



## Executive Summary

Authored by the Operations Partnerships [OP] February 2022..

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 through 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.



Photo: © HARP-F partner

Design template: © Molly Webster  
Cover Photo: © Unsplash