

# High Commissioner Structured Dialogue on UNHCR-IFRC-NGO Partnership

Greece Mission Report  
*With the support of US BPRM*  
12-14 December 2016

## Executive Summary

A joint ICVA-UNHCR Structured Dialogue mission took place in Greece from 12 to 14 December 2016. The objective was to assess the quality of partnership between UNHCR and its NGO partners at the capital (Athens) and field (Lesvos) levels, facilitate exchanges and review of partnership approaches, as well as strengthen mechanisms and identify opportunities for better collaboration.

At the workshop in both locations, capacity strengthening, information-sharing (and complementary advocacy) as well as joint assessment, analysis, prioritization and strategic planning were the areas identified by participants as priorities in need for further improvement. The workshops generated recommendations including:

### Information-sharing (and complementary advocacy)

- As a way to improve information flow between UNHCR and partners as well as manage NGOs' expectations about what UNHCR does and can do, UNHCR could communicate better about its own mandate, capabilities and constraints. It should also provide clarification about what type of information it can and cannot share with partners.
- UNHCR and NGOs could take simple practical steps to improve communication processes, such as using common acronyms, attending communication trainings, identifying focal points to constitute a communication network and facilitate information-sharing.
- Working Groups structure and format could be slightly revised in order to improve exchange of information among them. Changes would include making minutes of meetings better accessible, ensuring actors feel ownership of the Working Groups, having induction sessions for new-comers to avoid repetition of basic information.

### Capacity strengthening

- In order to address the National NGOs' lack of know-how in humanitarian contexts and ensure a long-term capacitation process, a database should be developed and made available compiling existing trainings for implementing and operational partners. According to participants, a 1-2 day training on UNHCR's funding structures would be greatly needed. The trainings should be based on a mutual learning approach, using national actors' social capital and UNHCR/INGOs' technical expertise.
- In order to improve awareness, recognition and use of local actors' capacities (national organisations and government actors), UNHCR should undertake a mapping exercise of those capacities using existing structures (i.e., the Working Groups). This mapping could also help in responding to capacity strengthening needs. Engaging with local

authorities and persons of concern (PoCs) would be particularly key in the operational response in order to ensure further coherence in the response as well as PoCs' empowerment and ownership on their life.

### Joint assessment, analysis, prioritization and strategic planning

- In order to deal with frequent staff turnover, UNHCR could regularly update its NGOs mailing list to ensure as many relevant partners as possible are included. A liaison officer could be appointed to share resources and be contacted when NGOs are in need of information.
- NGOs were encouraged to make a good use of existing structures, particularly the open interagency forum organized by UNHCR in Athens every Tuesday. In addition, UNHCR coordinators of those different structures were encouraged to recognize and clearly mention when they do not know or are not sure of an answer.
- In order to improve coordination for joint assessment and evaluation, a common process should be developed to select assessment questions, indicators, methodology and how the information is shared.
- An inter-sectorial Working Group could be launched to bring together leads of the various Working Groups, to better plan jointly while making sure it would not duplicate the coordination meetings.

## 1. Background Information

At the end of 2011 the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, called for a review of the quality of partnership between UNHCR, IFRC and NGOs and launched a process known as the “High Commissioner’s Structured Dialogue”. Based on the Principles of Partnership<sup>1</sup> adopted in 2007, the goal of the Structured Dialogue is to achieve mutual respect and trust demonstrated by open communication, transparency in decision making, and clear accountabilities between UNHCR and respective partners.

Since 2014 ICVA and InterAction, in partnership with UNHCR and the US State Department’s Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM), have completed 17 workshops on partnership strengthening at the sub-office and country-office level (including this mission to Greece). The goal of these consultations is to facilitate exchanges among partners on their experiences working together, to review partnership approaches, strengthen mechanisms and identify opportunities for better collaboration.

ICVA and the UNHCR Partnership Section selected Greece as the location for the ultimate Structured Dialogue mission of 2016 based on several factors related to the state of partnership including:

- Major international attention: Linked to the Syrian refugee crisis and impacting a European Union Member State already struggling with a major political and economic crisis, the humanitarian situation in Greece attracted massive international attention and generated new dynamics. For the first time in its history, the EU deployed its own humanitarian response unit inside Europe and important resources were allocated to

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<sup>1</sup> For more details, see: <https://www.icvanetwork.org/principles-partnership-statement-commitment>

this crisis, impacting the management of the response by national authorities and others.

- A specific humanitarian 'ecosystem': The humanitarian emergency response in Greece has involved a rarely seen diversity of dynamics and organizations
  - **'Non-traditional' actors** such as groups of international volunteers have been an important dimension of the evolving state of partnership. The role of 'front-line responders' and local communities has also been highlighted. Thus, the tireless efforts to assist refugees deployed by volunteers in Greece was recognized through the 2016 Nansen Refugee Award granted to Konstantinos Mitragas on behalf of the Hellenic Rescue Team (HRT) and Efi Latsoudi, the human rights activist behind PIKPA village on the Greek island of Lesbos.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, volunteer groups' activities have, at times, been characterized as challenging given their ad hoc relationship with UNHCR and other humanitarian actors and their lack of involvement (and awareness) about humanitarian coordination and principles.
  - Moreover, the emergency response built on a rather limited civil society focus on forced displacement issues, leading to the **creation of new National Non-Governmental Organizations (NNGOs) and the rapid of expansion in size of existing NNGOs.**
  - Before the emergency, **UNHCR** itself had a relatively limited presence in Greece, mainly based in Athens and with national staff and **experienced rapid growth**, particularly after UNHCR declared a level-2 emergency for Greece, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia in June 2015. By some accounts, emergency deployment to Greece was not always accompanied with the right level of briefing leading to difficulties with NNGOs.
- A rapidly changing environment: Over 2015 and 2016, incoming flows of people fluctuated with a particularly sharp decrease after March 2016, possibly linked to the signing of an agreement between the European Union (EU) and the Government of Turkey. This evolution impacted the response, particularly leading to changes in the setup of organizations involved (e.g., reduction of INGO presence in some islands; reduction of volunteers' presence) and deliberations about a transition from an 'emergency mode' to more solution oriented approaches to the remaining crisis situation. At the time the workshops were organized, UNHCR and NGOs were expecting a reduction in funding available for the humanitarian situation in Greece, thus looking into the planning ramifications of this evolution. The ICVA-UNHCR mission followed the finalization of the 2017 Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe<sup>3</sup> (launched in January 2017).
- Coordination challenges

