



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK  
FOR PRINCIPLED  
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

*The Institutionalization of the High  
Commissioner's Structured Dialogue on the  
NGO-IFRC-UNHCR Partnership*

**Lessons Learned 2014-16**

## Executive Summary

In late 2011, the High Commissioner initiated a process, which became known as the Structured Dialogue, to review and address the quality of partnership between UNHCR, NGOs, and the IFRC. Five years later, there is a general perception among NGOs and UNHCR that there has been steady progress, with 60% of NGO respondents and 63% of UNHCR respondents in a HIAS survey stating that partnership has improved over the past year, in line with a positive trend in improving relationships since 2014. While there remains room for improvement, UNHCR should be commended for its high-level commitment and investments to strengthen partnership and transparency.

While this study has shown that changes are largely perceived to be driven by individuals, reformed partnership management and human resource systems are critical to changing attitudes and institutional culture. Concrete initiatives, such as the establishment of joint planning exercises, the Partner Portal, and the Urban Refugee Working Group have contributed to increased transparency and collaboration. Given lessons learned identified in this research and other high-level initiatives, going forward, UNHCR and NGOs should focus on a narrower set of themes that build on positive outcomes from the Structured Dialogue and place more emphasis on systemizing concrete changes in partnerships at the field level. Key recommendations include:

1. **Prioritizing the Enhanced Framework for Implementing with Partners in order to improve excessively rigid policies and systems that draw away from service delivery, while also strengthening project management capacities for both NGO and UNHCR personnel.** This could be achieved by investing in the Field Facilitators group to build capacity within their respective regions and establish feedback loops with field practitioners to UNHCR HQ to refine partnership management systems.
2. **Strengthening accountability of UNHCR staff by ensuring that partnership-building skills are required in job descriptions and incentivized through performance evaluations and promotions** for key roles, particularly in senior management, programme, and coordination.
3. **Encouraging UNHCR and NGO leadership at the country level, to create a regular space for open dialogue,** with support from UNHCR HQ, ICVA, and InterAction, if required. Follow-up and regular dialogue on partnership was identified as a gap in continuing the momentum towards strengthened partnerships and should be conducted at least twice annually. Such fora could be used to follow-up on action points, monitor progress, or identify other key areas for collaboration based on the context and stakeholders' needs.
4. **The annual joint planning process for the Country Operational Plans should be strengthened with a more transparent process that involves joint prioritization of all available resources and stronger participation of partners.** This should also lead to joint advocacy efforts to develop fundraising strategies or other efforts to address these gaps.

## Introduction

In late 2011, the High Commissioner initiated a process, which became known as the Structured Dialogue, to review and address the quality of partnership between UNHCR, NGOs, and the IFRC. In a context of increased complexity and scale of global humanitarian crises, stakeholders aimed to

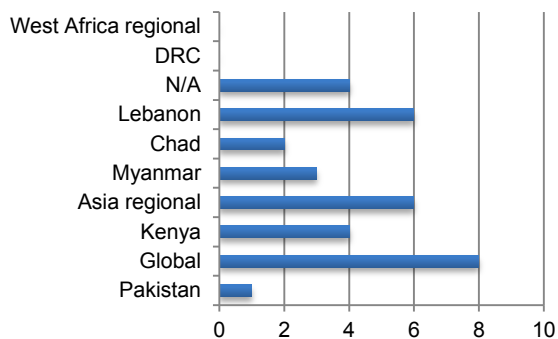
strengthen mutual respect, communication, and increased transparency in planning and accountability to improve assistance and protection to affected populations. Throughout 2012, a steering group and task teams were formed to identify and develop recommendations for improving partnership, including: information sharing, joint planning, joint advocacy, strengthening capacities, IDPs, urban refugees, supporting government pledges, collective dialogue, problem resolution mechanisms, and monitoring progress with an annual report.<sup>1</sup>

Since 2014, ICVA and InterAction, with support from the U.S. State Department’s Bureau for Populations, Refugees, and Migration, have supported the Structured Dialogue roll-out through country and sub-office level workshops in the DRC (2014), Pakistan (2014), Kenya (2015), Chad (2015), Lebanon (2015), Myanmar (2015), and regional workshops for West Africa (2014) and Asia (2013 and 2015) to identify and support follow-up on shared priorities. In total, 14 workshops took place in 8 countries, with over 350 participants.<sup>2</sup> The objectives of this study are to 1) analyze progress to date in institutionalizing UNHCR-NGO collaboration for more effective support to persons recovering from crisis and 2) develop lessons learned to inform future support towards strengthened partnership.

