



Findings and Recommendations InterAction Protection Mission – Myanmar

February 26 – March 9, 2017

Executive Summary

The risks faced by certain sections of the civilian population in Myanmar are significant including, for example, exposure to indiscriminate use of force by parties to conflict in areas where civilians live, deliberate destruction of civilian property, displacement (and repeated displacement), physical assault and coercion at an individual level, including gender-based violence, and systematic discrimination and deliberate deprivation of access to resources and services. Curtailed civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights can make it difficult to sustain life and cope, resulting in acute humanitarian need, negative coping mechanisms, and dependence on aid.

The types of threats people are continually exposed to in Rakhine, Kachin and northern Shan, indicate quite clearly a situation of ongoing humanitarian concern, which demands some immediate action in the short-term, while simultaneously adopting a wider aperture and longer-term outlook to cultivate a protective environment for civilians and marginalized communities. Many humanitarian actors expressed concerns regarding the mode of short-term emergency responses to displacement, which – particularly in Rakhine -- has seen little adjustment since 2014, and are acutely aware of the need to shift gears to accommodate longer-term thinking and ways of working to achieve protection outcomes.

Humanitarian actors also expressed concern regarding a dominant narrative among some diplomats and international organizations that humanitarian response must give way to development. This narrative seems to be driven in large part by a belief that a development framing is critical to consolidating new government leadership and political progress in Myanmar. Simultaneously, there is an apparent perception that acknowledging and addressing human suffering will have the effect of undermining the political leadership and nascent transition to democratic governance. This has the perverse effect of downplaying critical humanitarian need, and its causes and possible solutions, and seems to be an important reason for the lack of strategic adaptation of humanitarian efforts in Myanmar.

InterAction's recommendations seek to identify actions which could build on the foundation of the experienced, motivated and skilled local, national, and international humanitarian actors present in Myanmar. Drawing on the basic framework of collective approaches to achieve protection outcomes outlined in the [Inter-Agency Standing Committee \(IASC\) Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#), this report highlights opportunities in the following areas:

- Using a whole-of-system approach to achieving protection outcomes
- Establishing good information flow and analysis as a basis for problem-solving
- Diversifying ways of working in pursuit of protection outcomes
- Designing and implementing protection strategies

1. Introduction

InterAction, represented by Jenny McAvoy (Director of Protection) and Liz Bloomfield (Program Manager - Protection), travelled to Myanmar from February 26 through March 9, 2017. The team visited Yangon, as well as Myitkyina and Sittwe, with a focus on NGO roles in relation to the overall protection leadership, coordination, and strategies. Following a pre-trip desk review and calls with key personnel in-country, the InterAction team conducted one-to-one and focus group meetings with NGOs, UN agencies and donor government representatives. A series of debrief sessions on preliminary findings were conducted prior to leaving the country, and this written report captures the detailed findings and recommendations. Further details regarding the purpose, objectives and methodology for the mission are available at [Annex A](#).

2. Humanitarian context and protection concerns

The **risks faced by certain sections of the civilian population in Myanmar are significant**. These risks can include exposure to indiscriminate use of force by parties to conflict in areas where civilians live, deliberate destruction of civilian property, displacement (and repeated displacement), physical assault and coercion at an individual level, and systematic discrimination and deliberate deprivation of access to resources and services. Curtailed civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights can make it difficult to sustain life and cope, resulting in acute humanitarian need, negative coping mechanisms, and dependence on aid.

Specifically, some prominent risk patterns include:

- Physical assaults perpetrated by police, border guards, military forces and other government duty-bearers;
- People smuggling and trafficking across international borders;
- Displacement due to hostilities between military forces and non-state armed groups (NSAGs) in villages, and appropriation of land by the military for corporate use;
- Repeated displacement due to fighting around IDP sites;
- Protracted displacement, and lack of prospects for return and durable solutions due to ongoing hostilities, presence of landmines, land grabs, ongoing social tension, and risk of inter-communal violence;
- Destruction of civilian property, including sources of livelihood, occupation of land and property by military forces;
- Loss of access to farmland and property, as well as death and maiming, resulting from a high contamination level of landmines and other explosive remnants of war (ERWs);
- Restrictions on civilian movements, compounded by lack of personal documents, affecting access to their own assets and other resources and services, including emergency medical care;
- Bureaucratic restrictions on humanitarian local and national NGOs complicating transport of goods, movement of personnel, etc.;
- Restrictions on the movements of humanitarian personnel, particularly international staff, and their ability to reach and interact directly with affected people.

While similar ongoing risk patterns can be seen across different contexts in Myanmar, people in Rakhine experience the more extreme and comprehensive manifestations of all risks, and at a larger scale, which strip them of the protection of the state and the entitlements of citizenship, and therefore have the greatest consequences for people's ability to survive. The political situation in Rakhine is further compounded by communal polarization, including some civil society organizations (CSOs) which

propagate hatred and marginalization. Existential questions remain in Rakhine as to identity, rejection of population sub-groups by the Rakhine population, and the role of the State. This gives rise to dilemmas about the humanitarian response. While there is not currently a situation of armed conflict in Rakhine, the preconditions exist and there is an emerging non-state actor, therefore the situation must be watched closely.

The types of threats people are continually exposed to in Rakhine, Kachin and northern Shan, indicate quite clearly **a situation of ongoing humanitarian concern, which demand some immediate actions in the short-term, while simultaneously adopting a wider aperture and longer-term outlook.** Many humanitarian actors are aware of the need to shift gears to accommodate longer-term thinking and ways of working in order to achieve protection outcomes. However, NGO and UN personnel expressed two kinds of concerns.

First, many noted that humanitarian activities, particularly in Rakhine, are still primarily in the mode of short-term emergency responses to displacement with little adjustment in activities since 2014. One manifestation of this is the prevalence of short-term rotations of international staff working in Rakhine making it difficult to consolidate strategic thinking beyond short term projects. There is, therefore, comparatively little investment in remedial and environment-building work, with the bulk of activity focused primarily on responsive action.¹ An overwhelming dependence on humanitarian aid by the displaced and dispossessed Muslim population in Rakhine certainly demands responsiveness to immediate needs but, equally, there has yet to be concerted and collective adjustment of overall strategy and response over time. These issues are examined in some detail by Hugo Slim in his 2014 report for OCHA and the dynamics and dilemmas described remain valid today.²

Secondly, numerous individuals expressed concern over a dominant narrative among diplomats and international organizations that humanitarian response must give way to development. This narrative seems to be driven in large part by a belief that a development framing is critical to consolidating new government leadership and political progress in Myanmar, while acknowledging and addressing human suffering will have the effect of undermining the political leadership. This has the perverse effect of downplaying critical humanitarian need, and its causes and possible solutions, and seems to be an important reason for lack of strategic adaptation of humanitarian efforts in Myanmar.

