



NRM Programme Strategy

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1. Overview

This strategy document lays out the theory of change and governing approach of the Nexus Response Mechanism (NRM). The **Overall Objective** of the NRM is to contribute to lasting peace and national reconciliation, security, stability and sustainable development in Myanmar. The NRM will achieve this overall objective through three mutually reinforcing **Specific Objectives**:

1. Communities' vulnerabilities are reduced through programmes that address immediate needs.
2. Communities' resilience is increased by building their capacity to prepare for, reduce the risk, and mitigate the impact of future shocks.
3. The rights of communities, including IDPs and refugees, are protected by addressing structural rights challenges and mitigating their impact on communities.

While the overall goal of a nexus-type programme is thus similar to that of other international assistance, the use of a nexus APPROACH to achieve that goal is distinct, requiring a reimagining of how aid is delivered. For the NRM, this reimagination will consist of three cross-cutting pillars:

Integration

The NRM will implement more holistic programmes through the breakdown of humanitarian, development and peace sectoral silos and the integration of human rights into programming and advocacy. The key mechanisms for facilitating this change will be the use of area-based programmes, joint assessments, and collective outcomes.

Transformation

The NRM seeks to be transformative in nature by helping to address root causes of crisis, challenging predominant power dynamics, fostering greater inclusion and equity, and advancing new and flexible modalities for aid delivery. It will encompass policy dialogue and support for structural change and localisation, crosscut by focuses on inclusion and agency.

Accountability

As a pilot initiative for a relatively untested approach, the NRM will embrace its experimental ethos by championing new modalities for aid delivery, while also ensuring accountability to its stakeholders, including community members, and prioritizing independent analysis and learning.

The NRM will be guided by a Steering Committee composed of donors and managed by a UNOPS-based Secretariat.

2. Rationale

The most pressing issues in Myanmar, including protracted conflict, forced displacement, food insecurity, and a lack of economic resilience, are multifaceted and often mutually reinforcing. As such, international programmes must address these challenges, both holistically and simultaneously. Responses in highly complex environments can only be effective if humanitarian, peacebuilding, development, and political actions are harmonized. To be truly effective, humanitarian-focused programs must attempt to address the underlying causes of need; similarly, development programs aimed at addressing systemic issues must also address the immediate concerns of beneficiaries; and both modalities must remain grounded in the political issues and human rights frameworks that are a core component of these humanitarian and development objectives.

While strengthening the links between peace, humanitarian and development programs is at the core of the nexus approach, the nexus offers an opportunity to address existing structural problems with aid and employ transformative modalities of work. This includes a greater focus on localisation of humanitarian, development and peace initiatives, building in human rights, conflict sensitivity and gender equity as core tenets of the nexus approach, and restructuring incentive structures to ensure better learning and downward accountability.

3. Background and Lessons Learned

The Humanitarian–Development–Peace (HDP) nexus or “triple nexus” is the most recent conceptualization of a decades-long global effort to break down the silos between different sectors in international aid programming. Nexus terminology emerged at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, with The Grand Bargain document linking the development and humanitarian sectors; peace was added as a third side to the nexus “triangle” by Secretary General Antonio Guterres later in 2016.

Since 2016, a number of initiatives using the nexus concept have taken root across the international community. The DAC has defined the nexus as the “interlinkages between humanitarian, development and peace action,”¹ and stated that a nexus approach

“refers to the aim of strengthening collaboration, coherence and complementarity. The approach seeks to capitalize on the comparative advantages of each pillar – to the extent of their relevance in the specific context – in order to reduce overall vulnerability and the number of unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities and address root causes of conflict.”²

Nexus programs have been pioneered in a number of contexts, notably in Sub-Saharan Africa, but as a relatively new approach, little empirical evidence exists as to its effectiveness. Several key lessons from early nexus programming efforts can be extracted to inform the development of the NRM. In particular:

- > Nexus programs often **lacked clarity of purpose**, with many staff – especially at country and field levels – unsure of how nexus programs should be designed and implemented.
- > **Ambiguity about the role of government** and **tensions around neutrality**. While nexus approaches seek structural solutions that require government involvement, engagement with the government on these issues can lead to a violation of humanitarian principles. Achieving neutrality in humanitarian response while engaging with the government on peace and development will be a major challenge for any nexus program.³
- > **Inexistent focus on policy/structural change**. Nexus interventions globally have focused on reforming programming but have excluded targeting systems-level changes needed for more sustainable outcomes.⁴
- > **Insufficient efforts on localisation**. Analyses of nexus approaches globally show that they often exclude local civil society actors and NGOs,⁵ a trend that is mirrored in the broader pattern of development assistance where global commitments to greater localisation⁶ have not been reflected on the ground.⁷

¹ OECD, DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus, DAC, OECD Legal Instruments, 2020.