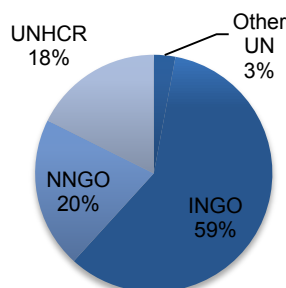
## Methodology

The study’s objectives were undertaken through a desk review of the workshop mission reports, evaluations, and follow-up activities, as well as partnership surveys conducted by HIAS<sup>3</sup> and InterAction.<sup>4</sup> The secondary data was complemented by semi-structured interviews of 34 key informants made up of workshop participants and others closely involved in partnership with UNHCR, both at the operational and policy levels. The research utilized qualitative (mission reports, workshop evaluations, key informant interviews) and quantitative data (survey data) to explore the experiences and lessons learned from both NGO and UNHCR perspectives.

**Workshop attended by key informant**



**Affiliation of key informant**



*N/A: Key informant did not attend a Structured Dialogue workshop*

*Global: Key informant participated in Structured Dialogue discussions at the HQ level*

This study faced some limitations in primary data collection due to challenges in soliciting a representative response from all the Structured Dialogue workshops. Thirty-four interviews were conducted between 8 August and 1 September and despite various efforts to mobilize

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR, January 2013.

<sup>2</sup> ICVA and InterAction also advanced work pertaining to thematic issues, which are not covered in this study.

<sup>3</sup> Since 2014, HIAS has undertaken a global survey of UN and NGO staff regarding the state of partnership.

<sup>4</sup> InterAction has undertaken different survey formats regarding partnerships with UNHCR from a global perspective and beginning in 2016, focused on country snapshots.

respondents, the vast majority of respondents had attended 2015 workshops.<sup>5</sup> This was attributed to staff turnover (about 20% of the participants' email addresses failed) and the timing of the interview phase (when many staff were on leave). While not all workshops were represented by key informant interviews, the study reached the data saturation point. The lower number of interviews was compensated with the various secondary data sources, such as the HIAS survey data, which had relatively high participation, although findings are not statistically representative. This study does not represent the perspectives of the IFRC on partnership because there were few IFRC participants in the workshops, and secondary data and the key informant interviews were focused on UNHCR and NGOs.

## Key Findings

This section is organized according to 4 of the 5 key questions of the study. The fifth question is answered in the "Recommendations" section.

### 1. Perceptions of workshop utility towards strengthened partnership at the sub-office and country office levels over time (since the workshops were held).

Interview respondents found difficulty in directly attributing progress in improving partnerships directly to the workshops compared to broad organizational efforts to improve partnerships, although in some cases the workshop was reportedly a catalyst for changes to be implemented. According to the Structured Dialogue workshop evaluations and key informant interviews, the main contributions of the workshop included:

- 1) **Raising awareness of the Structured Dialogue initiative at the field level.** According to all workshop mission evaluations, there was limited to no knowledge of the Structured Dialogue and the workshops significantly contributed to raising awareness.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, some NGO representatives expressed skepticism as to the extent to which the Principles of Partnership<sup>7</sup> were absorbed, in terms of UNHCR staff's understanding of how to apply it in their day-to-day interactions with partners. Also some pointed out that it depended on which UNHCR staff participated in the workshop, since participation was voluntary.
- 2) **Providing a neutral space** that "broke the ice" among participants and allowed for open discussion and mutual understanding. Both UNHCR and NGO participants felt that the methodology provided a safe space that took participants outside of their day-to-day roles and fostered candid conversations. Surveying participants on their interests and priorities prior to the workshop also helped to tailor the workshop agenda to the contextual needs.
- 3) **Inclusion of national NGOs (NNGOs)** who are often not involved in non-operational discussions. Many participants noted the utility and relative novelty of discussing strategic issues between NNGOs – and to some extent with operational partners – and UNHCR senior management.

The workshop was appreciated and viewed as effective in meeting its objectives by participants, but key informants also expressed a general sense of excessive meetings and workshops unrelated to the Structured Dialogue. Despite this, many participants recommended the need for follow-up dialogue or regular meetings to reinforce partnership. While ICVA and InterAction

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<sup>5</sup> No workshops have been held to date in 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Workshop mission reports.

