

HARP-F APPROACH TO REMOTE PARTNERSHIP IN MYANMAR

REVIEW

An independent review
commissioned by the
HARP Facility

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The team wish to thank the participants who contributed their time and insights in response to this evaluation. Myanmar has suffered tremendously since the Covid-19 pandemic arose in February 2020. Throughout the period since then humanitarians have faced tremendous challenges and accepted myriad risks to continue to provide assistance to those in need. The data collection was conducted during a very serious third wave. At least one respondent succumbed. The participants, and humanitarians in general, deserve respect for their commitment and effort to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in Myanmar.

Glossary

ASOP	Alternative Standard Operating Procedure
CA	Crown Agents
CASS	Community Analysis Support System
DCA	Dan Church Aid
EAOS	Ethnic Armed Organizations
FCDO	UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
GCA	Government Controlled Areas
HAG	Humanitarian Advisory Group
HARP	Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Programme
HARP - F	Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Programme Facility
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organisations
KII	Key Informant Interview
LIFT	Livelihoods and Food Security Fund (LIFT) /UNOPS
MHF	Myanmar Humanitarian Fund
NGCA	Non-Government Controlled Areas
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
RMP	Remote Management Programming
TBC	The Border Consortium
UNOCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

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Executive Summary

The Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Programme Facility (HARP-F) was established as an intermediary grant distribution mechanism for the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) humanitarian funding in Myanmar. The challenging and ever-changing operating context required a flexible and adaptable funding instrument that could support partner delivery in such circumstances. These characteristics were built into the design of the HARP-F from the outset.

This evaluation sought to understand why and how HARP-F and its partners used different remote management approaches, how these approaches compared to those described in the literature, whether the preparedness undertaken was helpful and whether HARP-F and partners were able to manage the multiple risks faced through remote management. The evaluation was conducted in a period of significant crisis in Myanmar, largely due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the military coup. Consequently, all interactions with stakeholders were conducted remotely, by a team of both national and international consultants, using a mixed methodology incorporating quantitative and qualitative inquiry.

We summarise our conclusions as:

1. HARP-F's flexibility and adaptability as a fund distribution mechanism was highly appreciated by partners.
2. The most localised responses, whether led by national or international partners, have been best placed to sustain delivery through the pandemic and coup.
3. The formal instruments HARP-F developed to support remote partnership, specifically the Remote Management Partnership toolkit was not applied by partners but was, nonetheless, aligned with many of the operational adaptations that partners actually took.
4. HARP-F's approach was well aligned with documented good practice.
5. Donors will continue to need intermediaries in Myanmar. They should be clearer about their accountability and reporting requirements and ensure the capacity of any intermediaries that succeed HARP-F is in place to meet such requirements.

We also make 19 specific recommendations for any intermediary organisations that follow HARP-F. The recommendations are structured around four of the research questions mentioned above, namely how, what, preparedness and risk management. HARP-F has already taken action in some of these areas where there was a self-evident need to take action, such as in the creation of a flexible budget line in each grant to facilitate quick responses to unanticipated emergencies. These are summarized below:

Recommendations per Section	
Why	
	1. Prioritise flexibility and adaptability in programming and operational management to enable agencies to cope with uncertainty and risk.
	2. Agree with partners likely operational and programmatic areas / issues where flexibility and adaptation are most likely to occur and discuss parameters of change.
How	

Recommendations per Section
3. Document the many adaptations, innovations and solutions to the many challenges partners have faced and found way to overcome, or not, in the various different regions and humanitarian contexts in Myanmar to create a digest of practical best practices and lessons.
4. Continue to develop community-based delivery and monitoring mechanisms through participatory structures that involve project participants. Identify and develop incentive structures to enhance accountable and need-based delivery of assistance within communities.
5. Include a flexible and unallocated budget line for new emergency response in each partner budget to facilitate quick, or anticipatory, response to new hazards. This was used by HARP-F and enabled partners flexibility to respond.
6. Establish autonomous third-party monitoring capacity, through both commissioning an appropriately qualified organisation(s), the use of digital tools for the triangulation of data, and encouragement of collaborative peer monitoring on the ground by national partners.
Preparedness
7. Set out clear and achievable criteria for trust and low risk operations, including incentives for achieving / applying them so that national partners have a pathway to a light touch partnership. Once the criteria are met the partner may be considered low risk. This would then enable partners to, for example, use their own in-house systems for reporting, or enjoy more flexibility to take decisions on programming without consultation etc.
8. Assess demand and need for continued development of the RMP toolkit. If it is deemed useful enough to develop further, this should be done on a partner-by-partner basis in combination with a review and potential re-engineering of management systems and processes.
9. Ramp up preparations for greater use of cash transfers through multiple delivery systems (cash, bank transfer, hundi and similar informal systems, mobile etc.).
10. Pre-position and replenish contingency supplies, including food, to facilitate continuous distribution when access is limited. Identify, train, and equip locally based distribution partners who can access the supplies and distribute to targeted recipients.
11. Ensure partners have access to and know how to use the communications technologies and digital tools that will be essential to delivery assistance in hard-to-reach areas in future.
12. Increase the effectiveness of training by correlating the acquisition of new knowledge and skills with the development of management, monitoring and learning systems.
13. Fund core costs of national partners – these funds contribute to and, therefore, enhance the essential capacities organisations need to both deliver and manage risk effectively, but may entail a higher resource need than those that can be directly associated with project outputs. This funding should be additional to the administrative overhead cost attached to project grants. Pooling donor support for core costs may be a cost-effective approach since many are supporting the same partners.
Risk Management
14. Promote consolidation of community feedback mechanisms on a regional basis.
15. Establish risk management processes, standards and tolerance levels for use of informal (hundi) cash transfer systems.
16. Tolerance of (partial) failure of some innovative approaches is needed and, in some ways, encouraged if new and more successful approaches to working in access-constrained areas are to be found. Seeking innovation in turn requires all parties (donor, intermediary, implementing partners) to adopt the appropriate risk appetite.
17. Ensure partners and their downstream partners have robust security capacity in place and arrange funding, capacity enhancement and communication accordingly.

Recommendations per Section
18. Develop formal, transparent, and objective criteria for due diligence to ensure the right partners are supported, especially in contexts with a substantial reliance on remote management approaches.
19. Adapt the risk management approach to specific partner requirements. Whereas training may have made some contribution to partner capacity for risk management, it is no substitute for direct capacity and support, for security and other risk areas.

Finally, we identify several good practices implemented by HARP-F and its partners that can be encouraged and supported in future.

Introduction and Methodological Approaches

1. Background

Established in 2016 the HARP-F serves as both a grant funding mechanism and a knowledge platform for the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and the wider humanitarian community. HARP-F has distributed and managed approximately £73 million to humanitarian organizations in Myanmar. HARP-F provided financial support through delivery, enabling, rapid response and innovation grants. It supports research to better understand the context and promotes learning and evidence generation to improve humanitarian response and resilience building, with a focus on responses in protracted crisis.

The conflict situation in Myanmar is complex. According to research conducted by the Community Analysis Support System (CASS), a HARP-F funded resource for the humanitarian community in Myanmar, conflict between the Myanmar Military (Tatmadaw) and Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) has its root causes as far back as independence¹. The conflicts have been fought principally in the country's seven "ethnic states" in the border areas including Chin, Rakhine, Shan, Kachin and Mon States among others. Over time the conflict has become more complex with the emergence of new armed groups. Furthermore, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 and the military coup in February 2021 have only increased this complexity for humanitarian organizations. It also appears to have placed the most vulnerable at greater risk.

As a response to the context, HARP-F utilises remote partnership and localisation approaches in Myanmar. These approaches are related but different. Remote partnership focuses primarily on the provision of a flexible and supportive operational framework that allows partners to adapt their approach to the changing context without excessive administrative resistance to change from HARP-F. Localisation, increasingly important in Myanmar due to the ever-decreasing space for international actors to operate, goes further than a flexible operational approach. Localisation is, according to the OECD definition² "a process of recognising, respecting, and strengthening the leadership by local authorities and the capacity of local civil society in humanitarian action, in order to better address the needs of affected populations and to prepare national actors for future humanitarian responses".

While leadership of local authorities in humanitarian action may be contested in Myanmar, HARP-F seeks to support greater localisation of response through its partnerships with national organisations of different types, particularly as much of programme operations are done in hard-to-reach areas. HARP-F approach to remote programming is explained in more detail in [Annex 1](#).

2. Scope of the assignment

Given the importance of remote management approaches within Myanmar, the aim of this evaluation is to promote learning among the HARP-F, FCDO and HARP-F grantees on approaches to delivering humanitarian assistance in hard-to-reach areas, particularly using remote management modalities. The key objectives are:

- Review **why** remote partnership is adopted by HARP-F and partners, specifically what has

¹ <https://cass-mm.org/new-coup-same-revolution-eaos-react-to-myanmars-2021-crisis/>

² <https://www.oecd.org/development/humanitarian-donors/docs/Localisingtheresponse.pdf>

triggered a remote partnership approach and successive stages of it (phases).

- To consider **how** HARP-F and partners attempt remote working.
- **Compare** the approaches taken by the HARP-F to delivering humanitarian assistance in hard-to-reach areas with approaches taken in comparable humanitarian contexts.
- Review partner **preparedness** and the effectiveness of HARP-F capacity development support for remote partnership.
- Review if remote partnership increased or decreased partner, HARP-F or donor **risk**.

The report makes recommendations on how the HARP-F or its successors can best support partners to improve humanitarian delivery in hard-to-reach areas, including but not limited to grant management processes, capacity development support, coordination, and management of risks. Further we compiled a set of good practices that can be used to guide further implementation by HARP-F partners. The evaluation findings will be used internally by the HARP-F and, potentially, FCDO to improve its grant management arrangements and to promote learning on humanitarian programming in hard-to-reach areas among partners and the wider humanitarian sector in Myanmar.

3. Methodological approach

The assignment is based on mixed-method **methodology** to deliver the outputs listed above. To achieve its objectives, this evaluation was undertaken in four distinct phases.

Phase 1: Inception phase

This phase included a quick pre-assessment of the documents available for the evaluation and initial conversations with the HARP-F Team. Documents studied are included in the [Bibliography](#). The inception phase also included a full elaboration of the evaluation criteria, questions, and tools. Additional information about the scope and methodology, information required and source(s), and limitations is provided in [Annex 5 \(Evaluation Matrix\)](#) and [Annex 6 \(Evaluation questions per tool\)](#).

Phase 2: Primary data collection

Primary data collection was done through the following tools.

Online survey (in Google Forms) addressed to all HARP-F's current and past partners to collect basic quantitative data about their experience of remote partnership in Myanmar. The survey was directed to the totality of HARP-F partners (**n=54**), with minimum responses expected from 40 partners (70%) in accordance with OECD DAC standards. **34 (63%) of the partners responded.**

Key informant interviews (KIIs) Out of a target of 20 KIIs, with 60% targeted to local organisations, 21 grantees (39%) were interviewed (8 international, 13 national). The semi-structured interviews were based on the questions in Annex 4. Selection criteria included proportionality in the coverage of: geographical areas (Rakhine, Kachin, Northern Shan, Chin, Southeast Myanmar and the Thai border area), government³ and non-government-controlled areas⁴ (NGCA) and ensuring participation of at

³ Where access is contingent on government approvals and HARP-F partners have difficulty securing access or where access approvals are intermittent

⁴ Where there is an absence of state authority and where the functions of the state may, to some degree, be filled by an opposition actor, often an armed group or a political authority with connections to an armed group.

least 60% CSOs or Local NGOs who were direct recipients of HARP-F funding, or downstream partners⁵.

Key informant interviews were also done with HARP-F staff, including Grant Management, Training and Financial teams, and relevant FCDO teams. To establish a comparison with other multi-stakeholder programmes in Myanmar the [Livelihoods and Food Security Fund \(LIFT\)/UNOPS](#), the [Myanmar Humanitarian Fund \(MHF\)/UNOCHA](#), and ECHO were also interviewed.

The main breakdown of the partners interviewed and surveyed is provided below with additional information in Annex 5.

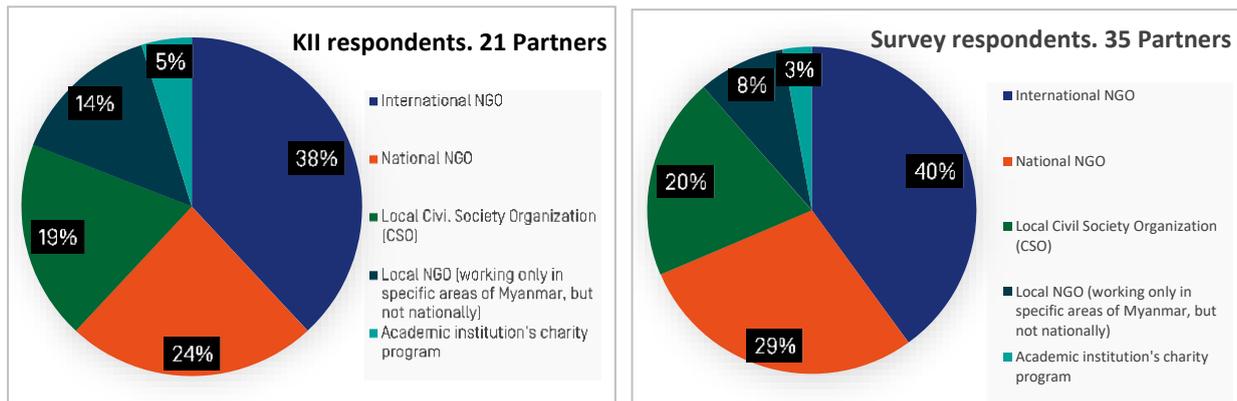


Figure 1 Characterisation of data collection by type of partner

Phase 3. Data analysis

Information was analysed using descriptive and content analysis, as well as case studies.

Descriptive analysis of the survey responses.

Content analysis was used to determine the presence of certain themes or concepts within the qualitative data collected.

Case studies showcase specific good practice for remote partnership in Myanmar. These are included in [Annex 2 and 3. Case Studies](#).

A validation workshop was undertaken with HARP-F staff after the delivery of preliminary findings, to solicit initial staff reactions to the evaluation.

4. Ethical and safeguarding approaches

Ethical and safeguarding approaches including confidentiality, safety, sensitivity, triangulation, progressive data analysis, quality control, language and translation were used. Details are in Annex 8.

5. Limitations of the research

The main challenges/mitigation during the execution of the research, was that many of the grantees were occupied either supporting their local communities or their own teams in the new waves of the COVID-19 pandemic and/or an increasingly difficult security situation in country. Some interviews

⁵ Most of the above criteria is not exclusive, thus partners that comply with one condition might also comply with others.

were cancelled due to informants falling sick with Covid-19. All data collection was done remotely⁶.

Findings

1. Why (and under what circumstances is remote management used)?

The HARP Business Case (FCDO, 2017) sets out, in its first objective, to better support to protect and provide basic services to vulnerable people living in protracted crises, that “in a primarily *constrained* context, where “humanitarian space is limited by the actions of different parties – by violations creating crises, by deliberate limitations of access or, in many cases, by both”, longer term flexible and adaptive approaches are critical to maximising the effectiveness of assistance”. HARP-F was, therefore, designed with the ability to provide funding for humanitarian and resilience building actions that could adapt to the circumstances encountered.

This design principle is in line with the UK’s commitment to the Grand Bargain (IASC, 2021) for both quality funding and localisation. The business case does not mention remote management or remote partnership, but it is assumed that the acceptance of these concepts was implicit in the design of the programme as examples of flexible and adaptive approaches. Similarly, there are no explicit triggers described in the business case for adoption of particular adaptations. The benefits of this design and way of working were not limited to remotely managed operations alone. They applied to a wide range of problems and solutions. From the literature, we observed that **the HARP-F was designed to be flexible and adaptive without placing any specific limitations on how partners should be flexible or adaptive or under what circumstances. There is good evidence that this approach has been helpful to partners and, by association, end recipients of aid.**

In 2019 HARP-F brought in staff resources from Syria / Lebanon to lead the development of protocols for remote management programming (RMP). HARP-F defined RMP as “the systems, controls, and management of programming in locations where there is an absence of senior national and/or international presence for a sustained period of time” (HARP-F, 2019). The summary guidance provided elaborated context thresholds where RMP would be justified, noting that it is a last resort in situations of high vulnerability and need. HARP-F RMP guidance outlines three conditions for approving RMP:

- i. HARP-F will weigh RMP partner proposals against organisations with similar capacities and eligible for HARP-F funding who have direct access in proposed locations (if alternatives exist).
- ii. In situations of local authority access restrictions HARP-F will expect partners to show that they have tried all options to resolve the access situation with the local authority.