Experience in other countries warrants study by humanitarian actors in Myanmar. For example, in Afghanistan (from 2002) and South Sudan (from independence in 2011), armed conflict was prematurely assumed to have passed, there was a comprehensive re-orientation towards reconstruction and development, accompanied by a strong diplomatic push for all international efforts to be “all in” for the new governments. These dynamics effectively meant a divestment in humanitarian capacities and an unwillingness to treat ongoing threats to civilian populations as anything more than the last few pangs of a violent past. This meant a lack of attention to ongoing fighting, slow recognition of new escalation in conflict, and low capacity to address the humanitarian impact, including efforts to check the abusive behavior of conflict parties towards civilians. In Sri Lanka, the incremental escalation of hostilities and abusive behavior towards the minority Tamil civilian population also lacked timely and concerted attention. At a time when the “Global War on Terror” dominated international affairs, this contributed

¹ The ‘egg model’ sets out three main spheres of protective action: responsive action, remedial action, and environment-building action. For further details, see page 42/43 of “Protection: An ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies,” ALNAP, 2005. www.alnap.org/pool/files/alnap-protection-guide.pdf

² Slim, “Expert Opinion on Humanitarian Strategy in Rakhine State – A Report for OCHA Myanmar,” 2014.

to creating a permissive environment for the conflict to be conducted with impunity in the last stages of the Sri Lankan civil war (2008/09).³

In light of the protection concerns present in Myanmar, and with the abovementioned experiences in mind, it seems clear that all actors in Myanmar should anticipate ongoing threat to people's fundamental safety and well-being and recognize that humanitarian, development, peacebuilding, rule of law and governance, and other objectives can and should be simultaneously pursued and, indeed, achieve outcomes which are greater than the sum of their parts.

InterAction's recommendations are intended to support efforts to this end and, drawing on the basic framework of collective approaches to achieve protection outcomes outlined in the [IASC Protection Policy](#), identifies opportunities which speak to strengthening continuous protection monitoring and analysis, undertaking deliberate effort to develop relationships with critical stakeholders, and aligning collaborative efforts through protection strategies, in order to prevent further deterioration, mitigate their worst effects, and respond to critical cases of human suffering. In doing so, InterAction seeks to identify actions which could build on the foundation of the experienced, motivated and skilled local, national, and international humanitarian actors present in Myanmar.

3. Using a whole-of-system approach to achieving protection outcomes

The [2017 Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan \(HRP\)](#) establishes 'Ensuring the protection of civilians' as one of four strategic objectives, and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) commits to: '...contribute to the protection of civilians from violence and abuse by reducing exposure to harm, mitigating its negative impact and responding to serious protection needs; and advocate for full respect for the rights of individuals in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law.'⁴

The National Protection Cluster and Protection Working Group (PWG) have developed a *2017 Work Plan* that sets out activities in a number of priority areas. Furthermore, the adoption of an *HCT Statement of Commitment to Protection* in November 2016 also highlights the priority afforded by the Myanmar HCT to 'reducing and addressing the protection risks faced by people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection.'⁵ The prominent risk patterns experienced by civilian populations in Myanmar are so severe, prevalent, and wide-ranging in character and impact, that a whole-of-system approach will be critical to the effective and comprehensive reduction of risk. It is therefore extremely positive that the HCT is recognizing its added value. It will be important, however, for the HCT to go beyond the adoption of a broad statement and ensure that its role serves to complement the role of the PWG, and that of individual actors, by leading collective strategies which demand whole-of-system attention. Developing and implementing an HCT Protection Strategy for Myanmar will be essential to achieving this and recommendations on how to go about this are provided later in the report.

³ See for example, on [Afghanistan](#): "Protective Space and Civilian Casualties: Insights from Afghanistan" (Niland, unpublished paper, 2010); on [South Sudan](#), "Donor-Driven Technical Fixes Failed South Sudan: It's Time to Get Political" (Pantuliano, 2014): <http://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan-republic/donor-driven-technical-fixes-failed-south-sudan-it-s-time-get-political>; and [Sri Lanka](#), The Report of the Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on United Nations Action in Sri Lanka (2012):

http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Sri_Lanka/The_Internal_Review_Panel_report_on_Sri_Lanka.pdf

⁴ Humanitarian Country Team Myanmar, "Humanitarian Response Plan 2017," Published December 2016: 15. http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2017_myanmar_hrp_final.002.pdf

⁵ Humanitarian Country Team Myanmar, "Statement of Commitment to Protection," Endorsed 25 November 2016: 2.

A whole-of-system approach to protection recognizes that **comprehensive reduction of risk typically requires more than one sector to achieve protection outcomes** and therefore takes a **multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach**. It is also often necessary to work at multiple levels simultaneously, ranging from individual and community level to sub-national, national, regional and international levels. In addition to aligning the contributions of different sectors, capacities, and mandates of humanitarian actors, this may entail actively cultivating complementarity with, and contributions from, actors beyond the humanitarian community to achieve the desired outcomes.

For example, development, human rights, and peacebuilding/conflict mitigation organizations, and the diplomatic community, can all contribute their unique capacities and roles towards protection outcomes. The [IASC Protection Policy](#) provides a starting point to consider the key components for this whole-of-system approach to protection and the roles of a range of actors in the international humanitarian system. In particular, an implication of the Policy is that achieving meaningful protection outcomes will often depend, at least in part, on an engaged and supportive HCT that can mobilize actors within and outside of the humanitarian system towards a common desired outcome. Beyond the humanitarian system, the perspectives and expertise of anthropologists, historians, and other disciplines may yield valuable insight on conflict dynamics, relationships between different parts of Myanmar society, or between vulnerable communities and formal authorities, and to identify entry points for changed behavior by actors whose policies and practices have the greatest impact on civilian lives.

There are a number of very knowledgeable and committed protection actors at national and sub-national level within Myanmar, the PWG enjoys high levels of participation, and the National Protection Sector *2017 Work Plan*⁶ reflects an inclusive approach bringing together a range of actors working on protection. However, there appears to be some **different perceptions regarding what protection entails in practice**. These perceptions will have consequences for how protection concerns are identified, prioritized, and strategies developed.