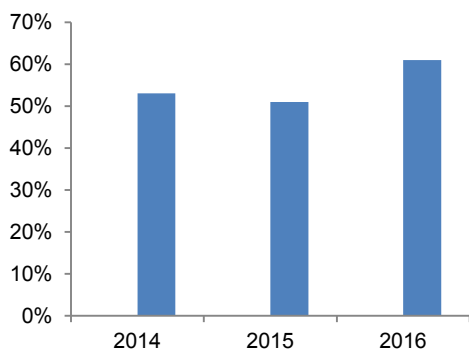
<sup>7</sup> The Inter-Agency Standing Committee endorsed the Principles of Partnership in 2007 to ensure that partnerships across the humanitarian community are based on the principles of equality, transparency, a results-oriented approach, responsibility, and complementarity.

followed up on the workshops with teleconference calls and surveys with participants, many key informants emphasized the need for localized, face-to-face follow-up to monitor progress on key action points and/or identify new priorities. As will be discussed further below, partnerships are better established and reinforced through face-to-face interactions.

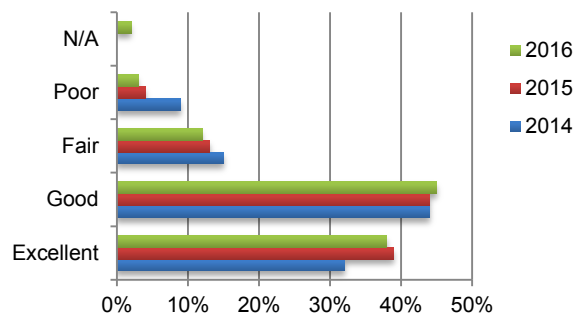
## 2. Perceptions of continued progress towards strengthened partnership for more effective support for populations affected by crisis.

According to the HIAS and InterAction partnership surveys and key informant interviews, there is a general perception of gradual progress in improving partnership, although there continues to be examples where partnership is weak or perceived to have deteriorated. The 2016 HIAS survey showed that **60% of NGO respondents and 63% of UNHCR respondents perceived partnership among offices to have improved and an overall trend of improving relationships since 2014** (see charts below). There is a notable difference in perception among national and international NGOs, as well as UNHCR: NNGO respondents were more than twice as likely to rate their relationship (54%) and communication (49%) with UNHCR as excellent compared to INGOs (27% and 18% respectively), while only 14% of UNHCR respondents rated the relationship as ‘Excellent.’ The disparity between national and international NGOs is likely due to different expectations of UNHCR partnership; the disparity between UNHCR and NGOs is less apparent.

**% NGO respondents reporting that their relationship with UNHCR has improved in the past year**



**% NGO respondents reporting on the quality of the relationship with UNHCR**



Source: 2016 HIAS Partnership Survey

While it is more difficult to attribute strengthened partnerships to more effective responses to affected populations, several respondents noted that UNHCR’s development of the Country Operational Plans (COPs), which is conducted jointly with partners, has strengthened response by increasing consultations with affected communities and integrating protection across sectors. Several HIAS survey respondents emphasized the need for strengthened communication with communities and feedback loops at all phases of project implementation in order to improve the response. Other efforts towards strengthened partnership, such as joint UNHCR and NGO advocacy efforts in Myanmar, while perceived positively in terms of partnership, do not always equate to achieving a more effective response.<sup>8</sup>

## 3. Post-workshop, what contributed most to strengthening partnership?

Many respondents were challenged in attributing changes to the Structured Dialogue workshop, as

<sup>8</sup> According to key informants, UNHCR and NGO protection actors in Myanmar collaborated extensively to advocate for the needs of stateless Muslims in Northern Rakhine State, however, these efforts did not effectively influence the RC/HC’s messaging to the Government.

many of the initiatives (such as the joint planning and prioritization exercise in Kenya initiated by UNHCR, the establishment of the Statelessness Network Asia-Pacific advocacy network with support from UNHCR) had begun prior to the workshop. Many of the recommendations and action points from the workshop were not achieved, sometimes due to changing circumstances or priorities, as well as a lack of adequate in-country follow-up on the workshop action points. Despite this, some noted that the workshop helped to catalyze action and commitment to partnership.

