

## **UNHCR-NGO Consultations 2010: Thematic Session on Partnerships**

### **Title of the Session: Strengthening partnerships at local-national level**

29 June 14:00 – 18:00

National organizations are the single largest group of UNHCR's partners. They constitute 79 percent of UNHCR's 852 partners. In 2009, 35.2 percent of UNHCR's expenditures were spent through national organizations.

Since strong partnerships are an effective way to deliver assistance to those in need, UNHCR is increasing the proportion of assistance it provides in this way. In this regard together with the number of partners, our expenditures through our partners have been on an upward trend. As a comparison, we increased the amount of funds disbursed to national partners from USD 262 million in 2008 to USD 288 million in 2009.

But increasing the number of national partners and their funding is not enough. Times and the global environment has changed, we need to adapt and if necessary change.

Compared to the past, there are fundamental changes in the environment in which we operate. The focus has shifted from logistical and infrastructural challenges to complex displacements with increasingly restricted humanitarian space. This requires and calls for reorientation of conventional humanitarian approaches. In this regard, this change translates itself into strengthening existing partnerships and in forging new partnerships in complex environments. In these circumstances, national and local organizations emerge as the most important element in the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Through intimate knowledge of their environment and dynamics in their communities, national organisations have been able to develop a unique way for accessing populations in need with sufficient discretion and safety. For this reason, they become crucial in reaching to our beneficiaries.

Against this background, UNHCR suggests to go beyond the traditional practice of seeing national partners as the implementers of our programmes to one in which we help them implement their programmes in a flexible manner to assist their own communities. However we are also aware that a concerted and coordinated effort is needed and a strong partnership is required at the international level to make sure we succeed.

So what must be done to achieve this? Here are few ideas. First, we may need to develop our partnership more systematically and look into ways how we can be more effective together. Secondly, we may need to look into way of lifting the barriers, and procedural obstacles which many of our partners complain about. Thirdly and maybe most importantly we need to continue with keeping the communications channels open and be more accessible.

All of this will be carefully examined in the partnership session. The format of the session and the break out sessions are specifically designed to enable the participants to get involved effectively, to discuss specific issues on how we can strengthen our partnership in this new environment and come up with practical recommendations.

See you all soon!