

Using PIM for the development of a Durable Solutions Information Management System

UNHCR Protection Officer, Tin Wun Andrew Mok , explains how PIM is reflected in UNHCR's durable solutions assessments and analysis in Kachin State in Myanmar.

Andrew Mok was Associate Protection Officer for UNHCR's Field Office in Myitkyina in Myanmar. UNHCR operations there support approximately 105 000 internally displaced people (IDPs) living in camps across Kachin and northern Shan states; the two most north-eastern parts of Myanmar, on the border with China. Andrew also coordinated the sub-national protection coordination forum and co-led the Durable Solutions Working Group (DWSG) for Kachin State.

Durable solutions: an emerging issue

In 2019, the Myanmar Armed Forces declared a unilateral ceasefire with armed groups in Kachin. Following this, and with a subsidence of active conflict in the state following that announcement, there was a growing interest among development, humanitarian and peace actors in possible transitional or durable solutions for internally displaced persons living in the 139 camps there.

Requests for information on conditions and needs

UNHCR began receiving requests for information on locations to which IDPs may return from a wide range of stakeholders who were considering whether and how they would provide assistance for people returning to these locations. Andrew describes these requests:

Questions we kept getting in 2018 [and] 2019, were, [for example] from [the] food security [sector] - 'We heard a group of people wants to move and they want a six month package to [assist them to] go back, but we are really not sure about what's going on in that location they're going. Can you tell us more?' [or a] shelter [agency] [might say] 'we found out ten households [that want to] move' and they would raise that [request at the] shelter cluster for support.

While UNHCR held relevant information in various Word and PDF narrative reports, it was time consuming and challenging to synthesise this information into a succinct and accessible format in response to these requests. In light of this, UNHCR set up a system to help track how many people are moving or planning to move, as well as a system to more adequately capture the information collected from assessments at different sites to identify needs of people across sectors.

Multi-sectoral durable solutions assessments

UNHCR decided to conduct site-by-site assessments, assessing each village, given that the

situation varies greatly from village to village. As a first step in this process, the protection coordination forum delivered trainings for protection cluster members and awareness sessions for community stakeholders about durable solutions and basic principles and concepts.

What has been developed to support the durable solutions assessments is a standardised toolkit with tools for focus group discussions, key informant interviews, household surveys and direct observations. Assessment reports are written in a standardised template framed by key indicators that, when entered into the database, can be aggregated for wider analysis and be displayed in an online format (dashboard).

A number of the indicators, and associated questions in the toolkit, are about conditions and so overlap with the [protection monitoring] checklist [in UNHCR's community-based protection monitoring system for Kachin], because UNHCR wanted to make sure there was comparability with that information. Additionally, there are questions about needs; for example, about number of households in need of Housing, Land and Property documentation, number of households in need of assistance with livelihoods, whether schools are available in a location, and so on. The system also includes a mechanism to track agency responses to identified needs, to identify any gaps in delivery of assistance.

Defining the purpose of the IM system

A critical step in the development of this system was defining its purpose. In this case, the system had multiple purposes for different levels or types of users. Andrew explains:

[We needed] to have a close dialogue... with more senior level users of this information...to better understand what their needs [were]... to understand what they need [information] for, what [they] plan to use [it] for, who is [their] audience, [whether] for meetings, for advocacy... that is something [that was] required when we started setting this up; to make sure when we started collecting data we were collecting data that would help those [users].

At field level, we wanted to make site-by-site assessments and reports so it is not just aggregated data about what it is like in Kachin State but that site-by-site information was accessible through the repository for people who needed those details. So that is still there. We have a balance between different levels of users. We want to make sure we are not collecting information to be used for advocacy or information to be used for site response in separate exercises. So trying to roll [that] together in one ...process [and system] was...the main thing we had to have in mind.

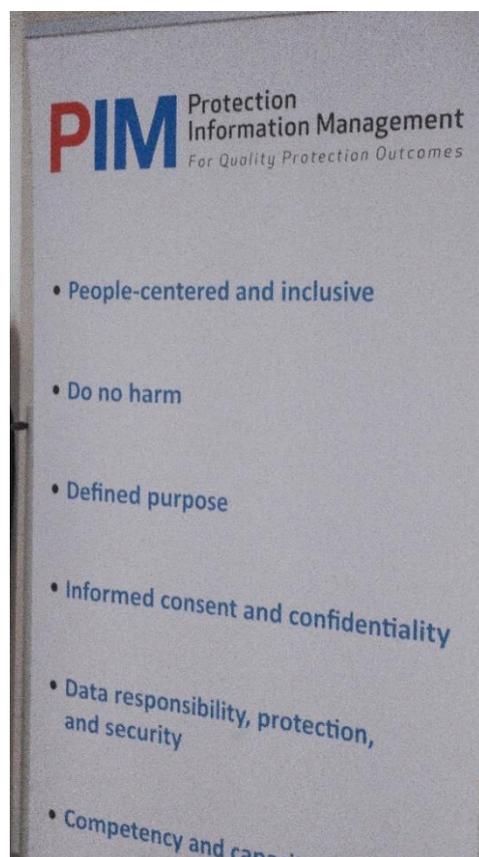


Photo from a PIM training

Coordination across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus

Durable solutions assessments are also multisectoral; that is, other sectoral actors join or undertake the assessments, sometimes using the standard tool and sometimes conducting their own technical assessments. The information gathered is included in the narrative reports and reflected in the online database so that agencies from different sectors can use it for their response planning.

The durable solutions working group (DSWG) for Kachin State is also multi-sectoral and includes humanitarian and development actors. For example, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) co-leads the DSWG with UNHCR because of the importance of a development perspective.

Some of the needs identified in assessments are not humanitarian; they are developmental and relate to access to services. For example, education is a need that comes up in many of the assessments, along with childcare which is assistance that frees up another member of the household to engage in livelihoods activities. All of these needs are included in the durable solutions assessments, so that they can also be shared with public sector actors for consideration in strategies and recurrent budgets.

Benefits of the Durable Solutions IM System

Andrew explains the benefit this IM system is bringing to the response in Kachin State:

All the sectoral actors will have the confidence they need to make decisions about whether to respond and how to respond on a principled and informed basis. Instead of dealing with piecemeal requests, we have a more systematic way of sharing information so actors know whether to respond and how to respond.

[And] in terms of questions we get from the country level, we are in a better position to give consolidated needs analysis and gap analysis than we were before. Before there were a lot of numbers floating around [with] people taking one [piece of information] to generalise [the situation], but now we have confidence to say 'this is the situation [in these locations], this is the overall picture we can share with you, so at the operational level and at the strategic level we have better situational awareness and more solutions awareness'.

PIM Highlights

- Purpose of IM system is defined and communicated and the IM system meets the needs of different types and levels of users (PIM Principle - defined purpose)
- IM system supports coordination and collaboration between humanitarian sectors and across humanitarian, development and actors (PIM Principle - Coordination and collaboration)
- Standardised toolkit and report templates aligned with analytical framework to support improved analysis to inform coordinated action (systematised approach)
- Training provided to ensure competency and capacity (PIM principle - competency and capacity)