Many international organizations consulted described protection primarily in terms of considerations to be taken account within the context of assistance activities. Some actors are concerned that this simply amounts to 'policing' assistance activities with a predominant focus on how some humanitarian activities may cause harm to vulnerable people. While the potential for heightened risk and a "do no harm" perspective certainly needs to inform all aspects of humanitarian response, there is a felt need for more practical advice about how to adjust activities to account for anticipated risks and avoid unnecessarily slowing down assistance activities. Care should be taken to ensure that 'protection' does not duplicate the responsibilities of all humanitarian actors to meet the basic requirements of safe, dignified, and accessible humanitarian assistance as per the technical guidance set out in the [Sphere standards](#). In addition, some actors were concerned that a focus on programmatic standards of assistance activities may get in the way of more strategic discussions about the most severe and prevalent risk patterns people are experiencing.

In contrast other actors, including but not limited to local and national NGOs, described their roles and objectives, in the first instance, in terms of people's protection from harm resulting from the behavior of conflict parties and formal authorities, whereby assistance has a role within an overall strategy to

⁶ The National Protection Sector *2017 Work Plan* sets out seven priority areas: (i) Protection Strategy, (ii) Centrality of Protection, (iii) Advocacy and Donor Relations, (iv) Setting Standards and Capacity-Building, (v) Protection Analyses and Monitoring, (vi) Information Management, and (vii) Coordination.

reduce such risks and enhance protection. The latter approach aligns more closely with the IASC Principals' Statement on the [Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action](#), and the [IASC Protection Policy](#), which describes how the Centrality of Protection should be fulfilled in practice.

Divergent understanding of protection outcomes, and how to get there, will inhibit effective collaboration for collective protection outcomes. It is essential, therefore, to build a common sense of protection outcomes and its role within overall humanitarian response strategies. In doing so, it is critical to establish a solid understanding of the most prevalent and severe risks of violence, coercion, and deliberate deprivation people are experiencing. This is the basis for measures purposefully targeted at reducing these risks. It is also the basis for embedding mitigation measures in the design and implementation of all humanitarian activities (for example, to mitigate a risk of attack associated with aid distributions or to ensure that assistance activities do not serve to reinforce policies of systematic and deliberate deprivation of certain groups of people). Clarity about protection outcomes can help to ensure that relevant capacities and resources are clearly and explicitly geared towards reducing the most prevalent and severe risks of violence, coercion, and deliberate deprivation created or perpetrated by parties to conflict and other authorities, including by ensuring that the international humanitarian law and human rights obligations are fulfilled.

At the **national level**, the HCT has taken positive steps to improve its coordination and ways of working in recent months, including the appointment of an NGO Co-Chair and by creating an HCT Planning Working Group to set agendas and oversee its effectiveness. This bodes well for the HCT's efforts to enhance protection. Meanwhile at **sub-national level**, there are numerous excellent and motivated staff members. The dedication of the Joint Strategy Team⁷ and other local NGOs operating in Kachin is worthy of particular note. There are also many examples of good collaboration and complementarity among different agencies at sub-national level, including some NGO initiatives which have helped to break 'stalemates' on certain issues. One example is the initiative taken by International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Danish Refugee Council (DRC) on the future of camps in Rakhine. Furthermore, there is recognition amongst humanitarian actors of the critical importance of developing multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary programming in the Myanmar context.

Despite these collaborative behaviors, there were also **divergent views between humanitarian personnel in Yangon and at sub-national levels regarding issues which should be prioritized**, and whether there are opportunities and options for doing so. Some people in Yangon expressed concern with a lack of concrete options being proposed to address critical risk patterns. Conversely, some in Sittwe and Myitkyina were concerned that their analysis and proposals did not seem to be eliciting responses or support from the Yangon level.

The perceived lack of options to address critical risk patterns may in part be attributable to a lack of sufficiently disaggregated protection analysis to inform decision-making regarding potential courses of action. However, there may also be **different perceptions or lack of clarity regarding where decisions are taken**. No-one consulted during the mission explicitly stated that they felt they were part of a forum that makes decisions. While many actors were positive about the Rakhine Coordination Group (RCG), it serves an information-sharing rather than decision-making purpose and is structurally de-linked from the HCT. It is therefore unclear where and how humanitarian decisions on Rakhine are made. Many of

⁷ The Joint Strategy Team comprises BRIDGE, Kachin Baptist Convention, Kachin Relief and Development Committee, Karuna Myanmar Social Services, Metta Development Foundation, Shalom Foundation, Wunpawng Ninghtoi.

the organizations participating in the RCG also sit on the HCT in Yangon, and although this can assist to ensure some information flow, the lack of a structural link may inhibit timeliness of action and strategic coherence between national and sub-national levels on critical protection concerns. As they shape collective protection strategies, the RCG and the HCT should ensure their relationship is one of mutually reinforcing engagement between sub-national and national levels. Similarly, improved understanding of respective needs relating to information flow and decision-making could help enhance the relationship between the Area HCT in Kachin and the HCT in Yangon.

The role of **local and national NGOs** in Myanmar should be widely acknowledged, especially as it relates to protection. The report [Accomplishments of Kachin Humanitarian Response Joint Strategy Team \(JST\)](#) highlights the crucial humanitarian role these organizations play in Kachin, and other JST products provide valuable insight into the needs and perspectives of internally displaced persons.⁸ Their straightforward approach to coordination and collaboration is extremely refreshing, and consultations highlighted some very effective partnerships with international NGOs (INGOs). Four national NGOs are members of the HCT,⁹ and have a key role to play in defining the vision and strategy for humanitarian operations in Myanmar, including with regard to achieving protection outcomes. The local and national NGOs consulted spoke in a very clear and purposeful way about the issues they face and how to address them, including ideas about how to improve the response and potential future opportunities,¹⁰ noting a desire to be able to act on these ideas in a more timely and effective way.¹¹

A useful next step to develop **more strategic relationships with local/national NGOs in Kachin and northern Shan** might involve some joint planning to further develop protection analysis, including agreeing the standards and methods to establish the kind of regular impartial analysis needed to make timely and informed choices to address protection concerns as well as to inform medium- and long-term strategies. An additional exercise that could serve to strategically develop the complementarity of UN, INGO and local and national NGO roles could be a stakeholder mapping exercise to prioritize engagement with the parties who have the strongest influence on protection risks, and to agree where strategic advantage lies in developing those relationships.

Recommendations for implementing a whole-of-system approach to achieving protection outcomes:

International, national and local NGOs should work together to:

- Spearhead efforts to forge more effective cooperation in Kachin and northern Shan. This could perhaps be facilitated under the leadership of the INGO Forum together with the JST. Initiatives could include regular meetings, exchange of information, and joint planning exercises that build on existing collective advocacy efforts.
- Further develop their analysis to be used as a basis to propose potential steps which may help to break the 'stalemate' on apparently intractable issues.

