



A displaced woman in Kachin State, working in a field to supplement the assistance she received from HARP-F partners. @Gyung Dau, 2018.

A TRIED AND TESTED MODEL TO DELIVER HUMANITARIAN AID IN PROTRACTED CRISIS

Over one billion people, 16% of the world's population, are living in countries affected by protracted humanitarian crisis¹. In most of these settings, international humanitarian organisations are restricted in their ability to provide relief to the affected populations.

Providing humanitarian assistance where there is no or limited access requires national actors to be put in charge of the response, adapt procedures to ensure compliance and accountability, and come up with innovative ways to reach the people most in need. This is not new: over 80% of the conflicts in the world today are protracted crises, meaning that international humanitarian actors have had to shift to some form of remote management for years. But a move to remote operations can be problematic for donors. Smaller, national organisations are suddenly entrusted with much larger grants and requested to comply with higher standards of transparency, without having the financial, procurement and safeguarding systems to do so.

Crown Agents achieve results in emergency and protracted crisis contexts and have responded to every major emergency over the past 28 years. Our success

in delivering large-scale, multi-year humanitarian programming in protracted crises hinges on the strong, long-term relationships we build with national actors, which enable us to rapidly adapt and respond to changing contexts. These relationships are the reason we are able to continue our support even when access for international organisations becomes constrained. We have decades of experience supporting international and donor agencies, national and sub-national authorities and civil society in managing impactful humanitarian responses in the most challenging contexts.



A woman in a Kachin camp, where HARP-F partners provided assistance. @Gyung Dau, 2018.

¹2020 Global Humanitarian Assistance Report.

The Crown Agents approach



Build trust and capacity

The Crown Agents approach relies on a trusted relationship with national partners. We build – rather than replace – the national capacity to lead the response. We not only develop bespoke ways of working to respond to specific situations, but also train, mentor and empower our partners to work successfully in remote management contexts. For example, we have built relationships with national civil society to identify and respond to urgent recovery needs in North-East Syria. We have conducted due diligence assessments, provided training on programme and financial management and safeguarding to partners and beneficiaries, and established a fully accountable, traceable, cash for work scheme. In Libya, since 2011, we have created a network of community-based partners comprised of civil society and local authorities who work together to resolve community-level conflicts and identify local governance priorities. This support has sustained through various iterations of the Libyan crisis.



Provide expertise

Fund management - We have extensive experience managing funds in protracted crises. For example, we delivered life-saving healthcare in South Sudan, where we lead a consortium of donors working with the government to strengthen its capacity to deliver health services. In Myanmar, we work with a network of partners to meet the humanitarian needs and build the resilience of people affected by conflict and climate change. In Zimbabwe, we designed a grain market facility to avert a food crisis. We work with partners to ensure ethical and transparent fund management, and an adaptive learning approach that offers tailored support from launch and grant delivery to evaluation. This helps maximise value for money, embed sustainable mechanisms of accountability, and ultimately empower people to access effective public services.

Technical experts - We have a standing roster of technical experts to support humanitarian response, with specialisms in WASH, shelter, protection, public health, cash and livelihoods, information management and analysis. For example, we are currently providing technical assistance in COVID-19 surveillance and data management in Sierra Leone to support the resilience of local health facilities. In Syria, solid waste management experts were on hand to help improve community waste management systems in Deir-ez-Zor, in the North East.

Supply chain expertise - We offer specialised end-to-end humanitarian supply chain services to NGOs, governments and multi-lateral agencies. In addition, our quality assurance and inspections service ensures that products throughout the world meet expectations, regulations and legislation. In Sierra Leone, together with our partners, we built a robust end-to-end supply chain to fight the spread of the Ebola epidemic and save thousands of lives. In Nepal we supplied over 360MT of Humanitarian non-food items for Nepal in the immediate aftermath of the 2015 earthquake.



Develop systems to ensure transparency, compliance and accountability

Remote management comes with a different set of risks related to oversight, governance, information, compliance, and accountability. We have developed risk mitigation tools and systems for actors working in fragile contexts with a strong focus on due diligence, offering reassurance that our partners are delivering with the highest standards of donor compliance and accountability.

Due diligence - Crown Agents' thorough due diligence process covers an organisation or provider's litigation and investigation history, ethical history, and governance.

Bespoke information systems - We develop bespoke information systems with context and analysis drawn from the communities and beneficiaries we work with. These provide our donors and clients with a live view of project implementation and drive our adaptive programme management.

Safeguarding - We take a zero-tolerance approach to any actions or behaviours which may jeopardize the well-being and rights of our staff, our partners and the communities we serve. We will take all possible steps to prevent harm from potential, actual or attempted abuse of power, authority, trust or vulnerability, especially in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse.

The case of HARP-F in Myanmar – where CSOs drive the response

Given our expertise in humanitarian response management in protracted crisis, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) awarded us the management of its Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Programme Facility (HARP-F) in Myanmar for 2016–2021.

