# HARP-F

Humanitarian Assistance and
Resilience Programme Facility

CROWN AGENTS
ACCELERATING SELF-SUFFICIENCY & PROSPERITY

# HARP-F
# FUNCTIONALITY
# REVIEW

**REVIEW**

An independent review
commissioned by the HARP
Facility

Authored by  the Operations
Partnership (OP)
February 2022.

## Table of Contents

## Table of Figures

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# 1. Executive Summary

The Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Programme Facility (HARP-F) has been the principal pillar of the UK's humanitarian assistance in Myanmar. Launched in 2016, the Facility acted as both a grant-funding mechanism and a knowledge platform for the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO, formerly DFID). It is managed through a contract with Crown Agents. The facility provides funding for humanitarian assistance on behalf of the UK government, with the FCDO involved in strategic decisions and some approvals, but has its own distinct identity and is managerially and operationally independent. Until 2021, the UK Aid branding was not used by HARP-F partners in relation to HARP-F funds, to allow the Facility impartiality. This contributed to perceptions that the HARP Facility and the FCDO were separate entities. As part of HARP-F knowledge component, a functional review was commissioned, in order to understand how the design, processes and structures of HARP-F have contributed to its ability to deliver humanitarian assistance and its impact, and to provide forward-looking recommendations that discuss how the benefits of HARP-F can be sustained in future funding for localised humanitarian responses in Myanmar. The Operations Partnership (OP) was selected to conduct the review. The review was designed to provide '**a systematic and impartial examination of humanitarian action intended to draw lessons to improve policy and practice and enhance accountability**'.

**Objective 1: Identify how HARP-F's structures and systems have evolved since 2016, and the impact of HARP-F systems on the provision of humanitarian assistance in areas of protracted crisis.**

Despite a slow start, HARP-F managed to adapt its systems and structure to cope with the requirements of an evolving complex emergency. HARP-F's structure allowed it to amend grants up to 10% of their existing value without requiring FCDO approval, and the Facility used this flexibility to keep programming quickly adapted to the current needs and reduce bureaucracy.

Key informants interviewed for this review highlighted the fact that HARP-F did not focus on details and administrative procedures. HARP-F grant management staff had the right mindset, focused on delivery of assistance, which allowed them to be adaptive when needed. The staff were open, responsive and easy to work with and above all understood the importance of timely decision-making and being adaptative to changing needs, while still maintaining safeguarding measures.

Overall, HARP-F was able continue to deliver its mandate in the face of both internal, organisational challenges such as the 2019 scale up, and major changes in the context, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 coup and the subsequent liquidity crisis.

**Objective 2: Understand how HARP-F's structure and ways of working have supported localisation though its engagement with national and international actors, both by intention and by result.**

Proximity was one of the key aspects of HARP-F's success regarding localisation. The presence of HARP-F staff in-country, the deployment of regional offices, and the provision of both direct funding and coaching/mentoring were perceived as very useful. Despite HARP-F shifting to a remote approach since 2020, the experience of HARP-F staff in-country allowed them to develop a strong understanding and experience of local context, which was beneficial in dealing with partners.

In addition, respondents saw the independence of Crown Agents as advantageous, limiting conflicts of interest. As a private contractor, Crown Agents is not competing for other funding with national organisations, in contrast to international non-governmental organisations.

In order to advance the localisation agenda and strengthen national leadership, donors should find ways to become closer to the organisations receiving grants in terms of location, language and personal relationship. HARP-F's allocation of resources (time and budget) supported its capacity enhancement activities, and in the future resources should be regarded as a key instrument in enhancing the capacity of national organisations. In particular, the support provided to international and national partners should be tailored to their different needs, to best use resources. International organisations primarily need funding for their programmes, but it is national organisations that benefit most from flexibility and

informality, which can ease issues around administration and paperwork. Also, national organisations are in greater need of training and capacity-enhancement activities.

**Objective 3: Gather lessons to inform the development of instruments for multi-year, multi-sector humanitarian and protracted crisis programming in Myanmar and elsewhere.**

HARP-F was not able to fully realise the benefits of multiyear funding since it only started issuing the bulk of its grants in 2019; however, it showed that it was possible to contract a large number of organisations, in both multiyear and shorter-term capacities, under a number of different grant opportunities (delivery, enabling, innovation and rapid response).

The shortened multiyear funding and capacity strengthening still provided opportunities to explore new ways of responding to and solving problems, and new models for working in complex protracted crises, including developing the Remote Management Partnership (RMP) toolkit, using non-traditional means of money transfer, and using partnerships with community volunteer groups with access to specific areas. These efforts have also provided learning that can be utilised by other humanitarian programmes going forward.

After a slow start, in the second half of its lifespan HARP-F was able to achieve significant results in supporting the localisation agenda. Unfortunately, it appears to have missed a window of opportunity due to early ending of the 'enabling grant' category (see p. 12) to push this agenda even further. Drivers to further support localisation need to be considered for future operations, and several aspects of the HARP-F model deserve to be pursued:

- FCDO should continue providing multi-year funding to local partners that is adequately flexible and adaptive to the environment.

- FCDO should consider allocating sufficient resources (time and budget) to its grant managers with priority given to capacity-enhancement activities. Additionally, the capacity support provided to international and national partners should be tailored to their different needs, to best use resources.

- FCDO should continue supporting tailored training activities, together with an online resource depository in the Myanmar language. The curriculum should include basic-, advanced- and expert-level training, to better meet evolving training needs.

- FCDO should continue its support to network(s) that can offer umbrella support for local civil society organisations (CSOs) in the fields of coordination and engagement with international fora.

For the most part, HARP-F delivered what could be expected, which is humanitarian assistance to affected populations through adaptive and flexible grant-funding windows, and providing capacity building and a knowledge platform for FCDO and the humanitarian community. Where perhaps work could have been improved was the definition of roles and responsibilities between HARP-F and FCDO, developing a clear definition for the 'instrument/funding facility' as well as its relationships to 'donors'. This could help refine the concepts that underlined the initial HARP-F approach.

HARP-F demonstrated that it could deliver when the right team was in place. Thus, in future, HARP-F could be considered as a concept for a **project** rather than an **instrument** to FCDO, which could deliver better results with greater clarity of roles and smoother implementation.

# 2. Introduction and Background

## 2.1. Context

The Operations Partnership (OP) was selected to conduct a review of the functionality of the Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Programme Facility (HARP-F), currently managed by Crown Agents. HARP-F is an instrument and funding facility established on behalf of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO; formerly DFID). Launched in 2016, the Facility acts as both a grant-funding mechanism and a knowledge platform for FCDO and the wider humanitarian community, and has been the principal pillar of the UK's humanitarian assistance in Myanmar; it is scheduled to conclude in mid-2022. During its period of operation, HARP-F has worked across key sectors to deliver assistance through national and international partners.

OP proposed the following approach for this review:

1. Inception (design of analytical framework and data collection tools)
2. Data collection and analysis (key informant interviews, online survey, group discussions and secondary data review)
3. Initial key findings
4. Remote workshop to present key findings and recommendations
5. Final Review report

## 2.2. Purpose and objectives

The aim of the functional review has been to understand how the design, processes and structures of HARP-F have contributed to its ability to deliver humanitarian assistance and its impact, and to provide recommendations that discuss how the benefits of HARP-F can be sustained after the conclusion of the Facility, in future funding for localised humanitarian response in Myanmar. There are three overarching objectives to this review:

- **Objective 1:** Identify how HARP-F's structures and systems have evolved since 2016, and the impact of HARP-F systems on the provision of humanitarian assistance in areas of protracted crisis.

- **Objective 2:** Understand how HARP-F'S structure and ways of working have supported localisation though its engagement with national and international actors, both by intention and by result.

- **Objective 3:** Gather lessons to inform the development of instruments for multi-year, multi-sector humanitarian and protracted crisis programming in Myanmar and elsewhere.

## 2.3. Analysis framework

The proposed analytical framework outlines the various themes, indicators and data sources that were used to inform the review. More details are available in *Annex A1: HARP-F Detailed Analytical Framework and Data Plan.*

## 2.4.    HARP-F evolution of structure and systems

| | |
|---|---|
| Structure and Systems Baseline | **Indicator 1.1**<br>Extent to which the initial processes and structures of the Facility were fit for purpose |
| Decision making processes | **Indicator 1.2**<br>Extent to which the decision-making model worked in practice |
| | **Indicator 1.3**<br>Extent to which formal and informal ways of working have been applied in an effective and efficient way |
| Evolution | **Indicator 1.4**<br>Extent to which HARP-F adapted its approach, structure and processes to the evolving context |
| | **Indicator 1.5**<br>Extent to which the HARP-F adaptations have been appropriate |
| | **Indicator 1.6**<br>Extent to which the HARP-F adaptations had an impact on its functioning |
| Usefulness | **Indicator 1.7**<br>Extent to which HARP-F supported/created/contributed to better humanitarian information systems |
| | **Indicator 1.8**<br>Extent to which HARP-F influenced the direction of humanitarian response in Myanmar |
| | **Indicator 1.9**<br>Extent to which HARP-F processes were viewed as impactful by its partners and the FCDO, in regards to HARP-F enabling humanitarian response, providing assurance and mitigating risk |
| | **Indicator 1.10**<br>Extent to which the grants, capacity enhancement and training support from a facility such as HARP-F were beneficial |
| Effectiveness | **Indicator 1.11**<br>Extent to which the grant-management system of HARP-F supported HARP-F partners to deliver better humanitarian response |
| | **Indicator 1.12**<br>Extent to which the structure of HARP-F supported successful delivery of humanitarian assistance at key stages of the Facility's existence |
| Support | **Indicator 2.1**<br>Extent to which HARP-F has supported national organisations throughout its lifespan |
| | **Indicator 2.2**<br>Extent to which HARP-F has supported national and INGO partners, in particular in the areas of risk, capacity development and grant management |
| | **Indicator 2.3**<br>Contribution of HARP-F to stronger national leadership of humanitarian response in Myanmar |
| | **Indicator 2.4**<br>Residual risks of financing national organisations for donors |
| | **Indicator 2.5**<br>Lessons learned in respect to the similarities and differences in support and engagement |
| Comparison with other similar funding instruments | **Indicator 3.1**<br>Ways that HARP-F can inspire/inform other grant-management instruments and grant-making facilities supported by the FCDO [and Crown Agents] |
| Other funding mechanisms in Myanmar | **Indicator 3.2**<br>Extent to which other funding mechanisms in Myanmar could learn from HARP-F |
| Recommendations | **Indicator 3.3**<br>Challenges, enabling factors and recommendations for the future |

## 2.5.    Methodology and limitations

### Overall Approach

OP has conducted a review of HARP-F functionality that provides 'a systematic and impartial examination of humanitarian action intended to draw lessons to improve policy and practice and enhance accountability' [ALNAP EHA Guide, 2005]. It has included a comprehensive technical review of the HARP-F model [structure and processes] and strategy, with the intention of providing analysis to inform strategic and programmatic decision-making, as well as demonstrating transparency and accountability to stakeholders.

