

Enhanced UNHCR Framework for Implementing with Partners
Selection and Retention of Partners for Project Partnership Agreements
Frequently Asked Questions
(4 August 2014)

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SELECTION AND RETENTION OF PARTNERS FOR PROJECT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

1. Introduction

The policy and procedures on selection/ retention of partners for project partnership and its related guidance note (IOM/FOM/052-2013) was issued in July 2013.

“Frequently Asked Questions” (FAQs) have been developed to assist UNHCR and partners for further understanding the policy. This document must be shared widely among UNHCR and with partners and other interested parties.

1.1 Why has there been a need to introduce a new partner selection and retention policy?

In July 2013 UNHCR issued Implementing Partnership Management Guidance Note No. 1, Selection and Retention of Partners for Project Partnership Agreements to establish a standard procedure in order to enhance transparency of selection of partners.

The objective of UNHCR's policy on the selection and retention of partners for Project Partnership Agreements is to ensure that UNHCR identifies the best-fit partners for project implementation in a given operation, in order to provide quality protection and assistance to refugees and other persons of concern. UNHCR Offices, through a multi-functional team approach, are required to undertake adequate due diligence and conduct the process of selection/retention of Implementing Partner(s) in an objective, consistent, transparent and timely manner.

1.2 Is the selection and retention policy applicable to Project Partnership Agreements with all the partners?

The policy as confirmed in IOM/FOM/052-2013 applies to all UNHCR Offices undertaking selection/retention of partners where project implementation requires entering into a Project Partnership Agreement with a NGO, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Society or other non-profit entity. The process for the selection of partners will not need to be applied when the partner is a United Nations system organisations or a governmental institution (designated entity by the authority such as Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or Ministry of Interior) that has a unique mandate that cannot be assumed by another organization.

1.3 When a partner sub-contracts another entity (non-commercial) for the implementation of project activities, should the selection of the sub-contractor entity be subject to the selection process?

The selection process applies only to the main partner with which UNHCR will sign a Project Partnership Agreement. The terms of any third party assignment of any aspects of the project are to be agreed by UNHCR and the partner in advance and are to be reflected in and regulated by the Project Partnership Agreement (ref. article 10.51 “Standard Format

Bipartite Project Partnership Agreement (UNHCR with non-governmental and other not-for-profit partners”).

1.4 Does the selection process apply to the International Organization for Migration (IOM)? In cases where the cooperation with IOM is already agreed with the UN Country Team, how is the selection process organised?

International Organisation for Migration is not an UN system organization, hence it not exempted from the selection process. However, if there is a Tripartite Agreement/Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR, IOM, other UN agencies and donors for joint cooperation, there will be no need to conclude a selection process.

1.5 Are the offices that do not have implementation with partners or have Partnership Agreements with values of less than USD 50,000 required to establish Implementing Partnership Management Committee?

Establishment of the Implementing Partnership Management Committee (Committee) is not required for operations where there is no implementation with partners. For operations where the value of the Project Partnership Agreement(s) is less than USD 50,000, the application of the selection policy is at the discretion of the Head of the UNHCR Office. However, the establishment of the Committee is required should the value of signed Agreements go beyond USD 50,000.

1.6 The selection process is mandatory for all projects above USD 50,000. What happens if the same partner implements two or more projects of less than USD 50,000 each, but the cumulative value is above USD 50,000?

Application of the selection process for project(s) with value of less than USD 50,000 is at the discretion of the Office. If the same partner implements two or more projects total of which equals or exceeds USD 50,000 within the same year for the same operation, the selection process is applicable. But if there are two small scale projects for the same partner with a total value of less than USD 50,000 each, selection is not required (for example, \$20,000 + \$20,000 or \$30,000 + \$10,000).

1.7 How do we manage an immediate/urgent need to sign Project Partnership Agreements when there is no time for a complete selection process?

Notwithstanding the importance of the selection of partners and providing opportunities for new partners, the UNHCR Office may determine that a complete selection process cannot be undertaken due to operational and security constraints, as this would have an adverse effect on timely addressing the needs of persons of concern (e.g. initial three months following the outbreak of emergency situations or security concerns). In such cases the Head of Office at the recommendation of the Committee must seek a waiver from the DFAM/IPMS and inform the respective Regional Office (where such structure exists). The waiver request must be in writing and should demonstrate the urgent nature and justification for not undertaking a complete selection process. DFAM/IPMS in consultation with the Controller and relevant Bureaus and divisions will decide on the waiver request (within two working days). The waiver may be granted for a maximum of one programming cycle.

