

## BACKGROUND PAPER

### UPDATE ON THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S STRUCTURED DIALOGUE ON NGO-IFRC-UNHCR PARTNERSHIP

The High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue on NGO-IFRC-UNHCR Partnership served as a platform to develop a series of recommendations endorsed in December 2012 (see the [Partnership Recommendations Paper, the outcome document](#)) on how to translate into action the five Principles of Partnership (PoP)<sup>1</sup>. UNHCR, ICVA, InterAction, the NGO community and the IFRC committed to take these recommendations forward at the global, regional and field levels. The following summarises the progress made in the year since the last UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultation in June 2013.

#### GLOBAL LEVEL

- ✚ In September 2013 High Commissioner Guterres sent a memo to all his staff informing them about the Dialogue and inviting them to make special efforts to systematically consult with partners and to engage in a regular dialogue on the strategic directions in their operations. ICVA and InterAction disseminated similar messages to their members.
- ✚ A guidance note was developed to facilitate the reflection and review of NGO-UNHCR partnerships at the field level.

#### Examples of how this has translated into practice:

- ✚ Strengthening of partnership with humanitarian actors, including NGOs, is one of UNHCR's **Global Strategic Priorities for 2014 and 2015**. UNHCR has committed to engage its partners – including operational partners - in all strategic planning and contingency processes.
- ✚ An analysis of UNHCR Country Operation Plans for 2015 showed the commitment, at the field level, to strengthen operational partnership. More than half of UNHCR's operations selected **the objective of "strengthening partnership and coordination."** Coordination mechanisms and capacity strengthening constitute the main focus of their planned interventions, followed by: the effective establishment and management of partnership; joint assessment, planning and evaluation; and partnership with development actors at national and regional level.

#### REGIONAL LEVEL

- ✚ ICVA organized a 20 September 2013 regional consultation on UNHCR-IFRC-NGO partnership in **Bangkok**. The event was well attended (around 50 participants) and with a very active and constructive participation of IFRC. Joint planning, info-

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<sup>1</sup> Equality, Transparency, a Result-Oriented Approach, Responsibility, and Complementarity

sharing, and capacity strengthening were the areas identified for further collaboration.

- ✚ Partners are exploring opportunities for additional regional NGO-IFRC-UNHCR consultations, and welcome the participation of regional consortia in helping to plan these events.

#### **Examples of how this has translated into practice:**

- ✚ In the Americas, UNHCR and NGOs are supporting governments of Latin America and the Caribbean in a commemorative process that will result in the adoption of a new strategic framework on the occasion of the **30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Cartagena Declaration**. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), in collaboration with UNHCR, is organizing preparatory meetings for each “Cartagena+30” sub-regional consultation and financing the attendance of NGOs representatives in these consultations. Asylum Access Ecuador has joined with others to galvanize civil society inputs into a Cartagena+30 Initiative document highlighting challenges in the region and providing 16 recommendations based on current good practice. Please click [HERE](#) for English and [HERE](#) for Spanish.
- ✚ In Europe, collaboration around advocacy it is highly developed. Some examples of successful collaboration include **ECRE’s campaign “Europe Act Now” for Syrian refugees** involving over 100 NGOs as well as UNHCR, in more than 40 European countries; and UNHCR’s collaboration with the **European Network on Statelessness Issues** (53 member organisations in 33 countries).
- ✚ In Asia, **the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR)** is a regional, multi-year strategy, agreed upon by the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, with the support of UNHCR, to identify and implement comprehensive solutions for Afghan refugees and returnees in the region. Both local and international NGOs are important partners in the implementation of the Strategy and in resource mobilization and advocacy efforts, including the elaboration of national portfolios of projects that form the basis for the Strategy in the years ahead. The Strategy offers a unique framework for strengthening existing partnerships and engaging new partners to address the needs of Afghan refugees and their host communities and to advance solutions.

#### **COUNTRY LEVEL**

ICVA, Interaction, and UNHCR undertook joint missions to the **DRC** (January 2014) and **Pakistan** (February 2014) to: 1) promote awareness about the Structured Dialogue, 2) examine its relevance in these contexts, and 3) facilitate discussions on partnership and opportunities for further action. In all four workshops held for participants in Kinshasa, Goma, Islamabad and Peshawar, participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to learn about the Dialogue and identified recommendations for strengthened collaboration in their operations.

