

# COMMUNITY ANALYSIS SUPPORT SYSTEM

REVIEW

An independent review  
commissioned by the  
HARP Facility

TRIAS Consult, February 2022



Supported by:



This material has been funded by UK aid  
from the UK government; however the  
views expressed do not necessarily reflect

## Contents

<b>ACRONYMS.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>2</b>
KEY FINDINGS.....	2
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	3
<b>1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1. HUMANITARIAN ANALYSIS CONTEXT.....	5
1.2. CASS CREATION AND EVOLUTION.....	5
<b>2. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1. EVALUATION FRAMEWORK .....	6
2.2. EVALUATION TEAM AND METHODS.....	6
2.3. DATA COLLECTION .....	7
2.4. ANALYSIS AND REPORTING .....	9
2.5. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS .....	9
<b>3. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1. RELEVANCE AND UTILITY .....	11
3.2. ACCESSIBILITY AND UPTAKE .....	14
3.3. QUALITY AND PRESENTATION.....	17
3.4. BENCHMARKING AND COORDINATION .....	20
<b>4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>23</b>
4.1. CONCLUSIONS.....	23
4.2. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	24
<b>ANNEX A: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>ANNEX B: ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>ANNEX C: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE (USERS) .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>ANNEX D: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE (CASS STAFF).....</b>	<b>32</b>

Cover template: © Molly Webster

Cover Photo: ©Unsplash/Ye Zaw

## Acronyms

<b>AA</b>	Arakan Army
<b>AHCT</b>	Arakan Humanitarian Coordination Team
<b>CAR</b>	Conflict Analysis and Research Facility
<b>CASS</b>	Community Analysis Support System
<b>CDNH</b>	Centre for Diversity and National Harmony
<b>COAR</b>	Centre for Operational Analysis and Research
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>DVB</b>	Democratic Voice of Burma
<b>EAO</b>	Ethnic Armed Organisation
<b>EWER</b>	Early Warning Early Response
<b>FCDO</b>	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
<b>HARP-F</b>	Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Programme Facility
<b>HAT</b>	Syria Humanitarian Access Team
<b>IDI</b>	In-depth Interview
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>IPSG</b>	International Peace Support Group
<b>KHRG</b>	Karen Human Rights Group
<b>LIFT</b>	Livelihoods and Food Security Fund
<b>LIS</b>	Local Insights Service
<b>MAA</b>	Myanmar Analytical Activity
<b>MEC</b>	Myanmar Education Consortium
<b>MIPS</b>	Myanmar Institute for Peace and Security
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organisation
<b>NRM</b>	Nexus Response Mechanism
<b>NRS</b>	Northern Rakhine State
<b>RFA</b>	Radio Free Asia
<b>TPM</b>	Third-party Monitoring

## Executive Summary

Humanitarian actors in Myanmar have faced significant challenges delivering critical assistance in parts of the country with vulnerable populations. Access is increasingly restricted due to coup-related violent crackdowns, sporadic clashes between Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs), Peoples' Defence Forces, and the military, and the collapse of critical infrastructure required to deliver aid. In particular, the 2017 humanitarian crisis in Rakhine State, including the repression of the Rohingya and their violent expulsion into neighbouring Bangladesh, continues to be a protracted and worsening situation.

Within that environment, the HARP-Facility engaged the Centre for Operational Analysis and Research (COAR) to set up the Community Analysis Support System (CASS) to provide contextual and operational humanitarian analysis, primarily focused on Rakhine State, expanding to Kachin and Shan states and other areas of HARP-F interventions. CASS services include: 1) provision of contextual analysis and a deeper understanding of relevant events, 2) provision of bespoke research, based on the priorities of HARP-F and the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO formerly the Department for International Development DFID), and 3) enhanced visibility to humanitarian responders in areas where they lack physical access, including Rakhine State.

The review was conducted from September – December 2021 to assess CASS utility and effectiveness to date. The approach was designed to understand how CASS contributes to the humanitarian knowledge base in Myanmar, in addition to UK government strategic decision making and broader diplomatic priorities. Below is a summary of the key findings and recommendations are geared toward FCDO, HARP-F and relevant stakeholders to provide formative insights relevant to future phases of CASS implementation.

### *Key findings*

- **CASS filled a critical gap in humanitarian analysis for INGOs in Myanmar.** On average, 64 percent of survey respondents agreed that CASS filled an important gap across humanitarian, conflict, and political analysis for users in Myanmar. There was evidence that CASS products had a high degree of utility among most users for the purposes of humanitarian coordination, conflict monitoring and triangulation, and political economy analysis. The majority of respondents felt CASS had achieved its mandate through the delivery of high-quality analytical products and remained a necessary service for international actors in Myanmar. There were notable discrepancies in the utility of CASS between international and Myanmar organisations, with the latter relying more on local sources to inform interventions. Stakeholders expressed a desire for greater coordination and collaboration among analysis providers to enhance efficiencies and mitigate duplication.
- **CASS weekly reports significantly influenced the coordination and adaptation of humanitarian interventions in Rakhine State.** Overall, 65 percent of survey respondents said that CASS was useful for their work, with 90 percent of respondents saying weekly updates were among the most useful products, followed by flash reports (44 percent), and thematic research (30 percent), when offered multiple responses. Users pointed to specific examples where CASS influenced their organisation's decision-making across a range of sectors, including protection, advocacy, and legal assistance for returnees. Additionally, organisations used CASS recommendations to drive operational and geographic adaptations such as pivoting to assist a rapid influx of IDPs or enhancing localisation of delivery through civil society networks.
- **Thematic products contributed to operational innovation, with slightly less engagement.** Comparatively fewer respondents engaged with the products, than with the weekly updates. However, those that did read them found them useful and noted instances where they had influenced operational and strategic planning. Users referenced thematic papers on informal cash transfer networks (*Hundis or Hawalas*), localisation through *Parahita* entities (community

charities or religious groups), and mobilisation in Kachin State, as having the greatest utility. However, selection of topics for thematic papers was perceived as top-down and ad-hoc, with potential to benefit from greater democratisation among practitioners.

- **CASS was a valuable tool among other analysis providers for triangulating and cross-verifying information.** Respondents noted that fewer humanitarian context analysis platforms existed in Myanmar prior to the military coup in February 2021. There was a notable post-coup increase in the volume of context-related analytics, which they attributed to shrinking operational space, prompting some agencies to divert funding to research and analysis. Within such an environment, stakeholders described CASS as instrumental in triangulating and cross-verifying observations, often as a primary source, from other information streams. Other Myanmar-focused research and analysis providers said they reference CASS liberally in their briefs to a diverse range of in-country stakeholders and international crisis forums.
- **CASS had less relevance for Myanmar organisations and interventions in Kachin and Shan States, given its recent expansion.** Myanmar organisations were less likely to use CASS due to pre-existing information channels, language barriers, and dislike of online login portals. Respondents explained that Myanmar NGOs and CSOs already possess a much deeper understanding of their target areas than INGOs due to on-the-ground presence, established grass-roots networks, and frequently updated local language news sources and social media feeds. There was consequently a desire for CASS to coordinate more proactively with national organisations and analysis providers. Users also observed higher levels of inclusion, nuance, and conflict-sensitivity in reporting on Rakhine and Chin states than in Kachin and Shan states. Such disparities were largely because CASS was originally exclusively Rakhine focused, with a more ad-hoc, recent 2021 expansion to include Kachin and northern Shan.
- **The lack of effective coordination and collaboration between FCDO-funded analytical services impacts efficiency and risks duplication of effort.** Some respondents expressed concern that, while services such as CASS and LIS had separate mandates and approaches, there was increasing overlap as CASS expanded its geographic and thematic focus areas. Further, staff of both services reported an absence of coordination and information sharing between the platforms, with CASS noting they do not have access to LIS reports. While CASS and LIS independently suggested to HARP-F and FCDO that they establish mechanisms for greater cooperation, no actions were taken to facilitate such engagement.

### *Recommendations*

- **FCDO should promote pro-active coordination between its analytical platforms** – Given the demonstrated utility of CASS, FCDO should encourage collaboration and coordination between LIS and CASS to streamline mandates and identify synergies across services. Other FCDO-funded research and analysis providers, such as the Myanmar Education Consortium (MEC), also highlighted a need for more information sharing and collaboration, particularly in Kachin and Shan states. Examples of potential coordination approaches include joint strategic design workshops, coordinated humanitarian briefings, and collaboration on discreet research and analysis products for the broader community of practice.
- **Additional resources required for geographic expansion and harmonisation of methods** – CASS staff and users noted discrepancies in the quality and comprehensiveness of analysis between target geographies, which was largely attributed to weaker primary networks in Kachin and Shan states. CASS noted that as its initial expansion was ad hoc, additional resource is necessary to expand on-the-ground networks in Kachin and Shan to harmonise methods and achieve the quality of analysis it is known for in Rakhine and Chin states. Such expansion should be wary of other research providers in these locations and cautious to avoid over burdening the same

networks and contributing to respondent fatigue. FCDO could consider working with its analysis providers to deliberately deconflict primary information sources to improve diversity of analysis and mitigate duplication.

- **CASS should strengthen gender-sensitivity and inclusion in Kachin and Shan states with a greater focus on minority and marginalised groups.** Users found CASS to be more inclusive of issues affecting women, girls, and minorities in Rakhine and Chin states, than in other target geographies. They expressed a desire for greater inclusion of such groups in Kachin and Shan states, with more attention paid to issues of domestic violence, trafficking, and child protection. Further, practitioners in these areas requested greater CASS focus on crisis-affected groups, outside of the majority Christian populations, which are less prominent in humanitarian reporting and thus sometimes overlooked in emergency responses. FCDO could encourage an updated joint mapping by its analysis providers of potentially overlooked and/or marginalised information networks to prioritise in future assessments.
- **The thematic research agenda should be democratised among humanitarian actors –** Stakeholders voiced a desire for greater inclusion in identification of priority topics for CASS research based on humanitarian imperatives. While most readers found the CASS thematic research papers to be timely and relevant, there was uncertainty regarding its approach to identification and selection of topics. Some perceived thematic research to be driven by the priorities of the FCDO and broader UK government to inform policy-level decision-making and advocacy efforts. Humanitarian stakeholders expressed a desire for more systematic consultation regarding the CASS research agenda to identify persisting gaps in the knowledge base enhance its relevance to practitioners on-the-ground. Such consultation should be multi-lateral and could occur in events like the INGO forum, humanitarian breakfasts, and among FCDO Myanmar partner meetings to identify and prioritise emerging areas of interest.
- **FCDO should re-evaluate CASS utility for Myanmar partners and broader civil society –** Given the comparatively low CASS usage among Myanmar stakeholders due to the previously highlighted barriers, FCDO should reassess how CASS fits within its broader localisation strategy. If CASS is intended to be a resource for these organisations, its products must be translated into local languages and disseminated in a more culturally accessible manner. FCDO should also consider having CASS provide verbal presentations to its partners which could contribute to greater coordination across its portfolio. Further, CASS should proactively engage with national partners to encourage their increased buy-in in the process and promote a greater diversity of perspectives in its analysis.
- **Humanitarian donors should better coordinate to maximise synergies across analysis platforms –** There is potential for greater harmonisation and integration of humanitarian analysis in Myanmar, including services such as CASS, CAR, LIS, and RAFT (LIFT). Senior managers with visibility across EU, UK, and US portfolios, identified potential for economies of scale to be achieved through improved coordination and information sharing. Such cooperation must be donor-driven and would likely deliver substantial dividends in the form of increased knowledge management efficiencies in the sector. FCDO expressed an interest in whether the current CASS platform could be suited to third-party monitoring (TMP) of its portfolio. While this was not an explicit focus of the study, such a reimagining of CASS's mandate would likely require a significant strategic pivot and expansion of resources. While there may be potential for more indirect outcome-level monitoring, FCDO should carefully consider the trade-offs in adjusting methodological approaches and how this could impact the quality of ongoing context analysis.