⁸ "Assessment on Internally Displaced Persons' Needs and Perspectives", Joint Strategy Team, August 2015.

⁹ The following national NGOs form part of the Myanmar HCT: Myanmar Red Cross Society, Local Resource Centre, Metta Development Foundation, and Karuna Myanmar Social Services.

¹⁰ For example, greater funding flexibility to allow them to respond when and where needed, more timely response to concerns raised, etc. Future opportunities include as new law relating to returns, potential creation of a Humanitarian Study Centre, using local media to disseminate messages, etc.

¹¹ A useful reference examining the role of local actors in protection outcomes is Pantuliano, S./Svoboda, E., *Humanitarian Protection – moving beyond the tried and tested*, within Wilmot et al (2016), *Protection of Civilians*, Oxford, Oxford University Press: 373.

- Initiate a stakeholder mapping exercise to prioritize engagement with the parties who have the strongest influence on protection risks, and work with the UN and other actors to agree where strategic advantage lies in developing those relationships.

At the same time, the HCT should:

- Clarify how the commitments established in the *HCT Statement of Commitment to Protection* will be fulfilled in practice, including the range of actors within and outside of the humanitarian system that will need to be mobilized.
- Build a shared view of protection as a humanitarian outcome, and its role within overall humanitarian response strategies.
- Establish a solid understanding of the most prevalent risks of violence, coercion, and deliberate deprivation to be used as a basis for measures purposefully targeted at reducing these risks.
- Work in partnership with the area HCTs and RCG to ensure a relationship of mutually reinforcing engagement between sub-national and national levels which facilitates informed and timely decision-making in the pursuit of protection outcomes.
- Promote active problem-solving by field-level fora by explicitly communicating that they are expected and encouraged to propose measures to enhance protection, and provide timely feedback and support where needed.
- Proactively engage donors on measures that could help facilitate a whole-of-system approach to achieving protection outcomes, for example through support for medium- and longer-term programming and multi-sectoral approaches, etc.

4. Good information flow and analysis as a basis for problem-solving

Humanitarian actors in Myanmar have set out some very good protection analysis and established regularized incident monitoring through the UNHCR-led Protection Incident Monitoring System (PIMS). In particular, the Rakhine protection analysis (November 2015) is notable for:

- Placing the protection concerns in their social, political and historical context;
- Disaggregating risk patterns through specific identification of threats, identifying who is vulnerable vis-à-vis specific threats, and the related coping mechanisms of these individuals and communities;
- Assessing the likelihood and severity of certain threats;
- Identifying relevant and specific knowledge and information gaps in the analysis.

The Rakhine protection analysis also identifies opportunities and possible strategies to address some critical risk factors and, importantly, a diversity of stakeholders who could contribute to protection outcomes. This is an excellent model on which to build in order to take a results-based and problem-solving approach to achieving protection outcomes.¹² While the Kachin and northern Shan protection analysis (October 2015) is less detailed, it follows a similar model and provides a good foundation on which to build.

Reflecting this analysis, humanitarian actors in Myanmar very ably described a full scope of protection concerns and underlying factors contributing to severe and prevalent threats to people's safety and well-being in the areas affected by conflict. However despite this, it is notable that **most humanitarian**

¹² Outcomes are defined and measured by a reduction in risk. Changes in behavior, attitudes, policies, knowledge, and practices are intermediate results that lead to comprehensive risk reduction. For more details, see: <https://protection.interaction.org/rbp-program/>

actors described their efforts to address these protection concerns in primarily reactive terms – for example, raising specific issues through letters or high-level meetings with government authorities – and were less able to describe more comprehensive solutions or ongoing strategies geared towards addressing the reasons why people were at risk. A number of people mentioned that the Rakhine and Kachin/northern Shan protection analysis developed in late 2015 would be updated soon, however, InterAction did not see any reports suggesting that the disaggregated risk factors contained in these analyses are being monitored on regular basis. Annual or semi-annual updating of a very comprehensive analysis may be a valuable exercise, particularly to reflect on major changes and refresh information sources. However, annual updates entail significant time and effort and do not meet the more frequent and regular information needs of an adaptive strategy responding to the reality experienced by a diverse range of at-risk people in an evolving situation.

Based on a review of protection information and analysis documents, and discussions with humanitarian organizations in Myanmar, it is possible to **identify ways in which continuous information flow and protection analysis could be further developed in support of practical problem-solving and effective protection strategies**.¹³ In the Rakhine protection analysis, while threats are quite specifically identified, further information is needed in order to know *how* to go about addressing the risk patterns, including whether and how to engage the responsible actors to influence their behavior towards vulnerable people, and the relationships that should be developed for this purpose. The further development of Kachin and northern Shan protection analysis should also take these information and analysis needs into account.

In particular, it will be helpful to:

- Establish an understanding of affected people’s interpretation of their threat environment, from their perspective, and how they would prioritize action taken on their behalf. Participatory rural appraisal methods and tools, or participatory action research, can be adapted for this purpose.
- Focus on the particular actors who are responsible for the prioritized threats and have the dominant influence on people’s safety and well-being, and unpack the attitudes, motivations, policies and practices which drive the directly harmful or negligent behavior by the responsible actors.
- Expand on the existing identification of coping mechanisms to encompass a broader scope of capacities which may be relevant to people’s response to threats and which may be developed further. These capacities may include, for example, access to information, community solidarity, and ability to organize at community level.
- Incorporate public health and food insecurity indicators into protection analysis to more comprehensively connect the dots between the most severe and prevalent threats with their humanitarian consequences.

The more threats, vulnerabilities to threats, and capacities relevant to threats are examined and broken down through dialogue with affected people,¹⁴ the more they can then be benchmarked against a series of desired results in the form of reduced threats, reduced vulnerabilities, and enhanced capacities. This is the starting point for describing pathways between the risk patterns people are experiencing, and the reduced risk that humanitarian actors seek to bring about. It can be helpful to establish the **causal logic for the series of interventions needed to achieve protection outcomes**, as way to set out the sequence

¹³ See brief guidance on **continuous context-specific protection analysis** as part of results-based approaches to protection here: <https://protection.interaction.org/continuous-context-specific-protection-analysis/>

¹⁴ This must represent the diversity of the affected population and not just leaders or nominated representatives.

of activities, key assumptions, and the roles of various contributing actors. Annex 2 of the [Global Protection Cluster \(GPC\) Guidance Note on HCT Protection Strategy](#) provides further details on establishing a causal logic to achieve protection outcomes.

