



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade



REVIEW OF AUSTRALIA'S HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO MYANMAR

EVALUATION REPORT

December 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation team comprised Kate Sutton (independent lead) from the Humanitarian Advisory Group; Joanna O'Shea (team member) from DFAT's Humanitarian, NGOs and Partnerships Division; and Mia Urbano (team member) DFAT's South East Asia gender and social development specialist. The team was supported in Myanmar by Susan Mai Ra, DFAT's Humanitarian Program Manager in Yangon and in Australia by Pip Henty, Humanitarian Advisory Group's Researcher. The team brought to this evaluation humanitarian, program management, and monitoring and evaluation expertise alongside a sound understanding of the context and corporate knowledge of DFAT's systems and processes.

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Cover photo: Two women in a community in Rakhine State, May 2017. Credit: Kate Sutton, Humanitarian Advisory Group

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Australia is a long-term donor to Myanmar and has supported the country during its transition to a democracy in recent years. Despite positive developments, Myanmar still faces substantial humanitarian challenges. The country is highly vulnerable to natural disasters, and inter-communal tensions and armed conflict characterise parts of the country. Situations of protracted crisis continue to demand humanitarian attention, with large numbers of displaced people and significant humanitarian needs.¹

This report details the findings and recommendations from an evaluation of Australia's humanitarian assistance in response to protracted crises in Myanmar between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2017. The scope did not include natural disaster responses. The evaluation is one of the Humanitarian, NGOs and Partnerships Division's two program-prioritised and independently-led evaluations in 2017.² The evaluation considered the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of Australian humanitarian assistance, with a particular focus on displacement in Kachin and Rakhine states. It is intended to inform Australia's ongoing approach to humanitarian assistance in protracted crisis situations in Myanmar.

Findings and Recommendations

Australia has invested over \$40 million in response to displacement and protracted crises in Myanmar since July 2014, which has contributed to reaching over 500,000 people in need of humanitarian assistance. Australian assistance has achieved a great deal working through a range of implementing partners, including UN agencies, and international and Australian NGOs. Australia has a strong reputation for being an engaged and flexible donor that works effectively with other donors, humanitarian stakeholders and national actors, including the Government of Myanmar, to provide effective aid.

The findings and recommendations of this evaluation relate to three thematic areas: strategic focus, policy priorities and national and local leadership.

Strategic focus

The geographic spread of Australian assistance has aligned closely with the needs outlined in the UN and partners Humanitarian Response Plan.³ Implementing partners welcome Australia's approach to un-earmarked funding allocations that allow them to target assistance appropriately and flexibly according to identified and evolving needs. Australia has provided humanitarian assistance across several sectors; investments in 2016-17 span four sectors and six partners. More targeted investments in fewer sectors with fewer partners would enable Australia to take a stronger leadership role and work more closely with

1 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan 2016, page 7

2 DFAT Aid Evaluation Policy <http://dfat.gov.au/aid/how-we-measure-performance/ode/Pages/aid-evaluation-policy.aspx>

3 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan 2016

partners to ensure programs are as effective as possible. There is also scope for Australia to explore innovative ways to work with partners such as joint multiyear planning, and competitive or incentivised multiyear funding. Recommendations summarised in the table below capture the importance of developing a multiyear humanitarian strategy that can guide ongoing decisions in relation to sector focus, implementing partner choices and alignment of humanitarian assistance with the broader development and peace investments in Myanmar.

Recommendation		Theme: Strategic focus
1	Australia should develop a multiyear humanitarian strategy for its support to Myanmar that consolidates assistance in key sectoral areas	
2	Australia should identify and articulate further opportunities for leverage and complementarity between development, peace and humanitarian programming	
3	Australia should reflect a shift towards resilience-focussed outcomes in the multiyear humanitarian strategy	
4	Australia should explore innovative ways of engaging with partners to support multiyear planning and implementation of effective programming	

Policy Priorities

DFAT's Humanitarian Strategy identifies protection, disability inclusion, gender equity and women's empowerment, and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEAL) as thematic priorities 'central to the efficacy of all Australian aid.'⁴ The Australian humanitarian program in Myanmar has increased its focus on gender equity⁵ and protection in the past two years by funding key protection partners. This has had the positive impact of contributing concretely to the safety and dignity of women, men, boys and girls across several states in Myanmar. Beyond dedicated funding to high-performing partners, protection, gender equality and disability inclusion are not consistently mainstreamed across Australian humanitarian investments in Myanmar.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning processes are generally strong but vary across implementing partners in process and content. As a result, the project reports informed by these processes contain different information that cannot easily be compared or compiled to capture the collective outcomes or impact. In most cases data is not disaggregated by sex, age, disability or other demographic characteristics.

⁴ DFAT, Humanitarian Strategy, May 2016, page 22. Note that the policy also identifies private sector engagement

⁵ primarily gender-based violence (GBV) as it affects women and girls

Recommendation

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5 | Australia should communicate policy priorities and support partners to mainstream protection, gender, disability inclusion and accountability to affected populations |
| 6 | Australia should monitor the progress of cash based programming and encourage partners to continue mainstreaming protection |
| 7 | Australia should explore options for technical support in relation to policy priorities, potentially through the use of Australian civilian deployments |
| 8 | Australia should continue to work with implementing partners in country to improve quality and consistency of reporting as part of best practice monitoring, evaluation and learning |

Theme: Policy priorities

National and local leadership

Australian assistance has supported national government priorities and provided funding to national organisations, through the Myanmar Humanitarian Fund (MHF) and other implementing partners. Approximately 22 per cent of Australian assistance has been programmed through national organisations. While Australia complies with all Government of Myanmar requirements to share information on ODA spending, including humanitarian funding, some stakeholders within government do not have a strong understanding of Australia's humanitarian assistance. This includes lack of understanding of how much humanitarian funding Australia provides, the geographic and sectoral focus of funding, the partners that work with Australia, and the impact of assistance.

Recommendation

- | | |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9 | Australia should increase its engagement with relevant ministries in the Government of Myanmar in relation to humanitarian assistance |
| 10 | Australia should provide ongoing funding to the MHF and encourage its efforts to build the capacity of local organisations to access international funding |

Theme: National and local leadership

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

The recommendations made in this report concern DFAT's humanitarian assistance to Myanmar in response to protracted crises, specifically between the period 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2017. Since this report was drafted, there has been a serious escalation to the crisis in Rakhine State and neighbouring Bangladesh, with over 650,000 people displaced to Bangladesh. DFAT notes this is not within the scope of this report.

The review took place in the context of broad reforms in how DFAT manages its humanitarian investments in protracted crises, which have significant and wide-ranging implications. In these contexts, the recommendations are targeted at strategic focus, policy priorities and national and local leadership. They provide useful suggestions on how to strengthen existing humanitarian investments in Myanmar, as well as identify opportunities for implementing DFAT's broader priorities for humanitarian reform in protracted crises. DFAT agrees to all of the recommendations made by the evaluation team.

DFAT notes that there are instances where recommendations require increased and more targeted engagement with local and national partners, including the Government of Myanmar. This is consistent with Australia's commitment to respect and help strengthen leadership and decision-making by local and national actors in humanitarian action, in order to better address the needs of affected populations.

The action plan identified in this management response will be progressed by DFAT's Humanitarian, NGOs and Partnerships Division (HPD), South-East Asia Division (SED) and Yangon Post, in consultation with the Government of Myanmar and relevant humanitarian partners.

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
<i>Recommendations on the strategic focus of Australia's humanitarian investments in Myanmar</i>				
Recommendation 1: Australian assistance could be improved with the development of a multiyear humanitarian strategy	Agree	Under the Grand Bargain (2016), DFAT committed to improving the flexibility and predictability of humanitarian funding through increased use of multiyear funding arrangements. Implementing this approach will also provide opportunity to review and improve funding and contracting processes, as identified in the evaluation.	— DFAT will develop a comprehensive multiyear strategy for humanitarian investments in Myanmar, including considering options for responding to displacement of people from Myanmar to Bangladesh. The strategy will identify suitable partners and priority sectors for future multiyear humanitarian investments, as well as articulate opportunities for greater efficiency and effectiveness through multiyear approaches.	To be developed in 2017-18 and introduced for all humanitarian contracting conducted by 2018-19
Recommendation 2: Australia should identify and articulate further opportunities for leverage and complementarity between development, peace and humanitarian programming.	Agree	DFAT is committed to improving the linkages between humanitarian, development and peace programming and advocacy, including under the Grand Bargain (2016) and in recognition of the benefits stronger linkages will provide for affected populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The multiyear strategy for humanitarian investments in Myanmar will investigate options for stronger and more systematic links between development, humanitarian and peace programming. In particular, opportunities will be investigated for links with the broader aid program's work in education, noting this was highlighted by the evaluation as a potential focus for Australia's humanitarian investments. — DFAT will engage with partners and other donors in Myanmar to strengthen linkages between development, humanitarian and peace programming and policy. — DFAT will also investigate options for stronger linkages between DFAT's political objectives, and humanitarian, development and peace programming in Myanmar, including advocacy efforts where appropriate. 	Commencing in 2017-18, but long-term issue for consideration

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
Recommendation 3: Australia should reflect a shift towards resilience focused outcomes in the multiyear humanitarian strategy	Agree	DFAT agrees with the evaluation report's conclusion that the humanitarian challenges in Myanmar are protracted and not likely to be resolved in the near future. Therefore, and recognising DFAT's commitment to improved links between development and humanitarian programming and policies, DFAT agrees that humanitarian investments need to include a stronger focus on resilience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — DFAT's selection of partners and priority sectors for its multiyear Myanmar humanitarian strategy will include identification of opportunities to increase the focus on resilience within humanitarian investments, particularly where existing programming could be reformulated to better incorporate resilience and draw on good practice examples. — DFAT will advocate for increased participation of local partners in the planning, implementation and monitoring of programming, including ensuring that it delivers locally and sectorally appropriate pathways to resilience. 	To be considered for all humanitarian contracting in Myanmar conducted from 2018-19
Recommendation 4: Australia should explore innovative ways of engaging with partners to support multiyear planning and implementation of effective programming	Agree	As set out in the DFAT Humanitarian Strategy (2016), a guiding principle for DFAT's humanitarian investments is to look for opportunities for increased effectiveness and innovation. The introduction of multiyear strategies for humanitarian funding in protracted contexts reflects a new approach to our work in protracted crises, and a sensible opportunity to investigate and implement other innovations as well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — DFAT is investigating a range of innovations in funding, planning and implementing humanitarian investments, drawing on experiences with other donors, partners and best practice literature, as well as engagement by Geneva and New York posts. HPD will provide support to all bilateral aid programs, including Myanmar, on how this might be applied. — In identification of partners, and subsequent negotiations for multiyear funding arrangements, DFAT will consider opportunities to encourage innovative approaches and the means to promote and track progress against our humanitarian reform priorities. — DFAT will consider how to generate, disseminate and act on learning from the existing humanitarian investments in Myanmar, and other protracted crises as relevant, to support innovative approaches by partners. 	To be considered for all humanitarian contracting conducted by 2018-19