## 1. Background and Introduction

The section below provides an overview of the purpose and objectives of the evaluation commissioned by the HARP-Facility. This includes the evolving context in Myanmar, imperatives for humanitarian stakeholders, and role of Trias Consult in delivering the assessment.

### *1.1. Humanitarian Analysis Context*

Humanitarian actors in Myanmar have faced significant challenges delivering critical assistance in parts of the country with vulnerable populations. Access is increasingly restricted due to coup-related violent crackdowns, sporadic clashes between Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs), Peoples' Defence Forces, and the military, and the collapse of critical infrastructure required to deliver aid. In particular, the humanitarian crisis in Rakhine State, including the repression of the Rohingya and their violent expulsion into neighbouring Bangladesh, continues to be a protracted and worsening situation. A significant spike in COVID-19 cases across the country and crippled healthcare infrastructure, has had deleterious impacts on the economy and threatens to further destabilise operating contexts.<sup>1</sup>

In such contexts, it is crucial for humanitarian donors and their implementing partners to obtain reliable, actionable, and timely information regarding the evolving humanitarian landscape, security conditions, and potential entry points. Agile analytical services are key to minimising risks, maximising the impact of aid, delivering conflict sensitive approaches, and enabling an adaptive response to humanitarian delivery. Several platforms have historically sought to fill, what was a gap in robust research and analysis to inform iterative adaptation of interventions and strategic decision-making. These include products such as OCHA situational analyses, Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU) briefs, The CDNH Early Warning Early Response (EWER), FCDO Local Insights Service (LIS) analytics, and Civil Society Organisations (CSO) platforms including those established by the Myanmar Institute for Peace and Security (MIPS), and Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) monitoring.

### *1.2. CASS Creation and Evolution*

Within this ecosystem, the HARP-Facility identified a gap in the availability of high-quality humanitarian and operational analysis in Rakhine State to inform FCDO policy imperatives and broader humanitarian coordination. HARP-F consequently engaged the Centre for Operational Analysis and Research (COAR) to set up the Community Analysis Support System (CASS) through a consultative design process that involved broad engagement with donors, the INGO forum, Myanmar organisations, and other analysis providers. The project evolved from an initial community-based analytical model (CBAM) pilot, seeking to improve the speed and agility of the Rakhine State humanitarian response, to the current iteration of CASS with an ad-hoc expansion into Kachin and Northern Shan states in early 2021.

CASS services include: 1) provision of contextual analysis and a deeper understanding of relevant events, 2) provision of bespoke research, based on the priorities of HARP-F and the FCDO, and 3) enhanced visibility to humanitarian responders in areas where they lack physical access, including Rakhine State. Given this context, and in line with the ToR, the evaluation sought to deliver a rigorous assessment of CASS utility and effectiveness to date, leveraging the approaches, methods, and tools outlined in section two.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.frontiermyanmar.net/en/fighting-new-covid-19-variants-amid-turmoil-and-resistance/>

## 2. Approach and Methodology

The assessment was conducted from September – December 2021. The approach was designed to understand how CASS contributes to the humanitarian knowledge base in Myanmar, in addition to UK government strategic decision making and broader diplomatic priorities. Further, it sought to compare and benchmark the effectiveness of CASS to other national and international providers of similar services in complex humanitarian contexts.

### 2.1. Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework responds to the assessment priorities outlined by HARP-F in the terms of reference. It was organised according to broad lines of inquiry, including the utility of CASS information, diversity of engagement, quality of mechanisms, and benchmarking with similar services. Each line of inquiry was then divided into relevant topics and sub-questions. Trias refined the framework collaboratively with HARP-F to ensure it was tailored to its emerging priorities and those of the FCDO and its stakeholders. The table below provides a summary of lines of inquiry and key questions with a full analytical framework provided in Annex A.

LINE OF INQUIRY	KEY QUESTIONS
<b>Relevance and Utility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How timely, useful, and relevant is CASS analysis and reporting? How well does it contribute to the broader humanitarian knowledge base?</li> <li>• Is there evidence of strategic adaptation because of CASS analysis? Are there examples of resulting modifications to actors' interventions?</li> </ul>
<b>Accessibility and Uptake</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How accessible are CASS products to the broader humanitarian community? How are key decision-makers targeted and prioritised?</li> <li>• What is the volume of engagement with CASS products? How do the topic and timeliness of reporting relate to uptake and depth of engagement?</li> </ul>
<b>Quality and Presentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How triangulated and reliable are data collection methods? How inclusive are methods regarding gender and marginalised groups?</li> <li>• How tailored, concise, and structured are analyses and insights? How useful and effective are reporting templates and online dashboards?</li> </ul>
<b>Benchmarking and Coordination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does CASS fill a critical gap in country-level humanitarian analysis? How is this perceived by key stakeholders?</li> <li>• How does CASS compare to CAR, LIS, RAFT, Envisage and other analysis services in terms of cost, relevance, and timeliness of insights?</li> </ul>

### 2.2. Evaluation Team and Methods

Trias Consult was engaged by HARP-F to conduct this evaluation of CASS. Trias is an international research, analysis, and design organisation, which supports clients in fragile and conflict affected states. In Myanmar, Trias has provided strategic advisory support to the Paung Sie Facility (PSF) and programme evaluations for UNOPS. The core evaluation team was comprised of a Team Lead (TL) and two Research Experts with significant experience in humanitarian evaluation in Myanmar and in other complex crises. The core team was supported by a Quality Assurance Committee, Project Manager, and Administration and Finance Officer. The methodology included formative and summative components, to provide a holistic picture of CASS intended and unintended outcomes and lessons learned to date. Specific methods included:

- **Process appraisal** – To assess the effectiveness of CASS research methods, dissemination and outreach approaches, and engagement platforms with a specific focus on improving the efficiency and utility of these processes.
- **Outcome harvesting** – To capture plausible and evidence-based examples, using contribution analysis, of CASS outcomes. The process employed a systematic approach, harvesting outcomes through interviews and surveys with key stakeholders.
- **Comparative benchmarking** – To comparatively evaluate the uniqueness and effectiveness of CASS in relation to other similar national and international analytical services. Stakeholders were asked to provide feedback on other services in terms of as cost-effectiveness, quality of analysis, and influence on decision-making.

### 2.3. Data Collection

The evaluation employed a combination of mix-method qualitative and quantitative tools, designed to rigorously gather high-quality, timely, and actionable data in complex environments. These tools included a desk/literature review, online survey, and in-depth, semi-structured interviews structured according to Do-No-Harm principles, conflict and gender sensitivity, and research ethics codes-of-conduct.

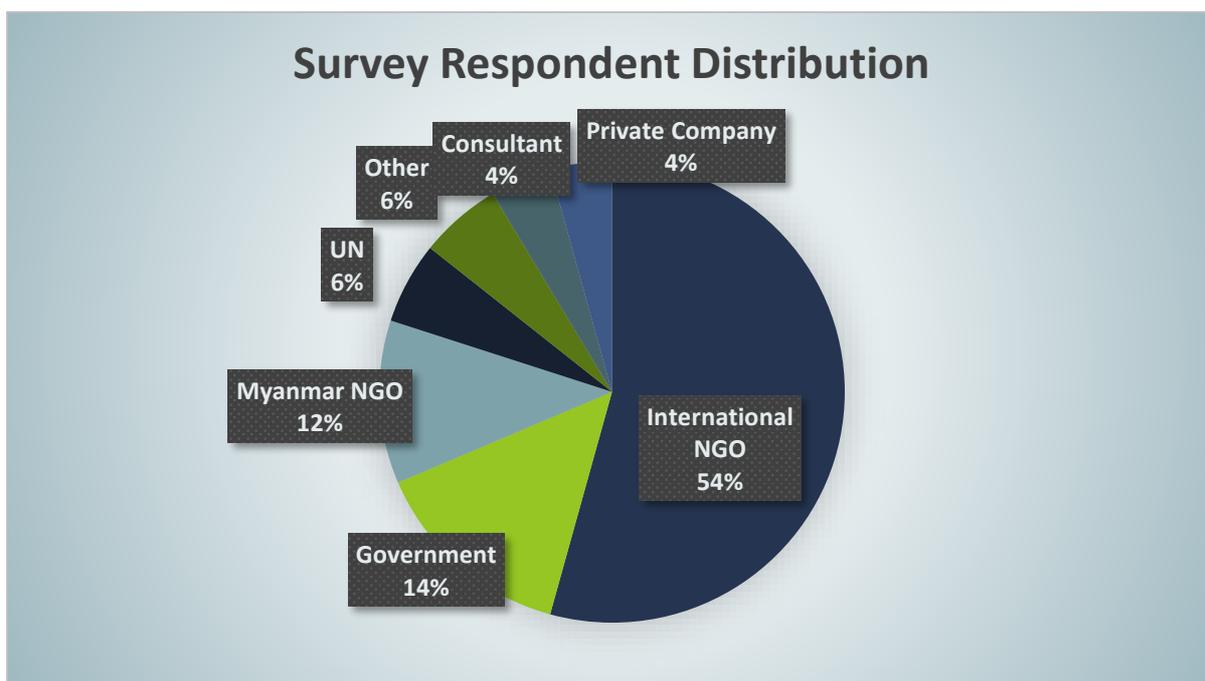
#### Desk Review

Our TL conducted, as guided by HARP-F, a systematic review of CASS programme documents, analysis, and platforms to assess quality and utility and to inform the subsequent evaluation design. The review, as presented in the inception report, included a critical comparison of other existing national and international analytical sources. However, these sources often differed from CASS in terms of methods, frequency, and provision of tailored recommendations for humanitarian actors. The initial mapping included a sample of existing humanitarian resources, broadly categorised according to context analytics, civil society briefs, and deeper-dive thematic research and articles presented in the table below.