The more risk factors are disaggregated, the more opportunities and possible strategies will emerge from the analysis, including the means of supporting people to be agents of their own safety and well-being. For example, enhanced access to information may enable people to avoid certain threats. Nascent relationships of affected communities with municipal or regional level duty-bearers could be cultivated further so as to prompt more appropriate policies and behavior towards vulnerable civilians. Taken together, these results contribute to the overall achievement of protection outcomes manifested as overall reduced risk.

The range of threats, vulnerabilities, and capacities which give rise to the most critical risk patterns are likely to be very diverse and demand capacities, mandates, and expertise which lie beyond a small group of protection actors to address. Efforts to address threatening behavior or formal policies which inhibit freedom of movement, for example, will likely need to involve sectoral specialists such as health or livelihoods if the practical benefits of such efforts are to be realized. In addition, comprehensive problem-solving will likely entail calling on capacities and expertise beyond the humanitarian community and those working at different levels – including conflict resolution/ peacebuilding, development, human rights, and the diplomatic community. For example, ceasefire agreements or peace negotiations may be useful processes within which issues related to freedom of movement can be comprehensively negotiated and addressed.

More **detailed disaggregation of risk patterns should additionally allow for the creation of a baseline against which to then regularly monitor the specific factors contributing to the risk patterns.** As such, protection analysis can be approached continuously, rather than treated as a one-off or annual exercise. An increase in frequency of information flow against selected indicators – along with periodic identification of trends which warrant taking a more focused look to deepen analysis – will be a critical means of enabling timely and informed decisions about action that can be taken to address protection concerns and allow programs to be adjusted accordingly. Just as analysis and problem-solving needs to draw on the capacities of a range of actors, a protection monitoring plan is likely to involve the regular information contributions of a range of actors.

The **Protection Incident Monitoring System (PIMS)** led by UNHCR currently serves as the primary collective means of ongoing monitoring of protection concerns. Some interesting trends can be analyzed on the basis of incidents – for example changes in types of incidents, the types of actors involved, and geographical locations of events. The *Conflict Tracker* piloted by the Danish Refugee Council additionally demonstrates some different ways of combining data points to yield valuable insights on trends. However, while incident-based monitoring can serve as a useful way to track topline trends, there are some inherent limitations. In particular, not all protection concerns are manifested as ‘incidents’ meaning that some concerns may be misrepresented, while other critical factors creating risk may not be identified. For example, an ongoing practice of deliberate deprivation of certain populations is a significant protection concern but may not be manifested through specific events. Inevitably, limited information on individual events limits the extent of analysis that can be done. An events-focused analysis in the absence of more detailed and disaggregated information may, in turn, have the effect of perpetuating a reactive posture towards protection concerns rather than one of proactive problem-solving.

The [IASC Protection Policy](#) highlights the **role of different parts of the humanitarian system within the problem-solving approach to achieving protection outcomes**. The Policy places a strong emphasis on the role of Protection Clusters, “to support this in-depth and integrated analysis, that is informed and validated by affected persons,”¹⁵ and undertaken in a continuous manner. This information should additionally inform Humanitarian Coordinator and HCT decision-making, prioritization, and tracking of progress towards protection outcomes. By setting out its expectations for ongoing analysis, the HCT can send a ‘demand signal’ to the protection sector, and other humanitarian actors, in a way that promotes strategic clarity throughout the humanitarian community, as well as active dialogue and exchange with those working on the frontline and/or key individuals with the best overview of critical concerns.

Experience with protection monitoring and continuous protection analysis from other country contexts suggests a few critical success factors. In particular, **protection information management should be designed with a clear purpose in mind** – in other words, information should serve the decisions that need to be made about how to address risks. For example, in Afghanistan, monitoring and reporting on the protection of civilians was purposefully designed with the very explicit objective of bringing down civilian casualty rates in the conflict.¹⁶ A strong evidence base for dialogue with the parties to conflict about their conduct towards civilians ensured the credibility of the endeavor and did successfully contribute to significant reductions in civilian casualties.

In addition, good information and relevant analysis depends on a **strong information-sharing network of local, national and international actors whose relationships are characterized by a high level of mutual trust and agreed means and methods**, which allows information to be shared and used.¹⁷ This takes effort to cultivate and inevitably must be built over time. Indeed, three of the most challenging aspects of protection information management system design have to do with:

- Minimizing bias and ensuring impartiality in the information collected;
- Establishing a means of ensuring confidentiality of information flow, management and retention, and building the trust that the confidentiality measures are being respected;
- Determining the level of information validation that is appropriate in light of the intended use of the information.

In Myanmar, each of these issues was identified problematic and affecting the ability to collectively undertake continuous protection analysis. However, there were no reported efforts to systematically address these challenges in a way that would enhance collective and collaborative information collection and analysis efforts. For example, a number of people noted concerns about bias present in the information being fed into the PIMS but, as yet, there does not appear to be an initiative to gather the relevant actors to discuss and agree what the information flow should look like and how to ensure impartial representation of protection concerns and confidential information-sharing.

UNHCR clearly would like to see more actors contributing to the PIMS. In the meantime, DRC has sought to develop a monitoring model with a clearer basis for validation and better disaggregation of incident data and NGOs are initiating enhanced information collection and monitoring in Rakhine. However, the critical challenges and fundamental success factors described above would benefit from more focused and thoughtful attention and collaboration.

¹⁵ Inter-Agency Standing Committee, “[Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#),” 2016: 2.

¹⁶ Personal files and unpublished paper by Norah Niland, “Protective Space and Civilian Casualties: Insights from Afghanistan” (2010).

¹⁷ Personal files and correspondence with Norah Niland on Afghanistan, and Brennan Webert on Sri Lanka.

Recommendations for good information-flow and analysis as a basis for problem-solving:

International, national and local NGOs have a critical role to:

- Diversify methods and sources of information, for example through increased collaboration between INGOs and local and national NGOs to regularize participatory and community-level monitoring and developing the model of DRC's pilot *Conflict Tracker*;
- Ensure that their investment in their own analysis helpfully contributes to the collective analysis conducted through inter-agency fora, including the PWG and HCT, and helps to kick-start HCT level prioritization and articulation of information needs;
- Contribute their experience in the development of a comprehensive set of protection information management protocols and tools that can be used by the broader humanitarian community;¹⁸
- In particular, as the INGO Rakhine Initiative (IRI) focused on joint NGO information and analysis is designed and begins implementation, it will be important to think explicitly about its contribution to effective problem-solving and protection outcomes.

