



Strategic Objectives

July 2014 - June 2016

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Introduction to the INGO Forum Strategic Objectives July 2014 through June 2016

This strategy has been developed to outline the overall objectives of the INGO Forum during the period July 2014 through June 2016. It articulates how the Forum intends to adapt to opportunities and challenges resulting from changes in the operational environment, namely Myanmar's reform process and the increasing and diversifying membership of the Forum. The plan was developed through a consultative process with Forum members and with input from external stakeholders, including the Development Partners and the United Nations.

Goal of the INGO Forum Myanmar

The INGO Forum aims to influence and increase the effectiveness and coherence of humanitarian relief and development aid in Myanmar. It does this by exploring opportunities to develop and strengthen policy and best practice through coordinated information sharing, facilitated dialogue and constructive engagement with national and international decision-makers involved in humanitarian and development activities, in doing so it supports an enabling environment for INGOs to better fulfil their mandates.

General Objectives

- The INGO Forum supports information sharing and facilitated dialogue between INGO decision-makers on operational matters, and on opportunities to strengthen policy and best practice through constructive engagement and collaboration with national and international decision-makers in Myanmar.
- The INGO Forum provides a means through which NGOs, the UN, donors, the Government of Myanmar and external stakeholders can exchange information, share expertise and establish guidelines for coordinated, efficient and effective relief and development activities.
- The INGO Forum provides opportunities for strategic discussions through which common or complementary strategies will be developed based on collective analysis and mutual learning.

Values and Principles

Members of the INGO Forum share common values and principles based on common interest and commitment to promoting social equity, economic progress and better standard of living for the people in Myanmar. This commitment is based on the agencies' appreciation of their own ethical obligations and reflects the rights and duties enshrined in international law.

- Forum Members promote and advocate for the right to life with dignity and security and undertake all possible steps to prevent or alleviate human suffering.
- Forum members subscribe to principles of Humanity, Impartiality, Independence, Neutrality and Non-Proselytising
- Forum members provide assistance on the basis of need alone regardless of ethnic backgrounds, political affiliations, religious beliefs, and gender difference or preference.
- Forum Members attempt to build and strengthen local capacities, work through/with local organisations/civil society and hold themselves accountable.
- Forum Members mutually respect each other's independence while recognising the necessity of discussion and dialogue and the benefits to be gained from close interaction and coordination.
- Forum Members follow a not-for-profit principle and are prohibited from distributing profit.

Strategic Objective 1: The INGO Forum will influence humanitarian decision-taking and national development policy.

Sub-Objective 1.1: To influence national development policy, the INGO Forum will elect representatives to the GoM-DP Sector Working Groups who will act as the voice of INGOs and will provide two-way feedback between the Working Group and Forum Members.

Background to Sub-Objective 1.1: In the Nay Pyi Taw Accord for Effective Development Cooperation, the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar committed to engage strongly with civil society in participatory approaches and to create an enabling environment for civil society to contribute to policy formulation, budgetary processes and delivery of services at the grass roots level. Following the Myanmar Development Cooperation Forum (MDCF) held in January 2013, the Government of Myanmar (GoM) and its Development Partners (DPs) agreed to establish Sector Working Groups (SWGs) to ensure effective coordination at the sector/thematic level and promote development effectiveness in Myanmar.

SWGs aim to ensure that sectoral strategies and priorities are elaborated by the GoM and that they identify priority programmes and 'quick win' initiatives to be implemented with DP support. The overall framework for SWGs work is provided by national plans, initially the Framework for Economic and Social Reform (FESR) and subsequently Five Year Plans that are agreed upon to implement the National Comprehensive Development Plan (NCDP). SWGs act as a one-stop shop for coordination in their respective sectors without imposing undue transaction costs on the GoM. The following Sector Working groups have been established:

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|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Education | 10. Social Protection |
| 2. Cultural Conservation | 11. Disaster Risk Reduction |
| 3. Agriculture & Rural Development | 12. Public Administration & Reform Process |
| 4. Environmental Conservation | 12.1. Public Financial Management Sub-Group |
| 5. Employment Opportunities | 13. Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment |
| 6. Electric Power | 14. Media |
| 7. Health & Water Supply | 15. Hotels & Tourism |
| 8. Communications & IT Technology | 16. Statistical Quality Development |
| 9. Transportation | 17. Trade |

In the first quarter of 2014 there is INGO Forum representation on the following SWGs; Education, Environmental Conservation, Electric Power, Transportation, Social Protection and Disaster Risk Reduction, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and Health and Water Supply. In addition the Cultural Conservation, Agriculture and Rural Development, Employment, Public Administration and Reform Process and Statistical Quality Development groups are all reportedly considering extending invites to INGOs and/or LNGOs.