Type	Source	Description
<b>Context Analytics</b>	Nexus Response Mechanism	EU-funded conflict analysis and research facility
	Local Insights Service	FCDO-funded NIS Foundation analysis of local dynamics
	Myanmar Analytical Activity	USAID-funded national research and polling mechanism
	MIMU Weekly Briefs	Repository of humanitarian reporting and mapping
	AVA Advisory Group	World Bank funded monthly context briefs
<b>Civil Society Briefs</b>	CDNH Monitoring	Tailored conflict-sensitive analysis in fragile areas
	MIPS Peace and Security Brief	Township-based conflict monitoring system
	KHRG Incident Reports	Kachin-focused conflict analytics and incident updates
	Phandeeyar	Social media monitoring and early warning system
	EMReF Newsletters	Sectoral and thematic papers on protection and inclusion
<b>Research and Articles</b>	FAO-WFP Myanmar	Agricultural livelihoods and food security research
	The Asia Foundation	Peace, conflict, and governance discussion paper series
	Frontier Myanmar	Long-form news articles on localised conflict issues
	International Crisis Group	Deep dive conflict and governance periodicals
	USIP Reporting	In-depth thematic research on governance and conflict

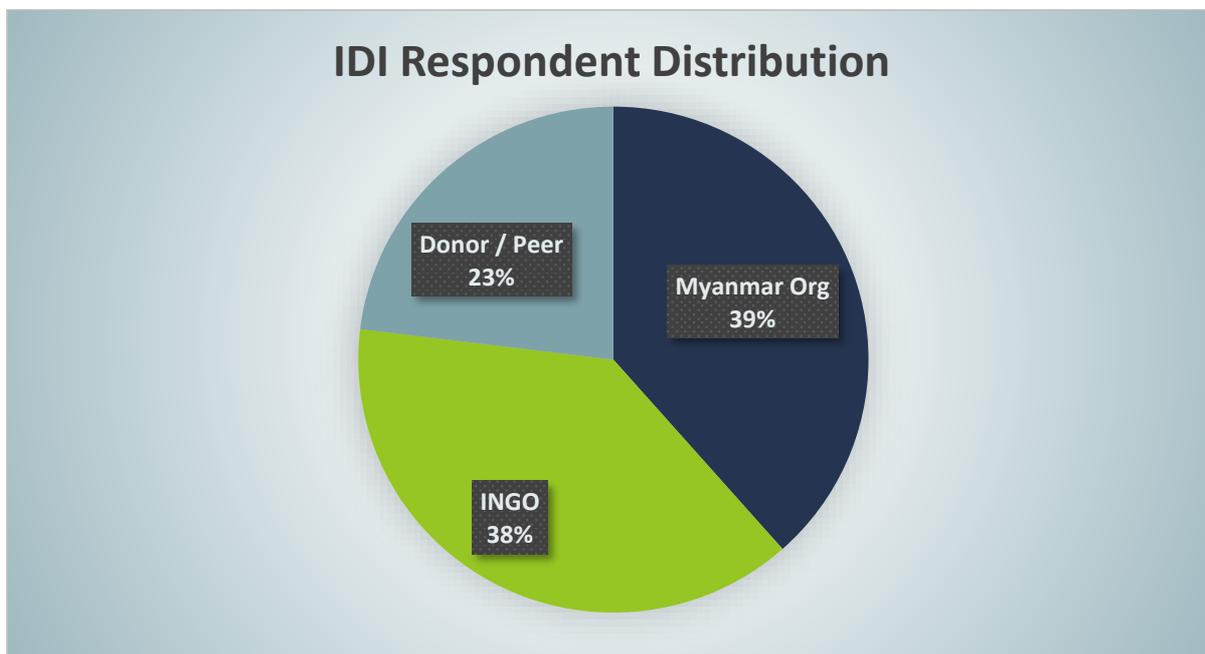
### Online Survey

A Google Forms survey (Annex B) was deployed to all approximately 700 CASS users to quantitatively assess the quality, utility, and timeliness of CASS analysis using multiple choice and Likert Scale (1-5) rankings of specific aspects of its reporting. The evaluation team followed up with recipients to ensure they understood how to complete the survey and encourage active participation in the review. The survey received 70 responses with the distribution of respondent categories presented in the below chart. The survey results were further analysed and interpreted through data gathered through qualitative interviews.



### In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted with a diverse range of 26 stakeholders, selected using a purposive sampling framework. The team developed semi-structured interview guides (Annexes C & D) to glean a greater depth of nuance about CASS effectiveness, allowing interviewers to probe areas of interest that emerge during the conversation. The sampling criteria took into consideration: a) the degree to which an organisation is known to be involved in supporting humanitarian responses in Myanmar, b) the number of members of an organisation registered on the CASS platform, and c) CASS users who are HARP-F grantees or partners.



As presented in the above chart, the evaluation sought to achieve an even balance of interviews from Myanmar and international organisations to compare relative utility between these groups.

#### *2.4. Analysis and Reporting*

The evaluation employed a rigorous and phased approach to data analysis, quality assurance, and reporting to ensure evaluation findings are reliable and actionable. The iterative validation process enabled HARP-F, FCDO, and its stakeholders to be active participants in each phase of analysis, to ensure recommendations were formative and fit-for-purpose.

- **Data cleaning and quality assurance** – The team conducted regular review, cleaning, and translation of incoming data continuously through the data collection phase, reinforced by online data collection platforms, including Google Forms, for quantitative data and audio recording, where appropriate, for qualitative data. A quality assurance (QA) committee was established to review evaluation products at each phase of design and implementation.
- **Reporting and dissemination** – The review team conducted an initial findings workshop with HARP-F, and separately with COAR, to present key observations and lessons learned. The workshop was an opportunity to validate findings and incorporate feedback from the assessment’s primary audiences prior to drafting the final report.

#### *2.5. Challenges and Limitations*

The complex dynamics in target areas, exacerbated by the post-coup military crack-down and COVID-19 pandemic, necessitated an approach that protected the safety and identity of respondents and avoided exacerbating community tensions. This approach resulted in methodological trade-offs and limitations:

- **Virtual data collection** – The evaluation used virtual surveys and IDIs due to the access restrictions posed by insecurity and the pandemic. This approach was dependent on sufficient connectivity, bandwidth and ICT capacity of key stakeholders and respondents. In areas with limited internet

access, interviewers used phone calls to contact key stakeholders. Further, the use of online surveys increases bias as stakeholders with greater CASS utilisation are more likely to respond.

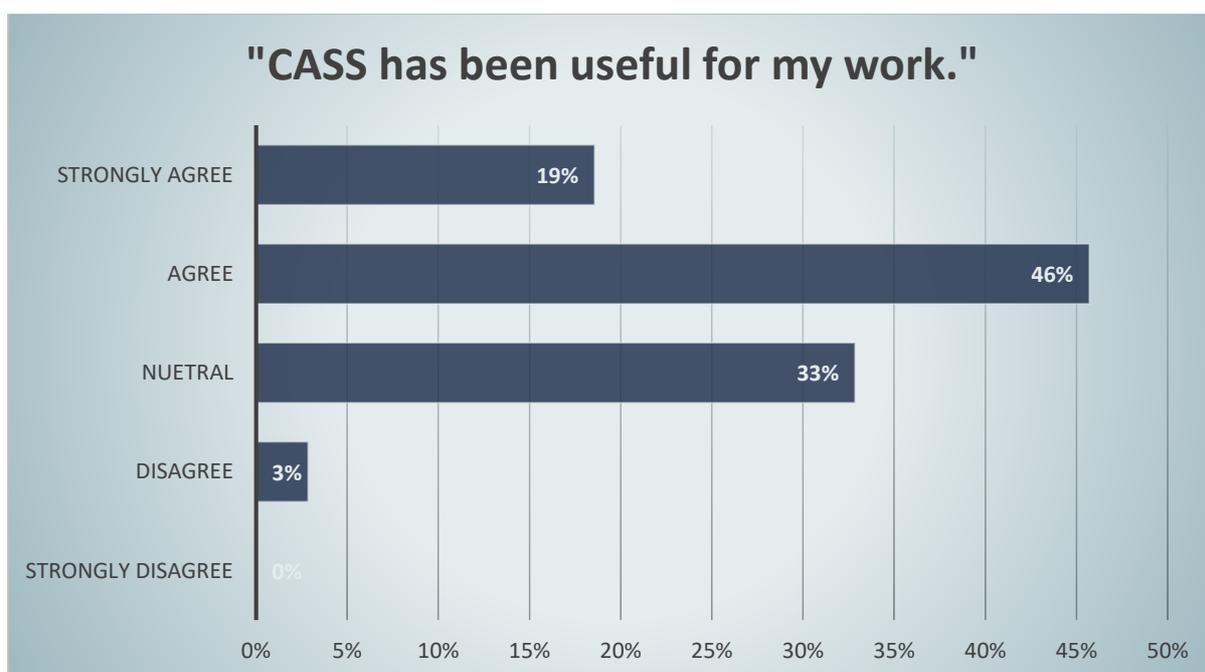
- **Access to stakeholders** – In some cases, not all sampled respondents were available to participate in the assessment or faced scheduling conflicts. Our team sought to mitigate this by arranging surveys/interviews well in advance with follow-up contacts to ensure the highest rate of engagement. Nonetheless, some respondents declined interviews due to security concerns or lack of availability.

### 3. Findings and Analysis

The analysis and findings are structured according to the evaluation framework, which feed into the broader learning agenda of FCDO Myanmar and HARP-F. The analysis includes highlights and observations from quantitative and qualitative sources, including the online survey and in-depth interviews. The sections cover CASS relevance and utility, accessibility and uptake, quality and presentation, and benchmarking and adaptation. Based on review observations, a range of conclusions and recommendations are presented for FCDO, HARP-F, and the broader community of practice in Myanmar.

#### 3.1. Relevance and Utility

The review examined the extent to which CASS is considered a valuable resource among key stakeholders and whether it had informed or influenced their strategic decision making. While there was a specific focus on assessing CASS' contribution to humanitarian efforts, it also looked beyond emergency assistance to understand its evolving utility for political economy and conflict analyses.



**There was evidence that CASS significantly influenced the coordination and adaptation of humanitarian interventions in Rakhine State.** Overall, 65 percent of survey respondents said that CASS was useful for their work, with 90 percent of respondents saying weekly updates were among the most useful products, followed by flash reports (44 percent), and thematic research (30 percent), when offered multiple responses. As CASS was originally created with a mandated focus on analytics and advisory services for humanitarian interventions in Rakhine State, prior to its geographic expansion, that is where it is has had more noticeable impact.

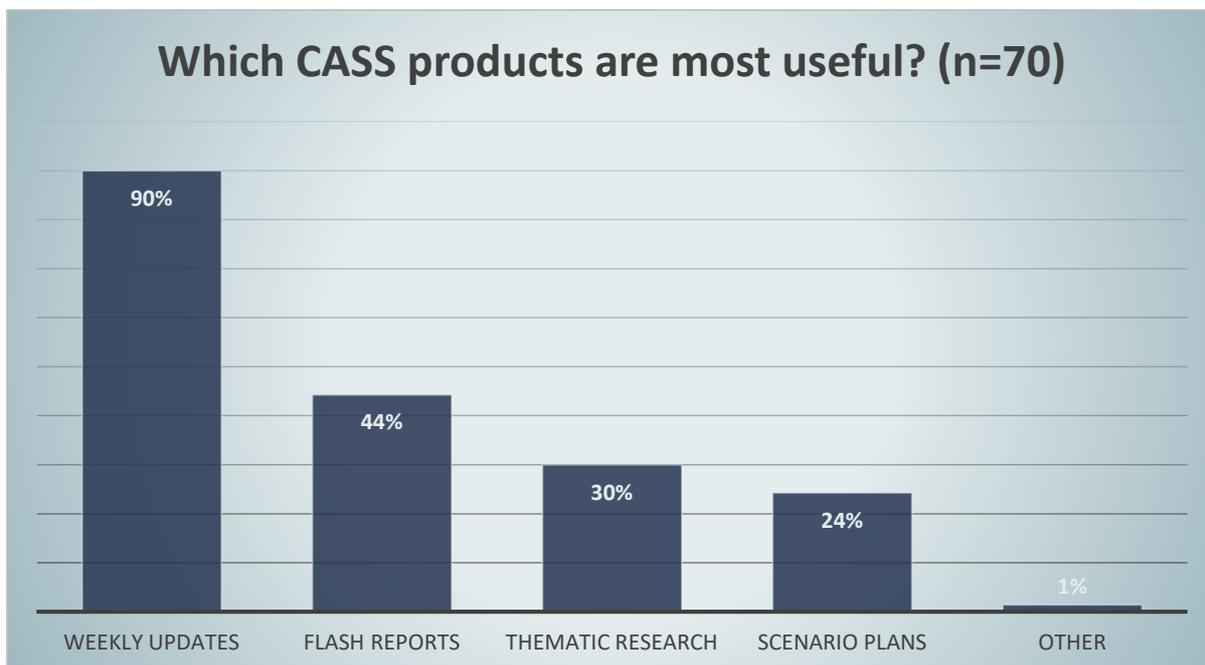
Users pointed to specific examples where CASS influenced their organisation's decision-making across a range of sectors, including protection, advocacy, and legal assistance for returnees. Additionally, organisations used CASS recommendations to drive operational and geographic adaptations such as

pivoting to assist a rapid influx of IDPs or enhancing localisation of delivery through civil society networks. One organisation noted, for instance, that CASS reported a substantial uptick in 2020 of Rohingya returnees from Bangladesh to northern Rakhine State (NRS), however, their activities were still predominantly in central Rakhine. The report provided the strategic imperative internally to rapidly adjust their resource allocation to NRS to support the increasing returnee population.

