

## Reporting by Session Note-takers at the 2019 Annual Consultations with NGOs

<b>Date:</b>	03 July 2019
<b>Session Title:</b>	Enhancing Partnership Integrity
<b>Moderator:</b>	Mark Hetfield, HIAS and Fatima Sherif-Nor, UNHCR-IPMS
<b>UNHCR focal point:</b>	Hans Baritt, UNHCR-Controller
<b>NGO focal point:</b>	Julian Schopp, InterAction and Selin Matthews, Don Bosco India
<b>Major points arising from speakers and discussions</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hans Baritt spoke of lessons learned during his field visits; the rapidly evolving, complex environment in which the UNHCR-NGO partnership exists; the growth of UNHCR, the increasing number and variety of Partners, efforts by UNHCR and other UN actors to work together as One UN, and the growing demand from donors for: greater transparency and accountability; baselines and results-oriented data; real time “nuggets” of information; enhanced risk management; and harmonized as well as simplified UN processes and tools. He said “the key to me is finding the balance” and noted both data and the views of Partners will continue to play important roles in UNHCR decision-making. To help meet some of the demands of the present as well as future, UNHCR is devoting more attention to various information technologies, robotics, and artificial intelligence. Regionalization is an effort to strengthen country offices, to bring decision-making closer to the field. The substantive work of the IPMS is expected to continue and it will remain at Headquarters. He spoke highly of the service of Fatima-Sherif Nor, whose term as Head of the IPMS ended on 30 June 2019, and introduced her successor.</li> <li>• Fatima Sherif-Nor presented key trends from 2010 through 2018, noting UNHCR expenditures through partners have more than doubled; more than 3,000 Partners have registered on the Partner Portal; the transition from viewing NGOs as “Implementing Partners” to true “Partners”; and the many outputs of the Enhanced Framework for Implementing with Partners. The latter, crafted through consultations with Partners, include: policies and guidance notes; a new Partnership Handbook soon to be finalized; action on Grand Bargain commitments, including simplified and harmonized approaches and tools; the development of e-learning products, including one in progress on fraud awareness; and specific UNHCR resource commitments for enhancing INGO as well as NNGO Partner capacities, integrity, and support. Participants in the session made a couple of comments about external auditors, asked about the effectivity date for the Policy on Partner Support, sought clarifications on the Multi-Year Agreement option, asked about relations with local governments, and inquired about how to work better together on risk management issues, such as reporting and investigating abuse and fraud.</li> <li>• Julian Schopp presented some of the key findings from the UNHCR/NGO Partnership Survey for 2018, as well as the increasingly positive trends over several years. In the latest survey, 75% of respondents perceived the partnership to be excellent and 70% of partners reported their views were considered in UNHCR Country Operations Planning processes. He noted Partners reported being more optimistic than UNHCR colleagues about partner organizational sustainability without continued UNHCR funding. Suggestions for improvements included continued use of email to inform about calls for expressions of interest, proactively explaining non-selection decisions, increasing the</li> </ul>	

capacities of the Partner Portal. Participants in the session suggested it would be useful, in future surveys, to collect and analyze data at the country level and regional level, allowing for a sense of the pulse of the partnership in different parts of the world.

- Selin Matthews, speaking from the perspective of a National NGO Partner, highlighted how participating in processes related to the Enhanced Framework, which kept refugees at the center of all discussions, was both empowering and inspiring. It helped her organization to not only better understand new policies and processes, but to have a sense of ownership of the same.
- Additional points from the discussions:  
Several partners put forth via Pigeonhole, or asked directly, questions about regionalization and some mentioned perceived risks related thereto. For example, how large-scale, multiple country emergencies will be addressed if there two or even three regional offices in Africa, each responsible for specific countries?  
The session's overall moderator, other members of the panel, and participants acknowledged, with deep gratitude, in person and via a short film, the leadership provided by Fatima Sharif-Nor as Head of the IPMS from 2011 through 30 June 2019.

#### **Recommendations/Conclusions/Decisions on the way forward**

- UNHCR: Engage much more actively with Partners on the ongoing regionalization effort. At a minimum, increase the communications about the status of this initiative so that Partners can better formulate their responses to the new arrangements, which are believed to include both significant opportunity and various risks.
- UNHCR and NGO Partners: Build on the Country Operations Planning (COP) process as a meaningful joint planning and coordination mechanism.
- UNHCR: Capitalize on high Partner Portal interest by expanding functionality, accessibility, and resources.

#### **Top two quotes from the session**

- “What is unique and the absolute strength of the IPMS is working together with Partners on policy. This needs to continue.” Hans Baritt.
- “The Portal has made a significant improvement especially in the communication on the Calls for Expression of Interest since the Portal can be consulted at any time.” Respondent to Annual UNHCR/NGO Partnership Survey for 2018.

#### **Any general points regarding UNHCR-NGO partnerships**

More information about regionalization is required. This is the major topic of the discussion with the Deputy High Commissioner, scheduled for the afternoon of 04 July. However, there is reason to believe Partners are wishing for more than information—they are seeking ongoing dialogue, as well as regular updates as the regionalization advances. Also needed is greater clarification as to the future of the IPMS in the context of regionalization. In addition to various meetings, it might be useful to open a dedicated, timebound dialogue platform for Partners to communicate their expectations, concerns, envisaged opportunities, etc., for which responses would be provide. A managed platform, perhaps like Pigeonhole, possibly linked to the Portal, will increase the space for Partner inquiries, observations, suggestions, etc.