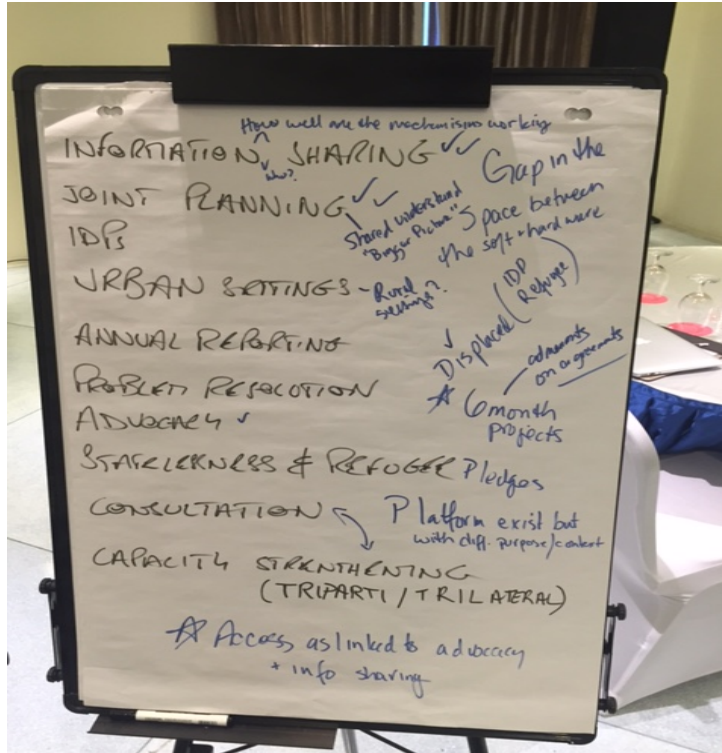




A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK
FOR PRINCIPLED
HUMANITARIAN ACTION



STRUCTURED DIALOGUE for Myanmar REPORT Yangon, December 2015

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Structured Dialogue Consultation – Myanmar, December 2015

Executive Summary

A joint ICVA-UNHCR Structured Dialogue consultation was held in Yangon on 8 December 2015 to follow-up on the implementation of the High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue on UNHCR-IFRC-NGO Partnership. The goal of this consultation was to evaluate the state of UNHCR-NGO partnerships in Myanmar and to support actions for further partnership strengthening and complementarity. The consultation was focused on two operational contexts, the first morning on the response in Rakhine and the second on the south east of Myanmar.

Information sharing, capacity strengthening, advocacy and joint planning together with all that is encompassed around the responses for IDPs, Statelessness and Refugees returnees were the areas identified by participants as priorities and in need for further improvement. The participants to the consultation, especially UNHCR representatives, further showed a great commitment in enhancing partnership and identified key recommendations per each priority areas. In particular, the following have been agreed upon to be taken forward:

Information sharing:

- Ensure, as a means of increasing transparency, an appropriate means (perhaps an open mailing list of/for partners) is created to share UNHCR sit-reps and partnership notices in order to disseminate information more efficiently taking advantage of existing networks for information sharing. For an example of good practice, in the Cluster domain UNHCR's information sharing has been consistent over almost three years. At www.shelterficccmmyanmar.org, you will find 590 individual documents online, including all minutes of all locations covered: Yangon, Sittwe, Myitkyina, Bhamo and Shan.

Advocacy:

- Use existing operational platforms and mechanisms (such as the SE operational meeting, the clusters and sectorial working groups to collect evidence-based messages) to address issues and ensure follow up on initiatives conducted identifying one organization or institution to follow up. UNHCR and its partners should continue to work together to lobby the diplomatic missions and the RC/HC office to ensure messages remain current and based in evidence.

Capacity Strengthening

- Actors are invited to pool resources together to promote a 360° approach to capacity strengthening; UNHCR to consider building upon examples of good practice and continue to utilize existing platforms (such as the SE operational meetings and state/region level coordination meetings/networks) to integrate capacity strengthening across partners and look in the near future into the opportunity to start identifying where partners can have gain more knowledge about each other (international and national) so as to build organic collaborations amongst partners operating in the same locations, international NGOs targeting in particular local actors. For example, working with IOM as a supporting partner in the CCCM of Rakhine and Kachin/Shan; where UNHCR undertakes less of a "one off training"

approach for partners but focuses on longer-term deployments to build capacity from within partners. As one UNHCR staff member states, “If one is prepared to be patient and funds can remain committed, longer-term benefits are there”.

Joint planning

- All actors are encouraged to increase the use of UNHCR participatory assessment as a tool for integrating persons of concern and local actors’ needs and opinions into joint response planning;
- Ensure information sharing properly announcing call for consultations related to operational planning.

