

Operational Guidance on Complementary Capacity Strengthening for UNHCR and its NGO Partners

This Operational Guidance provides guidance and suggestions on complementary capacity strengthening – on how mutual collaboration can be fostered between international organizations (UNHCR and international NGOs) and national/local partners, to reinforce local capacities and secure better protection outcomes.

- UNHCR offices are requested to share this Operational Guidance with partners.
- UNHCR offices and partners are required to fully understand the importance of this Guidance, particularly in placing priority on strengthening capacity of national NGO partners.

May 2018

Implementing Partnership Management Service

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The importance of partnerships: In UNHCR partnerships take many forms, including with refugees and other persons of concern (PoC) and with non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

- **Partnership with refugees and other PoC:** For UNHCR partnerships with refugees and PoC are fundamental and essential to its work. This partnership occurs in many ways, including:
 - the age, gender and diversity accountability framework – providing minimum standards for achieving equitable outcomes for all PoC;
 - the participatory approach – which places refugees and other PoC at the center of decision-making for their protection and well-being; and
 - the community-based approach - building on the knowledge, skills and capacities of PoC and their communities, by regarding them as partners who have an active role in their protection and solutions.
- **Partnership with NGOs:** To more effectively assist refugees and PoC, UNHCR partnerships and collaboration with NGOs and community-based organizations are vitally important, and increasingly so with national and international NGOs, as seen in the following figures:

Year	National NGOs	Total IPs	International NGOs	National NGO expenditures (A)	Total UNHCR expenditures (B)	Percentage (A) as % of (B)
2016	613	955	163	490.6	3,967	12.4%
2017	648	1035	190	524.2	4,083	12.8%

NOTES: (1) Figures for 2017 are provisional.

(2) UNHCR programme expenditures in 2016 were US\$ 3,292 billion (of which NNGO expenditures were thus 14.9%). In 2017 programme expenditures were US\$ 3,315 billion (of which NNGO expenditures were 15.8%).

- **Partnership with NNGOs:** There are various reasons why UNHCR should give serious consideration to the increased involvement of NNGOs for project implementation, among them:
 - being geographically, culturally and linguistically closer to the assisted populations and communities;
 - having close and longstanding contacts with government and civil society persons;
 - being more flexible and rapid;
 - being less costly, and
 - being present on the ground before and after a crisis – and hence their ability to ensure the sustainability of a project’s intended impact.
- **Priority on local and national partnerships through the Grand Bargain and the World Humanitarian Summit:** The Grand Bargain was officially launched during the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016. Governments and agencies endorsed the engagement with local and national responders in a spirit of partnership, with the aim to enforce rather than replace local and national capacities (from The Grand Bargain – A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need). Actual commitments made are elaborated below.

1.2 The need for improved capacity: All three parties – UNHCR, INGOs and NNGOs – have unique capacities, characteristics and qualities which, if complemented by the other parties, can contribute to more effectively serving refugees and other PoC. However, it is also generally conceded that many operations run by UNHCR with national partners have not yet attained the capacity – such as in project drafting, financial management, and reporting - needed to independently implement a project on their own without administrative support.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Guidance Note is to provide guidance and suggestions on complementary capacity strengthening – specifically, on how mutual collaboration can be fostered between international organizations (UNHCR and international NGOs) and national/local partners. The aim is to secure a more effective and contextualized response that reinforces local capacities, and secures better protection outcomes.

3. SCOPE

This Guidance Note provides ideas on mechanisms and approaches, including pilot projects, which can be used to build and strengthen capacity of NNGOs, ultimately for more effective support to refugees and other persons of concern. Activities would take place in locations to be agreed by the three parties – UNHCR, INGOs and NNGOs – or in some cases two parties where UNHCR is engaged in small refugee operations and work only with NNGOs.

4. RATIONALE

4.1 The need for a complementary NGO capacity strengthening strategy: This need, focused especially on NNGOs, has long been recognized by UNHCR. As far back as 1998, UNHCR produced “A Strategy for Enhancing National NGO Partner Effectiveness”. In 2001 a review of the strategy, “Evaluation of UNHCR’s role in strengthening national NGOs”, was carried out by a UNHCR Consultant.

