

## **Karuna Mission Social Solidarity: How collaboration among Caritas Internationalis member organizations led to improved institutional development and capacity strengthening**

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Participants of 1st KMSS Partners' Meeting, Yangon, 2013. Charles Cin Lam Thawn/KMSS.

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

With this report, Caritas Internationalis Member Organizations aim to highlight how collaboration amongst Caritas agencies has led to enhanced effectiveness and efficiency of institutional development and capacity strengthening efforts of Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS) in Myanmar.

Caritas Internationalis Member Organizations (MOs) are committed to joint and better synergized institutional development and capacity strengthening of local Caritas members. CAFOD, Catholic Relief Services, Caritas Australia and Trócaire are also dedicated to joint institutional development and capacity strengthening and support for the implementation of the Caritas Internationalis Management Standards (CI MS) in Myanmar (and three other countries<sup>1</sup>). In 2013, at the request of the local Caritas, executive directors from these four MOs renewed their agreement on humanitarian collaboration, and expanded it to encompass other areas, including better coordination of support for CI MS and capacity strengthening efforts. Subsequently, a letter was sent to Myanmar-based country directors or their equivalents from CAFOD, CRS, Caritas Australia and Trócaire, encouraging them to enhance in-country coordination in capacity strengthening and cost sharing, at their discretion in accordance with the local context.

KMSS is committed to its institutional development and capacity strengthening and puts significant effort into its organizational growth. KMSS drives its own institutional development and capacity strengthening process and owns the results, and the organization successfully establishes, manages and maintains strong partnerships with MOs and non-Caritas Internationalis partners.

This report reflects on the experience of KMSS leadership, Caritas Australia, CAFOD, CRS and Trócaire in KMSS institutional development and capacity strengthening. Each MO separately provides the institutional development and capacity strengthening support to KMSS per their identified and prioritized capacity needs. For this purpose, different capacity assessments were conducted (described below). However, to support KMSS to address the capacity needs prioritized effectively and efficiently, the MOs discuss and try to coordinate the institutional development and capacity strengthening initiatives via monthly coordination meetings and a KMSS annual partner meeting. Additionally, there are cases of joint funding and institutional development and capacity strengthening activities by two or more MOs.

Both the management (e.g., financial management) and programmatic capacity (e.g., emergency response and inclusive education) of KMSS are strengthened, due to institutional development and capacity

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1 Nepal, Zimbabwe and Malawi



KMSS staff recording beneficiary details for food rations during 2015 floods in Patheingyi Diocese. Tommy Trechard/Caritas.

strengthening and the application of the CI MS. To highlight a few successes of intra-agency collaboration in Myanmar, this report is limited to the work done in the management capacity to show the improvements in internal organizational systems and process and staff competencies (e.g., in financial management and human resource management). However, it is worth noting that MOs, jointly and separately, supported KMSS to build capacity in many programming technical areas (e.g., WASH, shelter and protection).

## II. BACKGROUND

Karuna Mission Social Solidarity was established and is mandated by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar (CBCM) as its social arm to serve the poor and the needy, inspired by the Catholic Social Teaching principle of "Option for the Poor". KMSS is organized with a national office located in Yangon, and 16 diocesan offices. The national office was established in September 2001. KMSS offices have been established in each diocese since the 1990s in line with the structure of the Catholic Church of Myanmar. A major strength of KMSS is its extensive network. As the dioceses work in all the 14 states/regions of Myanmar, they are able to reach out to the often neglected and out of reach vulnerable communities and families.

KMSS is a registered local nongovernmental organization and today is a confident network of 16 dioceses that is very well positioned to take on the challenges and opportunities in Myanmar. Projects are being implemented in 111 townships, covering more than 2,000 villages and reaching about 350,000 beneficiaries. KMSS has support from 67 different donors who supported 182 projects in 2015-16, with an annual budget of over \$17 million USD. These projects can be categorized into seven sectors: humanitarian; emergency response and disaster risk reduction; livelihoods; education; social protection; health and organizational development.