1.8 If as recommended by the Committee, the Head of Office decides not to go through the selection procedure for a specific project, what documentation is required to request a waiver from Headquarters?

When submitting a waiver request to IMPS, the requesting office should send a memorandum with justification and compelling circumstance for not undertaking a selection process. A copy of the minutes of the Committee meetings must be filed for later review and audit.

1.9 In the new UNHCR Preparedness Package for Refugee Emergencies (PPRE), the contingency plan template asks Country Offices to identify the NGO which could be the first responder for a given sector in case the contingency plan needs to be activated. How is this compatible with the selection policy?

Contingency plans should consider the period required to initiate a selection process. UNHCR should issue the "Call for Expression of Interest" in advance and carry out the selection process for identifying and preparing partners on standby that can be activated when the need arises or fast-track the selection process. When the situation does not permit a complete selection process, a request for waiver from the Controller through DFAM/IPMS can be sought. Please remember that potential partners are interested in participating in UNHCR emergency operations and such opportunities should be fostered.

1.10 Can UNHCR staff members make suggestions to the selection policy/procedures?

This policy and its application will be subject to monitoring, formal review, (auditors, management reviews, etc.) to ensure its integrity and adapt its applicability for operations on a bi-annual basis. Feedback, experience sharing and suggestions from UNHCR and partners can be sent to the DFAM/IPMS (epartner@unhcr.org), for future improvements of the procedure.

2. Procedure for Selection and Retention of Partners

a) **Establishment of a UNHCR multi-functional Implementing Partnership Management Committee**

2.1 **Can Regional Offices establish a Regional or Sub-Regional Committee instead of a country-based one?**

Yes, the Regional Offices can establish Regional or Sub-Regional Committee in lieu of country level. However, since the Head of Office of each country office is fully delegated to establish its own Committee and take decisions, all the Head of Offices must agree to such arrangements and a member representing each of the countries should be included in the Regional Committee. It is also permissible even encouraged that staff from the Regional Offices become members of country Committees.

2.2 **How the Committee is formed and what is the tenure of the committee?**

*The Head of Office is required to appoint the Committee and draw its members/alternates solely from UNHCR staff, comprising colleagues from the relevant functional areas with due respect to the principles of the UNHCR Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming strategy. The Chairperson (voting member) and Secretary (non-voting member) will also be appointed by the Head of Office. The size of the committee should be reflective of UNHCR Office size and its resources, but the Committee must consist of at least the Chairperson and three full members, the Secretary and their alternates. In order to support consistency and efficiency, it is recommended that the tenure of the Committee be maintained for all processes relating to the selection/retention of partners for two consecutive UNHCR programme cycles. The memo for establishing the committee must be uploaded into eSafe for future reference and audit. Terms of Reference for the Committee are found as **ANNEX B**, Selection and Retention of Partners for Project Partnership Agreements.*

2.3 **Can affiliate workforce personnel be members or alternate members of the Committee?**

Affiliate workforce personnel, consultants and staff seconded to UNHCR cannot be members or Secretary of the Committee, but can be consulted for specific expertise without being given voting right.

2.4 **What is the exact role of a project control or programme staff designated to the Committee? Can they be a voting member or an ex-officio?**

Project control and programme staff can be a voting member of the Committee or can be appointed as a secretary (non-voting member). The decision is left to the discretion of the Head of Office who established the Committee. It is encouraged to include them in the committee as multi-functional team members.

2.5 Should the Head of Office be allowed to be Committee chairperson or should the Committee chairperson be appointed from amongst other UNHCR staff?

The Head of Office cannot be a member or chairperson of the Committee. The Head of Office is the one who ultimately endorses or disagrees with the recommendation of the Committee and therefore cannot be part of the Committee's deliberations, in order to foster an objective and independent forum for discussion without due influence.

2.6 Are the Offices required to inform Headquarters about the establishment of the Committee?

A memorandum on the establishment and membership of the Committee is required to be issued and maintained in the Selection Files. The memorandum must also be uploaded to the eSafe folder "Implementing Partnership Committee", for reference and future reviews.

b) Call for Expression of Interest (ANNEX C, Selection and Retention of Partners for Project Partnership Agreements)

2.7 What's the purpose of issuing a "Call for Expression of Interest"?

The purpose of issuing a "Call for Expression of Interest" is to broaden opportunities for all interested organizations by inviting existing and new partners to express their interest in implementing a specific project in a given location/operation. The "Call for Expression of Interest" should inform interested partners about: project goals, project objectives and specifications; criteria for selection; deadlines for submission of concept note; date of selection decision; and other particularities of the operation and/or project. The same information will be provided to all existing and potential partners at the same time, in order to ensure fairness and objectivity of the process.

