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HUMANITARIAN ACTION



STRUCTURED DIALOGUE REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS REPORT Bangkok

Cecilia Roselli, September 2015

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Regional Structured Dialogue Consultation – Bangkok September 2015

Executive Summary

A joint ICVA-UNHCR Regional Structured Dialogue consultation was held in Bangkok on 22 September 2015 to follow-up on the implementation of the High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue on UNHCR-IFRC-NGO Partnership. The goal of this consultation was to evaluate the state of UNHCR-NGO partnerships in Asia and to support actions for further partnership strengthening and complementarity.

Information sharing, capacity strengthening, advocacy and joint planning together with urban settings were the areas identified by participants as priorities and in need for further improvement.

All participants to the consultation, including UNHCR representatives, further showed a great commitment in enhancing partnership and identified key recommendations per each priority areas. In particular the following actions have been agreed upon to be taken forward:

Information sharing:

- Ensure an appropriate mailing list of partners is created to share UNHCR sit-reps in order to disseminate information more efficiently taking advantage of existing networks for information sharing (APRRN).

Advocacy:

- UNHCR will share with NGOs the “white paper” currently being drafted building on the outcomes of the Special Meeting on irregular migration held on 29 May 2015. The white paper will include a status update on all recommendations and related action plan and will offer a great opportunity to follow up on a joint advocacy initiative.

Capacity Strengthening

- Actors are invited to pool resources together to promote a 360° approach to capacity strengthening; UNHCR to consider the integration of capacity building into grant management and look in the near future into the opportunity to start funding capacity building organic efforts of NGOs targeting in particular local actors.

Urban Settings

- To enhance awareness and understanding of UNHCR's Urban Refugee Policy, NGOs are invited to solicit inclusion of trainings and awareness sessions at country level in UNHCR next year COPs (Country Operation Plans).

Joint planning

- All actors are encouraged to increase the use of UNHCR participatory assessment as a tool for integrating refugees and local actors' needs and opinions into joint response planning;
- Ensure information sharing properly announcing call for consultations related to operational planning

Way forward

ICVA and UNCHR jointly engage in following up the implementation of these actions in the next months.

Background

The Structured Dialogue (SD) Regional consultation held in Bangkok in September 2015 came as part of the follow-up to the High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue on partnership with NGOs and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, which was initiated in 2011 to review and strengthen partnership. ICVA¹ and Interaction co-facilitate the roll-out of the Structured Dialogue with UNHCR since 2013.

The goal of the consultation was to facilitate a discussion among partners on their experiences working together, to review partnership approaches, strengthen mechanisms and identify opportunities for better collaboration.

Since the launch of the Structured Dialogue process 3 country field missions have been jointly realized by ICVA, Interaction and UNHCR in Pakistan, DRC and Kenya to promote the dialogue between UNHCR and NGOs at country level.

This Regional consultation builds in particular on the outcomes of a previous regional consultation held in Bangkok in 2013 and a recent regional consultation held in Dakar in December 2014.

Methodology

The Consultation has been organized around two workshops, one focusing specifically on the Structured Dialogue follow up - held on the 22 September - and the other – held on 23 September - concentrating on two specific protection themes identified jointly with UNHCR: Protection at Sea and Statelessness.² The two-days discussions are interlinked but each maintained its independent focus hence are reported separately.

Ahead of the Structured Dialogue workshop every participant was asked to fill a pre-questionnaire exploring if there were improvements in information sharing, advocacy, joint planning and funds managements over the past two years. An average of 36% of the respondents registered an improvement in those areas.

Only 54% of the respondents were aware of the Structured Dialogue process while 13% did not know about it and the remaining 31% had a limited knowledge and understanding. Nonetheless at the beginning of the workshop around 90% of participants felt committed to better NGO- UNHCR partnership processes.

The workshop was a combination of plenary but interactive sessions and smaller group discussions. UNHCR and ICVA introduced the Structured dialogue and provided an overview of global updates in terms of partnership in plenary sessions. Participants were then invited to identify key priority areas to focus on and divided into small working groups. As in previous SD workshops the group discussions were led by four questions: "what is working well," "what is working less well", "what are the opportunities for complementarity" and "identify one or two follow-up actions." The results - recommendations and suggested actions - are listed below.