² OECD, DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus, DAC, OECD Legal Instruments, 2020.

³ Slim, Hugo, “Searching for the nexus: How to turn theory into practice,” The New Humanitarian, 23 October 2019

⁴ Oxfam, The Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus: What does it mean for multi-mandated organizations?, Oxfam Discussion Papers, June 2019, p. 20.

⁵ Oxfam 2019, p. 20.

⁶ The Grand Bargain Commitment 2: More support and funding tools for local and national responders

⁷ See, for example: ODI, *Grand Bargain Annual Independent Report 2020*, Office of Development Initiatives, June 2020; NEAR, *Briefing Paper: Localisation on the Ground, Network for Empowered Aid Delivery*, December 2017; *Localisation of Aid*.

- > **Gaps in coordination.** Significant gaps continue to exist within and particularly between humanitarian, development and peace sectors. There is a lack of resources and willingness to invest in greater capacities for coordination.⁸
- > **Lack of joint analyses.** Most operational assessments undertaken by aid programs are sectoral and lack an interdimensional approach that depict human rights, peacebuilding, humanitarian and development dynamics.
- > **Confusion about peace.** Nexus efforts have often centered around humanitarian and development programming at the exclusion of peace initiatives.⁹ Where it does exist, peace has been defined in negative terms rather than as positive peace.
- > **Lack of systematic learning, monitoring and evaluation.** As is common in the broader aid system, MEAL in nexus programs have often not been prioritized.¹⁰
- > **Funding modalities lag behind HDP commitments.** While nexus approaches call for collective outcomes and synced programming, the siloed and short-term nature of much aid funding continues to inhibit the implementation of nexus programming.
- > **Shying away from a transformational agenda.** While nexus approaches have focused on systems change that ensures greater coherence across programming types, programs themselves have often lacked a transformative orientation.

Are INGOs Walking the Talk, Shifting the Power Project, 30 October 2017; Cornish, Lisa, "Putting localisation at the center of the humanitarian future," DEVEX, 31 May 2019.

⁸ FAO, NRC and UNDP 2019, p.6; Redvers 2019.

⁹ Dalrymple, Sara and Angus Urquhart, "Peace in the Triple Nexus: What Challenges do Donors Face," *Development Initiatives*, 18 December 2019.

¹⁰ Dalrymple 2019, pp. 5-7.

4. Policy Framework

The NRM is underpinned by an EU Policy Framework which has prioritized a nexus approach as a core tenet of European Union aid policy, in particular:

- > The European Council Conclusions on Operationalizing the Humanitarian–Development Nexus (May 2017)¹¹ and the Joint Communication on ‘A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU’s External Action’ (June 2017),¹² which names Myanmar as one of the EU’s pilot countries for the “HDP Nexus”.
- > The European Commission Communication “Lives in Dignity: From Aid-Dependence to Self-Reliance, Forced Displacement and Development”¹³ which requires the EU to use its humanitarian, development and political instruments comprehensively.
- > European Council Conclusions on Myanmar/Burma of 16 October 2017,¹⁴ 26 February 2018¹⁵ and 10 December 2018,¹⁶ which collectively reaffirm the strong engagement in support of the democratic transition, peace and national reconciliation process and inclusive socio-economic development by the EU and Member States.
- > Conclusions of Special Meeting of the European Council (17,18,19,20 and 21 July 2020) under heading 6 “Neighbourhood and the world” which establishes, for international funding, the principle of conditionality, including respecting the principles of the United Nations Charter¹⁷ and international law.¹⁸
- > The EU’s New European Consensus on Development (2017), which affirms the EU’s use of a rights-based approach and the promotion of inclusion and participation, non-discrimination, equality and equity, transparency and accountability.¹⁹

¹¹ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/24010/nexus-st09383en17.pdf>

¹² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/memo_17_1555

¹³ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/refugees-idp/Communication_Forced_Displacement_Development_2016.pdf

¹⁴ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13099-2017-INIT/en/pdf>

¹⁵ <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6418-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/37409/st15033-en18.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/introductory-note/index.html>

¹⁸ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/45109/210720-euco-final-conclusions-en.pdf>

¹⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/european-consensus-on-development-final-20170626_en.pdf

5. Theory of Change

At its core, the NRM seeks to transform the way in which humanitarian, development and peace initiatives are delivered in order to increase their positive impact on communities. The long-term **Overall Objective** that the NRM will therefore contribute to is lasting peace and national reconciliation, security, stability and sustainable development in Myanmar.