Way forward

ICVA will strive to host a follow up meeting within the first half of 2016, (to take place in Yangon) with participating partners as well as those unable to attend these past two days. The purpose of the meeting will be firstly to triangulate the findings in this report, discuss means with which NGOs can begin to implement some of the recommendations, and provide an opportunity for others to give comment and feed into the conversation. UNHCR will be invited to share any further updates or changes to the operational contexts.

Background

The Structured Dialogue (SD) Regional consultation held in Yangon in December 2015 came as part of the follow-up to the High Commissioner’s Structured Dialogue on partnership with NGOs and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, which was initiated in 2011 to review and strengthen partnership. ICVA¹ and Interaction co-facilitate the roll-out of the Structured Dialogue with UNHCR since 2013.

The goal of the consultation was to facilitate a discussion among partners on their experiences working together, to review partnership approaches, strengthen mechanisms and identify opportunities for better collaboration.

Since the launch of the Structured Dialogue process 5 country field missions have been jointly realized by ICVA, Interaction and UNHCR in Myanmar, Chad, Pakistan, DRC and Kenya to promote the dialogue between UNHCR and NGOs at country level. A further 3 regional consultations have been held: twice in Bangkok, Thailand and once in Dakar, Senegal.

Methodology

The Consultation has been organized around two workshops, one focusing specifically on the context in Rakhine - held on the 8 December - and the other – held on 9 December - concentrating on the specific themes in the south east of the country: protection, peacebuilding and conflict resolution, and returnees from Thailand. The two half-day discussions are interlinked but each maintained its independent focus hence are reported separately.

The workshop was a combination of plenary and interactive group discussions. UNHCR and ICVA introduced the Structured Dialogue and provided an overview of global updates in

¹ ICVA is a global network of NGOs offering a platform for increased collaboration and coordination between NGOs and other humanitarian actors (www.icvanetwork.org)

terms of partnership in plenary sessions. Participants were then invited to identify key priority areas of focus.

As in previous SD workshops the group discussions were led by four questions: “what is working well,” “what is working less well”, “what are the opportunities for complementarity” and “identify one or two follow-up actions.” The results - recommendations - are listed below.

Participation

The SD workshop was attended by a total 17 participants including National Red Cross partners, NGOs, and UNHCR representatives from the Country Office. Attendees actively participated in the discussion both in plenary and during the discussion groups.

The SD Consultations are seen as very useful and relevant if linked to the protection themes of concern. Participants welcomed the choice of having an interlinked discussion on contextualized protection themes along with the general partnership discourse.

Opening Sessions

Introduction to the Dialogue

In his opening remarks UNHCR Country Representative, Giuseppe De Vincentiis, welcomed participants highlighting that partnership and coordination, is part enshrined in the mandate of UNHCR and invited all to be open minded and to jointly identify concrete ideas for improvement.

Olivier Madjora, from the Regional UNHCR Office, introduced the Structured Dialogue providing an update on the process and explained the importance for all involved actors to engage in reviewing regularly the quality of the partnership.

Consistent with findings in the Kenya, Pakistan and more recently in Chad, participants indicated limited awareness of the recommendations to strengthen partnership made through the Structured Dialogue. A refresher of the 10 recommendations was provided by ICVA including reference to recent updates related to each recommendation (e.g. draft guidance note on capacity strengthening and plans for strategically operationalize it). While explaining the link between the 10 recommendations and the Principles of Partnership², which provide the building blocks within the relationship, ICVA stressed the power of principled partnerships in the lead up to the World Humanitarian Summit next year.

Overview of UNHCR partnership work

UNHCR updated the audience on recent developments in terms of operational management of partners making reference to the Enhanced Framework for Implementing with partners and to the newly introduced Partner Portal (www.partner.unhcr.org).³ UNHCR has in the past years made efforts to work more closely in partnership with national and local NGOs and in sharing information on its operations.

The Structured Dialogue should provide an opportunity for UNHCR and its partners to increase understanding of the aspirational elements of how we want to work together, but

² Equality, transparency, result-oriented approach, responsibility, and complementarity (<https://icvanetwork.org/icvapop-campaign>)

³ The Partner Portal is a web-based tool that will allow – when fully operational- improved information sharing on prospective and exiting partners, facilitating understanding of UNHCR policies and procedures in terms of grant agreements and related management.

more importantly, improve our understanding of how we translate our aspirations into our day-to-day operations.

This session saw very active participation - attendees seemed eager to voice their expectations and current concerns with the partnership, as it related to them and their organizations. In particular, participants highlighted that despite the efforts of UNHCR in building partnership at global level, there is room for improvement on information sharing both within partnership arrangements and in operational settings (particularly in Rakhine). Furthermore, there exists limited institutional trust within Myanmar, between local government and UNHCR and similarly partners are faced with a lack of trust from state and national level government. Together it was agreed, wherever possible, UNHCR would highlight the work of its partners with state and national government ministries and partners would do the same with their local and municipal counterparts for UNHCR.

