

## Structured Dialogue on UNHCR-IFRC-NGO Partnership Pakistan Mission Report 23 – 27 February 2014

### Executive Summary

A joint InterAction-ICVA-IFRC-UNHCR mission went to Pakistan from 23 to 27 February to follow-up on the implementation of the High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue on UNHCR-IFRC-NGO Partnership; to learn from the partners how the Dialogue is relevant to their context; and to support actions for further strengthening partnership.

The mission team held two workshops: one in Islamabad on 24 February 2014 for Islamabad-based partners and one on 26 February for Peshawar-based partners. Unfortunately due to security threats, the workshop planned for partners in Peshawar was canceled and partners were requested to travel to Islamabad to participate in the workshop, which naturally reduced attendance. This insecurity prohibited international staff movements. No UNHCR staff from Peshawar attended the workshop in Islamabad, which was disappointing and unfortunate since they are the regular interface with partners.

Information sharing, advocacy and coordination were the areas identified as priorities and in need of further enhancement. Below are a few suggestions from the workshop participants on immediate actions that could be taken to facilitate strengthened partnership:

#### Information Sharing:

- Information sharing needs to be envisioned by all partners as an actor process; information beds to be shared and pursued constantly, it listing as many avenues as possible such as the humanitarian dashboard, the Cluster and the NGO consortia.
- UNHCR should ensure timely info sharing with partners on **security** and **cross-border** developments;
- NGOs should **engage more through the humanitarian NGO consortia** to promote better information sharing and strategic coordination;
- Humanitarian NGO consortia should ensure a regular and timely flow of relevant information to their partners and increase occasions for joint collaboration.

#### Common Advocacy:

- Common messaging at the local, provincial, and national levels could help improve understanding and get partners on the same page;
- Partners should develop a **strategic advocacy plan for the refugee response** with short-, mid-, and long-term goals;
- UNHCR, as **Protection Cluster** Lead, should better communicate the advocacy that takes place in negotiating access. Partners, while acknowledging the importance of "quiet advocacy," are nevertheless asking both sides to engage in more common advocacy;

## Coordination:

- Establish/clarify **UNHCR's NGO focal point**, especially for operational partners (OPs);
- Include OPs in UNHCR's monthly funded partner meeting, and add advocacy and partnership to the meeting's agenda; this suggests OPs feel that, with the exception of the Protection Cluster, they do not have an entry point to discuss strategic issues directly with UNHCR.
- Involve Operational Partners in UNHCR's Country Operations Plan (COP) exercise

## Way Forward

The mission team noticed a concerning lack of awareness on the High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue amongst both UNHCR and NGO staff alike. Moving forward the team urges the agencies involved (InterAction, ICVA, IFRC and UNHCR) to pro-actively ensure a proper flow of relevant information and guidance among colleagues and members.

**Action Plan:** The Mission will consult with UNHCR Pakistan to decide on which recommendations will be taken up, how (and by whom). Priority actions may include:

- **Information Sharing:** Partners will utilize existing structures to improve information sharing. For example, UNHCR will include "partnership" (including partnership in advocacy) as a regular item for discussion at regular monthly meeting with partners. UNHCR will continue to share information on developments in Afghanistan with the PHF, and PHF will share that with NHN. UNHCR Peshawar will engage partners more deeply through sectoral meetings.
- **Advocacy:** Partners will develop an advocacy strategy targeting the media and donors to promote the preservation of asylum space in light of developments in Afghanistan.
- **Security:** UNHCR Sub-Office Peshawar will consult its security staff to see whether/if they could do more to alert NGO staff to known trouble spots.
- **NOCs:** UNHCR will facilitate the NOC issues through the existing channel established by OCHA in case particular problems are raised.
- **Partner selection and Performance Management:** UNHCR will strive to provide more regular feedback to partners on the reports. If performance problems are detected, this will be communicated to partners as soon as possible to allow for adequate time to rectify the problem. Next year's selection process will begin earlier and be better explained (this was the first year in the new system).
- **Dissemination:** The Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF) and National Humanitarian Network (NHN) will distribute the mission report and information on the Structured Dialogue to their networks. UNHCR Pakistan will circulate them to its staff in Islamabad, Peshawar, Quetta and Karachi. IFRC Pakistan Delegation will circulate them to various Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies present in Pakistan, including the Pakistan Red Crescent Society.
- **Follow-Up:** The delegation will engage in a dialogue with UNHCR Pakistan, PHF and NHN in mid-April to discuss progress and challenges.