4.2 The Structured Dialogue: When presiding over the December 2012 meeting of the UNHCR-IFRC-NGO Structured Dialogue on Partnership, the former UNHCR High Commissioner Antonio Guterres reiterated that UNHCR cannot meet the needs of its persons of concern alone: it requires strong partnership with the NGO community and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement. Structured Dialogue participants recognized the need for a more comprehensive, strategic, and systematic approach to bolstering one another’s capacities, to collectively respond to operational requirements. That is the goal of these Guidelines.

Recommendation 6 on capacity strengthening from the Structured Dialogue:

UNHCR, the IFRC and NGO partners recognize the need for a more comprehensive, strategic and systematic approach to **strengthening capacity** for collective response, involving the mutually reinforcing roles and capacities of UNHCR, international and national NGOs. The performance of UNHCR, the IFRC and the NGO community in joint implementation and in managing risk in complex and insecure operating environments is a critical issue for our partnership in the context of today’s humanitarian response. It is a challenge we must take on together, reinforcing each other’s capacities to optimal effect. Learning from existing initiatives, UNHCR will seek to strengthen its institutional strategy for capacity development of national NGOs, on the basis of a trilateral partnership - UNHCR, International NGOs, and National NGOs, and to build on their respective capacities and roles. Recognizing that capacity-strengthening strategies are usually best determined at field level, UNHCR and the NGO community will develop plans which ensure specific capacity strengthening is built into partner agreements where needed.

5. THE GRAND BARGAIN AND THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

5.1 The Grand Bargain

The following actual commitments were agreed by aid organizations and donors, which committed to:

Grand Bargain Commitments – National and Local Responders

1. Increase and support multi-year investment in the institutional capacities of local and national responders. Incorporate capacity strengthening in partnership agreements.
2. Remove or reduce barriers that prevent organizations and donors from partnering with local and national responders.
3. Include local and national responders in international coordination mechanisms.
4. Achieve by 2020 a global, aggregated target of at least 25 per cent of humanitarian funding to local and national responders as directly as possible.
5. Develop a localization marker.
6. Make greater use of funding tools which increase and improve assistance delivered by local and national responders.

5.2 World Humanitarian Summit

UNHCR's Position Paper presented to the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016 emphasizes the great importance which it accords to national partners, including national and local governments, and on building their capacity – including in financial and project management and fundraising, viewing this investment as key for localization of aid. It further notes that local experience, presence and community relations are among the key criteria for partner selection in UNHCR. National and local organizations are the first to respond to emergencies, and they remain in the communities they serve. UNHCR is committed to making principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary, and wants to see local and national responders take the lead.

Among the UNHCR Commitments at the World Humanitarian Summit were the following:

Empowering national and local humanitarian action

- UNHCR commits to expand its investment in institutional capacity building of national partners, and to support effective emergency preparedness and response by engaging proactively with first responders at the local level as leaders and equal partners and fostering their participation in the coordination mechanisms.
- UNHCR commits to minimize the links in the humanitarian funding chain and transfer at least 25 per cent of its programme expenditures to the national first responders by the end of 2020.

6. PAST AND PRESENT INITIATIVES IN CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

6.1 1998: “A Strategy for Enhancing National NGO Partner Effectiveness – Recommendations” [PPA 1998 strategy on partnership.pdf](#)

- **Global:** NGO focal point in each office. NGO forum in each country. Identify core competencies for national NGOs and ensure training. Work with INGOs and NNGOs together, with a hand-over strategy, and training and capacity building components. Include capacity strengthening of NNGOs in international NGO partnership agreements. Give increased financial administrative support to NNGOs.
- **Regional:** identify common activities and training needs to be carried out regionally, including workshops for NNGOs to improve skills.
- **Country:** develop a Plan of Action in each UNHCR country office on NNGO capacity building.