‘THROUGH THE TRUST WE BUILD WITH OUR PARTNERS, WE EMPOWER THEM TO DELIVER AID IN HARD-TO-REACH AREAS, CONFLICT-AFFECTED AND COVID-19 AREAS. WE SUPPORT THEM WITH OPERATING SYSTEMS – IN PROCUREMENT, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND SAFEGUARDING – TO ENSURE THEY ALWAYS MEET THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF DELIVERY EVEN AS THE CONFLICT, ACCESS, POLITICAL OR HEALTH SITUATION DETERIORATES’.



e-voucher cash programme in Rakhine. ©HARP-F partner

Myanmar is in a state of protracted, complex and evolving humanitarian crisis. The layered dynamics of conflict, displacement, increasing humanitarian needs, poor humanitarian access, COVID-19 and the February 2021 military coup d'état require a nationally led humanitarian response. HARP-F is an innovative instrument funding humanitarian assistance in Myanmar, specifically designed to strengthen the role of national civil society in rapid onset and protracted crises. Through its partners, HARP-F has been working to address acute humanitarian needs, build resilience and reduce the vulnerability of populations affected by successive crises and natural disasters in Myanmar and on the border with Thailand since 2017.



909,000

conflict-affected people reached



1m

people in need of assistance



63%

of the internally displaced people in Rakhine, Kachin and Northern Shan reached



£73.5m

committed 74 grants providing predictable, multi-year financing



8 sectors

WASH, Food, Health, Livelihoods, Nutrition, Protection, Shelter, COVID-19.



500,000

people reached with COVID-19 prevention measures



Facemask distribution in Northern Rakhine State. ©HARP-F partner

Myanmar's complex, protracted crisis

Myanmar has experienced varying degrees of crisis since independence. Long-standing ethnic armed conflicts are frequently characterised by violence, human security concerns and poor and politicised/militarised access. Decades of military rule, interspersed with occasional, compromised, democratic governments, have seen significant human rights and International Humanitarian Law violations across the country.

Both Rakhine and Northern Shan states have seen ongoing and increasing conflict for many years, are in the throes of a protracted crisis and experience constant spikes in humanitarian need, especially in Rakhine. Access to international aid agencies is very limited in both states. The COVID-19 outbreak has added another dimension to an already volatile context.

The military coup d'état, which took place on 1 February 2021, triggered widespread counter-coup protests, closure of basic social services (notably health), boycotts of state-owned enterprises and a significant reduction in financing for development and state-supporting international assistance.

In Rakhine, humanitarian needs were already severe and coverage of services in displacement camps is poor. The risks of a further deterioration, beyond an already dire situation, are huge. In Kachin and Northern Shan states, armed groups have reacted to the coup and conflict between the Myanmar military and the Kachin Independence Army is at its highest levels in some time. Armed groups are allying themselves to the protest movement, and the risks of conflation of violent repression of protestors with ethnic conflict is growing across Kachin, Northern Shan and Kayah states.

HARP-F is taking our remote management partnership approach a step further to support a national CSO-led response at scale. This strong reliance on local partners, as well as context-specific, adaptive programming, is what enabled HARP-F to quickly mount a COVID-19 response in 2020 in Myanmar, and to continue to operate and meet the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable populations following the February 2021 coup. HARP-F is capitalizing on the following strengths:

Empower CSOs as first responders – with organisational strengthening training tailored to the needs of each CSO partner in Rakhine and Kachin to ensure they have the necessary mechanisms to lead and monitor the response; with emergency funding for a CSO network in Northern Shan who are best placed to conduct immediate interventions following conflict-related displacements.

Allay donors' concerns, with enhanced due diligence – HARP-F has adapted our due diligence procedures for partners working with downstream humanitarian actors in remote partnership programming contexts to ensure that all partners comply with our high ethical and compliance standards.

Mitigate the risk for partners – our Remote Partnership Programming Toolkit includes Alternative Standard Operating Procedures for remote management programming in conflict. For every stage of the project cycle, from partner identification to evaluation, it suggests procedures to ensure partners can adhere to standard accountability practices in these challenging settings.

Expand contextual knowledge to inform adaptive programming – The Community Analysis Support System (CASS), HARP-F's research and analytical unit, provides real-time, independent contextual and operational analysis in support of humanitarian interventions in Rakhine state. CASS consolidates information and data from a range of traditional sources from community field work which then informs situation analysis, planning and advocacy.

HARP-F complements CASS by drawing on the vast amount of information we receive from our partner network. We provide sometimes daily updates on operational realities, challenges and risks which contribute to donors' understanding of the realities of response and can inform advocacy inside Myanmar and with donor headquarters.

Provide technical assistance for humanitarian response and adaptive programming – We provide (national and international) technical assistance to HARP-F partners on nutrition, cash, WASH, protection, and more recently banking, in view of the rapidly changing banking regulations post-coup. This technical assistance can also be provided beyond the project partners to the wider humanitarian sector in order to support adaptive programming.

Understand the supply chain – In Rakhine and Northern Shan, HARP-F has conducted independent supply chain assessments to analyse the ability of partners (particularly national partners) to address supply chain gaps and shortfall. This was coupled with rolling market assessments to track the availability of essential commodities and prevent stock-outs.

Feed learning into programming – The HARP-F MEAL team uses the raw data gathered from partners, CASS, and its own monitoring to provide assurance that the response is on track and to learn lessons on how a remote and locally led response is working. HARP-F is also developing a learning platform bringing together the data, evidence – analysis and expertise accrued by its partners to provide a learning resource for Myanmar humanitarian organisations once the project ends. The learning platform will help inform programming, feed into advocacy efforts on humanitarian programming in protracted crises, and support policy and practice change.



Planting of a new mangrove in Gone Taung. ©HARP-F partner



Screening for hypertension and diabetes in Kachin State. ©HARP-F partner

GET IN TOUCH

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