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
<i>Recommendations on the policy priorities of Australia's humanitarian investments in Myanmar</i>				
Recommendation 5: Australia should communicate policy priorities and support partners to mainstream protection, gender, disability inclusion and accountability to affected populations	Agree	As noted in the report, DFAT prioritises protection, disability inclusion, gender equity and accountability as essential for effective humanitarian action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — DFAT has prepared a series of guidance notes for use by bilateral aid programs, to support improved understanding of these policy priorities and greater ability to practically and realistically engage with partners to ensure they are mainstreamed in all activities. — DFAT will communicate these policy priorities with partners, including national governments, through the provision of standard messaging. These will be reinforced at all international fora to the extent possible, including by Geneva and New York posts and in meetings with partners. — DFAT will ensure messaging on Australia's policy priorities informs discussions with partners in Myanmar, including in negotiations for multiyear funding agreements or partner workshops, and make expectations clear around implementation and reporting. — DFAT will seek opportunities to collaborate with agencies in Myanmar who champion protection, disability inclusion, gender equity and accountability to affected populations – both through funding arrangements and by participating in relevant fora (e.g. sector working groups) 	These policy priorities to inform all relevant discussions from late 2017
Recommendation 6: Australia should continue to monitor the progress of cash based programming and encourage partners to continue mainstreaming protection	Agree	DFAT is committed to improving and increasing the use of cash based programming, recognising the many benefits from this approach to assistance. DFAT has also identified protection as a key policy priority for all humanitarian investments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — HPD, with support from Geneva and New York posts, will continue to work with partners (e.g. WFP) at the global level to influence how and when they implement cash based programming, including the incorporation of protection mainstreaming. — HPD will work with DFAT's Social Protection team to strengthen support to the Myanmar aid program on the use of cash transfers, including best practice and protection concerns. — DFAT will prioritise cash based programming in discussions with all relevant partners working in Myanmar, and seek evidence of how partners have improved their approach to protection within this programming, including seeking regular reporting. 	To commence as soon as possible

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DFAT will also foster dialogue and collaboration in Myanmar between partners working on cash-based programming and partners working on protection. 	
Recommendation 7: Australia should explore options for technical support in relation to policy priorities, potentially through the use of Australian civilian deployments	Agree	DFAT agrees that the provision of technical support is an important tool for ensuring complex priorities are understood by partners and able to be implemented. This could include volunteers or paid humanitarian specialists.	<p><i>(See Action Plan for Recommendations 5 and 6)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DFAT will continue to investigate opportunities for targeted civilian deployments within the new Australia Assists mechanism that will protect, build resilience and support the most vulnerable, and support regional partners to find durable solutions to protracted crises. DFAT will consider options for targeted technical assistance to partners in-country, including training workshops, distribution of guidance material or access to Australian volunteers. DFAT will also require partners to provide progress updates against policy priorities to assist in identifying areas for further support or guidance, as well as opportunities for sharing of learning and good practice. 	To be considered within Australia Assists, the new civilian deployment mechanism, in early 2018
Recommendations for national and local leadership in Australia's humanitarian investments in Myanmar				
Recommendation 8: Australia should continue work with implementing partners in country to improve quality and consistency of reporting as part of best practice monitoring, evaluation and learning	Agree	Consistent with DFAT's Humanitarian Strategy (2016), DFAT strives to be accountable and continually learn from our actions to improve the quality of our work. High quality partner reporting is an essential component of this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DFAT requires and will continue to require our partners to undertake in-depth monitoring and evaluation of activities and provide meaningful performance information to all stakeholders. DFAT will communicate this expectation strongly with all partners. DFAT will seek to incorporate clear and sufficiently strong reporting requirements on program partners in contracting arrangements. Where issues in reporting are identified, DFAT will seek to address these at both the country and global level. DFAT will also seek opportunities to share learning across partners in Myanmar, such as joint workshops or meetings. DFAT is establishing a joint monitoring and evaluation framework with New Zealand (Joint MEF) for rapid onset disasters, which is intended to provide guidance on reporting processes for partners undertaking response activities in the Pacific. It is expected to 	New monitoring and evaluation framework currently under development

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
			increase the timeliness, quality and consistency of reporting and will be used by DFAT to guide decision-making. HPD will share relevant lessons learned from its implementation with bilateral aid program areas and consider whether it would be appropriate to adapt for protracted crises.	
Recommendation 9: Australia should increase its engagement with relevant ministries in the Government of Myanmar in relation to humanitarian assistance	Agree	Humanitarian assistance is a significant component of Australia's engagement with Myanmar, and DFAT agrees that our activities need to be better understood by the Myanmar Government, to both increase effectiveness and sustainability, and to maximise the effectiveness of our broader engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — DFAT, through Yangon Post, will seek opportunities to liaise directly with the Government of Myanmar on humanitarian assistance and draw attention to our activities where appropriate. — SED will continue to strengthen linkages between humanitarian programming and broader political efforts to better advocate with other donors and the Government for political solutions to address the underlying factors causing humanitarian needs. — DFAT will ensure that humanitarian assistance is incorporated to the extent useful in broader political or advocacy discussions. — DFAT, through Yangon Post, will encourage humanitarian actors to engage closely with the Government of Myanmar at the national and local level where appropriate, both to maximise awareness and participation to the extent possible. 	To be incorporated into discussions whenever possible

Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Timeframe
Recommendation 10: Australia should provide ongoing funding to the Myanmar Humanitarian Fund (MHF) and encourage its efforts to build the capacity of local organisations to access international funding	Agree	DFAT is committed to the localisation ⁶ of humanitarian responses. In line with this, DFAT agrees to consider continued funding the MHF within its multiyear humanitarian assistance strategy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — DFAT will consider support to UNOCHA, in its role managing the MHF, when developing the new multiyear humanitarian assistance strategy. — HPD will provide guidance to SED on localisation, including best practice, to strengthen the capacity of local organisations to prepare for and respond to emergencies. — Yangon Post, supported by HPD as needed, will take available opportunities to encourage UNOCHA to emphasise the importance of working with local organisations to build capacity to access funding directly. Yangon Post will also encourage other donors to prioritise this issue in their advocacy with UNOCHA to ensure a consistent message. 	To be considered as part of development of multiyear strategy, commencing by 2018-19

⁶ For Australia, localisation means recognising, respecting and strengthening leadership and decision-making by local and national actors in humanitarian action, in order to better address the needs of affected populations.

INTRODUCTION

This report details the findings and recommendations from an evaluation of Australia's humanitarian assistance in response to protracted crises in Myanmar between 1 July 2014 and 30 June 2017. This assistance forms one component of a larger aid program in Myanmar that covers development, peace and humanitarian programs.

Australia has been a long-term donor to Myanmar and has supported the country during its transition to democracy in recent years. Despite positive developments, Myanmar still faces substantial humanitarian challenges. The country is highly vulnerable to natural disasters, and inter-communal tensions and armed conflict characterise parts of the country. Situations of protracted crisis continue to demand humanitarian attention, with large numbers of displaced people and significant humanitarian needs.⁷

The evaluation addresses the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of Australian humanitarian assistance, with a particular focus on displacement in Kachin and Rakhine states. The assistance provided in the south-east and the Thai-Myanmar border was not included in this evaluation as it was covered in a separate evaluation in 2015. Humanitarian assistance to sudden-onset disasters (e.g. flooding/cyclones) is also not included in this evaluation in order to limit the scope.⁸ However, it is acknowledged that sudden-onset disasters compound the challenges for response to protracted crises, and equally that protracted crises deplete assets and coping capacities for responding to sudden onset disasters.

The timeframe under review by the evaluation team spans two consecutive aid investment plans for Australia in Myanmar and two different global humanitarian strategies for Australia.⁹ Due to the forward-looking nature of the evaluation, this report largely considers how the humanitarian program is performing in the context of the current strategies and DFAT priorities.

Humanitarian context

The humanitarian situation in Myanmar is characterised by situations of protracted crisis in three distinct contexts: active conflict in northern Myanmar; long-term displacement of Myanmar refugees in Thai camps; and ongoing intercommunal tensions and displacement in Rakhine state. The evaluation focused on Australian humanitarian assistance in two of these contexts: in Kachin and Shan states in northern Myanmar, and in Rakhine state in the south-west.

In Kachin and northern Shan States, over 120,000 people¹⁰ remain in need of humanitarian assistance, including over 98,000 people displaced because of ongoing conflict. Around 50 per cent of these Internally Displaced People (IDPs) are located in areas outside government control where humanitarian access is

⁷ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan 2016, page 7

⁸ The scope needed to be limited due to timing and resourcing requirements.

⁹ Humanitarian Action Plan (2011) and Humanitarian Action Strategy (2016)

¹⁰ United Nations, Humanitarian Response Plan January-December 2017. For figures in this section, please note that data disaggregated by sex and age was not available.

limited. An estimated 77 and 78 per cent of camp residents are women and children in Kachin and Northern Shan state, respectively.¹¹ The conflict in Kachin has escalated significantly in recent months, and many people are now facing secondary or even tertiary displacement.

