Information Management Common Service Guidelines

These guidelines provide an overview of the functionality of Information Management Common Service (IMCS) under the overall responsibility and leadership of UNHCR as it concerns information management and information sharing for refugees' preparedness for voluntary return to Myanmar and/or other durable solutions that may be available to them.

The guidelines explain how the information-sharing mechanism will work to systematically collate, compile and assess relevant information into and from the IMCS, and how this information will be disseminated and also how it can be directly accessed by refugees and other interested stakeholders through the UNHCR cross-border Web Portal, the Information Sharing Centres and other mechanisms.

The guidelines are to be referred to in conjunction with the IM Common Service Terms of Reference.

1. IMCS Structure

The IMCS includes a number of components that interact together to contribute, compile, organize and subsequently disseminate information.

1.1. The IMCS consists of: information owners and contributors, information management oversight, the cross-border Web Portal, the Information Sharing Centres located in the refugee camps, and other information sharing strategies including mass-information dissemination activities.

1.2. Information owners and contributors can be the humanitarian organisations, researchers, news and information media, governments, donors, the refugee community itself, and other relevant actors wishing to access and contribute information.

1.3. Information contributed to the IMCS in electronic format will be shared through the Web Portal as well as by email to and from the IMCS with the end-users.

1.4. Electronic and printed/hard copies will be shared through the Information Sharing Centres, through other dissemination mechanisms, and upon request to the IMCS, directly to end-users.

1.5. As a first priority, the Information Sharing Centres will disseminate the information to the refugees in the nine camps and then to organisations and other interested parties. The process of the Information Sharing Centres will be detailed in the Information Sharing Centre Guidelines.

1.6. Requests for information by refugees and humanitarian actors will be facilitated by the IMCS as outlined in section 4 of these Guidelines.

2. Contributing Information to the IMCS

2.1. Organisations and individuals wishing to contribute relevant information through the IMCS may do so either electronically or by providing printed copies.

2.2. Electronic copies of information should be sent to the IMCS by emailing the UNHCR Information Management Unit: UNHCR IMU ILLANGAS@unhcr.org and TATEWAKI@unhcr.org

2.3. Printed information can be sent to the UNHCR IMU (sample copy) for screening prior to onward distribution at the Information Sharing Centres. If they wish to do so, contributors also have the option to directly send their information to the Information Sharing Centres.

2.4. Where possible, contributors should share information in multiple languages in order to reach the widest possible audience within the refugee population. Contributors are primarily responsible for translating documents into languages for dissemination through the IMCS.

2.5. Information will be shared in the original format(s) produced by the contributors. Amendments to any information will be done in consultation and agreement of the contributing organisation. Where possible, UNHCR IMU will also assist in reproducing contributed information into formats more easily accessible for refugees, e.g. maps, leaflets, posters, etc.

2.6. UNHCR IMU will screen documents presented to the IMCS prior to onward dissemination. The screening of information will be according to the following criteria:
   - Information must be relevant to refugees as it concerns the search for durable solutions.
   - Information must adhere to the humanitarian principals (humanity, neutrality and impartiality) and contributors must also abide by the "Do No Harm" principle.
   - Individual and political opinions, speculative text and information based on rumour will not be accepted into the IMCS.
   - UNHCR shall retain a discretionary decision on whether to accept any information that has not been presented in line with the above principles.

3. Ownership and Responsibilities of Contributors

3.1. The ownership of and the responsibility for all original information provided will remain with the contributor (organization or individual). Before sending information to the IMCS, contributors should very carefully consider both the accuracy and the validity of the information; particularly information from sources external to the contributor.

3.2. Contributors have the responsibility to ensure no confidential information is shared, such as the details of Individuals or families residing in the refugee camps.

3.3. UNHCR retains the right to filter out any confidential information within documents provided (and will inform the contributor).

3.4. Contributors must not include information that may cause contention, friction or lead to misunderstanding amongst the refugee population.

3.5. All information is to be duly sourced, and noted as such on the document and/or other product that is disseminated to the refugees.

3.6. All information provided to the IMCS, electronically or in print, should be considered for open distribution, i.e. suitable for dissemination to refugees, organisations, governments, general public, etc. If any information is considered to be for restricted distribution, UNHCR IMU may be consulted on a case-by-case basis when the information is first contributed.

3.7. Contributors should refer to the prioritized durable solutions interests of refugees and related activities of the humanitarian actors to ensure that the subject matter is relevant.

4. Storage and Dissemination of Contributed Information

    4.1. UNHCR IMU will catalogue all information contributed to the IMCS, shared with the Information Sharing Centres, listed on the 'Cross Border Web Portal', and through other dissemination methods.

    4.2. Soft copies of all electronic material will be stored by UNHCR IMU as well as a sample copy of all printed material contributed to the IMCS.

    4.3. Requests for information can be sent directly to UNHCR IMU. Requests will be facilitated based upon the available information in the IMCS catalogue of contributed information and other means if readily available. Unmet requests will be recorded in case the information should be available at a later time. Requests may also be referred to other organisations that may be able to provide the required information.

    4.4. Once contributed IMCS printed/hard copies have been screened by UNHCR IMU, the material may be disseminated by the contributor through the Information Sharing Centres.

    4.5. UNHCR IMU will manage the dissemination of electronic copies of information via the 'Cross Border Web Portal'. Information will be made widely available on the web portal to be accessed by all interested actors. Detailed instructions on how to access information will be made available after development of the Web Portal has been completed.

Information Management Common Service

UNHCR established the IMCS to ensure that relevant humanitarian-based information dissemination strategies and activities assist refugees in the temporary shelters in reaching well-informed decisions concerning their futures, including the possibility of a voluntary return home.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT COMMON SERVICE