KMSS began its internal institutional development and capacity strengthening process many years ago, before the CI MS program was launched in 2014. Different Caritas Internationalis, and Catholic International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity (CIDSE)

members, including CAFOD, CRS, Trócaire and Caritas Australia, were engaged in KMSS' institutional development and capacity strengthening to address different capacity areas, such as financial management, strategic planning, program design, based on the needs identified and prioritized by KMSS. The ongoing intentional institutional development and capacity strengthening efforts by KMSS prepared it for the successful launch of the CI MS. Some aspects of the intra-agency collaboration in the KMSS institutional development and capacity strengthening process, results and lessons learned/ recommendations are outlined below.

### III. PROCESS OF INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

#### 1. CAPACITY ASSESSMENTS:

Participation of KMSS leadership in Caritas Asia regional meetings on CI MS, and communication from the CI MS team in the CI General Secretariat, helped KMSS to better understand the CI MS and their contribution to the internal institutional development and capacity strengthening process. In 2014, KMSS conducted a self-assessment by using the CI MS self-assessment tool. This assessment was initiated and fully administrated by KMSS<sup>2</sup>. The self-assessment results showed that 53 percent of KMSS offices have some good financial practices, but also have plenty of room for improvement, while 47 percent of KMSS network offices are at a high-risk level.

However, several assessments were conducted by KMSS and CI partners before the CI MS self-assessment, to identify capacity strengths and gaps. For example:

- CAFOD, CRS and Trócaire, carried out separate finance system assessments of the KMSS national office and some of the diocesan offices for their project funding purposes and helped KMSS identify areas for improvement.
- Back in 2014, CIDSE initiated the process of a 'listening survey' and Caritas Australia facilitated a workshop with KMSS to discuss the results of the survey and identify ways to improve coordination of the institutional development and capacity strengthening activities in Myanmar. KMSS identified CIDSE field visits for monitoring as an area of the coordination that is working well. The areas for improved coordination mentioned were: advocacy, unified presence of positioning and stronger thematic focus. The assessment results also contributed to KMSS and MOs deciding to prioritize the financial management and human resource management institutional development and capacity strengthening efforts in Myanmar.
- Secours Catholique/Caritas France took a wider approach by reviewing the consolidated audited report, annual report and one of the diocesan office's s finance reports and recommending system strengthening activities.

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<sup>2</sup> The KMSS national office accomplished CI MS self-assessment on all 32 articles, while the 15 diocesan offices completed the six articles of the highest priority that must have a minimum score of 3.

- CRS supported KMSS national office to complete the Learning Needs and Resources Assessment in Monitoring and Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) for key diocesan office and national office staff.
- To develop its strategy for 2016-2018, KMSS engaged an external consultant<sup>3</sup> to carry out the review and reflection of the 2012-2015 strategy<sup>4</sup>.

## 2. KMSS PROPOSED INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY STRENGTHENING PLAN

Based on the results of the CI MS self-assessment and the findings of the earlier assessments and guided by the KMSS Strategic Plan (2012-2015), the leadership of the KMSS Board of Directors developed an institutional development and capacity strengthening proposal - *KMSS Institutional Development: The Financial Management Policy and Human Resource Management Policy Making and Implementation*. Again, this proposal was underpinned by the extensive preliminary institutional development and capacity strengthening work conducted by KMSS in the area of financial and human resource management improvement with the support of Caritas Australia, CRS and CAFOD. The institutional development and capacity strengthening proposal emphasized the need to systematize KMSS work across Myanmar by building strong financial management and human resource management. After submitting this proposal to CI/CIDSE partners in 2015, KMSS received financial support from a few MOs to implement the three aspects of this proposal: financial management, human resource management and the information management system, the key areas endorsed by the KMSS Board of Directors and CBCM for the sake of stronger and more robust service delivery in Myanmar.

## 3. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY STRENGTHENING PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

KMSS identified capacity priorities for 2014-2017, reflected in the proposal discussed above: financial and human resource management policy drafting and system strengthening as well as improvement of the information management system. Here are some of the activities implemented and achievements made through the recent *KMSS Institutional Development: The Financial Management Policy and Human Resource Management Policy Making and Implementation* project, which is possible thanks to the pooled funding from Secours Catholique/Caritas France, CAFOD, Caritas Austria, MISEREOR and CRS<sup>5</sup>:

### FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT (ACCOMPANIMENT, CAPACITY BUILDING AND FUNDING PROVIDED BY CARITAS AUSTRALIA, CRS, TRÓCAIRE, CAFOD AND CRS<sup>6</sup>)

- A finance policy was developed with the support of the external consultants and a working group established by KMSS.
- CBCM approved the updated KMSS' financial management policy and encouraged KMSS to go forward with operationalization.

