

Statement on the

Joint Strategy for Humanitarian Response in Kachin & Northern Shan States (2013-2015)

The Joint Strategy is a collaborative effort by local humanitarian agencies involved in the humanitarian response in these areas. The Strategy is intended to ensure an efficient, impactful and quality humanitarian response by local (national) non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to address the most urgent needs of people affected by the conflict in Kachin and Northern Shan States.

Current estimates place the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the conflict-affected area (Kachin and Northern Shan States) between 80,000 and 100,000 persons.

International NGO (INGO) and United Nations (UN) agencies do not have open humanitarian access¹ and cannot cover the basic needs of IDPs especially in KIO Controlled Areas (KCA). Local actors are the only ones to access IDPs, particularly in the most difficult areas, helping them to develop coping mechanisms and maximise local capacities. Local groups need to spend much time and energy on relationships and processes which are exclusive task and project oriented, rather than an overall strategy.

Despite ongoing humanitarian assistance, we acknowledge that minimum standards are not being met in delivery of this assistance by the different responders. Humanitarian needs for camps in the KCA and border areas must be prioritised.

We call upon all stakeholders to recognise and support the local humanitarian agencies' roles and contribution to the ongoing humanitarian response. It should be recognised that locally based organisations have been playing a leading role in response activities. These organisations have developed their own joint strategy and have also engaged in joint programme planning. We urge stakeholders to recognise these local initiatives.

We strongly recommend donors and international partners support local humanitarian organisations through provision of institutional support and further capacity development. We stress that strategic partnership includes working together hand-in-hand to develop programmes that will alleviate the IDPs' suffering.

We call upon donors and other relevant stakeholders to remove barriers limiting local organisations' access to funding. We ask for strategies and approaches that emphasise direct support to and/or funding access for local organisations. We stress the need for more funding allocations to be made for IDPs in the KCA and the importance of a speedy response.

It is important to recognise that provision of funding support must also include coverage of administration costs for the responding agencies.

We recognise that coordination plays an important role in humanitarian response. Effective coordination is necessary to reduce gaps and overlaps in ongoing and planned response activities. We call upon UN agencies, international and local humanitarian actors to recognise and strengthen existing coordination mechanisms, especially those that are initiated and led by local responders. Moreover, we urge the participation of all parties involved in the coordination processes, particularly local organisations and community-based organisations (CBOs).

¹A convoy approach being used by UN organisations has been seen to have a very limited impact on covering people's needs and undermines other alternative approaches to reach IDPs.

Protection

The IDPs are in a situation where they are more vulnerable than they may be under normal circumstances. They are at risk of falling victim to human trafficking. Being in the camp setting or being displaced from their places of origin, they lack nutritious food and livelihood security. Women and children are especially vulnerable to physical and psychological harm, such as domestic violence. All stakeholders (state and non-state) should ensure that the IDPs are assured of safety and security in the camps and surrounding areas. The IDPs' needs should be identified, with their active participation, and humanitarian organisations must take the responsibility to meet these needs.

IDP Participation

We call upon agencies to listen to the voices of the IDPs. We encourage all stakeholders to engage in constructive consultations with the IDPs on issues that affect their lives and futures. It is important that they are involved in each step of the process, that they feel a sense of ownership in activities which impact their lives.

We acknowledge that as humanitarian actors, it is our responsibility to ensure that the IDPs are aware of their rights and the humanitarian agencies' roles and responsibilities.

We call upon all humanitarian organisations involved in the response to this humanitarian emergency to respect all humanitarian standards and principles including the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership standards, Do No Harm principles and the international humanitarian code of conduct.

Conditionality of Return and Resettlement

With the recent signing of the Seven Point Agreement, we recognise that the political and social context for the IDPs will be changing. Therefore, the IDPs will face pressure on various fronts regarding their futures. With this in mind, we call for relevant stakeholders to abide by the following:

- 1. All stakeholders must acknowledge and respect the human dignity and rights of the IDPs.*
- 2. Parties to the conflict must acknowledge and adhere to the principles of the International Humanitarian Code of Conduct and UNOCHA Displacement Guiding Principles related to return and resettlement.*
- 3. Protection and safety must be guaranteed prior to any return or resettlement of the IDPs.*
- 4. Social service packages (to meet basic needs) must be provided to IDPs prior to any return or resettlement.*
- 5. Awareness raising and proper education on return and resettlement must be done well in advance.*
- 6. The return and resettlement process must not be driven by the political timeframe.*
- 7. Objective monitoring by recognised and independent parties must be conducted as part of the return and resettlement process, to ensure that activities are in line with points mentioned above.*

BRIDGE, Kachin Baptist Convention, Kachin Relief and Development Committee, Karuna Myanmar Social Services, Metta Development Foundation, Shalom Foundation and Wunpawng Ninghtoi

24 July 2013; Yangon, Myanmar