CARE Myanmar Partnership Strategy

Summary

Goal: To strengthen and expand our partnership relationships to achieve significant and lasting change for impact groups

Objective 1:
To develop and strengthen CARE Myanmar’s commitment, capacities and systems for effective work with a diverse range of partners

- Systems, procedures
- Attitudes
- Skill sets, capacities
- Staff structures
- Tools

Objective 2:
To strengthen the capacities of partners to contribute to quality development practices

- Capacity building – financial, programmatic, technical, organisational, institutional
- Accountability (e.g., budget tracking)
- Representation

Objective 3:
To actively support an enabling environment for civil society

- Coordination, networking
- Monitoring changes in civil society
- Identifying CMM strengths/priorities in civil society development
- Legal frameworks, regulations (advocacy)
- Donor priorities and practices

Objective 4:
To develop, capture learning and innovate with program-level partnerships

- Piloting and extending – collaborative, Strategic, non-resource based Partnerships
- Private sector
- Learning – externally
- Documentation, sharing, learning
Contents

Partnership Strategy summary 1

1. Background 3
   • Purpose of the Strategy
   • Partnership lessons learned
   • Contextual influences

2. Overview
   • Definition of partnership
   • Partnership principles

3. CARE Myanmar Partnership Strategy
   • Goal
   • Objectives

4. Action plan
   • Priorities
   • Resources

5. Monitoring and Evaluating the Strategy

Annex 1: Types of partnership relationships
1. Background

1.1 Purpose of the Strategy

Partnership has always been closely linked to CARE’s core principles and development practice. CARE Myanmar has some experience in working in partnership local organisations and networks, and sees considerable opportunities to extending and deepening partnership approaches.

This Partnership Strategy represents our commitment to strengthen our partnership practice, and establishes higher level directions to focus our work over the next 5 years. These directions are strongly aligned to CARE’s broader strategic directions (see box), CARE Australia’s Partnership policy, CARE Myanmar’s directions, and changing dynamics in the Myanmar operating environment.

The Strategy outlines our initial priorities in moving forward on four interrelated objectives. It provides an important reference point for CARE Myanmar as priorities are set, to ensure our planning and actions are linked to progress on this Strategy.

1.2 Partnership lessons learned

Analysis and reflection on our partnership practice in the past has highlighted key lessons:

- **Invest in ensuring clarity of purpose** of the partnership, and roles and responsibilities at an early stage. For new partnerships, a planned partnership Establishment Phase for new partnerships is recommended. As partnerships evolve into new forms of relationships, or introduce new focus areas for capacity building, periodic reviews should be undertaken. Similarly, our practice in the past has seen CARE taking the lead on most aspects of partnership management, providing high levels of support and management of decisions. We are increasingly recognising that a purposeful approach is necessary, with the level of support provided varying in different circumstances and over time.

- **Partner selection** – Our experience suggests that at project level, it is worth investing more in selection processes which identify partners with a good fit to the purpose of the partnership and programming objectives. These processes will require improved capacities and methods for partner selection.

- **Capacity building** – CARE Myanmar has developed experience is supporting the technical capacity of groups operating at community level. There is scope to expand our capacity building approaches.
skills and focus to new areas, such as organisational development, and more actively link with other capacity building service providers.

- **Partnerships at different levels** – While many of our partnerships have been developed at local levels, we do have some experience working with partners at national level. There is a need to capture and analyse this experience, along with that of peer agencies, and feed learning into future partnerships which will be developed to progress impacts in our long term programs.

### 1.3 Contextual influences

**Government of Myanmar:** The political, legal and policy environment in Myanmar is changing, with new and rapidly changing dynamics influencing INGO operations, civil society development, donor priorities and broad range of poverty reduction programmes. Through this Strategy, CARE Myanmar affirms its commitment to maximise the opportunities presented through these broader changes. We will also increasingly engage in partnerships with the Government of Myanmar in design and implementation of pro-poor development policy and projects. Efforts will continue to strengthen partnership with the government agencies at national level, and line ministries will also be key to our advocacy efforts. At a state and township level, CARE will strengthen relationships and seek more formal partnerships with key agencies.