Similarly, another INGO providing emergency cross-border assistance between Myanmar and Bangladesh noted that there were few sources providing useful analysis in Bangladesh and the border areas. As such, CASS filled a critical gap in their understanding of needs along the border, including IDP movements. A separate actor, advocating for legal protection of returnees, explained that CASS was often the first of their sources to verify incidents of formal return, which enabled them to rapidly alert their partners providing legal support for such individuals. Other agencies highlighted the importance of the scenario planning, such as the post-coup fluctuations in military presence in NRS and Chin State, in supporting their contingency plan development.

*“The Parahita paper was very helpful in providing a foundation from which to advocate to our donors about the importance of hyper-localisation in humanitarian assistance in Myanmar. It helped us move beyond partnering with the larger NGOs and adopt a more grass-roots platform for delivery. It also reflected synergies with the ECHO ‘FLARE’ strategy to improve access through engagement with local monasteries and community groups.” – Humanitarian INGO*

Regarding the utility of CASS thematic research, comparatively fewer respondents engaged with the products, than with the weekly updates. However, those that did read them found them useful and noted instances where they had influenced operational and strategic planning. In particular, users referenced thematic papers on informal cash transfer networks (*Hundis or Hawalas*), localisation through *Parahita* entities (community charities or religious groups), and mobilisation in Kachin State, as having the greatest utility. Several stakeholders said the *Hundi* paper was highly relevant and timely, following post-coup restrictions on international bank transfers, to enable them to continue funding in-country partners in Rakhine State and avoid potential gaps in delivery due to financial obstacles. Similarly, readers found the *Parahita* analysis useful in channelling aid, including COVID-19 assistance in Kachin State, through local groups with greater access and supply networks in vulnerable locations. Scenario plans were useful among organisations with intervention in the design/start-up phase, with most readers referencing those developed for Kachin and Chin states.



**CASS was seen as a valuable tool among other analysis providers for triangulating and cross-verifying information, in addition to longer-term trend analysis.** Respondents noted that fewer humanitarian context analysis platforms existed in Myanmar prior to the military coup in April 2021, viewing CASS largely as a unique resource. Several respondents, however, noted a post-coup increase in the volume of context-related analytics, which they attributed to shrinking operational space, prompting some agencies to divert funding to research and analysis. Within such an environment, stakeholders described CASS as instrumental in triangulating and cross-verifying observations from other information sources. A Rakhine State-focused think tank, for instance, said they coordinate with CASS to validate the context-related updates from their primary networks, serving to enhance the reliability of data across both services.

Other Myanmar-focused research and analysis providers said they reference CASS liberally in their briefs to a diverse range of in-country stakeholders and international crisis forums. One thematic expert cited a recent briefing to the International Peace Support Group (IPSG) that included more than 30 foreign diplomats, where CASS was used extensively to verify findings and reinforce recommendations to the group. Another analyst from a Myanmar organisation said they produce an average of five annual papers on a range of relevant thematic issues for humanitarian practitioners, and said they found CASS a “ready-made” resource to inform their products. Other research entities, that previously provided broader context analysis, said the emergence of CASS had enabled them to pivot to more niche advisory services related to the implementation of conflict-sensitivity frameworks.

**CASS had less relevance for interventions in Kachin and Shan States, due to actors’ reliance on internal data and sources with stronger on-the-ground networks.** Discussions with internal stakeholders indicated that the recent geographic expansion of CASS outside of Rakhine and Chin States in 2021 was an “ad-hoc” decision that was largely driven by the HARP-F rather than FCDO. The expansion was partially due to the recognition that the humanitarian context in Rakhine State was not isolated, but rather increasingly interlinked with external dynamics in other parts of the country. Such dynamics include the geographic presence of the Arakan Army (AA), and ethnic armed organisation (EAO) from Rakhine State, that also operates across Kachin and Shan States, among other locations.

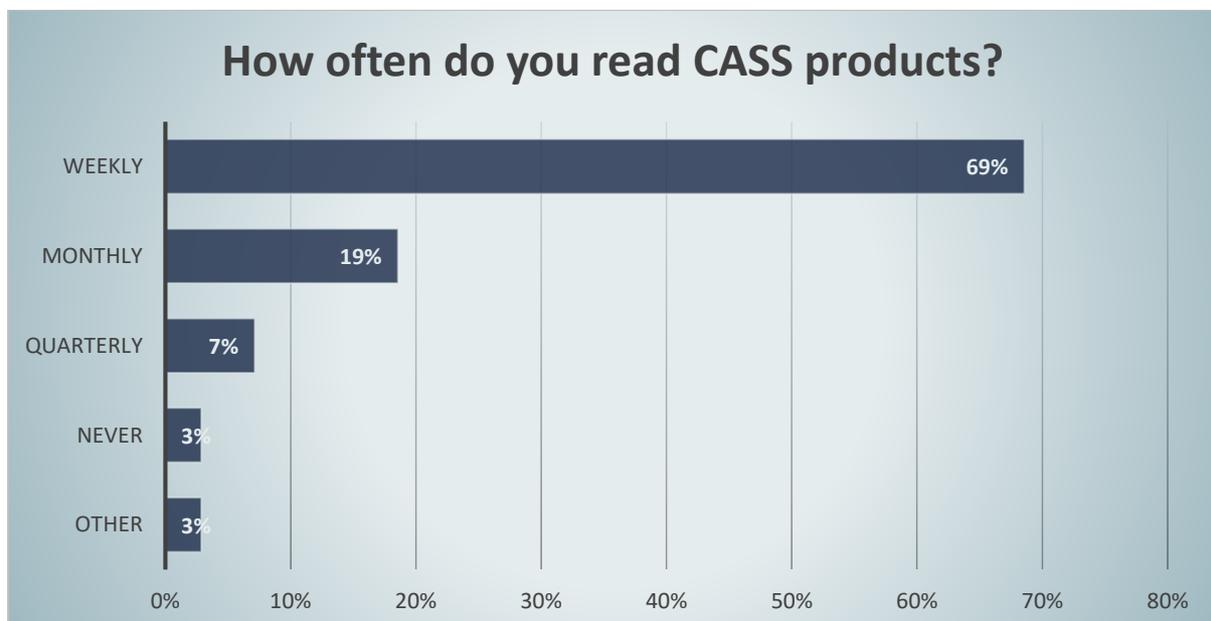
CASS managers noted, however, that the broadening of its geographic mandate was initially not accompanied by an increase in funding, which resulted in resource disparities across geographies,

particularly regarding primary data collection. The methodological approach of CASS in Rakhine and Chin states relied on the synthesis of secondary data, such as reports from local news outlets and social media, augmented by information gathered through primary networks, including key informants and CSOs on-the-ground. The CASS primary data collection networks in Kachin and northern Shan states are comparatively quite limited, as they are grown “organically” and require additional resources in the form of capacity building and training to ensure their quality of reporting.

Some CASS users with activities across Myanmar consequently noted some disparities in the quality of reporting between Rakhine, Kachin, and northern Shan states pointing to a need to integrate more local perspectives in its reporting. One organisation with interventions across all three states said that they did not find CASS analysis as nuanced or reliable in Kachin and Shan states as they did not believe their team had the same level of contextual understanding in these areas. Another consortium, receiving funds from HARP-F, said they were encouraged by the FCDO to boost their internal analytical capacity in Kachin and Shan states and therefore had more confidence in their internal sources versus CASS analysis. Similarly, an organisation working in south-eastern Myanmar did not find that CASS products were relevant to their interventions but hoped it could expand its focus to serve their needs.

### 3.2. Accessibility and Uptake

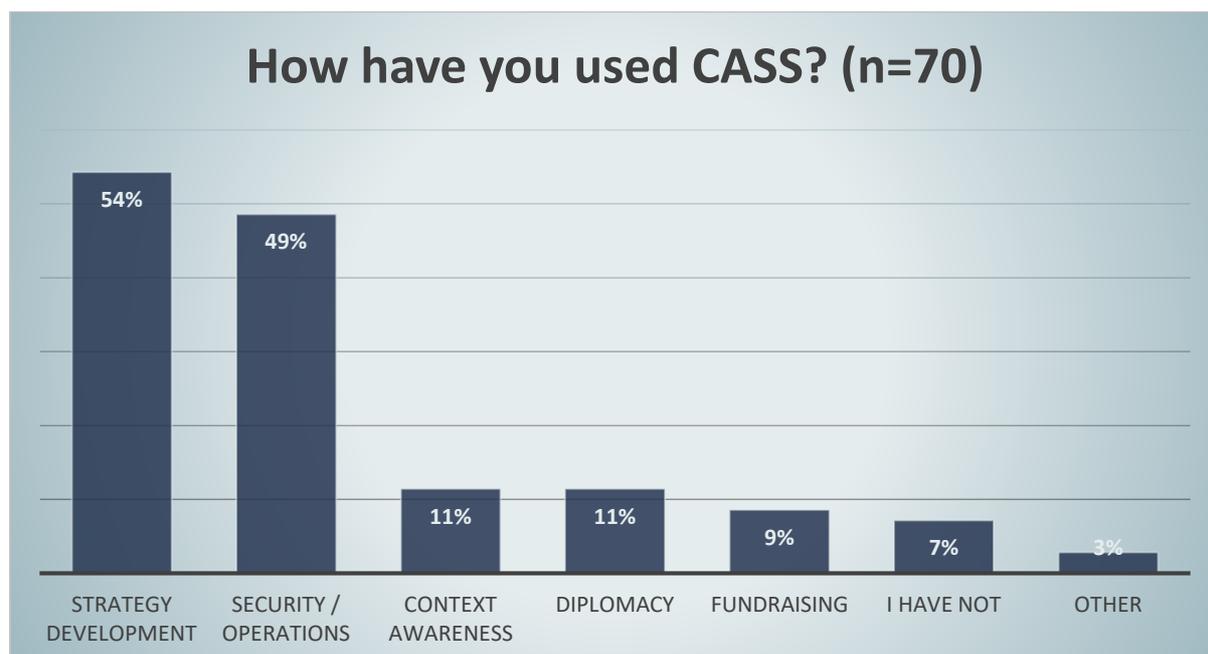
The review assessed the degree of accessibility of CASS regarding ease of logging into the platform, digestibility of its content, and effectiveness of outreach. Given the FCDO and HARP-F objective of transitioning its humanitarian assistance from international agencies to more localised delivery, the evaluation compared levels of CASS accessibility between international and Myanmar users. Further, the assessment looked at how the design of the platform and recent adjustments to its interface impacted frequency of engagement, uptake, and dissemination across relevant stakeholders.