⁶ For surveys, all responses were collected online, and additional time (a total of 4 weeks) was given for partners to respond. At least one reminder a week was given. Similarly, with KIIs, the team provided a window of three weeks for these to be organised with our four researchers doing data collection in local languages or English, and at the schedules preferred by the partners. This risk did nonetheless have an effect on the total number of online surveys that were able to be collected and the total amount of time that was available for KIIs. Despite the challenges the samples are still highly representative (63%) and more KIIs were collected (2 additional ones) to increase in-depth information.

- iii. HARP-F partners proposing RMP in situations of local authority access restrictions must demonstrate that they are considering incorporating acceptance building measures during the implementation of their programs to shift back to direct implementation, when viable.

In correspondence with the above, we found that 91.2% of survey respondents indicated that their organisation had employed some form of remote management approach to implement HARP-F funded projects (figure 2). 55.9% of respondents indicated that remote management approaches were built into the project design, either explicitly or implicitly, from the outset (figure 3).

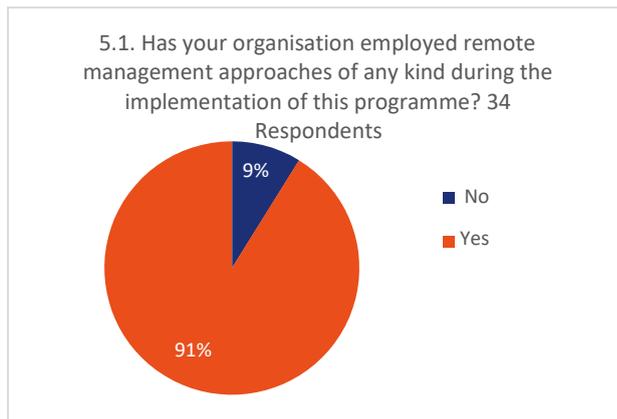


Figure 2 Use of remote management approaches

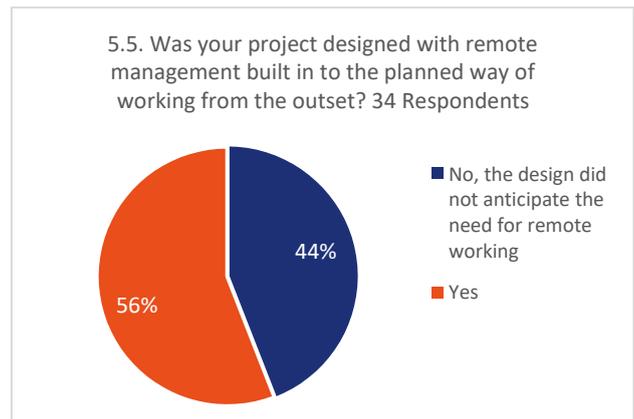


Figure 3 Planning of the remote management approaches

It is quite clear that HARP-F adopted a flexible and adaptive approach to managing its grants, especially from 2019 onwards when a new management team was appointed and introduced more robust approaches across a range of areas, but especially in grant management. Numerous instances of flexibility regarding operational arrangements, grant agreement, reporting arrangements were reported in response to a myriad of causes related to the changing operational environment, partner capacity constraints, and new or emerging needs resulting from localised events. Furthermore, 81.8% of survey respondents indicated that their organisations used different, or adapted approaches to remote management in different contexts across the country, shown below in figure 4.

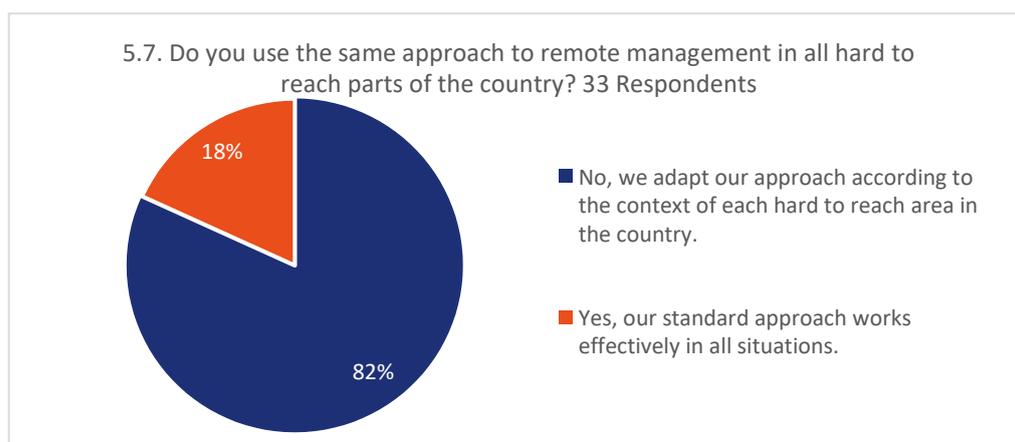


Figure 4 Adaptiveness of the RMP approach chosen

Partners and HARP-F staff also identified **three situations that demanded flexibility and**

adaptiveness, and an increase in remote management. Those were: (i) armed clashes between the Myanmar Tatmadaw (military) and armed groups in Northern Rakhine from January 2019; (ii) the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020; and (iii) the military coup in February 2021. Figures 5 and 6, below, show that approximately two-thirds of survey respondents adapted their approaches to remote management in light of Covid-19 and the military coup. Survey responses did not reveal why organizations may have adjusted their operational response to either covid or the coup. KII responses suggest simply that most organizations were flexible and ready to change their approach in response to changing context, as needed.

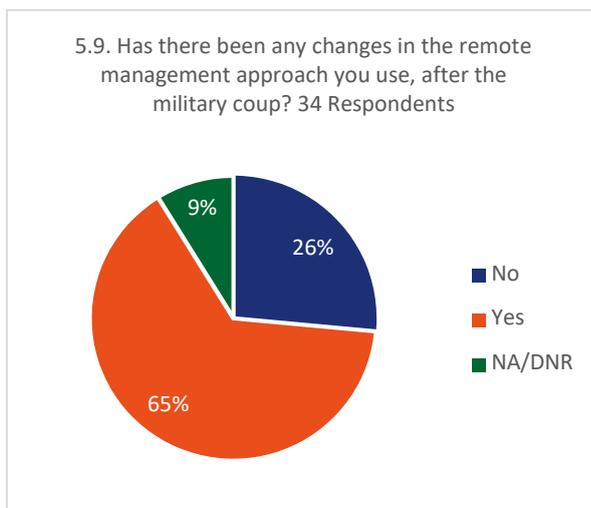


Figure 6 Changes in RPM approach after COVID-19

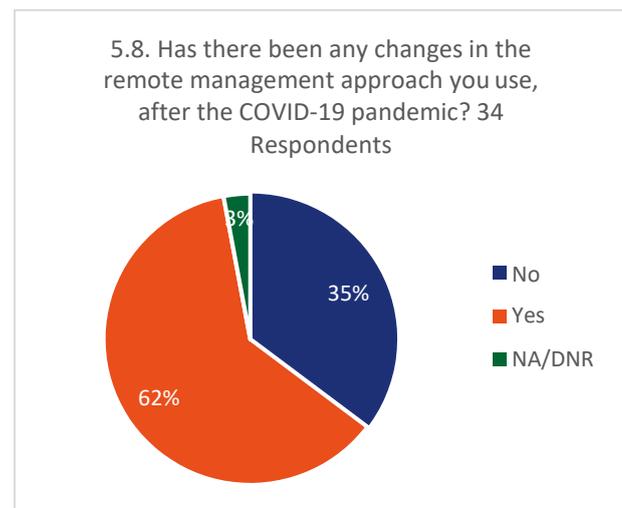


Figure 5 Changes in RPM approach after military coup

HARP -F staff highlighted specific triggers, such as the **liquidity crisis** following the coup, as a challenge that required collective imagination, experimentation, risk-taking, coordination and the sharing of learning across organisations to find solutions. In this instance HARP-F finance, grant management and technical staff, especially those focused on cash transfers, supported by Crown Agents HQ, pulled together to help partners overcome the challenges posed by the shuttering of some banking services and government-imposed limits on cash withdrawals and transfers. This challenge was widely cited by national and international partner organisations as a trigger for adopting new administrative approaches to fund country and field offices, and to complete procurement transactions. It was also a trigger for experimentation and change in programmatic approach in moving from, for example, physical distribution of food assistance to the use of cash transfers as an alternative.

“HARP-F helped a lot with the move to cash distribution. The HARP-F cash technical advisor helped by facilitating meetings with the mobile money transfer agents. We put the idea on the table quite early and HARP F were supportive. We also discussed return to physical distribution. They were always quite flexible. Their interest was in maintaining delivery to the beneficiaries, were always very encouraging and supportive of realistic ideas.” KII International Organisation and their local partners.

The ability of organisations to change operational modalities relatively quickly, with HARP-F support and approval was, in general, a very successful illustration of the flexibility and adaptiveness of the approach adopted. While not every change adopted worked as well as hoped, for example an international organisation moved from food to cash distribution which was undermined when money transfer agents ran out of cash themselves, the ability of partners to try different solutions, with HARP-F support, was a good illustration of the merits of the flexible and adaptive approach in action.

However, triggers like the liquidity crisis, or even Covid-19 and the coup, have **different impacts and cause different responses depending on the characteristics of different organisations and the context within which they are operating**. For example, some organisations with support bases in China were able to find alternative sources of liquidity from Chinese banks and cross-border arrangements, whereas others were paralysed and had far fewer options. Some had more cash on hand from HARP-F or other donor funding to cross-subsidise cash requirements, where others did not.

Leaving aside the impact on implementing organisations and the recipients of their assistance, this diverse set of consequences arising from a common cause presents a unique challenge to an intermediary, like HARP-F, and to donors, where there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the problem faced. After the coup in Myanmar HARP-F and its partners tried multiple ways to overcome, or mitigate, the liquidity crisis. This flexibility was reflected in the regular situation reports going to FCDO. Some adaptations worked, some worked for a period then failed, some did not work. The notion of a series of linear phases where different approaches would be successively triggered once specific, pre-arranged criteria are met was not the experience in practice. This is where the HARP-F ability to be flexible, adaptive, and responsive to challenges, with collective solutions where possible and agency-specific solutions where needed, appears most useful.

It is clear from a review of a sample of **project proposals for 2021 that partners indicated needs and activities for remote management**. These included changes to the job expectations of camp-based staff, the equipment and pre-positioned stockpile of relevant supplies available to them, and access to funds, so that they could continue to implement essential WASH services when access was limited from outside the camp. The HARP-F proposal assessment form for cost extension also included a space for discussion of “how the partner will manage access restrictions” and “has the partner set out how they will remotely manage the activities”, but these details were not completed for this specific project. This was a new section that wasn’t in pre-2021 proposals, showing HARP-F learning and adaptation processes in action.

Remote management arrangements were also included in partner reports to HARP-F. For example, we observed examples of positive feedback on the initiatives for remote management undertaken by the partners, specifically regarding the availability and utilisation of communications technology to stay in touch, and the transportation of water samples for quality testing outside by tuk tuk, and transfer of funds through mobile money services such as Wave Money. Some reports even mentioned how “shifting duties and responsibilities to staff based in camps” was resulting in “increased ownership at the community level of the project activities” and “to foster their agency and decision making that was stripped off by several years of life in confined camps”. This is a bold claim that has not been possible to evaluate. Yet, it suggests that the benefits of further localisation of humanitarian assistance are potentially significant.

We can infer from the proposals and amendments⁷ **to accountable grant agreements, and interviews with international and local partners, that at least during Covid-19 and after the coup, HARP-F did consciously assess whether and the extent to which remote management programming arrangements were, broadly, aligned with the context thresholds set out in the RMP toolkit.**

2. How [type of approaches]?

The HARP-F Grant Tracker for 2021 indicated that 30 delivery grants, 17 enabling grants, 6 innovation grants, 18 rapid response fund grants and 4 transition grants were funded, a total of 75 grants in total⁸. The breakdown of grant types that survey respondents indicated they held is shown below in figure 7. Many local partner organisations reported that the **typically larger grant size and the multi-year duration of funding** received from HARP-F already placed them in a position to exercise **greater flexibility and adaptability of programming than other donor funds** allowed.

⁷ For cost extensions. Most delivery and enabling grants were multi-year, ending in 2020 or earlier. Only cost extensions in 2020 required proposals, formal assessment and associated process resulting in amendments to accountable grant agreements.

⁸ The latest report on the HARP-F website indicates an addition two RRF grants awarded beyond the data included in the grant tracker provided to the evaluators. <https://harpfacility.com/about-us/>

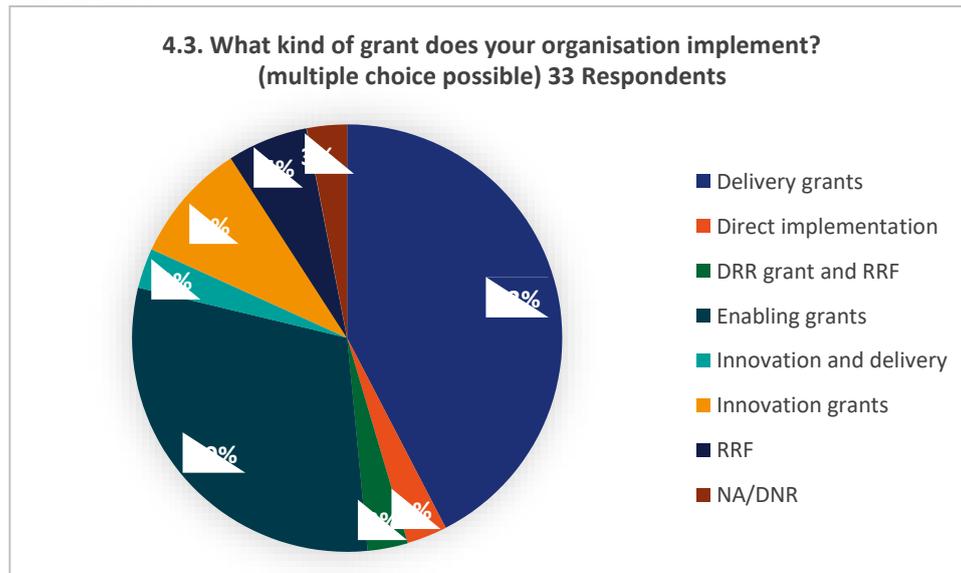


Figure 7 Type of Grant

For those respondents, the evaluation aimed to identify the typology of the remote management approach used based on the classification of the Humanitarian Advisory Group and Care International’s guidance note (HAG / Care International, 2020) as a framework for analysis. The evaluators added a fifth approach, remote strategic partnership, to the four identified by HAG / Care based on their experience of remote management in other contexts. The definitions of these typologies are described below:

- Remote Control: Majority of decisions made by international managers located apart from programs. Limited delegation of authority
- Remote Delegation: Partial or temporary delegation of authority to national/local staff at project sites while other staff are in a separate location
- Remote Partnership: Local actors maintain significant decision-making authority
- Remote strategic partnership: Local actors maintain significant decision-making authority. Project implementation is undertaken by national or local partners, or contractors but local NGO management capacity is strengthened and later transferred from the INGO to the local partners over time.

The interviews revealed that organisations were using multiple approaches to remote management, with surveys showing the primary approaches used as indicated in figure 8. When discussing the survey data in the interviews, it emerged that HARP-F itself and their various partners were all employing a **number of approaches simultaneously** but that this varied across specific geographical locations and times. This may be as much related to a loose interpretation or unfamiliarity with the strict definition of these typologies, as much as it demonstrates a flexible but deliberate selection of a different type of remote management approach as a context evolves. KIIs suggested that strict typologies of approach were not documented in practice when planning for or talking about remote management arrangements. They are more commonly used by researchers than practitioners seeking to implement humanitarian projects. Indeed, the typologies described above in table 1 are not

referred to in the project related documentation (proposals, reports, risk matrices, proposal assessment forms etc.) reviewed for this evaluation.