In the short-term the HCT should:

- Reflect on its information needs with a view to identifying – from the vantage point of its unique and strategic decision-making role – a limited number of key questions or trends for which it wishes to receive information on a regular basis.¹⁹

Meanwhile, in addition to building on existing protection information management and analysis, the National Protection Sector and Protection Working Group (PWG) should:

- Engage the HCT about its ongoing information needs, so that the HCT perspective can inform the approaches to protection analysis and information management capacity undertaken throughout the country.

In addition, the PWG should:

- In consultation with the HCT and other humanitarian actors, collectively agree what analysis is needed and develop a plan to build on incident-based monitoring by phasing in new information collection as appropriate to context-specific needs and issues to be monitored and analyzed.²⁰
- Identify regular information collection by other actors which could usefully inform protection monitoring on a more frequent basis – this might include information from other sectors of humanitarian response (e.g. public health and food security indicators) as well as from actors outside the traditional humanitarian realm (e.g. conflict resolution).
- Strengthen the implementation of PIMS and other regular protection monitoring by agreeing protocols for information management (encompassing methods and protocols for information collection, verification, use, and retention).

¹⁸ Protection Information Management (PIM) guidance can be used to inform these efforts. More details are available here: <https://pim.guide/background/>

¹⁹ For areas of acute need, high tension, or active fighting, it may wish to receive such information on a monthly basis. For other areas, quarterly or bi-annually may be sufficient for its needs. When unique events occur or during flashpoints in conflict, it may wish to make a more specific request for certain information, in order to ensure the timeliness of its decisions about the overall humanitarian response and its engagement with the relevant authorities in central government.

²⁰ Protection Information Management (PIM) guidance can be used to identify and prioritize: <https://pim.guide/background/>

- Encourage all actors to consider how to diversify methods and types of information collection, which could include regularizing periodic focus group discussions or opinion surveys to enable consistent tracking of certain indicators from the perspective of affected individuals.

5. Diversifying ways of working in pursuit of protection outcomes

As highlighted above, achieving measurable results and protection outcomes manifested in reduced risk demands different ways of working, depending on the specific threats in each context, and people’s vulnerabilities and capacities vis-à-vis those threats. This means effective **use of advocacy alongside other means of bringing about the desired outcomes.**²¹

In Myanmar, as in other humanitarian responses, there is a strong commitment at all levels to collecting information to inform advocacy messaging. However, while there are a number of ‘advocacy products’ produced at national and sub-national level in Myanmar, it is not always clear who these products are directed to and how they relate to a desired outcome and a broader strategy to get there. As a mode of influencing, advocacy is typically one-way and ‘positional’. As noted above, if much of the information on which advocacy is based is incident-driven, advocacy may end up being primarily reactive rather than working towards a desired outcome in a planned way and complementary to other ways of working.

Beyond advocacy, achieving protection outcomes depends on a range of actions addressing the specific factors giving rise to risk. For example, threats might be addressed through continuous dialogue or negotiation with the relevant authorities which allows potential solutions to constructively evolve, creating incentives or disincentives for certain behavior through the introduction of new policies, publically exposing abuses, or shaping public opinion and expectations for changed behavior. Of course, the choice of approach depends very much on the political context and the most likely levers of influence, particularly the attitudes and motivations of the actors whose policies and behaviors in relation to vulnerable people need to change.

Efforts to address threats need to be complemented by efforts to overcome specific vulnerabilities and enhance relevant capacities in relation to these threats. Addressing the reasons why certain people are vulnerable to certain threats may be even more diverse and **draw on multiple technical sectors**, for example, relating to public health, health care, education, public communications, agriculture, livelihoods, land and property, mine action, income generation, and so on. Other actions may not involve a technical sector per se but entail **working closely with affected communities to help them strengthen community-level organizations and undertake their own efforts to solve problems.**

Vulnerability in relation to certain threats might be reduced and capacities enhanced by:

- Changing daily activities in a way that minimizes exposure to threats;
- Enhancing people’s access to information, resources, or options in order to avoid threats;
- Ensuring formal recognition of certain rights or entitlements of vulnerable people;
- Strengthening affected people’s participation in decision-making and their direct relationship with the responsible authorities or armed groups, to enable them to negotiate directly for the changes they wish to see.

²¹ A potentially useful reference document is the 2006 Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue manual, “Proactive presence: Field strategies for civilian protection.” Available at: http://fieldviewsolutions.org/fv-publications/Proactive_Presence.pdf

Inevitably, it is a combination of actions targeted at different risk factors, not any single action, that will yield the desired results and protection outcome.

One area where a broader diversity of possible actions could usefully be examined concerns **humanitarian access**. Humanitarian access is commonly approached with a focus on securing access *by* international humanitarian organizations and their staff *to* affected people. Of course, this access is important and necessary but this assumption may limit the range of strategies considered. Conversely, viewing the constraints in the first instance from the perspective of affected people may give rise to an appreciation of the varied factors which inhibit *their* access to resources and services that they need to survive, including humanitarian aid. This in turn can lead to more a diverse range of steps that can be taken to address or overcome those factors.

In addition, it was noted that most efforts to improve access rely heavily on advocacy directed at those that have the power to permit or deny access, although thus far this has achieved little in the way of results and in fact access is increasingly constrained. In Kachin, international staff of international NGOs and UN agencies used to receive permits to travel to IDP sites in non-government controlled areas but now only national and local NGOs are able to do so. It is critical to **examine more closely the reasons why these restrictions are directed at international humanitarian organizations** and address those specific factors with a view to cultivating respect for vulnerable people and their access to resources and services, as well as cultivating an environment welcoming of humanitarian actors and respectful of civilian infrastructure and services.

Constraints on access may be traced back to, for example, a belief on the part of military commanders that humanitarian actors are supporting insurgent forces or allowing aid to be diverted by them. This particular perception needs to be addressed – through an incremental process of liaison, relationship-building, dialogue, and confidence-building – if constraints are to be successfully overcome and environment conducive to addressing humanitarian need is to be nurtured. Sustained engagement will be important at several levels – ranging from the local to state or regional level to Naypyidaw. The *Draft Myanmar HCT Humanitarian Access and Delivery Strategy* (6 December 2016) as well as the creation of an OCHA civil-military liaison position for Kachin/northern Shan reflect positive initial investments to this end. This approach will certainly create the conditions for more constructive relationships in the medium- to long-term. While it may not deliver immediate results, with this investment there can be a process of continual adaptation as an appreciation for the perspectives of the various interlocutors grows.