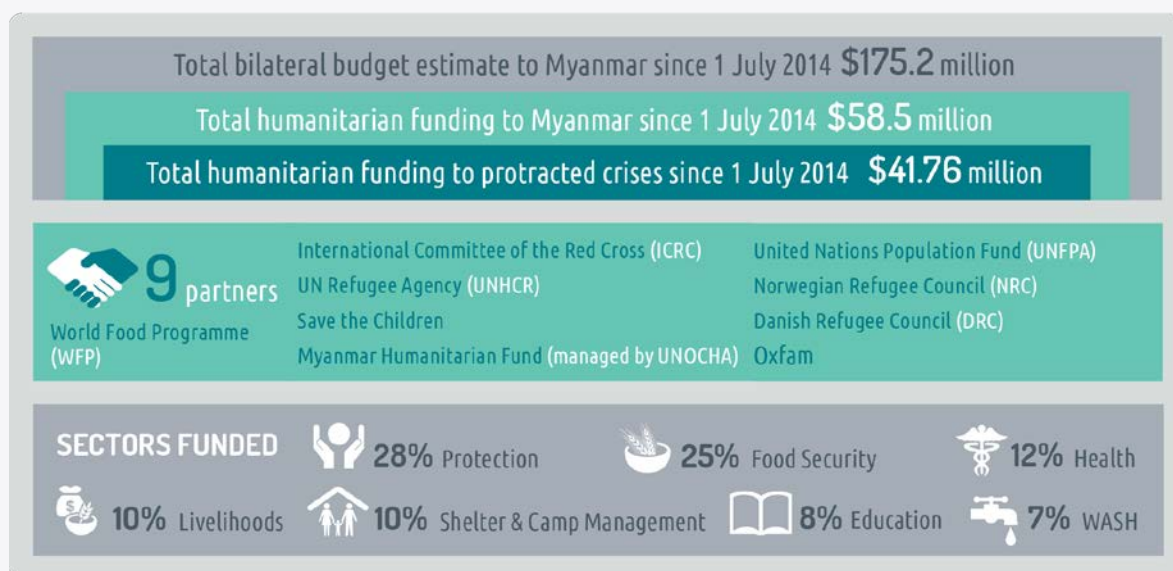
In Rakhine state, over 400,000 people need assistance. Inter-communal violence in 2012 led to the displacement of approximately 145,000 people, of these around 120,000 remain displaced in June 2017. Women and children comprise an estimated 79 per cent of people in IDP camps. Recent security operations in northern Rakhine state in 2016 and 2017 created additional internal displacement of over 20,000 people and close to 70,000 displaced to Bangladesh. Security operations resulted in the prolonged suspension of most pre-existing humanitarian activities in the region from October 2016 to February 2017, which have restarted in recent months.¹²

Australia's humanitarian assistance

Australia has provided \$58.5 million in humanitarian assistance to Myanmar between July 2014 and July 2017 (approximately 33 per cent of the total bilateral aid budget). Australia is currently the eighth largest humanitarian donor to Myanmar.¹³ Over 70 per cent of this total (\$41.76 million) has been allocated to responding to evolving situations of inter-communal tension and armed conflict in Myanmar, primarily affecting Shan, Kachin and Rakhine states, characterised as protracted crises.¹⁴ Australia's assistance has evolved over the past four years to accommodate this shift from short-term immediate relief to longer-term humanitarian programming. A summary of this assistance is provided in Figure 1 below.

The humanitarian program is managed by a small team based at the Australian Embassy in Yangon and reporting to the Deputy Head of Mission. The team comprises two officers: one Australian-based officer and one locally engaged officer. They are supported by one Desk officer in Canberra who also performs other duties; and, as needed, by the Humanitarian NGOs and Partnerships Division (HPD).¹⁵

Figure 1: Australian assistance in Myanmar between July 2014 and June 2017



11 United Nations, Humanitarian Response Plan January-December 2017

12 Since this report was drafted, there has been a serious escalation to the crisis in Rakhine State and neighbouring Bangladesh, with over 650,000 people displaced to Bangladesh. This is not within the scope of this report.

13 OCHA FTS, accessed 4 July 2017

14 There is no commonly accepted definition of protracted crises but they are generally characterised by their intractability and longevity (reference: Protracted Conflict and Humanitarian Action, ICRC, 2016)

15 TOR Myanmar evaluation – FINAL, 2017

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess whether Australia's humanitarian investments within the defined scope (see page five) were effective, efficient and appropriate. The evaluation questions were derived from international frameworks¹⁶ and Australia's key policy and strategy documents.¹⁷ Three overarching questions guided the evaluation:

- Was Australia's humanitarian assistance to protracted crises in Myanmar appropriate and relevant?
- Was Australia's humanitarian assistance to protracted crises effective and efficient?
- Did Australia's humanitarian assistance reinforce national and local leadership?

The methodology used a largely qualitative approach, combining stakeholder interviews, a desk review and focus group discussions. Quantitative data sets including Australian humanitarian funding allocations and the OCHA Financial Tracking System¹⁸ were used to triangulate key findings. Short field visits to Rakhine state and Kachin states were undertaken to capture the experience of the affected population.



Australian Embassy staff member talks with the Camp Manager at Maina KBC Camp in Kachin State. Photo: Kate Sutton

Desk review

The desk review included the analysis of 113 documents. Documents included: DFAT policy and strategy documents, humanitarian policy and guidance documents, UN and implementing partner strategy documents, implementing partner reports and proposals, and other specialist papers (e.g. reports on disability, gender-based violence and political context). Please see the Annex 1 for the Reference List.

Key informant interviews

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with 46 individuals (27 women, 19 men). Key informants comprised 13 DFAT staff, seven Government of Myanmar representatives, 21 implementing partner representatives, two other donor representatives and three other stakeholders.

16 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Development Assistance Committee (DAC), Principles for Evaluation Development Assistance, 1991

17 DFAT, Humanitarian Strategy, 2016; Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy, 2016; Development for All - Development for All 2015–2020: Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia's aid program; Child Protection Policy, 2017; and Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012 – 2018

18 <https://fts.unocha.org/>

Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions (sex-segregated) were used to capture the views of affected populations on the appropriateness of the assistance provided and the extent to which they participated in, and influenced,



partner programs. One hundred and seven community representatives (71 male and 36 female) were involved in focus group discussions.¹⁹ People consulted came from six communities that represented internally displaced camp and host community populations in Kachin and Rakhine states. A consultation was also held with seven representatives from Disabled Peoples' Organisations in Yangon.²⁰ The specific purpose of this focus group discussion was to understand barriers and priorities for people living with disabilities in situations of protracted crisis.

Women's focus group discussion at Shwe Zat Baptist Camp, Myitkyina, Kachin state. Photo: Kate Sutton

Consent

All evaluation participants provided informed consent prior to data collection. Written consent was also sought for taking photographs using the standard DFAT form and process. The process was verbally explained via translators and for people with vision impairments.

Triangulation and rigour of evidence

All findings presented in the report have been validated through triangulation. Each finding is based on data that has emerged from multiple sources and/or methods (i.e. desk review and/or focus group discussions and/or interviews). Where possible quantitative data was used to further strengthen evidence.

Limitations

The evaluation was completed in a three-month time frame with approximately 80 personnel days. Time constraints meant that visits to Kachin and Rakhine states were brief (three days) and that only selected partner sites could be visited. Partner reports varied in format, detail and comprehensiveness. As a result, the evaluation could not verify all implementing partner activities and outputs or provide detailed analysis of the efficiency and effectiveness of each partner program.

The sampling strategy was purposive, weighing up the opportunity cost associated with each interview and document review. One team member was fluent in Kachin, Myanmar and English languages, facilitating more engagement and clarity during focus group discussions in Myitkyina. The consultations in Rakhine State were translated through partner staff members and via three or four language translations, as a result engagement and clarity were compromised.

¹⁹ Note that the same number of male and female focus group discussions were held but the number of men was particularly high in one FGD (over 30 men attended) pushing up the overall number of men involved.

²⁰ Myanmar Federation of People with Disabilities and Myanmar National Association of the Blind

FINDINGS

1.1 ACHIEVEMENTS

A great deal has been achieved with Australian assistance in response to protracted crises in Myanmar since 2014. Australia has provided over \$40 million to protracted crises across the country and has contributed to reaching up to 500,000 people per year.²¹ Australia has made notable contributions across a range of sectors by providing funding through a range of partners (UN and NGOs) that have a strong track record upholding humanitarian principles and delivering effective humanitarian assistance. Key achievements are captured below in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Highlights of Australian assistance to situations of protracted crisis in Myanmar since 2014



²¹ This figure is based on the total numbers reached by Australia's implementing partners on an annual basis

1.2 STRATEGIC FOCUS

FINDING 1: AUSTRALIAN ASSISTANCE COULD BE IMPROVED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MULTIYEAR HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY

FINDING 2: FUNDING AND CONTRACTING PROCESSES COULD BE REVIEWED TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF ASSISTANCE

Humanitarian assistance during the evaluation time frame was guided by the Myanmar Aid Investment Plan (AIP 2015-2020) and the Humanitarian Action Plan (2011) and subsequent Humanitarian Strategy (2016). These provide high level guidance for the broad direction of the program. The AIP 2015-2020 provides a geographic focus for assistance in Rakhine, Kachin and northern Shan states, and identifies priorities such as addressing the root causes of protracted crises and a shift from shorter-term to longer-term programs encouraging resilience. Australia's humanitarian assistance is also informed by Australia's political objectives in Myanmar, for example in relation to advocacy and engagement with the Government of Myanmar.

Post has identified the need for a multiyear humanitarian strategy to sit under these higher-level guidance documents and to articulate intended outcomes and outputs specific to Australia's humanitarian assistance. A multiyear strategy could improve effectiveness and efficiency by:

- defining clear outcomes;
- focusing on fewer sectors and more strategic implementing partnerships;²²
- providing a basis for multiyear funding agreements, which could help to reduce administration and increase certainty for implementing partners;²³
- improving alignment with development and peace objectives of the Australian aid program;²⁴ and
- improving alignment with policy priorities, such as supporting the Government of Myanmar in specific areas.²⁵

Post has been proactive in taking steps to improve assistance and has worked to implement recommendations from a review of Australian humanitarian support in Myanmar (2012-2014)²⁶ and an evaluation of assistance to conflict-affected and displaced persons (2014).²⁷ Building on this work to date, there is now an opportunity to develop a multiyear strategy that would assist with decision-making, improve monitoring and evaluation, and increase the effectiveness and efficiency of assistance.