**Emerging Civil Society:** The past few years has seen a rapid expansion of the civil society sector, linked to changes in the political climate and to a markedly increased interest amongst international organisations and donors in working with local CSOs. The number of local organisations is still growing, and they vary widely in size, structure, goal, and strategy, with different strengths and weaknesses. There is enormous diversity in areas of work, strength of operations and programming quality, and in strength of their accountabilities. In order to build on initial and positive trends, some clear priorities have emerged. There is a pressing need for appropriate and effective CSO capacity-building, particularly for CSOs based outside Yangon where capacity development opportunities are far rarer. In addition, there is a need for improved valuing of the role of civil society, along with a fairer regulatory environment for CSO operations.

CARE Myanmar recognises that a functional and representative civil society will contribute to lasting and meaningful impact on the lives of marginalised people. Through this Strategy, we adopt a dual approach, combining focused, purposeful support for groups and networks to evolve and be responsive to poverty and social marginalisation, while also strengthening the broader operating environment influencing civil society actions. Civil society organisations require strengthened capacity for project delivery; for constituency representation and engagement with the GoM and donors in the development agenda. This requires attention to technical and programmatic capacities, organisational and institutional development of CSOs, in addition to consideration of their operating space.

---

Overview

1.1 Definition of partnership
In line with CARE Australia, we define partnership as:

A purposeful relationship, with clearly defined objectives, that engages the strengths of different actors to contribute to positive impacts for marginalised and vulnerable groups.

1.2 Partnership principles

In all of our partnerships, CARE Myanmar is guided by the following principles²:

2. **Mutual respect and trust.** Mutual respect and trust is based on valuing the knowledge and experience of different groups, valuing diversity and ensuring non-discrimination in our work with others. It requires working with patience, understanding and openness and ensuring integrity in our relationships. Mutual respect and trust is strengthened through ensuring we have common agreement on our shared aims as well as on how we collaborate as partners, aiming for equity in the relationship.

3. **Adaptability.** Our partnerships are based around recognition of the strengths and potentials and complementarity of partners, acknowledging that the dynamics of partnerships can and should change over time. This is fostered through approaches that prioritise mutual learning and improvement, and can also include practical strategies such as planning together, structured monitoring of the quality of the relationships, and clear procedures for revising the nature of the relationship. Adaptability also involves sharing support for innovation, including accepting the risks associated with innovation.

4. **Transparency.** Transparency in our partnerships supports ownership of the relationship, and ownership of its outcomes. This involves open and transparent communication about the partnership, for example ensuring there is clarity about information and responsibilities that can be shared, honouring confidential information, as well as specific actions such as engaging partners in strategic planning processes. Transparency also involves ensuring we provide appropriate credit for the contributions of our partners, have clarity about dispute resolution processes, and effectively plan for partnership phase-out over time.

5. **Accountability.** Accountability means that we, along with our Partners, will be mutually accountable to stakeholders for our work. This spans accountability to our donors, target communities, host government and other stakeholders. This involves clear and shared responsibility for achieving the agreed outcomes of the partnership, and clarity about roles and responsibilities. It can involve transparent use of resources; honouring agreements; having defined roles and responsibilities and a commitment to resolving difficulties. Where required, we will support our Partners to meet appropriate accountability standards.

² CARE Australia Partnership Policy 2011
6. Partnership Strategy

**Goal: To strengthen and expand our partnership relationships to achieve significant and lasting change for impact groups**

The Goal of this Strategy is strongly aligned to our programmatic commitments, and as such, identifies our focus on positive impacts for marginalised groups of people at the centre of our partnership practice. Our partnership priorities, practice and systems will explicitly focus on supporting significant and lasting change for program Impact Groups, mobilising the skills, knowledge and resources of a range of development actors. In this way, CARE Myanmar can expand program reach, including into areas where we are not operational; contribute to a greater collective voice on priority topics; and strengthen shared ownership of changes, processes and benefits with other local, national and international actors.

At the same time, CARE Myanmar is committed to expanding our partnerships, and will ensure we are increasingly working with a range of other agencies across our operations at different levels.

The Strategy Goal also highlights our understanding that CARE Myanmar is one actor of many working around desired changes, and progress towards impacts will see us engage with a range of development actors, not always needing to take the lead, and that we will work across different types of partnership relationships relevant to the purpose of that engagement.

**Objective 1: To develop and strengthen CARE Myanmar’s commitment, capacities and systems for effective work with a diverse range of partners**

CARE Myanmar recognises that a key platform for achieving the objectives of this Strategy lies in our internal capacity for effective partnerships. Into the future, our focus will be on ensuring different good practice options relevant to specific situations, responsive to the diversity of partner types and strengths, and different objectives of our partnership relationships.