**The platform fostered high levels of access, dissemination, and uptake among international humanitarian agencies which had familiarity with online portals.** Prior to the coup, CASS embedded weekly updates in emails to users and enabled PDF downloads of analytic products via its online portal. Due to post-coup concerns regarding data security and protection of sources, it required users

to log into the portal to read products and disabled downloads, reportedly to limit dissemination among potentially hostile actors. INGO respondents and peer agencies largely supported the increased security measures and did not view the shift as hindering access, noting ease of login to the online portal and user-friendly interface.

Consequently, international users reported a high frequency of engagement with CASS, with almost 70 percent of survey respondents saying they access the platform on a weekly basis. It is likely, however, that the online survey method was biased toward users with a higher frequency of usage as they were more inclined to respond. Of the eight Myanmar organisations that responded to this question, four said they access CASS on a weekly basis, while the other half said either monthly or quarterly. Nonetheless, the high rate of engagement reflected satisfaction with the platform and interface, with many interviewees reporting that they shared CASS with their colleagues and partners, prompting the registration of multiple users per INGO. Further, humanitarian actors confirmed that CASS reporting was consistently referenced in the Myanmar INGO Forum and at humanitarian breakfasts, where participants had jointly accessed, and engaged with, the content of CASS products. This was largely for the purposes of coordination and adaptation, primarily for interventions in Rakhine State.



**Myanmar organisations were less likely to use CASS due to pre-existing information channels, language barriers, and dislike of online login portals.** As noted in the methodology, Myanmar organisations, including NGOs, CSOs, and CBOs, comprised only 12 percent of survey respondents and fewer than five percent of users registered with organisational email addresses. This was qualitatively attributed to less CASS usage than international stakeholders. Of the 21 Myanmar organisations, many having been HARP-F partners, contacted for interviews, approximately 40 percent did not respond and three said they were not regular CASS users. Respondents explained that Myanmar NGOs and CSOs already possess a much deeper understanding of their target areas than INGOs due to on-the-ground presence, established grass-roots networks, and frequently updated local language news

sources and social media feeds. Further, the comparatively lengthy CASS 20-page weekly updates and thematic papers were difficult to digest for non-native English speakers. Even with their existing information networks, several Myanmar stakeholders said they would utilise CASS if it was made more accessible through email dissemination in local languages.

*“I tried to read CASS, but it took a long time and I often had to rely on Google Translate to decipher the text. For the more technical language, I had to ask my younger colleagues to see if they understood what was being said. If this resource was written in Myanmar it would be more useful and save us a lot of time. Some CSO staff have sufficient English skills to understand, but most of us do not.” – CSO in Rakhine State*

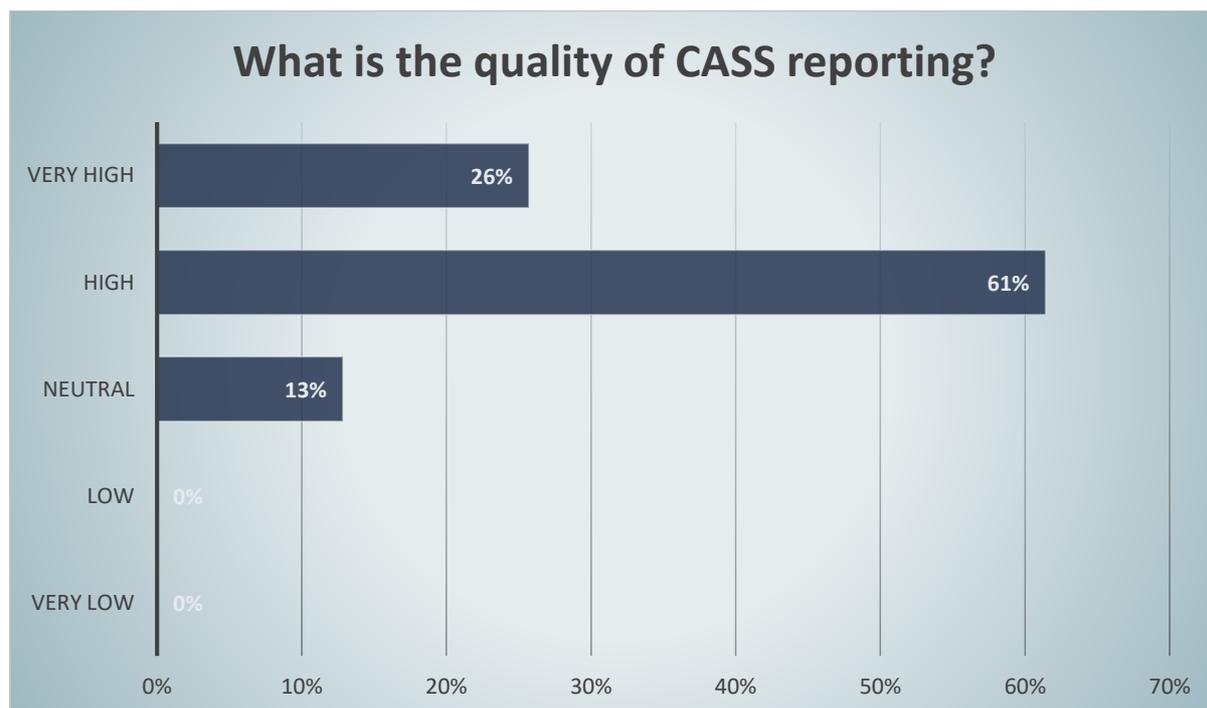
Some Myanmar HARP-F partners were unaware that CASS existed and said it would have been helpful if HARP-F had notified them and/or provided an orientation on how to access and use the platform. HARP-F and COAR noted that, during the design phase, they twice presented at and subsequently sent out information through the INGO forum, and met with individual partners including Myanmar organizations, notifying them through mailing lists. A women-focused CSO in Kachin, however, explained that, culturally, password protected online portals are deterrents for Myanmar users, who prefer to receive information and updates in local languages through Facebook, YouTube, or encrypted messaging services, such as WhatsApp or Signal. Popular Myanmar language news sources commonly referenced included the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB), Radio Free Asia (RFA), The 74, Myanmar Now, Mizzima, and Kachin Waves. Others noted that the weak internet connectivity in remote areas makes it challenging to access the online portal and, in such contexts, preferred the pre-coup email updates with PDF attachments.

However, a small number of Myanmar organisations interviewed said they were active CASS users. One noted it discussed highlights in SMT meetings and used the *hundi* paper to instruct donors how to continue supporting its activities through cross-border cash transfers. Common feedback was that CASS was perceived to be intentionally geared toward international audiences and if it sought to engage Myanmar readers, it would need to significantly alter its approach. CASS and HARP-F stakeholders noted that a reconfiguration of CASS products to target Myanmar organisations, including establishing alternative platforms with translation in local languages, would require significant additional resources. They also noted that such a shift should be taken in consultation with local partners to understand whether a critical gap persists in their existing sources of analysis.

**Recommendations to humanitarian organisations sometimes found to be overly generic and/or impractical.** While most CASS recommendations in weekly reports and other analytical products were found useful, some were deemed irrelevant or unimplementable for humanitarian actors, particularly for small to medium sized organisations. One organisation referenced a weekly update recommendation that urged those seeking to deliver assistance in Chin State to establish a presence across the border in a neighbouring town in India with greater access. The respondent explained that such a move might be feasible for large INGOs, but the required resources and operational capacity would be prohibitive for most actors. Another interviewee cited a CASS recommendation to provide livelihoods interventions to forced returnees in Rakhine, which they felt overlooked the substantial risk such a move might pose for organisations, due to government scrutiny and potential expulsion from Myanmar.

### 3.3. Quality and Presentation

As part of the assessment, survey respondents and interviewees were asked to comment on the overall quality of CASS reporting and level of satisfaction with analytical products. This included feedback on the quality of written narratives, visualisations, and report length and structure. Additionally, the evaluation examined the strengths and weaknesses of CASS methodologies, including its processes for data triangulation and verification, protection of sources, and geographic variations in approaches.



**Most CASS users report high levels of satisfaction with the quality of written narratives, mapping, and visualisations.** A significant proportion of survey respondents, 87 percent, gave a high ranking for the quality of CASS reporting. Among interviewees, most said that they found CASS products well written and easily digestible. INGO stakeholders remarked that the consistent high quality of writing and trend analysis of the weekly was impressive given the regularity of the reporting. While some felt that the approximately 20-page weekly report was lengthy, they noted that the topic summaries and sub-headings, which enabled readers to skip to relevant sections of the report, helpful in navigating the document. The visualisation and mapping embedded in CASS products were said to be especially useful and higher quality than what was typically found from other analytical services. Some stakeholders, familiar with COAR’s work in other contexts, said the visualisations were a unique offering that built on the organisation’s previous experience advising humanitarian actors in fragile contexts.

**Users find methods and sources somewhat opaque with notable variation in quality of analysis, gender-sensitivity, and inclusion across geographies.** As mentioned earlier in the report, CASS methods employ a combination of systematic analysis and synthesis of secondary news sources and social media, reinforced by data collected from primary, on-the-ground networks. While readers reported being largely aware of this approach, they expressed a desire for greater transparency around the origin of observations, particularly if they came from publicly available sources. Users said inserting URLs or links to local news articles or social media posts would enhance the reliability and

actionability of CASS content. In interviews with CASS staff and peer agencies, it was emphasised that protecting the identity of on-the-ground sources was paramount and the absence of detailed citations was to prevent key informants from being targeted by malicious actors, such as the military. Nonetheless, stakeholders felt that CASS could strike a better balance by disclosing the type of source, while still maintaining their anonymity.

There was a notable divergence in depth and quality of analysis between CASS target geographies in Rakhine, Kachin, and Shan states. Users observed higher levels of inclusion, nuance, and conflict-sensitivity in reporting on Rakhine and Chin states than in Kachin and Shan states. One INGO stakeholder noted, for example, that CASS reporting on Kachin seemed overly focused on religious groups, such as the Christian Baptist communities, in addition to issues in the northern areas like Puta-O. Consequently, some Kachin experts and peer services felt that CASS overlooked some critical minority groups that had recently been affected by conflict and other humanitarian crises. As previously mentioned, the geographic disparity in methods and quality of reporting was attributed to weaker primary networks in Kachin and Shan given the relatively recent expansion of CASS services to those locations.