## 1. Background information

The mission came as part of the follow-up to the High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue with NGOs and the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement on partnership. The Structured Dialogue was a consultative process that led to ten recommendations and provided ideas on where and how partnership can be strengthened at different levels (HQ, regional, and field).<sup>1</sup>

The goal of the mission was to **facilitate a discussion among partners to review partnership approaches, strengthen mechanisms and identify opportunities for better collaboration.**

The High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue on UNHCR-IFRC-NGO Partnership was rolled out in Pakistan through two workshops held in Islamabad on 24 February 2014 for Islamabad-based partners and 26 February for Peshawar-based participants.

The workshops were conducted by the mission members: Tiziana Clerico (UNHCR); Karen Helene Bjornestad (IFRC); Caroline Nichols (InterAction); and Melissa Pitotti (the International Council of Voluntary Agencies -ICVA).

Their purpose was three-fold: 1) to raise awareness about the commitments made at a global level during the High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue on UNHCR-IFRC-NGO partnership; 2) to learn from partners in Pakistan how the Dialogue was relevant to their context; and 3) to identify concrete follow-up actions to strengthen partnership in Pakistan.

## 2. Operational Context

The UNHCR Representative - Neill Wright - kicked off the discussion with an overview of the operational context in Pakistan.

Pakistan is an increasingly complex and dynamic operating environment. Presently, it hosts approximately 1.6 million Afghan refugees; in addition to around 1 million conflict affected internally displaced persons.

Looking ahead, 2014 will not be a typical year in Pakistan. Ongoing insecurity in Afghanistan and the likelihood of a full US troop withdrawal threatens to increase the number of refugees. UNHCR and partners have developed contingency plans to provide support for an additional up to 100,000 refugees over the coming year. Concurrently, contingency plans are in development in case GOP-TTP peace talks fail and large-scale military operations take place as a result, producing 300,000 new IDPs.

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<sup>1</sup> The Dialogue's ten recommendations focus on information sharing, joint planning, consultation fora, problem resolution, elevating IDPs on the international agenda, government pledges made at the 2011 Commemoration of the 1951 Refugee and 1961 Statelessness Conventions, protection-related advocacy, urban refugees, capacity strengthening and reporting.

### 3. Coordination Mechanisms

UNHCR Pakistan engages annually (in February-March) with funded partners to discuss and develop the Country Operations Plan (COP) for the following year. Operational partners are not included, but some are involved in the discussion and drafting of the contingency planning.

The Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF) and National Humanitarian Network (NHN) regularly attend Humanitarian Country Team meetings. The PHF also leads an Afghan Refugee Task Force, which remains involved in the COP process through its Chair and Co-Chair.

### 4. Workshops

The mission team gave a brief overview on the Principles of Partnership<sup>2</sup>. Participants also reviewed the Structured Dialogue's ten recommendations<sup>3</sup>.

These recommendations were largely unknown to the group, underscoring the need for increased communication and information sharing from Geneva to the field.

Each participant was then asked to identify one or two priority topics related to partnership for deeper, small group discussion. Discussions were led by two questions: *“what are the opportunities for complementarity”* and *“identify one or two follow-up actions.”* The results of the group discussions - recommendations and suggested actions - are listed below.

#### 4.1. Islamabad Partners

The 24 February workshop for partners based in Islamabad was hosted by the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF) and included 21 participants, inclusive of NGOs and UNHCR staff. (See Annex 1 for participant list). The participants were mainly operational partners focusing equally on the IDP and refugee responses.

The topics chosen for small group discussion were: information sharing, joint advocacy and general partnership issues.

##### 4.1.1. Recommendations and proposed actions

**Information Sharing:** The group felt that improving information exchange, making information flows consistent and continuous, was an opportunity for increased collaboration amongst partners. Participants were particularly concerned on the lack of

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<sup>2</sup> **equality** (mutual respect between members irrespective of size and power); **transparency** (in dialogue, communication, strategies and priorities, increasing the level of trust among participants); a **results-oriented approach** (committing to activities only if the means, skills and capacity to deliver are there); and **complementarity** (building on comparative advantages and complementing each other's contributions).