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<sup>2</sup> See: <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/10/57ee19bc4/greek-volunteers-receive-unhcr-nansen-refugee-award.html>

<sup>3</sup> See: <http://www.unhcr.org/partners/donors/589497d07/2017-regional-refugee-migrant-response-plan-europe-january-december-2017.html>

The Government was officially coordinating the response whilst in practice it did not have the means. As a result, UNHCR (and sometimes other actors, such as IOM or donors) had to step in and/or were hindered to effectively coordinate (for example, in Lesvos UNHCR could not hold a RRP planning meeting).

## 2. Methodology & Participation

The Greece Structured Dialogue country mission was organized around two workshops, one in the capital, Athens, and one in a field location, Lesvos. Both well attended, the Athens workshop gathered 15 NGO representatives and 3 UNHCR staff members, while in Lesvos the workshop was attended by 11 NGO representatives and 5 UNHCR staff members. For the first time those Structured Dialogue workshops involved volunteer groups in addition to implementing and operational partners.

Prior to each workshop, the mission team members, Jerome Elie and Sophie Helle from ICVA and Monika Brühlhart from UNHCR Partnership Section, organized bilateral discussions with 5 UNHCR staff members and 10 NGO representatives. This approach helped increase participation; improved the facilitators' understanding of the operational/partnership context; allowed for a safe space to discuss issues that may be sensitive to raise within a group; and thus helped structure the Dialogue accordingly.

At the beginning of each workshop, the participants filled out a questionnaire to gauge awareness of the Structured Dialogue, recent evolutions in collaborative dynamics and the level of commitment to UNHCR-NGO partnership.

The workshop agenda in both locations included an overview of the Principles of Partnership, an introduction to the Structured Dialogue history, methodology and goals, a brief review of the Structured Dialogue's ten Recommendations for Strengthened Partnership<sup>4</sup>, and a general plenary discussion on those elements as well as on the overall interaction between UNHCR and partners in Greece. Participants then identified key priority areas linked to the ten Recommendations and split into working groups to discuss challenges and recommend realistic and constructive actions for improvement.

To the extent possible, the working groups included a balance of implementing partners, operational partners, and UNHCR staff members. Participants were asked to identify two to three specific issues related to the selected theme and propose recommendations and suggested actions for improvement.

In both workshops, participants mainly focused on capacity strengthening, information-sharing, complementary advocacy, joint assessment and strategic planning. The results of the discussion are outlined below.

## 3. Athens Workshop

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/ngo-consultations/ngo-consultations-2014/Partnership-Structured-Dialogue-Outcome-Recommendations.pdf>

## Pre-workshop questionnaire

In line with previous missions, pre-workshop questionnaires revealed somewhat limited awareness and knowledge, among the participants about the Structured Dialogue, its ten Recommendations and the Principles of Partnership. Overall, answers to the questionnaires highlighted a strong commitment and willingness, from participants, to contribute to improving the state of UNHCR-NGO partnership.<sup>5</sup>

## Introductory remarks

Ms. Kate Washington, Senior inter-Agency Coordination Officer, provided introductory remarks, referring to the workshop as an opportunity to sit down and think about what quality partnership means. She hoped that the specific recommendations to come out of this process, would be valuable in ensuring a more effective humanitarian response.

The facilitators also gave a short introduction, thanking the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM) for funding the Structured Dialogue missions over the past two years and welcome the fact that a Political Officer from the U.S. Embassy in Athens took time to attend the opening session of this workshop. The opportunity to discuss the state of partnership and possible improvements in the Greece context was presented as ambitious but probably necessary at this juncture. The introductory remarks were also the occasion to shortly present ICVA, the UNHCR Partnership Section and their common work, notably through the organization of the UNHCR-NGO Annual Consultations.

## Discussion on priority areas

### *a. Capacity Strengthening*

#### **Challenges and gaps identified:**

- Access to UNHCR resources and information: NGOs highlighted the often unclear or lack of channels to access UNHCR resources. In many cases, the information and/or resources are available, but NGOs are unaware of how they can access these or of how to submit applications. Smaller NGOs, particularly volunteer groups face particular challenges in this respect, sometimes not fulfilling criteria and thus being disqualified for applying.
- Lack of know-how in humanitarian contexts: In Greece, NNGOs tend to have very specific expertise but some need to be prepared and capacitated to respond in emergencies. For example, many NNGOs need to be further trained on camp management, psycho-social support for humanitarian workers, and institutional management.
- Short vs. long term capacitation process: UNHCR's capacity strengthening efforts towards national NGOs has tended to focus on responding to short term needs rather than taking a longer term perspective, which would generate durable investment with NGOs remaining active in Greece after the crisis ceased. Moreover, rather than increasing NNGOs capacity, the rapid growth of UNHCR and arrival of INGOs in Greece

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<sup>5</sup> See annexes for more details of the pre-workshop questionnaires' findings.

resulted in a competition for human resources and a form of ‘brain drain’ negatively impacting NNGOs.