OPs key principles during independent reviews are objectivity and data quality. These principles underpin the review process and ensure that recommendations are sufficiently valid and reliable based on robust data collection and analysis. The review process is guided by the analytical framework in Annex A1. OP has developed a thorough and rigorous approach to data collection and analysis. This process has been designed to take into account the current limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and is therefore fully remote, minimising physical interaction.

### Data collection methods, tools and sampling

The review used secondary and primary data collection methods, comprising quantitative and qualitative data, with an emphasis on data triangulation and verification across a range of data sources.

### 2.5.1.    Primary data collection

Primary data was collected through key informant interviews [KIIs], an online survey and group discussions [GDs].

### 2.5.2.    Secondary data review [SDR]

An extensive secondary data review was conducted to complement the primary data collection, focusing on comparison of baseline data against monitoring documentation. This included a comprehensive review of HARP-F project documents and monitoring data, grant-management procedures, contracts, quarterly and final reports, and any other relevant documents. Each document was processed and analysed, so as to constitute a complete data set, together with the primary data collected, and all findings from the SDR were cross-referenced against the primary data. A preliminary analysis was conducted to inform the analytical framework [see *Annex C1: Preliminary analysis SDR*]. Further to that, data was obtained from both the consultation workshops organised by HARP-F and other ongoing or past studies and reviews.

#### 2.5.2.1.    *Data collection tools*

**Key informant interviews:**

The review team conducted **37** in-depth interviews with key informants [KIs], either using the Zoom platform, or with phones when the internet connection was too slow. The interviews were structured on pre-defined guidelines, with a series of closed- and open-ended questions. The interviews were recorded in Zoom, and an interview note is available for each interview. For KI interview guides, please refer to Annexes B1-B5.

KIs were selected based on their involvement in, or in coordination with, HARP-F, as well as their role and experience, in four categories:

1. HARP-F staff

2. FCDO staff and peer agencies/donors in-country

3. International partners directly implementing or with downstream partners

4. National partners directly implementing or with downstream partners.

KIs were selected using a purposive sampling approach to ensure a diversity of respondents from these categories. Not all questions were asked of all KIs; rather, the interviews focused on a predefined set of the most relevant questions for each category of respondent. A summary analysis showed that more than 80 people had worked for HARP-F since it started, with substantial variation of roles (see *Annex E1: HARP-F Staff List Analysis*); **10** staff were selected as KIs based on their roles and their history with the Facility. HARP-F partners were selected based on a preliminary analysis (*Annex D1: Grant Analysis*), which identified **21** KIs out of the 55 partners across 76 grants that comprise the HARP-F portfolio. Finally, **six** other KIs were conducted with FCDO staff and other donors.

**Online survey:**

An online survey was presented to more than 100 HARP-F partners, HARP-F staff, FCDO staff, and Crown Agents staff, which included 14 closed questions based on the analytical framework, in order to provide quantitative data on the core themes and indicators. Although 47 respondents initially started the survey, only **27** surveys were completed and analysed.

**Group discussions:**

Semi-structured GDs were held with the staff of **8** selected HARP-F national partners in Rakhine and Kachin. **Four GDs** were conducted, each including 5-10 respondents. The purpose of the GDs was:

- To expand the number of staff who were able to contribute their experiences and opinions directly, and

- To provide an opportunity to explore in more depth specific topics arising from the analysis of the survey and KIIs.

### 2.5.2.2.    *Sampling size*

The table below details the total number of interviews/respondents planned for the review.

| Type of data collection | Type of respondents | # Int./Respondents |
|---|---|---|
| Key Informant Interviews | FCDO staff/others | 6 |
| Key Informant Interviews | HARP-F staff | 10 |
| Key Informant Interviews | HARP-F partners | 21 |
| Online survey | All | 27 |
| Group discussions | National partners | 8 |

*Table 1*

### 2.5.3.   Data collection and analysis process

Qualitative data from KIIs was organised by criteria, indicator and themes, as per the proposed analysis framework. This was done using the interview notes, GD notes and the online survey results, to minimise errors or bias. A structured analytical process was then followed:

- **Step 1**: Code the data. From each question set, a list of themes was identified and a coding system established using inductive and deductive methods.

- **Step 2**: Rank the data. The data in each key theme was ranked based on frequency and importance and exported into an analysis matrix.

- **Step 3**: Explore key themes and patterns. Data was cross-referenced and verified, to summarise the factors that contributed the most to success or good performance, the main challenges that impeded achievements, and any conclusions or recommendations. Comparison and triangulation between sources and methods allowed the team to review similarities and differences, areas of agreement or inconsistencies.

- **Step 4**: Discussion. Intermediary conclusions were derived for each criterion and topic, and discussed between OP team members to ensure agreement and consensus.

- **Step 5**: Articulate initial key findings.

### 2.5.4. Methodological challenges

The main challenges were as follows:

- KIIs were challenging to schedule due to a combination of connectivity issues and conflicting priorities for those in Myanmar.

- As the timeline of this review overlapped with other studies, there was a risk of duplication of effort, and creating interview fatigue amongst HARP-F staff and partners.

- Challenges in coordination impacted the timeline of the delivery of the outputs.

- Data analysis disaggregation from a geographical point of view was limited, as most of HARP-F's effort was focused on the regions of Kachin and Rakhine. Thus, analysis for any other part of Myanmar is anecdotal.

- Because HARP-F is a grant-making facility, some respondents to this review considered HARP-F to be a donor, as shown in some of the quotations used in this report. This is a misperception: the HARP Facility was an intermediary disbursing humanitarian funds on behalf of a donor, in this case the FCDO. Over its life, the Facility has made great efforts to explain the relationship between the FCDO, as the donor, HARP-F, as a funding facility, and implementing partners. However, owing to the close financial, managerial and technical relationship between HARP-F and its partners, the perception that HARP-F was a donor remained. The correct terminology is used throughout this report, but where the Facility is referred to as a donor in quotations, we have not corrected the words of key informants.

# 3. Findings

## 3.1. Structure and systems baseline

**Indicator 1.1: Extent to which the initial processes and structures of the Facility were fit for purpose**

**Inefficient processes:** HARP-F took a long time to take off, as the Crown Agents' grant management system was initially ill-suited to the partners' needs. Respondents from HARP-F and partners indicated that processes were inefficient, with approvals timings being long and not clear. Despite HARP-F being established in 2016, it was only in 2019 that the Facility had an efficient structure and grant system.

The *HARP-F Grants Manual* enumerates the types of funding provided by the Facility as follows:

1) Delivery grant: Humanitarian and resilience service delivery by medium to large partners.

2) Enabling grant: Grants providing an entry point to smaller, national organisations active in humanitarian work, with well-regarded, effective programming and reach, but lacking systems or a demonstrated track record.

3) Knowledge, Evidence and Innovation grant: Grants supporting areas where there are gaps in humanitarian delivery, and grants supporting projects aiming to demonstrate innovation in humanitarian system delivery in Myanmar.

4) Rapid Response Fund: The RRF provides rapid funding for national and international humanitarian agencies to respond to sudden-onset disasters. Partners are pre-qualified.

5) Capacity Enhancement: This mechanism provides funds to support national and local organisations receiving enabling or innovation grants, or organisations wishing to apply for grants who cannot currently qualify.

6) Transition grant: Work with partners to prepare them for the transition and support needed to access multiple funding streams as per the HARP-F localisation agenda.[1]

New management: In 2019, there was a dramatic change in HARP-F's ways of working, including putting in place processes for review, establishment of the grant system, and Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL). In addition, more resources were mobilised, including more technical resources. These changes enabled the current results of 55 grantees and GBP 75 million in grants disbursed through the Facility. As of 2019, HARP-F had the relevant structures and systems in place, although some fine-tuning of the MEAL approach was ongoing. In addition, during mid-2019, HARP-F conducted a baseline Organisational Capacity Assessment (OCA). Based on this assessment, HARP-F's capacity-building efforts were formulated. However, there were limitations to 2021 funding (GBP 13 million for grants) due to FCDO procurement rules, which led to the end of the 'enabling grant' category, and a reduction in HARP-F staff. The following (Figure 1) details the HARP-F grant process as defined in the *Grants Manual*:
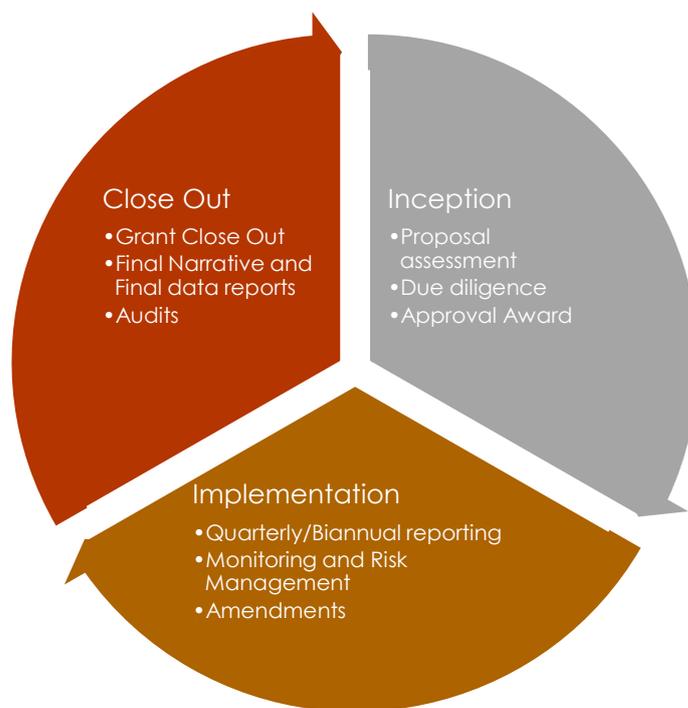


In addition, Crown Agents utilises a bespoke                    platform, providing a web portal to facilitate

*Figure 1*

grant and programme management: the Grant Management Information System (GMIS), provides functionality to assist in all aspects of the grant-management process. Its accessibility extends to donors, and prospective and actual grant partners. However, as mentioned earlier, this platform did not fit HARP-F's needs, and the team had to develop a completely new system.

The eligibility criteria for HARP-F funding were based on a weighting tool used to score the submissions. The weighting tool is composed of the following: (1) Relevance & Impact (2) Regional Context (3) Budget (4) Technical (5) M&E. Applicant eligibility for each of the grants was detailed in their respective concept notes.

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[1] Transition grants were initially part of the delivery grant category, but later were distinguished separately.