*“CASS reporting does a good job of covering the diverse ethnic and religious populations in Rakhine State. This includes reporting on how Rohingya, Christian, Kaman, and Hindu groups have been differently affected by crises. They sometimes touch on topics of gender and inclusion, such as cash assistance for maternal and neo-natal care, but it could do a better at highlighting these issues.” – INGO user*

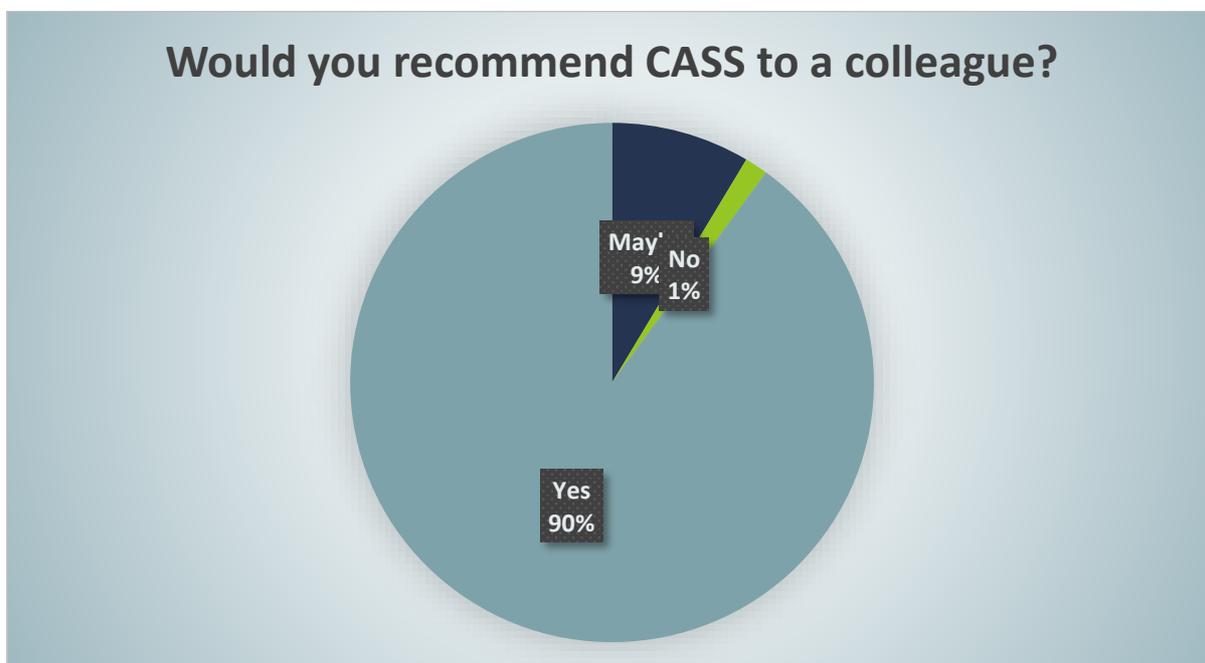
Stakeholders felt that analysis in these areas could be strengthened by the identification and inclusion of more diverse informants and CSOs with representation in minority and marginalised communities. Some humanitarian agencies working in Kachin said they would like CASS to include more perspectives from local women’s organisations highlighting the complex challenges that women and girls face in these areas. Some noted that they received information from other sources about concerning developments related to trafficking, gender-based violence, and child protection that are not often covered in CASS regional reporting.

**CASS has invested substantial resource in building the research and analysis capacity of primary networks, but processes for identification and selection are murky.** Some of the Rakhine-based Myanmar organisations consulted during the review reported to have been previously engaged by CASS as part of its primary informant network. One of the groups described how CASS had worked closely with their staff and volunteers in different parts of Rakhine state to build their data collection and reporting capacity through regular training and mentoring. He further explained that CASS had emphasised the need to diversify their networks of informants to include Muslim, Kaman, and Hindu team members to gain greater access to, and perspectives among, minority and marginalised groups. CASS also reportedly encouraged them to boost the proportion of women in their network to shed more light on issues of domestic violence and child protection.

One organisation said, however, that CASS had abruptly, and without explanation, stopped engaging them in their data collection efforts. They were curious why CASS had apparently adjusted its data collection approach and hoped to receive more clarity regarding whether their network would be consulted in the future. In discussions with CASS staff, they described an ad hoc approach to identifying and selecting networks of informants in their target geographies. The approach most closely resembled a form of snowball sampling, where CASS staff identified local NGOs and CSOs in key areas through trusted contacts and then gradually expanded their networks through grass-roots linkages. Context experts said CASS could benefit from more transparent engagement with these

groups regarding processes for identification and coordination to deepen working relationships, particularly in Kachin and Shan states.

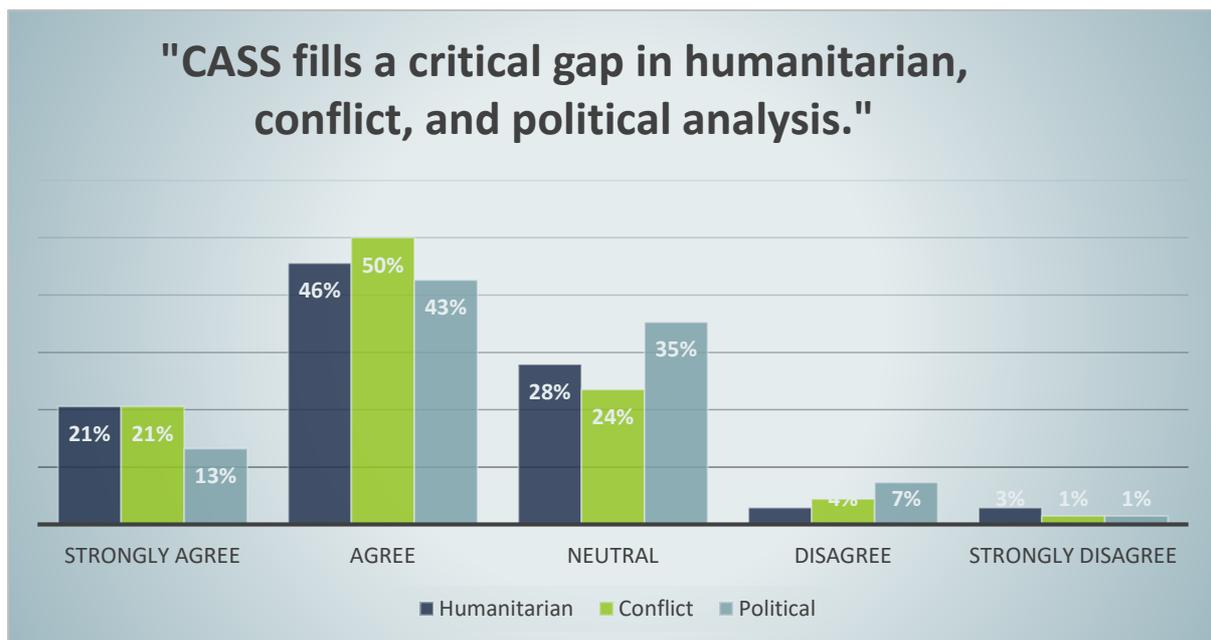
Stakeholders also pointed to CASS involvement in supporting the creation and ongoing capacity building of the Arakan Humanitarian Coordination Team (AHCT) in Rakhine State. The AHCT was reported formed in response to the worsening crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which was limiting access to communities and compounding an already challenging humanitarian context. The AHCT is mostly comprised of Myanmar CSOs and NGOs working in Rakhine State, which jointly circulate weekly Myanmar and English language updates to key stakeholders. They described how CASS provide them with valuable technical expertise regarding data collection methods and reporting. Prior to the coup, the AHCT circulated its weekly updates widely via email and social media, however, post-coup it has narrowed its dissemination and instituted greater security measures, ultimately hoping to establish a password protected online portal, similar to CASS.



**Selection of topics for thematic papers perceived as top-down and ad-hoc, with potential to benefit from greater democratisation among practitioners.** While most readers found the CASS thematic research papers to be timely and relevant, there was uncertainty regarding its approach to identification and selection of topics. CASS explained that ideas for thematic papers emerged organically with suggestions coming from consultants, team members, and advisory groups, such as the INGO Forum and humanitarian breakfasts. Further, there was acknowledgement that thematic research was often driven by the priorities of the FCDO and broader UK government to inform policy-level decision-making and advocacy efforts. However, CASS noted that since its inception it had been given greater autonomy and ownership over its research agenda and sought to further democratise its approach. Some humanitarian stakeholders expressed a desire for more systematic consultation regarding the CASS research agenda to identify persisting gaps in the knowledge base and enhance its relevance to practitioners on-the-ground.

### 3.4. Benchmarking and Coordination

This section builds on the benchmarking conducted during the inception desk review with analysis from interviews with key stakeholders to compare CASS and its services within the broader analytical ecosystem in Myanmar. The findings unpack the extent to which CASS is seen to fill a critical gap in analysis across the humanitarian, conflict, and political spectrums, considering other existing sources. The section also assesses the effectiveness of coordination and collaboration between FCDO-funded analytical platforms and how it impacts overall efficiencies and information sharing across the sector.



**CASS provides unique, critical humanitarian and political analysis in an increasingly crowded space.**

The above chart aggregates online survey responses to three separate questions regarding the extent to which CASS filled a comparative gap across the three spheres of analysis. Most users agreed that CASS provided a crucial service to a similar degree in the three categories, with slightly weaker agreement for political analysis than humanitarian and conflict. In interviews, respondents were asked which other sources of context analysis they relied on, if any, and how they compared to CASS. Regarding the timeframe for this benchmarking, respondents noted that the overall volume of research and analysis was much lower prior to the military coup, with most reporting a noticeable post-coup uptick in such reporting. This increase was attributed to several factors, including the shrinking space for INGO implementation and the volatile and rapidly evolving post-coup conflict dynamics.

Most frequently mentioned and compared to CASS were LIS, the Nexus Response Mechanism (NRM) Conflict Analysis and Research (CAR) Facility, RAFT analysis for the Livelihoods and Food Security (LIFT) Fund, Exera weekly updates, updates from the Centre for Diversity and National Harmony (CDNH), and the Myanmar Analytical Activity (MAA), among others. There was, however, general agreement that none of these services shared identical mandates or methodologies, while some overlapped more than others. There was a divergence in perspectives between humanitarian actors and entities engaged in knowledge management, where the latter were more likely to report a glut or redundancy of analysis than the former.

There was general agreement that CASS provided deeper and longer-term trend analysis than incident reporting services, such as that provided by Exera and/or CDNH. While services provided by LIS, CAR, RAFT, and MAA were perceived as most like CASS, there was acknowledgement that they differed in terms of mandate, geographic focus, and/or methodological approach. LIS, for example, provides tailored research on a changing range of thematic areas, with a focus in Kachin and Shan states, while CASS methodologies remain more static and geared toward humanitarian actors. Similarly, CAR provides EU portfolio focused TPM and results-based management services, in addition to periodic thematic briefs, while the MAA engages primarily in nation-wide polling for US government stakeholders. Nonetheless, there was broad consensus that more donor-level effort should be invested in promoting coordination and sharing between analysis providers.

Some respondents made comparisons to the Syria Humanitarian Access Team (HAT) run by Mercy Corps, on which CASS was said to be loosely framed. They noted a distinction, however, in the level of granularity between them, saying that HAT focused on access-related issues at the sub-district level related to specific programmatic interventions, while CASS provided more mid-tier context analysis intended for a broader range of stakeholders. Consequently, Mercy Corps Myanmar reported they were in the process of establishing their own township level analytical service to inform its programming Rakhine State, which they said would be complementary to CASS products.