¹ ICVA is a global network of NGOs offering a platform for increased collaboration and coordination between NGOs and other humanitarian actors (www.icvanetwork.org)

² A detailed report on the second workshop is available on ICVA website

Participation

The SD workshop was attended by 37 participants including National and International NGOs coming from 8 different countries, Regional and national NGO networks, UNHCR representatives from the Regional Office (5) and from the Thailand Country Office (1). Attendees actively participated in the discussion both in plenary and during the working groups. For more details on attendees see Annex 2.

Regional SD Consultations are seen as very useful and relevant if linked to the protection themes of concern in the region. Participants welcomed the choice of having an interlinked discussion on protection at sea and statelessness the following day.

Plenary Sessions

- Introduction to the Dialogue

In his opening remarks UNHCR Assistant Regional Representative for Protection, Alistair Bulton, welcomed participants highlighting that coordination with “private voluntary organizations”, is part of the DNA of UNHCR and invited all to an open minded and sincere exchange to jointly identify concrete ideas for improvement.

ICVA introduced the Structured Dialogue providing an update on the process and explained the importance for all involved actors to engage in reviewing regularly the quality of the partnership.

Consistent with findings in the DRC, Pakistan and more recently in Kenya, participants indicated limited awareness of the recommendations to strengthen partnership made through the Structured Dialogue. A refresher of the 10 recommendations was provided by ICVA including reference to recent updates related to each recommendation (e.g. draft guidance note on capacity strengthening and plans for strategically operationalize it). While explaining the link between the 10 recommendations and the Principles of Partnership³, which provide the building blocks within the relationship, ICVA stressed the power of principled partnerships in the lead up to the World Humanitarian Summit.

- Overview of UNHCR partnership work at global level

UNHCR Assistant Regional Representative for Operations, Kazutoshi Nagasaka updated the audience on recent developments in terms of operational management of partners making reference to the Enhanced Framework for Implementing with partners and to the newly introduced Partner Portal (www.partner.unhcr.org).

The Partner Portal is a web-based tool that will allow – when fully operational- improved information sharing on prospective and exiting partners, facilitating understanding of UNHCR policies and procedures in terms of grant agreements and related management.

For example:

- NGOs/CSOs who are interested in working with UNHCR can now register online by indicating their geographic coverage and by describing the areas of work in which the organization operates.

³ Equality, transparency, result-oriented approach, responsibility, and complementarity (<https://icvanetwork.org/icvapop-campaign>)

- Partner portal provides information on how UNHCR selects partners at the country operations level
- Agencies with Partnership Agreements (and those that do not have) are encouraged to register with the website in order to be eligible to submit proposals to implement projects in partnership with UNHCR.

Mr. Nagasaka further indicates that there is potential for the portal to be used for trainings in the future. UNHCR has organized in Asia in the past month dedicated workshops to update partners and UNHCR staff on recent changes and improvements introduced to manage the partnership.⁴ Few NGOs present were aware of recent developments and changes introduced through what is called the UNHCR Enhanced Framework for Implementing with partners and more opportunities to increase knowledge and understanding were advocated for by many participants.

UNHCR has in the past years made efforts to work more closely in partnership with national and local NGOs and in sharing information on its operations.

Mr. Nagasaka reiterated that UNHCR has been working with partners since it first began helping the forcibly displaced in the early 1950s and the agency sees this partnership as the best way to ensure that the basic needs of refugees and populations of concern are met. The Structured Dialogue should provide an opportunity for UNHCR and its partners to increase understanding of the aspirational elements of how we want to work together, but more importantly, improve our understanding of how we translate our aspirations into our day-to-day operations.

This session saw very active participation - attendees seemed eager to voice their expectations and current concerns with the partnership, as it related to them and their organizations. In particular many participants highlighted that despite the efforts of UNHCR in building partnership at global level, there is a lack of information sharing and limited mutual trust, particularly at local/national level.

Way forward

- UNHCR encourages NGOs to proactively seek out ways to communicate their partnership challenges and suggests discussing their experiences with the Implementing Partner Management Section for Country Operations based in Geneva if NGO partners feel that the country office is not responsive to their concerns;
- Partners suggested increasing information sharing and learning opportunities on recent improvements in terms of partnership management (Enhanced Framework for Implementing with Partners);
- Structured Dialogue country missions (like the one planned in Myanmar for December 2015) offer an additional forum to address concerns regarding country specific operations.

