



**Collective Accountability to Affected Populations Strategy for Myanmar
2025-2026**

Background

In Myanmar, humanitarian needs continue to increase due to escalating conflicts which continue to cause mass displacement and exacerbate existing vulnerabilities of affected people. The Myanmar Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, 2024 (HNRP 2024) highlights that out of 18.6 million people in need in Myanmar, 52% are women and girls, 32 % are children and 13% are people with disabilities.

Since February 2021, the people of Myanmar have faced significant economic, political, and social crises, resulting in widespread and multifaceted humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding needs. Displacement continues unabated and as of 7 October 2024, an estimated 3,441,200 individuals are displaced, with 3,163,700 having been displaced since the military takeover in February 2021. Displacement has specifically increased drastically since the expansion of conflict in October 2023, with over 40% or 1,452,000 individuals being displaced in the last 12 months alone. This is compounded by a severely restricted operating environment, with the movement of people and transportation of goods being heavily curtailed and interruptions to phone and internet services impacting on humanitarian operations. Humanitarian access and space continue to be impeded by several factors - including operational impediments, hard-to-reach rural, mountainous, or jungle areas people are displaced to, and conflict-related insecurity leading to roadblocks, checkpoints and travel restrictions.

Protection risks are grave, with increasing risks of injuries due to explosive ordnance and greater risks of discrimination, exploitation, abuse, and violence, compounded by a breakdown of social structures and support systems as well as limited access to the legal system. With ongoing insecurity, disruptions to key services and difficulties in transporting goods, households are struggling to meet their basic needs and to access food, essential medical care, adequate shelter, and key household supplies. Recent flooding due to the seasonal monsoon and the impacts of Typhoon Yagi has highlighted Myanmar's very high level of risk related to natural hazards, with over 1 million people in 70 townships

being affected by flooding, and vast destruction of and damage to infrastructure, housing and livelihoods. Development gains across the country have been lost through the combined impact of conflict and natural hazards.

Due to the contextual issues highlighted above, Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) remains of paramount importance to the overall humanitarian response, propelled by the indistinguishable operational responsibilities to promote a rights-based approach and to improve aid effectiveness across humanitarian programming. Leadership is one of the five Revised commitments endorsed in 2017 by the IASC. This commitment requires leadership at all levels to support and maintain commitment and proactively take steps to mainstream AAP across the humanitarian response. The Grand Bargain Signatories commitment (2016) reinforces the critical role of response leadership through improvement of the engagement of humanitarian country team (HCT) and cluster/sector leadership with AAP being one of its core commitments.

Within the Humanitarian Coordination infrastructure in Myanmar, the Working Group on AAP and Community Engagement has received 2024 CERF funds to:

- Strengthen humanitarian information systems through community-centred engagement (information provision, consultation, feedback) in the country's Northwest (NW) and Southeast (SE), two areas that face complex access challenges; and
- Develop collective AAP systems and processes to ensure systematic use of localized feedback data to influence programme and operational decisions and inform corrective actions that are documented and validated by communities at the sub-national and national levels.
- Provide support to the coordination of the AAP/CE Working Group to ensure continued national-level coordination of AAP interventions in Myanmar.

In support of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) protection and localization strategies, the AAPWG prioritizes inclusion of community-based organisations and local partners, many of whom have indicated several barriers to the implementation of AAP services, including insufficient knowledge and understanding of AAP, lack of staff and resources, and language barriers. Through the efforts of the above-mentioned project, feedback collected from AAPWG members is fed into the Community Voices Platform and contributes to collective CFM efforts.

As such, the national Accountability to Affect People Working Group (AAP WG) in Myanmar aims to collectively promote greater accountability in humanitarian and development work. It was established in 2020 under the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) and with the endorsement of HCT and works towards institutionalization and

implementation of relevant standards at all levels of humanitarian and development actions by member agencies and the wider humanitarian community including the government. In 2024, a total of at least 45 agencies composed of diverse local, national and international organisations regularly attended AAP WG meetings. Recently, three national co-chairs have been selected with the representation of civil society organisations, INGOs and UN agencies to be able to sustain the work of AAWG while two Senior Field Associates have been appointed for the country Northwest and Southeast to strengthen the sub-national AAPWG and the engagement of AAP in those regions.

