

Guidance for Problem Resolution

At the end of 2011, the High Commissioner invited the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), the NGO consortium InterAction and their members and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to participate in a Structured Dialogue with UNHCR to review their partnership. This Dialogue provided a platform to jointly identify priority areas where their partnership could be optimized and improved, with the broad goal of achieving a more strategic, transparent, and action-oriented relationship. In this regard, one of the Recommendations made in the outcome document of the Structured Dialogue, namely the *Partnership Recommendations Paper* (attached for easy reference), is as follows: “UNHCR, the IFRC and NGO partners has committed to a transparent and agreed mechanism for handling issues of concern that need to be raised above and beyond field level, to ensure faster resolution of problems, more transparency and a positive impact on field operations.”

To this end, a simple diagram illustrates the process for addressing issues of concern that need to be raised above and beyond field level. The diagram underscores that problems and issues of concern should be resolved as close to the source as possible. In practical terms, the entry point for problem resolution is at the sub/field office level between the relevant programme, community services, protection or technical counterparts. The next step is to involve the respective heads of field office or country-level representatives. When issues have not been solved at the field level or have broader ramifications beyond the operation concerned, these issues can be escalated to the HQs of the NGO / UNHCR, in a flexible manner, involving a number of relevant counterparts.

The UNHCR Inter-Agency Unit (interagency@unhcr.org) at HQ often plays the role of facilitating contacts and coordinating efforts in problem resolution amongst the relevant Services, Divisions and Bureaux at UNHCR HQ. The Inter-Agency Unit will follow this process, and identify any gaps or failings. The Senior Leadership of UNHCR has an open door policy, and is always willing to address significant concerns of NGO partners that cannot be resolved otherwise.

In some situations, an NGO coordinating body at the field level or the NGO consortia at the global/ regional level may also play a role by facilitating communication and representing collective NGO views when possible.

The Guidance for Problem Resolution can be flexibly applied as appropriate for a broad range of partnership issues that may arise¹. The Inter-Agency Unit, as well as the Director of the Division of External Relations if appropriate, can also provide a neutral and discreet channel to address more sensitive issues requiring a measure of confidentiality.

¹ With regard to issues of misconduct (i.e. sexual harassment, abuse of authority, theft, threats, fraud, sexual exploitation, corruption, discrimination, conflict of interest, etc.), implementing partners should follow procedure laid out in the project agreement signed with UNHCR.