

**ANNUAL CONSULTATIONS WITH NGOs
17 – 19 JUNE 2014 - International Conference Center Geneva**

THEMATIC SESSION

BACKGROUND PAPER

**Structured dialogue to structured action
The High Commissioner's Dialogue on UNHCR-IFRC-NGO
Partnership at the field level**

Tuesday 17 June 2014, 14h30 – 15h45 - 09h00 – 10h45 - Room 2

- This document briefly summarise the **recommendations** of Structured Dialogue with NGOs and the IFRC and **indicates key elements for implementation at the field level**.
- The High Commissioner invited NGOs and the IFRC to engage in a Structured Dialogue process in 2012 to review the quality of partnership between UNHCR and NGOs. This led to 10 **joint recommendations**¹ to strengthen the application of partnership principles in practice. The need for joint planning and analysis and good information-sharing was underscored, as well as transparent dialogue at field level. The specific areas of advocacy, capacity development for local actors, and partnership in urban refugee settings were identified as providing opportunities for closer and more strategic collaboration. It was agreed that problem resolution should primarily be handled at field level, where regular and frank dialogue between UNHCR and NGO partners should facilitate this.
- In the September 2013 Standing Committee, several members states praised UNHCR for its efforts in strengthening partnership, accountability and coordination with NGOs and consistently asked UNHCR to ensure these partnership principles were translated into practice at field level. NGO partners hope that by the 2014 Annual NGO Consultations we will be able to highlight some tangible indicators of stronger dialogue and collaboration at country and regional levels.
- The High Commissioner in his message to all staff on 11 September 2013 asked all Representatives and their teams in the field to: *“carry forward the partnership recommendations from the Dialogue in their daily work with partners at the field level”*, and to *“lead by example, and to make special efforts to systematically listen to and consult with partners at all levels of the operation, engaging in a regular dialogue that goes beyond immediate issues around implementation and that systematically involves key partners in discussions on strategic direction”*.

¹ Joint assessment and analysis, prioritization and strategic planning; information-sharing; developing advocacy positions and strategies; IDP; Statelessness; strengthening capacity for collective response; urban; review current for a dialogue; complaint mechanisms and progress report.

Some ideas and next steps for taking the Dialogue to the Field

- ❖ Common approaches to **coordinated assessment, planning and monitoring** of performance in emergencies will require **strengthening of our interaction and coordination** with all humanitarian actors on the ground, including NGOs.

How is this translated into practice?

- ✚ NGOs are included in participatory assessments and planning initiatives
- ✚ NGOs are participating in monitoring and evaluation exercises
- ✚ Coordination meetings and information management in refugee emergencies and in UNHCR-led clusters serve well the needs of UNHCR's partners
- ✚ Relevant NGOs with expertise in the coordination of specific technical areas are engaged
- ✚ Key NGO partners are consulted on significant policy developments and upcoming challenges

- ❖ Expand partnership opportunities at both **national** and **regional** levels, particularly in **advocacy** -- acknowledging differences and complementarities in roles, mandates and relationships to other stakeholders; and in **urban settings** – identifying different types of complementarity and partnership with NGOs, local authorities and service providers etc.

How is this translated into practice?

- ✚ Use the guidance note on advocacy² to jointly analyse and prioritize priorities ahead of time, strategise and plan where feasible, and clarify partner roles
- ✚ Mutually engage and consult formally and informally on specific issues as they emerge
- ✚ Ensure that significant regional initiatives have broad NGO participation
- ✚ Engage NGO partners in jointly implementing the urban refugee strategy; refer to best practice and lessons learned

- ❖ Strengthen the **capacity development of national NGOs** on the basis of trilateral partnership between UNHCR, international and national NGOs. This will build on complementarity capacities and roles as well as lessons learned from past practice and existing initiatives.

How is this translated into practice?

- ✚ Explore with INGOs and relevant NNGOs their approaches to and resources for capacity-development, identifying which areas and partners are involved
- ✚ Identify gaps in the context of UNHCR's operational priorities and discuss if and how these could be addressed jointly with existing UNHCR's resources (human and financial) and matching NGO resources, especially those INGOs which prioritise capacity development in their missions/ mandates

- ❖ **Resolve problems at the field level**, without fear of retaliation.

How is this translated into practice?

- ✚ Ensure an open door policy at senior levels and ensure NGO partners have access to the Representative
- ✚ Decisions that are likely to bring discomfort (e.g. budget cuts, termination of partnership agreements, etc.) should be discussed ahead of time, explained by transparent criteria, and conveyed to the NGOs concerned in a respectful way (bilaterally)

²https://intranet.unhcr.org/content/intranet/unhcr/en/home/support_services/humanitarian_partnerships0/bilateral_and_multilateral/ngos/_jcr_content/mainpar/multidownload_1/multidownloadItems/multidownloadfile_0/file.res/Guidance%20note%20on%20partnership%20in%20advocacyFINAL.pdf

- ✚ Good information sharing and regular coordination meetings may help in keeping partners abreast of the situation and of the rationale for possible changes in strategy affecting NGO partners
- ✚ Use the problem resolution mechanism when issues need to be addressed to senior staff or HQ

For ease of reference, please use the following link https://intranet.unhcr.org/intranet/unhcr/en/home/support_services/humanitarian_partnerships0/bilateral_and_multilateral/ngos.html to access the Inter-Agency page where key documents and guidance notes can be found. Tiziana Clerico and Kemlin Furley can be contacted for any further query you may have on the implementation of the Structured Dialogue's recommendations.

NGOs can also have access to these documents through the International Council of Voluntary Agency's (ICVA's) website: <https://www.icvanetwork.org/doc00005442.html>.