2.8 If UNHCR has limited choice of partners that can work with refugees in a given country and is aware that only the existing partners have government permission to work in a refugee camp- is UNHCR still required to initiate a "Call for Expression of Interest"?

The "Call for Expression of Interest" should still be initiated and requirement for "permission of the government for interested NGOs to work in refugee camps" should be specified/announced in the "Call for Expression of Interest". UNHCR may also assist to negotiate with the government for providing an opportunity to NGOs, wherever possible.

2.9 Can potential partners who are not registered in the country of operation submit Concept Notes following UNHCR's "Call for Expression of Interest"?

Registration of a partner with the host country is not a pre-condition for selection. However, some host countries may require registration of foreign NGOs. Partners are responsible for securing government requirements for registration and operation in a host country. UNHCR may assist the selected partner in the negotiations with the host government, where applicable.

2.10 Can the selection/retention process be launched without issuing a “Call for Expression of Interest”?

The “Call for Expression of Interest” is a mandatory part of the selection process. However, the choice of the format for the “Call for Expression of Interest” is at the discretion of the Office.

2.11 What is the flexibility allowed in complex and large-scale operations when issuing “Calls for Expression of Interest” to avoid the issuance of a very large number of “Calls”? Should the “Call” be issued by sector or by project or by camp/region?

It is subject to the prevailing needs, and offices have the discretion to decide. The Office might decide to issue one “Call for Expression of Interest” for a project which covers multiple sectors or it might decide to issue a “Call” for a number of sectors (such as Health, Education or Water and Sanitation) at once and then select partners for different projects specialising in different sectors or might cover a single sector in each “Call”.

2.12 How should the selection criteria strategically be established to ensure transparency and impartiality?

The Committee should convene and decide on the selection criteria that best suits the needs of the operation. The Committee should also agree on the mechanism/methodology as to how the Concepts Notes are to be evaluated based on the agreed selection criteria. It is very important to include the selection criteria in the “Call for Expression of Interest”.

2.13 Which selection criteria should be given a higher weight and how the evaluation of Concept Notes is to be done?

The selection criteria should be set by the multi-functional Committee team aligning those with project and operational requirements. The Committee is required to establish the relevant and assessable criteria as well as deciding on the rationale and manner in which the Concept Notes will be evaluated. There are variety ways for evaluation against set criteria: scoring matrices (quantitative or qualitative) can be used including assigning scoring scales by weights, levels of importance, rating, etc. The Committee should agree on the evaluation methodology and should document the evaluation process for transparency and future reference.

2.14 Should the Concept Note with the lowest UNHCR funding requirements be given priority when concluding the selection of a partner?

The principle of “best value for money” should be considered in determining whether an offer or proposal is acceptable with non-price factors first having been considered. If all other technical elements are equal, the lowest acceptable price offer or proposal must be preferred. The basis for selection must be duly justified and documented, and must be based on the established evaluation criteria announced in the “Call for Expression of Interest”.

2.15 If the donor has put forward specific conditions or earmarking on the engagement of partners for a particular project, how this should be factored into the selection process?

When going through the selection process for projects where the donor has placed special earmarking conditions, one of the selection criteria considered should be the conditions from the donor (for example, when a donor proposes funding for only national NGOs or the same partner being engaged in multi-year project, etc.).

2.16 Could UNHCR Office ask for a waiver from the selection process when UNHCR doesn't have a sufficient number of partners to invite for the "Call for Expressions of Interest"? In case UNHCR has received Concept Notes only from existing partners in response to the issued "Call" limiting the scope of choice, is a waiver from the selection process justifiable?

The Partner selection/retention policy does not set a minimum required number of Concept Notes to be received in response to a "Call" in order to conclude the partner selection process. If for objective reasons only a limited number of prospective partners have submitted Concept Notes, UNHCR will make a selection from the available pool of potential partners. The described scenario is not a case where a waiver from the selection process is required.