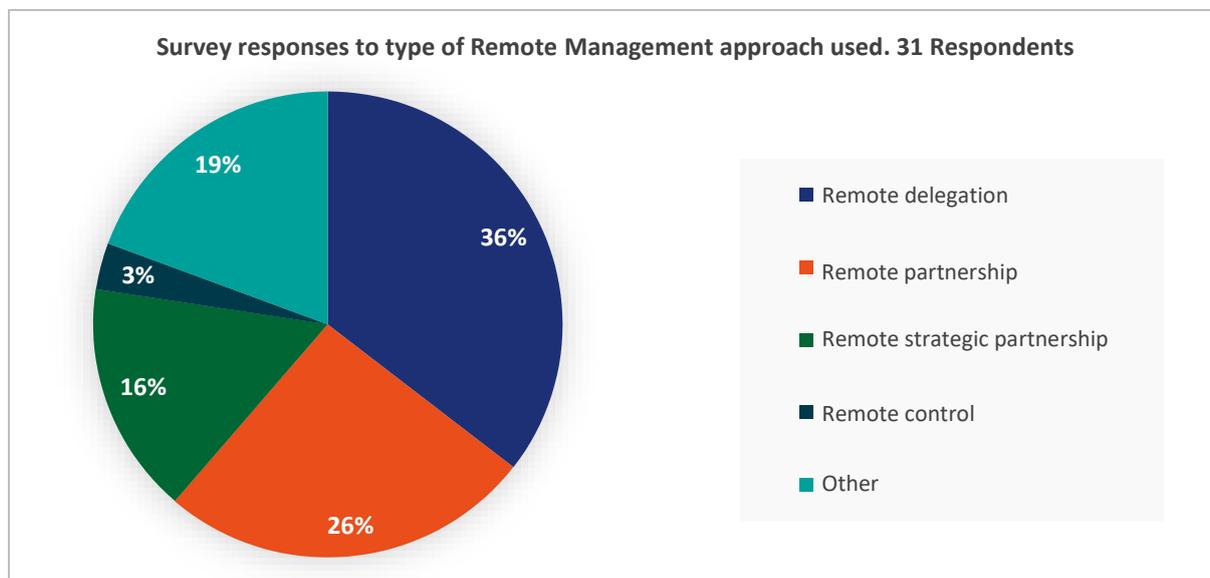


Figure 8 Remote management approach used by respondents

The 2019 HARP-F Remote Management Programming Toolkit set out a summary of Alternative Standard Operating Procedures (ASOPs). In its description of its approach to RMP it is stated that “HARP-F recognizes that shifting to RMP comes with different risks than direct implementation programming and requires adaptations to usual program cycle management to be able to appropriately manage those risks”. HARP-F “proposes that the ASOP framework to be one way that partners and HARP-F can agree on alternative approaches and documentation to mitigate risks”. The ASOP framework also requires partners to demonstrate how they will manage different risks in: i) needs assessment, ii) Monitoring and Evaluation, iii) financial processes and documentation, iv) supply chain processes and documentation, and v) beneficiary feedback and reporting mechanisms

Whereas the assessment of the context thresholds, described in the section above, appears to have been documented in grant modification (cost extension) processes, **it does not appear that the ASOP process was explicitly documented.** Indeed, in an example of the ASOP framework (HARP-F, 2019) HARP-F states that the ASOP was “meant to be a starting point to facilitate a conversation on shared risk and alternative ways of working, to reach vulnerable communities with humanitarian assistance in Myanmar. **It is not binding**”. Some HARP-F senior managers went further, indicating that the toolkit was insufficiently detailed and adapted to partner needs, so they did not prioritise its roll out. Despite spending some significant time trying to apply the toolkit the grants management team concluded that it is “too difficult to anticipate what, specifically, you need, until you need it”, despite the high-level principles being relevant to the uncertain operational context. However, donor expectations had been raised and a certain amount of disappointment about the effect of the toolkit was apparent.

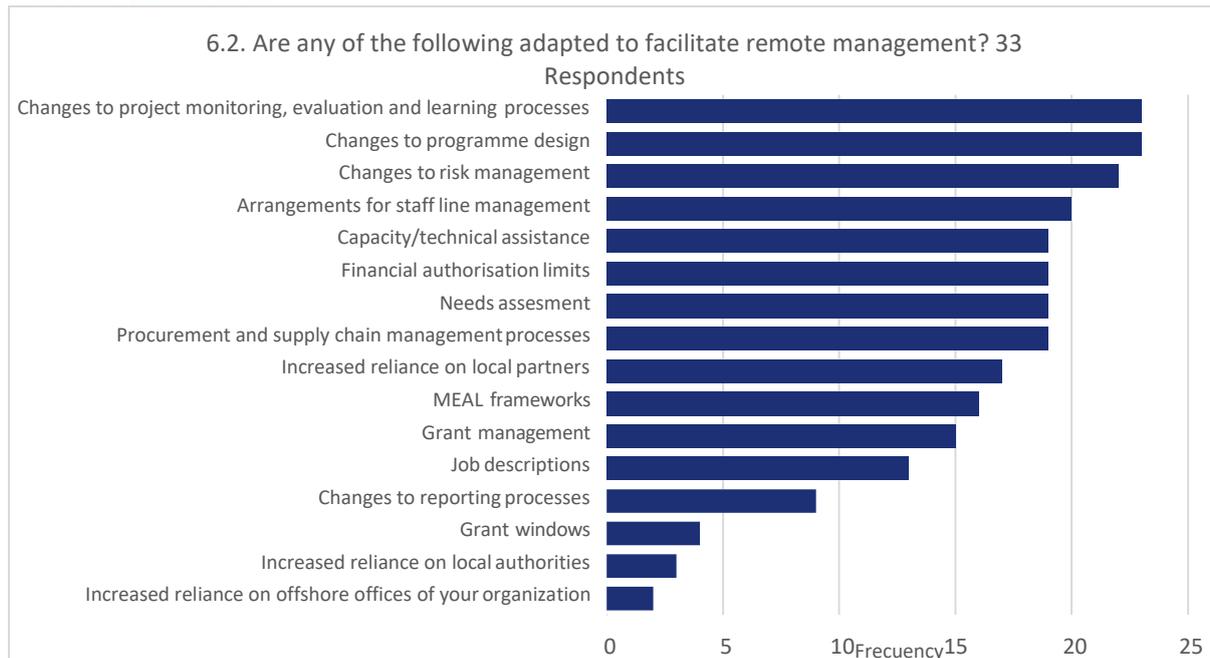


Figure 9 Type of adaptations to RPM

Even though ASOPs were not explicitly discussed in cost extension proposals for 2021 it appears that the expectations of what aspects of operational management would change to overcome a variety of access constraints were borne out in practice. Figure 9, above, outlines the most likely issues to be adapted for remote management programming (frequency >19) were monitoring and evaluation, programme design, risk management, line management, technical support, financial authorisation limits, needs assessment, procurement, and supply chain management. Further adaptations in approach were made by partners in almost every area of operation imaginable.

Despite no key informants reporting that they had specifically taken action to integrate the suggestions HARP-F made in the RMP toolkit into their way of working, the changes partners made were consistent with subjects addressed in the toolkit, and with the HARP-F definition of remote management.

The toolkit received mixed reviews. Even though some input in the development of the toolkit had been received from 5 international and 1 national organisation there was little evidence of uptake. The survey results, shown in figure 10 and 11 below, revealed that almost 30% of the participants did not know anything about the toolkit (on an equal number amongst local and international grantees). This was repeated during the KIIs, where about a third of the representatives from local and international partners interviewed, either did not remember anything about the tool or were admittedly too new to know anything. In general, local partners considered the toolkit more useful (26% saying that the toolkit was highly useful -more than 7 in the scale), than international partners (only 6% giving it a grading of more than 7 in the scale). The same manifested in the KIIs (as seen below). However, no one reported having taken significant steps toward its implementation.

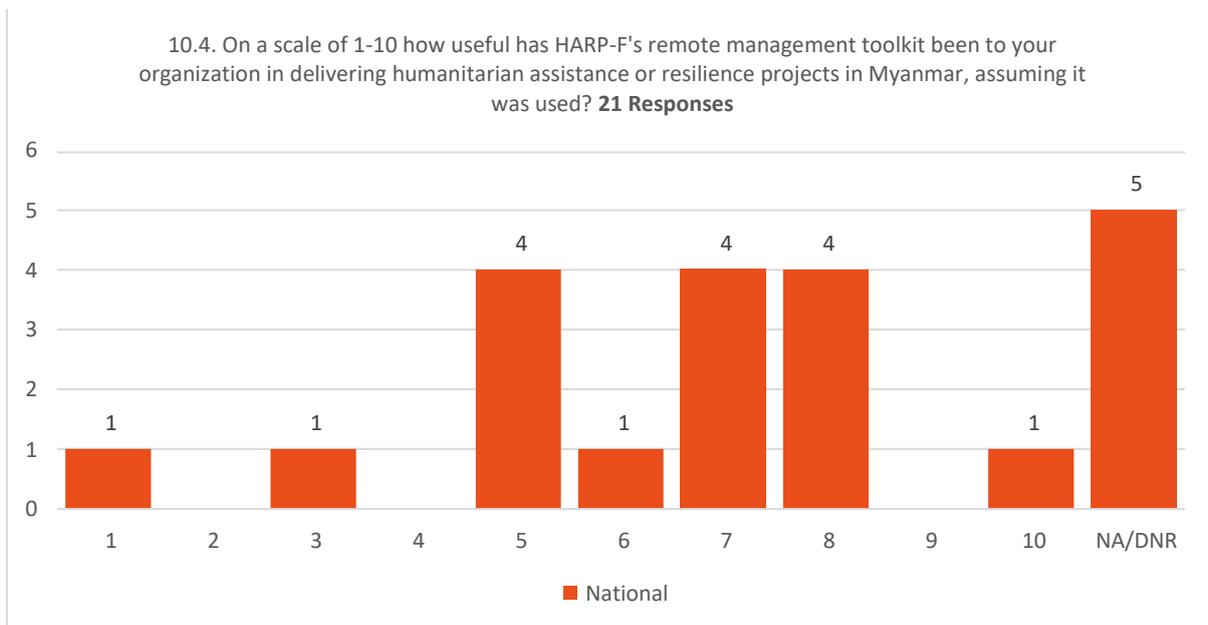


Figure 10

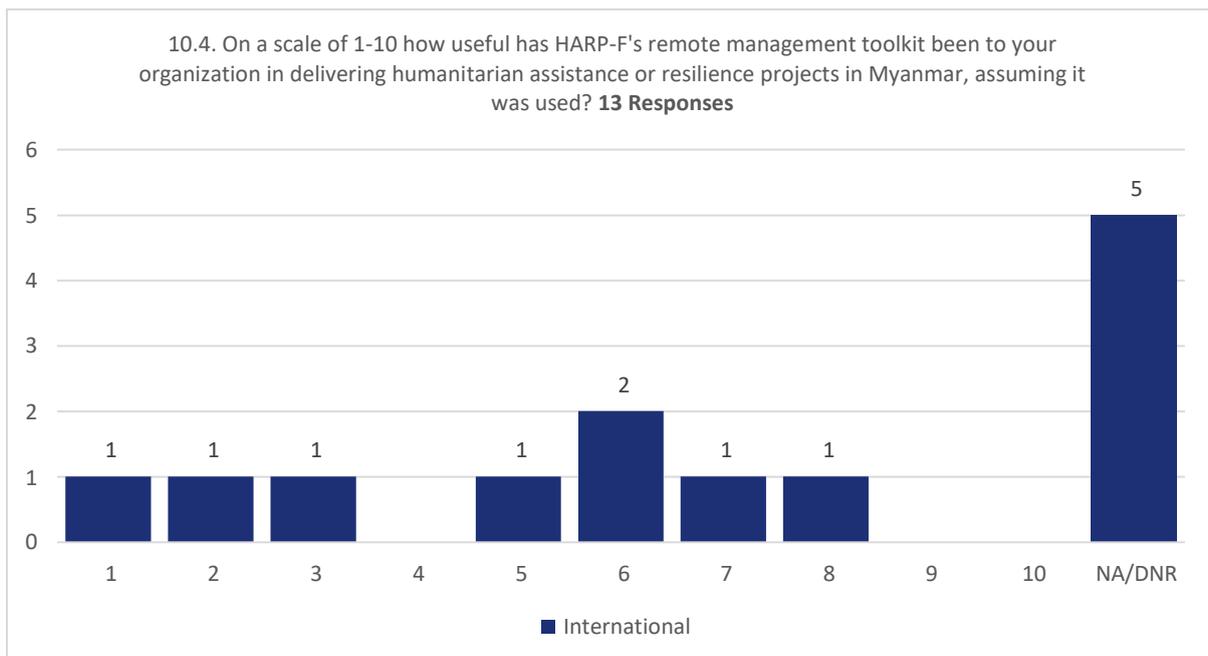


Figure 11

Partners also reported that the HARP-F **Kachin and Rakhine field offices played a very valuable role in remote partnership**, enabling regular support and mentoring from people who were living in and understanding of the context and, often, able to provide support in local languages. The Rakhine field office was closed in **January 2021** due to lack of funding within the HARP-F contract extension and the physical office in Kachin was closed. Following closure, HARP-F staff have endeavoured to sustain regular support to partners through online communication. It is unclear what the impact of closure on

the quality, regularity or effect of support offered. However, several partners noted that the field offices were missed.

HARP-F made quick decisions and released prompt responses for emergency projects. It took 3 days to one week to get approval for the emergency responses or the concept notes that were submitted to HARP-F. HARP-F replied to feedback and suggestions within 24 hours for the emergency projects if we can provide detailed information. KII with local partner.

One clear trend, though, was that the **flexibility and adaptiveness of approach was mostly reliant upon local staff, including those based in camps and other beneficiary settings, and local partners.** Some international organisations, including HARP-F itself, allowed international staff to relocate out of Myanmar to neighbouring or home countries depending on their personal circumstances. 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, as seen in figure 12. For many partners, a significant or complete reliance on national staff for implementation was always evident. **This fact reinforces the need to maintain momentum towards localisation of humanitarian assistance in Myanmar.**

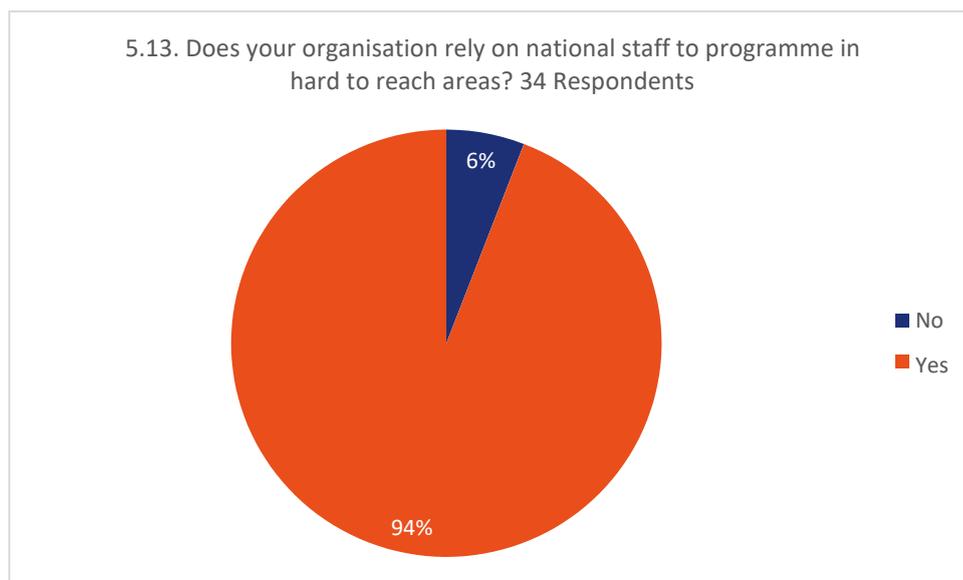


Figure 7 Reliance on national staff

Feedback from the survey and KIIs clearly show that **HARP-F partners used the opportunity for flexible and adaptive programming to adjust to the circumstances and challenges they encountered** when senior management personnel could not travel to the field. **Many organisations highlighted the importance of using different electronic communications methods including online videoconferencing and services such as WhatsApp, Signal and Viber to monitor and manage operations in camps as essential innovations that helped them to overcome a lack of face-to-face contact with staff and project participants,** although this seemed like nothing new to those operating in Non-Government Controlled Areas (NGCA), where telephone calls were used when the internet was inaccessible.

Provision, to camp and community-based staff, of communications devices and credit for internet and mobile network access by partner organisations helped to facilitate this type of communication for project management and monitoring purposes. Some partners described their remote management interactions as primarily focused on finances, resources and programme quality, as part of a **remote system of project control**. This was complemented by **remote support, through coaching, steering, training and empowering** staff and volunteers.

I have used Skype and Messenger to communicate with my project teams in Myanmar, Dropbox for file sharing and storage since 2016. When Covid-19 hit Myanmar in March 2020, I set up a remote management plan for my project teams and initiated a plan (...) that included a capacity building component for staff and senior volunteers to improve their IT literacy, setting up of IT facility such as provision of laptops, tablets and mobile internet facilities, subscription of Zoom and streamyard live streaming studio for online coaching program. (...) Sometimes interviews were done over the phone and some advice from HARP-F's training was used. KII with a local grantee.