Discussion on priority areas

1. Information Sharing

⁴ More information on the partner portal as well as on latest developments in terms of UNHCR Enhanced Framework for Implementing with partners can be found at : <https://icvanetwork.org/unhcrs-enhanced-framework-implementing-partners>

The majority of groups identified information sharing as an area in need for particular attention.

Works well: the majority of participants agreed that there is a lot of information available and relevant information at global level is distributed well.

Not so well: despite the amount of information available – this is not always contextualized or tailored nor user-friendly. In addition there are too many platforms and channels of communication with no clear identification of focal points per agency resulting in lack of coordination between these tools. Relevant information at regional level is not percolating to the field.

➤ **Recommendations and proposed actions**

- Create a single platform for networks to share information or reinvigorate existing ones, improving existing databases;
- Invest in improving the quality of the information shared making it more user-friendly and identify mechanisms to flag importance;
- Identify clear focal points to receive and manage information within the different agencies;
- UNHCR commits to share the Sit Reps in order to disseminate information more efficiently. APRRN will assemble a list of NGOs active on maritime movement issues and UNHCR will include APRRN in this list to ensure further reach out and for potential capacity strengthening/peer-to-peer support on strategic litigation.

2. Advocacy

Most participants identified advocacy as a key area of concern, in particular in relation to the protection at sea and statelessness issues.

Works well: There is a general agreement on theoretical principles at every level, which contributes to a positive atmosphere and general feeling of working towards the same positive goals. Successful advocacy strategies do exist in the region, despite the unfavorable circumstances; There are many strong and well-established networks of civil societies in the region, in particular in South Asia; there is a great public interest in humanitarian issues and global media are invested in raising awareness.

Not so well: Governments in general lack engagement and are quite slow to implement political solutions that address the root causes. Despite engagement from many actors in recent advocacy efforts there is limited follow up to initiatives (e.g. advocacy related to the Special meeting on Irregular migration in the Indian Ocean – 29 May 2015).

Evidence based advocacy, especially from grass root level is poor (if any) due – amongst other things- to limited access to information at that level.

➤ **Recommendations and proposed actions**

- Use regional mechanisms to address issues and ensure follow up on initiatives conducted identifying one organization or institution to follow up on behalf of stakeholders: With reference to the Special Meeting on irregular migration held on 29 May and related action plan UNHCR will share with NGOs the “white paper” currently being drafted. The white paper built around information on access, recommendations, search and rescue, legal strategies and root causes will include

a status update on all recommendations and related action plan and will offer a great opportunity to follow up on a joint advocacy initiative;

- Continue to take advantage of existing advocacy opportunities as they present themselves (NGOs to explore ways to input into the High Commissioner Dialogue on Root causes⁵);
- Small and local NGOs have a better chance of establishing trust within local communities, especially among community leaders and invest – also through UNHCR- in supporting these organizations;
- Identify opportunities for peer-to-peer learning focused on evidence-based advocacy and reaching out to local organizations (APRRN can conduct basic mapping to connect organizations and individuals).

3. Capacity Strengthening

Several NGOs identified capacity strengthening as a key area to improve partnership with UNHCR. The discussion in the group was held building on the draft guidance note on capacity strengthening issued by UNHCR after consultation with a group of NGOs and network representatives.

Works well: Trainings are being made increasingly more available and sustainable models of how to build the capacity of NGOs already exist. Common platforms, task forces, and national networks for information sharing, emergency response, disaster preparedness, etc. have improved the capacity to share resources, skills, and technical expertise.

Not so well: Capacity strengthening is not only trainings. There is a need to adopt a full circle/360 degree approach targeting a wide range of actors and making resources available to all levels and interested parties. Participants highlighted the need to understand the information that is already there and find a way to get that information to the target audience connecting existing resources to the actors that need it the most. One of the points of concern raised was how to follow up on those trainings, measure their effectiveness and make sure they contribute strengthening of capacity and knowledge for effective policy changing.

- **Recommendations and proposed actions**
- NGO networks/platforms, including APRRN, should start mapping existing initiatives and expand to address capacity gaps through increased networking and information sharing promoting a 360° approach to capacity strengthening;
- Actors are invited to pool resources together, consolidating efforts and replicating sustainable models of capacity strengthening of NGOs;
- UNHCR to consider the integration of capacity building into grant management and look in the near future into the opportunity to start funding capacity building organic efforts of NGOs targeting in particular local actors;
- Strengthen interaction between INGOs, NNGOS and local CBOs to build mutual greater understanding and further engage local communities.