Way forward

- UNHCR encourages NGOs to proactively seek out ways to communicate their partnership challenges and suggests discussing their experiences within some of the existing coordination platforms.
- One UNHCR colleague highlighted that even in circumstances where a partner may not feel the country office is responsive to their concerns, partners are encouraged to contact the Implementing Partner Management Section for Country Operations based in Geneva;
- Increase sharing of responsibility for making operation and coordination meetings more useful;
- Partners suggested increasing information sharing and learning opportunities on recent changes in terms of partnership management (Enhanced Framework for Implementing with Partners);
- Partners suggested that UNHCR should host more formal partnership review discussions within an agreement timeframe;
- Structured Dialogue country missions offer an additional forum to address concerns regarding specific operations.

Discussion on priority areas

1. Information Sharing

The majority of participants identified information sharing as an area in need for particular attention. There was recognition that the INGO Forum could play a role in establishing a structure of disseminating related information.

Works well: the majority of participants agreed that there is a lot of information available and relevant information is distributed.

Not so well: despite the amount of information available – this is not always contextualized or tailored to be user-friendly. In addition there are too many platforms and channels of communication with no clear identification of focal points per agency resulting in lack of coordination between these tools. Relevant information at national level is not always percolating to the operational sites.

➤ Recommendations and proposed actions

- Streamline information sharing through key platforms to share information or reinvigorate existing platforms, identifying UNHCR staff member in operational settings to be the focal point with partners;
- Agreeing on expectations with UNHCR and feedback mechanisms to support the work together;
- Invest in improving the quality of the information shared making it more user-friendly and identify mechanisms to flag important messages;
- Partners to increase their contribution and participation in joint analysis;
- Partners to identify clear focal points to receive and manage information within the different agencies;
- UNHCR commits to ensure further joint partner outreach and identify where possible, potential capacity strengthening/peer-to-peer support on strategic litigation.

2. Advocacy

Most participants identified advocacy as a key area of need, in particular in relation to returnees from Thailand and statelessness issues.

Works well: There is a general agreement on theoretical principles at every level, which contributes to a positive atmosphere and general feeling of working towards the same goals. Successful advocacy strategies do exist in Myanmar, despite the unfavorable circumstances.

Not so well: Government (various levels) in general lack engagement and are quite slow to implement political solutions that address human rights and the root causes of displacement. Despite engagement from many actors (in Myanmar and regionally) in recent advocacy efforts there is limited follow up to initiatives (e.g. advocacy related to the Special meeting on Irregular migration in the Andaman Sea – 29 May 2015).

Evidence based advocacy, especially from State and local levels is poor (if any) due – amongst other things - to lack of a unified approach.

➤ Recommendations and proposed actions

- Use existing operational platforms and mechanisms (such as the emerging SE Protection Network, Operations meeting and local coordination groups or the clusters and sectorial working groups to collect evidence-based messages) to address issues and ensure follow up on initiatives conducted identifying one organization or institution to follow up on behalf of stakeholders;
- UNHCR and its partners should continue to work together to lobby the diplomatic missions and the RC/HC office to ensure messages remain current and based in evidence;
- Continue to take advantage of existing advocacy opportunities as they present themselves (it was noted that the diplomatic missions are engaged and these were recognized as strong allies for advocacy)
- Small and local NGOs have a better chance of establishing trust within local communities, especially among community leaders and invest – also through UNHCR- in supporting these organizations;

3. Capacity Strengthening

The Myanmar Rec Cross Society and NGOs identified capacity strengthening as a key area to improve partnership with UNHCR. The discussion in both groups was held building on the draft guidance note on capacity strengthening issued by UNHCR after consultation with a group of NGOs and network representatives.

Works well: Common platforms, task forces, and national networks for information sharing, emergency response, disaster preparedness, etc. have improved the capacity to share resources, skills, and technical expertise. UNHCR trainings are being made increasingly more available and sustainable models of how to build the capacity of NGOs already exist (for example, three partners from Myanmar participated in the regional roll out of the Implementing Framework training and now act as focal points for peers in Myanmar).

Not so well: There is a need to adopt a full circle/360-degree approach targeting a wide range of partners and other operational setting actors; also, making resources available to all levels and interested parties. Participants highlighted the need to understand the information that is already there and find a way to get that information to the target audience connecting existing resources to the actors that need it the most.

One of the points of concern raised was how to follow up on those trainings, measure their effectiveness and make sure they contribute strengthening of capacity and knowledge for effective policy changing.