Decision making processes

*Indicator 1.2: Extent to which the decision-making model worked in practice*

**Fast decision-making:** HARP-F was able to provide quick and clear decisions, reached through constant communication and consultation with partners. According to KIs from both international and national partners, the decisions reached were appropriate to the partners' and the humanitarian needs. In addition, promptness and the use of informal communication channels engendered quick decision making.[2] International and national KIs reported that decisions were made in a timely manner, and communicated clearly. According to international partner KIs, communication was often done through a focal point, which clarified for partners which person to contact and for which topic. However, the method of communication differed from one partner to another:



Figure 2

some primarily used emails, others have relied on phone calls, according to the partners' convivence.
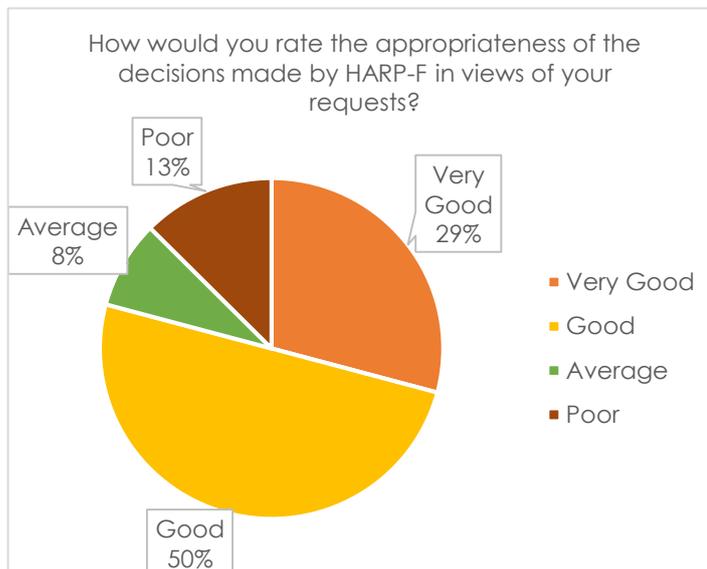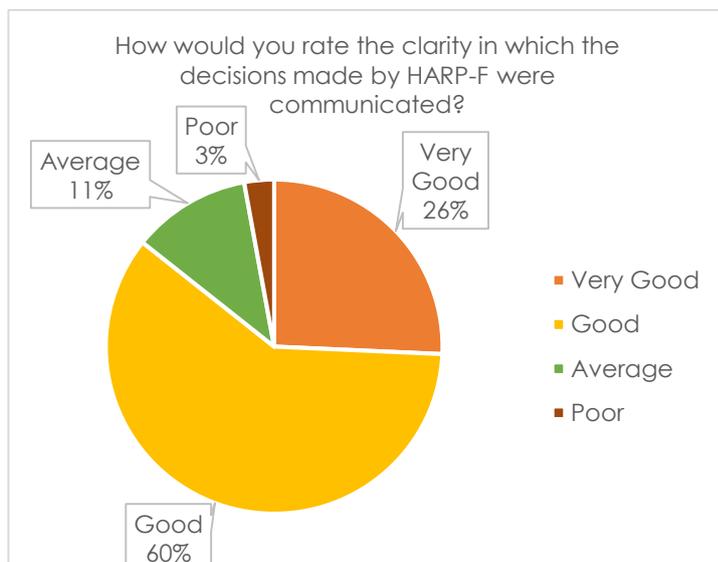
As shown in Figure 2, results from the online survey show that the vast majority of respondents rated the appropriateness of the decisions and the clarity with which these decisions were communicated 'good' or 'very good'.

**Proactive engagement and clear communication from HARP-F:** The collaborative relationship between HARP-F and its partners in reaching decisions was evident in respondents' interviews. According to partners, this collaborative relationship in decision-making was driven by the way the HARP-F team worked with partners: through a close, hands-on approach, using clear communication, and making the team available to partners for discussion or questions. One national partner respondent said: *'They always keep in touch with us via email as well as telephone. They also keep their phone available so that we can communicate with them at any time'.* The effectiveness in communication was also attributed to the mutual understanding between HARP-F staff and partners of the importance of immediate response. The presence of HARP-F in the same time zone also helped in fast communication.

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[2] Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Programme Facility (HARP-F) *COVID-19 Response Evaluation*

Figure 3

**How would you rate the clarity in which the decisions made by HARP-F were communicated?**

- Very Good 26%
- Good 60%
- Average 11%
- Poor 3%

Legend:
- Very Good
- Good
- Average
- Poor

Partners expressed their satisfaction [Figure 3] with, and appreciation of, the level of communication and proactiveness of HARP-F staff in following up on issues and providing regular updates. This was especially the case during the liquidity crisis; one international partner explained HARP-F's communication during the crisis as follows: *'HARP-F were very proactive in reaching out to us, for a time, almost on a weekly basis to ask what the cash situation was like and how we were dealing with it and what were our challenges'*.

**Trusting and understanding relationship between HARP-F and partners:** A number of respondents noted the quick response time and decision-making process of HARP-F in comparison to traditional donors. Evidence from International and national KIs indicates that HARP-F staff understood the importance of a timely response, an understanding rooted in their presence in-country and understanding of the context, and also in a close and trusting relationship with partners. According to international partners, there were focal points with whom they could discuss issues, requests and amendments. This understanding also meant that administrative issues were kept to minimum, keeping the bureaucratic burden light.

For example, according to one international partner talking about HARP-F reactions during the liquidity crisis: *'HARP-F was the only donor […] that understood the importance of providing financial support, while many donors put transfers on hold and exacerbated the cash-flow crisis'*.

This trusting relationship also meant that when there was an established relationship between HARP-F and partners, which sped up processes and amendments. According to KIs from HARP-F staff, HARP-F has created an environment that fosters trust with local partners. For example, one international partner noted that, in regards to some amendments (for example, delivery chain risk map) HARP-F would give the go ahead with a written statement even before the final sign off, which enabled partners to begin implementation.

**FCDO involvement in decision-making:** The role of HARP-F versus FCDO and the relationship between the two was often not clear for partners. This highlights the miscommunication around FCDO and HARP-F and their roles. Many respondents indicated that HARP-F was able to achieve with partners much more than FCDO could have in terms of overall support and understanding of the local context, and it was often mentioned that FCDO's role in decision-making caused delays, with some organisations suggesting giving more autonomy to HARP-F in decision making.

*Indicator 1.3: Extent to which formal and informal ways of working have been applied in an effective and efficient way*

**Changing ways of working quickly when needed:** The informality and flexibility of HARP-F processes allowed for quick adaptation. Interviews from both international and national partners indicated that formal processes were still applied, but they were not regarded as a hindrance. This, again, was primarily attributed to the supportive staff at HARP-F, who understood the importance of responding quickly rather than focusing on administrative issues. When new ways of working were being adopted, guidance documents were issued detailing options and criteria for partners, ensuring due diligence and a formal process was followed. Respondents from national organisations also noted that easy communication allowed them to clarify any concerns or issues they had.

This flexibility was especially beneficial as the working environment in Myanmar was challenging, including insecurity and access constraints. There were primary situations that demanded flexibility and adaptiveness, including an increase in remote management: [1] the armed clashes between the Myanmar Tatmadaw and armed groups in Northern Rakhine in January 2019, [2] the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020, and [3] the military coup in February 2021. These events each triggered their own associated crises, such as the liquidity crisis following the coup, which required coordination, adaptation and innovative ways of working and responding.

The ability of partners to change operational modalities relatively quickly, with HARP-F support and approval, successfully illustrated the flexibility and adaptiveness of the approach adopted by HARP-F staff. For example, during COVID-19, partners reported that the facility was quick to respond through the rapid grant amendment process. This enhanced the humanitarian response, including keeping programmes relevant to the context and arising needs, and reaching more people in need in a timely manner. Interviews revealed that when COVID-19 hit, many partners needed to do massive programming, and HARP-F processes allowed it. In addition, HARP-F generated and demonstrated a fast process of partnership creation with grantees.[3]

**Innovative ways to respond to crises:** HARP-F staff worked with partners to find solutions and innovative ways to respond to crises. While some organisations opted to stop working post-coup and during the subsequent liquidity crisis, HARP-F moved quickly to address the liquidity crisis and explored different ways to access cash; in July 2021, HARP-F issued a guidance document on alternative payment options for partners. Respondents from both national and international organisations noted that HARP-F had proactively contacted them to find ways to support them, and was one of the first funders to come up with workable alternatives. For example, when partners could not receive money from HARP-F during the liquidity crisis, HARP-F turned to the use of non-traditional banking systems.

Other innovative aspects were found in cash and WASH programming, with the use of e-vouchers started by a few HARP-F partners. Moreover, the implementation of the Action for Community Engagement (ACE), that places community ownership and decision making in the centre of WASH service delivery, became part of the Rakhine WASH Working Group's strategic framework and has been adopted by other implementing organisations.[4] In fact, the 'innovation grant' category was set up by HARP-F to explore new ways to deliver humanitarian assistance to affected populations in Myanmar, build on existing pilots, and take successful small-scale innovations to scale. Respondents indicated that HARP-F supported scale-up in humanitarian responses when needed.

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[3] Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Programme Facility (HARP-F) *COVID-19 Response Evaluation*
[4] FCDO Myanmar *HARP-F Mid-Term Review*, October 2020

**Delays in financial requests or amendments:** Despite the flexibility and speed with which decisions were made within HARP-F, respondents, particularly international partners, noted that when delays took place, they often associated it with an upstream issue (e.g., approvals from FCDO), as any amendments exceeding 10% of the value of an existing grant required FCDO approval. One illustrative quote from an international partner noted that *'the process of finalising particular amendments was not [quick]. Sometimes it felt like it is an upstream problem, relating to FCDO'*. According to HARP-F staff, the facility specifically utilised the 10% margin to limit any potential delays.

## 3.2.   Evolution

*Indicator 1.4: Extent to which HARP-F adapted its approach, structure and processes to the evolving context*
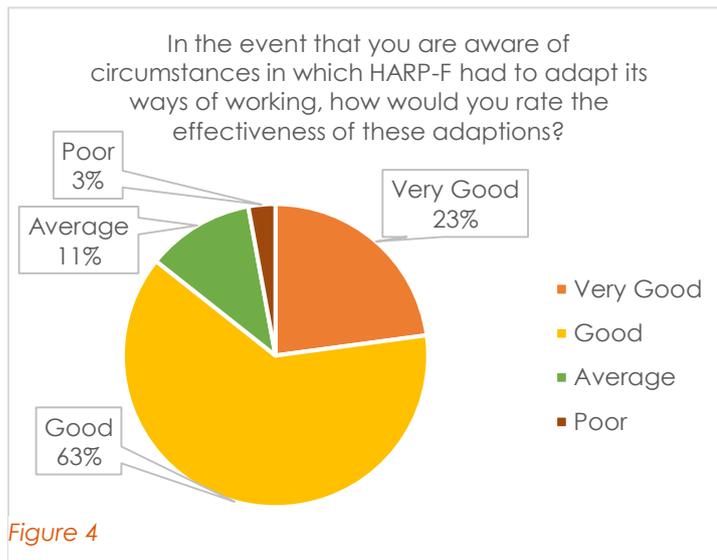
**Changing priorities according to the needs:** Some of the main adaptations and evolutions in HARP-F came through the appointment of the new management in 2019. Despite HARP-F having already been managed relatively remotely by the regional office, there was a more intensified shift towards remote management at this time.[5] The level of remote management increased again post-COVID. However, some HARP-F international staff remained in Myanmar throughout COVID and the coup, so consistent international presence was maintained, and national staff continued to work throughout. Also, HARP-F and FCDO agreed that the Rakhine office would close post-COVID, but pre-coup.