The NRM will work towards this overall objective through three mutually reinforcing **Specific Objectives**:

Specific Objective 1

Communities' vulnerabilities are reduced through programmes that address immediate needs.

While the NRM aims to contribute to long-term structural change, it recognizes that achieving peace and sustainable development is not possible unless the immediate humanitarian needs of communities are met. While these needs naturally vary by location and circumstance, they include both risks to lives of community members themselves, including food, health, shelter and WASH, insecurity and physical threats posed by disasters or active fighting, and the longer-term needs that are not typically met in emergency contexts, including education, livelihoods support, and protection.

As an entity that is flexible by design, the NRM will be prepared to quickly respond to new emergencies, such as those prompted by COVID-19, flooding or new conflicts. However, the NRM also recognizes that much of the humanitarian response in Myanmar is concentrated in situations of protracted conflict and displacement, including in Kachin, Shan, Rakhine, and the south east. In these areas, where nexus approaches are most critical, the NRM will weave together traditional humanitarian assistance with peace and development initiatives with the aim of creating durable solutions to intractable challenges. The NRM will aim for nexus initiatives that go beyond short-term humanitarian funding cycles, and which employ innovative mechanisms for delivering assistance through both national and international partners. At the same time, NRM's humanitarian partners must ensure coordination and complementarity within the broader humanitarian system to ensure the coverage of gaps and avoid duplication.

Specific Objective 2

Communities' resilience is increased by building their capacity to prepare for, and reduce the risk of, future shocks.

While Objective 1 focuses on addressing immediate needs, Objective 2 emphasizes the need for transformative programmes that build the capacities of communities to weather and prevent conflict through the building of local capacities for humanitarian response and peace, interlinked with development programming that provides opportunities for sustainable livelihoods and access to non-discriminatory services.

To ensure that communities are able to prepare for and respond to emergency situations, the NRM will include a localisation agenda in keeping with The Grand Bargain. In Myanmar, local actors, including religious organizations, parahita groups and CSOs, often form the first line of humanitarian responders in crisis situations. While more established NGOs have played key roles in long-standing conflicts like those in Kachin State, civil society groups have increasingly played a critical part in leading the response in newer conflict zones, including in northern Shan State²⁰ and Rakhine State²¹ where international agencies are often deprived of access. These efforts should be built upon and supported; routing funding through local actors and building their capacity to provide a more principled and effective response will foster greater resilience within communities in areas prone to conflict and crisis.

The NRM will also build local capacities for positive peace in the areas which it works, supporting communities in developing the skills and relationships needed to deescalate current conflict and prevent future violence. This effort is premised in the notion that locally owned and driven initiatives are more successful in building peace. Peacebuilding and social cohesion programming should be based on a multifaceted model of peace that recognizes its vertical and horizontal dimensions and the relationships within and between communities of different identities, as well as between those communities and the state.²² In particular, building cross-group empathy and solidarity is critical in a context where divide-and-rule strategies have often been used to divide and weaken communities. Noting the significant positive – and negative – roles that women and youth can play in attaining or preventing peace, programmes should utilize transformative programming approaches to ensure greater inclusion and the empowerment of marginalized groups. Recognizing that local peace capacities are necessary, but not sufficient, in achieving sustainable peace, the NRM will also support broader peace efforts through advocacy under Outcome 3.

NRM programmes, through local and international partners, in areas of protracted conflict will work with local authorities, ethnic service providers (including those operating within interim arrangements) and civil society organizations to build their capacity to provide essential services particularly in the areas of health and education, focusing specifically on ensuring that these services are provided in a non-discriminatory manner. Long-term resilience also requires access to sustainable livelihoods. Where possible, the NRM will focus on building livelihoods capacities while also addressing underlying issues that prevent access to jobs, including mine clearance and education, addressing drugs and conflict, and market strengthening.

While greater localisation is a key outcome for the NRM to achieve its goal, the NRM recognizes the distinct and complementary role that international agencies can play in both leading and supporting programmes and building the capacity of local organizations to take the lead in their own communities. The complementarity of local and international partners is discussed in Section VIII: Partnership.

²⁰ See Walsh, Matt, "Time to recentre power to northern Shan State's first responders," *Frontier Myanmar*, 27 January 2020.

²¹ Independent Rakhine Initiative, forthcoming.

²² Analysis of the Social Cohesion Landscape in Rakhine State, Independent Rakhine Initiative, August 2019

Specific Objective 3

The rights of communities, including IDPs and refugees, are protected by addressing structural rights challenges and mitigating their impact on communities.