**The lack of effective coordination and collaboration between FCDO-funded analytical services impacts efficiency and risks duplication of effort.** Some respondents expressed concern that, while services such as CASS and LIS had separate mandates and approaches, there was increasing overlap as CASS expanded its geographic and thematic focus areas. Further, staff of both services reported an absence of coordination and information sharing between the platforms, with CASS noting they do not have access to LIS reports. External readers of products from both services reported increasing instances of duplication in focus areas and approaches. While CASS and LIS independently suggested to HARP-F and FCDO that they establish mechanisms for greater cooperation, no actions were taken to facilitate such engagement.

*“There is genuine concern that CASS, LIS, and MEC are all regularly reaching out to the same EAOs and CSOs to inform our analysis in Kachin and Shan, which could cause duplication and respondent fatigue. However, I had the opportunity to attend a LIS strategic workshop where I sat with peers to discuss research priorities. It would be great if FCDO continued to facilitate such sessions across their education, health, and governance teams.” – Peer Analysis Agency*

Other FCDO-funded research and analysis providers, such as the Myanmar Education Consortium (MEC), also highlighted a need for more information sharing and collaboration, particularly in Kachin and Shan states. There was an awareness that, while methodologies were somewhat distinct, the research teams were contacting and gathering information from many of the same sources, such as EAOs and CSOs based in Kachin and Shan states. Staff expressed concern that, over-time, the overlapping sampling approaches would contribute to respondent fatigue and redundancies of information. While some efforts had been made to involve CASS, LIS, and MEC in broader FCDO strategic discussions, they remained largely siloed services. Some suggested that this was a bi-product of FCDO department-level compartmentalisation of knowledge management, compounded by weak lines of communication within the country office.

**There is potential for greater harmonisation and integration of humanitarian analysis in Myanmar.** Based on the above benchmarking findings, stakeholders emphasised the need for greater integration across analytical services such as CASS, CAR, LIS, and RAFT (LIFT). They noted that harmonisation challenges across country-level humanitarian portfolios are not unique to Myanmar, but that such

divisions are found in many similarly complex contexts. Senior managers with visibility across multiple funds and diplomatic missions, including the EU, UK, and US portfolios, identified potential for economies of scale to be achieved through improved coordination and information sharing. Such cooperation would need to be donor-driven and would likely face obstacles due to disparate internal working cultures, funding mechanisms, and strategic imperatives, but would likely deliver substantial dividends in the form of increased knowledge management efficiencies in the sector.

FCDO and HARP-F stakeholders expressed a desire for COAR to explore the feasibility of further integrating the services it provides through CASS and CAR. In particular, respondents felt there were potential synergies between the thematic research COAR performs for the EU and FCDO funded portfolios in terms of geographies and technical focus areas. Additionally, some perceived unrealised potential in adapting CASS to include more indirect TPM of FCDO humanitarian interventions, like what it currently provides for the EU. CASS, however, explained that the services it provides through CAR and CASS are sufficiently distinct that it would require initial investments of additional resources from both donors to facilitate portfolio-level harmonisation, which would likely result in greater value-for-money in the longer-term.

## 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Below is a summary of the key conclusions gleaned through the review, structured to respond to primary questions in the evaluation framework. The associated recommendations are geared toward FCDO, HARP-F and relevant stakeholders to provide formative insights relevant to future phases of CASS implementation. It is expected that these observations will contribute to further discussions regarding how analytical services can build on lessons learned to enhance strategic decision-making, coordination, and real-time adaptation of emergency assistance in Myanmar.

### 4.1. Conclusions

- **CASS filled a critical gap in humanitarian analysis for INGOs in Myanmar.** On average, 64 percent of survey respondents agreed that CASS filled an important gap across humanitarian, conflict, and political analysis for users in Myanmar. There was evidence that CASS products had a high degree of utility among most users for the purposes of humanitarian coordination, conflict monitoring and triangulation, and political economy analysis. The majority of respondents felt CASS had achieved its mandate through the delivery of high-quality analytical products and remained a necessary service for international actors in Myanmar. There were notable discrepancies in the utility of CASS between international and Myanmar organisations, with the latter relying more on local sources to inform interventions. Stakeholders expressed a desire for greater coordination and collaboration among analysis providers to enhance efficiencies and mitigate duplication.
- **CASS weekly reports significantly influenced the coordination and adaptation of humanitarian interventions in Rakhine State.** Overall, 65 percent of survey respondents said that CASS was useful for their work, with 90 percent of respondents saying weekly updates were among the most useful products, followed by flash reports (44 percent), and thematic research (30 percent), when offered multiple responses. Users pointed to specific examples where CASS influenced their organisation's decision-making across a range of sectors, including protection, advocacy, and legal assistance for returnees. Additionally, organisations used CASS recommendations to drive operational and geographic adaptations such as pivoting to assist a rapid influx of IDPs or enhancing localisation of delivery through civil society networks.
- **Thematic products contributed to operational innovation, with slightly less engagement.** Comparatively fewer respondents engaged with the products, than with the weekly updates. However, those that did read them found them useful and noted instances where they had influenced operational and strategic planning. Users referenced thematic papers on informal cash transfer networks (*Hundis or Hawalas*), localisation through *Parahita* entities (community charities or religious groups), and mobilisation in Kachin State, as having the greatest utility. However, selection of topics for thematic papers was perceived as top-down and ad-hoc, with potential to benefit from greater democratisation among practitioners.
- **CASS was a valuable tool among other analysis providers for triangulating and cross-verifying information.** Respondents noted that fewer humanitarian context analysis platforms existed in Myanmar prior to the military coup in February 2021. There was a notable post-coup increase in the volume of context-related analytics, which they attributed to shrinking operational space, prompting some agencies to divert funding to research and analysis. Within such an environment, stakeholders described CASS as instrumental in triangulating and cross-verifying observations, often as a primary source, from other information streams. Other Myanmar-focused research and analysis providers said they reference CASS liberally in their briefs to a diverse range of in-country stakeholders and international crisis forums.

- **CASS had less relevance for Myanmar organisations and interventions in Kachin and Shan States, given its recent expansion.** Myanmar organisations were less likely to use CASS due to pre-existing information channels, language barriers, and dislike of online login portals. Respondents explained that Myanmar NGOs and CSOs already possess a much deeper understanding of their target areas than INGOs due to on-the-ground presence, established grass-roots networks, and frequently updated local language news sources and social media feeds. There was consequently a desire for CASS to coordinate more proactively with national organisations and analysis providers. Users also observed higher levels of inclusion, nuance, and conflict-sensitivity in reporting on Rakhine and Chin states than in Kachin and Shan states. Such disparities were largely because CASS was originally exclusively Rakhine focused, with a more ad-hoc, recent 2021 expansion to include Kachin and northern Shan.
- **The lack of effective coordination and collaboration between FCDO-funded analytical services impacts efficiency and risks duplication of effort.** Some respondents expressed concern that, while services such as CASS and LIS had separate mandates and approaches, there was increasing overlap as CASS expanded its geographic and thematic focus areas. Further, staff of both services reported an absence of coordination and information sharing between the platforms, with CASS noting they do not have access to LIS reports. While CASS and LIS independently suggested to HARP-F and FCDO that they establish mechanisms for greater cooperation, no actions were taken to facilitate such engagement.

#### *4.2. Recommendations*

- **FCDO should promote pro-active coordination between its analytical platforms** – Given the demonstrated utility of CASS, FCDO should encourage collaboration and coordination between LIS and CASS to streamline mandates and identify synergies across services. Other FCDO-funded research and analysis providers, such as the Myanmar Education Consortium (MEC), also highlighted a need for more information sharing and collaboration, particularly in Kachin and Shan states. Examples of potential coordination approaches include joint strategic design workshops, coordinated humanitarian briefings, and collaboration on discreet research and analysis products for the broader community of practice.
- **Additional resources required for geographic expansion and harmonisation of methods** – CASS staff and users noted discrepancies in the quality and comprehensiveness of analysis between target geographies, which was largely attributed to weaker primary networks in Kachin and Shan states. CASS noted that as its initial expansion was ad hoc, additional resource is necessary to expand on-the-ground networks in Kachin and Shan to harmonise methods and achieve the quality of analysis it is known for in Rakhine and Chin states. Such expansion should be wary of other research providers in these locations and cautious to avoid over burdening the same networks and contributing to respondent fatigue. FCDO could consider working with its analysis providers to deliberately deconflict primary information sources to improve diversity of analysis and mitigate duplication.
- **CASS should strengthen gender-sensitivity and inclusion outside of Rakhine State with a greater focus on minority and marginalised groups.** Users found CASS to be more inclusive of issues affecting women, girls, and minorities in Rakhine and Chin states, than in other target geographies. They expressed a desire for greater inclusion of such groups in Kachin and Shan states, with more attention paid to issues of domestic violence, trafficking, and child protection. Further, practitioners in these areas requested greater CASS focus on crisis-affected groups, outside of the majority Christian populations, which are less prominent in humanitarian reporting and thus sometimes overlooked in emergency responses. FCDO could encourage an updated joint

mapping by its analysis providers of potentially overlooked and/or marginalised information networks to prioritise in future assessments.

- **The thematic research agenda should be democratised among humanitarian actors** – Stakeholders voiced a desire for greater inclusion in identification of priority topics for CASS research based on humanitarian imperatives. While most readers found the CASS thematic research papers to be timely and relevant, there was uncertainty regarding its approach to identification and selection of topics. Some perceived thematic research to be driven by the priorities of the FCDO and broader UK government to inform policy-level decision-making and advocacy efforts. Humanitarian stakeholders expressed a desire for more systematic consultation regarding the CASS research agenda to identify persisting gaps in the knowledge base and enhance its relevance to practitioners on-the-ground. Such consultation should be multi-lateral and could occur in events like the INGO forum, humanitarian breakfasts, and among FCDO Myanmar partner meetings to identify and prioritise emerging areas of interest.
- **FCDO should re-evaluate CASS utility for Myanmar partners and broader civil society** – Given the comparatively low CASS usage among Myanmar stakeholders due to the previously highlighted barriers, FCDO should reassess how CASS fits within its broader localisation strategy. If CASS is intended to be a resource for these organisations, its products must be translated into local languages and disseminated in a more culturally accessible manner. FCDO should also consider having CASS provide verbal presentations to its partners which could contribute to greater coordination across its portfolio. Further, CASS should proactively engage with national partners to encourage their increased buy-in in the process and promote a greater diversity of perspectives in its analysis.
- **Humanitarian donors should better coordinate to maximise synergies across analysis platforms** – There is potential for greater harmonisation and integration of humanitarian analysis in Myanmar, including services such as CASS, CAR, LIS, and RAFT (LIFT). Senior managers with visibility across EU, UK, and US portfolios, identified potential for economies of scale to be achieved through improved coordination and information sharing. Such cooperation must be donor-driven and would likely deliver substantial dividends in the form of increased knowledge management efficiencies in the sector. In some instances, analytical services, such as CAR for the NRM, are also providing third-party monitoring (TPM), prompting other donors to explore the broader potential of these platforms. FCDO expressed an interest in whether the current CASS platform could be suited to third-party monitoring (TMP) of its portfolio. While this was not an explicit focus of the study, such a reimagining of CASS's mandate would likely require a significant strategic pivot and expansion of resources. While there may be potential for more indirect outcome-level monitoring, FCDO should carefully consider the trade-offs in adjusting