The introduction of the RMP toolkit was another part of this overall trend towards more remote management. Evidence gathered for this review shows that as COVID-19 and the coup meant more humanitarian work needed to be conducted remotely, HARP-F needed to adapt its grants, as some partners needed top-up funding to reprogramme or expand to new geographical areas, and some needed to reallocate money elsewhere; on top of this came the liquidity crisis, which required innovative ways to respond to humanitarian needs. Some respondents said HARP-F was on the only funder that provided top-up funding during COVID-19, though this could not be fully verified.

According to KIs with international and national partners, the liquidity crisis proved to be one of the most challenging moments for HARP-F operations and partners. However, the Facility's ability to adapt swiftly allowed HARP-F to continue to deliver a relevant humanitarian response during this crisis. Partners were able to access cash (for example through the Hundi network) and continue operations while maintaining due diligence. In July 2021, HARP-F issued guidance for documenting alternative payment options for partners, including non-traditional means. One international partner respondent said: *'There was a point earlier this year when we knew liquidity would be a problem. We needed to use non-traditional cash mechanisms, in order to move cash around the country. HARP-F put out a statement saying that if you are planning to do so, you must inform us and get approval to do so.'*

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[5] Kachin and Rakhine HARP-F suboffices

According to the online survey (**Error! Reference source not found.**), more than 90% of respondents rated the effectiveness of adaptations 'good' or 'very good'. Overall, the adaptations brought about with these contextual changes strengthened structures and enhanced capacities within HARP-F and its partners, partly due to the increase in remote working. The flexibility of the grant system meant that some partners were able to transform some activities into COVID-19 response activities. This mitigated the impact of COVID-19 on targeted communities, and allowed partners to extend engagement with them.

In the event that you are aware of circumstances in which HARP-F had to adapt its ways of working, how would you rate the effectiveness of these adaptions?

Poor 3%
Average 11%
Very Good 23%
Good 63%

- Very Good
- Good
- Average
- Poor

*Figure 4*

*Indicator 1.5: Extent to which the HARP-F adaptations have been appropriate*

**Constant engagement when amendments were needed:** The project period after the new management was appointed in 2019 was marked by arising contextual challenges, while issues such as limited access and liquidity added more difficulties for partners. However, the new ways of working under HARP-F proved to be beneficial in adapting to the new challenges.

KIIs with HARP-F staff and international and national partners indicated that HARP-F staff's positive and supportive attitude towards partners allowed for quick and appropriate adaptations; for example, redirecting funding or changing program focus. HARP-F staff understood the importance of delivering aid in difficult circumstances, and worked toward finding solutions. This meant that programs remained relevant to needs, and assured continuity of activities and humanitarian response.

One international partner respondent said: *'The morning of the coup, I was on a call at 9am Bangkok time, which is around 3am UK time, with the director of HARP-F, talking about security procedures and what to do. In the moment we needed to adapt, they were with us.'*

**Adaptation to partners' needs:** Because HARP-F was designed to be flexible (not rigid within a structure) and adaptive (changing in respect to the context), it placed no specific limitations on how partners should be flexible or adaptive, or under what circumstances, making it quite malleable and agile to the partners' needs. Partners have indicated that HARP-F welcomed changes to initial agreements such as a shift in focus, an increase in geographical coverage or an expansion to different regions, as long as the change was clearly justified and discussed. HARP-F's guidance note on amendments states that partners must submit an Amendment Request Letter, articulating a sound justification for all amendments. Some adaptations faced challenges; for example, evidence from the *Myanmar Remote Partnership Report* shows that the RMP toolkit was sometimes also considered ill-adapted to partners' needs because it was insufficiently detailed. The grants management team concluded that the toolkit was not good enough, and as a result, HARP-F senior managers did not prioritise its roll out.

**Adaptations ensured accountability:** The flexibility described above meant that partners could mould projects to fit current, evolving needs. While adapting to the context, HARP-F also encouraged rigorous feedback mechanisms that meant partners remained accountable to people in need and donors. In addition, the long-term funding cycle allowed partners to have a rigorous and structured accountability system (which takes time and resources to set up, including accountability and MEAL trainings). According to KIs from national organisations, when partners signed a contract with HARP-F, they were obligated to make sure they were aware of regulations such as child safeguarding, Do No Harm and human rights. Additionally, even when local partners did not reach the threshold for accountability indicators, HARP-F would coach them through the process to ensure that they met the required levels of accountability.

According to one national-partner respondent: '*HARP-F gave trainings on feedback response mechanism to the M&E officers which helped a lot in understanding accountability and enhancing skills to take accountability in our projects. Thanks to it, about 80% of our staff are now ready to take on projects and share knowledge to our junior staff as well*'.

*Indicator 1.6: Extent to which the HARP-F adaptations had an impact on its functioning*

**Contextual changes led to new ways of working:** Projects were interrupted by armed conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic, which meant that activity implementation had to pause multiple times, affecting projects' momentum, and extra effort was needed to hit target achievements within the project time frame. This meant that most activities had to rely more on community leadership and initiative.

HARP-F introduced the RMP toolkit and RRF in 2019, in order to provide humanitarian assistance. These measures were utilised during COVID-19, and improved humanitarian response and adapted programming to the increasing number of people in need.

Access issues due to COVID-19 and the coup led to a push for further localisation. Also, subsequent adaptations such as the introduction of the RMP toolkit meant that responsibility for delivering assistance remained local. For many partners, a significant or complete reliance on national staff for implementation was always evident. In some instances, like in Kachin, HARP-F actively shifted the responsibility of responding to the humanitarian crises almost fully to partners, especially local ones, which increased ownership of project activities at the community level, while HARP-F's presence was primarily to support.

**Contextual changes led to increased reporting to FCDO:** According to respondents, adaptations made due to COVID-19 and the overall contextual situation in Myanmar also increased requests for reporting and sitreps to FCDO, which were already quite exhaustive pre-COVID. This reporting was an added burden to partners, and required much more time.

## 3.3. Usefulness

*Indicator 1.7: Extent to which HARP-F supported/created/contributed to better humanitarian information systems*
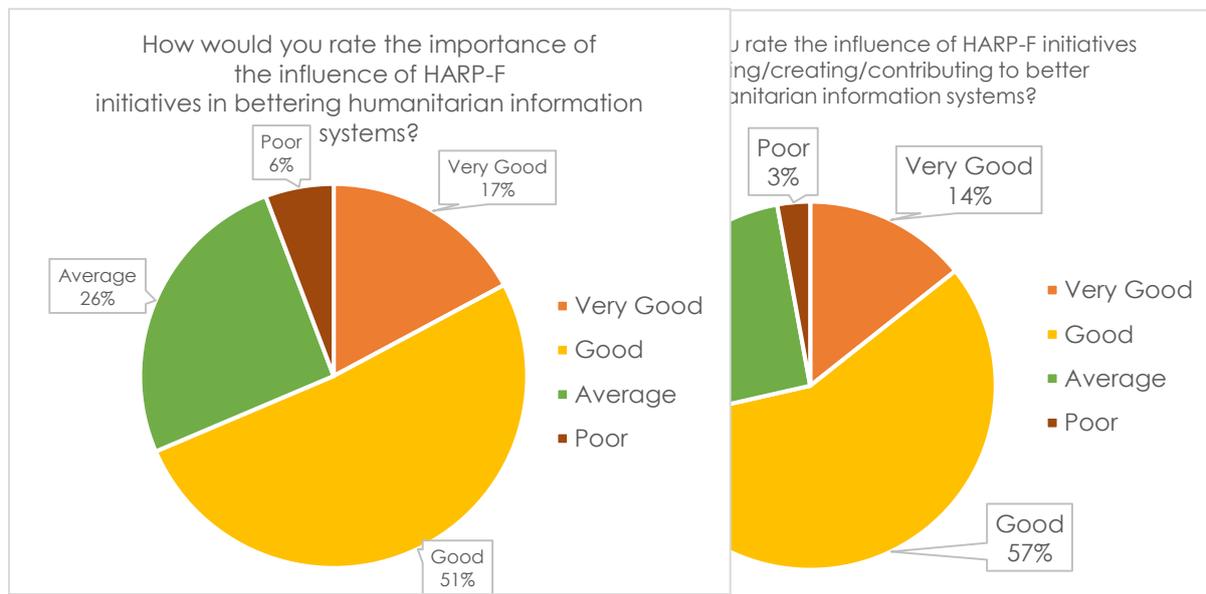


*Figure 6*

**Contextual information:** The majority of respondents (71%, **Error! Reference source not found.**) rated the influence of HARP-F initiatives in supporting, creating and contributing to better humanitarian information systems 'good' or 'very good'. The importance of these systems was similarly highly rated (Figure 6). The Community Analysis Support System (CASS) was one of the most mentioned and appreciated humanitarian information systems during the interviews. CASS was a HARP-F funded resource for the humanitarian community in Myanmar, and was one of the key sources of information on the operating context; it was accessed by a wide audience and provided detailed, updated information on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the ground in Rakhine at a time when most international actors faced severe access constraints. CASS was noted by respondents as particularly beneficial in disseminating contextual information. This was also echoed in the CASS review, which found that 65% of survey respondents said CASS was useful for their work. CASS was especially beneficial for international organisations, whereas national organisations depended more on local sources to inform interventions. The parent company of CASS, the Center for Operational Analysis and Research (COAR), had offered a similar service in Syria, but the need for what became CASS was identified by HARP-F, which offered significant support for the establishment of CASS, which is a stand-alone service.

Given that HARP-F and partners needed to be flexible and easily adapt to the arising circumstances, they relied heavily on electronic communications methods. According to KIIs with international and national partners, HARP-F disseminated information through the use of videoconferencing, emails, and social media platforms (such as Viber). However, while information was consistently flowing upstream (primarily to FCDO) little effort was directed into channelling information downstream. More could have been done to facilitate information sharing with/among partners.

*Indicator 1.8: Extent to which HARP-F influenced the direction of humanitarian response in Myanmar*

**HARP-F's work influenced localisation:** HARP-F provided direct funding for national organisations and capacity-enhancement activities, allowing grantees to stretch their resources and strengthening their ability to help the most vulnerable. In addition, HARP-F's localisation processes prior to and during COVID-19 enhanced the response. Small organisations received mentorship and organisational development support. One such organisation in Rakhine State started their own project in early 2019, after being incubated.[6]

KIs from national partners also noted that HARP-F had facilitated the response to emergencies for local organisations. According to one KI: '*The main problem with local organisation is that they don't have budget and a connection with donors. If an emergency occurs, we need donations that don't need time to write [a] proposal and wait for approvals in order to deliver immediate response. If HARP-F has a record of organisations, they can connect the organisations with the donors so that immediate response can be delivered to the required communities*'.

National partner KIs also noted that HARP-F had granted partners the ability to make decisions in regards to budgets and money transferring methods, which in turn increased the ownership of local partners over the projects. According to the KIs, ownership also increased with the freedom of partners to adapt without any restriction to meet communities changing needs.

**HARP-F had considerable influence on the WASH sector:** HARP-F was the largest funder of WASH programming in Myanmar; as of October 2020, 66% of its allocated grants were for projects wholly or partially delivering WASH, according to FCDO's October 2020 *HARP-F Mid-Term Review*. The review notes that HARP-F positively influenced WASH programming by sharing technical expertise and presenting evidence and learning to other actors. Its technical support was recognised as very strong by national organisation's respondents. One demonstrative example from the *Mid-Term Review* is that HARP-F held Myanmar's first ever Humanitarian-Development WASH event in Rakhine in March 2019, which was attended by all WASH agencies in the area. In addition, HARP-F produced a collaborative WASH handbook, which will continue to be used post HARP-F.