**Key areas of work:**
A critical component of our capacity for partnership is our internal skills, values and attitudes we bring, to ensure we are providing appropriate and effective contributions to each relationship. CARE Myanmar interprets these skills quite broadly, recognising that changes in the capacities and priorities of partners, and changes in the forms of partnerships we are engaging in will require specific skills sets, across the programs and support teams. These are likely to include high level technical, communication, networking and facilitation skills, as well as capacities in new topics such as organisational development. Enabling values and attitudes towards partnership and partners amongst staff across the organisation are equally critical. Having this internal capacity will position CARE Myanmar to move forward and will include exploring accountabilities and responsibilities for partnership, along with allocating sufficient time for effective relationship building and management.
We will also focus on strengthening our finance and administration **systems and procedures** to support different partnerships, to see that our systems more effectively enable programmatic outcomes of partnership, while also ensuring compliance with donor and CARE Australia requirements.

CARE Myanmar will invest in capturing and using **lessons learned** in partnership practice, aiming to see our practice based on **evidence** of what works in partnership. This will draw on our internal experience, and from others in Myanmar, in the region and globally. We will synthesise good practice approaches in a new CARE Myanmar **Minimum Standards for Partnership**, to be used by all programs and projects. The Minimum Standards will clarify expectations on topics such as identifying the objectives of each partnership; planning and implementing an effective partnership establishment phase; processes for clarifying roles and responsibilities in a partnership; dispute resolution mechanisms; monitoring the quality of our relationships; and ensuring a partnership evolution or exit plan is developed and implemented. The standards will also identify core commitments to be supported through our implementation partnerships, such as gender equity and child protection.

Application of the Standards will be supported through the development of specific **tools** where needed to support discrete partnership activities. A key tool will be a **Partnership Planning Framework**, to more effectively link partnership purpose to decision making around a range of relationship building and management processes.

**Indicators of success:**
- Organisational reviews indicate CARE Myanmar has the resources and capacity for partnership relationship management and systems support

### Objective 2: To strengthen the capacities of partners to contribute to quality development practices

CARE Myanmar has prioritised strengthening the capacity of government and civil society organisations as one key element of partnership practice. Our focus will be increasingly around an overarching priority on capacity strengthening for **quality development practices**. This includes strengthening capacity of implement gender sensitive and inclusive approaches, as well as to recognise, respond to and genuinely represent the interests and concerns of program Impact Groups. It includes supporting organisations to develop enabling governance, leadership and accountability mechanisms to constituents, members and beneficiaries. Progress towards this Objective is strongly linked to progress towards Objective 1, i.e. CARE Myanmar’s **internal capacities and attitudes** to strengthen the capacity of other actors.

**Key areas of work:**
CARE Myanmar will focus on improving our capacity building approaches, to ensure our practice is purposeful, targeted and outcomes orientated. This includes ensuring ensure initiatives are responsive to partner priorities, foster tangible results and are responsive to changes over time.
Our capacity strengthening practice will be objective based, and linked to agreed focus areas for support, spanning across financial, programmatic, technical, organisation and institutional capacities. In light of the changing and complex operating environment in Myanmar, a key focus will include capacities around accountability and representation. CARE Myanmar is also committed to a balance and blend of capacity strengthening initiatives which target organisations; individuals; networks and umbrella organisations; as well as capacity strengthening at the program / policy / operating environment level.

We will draw on multiple capacity building methods, relevant to objectives established. Increasingly, this will included proven experiential approaches such as structured mentoring, internships, training courses and phased on-the-job learning approaches. Where appropriate, we will facilitate linkages between our partners and other capacity building service providers (such as CBI), and seek opportunities for partners to learn from each other. CARE Myanmar will also invest in developing quality approaches to monitoring and evaluating capacity strengthening processes, results and impacts for marginalised groups.

**Indicators of success:**
- Positive changes in partner capacity are identified through project M&E systems, by June 2014

**Objective 3: To actively support an enabling environment for civil society**

CARE Myanmar recognises that an enabling environment for civil society is essential to support CSOs to act as effective advocates and genuine representatives for the voice of marginalised groups. This Objective also links to expected results from Objective 2, with changes in CSO capacity having greater impact and relevance where the broader environment is supportive of operations and valuing of CSO contributions.