Most partners interviewed described using regular “check-ins” with staff, volunteers and partners to review progress and brainstorm solutions to a wide array of challenges. These challenges may lead to small, location-specific adjustments to the normal way of working for short periods, or more extensive and lasting changes that applied to all project sites. It was in reviewing and agreeing these changes, where they may have had implications on reporting, use of funds or other contractual obligations, that the regular interaction with the HARP-F grants management team was particularly welcomed by partners. **72.7% of survey respondents indicated that at least some decisions on remote management were taken in consultation with HARP-F**, as shown in Figure 13, below, substantiating the close engagement that has been maintained. The consultations leading to shared decisions covered a wide range of subjects including, but not limited to, grant management, reporting and technical issues. They illustrate the collaborative relationship between HARP-F and partners.

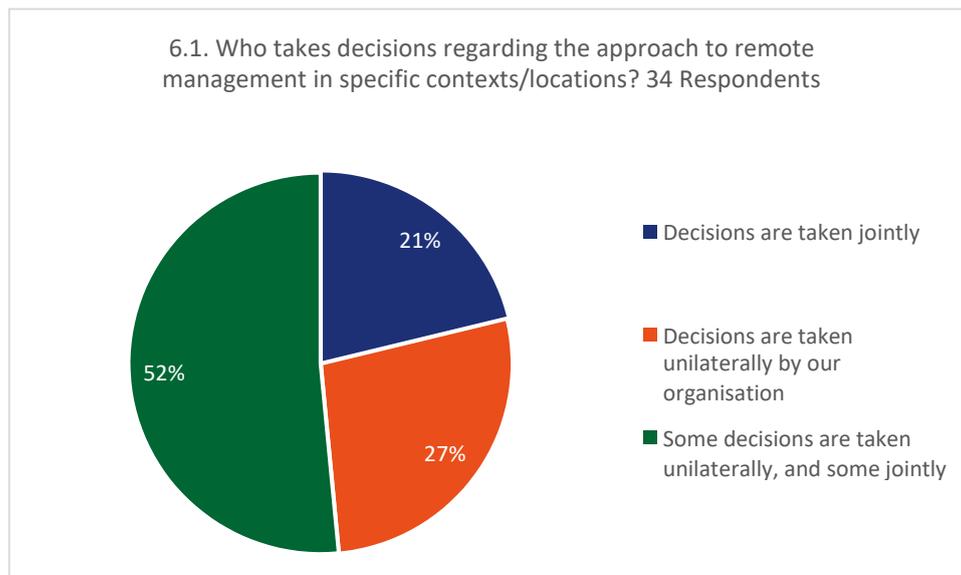


Figure 8 Decision-making process on RPM approach

The grants management team explained that, for HARP-F itself, the RMP toolkit did not change what the grants management team did. However, it does appear that partners understood that while challenges, for example accessing documentary evidence of expenditure in a timely manner for reporting, inevitably occur, there is benefit in talking to HARP-F early to find solutions.

Partners described paying particular attention to maintaining an adequate level of project monitoring through remote means. Most partners had established a **layered structure that was built upon** the mobilization of project committees and volunteer networks in the camps and other community settings where assistance is provided. Some partners had gone further through the recruitment of some or all project staff from within the participant communities. Partners generally reported confidence that these community-based structures have performed well in the circumstances, assisted by ongoing control and support from regionally, nationally, and internationally based staff.

Most agencies invested at least to an extent in some form of **community feedback mechanism that allows for real-time identification of challenges** of all sorts (more information on [Annex 3. Case study](#)). Clearly, the effectiveness of such systems depends on the extent to which they are known to project participants and trusted to help address problems. This is in large part determined by the level of resources provided to operate the system. The most effective and enduring mechanisms are **resource intensive**, incorporating multiple language capability among other features. There is considerable scope for **consolidating the many agencies and project specific feedback mechanisms into one, at least on a regional basis**, to enhance regional monitoring and accountability. This may also enhance the potential such mechanisms have for “push” messaging, for example providing early warning of disaster risks, or sharing consistent public health messaging.

The evaluators also reviewed three **end line survey reports or programme evaluations** for HARP-F funded projects, seeking information based on key word searches⁹. Of the evaluation or end line reports, only one specifically addressed the need for remote management in response to “unexpected factors” of Covid-19, political instability, lack of access to sites, landmines and insecurity. The partner noted that such circumstances made it difficult to complete planned activities. Instead, the organisation focused on critical activities to meet the humanitarian needs of the communities served. Neither of the other two reports noted anything to do with adaptable programming or changing operational processes in response to changing access conditions. Yet, one of them mentioned that HARP-F had recommended, in July 2020, that they implement a complaint mechanism that revealed beneficiary concerns around the scope of assistance and beneficiary selection criteria.

The evaluators found that **changes to operational approach, resulting from access constraints, was so inherent to partner ways of working that they become unremarkable and were consequently not remarked upon in independent evaluations. In future, including consideration of changing operational approaches should be a standard part of any programme review or evaluation.**

Third-party monitoring was also not a feature of remote management practices according to key informants. In the prevailing circumstances, the creation of such capacity could have been helpful to HARP-F and FCDO to verify what was happening on the ground during crisis periods, drawing attention

⁹ Key words included “remote management”, “localisation”, “adaptable”, “flexible”, “partner”, “HARP-F”, “challenge”, “constraint” and “access”.

to gaps and emerging needs, and providing an independent assessment of partner performance. FCDO reported feeling out of touch with some issues including programme quality and being less equipped to be fully accountable to ministers in London than they wanted to be.

Yet, while **CASS context analysis has been widely appreciated** by donors and implementing partners, helping to anticipate and prepare for changes to operations and risk management, this service **did not include a capacity for programme monitoring**. Some partner specifically requested “a similar mechanism to CASS for third party monitoring”. For them, CASS do contextual analysis not programme monitoring, which does not allow to understand what their partners are doing in targeted locations. This is an area where greater value could have been added.

Information needs increase and change, sometimes quickly, when in the midst of (successive, compound) crises. It can be difficult to meet everyone’s needs and expectations at all times and in real time. FCDO felt, at times, unable to lay their hands on the information they wanted to maintain the desired level of accountability to Ministers in London in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic and the coup. They reported being frustrated by being kept at “arm’s length by HARP-F” despite the fact that there was a large volume of written reports, of different types, and regular calls and meetings on the covid crisis and coup. **An ongoing dialogue on needs and expectations for reporting, between implementing organisation, intermediary and donor is needed, alongside transparency on the resources and operational support needed to meet these expectations.** An understanding of underlying realities – perfect information may be impossible to gather given challenges such as monitoring capacity, unreliable communications networks, and displaced teams – must be maintained, alongside a willingness to do things differently, for example though facilitating greater direct communication between donor and implementing partners. **These expectations should be clearly discussed by FCDO and HARP-F’s successors to avoid the challenges experienced to date.**

Overall, we conclude that **HARP-F’s approach to remote management facilitated a high level of flexibility and adaptability in programming.** Partners were able to use methods for remote control, support, delegation, and partnership that were tailored to specific contexts across Myanmar and facilitated by multi-year projects. Feedback received from partners and other stakeholders showed that flexibility and adaptability were applied across a broad range of operational subjects, some of which were anticipated by the RMP toolkit. This toolkit was more useful for local than for international partners, which corresponded with the fact that international partners in many cases already had their own approaches and tools for RMP.

The **close contact between HARP-F’s grant management and technical team, in particular, and partners facilitated the flexibility and adaptability partners needed, and their support was widely appreciated.** The establishment of third-party monitoring may have been a helpful step to augment HARP-F’s ability to verify partner performance on the ground and to complement reporting to the donor. Risk appetite should have been appraised as a criteria for partnership and backing partners willing and able to remain in place during crises to the fullest extent may have achieved even better results for participants. Greater **appreciation of donor information needs and a more open dialogue on those needs** before the most critical phases of crises occurred could have been helpful in **maintaining a more constructive relationship** between HARP-F and FCDO.

3. Comparison

In February 2015 FCDO published the report of the Cross Cutting Evaluation of DFID's Approach to Remote Management in Somalia and North-East Kenya (FCDO, 2015). The independent evaluation was undertaken by Integrity Research and Consultancy and Axiom Monitoring and Evaluation. The evaluation report informed a working paper entitled "No Longer a Last Resort: A Review of the Remote Programming Landscape". The working paper uses the same breakdown of remote management modalities as mentioned above and attributes the basis of the modalities to the NGO Co-ordination Committee in Iraq (NCCI) study by Hansen (2008) with the integration of information, by the authors, of other sources to make the table more comprehensive. Many of the constraints identified in the evaluation in 2014 have been, consciously or otherwise, addressed by HARP-F.

Considering some of the main challenges identified in FCDO's evaluation, remote management is no longer viewed by HARP-F, FCDO or grantees, as a short-term and temporary response to access challenges, but as the regular "mode of operation" in conflict-affected and fragile settings. Secondly, HARP-F has addressed knowledge gaps through a consistent approach to monitoring, analysis, learning and coordination about the different approaches its grantees use to access hard-to-reach populations.

Furthermore, the local context and the voices of affected populations are built into the way the programme works, in part through the financing of CASS. The FCDO evaluation proposed a list of modalities for remote management some of which are reflected in the four modalities considered for this evaluation. They are acceptance measures, change of activities, decentralised programming, mitigation activities, relocation of services, remote programming and third-party monitoring. Their contrast is summarised in a table at annex 4 and includes some reference to examples from HARP-F or partner experience. The modalities suggested in annex 4 may not, in 2021, be considered approaches to remote management in and of themselves but are components of a more comprehensive and adaptable approach, and as such applicable.

HARP-F brought in expertise from humanitarian operations in Lebanon/Syria to develop the approach to remote partnership, including formulation of the toolkit, in 2019. However, there is no evidence that this investment resulted in a substantially different approach by partners, particularly international partners, as discussed above. Good practices described in the literature have, at least to an extent, been seen in the HARP-F approach (Somalia/Kenya, Afghanistan). Some partners used their own organizational tools (developed in other contexts within Myanmar or outside) to respond to the changing context and priorities, particularly in terms of MEL and communications. **Day to day mechanisms have been very autochthonous and specific to the context.** HARP-F's continuous engagement from technical and grant management teams have played a very positive role in both quickly reviewing and approving changes that have contractual implications and suggesting or co-creating technical solutions to partner-specific or programme-wide challenges.

Overall, HARP-F has played a constructive role in supporting its partners through its consistent

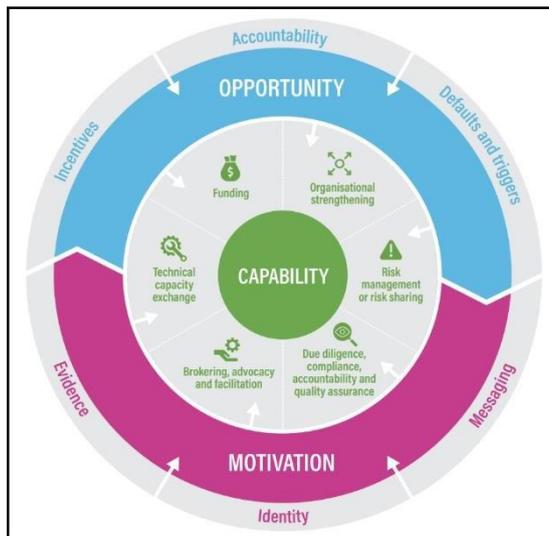


Figure 94 Desirable characteristics for intermediary partners

commitment to facilitating flexibility and adaptability through its strong focus on communication and responsiveness. From an implementing partner perspective HARP-F has performed well as an intermediary. Partners have been supported by HARP-F, in line with HAG Guidance on Remote Humanitarian Management and Programming (HAG / Care International, 2020) to mount locally led responses, emphasizing safety and well-being, flexibility and adaptability, accountability and protection. In its’ 2021 report on “Bridging the Intention to Action Gap” (HAG, 2021) describes some of the desirable characteristics and competencies for intermediaries, like HARP-F, to support locally led humanitarian action, shown in figure 14.

HARP-F attempted to **provide value in all the six core competencies** that the report recommends for intermediaries – funding; organizational strengthening; risk management and risk sharing; due diligence, compliance, accountability, and quality assurance; brokering, advocacy and facilitation; and technical capacity exchange. Whether or not it was successful enough in all areas to achieve the recommended future role for intermediaries to “empower local and national organisations to drive, define and deliver principled humanitarian responses to needs in their communities” is beyond the scope of this evaluation.

Overall, we conclude that HARP-F’s approach to remote management was well-intentioned and **demonstrated many, if not all, of the practices recommended in the literature.** It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to measure the effectiveness of HARP-F impact on locally led humanitarian action generally.

4. Preparedness

HARP-F invested significantly in capacity support and enhancement. It distributed approximately £3 million in 17 enabling grants to national organisations with the specific goal of enhancing capacity. This was in addition to funding that some or all these organisations received as downstream partners of other HARP-F partners receiving larger delivery grants. HARP-F’s training team was active in developing and delivering a range of training in support of assessed capacity needs such as for financial management, procurement and supply chain, risk management and in technical areas like nutrition.

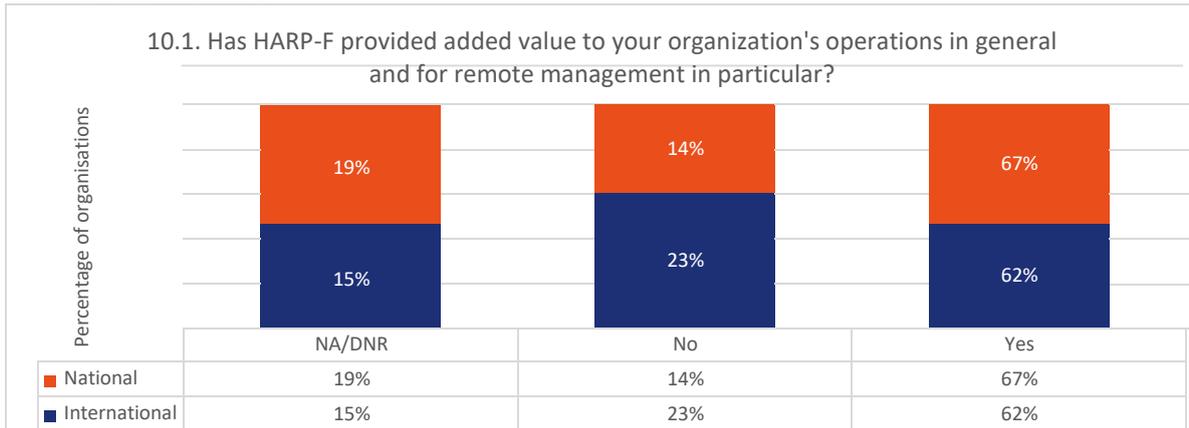


Figure 15 Added value of HARP in RPM adaptations

HARP-F's training team also offered training in emergency response to local partners of the LIFT programme. In general, 64.7% of all HARP-F partners that responded to the survey considered that HARP-F had added value to their organization's operations in general and for remote management, as seen in figure 15 above. This response was relatively equally balanced between local and international partners.

However, as figure 16 shows, 35.3% of survey respondents indicated that the main ways that this added value was provided was through grants management flexibility, with this being particularly seen as significant by international partners. Training, capacity enhancement and technical assistance were individually seen as a less significant although still relevant mechanism for support, although these categories were more important for national partners than international.