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[6] Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Programme Facility (HARP-F) *COVID-19 Response Evaluation*

*Indicator 1.9: Extent to which HARP-F processes were viewed as impactful by its partners and the FCDO, in regards to HARP-F enabling humanitarian response, providing assurance and mitigating risk*

**Risk identification and management was a priority in the workings of HARP-F:** More than 70% of survey respondents rated the effectiveness of HARP-F processes in mitigating risks 'good' or 'very good' (Figure 7). The Facility mitigated risks by having a better understanding of the context, and putting in place adequate processes and trainings for its partners, including maintaining a risk register, following anti-money laundering processes, and providing risk-mitigation training. Some of HARP-F's risk-mitigation processes were detailed in a risk management strategy. According to national partner KIs, HARP-F provided training for risk mitigation and shared information for
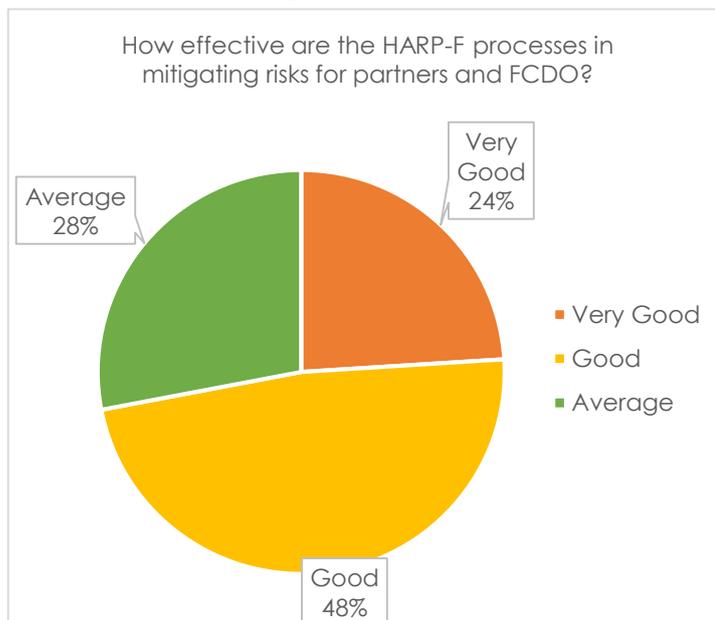
How effective are the HARP-F processes in mitigating risks for partners and FCDO?

Very Good 24%

Average 28%

Good 48%

Very Good
Good
Average

*Figure 7*

security updates, all of which helped in managing risks.

The HARP-F team developed a risk register for the programme, which assessed risks in six categories: (1) Context, (2) Delivery, (3) Safeguarding, (4) Operational, (5) Fiduciary, and (6) Reputational. In conjunction with this register, the HARP-F risk management framework for the programme was in full compliance with Crown Agents' procedures and FCDO's risk management approach. The framework comprised four areas: communication, documentation and evidence, professional judgement and common language of risk.

National organisations shoulder a disproportionate level of the risk associated with operating in a protracted crisis,[7] and KI interviews show that HARP-F worked to prioritise the safety of partners, for example by avoiding requests that might endanger the staff, or, according to one national partner, choosing more expensive options for assistance delivery which better ensured staff safety. With this risk-management approach, HARP-F provided a safe buffer to FCDO, allowing for a greater risk appetite.

HARP-F provided FCDO with reporting requests through the MEAL team during the reporting quarters. The MEAL team also contributed to other *ad hoc* information requests by FCDO. However, the *Remote Partnership Report* noted that FCDO felt out of touch with some issues, including programme quality, and less equipped to be fully accountable to ministers in London than they wanted to be.

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[7] *The Power Structure of Localisation: Recommendations From HARP-F Partner Consultations In October 2021*

HARP-F prioritised humanitarian needs: Almost 90% [Figure 8] of respondents rated the effectiveness of HARP-F processes in enabling humanitarian response 'good' or 'very good'. Both international and national partner KIs indicated this effectiveness was a result of HARP-F staff prioritising humanitarian needs and enabling partners to be as responsive as possible.

According to one international partner: '*The ethos of the relationship never felt that we have to deliver for HARP-F and the contract, it felt we are here to deliver to the humanitarian needs. [...] For other funding [instruments] there are so many indicators and regulations, and so little flexibility, which makes you feel like the entire job is to make your programme feed into the parameters that were set at the beginning, and that is the biggest difference*'.
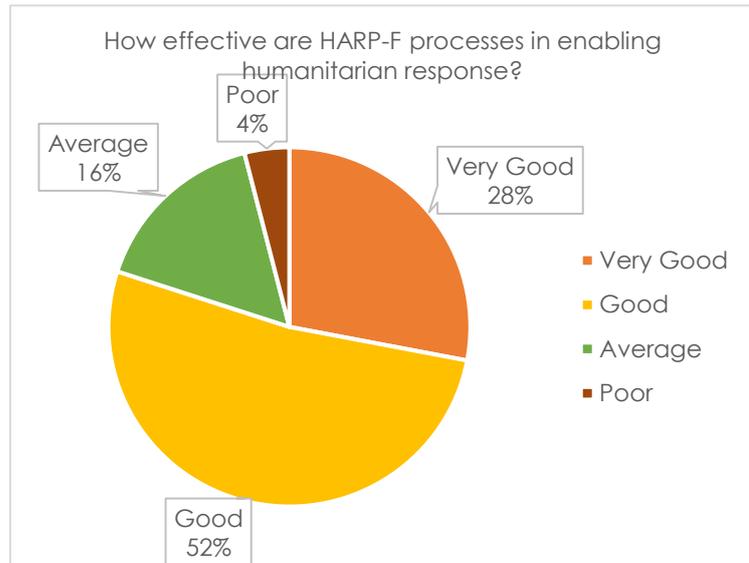


Figure 8

*Indicator 1.10: Extent to which the grants, capacity enhancement and training support from a facility such as HARP-F were beneficial*
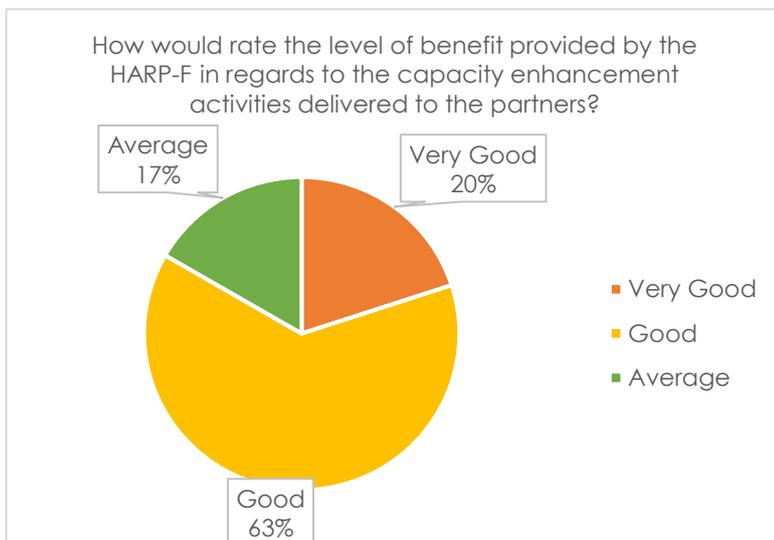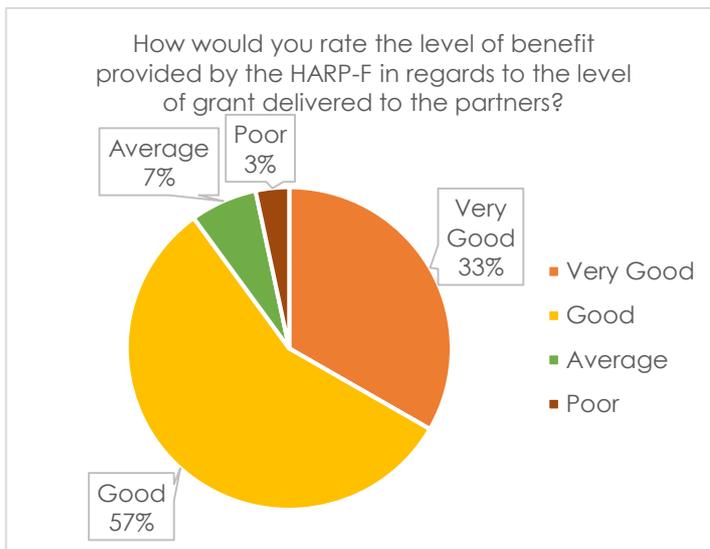


Figure 9

HARP-F provided local organisations with long-term skills and the tools to comply with donors: Respondents [Figure 9] were overall positive about HARP-F training and capacity building, though national partners and their staff reported more benefit than international partners. Training and capacity enhancement activities moved to a remote approach following the coup and COVID-19. In the survey conducted for this review, the vast majority of respondents rated the capacity enhancement (96%) and training activities (90%) 'good' or 'very good' in terms of their benefits (Figure 10).

Part of the success of some of the projects funded by HARP-F (despite the challenges such as COVID-19, the military coup and the lack of experience in similar projects) was linked to the training provided by HARP-F and other stakeholders, such as emergency response training. That being said, national partner KIs reported that some trainings were redundant, as they were already given by other organisations, and some were quite basic. However, overall, the quality of the trainings and the trainers were praised by respondents.

How would you rate the level of benefit provided by the HARP-F in regards to the level of grant delivered to the partners?

- Average 7%
- Poor 3%
- Very Good 33%
- Good 57%

Legend:
- Very Good
- Good
- Average
- Poor

*Figure 10*

The kind of combination support provided by HARP-F is characterised by being sustainable, particularly for national partners, meaning that organisations are supported in strengthening their operational and technical capacity in order to be able to access direct funding and enhance humanitarian response. According to one national partner, *'HARP-F provided us with capacity enhancement trainings on financial management, M&E training and many more for our organisation. Thanks to the trainings, the organisations get to improve their capacity to stand alone in future'*.

Capacity enhancement also improved the ability of local partners in project implementation. For example, WASH partners reported that HARP-F had been a key supporter of structured organisational capacity development, and had helped them develop some of the capacities that are key for management of international-donor supported humanitarian projects.[8] Moreover, it supported the development of technical skills such as financial management and MEAL, thanks to the enabling grant scheme.

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[8] *The HARP-F Multi-year WASH Funding Strategic Review*

How would rate the level of benefit provided by the HARP-F in regards to the training activities delivered to the partners?