6.2 2001: “Evaluation of UNHCR’s Role in Strengthening National NGOs” (by John Telford, EPAU/2001/011, January 2001, pages 22-23 [Evaluation national NGOs 2001.pdf](#)

Among the recommendations were:

- Develop criteria for selection of NNGOs.
- Strengthen NNGOs that are involved in UNHCR’s primary activities.
- Identify potential INGO- NNGO partnerships (as well as direct UNHCR – NNGO partnerships).
- Make increased funding available for capacity strengthening activities.
- Include NNGO capacity building activities in budgets of the UNHCR Country Operations Plan.
- Encourage systematic mentoring and on-the-job training in UNHCR offices for partner staff, and staff exchanges between UNHCR and NNGOs.

Some of the above recommendations have been implemented through the UNHCR Enhanced Framework for Implementing with Partners.

6.3 2013: UNHCR Implementing Partnership Management Guidance Note No. 1 - Selection and Retention of Partners for Project Partnership Agreements

Guidance Note No. 1 lists various criteria as bases for selecting Partners. These criteria must be aligned with the Project and operational requirements, and are to be included in the Call for Expression of Interest. Criteria may include, but are not limited to:

- a) **Sector expertise and experience:**
- b) **Project management:** ability to deliver project objectives, accountability mechanisms and sound financial management.
- c) **Local experience, presence and community relations:** ongoing programme in the area of operation; local knowledge; engaging refugees and other persons of concern; trust from local communities; local presence.
- d) **Contribution of resources:** evidenced and documented contribution of resources to the [Project](#) in cash or in-kind.
- e) **Security considerations:** ability to operate in security conditions of the [Project](#) site or country.
- f) **Cost effectiveness:** level of direct costs and administrative costs imposed on the [Project](#) in relation to project deliverables.
- g) **Experience working with UNHCR:** global and/or local partnerships including knowledge of UNHCR policies, practices and programmes.

Some of the above criteria fall well within the competence of NNGOs, such as local experience and knowledge, local presence, trust of local communities, cost effectiveness, and awareness of the local and national security environment.

6.4 2014-2015: THE IPMS MAPPING SURVEY – SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

6.4.1 Structured Dialogue follow-up: Towards Complementary Capacity Strengthening: In 2014 a consultancy was undertaken under the responsibility of the UNHCR Implementing Partnership Management Service (IPMS). Terms of Reference were developed for a consultancy to:

- “(Phase 1) better define the scope and what constitutes trilateral collaboration of UNHCR, international NGOs and national/local NGOs for strengthening capacity of UNHCR and its NGO partners, and
- (Phase 2) outline a potential strategy to enhance their complementary capacities to provide better protection for refugees and other persons of concern.”

6.4.2. The Mapping Survey: In 2014 a mapping of tripartite initiatives took place (Phase 1), with 40% replying from 173 addressees (UNHCR, INGOs and NNGOs). Participants in the Mapping Survey identified numerous **gaps**, particularly focused on national NNGOs, where capacity was felt to be weakest. Survey results also included a number of **capacities** felt to be the most important for NNGOs to achieve, and **mechanisms** which might be used to strengthen NNGO (and mutual) capacities.

- **Where are the identified gaps?**
 - lack of trained staff
 - staff retention
 - lack of resources
 - insufficient organizational visibility, linked to resource mobilization
 - lack of qualified staff to lead capacity strengthening activities
 - insufficient human resources for the development of the organization (managers), as well as for projects
 - ineffective systems, procedures and manuals (HR, finance, procurement)
 - need for increased tripartite cooperation and coordination among the three parties
 - lack of indicators to measure capacity strengthening
- **Which capacities are most required?**
 - resource mobilization and self-financing (**top of the list**)
 - strategic planning (**top of the list**)
 - leadership and management (**top of the list**)
 - human resources (**top of the list**)
 - programme management (**top of the list**)
 - financial management, internal systems and infrastructure (**top of the list**)
 - quality staff recruitment
 - staff competency and development
 - quality staff retention
 - specialized expertise (protection and technical sectors)
 - adherence to principles of accountability
 - effective external networking

- **Which mechanisms might be used to strengthen capacity?**
- training and staff development (**top of the list**)
- on the job coaching (**top of the list**)
- sharing experiences (**top of the list**)
- inter-agency exchange (**top of the list**)
- twinning and mentoring (**top of the list**)
- building partnerships and networking
- (joint) strategic planning
- engagement with refugees, populations and communities
- evaluation and organizational learning
- transfer of knowledge and skills
- sharing manuals, procedures and materials
- participatory and inter-agency assessments and planning
- sharing good practice examples