This strategy is aligned with the IASC Collective AAP Framework (2023) in ensuring the development, implementation and monitoring of an operational country-specific AAP set of actions led by the HCT with the support of key actors and existing structures (including clusters/sectors, inter-cluster/sector coordination groups) steered by the AAP/CE working group in Myanmar. It seeks to improve the quality, accountability and effectiveness of the humanitarian response, in support of local and national systems, to deliver more responsive and people-centred humanitarian actions. It is also aligned with the 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan strategic objective one which highlights that protection risks and needs should be identified, monitored, mitigated, and met for affected people, while upholding the centrality of protection across the humanitarian response including through promotion of respect for human rights, international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles.

Goal: Empowered communities actively shape and hold humanitarian actors accountable for safe, inclusive, responsive, and effective programming.

Objective: To establish a framework for integrating AAP principles across the Humanitarian Programme Cycle.

Strategy Outcomes

Outcome 1: Systematically and continuously engage diverse community groups and local actors on preparedness including through assessments and collective planning to better understand capacities, vulnerabilities and risks, and preferences for assistance, communication and engagement.

Action 1.1: Coordinate local and national humanitarian actors to scale up collective AAP systems, map capacities and identify processes that enable affected people to influence decisions.

Action 1.2: Identify and strengthen safe and responsive systems/mechanisms for feedback and complaints and community response capacity

Action 1.3: Ensure appropriate financial and human resourcing is available to support regular and meaningful engagement of affected people as well as interagency coordination

Action 1.4: Reinforce and scale-up interagency mechanisms and practical tools that can support the engagement of affected communities in shaping the humanitarian response through two-way dialogue, community feedback mechanisms, learning and adaptation of the response

Outcome 2: Coordinated needs assessment and analysis reflects affected community groups' capacities, information needs and communication preferences

Action 2.1: Collate evidence representing the views of affected people collected from community feedback, perceptions and participation in inter-sectoral needs assessments

Action 2.2: Aggregate and consolidate the collated evidence in response-wide analysis of community feedback, preferences and suggestion to inform HCT/ICCG/donor decisions, the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan and other needs assessment activities and documents

Action 2.3: Engage affected people during needs assessment as well as share and validate collected evidence with them

Action 2.4: Identify chronic barriers to lack of information and review existing strategies, best practices and innovative ideas to ensure affected communities have the information they need to make decisions.

Outcome 3: Humanitarian response includes affected people's voices and recognizes their capacities

Action 3.1: Engage and empower community-based organizations and community representatives in humanitarian response planning

Action 3.2: Enhance the capacities of humanitarian actors particularly national and local partners to strengthen AAP/CE within their programming

Activity 3.3: Support coordinated and interagency actions to reduce the fragmentation of existing solutions to encourage people's participation

Outcome 4: Response implementation is coordinated and driven by informed community participation and feedback systems and is monitored and adjusted accordingly

Action 4.1: Establish coordinated ways for communities with the local dialects to strengthen effective participation and coordination

Action 4.2 Using feedback obtained through actions in Outcome 2, deploy a diverse range of information provision systems, leveraging localized collective approaches and using appropriate language and communication channels, to ensure that communities are aware of the objectives of the humanitarian response, its actors, programmes and targeting criteria, as well as where to go to find additional information or to provide feedback and submit complaints.

Action 4.3 Coordinate collective community feedback and complaints mechanisms within interagency referral systems, to include programme adaptation and course correction in programme response.

Action 4.4 Aggregate feedback and community perceptions and insights and present them to humanitarian leadership (Donors/HCT/ICCG) in a regular, systematic and coordinated manner to enable decision-makers to act upon them, and course correct and adapt the response accordingly.

Action 4.6 Communicate decisions on actions taken or not taken with affected people and communities, to 'close the feedback loop', as part of continuous engagement and dialogue

Outcome 5: Evaluation and review of collective AAP actions and outcomes is coordinated, participatory and transparent to inform learning, action and adaptation.

Action 5.1: Assess response-wide performance and progress on AAP to strengthen the overall accountability and promote learning and course correction

Action 5.2: Facilitate a participatory process for evaluating, verifying and learning from response operations, informed by community feedback and perceptions and validated by affected communities

Action 5.3: Share evaluation findings and lessons learned with affected communities and other stakeholders at sub-national and national levels.

Action 5.4: Ensure evaluation findings inform other response-wide strategies and future action on planning, implementing and monitoring at all levels.