- Very Good 27%
- Good 50%
- Average 20%
- Poor 3%
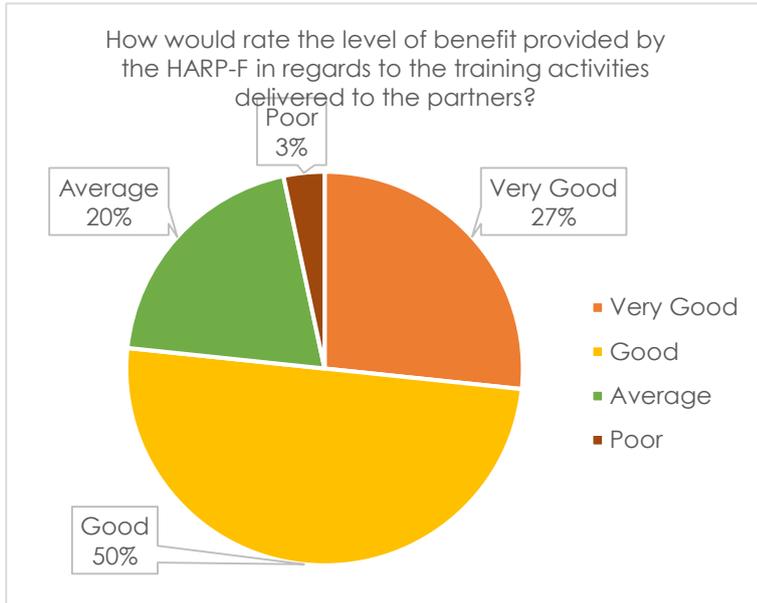
Legend:
- Very Good
- Good
- Average
- Poor

Figure 11

Beyond the grants, capacity enhancement and training support, respondents appreciated the support that was provided one-to-one through personal consultations, and this kind of support was primarily achievable due to the presence of HARP-F in-country and the overall availability of staff for any assistance. For example, HARP-F would provide help to partners to understand forms and templates.

As one international partner put it: *'The dual role of HARP-F, being a donor and a funder and having some operational capacity, adds a massive benefit. Being in Myanmar in a physical office, building relationships with people and having face to face meetings has been really helpful'.*

## 3.4.    Effectiveness

*Indicator 1.11: Extent to which the grant management system of HARP-F supported HARP-F partners to deliver better humanitarian response*

**HARP-F's presence in-country has added value:** Results from the online survey [Figure 12] show that more than 80% of respondents rated the grant management system in supporting partners 'good' or 'very good'. KIIS responses noted the factors which have enabled the grant management system of HARP-F to achieve such positive results. According to national partners respondents, HARP-F's presence in-country and local language skills added value to the grant management system, allowed for easy communication and strong understanding between HARP-F and partners.
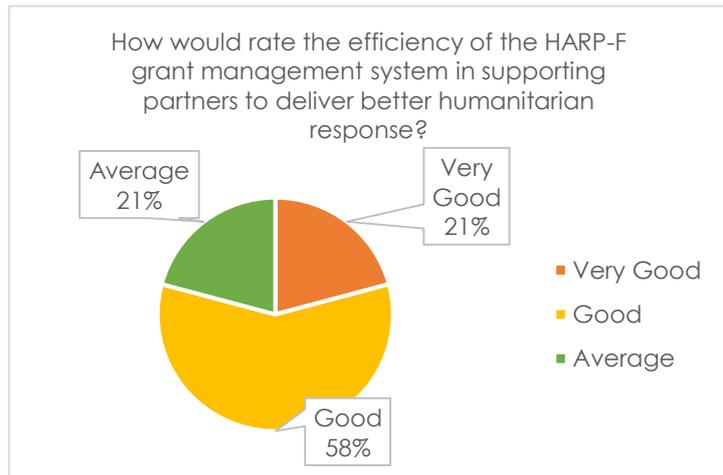


How would rate the efficiency of the HARP-F grant management system in supporting partners to deliver better humanitarian response?

- Average 21%
- Very Good 21%
- Good 58%

Legend:
- Very Good
- Good
- Average

Figure 12

*Indicator 1.12: Extent to which the structure of HARP-F supported successful delivery of humanitarian assistance at key stages of the Facility's existence*

**Operational advantage of private-sector management:** According to some international partners interviewed for this review, the Facility was seen as independent and having few conflicts of interest, because HARP-F was run by a private contractor. This showed the benefit of having Crown Agent as the operational manager as it was solely dedicated to delivering the HARP mandate without internal political interferences.
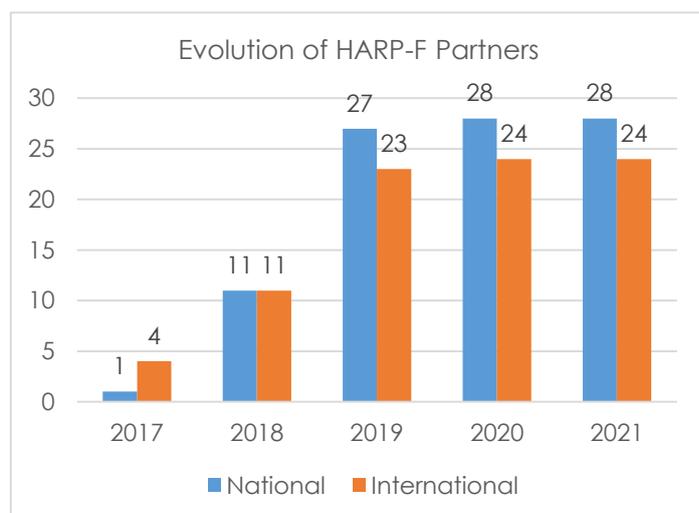
However, operational challenges, such as high staff turn-over at HARP-F at the start of the project, meant that the Facility did not reach its potential in the first 2.5 years, in terms of supporting organisations to deliver humanitarian assistance.[9] The arrival of new management in 2019 brought a new grant system, allowing a dramatic increase the number of grants delivered. Evidence from international and national partner KIIs indicates that throughout the project, HARP-F staff also worked to prioritise humanitarian response, understanding the complex environment and the need to adapt and change programming to better fit the needs of affected people.

Data collected during interviews with partners for this review shows that the trusting relationship between HARP-F and partners had an impact on the relationship between partners and the targeted population. According to one national partner: *'HARP-F is very flexible with their project … [L]ocal organisations are working in an environment where we don't know the exact need[s] of the community. Being flexible strengthens the implementation of the partners. Other organisations are very strict about their policies and hence the partners are working with constant stress'.*

## 3.5.   Support

*Indicator 2.1: Extent to which HARP-F has supported national organisations throughout its lifespan*

**HARP-F grants, especially enabling grants for national organisations, were important means of achieving localisation and the capacity building support:** According to quarterly reports from 2017-2021, 28 national partners were directly supported by HARP-F. As shown in Figure 13, in 2017 HARP-F only provided grants for five partners (one national and four international) however the numbers increased significantly in 2019 with the new management team. By 2021, HARP-F had supported 28 national partners and 24 international partners (including closed grants).



*Figure 13*

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[9] Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Programme Facility (HARP-F) *COVID-19 Response Evaluation*, September 2021

Figure 14 shows that the majority of grants given to national partners were enabling grants. For smaller national organisations, these types of grants are a particularly important means of achieving localisation and building capacity. However, there are few examples of national organisations transitioning from enabling grants to delivery grants (like KMSS). Although enabling grants were ended in 2020, the Knowledge management component from HARP-F provided further support to partners with commissioned research, webinars and partner consultations. Moreover, the training and enhancement team continued to run trainings for local organisations online, as well as through the development of an online training platform.
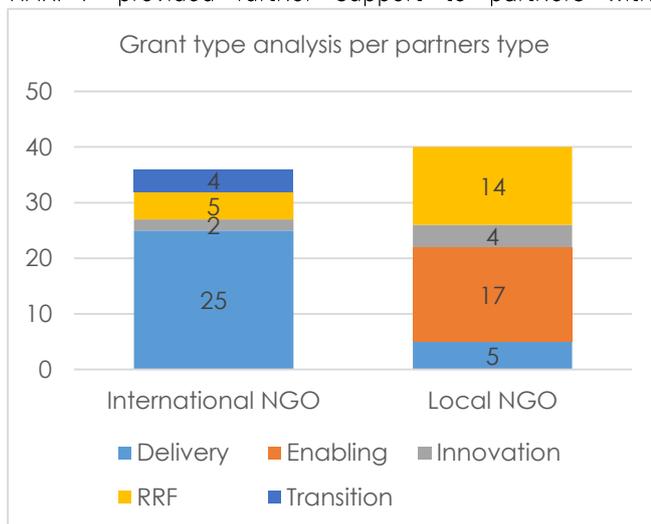


*Figure 14*

*Indicator 2.2: Extent to which HARP-F has supported national and INGO partners, in particular in the areas of risk, capacity development and grant management*
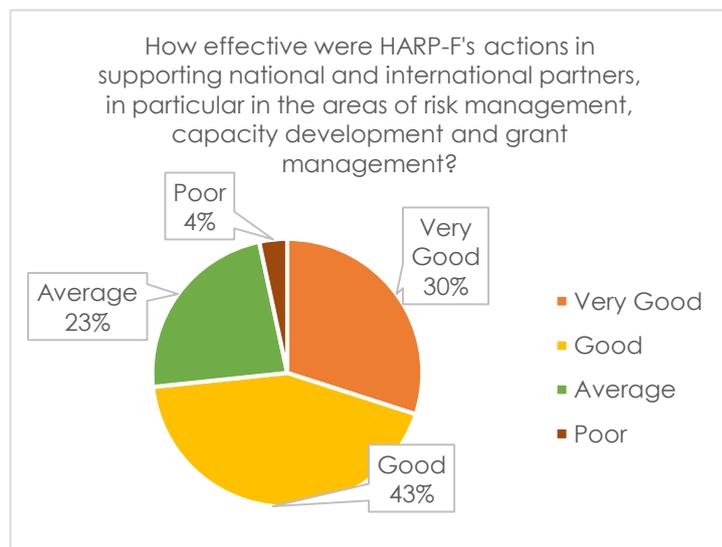


*Figure 15*

The combination support of HARP-F being a funding instrument and providing capacity and training activities was highly valued, and was characterised by having supportive staff that provided tailored consulting when needed: Overall, the support in areas of risk, capacity development and grant management has been sufficient, and according to the survey 76% of respondents rated the support 'good' or 'very good' (Error! Reference source not found.). The support provided by HARP-F was described as sustainable, which entailed providing organisations with adequate training and capacity enhancement activities that ensured the improvement of internal capacity, and therefore the continuity of programming and response for longer periods, but also supported the ability to get funding post-HARP-F if needed.

According to data, 20 HARP-F national partners were able to secure funding through other channels, such as JST, UNICEF, LIFT, UNFPA, Access to Health or FCDO.

While many respondents emphasised that there were no funding gaps during HARP-F, some respondents reported a need for even longer-term funding, for better planning and response. Some anecdotal evidence has shown that there was a need for gender- and disability-sensitive programming. Other studies also show the appetite for third-party monitoring.[10]

HARP-F staff played a significant role in getting this combination support together in an effective manner, in terms of number of personnel, regional presence, and availability of in-house experts. The staff managed to understand when partners faced gaps, and responded with proactive engagement and prioritising humanitarian response.

