Operational Context

Myanmar is amidst an important political and socio-economic transformation. The country is highly susceptible to natural disasters and climate risks. An estimated 37.5 percent of its 53 million population live near or below the poverty line. Many struggle with physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food with women, girls, elderly persons with disabilities and minorities affected most.

Wasting prevails at 6.7 percent nationally. Myanmar is one of the world’s 20 high tuberculosis burden countries. It is also among 35 countries accounting for 90 percent of new HIV infections globally.

Ethnic conflict exacerbates an already fragile situation. Over 1 million people have been displaced from their places of origin since June 2011. With restrictions on movement and lack of access to livelihoods, many conflict-affected populations rely on assistance to survive. Attacks on border outposts in August 2017 and ensuing violence forced over 700,000 Muslims to flee Rakhine State and seek refuge in Bangladesh, leading to a humanitarian crisis and activation of WFP’s corporate Level 3 response, since downgraded to Level 2.

In northern Rakhine State, WFP’s emergency relief assistance reached 91,340 conflict-affected people from 164 Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu villages and two internally displaced people (IDP) locations in Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships. In addition, WFP reached over 18,900 children under 5 years and pregnant and lactating women (PLW) through nutrition interventions. In central Rakhine State, WFP nutrition assistance reached 6,430 PLW and 27,070 children under 5, and 113,700 food-insecure people received WFP relief assistance.

WFP continued to provide emergency food assistance to 47,450 displaced people in 11 townships in Kachin State through cash and E-Money transfers. Over 1,850 PLW and children under two received WFP’s nutrition assistance.

In Numbers

- **314,040 people assisted** in May 2019
- **US$ 537,280** cash-based transfers made
- **3,800 mt** of food distributed
- **US$ 39.77 million** six months (June - November 2019) net funding requirements

Operational Updates

- **Emergency Relief & Nutrition**
  - **Rakhine**: Armed clashes between the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) and Arakan Army continued in May across Rakhine State, resulting in small-scale and sporadic internal population movements. WFP continued to support newly displaced people with emergency food assistance, assisting over 1,500 newly displaced people in northern Rakhine and over 2,300 in central Rakhine during May.
  - **Kachin**: Building on the previous expansion of E-Money, the transfer of cash for relief assistance through mobile phones, WFP extended its coverage to a further four IDP camps in May. These camps previously relied on direct cash assistance only. E-Money is now running in 14 IDP camps in Kachin State. Using mobile phones to transfer money can make the process faster, safer and more convenient for the recipients.
  - **Shan**: Tensions between armed forces continued to remain high during May in northern Shan State. WFP provided cash for food rations covering one month to 19 households of IDP returnees in Namkham Township. WFP’s emergency relief distributions continued to support 11,010 beneficiaries from northern Shan State and conflict-affected villages in the northernmost part of KoKang Self-Administered Zone. Over 2,200 PLWs and children under two received nutrition assistance.
  - **School Feeding**: As the holiday season continued for government-run schools, WFP provided nutritional snacks or meals to 7,580 primary school children in Wa Self-Administered Division, an autonomous region in northeastern part of Myanmar.
  - **Community Asset Creation**: WFP completed a total of 16 community asset creation projects, including irrigational canal construction, land development and road renovation, in Chin State and Wa Self-Administered Zone.

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Operational Updates continued

- **HIV & TB**: WFP supported 2,780 HIV and tuberculosis patients with food and nutrition assistance in Kachin, Kayin, Mon, Shan and Rakhine states, and Yangon Region.

- **Nutrition in non-emergency areas**: Over 5,290 children under 5 and PLW from Chin State, Magwe Region, Naga Self-Administered Zone and Yangon peri-urban areas benefited from WFP nutrition interventions.

**Challenges**

WFP’s plan to assist over 600 people displaced by the armed clashes in Paletwa Township, Chin State has been put on hold due to the ongoing fighting. Similarly, WFP did not receive travel approval to assist new IDPs in Mrauk-U and Minbya in May.

**Opportunities for Southeastern Myanmar**

AFFECTED BY DECADES of armed conflict, southeastern Myanmar remains vulnerable in many ways. With the peace process gathering momentum, the region is noticeably more stable than states such as Kachin and Rakhine. However, this does not mean that there is no need for humanitarian and development interventions. Limited livelihood opportunities and prevalent food insecurity continue to hold back the development of the region.

From its newly relocated field office in Hpa-An, WFP is planning to scale-up its assistance in Kayin, Kayah and Mon states and in Tanintharyi Region. Short-term targets include:

- extending the school feeding programme to the most vulnerable children taking non-formal education;
- providing nutrition assistance to fight micronutrient deficiency in Myaingyi Ngu IDP camp; and
- implementing community asset creation projects in Tanintharyi to provide job opportunities for resettled populations and host communities and to help build resilience.

Southeastern Myanmar is a success story of humanitarian-development nexus intervention, however the lack of available funding is the primary constraint preventing WFP from building even further on this potential.