Principles

In order to carry out AAP, the AAP/CE WG's activities under this strategy will adhere to the following principles:

- **Do no harm:** Taking all necessary measures to protect the principles of “do no harm”, including to prevent the unintended harms that may result from well-meaning activities in crisis contexts by incorporating conflict sensitivity into assessments as well as complaints and feedback mechanisms.
- **Non-discrimination:** Taking all necessary measures to promote and advance gender equality and diversity inclusion, including by helping to remove or overcome obstacles that may undermine their access to assistance, services and their ability to submit complaints, provide feedback or participate in relevant decision-making relevant for AAP.
- **Zero tolerance for sexual abuse and exploitation:** Taking all necessary measures to enforce the zero tolerance for SEA by all partners and to ensure strict adherence to Standards of Conduct.
- **Principled humanitarian action:** Respecting the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence in the delivery of humanitarian response, and equally calling for all those engaged in humanitarian action to promote and fully respect these principles.
- **Protection:** Aligning humanitarian responses with IASC-endorsed standards and practices on the centrality of protection, such as the IASC Protection Policy; and adopting a rights-based approach in all humanitarian assistance based on assessment of affected people's needs and diversity of vulnerabilities
- **Localization:** Ensure a locally driven approach, informed by a participatory approach to humanitarian programming and an in-depth understanding of local dynamics and context.
- **Rights-based approach:** Support promoting and preserving rights-based and dignified approaches to assisting conflict- and disaster-affected populations in Myanmar.
- **Conflict sensitivity:** Ensure AAP interventions are informed by a thorough understanding of the conflict context and incorporate clear measures to ensure a conflict-sensitive approach

Strategy Pillars

To achieve the above commitments, the AAPWG in Myanmar will embed its approach in the following pillars:

Pillar 1- Leadership: Strengthen leadership and systems to embed good practices within the humanitarian programme cycle of the Myanmar response.

The AAPWG will reinforce accountability systems of the HCT and clusters, including the reporting of all forms of misconduct and ensuring clear lines of reporting and accountability relevant to all aspects of AAP are established and enforced. The AAPWG will ensure that HCT integrates AAP throughout the full humanitarian programme cycle for crisis-related programming and in strategic planning processes including the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans. Given that the nature of unsustainable and short-term humanitarian programming continues collective AAP gaps in the country and that the civil society organisations and national actors tend to come to the APWG along with the voices, ideas, and the preferences of the community, the humanitarian country team (HCT) acknowledges expansion of capacity building initiatives to the civil society organisations (CSOs) and national organisations to sustain AAP engagement with the local capacity. In addition, the AAPWG will detect the spaces where the civil society, national and local organisations can take a greater role and influence in humanitarian decision-making thanks to their knowledge of affected communities that can enhance an effective, inclusive and sustainable response to the people affected across the country. The strategy will also reinforce capacity enhancing with AAPWG members and partner staff in AAP implementation approaches, with the aim of expanding sub-national accountability working groups and encouraging their contribution to the national AAPWG.

Pillar 2- Participation: Involve affected people to influence and shape the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian activities and decision-making processes throughout the humanitarian programme cycle

The AAPWG will identify and enable affected populations to participate using various methods to ensure that participation is safe, inclusive and representative of diverse groups and in understanding diverse risks, vulnerabilities and capacities and mitigating barriers to equal participation.

Acknowledging the better understanding of local contexts and the local capacity of national and civil society organisations which are frontline humanitarians with access to people in hard-to-reach areas, the experiences and wisdoms of the LNGOs and CSOs will be utilised in facilitating AAP assessments to strengthen tailored and contextually appropriate CFMs and share lessons and experiences from CFM implementation through the capacity building of the local and building on the mainstreaming and implementation of AAP activities. Hence, the AAPWG will tailor and adopt participatory methods that are appropriate to the Myanmar context in all stages of the humanitarian programme cycle and ensure special consideration is given to diverse groups, including the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, and to traditional and cultural dynamics so as not to perpetuate existing inequalities or bias that limit participation.