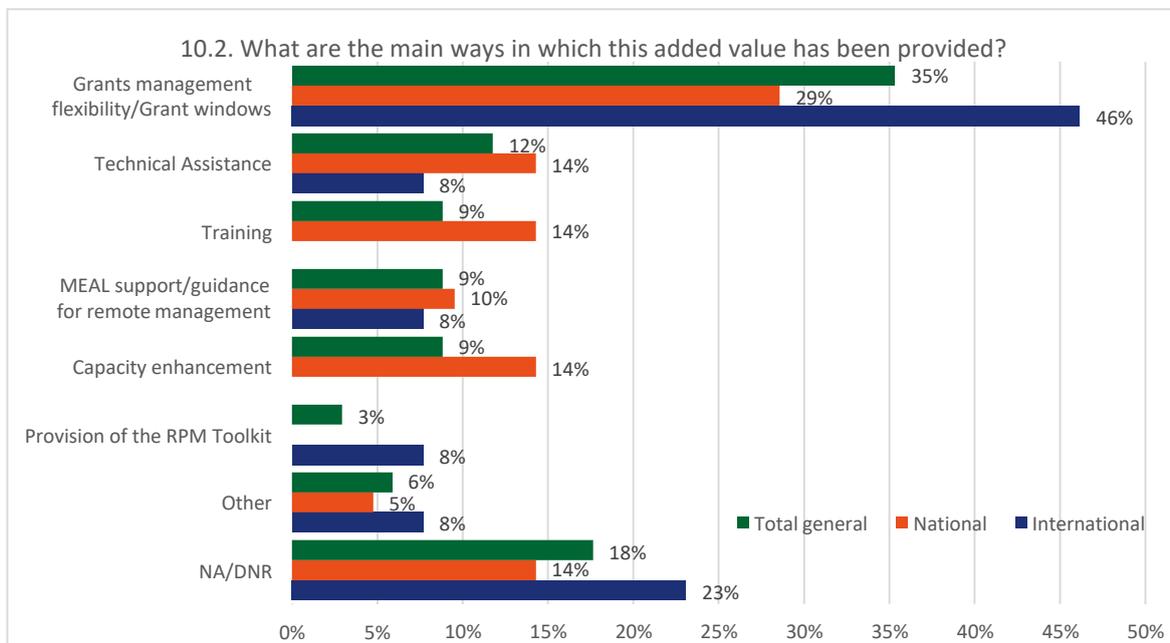


Figure 10 Main ways in which added value was provided from HARP-F

HARP-F assessed the training provided to have predominantly benefitted national partners and their staff. Training, supported by the ongoing support and contact with HARP-F technical, grant

management and finance teams, alongside the regional offices in Kachin and Rakhine combined to have a noted impact. Survey results, shown in figure 17, suggest that 58% of respondents rated HARP-F training and other knowledge and evidence development at 7/10 or above. The tendency again was higher amongst national partners (65%) than international ones (45%). Some international partners considered the HARP-F training to be very basic, too short, in some areas and possibly more “focused on creating baseline knowledge for new local partners”. Training typically focused on core organisational domains such as project management, M & E, human resources and financial management, based on periodic capacity assessments.

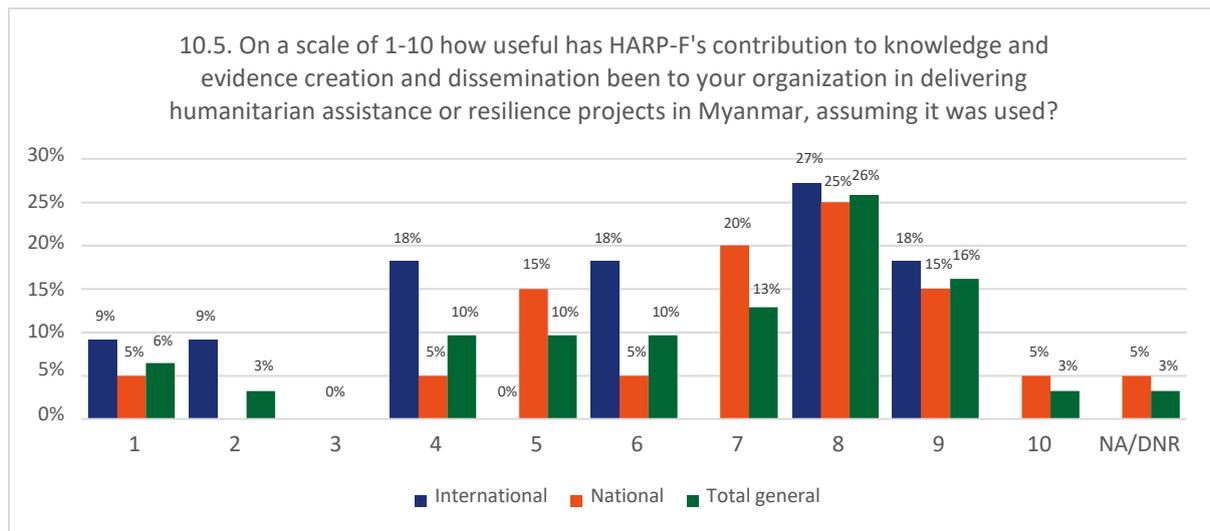


Figure 11 Usefulness of HARP-F contribution to knowledge and evidence creation

Technical training on a range of issues such as PSEA, protection and safeguarding, was also provided, sometimes at the request of partners. Further, one-to-one support was provided to some local partners, which was seen as highly valuable by those respondents. **None of the training provided focused on remote management, the RMP toolkit or the remote partnership approach in general.** Finally, HARP-F prepared a 3-day training programme for LIFT and Access to Health Funds in 2018 to help their partners develop their capacity for humanitarian response.

However, there were also indications of training not being sufficiently coordinated with other partners/programmes (ECHO, MHF, LIFT) and was thus duplicative. Better coordination of training, in terms of both content and scheduling would have represented a good use of resources. One respondent from the MHF noted that HARP-F was not responsive when invited to coordinate on the provision of training and support to shared partners. At the same time, it was apparent that there was not a very strong connection between HARP-F’s operational and training teams, with respondents indicating that it did not seem that the training team was incorporating the challenges and solutions discussed with the financial and grant teams into the training content. It appeared that these functions were rather disconnected, and thus an opportunity missed to make best use of available resources.

All donors give similar trainings and therefore they cover some common topics. KII National Partner

Several partners discussed their anticipation of access constraints and the design of programmes that were rooted in the communities served. Many organisations developed a layered structure that employed staff and mobilised volunteers within the targeted villages, townships and IDP camps. For others, working cross-border and in NGCA a localised approach has been in place for, in some cases, decades. The investment in recruiting, equipping, and training community-based partners, staff and volunteers has been paid back through the ability of these structures to maintain service delivery, at least to an extent throughout the last two years.

As seen in figure 18 below, 25% of survey respondents reported having clearly articulated management approaches and thresholds for remote management developed centrally by their organization. This category was particularly high amongst the international partners with 46.2% giving this response, in comparison with 10.5% of the local partners. On the other side 53.1% reported using a flexible, more informal approach to deliver assistance and manage projects in hard-to-reach areas and did not have documented procedures to prepare for remote management. This was more the case of national partners (73.7%) than international ones (23.1%). The remaining 21.1% of respondents reported either a mixed approach with some standardized tools, for example for MEAL, and some flexibility of approach, while others were in the process of documenting a locally standardized approach.

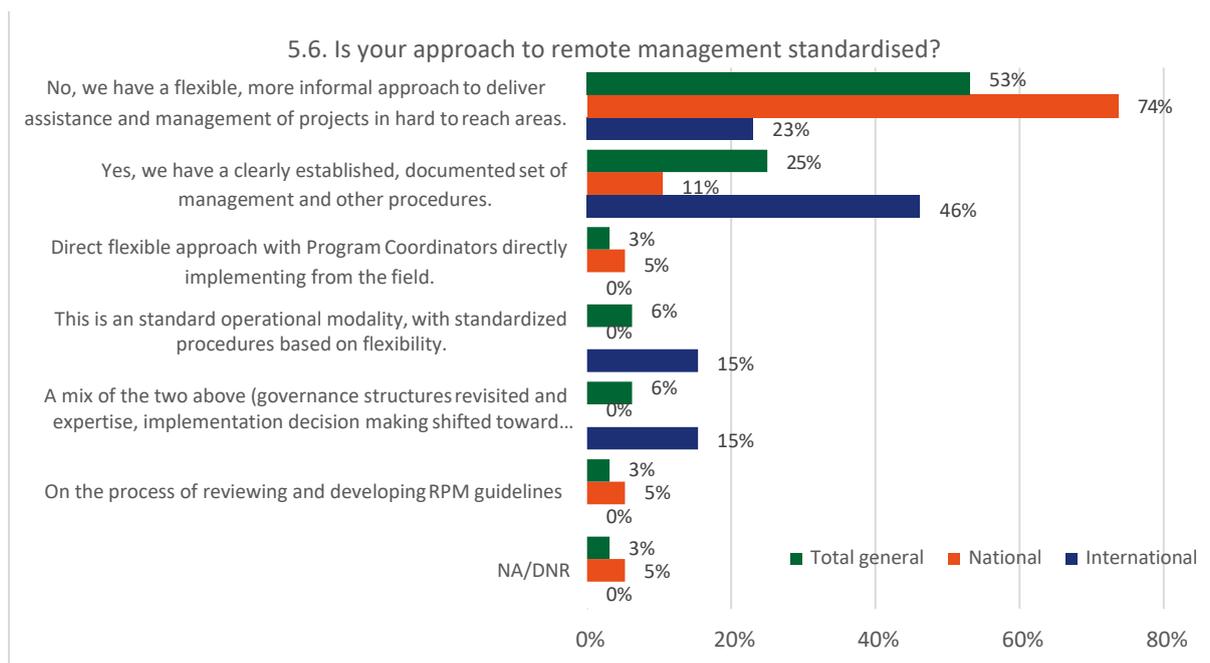


Figure 12 Flexible vs. Standardized RPM

This explains the difference in the answers provided regarding the utility of the RPM toolkit, as it normally covers areas which are part of standardized approaches. It is more difficult to assess whether partners benefitted from the guidance provided by the RPM toolkit in a flexible/adaptable approach. The graph also shows that despite the importance of standardized approaches, flexibility is even more important in highly volatile situations. Thus, the evidence suggest that toolkits can be a useful tool mainly for those organisations that don't have a standard approach already, and that those partners

that have it, can be a useful source of information for the consolidation of such guidance, rather than a recipient. Again, this points to the need to make a needs assessment before commissioning such a tool, in order to understand who the public will be, what are the specific needs and who could provide support in its making.

This reflects in the overarching impression of the toolkit by the grantees, which was that its design addressed areas of potential concern for HARP-F's risk management. However, it did not necessarily address subjects of concern to partners, particularly internationals. **Capacity to manage projects in high-risk, hard-to-reach areas is more effectively addressed through the funding of core capacity, better achieved through enabling grants, than high level lists of "things to think about", regardless of how relevant the headings appear.** Even though the RMP toolkit itself was not a significant contributor to the effectiveness of remote management, the overall approach of remote partnership, combining trust, where earned, and careful due diligence in a risk-based approach, was highly appreciated by partners and appears to be effective. **Partner feedback overwhelmingly supported the idea that real-time support through mentoring, discussing, and finding solutions to the day-to-day and sector-wide problems that frequently arose was a valuable type of support.**

5. Risk management

Humanitarians in Myanmar face a complex and shifting set of risks generated by the protracted crisis context. The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 and the coup in February 2021 have added to the complexity HARP-F and its partners must cope with. Inevitably financial, physical and reputation risks increase as direct access to the field decreases. Multi-dimensional risks to vulnerable populations, particularly those beneficiaries of HARP-F programming, has grown over the past two years. These risks include those caused by violence and displacement, disruption of basic and protective services of all kinds, loss of contact with the outside world, predatory elites, domestic violence, worsening of food security, among others, all of which have been experienced to greater or less degrees since the onset of covid-19. CASS reporting is clearly documenting ongoing serious human rights abuses and growing humanitarian needs (CASS, 2021).

The HARP-F approach to working in Myanmar, described that one of the three pillars to its approach is to enhance the due diligence process to assess the amount of funding that each partner can reasonably absorb and use effectively (HARP-F, 2020). **The document does not provide details of what criteria are analysed to make this assessment.** Yet, feedback from partners and the HARP-F grant management team suggest that due diligence was based on experience of the timeliness and effectiveness of operations, delivery, reporting and budgeting. This information was uncovered through the periodic interaction and support that brought the HARP-F and partner teams together.

The relative ease of communication between HARP-F and partners was also cited as a factor that helped both manage risk and increase trust. While positive relationships are of course important and helpful, it would also assist partners in the reduction and management of risk if HARP-F had clearly established criteria for its risk-based partnership approach. This may have made it easier for partners to develop the characteristics and competencies associated with the lowest risk, most fundable partners, rather than relying on a more subjective approach. Organisations with articulate, Western-

educated CEOs, or other senior staff, who are fluent in English and enjoy substantial social capital with intermediaries and donors may well merit financial support based on their proven ability to implement, but competencies in communication certainly help to build relationships.

Very high-risk appetite from HARP-F which has not been the case with other funders. KII International Partner

We tried to get adequate information from the locals that we were travelling to. Our decisions were made based on the information we received from them (...) Regarding risk management, HARP-F trained us how to conduct a risk assessment, such as classifying high, medium, and low risk and mitigation measures. HARP-F taught us these systematically in the training and we had to include it in the formulation of the new proposal. KII National Partner

The informal element of the due diligence process, based on communication and experience, is normal, but can make it difficult for partners to understand what is expected of them. We suggest that **transparent, objective criteria for due diligence are valuable to ensure the right partners are supported, especially in contexts with a substantial reliance on remote management approaches.**

The survey showed that 70.6% of respondents employed risk management tools specific to remotely managed operations, as shown in figure 19 below. These included enhanced security and duty of care protocols, security and community profiling, conflict sensitivity analysis, as well as regular contact with community-based networks. Several national partners noted their use of risk registers, developed to secure and to manage HARP-F funding. These tools were useful to identify and implement mitigation measures to address changing risks. HARP-F extended risk management by the use of virtual spot-checks. Also, national grantees particularly noted the support given to them by HARP-F, other donors and INGO intermediaries to analyse and cope with additional risks, including training on risk management, safeguarding, protection monitoring and PSEA, among other topics.

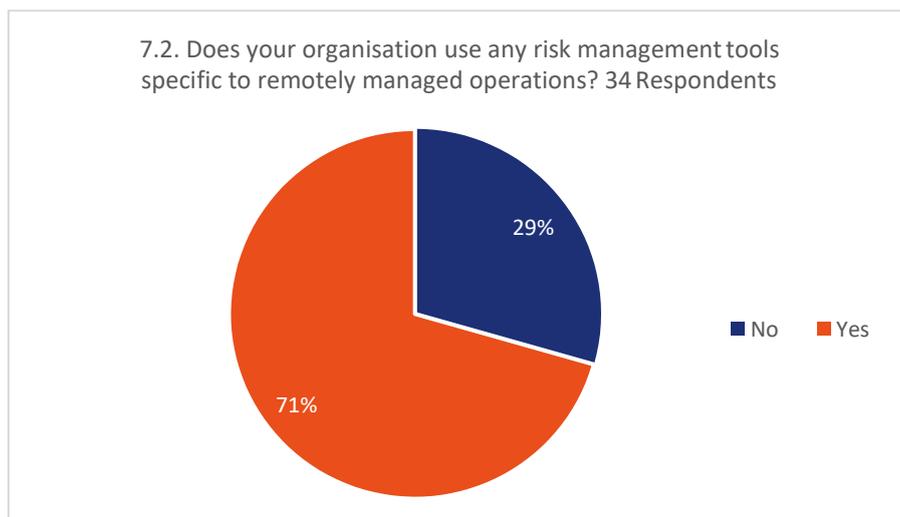


Figure 19 Use of risk management tools within grantees

Training provided for national partners focused on issues related to risk areas considered most important to the humanitarian system including, but not limited to, financial management, procurement and supply chain management. It also sought to build partner capacity in protection relevant subjects such as PSEA, do no harm, safeguarding and protection monitoring. It also extended to technical subjects including nutrition and WASH among others. Yet, gender sensitivity appears to have been a gap in HARP-F's risk-based approach. One staff member noted that "we haven't done too much on gender. We have gender disaggregated data but we haven't done much more".

HARP-F risk approach has also been backed up and reinforced by interaction between partners and technical or operational staff. As mentioned above, grantees consistently mentioned that HARP-F had strongly added value by "working with them" during the identification of solutions to arising problems and risks. Yet, four of the local partners interviewed, mainly those newer within HARP-F, mentioned not receiving any specific training or support, although they did receive it from other international partners they worked with, so it is difficult to know if this was part of a conscious and coordinated approach from HARP-F.

HARP F did reach out to get updates and to have regular discussions on security and safety, and other risk issues. We felt they were willing to respond to any specific requests. They were constantly aware of decisions we were making. We supported our partners on risk management – for security and safety we shared our guidelines to partners, we ensured PPE was available for local staff meetings, we provided psychosocial support to staff and partners as it has been a very stressful period. KII International Partner

There was no particular training received from HARP on risk management, or safeguard training. We have other donors so we got that from them and not seek support from HARP. KII National Partner.

Thus, **it is not clear if the risk management approach was sufficiently individualised to specific partner requirements.** This is an area that intermediaries could reinforce in future, to **correlate the acquisition of new knowledge and skills with the development of management, monitoring and learning systems.** Whereas **training may have made some contribution to partner capacity for risk management, it is no substitute for direct capacity and support,** for security and other risk areas. Post HARP-F funding of national organisations should include core funding, in support of localization, to ensure that partners can build longer-term capacity within their organisations and, at least to an extent, reduce the trend of poaching of the most capable staff by the UN and INGOs, among others.

In any case, **all partners described trying to meet minimum standards for the management of safeguarding and protection risks in different ways.** In some cases, partners promoted greater use of community-based decision-making, where flexibility and resources were available at the grassroots level. This enables project implementers in hard-to-reach areas the flexibility to respond to new or unmet needs at a granular level. Many partners reported the use of telephone and internet-based community reporting and feedback mechanisms.