<sup>3</sup> **joint assessment, analysis, prioritization and strategic planning; information sharing; joint advocacy; IDPs; following up government pledges made on refugees and statelessness; strengthening capacities; urban settings; review of fora for collective dialogue; complaints mechanisms and a yearly report.**

timely security updates. (UNDSS updates are only for UN staff members. NGO partners receive information and statistics related to the previous month, but not current alerts or information).

- UNHCR should ensure timely info-sharing on **security** to partners.
- NGOs should **engage more through the consortia** (PHF and NHN) to promote better information sharing and strategic coordination.
- PHF and NHN should ensure a regular and timely flow of relevant information to their partners and increase occasions for joint collaboration.

**Common Advocacy:** Strategic, complimentary advocacy is an opportunity for partners to leverage each other's strengths.

Participants highlighted, among others, the importance of having a good media strategy to steer public opinion more favorably towards persons of concern. Donors are other key targets for joint advocacy to ensure that humanitarian priorities guide their decision making. NGOs, particularly national ones, would like to have their perspective and recommendations taken into account.

- Discussions on advocacy should be more **strategic and focus on complementarities**.
- Common messaging at the local, provincial, and national levels could help improve understanding and get partners on the same page.
- Partners should develop a **strategic advocacy plan for the refugee response** with short- mid- and long-term goals.
- UNHCR, as **Protection Cluster** Lead, should better communicate the advocacy that takes place in negotiating access. Partners, while acknowledging the importance of "quiet advocacy," are nevertheless asking both sides to engage in more common advocacy.
- UNHCR, NGOs and the IFRC will develop media strategies to promote a more favourable protection environment, when deemed necessary/appropriate.
- They will also engage the donors to ensure humanitarian priorities are given due consideration (despite their economic and political interests).

**Coordination:** Participants recognized the fact that there are different coordination fora at central, regional or local levels. Operational partners feel that they do not share the same access and relationship with UNHCR as funded partners do. This gap in communication has been attributed to the fact that OPs do not have an interlocutor within UNHCR (IPs have Program or Protection staff).

Participants also recognized the need for more proactive engagement of the NGO community in the different coordination fora, and more fully utilizing these fora for improved information sharing as well as a venue for more regular discussion of partnership issues between international and national NGOs.

- Establish/clarify **UNHCR's NGO focal point**, for operational partners (External Relation Officer perhaps?).
- Include OPs in the monthly meetings with UNHCR-funded partners, and add advocacy and partnership to the regular agenda. This suggests OPs feel that, with the exception of the

Protection Cluster, they do not have an entry point to discuss strategic issues directly with UNHCR.

- Introduce a common **data collection format** that applies to all partners and provinces.
- National NGOs active in refugee support should participate in the PHF's Afghan Task Force.

## 4.2. Workshop 2: Peshawar Partners

Due to security incidents in Peshawar on 25 February, the workshop for Peshawar-based partners was moved to Islamabad. Most of UNHCR's funded partners are based near the sub-office; all but one of the participants was a funded UNHCR partner. Due to security constraints, UNHCR's international staff was unable to travel to Islamabad. It is unfortunate that the UNHCR national staff were unable to participate in the workshop since they have the most regular interaction with partners on the ground and are the ones most likely to take forward with NGO partners the actions proposed below. Eleven NGOs participated and, as said before, other than during the opening and closing sessions, no UNHCR staff participated.

The topics identified by Peshawar participants for working group discussions were coordination/ information sharing, capacity strengthening, and urban issues.

### 4.2.1. Recommendations and proposed actions

**Coordination/Information sharing:** Peshawar partners expressed concerns about access to timely security information and program updates. One aspect of the information sharing gap is related to developments in Afghanistan. This was particularly felt by NGOs working with refugees who felt unable to respond to refugee queries on conditions inside Afghanistan.

NGOs also requested more direct communication with international staff; they interact mainly with national staff and feel disconnected from decision makers. Communication should be multichannel to guarantee a more comprehensive and regular communication.

One observation from this workshop was a request from NGO partners for UNHCR to develop a broad, long-term partnership strategy, inclusive of a capacity development component.

NGOs also recognized the need from more proactive coordination and information sharing amongst them.

### Information-sharing:

- NGOs would appreciate access to UNDSS warnings.
- UNHCR international staff should engage more directly with NGO staff and actively participate in the selection process.
- UNHCR should share with NGOs working with Afghan refugees reports and information with a regional perspective (e.g. developments inside Afghanistan; UNHCR forward planning; priorities, etc.).
- INGOs and NNGOs (including OPs) should actively participate in UNHCR's contingency planning for new Afghan arrivals and receive up-to-date information, including on site identification, border monitoring, registration, resource mobilization, and complementary advocacy to preserve asylum space.
- NGOs should more proactively share information among themselves.

