

# HARP-F MULTI-YEAR WASH FUNDING REVIEW



## Executive Summary

Authored by The Operations Partnership, December 2021.

### WHAT IS HARP-F?

The Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Programme Facility (HARP-F) is a UK Government Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) initiative launched in 2016. HARP-F is the grant-funding mechanism, and the largest component of the wider Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Programme. It is managed by Crown Agents. It has so far committed £74.7 million, reaching 1.69 million conflict-affected people via 76 grants, across 8 sectors and in collaboration with 55 partners.

### WHY REVIEW HARP-F MULTI-YEAR WASH FUNDING?

Since 2016, HARP-F has been the largest funding mechanism for humanitarian water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) support in Myanmar. Over the last 6 years HARP-F WASH programming has supported 315,000 conflict-affected people in Kachin, Northern Shan, Rakhine and Chin States, with grants totalling £22.4 million.

The case for multi-year humanitarian funding was established as part of the Grand Bargain in 2016. Since then, **HARP-F has been the main provider of multi-year humanitarian WASH funding in Myanmar**, providing 95% of all humanitarian WASH multi-year funding in Myanmar between 2017 and 2021.

This strategic review outlines what has been learned about WASH multi-year funding and identifies where, and how, this learning could be applied in the future. 71 specialists, representing 22 organisations, were consulted via key informant interviews (KII) and focus groups. This included staff from HARP-F, FCDO, the WASH cluster and from the majority of key WASH actors working in Myanmar.

## 7 KEY LESSONS LEARNED FROM HARP-F MULTI-YEAR WASH PROGRAMMING

1. Provision of “Long term” multi-year funding (>24 months) was a key factor in supporting substantial advances in community ownership and management of WASH services in a challenging operating environment (central Rakhine IDP camps)
2. “Medium term” multi-year funding (12-24 months) was effective in supporting a structured process of local NGO capacity development (mostly evidenced in Kachin/NSS). It was crucial to maintain coordination with other capacity building providers for this funding to be effective. 96% of WASH actors consulted in this review agreed that HARP-F funding has been effective in empowering local and national actors.
3. Multi-year funding of any duration (12 months or more) helped implementing agencies build programme quality and led to administrative and operational cost savings in comparison to typical short term humanitarian funding. This is consistent with previous research on multi-year funding. 93% of WASH actors consulted in this review agreed that multi-year funding substantially increased programmatic impact. Those consulted reported that more time was spent on creating value with targeted communities rather than meeting the increased administrative requirements that back-to-back short-term funding involves.
4. A contextualised strategy framework for WASH programming was helpful in guiding HARP-F support to partners, HARP-F funding decisions and HARP-F partner planning. It outlined relevant approaches to sustainability and resilience for the key operating contexts in Rakhine and Kachin States.
5. HARP-F recognised the difficulty that a funding gap would present for local NGOs and tried to mitigate the risk of this happening. Local NGOs do not typically benefit from the funding reserves that many INGOs have. Given the effort invested by HARP-F and partners in LINGO capacity development it was crucial that HARP-F found ways to ensure sustained funding for local NGOs working in a protracted crisis.
6. The M&E approach needed to be better at capturing outcomes and learning. There would be increased benefit from multi-year funding, and stronger evidence for the future, if M&E approaches were designed to understand emerging long-term outcomes and learning. A results/ outputs focused humanitarian M&E approach is not sufficient.
7. Multi-year thinking and planning was encouraged alongside multi-year funding. The HARP-F experience shows that multi-year funding is not the only tool that can support programme quality, efficiency and longer-term WASH outcomes. In a protracted crisis multi-year planning approaches should be encouraged at all levels. There were examples of this happening in Myanmar at both the WASH cluster and implementing organisation levels. Adapt the risk management approach to specific partner requirements. Whereas training may have made some contribution to partner capacity for risk management, it is no substitute for direct capacity and support, for security and other risk areas

There was a significant scale-up of the humanitarian response during 2021 to respond to new needs following the military takeover in February. Unfortunately, the situation continues to be unstable and unpredictable. Humanitarian access remains a significant challenge. Humanitarian organisations have set an ambitious target of assisting 6.2 million people in 2022. The financial ask identified in the Humanitarian Response Plan is three-times that of 2021.

HARP-F will end its programming in March 2022. Since HARP-F currently supports 95% of multi-year WASH projects, it is critical for other funding organisations to consider financing multi-year WASH projects. Continued funding from new sources is important for the sustainability of capacity investments made in communities and local NGOs via HARP-F.

There is a risk that the current level of uncertainty in Myanmar could dissuade donors from making multi-year funding commitments. However, short-term funding will yield only short-term results. It seems highly likely that humanitarian access will continue to be a critical problem. **Well supported and capacitated community organisations and local NGOs may be the only lifeline** available to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to the most vulnerable in many locations.

Continuing and deepening support to communities and local NGOs is a critical strategy for the overall response. Multi-year funding is the most effective way to accomplish this in WASH, and in many other sectors.

### Humanitarian actors and donors in Myanmar should

Advocate for multi-year WASH funding, especially where long term outcomes are envisioned, or access constraints are likely to be sustained. Multi-year grants with a duration of 2 years or more (in keeping with the OECD definition) are preferred because of the increased efficiency and programme impact gains that can be achieved over such a period.

Where multi-year funding is not possible, adopt multi-year plans at the agency, donor and cluster levels. Meanwhile, the situation at community level should be closely monitored to help identify when the situation is sufficiently stable for multi-year funding.

Consider adopting multi-year funding and planning modalities for emergency response programming, employing an adaptive management approach. This can also provide a framework that will enable local NGO response capacities to be further strengthened.

## Recommendations

### Humanitarian, Development and Peace actors in Myanmar should

Continue to build linkages between humanitarian, development and peace-building mechanisms in order to maximise coherence and shared impact. This coordination becomes increasingly important the more that humanitarian multi-year funding is supported.

### The Global WASH Cluster should

Examine how the cluster funding matrix could better capture data relevant to multi-year funding. Original project duration and project extension information is important, as is disaggregated data on primary grants and subgrants (duration and financial value). If this information is collected, it can more readily be used to track progress against Grand Bargain commitments towards “Quality funding” and “More support and funding for local and national responders”.



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