Some, international partners reported their feedback mechanism being useful to report service interruptions and other operations and maintenance needs for their WASH infrastructure. Others

described multi-lingual, multi-gender phone banks to record complaints, feedback and protection reporting. The partner implementing one such system, highlighted the resource intensity of effective systems and their potential for pushing out communications to project participants, for example to disseminate covid-19 health promotion information. The proliferation of such feedback mechanisms may dilute effectiveness, coverage and cost effectiveness. The potential utility of such systems is clear for accountability to affected populations but offers potential benefit for remote monitoring and dissemination of information. The potential for **consolidation of such agency level mechanisms into system-wide mechanisms should be appraised.**

Is risk sharing between national and international partners in Myanmar equitable? National and community-based partners and their implementation structures take on the bulk of the physical risk, whereas international partners aimed to absorb the bulk of the fiduciary, or administrative risk. The HARP-F document on duty of care for remote partnership (HARP-F, 2020) focuses exclusively on burden-sharing of security risk, promoting the coverage of national partner staff with effective security policies and procedures, insurance cover, equipment and staffing, among other things. HARP-F cannot remove the burden of security risk on national partners, but the principles, minimum standards and recommendations inform as equitable a burden-sharing as possible, **if implemented.**

It was clear that security has been discussed extensively, but in practice little was revealed by either HARP-F documentation, or KIIs as to whether the duty of care approach was implemented. Given the hands-off approach regarding the roll out of the RMP toolkit, **it is possible that duty of care was more window-dressing than substantive contribution to risk sharing.** While there was clearly an active discussion within HARP-F on the extent to which they, as intermediary, bore responsibility for ensuring all partners, including the downstream partners of the INGOs, had effective procedures and capacities in place to manage security risk. In future, **intermediaries should address this question at the outset and make funding and capacity enhancement arrangements accordingly,** alongside appropriate communications, so partners and donors know exactly what they should expect.

Conclusions

- HARP-F was designed to be flexible and adaptive without placing any specific limitations on how partners should be flexible or adaptive or under what circumstances. There is good evidence that this approach has been helpful to partners and, by association, end recipients of aid. The close contact between HARP-F's grant management and technical team, and the local and international partners facilitated the flexibility and adaptability partners needed, and their support was widely appreciated.
- HARP-F provided capacity enhancement and financing to national partners broadly in-line with Grand Bargain goals. Many local partner organisations reported that the typically larger grant size and the multi-year duration of funding received from HARP-F already placed them in a position to exercise greater flexibility and adaptability of programming than other donor funds allowed.
- The more localised the response the better able to deliver assistance despite the many challenges experienced in the past two years, independently of whether they were being delivered by national or international grantees. Flexibility and adaptiveness were mostly reliant upon local staff, including those based in camps and other beneficiary settings, and local partners. This fact reinforces the need to maintain momentum towards localisation of humanitarian assistance in Myanmar.
- HARP-F itself and their various partners were all employing several approaches / typologies simultaneously but that this varied across specific geographical locations and times. Partners used a wide range of terminology to describe their approach to remote management, including having no specific terminology at all, or creating new terminology.
- The most likely issues to be adapted for remote management programming were monitoring and evaluation, programme design, risk management, line management, technical support, financial authorisation limits, needs assessment, procurement, and supply chain management.
- HARP-F's approach to remote management was well-intentioned and demonstrated many, if not all, of the practices recommended in the literature. Its operations covered the six core competencies recommended for intermediaries to support locally led humanitarian action.
- Despite being well documented the Remote Management Toolkit was not widely applied by partners. Capacity to manage projects in high-risk, hard-to-reach areas is more effectively addressed through the funding of core capacity, better achieved through enabling grants, than high level lists of "things to think about", regardless of how relevant the headings appear. Partner feedback overwhelmingly supported the idea that real-time support through mentoring, discussing and finding solutions to the day-to-day and sector-wide problems that frequently arose was a valuable type of support.
- Training typically focused on core organisational domains such as project management or M & E, while technical training addressed issues such as PSEA, protection and safeguarding. None of the training provided focused on remote management, the RMP toolkit or the remote partnership approach in general.
- Greater appreciation of donor information needs and a more open dialogue on those needs before the most critical phases of crises occurred could have been helpful in maintaining a more constructive relationship between HARP-F and FCDO. Since intermediaries will still be needed

after HARP-F closes. Financing must recognise and support the genuine capacity needs for the intermediary to enable it to meet donor and partner expectations.

Recommendations to post-HARP-F intermediaries

HARP-F is approaching the end of its lifecycle. These recommendations are primarily intended for successor intermediary arrangements and should be implemented immediately to build on the positive impact of HARP-F support for humanitarian action in Myanmar. It is noted that HARP-F has, at least as of 2021, taken action on some of these recommendations.

Recommendations per Section
Why
1. Prioritise flexibility and adaptability in programming and operational management to enable agencies to cope with uncertainty and risk.
2. Agree with partners likely operational and programmatic areas / issues where flexibility and adaptation are most likely to occur and discuss parameters of change.
How
3. Document the many adaptations, innovations and solutions to the many challenges partners have faced and found way to overcome, or not, in the various different regions and humanitarian contexts in Myanmar to create a digest of practical best practices and lessons.
4. Continue to develop community-based delivery and monitoring mechanisms through participatory structures that involve project participants. Identify and develop incentive structures to enhance the accountable and need-based delivery of assistance within community settings.
5. Include a flexible and unallocated budget line for new emergency response in each partner budget to facilitate quick, or anticipatory, response to new hazards. This was used by HARP-F and enabled partners flexibility to respond.
6. Establish autonomous third-party monitoring capacity, through both commissioning an appropriately qualified organisation(s), the use of digital tools for the triangulation of data, and encouragement of collaborative peer monitoring on the ground by national partners.
Preparedness
7. Set out clear and achievable criteria for trust and low risk operations, including incentives for achieving / applying them so that national partners have a pathway to a light touch partnership. Once the criteria are met the partner may be considered low risk. This would then enable partners to, for example, use their own in-house systems for reporting, or enjoy more flexibility to take decisions on programming without consultation etc.
8. Assess demand and need for continued development of the RMP toolkit. If it is deemed useful enough to develop further, this should be done on a partner-by-partner basis in combination with a review and potential re-engineering of management systems and processes.
9. Ramp up preparations for greater use of cash transfers through multiple delivery systems (cash, bank transfer, hundi and similar informal systems, mobile etc.).
10. Pre-position and replenish contingency supplies, including food, to facilitate continuous distribution when access is limited. Identify, train and equip locally based distribution partners who can access the supplies and distribute to targeted recipients.
11. Ensure partners have access to and know how to use the communications technologies and digital tools that will be essential to delivery assistance in hard-to-reach areas in future.
12. Increase the effectiveness of training by correlating the acquisition of new knowledge and skills with the development of management, monitoring and learning systems.

Recommendations per Section
13. Fund core costs of national partners – these funds contribute to and, therefore, enhance the essential capacities organisations need to both deliver and manage risk effectively, but may entail a higher resource need than those that can be directly associated with project outputs. This funding should be additional to the administrative overhead cost (usually between 7 and 10%) attached to project grants. Pooling donor support for core costs may be a cost-effective approach since many donors are supporting the same partners.
Risk Management
14. Promote consolidation of community feedback mechanisms on a regional basis.
15. Establish risk management processes, standards and tolerance levels for use of informal (hundi) cash transfer systems.
16. Tolerance of (partial) failure of some innovative approaches is needed and, in some ways, encouraged if new and more successful approaches to working in access-constrained areas are to be found. Seeking innovation in turn requires all parties (donor, intermediary, implementing partners) to adopt the appropriate risk appetite.
17. Ensure partners and their downstream partners have robust security capacity in place and arrange funding, capacity enhancement and communication accordingly.
18. Develop formal, transparent and objective criteria for due diligence to ensure the right partners are supported, especially in contexts with a substantial reliance on remote management approaches.
19. Adapt the risk management approach to specific partner requirements. Whereas training may have made some contribution to partner capacity for risk management, it is no substitute for direct capacity and support, for security and other risk areas.

Good practices

A set of good practices informed by HARP-F experience and findings from the evaluation are presented for intermediaries, partners and donors to consider for future operations in Myanmar.

- Keep it simple – the three pillars of the remote partnership approach (build trust, enhance due diligence, support flexible and adaptable management approaches) are appropriate and helpful as an approach to sustaining humanitarian operations in protracted crisis. Complex, abstract conceptual packaging for remote management, remote control, remote delegation etc, are harder to understand and are consequently less practical.
- Clear criteria for the assessment of partner capacity for delivery and risk management in access-constrained contexts, to enable partners to work towards attainment of the characteristics and competencies of the lowest risk, most highly trusted partners.
- Combination of training backed up by field engagement, mentoring and ongoing support of all forms is a good approach to provide support, resolve challenges in an administratively accountable manner, build resilience and confidence between partner and intermediary.
- Donors must also accept that national humanitarian organisations typically have far less access to essential unrestricted core funding than many INGOs. These funds are essential to build and sustain institutional capacity in core functions that any organisation needs to deliver the best results. Since most, if not all, Myanmar organisations cannot fundraise from the public their institutional donors should consider creating a multi-donor fund for their, often shared, partners to apply for core capacity funding distinct from project funding.
- Effective intermediaries buffer partners from donor demands and consolidate reporting and analysis for the donor into a digestible format, level of detail and depth. This role requires considerable capacity to implement effectively. If donors expect national organizations to perform the intermediary role in future, after HARP-F closes, they must accept the need to fund adequate capacity, above and beyond that needed for the direct delivery of project outputs, to be successful. Donors must also be very clear about their informational needs, including how they may change over time.
- Including flexible, unallocated budget lines for emergency response in each grant enhances capacity for responding quickly to, or even before, new hazards occur. The MHF incorporates a 4% response line in all partner budgets for this. The level of funding may be low and can be reconsidered, but it is probably enough to at least quickly initiate action without undue process.
- Widespread use of digital solutions as an enabling technology for remote management. Enabling partners to distribute locally appropriate communications tools (smart phones, tablets, computers, wifi infrastructure etc.) to their community-based staff and volunteers, with funding for network service costs and training in the use of relevant apps and software packages (MS Teams, Zoom, Kobo Toolbox, Survey CTO etc.) in advance of crises will facilitate communication, management and monitoring during crises.
- Monitoring and evaluating humanitarian assistance in hard-to-reach areas requires innovation that may include:
 - Supporting collaboration among national organisations for mutual monitoring of humanitarian needs and project performance.
 - Creating common monitoring templates and indicators for all partners operating in similar areas.
 - Financing third-party monitoring capacity through existing organisations.

- Facilitating real-time learning through the documentation and dissemination of the practical, often small, adaptations agreed with individual partners to overcome specific problems, to the wider group of partners, is almost certainly more helpful than dissemination of lengthy guidance documents and toolkits.

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Annexes

Annex 1: A note on HARP-F's Approach to Programming in Hard-to-Reach Areas

The approach taken by HARP-F and the terminology it has used to describe its approach to programming in hard-to-reach areas has evolved over time. The evaluation team understands that HARP-F started to codify its approach in 2019. The approach may have built on practices employed prior to then, but it is not clear from the documentation or interviews conducted that this was the case. In 2019 HARP-F recruited a staff member from Syria / Lebanon to develop the approach. In 2019 four documents were published outlining a more coherent approach, referred to as the Remote Management Programming (RMP) toolkit:

- HARP-F Approach to Remote Management Programming (RMP) for Partners Applying for Funding of RMP projects.
- An example Alternative Standard Operating Procedures (ASOPs) framework for Remote Management Programming (RMP) for HARP-F partners in Myanmar.
- HARP-F Guidance Note: Due diligence questions for partners working with downstream humanitarian actors in RMP contexts in Myanmar.
- HARP-F Duty of Care in Remote Management Programming (RMP) Contexts.

The tool kit comprises four short documents providing an overview of HARP-F's approach and addressing three key issues of relevance throughout Myanmar regardless of the context. Firstly, the tool kit defines RMP as *"the systems, controls, and management of programming in locations where there is an absence of senior national and/or international presence for a sustained period of time"*. The overview makes clear that RMP is to be used as a last resort and only situations with demonstrable high vulnerability and need. HARP-F's strong preference is to be able to access all operational sites.

The overview goes on to outline the Alternative Standard Operating Procedures (ASOPs) grantees are expected to consider in areas including needs assessment, M & E, financial management, supply chain, beneficiary feedback and accountability mechanisms. A separate document provides examples of the analysis and measures that grantees may find appropriate. Finally, it makes clear that arrangements must be made to manage and mitigate the additional risks that may be faced by downstream partners through which access will be maintained, especially for security and duty of care of national humanitarian workers.

The tool kit includes a document outlining the applicable principles, minimum standards, and recommendations for duty of care. A further document proposes a due diligence framework covering governance, financial robustness, programme capacity and capability, security, and visibility. Taken together the tool kit provides a useful summary of measures grantees could take to ensure their approach to RMP is effective while appropriate mitigation is in place to manage risks to national partners of different kinds.

From 2020 additional documentation was published:

- A Tried and Tested Model to deliver Humanitarian Aid in Protracted Crisis¹⁰
- HARP-F Operations in Protracted Crises

The overall approach described in these additional documents, which are underpinned by a “robust evidence base” (HARP-F, 2020) is one of partnership, with distinct but commonly understood and agreed roles and responsibilities for each actor. Flexibility is characterised as important to respond to the “fluid and rapid contextual changes” experienced in situations of protracted crisis. HARP-F’s approach is summarised in several, non-sequential steps:

- Build trust – building not replacing national capacity to lead response.
- Enhance the due diligence process – to right size funding for downstream partners.
- Roll out the Remote Partnership Programming toolkit (referred to as RMP in the toolkit) – discussed below.

These steps are supported by a variety of enabling systems that are referred to in the theory of change and elsewhere and include: information from a variety of sources, such as CASS and MIMU; technical assistance for humanitarian response; monitoring, evaluation and best practice; communication; safeguarding; supply chain; and continuous improvement. These systems constitute a quite comprehensive suite of measures to facilitate remote management of assistance when it is required.

When the inception report for this evaluation was reviewed HARP-F proposed to adopt remote partnership, rather than remote management, as the appropriate collective noun for the subject. This term is more aligned with the concept of localisation, another area of interest for HARP-F and an area of focus in its legacy planning. For practical purposes **the evaluation team consider the terms remote management, remote management programming, and a range of other terms used by HARP-F partners, described below, as synonymous.**

Remote partnership, though, is a term primarily used by HARP-F to describe **the trust-based approach to programme and risk management** that they have employed to maintain momentum, to the extent possible, in uncertain and unpredictable contexts across Myanmar. Those **partners that have shown themselves best able to manage in difficult contexts**, maintaining accountability to both project participants and donors, and commitment to achieving basic programme quality standards, **have benefitted from the lightest touch in terms of oversight** and the quickest turnaround of approval on changes to programming and grant terms. Other organisations who have not established the highest level of trust were scrutinised more carefully and benefited from greater engagement from regional and technical teams.

Remote partnership, remote management and related terms are often conflated with localisation. Some respondents described their actions as localised. There was ample evidence to suggest that the most localised responses, that is those implemented through robust structures, run by both partner staff or volunteer teams and committees, appointed from within

¹⁰ This document appears to be primarily intended as marketing material leveraging HARP-F’s experience of remote management in Myanmar as a case outlining Crown Agents corporate capacity for the same elsewhere.

participant communities, such as IDP camps, and with at least some authority to make locally-appropriate decisions on programming and use of resources including funds, have been more resilient and able to deliver assistance despite the many challenges experienced in the past two years. While many such programmes were led by national organisations, some were supported through international NGOs.

The Grand Bargain localisation workstream (IFRC , 2021) notes that, while there is no single definition of localised humanitarian action it can be summarised as “making principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary”. The Grand Bargain itself makes commitments to use multi-year investments to increase institutional capacity of local humanitarian organisations; remove or reduce barriers to partnership; support local coordination structures; and deliver at least 25% of humanitarian funding through local partners, among others. The OECD provided further guidance (OECD, 2017) on how to provide support, or as “direct support as possible”, to local partners; risk management; coordination and co-operation; impact and monitoring approaches. While HARP-F funding and support for national partners may not have achieved fidelity with every aspect of either the Grand Bargain commitments or the OECD guidance, it has certainly made a **considerable effort to enhance the capacity of local partners, provide them with quality and often multi-year funding, and share risk through rational and appropriate division of labour**. In summary, the HARP-F approach to programming in protracted crisis is **compatible with the basic principles of localisation**.