### Advocacy:

- UNHCR and NGOs could pursue separate, but complementary, advocacy strategies in coordination with OCHA to secure increased and expedited No Objection Certificates (NOCs<sup>4</sup>), particularly for emergencies
- UNHCR, NGOs and the IFRC will develop media strategies to promote a more favourable protection environment, when deemed necessary/appropriate.
- UNHCR should use its leverage to ensure that humanitarian concerns (more than political or economic interests) guide donor decisions.

### Capacity Strengthening:

- NGOs encourage UNHCR to develop a long-term partnership and staff retention strategy. This could include 5-year (non-binding, non-financial) MOUs listing capacity strengthening opportunities and other areas for partnership.
- UNHCR-funded NNGOs would like to receive salary and overhead support on a more equal footing with INGOs, citing the Principles of Partnership.
- Partners would like access to training and capacity development courses (included e-learning).

**Urban Issues:** Three areas were identified as opportunities to improve complementarity between partners in urban humanitarian response: information sharing, flexible programming and advocacy.

- **Information Sharing:** NGOs would like to do more joint profiling work with UNHCR in urban areas to improve understanding of the urban caseload.
- **Flexible programming:** NGOs would like to discuss amongst partners the potential to use cash programming to scale up support to urban populations in need of humanitarian assistance. NGOs would like to see RAHA programming extended into urban environments with an emphasis on infrastructure support.<sup>5</sup>
- **Advocacy:** Once more data is generated; joint advocacy could help create more political will for the government to address broader urban degradation issues.

<sup>4</sup> Humanitarian workers must have an NOC to enter certain implementation areas (e.g. FATA). An NOC is given by the GoP and it can be a very lengthy process, hindering the timely intervention.

<sup>5</sup> This is an example of an information gap; in the debrief on 27 February the mission team learned that RAHA has in fact expanded into urban areas.



## General Observations

Based on these two workshops and bilateral meetings with various partners, the mission team drew a few general observations.

- Prior to this mission there was very limited knowledge among all participants -- UNHCR, IFRC, and NGOs -- about the Structured Dialogue in Pakistan.
- The Principles of Partnership need to be understood and applied by all organizations and staff at all levels.
- Information sharing was the most frequently raised issue.
- Advocacy was discussed as a specific topic in workshop one, but it was clearly a cross-cutting theme to all the group work.
- Partnership is dynamic and must be constantly nurtured. It is important for partners, especially operational partners, to have a space where they can regularly come together to discuss partnership, including mutual accountability.
- All partners seemed strained and simply tired from this context's constant insecurity and multi-faceted challenges.

## Way Forward

**Action Plan:** The Mission will consult with UNHCR Pakistan to decide on which recommendations will be taken up, how (and by whom). Priority actions may include:

- a) Information Sharing:** Partners will utilize existing structures to improve information sharing. For example, UNHCR will include "partnership" (including partnership in advocacy) as a regular item for discussion at regular monthly meeting with partners. UNHCR will also share information on developments in Afghanistan with the PHF and NHN. UNHCR Peshawar will engage partners more deeply through sectoral meetings.
- b) Advocacy:** Partners will develop an advocacy strategy targeting the media and donors to promote the preservation of asylum space in light of developments in Afghanistan.
- c) Security:** UNHCR Sub-Office Peshawar will consult its security staff to see whether/if they could do more to alert NGO staff to known trouble spots.
- d) NOCs:** UNHCR will facilitate the NOC issues through the existing channel established by OCHA in case particular problems are raised.



- e) **Performance Management:** UNHCR will strive to provide more regular feedback to partners on their reports. If performance problems are detected, this will be communicated to partners as soon as possible to allow for adequate time to rectify the problem. Next year's selection process will begin earlier and be better explained (this was the first year in the new system).
- f) **Dissemination:** The Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF) and National Humanitarian Network (NHN) will distribute the mission report and information on the Structured Dialogue to their networks. UNHCR Pakistan will circulate them to its staff in Islamabad, Peshawar, Quetta and Karachi. The IFRC Pakistan Delegation will circulate them to various Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies present in Pakistan, including the Pakistan Red Crescent Society.
- g) **Follow-Up Telcon:** The delegation will engage in a dialogue with UNHCR Pakistan, PHF and NHN in mid-April to discuss progress and challenges.
- h) **Oral Progress Report:** will be delivered by UNHCR, ICVA and InterAction at the June 17-19 UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultation Session on Partnership. This will include not only information about Pakistan, but also updates on other operations and regional consultations.