- ✚ In the **DRC**, NGOs were keen to better understand UNHCR's country-specific as well as organizational partnership strategies, and emphasised the goal of complementarity. They agreed on the need for more inclusive joint situation analyses, joint planning and advocacy. In Eastern DRC, participants agreed that there were several well-developed and functioning fora for coordination and discussion including UNHCR, NGOs and other relevant actors. There was particular interest in national NGO capacity strengthening; discussions included an interesting range of ideas from NGOs on how they could best maximise their own opportunities, skills and resources. UNHCR Goma held a follow-up meeting in May, which included discussion of key operational strategies involving several partners.
- ✚ In **Pakistan**, participants agreed on findings and recommendations to improve information-sharing, advocacy, and coordination amongst partners. A follow-up teleconference to review progress with relevant parties in Pakistan was held mid-May 2014.

There are many examples of good NGO-UNHCR partnership in the field across many different contexts which this note does not attempt to identify or summarise.

## THEMATIC ISSUES

- ✚ **Information Sharing:** A [Guidance Note on Improving Information Sharing Among Partners](#) serves as a reference for those interested in ensuring mutual expectations are appropriately considered. This issue was highlighted as a priority in the September 2013 Bangkok regional consultations, January 2014 DRC workshops, and February 2014 Pakistan workshops. UNHCR is enhancing its information management capacity by creating dedicated posts (from 1 in 2010 to 40 in 2014), and is working closely with governments and partners on population data, for example joint work on communities at risk in the Central African Republic and collaboration with the shelter cluster on movement tracking in Iraq.
- ✚ **Advocacy:** The theme of the June 2013 UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations was "[Advocating Together for Protection.](#)" The Consultations included a half-day session exploring opportunities for complementary advocacy at the global, regional and field levels. The advocacy session has now become a recurring agenda item at the UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations; the 2014 session will focus on how humanitarian actors can better collaborate in joint advocacy focused at promoting positive social change and protection for persons of concern to UNHCR.
- ✚ **Putting IDPs Back on the Agenda:** The theme of the [December 2013 High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges](#) focused on IDPs. NGOs held a side event at the Dialogue on "Keeping the Focus on IDP Protection."
- ✚ **Promoting Government Pledges:** Following discussions between NGOs attending the June 2013 statelessness retreat and UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations, a group of NGOs along with UNHCR and UN Women formed a coalition to start a

campaign to eradicate gender discrimination in nationality laws. (27 countries still prevent mothers from passing on their nationality to their children and there are over 60 that prevent women from acquiring, retaining or changing their nationality on an equal basis as men). The campaign will be launched on 18 June 2014 at a side event at the 2014 Human Rights Council meeting, and it is envisaged that one of the primary activities of the Campaign will be to promote States implementation of pledges to reform gender discrimination in their nationality laws.

- ✚ **Capacity Strengthening:** An expert was recruited in January 2014 to map current capacity strengthening efforts by UNHCR, INGOs and NNGOs. Phase I of the review is currently ongoing. 173 questionnaires were shared with UNHCR Country offices, NNGOs, and INGOs. To date, 68 replies (39%) were received as follows: UNHCR (67%); NNGO (37%); and INGOs (20%). Currently the answers are being analysed to identify good practices, gaps and a proposed way forward.
- ✚ **Urban Settings:** The [UNHCR-NGO Urban Refugee Task Team](#) continued working to identify and promote the adoption of good practices. To date more than 110 good practices have been uploaded onto <http://www.urbangoodpractices.org/> touching upon community integration, community outreach, education, health, livelihoods, SGBV and other topics. In addition, the Team is collaborating with UNHCR's Global Learning Centre on a webinar series on urban refugees. The first webinar was held on 9 May 2014 on urban refugee livelihoods programming featuring the Women's Refugee Commission's (WRC's) learnings and recommendations based on field assessments undertaken in seven cities: Zarqa, Nairobi, Johannesburg, Kampala, Panama City, Delhi and Cairo.
- ✚ **Fora for Collective Dialogue:** A [review of consultation fora](#) resulted in two key recommendations: one for introduction of regional consultations and another for the introduction of social media at the Annual Consultations in Geneva. The implementation of these recommendations began with the September 2013 regional consultations in Bangkok and the introduction of Twitter and other social media at the 2014 UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations by following [#unhcrngos](#) and [@ICVAREfugee](#), [@UNHCRIAU](#), the NGO Rapporteur [@jessiecthomson](#), and the NGO Vice Rapporteur [@jafrizainab](#). Additional informal regional sessions were also integrated in the 2014 Annual Consultations.
- ✚ **Problem Resolution:** A [guidance note and chart on problem resolution](#) serves as a reference for those interested in understanding available problem resolution mechanisms
- ✚ **Progress:** Every UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultation will include a session on partnership, offering an opportunity to "take the temperature" on partnership consult on past, present and future activities underway to improve UNHCR-IFRC-NGO partnership.