**The most common suggestion for strengthening partnership was the need for regular and genuine dialogue between NGOs and UNHCR**, particularly voiced by NGO interviewees. This was necessary due to the workshop's limited timeframe and the need for further discussion and consensus building on action points, as well as to address the constant challenge of staff turnover, by creating the opportunity for relationships and trust to be built. UNHCR and NGOs should ensure that such dialogues involve an exchange of information and perspectives that inform strategies from the beginning, rather than notifying partners of finalized plans or conclusions. In Lebanon, for example, UNHCR and NGOs dialogue regularly on protection issues, but in these discussions, UNHCR is perceived to inform NGOs of their plans, rather than engaging in a genuine consultation that seeks input for decision-making. At the operational level, trainings for NGOs, some jointly organized by UNHCR and NGOs, have been appreciated, although not often attributed as an outcome of the Structured Dialogue process. Lastly, some implementing partners (IPs) expressed appreciation for UNHCR's involvement and feedback in the project design phase, even prior to the submission of proposals. This type of dialogue allowed for open communication and exchange of ideas, resulting in improved projects.

The annual development of the COPs has been a useful platform to discuss the needs and priorities of affected populations and for many interviewees, these reinforced UNHCR's commitment to partnership. However, the process has also highlighted gaps: some NGOs reported in the HIAS survey that the process felt "one-sided" with UNHCR providing information or setting priorities without the opportunity for genuine consultation with partners. As discussed above, this should be applied to dialogue with partners generally, not just the COPs. Secondly, the COPs should be the first phase of jointly identify needs and should involve a second phase of joint decision-making and prioritization based on all available resources. In Kenya, UNHCR has initiated an additional collaborative process to determine priorities based on both UNHCR and other funding sources for the refugee response, known as the Kenya Comprehensive Refugee Programme (KCRP).

#### **4. Is partnership most improved by individuals or systems?**

Individuals willing to work together within both NGOs and UNHCR, but particularly UNHCR's country-level leadership, have been most critical in strengthening partnerships, compared to the systems and policies created in the Structured Dialogue process, according to key informants. Notably, UNHCR HQ staff were frequently more emphatic in this response, compared to their field-based and NGO counterparts. The Structured Dialogue process has provided the platform for UNHCR staff to initiate the change in organizational culture and attitudes towards partners, although not all have used this opportunity. The newly-established systems, such as the COPs and partnership portal, are generally being used but depending on the office, they may be viewed as a "box checking" exercise, rather than as an opportunity to strengthen partnership, such as through active information sharing, inclusion in the development of COPs, or collaboration on advocacy. While much of the Structured Dialogue has focused on shortcomings with UNHCR, individuals within NGOs also matter. Both NGO and UNHCR respondents noted the need for NGO interlocutors who understand UNHCR's challenges and perspectives and engage constructively.

Individuals frequently have a quick and tangible impact in affecting the tone or relationship between UNHCR and NGOs, however, the influence of systems should not be dismissed, although it is often more gradual. The chronic problem of staff turnover among both NGOs and UNHCR means that systems are necessary to institutionalize change. Systems such as the partner portal have been helpful in increasing transparency, although it could be significantly improved by being more user-friendly, providing alerts for new calls for proposals, and ensuring proper implementation of the system across UNHCR operations.

## Lessons Learned

### Strategic issues

- The original 10 recommendations of the Structured Dialogue developed throughout 2012 were ambitious in scope and created a heavy process for task teams responsible for developing guidance notes. However, some Steering Group members noted that the intensity of the process forged trust and relationships between UNHCR and NGO representatives at the global level to a greater extent than occurred during the one-day field workshops.
- Related to the above, while the workshops were a solid starting point to improving partnership, alone, they were insufficient to sustaining momentum. Follow-up meetings or workshops at the country and sub-office level should continue on a regular basis to monitor progress on action points, emerging priorities, and the overall state of partnership.
- Efforts under the Enhanced Framework for Implementing with Partners<sup>9</sup> have increased transparency and accountability, but much more needs to be done to overhaul outdated systems and requirements, which have been burdensome for both IPs and UNHCR staff, and ultimately undermine efforts towards improved partnership and a more effective response.
- Ownership and initiative from the previous High Commissioner to undertake the Structured Dialogue, coupled with regular messaging across UNHCR, was critical, particularly because of UNHCR's de-centralized yet hierarchical structure.
- There are significant differences in the perspectives of international and national NGOs, with NNGOs having a more positive perspective of UNHCR's partnership approach and a greater emphasis on pragmatic recommendations, such as capacity-building and reform to project management practices and policies, compared to INGOs. These differences should be addressed in partnership discussions to ensure that NNGOs' views are not lost amidst other priorities.