### **Proposed actions:**

- In order to improve access to UNHCR information and NGOs know-how in humanitarian contexts, UNHCR should diversify its channels of communication with NGOs, beyond the current predominant use of e-mails.
- A database, learning platform should be developed and made available compiling existing trainings for implementing and operational partners. This platform would also list focal points by sector and relevant procedures (e.g., to file applications).
- NGOs explicitly mentioned that a 1-2 day training on UNHCR funding structures would be strongly welcomed.
- To improve awareness, recognition and use of local actors’ capacities (national organisations and government actors), UNHCR should undertake a mapping exercise of those capacities. This mapping could be organized by a working group and thus also highlight, categorize and respond to capacity strengthening needs.
- In the existing Working Groups, NGOs should learn how to be more specific in their asks. This would help UNHCR better understand and respond to their requests.

#### *b. Information-Sharing:*

### **Challenges and gaps identified:**

- Sharing information on the broader perspective: While there is information flow between UNHCR and partners, analysis, early warning trends, contextualization and compilations are often lacking. Partners end up being overloaded with juxtaposition of information. More specifically:
  - The information is usually shared in technical groups, making it a challenge to establish linkages.
  - Partners sometimes find it difficult to identify what is shared from what is not; they are not always aware of what may be sensitive information and why (e.g., political dimensions).
  - As participatory needs assessment exercises have so far taken place only on the islands, NGOs considered that those exercises should be expanded to the mainland.
  - There is a lack of confidence from some partners about sharing information because NGOs sometimes do not want to display challenges they may be facing (especially in the northern mainland and the islands); partners usually prefer sharing information once it is confirmed (‘100% certain’), but it is generally too late at that point; partners wish to avoid being under the spotlight, especially when it comes to sensitive information.

**Proposed actions in order to ensure an improved, centralized, regular, analytical information that is widely shared among UNHCR and partners:**

- UNHCR could communicate better about its own mandate, capabilities and constraints. This would help manage NGOs' expectations about what UNHCR does and can do, particularly for NNGOs and volunteer groups.
- Given that sensitive information cannot always be shared widely, UNHCR should provide clarification about what type of information it can and cannot share with partners. This would help develop a common understanding around the kind and level of information exchanged. Heads of agencies could also set up system with UNHCR management for sharing and discussing sensitive information at this high level, thus feeding into possible complementary advocacy and action.
- The Athens interagency coordination working group weekly meetings could contribute to further analysis. A staff member could be appointed/recruited specifically to do this information management and analysis work.

*c. Transparent Complain Mechanism & Problem Resolution Processes*

**Challenges and gaps identified:**

- The lack of adequate collective transparent complaint mechanism for the Persons of Concern is an important accountability and protection gap that should be addressed by humanitarian actors. This is particularly the case with regard to Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA).
- Staff misconduct (intentional or due to lack of experience): There is a lack of safe space to express concerns, raise complaints, and highlight operational challenges. The feeling that one cannot openly share such issues without putting oneself and her/his organization at risk is a serious issue that should be addressed.

**Proposed actions:**

- Develop a collective and comprehensive transparent complaint mechanism: UNHCR and NGOs need to look at best practices from other contexts and adapt these to Greece. This complaint mechanism should include PSEA and if possible, a third party who could manage the complaint mechanism (a practice already in use in other countries).
- Develop a standardized operating procedure for accountability: The procedure should allow staff to openly talk about challenges and concerns. It should also ensure that problems can be escalated should a solution not be found at the original level. One option would be to address field-level problems during senior management interagency meetings. It would also help define which issues should be addressed collectively, at an interagency level or bilaterally.

*d. Joint Assessment, Analysis, Prioritization & Strategic Planning*

**Challenges and gaps identified:**

- Participants highlighted the lack of opportunities for further cooperation in the context of Assessment, Analysis, Prioritization and Strategic Planning. In particular, NGOs mentioned the:
  - Lack of NGOs' engagement in UNHCR's planning and assessment exercises.
  - Lack of NGOs' initiatives to cooperate with each other.
  - Lack of local communities' engagement in NGOs-UNHCR assessments and planning exercises.
- Decentralization was also considered as an important challenge:
  - From the NGO perspective, there is not enough joint engagement/work at field level: Humanitarian actors should share information and discuss specific challenges such as ensuring a continuity in services and assistance. It is important to ensure people receive the services they need and do not lose access to those, a real challenge as populations keep on moving. Medical organizations particularly identified this issue. Some improvements have already been observed but there is still work to do to mitigate such adverse effects of decentralization.
  - For its part, UNHCR is present over the country with 6 offices on the mainland and 6 offices on the islands (in addition to the Representation office in Athens). Communications between the field offices and the Athens office were qualified as appropriate, although there may be challenges in relaying information originating from other actors on the ground (e.g., for new arrivals to sites, UNHCR is dependent on the authorities). Yet, UNHCR recognized that closer cooperation and exchange is very important. This aspect will take an added dimension with the introduction of the cash programme.
- Efficiency of the planning process: Because of repeated uncertainties (e.g., on the status of sites), it has been very challenging for UNHCR to share timely information on what it is planning. Nevertheless, NGOs thought they should be more consulted in various planning processes. Information that NGOs share with UNHCR was characterized as being extremely useful, although NGOs felt that UNHCR does not take sufficient time to inform NGOs on whether and how this information is being used.