While increasing local capacities for humanitarian response, development, and peace is critical for ensuring community resilience, achieving long term reductions in vulnerability is only possible through structural changes that ensure that the rights of all communities are protected and respected and which address the root causes of conflict and crisis.

NRM programs will thus place the promotion of international human rights at the core of programme design, even in programs which are not directly focused on rights issues. Joint assessments conducted at the outset of programme design will catalogue human rights challenges within the contexts that the NRM is working; in turn, these analyses will inform both multi-level advocacy that will be undertaken by NRM partners and funders, as well as programming designed to mitigate the effects of rights challenges on the day-to-day lives of community members. For example, NRM activities in a particular township may focus on local-level advocacy on access to healthcare facilities within that township, while also providing health care services and facilities to meet immediate needs. NRM programmes' collective outcomes will include human rights objectives that will be monitored and tracked through both partner-implemented MEAL activities as well monitoring by the NRM's in-house Due Diligence and Context Analysis Facility (DDCAF), ensuring that rights remain at the centre of the NRM's programmatic and advocacy approach.

In addition to its rights-centred programmes, the NRM will also focus on finding ways of addressing structural rights issues directly. This may include support for ongoing and new initiatives promoting durable solutions to protracted displacement, independent research and investigation into existing or new rights challenges, initiatives addressing questions of documentation, citizenship and land-ownership, cross-border initiatives, or other pressing rights issues. Recognizing the immensity of the structural challenges facing Myanmar, this support will seek to build upon, and collaboration with, national and international rights organizations and movements, international organizations and donors, including other EU rights and nexus programmes. Of particular focus will be the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State and on creating safe and conducive conditions for the return of refugees from Thailand and Bangladesh.

The NRM will ensure continuity of purpose between its community-level programmes and policy-level discussions led by the EU and its member states, in keeping with the European Commission Communication "Lives in Dignity: From Aid-Dependence to Self-Reliance, Forced Displacement and Development" which calls for the EU and its member states to ensure it uses their humanitarian, development and political instruments comprehensively.

Contribution to Systemic Change

While the design of the NRM's programming will be driven by the needs of communities and will span across the humanitarian-development-peace continuum, the NRM will seek to contribute to systemic change in Myanmar through eight cross-cutting **results**.

1. Expansion of sustainable, inclusive and fair livelihood opportunities
2. More responsive and inclusive services (health, education, WASH, nutrition, social protection, financial inclusion, humanitarian, etc).
3. Increased voice and influence of civil society
4. Conflict transformation and enhanced social cohesion
5. Transformation of gender norms and practices
6. Protection of the environment and climate change resilience
7. Creating conducive conditions for safe return of IDPs and refugees and the realisation of durable solutions
8. Transformative and evidence-based policy and institutional change

These results are not prescriptive, and projects may target other results as dictated by the needs of communities and the NRM's joint assessments. However, the eight results collectively represent the broad spectrum of actions that the NRM may undertake across its programming. The eight results are elaborated upon in the NRM's MEAL Framework.

The Centrality of Protection

Recognizing the need to ensure the centrality of protection, the NRM will seek to put rights at the core of its programmes and processes. This includes, but is not limited to:

- > Conducting human rights analysis as part of its initial Joint Assessments in each programme area
- > Placing rights at the heart of grant-making processes and using rights-based criteria to evaluate prospective partner proposals
- > Including rights outcomes, objectives, and indicators in its area and thematic-based programmes. This includes ensuring humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding activities utilize a rights-based approach.
- > Incorporating rights-focused advocacy into every intervention
- > Monitoring the rights context in the areas in which it works through the NRM's Due Diligence and Context Analysis Facility
- > Supporting advocacy efforts by partners at local, state, and national levels
- > Facilitating the flow of information and advocacy messaging from implementing partners in the field to donors and diplomatic partners

6. Approach

While the overall goal of a nexus-type programme is thus similar to that of other international programmes, the approach towards achieving that goal is fundamentally different, requiring a reimagining of how aid is delivered. For the NRM, this reimagination will consist of three cross-cutting pillars: Integration, Transformation, and Accountability.

Integration

The NRM will aim to implement holistic interventions through the breakdown of humanitarian, development and peace sectoral silos and the integration of human rights into programming and advocacy. The key mechanisms for facilitating this change will be the use of area-based or thematic-based programmes, joint assessments, and collective outcomes.