The INGO representatives who are currently sitting in SWGs have not always fed-back to other NGOs working in the sector. As a result, opportunities for Forum Members to engage in dialogue regarding sector strategies and priorities and to have their voices heard in the Sector Working Groups may have been missed. A review of the INGO Forum in 2013 found that clearer expectations should be set for the procedure for INGO representatives to report back to the INGO Forum with consistency between the perceived responsibility and actual process of reporting back to the INGO Forum.

Activities for Sub-Objective 1.1: The SWGs that have currently agreed to INGO representation include, Agriculture & Rural Development, Education, Health Technical Working Groups, Public Financial Management Sector Working Groups, and Transportation. The INGO Forum will advocate for all Sector Working Groups to include INGO representation. The INGO Forum will also act as the focal point for the election of representatives, who will act as the voice of the INGOs on the Sector Working Groups.

INGO representatives on the Development Sector Working Groups will coordinate with Forum Members to define core messages to the SWGs with the objective of influencing the formulation of national development policy. A common objective of INGOs representatives will be to advocate for a rights-based approach towards communities and to reflect realities on the ground. Given that the INGO Forum represents varied perspectives and approaches, a single INGO representative may not be able to articulate all INGO voices, none-the-less they will be dedicated to rights-based approaches and to the eradication of poverty in Myanmar.

INGOs that are elected to Sector Working Groups, plus those that are already in place, will be supported by the INGO Forum with meeting facilitation and information sharing according to an agreed INGO Forum feedback mechanism which is described in INGO Forum Statutes. The feedback mechanism will help to ensure that all Forum Members working in the sector are represented in the SWG and are informed about priorities and initiatives. The INGO representatives on the SWGs will raise the profile of the INGO Forum as a relevant body for the Union Government to consult with bilaterally on development, operational and policy issues.

Sub-Objective 1.2: To facilitate an enabling environment for INGOs, the INGO Forum will increase advocacy on the operational and legal framework.

Background to Sub-Objective 1.2: The operational and legal environment in Myanmar can be complex to understand, for example, procedures to develop MoUs with Line Ministries differ from ministry to ministry. An INGO Forum survey undertaken in November 2012 found that one of activities that Members would most appreciate is policy advocacy on the operational environment.

Activity for Sub-Objective 1.2: With the Government of Myanmar demonstrating a willingness to engage more with civil society on the legal environment - a key example being evident in efforts to consult on the draft Association Law - the INGO Forum will promote itself as the 'go to' INGO body for direct dialogue with the Government. By highlighting the relevance of the INGO Forum as a standalone entity, and its willingness to engage with the Government of Myanmar on policy decisions, particularly if the policy pertains to the operational environment, the INGO Forum will establish itself as a key focal point. The INGO Forum will specifically engage with the Ministry of Planning's Foreign Economic Relations Department (FERD).

Sub-Objective 1.3: To empower INGOs to play a leadership role on humanitarian issues, the INGO Forum will strengthen engagement with the Humanitarian Country Team and OCHA.

Background to Sub-Objective 1.3: During its meeting on 21st January 2010 the Inter-Agency Standing Committee of Myanmar agreed to initiate a Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) in Myanmar, highlighting the need for it to become a strategic decision-making body. The HCT structure incorporates seven elected full-time INGO Forum Representatives, or seven alternate representatives. The role of the representatives is to act as the voice of all INGOs working in the humanitarian sphere relaying concerns and messages from the INGOs and to vote on HCT decisions on their behalf.

Activities for Sub-Objective 1.3: In order to strengthen the engagement of the INGO Forum representatives the HCT, the INGO Forum will formalise monthly INGO Forum Humanitarian Meetings during which key issues will be identified and discussed, and common messages from INGOs to the HCT will be developed. The monthly INGO Forum Humanitarian Meetings will be scheduled within three working days of a scheduled HCT meeting. The Head of OCHA may be invited to discuss any topics that are specific to OCHA.

