

MYANMAR HUMANITARIAN COUNTRY TEAM

Terms of Reference - Revision October 2013

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Inter-agency Standing Committee Working Group (IASC WG) endorsed the Guidance Note for Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT) during its 75th session on 18 November 2009 in New York.
- 1.2. The Myanmar Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), which is convened under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC), is a key coordination structure that is composed of organisations that undertake humanitarian action in Myanmar and that commit to participate in coordination arrangements.

2. PURPOSE:

- 2.1. The Myanmar HCT, as the primary international humanitarian decision- and policy-making body in Myanmar, seeks to optimise the collective efforts of the UN, other international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the Red Cross Movement to strengthen the overall humanitarian response by maximizing its coherence with government arrangements to the extent possible for the provision of assistance to and protection of populations affected by emergencies.
- 2.2. The role of the HCT is to provide guidance on major strategic issues related to humanitarian action in-country, including by developing a strategic vision, setting strategic objectives and priorities and developing a comprehensive strategic response plan. The HCT decides on major policy issues related to international humanitarian action in the country and ensures that humanitarian principles, international human rights and international humanitarian law, the Principles of Partnership¹, IASC guidelines and policies and strategies adopted by the HCT are promoted and adhered to by organizations participating in coordinated humanitarian response. The HCT recognizes its role in the implementation of the UN's Rights Up Front Plan of Action with a view to promoting and protecting, as a central tenet of the HCT's overall humanitarian efforts, the rights of affected persons.
- 2.3. The HCT supports the local realisation of the Humanitarian Reform objectives of strengthening humanitarian response capacity; strengthening the Humanitarian Coordinator system; ensuring predictable funding; and promoting the Global Humanitarian Partnership. It also recognises its role in the implementation of the IASC's Transformative Agenda at country level.
- 2.4. The HCT supports the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator in his/her remit to lead and coordinate humanitarian action in support of national and local authorities and promote strategic coherence among the humanitarian community. This includes strengthening operational leadership and ensuring appropriate sectoral coordination, overseeing needs assessments and prioritization exercises; improving response preparedness capacity, and advocating for principled humanitarian action. Individually and collectively, HCT members have the responsibility to ensure that the decisions of the group are enacted, including by holding the HC, cluster leads and other HCT members to account for assigned actions. In this context HCT membership shall be at the head of agency level.
- 2.5. The HCT is responsible for fostering better relations between humanitarian actors and government entities and enhancing system-wide coherence in the delivery of humanitarian response.

3. COMPOSITION

- 3.1. Recognising the need to be a strategic and decision-making body, and thus requiring a limit to the size of the team as well as supporting opportunities for broad-based engagement in coordination mechanisms, the HCT is composed of organisations that have a wide geographic coverage in Myanmar, a geographical focus and/or are working with local partners, lead working groups / have specific sector

¹ The Principles of Partnership include: equality, transparency, a result-oriented approach, responsibility and complementarity.

knowledge, or are recognized as key contributors to policy making based on a demonstrated knowledge of the operating environment.

- 3.2. *Membership*: The HCT is composed of 14 members. It includes constituencies of 7 UN representatives and 7 INGO representatives.
- 3.3. *Observers*: The HCT requests the technical and thematic support of observer agencies to advise it on topics and areas of work.
- 3.4. *Timing*: The HCT will meet once a month on the third Thursday of the month and exceptionally more often if required. (see 4.1 below).
- 3.5. *Alternates*: may also be nominated. The representatives and their alternates are selected within their respective constituencies. If a representative cannot attend a meeting, an elected alternate will attend in his/her stead.
- 3.6. The HCT may request technical experts, cluster/sector leaders and others to attend meetings.
- 3.7. The HCT Secretariat will explore options for local NGO participation as observers.

4. CHAIR AND SECRETARIAT

- 4.1. The HCT is chaired by the Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC). In case the RC/HC is not available, meetings of the HCT will be chaired by the HC a.i.
- 4.2. In case of emergencies or important topics to be followed-up on, the Chair may call an ad hoc HCT meeting.
- 4.3. The chairmanship style is consensual and facilitative. Decision-making shall be based on consensus of the member agencies.
- 4.4. The HCT will be serviced by a Secretariat, which does not represent the interests of any member. OCHA will serve as Secretariat and, among other tasks, will be responsible for the preparation of the agenda and its annotated version, timely dissemination of working documents, the issuance of meeting minutes and other documentation, in support of the Chair.
- 4.5. The HCT monthly meeting agenda is developed based on inputs from all HCT members and inputs from the inter sector/cluster meeting and state level coordination bodies. The agenda, follow up of action points from previous meetings and background reading is circulated 7 days in advance of each meeting. Members can request inclusion of urgent issues on the agenda until 24 hours before the meeting or by raising them under "Any Other Business". The final agenda will be circulated by OCHA, after clearance by the RC/HC, no less than 24 hours prior to the meeting.
- 4.6. The Secretariat will maintain records of attendance for all meetings.
- 4.7. A meeting schedule for the HCT and its subsidiary bodies will be maintained and updated as required by OCHA in consultation with the Myanmar Information Management Unit.