**Proposed actions:**

- UNHCR could regularly update its NGOs mailing list to ensure as many partners as possible are included. Given the high turnover rate, targeting the right people with the right information is a particular challenge.
- UNHCR could appoint a liaison officer, who would be accountable to share resources with NGOs and that NGOs could contact when needed (information, consultations, policy forum).
- To strengthen local communities' engagement, NGOs could develop quarterly reports providing feedback from local communities. This would contribute to the assessments process.

- NGOs should make a good use of existing structures. They were particularly invited to join the open interagency coordination meetings organized by UNHCR in Athens every Tuesday. This is an open space, without a strict agenda, where questions can be shared in advance and then answered during the meeting. UNHCR uses this space to *inter alia* discuss advocacy work. To allow for open debate, including on sensitive topics, participants are asked not to take notes and no minutes will be shared.
- UNHCR coordinators were encouraged to recognize and clearly mention when they do not know or are not sure of an answer, when an information needs to be confirmed, or when there may be changes in plans.

### Concluding remarks:

The workshop in Athens was a key moment in clarifying capacities and expectations from both sides. Indeed, some partners in the room explicitly stated their difficulty in understanding UNHCR's capacity. Some of them, especially volunteer groups, had the impression that UNHCR was almost omnipotent and could do anything given its status, links with authorities and INGOs. Conversely, others had wondered whether UNHCR had done all it could to respond to critical humanitarian situations (on the islands for example).

UNHCR explained how, in the specific Greek context, issues linked to where the authority, responsibility and accountability lays may sometime affect effectiveness. Clarity – based on needs – of rules, roles and responsibilities from the onset can help address such issues. In the Greek context, there limited delegation of responsibility, with a variety of actors and levels to take into account, including political elements.

In terms of improving NGOs' understanding of operations and responsibilities and how this may impact the asylum space in Greece and beyond, UNHCR had the opportunity to bring some clarifications: although UNHCR is not always able to share some information, there is a need to find ways to strategize together in order to better respond. Preparing a common plan of action could address some of the issues and contribute to further joint planning and complementary advocacy, while better defining roles, responsibilities, resources available and capacities.

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Giovanni Lepri, UNHCR Deputy Representative in Greece, thanked NGO participants for their flexibility and patience with UNHCR. He recognized the need to share information in a better way. The current situation should be seen as an opportunity: so much attention being given to refugees is an exceptional element of European history. If we manage to turn history around, it will not be remembered as a dramatic moment but as a time when we all stepped up on behalf of refugees. The international community has a duty to leave something strong behind, for those that are going to leave, and those that are going to stay. In this regard, NNGOs need to be further stabilized, strengthened and capacitated.

Giovanni Lepri added his hope to meet again in the next 6 months, see that UNHCR and NGOs have better processes and capacities and that those can be used in a situation that has moved away from the emergency period to focus on solutions aspect of the crisis.

## 4. Lesvos Workshop

### Pre-workshop questionnaire

In Lesvos, pre-workshop questionnaires demonstrated little awareness and knowledge, among the participants about the Structured Dialogue, its ten Recommendations and the Principles of Partnership. All participants showed strong commitment and willingness to better UNHCR-NGO partnership processes.<sup>6</sup>

### Introductory remarks

Ms. Kate Washington, Senior inter-Agency Coordination Officer, provided introductory remarks, referring to the Athens workshop, which had generated constructive conversations. This second workshop was also a good opportunity to dig into and pull apart what partnership means, highlighting the specificities of the Lesvos context. While the workshop took place in UNHCR's premises, it was to be considered as a space where everyone should feel free to speak and be listened to.

The facilitators gave similar short introductions as provided in Athens, particularly thanking the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM) for funding the Structured Dialogue missions and highlighting the agenda and methodology to be followed.

### Discussion on priority areas

#### *a. Joint advocacy & Information-sharing*

#### **Gaps and challenges identified:**

- UNHCR and NGOs do not necessarily understand each other because they do not “speak the same language”, i.e. use the same concepts, acronyms or describe technicalities in the same way.
- While part of the information can be shared through the Working Groups, it is challenging for partners, especially smaller organisations, to attend all meetings and keep themselves up-to-date. In the past, an NGO used to work specifically on communication, contributing to compiling information, disseminating it and providing further analysis for common messaging. This NGO has now left Lesvos, leaving a gap to be filled.
- In order to work towards further complementary advocacy, partners lack a strong network of communication, mapping who is involved in what. Such a mapping would allow NGOs' advocacy to work on two fronts: traditional individual perspectives to support/defend a cause/issue and perspectives linked to common action.
- As there is a high turnover rate among humanitarian actors, especially volunteers, building a common memory of humanitarian work in Lesvos is very difficult. Yet, capturing those experiences and ensuring this memory is shared is important for a variety of reasons.
- Participants considered that information exchange, communications and coordination between the island and the mainland was not always optimal for all actors. In addition,

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<sup>6</sup> See annexes below for more details of the pre-workshop questionnaires' findings.

lack of cross-border communication and coordination with partners in Turkey was identified as a limiting factor in developing timely response.