The NRM's primary implementation modality will be through the use of **area-based programmes** that focus on a concentrated geographic area (for example, a set of IDP camps or a township). The use of an area-based programme is key to the integrated and comprehensive championed by the nexus, allowing the NRM and its partners to focus on the total needs of the communities in the areas it operates in. This approach is conflict sensitive by nature, ensuring that local socio-political dynamics and intercommunal relations are accounted for and that the needs of all communities within a chosen area are considered. At the same time, the integration of rights as a core NRM objective ensures that the rights challenges that transcend the borders of the NRM's programme areas are still addressed through multi-level advocacy.

To facilitate the implementation of area-based programmes, the NRM will use **joint assessments** -- which identify key contextual and demographic data, entry points for reducing vulnerability, building resilience, and rights-based advocacy, localized human rights challenges, political economy, conflict and gender dynamics, and other relevant information. Joint assessments will involve extensive consultation with community members, local authorities and other stakeholders in the chosen location; these stakeholders will participate not only in providing information, but in identifying needs and shaping a systemic theory of change for each area-based programme, which will then serve as a basis for the programme's **collective outcomes**, a set of measurable results that can be achieved jointly by H-D-P actors.²³ The NRM will provide greater guidance on area-based programmes, joint assessments and collective outcomes through its Nexus Guidelines document.

Recognizing the need for flexibility, the NRM may also avail itself of other types of programming beyond the area-based approach as necessary to meet its objectives. In particular, this may include **thematic-based programmes**, which home in on a specific thematic or sectoral issue but use a cross-cutting nexus approach, or which integrate into a larger nexus-style programme in

²³ OCHA, 2017

collaboration with other programmes. This may include (but is not limited to) support for coordination mechanisms within the broader aid system in Myanmar, support for research projects that utilize a nexus lens, support for peace processes or advocacy initiatives that create and call for systemic change, and responses to emergencies such as COVID-19.

Transformation

The NRM is focused on addressing the conflict and crisis drivers and achieving greater equity and partnership among implementing partners and communities. To do so, it will use a transformation framework based on policy dialogue and support for structural change at the policy level, complemented by the strengthening of local response systems and localisation at the community level. This framework combines top-down and bottom-up approaches to promote transformative change, allowing the NRM to push for structural changes that address the root causes of conflict while also enabling communities to not only respond to crises, but to be their own agents of change. A focus on inclusion and agency will transect these two approaches.

Localisation

A cornerstone of development programming and the NRM is sustainability, and an important goal of the NRM is to make gains that last long after the programme cycle ends. A major issue with the Myanmar response as a whole is its heavy reliance on direct programming modalities, which are by definition unsustainable. One of the strategic ways the NRM will increase the sustainability of its programmes is by strengthening local response systems – the ecosystem of local actors including government officials, civil society organizations, community groups, religious organizations, and other stakeholders that collectively make up civil society and which are at the front lines of humanitarian response and local development. These stakeholders should be supported through more equitable programmatic partnerships, greater degrees of sustained engagement and relationship-building, and new modalities for capacity building built on ownership of projects, empowerment models and inclusion. In addition to strengthening local response systems, the NRM will seek to expand livelihood opportunities in the communities it works in, in turn increasing income for individuals and households and enabling greater resilience. Strengthening local response also entails empowering local voices as agents of change, as detailed below under Agency.

International agencies can leverage their global experience and expertise to provide technical assistance and capacity building to local organizations, or to coordinate the response of multiple local agencies. In some situations, international agencies may be better positioned to directly lead programmes, especially in areas where complex intercommunal relations raise concerns about the ability of local actors to provide a principled response. For more on the complementarity of local, national and international actors, see Section VIII: Partnership.

Policy dialogue and support for structural change

While area-based programmes and other localized programming play a critical role in reducing vulnerability and building resilience of communities, long-term positive change can only be brought about by addressing problematic policies and norms that can instigate division, create exclusion, and

violate the rights of Myanmar people. The NRM and its donors will push for structural changes through policy dialogue, engaging with authorities at the highest levels on a rights agenda driven by its community stakeholders, with the NRM will play a key role in facilitating the transmission of grass-roots advocacy messaging in its areas of programme to government and diplomatic partners. At the same time, the NRM will support efforts to strengthen the capacity of the government to provide inclusive services and assistance to all populations in need, ensuring the long-term sustainability of its initiatives.