⁵ ICVA has established an NGO working group called « friends of the dialogue » -- for more information on how to engage with this group : [icvanetwork/forced displacement](https://www.icvanetwork.org/forced-displacement)

4. Urban Settings

A small group of NGOs indicated interest in improving partnership in urban settings.

Works well: participants acknowledged that there are regular meetings and some degree of coordination in terms of urban refugees. UNHCR has recently initiated reviewing domestic laws relating to urban population (refugees and migrants).

Not so well: Despite the positive achievements NGOs face some challenges in terms of coordination amongst organizations, including UNHCR, sometimes resulting in overlaps of activities and more often in lack of information. Limited cooperation from the authorities and uneven knowledge amongst partners and local stakeholders on the UNHCR's Urban Refugee Policy were listed are areas in which further improvement is needed.

Actors continue to work in silos with a strict focus on their respective areas of interest: migrants, refugees or victim of trafficking. Sometimes the lack of understanding and proper use of clear definitions of refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and trafficked persons, brings frustration and complexity. More flexibility in working with local, grass roots and sometimes unregistered NGOs, working in urban settings is needed.

- **Recommendations and proposed actions**

- Increased awareness and understanding of UNHCR's Urban Refugee Policy to enhance communication/advocacy with government by local partners. NGOs to solicit inclusion of trainings and awareness sessions at country level in UNHCR next year COPs.
- Explore intersections between migrants, trafficked persons, and refugees to allow for potential new partnerships and stimulate organizations working on these separate but overlapping issues to potentially work together;
- Consider introducing more flexible and innovative management tools to support CBOs or unregistered NGOs to expand the role of CBOs and service providing organizations
- Encourage further think-tank discussion about migration, forced migration, cross-cutting issues and needs (actor: APRRN)

5. Joint Planning

Several participants pointed to the importance of focusing on better coordinated response and preparedness hence priority for the discussion was given to Joint Planning.

What works well: There are successful model of joint crisis management and field level coordination in emergencies exist. Partners are more involved in UNHCR planning mechanisms compared to the past.

Not so well: Despite efforts made in joint planning there is still lack of coordination in the response (e.g. when mapping exercises are conducted who is responsible for avoiding overlapping?) and, as many participants pointed out, people of concern and local actors

are not necessarily involved in the planning process. In some countries there are also barriers to local government involvement that needs to be overcome.

- **Recommendations and proposed actions**

- Include local actors and refugees and other people of concern in the planning process; UNHCR participatory assessment can be a tool for integrating refugees and local actors' needs and opinions into joint response planning;
- Ensure information sharing properly announcing call for consultations related to operational planning (COPs) including, when possible, local decision-makers in government hosting refugee communities.

Conclusions

All participants concurred on the value of continuing the engagement, in particular at country level, in the roll-out and promotion of the Structured Dialogue with the aim of improving the quality of partnership.

Despite the knowledge and understanding of the principles of partnership and SD recommendations amongst the actors involved in the dialogue, it remains relevant to recall them and make reference to their day to day implementation.

Building on the positive experience of linking the Regional Consultation to a specific protection theme it is recommended in the future to institutionalize this link between the Regional Structured Dialogue consultations and the HC Protection Dialogue themes.