### Joint planning (Structured Dialogue Recommendation 1)

- Joint planning, particularly in the development of COPs, have contributed to strengthening partnership and hopefully, to creating better informed strategies for a more effective response for affected populations. However, more effort needs to be invested in involving partners in the prioritization process and identification of resource gaps, as done in the KCRP. In some countries, the process was not as inclusive and partners were not always provided with the final report or outcomes of the process.
- The involvement of NNGOs and non-IPs contributed to ensuring a balanced and inclusive discussion in the Structured Dialogue workshops. Their involvement in joint planning and advocacy is also critical in bringing different perspectives and contributions.

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<sup>9</sup> Activities include the revision of Project Partnership Agreement template, establishment and roll-out of the Partner Portal, increased transparency in the partner selection process, and capacity-building on new systems.

## **Information sharing (Structured Dialogue Recommendation 2)**

- The HIAS survey showed an association between good communication between UNHCR and NGOs and perceptions of a positive relationship. This was supported by key informants who highlighted continued open dialogue as a key channel to strengthen partnership.
- Poor information sharing practices are driven by a lack of trust in the way information is used and shared by both NGOs and UNHCR. Despite attempts to systematize information sharing, such as the establishment of UNHCR information portals,<sup>10</sup> the sharing of sensitive and/or strategic information remains dependent on individuals and is far from systematized.

## **Joint advocacy (Structured Dialogue Recommendation 3)**

- Below the HQ level, key informants did not identify the Structured Dialogue's added value in strengthening joint advocacy among UNHCR and partners. According to key informants, successful joint advocacy is highly dependent on the individuals involved, with the Structured Dialogue having a limited impact in influencing advocacy approaches (despite being identified as a common priority across workshops). While there were positive examples of strong collaboration between UNHCR and NGOs on advocacy to raise awareness and operationalize UNHCR's global urban refugee policy and in Myanmar on statelessness, it was noted there was already favorable interest and collaboration prior to the Structured Dialogue recommendation on these issues. Efforts to strengthen the international community's response to IDPs (Structured Dialogue Recommendation 4) was perceived to be weak due to turnover in key personnel leading the IDP task team, according to interviewees. In February, however, UNHCR issued operational guidance on its role in IDP situations<sup>11</sup> and is planning to assess its implementation in the field.

## **Problem resolution mechanisms (Structured Dialogue Recommendation 9)**

- The problem resolution mechanism developed by the Steering Group<sup>12</sup> has been unable to overcome UNHCR's de-centralized power structures and has not been effective in ensuring transparency and accountability. This may be due to the lack of focus on implementation of this specific mechanism amidst the 10 recommendations, although this was identified as a key gap by NGO interviewees. Several UNHCR and NGO respondents were aware of negative reactions from UNHCR country operations when partners attempted to escalate problems to the HQ level. Re-consider how to create an effective problem resolution mechanism, with strengthened accountability and oversight of country offices by UNHCR HQ, including the involvement of UNHCR's Department of Human Resources and the Inspector General's Office to independently investigate complaints.

## **Workshop management**

- Workshop facilitation and methodology developed and implemented by ICVA, InterAction, and UNHCR staff were highly rated by participants and key informants as the joint collaboration in the workshops signalled a united front and commitment from the global level. HQ-level efforts to organize the workshops should not be under-estimated, given that some UNHCR country operations could understandably view the Structured Dialogue workshop as a threat, or at least as additional work for field staff. Involving HQ-based senior management in the roll-out workshops (such as Regional Directors), particularly from UNHCR, would have further

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<sup>10</sup> See <http://data.unhcr.org/>

<sup>11</sup> UNHCR, February 2016.

<sup>12</sup> November 2013.



contributed to reinforce accountability and commitment at the country and sub-office levels, and provide access to NNGOs, which are less likely to have relationships with UNHCR HQ staff.

- Regional workshops seem to have resulted in less operational and concrete impact because country operations have significant autonomy. Future support should prioritize country and sub-office operations.
- Workshop action points required further discussion and should include regular, face-to-face follow-up meetings – perhaps every 6 months – to monitor progress on action points. Most respondents expected UNHCR to initiate the follow-up, however, there were legitimate concerns raised that the process should be jointly owned by NGOs (such as NGO coordination bodies) and UNHCR. Some points that came from brainstorming or individual agencies, such as advocacy ideas for specific campaigns, were documented in the final workshop report as action points but in retrospect, some participants noted a lack of time for a thorough discussion of the issue or to build consensus.<sup>13</sup> While some key informants suggested identifying global benchmarks to measure progress (similar to Structured Dialogue Recommendation 10 to develop an annual global progress report, which did not occur), others have suggested that this would have resulted in a process-heavy effort.