In case UNHCR has received Concept Notes only from existing partners in response to the issued "Call" limiting the scope of choice, no need for requesting a waiver from the selection process. Nevertheless, it should be documented for the Committee's review and future references.

c) Submission of Concept Note

2.17 If a prospective partner is interested in UNHCR's "Call for Expression of Interest", how should it inform UNHCR on its intentions to become a partner?

*Interested existing or prospective partners may submit a Concept Note in response to the "Call for Expression of Interest". Prospective partners that have not previously worked with UNHCR and are not yet registered with UNHCR Headquarters will also need to submit the Partner Declaration form contained in **ANNEX A** of the Selection Policy document. NOTE: Except for the Partner Declaration, UNHCR Offices may tailor templates to best suit their operational needs. Any chosen template must then be used consistently throughout the selection/retention process to ensure objectivity and fairness.*

2.18 What should the Concept Note cover and how is it different from a fully developed project proposal?

The Concept Note is for the partner to express its unique advantage and added value in accomplishing project objectives. The Concept Note is to clearly spell out objectives for undertaking the project, describe the implementation approach, expected outputs, and demonstrate abilities to meet the selection criteria and project requirements, the unique advantage the partner brings to the partnership, and its complementarity with UNHCR. It is important that the selected partner participates in the design and detailed budgeting of the project and in concluding the Project Partnership Agreement. Therefore, the Concept Note should not be a fully developed project proposal, but rather should be concise and contain clear information.

2.19 Should partners strictly follow the format proposed by the UNHCR Office when submitting Concept Notes?

*It is at the discretion of the UNHCR Office to determine whether partners use the recommended template in **ANNEX D** of the Selection Policy document or if they can use a similar format developed by the UNHCR Office. However, all partners are required to submit Concept Notes to the UNHCR Office according to the same standard submission format required by the Office to ensure fair assessment, consistency and objectivity.*

2.20 Can the Government participate in the response to the “Call for Expression of Interest” for projects that are not related to their mandate?

The process for the selection of partners does not need to be applied when the partner is a governmental institution that has a unique mandate that cannot be assumed by another organization (such as the Ministry of Interior of a host country, national commission for refugees, etc.), as determined by the national laws. Governmental institutions such as hospitals might be subject to selection.

However, when the government departments want to implement particular projects that are not necessarily related to their mandate, they should go through the selection process along with other interested applicant organizations, provided their engagement is permissible by the national laws.

2.21 If UNHCR has received a Concept Note from a partner at the latter’s initiative, could the office accept the Concept Note and conclude a partnership if the proposed project is in line with the UNHCR Operations Plan?

Partners can bring forward initiatives by submitting a Concept Note to UNHCR Offices. In cases where the initiative is within the Operations Plan, and the project value is above USD 50,000, the UNHCR Office is required to issue a “Call for Expression of Interest” offering the same opportunity to all interested partners for fair and objective assessment and inclusion.

d) Preparation for the Committee Review and Recommendation

2.22 How is it ensured that all the submissions from the different prospective partners are considered?

All the submissions from the prospective partners will be compiled and submitted by the Committee Secretary to the members of Committee to carry out different assessments prior to concluding discussions and making recommendation to the Head of the Office.

2.23 What is the expected role of the Secretary of the Committee, including in verifying in the Partner Declaration and other documents submitted by the prospective organizations?

The Secretary is required to check whether the applicant organization meets the basic compatibility/eligibility criteria for establishing Partnership as outlined in the Partner Declaration. In addition, as part of preparations for the committee’s review and recommendation, the Secretary will verify that the organizations who submitted Concept Notes are not listed on any of the sanctions lists established and maintained by the United Nations Security Council (http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/aq_sanctions_list.shtml), consult DFAM/IPMS and other UNHCR data, etc.

2.24 The Secretary's function on the Committee is an important and responsible job. Is there any recognition or compensation provided for undertaking the additional responsibilities?

No financial compensation should be provided to the members of the Committee/Secretary. Like in any other committees, the HC or the delegated authority can appoint a staff member to exercise functions in committees. The contribution of such staff undertaking additional responsibilities should be acknowledged in the staff member's annual performance appraisal process.

2.25 The Secretary to the Committee is required to have good knowledge of project implementation/management and clear understanding of his/her responsibilities (preparation of "Call for Expression of Interest", Partner Selection Decision template, drafting the letter on selection decision addressed to partners, etc.). If the Secretary is not from the Programme Unit, is there any mechanism to assist him/her to carry out the assumed responsibilities?