6.5. 2016: Follow-up webinars:

Webinars with international and national NGO Partners, arrived at the following conclusions: It must be a voluntary strategy. Approaches could be short-, medium- and long-term. Approaches could be global, regional and national (and contextualized to national context). Tripartite vs. bipartite approaches – both are necessary. Pilot projects should be organized in a few locations, then scale up based on experience and lessons learned from the pilots. Indicators should be considered to measure progress. Good practice examples and lessons learned should be shared, following the pilot projects. Pairing of NNGOs and INGOs should be considered.

6.6 2016: APRRN – ICVA – Mercy Malaysia Workshop on Capacity Strengthening

The aims of the Workshop, held in September 2016, were to:

- Take stock of and learn lessons from existing capacity strengthening initiatives;
- Identify current gaps and opportunities for organizations to contribute;
- generate feedback on the proposed NGO-2-NGO staff exchange programme, and
- brainstorm inputs into a strategic way forward.

The Workshop discussed various capacity strengthening activities, including Urban Refugees (focusing on peer-to-peer learning and sharing of good practice relating to urban refugees), the Africa NGO Platform (a good example of south-south learning exchange), and NGO-2-NGO (staff exchange).

6.7 2017: Conference calls: East and Horn of Africa

In May 2017, UNHCR and ICVA organized a series of conference calls in East and Horn of Africa countries (Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya) to take this initiative forward. The discussions were key in sharing good practices and future challenges, and to lay the groundwork for future cooperation in capacity strengthening. The need for multi-year planning on capacity issues, in-country partnering to identify and address gaps in organizational expertise and effectiveness, creative ways to deal with funding shortcomings, and the priority on in-country mapping, were among the key areas identified.

6.8 2017: Ethiopia Workshop

A workshop on Complementary Capacity Strengthening was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in November 2017. The workshop was co-facilitated by ICVA and UNHCR. Participants in the workshop included representatives from the Government of Ethiopia (ARRA), UNHCR country office for Ethiopia, international NGOs (INGOs) and, primarily, national NGOs (NNGOs). The workshop was planned and organized as an additional element of UNHCR's capacity strengthening strategy, dating back to the 2012 Structured Dialogue and the more recent 2016 Commitments on the Grand Bargain and at the World Humanitarian Summit. This Guidance Note, and the Strategy Suggestions found below, were used as bases for the workshop deliberations.

The majority of time at the workshop was devoted to small group discussions among participants, who were asked to deliberate on gaps, challenges, mechanisms, and next steps related to three key areas:

- financial sustainability
- financial management
- human resources management

At the final session various issues were identified for follow-up by the participants:

Internally:

- Identify a focal point for each NNGO present
- Assess capacity gaps and challenges, as well as mechanisms and next steps to address those gaps, by each NNGO.
- Commit each NNGO to develop action plans with ideas on concrete projects/activities
- Integrate capacity strengthening into the annual planning of each NNGO

Externally:

- Create an NNGO forum/network for Ethiopia, as a mechanism for coordination, information and follow-up
- Arrange for INGOs, such as World Vision, to share their resources
- Perhaps have a similar follow-up workshop in 2018, to assess progress against action plans

It is felt that this workshop and its follow-up activities could be a precedent for other similar workshops and initiatives by UNHCR country offices.

6.9 Grand Bargain Workstream on Local and National Responders

As one of the follow-up activities of the Grand Bargain, the Grand Bargain Workstream 2 on Local and National Responders was formed. Among the activities of the Workstream are:

- Preparation of Guidance Notes on some aspects of the Grand Bargain (country-level finance solutions for local actors, engaging local actors in coordination mechanisms, best practices in partnerships, and supporting local actors in capacity strengthening);
- 3-4 missions to Grand Bargain signatory countries, to review the countries' commitments to localization; and
- Occasional meetings bringing together UN agencies and NGOs involved in research projects connected to localization. UNHCR is participating in these discussions, focusing on the Ethiopia Workshop and its follow-up activities.