The implementation of a multiyear strategy will require careful consideration of funding and contracting processes. Currently, decisions on funding allocations and partnerships are made annually and informed by specific needs, partner requests and funding availability. The short time frame to turn around contracts at the end of the financial year reduces the opportunity to engage in strategic dialogue on policy priorities or program quality.²⁸ There is an opportunity to provide multiyear funding to partners that have invested in multiyear planning²⁹ and to make funding allocation decisions earlier in the financial year. Australia should encourage and support those partners that have taken the initiative to think ahead and demonstrate

22 Interview 21

23 Interview 24

24 Interview 26

25 Interview 6

26 Humanitarian Advisory Group, Review of Australian Humanitarian Support in Myanmar (2012-2014), December 2014

27 TANA, Evaluation report: Assistance to Burmese Conflict-Affected and Displaced Persons

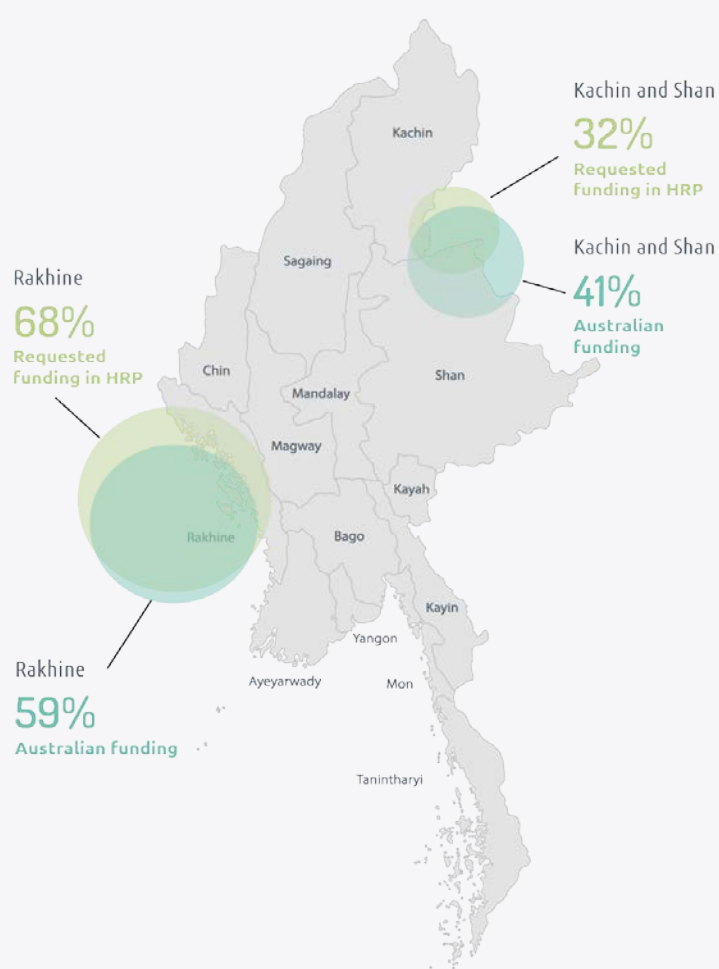
28 Interview 21

29 Interview 12, 38

multiyear thinking. Competitive processes and incentives could be built into contracting agreements to encourage partners to deliver innovative program approaches and to build on learning.

1.3 GEOGRAPHIC AND SECTORAL FOCUS

FINDING 3: THE GEOGRAPHIC AND SECTORAL FOCUS HAS BEEN APPROPRIATE TO DATE. THERE IS SCOPE FOR THE SECTORAL FOCUS TO BE FURTHER CONSOLIDATED.



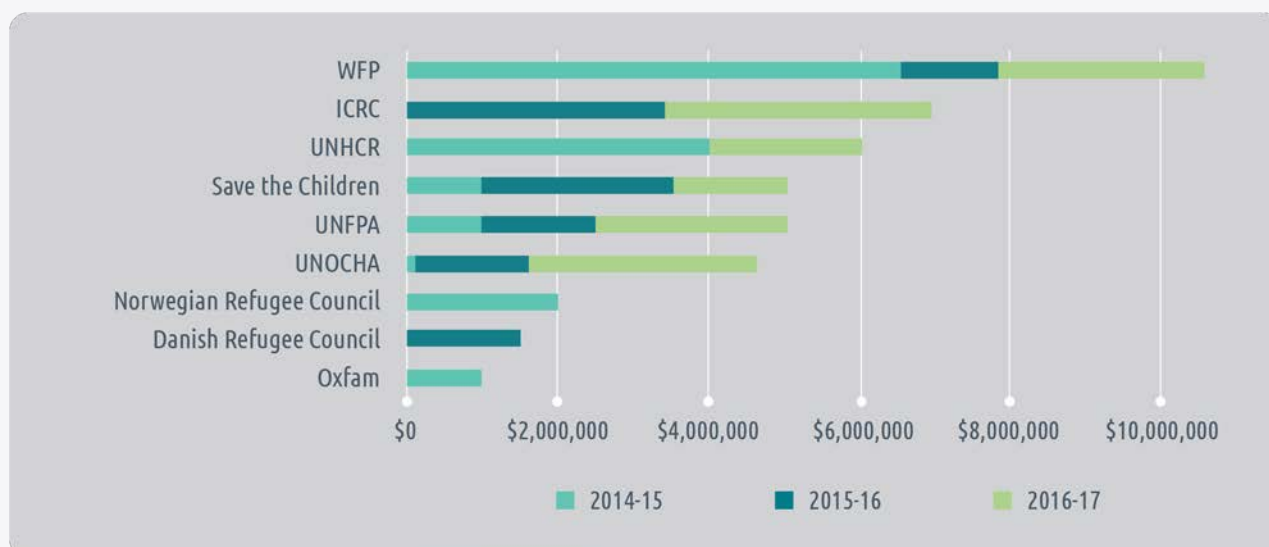
The approximate geographic spread of Australian assistance aligns closely with the needs identified in the OCHA-coordinated Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan (see Figure 3). Australia is considered a highly flexible donor, and funding for most partners is not earmarked to a specific geographic location. This allows implementing partners to make decisions on allocating the funding to the area of greatest need and ensures that Australian assistance is appropriate and responsive.

Figure 3: Geographic breakdown of Australian funding allocation between July 2014 and June 2017 compared to the needs identified in the OCHA Humanitarian Response Plan 2017

Prior to the time frame of this evaluation Australia had intentionally invested in a broad range of humanitarian partners and sectors. At one point Australia was working with 16 different partners simultaneously. This approach facilitated a broad reach and provided time for Australia to identify strong implementing partners, but involved a high administrative burden.

The spread of funding across sectors and partners has since been consolidated based on learning and the changing context. In 2015-16, in particular, funding was provided to fewer partners targeting key sectors: protection, education and food security. Investments in 2016-17 span four sectors and six partners (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Breakdown of humanitarian funding, by partner and financial year³⁰



Key stakeholders and documentation, internal and external to DFAT, suggested that further consolidation in key sectoral areas would further strengthen Australia's humanitarian assistance.³¹ Focusing on one or two sectors would allow Australia to take a strong leadership role with increased leverage and influence. It would also enable Australia to increase its support and engagement with key implementing partners to ensure programs are as effective as possible.³²

Protection and education emerged in interviews and focus group discussions as two sectors that could form the focus of future Australian assistance. All sectors in the UN OCHA Humanitarian Response Plan are underfunded, however, education is particularly under-resourced at 3.1 per cent of requested funding as of May 2017. Food security is the highest funded sector at 31.2 per cent as of May 2017.³³

Protection

Text Box 1: DFAT's definition of protection

Protection aims to assure the safety of people from serious harm. This includes protection from violence, such as killing, wounding, torture, cruel and inhumane treatment, protection from exploitation and coercion, and protection from deliberate deprivation, such as denial of medical care, food, shelter or water.³⁴

Evaluation interviews conducted with UN agencies, implementing partners and other donors revealed that Australia has developed credibility and a positive reputation as a protection-focused donor.³⁵ One UN agency commented that "Australia is a very strong advocate for protection."³⁶ This has been achieved through increased funding to protection actors in recent years and consistent advocacy for protection at

³⁰ Australia also provides core funding to some of these agencies that may be directed towards Myanmar. The exact figures are not always known and therefore not reported in this figure.

³¹ DFAT, Aid Program Performance Report 2015-2016 and interview 21

³² Interview 17, 21, 25

³³ OCHA, Financial Tracking System, accessed 23 May 2017

³⁴ DFAT, Humanitarian Strategy, May 2016, page 24

³⁵ Interview 17, 18, 29

³⁶ Interview 19, 29

coordination and cluster meetings. Several stakeholders also commented on the positive contribution of the Australian Civilian Corps deployee based in the Australian Embassy who was a strong protection practitioner and advocate.³⁷

Australia's focus on protection has also generated concrete positive outcomes that are further detailed in Section 1.5 on Australia's Global Policy Priorities.

Education

Australia is also well known for its support to the education sector, particularly in regards to its development programming which is viewed very positively by all stakeholders.³⁸ In focus group discussions with displaced communities, education was consistently identified as being a very high priority for families³⁹ and the number of children in need of humanitarian education services include 37,700 children in Kachin, 3,300 in Shan and 100,000 in Rakhine state.⁴⁰ Despite the large focus on education in its development program, only eight per cent of Australian humanitarian funds examined under this evaluation were allocated to education.

There have been significant challenges with the education component of Australia's humanitarian assistance. Education assistance is largely focused on short-term displacement camp service provision, primarily basic education-level Temporary Learning Spaces with non-formal teachers drawn from the local community. According to implementing partner reports children with disabilities are not currently accessing the temporary learning spaces. The education assistance provided still focuses on short-term solutions that a DFAT officer visiting Rakhine state in 2015 noted as increasingly inappropriate,⁴¹ and the shift to longer term programming continues to challenge donors and implementing partners. Transition to limited higher education opportunities has not occurred due to challenges including mobility, materials, teacher quality and segregation of schools.