The terms of reference for this evaluation identified three contexts where HARP-F projects are implemented. Partners operating in each of the three contexts across states and regions (Kachin, Shan, Chin, Rakhine, Kayin and Mon States and Ayeyarwady Regions) responded to the survey and participated in key informant interviews. The contexts identified by HARP-F were:

1. Non-government-controlled areas, where there is an absence of state authority and where the functions of the state may, to some degree, be filled by an opposition actor, often an armed group or a political authority with connections to an armed group.
2. Areas formally under government control but affected by armed conflict between government forces or pro-government militias and ethnic armed opposition, where access is contingent on government approvals and HARP-F partners have difficulty securing access or where access approvals are intermittent.
3. Areas where HARP-F partners have access but only through national staff (of INGOs) or national partners (be these direct HARP-F partners or INGO partners/affiliates), thus access is ‘localised.’

Annex 2: Case Study – National partner

This national partner delivers imperative health services and awareness raising activities in five IDP camps and 10 remote villages in non-government-controlled areas of Kachin State.

Prior to the grant received from HARP-F, the partner sourced funding from cross-border funds and through foundations and student groups in Australia and America. The amount of funding previously received was typically small while the needs were intensifying in NGCA. HARP-F's funding which was relatively bigger and provided opportunity for the organization to expand its services and serve thousands more women and adolescents in conflict affected areas. In particular, through the programme, the partner could train 25 community workers and serve 1000 individuals.

Albeit rolling out projects in hard-to-reach areas, the organization implemented all projects directly prior to the COVID-19. The pandemic challenged the organization to re-structure its program and approach to delivery. The partner turned to community volunteers and health workers to provide services to the community. The program was then orchestrated by the local staff at the head office and regular meetings were conducted between KWAT staff and the community volunteers to provide support and regular trainings. During more stringent lockdowns, information was shared using the internet in villages where mobile internet networks are functional and through mobile phones in villages where internet access is restricted. It is important to be mindful that these changes would have been difficult to materialize with very few trained community workers - sizeable funding from HARP-F facilitated this approach of reliance on trained community workers. Presently, with the third wave spreading like wildfire, monitoring also had to be taken online. Trained community staff became the eyes and ears of the program, contributing to the successes and continuity of the program.

HARP's flexibility and support was monumental to the success of the program. HARP's flexibility and support during the whole process of learning encouraged innovative approaches and shared accountability. HARP-F's staff in Kachin were swift in responding to the needs of project staff and project staff received invaluable mentoring and coaching through the field offices. HARP's field team were all qualified local staff who better understood the context and the constraints encountered by the organizations and could provide constructive and practical solutions. As a result of the trainings and support, the partner now has its own comprehensive financial system from which the information needed by donors could be extracted effortlessly.

The program provided with many lessons. Firstly, the partner learnt the importance of working with the right and flexible donors who can comprehend the challenges faced by the local organizations on the ground. In Myanmar, there are only a handful of local organizations that are extremely professional and can provide with detailed paperwork. Most organizations are founded simply to provide much needed support in restricted areas. Therefore, donors like HARP-F who are flexible and can strengthen the capacity of the local organizations is crucial. Secondly, the importance of localization for sustainability of the programs became even more apparent during times of such crisis. Programs that are implemented using local resources also provides better value for money as well. In the future, the partner plans to take a step back to provide more space to community-based organizations to provide vital needs in their own communities. The partner's role will shrink to providing back stopping support and capacity strengthening technical trainings to these organizations instead.

Annex 3: Case Study – International partner

This partner has been implementing the “Promoting needs-based protection and community-based support mechanisms for internally displaced and crisis-affected people in Rakhine State” project since October 2019 (the project is due to end in December 2021). The project received two grants from HARP-F, which are focused on protection monitoring and case management. The project supports monitoring of trends and protection issues within Rakhine State. Additionally, the project supports providing information, counselling, and legal assistance (ICLA), undertaking cross-learning with the partner Cox Bazar team and strengthening the communication with communities and accountability to affected population components.

Their approach to remote management, particularly after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, was to further focus on community participation and feedback. The first phase of the project supported the maintenance and refurbishment of community centres, including libraries, as a meeting point to engage communities and organize inclusive community meetings. As part of the top up of the project, mid 2020, the partner started a community hotline to identify areas of concern for the communities, collect information on community needs, problems and inform solutions. The hotline was very helpful in monitoring the changing needs of people from groups of concern, such as women, children, persons with disabilities, older people and ethnic minorities. It also enabled the collection of general feedback on project implementation, access to services and conditions in the communities.

The successful use of community Hotline:

The Community Hotline offers a direct two ways communication channel between the partner and the participating communities. It combines the functions of a Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CFM) with information sharing with beneficiary populations. The overall purpose is to provide support to IDPs and host communities through information sharing and referrals to available services. The hotline also serves as a tool to identify trends, escalating protection issues, and gaps in services, including but not limited to preparedness and response to COVID19. Finally, the hotline forms part of the partner Myanmar’s approach to strengthening its accountability system and ensuring that affected populations participate throughout the project cycle.

The Community Hotline also has other objectives such as [1] to connect beneficiaries to services provided by other humanitarian organisations through service mapping and building a database on available humanitarian assistance and services within a location, [2] to provide counselling on legal identity , housing, land and property rights where appropriate.

How the community hotline works:

The hotline allows users to use all available communication methods, including voice recordings in the Rohingya and Rakhine languages, to ensure access to information is made available to communities and feedback can be shared. Visual methods including drawings, photos and infographics for persons with visual impairments and individuals with low literacy skills are also used to share information with participants. The Hotline is operated by staff who can speak Myanmar, Rakhine and Rohingya languages, with the ability to converse in Hindi on the Maungdaw Community Hotline.

The staff supporting the hotline have been trained on application of participatory methods on subjects including introduction to psychological first aid [IPFA], protection principles, safe referrals to ensure that “Do No Harm” is at the centre of the partner’s approach. This is quite important, as very sensitive issues are reported through the hotlines, including reports on people trafficking, smuggling, kidnapping and suicide. In such cases, to guarantee the safety and provide adequate support to the victim/person reporting, it is referred to the case management team for further actions.

There is also a strong focus on responding to feedback -closing the loop by contacting the caller and the relevant service provider, rather than only collecting information. During key informant interviews, the partner shared that, for example, in May 2021 they received approximately 1500 calls. The information collected was used to adjust programming within the partner and is shared with other partners, with the monthly report going to over 150 actors. The information shared includes a summary of the main complaints and issues raised, by location and gender. When necessary and available, the partner refer callers to other qualified service delivery organisations.

Using the right staff to mitigate communication and access barriers:

the partner’s projects are implemented primarily by local staff. the partner started recruiting field-based teams in Myanmar in 2017, with most of the local staff based within the areas of work, such as IDP camps or adjacent villages. the partner aims for an equal gender and ethnic balance across its workforce. the partner used the initial years of work in Rakhine to build staff capacity on disaster risk reduction, hygiene promotion, protection incident monitoring (identification and reporting), hotline awareness, communication with communities, community engagement among other things. Currently, they have approximately 40-50 staff based in the field, plus an additional 40-50 community mobilisers. These teams are funded by the many donors supporting the partner (not only HARP-F).

Since the onset of COVID-19 and the military coup, those staff members kept delivering services in areas of operation (most of them are local) and providing monthly reports to identify challenges and find solutions (e.g., through the provision of equipment, ideas on how to maintain internet access, how to negotiate with community leaders). Consistency of staff in the past years (not just since Covid-19) has thus been critical, as many local and international organisations have a high turnover. To ensure that, in general, the partner ensures competitive salaries based on coordination with other organizations in country, has a high focus on duty of care and safety of its staff, beneficiaries and partners, continuous to invest in staff capacity while working towards the pathway of nationalization of key senior positions.

During Covid-19 and also after 1 February events, the partner ensured two ways communication with its staff and partners, by putting in place Covid-19 staff care focal points in each office who have raised weekly or bi-weekly basis concerns on behalf of its team to the partner’s Crises Management Team in Myanmar. Budget line was established for national colleagues for COVID-19 related medical support, guesthouses were set up for isolation and quarantine for staff in case needed. the partner has also shared key translated SoPs and guiding documents, such as on Principles of Engagement, Work from Home SoP, revised Emergency Distribution SoPs, the partner Myanmar SoP for Business Continuity and

Personal Protection. Among many other further measures, regular all staff messages and updates were shared by the Country Director.

Annex 4: Remote management approaches

Table: Remote management modalities, in cross-cutting evaluation of DFID's approach to remote management in Somalia and North-East Kenya, 2015

Modality	Description
Acceptance measures	A strategy in which the organisation accepts the risks posed by delivering programmes in a particular context. The acceptance measures can be passive (i.e. making clear distinctions of neutrality and distancing the organisation from military or political groups) or active (i.e. negotiating access to programming areas or obtaining guarantees of security). While HARP-F itself maintained strategic distance from the government, its partners were free to engage, for example to secure travel authorisation, while those working to support ethnic organisations in NGCA maintained similar relationships with the authorities concerned.
Change of activities	Agencies may choose to adjust the programme sector or the types of activities they conduct. They can do this while maintaining a presence in the area or after relocation in order to respond to specific risks associated with the types of activities they were originally undertaking. Many of HARP-F's partners changed activities to focus on Covid-19 related needs either in response to being unable to implement planned activities, or the need being greater to help communities cope with the consequences of the pandemic.
Decentralised programming	When an organisation that is located elsewhere engages in programming where the main purpose is the capacity building and support of another, often local, organisation. This type of programming is not necessarily chosen in response to situational dynamics, such as insecurity, but often as an intended purpose of the programme itself. This approach has been adopted not only in NGCA, but also in areas where access is restricted. Settings camp-based structures have taken on a greater role in the delivery of assistance.
Mitigation activities	Organisations can opt to continue operations but adopt a series of strategies in response to specific threats (low profile travel, security measures for staff housing, armored vehicles, security details, travel restrictions, etc). These activities would vary by risk and the degree of risk acceptance by the organisation. HARP-F and its partners have adopted a wide range of mitigation activities to retain access to the extent possible while reducing risk to staff, including increasing acceptance to working from home.
Relocation of activities	A common strategy used by aid agencies facing increasing insecurity and lack of access is relocating programme activities to accessible areas, while maintaining the same operational policies and procedures. Typically, the decision to relocate is made when the donor or implementing partners determines that the risks involved in shifting to remote programming outweigh the benefits of trying to stay (OCHA, 2011). This has not been a significant part of the response to Covid-19 or the coup in Myanmar.
Remote programming	Remote programming (or remote programme management) is a response to insecurity and risk that involves a relocation of staff members and a shift in

Modality	Description
	operational modalities. The change in the location of staff and their ability to access programme implementation sites and communities is accompanied to varying degrees by a transfer of responsibility and control over programme implementation and decision-making to other stakeholders. Sometimes this involves the formation of new partnerships and an increased investment in capacity building, support, and training for these partners. This has been widely adopted by both HARP-F and its partners with a great increase in the use of online communication to maintain control and support for community and camp-based structures delivering assistance.
Third-party monitoring	Although not a programming response, third party monitoring is often employed by donors as an oversight mechanism for remotely managed programmes and is a significant focus of this report. It is undertaken by parties external to the programme’s management structure and aims to provide an independent and external perspective on project implementation and management. It can be adapted to fit requirements, verifying programme inputs and outputs or evaluating broader outcome and impacts. Third party monitoring can also provide information on various phases of the project cycle, impact, sustainability and governance. This option has not been established by HARP-F.

Annex 5: Evaluation matrix

Research questions	Information required and source(s)	Scope and Methodology	Limitations
<p>Why is remote partnership adopted by HARP-F and partners? What causes the adoption of different phases or changes in approach?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary information including project business case, concept note, project reports and annual reviews for FCDO, SitReps, Crown Agents / HARP-F guidance on remote partnership, sample of grantee contracts and reports (both enabling and operational), HARP-MIMU Vulnerability Analysis by region, IPE Triple Line Mid Term Review 2020. • Primary data collection with key stakeholders including international and local partners, FCDO key points of contact, HARP-F key staff • Internal controls and compliance will be assessed against Annual and Mid-Term Reviews recommendations, as well as recommendations from any internal assessments/reports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents will be provided by the HARP-F to the Evaluation Team. Additional documentation might be obtained from local or international partners, with support from HARP-F. • Primary data will be collected using: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Initial online surveys with a representative sample of local partners (70% at least). ○ KIIs with local partners to be selected based on survey results. ○ KIIs with FCDO and HARP-F key points of contact. • Action plan/timeframes as described in Inception Report. • Analysis will be done using descriptive and content analysis. 	<p>The research is conducted amidst the effect of two potentially major limitations. Firstly, the Covid-19 pandemic. Secondly, the military coup in Myanmar on February 1st, 2021, and its consequent impact on security and freedom of movement in the country.</p>
<p>How do HARP-F and partners attempt remote working? What kind of approaches and practices have been undertaken? How these approaches and practices compare?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary information including project business case, concept note, project reports and annual reviews, SitReps, and any reports/case studies from local partners. • Primary data collection with key stakeholders including international and local partners, FCDO key points of contact, HARP-F key staff, other international humanitarian stakeholders in Myanmar (UNOCHA, Cluster Coordinators). • Internal controls and compliance will be assessed against Annual and Mid-Term Reviews recommendations, as well as recommendations from any internal assessments/reports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents will be provided by the HARP-F to the Evaluation Team. Additional documentation might be obtained from local or international partners, with support from HARP-F. • Primary data will be collected using: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Initial online surveys with a representative sample of local partners (70% at least). ○ KIIs with local partners to be selected based on survey results. ○ KIIs with FCDO and HARP-F key points of contact. ○ Two case studies with specific organizations in which approaches are distinct. 	<p>The first limitation is mitigated by the adoption of a largely remote research process whereby the international researchers will conduct their work from Europe. They are assisted by a</p>

Research questions	Information required and source(s)	Scope and Methodology	Limitations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action plan/timeframes as described in Inception Report. Analysis will be done using descriptive and content analysis, and case studies. 	two-person national research team based in Yangon.
How do these approaches compare with others taken in comparable humanitarian contexts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluations/assessment from other FCDO humanitarian programme or any other international humanitarian organizations working through remote management approaches¹¹. Comparison with primary data collected for the two previous questions. Primary data collection with additional key stakeholders including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representatives from other FCDO supported sectorial programmes working through remote management approaches in Myanmar (The Livelihoods and Food Security Fund - LIFT, Three MDG Fund). Representatives from other international humanitarian programmes working with remote management approaches and former evaluation teams (CARE, Integrity, UNICEF, UNOPS or others to determine). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents will be provided by the HARP-F to the Evaluation Team, requested to the FCDO teams in Myanmar, or searched within the FCDO DevTracker. Primary data will be collected using: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparing information collected for previous questions with: KIIs with other local or international partners mentioned in first column. Action plan/timeframes as described in Inception Report. Analysis will be done using descriptive and content analysis. 	The second limitation will be mitigated by increased use of remote interviewing of national organizations in Myanmar with travel plans reduced to safe, as opposed to the hard-to-reach areas where humanitarian operations are conducted. While in-country travel is still envisaged it is likely to be less extensive than planned at proposal stage. The direct observation of
What was the level of preparedness and the effectiveness of HARP-F capacity development support for remote management? How the HARP F can help support partners to improve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary information as in the first, second and third question. Primary data collection with key stakeholders including international and local partners, FCDO key points of contact, HARP-F key staff, other international humanitarian stakeholders in Myanmar (UNOCHA, Cluster Coordinators). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similar approach as in first, second and third question. 	

¹¹ For example: Cross Cutting Evaluation of DFID's Approach to Remote Management in Somalia and North-East Kenya (January 2015) or CARE, Remote Humanitarian Management and Programming: Guidance Note (May 2020)

Research questions	Information required and source(s)	Scope and Methodology	Limitations
humanitarian delivery in hard-to-reach areas, including but not limited to its grant management processes, capacity development support and coordination?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal controls and compliance will be assessed against Annual and Mid-Term Reviews recommendations, as well as recommendations from any internal assessments/reports. 		humanitarian operations is unlikely to be possible. Instead, the team will seek photographic and video evidence, as appropriate.
What are the key ethical and protection issues related to the remote management approaches and practices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary information as in the first, second and third question, and adding representative sample of grantee accountability to affected persons reports for both enabling and operational grants. Primary data collection with key stakeholders including international and local partners, FCDO key points of contact (especially those that have evaluated due diligence, risk management and safeguarding policies), HARP-F key staff (Risk manager, programme and financial team and others involved in safeguarding and control of fiduciary risks), Internal controls and compliance will be assessed against Audits, Annual and Mid-Term Reviews recommendations, as well as recommendations from any internal assessments/reports. 	Similar approach as in first, second and third question.	Furthermore, contact information of each of the grantees is expected from HARP-F. The evaluation team expects that at least 70% of those contacted reply.