7. CAPACITY STRENGTHENING - STRATEGY SUGGESTIONS:

Following from the above, UNHCR will place increased priority on strengthening capacities of its NNGO Partners through the following strategies, for the overall benefit of refugees and persons of concern:

STRATEGIES FOR INSTITUTIONAL AND COMPLEMENTARY CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

1. **Determine capacity strengthening focal points:** An Advisory Group will be formed to advance this initiative, and to promote the adoption and implementation of the Strategy among the offices and organizations interested to be engaged. It could consist of five entities/partners: UNHCR, ICVA, InterAction, the Africa NGO Task Force, and the Asia-Pacific Refugee Rights Network. The NGOs, with their broad networks and global/regional/national contacts, will help to facilitate networking among organizations and dissemination of the Strategy. UNHCR will identify a focal point/office at Headquarters to coordinate this initiative.
2. **Agree on possible Locations:** UNHCR field offices and NGOs willing to take part will be identified in specific countries. Although this strategy is voluntary, capacity strengthening for local and national NGOs (and local authorities) are among the key responsibilities that field offices are expected to fulfill.
3. **Develop a step-by-step approach in the agreed country: The steps below are suggested as part of the Strategy:**
 - Step 1: name a focal point in the UNHCR country office for capacity strengthening.
 - Step 2: engage in discussions with INGO and NNGO forums in the country.
 - Step 3: identify INGOs in the country with capacity strengthening experience, willing to take part.
 - Step 4: identify interested NNGOs.
 - Step 5: agree on where the gaps are, what capacities will be targeted, and which mechanisms will be used (see 4. below).
 - Step 6: develop pilot projects (see 5. below), agreeing on a response plan, indicators and implementation arrangements.
4. **As part of the Strategy, identify gaps, then mechanisms to address gaps and improve capacities:**
 - 4.1 **Gaps:** In developing activities, focus on the Gaps identified with NNGOs, and plan to address the gaps. Many of the Gaps are linked to inadequate staffing, systems, resources, or external visibility. Some of the most important gaps to address, identified in the Mapping Survey (p. 6 above), are:
 - ✓ lack of trained staff
 - ✓ staff retention
 - ✓ lack of financial resources
 - ✓ lack of indicators to measure capacity strengthening
 - ✓ organizational visibility, linked to resource mobilization
 - ✓ qualified staff to lead capacity strengthening and managerial activities
 - ✓ effective systems, procedures and manuals (HR, finance, procurement)
 - 4.2 **Capacities:** : In strategically addressing Gaps, it is foreseen that capacities would be increased in specific areas, while ensuring that broader approaches for advancing protection and solutions remain central and are fully integrated. The most important capacities identified in the Mapping Survey were:

- ✓ resource mobilization and self-financing (prioritized by NNGOs)
- ✓ diversification of funding approaches
- ✓ strategic planning (prioritized by NNGOs)
- ✓ effective leadership and management (prioritized by NNGOs)
- ✓ human resources, including recruitment, staff development and staff retention
- ✓ programme management
- ✓ financial management, internal systems and infrastructure

4.3 Mechanisms: In addressing the gaps, think of which Mechanisms would be best to facilitate progress and improvement. For example, transfer of knowledge and skills could be a way to deal with lack of trained staff. Sharing of manuals and materials could help to improve deficiencies in systems. Twinning and mentoring could work to increase external visibility of an NGO, including resource mobilization possibilities. Establishing a project with a training component could address problems of staffing or systems. Some of the important mechanisms identified in the Mapping Survey were:

- ✓ training and staff development (prioritized by INGOs)
- ✓ understanding of the global humanitarian system (prioritized by INGOs)
- ✓ NNGOs working with and assisting other NNGOs
- ✓ sharing good practice examples, experience and lessons learned
- ✓ use of indicators to measure progress
- ✓ extend training and tools which are already available to UNHCR staff, also to partners
- ✓ engagement with refugees, populations and communities
- ✓ the UNHCR project control function plays a key role in building the capacity of NNGOs
- ✓ guidance for partners based on the recently issued Programme Manual (Chapter 4 of the UNHCR Manual) on issues such as results-based management will also benefit NGOs in their capacity strengthening in internal and project procedures
- ✓ identification by UNHCR offices of some projects on the Partner Portal where capacity strengthening could be developed or built in

In the review the issue of financial dependency of NNGOs was highlighted as a problematic area. With some NNGOs 100% dependent on UNHCR funding, one approach could be to help diversify the NNGO's funding portfolio, in order to reduce dependency on UNHCR funding. This is where strategic planning between organizations is highly important.