It is recommended that when appointing a Secretary to the Committee these requirements are kept in mind. The Secretary's role is to assist in ensuring that all the documents are received on time, members of the Committee are provided with relevant documents for assessments, files are maintained in order and minutes are prepared, etc. Full knowledge of project management is not required to fulfill the above responsibilities (for example the "Call for Expression of Interest" should be prepared by the Programme Officer and not the Secretary). However, it is important the role and the behavior of the Secretary be neutral and not to get involved in decision making of the selection.

e) Committee Review and Recommendation

2.26 How the submitted Concept Notes will be studied and analyzed?

*The Committee is required to examine and evaluate all the Concept Notes and other requested information submitted by all applicant organizations, the results of technical and other assessments as well as related documents compiled by the Secretary. Then the Concept Notes will be reviewed and analysed taking into account the criteria and project specifications that were outlined in the "Call for Expression of Interest". The Committee will consider all factors to identify the partner that most substantially conforms to the requirements and criteria outlined in the "Call". The Secretary will collect and tabulate all the applications. **ANNEX E** of the Selection Policy document contains sample scoring scales and evaluation matrices.*

2.27 In a cases where the selection requires technical knowledge and expertise in a particular domain, such as WASH or shelter, can a UNHCR technical expert be invited to participate in the Committee meeting, even if he or she is not formally part of the Committee?

As a guiding rule the Committee should be multi-functional and the membership to the Committee is to be drawn from different functional units of the operation utilizing sectorial expertise available in the office.

When a project includes a specialized technical component(s) and the multi-functional Committee has no sectorial expert present in the country or among its members, the Office should consult relevant sectorial specialists, when setting up selection criteria and evaluating the Concepts Notes. If specialised expertise is not available in the operation, the Office can engage relevant technical experts in the region or at Headquarters for consultations as early as when defining selection criteria and subsequently for the evaluation of Concept Notes. When the technical experts (such as consultants or affiliated work force) are not members of the Committee, they can be invited to attend Committee meetings in an advisory and non-voting capacity only. Additionally, advice of non-UNHCR experts can be sought in cases where there is no conflict of interest; however non-UNHCR experts (from other UN Agencies, NGOs, government agencies, etc.) cannot attend the COMMITTEE meetings or act as a voting member.

2.28 Can the review process include a physical visit to the prospective partner's office and interview with their staff?

If it is deemed necessary to undertake such assessment, visit to the partner's office is possible to facilitate the selection process.

2.29 Will the Committee's decision on the selection of the partner be final?

The Committee will not make a final decision on the selection of a partner. The Committee's responsibility is solely to conduct an assessment and make a recommendation to the Head of Office for the final decision.

2.30 Should the Committee's deliberations be documented for possible reference?

The Committee's deliberations and recommendation(s) along with all justifications will be documented by the Secretary in the meeting minutes. The meeting minutes must contain a summary of the discussion, the recommendation made and the reasons for that recommendation. Any Committee member has the right to request the Secretary that his/her view be duly reflected in the minutes. Meeting minutes must be shared within three working days of the Committee meeting with the Committee members and, upon their adoption/signature, be presented to the Head of Office and Regional Office (where such structure exists).

2.31 Can the Committee meeting be conducted through a phone or conference call?

The Committee's meetings can take place in person, by telephone or electronic means, provided that the rules and confidentiality are maintained.

2.32 Should the recommendations of the Committee be reached through consensus or by majority vote?

The Committee should reach its recommendations based on voting. The majority vote will determine the Committee's recommendation. In case a majority vote cannot be reached, the decision will be referred to the Head of Office. The Committee can only make recommendations when there is quorum, requiring the presence of the Chairperson (or alternate) and two-thirds of the members (or alternates).

f) Decision by the Head of Office

2.33 The final decision on the selection/retention process rests with the Head of Office. If the Committee does not agree with the final decision of the Head of Office, what next steps should the Committee take?

The Committee can only make a recommendation on the selection/retention of partners. The Head of Office holds the ultimate responsibility to the High Commissioner for the management of the operation in a country. The final decision, accountability, responsibility and authority for selection/retention of partners remain with the Head of Office. However, it is required from the Head of Office to exercise adequate due diligence, objectivity and fairness. When the host Government requires approving the partners that work in the country, UNHCR will consult any restrictions before making final decision.