Annex 1 – Agenda

Time	Agenda	Lead Facilitator
9:00 – 9:30	Registration of participants Participants are requested to fill the pre-evaluation questionnaire before the beginning of the workshop. Results are read	
9:30- 9:50	Welcoming Remarks Goal of this structured dialogue to review and improve understanding and approaches to collaboration and partnership - looking forward into 2016. Partnership priorities and challenges of UNHCR in Region/country	UNHCR
9:50-10:15	Introductions and Agenda	ICVA
10:15-10:30	Outcomes and goals of the Structured Dialogues to date; Outline follow-up taking place (ppt presentation of Update as of June 2015)	ICVA
10:30-10:45	Coffee break	
10:45-11:00	Overview of UNHCR's Partnership work at global level UNHCR's Partnership goals and priorities globally; our rationale for Structured Dialogue and commitment to its follow-up; need to translate partnership principles into practice; learning from the field; constructive participation and investment in partnership needed from all sides; good practice available! Share results of the pre-evaluation	UNHCR
11:00-11:30	Discussion of relevance of SD & partnership principles in practice Partnership priorities for 2016. Participants write down on post it which one(s) – among the 10 recommendations – are the priority, in terms of gaps and need for improvement. The top 3 to 4 (according to number of participants and preference) will be discussed in small groups	ICVA
11:30-12:30	Small Group Discussions - Taking stock of country level partnerships Review country level partnerships, what is going well and not so well (and why?) and what can be done to improve. What are key complementarities of roles in both advocacy and implementation and how to better leverage these.	ICVA & UNHCR
12:30-13:00	Group report-back and discussion	ICVA & UNHCR
13:00-14:00	Lunch	
14:00-15:00	Small Group Discussions – Taking stock of regional partnerships and setting goals Review regional level partnership, what is going well and not so well (and why?) and what can be done to improve. Identify key goals and impact of the regional partnership and ways in which this can be leveraged to better influence governments and key actors and serve populations in the region	ICVA & UNHCR
15:00-15:30	Group report-back and discussion	ICVA & UNHCR
15:30-15:45	Break	
15:45-	Conclusions and way forward Evaluation/ reflection on this Dialogue – useful? What mechanism(s) to	ICVA

16:15	follow-up on this Dialogue and check in on progress in improving partnership.	& UNHCR
16:15- 16:45	Overview of the next two days Protection at Sea and Statelessness in the region will be explored with emphasis on how to improve working together to reinforce gathering, analysis and sharing of information and how as a collective actors can meet information campaign needs for aware raising in source, transit and destination countries.	ICVA

Annex 2 – List of participants

	Name	Organization
1.	Adam Royston	Church World Service (CWS) Regional Office
2.	Alistair Boulton	UNHCR – UN Refugee Agency
3.	Allison Zerkowitz	Save the Children
4.	Altafur Rahman	Human Security Alliance (HSA)
5.	Amihan Abueva	Child Rights Coalition Asia
6.	Anoop Sukumaran	ACT Alliance
7.	Ashok Gladston Xavier Gnanapragasam	Organisation for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation (OfERR)
8.	Cecilia Roselli	International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)
9.	Chit Ko Ko Oo	Myittar Resource Foundation (MRF)
10.	Chris Lewa	Arakan Project
11.	Christopher Horwood	Danish Refugee Council (DRC) Horn of Africa & Yemen office
12.	Evan Jones	Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN)
13.	Geraldine Chin	Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)
14.	Gopal Krishna Siwakoti	INHURED International, Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN)
15.	Helen Brunt	Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN)
16.	Hermanto Hasan	Geutanyoe Foundation
17.	Imran Laghari	Human Rights Alliance
18.	Jane Calder	Save the Children
19.	James Munn	International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)
20.	Jessica Darby	International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)
21.	Julia Mayerhofer	Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN)
22.	Katrien Denys	Mercy Malaysia
23.	Kazutoshi Nagasaka	UNHCR – UN Refugee Agency

24.	Keane Shum	UNHCR – UN Refugee Agency
25.	Liliane Fan	Overseas Development Institute (ODI)
26.	Maria Rose	The Life Skills Development Foundation
27.	Michael Koeniger	Church World Service (CWS) Indonesia and Timor-Leste
28.	Nicholas Oakeshott	UNHCR – UN Refugee Agency
29.	Nick Jones	Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)
30.	Olivier Madjora	UNHCR – UN Refugee Agency
31.	Parinya (Ann) Boonridrerthaikul	Asylum Access
32.	Parsu Sharma-Luita	Core Group on Statelessness (in Asia and Pacific)
33.	Phil Robertson	Human Rights Watch
34.	Prasant Naik	Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
35.	Rosai Wongsuban	Migration Working Group Thailand
36.	Sabeth Abilawa	Dompot Duafa
37.	Sanghee Bang	International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)
38.	Sanoj Rajan	Harvard Humanitarian Initiative
39.	Subin Mulmi	Forum for Women, Law and Development (FWLD)
40.	Khemtida Petchtam	Asylum Access Thailand
41.	Revata Kraljevic	UNHCR – UN Refugee Agency
42.	Supatsak Pobsuk	International Rescue Committee Thailand



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