### Proposed actions:

- Improve communication processes:
  - Use of common acronyms: UNHCR and NGO partners should agree on using the same acronyms in order to facilitate mutual understanding
  - Communication training: Humanitarian workers should have access to a communication training/workshop to improve information-sharing and advocacy skills.
  - Identifying focal points who could constitute a communication network and therefore facilitate information-sharing. Focal points could be identified, at different levels – in each Working Group, organization, and for each of UNHCR’s sector/section.
- Improve exchange of information through Working Groups:
  - Access to minutes: Given the limited capacities of most partners, Working Groups minutes should be made available in short and concise format, highlighting the main elements.
  - The Working Groups structure could be re-thought to ensure actors feel more ownership (e.g., through more NGO co-leads) and therefore, make a good use of this common space of exchange.
  - Given the high rate of staff turnover, induction sessions could be set-up to avoid repeating basic information to new comers within the Working Groups, as this encroach on time available to discuss pressing operational aspects.
- Field visits: In order to better understand each other’s realities and manage expectations within and between organisations, field visits should be organized for programme staff, and office visits should be organized for field workers.
- Long-term ideas: A new NGO could be created that would only focus on media coverage and therefore, share information on new projects, press release, etc. (media coverage). Moreover, an NGO indicated its willingness to start filming volunteers asking them to tell their stories, experience, challenges. A website will be set-up to share this information and thus show “what is really going on” and therefore contribute to global advocacy.

### *b. Capacity Strengthening*

#### **Gaps and challenges identified:**

- Access to expertise and trainings: Many NGOs have strong expertise in one specific sector but lack other skill sets regularly needed in their day-to-day operations, aside from their sectorial focus. For example, an NGO participant explained that within the context of distributing NFIs, this partner is often in contact with protection issues, or asked questions related to protection. Not having a protection background, this partner faces challenges that should be addressed.
- Insufficient planning around trainings: Last minute training opportunities are problematic because partners’ workload and limited human resources do not allow

them to take advantage of such options. Lack of scheduling also means that NGOs have difficulty factoring trainings into their overall planning.

- **Short vs. long-term capacity strengthening:** NGO partners considered that capacities should be developed to answer needs quickly. Often, capacity building takes a long time, while the group of organizations need those skills to address needs in a timely manner.
- **Building on NNGOs' social capital:** UNHCR and NGO partners find it challenging to build internal capacity based on and highlighting identified existing local strengths. However, such capacity strengthening is fundamental in the longer-term given that INGOs and UNHCR are bound to reduce their presence on the island once the emergency phase has faded. Moreover, it would help respond in case of a resurgence of arrivals to the island.

#### **Proposed actions:**

- **Use existing structures to map and address the needs:** Working Groups could be a good platform to raise capacity strengthening issues. It would allow centralizing mapping needs and ensuring collective regular checks/updates on those needs (through a standing agenda item titled “capacity strengthening”).
- **Learning from each other's experience:** Based on social capital of national actors and technical expertise from UNHCR/INGOs, UNHCR and NGOs agreed that they should be learning from each other through trainings offering expertise and/or material from different actors (not only UNHCR offering expertise to NGOs). Matching staff from NGOs with limited capacities with INGOs staff could also lead to a mutual technical advisors scheme. This would offer another channel of communication for technical advice and expertise and feed into the training schedule.
- **Engaging with local authorities and PoCs:** Those actors must be part of the capacity strengthening efforts given national expectations that local authorities should take on key roles in the operational response. Participation of authorities could also help bring more coherence to the response. It would also be key to include PoCs in these efforts, as it would contribute to their recovery of ownership on their life.

#### *c. Joint assessment analysis, prioritization and strategic planning*

#### **Gaps and challenges identified:**

- **Uncoordinated assessments:** Humanitarian actors in Greece tend to duplicate data and generate multiple assessments because of lack of communication and coordination. On another level, smaller organizations do not have access to the information generated through assessments and do not always have the capacity to conduct their own assessments.
- **Content of Working Groups:** NGO partners felt that Working Group meetings are, for the most part, about sharing information rather than developing joint strategical planning for the island.

#### **Proposed actions:**

- Improved coordination for joint assessment and evaluation: A common process should be developed in order to select assessment questions, indicators, methodology and how the information is shared (e.g., based on the experience in Iraq). Thus, humanitarian partners would be aware of which question is asked, when, and why other questions are not asked. It would also contribute to complementarity when completing individual assessments.
- Yet, from a planning and technical perspective, this would require: 1) to appoint an organization to centralize the process (most likely UNHCR); and 2) to ensure translation is being provided in all relevant languages (Greece is a very specific context, where many languages are in use).
- Launch of an inter-sectorial Working Group: An inter-sectorial Working Group bringing together leads of the various Working Groups would help better plan jointly. Yet an inter-sectorial Working Group may risk duplicating the coordination meetings. UNHCR and NGOs would therefore need to make sure the inter-sectorial Working Group would help develop an overall strategy for the Working Groups and develop awareness on the broader perspective, the role and responsibilities of each actor. Decisions would have to be very action-oriented.

### Concluding remarks:

In concluding the workshop, both UNHCR and NGOs considered the discussions had been a useful and fruitful opportunity to discuss partnership issues and showed interest in being engaged in the follow up process. Specificity of humanitarian work in Lesvos and the islands had been highlighted, complementing and somewhat contrasting with the discussions held during the Structured Dialogue workshop held a few days before in Athens.

UNHCR was particularly interested in the suggestions made regarding the sector working groups and encouraged NGOs to provide additional ideas and proposals from NGOs on improving the efficiency of the working groups in Lesvos, possibly through conducting a dedicated survey.

## 5. Conclusion and Next Steps

While closing both workshops, ICVA and the UNHCR Partnership Section informed participants that a compilation of recommendations made in Athens and Lesvos would be made available in a report. This would allow participants to take ownership of those recommendations, move forward in taking related action to strengthen partnership. ICVA and the UNHCR Partnership Section will then get back to participants within 4-6-month through teleconferences to discuss improvements, evolutions, and action points.