**Key areas of work:**
A key foundation for our work under this objective in ensure we have access to current analysis of the civil society sector, as this changes over time. We will ensure we are regularly monitoring changes in civil society, to assess the effectiveness of civil society development strategies, analyse progress and results over time and to ensure our work is responsive to changing circumstances. This will also inform work to identify CARE Myanmar strengths and priorities in civil society development, to focus our initiatives at different levels.

CARE Myanmar’s work in this area will include working with others around a more enabling operating environment for CSOs in Myanmar, including the regulatory environment for CSO operations. Our focus will include promoting both more positive laws and regulations, and promoting understanding of their intent and value at multiple levels.

Recognising that key constraints for civil society also include challenges from informal institutional practices, CARE Myanmar will contribute to more active and positive engagement and linkages amongst CSOs and between civil society and other development agencies, such as government agencies, service providers, donors and other INGOs. More effective engagement across multiple
levels aims to strengthen supportive peer processes; increase voice and influence through stronger collaboration; build trust between CSOs and government agencies; improve the credibility of CSOs; and see CSOs better placed to support their members and beneficiaries to access services and support from mainstream providers. In addition, CARE Myanmar will contribute to improving recognition and valuing of the contributions of CSOs in other ways, such as supporting CSOs to capture, document and share evidence of the their results.

Importantly, CARE Myanmar will also focus on influencing donor policies and practices around working with CSOs and civil society development, promoting approaches which are grounded in the realities of the operating environment, cognisant of CSO absorptive capacity, and prioritise a focus on program impact groups.

**Indicators of success:**
- At least 50% of projects include strategies to promote recognition of CSOs, by Dec 2014

### Objective 4: To develop, capture learning and innovate with program-level partnerships

To support our broader strategic directions, CARE Myanmar will engage in new types of partnership relationships. – see Annex 1. Our transition to program approaches and advocacy work will see us increasingly engaging in strategic, and often non-resource based partnerships. These partnerships are about linkages with development actors (government, international and local) engaged in supporting similar impacts for marginalised groups. Strategic partnerships will have a range of objectives, linked to the changes identified in our program designs. Current examples include our partnerships with GEN, and with the FSWG.

In addition, we will develop collaborative partnerships, built on a long term engagement and allowing mutual learning and development between partners. Collaborative partnerships will contribute civil society development in Myanmar, and are increasingly possible as civil society changes in Myanmar. CARE Myanmar will also explore scope for private sector engagement in program delivery. Our emphasis will be on identifying complementary interests across CARE and private sector organisations, which can lead to positive outcomes for marginalised groups.

As with other types of partnerships, these new relationship types will be identified through the pathways of change in our program designs.

**Key areas of work:**
CARE Myanmar will seek opportunities to learn from our current experience and that of other agencies in planning and managing program-level types of partnership, and adapt successful practice to our future relationships. We will pilot different forms of engagement, capture, document and share lessons learned, and draw on this experience as we move forward. Our progress will be supported by work on our internal capacities and clarifying accountabilities for partnership [see Objective 1], including accountabilities and skill sets for higher level partnership engagement.

**Indicators of success:**
• Program implementation plans have identified priority entry-points for strategic, non-resource partnerships
• Both programs have piloted a new form of partnership, by Dec 2014

7. Action Plan

7.1 Priorities
CARE Myanmar has identified some initial priorities to take forward the commitments in this Strategy over the next 18 months. Our priorities and indicative activities are:

CARE Myanmar internal commitment, capacities and systems
• Support a dedicated resource for capacity building / partnership
• Develop clarity of roles and responsibilities for partnership
• Review and align CARE Myanmar current HR, finance and procurement policies, and structure for partnerships

Strengthened capacities of partners for quality development practices
• Map current CARE Myanmar partnerships, by type
• Multiple partnership elements are integrated into our forthcoming ANCP-funded proposal
• Strengthen our approach to OD for partner organisations (ODA, Accountability, HR management, financial management, etc)

Actively support the enabling environment for civil society
• We have access to a current mapping of CSOs in Myanmar
• We have access analysis to monitor changes in civil society development in Myanmar

Program level partnerships
• Capture learning from existing program-level engagement
• One pilot program-level partnership has been developed and funded

7.2 Resources
CARE Myanmar recognises that in order to move forward on its commitments around partnership, there are a number of resources available that we can use or adapt. In addition, we will actively seek additional resources to implement this Strategy. Key resources required are:

• Leadership on partnership. CARE Myanmar recognises that as we move towards harmonised partnership approaches, leadership on partnership practice will be shared across senior programmers, and senior program support staff. In addition, it may be necessary to access additional technical / advisory support to progress some initiatives. We will identify our requirements for specific technical expertise, and seek ways to resource these.

