

ANNUAL CONSULTATIONS WITH NGOS
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DISCUSSION PAPER

Session title: ***Status of UNHCR-NGO Partnership***

Date: ***Thursday 15 June***

Time/Room: ***16h30 – 18h30 – Room 2***

Background:

Since 2010, UNHCR has been pursuing various avenues to enhance UNHCR-NGO partnership, in particular through two tracks of work: the *Enhanced Framework for Implementing with Partners* and the *High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue with NGOs and IFRC*.

a) *The Enhanced Framework for Implementing with Partners*

The *Framework* has been developed in a highly consultative process with NGOs and other stakeholders aimed at renovating policies and processes for operational effectiveness, accountabilities and bolstering support to partnerships particularly NGO. "Guidelines for capacity strengthening of local NGOs" have been piloted in field locations to explore the best approaches to adopting the guidance. The roll-out of the *Framework* have been introduced to strengthen knowledge and capacity through phases since the enhanced been gradually developed. A team of facilitators and resource persons (UNHCR and partners) that have been contributing in the development and roll-out of the Framework continue to participate in sharing knowledge and experience and best practices in the field and opportunities for application of operational guidance on strengthening complementary capacities, and partnerships are being developed by UNHCR/ICVA.

In order to better understand and improve UNHCR- NGO partnership at operational level, HIAS has been conducting yearly surveys on the quality of UNHCR-NGO relations and the perception for the past four years. Over the years, there has been notable improvement of the partnership of the efforts made. UNHCR commits and continues fostering collaborative environment for achieving best results for persons of concern through partnerships.

In addition, UNHCR UNICEF and WFP have embarked efforts to realise Grand Bargain commitments, particularly, in harmonization and simplification for management of partnership arrangements. They have identified areas that bring about positive changes to increase effectiveness, reduce duplications and administrative burden, and promote localization of humanitarian operations and fostering linkages with other workstreams.

b) The Structured Dialogue with NGOs and IFRC

Since late 2011, the High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue aims at achieving mutual respect and trust evidenced through open communications, transparency in decision making, and clear accountabilities between UNHCR and respective partners. UNHCR recognized that a shift was still needed to improve the "partnership culture" and ensure that it permeates all levels of the organization, especially at field level.

This led to the development of 10 recommendations for translating into practice the five *Principles of Partnership* and a series of guidance notes – on improving *strategic information sharing* among partners; on partnership in *advocacy for protection* and on *problem resolution* – which are available to help operations and colleagues in implementing these recommendations and progress in strengthening the partnership.

Moreover, a series of joint Structured Dialogue missions have been fielded: eight country specific missions – in DRC (2014), Pakistan (2014), Kenya (2015), Chad (2015), Myanmar (2015); Lebanon (2015), Tanzania (2016), Greece (2016) – three regional follow-ups – West Africa (2013); South East Asia (2013 and 2015); and one continental dialogue in El Salvador for the Americas and Caribbean (2016) have been completed. Eighteen consultations have been organized with over 550 participants between INGOs, NNGOs and UNHCR staff. The feedback from these missions was positive throughout with both NGOs and UNHCR appreciating the opportunity to identify partnership problems and address them jointly.

InterAction and ICVA have commissioned a study to draw some lessons from the implementation of the Dialogue at the field level (2014-2016). The study has found that the recent reforms UNHCR has undertaken (joint planning exercises, partner portal, Urban Refugee Working Group) have contributed to increased transparency and collaboration, but that much remains to be done to change the nature of the relationship.

The study put forward recommendations, subscribed by UNHCR, to focus on a narrower set of themes; to strengthen the accountability of UNHCR's staff vis-à-vis partnership (performance evaluations, promotions); to encourage regular dialogue and follow up at field level and more transparency in the planning process.

Objectives of the session:

This session's objective will be to look back at the outcomes of the two initiatives with regard to improving UNHCR's relationship to its NGO partners, and what might still to be achieved in the future.

This session will update and share the recent developments, the outcome of the annual UNHCR-NGO partnership survey and seek views and suggestions for further strengthening our partnerships. We wish to further explore the joint UNHCR-NGO efforts and approaches that can be leveraged through our partnerships to bring about positive changes to realise best results for persons of concern.

This session will look at the experience to date linked to the High Commissioner's Structure Dialogue and how this can be taken forward, for example contributing to the implementation of the comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF) and other major initiatives of relevance to UNHCR; NGOs and Persons of Concern.

Desired outcome of the session:

The desired outcome for the session pertain to gathering inputs, ideas and suggestions that would feed into the further development and implementation of the annual UNHCR-NGO partnership survey, the enhanced framework for implementing with partners; and the High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue under new High Commissioner Filippo Grandi.

Methodology:

The session will be organized around two successive panels, a) discussions on the findings of the survey and the Framework for Implementing with Partners; b) the other looking at the High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue.

Both panels will include UNHCR and NGO staff members and engage with the audience following initial short presentations.

The first panel will also rely on a short question-sheet handed to participants at the beginning of the session (about 5 questions) and collected at the end to increase concrete feedback.