<sup>3</sup> KMSS used its reserve funds for strategy development.

<sup>4</sup> This was the first KMSS strategy document.

<sup>5</sup> The total funding is about USD \$170,000 and the project will end in mid-2017.

<sup>6</sup> And other MOs.

- The KMSS national office has launched the finance policy roll out to all 17 network offices. This includes the policy orientation to all diocesan and national office staff.
- The finance staff from the KMSS national office and diocesan offices received basic financial management training with the Mango organization's guide and CI MS guidelines.
- KMSS provided the Mango organization's training and QuickBooks software orientation for all directors from KMSS network offices.
- The national office supported capacity building for diocesan finance staff in finance software, common finance formats, monthly reporting, consolidated financial report, etc.

#### ***HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (ACCOMPANIMENT, CAPACITY BUILDING AND FUNDING PROVIDED BY CARITAS AUSTRALIA, CAFOD AND CRS<sup>7</sup>)***

- Human resource policy drafts<sup>8</sup> were created with the support of external consultants and a working group established by the KMSS.
- CBCM approved the updated KMSS' human resource management policy and encouraged KMSS to move forward with operationalization.
- The human resource policy has been adopted by the national office.
- Orientation on KMSS' new human resource policy was conducted for the national office.
- In the national office, the human resource department was created to provide support to both national offices and diocesan offices human resource related matters.
- The performance development appraisal system of KMSS national office staff has been initiated and the first round of appraisal development plans has been completed. The human resource manager reviewed the staff performance appraisal process and provided feedback to the national office director.
- The new salary scheme has been applied by the national office in 2016 and includes the incremental process.

#### ***MEAL AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (ACCOMPANIMENT, CAPACITY BUILDING AND FUNDING PROVIDED BY CRS, TRÓCAIRE AND CARITAS AUSTRALIA)***

- Standardized tools for MEAL across all KMSS network offices were created.
- KMSS' profile on the KMSS website was updated and uploaded and shared with the Myanmar Information Management Unit.
- KMSS established a MEAL Community of Practice.

<sup>7</sup> And other MOs.

<sup>8</sup> Human resources consultant and national human resource manager conducted the comprehensive Staff Survey in 2015 as a baseline data, which contributed to drafting the KMSS human resource policy.

- KMSS developed MEAL manuals.
- The KMSS national office hired a MEAL manager and officer and all diocesan offices have at least one MEAL staff.
- KMSS provided input into the Myanmar Information Management Unit for the three diocesan offices.

#### *HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE (ACCOMPANIMENT, CAPACITY BUILDING AND FUNDING PROVIDED BY CAFOD, CARITAS AUSTRALIA AND CRS)*

- The Humanitarian Capacity Assessment was conducted across 10 dioceses and the national office.
- KMSS developed the Network's Humanitarian Policy.
- The KMSS national office is rolling out the Humanitarian Capacity Development project across two diocesan offices.
- Based on the request from KMSS and CAFOD, CRS will provide capacity building for emergency leadership (as well as in technical areas such as shelter).

#### *STRATEGIC PLANNING (ACCOMPANIMENT, CAPACITY BUILDING AND FUNDING PROVIDED BY CAFOD, CARITAS AUSTRALIA AND CRS)*

- 2012-2015 National Strategy was reviewed and reflected upon.
- KMSS Network's Strategy 2016-2018 was developed.
- KMSS developed indicators for the strategy and established evidence-based result tracking system at national and diocesan levels.

Apart from these institutional development and capacity strengthening activities implemented as a result of intra-agency collaboration, Caritas Australia and CAFOD have co-funded the Program Development Adviser seconded to KMSS. Among others, the adviser accompanies the KMSS in the following ways:

- Supports the institutional and organizational change as outlined in the Strategic Plan.
- Assists the Director of the national office in building and maintaining relationships with the national office/ diocesan offices, CI/CIDSE, donor community, other funding partners, nongovernmental organizations partners, and government to maintain comprehensive understanding and coordination of programming.