Staff development could include the capacitating of national staff of international NGOs and the gradual nationalization of the NGO office.

5. Develop pilot projects: in a few locations, then scale up based on experience and lessons learned from the pilots. Identify 1-2 partners per country willing to work on this.

- Pilot projects could be tripartite – UNHCR with international and national NGO Partners. They could also be bipartite – international NGOs working with national NGOs, or more experienced national NGOs working those less experienced, or UNHCR working with national NGOs.
- Activity focus: to be decided for each country. For UNHCR, one activity could be capacity strengthening as part of a Project Partnership Agreement. Build into PPAs and MoUs of international NGOs provision for NNGO cooperation, including training related to capacity strengthening. Another arrangement could be an NNGO or INGO serving as an umbrella agency, whereby the less developed NGO (generally a NNGO) contributes to the delivery of services under supervision of the more developed NGO.
- Identify strong, committed offices to advance this initiative, including the donor community.
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6. Agree on a Plan of Action: agree on a plan of action among organizations willing to be engaged, which should include planned activities, timelines for completion, and organizations/partnerships to be involved. This should include transition and succession plans for NNGOs, anticipating their strengthened capacity as first responders in humanitarian action.

7. Access available resources: many tools and resources exist in capacity strengthening. Some of these are listed below, and can well be used in conjunction with other approaches:

7.1 UNHCR e-learning platform: Learn & Connect is the Learning Management System of the UNHCR Global Learning Centre. The GLC Training Catalogue presents the currently available training and learning opportunities for UNHCR staff, affiliated workforce and partners. Much of the training offered corresponds to recognized gaps and desired capacities of NNGOs. Among the topics offered in the Catalogue are:

- Ethics and Integrity
- Protection
- Programme
- Security
- Emergency
- Management and Leadership
- Supply Management
- Finance
- HR Management
- Staff Health and Welfare
- ICT
- Language and >Communication

7.2 ALNAP (Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action): ALNAP has numerous materials on its website which can be used by Partners:

- learning reviews
- tools, guidelines and methodologies
- reports and studies
- programme and project reviews
- evaluation reports
- training and meeting documents

Link: <http://alnapp.org>

7.3 CaLP (Cash Learning Partnership) Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT): this self-assessment tool helps organizations to identify gaps, leading to capacity building for cash transfer programming. Organizational capacity is broken down into six categories:

- governance/leadership
- organizational management
- HR management
- financial management
- programme/project management
- external relations

Link: <http://www.cashlearning.org>

7.4 Save the Children – Capacity Strengthening Resource Guide and indicator tables:

[SC NGO Capacity Strengthening Resource Guide.docx](#)

Save the Children has developed this Guide to support capacity strengthening of national partners and to provide tools to promote their sustainability, in changing lives of children, families and communities. Two excellent tables could be used or adapted to provide indicators for actions taken and results achieved in capacity strengthening:

- Illustrative Capacity Strengthening Indicator Table for Organizations and Sectors
- Illustrative Results Indicators

8. **Secure funding:** Funding may be required for some of the activities to be undertaken. Primarily, participating organizations should endeavor to secure their own funds. Alternatively, a global capacity strengthening fund could be created either by UNHCR or through an interested donor such as the START BUILD Fund in the UK. Help to identify a network of funding sources for (especially) NNGOs. Donors, the private sector, and in some cases governments should be part of the initiative.
9. **Do not reinvent the wheel!** Build on various tripartite and bipartite good practice examples which already exist. See **ANNEX 1** for ideas. The initiative could benefit from protocols and guides already in place with INGO partners, such as :
 - Save the Children (Capacity Strengthening Resource Guide, cited above)
 - Search for Common Ground (Partnership Protocols)
 - ACTED Grassroots Organization Capacity Assessment (GOCA)
10. **Evaluate and draw lessons:** The first round of activities, when finalized, could be evaluated, lessons learned, good practice examples formulated, and decisions taken on a medium-term approach to complementary capacity strengthening. The Advisory Group could assist in this regard.
- 11.