Developments following this mission revealed once more the complexity of the Greek context. The harsh winter conditions of December-February highlighted a number of ongoing challenges in how all actors respond to the humanitarian crisis. Discussions in Athens and particularly in Lesvos also highlighted the need to further work on preparedness for 2017, with a two-pronged planning looking at moving away from the emergency phase to plan for

a solutions oriented approach, while keeping contingency plans in the background should those be needed to face a new wave of arrivals.

ICVA/ UNHCR

May 2017

## 6. Annexes

### Annex I - List of participants in Athens

<b>NAME</b>	<b>POSITION</b>	<b>ORGANISATION</b>	<b>EMAIL</b>
ALEXOPOULOS Sotiris	Representative	Pampiraiki Initiative	<a href="mailto:pampiraiki@gmail.com">pampiraiki@gmail.com</a>
ANGELAKI Antigoni	Head of Operations and Programmes	Metadrasi	<a href="mailto:angelaki.metadrasi@gmail.com">angelaki.metadrasi@gmail.com</a>
BADER Claire	Director of Programme Development and Quality	Save the Children	<a href="mailto:claire.bader@savethechildren.org">claire.bader@savethechildren.org</a>
BEN-ATAR Mor	Partnership Capacity Development Manager	Save the Children	<a href="mailto:mor.benatar@savethechildren.org">mor.benatar@savethechildren.org</a>
BIRNBAUM Sam	Program Manager	Organization Earth	<a href="mailto:sam@organizationearth.org">sam@organizationearth.org</a>
CLERICETTI Giulia	Program Officer	I AM YOU	<a href="mailto:giulia.clericetti@iamyou.se">giulia.clericetti@iamyou.se</a>
DAMILAKI Eirini	Coordinator of Social Unit	Greek Council for Refugees	<a href="mailto:e.damilaki@gcr.gr">e.damilaki@gcr.gr</a>
DELMORE Colin	Partnership Manager	IRC	<a href="mailto:colin.delmore@rescue.org">colin.delmore@rescue.org</a>
KERASIoTIS Vassilis	Coordinator of Legal Unit	Greek Council for Refugees	<a href="mailto:kerasiotis@gcr.gr">kerasiotis@gcr.gr</a>
LEPRI Giovanni	Deputy Representative	UNHCR	<a href="mailto:lepri@unhcr.org">lepri@unhcr.org</a>
MORLET Frederic	Country Director	Humanitarian Support Agency	<a href="mailto:fred@humanitarian-support-agency.org">fred@humanitarian-support-agency.org</a>
MUGHAL Nadia	Program Assistant	Organization Earth	<a href="mailto:nmughal14@gmail.com">nmughal14@gmail.com</a>
SKINNER Jessica	Protection Lead	Oxfam Novib	<a href="mailto:jessica.skinner@oxfamnovib.nl">jessica.skinner@oxfamnovib.nl</a>
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## Annex II - List of participants in Lesvos

<b>NAME</b>	<b>POSITION</b>	<b>ORGANISATION</b>	<b>EMAIL</b>
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A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK  
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE  
HUMANITARIAN ACTION



**UNHCR**

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

## Annex III – Agenda in Athens

### Structured Dialogue between UNHCR and NGOs

Monday 12 December  
UNHCR Athens, Greece

13:30 – 14:00 | Registration

14:00 – 15:00 | The Structured Dialogue: Introduction, history and objectives

Welcoming Remarks

Tour de table and presentation of the agenda

History and objectives of the Structured Dialogue

History of the Structured Dialogue

The 10 Recommendations

The Principles of Partnership

15:00 – 15:30 | Reflecting and preparing for practice: What are the priority areas to improve partnership?

15:30 – 15:45 | Break

15:45 – 16:00 | From the Structured Dialogue to Structured Action

16:00 – 17:00 | Breakout group work on identified priority areas

Group discussions on challenges and solutions for improved partnership

17:00 – 17:30 | Reporting back in Plenary: Results

17:30 – 18:00 | Conclusion and Next Steps



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**UNHCR**

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

## Annex IV – Agenda in Lesvos

### Structured Dialogue between UNHCR and NGOs

Wednesday 14 December  
Lesvos, Greece

08:30 – 09:00 | Registration

09:00 – 10:00 | The Structured Dialogue: Introduction, history and objectives

Welcoming Remarks

Tour de table and presentation of the agenda

History and objectives of the Structured Dialogue

History of the Structured Dialogue

The 10 Recommendations

The Principles of Partnership

10:00 – 10:30 | Reflecting and preparing for practice: What are the priority areas to improve partnership?

10:30 – 10:45 | Break

10:45 – 11:00 | From the Structured Dialogue to Structured Action

11:00 – 12:00 | Breakout group work on identified priority areas

Group discussions on challenges and solutions for improved partnership

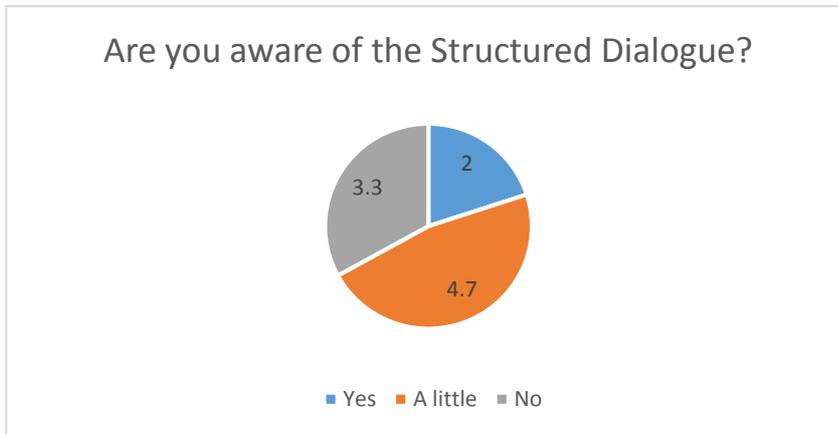
12:00 – 12:30 | Reporting back in Plenary: Results