- **Recommendations and proposed actions**

- INGOs should work through the INGO forum to address capacity gaps and areas for improved information sharing;
- Partners expressed the need to pool resources, consolidate efforts and replicate sustainable models of capacity strengthening for peer NGOs;
- UNHCR to consider the integration of capacity building into grant management and look in the near future into the opportunity to start funding capacity building organic efforts of NGOs targeting in particular local actors;
- Strengthen interaction between INGOs, NNGOS and local CBOs to build mutual greater understanding and further engage local communities.

4. Joint Planning

Several participants pointed to the importance of focusing on better coordinated response and preparedness, particularly in the context of potential returnees to the south east and to the mix of development and humanitarian operations through Rakhine state, hence priority for the discussion was given to Joint Planning. There was clear willingness on the part of both UNHCR and those partners present to see the response in Rakhine as a “holistic approach” and, therefore, removing the current dividing line between the “humanitarian response based around IDPs in Sittwe and the development and durable solutions for all of Rakhine State.

What works well: There are successful model of joint crisis management and field level coordination in emergencies exist. Partners expressed the sense that (since 2014 onward) they are more involved in UNHCR planning mechanisms compared to the past.

Not so well: Despite efforts made in joint planning there is still lack of coordination in the localities of the response(s) (e.g. during contingency planning and humanitarian country

planning, it is unclear whether evidence is being gathered from the most relevant actors or the most vocal) and, as many participants pointed out, people of concern and local actors are not necessarily involved in the planning process. In the south east consultation it was clear that there are barriers to local government and authorities among non-state actors involvement that needs to be overcome.

- **Recommendations and proposed actions**

- Include local actors and people of concern in the planning process; UNHCR participatory assessment can be a tool for integrating IDPS, refugees and local actors' needs and opinions into joint response planning;
- Ensure information sharing properly announcing call for consultations related to operational planning (COPs) including, when possible, local decision-makers in government hosting refugee communities.

Conclusions

All participants concurred on the value of continuing the engagement, in particular for ICVA to host a follow up meeting within the first half of 2016. ICVA and UNHCR will continue the roll-out and promotion of the Structured Dialogue with the aim of improving the quality of partnership.

Despite the knowledge and understanding of the principles of partnership and SD recommendations amongst the actors involved in Myanmar, it remained relevant to recall them and make reference to their day to day implementation.

Building on the positive experience of linking UNHCR partners to each other (gaining knowledge on each other's operations) it is recommended in the future to institutionalize this link between the existing in-country platforms (INGO Forum, the SE operations meetings, coordination groups etc.) and the UNHCR hosted joint planning opportunities.

Annex 1 – Agenda

Myanmar Structured Dialogue on UNHCR-IFRC-NGO Partnership and Collaboration AGENDA (Yangon – December 8, 2015)

Time	Agenda	Lead Facilitator
8:30 – 9:00	Registration of participants	
9:00 – 9:15	Welcoming Remarks	UNHCR Country Representative
9:15 – 9:30	Introductions and Agenda	UNHCR
9:30 – 9:45	Outcomes and goals of the Structured Dialogues to date	ICVA & UNHCR
9:45 – 10:30	Discussion of relevance of SD & partnership principles in practice	ICVA
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee break	
10:45 – 11:15	Small Group Discussions - Taking stock of country level partnerships	ICVA & UNHCR
11:15 – 12:30	Group report-back and discussion	ICVA
12:30 – 13:15	Conclusions and way forward	ICVA & UNHCR
13:15-14:30	Lunch	

**Structured Dialogue for South East Myanmar UNHCR and Partners AGENDA
(Yangon – December 9, 2015)**

Time	Agenda	Lead Facilitator
9.00 – 9.30	Registration of participants	
9:30 – 9:45	Welcoming Remarks	UNHCR Country Representative
9:45 – 10:00	Introductions and Agenda	UNHCR
10:00 – 10:30	Discussion of relevance of SD & partnership principles in practice	ICVA
10:30 – 10:45	Coffee break	
10:45 – 11:15	Small Group Discussions - Taking stock of country level partnerships	ICVA & UNHCR
11:15 – 12:30	Group report-back and discussion	ICVA
12:30 – 13:15	Conclusions and way forward	ICVA & UNHCR
13:15- 14:30	Lunch	



www.icvanetwork.org

International Council of Voluntary Agencies

Geneva Office

26-28 Avenue Giuseppe Motta 1202 - Geneva - Switzerland

Tel: +41 (0)22 950 9600 - Fax: +41 (0)22 950 9609

Email: secretariat@icvanetwork.org

www.icvanetwork.org

[@ICVANetwork](https://twitter.com/ICVANetwork)

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