Annex 6. Evaluation questions

Researchable question(s)	KIIs- Local and international partners	KII HARP Team	KII other actors ¹²
EQ1. Why remote partnership is adopted by HARP-F and partners? What has triggered a remote partnership approach and successive stages?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How useful has been the remote management toolkit provided by HARP at the onset of the project? • Is your approach to remote management standardized across all regions in Myanmar? Is your approach codified in standard operating procedures / manual etc.? Please elaborate. • How does your organisation decide what remote management practices should be used? Is this done jointly with HARP? • If you use partners to deliver humanitarian assistance or to manage projects, how are they selected? (answer to survey – other) please elaborate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How useful has been the guidance/toolkits for the implementation of remote management? What has been useful from this guidance? What hasn't? • How do you assess if a remote partnership approach (from a specific partner) has been adequate? How do you assess what changes are needed? Are there any benchmarks/criteria to measure if the approach is effective? • Has HARP undertaken any specific, proactive measures to prepare for remote management situations, such as training, additional guidance or pre-positioning? 	<p>FCDO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there standardized FCDO strategies/guidelines/best practices on remote management? If yes, where this provided to HARP from the onset? • Are you aware/have read the remote management toolkit implemented by HARP? How useful do you think it has been? • What guidance/training has been missing? <p>Other international implementers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your organisation use remote management for delivery in Myanmar? • If yes, does your programme have any designed strategies/policies/ guidelines regarding remote management? • Has your organization undertaken any specific, proactive measures to prepare for remote management situations, such as training or pre-positioning?
EQ2. How HARP-F and partners attempt remote working? What kind of approaches and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please describe the main characteristics of your approach to remote management in different contexts. For example, do you use partnerships with local civil society groups on the ground, client groups e.g., camp 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of remote management approaches have been used within the project? • Are there any specific guidelines/criteria regarding the selection of these approaches? 	<p>FCDO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there specific remote management approaches preferred rather than others? • What do you feel has worked well in HARP's remote management approach? What could be improved?

¹² FCDO, other FCDO implementers working in Myanmar and working in similar areas as HARP (LIFT, 3MDG), other humanitarian partners working alongside with HARP (UNOCHA, XXX)

Researchable question(s)	KIIs- Local and international partners	KII HARP Team	KII other actors ¹²
practices have been undertaken? How these approaches and practices compare?	<p>committees, with local civilian authorities, or private sector companies?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your organization document lesson for future remote management situations? Answer to survey – yes) please elaborate, what lessons have you identified, acted upon? How are lessons being shared? • What approaches have been more helpful, which less, and why? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has HARP done any comparison between remote management approaches? What do you feel has worked well in the remote management approaches used by the different partners? What could be improved? 	<p>Other stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of remote management approaches you and your partners use? • What process is followed to select the remote management approach/practice? • Do you have specific guidelines regarding the choosing of the remote management practices to be used or when to trigger them?
EQ3. How these approaches compare with others taken in comparable humanitarian contexts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your organisation have any other remote management experience in other humanitarian contexts (or in the past)? If so, are you using any of those experiences in this context? How? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does Crown Agents or any of its partners use remote management approaches in other humanitarian/fragile contexts? If yes, provide some examples and explain if lessons have been shared across these experiences? • What has the HARP team do to ensure you are learning from others or past experiences in regard to remote management? 	<p>FCDO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any best practices from other countries/environments in regard to remote management? • Have they been shared with HARP? Has HARP shared any best practices? How these have been used? <p>Other stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has there been any type of coordination (or sharing of best practices) with HARP in regard to remote management approaches? Is there any coordinated approach/strategy/learning process? • Does your organisation use remote management approaches in other humanitarian/fragile contexts? If yes, are there any specific best-practices/ lessons that you know of?
EQ4. What was the level of preparedness and the effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has your organisation created capacity internally to respond to remote management approaches e.g., training, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has there been any assistance provided to partners to facilitate remote management 	<p>FCDO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your assessment of the capacity created by HARP to the local and international partners?

Researchable question(s)	KII- Local and international partners	KII HARP Team	KII other actors ¹²
<p>of HARP-F capacity development support for remote management? How the HARP programme can help support partners to improve humanitarian delivery in hard-to-reach areas, including but not limited to its grant management processes, capacity development support and coordination? Are there any good practices?</p>	<p>promotion, increasing or decreasing staff numbers / capacities, incentives etc?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please describe any assistance provided by HARP-F, if any, to facilitate remote management beyond the terms of their agreement with your organization, (e.g. additional funds, training, sharing o learning, technical assistance, grant management flexibility, MEAL support, enabling grant, risk management assistance or guidance). What has been useful? What was less useful? • What measures, if any, has your organization implemented to manage or reduce costs or increase efficiency /effectiveness or its remote management approach? • What could have been done better/differently? 	<p>(e.g., additional funds, training, sharing of learning etc.)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has HARP assessed the value for money (efficiency / effectiveness) of the different approaches to remote management? If yes, what changes has HARP or partners made to its remote management approach to enhance value for money, if any? • What measures, if any, has HARP or its partners implemented to manage or reduce costs related to remote management? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you observed any significant measures to manage or reduce costs related to remote management? • Do you have any recommendations to improve the efficiency and capacity-building of this programme? <p>Other stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you provided any capacity building to your local partners to facilitate remote management (e.g., additional funds, training, sharing of learning etc.)? • How do you assess the sustainability of this capacity? • Has your organisation assessed the value for money (efficiency / effectiveness) of the different approaches to remote management you have taken?
<p>EQ5. What are the key risks related to the remote management approaches and practices (including protection and safeguarding)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What type of risk management tools are used by your organization? How is risk management incorporated in remote management decisions? Please elaborate (how regularly are your risk management processes updated? How is risk mapping done? What is HARP’s role in this?) • What has your organization done to identify and mitigate any additional risks created by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you feel are the most significant risks of delivering through remote management approaches? • What has your organization done to identify and mitigate any additional risks created by remote management e.g., working with partners, controlling opportunities for fraud etc.? 	<p>FCDO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you feel are the most significant risks of delivering through remote management approaches? • What is your view of the risk management approach taken by HARP and its partners? Do you feel all risks have been properly mitigated? • What could be done better/differently? <p>Other stakeholders:</p>

Researchable question(s)	KII- Local and international partners	KII HARP Team	KII other actors ¹²
	<p>remote management e.g., working with partners, controlling opportunities for fraud etc.?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What support have you received from HARP in terms of risk management or response/mitigation of risks? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does your organization try to mitigate any safeguarding or fiduciary risks resulting from remote management? • What type of risk management tools are used by HARP? How is risk management incorporated in remote management decisions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you feel are the most significant risks of delivering through remote management approaches? • How does your organization mitigate against those risk, and particularly against safeguarding or fiduciary risks resulting from remote management?

Annex 7. Characterisation of the sample of respondents

Most of the organisations surveyed (60%) were managing their programmes/projects remotely either from state capitals, Yangon, or outside Myanmar (we purposefully tried to maintain equal representation of these two groups (respondents working remotely and within Myanmar) in the KIIs, to better understand the differences/benefits/ challenges of both approaches). In terms of location of the work, results differed significantly across locations with work in Kachin and Rakhine being done mostly through direct implementation, and mostly remotely in the other locations.

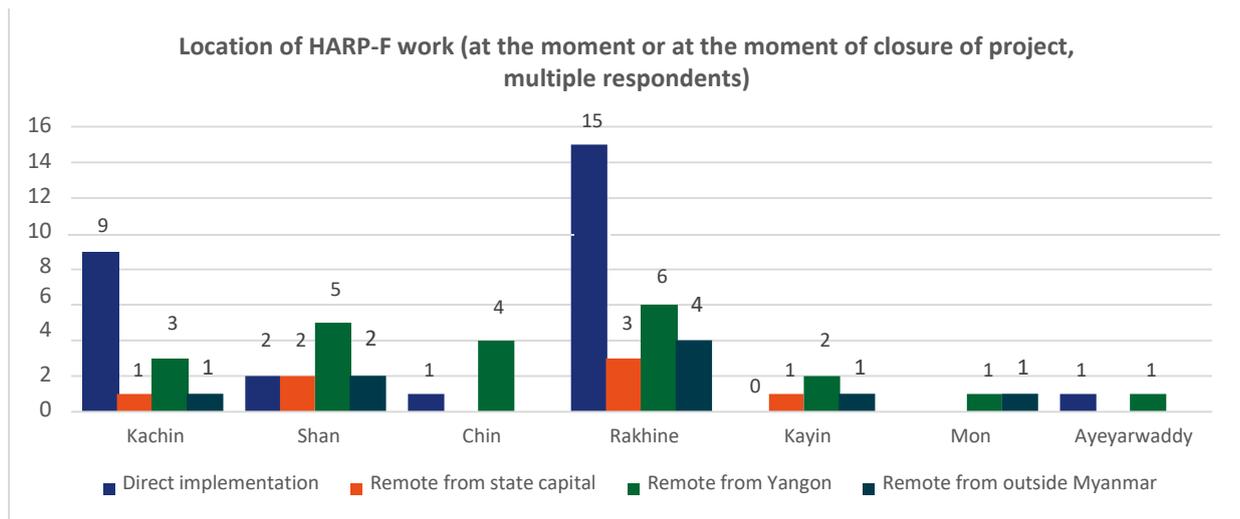


Figure 14 Summary of direct vs remote management of HARP-F projects by state (according to responses from the survey).

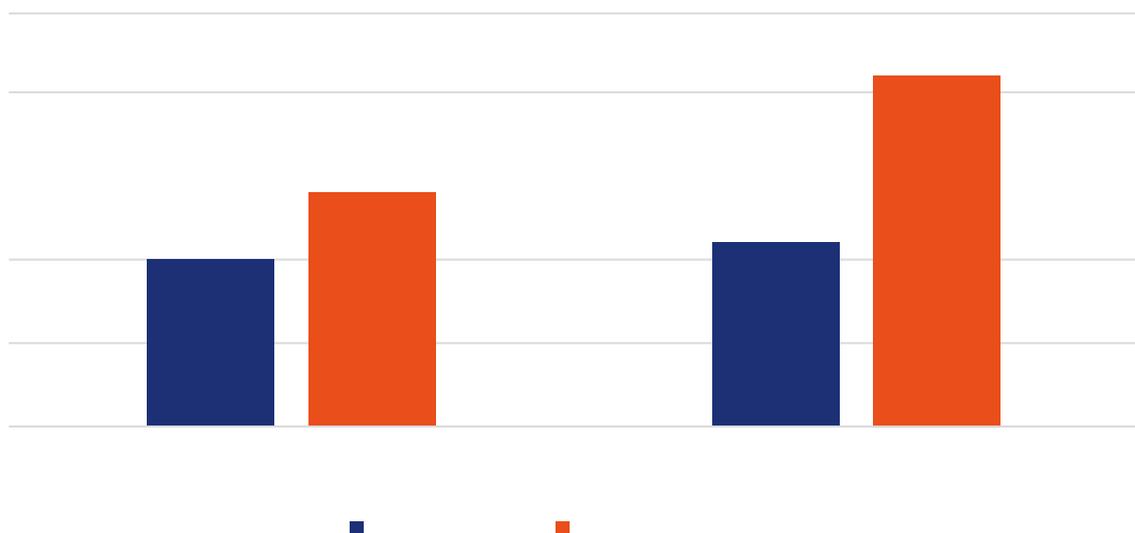


Figure 13 % of respondents managing HARP-F funded projects remotely (Survey and KIIs)

Most of the grantees surveyed and interviewed were focusing on humanitarian action or had a multi-mandate of humanitarian and development, resilience building or disaster risk reduction and preparedness. Other areas of work, such as human rights, social cohesion or protection were more common in Kachin and Rakhine.

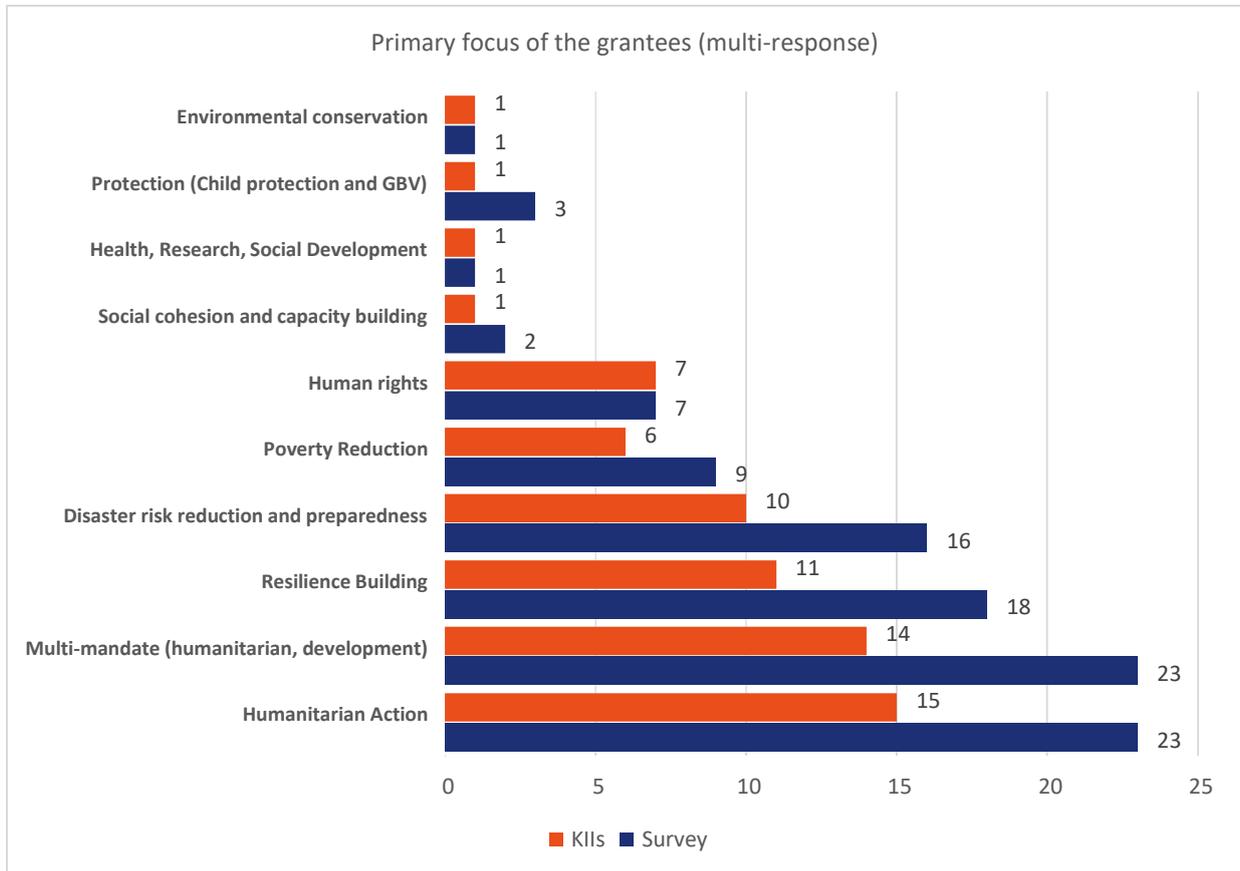


Figure 15: Partner thematic focus / foci

Annex 8. Ethical and safeguarding approaches detail

Confidentiality: To protect the confidentiality of the respondents, the team will not cite names of the respondents in the report and will not ask for names during the field data collection. Responses were stored securely and will be deleted when the project has been finished. We have not communicated individual agency feedback to HARP-F and, while we are collecting names, roles and contact information from respondents, all information provided will be treated in confidence.

Safety: Throughout the research, the team put the safety and security of participants first. Among others, the team respected the participants' preferred mode for the interview.

Sensitivity: All tools were designed and adapted to the context. To avoid controversial or inappropriate word use, the HARP-F, FCDO and local teams reviewed the questions and topics covered in the research tools. The team members were all highly experienced in conducting data collection on sensitive topics, and pre-training/internal discussions were done to ensure the same level of understanding.

Triangulation: The verification and validation of data and probing of issues from different perspectives takes place by repeatedly asking the various respondent groups the same questions in a slightly different way. The master list of evaluation questions organised and grouped together similar questions from different tools thus making it easier to compare the results and bring out the analysis.

Progressive Data Analysis and Quality Control: To ensure maximum quality and completeness, data entry and analysis took place throughout the research period. Quality control mechanisms are furthermore built in through triangulation and regular feedback loops.

Language and Translation: Data collection took place in national languages when requested by the partners/stakeholders. Transcripts and the evaluation report are produced in English.