Despite the challenges, like-minded donors, the education cluster and implementing partners look to Australia to take a lead on education in humanitarian programming.⁴² Other donors have increasingly focused their humanitarian spending, for example UK AID in water, sanitation and hygiene, and are unlikely to address the considerable education needs in the absence of Australia's leadership.⁴³ Australia also has the opportunity to strengthen linkages and leverage technical expertise from within the Australian development program. DFAT's long engagement in education in Myanmar make it well placed to manage ongoing relationships with government and to navigate the complexities of multi-ethnic education systems and to address challenges such as disability inclusion in education programming.⁴⁴

Food Security

Food security and livelihoods is also a potential sectoral focus for Australia's future humanitarian assistance. This would have the advantage of building on the considerable development investment in the Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT) program and supporting implementing partners that have achieved strong resilience focus in their programs. However, the evaluation team concluded that food security offers less comparative advantage to Australia in its response to protracted crisis situations (notwithstanding the important contribution Australia can play in this sector in response to sudden onset crises). Australia's

37 Interview 19, 17, 15

38 Interview 17, 25

39 Women's focus group discussions at IDP camps in Rakhine and Myitkyina

40 Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017, United Nations and Partners, 2017, page 18

41 Informal DFAT report on field visit (May 2015)

42 Interview 12, 23, 25

43 Interview 17, 21, 25

44 Interview 1

investment in food security, 25 per cent of Australian humanitarian funds examined under this evaluation, has been somewhat disproportionate considering the needs in other sectors. Whilst food security continues to be a sector of substantial need, it is also the least under-funded sector under the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2017, attracting significant funding from donors including Japan and the USA.⁴⁵ World Food Programme (Australia's main implementing partner in food security) also receives the largest share of humanitarian funding in country (at 23 per cent of humanitarian funding as of July 2017).⁴⁶ Australia already provides a significant amount of unearmarked core funding to WFP centrally through Canberra. Australia's added value in the sector is relatively small in Myanmar, and the available funding could have significantly more impact in other sectors where Australia can take more of a leadership and advocacy role.

Other sectors

Figure 1 provides an overview of Australia's contributions to a broad range of sectors including those that are not a focus for Australia, for example, WASH, shelter and health. Australia can maintain a broad sectoral understanding via its engagement in humanitarian coordination mechanisms⁴⁷ and continued investment in the Myanmar Humanitarian Fund that covers seven sectors. Whilst it is important to maintain this engagement there is limited opportunity or value to scaling up investment or focus in these sectors that are largely covered by other donors, for example UK AID investment and leadership in the WASH sector.⁴⁸

1.4 ALIGNMENT OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE WITH DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE PRIORITIES IN MYANMAR

FINDING 4: THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES TO FURTHER PROMOTE LINKAGES BETWEEN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND THE BROADER AID PROGRAM IN MYANMAR.

FINDING 5: THERE ARE POSITIVE EXAMPLES OF AUSTRALIAN AID CONTRIBUTING TO LONGER-TERM OUTCOMES AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE. THIS HAS NOT BEEN REFLECTED ACROSS ALL AUSTRALIA-FUNDED PROGRAMS OR CAPTURED IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORKS.

There are positive examples of Australia aligning humanitarian and development priorities to increase the appropriateness and effectiveness of both. Most notably, intentional efforts have been made to pioneer 'courageous development programming' that reaches into conflict-affected areas and intends to keep development holds as well as improve the success of humanitarian interventions.⁴⁹ As a large donor to a Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT),⁵⁰ Australia advocated successfully to expand its reach into conflict-affected areas, including Rakhine state. Within the education portfolio, Australia made considerable efforts to ensure that World Bank-funded education initiatives were extended into conflict-affected areas and adopted a conflict-sensitive approach. More recently, humanitarian and development staff members from the Embassy have been working with partners in the design of education programs in Rakhine state, with positive outcomes already evident in terms of encouraging partners to think beyond short-term

45 OCHA, Financial Tracking System, accessed 23 May 2017

46 OCHA, Financial Tracking System, accessed 04 July 2017

47 For example, Humanitarian Country Team

48 Interview 17

49 Interview 5, 26

50 Livelihoods and Food Security Trust Fund, a multi-donor initiative led by UNOPS.

interventions. Save the Children worked closely with DFAT in early 2017 to apply development learning to their humanitarian programming with respect to teacher development programs and capacity development plans.⁵¹

Key stakeholders believe there is scope for greater alignment of Australia's humanitarian assistance with development and peace priorities in the Australian aid program, especially building on the recent work undertaken in education. The positive examples to date have often emerged from individual DFAT staff initiative; there is potential to develop strategic institutionalised approaches.

Opportunities include:

- aligning focus sectors for humanitarian programming with areas of sectoral expertise and focus for the Australian development program more broadly;
- engaging with implementing partners holistically across development, peace and humanitarian programming for planning and review processes;
- DFAT staff working together on common challenges faced in humanitarian, development and peace programming, such as how to ensure programs are implemented in a conflict-sensitive manner, how to improve gender mainstreaming, or how to effectively support local leadership;
- building provisions into contracts with implementing development partners for surge capacity to support humanitarian response where required and appropriate; and
- encouraging partners to consider resilience approaches and outcomes in their programs that may bridge humanitarian-development divide.

Shift to Resilience

The humanitarian challenges across Myanmar are not about to be resolved in the near future. There is still active conflict in Kachin and Shan states; the peace process offers some prospect for cessation of hostilities, but even once fighting ends, the sustainable return and resettlement of affected communities may require many years of support, including for the clearance of landmines and re-establishment of sustainable livelihoods. The escalation of inter-communal conflict in Rakhine state in 2012 was considered a temporary situation at the time, with return of displaced communities and resumption of normal life a real possibility. Five years on, the protracted nature of the situation is clear. Restrictions on freedom of movement seriously curtail people's options for resilience. This requires humanitarian actors to rethink their approach to humanitarian situations across the country and find more sustainable ways to engage.

The international community in Myanmar appears to be reaching consensus that in certain parts of the country humanitarian programming must shift from short-term emergency-focused programming to longer-term resilience-focused programming.⁵² At the same time, there will continue to be humanitarian needs, especially in Rakhine state, that require immediate attention. In this sense, donors are required to develop twin-track programs and find a balance between addressing short and long-term needs. This approach was articulated in a recent Inter Action report (specifically with respect to protection) in the following way:

⁵¹ Interview 12, 13

⁵² Interview 22

The types of threats people are continually exposed to in Rakhine state, Kachin and northern Shan indicate quite clearly a situation of ongoing humanitarian concern, which demands some immediate action in the short term, while simultaneously adopting a wider aperture and longer-term outlook to cultivate a protective environment for civilians and marginalised communities.⁵³

In practical terms, humanitarian actors need to be thinking about the next two years at the same time as thinking about the next two weeks. Some of Australia's implementing partners have been proactive in this shift. UNFPA took a proactive step in 2015 to combine the different strands of its program into an overarching Women and Girls First Initiative. The program addresses the short-term needs of women and girls with respect to sexual and reproductive health, the humanitarian imperative to respond to gender-based violence, and the longer-term need to work with government to link sub-national service provision with national policy frameworks. The ICRC has also adopted a strategic global approach to protracted crises that combines short and long-term thinking to meet immediate needs and mitigate cumulative impact. In Myanmar, this means that all ICRC programs in protection, WASH, economic security and health prioritise sustainable improvement above simply meeting basic needs.⁵⁴ This approach has not yet been adopted across all of Australia's implementing partners.

The development of a multiyear strategy provides a great opportunity to work with partners to strengthen resilience-based programming, and encourage partners to engage in multiyear planning. It will enable identification of opportunities to strengthen community resilience and practical ways to shift programming. Some concrete ideas which emerged from the evaluation are contained in Text Box 2.

Text Box 2: Ideas to shift to resilience-based programming

The following ideas for a program shift from humanitarian to more resilience-based programming are provided for further discussion and exploration as part of the strategy development process. They all come with the caveat of requiring 'do no harm' analyses and conflict-sensitive approaches.

- Build in national policy strengthening and advocacy components to humanitarian programs to address root causes of humanitarian need.
- Reformulate program outcomes and indicators of success to better capture community definitions of resilience, whereby the contextual and situational factors that shape resilience are defined and owned by communities.
- Identify positive deviance examples within humanitarian contexts in relation to resilience and community harmony as a basis for investment.
- Undertake intentional joint development and humanitarian investment in areas of resettlement to support its sustainability.
- Ensure that national or local government partners are involved with humanitarian programming where appropriate.

⁵³ InterAction, Myanmar Mission Report, May 2017, page 1

⁵⁴ ICRC, Protracted Conflict and Humanitarian Action, 2016

1.5 AUSTRALIA'S GLOBAL POLICY PRIORITIES

FINDING 6 HIGH-PERFORMING HUMANITARIAN PROTECTION AND GENDER PROGRAMS FUNDED BY AUSTRALIA HAVE ACHIEVED SIGNIFICANT OUTCOMES.

FINDING 7: PROTECTION, GENDER EQUITY AND DISABILITY INCLUSION ARE NOT WELL MAINSTREAMED ACROSS ALL AUSTRALIAN-FUNDED PROGRAMS.

FINDING 8: THE COLLECTIVE IMPACT OF AUSTRALIA'S HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IS NOT FULLY CAPTURED DUE TO THE DIFFERENCES IN DATA AND QUALITY OF PARTNER REPORTING

DFAT's Humanitarian Strategy identifies protection, disability inclusion, gender equity and women's empowerment, monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning, and private sector engagement as thematic priorities 'central to the efficacy of all Australian aid.'⁵⁵ This evaluation considered the extent to which Australia's humanitarian assistance in Myanmar aligned with, and was effective in relation to, four of the policy priorities. Private sector engagement was not considered in the scope of the evaluation.

Text Box 3: Thematic Priorities in DFAT's Humanitarian Strategy

For gender equity and women's empowerment the Humanitarian Strategy says that women have equal benefit from and decision making power in assistance, as well protection from violence. It requires the use of gender analysis, sex, age and disability-disaggregated reporting, and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Gender Marker.

For people with disability, the Humanitarian Strategy requires that all assistance involves people with disability at all stages of the program cycle so that assistance is disability-inclusive and accessible. It also calls for dedicated funding for the safety and protection of people with disability.

For protection, the Humanitarian Strategy prioritises the safety and dignity of affected populations and requires protection mainstreaming in all humanitarian action that DFAT funds. It also requires that core funding is provided to protection agencies to address specific protection issues.

For monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning, the Humanitarian Strategy prioritises continual learning in order to improve the quality of humanitarian assistance. It requires that humanitarian partners undertake monitoring and evaluation and provide meaningful information to all their stakeholders.

Strong alignment with three of these policy priorities requires parallel areas of work (sometimes referred to as the 'twin-track approach'). This means that on the one hand, Australia should support investments that explicitly focus on gender equity, protection and disability inclusion outcomes (for example, programs designed to reduce the incidence of gender based violence). On the other hand, all investments should mainstream gender, protection and disability inclusion across all program interventions (for example, taking steps within a WASH program to ensure all in the affected population, including men, women, children and people with disabilities, can safely access WASH facilities and programs).

⁵⁵ DFAT, Humanitarian Strategy, May 2016, page 22

The Australian humanitarian program in Myanmar has increased investments that explicitly focus on outcomes in protection and gender equity, primarily gender-based violence (GBV) as it affects women and girls. In the past two years Australia has provided dedicated funding to address these priorities in partnership with ICRC, UNHCR, UNFPA and DRC. This explicit focus has been effective in achieving concrete gender and protection outcomes (an example is provided in text box 4 below).

Text box 4: Examples of protection and gender outcomes as a result of an explicit funding focus

Protection outcome – Increased access of women and girls to comprehensive, rights-based package of SRH and GBV services evidenced by the following outputs:

- Over 60,000 women and girls accessing gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services in 2016 representing more than a sixfold increase from 2015.
- An increase in locations delivering SRH and GBV services from zero in 2015 to 20 in 2016.
- An increase in townships across four states that have capacity to implement the Minimum Initial Service Package for Reproductive Health in crisis situations from zero in 2015 to 5 in 2016⁵⁶

Beyond focused funding and discussions with key gender and protection actors, Australia has not consistently provided guidance to implementing partners on mainstreaming its policy priorities (protection, gender equity and disability inclusion). Some partners were unaware that Australia has a particular interest in these specific areas. Australia does not require partners to include particular indicators or to consider areas such as GBV prevention within their program plans. Many partners suggested that more support and dialogue would be welcomed, and there is evidence that when this guidance is provided it results in strengthened program design.⁵⁷

Approximately 50 per cent of the Australian-funded partners reflected some protection and/or disability and/or gender mainstreaming within their program documentation.⁵⁸ Some agencies based program designs on gender and protection analysis, but few have utilised technical expertise, allocated dedicated budget lines, referred to the use of relevant standards, or developed sufficiently sensitive M&E frameworks.

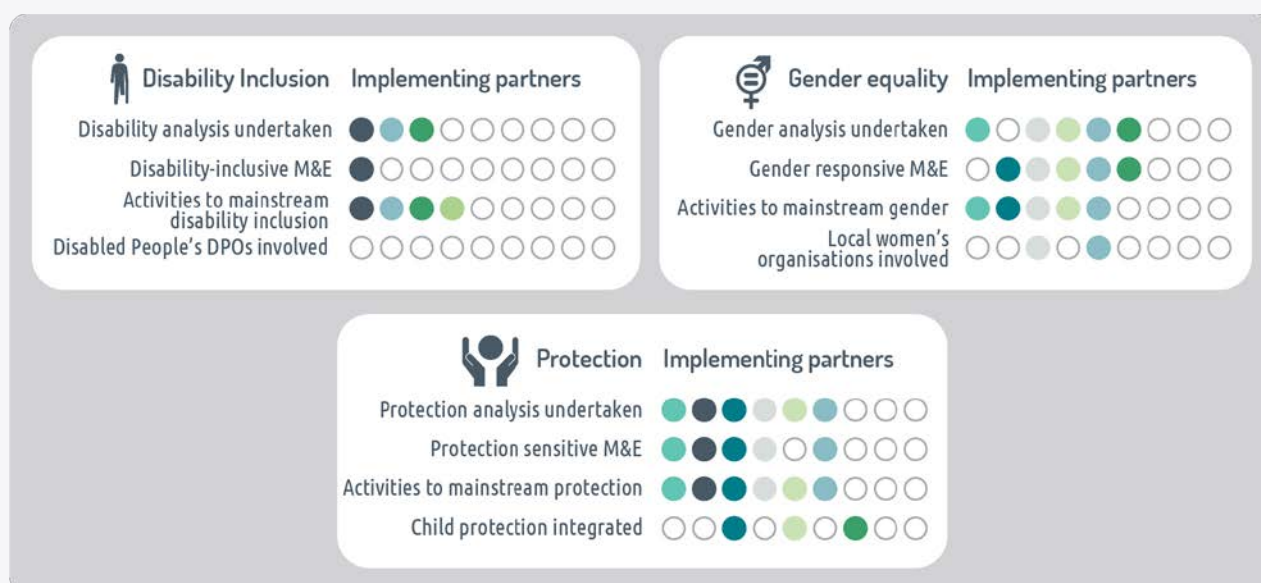
Figure 5 below provides an overview of current practices in relation to mainstreaming protection, gender equity and disability inclusion. It represents evidence of activity based on document review only, but does not capture the comprehensiveness or quality of activities.

⁵⁶ Women and Girls First Initiative, UNFPA, Narrative Annual Report 2016

⁵⁷ UNHCR Proposal to Australia_FINAL_May 2017

⁵⁸ Note that the analysis of mainstreaming activity was based on document analysis only. It was not possible to verify the document analysis across all partners.

Figure 5: Analysis of implementing partner practices in relation mainstreaming protection, gender equity and disability inclusion



Gender Equity and women's empowerment

Few partners have specific gender-related objectives. Three of the nine implementing partners provide sex-disaggregated data, but it is not clear how this information is shaping program modification. Only one partner provides age-disaggregated data, and only one reported using the IASC Gender Marker. Three programs have mentioned livelihood options for women, and another two have supported women's role in decision making through formation of women's groups in IDP camps and recruitment to key service delivery roles. Only one partner demonstrated an understanding of the relevance of humanitarian assistance to the Women, Peace and Security agenda. UNFPA has been approached by three partners to provide GBV mainstreaming advice, however broader gender mainstreaming is not routine. Programs tend to be oriented to women's basic needs (such as safety, and hygiene kits) rather than women's strategic interests (such as joining camp committee meetings). It is notable that the particular vulnerabilities of LGBTI people within the protracted crises in Myanmar are not mentioned in partner reports either, nor men and boys' experience of violence.⁵⁹ Australia has committed to develop and implement a gender marker for quality assessment of all humanitarian action funded by DFAT. This will draw upon the Gender Marker Guidance which is currently being revised by the Interagency Standing Committee (IASC).

Protection

At least half of Australia's implementing partners evidenced protection mainstreaming in documentation, however discussions with member of the Protection Cluster suggested that protection mainstreaming could be strengthened.

The potential consequences of poorly or partially mainstreamed protection were raised in relation to cash transfer programming (CTP). Protection concerns raised in a cash feasibility study in 2016 included: perceived risk of human trafficking, risk of domestic and gender-based violence, risk of alcoholism and drug use and the potential for cash to deepen inequalities within camps.⁶⁰ In the context of this evaluation,

⁵⁹ For discussion on this point, see Dolan, C. (2014). Letting go of the gender binary: Charting new pathways for humanitarian interventions on gender-based violence. *International Review of the Red Cross*. 96(894): 485-501

⁶⁰ Prioritization and Cash Feasibility Study, Joint Humanitarian Response, Kachin and Shan state, KMSS and Trocaire Presentation, August 2016

protection concerns were raised by some communities and partners in relation to existing and proposed cash transfer programming in Kachin and Rakhine state.⁶¹ It is important to note that concerns raised with the evaluation team related primarily to the lack of systematic integration of protection principles into CTP i.e. the concern that protection risks have not always been effectively identified and mitigated by key implementing partners.⁶² The change that protection actors are advocating for is not necessarily the discontinuation of CTP, but rather that the approach to introducing and implementing CTP better mainstreams protection and proactively mitigates potential protection risks. This approach is summarised in the following abstract from an ECHO-DFID joint consortia note on cash transfer programming in Kachin state, Myanmar (October 2016).

“while risks can and do occur in the implementation of CTP, it is most often related to programme design rather than being inherent to the use of cash... Therefore, good programme design, with a strong Protection lens on the Risk analysis, mitigation and monitoring, can facilitate CTP that is safe, effective and efficient.”⁶³

Implementing partners responsible for the introduction and implementation of CTP have recently taken concrete steps to improve their sensitivity to protection concerns. This includes recruitment of protection technical expertise and the introduction of protection questions into post distribution monitoring.

Disability Inclusion

Disability inclusion has been almost absent from Australia’s humanitarian programming in Myanmar to date, with the exception of support to individuals with physical disability who are able to access ICRC-supported rehabilitation centres, originally for mine victim assistance but now serving all community members with rehabilitation needs. Programs that actively engage people with psycho-social disability are rare, although UNFPA women and girls’ centres report supporting many clients with mental health needs.

NGOs and UN agencies mostly work on humanitarian mine action, but not on disability inclusion. For example, there might be a rehabilitation centre set up, but people with disabilities and their carers are not aware of it, or the streets to the rehabilitation centre are not accessible, or people with disabilities are too ashamed to leave their houses. No one is prioritising this work.”⁶⁴

Nevertheless, there is some evidence that partners are beginning to consider disability inclusion more systematically for future programs. DRC recently requested an amendment to its contract with Australia to carry out a disability analysis, and is working with UNHCR to identify people with disabilities across displacement camps. The intended outcome of this work is for follow up consultations with the people identified to design programs to better address the specific needs of people with disabilities.⁶⁵ Handicap International has been engaged by these two partners to provide a short stint of training on disability

61 Women’s Focus Group Discussion in Kachin and Interview 29 Kachin and Kachin Cash Transfer Program Feasibility Study, Oxfam, 2016

62 Interview 15, 17, 19

63 ECHO-DFID Joint Consortia Note on Cash Transfer Programming in Kachin State, October 2016

64 Interview 18

65 Interviews 7, 21 and 29

inclusion, but there is clearly scope for increased awareness and longer term capacity development among partners.