• Accessing lessons learned across a range of topics, for example new forms of partnership, capacity assessment tools and methods, and M&E of partnership and of capacity strengthening. CARE Myanmar recognises the value of capturing lessons learned from our own experience, as well as that from other agencies in Myanmar and in the region.
• **Funding.** CARE Myanmar recognises that specific funding will be required to support some initiatives in our Partnership Strategy, both at organisational level, and through the ways in which funds are allocated across project budgets. This will require discussions with some donors. Similarly, it is important that appropriate **time** is allocated to specific tasks, for example planning effective partnership establishment processes for new partnerships; and that time for reflection and learning are integrated into project annual plans.

• Participation in relevant **CI opportunities** is important as we way make progress on our objectives. This provides access to current technical thinking, lessons learned, and opportunities for effective networking with others engaged in partnership.

8. **Monitoring and Evaluating the Strategy**

The Senior Management Team (SMT) is responsible for implementation of this Strategy. Operationalising the Strategy is a shared responsibility across CARE Myanmar, and this will be monitored by the Partnership Working Group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Final Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To develop and strengthen CMM commitment, capacities and systems for effective work with a diverse range of partners</strong></td>
<td>• Organisational reviews indicate CARE Myanmar has the resources and capacity for partnership relationship management and systems support</td>
<td>• All programs are adhering to Minimum Standards on Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To strengthen the capacities of partners to contribute to quality development practices</strong></td>
<td>• Positive changes in partner capacity are identified through project M&amp;E systems, by June 2014</td>
<td>• Evidence that partner capacity has resulted in positive impacts for Impact Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To actively support an enabling environment for civil society</strong></td>
<td>• ???</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To develop, capture learning and innovate with program-level partnerships</strong></td>
<td>• Program implementation plans have identified priority entry-points for strategic, non-resource partnerships • Both programs have piloted a new form of partnership, by ???</td>
<td>• Evidence that program-level partnerships have resulted in positive impacts for Impact Groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Annex 1: Partnership Modalities – Summary

### Type A – Partnerships – types of relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modality</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Co-implementation partner** |  • Partners implement specific activities, in line with the project / program design  
  • CARE takes the lead in elements of project cycle management, donor liaison  
  • There may be different degrees of cooperation around decision making – eg around project design, activities, M&E, etc.  
  • There may be different levels of support and/or capacity building provided by CARE |
| **Alliance, Network**         |  • Formal or informal grouping of agencies to share information, and progress changes around a particular topic or interest  
  • Can include coordination of efforts, and assigning tasks to members to take actions forward |
| **Consortium**                |  • Two or more organisations contribute to a project / program, with roles and obligations of each clearly defined  
  • Roles of each agency are based on complementary strengths and expertise – eg, programmatic, geographical, organisational, technical strengths |
| **Collaborative partnership** |  • Evolving relationship, long term commitment  
  • Mutual accountability and respect  
  • Mutual capacity building – technical, programmatic, organisational and institutional  
  • Partnership objectives based on partner priorities |
| **Strategic and non-resource based partnership** |  • Relationship built around shared commitment to specific impacts  
  • Operate at the program, or cross-program level, rather than at the project level  
  • Generally at national level  
  • Will often aim to scale up impact, through advocacy initiatives, ownership of models, or expanding reach into areas where CARE is not operational  
  • Generally (but not always!) do not involve a financial relationship  
  • May or may not involve joint work, eg, can be about sharing of impact data |
## Type B – Contracts for programming work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contract Type</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Fee for Service / Advance and Acquittal | - Contract developed for discrete activities or outputs; payable on milestones delivered  
- CARE defines the parameters of the services provided, and does not support management / ‘on’ costs for partners  
- Often used for government partners, or new CBOs |
| Sub-Contract or sub-grant | - Selected project / program activities are sub-contracted to another organisation  
- Is a funding mechanism, or contractual arrangement; which can be used to support different types of relationships  
- Allows CARE to support management / ‘on’ costs for partners |