A ToR for INGO Forum representatives on the HCT which is contained in the INGO Forum Statutes will be used to guide constructive engagement and participation on the HCT.

Sub-Objective 1.4: The INGO Forum will find new ways to share information with LNGOs about its activities and will explore options to build synergies.

Background to Sub-Objective 1.4: Myanmar has a large, dynamic and diverse Civil Society. There are over 10,000 Community Based Organisations of which over a 1,000 might be classed as LNGOs. Given the number and diversity of LNGOs there is no overall / united umbrella coordinating body for them. It is difficult for many stakeholders, including the INGO Forum, to share information, or to engage in dialogue about common issues affecting both LNGOs and INGOs, or about opportunities to influence National Development Policies with the full range of LNGOs.

Activity for Sub-Objective 1.4: The INGO Forum will explore mechanisms to engage with Local NGOs. When feasible, INGO representatives who sit on Sector Working groups will coordinate with, or share their activities with LNGO networks in those sectors.

If requested, the Forum will lend support to existing sector and thematic coordination networks or emerging mechanisms for coordination. It is hoped that through increased engagement LNGO networks will reach out to the INGO Forum to engage on specific issues or to explore options whereby the INGO Forum or its members may provide support to the network.

The INGO Forum will play a supporting or facilitating role for INGOs who are engaged in raising standards and capabilities of civil society; for example the INGO Forum may support joint trainings that are led by INGO for LNGOs on humanitarian law, project cycle-management, child protection, or the Joint Standards Initiative.

Strategic Objective 2: The INGO Forum will ensure institutional knowledge management within the Forum, and transparency through public information sharing.

Sub-Objective 2.1: The INGO Forum will be a provider of useful, high-quality information and analysis for use by Forum Members.

Background to Sub-Objective 2.1: There are many issues and topics that Forum Members require specific information on, for example, technical information from the Sector Working Groups, information pertaining to the regulatory framework, or information about the policies of other INGOs.

Activities for Sub-Objective 2.1: The INGO Forum will establish regular and ad hoc INGO Forum Working Groups. Examples of working groups that will be established include:

- A Health Working Group whose main objective will be to share information from the technical working groups with INGO health implementers.
- A Communications and Advocacy working group who will develop core messages for the INGO Forum. This group will also provide recommendations to the Forum about when the Forum might want to develop a more strategic advocacy and communications plan.
- A Finance and Admin Working Group.
- Ad hoc working groups who will focus on specific issues.

When possible, official guidance from the Government will be available to Forum Members and to INGOs conducting exploratory missions in Myanmar. In the absence of formal guidelines the INGO Forum will endeavour to develop a regulatory guide. This will be used for briefing incoming NGOs, and to highlight changes in law and policy for existing members. Guidance may include topics such as seeking MoUs, seeking registration, reporting requirements, banking in Myanmar.

In addition to providing guidance to Forum Members, the INGO Forum will conduct an annual national staff salary-survey. The salary-survey will only be made available to those INGOs who have provided details for the survey. Newly establishing INGOs will also be provided with the anonymised survey when they join the Forum so as to assist them with setting salaries that are comparable with other INGO salaries, thus lessening the likelihood of staff leaving their post to work with incoming INGOs.

Sub-Objective 2.2: The INGO Forum will develop and launch a website.

Background to Sub-Objective 2.2: Most NGO coordination bodies around the globe have invested in developing an effective and efficient website. This is a critical tool for sharing information. If done well, a website reduces information requests and exchanges by email between Forum Members and the Secretariat and provides a central reference point for information distribution.

Activity for Sub-Objective 2.2: In 2014 the INGO Forum will develop and launch a public website. The website may include:

- An explanation of what the INGO Forum is and what its purpose and objectives are
- Information on government / parliamentary statements and on aid related matters
- Links will be given for other websites, for example, MIMU and the Government Aid Information Management System (AIMS)
- Meeting minutes, or summary meeting notes, will be posted
- Job vacancies and C.V.s of consultants will be posted (Members Only)
- Relevant reports from NGOs, the UN and academia
- To enable INGO Forum Members to express their views openly and transparently a comments / suggestions blog page will be included on a 'Members only' page

Sub-Objective 2.3: To increase transparency the INGO Forum will produce relevant meeting notes to be made available to external stakeholders.