*Indicator 2.3: Contribution of HARP-F to stronger national leadership of humanitarian response in Myanmar*

**Direct funding to national organisations has had significant benefits:** Results from the online survey show that more than 70% [Figure 16] of respondents rated the level of initiatives contributing to national leadership 'good' or 'very good'. Direct funding to national organisations has had two-fold benefits.
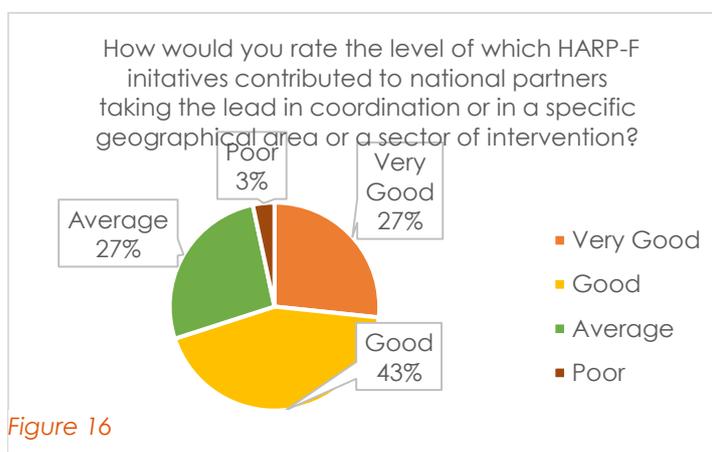


How would you rate the level of which HARP-F initatives contributed to national partners taking the lead in coordination or in a specific geographical area or a sector of intervention?

- Poor 3%
- Very Good 27%
- Average 27%
- Good 43%

Legend: Very Good, Good, Average, Poor

*Figure 16*

First, it has contributed to local organisations building a sense of ownership and a culture of accountability for their own projects. Second, the non-project attributable cost (or overhead cost) has greatly contributed to organisational development. Furthermore, HARP-F's funding of overhead costs for national organisations was widely appreciated, as it protected partner organisations' sustainability, and improved their ability to maintain operations and retain staff. Anecdotal evidence from the national partner KIs indicated that this was rare, as most donors are strict on how to use the budget, and give less percentage for overhead costs. One good example from Kachin was that an organisation used this small amount of funding for further fundraising activities. They could not receive this funding under the sub-grant mechanism from other funding sources.

**The humanitarian situation in Myanmar is shifting toward increased local leadership:** Due to armed conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic, project implementation has had to be paused multiple times, affecting momentum, but this has also meant that most activities had to rely more on community leadership and initiative. Evidence also shows that HARP-F's RMP toolkit eventually led to a shift in responsibility towards the community level, which meant increased responsibility and ownership in projects.

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[10] *Community Analysis Support System Review,* February 2022

For example, some international organisations, including HARP-F itself, allowed international staff to relocate out of Myanmar to neighbouring or home countries. The responsibility for delivering assistance remained local, with 94.1% of survey respondents reporting their reliance on national staff to conduct programming in hard-to-reach areas.[11] Also, events such as the coup and subsequent access restrictions have highlighted the importance of local leadership, as local partners had to step in due to access issues for international partners.

**Lack of structure for localisation:** Some of the main challenges to stronger national leadership are related to the organisational and administrative capacity of national organisations, in particular their limited ability to retain staff (both programme and support). This is linked to short-term funding and a lack of internal capacity. In addition, national and international respondents indicated that there remain challenges to the localisation agenda within the international humanitarian system, as international organisations are dominant and leave few opportunities for national organisations to take the lead.

*Indicator 2.4: Residual risks of financing national organisations for donors*

**HARP-F's risk register and ease of communication mitigated risks:** HARP-F has promoted and supported local solutions and capacities to reduce and mitigate risk in advance, as well as supporting national actors to deliver rapid responses. Having said that, HARP-F's risk factor was higher, as they directly funded local organisations, however the Facility's residual risk threshold could not exceed that of FCDO. HARP-F managed risks by using a Risk Register to monitor and rate risks, and quarterly reports provided mitigation strategies for the risks identified. In addition, the relative ease of communication between HARP-F and its partners was cited as a factor that helped both manage risk and increase trust.

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[11] *HARP-F Approach to Remote Partnership in Myanmar,* August 2021

According to the quarterly reports [Figure 17], delivery risks were by far the most reported type of risk in most years, followed by contextual risks. The exception was in 2018, when operational risks were the
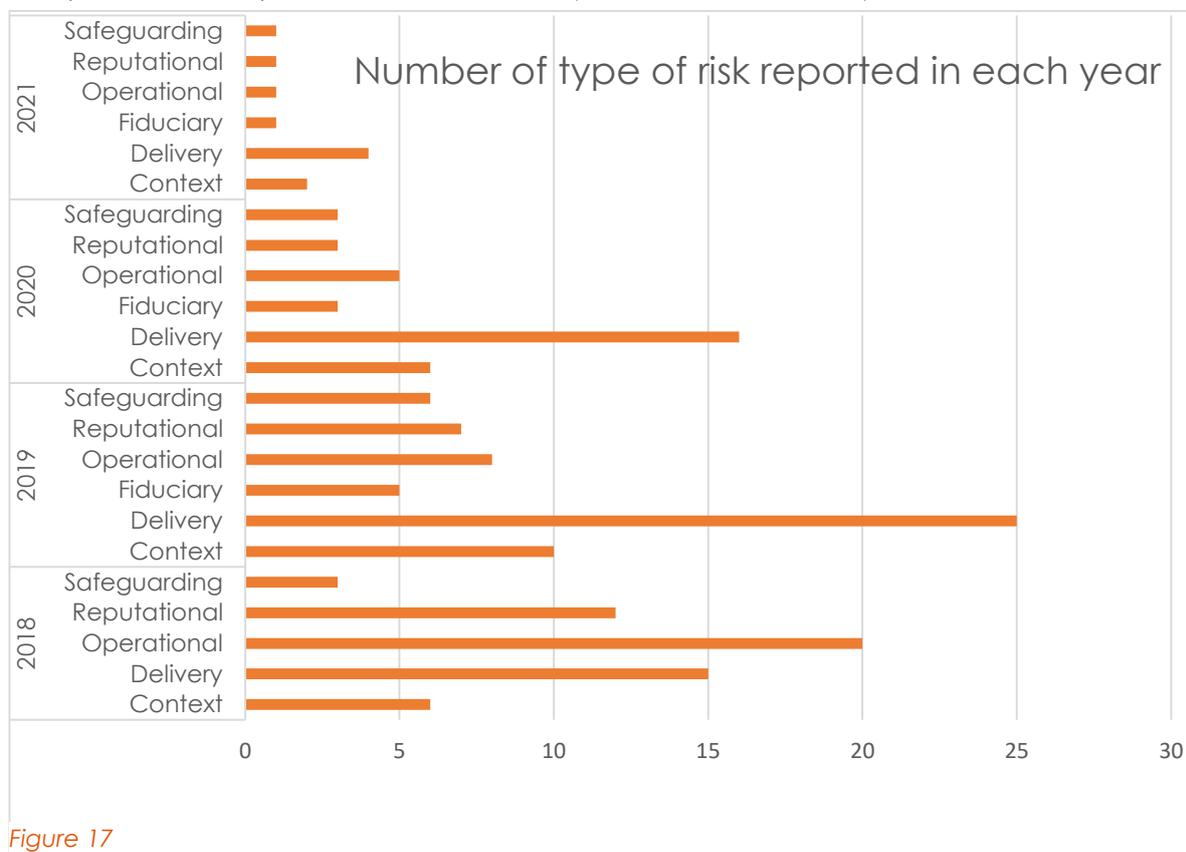


*Figure 17*

highest, and reputational risks were nearly on a par with delivery risks. Delivery risks reported included delivery chain risks, where partners' staff, subcontractors, beneficiaries, or any other individuals were implicated or accused of fraud, corruption, sexual exploitation or abuse, violent crime, or other violation of Crown Agents' ethical policies. Other risks that were consistently reported as among the most severe were risks to the personal security of HARP-F staff and consultants in-country; delays or inability of partners to deliver expected results; and partners not complying with HARP-F (FCDO) legal, ethical, risk and delivery requirements.

Furthermore, with HARP-F ending, there is a risk that the learning and evidence generated by HARP-F will be stalled. Another risk is that organisations revert back to short-term projects, instead of longer-term strategic funding. In addition, there is a risk that national organisations will not be able to retain highly qualified staff.

*Indicator 2.5: Lessons learned in respect to the similarities and differences in support and engagement*

**HARP-F's combination approach of being a funding instrument and providing capacity and training activities has been especially beneficial for national organisations:** Capacity enhancement activities and trainings were primarily noted as benefitting national organisations, while INGOs benefitted less from the hands-on support provided by HARP-F. HARP-F's ways of working, particularly the Facility's flexibility and adaptability, proved beneficial for all partners.

In order for national organisations to work with donors in the future, they need more capacity building and safeguarding training. In addition, since COVID-19 and coup, there has been a shift towards national organisations taking the lead, and this momentum should be taken advantage of.

## 3.6.   Comparison with other similar funding instruments

*Indicator 3.1: Ways that HARP-F can inspire/inform other grant-management instruments and grant-making facilities supported by the FCDO [and Crown Agents]*

**Greater programming flexibility for partners:** Many respondents from local partner organisations reported that the typically larger grant size and the multi-year duration of funding received from HARP-F allowed them to exercise greater flexibility and adaptability of programming than other donor funds. It also gave them more opportunities to reach hard-to-reach areas, and create better interventions, especially in a protracted crisis.

**Working in Myanmar requires the right adaptative mindset and adequate resources:** Operating in a context such as Myanmar requires systems and processes to evolve according to the changing context. HARP-F's ways of working showed the need for the right type of mindset, as well as sufficient resources to be adaptive to the context and geared towards problem solving. In general, in different partnerships, grants should consider capacity building and systematic growth of local CSOs, and allocate adequate resources (time and budget) for this. However, it should be noted that being flexible is resource intensive, both in terms of human resources and finances.

Further, HARP-F managed the risk for FCDO, and was able to take on much higher risk than FCDO could. This aspect of risk mitigation is important in supporting national organisations.

**Capacity enhancement and adequate trainings are fundamental in the localisation agenda:**

National organisations have benefited greatly from HARP-F supported capacity enhancement and training activities. Through these activities, organisations were able to strengthen their operational and technical capacities, allowing them, at least potentially, to directly access and adequately manage international donor funding.

**The need for contextual information in Myanmar:** CASS, which was established in September 2019, proved important in providing operational and contextual analysis, especially to support remote-management strategies that included work in hard-to-reach areas. It was appreciated by both donors and implementing partners. While CASS provided contextual analysis, there was also a need for third-party/programme monitoring to understand what partners were doing in targeted locations.

**Indicator 3.2: Extent to which other funding mechanisms in Myanmar could learn from HARP-F**

**Supporting organisations for longer-term capacity:** Through HARP-F's systems, processes and ways of working, partners were enabled to build longer-term capacity within their organisations, at least ensuring that they could pursue funding from other sources when needed, and retain qualified and capable staff. HARP-F's relatively large funding envelope also provided an opportunity for organisations to expand their services, and serve more people in need in conflict-affected areas.

Respondents for this review noted that HARP-F's ways of working, including being present in-country, provided organisations with the flexibility to respond to people in need adequately and keep programming relevant to needs.