Monitoring Evaluation and Learning

Implementing partners provide strong reporting on outputs, and to some extent outcomes, at a project level.⁶⁶ These reports, and the monitoring and evaluation systems that inform them, provide Australia with a good understanding of project achievements and outcomes. It is more difficult to collate and understand cumulative achievements across multiple partners due to variance in quality and content of reporting. Some partners provide reports that detail project targets, progress per reporting period, cumulative progress and number of affected people reached during the project. Other partners provide outputs relevant only to the reporting period with no cumulative figures or tracking against targets. In most cases data is not disaggregated by sex, age, disability or other demographic characteristics.

Australia is committed to good humanitarian donor principles, which include simplified and harmonised reporting requirements. Australia is also committed to the Grand Bargain which requires “substantive and qualitative while also lean enough to allow for the most efficient use of resources”. In line with these commitments partners are not required to report separately on Australian funding. This reduces time-consuming and potentially duplicative reporting processes for partners. However, standard reporting across donors, in particular from UN agencies, does not currently provide all the information that Australia needs. There is an opportunity for Post and Canberra to work with other Grand Bargain signatories and the Good Humanitarian Donor Initiative to influence content of harmonised donor report formats that will be completed by the end of 2018. There is also an opportunity for Post to work in country to improve the consistency of reporting within and across implementing partners.

1.6 ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

FINDING 9: CASH ASSISTANCE MAY HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED WITHOUT ADEQUATE CONSULTATION, COMMUNICATION AND MONITORING OF PROTECTION CONCERNS.

FINDING 10: ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS CAN BE STRENGTHENED.

The evaluation team met with community groups in Kachin living in IDP camps. In general, they reported positive interactions with the organisations working in the camps and the appropriateness of the assistance provided. The main issue raised by women’s and men’s groups was the introduction of cash-based assistance to replace food assistance. Men considered the cash inadequate to cover all household needs, and expressed concern for elderly people who may be unable to use the phone systems required by the e-wallet. Both women and men expressed concern that cash is sometimes used for items other than food, leaving families short of food each month. Women shared an added concern that in some cases cash was used to buy drugs and alcohol, leading to increased domestic violence (note: these concerns have not been triangulated).

There is a shift from food to cash and some families don’t use the cash for food, so when it comes to buying food there is none left. We think food is preferable; it is easier for us.

66 DFAT, Humanitarian Aid Quality Check, 2017

When we get cash, we have to contribute to celebrations (e.g. weddings and funerals) even though we know it is really for food.⁶⁷

The evaluation team met with residents in one IDP camp in Sittwe in north-west Rakhine state as well as Muslim and ethnic Rakhine state communities near Rathedaung. The lack of freedom of movement was a consistent theme raised by camp residents and in the Muslim communities, substantially reducing access to health, education and livelihoods. A women's group discussed how the inability to travel to a hospital without authorisation was a significant concern during childbirth; any complications had to be handled within the community and without medical assistance.

Across focus group discussions in Kachin and Rakhine state, common themes emerged in relation to the lack of accountability to affected populations and inclusion. People gave examples of poor communication with communities, in particular in relation to the introduction of cash programming. Men in a focus group discussion in Kachin talked about how the system was changed with no one explaining why. Women in Kachin described a positive experience of consultation on changes to distribution practices. However, when they provided written feedback on the problems with cash they did not receive a satisfactory response.⁶⁸



Several individuals who participated in the focus group discussions raised the issue of inclusion. In Kachin, the ability of older persons and people with disabilities to access assistance was raised as a concern.

Rashida has a visual impairment and lives in an IDP camp in Rakhine. She receives no additional assistance but has recently started to attend a disability group established by the DRC, allowing her to participate in the community and feel a joy she is unable to feel at home

Photo: Kate Sutton

Organisations should do home visits – they always organise people in one place but the elderly and people with disabilities cannot come to central locations so organisations should go and give information to them. Need to provide awareness to different people in the community and more assistance to disabled people.⁶⁹

67 Men's Focus Group Discussion in Kachin IDP camp

68 Women's Focus Group Discussion in Kachin IDP camp

69 Men's Focus Group Discussion in Kachin IDP camp

In Rakhine state, there was concern about programs not always targeting households most in need. This included people living in makeshift shelters that had arrived after the camps were established in 2012 and had not been registered on the camp and food registration list. Within displacement camps in Rakhine state, participants in focus group discussions also suggested there is insufficient additional assistance or program adaptation to accommodate the needs of older persons or people with disability.

1.7 COORDINATION OF ASSISTANCE

FINDING 11: AUSTRALIA COORDINATES WITH OTHER DONORS AND AUSTRALIAN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IS COMPLEMENTARY

Australia's humanitarian assistance is well coordinated with other donors as a result of consistent engagement and relationship building. Australia is a rotating observer in the Humanitarian Country Team and an active participant in an informal humanitarian donor coordination group comprising Australia, US, UK, Canada, Japan, Switzerland and EU. Australia is also active in the Rakhine Heads of Mission Group which coordinates on the range of political, development and humanitarian challenges in Rakhine State. Key stakeholders gave extremely positive feedback about Australia's practical and useful engagement in all of these coordination mechanisms. Australia's coordination efforts have been particularly effective in areas such as joint advocacy messaging and ensuring sectoral and geographic coverage.⁷⁰ There is a clear understanding amongst donors as to Australia's sectoral focus and areas of value add; equally Australia understands and complements the focus areas of other donors, for example the UK's explicit focus on WASH and non-government controlled areas. This has minimised any potential duplication of humanitarian assistance.⁷¹ Australia has also taken part in important joint donor initiatives that reportedly brought about effective outcomes (see Case Study: Joint donor trip to Rakhine state).⁷²

CASE STUDY: Joint donor trip to Rakhine state in October 2016

Australia, Switzerland, Canada and the US coordinated a monitoring trip to Rakhine state. The trip included visits to common implementation partners and to government representatives. The coordinated nature of the trip was perceived to have the following advantages:

- reduced pressure on implementing partners to coordinate multiple visits;
- shared logistical burden amongst donors;
- coordinated messaging to the Rakhine state government about access; and
- provided access to people and locations that may not otherwise have been permitted, had they made separate requests.⁷³

⁷⁰ Interview 17, 25

⁷¹ Interview 17, 25

⁷² Interview 25

⁷³ Interview 25

1.8 SUPPORTING NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEADERSHIP

Partnership with the Government of Myanmar

FINDING 12: AUSTRALIA HAS A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF MYANMAR AND HAS MADE SIGNIFICANT EFFORTS TO SUPPORT POSITIVE GOVERNMENT OF MYANMAR HUMANITARIAN INITIATIVES.

FINDING 13: GOVERNMENT OF MYANMAR REPRESENTATIVES ENGAGED IN THE EVALUATION DID NOT HAVE A STRONG UNDERSTANDING OF AUSTRALIA'S HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE.

The Australian Embassy holds High Level Consultations on Australia and Myanmar's partnership to ensure that its overall aid program is broadly in line with the Government of Myanmar's priorities.⁷⁴ Australia has also aligned its humanitarian program with the United Nations' and partners' Humanitarian Response Plan.⁷⁵ The overarching goal of the Humanitarian Response Plan is 'to support the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and local communities to ensure that the lives, dignity, well-being and rights of persons affected by conflict, natural disasters and other emergencies are protected.'⁷⁶ Australia's support for the Humanitarian Response Plan serves the dual purpose of supporting the national government whilst also upholding the humanitarian principles that provide a foundation for that plan and its implementing partners.

Ensuring that Australia's assistance aligns with the national government's priorities has been a consistent approach over many years.⁷⁷ Most recently, Australia has been proactive in considering how it could, if requested, support the implementation of the Interim Report and Recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine state (March 2017). There is plenty of potential to support implementation through development and humanitarian programming. In addition, Australia could advocate and provide support for ensuring that 'all communities have access to education, irrespective of religion, ethnicity, race, gender, or citizenship status.'⁷⁸

Implementing partners have also made efforts to work closely with the Government of Myanmar. Australia's partners have a strong track record in country of balancing the importance of upholding humanitarian principles and ensuring effective government working relationships where possible. For example, the ICRC has worked closely with the Ministry of Health and Sports on the newly established Rehabilitation Centre in Myitkyina, Kachin State, whereby the Government is responsible for funding ongoing staff and maintenance costs for the Centre.

The Government of Myanmar is broadly familiar with Australia's aid program and is regularly provided with updates about it. The Government views humanitarian assistance primarily through a disaster response lens, although engagement on protracted crisis and displacement is increasing in some areas. While Australia complies with all Government of Myanmar requirements to share information on ODA spending, including humanitarian funding, and has regularly briefed Government officials on key elements of our humanitarian assistance, some key stakeholders within the Union and State-levels government are not familiar with details

⁷⁴ Annual high level consultations with GoM

⁷⁵ United Nations, Humanitarian Response Plan, Dec 2016

⁷⁶ United Nations, Humanitarian Response Plan, Dec 2016, page 15

⁷⁷ See Aid Investment Plan Myanmar 2015-2020

⁷⁸ Advisory Commission on Rakhine state, Interim Report and Recommendations, March 2017, page 10

of Australia's humanitarian assistance.⁷⁹ This includes lack of understanding of how much humanitarian funding Australia provides, the geographic and sectoral focus of funding, the partners that work with Australia, and the impact of assistance.

The lack of understanding may be due to a range of factors, including low engagement by parts of Government, challenges with inter-government information-sharing and coordination, and limited direct engagement on humanitarian assistance by Australia.⁸⁰ The humanitarian sector in Myanmar has only recently begun to increase engagement with Government and partners have had limited opportunities to appropriately acknowledge Australia's support for programs. There are opportunities to strengthen the information exchange with the Government of Myanmar and ensure that Australia's humanitarian assistance underpins more constructive engagement and leverage with the national and state authorities.

Support to national NGOs and civil society

FINDING 14: AUSTRALIA HAS SUPPORTED NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS THROUGH ITS FUNDING AND ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN THE MHF.

In 2016 Australia was the fourth largest donor to the Myanmar Humanitarian Fund (MHF), a flexible pooled fund managed by UNOCHA that explicitly aims to channel more humanitarian funding through national and local actors. In 2016, 45 per cent of funding through the MHF was allocated directly to national NGOs,⁸¹ and the target for 2017 is at least 50 per cent.⁸² The fund represents a useful avenue for Australia to support national organisations through an intermediary.