## Recommendations

This section seeks to answer the final key question and address what would systematically make the most significant contribution towards strengthened partnership. The field workshops and subsequent follow-up interviews and consultations resulted in 5 common priorities to all contexts with varying degrees of emphasis: information sharing, joint planning, joint advocacy, capacity strengthening, and mechanisms for problem resolution. Given lessons learned and other number of other high-level initiatives, going forward, **UNHCR and NGOs should focus on a narrower set of themes that build on positive outcomes from the Structured Dialogue and place more emphasis on systemizing concrete changes in partnerships at the field level.** These core areas include:

**1. Prioritizing the Enhanced Framework for Implementing with Partners in order to streamline systems, while also strengthening project management capacities based on the Principles of Partnership, for both NGO and UNHCR personnel.** To date, this initiative has been conducted in parallel to the Structured Dialogue to expand the discussion beyond implementing partnerships. However, given the link to one of the top priorities by both NGO and UNHCR field-based staff to strengthen capacity, similar high-level commitments in the Grand Bargain to increase funding to NNGOs, and strong requests from NNGOs, there is significant momentum to prioritize the IP Framework to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response.

According to both NGO and UNHCR staff, administrative and financial project requirements are excessive and too rigid, resulting in time consuming efforts that draw away from ensuring the delivery of effective services and protection. UNHCR and its partners should work together to overhaul and streamline these requirements to continue to meet internal accountability to UNHCR's donors while reducing burdensome requirements for both IPs and UNHCR staff involved in managing projects. These requirements have resulted in "micro-management" of projects (noted widely in surveys and interviews across country operations) by UNHCR staff, who are often equally frustrated but feel constrained by the system, and ultimately undermine the Principles of Partnership.

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<sup>13</sup> All workshop participants were provided with at least 2 weeks to provide feedback or edits on the workshop report.

UNHCR and partners should further invest in training through the Field Facilitators<sup>14</sup> group to increase the use of new systems, such as the Partner Portal, and to provide regular feedback to change partnership policies, such as by increasing budget flexibility for all partners and/or making other funds available for NNGOs' organizational development.<sup>15</sup> A number of Field Facilitators, whose role is to build capacity within their regions and provide feedback on the Enhanced Framework, have been trained by UNHCR on various project management aspects (such as reporting, logistics, etc.). To realize the potential of the Field Facilitators group, country-level strategies should be developed to further support these focal points to lead field-based training on key topics and establish feedback loops with practitioners to refine project management systems. The Partner Portal, which was rolled out in April 2015, provides a clear example of a system aimed to increase transparency, which has been welcomed by partners, but is limited in effectiveness due to weak and uneven use, particularly by UNHCR offices. While the majority of partners (85%) have registered as users, less than half are using the portal systematically.<sup>16</sup> The capacities of all UNHCR staff involved in project management should also be reinforced and underpinned by the Principles of Partnership.

**2. Strengthening accountability of UNHCR staff and ensure that partnership-building skills are required in job descriptions and incentivized in performance evaluations for roles in senior management, programme, and coordination.** To move from a personality-driven approach in improving partnerships to a more systematic one, UNHCR's Division of Human Resources Management should review and adapt job descriptions to ensure that partnership responsibilities are required and its application understood in the context of the respective role by candidates. Input from partners should be required in performance evaluations processes to ensure accountability and partnership-building should be a required skill for promotion for certain roles, particularly senior management. UNHCR should consider requiring a senior manager (such as Country Representative or Deputy Representative) to serve as a focal point on partnership issues in every country office to ensure accountability throughout the operation and lead appropriate follow-up activities. Similarly, NGOs should appoint equivalent representatives, such as through NGO coordination fora, to jointly own the partnership process in country.

**3. Encouraging UNHCR and NGO leadership, particularly at the country level, to create a regular space for open dialogue, with support from UNHCR HQ, ICVA, and InterAction, if required.** Follow-up and regular dialogue on partnership was identified as a gap in continuing the momentum towards strengthened partnerships and should be conducted at least twice annually. Such fora could be used to follow-up on action points, monitor progress, or identify other key areas for collaboration, based on the context and stakeholders' needs. In-country UNHCR and NGO leadership should take ownership of initiating this process, taking lessons from the success of the Structured Dialogue workshop methodology, but should draw on UNHCR HQ, ICVA, and InterAction for support, as needed.