12:30 –

and

**Annex**  
**the pre-**  
**questionnaire & evaluation form in Athens**

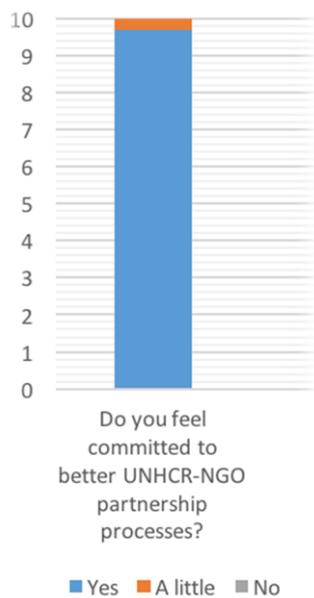
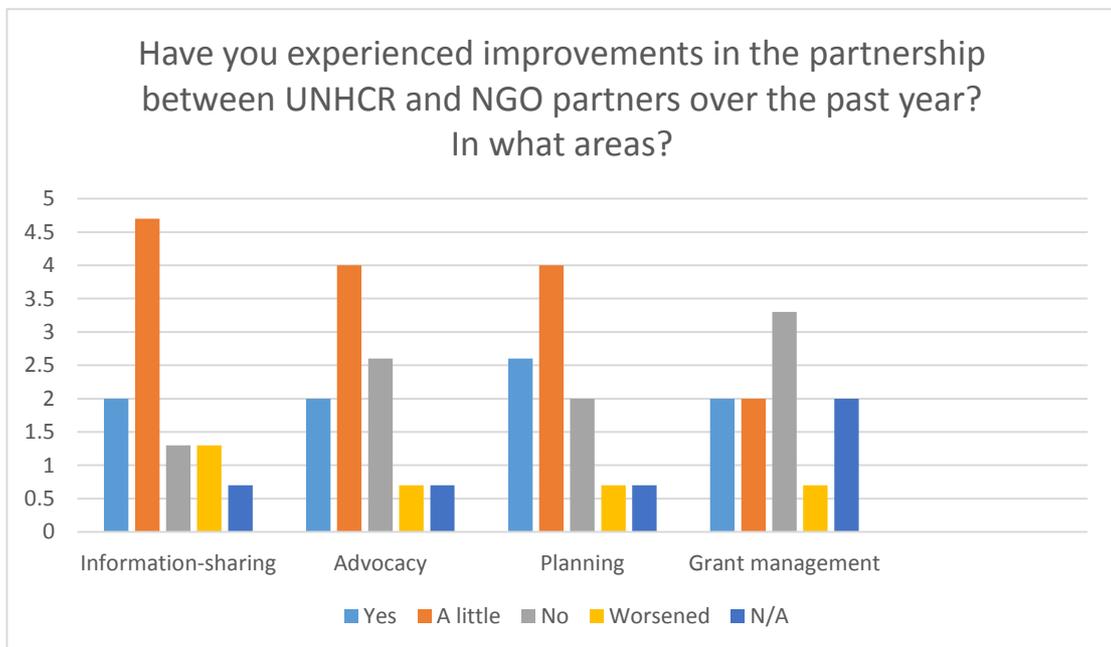
*Pre-workshop questionnaire*



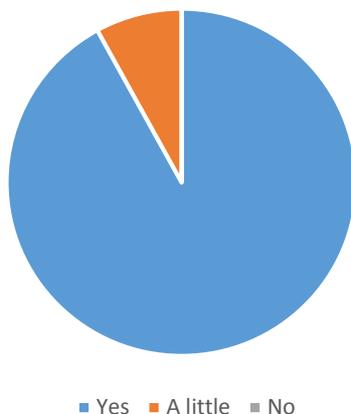
13:00 |  
Conclusion  
Next Steps

**V – Results of**  
**workshop**

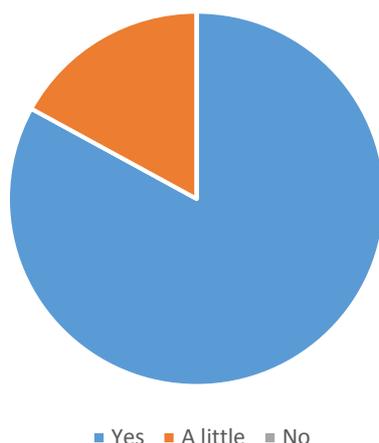
Post-workshop evaluation:



Do you feel more knowledgeable about the HC's Structured Dialogue?



Do you feel more committed to better UNHCR-NGO partnership processes?