Pillar3- Information-sharing and transparency- Ensure Myanmar humanitarian information systems are strengthened to protect and promote the right to information and two-way communication with affected people The AAPWG will ensure affected communities have access to relevant information about the humanitarian activities and processes that affect them in a reliable and timely manner, including being contextually relevant and in line with literacy levels and language diversity, and that they have the opportunity to provide feedback, as appropriate (that is, closing the feedback loop). The working group will inform affected populations and communities about humanitarian Standards of Conduct and their right to provide feedback or raise complaints and about their rights.

While humanitarian information sharing and two-way community have been established, building on evidence to expand AAP activities, particularly Community Voices Platform (CVP)/Community Feedback Mechanism (FMs), in line with community preferences and disseminating good practices in terms of participation in intervention decision making and information sharing are to be systematically operationalized. Maintaining the Community Voices Dashboard and disseminating its findings, as well as continuing to disseminate standards through training, will remain key activities of the National AAPWG and its members in 2025. To collectively handle and analyse community perceptions, feedback and complaints, the Community Voices Platform (CVP) was initiated to aggregate feedback to influence decision-making in the HCT, in the effort to lead to response adjustment and course correction.

Pillar4- Coordination: The coordination of the National AAP/CE Working Group and sub-National AAP/CE Working Group and other clusters is strengthened to continuously engage AAP interventions in Myanmar.

The AAPWG will collaborate with all clusters and partners to deliver on AAP principles and commitments in a coordinated and coherent way, including collective responsibility in an inter-agency way. Given the access constraints and limited information sharing channels in many regions in the country, the coordination fora of the National AAP Working Group and Sub-National AAP Working Groups will be continuously strengthened to solidify and get together the individuals' efforts to sustain the collective AAP engagement and collect more in-depth understanding of affected populations from the local organisations, that may contribute to a more inclusive and collective approach. As such the National AAPWG will reinforce and expand sub-national accountability working groups and encourage their contribution to the national AAPWG. Through the National AAPWG, joint efforts in improving accountability to affected people in Myanmar will continue in 2025 and beyond through sharing experiences and best practices. In the effort to amplify community voices, raise the profile of the crisis and provide insights into the multi-layered impacts of the crisis, the group will partner with other coordination fora, media organisations to explore successes, failures, challenges, innovations and gaps. In

addition, the AAPWG will promote incorporation of AAP in country-based strategic documents within HCT in a coordinated way based on input from all clusters to promote AAP practices in the preparation of Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans.

Governance

Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) stands as a critical commitment embraced by humanitarian practitioners and organizations, emphasizing ethical conduct, responsibility, and respect towards the communities they serve. This approach, in alignment with the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), Grand Bargain 2.0 commitments, and the IASC commitment on Accountability to Affected Populations, recognizes the inherent dignity, expertise, and capabilities of those impacted and mandates humanitarian agencies to actively involve and listen to affected community's perspectives in all stages of programming. In line with this principle, the national Accountability to Affected Populations Working Group (AAP WG) in Myanmar brings together diverse stakeholders from the humanitarian sector, including NGOs/CSOs/CBOs, INGOs and UN agencies. The AAPWG aims to ensure collective accountability and foster robust community engagement across humanitarian response activities and at integration and mainstreaming of gender, age, disability and inclusion of other marginalised community into collective AAP systems.

To ensure inclusive leadership that is representative of the key players in humanitarian programming, the AAPWG is led by three co-chairs based on resolutions of its membership.

The co-chairs of the working group will lead the implementation of this strategy in coordination with AAPWG members and other coordination structures. Hence, the co-chairs will be accountable to the wider membership of the AAPWG and to HCT/ICCG. In addition, the co-chairs will report on collective AAP progress against the Grand Bargain commitments to the HCT in coordination with all clusters to ensure key AAP commitments inform the humanitarian response.

If deemed necessary by the leadership or the members, smaller technical teams/taskforces for specific tasks and timelines will be formed to support the implementation of specific actions of this strategy. In addition, during the humanitarian response operation, the leadership, in consultation with the members of the AAP WG, may come up with interim structures to facilitate the integration and implementation of different AAP elements in the Myanmar humanitarian response operation.

As a member of the ICCG, the AAPWG shall incorporate AAP into needs assessment templates, cluster plans and humanitarian needs and response strategic documents. In addition, the co-chairs will ensure overall HCT strategies incorporate collective accountability approaches and indicate how affected communities will be engaged

throughout the humanitarian response and how the HCT will adjust overall programming based on regular engagement of affected people and response monitoring.