Along with the above institutional development and capacity strengthening activities, the KMSS national office is working to strengthen administration and logistics systems as part of its strategic objective of "Professionalization of KMSS Network"<sup>9</sup>. Trócaire specifically provides support in procurement and supply chain management.

<sup>9</sup> This sub-component includes: (i) procurement policy and systems; (ii) asset management system; (iii) capacity building of admin/logistics staff of diocesan offices; and (iv) building mentoring and support group for admin/log staff across the network.





KMSS transporting food rations during 2015 floods in Patheingyi Diocese.  
Tommy Trechard/Caritas.

#### IV. FUTURE INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY STRENGTHENING PLANS

Thanks to the KMSS and its partners' successful implementation of the institutional development and capacity strengthening efforts, KMSS is able to attract more support for its organizational growth. KMSS is keen to comply with all CI MS and looks for the ways to improve various prioritized capacity needs. Here are some examples of achievements by KMSS which demonstrate it is a strong organization committed to its growth, mission and vision.

CAFOD, Caritas Australia, CRS and Caritas Switzerland funded a "Finance Accompaniment" project (starting from May 2017), which will help strengthen finance management across the network, namely accounting and financial reporting aspects of the KMSS Finance policy.

In 2017, the Strategic Partnership for Civil Society Empowerment (SPaCE) project provided a big boost to institutional development and capacity strengthening of KMSS. KMSS was successful in winning this award from LIFT, a Myanmar based multi-donor trust fund for livelihoods managed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), from May 2017 to June 2019. This project strengthens the CI MS implementation in the following ways:

- Component One aims to achieve three specific objectives: (i) leadership and management capacity development; (ii) strengthening KMSS governance mechanisms; and (iii) system strengthening.
- Component Two: KMSS will continue to scale up the efforts in the MEAL strengthening process.
- Component Three: KMSS Network will improve its engagement with other civil society organization actors to use its accumulated program knowledge and evidence to influence systemic change in key policies for the benefit of the rural poor and remove major policy barriers to growth.

## V. LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### LESSONS LEARNED:

Here KMSS, Caritas Australia, CAFOD, Trócaire and CRS share the highlights of the lessons learned concerning the collaboration amongst Caritas agencies that has led to enhanced effectiveness and efficiency of institutional development and capacity strengthening efforts of KMSS in Myanmar.

- *The support and commitment of the organization's governance to the institutional development and capacity strengthening is key for its success:* All key institutional development and capacity strengthening proposals were taken to the Board of Directors and Steering Committee for their review and approval. They were very positive and appreciative about the institutional development and capacity strengthening initiatives.
- *The leading role of the National Director is key for the success of institutional development and capacity strengthening:* The on-going institutional development and capacity strengthening processes have been strongly internalized within the KMSS network's leadership and the KMSS national director is spearheading this. The KMSS national director has been inclusive by engaging all 16 directors and senior managers of the national office at various stages of the institutional development and capacity strengthening, e.g., capacity assessments and prioritization of the capacity needs. He is proactive, creative and openly communicates with the staff and partners.
- *Ongoing organizational development ensures the organization's readiness to apply new systems and standards, if necessary, and ability to be compliant with the new standards and requirements, if applicable:* KMSS was among the first MOs in the confederation that proactively and enthusiastically launched the CI MS and works towards the full compliance. It is one of the rare MOs which applied the CI MS to the diocesan level, which is not a requirement of the CI MS.
- *Member Organizations' joint support of the institutional development and capacity strengthening yields better results:* For example, CAFOD and Caritas Australia have jointly supported the secondment of staff to KMSS; CAFOD and CRS contributed to the finance, human resource and M&E policy drafting process; and CAFOD and Caritas Australia have funded the drafting of the humanitarian policy. The achievements of these efforts are highlighted above.
- *Member Organizations taking on the leading role in support of specific institutional development and capacity strengthening activities results in clear roles and responsibilities among those engaged in the institutional development and capacity strengthening:* For example, CRS is taking the lead for MEAL support; CAFOD leads the roll-out of the humanitarian policy.
- *Regular follow up and timely fulfilment of commitments in institutional development and capacity strengthening by the MOs (and other engaged) is essential.*