It may also be important to approach negotiations with a view to **enhancing access for certain types of resources, services, and activities** rather than negotiating on the basis of generalized and blanket access by all humanitarian actors for all types of activities. Negotiating access for periodic food distributions, for example, is very different from negotiating for people's regular access to health care. Not only is the modus operandi of implementation very different, the relevant authorities may have very different concerns which need to be taken account in negotiation. In addition, the complementary roles of local, national, and international humanitarian actors must be taken account in devising comprehensive access strategies. No single actor can be considered fully impartial, neutral and independent, with all the necessary capacities to develop analysis and design and implement strategies. It is the combined profiles, perspectives, and ability to interact with affected people and authorities, across local, national and international actors that can together maximize protective impact in Myanmar.

During discussions in both Rakhine and Kachin, there was widespread acknowledgement of the need to improve engagement with the government, military and non-state armed groups, however there were mixed views regarding humanitarian actors' individual and collective ability to engage and get traction with these actors, especially the military.²² Some **critical considerations relating to the engagement of responsible authorities and parties to conflict in pursuit of protection outcomes** were raised, including the need for greater analysis of the motivations behind the behavior of the state and non-state parties to conflict towards the civilian population. Others highlighted the need for greater understanding within armed groups (and possibly also the military) regarding international humanitarian law and their obligations vis-à-vis the civilian population. Some actors, including ceasefire monitors, seek to reinforce the obligations of parties to conflict but there is no apparent collective effort to this end. In addition to engaging with the relevant parties regarding the immediate threats to civilians and with a view to enhancing protection, there would seem to be a need and scope for longer-term efforts in relation to rule of law or governance and security sector reform in the context of peacebuilding or development efforts.

Finally, several **opportunities were highlighted, including in relation to the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and the associated openings for engagement with the government and military authorities**, including for civil society actors. With the exception of one international NGO and one local NGO, none of the humanitarian actors consulted referred to the NCA as a potential avenue to influence the behavior of the parties to conflict towards civilians. This seems to be a missed opportunity. Some people did note that insofar as the Myanmar military may be seeking legitimacy globally, with view to participating in joint training exercises or becoming a Troop Contributing Country for UN peacekeeping operations, there are openings for meaningful engagement and dialogue which should be cultivated.

Recommendations on diversifying ways of working in pursuit of protection outcomes:

A deliberate plan and approach to developing relationships with critical interlocutors is essential. These may be actors who have formal responsibilities or direct impact on people's lives, or they may be one or two steps removed but with influence in relation to an individual with decision-making power or moral authority. Different humanitarian actors (organizations or individuals) may have different advantages or opportunities in relation to different interlocutors and this should be taken into account when forming shared strategies. NGOs and UN representatives can play complementary roles if there is a common view of the outcomes sought.

The *Myanmar HCT Humanitarian Access and Delivery Strategy* sets out a set of proposed actions to establish regular interaction with the key government and military stakeholders at all levels. There are several steps that NGOs could take in the short-term to support these efforts and help facilitate a more deliberate approach:

- INGOs should consider developing a joined-up NGO strategy of engagement and invest in joint capacity accordingly. Donors have indicated that they are open to exploring options for more structured approaches amongst NGOs on engaging with the government, military, and non-state armed groups, but need more specific details regarding what this would take.
- Local, national, and international NGOs should together explore how they can support the ability of affected populations to directly engage responsible authorities regarding their humanitarian

²² This is further explored in the 2017 report by CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, [Navigating Change: Crisis and Crossroads in Rakhine State Context](#).

concerns and measures that should be taken to address them.²³ At present, there appears to be a lack of understanding regarding the relationship between the civilian population and the military/armed groups (especially in Kachin), and how this has changed over time.

In general, it will be important to ensure that analysis of key actors lends itself to an understanding of norms, attitudes and motivations driving behavior towards civilian populations as well as what some incentives and disincentives for changed behavior might be. For example, a clear pathway to becoming a Troop Contributing Country (TCC) to UN peacekeeping operations may serve as an incentive for the military to engage in more regular dialogue and adopt new measures to prevent civilian harm.

6. Designing and implementing collective protection strategies

The diversity of factors driving violence, coercion, and deliberate deprivation, as well as the consequences of these risk patterns, means that comprehensive reduction of risk can rarely be achieved by just one actor or one sector of work. Multiple mandates, capacities, sectors, and disciplines and multiple actors working at different levels – are typically needed to achieve protection outcomes.²⁴ This is what is meant by a ‘whole-of-system’ approach to protection, as highlighted in [section 3](#). This approach recognizes the unique expertise and focus of the protection sector or cluster, while also recognizing that some issues will inevitably be beyond the capacity of those in the protection sector alone to address. It depends in great part on leadership to mobilize and align capacities and resources within the broader humanitarian system - and beyond - in a way that works toward protection outcomes.

The broader social, economic and political context of Myanmar and the types of protection concerns experienced exemplify precisely the kind of context which stands to benefit from multi-disciplinary ‘whole-of-system’ approaches to protection. In this respect, **international, national and local NGOs** in Myanmar are uniquely capable - given the diversity of their organizational programming capacities and experience - but do not yet appear to be fully playing to their strengths. Individually and jointly NGOs are undertaking unique and important programming, including initiatives and ways of working which have helped to break stalemates on festering issues and push the boundaries of ‘what is possible’ in the Myanmar context. However, beyond this, and in relation to many of the most severe and prevalent protection concerns in Myanmar, NGOs could further draw on their unique strengths and come together in a more strategic and impactful way.

NGO strengths – individually and collectively - that would seem to be particularly valuable in the Myanmar context include:

- Humanitarian, development, governance, and conflict resolution analysis and programming expertise;
- Participatory methods for community-level analysis, planning, and problem-solving;
- Working with local and national NGOs in a way that maximizes their proximity to affected people and helps to ensure that the overall humanitarian response is designed in a context-specific way;
- Engaging collectively with national, sub-national, and local authorities on the basis of strong links with affected populations.

²³ For more information on community-based protection, see <https://www.interaction.org/blog/community-based-protection>.

²⁴ See brief guidance on **designing for the contributions of diverse actors** as part of a results-based approach to protection here: <https://protection.interaction.org/design-for-contribution/>

The INGO Forum should serve as a place where NGOs examine the breadth of issues of concern and where their unique strengths may serve to helpfully promote progress on a certain issue, for example through joint analysis, collective advocacy or a joined-up NGO strategy for engaging with the government, military and non-state armed groups.