Agency

The NRM will seek to empower community members and its range of civil society partners to advocate for their rights and share their voices on issues of community importance. At the local level, this cross-cutting focus on agency translates into the integration of rights advocacy objectives into programme design itself, relationship-building with local officials from relevant government offices or ethnic armed organisations, and advocacy on issues of importance to local communities. At the state and national level, the NRM may provide support for advocacy and human rights organizations that are creating awareness about rights issues and pushing for greater accountability and change. And at the highest levels, the NRM will support its donor and diplomatic partners by providing information and advocacy messaging. By providing a through line from its most grassroots partners to diplomatic allies engaging at the highest levels of government, the NRM will play a key role in providing an avenue for vulnerable people to raise their voices on the issues that most affect them.

Inclusion

The NRM's transformation framework is transected by an approach that is participatory, inclusive and equitable in nature, and which disrupts – or at a minimum, avoids perpetuating – existing power imbalances. This inclusive approach starts with the joint assessment and development of a systemic theory of change, which is done in partnership with communities and which allows them to define and prioritize their needs themselves. It then extends across the programme cycle, enabling communities to shape the development of collective outcomes and programme design, allowing for greater community ownership of programmes and allowing for their adaptation based on evolving community needs.

By its very nature, an inclusive approach incorporates groups that have been socially, economically and politically marginalized. In Myanmar, a wide range of people fall into this categorization, including women, children, and youth, religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities, persons with disabilities, stateless communities and people without documentation, and more. NRM programmes will strive to be as inclusive as possible, taking into account the distinct needs different individuals and groups can have. In particular, NRM programmes will strive to have a gender transformative approach wherever possible, creating opportunities for individuals to actively challenge gender norms, promote positions of social and political influence for women in communities, address issues around masculinity, and rebalance power inequities between persons of different genders. Similarly, NRM programs should utilize transformative approaches with other marginalized groups to ensure equitable participation and inclusion.

Recognizing the political impact that programmes can have in local contexts, all NRM programmes will follow Do No Harm principles, including conflict sensitivity analyses which should form part of the joint assessment, the development of a conflict sensitivity strategy, and ongoing conflict sensitivity monitoring.

Accountability

The NRM will support pilot initiatives based around the nexus, itself a relatively untested approach. To ensure the NRM remains accountable to its stakeholders (including donors, partners and communities), the NRM will employ programmatic and independent analysis, monitoring and evaluation; downward accountability mechanisms; and communities of learning.

Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation and Learning

The NRM's integrated and transformative approach requires deep contextual understanding to inform the design and implementation of its programmes, as well as to gauge their impact after completion. Each NRM programme will be guided by a joint assessment conducted by the NRM's dedicated Due Diligence and Context Analysis Facility (DDCAF) which will be made available to implementing partners and which is intended to provide a foundation for programme design. These assessments will be based on consultations with community members and local stakeholders, who will also validate the assessments and help shape the systemic theory of change that will serve as the basis for each programme's collective outcomes.

The joint assessment will be followed by dual strands of monitoring. Project-level monitoring will be carried out by NRM's implementing partners and will gauge progress towards the collective outcomes. However, MEAL systems within the NRM and its implementing partners will be structured so as to avoid imposing a major bureaucratic burden on partners; instead, the NRM's programmes will employ innovative and light-touch MEAL systems that incentivizes honest reporting on progress and challenges. In addition, the DDCAF will carry out contextual monitoring which will gauge broader changes in the context itself and assess the impact of NRM programmes, effectively serving as an independent source of information that can inform NRM management.

The comprehensive use of analysis and MEAL tools will provide the NRM with the contextual and programmatic information needed to assess whether particular programmes, or components within those programmes, are successful and can be transferrable or scaled up.

Downward Accountability

While the NRM will be upwardly accountable to its donors and stakeholders through regular programmatic and financial reporting, a key priority of the mechanism is to ensure that programmes are downwardly accountable to communities themselves. This requires the building-in of participatory MEAL techniques into programme and project design, including regular feedback sessions with community members, and adapting programmes to community needs. The DDCAF will be responsible

in ensuring that the NRM's programs remain accountable to its important stakeholders – communities themselves.

Communities of Learning

As a pilot nexus initiative, the lessons learned by the NRM through the implementation of its programmes will be critical in informing other nexus-style approaches. Through the DDCAF, the NRM will facilitate learning sessions with its partners and donors based on information from programmatic and independent analysis and M&E, ensuring the continuous adaptation of its programmes. The NRM will strive to learn from, and contribute to, praxis discussions by other funding mechanisms including the Joint Peace Fund, LIFT and Access to Health Fund. In addition, the NRM and its DDCAF will participate in existing forums for learning on nexus approaches nationally and globally, and will contribute to global learning through white papers and thought pieces. Implementing partners will also be supported in conducting research and contributing to thematic discussions on the nexus.