Text Box 5: Myittar Resource Foundation (MRF)

The MRF has received funding and support via the MHF for an informal education program that reaches four communities in Rakhine state. The Project Field Officer, Aung San Wi, described how local organisations struggled to work with communities when funding was limited and the importance of their role in bringing about sustainable peace.

"Local organisations have a big role in making a bridge between the two communities to bring peace. [For example] with the current project, we are fulfilling requests from the three different Rakhine state and Muslim communities. By doing these services we hope there will be interaction between these groups and positive change⁸³"

The MHF represents the best current option for Australia to support localisation for several reasons. Firstly, there are few national organisations with the capacity to absorb and manage funding without significant support. Other donors highlighted the risk of everyone investing in one or two high capacity national

79 Interview 9

80 Interview 21

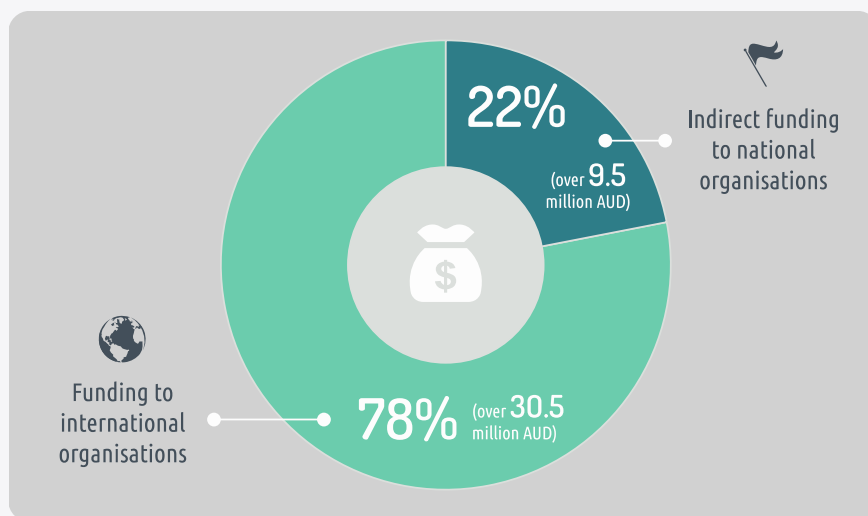
81 OCHA, Myanmar Humanitarian Fund: 2016 Overview, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Myanmar_MHF_Update_2016_final.pdf

82 United Nations, Humanitarian Response Plan, Dec 2016, page 21

83 Interview 8

organisations, to their detriment and to the detriment of the balance in wider civil society.⁸⁴ Secondly, OCHA appears committed to investing the required time and effort to manage the fiduciary and programmatic risks of direct grants to small national organisations, which would be beyond the existing resources of the Australian Embassy. Thirdly, OCHA is providing capacity-strengthening support to a range of national actors that would otherwise not be able to access international funding.⁸⁵ Whilst there was mixed feedback from national actors on the support received from OCHA⁸⁶ overall it is positively received. OCHA has also been proactive about changing ways of working to better support NGO access to the fund.⁸⁷ **Text Box 5** provides an example of a national organisation that is partnering with the MHF to deliver humanitarian assistance.

Figure 6: Australia’s humanitarian funding allocation to national organisations



It is estimated that approximately 22 per cent of Australian humanitarian funding to Myanmar in the evaluation scope was channelled to national organisations (see Figure 6). Many of Australia’s international partners are also making considerable efforts to support national partners in their programs. UNFPA, UNHCR and WFP all provide funding directly to local organisations, and the ICRC allocates significant funding to support the Myanmar Red Cross Society.⁸⁸

84 Interview 25

85 Interview 21, 28

86 Interview 38

87 Interview 28

88 Interview 22

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Australia's humanitarian assistance in Myanmar has achieved a great deal across sectoral areas since July 2014. Notably, assistance has contributed to reaching up to 500,000 people in need each year. Half the findings of this evaluation relate to areas of strength in Australia's humanitarian assistance that should be recognised and built upon in the coming years. Textbox 6 provides an overview of these strengths as a basis for continued focus and investment.

Text Box 6: Strengths in Australia's humanitarian assistance.

The geographic and sectoral focus of Australia's humanitarian assistance has been appropriate to date. In particular, Australia's flexible un-earmarked funding allows implementing partners to direct funding to areas of greatest need.

There are positive examples of Australian assistance working across the humanitarian-development divide and contributing to longer-term outcomes and community resilience. Some of Australia's partners have been particularly effective at shift to resilience-focused outcomes.

High-performing humanitarian protection and gender programs funded by Australia have achieved significant outcomes. This has resulted from an intentional focus and financial investment with the support and technical expertise of an ACC deployment to the Australian Embassy.

Australia coordinates with other donors and Australian humanitarian assistance is complementary.



Australia has a good relationship with the Government of Myanmar and has made significant efforts to support positive Government of Myanmar humanitarian initiatives.

Australia has supported national organisations through its funding and active engagement in the Myanmar Humanitarian Fund. This investment was increased this financial year and reflects Australia's commitment to supporting national organisations.

In addition to building on achievements, there are areas for potential improvement in Australia's assistance to protracted crises in Myanmar. These fall into three broad categories: strategic focus, policy priorities and national and local leadership.

Strategic focus

Humanitarian assistance within the evaluation scope was guided by the Myanmar Aid Investment Plan (AIP 2015-2020) and the Humanitarian Action Plan (2011) and subsequent Humanitarian Strategy (2016). Whilst these provide a broad guidance for Australia's humanitarian assistance this evaluation found that effectiveness and efficiency could be improved by developing a more strategic approach. More targeted investments in fewer sectors with fewer partners would enable Australia to take a stronger leadership role and work more closely with partners to ensure programs are as effective as possible. There is also scope for Australia to explore innovative ways to work with partners such as joint multiyear planning, and competitive or incentivised multiyear funding (rather than non-competitive grants). Recommendations summarised in the table below capture the importance of developing a multiyear humanitarian strategy that can guide on going decisions in relation to sector focus, implementing partner choices and alignment of humanitarian assistance with the broader development and peace investments in Myanmar.

Recommendation		Theme: Strategic focus
1	Australia should develop a multiyear humanitarian strategy for its support to Myanmar that consolidates assistance in key sectoral areas	
	 KEY FINDINGS: Australian assistance could be improved with the development of a multi-year humanitarian strategy. The geographic and sectoral focus has been appropriate to date. There is opportunity for the sectoral focus to be further consolidated.	
2	Australia should identify and articulate further opportunities for leverage and complementarity between development, peace and humanitarian programming	
	 KEY FINDING: There are opportunities to further promote linkages between humanitarian assistance and the broader aid program in Myanmar.	
3	Australia should reflect at shift towards resilience-focused outcomes in the multiyear humanitarian strategy	
	 KEY FINDING: There are positive examples of Australian aid contributing to longer-term outcomes and community resilience. This has not been reflected across all Australia-funded programs or captured in monitoring and evaluation frameworks.	
4	Australia should explore innovative ways of engaging with partners to support multiyear planning and implementation of effective programming	
	 KEY FINDING: Funding and contracting processes could be reviewed to improve efficiency and effectiveness of assistance.	

Policy Priorities

DFAT's Humanitarian Strategy identifies protection, disability inclusion, gender equity and women's empowerment, and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEAL) as thematic priorities 'central to the efficacy of all Australian aid.'⁸⁹ The Australian humanitarian program in Myanmar has increased its focus on gender equality⁹⁰ and protection in the past two years by funding key protection partners. This has had the positive impact of contributing concretely to the safety and dignity of women, men, boys and girls across several states in Myanmar. Beyond dedicated funding to high-performing partners, protection, gender equality and disability inclusion are not consistently mainstreamed across Australian humanitarian investments in Myanmar.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning processes are generally strong but vary across implementing partners in process and content. As a result, the project reports informed by these processes contain different information that cannot easily be compared or compiled to capture the collective outcomes or impact. In most cases data is not disaggregated by sex, age, disability or other demographic characteristics.

The following recommendations provide a basis for strengthening Australia's focus on its policy priorities by working more closely with partners.

Recommendation		Theme: Policy priorities
5	Australia should communicate policy priorities and support partners to mainstream protection, gender, disability inclusion and accountability to affected populations	
	 KEY FINDINGS: Protection, gender equality and disability inclusion are not well mainstreamed across Australian-funded programs. Accountability to affected populations can be strengthened.	
6	Australia should monitor the progress of cash based programming and encourage partners to continue mainstreaming protection	
	 KEY FINDING: Cash assistance may have been introduced without adequate consultation, communication and monitoring of protection concerns.	
7	Australia should explore options for technical support in relation to policy priorities, potentially through the use of Australian civilian deployments	
	 KEY FINDING: Protection, gender equality and disability inclusion are not well mainstreamed across Australian-funded programs.	
8	Australia should continue to work with implementing partners in country to improve quality and consistency of reporting as part of best practice monitoring, evaluation and learning	
	 KEY FINDING: The collective impact of Australia's humanitarian assistance is not fully captured due to the differences in data and quality of partner reporting.	

⁸⁹ DFAT, Humanitarian Strategy, May 2016, page 22. Note that the policy also identifies private sector engagement

⁹⁰ primarily gender-based violence (GBV) as it affects women and girls

National and local leadership

Australian assistance has supported national government priorities and provided funding to national organisations indirectly, through the Myanmar Humanitarian Fund (MHF) and other implementing partners. Approximately 22 per cent of Australian assistance has been programmed through national organisations. While Australia complies with all Government of Myanmar requirements to share information on ODA spending, including humanitarian funding, key stakeholders within government do not have a strong understanding of Australia's humanitarian assistance. This includes lack of understanding of how much humanitarian funding Australia provides, the geographic and sectoral focus of funding, the partners that work with Australia, and the impact of assistance.

The following recommendations provide a basis for strengthening engagement with the Government of Myanmar and continuing to support national organisations.

Recommendation		Theme: National and local leadership
9	Australia should increase its engagement with relevant ministries in the Government of Myanmar in relation to humanitarian assistance	
	 KEY FINDING: Government of Myanmar representatives engaged in the evaluation did not have a strong understanding of Australia's humanitarian assistance	
10	Australia should provide ongoing funding to the MHF and encourage its efforts to build the capacity of local organisations to access international funding	
	 gh its funding and active engagement in the MHF	

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