8. DEFINITIONS

From the mapping survey (provided by, and adapted from, Save the Children):

- **Capacity:** Building on a UNDP definition, “the ability of individuals, institutions and societies to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve objectives in a sustainable manner” that leads to improvements in the lives of children and their families (last part added by SC).
- **Capacity strengthening:** The process through which individuals, institutions and societies obtain, strengthen and sustain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time. Capacity strengthening is now recognized as an internally owned and driven process, taking place from within by the people in the organization. It is not something that an international NGO can do for a partner. Through this perspective, our role is one of facilitating the process.
- **Capacity strengthening support:** Purposeful interventions that support partners to increase their ability to successfully act.

9. REFERENCES

- A Strategy for Enhancing National NGO Partner Effectiveness, UNHCR, 1999.
- Evaluation of UNHCR’s role in strengthening national NGOs, 2001.
- Towards an Institutional Strategy for Strengthening Complementary Capacities of UNHCR and its NGO Partners – Phase 1, Mapping of Tripartite Initiatives, 23014.
- UNHCR e-learning platform, Learn & Connect

- CaLP Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT), version 2.0, January 2016.
- Save the Children, Capacity Strengthening Resource Guide, December 2013.

10. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

Monitoring and compliance will be conducted by UNHCR country offices, for any complementary capacity strengthening initiatives which are developed and implemented.

11. DATES

These Operational Guidelines will come into effect on They will be reviewed and updated on

12. CONTACT

For more information or support in connection with this strategy, please contact the Implementing Partnership Management Service at epartner@unhcr.org.

13. HISTORY

These Guidelines will be incorporated in UNHCR's Enhanced Framework for Implementing with Partners, accessible on UNHCR's Intranet under Support Services / Implementing Partnerships.

**GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES IN COMPLEMENTARY CAPACITY STRENGTHENING
(from the document Mapping of Tripartite Initiatives : Questionnaire Replies –
Summary and Conclusions)**

Do you have any good practice examples of your tripartite or bipartite capacity development activities with local/national NGO partners? If so, please provide a short summary:

Replies from respondents converged in the following areas:

- **Partnerships, in the true sense of the word – empowering, of mutual benefit to all three organizations, peer-to-peer support, consultative and collaborative decision-making, use of peer educators from the community**
- **Regular staff training and coaching – including emergency leadership training**
- **Capacity support from UNHCR – allocate funding for it**
- **Lessons learned and evaluation workshops – regular forums and interactive sessions, to share outcomes of projects or good practice**
- **Resource mobilisation – lobby with donors on behalf of the NNGO, diversify income sources, exposure to success stories and initiatives**
- **Undertake activities jointly with the NNGO, preferably tripartite**
- **NNGO results orientation, RBA approach**

UNHCR – Good practice examples of national NGO capacity strengthening:

- **In Armenia** UNHCR, with funding from the U.S. BPRM, is engaged in a project entitled Asylum Capacity-building and Strengthening Protection Delivery. The project has several components, including: provision of technical expertise and management skills to local NGOs to provide protection and effective service delivery to persons of concern; and sending NGO staff abroad to benefit from on-the-job training in information sharing, referral systems, advocacy on refugee rights, refugee case management, and resource mobilization. In addition, UNHCR Armenia organized a protection workshop in 2013, which provided a forum for exchange of experience and training of many implementing and operational partners. The workshop revealed areas in which partners would like to receive or offer training or other capacity development support, including international protection, statelessness, sexual and gender-based violence, data management and registration, and working with unaccompanied minors.
- **The Africa Regional Bureau** has been supporting the Africa NGO Task Force, comprising a group of 60 national NGOs. One of its objectives is to strengthen the capacity of national NGOs in Africa. UNHCR has been supporting the Task Force with the establishment of a small secretariat in the OFADEC premises in Dakar, Senegal. Two regional training events were organized on the UNHCR results based management framework, and on related programme and accountability matters. In November 2013 UNHCR facilitated a workshop with the Africa NGO Task Force on programme management and partnership. The Africa NGO Task Force is a good example of south-south learning exchange.