5. GOVERNANCE OF THE HCT

- 5.1. The HCT's work will be guided by a Strategic Humanitarian Plan and an agreed forward agenda.
- 5.2. The will have the authority to form ad hoc working groups to focus on key areas of work (both geographic and thematic). Establishment of these groups should be time-bound, with clear deliverables articulated by the HCT as part of the process to establish such working groups.
- 5.3. A summary record and action points will be produced and distributed by the Secretariat to the members no later than a week following each meeting.
- 5.4. OCHA will maintain an HCT decisions matrix which will be reviewed and updated at each meeting of the HCT.
- 5.5. The HCT will periodically carry out performance reviews to ensure it is achieving its goals and objectives as articulated in the Strategic Response Plan reference in Section 7 below. It will also support real time evaluations as appropriate.

6. BROAD OBJECTIVES

6.1. The HCT's broad objectives are to ensure that:

- 6.1.1. the activities of participating organisations are coordinated, in line with internationally agreed coordination mechanisms, as agreed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee from time to time and with specific reference to the Guidance Note for Humanitarian Country Teams. Issued during its 75th session on 18 November 2009;
- 6.1.2. humanitarian action in-country is principled, timely, effective and efficient, in accordance with internationally agreed humanitarian principles;
- 6.1.3. clusters and agencies are held accountable for their response plans according to the strategic response plan;
- 6.1.4. humanitarian action is linked with and contributes to recovery and longer-term development;
- 6.1.5. through advocacy with other actors, such as the Government, civil society, the private sector and others, there is clarity on the centrality of:
 - 6.1.5.1. the provision of humanitarian access by and for HCT members to affected people, on the basis of assessed needs; and
 - 6.1.5.2. the role of the state and non-state actors in the identification and achievement of durable solutions for people who have been displaced from their homes as a result of conflict or disaster.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1. The HCT holds itself responsible to:

- 7.1.1. Develop and agree on a country-wide strategic response strategy as the over-arching guidance for the work of participating agencies.
- 7.1.2. Establish and maintain a system to work closely with the Union Government of Myanmar on humanitarian issues.
- 7.1.3. Set common objectives and priorities.
- 7.1.4. Through the established operational coordination mechanisms, ensure the development of response plans for areas that a coordinated humanitarian response.
- 7.1.5. Identify areas where gaps in mandates or lack of operational capacity exist.
- 7.1.6. Provide oversight and advice to the cluster/sector leads and humanitarian-focused Geographic and Thematic Working Groups.
- 7.1.7. Agree on prioritisation of use of monies available from the Central Emergency Response Fund and other funds where the discretion for prioritisation rests with the HCT.
- 7.1.8. Oversee the development of a rolling advocacy and communications strategy and related implementation plans on humanitarian issues in Myanmar by the Humanitarian Advocacy and Communications Working Group.
- 7.1.9. Agree on the establishment and disestablishment of additional coordination mechanisms and related lead agencies as needed.
- 7.1.10. Lead the annual review of sector/cluster coordination mechanism and adapt as appropriate
- 7.1.11. Lead decision making on inter-agency coordination in regards to assessments, joint monitoring and evaluation missions including by providing direction to the Inter-Sector/Inter Cluster Mechanism and state level coordination entities.
- 7.1.12. Maintain, expand and negotiate for humanitarian access
- 7.1.13. Agree on common policies related to humanitarian action in-country.
- 7.1.14. Promote adherence by organisations that undertake humanitarian action in-country to sets of principles, guidelines and policies adopted by the HCT or existing Codes of Conduct and sets of standards (e.g. Sphere Standards).

- 7.1.15. Promote transparency and accountability among non-members.
- 7.1.16. Oversee the development and subsequent updating of the inter-agency preparedness contingency plan in response to disasters and emergencies.
- 7.1.17. Ensure that relevant information is disseminated among members and to relevant partners.
- 7.1.18. Ensure that an independent review and evaluation of performances of the HCT is undertaken annually.

8. Relationship with other Humanitarian Coordination Mechanisms in Myanmar

- 8.1. The HCT will be responsible for the establishment and maintenance of robust operational humanitarian coordination mechanisms. It will oversee the work of:
 - 8.1.1. the Inter-Sector/Inter-Cluster Meeting (ICCM), which will inform the HCT of issues where strategic decisions are required on issues related to humanitarian action in Myanmar.
 - 8.1.2. Local Humanitarian Country Teams (LHCT), which will be formed as needed depending upon humanitarian requirements in geographic locations where a coordinated approach to the provision of humanitarian assistance is required.
- 8.2. Summary Notes and Action Points from the ICCM and LHCTs will be shared with HCT Members by the Secretariat.
- 8.3. The draft agenda for HCT meetings will be circulated to the ICCM and LHCTs for comment and input.
- 8.4. Action points and meeting summaries of HCT meetings will be routinely circulated to the ICCM and LHCTs.

9. LIST OF MEMBERS

United Nations	Non-Governmental Organisations	Non-Governmental Organisations Alternates	Observers
UNDP UNFPA UNHCR UNICEF WHO WFP FAO	ACF LWF MSI Save the Children Oxfam TROCAIRE World Vision International	IRC Malteser Merlin Relief International CDN	Humanitarian Advocacy and Communications Group (HACG) IFRC ICRC IOM Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU) MSF OHCHR UN Habitat UN DSS
Support: RCO	Support: INGO Liaison Officer		
Secretariat: OCHA			