- *Having regular country-level MOs coordination meetings is very helpful to prevent overlap, double-funding of the same activities, follow up on progress and early identification of gaps.*
- *KMSS should be given more opportunities to fully drive and own its institutional development and capacity strengthening supported by the partners:* despite on-going dialogue with KMSS on the capacity needs, priorities and institutional development and capacity strengthening, regular MOs coordination meetings<sup>10</sup> and annual KMSS partners' meeting, there seems to be a disconnect between KMSS and CAFOD, CRS, Caritas Australia and Trócaire as an intra-agency group as far as the joint and collaborative institutional development and capacity strengthening is concerned. KMSS feels it has been a bit out of the conversation that the intra-agency group is having about KMSS' institutional development and capacity strengthening.
- *All institutional development and capacity strengthening efforts should be put in one big picture:* even though there are efforts by CAFOD, CRS, Caritas Australia and Trócaire to regularly and openly communicate and coordinate the institutional development and capacity strengthening activities, including the capacity improvement in programming areas such as mine risk education, some of the institutional development and capacity strengthening activities are often fragmented. The MOs institutional development and capacity strengthening efforts should align with the KMSS strategic plan, ongoing institutional development and capacity strengthening activities and the CI MS initiatives, to also be supported by the SPaCE project. KMSS should take the lead in ensuring that capacity building efforts fit with the KMSS strategic plan.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. All parties engaged in KMSS' institutional development and capacity strengthening support KMSS to integrate and synergize institutional development and capacity strengthening efforts with the CI MS and SPaCE project.
2. As the institutional development and capacity strengthening process moves forward, document the KMSS commitments, roles and responsibilities. It may be worthwhile to include some institutional development and capacity strengthening benchmarks from KMSS including (e.g., a certain percentage of the overall budget allocated, benchmarks in the strategic plan with timelines, etc.).
3. Provide the opportunity to KMSS to chair the quarterly review meetings held among Myanmar based MOs.
4. Develop a mechanism to align the work of intra-agency group and other MOs in Myanmar with the six- monthly "Steering Committee" meetings of SPaCE project, which will be focusing on CI MS related issues.

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<sup>10</sup> In-country MO meetings have a rotating chair and host. Meetings are held in each agency office on a rotating basis, and KMSS is part of that rotation.

5. Support KMSS to conduct the annual comprehensive review of its institutional development and capacity strengthening process at the end of the calendar year, to be able to reflect on the findings during the KMSS CI Partners Annual Meeting scheduled for every February.

Recommendations will be revisited in a year's time, so that change brought about as a result of these recommendations can be demonstrated.

## ANNEX 1

### SNAPSHOT OF INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY STRENGTHENING SUPPORT PROVIDED BY CARITAS AUSTRALIA, CAFOD, CRS AND TRÓCAIRE

CI Partner	Finance Management		
	Funds	Technical advice/ Capacity building/ provision of tools/Accompaniment	Secondment
C. Australia			X
CAFOD	X	X	
CRS	X	X	
Trócaire	X	X	
Other (MOs, NGOs, etc.)	X		

CI Partner	Human Resources Management		
	Funds	Technical advice/ Capacity building/ provision of tools/Accompaniment	Secondment
C. Australia			X
CAFOD	X		
CRS	X		
Trócaire			
Other (MOs, NGOs, etc.)	X		

CI Partner	Monitoring and Evaluation		
	Funds	Technical advice/ Capacity building/ provision of tools/Accompaniment	Secondment
C. Australia			X
CAFOD		X	
CRS	X	X	
Trócaire	X	X	
Other (MOs, NGOs, etc.)			

CI Partner	Humanitarian Response		
	Funds	Technical advice/ Capacity building/ provision of tools/Accompaniment	Secondment
C. Australia	X	X	X
CAFOD	X	X	X
CRS	X	X	
Trócaire	X	X	
Other (MOs, NGOs, etc.)			