- **In Serbia**, in the 1990s experienced international NGOs became UNHCR's main implementing partners. With the stabilization of the region, combined with decreased funding and emerging refugee crises elsewhere, international NGOs shifted their focus elsewhere. A positive legacy was left, as international NGOs created "spin-offs" local NGOs who were to remain in the country after the departure of the international NGOs. The INGOs strategically prepared and trained the local NGOs, with UNHCR assistance, to enable them to become fully operational and to meet UNHCR implementation standards. This was the case particularly in housing, income generation and vocational training. Some ten local "spin-off" NGOs were created during this time and some are still active UNHCR partners.
- **In Japan** the Regional Centre for Emergency Preparedness, or centre, has worked with emergency management stakeholders throughout Asia and the Pacific to promote emergency preparedness, whether caused by armed conflict, natural disasters or large-scale rights violations. To achieve its preparedness objectives, the centre conducts innovative capacity-building activities, information exchange and training. In 2012, core members of the centre network launched the Asia-Pacific Emergency Management (APEM) Platform, a vehicle for inter-agency exchange and joint preparedness initiatives. Several priority areas for collaboration have been identified, including capacitation of and engagement with local NGOs. Institutions belonging to the Platform come from 18 countries in Asia, and include some national NGOs.
- **In Iraq** UNHCR will be carrying out an evaluation of its NNGO empowerment programme. The primary objective of the evaluation is to assess the sustainability of the NNGOs; it will review the programme implementation and outcomes in Iraq from previous years to determine whether the projects have been successful in achieving their outlined objectives and outputs. The evaluation will measure the impact, relevance, cost-effectiveness and durability of the activities undertaken. This tool is meant to enable both UNHCR and NNGOs to improve their partnership efforts to meet beneficiary needs.
- **At the initiative of the former UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner (Operations), a UNHCR-International Medical Corps pilot project** was implemented during the period 2012-14. It aimed at establishing strategic UNHCR emergency stand-by arrangements with national NGOs, for deployment in emergency operations as part of a UNHCR emergency response team. Eleven NNGOs were identified to take part in the pilot from three priority regions - the Middle East, East Africa and Asia. The capacity of the participant NGOs was further enhanced by providing a tailored "on-site mentoring" programme, which was designed around the specific context and assessed needs of the individual organizations. The training greatly benefitted the NGOs, in changing and improving many areas of their work processes and capacity in emergency preparedness. UNHCR plans to create opportunities for the participants to experience in real time how UNHCR responds to emergencies, through engaging them in UNHCR emergency training (Workshop on Emergency Management, WEM). "The Pilot Project was a positive example of UNHCR-NGO cooperation, both in enhancing NNGO emergency preparedness capacity, and in mutual capacity strengthening among the three parties - UNHCR, INGOS and NNGOs."

- **Malaysia Pilot Project on Capacity Strengthening:** In line with the global capacity building initiative for UNHCR and its partner NGOs, the Malaysia operation embarked on a major exercise to enhance the capacity of Partners, refugee community-based organizations as well as UNHCR to effectively manage partnerships. The UNHCR office conducted a detailed assessment of the capacity gaps of its partner NGOs earlier in 2015, and commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers to develop a multi-year capacity building strategy for enhancing UNHCR and partner NGOs. UNHCR locally recruited an international consultant to conduct a pilot project to strengthen the capacity of two partner NGOs.

The project used a 'Strength-Based Approach' to identify existing assets of the partner organizations in planning and implementation of capacity strengthening interventions. Also, the project comprised two parts: 1) capacity strengthening interventions with the partners. 2) The analysis of the environment and available resources for the capacity strengthening interventions. The final report is entitled "Towards a strong refugee service sector: piloting capacity strengthening of UNHCR partner organizations in Malaysia". Mobilizing financial and other resources for Partners, building the refugee service sector, and increasing professional standards in the refugee sector, were among the recommendations coming out of the pilot project.

This pilot project constitutes an integral part of the UNHCR long-term vision of developing a stronger refugee service sector in Malaysia through building the capacity of partner NGOs. UNHCR Malaysia intends to further replicate this pilot with other partners.