*The Head of Office is required to fully document the rationale for approval or rejection of the Committee's recommendation. The decisions of the Head Office are subject to oversight review and audit. The decision is required to be documented using a format similar to the Partner Selection Decision template in **ANNEX F** of the Selection Policy document.*

2.34 Does the Committee have to redo the selection process in case of rejection of its recommendation by the Head of the Office?

Should the Head of Office disagree with the Committee's recommendation, (s)he must document the justification for overriding the Committee's recommendation in the file for future review and independent audit. The following options may become available:

- *The Head of Office selects the next best-fit partner from the shortlist reviewed by the Committee (the justification for such is to be recorded); or*
- *The Head of Office decides to initiate and conduct a new selection cycle, and re-advertise the "Call for Expression of Interest"*

2.35 Can the office sign a Project Partnership Agreement following the final decision by the Head of Office?

The Head of Office will grant that the selected partner is engaged in project implementation for two consecutive years of UNHCR programme cycle, provided that the partner has demonstrated good performance, the operation continues, and funds are available for project implementation for the second year. Prior to the signing of the Project Partnership Agreement the Office needs to discuss and negotiate with the partner the details of the project.

g) Communication of Decision to Applicant Partners

2.36 How will the outcomes of the selection process be announced to the applicant organizations?

*In order to ensure transparency, it is required from the Head of Office to inform the applicant organizations, in writing, of the outcome of the selection/retention process within three working days of the date of the decision. **ANNEX G** of the Selection Policy document provides sample wording for providing feedback.*

2.37 Can an e-mail be adequate in providing feedback to the applicant organizations?

An appropriate communication medium (i.e. email, web, letter, etc.) should be used taking into account protection sensitivities, security constraints and the operational environment when communicating the results of the selection process to applicant organizations.

2.38 Can applicant organizations that were not selected request clarifications on the selection decision from UNHCR and if yes should UNHCR respond?

Should an applicant organization request clarification on the selection decision, the Head of Office is required to provide a response, explaining the transparency and integrity of the selection/retention process. However, the UNHCR Office may not be in a position to disclose the rationale for the decision due to operational sensitivities (e.g. confidentiality related to protection of persons of concern, security). The feedback must be provided within 15 working days of the request.

Applicant organizations that are not satisfied with the feedback provided by the UNHCR Office in the field may escalate their concerns to UNHCR's DFAM/IPMS (epartner@unhcr.org). The DFAM/IPMS will then assess and refer to the appropriate senior management for follow-up.

h) Retention of Partners

2.39 Is retention of a partner for the second year automatic as UNHCR has granted a partner engagement in project implementation for two consecutive years?

*While the selection of a partner is for a period of two UNHCR programme cycles, prior to entering into the second year Project Partnership Agreement, a desk review by the Programme Unit (or other designated unit) is to be conducted to ensure that the operation requires retention and the partner performance is adequate. If the desk review determines that the partner should not be retained, the matter shall be referred to the Committee. Upon recommendation of the Committee, the Head of Office may decide not to retain the partner. Such decision will be communicated in writing to the partner, in advance. If the desk review concludes that the partner should be retained, the Office can proceed with signing a new Partnership Agreement with the same partner. **ANNEX H** of the Selection Policy document contains a template for partner retention.*

2.40 How is the retention decision beyond two operational consecutive years made?

After two UNHCR programme cycles, the Committee is required to determine whether it is in the best interest of the operation to further retain the selected partner for an additional two programme cycles. The review is to be conducted and documented taking into consideration

the performance of the partner and quality of delivery of desired results; whether a change of partner may negatively impact on resources, continuity and/or effective response to the persons of concern; UNHCR's contribution in the capacity development of the partner may be lost or not yield its desired outcome in case of change of partner; contribution of the partner (in cash or in-kind); willingness of partner to continue with project implementation; and availability and interest of alternative partners.

2.41 A partner can be retained maximum for four years following selection by the Committee subject to evaluation of its performance at the end of each year and operational needs. After four years, does the Committee need to issue a "Call for Expression of Interest" to this partner who has been already engaged by UNHCR for the previous 4 years? Does the partner still need to submit a Concept Note?

Offices are required to ensure that for each project a complete and comprehensive selection process is undertaken no less frequently than every four years. UNHCR Offices should consider all partners, not to disregard (or include) simply because they are a new or existing partner. Wider publicity of a "Call for Expression of Interest" and solicitation should be undertaken in order to have a broader choice among existing and new partners. All the partners responding to the "Call for Expression of Interest" should submit Concept Notes.