**Coordination of response:** Respondents indicated the need for better coordination among donors. In addition, organisations should engage more collectively in some activities, to apply projects collectively, as a consortium, strengthening and filling gaps for each other.

### Indicator 3.3: Challenges, enabling factors and recommendations for the future

Adaptability and flexibility have been enabling factors, but they were successfully achieved because of the efforts of proactive staff, who worked to find ways to respond to contextual challenges while maintaining risk-mitigation measures.

At its inception, HARP-F faced operational challenges such as high staff turnover and lack of efficient systems, which hindered it from reaching its potential in providing grants and support. Also, challenges related to the contextual changes, primarily COVID-19 and the coup, meant the Facility had to change its ways of working, and while overall the response and decision making by HARP-F were fast, some anecdotal evidence suggests the response faced minor delays, often due to upstream issues.

# 4. Conclusions

### Objective 1: Identify how HARP-F's structures and systems have evolved since 2016, and the impact of HARP-F systems on the provision of humanitarian assistance in areas of protracted crisis.

Despite a slow start, HARP-F managed to adapt its system and structure to cope with all requirements needed to deliver its mandate, whether related to internal needs (scale up in 2019) or adapting to a constantly changing external environment (COVID-19, coup, liquidity crisis). HARP-F's structure allowed it to amend grants up to 10% of their existing value without requiring FCDO approval, and the Facility used this flexibility to keep programming quickly adapted to the current needs and reduce bureaucracy.

HARP-F was designed to be flexible and adaptive, and to learn through doing. This not only allowed it to continue operations in the face of significant challenges, but also enabled it to support the provision of humanitarian assistance in an innovative and timely manner.

Key informants interviewed for this review highlighted the fact that HARP-F did not focus on details and administrative procedures. HARP-F grant management staff had the right mindset, focused on delivery of assistance, which allowed them to be adaptive when needed. The staff were open, responsive and easy to work with, and above all understood the importance of timely decision-making, and being adaptive to changing needs while maintaining safeguarding measures.

Overall, HARP-F was able continue to deliver its mandate in the face of both internal, organisational challenges such as the 2019 scale up, and major changes in the context, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 coup and the subsequent liquidity crisis.

Nonetheless, considering HARP-F's achievements from 2019-2022, one can not help wondering what more the Facility could have achieved, if it had started its work in 2016 at full capacity. For example, one of its pillars of work, the knowledge management component, could have been initiated long before it was. Thus, although HARP-F has been successful in delivering its mandate, it has been less successful in fulfilling its own potential.

## Objective 2: Understand how HARP-F's structure and ways of working of have supported localisation though its engagement with national and international actors, both by intention and by result.

Proximity was one of the key aspects of HARP-F's success regarding localisation. The presence of HARP-F staff in-country, the deployment of regional offices at subnational level, and the provision of both direct funding and coaching/mentoring to local organisations were perceived as very useful, despite HARP-F shifting to a remote approach since 2020.

In addition, respondents saw the independence of Crown Agents as advantageous, limiting conflicts of interest. As a private contractor, Crown Agents is not competing with national organisations, as opposed to INGOs.

The evidence gathered for this report shows that the relationship between HARP-F and its partners was built on trust and understanding, which led to productive engagement and a problem-solving mindset.

The challenges to localisation were mainly those associated with the structure and environment of the international humanitarian system, which often creates challenges to the advancement of national leadership.

In order to advance the localisation agenda and strengthen national leadership, donors should find ways to become closer to the organisations receiving grants in terms of location, language and personal relationship.

HARP-F's allocation of resources (time and budget) supported its capacity enhancement activities, and should be regarded as a key instrument in enhancing the capacity of national organisations.

The support provided to international and national partners should be tailored to their different needs, to best use resources. International organisations primarily need funding for their programmes, but it is national organisations that benefit most from flexibility and informality, which can ease issues around administration and paperwork. Also, national organisations are in greater need of training and capacity-enhancement activities.

## Objective 3: Gather lessons informing the development of instruments for multi-year, multi-sector humanitarian and protracted crisis programming in Myanmar and elsewhere.

HARP-F showed that contracting a large number of CSOs and establishing a rapid funding window was definitely possible, even in a changing, complex emergency. Moreover, HARP-F proved that funding flexibility and adaptation can be beneficial in such emergency responses, and that long-term funding can enable better planning and, in turn, better humanitarian intervention strategies.

The shortened multiyear funding and capacity-strengthening still provided opportunities to explore new ways of responding to and solving problems, and new models for working in complex protracted crises, including developing the Remote Management Partnership (RMP) toolkit, using non-traditional means of money transfer, and using partnerships with community volunteer groups with access to specific areas. These efforts have also provided learning that can be utilised by other humanitarian programmes going forward.

# 5. Recommendations

Systems should enable, rather than hinder humanitarian response, especially in a complex humanitarian situation such as Myanmar, which requires adaptability and flexibility. This flexibility also requires the right mindset among the staff, who must understand the importance of timely decision-making, and adapt to changing needs while maintaining safeguarding measures. Thus*, to enable the right level of support for new CSOs*, a *structure decentralised at subnational* level appears necessary. This structure needs to be supported with *systems that are flexible* enough to adapt to a constantly changing environment. Moreover, this structure needs to be *staffed with the personnel that possess the necessary contextual knowledge*. This is what HARP-F has been able to achieve.

- Thus, FCDO should continue providing multi-year funding to local partners that is adequately flexible and adaptive to the environment.

In order to advance the localisation agenda and strengthen national leadership, Donors should find ways to become closer to the organisations receiving grants, in terms of location, language and approach to partnership.

- FCDO should consider allocating sufficient resources (time and budget) to its grant managers with priority given to capacity enhancement activities. Additionally, the support provided to international and national partners should be tailored to their different needs, to best use resources.

- FCDO should continue supporting tailored training activities, together with an online resource depository in the Myanmar language. The curriculum should include basic-, advanced- and expert-level training, to better meet evolving training needs.

The multiyear funding and capacity strengthening provided by HARP-F provided opportunities to explore new ways of responding to and solving problems, and new models for working in complex protracted crises. This also provides other humanitarian programs a learning experience based on the learning from this project.

- FCDO should continue its support to network(s) that can offer umbrella support for local CSOs in the fields of coordination and engagement with international fora,

## END

# 6. Annexes

## 6.3.    List of interviewees

| List of organisations that participated in Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions |
| --- |
| HARP-F Staff |
| ABCD |
| CERA organization |
| CERDA |
| CHAD |
| COAR |
| CPI |
| Crown Agents |
| CSI |
| DCA |
| DFSS |
| ECHO |
| FCDO |
| FinnChurch Aid |
| Football Utd. FUN/UNSW |
| Grip Hands Organisation |
| HORC |
| KMSS |
| KWAT |
| LCD |
| MA-UK |
| Mercy Corps |
| Metta |
| MSN |
| Nyein Foundation |
| Oxfam |
| PFP |
| Pyoe |
| RWCF |
| UNOPS - Access to Health Fund |
| Wan Lark |
| WFP |
| WPN |
| YSA |

## 6.5.    List of SDR information sources

| Source | Date |
|---|---|
| Accountable Grant Arrangement for Enabling Grant | Aug.19 |
| Action Based Community Development (ABCD) - Activity Reflection Report | N/A |
| Bi-Annual Narrative Progress Report | Aug.20 |
| Bi-Annual Narrative Progress Report | Feb.20 |
| Bi-Annual Narrative Progress Report | Aug.20 |
| Center for Environment and Resources Development in Arakan - Activity Reflection Report | Nov.20 |
| Close out guidance for DG and IG | N/A |
| Close out guidance for enabling and RRF | N/A |
| Coastal Region Mangrove Conservation Organization (CRMO) - Activity Reflection Report | N/A |
| Collective Learning Report | N/A |
| DFID IATI Guidelines (Policy) | N/A |
| DRAFT HARP Business Case | N/A |
| End line Organization Capacity Assessment report for Enabling Grant Partners | Dec.20 |
| FCDO Myanmar Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Programme Facility: Mid - term review | Oct.20 |
| Grant Process Diagram | Feb.20 |
| Grants Management Cycle & Process v1.1 | N/A |
| Guidance Note on Amendment Process | Dec.20 |
| HARP Facility Inception Report | Dec.16 |
| HARP Facility Innovation Grant Funding Guidelines | Nov.18 |
| HARP Facility Quarterly Report Narrative - Q1 2017 (April-June) | 2017 |
| HARP Facility Quarterly Report Narrative Apr - Jun 2020 | 2020 |
| HARP Facility Quarterly Report Narrative Apr - Jun 2021 | 2021 |
| HARP Facility Quarterly Report Narrative Apr - Jun 2019 | 2019 |
| HARP Facility Quarterly Report Narrative Jan - Mar 2021 | 2021 |
| HARP Facility Quarterly Report Narrative Jan - Mar 2020 | 2020 |
| HARP Facility Quarterly Report Narrative Jul – Sep | |
| HARP Facility Quarterly Report Narrative Jul-Sep Q2 FY19-20 | 2019 |
| HARP Facility Quarterly Report Narrative Oct - Dec Q3 FY19-20 | 2021 |
| HARP Facility Rapid Response Fund Funding Guidelines | N/A |
| HARP Welcome Pack | N/A |
| HARP-F COVID Response | |
| HARP-F COVID Response: Rakhine Update | |
| HARP-F Grants Manual | Sep.18 |
| HARP-F Grants system Final | N/A |
| HARP-F Myanmar Remote Partnership | Aug.21 |
| Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Programme Facility (HARP-F) 2021-22 Extension - Technical and Budget Narrative | Jun.20 |
| International Aid Transparency Guidance for Grant Holders | N/A |
| Mid-Term Survey Result / Report on CBDRM Project | Jun.20 |
| Organigram | Dec.19 |
| Organizational Level DRR Project Self-Reflection Exercise | N/A |
| People for People - Activity Reflection Report | Nov.20 |
| Quarterly Reporting to FCDO Q1 2017 | 2017 |
| Quarterly Reporting to FCDO Q1 2018 | 2018 |
| Quarterly Reporting to FCDO Q1 2019 | 2019 |
| Quarterly Reporting to FCDO Q1 2020 | 2020 |
| Quarterly Reporting to FCDO Q1 2021 | 2021 |
| Quarterly Reporting to FCDO Q2 2017 | 2017 |
| Quarterly Reporting to FCDO Q2 2018 | 2018 |
| Quarterly Reporting to FCDO Q2 2019 | 2019 |
| Quarterly Reporting to FCDO Q2 2020 | 2020 |
| Quarterly Reporting to FCDO Q3 2017 | 2017 |

| Source | |
|---|---|
| Quarterly Reporting to FCDO Q3 2019 | 2019 |
| Quarterly Reporting to FCDO Q4 2017 | 2017 |
| Quarterly Reporting to FCDO Q4 2019 | 2019 |
| Quarterly Reporting to FCDO Q4 2020 | 2020 |
| Rakhine Window Open Call for Project Concepts | N/A |
| Report Review Plan Final | N/A |
| Success Story: Bi-Annual Narrative Progress Report | Aug.20 |
| Youth Strength Association (YSA) – Activity Reflection Report | N/A |