WHAT IS THE MYANMAR HUMANITARIAN FUND?

The Myanmar Humanitarian Fund (MHF) is an OCHA-managed country-based pooled fund led by the Humanitarian Coordinator. The MHF is a vital enabler of humanitarian response both in critical moments when funding is scarce and for critical sectors that are often underfunded. Since 2007, the MHF has mobilized US$62 million from donors, providing life-saving assistance to 2.6 million people through 152 projects. Throughout 2019, the MHF has been activated in three occasions: in May, through a first reserve allocation of US$1.5 million, under a larger Integrated Allocation Strategy to respond to the new displacement in Rakhine State, together with the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF); in July, through a first standard allocation of US$8 million against the 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP); and, currently, through a second standard allocation of US$6 million, still in the project selection process. This last allocation aims at addressing urgent needs in the most crisis-affected states across Myanmar, including Rakhine, Kachin and Shan States and the South-East part of Myanmar. In addition, agriculture support for flood-affected farmers in Kachin and the South-East, seriously affected by monsoon rains in 2019, has been prioritized in this allocation. In 2019, the MHF has received US$16.6 million in contributions from nine donors.

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE FUND?

The MHF is designed to support a rapid and effective response to new emergencies and to fill critical gaps in ongoing humanitarian operations. The Fund aims to strategically allocate the available resources to reach a wide number of beneficiaries, develop the capacity of local organizations and enhance the resilience of targeted communities. Projects must be aligned with sector priorities outlined in the HRP, the allocation strategy paper and the operating principles included in the MHF Annual Strategy. The Fund complements allocations at the global level through the CERF, when possible.

WHY IS THE FUND AN EFFECTIVE TOOL TO ADDRESS NEEDS?

Donor contributions to the MHF are un-earmarked. The Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) works with relevant partners to develop a strategy for each Fund allocation. Funding decisions for individual projects are then made through a consultative process, based on identified humanitarian needs and priorities at the country level. Inclusiveness, flexibility, timeliness, efficiency, and accountability and risk management are the principles that underpin the use of the MHF, as reported in its Annual Report.
MEETING COMMITMENTS FROM THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

Supporting the MHF is a practical way for donors to realize the commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit. Giving to the MHF allows donors to deliver on their pledge in Istanbul to localize humanitarian response and funding. The MHF targets 50 per cent of its funds for allocation to national NGOs. This exceeds the 25 per cent targets set as part of ‘The Grand Bargain’ in Istanbul. The argument for supporting local humanitarian action in Myanmar is a strong one, particularly in conflict-affected areas, where local organizations are central to providing vital humanitarian relief to people in need. In 2019, 57 per cent of MHF grants has been directly or indirectly allocated to local and national NGOs. When a natural disaster strikes or conflict breaks out in Myanmar, it is always the affected communities, the local authorities and the NGOs who are the first to respond. Providing donor funds to eligible local partners through the MHF is a practical way for the international community to enhance their invaluable role.

WHAT KIND OF PROJECTS DOES THE MHF SUPPORT?

MHF projects respond to humanitarian needs across all humanitarian sectors: education, food security, health, nutrition, protection, shelter / non-food Items / camp coordination and camp management, and water, sanitation and hygiene. These projects have increased access to safe and clean water, initiated emergency sanitation in displacement camps, provided emergency health response and basic health assistance, funded distribution of medicine, ensured the continuation of emergency educational programmes, supported anti-trafficking activities, provided mine risk education, delivered food supplies, increased food production and improved livelihood opportunities. The MHF recognizes the centrality of protection, implements an age, gender and diversity approach, with a clear focus on disability inclusion, and uses the IASC Gender with Age Marker to select projects for funding. The Fund also supports cash-based programming as a preferred method of distributing assistance to people in need, when possible.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE MHF FUNDING?

The MHF will only fund active NGOs which have completed the due diligence process through the online Grant Management System (GMS), have undergone the capacity assessment process and become eligible to receive the Fund. Active participation in the humanitarian coordination system at sub-national level, including the sectoral coordination, will be also considered during the evaluation of the project proposal for funding. Only national and international NGOs that are eligible partners can apply for direct funding through the MHF, as well as UN Agencies.

HOW ARE FUNDS DISTRIBUTED?

Once a new emergency hit the country or critical gaps in the core humanitarian response need to be addressed, the MHF will undertake a consultation and analysis process to elaborate an allocation strategy paper for a call for proposals, depending on availability of funds. The call for proposals is developed in collaboration with partners, clusters/sectors, the MHF Advisory Board and the Humanitarian Coordinator, in close consultation with the Humanitarian Country Team. Allocations are limited in time, scale and scope to the prioritized activities and sectors indicated in the allocation strategy paper.

For further information, please contact the OCHA Humanitarian Financing Unit by email at MHF-Myanmar@un.org or visit: unocha.org/myanmar/about-mhf and pfbi.unocha.org