## Annex 1: Participants

Islamabad Partners  
24 February 2014

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Peshawar Partners  
26 February 2014

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## Annex 2: Evaluation Results

Islamabad (24 February 2014)	Peshawar (26 February 2014)
<b>Most helpful aspects of the consultation:</b>	
<p><b>Intent:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The will to improve our partnership;</li> <li>• UNHCR is working to enable a strong partnership;</li> <li>• It shows that partners' opinions are important to UNHCR;</li> <li>• NGOs should be treated fairly, and the Dialogue is suitable for achieving this goal;</li> <li>• UNHCR and key partners are working towards common objectives not at the implementation level, but at the strategic level;</li> </ul> <p><b>Knowledge Transfer:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarified the Structured Dialogue and the purpose/objectives of this vision;</li> <li>• Good to know about UNHCR strategies, partner strategy ;</li> <li>• Good to discuss different topics that are very necessary for IDPs, refugees;</li> <li>• Good to discuss responsibilities, ideas, options and views on partnership;</li> </ul> <p><b>Forum:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good initiative and opportunity to engage with UNHCR on partnership;</li> <li>• Good meeting with other colleagues;</li> <li>• This is the best kind of forum for exchanging ideas;</li> <li>• Discussion and group work;</li> <li>• Active participation by participants</li> </ul>	<p><b>Intent:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good initiative to bridge the gap for better understanding between IPs and UNHCR;</li> </ul> <p><b>Knowledge Transfer:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowing that there is an initiative on dialogue with partners and its recommendations;</li> <li>• Clarity on capacity building;</li> <li>• The clear-cut presentation on the principles of partnership and priorities helped keep the discussion track</li> </ul> <p><b>Forum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important forum to share experience and information;</li> <li>• Meeting with the UNHCR Representative</li> <li>• Willingness to understand and discuss;</li> <li>• Equal opportunity for all participants to speak;</li> <li>• Realistic and pragmatic approach of consultations;</li> <li>• Opportunity to share thoughts and corrective measures with participants and a group of neutrals with a hope it will reach the relevant people for common benefit</li> <li>• Discussed in working groups issues and recommended certain solutions;</li> <li>• Openness and approachability of the mission members to ideas of participants. Facilitators frank and knowledgeable</li> </ul> <p><b>Results:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive recommendations;</li> <li>• Do-able solutions shared;</li> <li>• Helped raise issues and find solutions</li> </ul>
<b>Issues for further work:</b>	
<p><b>Follow-Up to SD Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A more clear and quick channel for information sharing</li> <li>• Enhance capacity;</li> <li>• Advocacy to a higher level (UNHCR → government));</li> </ul> <p><b>Process:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a mechanism to operationalize the partnership framework;</li> <li>• Coordinate partnership;</li> <li>• Better coordination between UNHCR, INGOs and NNGOs;</li> <li>• Take the recommendations forward;</li> <li>• Revisit the discussion and recommendations after some time to see what worked and what didn't work;</li> </ul> <p><b>Other:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We would like to work on Afghan refugees once we get registered with the CAR</li> </ul>	<p><b>Follow-Up to SD Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow up activities taking place in Peshawar</li> <li>• More capacity building;</li> <li>• Would like further work on urban response</li> <li>• Follow up with IDP issues</li> </ul> <p><b>Process:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform UNHCR officials on coordination and equality</li> <li>• Inequality which exists in the financial compensation (salary/budget) structures between INGOs and NGOs</li> <li>• More engagement among UNHCR international staff</li> <li>• Interested to know about the follow-up and impact of this dialogue on UNHCR policy;</li> <li>• More group discussion and individual sessions;</li> <li>• It should not be the last one and should carry on for better understanding and especially DIRECT contact with HQ as well;</li> <li>• We will work with UNHCR and expect more opportunities where we can participate and share more experiences;</li> <li>• Suggest that UNHCR staff must participate in future workshops so they will be on the same page in the future.</li> </ul>