**4. The COP process should be strengthened with a more transparent process that involves joint prioritization of all available resources and strong participation of partners.** The COP exercise has reinforced partnership, but improvements have been recommended for a more inclusive and transparent process. First, both UNHCR and NGOs should prioritize this process as a key opportunity to enhance the response to affected populations by ensuring wide participation and

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<sup>14</sup> According to the "Terms of Reference for the Field Facilitators Group," the Field Facilitators are made up of UNHCR and NGO staff who role it is to: '(1) regularly share information about the Framework and provide ongoing support to their colleagues/peers in the Field; (2) participate in organizing/conducting workshops and learning sessions in their respective regions and as called upon; (3) provide regular feedback from their vantage point on the roll out and application of the Framework; and 4) provide input on drafts for the further development of the Framework, should this be required.'

<sup>15</sup> Currently, NNGOs are not provided with overhead costs into project budgets, which is only allowed for INGOs.

<sup>16</sup> HIAS, August 2016.

meaningful input. Secondly, following the COP, there should be an additional phase that focuses on the prioritization of resources, taking into consideration both UNHCR and other funding, and highlighting key funding gaps. This should also lead to joint advocacy efforts to develop fundraising strategies or other efforts to address these gaps. Many NGOs reported the lack of input into resource allocation, which is largely done by UNHCR after the COP process, with little to no consultation with partners. The KCRP seeks to address this gap and could provide tools and lessons learned for applying it globally.

## Conclusion

While there remains room for improvement, UNHCR should be commended for its high-level commitment and investments to strengthen partnership and transparency. Within the Structured Dialogue process, the establishment of joint planning exercises, the Partner Portal, and the Urban Refugee Working Group have systematically increased transparency and collaboration. Even prior to the Structured Dialogue initiative, many individual UNHCR staff have taken significant initiative to prioritize partnerships in their day-to-day work; it is now time to systematically reward and incentivize such efforts.

While this study has shown that changes are largely perceived to be driven by individuals, **reformed partnership management and human resource systems are critical to changing attitudes and institutional culture.** Much of this responsibility lies with UNHCR, however, NGO coalitions like ICVA and InterAction, as well as regional and country coordination structures, are essential to ensuring that these changes are informed and driven by the experience of agencies working directly with affected populations.

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## Annex B: Terms of Reference

### Lessons Learned on the Institutionalization of UNHCR High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue on the NGO-UNHCR Partnership

#### Background:

Representing more than 60% of UNHCR's operational budget and an estimated 80% of its field programming, NGOs are essential to the fulfillment of UNHCR's mandate. This close relationship is however often challenged by power imbalances and divergent organizational cultures. For instance, the application of the Principles of Partnership – equality, transparency, results-orientation, responsibility, and complementarity – greatly varies per operation and individual. Working towards the institutionalization of the 10 recommendations of the Structured Dialogue aims at building an equal and strong partnership.

Since 2014 InterAction and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), in partnership with UNHCR and the U.S. State Department's Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration, have worked to institutionalize the UNHCR High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue on Partnership at the country, regional and global levels through workshops and dialogue with UNHCR and NGO staff alike. The purpose of the initiative is to create the space for UNHCR staff and NGO partners to acquire knowledge, develop trust and engage in regular interaction with one another, thus enhancing the chances of achieving lasting organizational change. ICVA and InterAction have completed a total of nine country and regional workshops to strengthen partnership and create space for dialogue. (Democratic Republic of Congo (2014), Pakistan (2014), Kenya (2015), Chad (2015), West Africa regional (2015) Asia regional (2013 and 2015), Lebanon (2015) and Myanmar (2015).)

#### Objective:

The objective of this study is to analyze progress to-date in institutionalizing UNHCR-NGO collaboration for more effective support to persons recovering from crisis and develop lessons learned to inform future support towards strengthened partnership. Given the pivotal role that grant-making plays within many UNHCR-NGO partnerships observations on the Enhanced Framework for Implementing with Partners will be included.

#### Scope of Study:

The consultant will analyze documents and conduct semi-structured interviews to answer the following core questions:

- Perceptions of workshop utility towards strengthened partnership at the sub-office and country office levels over time (since the workshops were held).
- Perceptions of continued progress towards strengthened partnership for more effective support for populations affected by crisis.
- Post workshop, what contributed most to strengthening partnership?
- Is partnership most improved by individuals or systems?
- What systemically would make the most significant contribution towards strengthened partnership?