The Myanmar HCT is committed to developing an HCT protection strategy. The GPC [Guidance Note on HCT Protection Strategy](#) provides very useful guidance and is highly recommended as point of reference as the HCT embarks on this process. In particular, it is worth noting that **HCT protection strategies should not attempt to serve as an overarching strategy addressing all protection concerns in a given country**. They should not duplicate the role of the protection sector or cluster, rather be developed with a view to **maximizing the strategic role, vantage point, and added value of the HCT**. As such, it is recommended that the HCT select a very limited number of issues to focus on (e.g. one to three). These should be issues which are beyond the capacity of the protection sector to comprehensively address alone, and which are so prevalent and severe in their scope and impact that they demand a whole-of-system perspective and approach.

In Myanmar, protection concerns which could benefit from whole-of-system attention through HCT-facilitated strategies might include, for example:

- Land mines and ERW risk mitigation, clearing and recovery
- Reducing the risk of human trafficking
- Freedom of movement and access to property, resources and services in Rakhine
- Free and informed decisions by affected populations regarding their displacement, return or resettlement, and establishing pre-conditions for voluntary population movements and durable solutions to displacement

Further details on the potential added value of HCT protection strategies can be found on page 8 of the Guidance. In particular, in light of the Myanmar context, the HCT should seek to identify and solicit the engagement of conflict resolution/peacebuilding and development actors in the in-depth analysis of the issue to be addressed as well, as their contribution to achieving the intended protection outcomes.

In addition to working towards specific protection outcomes, an HCT protection strategy could **identify an issue or an area which is not yet ripe for solutions per se but which might be adopted as a ‘learning agenda’** in order to build up analysis and understanding over a period of time (e.g. 6 – 12 months), with a view to making some informed choices about how to address the issue in the future. Issues which in particular seem to warrant joined up analysis and attention include, for example, human trafficking and the potential for protection concerns to be addressed in ceasefire/peace negotiations and agreements. The adoption of an HCT protection strategy, along with identifying ongoing HCT information needs, will additionally serve to provide some structure and substance for **protection as a standing item on the HCT agenda**. NGOs should seek to ensure maximum complementarity between INGO Forum discussions and issues which could be brought into HCT discussions and strategy development for protection.

Finally, the prospect of developing a collective protection strategy strike many as a daunting task, particularly given the length of time it took to draft the *HCT Protection Statement*. Although there are naturally concerns about heavy and lengthy process, it can be facilitated in a light and productive manner and does not need to be painful and burdensome. It should be approached as a phased process of working through a series of decision points and key steps – including selecting an issue to be adopted, consultations with relevant stakeholders, drafting, and so on. As long as these discussions proceed in a

purposeful and forward-moving way, it is worth taking some time to reflect on key issues which need attention, how to promote whole-of-system ways of working, and build a unified view of the expected benefits of an HCT role. A number of people pointed to the effectiveness of HCT sub-Working Groups as a way to facilitate collaborative efforts such as this. In addition, the HCT should consider bringing in an individual from outside the HCT to facilitate the process from beginning to end.

Finally, it is impossible for any strategy to chart out a precise sequence of actions from beginning to end. Strategies should be developed with an expectation of **iterative and continual adjustment and adaptation**. Strategies depend, therefore, on regular information and analysis (described in [section 4](#)) that enables informed decision-making throughout the course of implementation.

7. Conclusion

While positive steps have been taken in recent months, it is concerning that the humanitarian response in Myanmar has yet to shift gears and adapt to the diversity of risk patterns being experienced by vulnerable people and to the changing context. The INGO Forum and the HCT should each consider what kind of internal reflection and analysis could best enable more timely adjustments and adaptation to an evolving situation. In addition, it will be valuable to reflect on the nature of protection concerns that will continue to drive humanitarian need, and to cultivate a vision and clarity of purpose in relation to these challenges. It may be instructive to reflect on other contexts where similar dynamics have been encountered as set out in [section 3](#).²⁵

²⁵ For example, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Sri Lanka.

Annex A: InterAction mission purpose, objectives and methodology

InterAction²⁶ protection missions seek to examine critical protection issues and trends, and how they are being addressed by humanitarian actors, in order to highlight key issues and recommend possible strategies and measures to address them to practitioners, policymakers, donor governments, and humanitarian leaders. In particular, InterAction seeks to support the increased emphasis throughout the humanitarian community on the centrality of protection in humanitarian action, and more outcome-oriented and results-based approaches to protection, including collective outcomes.

This mission was designed to develop an overview of context-specific risk patterns and trends in Myanmar, including the specific threats facing civilian populations, people's vulnerabilities and capacities in relation to these threats, and NGO strategies to reduce these risks. It also sought to examine and make recommendations on the implementation of the recently endorsed *HCT Statement of Commitment on Protection*, including opportunities to increase awareness of protection amongst non-protection actors and expand engagement to all sectors and clusters, with particular focus on the NGO role in this process. In doing so, the mission provided an opportunity to explore with NGOs how the [IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action](#) and [GPC Guidance Note on HCT Protection Strategy](#) could be implemented in support of achieving protection outcomes.

The InterAction team²⁷ visited Yangon, as well as Myitkyina and Sittwe, with a focus on NGO roles in relation to the overall protection leadership, coordination, and strategies. The team conducted one-to-one and focus group meetings with the following organizations and individuals:

- Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
- Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator (DHC)
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- International Rescue Committee (IRC)
- Joint Strategy Team (Kachin), including Metta, KBC, KMSS and Shalom.
- Myanmar INGO Forum (staff)
- National Protection Cluster (staff)
- Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
- OCHA
- UNHCR
- Oxfam
- Nonviolent Peaceforce
- Plan
- Relief International
- Save the Children
- Trocaire
- World Vision

The following debrief sessions on preliminary findings were conducted prior to leaving the country:

- INGO Forum
- Protection Working Group

²⁶ InterAction is an alliance of over 180 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and serves as a convener, thought leader and voice of the humanitarian and development community.

²⁷ Jenny McAvoy (Director of Protection, InterAction) and Liz Bloomfield (Program Manager-Protection, InterAction).

- Humanitarian Country Team
- Donors

A second InterAction protection mission will be conducted jointly with the Danish Refugee Council from May 22 through June 2, 2017.²⁸ This mission will focus on a specific protection issue within Rakhine state, and examine the methods and approaches NGOs can use to achieve protection outcomes and establish protection information management systems in support of their strategies.

²⁸ Jessica Lenz (Senior Program Manager–Protection, InterAction), Kelsey Hampton (Policy Coordinator-Protection, InterAction), and Brennan Webert (Protection Advisor, Danish Refugee Council).