7. Geographic and Thematic Scope

The NRM's focus is on vulnerable communities that have been affected by conflict or natural disaster. Geographically, this may include parts of Chin, Kachin, northern Shan, Rakhine, and the southeast (Kayin, Kayah, Mon, and Tanintharyi states). In addition, given the unpredictable nature of natural disasters, the NRM will also be prepared to mobilize funding for rapid response interventions in other parts of the country. The NRM may also choose to operate in border areas and cross-border initiatives, including along Myanmar's borders with Bangladesh, China and Thailand. As discussed under the section VI: Approach, the NRM will use area-based programmes, allowing for integrated and transformative programs within contained geographic zones.

The NRM's thematic scope is not constrained sectorally; programmes can and should include components that could be considered humanitarian, development or peacebuilding in character, if they are needed. However, while NRM programmes should strive to be comprehensive, it is not possible for them to include all necessary actions needed within a particular operational area. As such, the NRM will focus on programming that best meets the needs of communities and which complements programming by other donors and agencies, while limiting components that are outside the technical or operational capacity of its implementing partners and avoiding the duplication of actions being taken by other actors.

8. Partnership

The holistic nature of the NRM's area-based programmes means it is unlikely that any one organization has the technical or operational capacity to carry out the range of activities needed to meet local needs. Funding modalities will depend on the chosen area and identified needs, but may include direct funding for a consortium of agencies and local actors, funding for one agency that can coordinate and manage sub-granting to other agencies and actors, or some combination of the two. In exceptional cases, the NRM may choose to fund relevant programmes that are not area-based and therefore do not require multiple actors. The NRM will make decisions on the best partnership modality for each area once a joint assessment has been conducted.

Localisation Agenda

As discussed under the Outcome and Approach sections, the NRM will push for a more localized response founded on both a strategic and comprehensive approach to programming that focuses on strengthening local response systems as a whole, rather than individual local stakeholders. Localisation will be prioritized where possible through direct grants to national organizations as well as the selection of consortium or partnership proposals that feature majority implementation by national partners and significant demand-driven capacity building components. In grants that are led by international partners, indirect costs will be shared with all national partners. The NRM may also fund programmes that include small-grants components to community-based organizations and other forms of localized funding.

While the NRM's localisation agenda may include partnerships with formal CSOs and NGOs, the NRM envisions a more comprehensive approach that encompasses engagement with and strengthening of local community structures, local governance authorities, key civil society and religious stakeholders, and possibly ethnic armed organizations. In a similar manner, private sector and government officials may also be engaged through funding, programming and advocacy. The localisation of project implementation, combined with the NRM's participatory approach and downward accountability, will help increase ownership in the NRM's programmes and build the resilience of communities as a whole.

In areas where national or local actors are leading the implementation of programmes, INGOs or other international agencies can provide technical assistance and capacity building. In other areas, local actors may not be in a position to lead implementation of NRM programs; in these situations, international agencies can take leadership roles, coordinating the actions of different local and international actors or in some circumstances, directly implementing activities themselves.

Coordination

Coordination within and outside NRM programmes is critical to their success. Given that multiple agencies will be working on delivering on collective outcomes, regular coordination meetings between programme partners is a given, and adequate resources should be assigned to ensure coordination takes place. In addition, external coordination at the implementation and donor level is also necessary

for programmes to be successful, requiring participation at relevant fora. In particular, NRM partners delivering humanitarian assistance must ensure coordination with the broader humanitarian system.

9. Governance

The NRM is implemented through a fund that can be made up of contributions from several partners. All parties that contribute to the Fund are members of the Fund Board, which takes strategic decisions on the NRM and in particular on the use of funds. As the only current donor to the fund, the EU – represented by DEVCO – sits on the Fund Board alongside a representative of the NRM Fund Management Office (FMO). To reflect and ensure the nexus approach in decisions taken by the Fund Board, an Advisory Board composed of representatives from concerned institutions and services of the EU (namely EEAS and the Commission through DG ECHO and DG DEVCO) is established to provide guidance to Fund Board and NRM FMO.

UNOPS hosts the NRM FMO and is charged with providing effective, transparent and efficient management of the NRM. Responsibilities include administering funding, monitoring and auditing projects, measuring the NRM's collective impact, and reporting to the Fund Board. In addition to fund management, contracting, and daily operation, UNOPS will facilitate external communications and will act as the NRM's chief representative both to other NRM stakeholders and to external actors. Notably, UNOPS will also manage the Due Diligence and Context Analysis Facility (DDCAF), which will be a service provided by an independent organization. The DDCAF will conduct joint assessments and contextual monitoring, provide strategic guidance to the Secretariat, and conduct third party due diligence monitoring of NRM programmes throughout their lifecycle. The DDCAF is thus both a driving component of the NRM and a service provided to NRM-funded partners and programmes.