Background to Sub-Objective 2.3: While degree of confidentiality needs to be maintained, sharing information transparently about how the INGO Forum is contributing, or intends to contribute, to the development and humanitarian agenda is a key Forum aim.

Activity for Sub-Objective 2.3: The INGO Forum will foster an atmosphere of openness and transparency by sharing 'summary meeting notes' on the website which will be open to key stakeholders such as the Government of Myanmar, Donor Partners, the RC/HCs office, the UN, and Local NGO networks.

Strategic Objective 3: To develop organisationally, the INGO Forum will revise its internal governance and review its legal status as an organisation.

Sub-Objective 3.1: To strengthen the internal governance of the INGO Forum its statutes will be developed or revised.

Background to Sub-Objective 3.1: The INGO Forum and its statutes have developed organically since its inception. As the INGO Forum increases in size and the Government opens up to allow for formal engagement of INGOs the INGO Forum Statutes also need to be adapted and strengthened in order to clarify the governance arrangements and to ensure that the Forum is meeting the expectations of its membership.

Activity for Sub-Objective 3.1: All INGO Forum Statutes will be reviewed, revised, and agreed by the INGO Forum at the time that the strategy is released. Statutes will be reviewed and refined by Forum Members within the first three months of their release.

Sub-Objective 3.2: The INGO Forum will review its legal status and if appropriate will apply for registration as an appropriate entity according to Myanmar law.

Background to Sub-Objective 3.2: The INGO Forum is not a registered or otherwise officially endorsed organisation by the Government of Myanmar. With the Associations Law expected to be finalised by mid 2014 it potentially opens the opportunity for the INGO Forum to register as either a local NGO or as a Professional Association. It is possible that the Associates Law will make it a legal requirement for the INGO Forum to register itself.

Activity for Sub-Objective 3.2: The INGO Forum will regularly review amendments to the Association Law vis-a-vis the potential requirement for it to register as either a LNGO or as a Professional Association. Simultaneously the INGO Forum will review of the feasibility of the INGO Forum registering as a legal entity and the options for doing this. An alternate arrangement may be that the INGO Forum is hosted by one INGO on a rotational basis as is the case in many other countries.

Review process for the Strategic Plan

To confirm that the Forum and the Forum Secretariat are taking all necessary steps to achieve the Strategic Objectives and that Strategic Objectives remain relevant. This Strategic Plan will be reviewed on a six monthly basis. A more comprehensive review will take place after one year with possible revision of the Strategic Objectives to reflect the changing context. The Strategic Plan will be accompanied by an internal Indicators Table that it will be reviewed against periodically.

Stakeholder analysis and priorities for engagement

Coordination Groups: Myanmar has over eighty sector and thematic groups working on technical issues and coordination in the development and humanitarian spheres. The groups incorporate a range of stakeholders, for example, the Government of Myanmar, Donors, the UN, INGOs, LNGOs, CBOs and the private sector. Often there is little interplay between development and humanitarian coordination, and geographically based coordination groups. INGOs are members of over fifty of these groups. The following table indicates how the INGO Forum intends to engage with external stakeholders and what the priority areas for engagement are.

Stakeholders in Humanitarian and Development issues

External Stakeholder	Priority areas in which the INGO Forum may seek to engage or to have influence
Government of the Union of the Republic of Myanmar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National and Sector Development Plans Sub-National Plans Laws Pertaining to INGOs
Donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donor strategy
UN: HCT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electing INGO representatives Passing messages from the INGO community to the HCT Supporting the HCT in setting priorities and objectives
UN: Clusters and Sector WG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaison and participation
GoM-DP Sector Working Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electing INGO representatives to represent Forum members Encouraging that two-way feedback mechanisms are in place Playing a role in determining National Development Plans, sectoral plans, annual action plans of SWGs
LNGO Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing linkages and sharing information Developing joint strategies
LNGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing information to LNGOs Sharing information
Civil Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing information to Civil Society Sharing information
Myanmar Information Management Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic and Planning Support
Multi-laterals: WB, ADB, ASEAN etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forum for engagement on policy and strategy To advocate for a rights-based approach
International NGO coordination bodies: Interaction / ICVA / Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For external high-level advocacy and sharing information
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For engagement and information sharing