#### Study Design and Methodology:

Document review

Documents to be analyzed include but are not limited to

- HC's Structured Dialogue Final Report
- HIAS Annual Survey on Partnership with UNHCR 2011-2016
- InterAction Annual Survey on Partnership with UNHCR 2010-2016
- Structured Dialogue Country and Regional mission reports, annexes and follow-up documents.
- Documents related to the Enhanced Framework for Implementing with Partners

**Semi-structured interviews:**

An estimated 40 semi-structured interviews with UNHCR and partner staff who participated in the workshops at a regional, country and sub-office level as well as UNHCR and NGO staff who participated in the 2011-12 Structured Dialogue at Headquarters.

**Timeframe:**

Estimated 24 day consultancy.

First draft due 31 August.

Final output 15 September.

**Output:**

A short report (7 pages max) with study findings, lessons learned and recommendations to further institutionalize NGO-UNHCR collaboration for more effective support to persons recovering from crisis.

**Qualifications to be met by Consultant:**

- Proven past performance as a researcher and writer with strong ability to consolidate semi-structured interviews into data, analysis and forward looking recommendations.
- Demonstrated direct program implementation experience with UNHCR.
- Awareness of partnership strengthening initiatives with other UN agencies such as UNICEF.
- Can communicate in English and French

## Annex C: Semi-structured Questionnaire – Key Informants

**Name:**

**Position:**

**Date:**

**Workshop attended:**

1. Since the workshop, what change(s), if any, in the NGO-UNHCR partnership have you experienced or observed? Please be as specific and concrete as possible.
  - a. In the SD workshop in which you participated, UNHCR and partners agreed to the following action points: [insert summary from workshop report]. How would you assess the follow-up on those points?
  - b. Have any other issues regarding partnership been raised since the workshop? If so, please describe the issue and any follow-up.
2. Did the workshop contribute to the change(s) identified?
  - a. If so, how? If not, why not?
  - b. Were there any other significant contributing factors to the change(s) identified?
3. What contributed most to strengthening partnership?
  - a. Is partnership most improved by individuals or systems?
  - b. Which aspects of [individuals or systems] were most useful to improving partnership?
4. What [system, activity, action, or policies] would have the most significant impact in strengthening the UNHCR-NGO partnership?
  - a. What barriers or enablers, if any, do you foresee in strengthening partnership?
  - b. What type of support, if any, could organizations like IA and ICVA do to support strengthened partnership?

## Annex D: List of Key Informants Interviewed

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Workshop attended</b>
1	Ronald Odhiambo Omuthe	RET International	Dadaab, Kenya
2	Laura Marshall	NRC	N/A
3	Mark Hetfield	HIAS	SD Steering Group
4	Chris Lewa	Arakan Project	Bangkok, Thailand
5	Jason Knapp	formerly CWS	SD Steering Group
6	Kristen Knutson	OCHA	Bangkok, Thailand
7	Andre Krummacher	ACTED	SD Steering Group
8	Lorène Tamain	ACTED	SD Steering Group
9	Tiziana Clerico	UNHCR	Various
10	Maja Lazic	UNHCR	Yangon, Myanmar
11	Nick Jones	JRS	Bangkok, Thailand
12	Cho Lay Mar	CFSI	Yangon, Myanmar
13	Yadu Lal Shrestha	LWF	Yangon, Myanmar
14	Juliette Thiombiano	AIRD	Goz Beida, Chad
15	Leila Muriithia Simiyu	Refugee Council Kenya	N/A
16	Amy Keith	Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum	Beirut Lebanon
17	Raouf Mazou	UNHCR	Nairobi, Kenya
18	Jeroen Stol	Handicap International	Nairobi, Kenya
19	Farah Kerdy	Restart Center	Tripoli, Lebanon
20	Rosemary Pikko	Formerly KMSS	N/A
21	Maria Rose	Life Skills Development Foundation	Bangkok, Thailand
22	Saif-Ur-Rehman Durrani	CERD	N/A
23	Wasseem Mohanna	UNHCR	Beirut, Lebanon
24	Layal Abu Darwich	UNHCR	Beirut, Lebanon
25	Kathrine Starup	DRC	SD Steering Group
26	Cecilia Roselli	Formerly ICVA	Bangkok, Thailand
27	Katrien Denys	Mercy Malaysia	Bangkok, Thailand
28	Mitzi Schroeder	JRS	SD Steering Group
29	Haoudoum Bienvenu	JRS	Goz Beida, Chad
30	Murad Ullah	UNHCR	Islamabad, Pakistan
31	Toufic Rizkallah	World Rehabilitation Fund	Beirut, Lebanon
32	Walid Rifai	LOST	Beirut, Lebanon
33	James Munn	NRC	Bangkok Thailand
34	Paul Onimbo	RET International	Dadaab, Kenya