**Main qualitative comments:**

Overall achievements:

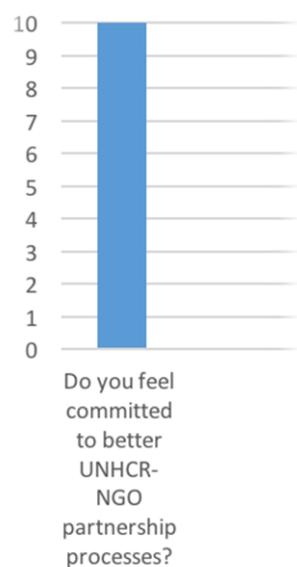
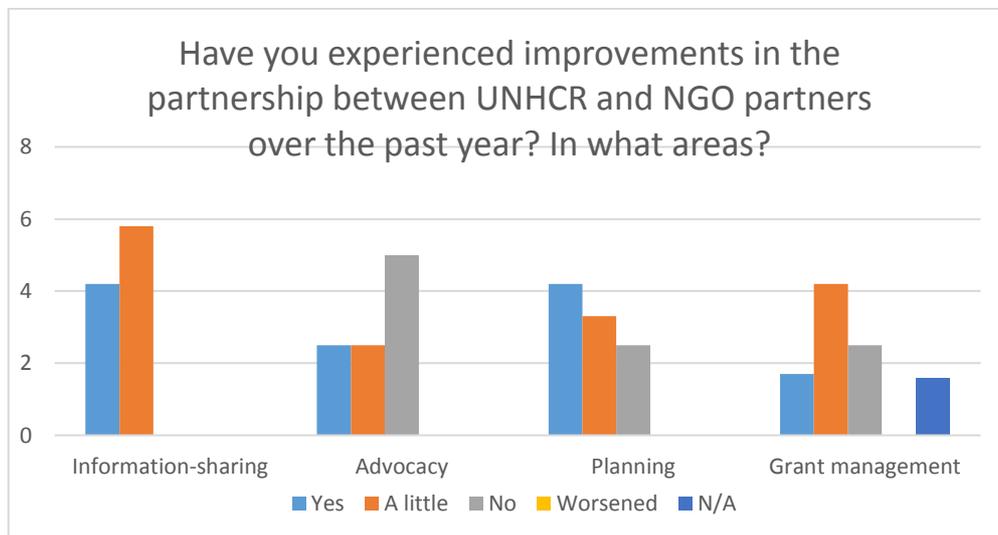
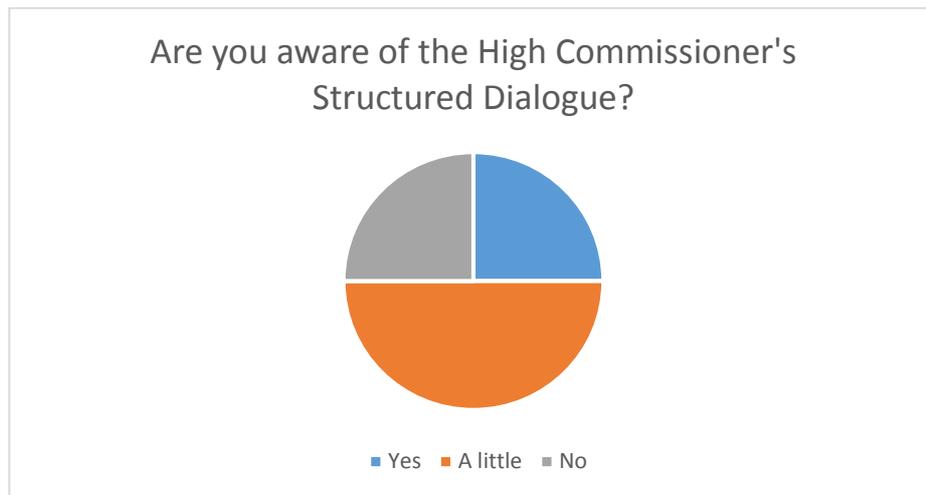
- It helped manage expectations towards UNHCR: “UNHCR is also struggling with this situation and they are already working on addressing [NGOs] concerns already.” ; “UNHCR has limits and weaknesses”
- The importance of sharing and accessing information: Further participation to meetings, build constructive relationship ; Will consider how to leverage and improve information-sharing ; Will insist on better information flows ; Will consult UNHCR’s website more frequently ; Will go to Tuesday’s meetings for UNHCR and NGOs.

Recommendations for improvements:

- Better participation from UNHCR colleagues and other partners
- Better coffee!

**Annex VI – Results of the questionnaire & evaluation form in Lesvos**

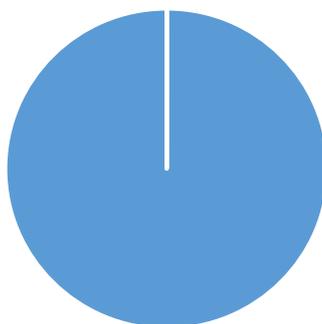
Pre-workshop questionnaire:



Post-workshop evaluation

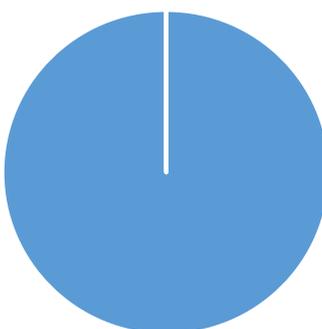
■ Yes ■ A little ■ No

Do you feel more knowledgeable about the HC's Structured Dialogue?



■ Yes ■ A little ■ No

Do you feel more committed to better UNHCR-NGO partnership processes? If not, why?



■ Yes ■ A little ■ No

**Main qualitative comments:**

Overall achievements: Realisation of existing information and opportunities for capacity building.

- There are islands of information among the organisations.
- Information is out there but it needs to be better shared between organisations.
- There are opportunities for strengthening organizational capacities. It is important to communicate those needs to others.

Recommendations for improvement:

- It could be useful to have more case studies to identify possible solutions.
- The facilitators could be more specific in informing about the timeline of the follow-up.