## Annex A: Analytical Framework

Line of Inquiry	Topic	Sub-questions	Data Source	Method / Tool
<b>Utility of information</b>	Relevance of insights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How timely, useful, and relevant is CASS analysis and reporting? How well does it contribute to the broader humanitarian knowledge base, in addition to socio-cultural, political, and economic analysis.</li> <li>How well does analysis align with evolving strategic priorities, both those of FCDO and the broader humanitarian community in Myanmar (e.g. as articulated in the HRP / addendum, HNO, cluster / sectoral strategies etc)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HARP-F IPs</li> <li>Humanitarian stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online survey</li> <li>IDIs</li> </ul>
	Impact on decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How frequently is CASS analysis referenced in forums? To what extent are formative contributions to decision-making captured?</li> <li>Is there evidence of strategic adaptation because of CASS analysis? Are there examples of resulting modifications to actors' interventions?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HARP-F IPs</li> <li>Humanitarian stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online survey</li> <li>IDIs</li> </ul>
<b>Diversity of engagement</b>	Dissemination and outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How well is CASS proactively reaching out to diverse audiences (Myanmar and International)? To what extent are users involved in dissemination?</li> <li>How well does outreach promote awareness and engagement with platforms? How could these platforms be streamlined and improved?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HARP-F IPs</li> <li>Humanitarian stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online survey</li> <li>IDIs</li> </ul>
	Accessibility and uptake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How accessible are CASS products to the broader community?</li> <li>What is the volume of engagement with CASS products? How do the topic and timeliness of reporting relate to uptake and depth of engagement?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HARP-F IPs</li> <li>Humanitarian stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online survey</li> <li>IDIs</li> </ul>
<b>Quality of mechanisms</b>	Research methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How triangulated and reliable are data collection methods? How inclusive are methods regarding gender and marginalised groups? To what extent are topics controlled by FCDO/HARP-F or set independently and how did this impact CASS ability to achieve its objectives?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analytical Products</li> <li>Methodology docs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desk review</li> <li>Comparative analysis</li> </ul>
	Analysis and presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent are CASS research methods considered robust by its users? How do research methods contribute to perceived credibility of findings?</li> <li>How tailored, concise, and structured are analyses and insights? How useful and effective are reporting templates and online dashboards?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analytical Products</li> <li>Methodology docs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desk review</li> <li>Comparative analysis</li> </ul>
<b>Benchmarking with similar services</b>	National comparison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent does CASS fill a critical gap in country-level analysis? How is this perceived by key stakeholders?</li> <li>How does CASS compare to and complement LIS, MIMU, NRM and other analysis services in terms of cost, relevance, and timeliness of insights?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CASS products</li> <li>SitReps</li> <li>HARP-F stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desk review</li> <li>IDIs</li> </ul>
	International comparison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does CASS compare to similar services such as INSO, HAT, and NRM? What is the comparative uptake of NRM vs CASS?</li> <li>What lessons learned from evaluations of similar services could have relevance and application to improve CASS systems and processes?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CASS products</li> <li>SitReps</li> <li>HARP-F stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desk review</li> <li>IDIs</li> </ul>

## Annex B: Online Survey Questionnaire

Survey Type	Online multiple choice
Platform	Google Forms
Introduction	<i>Trias Consult is conducting an evaluation of the Community Analysis Support System (CASS) on behalf of the UK-funded Humanitarian and Resilience Programme – Facility (HARP-F). Your responses to this survey are anonymous and will help improve this service. Thank you for your participation.</i>
Q1:	For which type of organization do you work?
Type:	Select one
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Government</li> <li>b) International non-government organization</li> <li>c) Myanmar non-government organization</li> <li>d) Private company</li> <li>e) Freelance / consultant</li> <li>f) Other</li> </ul>
Skip:	If 'any', proceed to Q2
Q2:	Have you ever read CASS reporting?
Type:	Select one
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Yes</li> <li>b) No</li> <li>c) No reply</li> </ul>
Skip:	If 'No', proceed to Q3. If 'Yes', skip to Q4.
Q3:	If not, why not?
Type:	Select one
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Too busy</li> <li>b) No access</li> <li>c) Not relevant</li> <li>d) Poor quality</li> <li>e) Other</li> </ul>
Skip:	If 'any', proceed to Q12
Q4:	How often have you read CASS reporting?
Type:	Select one
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>f) Weekly</li> <li>g) Monthly</li> <li>h) Quarterly</li> <li>i) Annually</li> <li>j) Other</li> </ul>
Skip:	If 'any', proceed to Q4
Q5:	What has been the quality of CASS reporting?
Type:	Likert ranking
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Very high</li> <li>b) High</li> <li>c) Medium</li> <li>d) Low</li> <li>e) Very low</li> <li>f) No reply</li> </ul>
Skip:	If 'any', proceed to Q5
Q6:	[Rank your level of agreement] "CASS reporting has been useful for my work."

Type:	Likert ranking
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Strongly agree</li> <li>b) Agree</li> <li>c) Neutral</li> <li>d) Disagree</li> <li>e) Strongly disagree</li> <li>f) No reply</li> </ul>
Skip:	If 'any', proceed to Q6
Q7:	Which CASS products have been most useful for your work?
Type:	Select multiple
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Weekly Updates</li> <li>b) Flash Reports</li> <li>c) Scenario Plans</li> <li>d) Thematic Research</li> <li>e) None</li> <li>f) No reply</li> </ul>
Skip:	If 'any', proceed to Q7
Q8:	How have you used CASS products?
Type:	Multiple response
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) I do not use CASS products</li> <li>b) Security and operations</li> <li>c) Strategy development</li> <li>d) Diplomacy</li> <li>e) Fundraising</li> <li>f) Other</li> <li>g) No reply</li> </ul>
Skip:	If 'a', skip to Q9. If 'b-g' proceed to Q8
Q9:	Please give a brief example of how you have used CASS reporting.
Type:	Open ended
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Text entry</li> <li>b) No reply</li> </ul>
Skip:	If 'any', proceed to Q9
Q10:	Would you recommend CASS reporting to colleagues?
Type:	Select one
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Yes</li> <li>b) No</li> <li>c) No reply</li> </ul>
Skip:	If 'any', proceed to Q10
Q11:	[Rank your level of agreement] "CASS filled a critical gap in humanitarian analysis."
Type:	Likert ranking
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Strongly agree</li> <li>b) Agree</li> <li>c) Neutral</li> <li>d) Disagree</li> <li>e) Strongly disagree</li> <li>f) No reply</li> </ul>
Skip:	If 'any', proceed to Q11
Q12:	[Rank your level of agreement] "CASS filled a critical gap in conflict analysis."
Type:	Likert ranking
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>g) Strongly agree</li> </ul>

	h) Agree i) Neutral j) Disagree k) Strongly disagree l) No reply
Skip:	If 'any', proceed to Q11
Q13:	[Rank your level of agreement] "CASS filled a critical gap in political analysis."
Type:	Likert ranking
Response	m) Strongly agree n) Agree o) Neutral p) Disagree q) Strongly disagree r) No reply
Skip:	If 'any', proceed to Q11
Q14:	How could CASS reporting be improved?
Type:	Open ended
Response	a) Text entry b) No reply
Skip:	If 'any', proceed to End
END	Thank you for participating in this survey!

## Annex C: In-depth Interview Guide (Users)

Date:	
Interviewer:	
Location:	
Organization:	
Gender:	
<b>Introduction</b>	
We are conducting an evaluation of the Community Analysis Support System (CASS) on behalf of the UK-funded Humanitarian and Resilience Programme – Facility (HARP-F). We arranged this interview to obtain your perspectives on the quality, utility, and necessity of the CASS platform within the current humanitarian context in Myanmar. The interview is intended to last approximately 60 minutes and all responses are recorded anonymously. Feel free to skip any questions which may not be relevant. Thanks in advance for your participation.	
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Key questions</b>
<b>Utility of information</b>	
Relevance of insights	How timely, useful, and relevant is CASS analysis and reporting?
	How well does it contribute to humanitarian, political, and conflict analyses?
	How could the quality and content of analysis and reporting be improved?
Impact on decision-making	To what extent has CASS reporting informed your decision-making?
	Have you adapted your strategy because of CASS analysis?
	Are there examples of resulting modifications to your interventions?
<b>Diversity of engagement</b>	
Dissemination and outreach	Have you been involved in disseminating CASS reporting? How?
	Do you think CASS could improve its dissemination and outreach? How?
Accessibility and uptake	How accessible are CASS products to you and your colleagues?
	Are CASS products read and discussed in your organisation? How and why?

	How relevant and timely are CASS topics and reporting frequency? Why?
	How could the CASS platform be streamlined and/or improved?
Quality of mechanisms	
Research methods	How reliable are CASS findings? How do you determine their reliability? How do you triangulate with other sources?
	How inclusive is reporting regarding gender and marginalised groups?
	How confident are you that CASS manages data responsibly? Are you aware of CASS data sources?
Analysis and presentation	How tailored, concise, and structured are analyses and insights?
	Where do you see gaps in CASS analysis and reporting? Give examples.
	How could reporting templates and platforms be improved? Give examples.
Benchmarking with similar services	
Comparative Analysis	Does CASS fill a critical gap in country-level humanitarian analysis? If so, how?
	What other information services do you use to inform your work in humanitarian assistance? How do these compare to CASS?
	What lessons learned could be relevant for CASS systems and processes?

## Annex D: In-depth Interview Guide (CASS Staff)

Date:	
Interviewer:	
Location:	
Organization:	
Gender:	
<b>Introduction</b>	
We are conducting an evaluation of the Community Analysis Support System (CASS) on behalf of the UK-funded Humanitarian and Resilience Programme – Facility (HARP-F). We arranged this interview to better understand CASS’s origins, achievements, lessons learned providing analytic support in Myanmar. The interview is intended to last approximately 60 minutes and all responses are recorded anonymously. Feel free to skip any questions which may not be relevant. Thanks in advance for your participation.	
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Key questions</b>
<b>Inception and Development</b>	
Design Process	Describe the beginning of CASS? How was the design process?
	What type of consultations were conducted? Who was involved?
	How were systems structured to achieve primary objectives? Give examples.
Approach and Methodology	What were the reasons for selecting your current approach and methods?
	How are secondary sources selected and vetted? How is data validated?
	How could CASS’s methods and processes be improved in the future? Do you triangulate with other analysis platforms?
<b>Diversity of engagement</b>	
Dissemination and outreach	How does CASS promote its services? Which stakeholders are targeted?
	Do you think CASS could improve its dissemination and outreach? How?
	How could the CASS platform be streamlined and/or improved?
Accessibility and uptake	How accessible are CASS products to Myanmar organisations? Why?

	Is there evidence that CASS reporting is informing humanitarian strategy? Other strategies? How?
	How are thematic research topics selected? Who is involved in selection?
Achievements and Lesson Learned	
Delivery experience	What challenges or obstacles did CASS face in establishing the service?
	How has the evolving humanitarian context impact delivery? Give examples.
	What have been CASS's biggest achievements to date? Give examples.
Learning and adaptation	What lessons has CASS learned from project delivery to date? Give examples.
	To what extent is CASS incorporating lessons learned into its processes?
	How has adaptive management been built into CASS systems? Give examples.
Benchmarking with similar services	
Comparative Analysis	Does CASS fill a critical gap in country-level humanitarian analysis? If so, how?
	How does CASS user uptake compare to that of NRM or other COAR services?
	What lessons learned could be relevant for CASS systems and processes?