2.42 For exceptional and valid reasons, the NGO was engaged by UNHCR to become a partner despite the absence of a selection process. Would the NGO benefit from the four-year qualifying period?

It is possible that a NGO was selected as a partner without going through the Partner Selection Process (for example following granting of a waiver from the process). However, it is mandatory to conduct the selection process in the next operational year to ensure compliance with the policy as well as transparency and consistency in the way UNHCR establishes partnerships.

2.43 What type of changes in the project would warrant a new selection process of a partner?

If there is a substantive change to the project from one programme cycle to the next, a complete selection process is required to be undertaken. Examples of such changes include: change in needs of the population group (i.e. repatriation vs. asylum seeking); changes in the operation (i.e. from emergency to maintenance), change of sector (i.e. from health to education); or substantial variation in project size and budget (i.e. increase of the project budget by about over 40-50%).

i) Operational Provisions

2.44 What is the best time in the operational cycle to start the partner selection process?

Selection must take place well in advance in order not to delay the start of implementation of projects. Depending on the prevailing situation, the selection procedure starting from issuance of the "Call for Expression of Interest" and finishing with informing the selected partner on the outcome of the process might take not more than 3 months. This means operations should start the selection process quite early in the year and ideally as soon as the UNHCR Office knows the outline of the Operations Plan or shortly after the mid-year review.

However, selection/retention decisions should not be made later than October, when the Operating Level (OL) is set for funding of the forthcoming implementation year.

2.45 How frequently should the Committee meet?

The Committee should meet as frequently as required.

2.46 Should Committee members be frequently informed about progress on implementation by all partners, thus paving a way for periodic review of partners' performance?

Yes, the Office should keep the Committee abreast of the developments and work progress, performance of partner, as such information would be useful and facilitate the reviews and assessments in future selection processes such as reviews for retention.

2.47 Are UNHCR Offices required to keep relevant records of selection/retention process and for how long?

Selection Files must be established by the relevant UNHCR Office and structured in an organised manner, to maintain documents related to the process of selection/retention of partners. The files should include a Memorandum on the establishment of the Committee and its composition; copies of any documents used to solicit interest for the project and submissions from partners; assessments undertaken of each partner against the selection criteria; technical and risk assessment of each partner on the specific project; assessment of performance for retaining partners, if applicable; minutes of the Committee meetings clearly documenting the recommendations of the Committee; decisions taken by the Head of Office; possible waiver requests and responses; copies of Partner Feedback; and any other relevant documents.

Selection File documentation is confidential to UNHCR and must be properly maintained for six years for audit purposes and to facilitate management oversight.

2.48 Once a new partner is selected, what documentation should be submitted to DFAM/IPMS for the registration of the Partner with UNHCR?

To register a new partner with UNHCR a request has to be sent to the DFAM/IPMS mailbox at epartner@unhcr.org. For international and national (NGO and Government) partners the following documents are required to be submitted: 1) "IP Creation Form" (ref. IOM/059-FOM/058/2009, Appendix 2), 2) "Partner Declaration Form"-applicable only to NGOs (ref. IOM/052-FOM052/2013, Annex A), 3) documents confirming the partner's legal status (partner registration documents).

2.49 Are all the partners required to complete and sign the Partner Declaration form?

The Partner Declaration form is required to be submitted only by new partners who have not worked with UNHCR previously and need to fill the Partner Data.

2.50 With the issuance of this policy, is the Committee given authority to negotiate and conclude Project Partnership Agreements?

Authority to negotiate, sign and terminate Project Partnership Agreements with partners in accordance with UNHCR policies and procedures lies with the UNHCR Head of Office. The accountability, responsibility and authority of Committee as well as other parties (Head of Office, Bureaus, DFAM/IPMS, partners, etc.) related to partner selection and agreements, are detailed in the Annex J of Guidance Note No. 1.

2.51 Would DFAM/IPMS consider setting Committee Help Desk to provide advice and support to field offices?

DFAM/IPMS is already running the epartner@unhcr.org mailbox, which provides advice and guidance to the field on different aspects of the Partnership Framework.

2.52 Any other question was not addressed in the FAQs. To whom do I write if I need more information?

Questions can be addressed to the Implementing Partnership Management Service at epartner@unhcr.org mailbox.

*Implementing Partnership Management Service
Division for Financial Administration and Management*

4 August 2014