Programs will be conducted by **implementing partners**. A core part of the NRM is its focus on localisation in the aims of both sustainability and effectiveness. As such, implementing organizations will be a combination of INGOs, local CBOS, and local entities.

10. MEAL

The NRM will be underpinned by a flexible yet robust Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) framework that matches the unique requirements of the programme. The NRM as a whole has been conceived as a pilot initiative to generate knowledge about what it means to engage within a nexus approach and how to do so effectively. As such, evidence-based learning adapted to the requirements of the context, stakeholders and the NRM's goal and approach is at the core of the approach to MEAL.

More specifically, the NRM's MEAL strategy has three primary functions, namely to support:

1. Learning related to the piloting of nexus approaches in Myanmar: What can be learned about how to work effectively within a nexus approach in Myanmar? What specific knowledge gaps can be filled by testing different approaches? How can the NRM's approach in Myanmar inform nexus approaches globally?
2. Evidence-based contributions to policy and systemic change: how can evidence from NRM initiatives feed into and inform ongoing efforts by the donor community and other stakeholders?
3. Responsive, innovative and dynamic programming: how can evidence generated within the project support quality programming that is accountable to communities while also delivering value for donors?

To this end, a three-tiered MEAL system will be established by the NRM, addressing the needs and priorities of donors, implementing partners, the government, the wider aid/civil society sector, and communities. The three tiers are: (1) the national level; (2) the intermediate level; and (3) the project level. Across these levels, the MEAL Framework has been conceived to specifically support/underpin each of the key principles of the NRM approach.

At the NRM-wide or national level, the MEAL framework is focused on the NRM's purpose and objectives, with an emphasis on generating learning and evidence, feeding learning and evidence into policy and systemic change initiatives and ensuring the effective management of the programme as a whole. Key components at this level will include the NRM-level Theory of Change, the NRM learning framework and agenda, an NRM Results Framework and an overall evaluation strategy for the NRM. These elements will complement each other, and serve as inputs into the design of programmes and projects (see below), to ensure a common approach to design, monitoring, reporting and learning across the NRM as a whole.

At the intermediate level, the NRM envisions two primary types of programme – those following an area-based approach and those that are more thematic or issue-based. The programme level MEAL framework is grounded in the NRM's joint and thematic analyses conducted by the DDCAF at the outset of the programme cycle. To ensure their validity and community ownership of programming, these analyses will be validated by community members and stakeholders in a participatory process, setting the foundation for a programmatic Theory of Change with clearly defined collective outcomes and potential impact pathways. The MEAL framework will also include periodic third-party contextual

or thematic monitoring linked with adaptive management cycles and programme level (i.e. multi-project) evaluations. Programme level evaluations will replace the more standard approach of individual project evaluations permitting clubbing of evaluation funds and enabling a stronger emphasis on collective outcomes, synergies across projects and learning.

At the project level, a lightweight and flexible approach to MEAL built around project Theories of Change that indicate how individual projects will contribute to collective outcomes (and work with other projects and stakeholders to do so). They will include a clear set of project learning objectives, a results framework that underpins project monitoring and reporting against agreed commitments (and aligned with the project and programme TOCs) and an emphasis on adaptive management built around reporting cycles.

The rollout of the NRM MEAL framework will require the preparation of clear guidelines, and the allocation of sufficient resources to orientation and capacity development as well as to the coordination, management and facilitation of MEAL mechanisms and processes. These investments are geared toward not only ensuring the quality of NRM initiatives on the ground, but to generating evidence that can advance thinking and practice about working at the HDP nexus in Myanmar and beyond.

11. Operationalization and Resources

This strategy was internally developed by the NRM Secretariat in June–December 2020 and serves as a vision document for the NRM. Given that the NRM itself is a pilot programme that will continuously adapt over the course of its implementation, the strategy serves as a form of living document that will evolve through additional consultations and workshops with stakeholders and communities, and as the NRM learns lessons from the implementation of its programmes.

Key NRM Resources

The following resources are linked to on the NRM [website](#) and hyperlinked below:

- > [NRM Website](#)
- > NRM MEAL Framework
- > MEAL Guidelines for Implementing Partners
- > Gender Strategy
- > Operational Guidelines for Implementing Partners
- > Policy to Address Fiduciary Risk and Fraud
- > Communications Strategy and Visibility Guidelines

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