

## Enhancing the UNHCR Framework for Implementation with Partners



### Implementing Partnership Management Guidance Note Joint Monitoring and Partner Feedback

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**Draft subject to consultation and approval**  
**2013 UNHCR-ANNUAL CONSULTATIONS WITH NGOS**



**UNHCR**

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

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Project monitoring with partners, refugees and persons of concern and other stakeholders is an important and essential practice. It allows for incorporating various perspectives and expertise into the monitoring process as well as building ownership and commitment for follow up actions and resolutions.

Projects implemented with partners take place as part of a partnership relationship guided by *The Principles of Partnership*<sup>1</sup> whereby different parties to the partnership play specific roles and undertake clearly defined tasks stipulated in Project Agreements. Each project has a set of objectives, deliverables, implementation strategies and approaches as well as a detailed resource package – all of which are defined in the Project Agreement.

Joint monitoring of a project can extend beyond the implementing parties of the Project Agreement to include stakeholders that the project directly or indirectly impact. Involvement and participation of refugees and persons of concern, in providing grassroots perspectives and in implementation of activities affecting them and their futures, is fundamental to joint monitoring. However, in order to manage expectations, it is important to determine the most appropriate refugees and persons of concern engagement strategy for each project.

Joint monitoring of projects strengthens collective ownership and shared responsibility for the implementation of projects that deliver the intended result to refugees and persons of concern. This collective ownership is further strengthened through undertaking the complete project life cycle in a joint manner: from inception, design, implementation and closure. The joint review of project implementation should also include a mechanism for UNHCR and partner to provide feedback to each other.

In addition, joint monitoring of projects implemented with partners is consistent with other inclusionary practices within UNHCR partnerships. Examples of such inclusionary practices include: Age and Gender Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM); Joint Assessment Mission (JAM); and, Mid-Year and End of Project Review processes.

## 2. ABOUT THIS GUIDANCE NOTE

This guidance note is intended to support UNHCR Offices and partners when planning and conducting joint monitoring and review activities. The draft revised Project Agreement contains a new article requiring joint monitoring and review so to ensure it is treated as a core project management undertaking; not an optional function.

*“The Parties shall hold consultations and coordination meetings. Formal joint monitoring and review meetings should be held at least at mid-year and at the end of the Project in order to agree on the resolution of findings and to build on lessons learned to better the Intended Population. These joint reviews will be undertaken in good faith and take into account: the progress of the Project; working relationship of the Parties; the compliance of the Parties with this Agreement; and, the success and challenges of the Partner in meeting the agreed objectives as reflected in this Agreement.” (Art. 7.2)*

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<sup>1</sup> “*The Principles of Partnership*” were endorsed by The Global Humanitarian Platform (GHP) in July 2007. The GHP was created as an outcome of the “12-13 July 2006 Dialogue Between UN and non-UN Humanitarian Organizations.” The *Principles of Partnership* are: Equality; Transparency; Result-orientated approach; Responsibility and Complementarity.

One of the proposed elements to put this article into practice is the use of standard feedback forms that are to be completed by the partner and UNHCR at the end of a project.

The proposed Partner to UNHCR Annual Feedback form (Appendix A) is the output of Field Reference Group members of the initiative to enhance the UNHCR Framework for Implementation with Partners. The Field Reference Group is comprised of humanitarian practitioners from both UNHCR field operations and partner organizations.

The Partner to UNHCR Annual Feedback form was piloted in 12 countries for 2012 projects and found to be a very useful tool for improving partnership relations and incorporating lessons learned.

The proposed UNHCR to Partner Feedback form (Appendix B) is an output of members of NGO network organizations of the initiative to enhance the UNHCR Framework for Implementation with Partners.

Section 3, Joint Monitoring Terms of Reference – Guiding Principles and Key Considerations, of this guidance note is the output of members of the Field Reference Group. It also incorporates feedback received from NGO network organizations that acknowledged joint monitoring and review as a critical component of project implementation and documenting lessons learned to both improve the partnership relationship and the response to the needs of refugees and persons of concern.

The Field Reference Group stressed that a well-developed terms of reference provided the foundation for successful joint monitoring. However, a “one-sized fits all” standard Terms of Reference was not recommended given that UNHCR has a wide spectrum of projects, partnerships and implementation environments. Instead, the Field Reference Group focused on developing generic principles and key considerations for joint monitoring.

Each subsection listed below represents a section that should be found in a Terms of Reference for joint monitoring along with relevant guiding principles and key considerations.

### **3. JOINT MONITORING TERMS OF REFERENCE – GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND KEY CONSIDERATIONS**

#### **3.1 Objectives**

The key objectives of joint monitoring:

- Joint assessment of progress and trend in implementation with reference to initial project design criteria to ensure efficiency and effectiveness;
- Monitoring evolving situations during implementation that may impact on key project parameters;
- Identifying the need for remedial actions to address weaknesses as well as promotion of best practices and strengths;
- Involvement and participation of refugees and persons of concern in providing grass-root perspectives regarding enhanced implementation, and
- Strengthened project risk management.

### 3.2 Outputs

The key outputs of the joint monitoring exercise include:

- Verification, validation, documentation and dissemination of outcomes of project interventions at intermediate level (s) of implementation;
- Provision of feedback of joint monitoring to partners and other stakeholders;
- Provision of recommendations to fine tune project implementation;
- Strengthen collective ownership of project/programme and overall shared goals for effective results for refugees and persons of concern; and
- Sharing of best practices amongst partners supporting capacity building.

It is important to recognize that the timing of dissemination of outcomes and sharing of best practices may vary with some not likely to take place until well after the joint monitoring exercise has been completed.

### 3.3 Scope

A clearly defined scope is important to ensure joint monitoring is effective and efficient. The common result of an inadequately defined scope is open-ended assessments that lead to deviation from monitoring the core issues defined by the Project Agreement.

Key considerations:

- The multidisciplinary nature of joint monitoring may be able to give an indication of overall trends in terms of the general welfare systems of the refugees and persons of concern. However, it is important to focus on the specific project objectives and strategies as outlined in the Project Agreement. That is, a single project is not designed to be directly responsible for the attainment of overall goals of a welfare system in communities – rather it is meant to contribute towards achieving it. Therefore, it is important to use the project objectives to define scope.
- There may be numerous interventions that are being undertaken in the area of project implementation. The scope of joint monitoring must ensure that all high impact interventions are covered - as these would, by and large, impact the success or failure of a project.
- Joint Monitoring must address issues that may impact the majority of persons of concern and should utilize the core parameters in Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM).

### 3.4 Methodology and Approach

The methodology and approach for conducting joint monitoring may vary depending on the operational environment as well as composition and structure of partnerships that characterize each project. However, it is necessary and useful to consider important cross-cutting principles that contribute towards effective joint monitoring.

Ensure that:

- All key parties to the Project Agreement are well informed prior to the commencement of any of the joint monitoring activities;
- There is a well-structured checklist (taking into account international and local standards) developed and agreed upon that covers multidisciplinary interventions as well as thematic /sector specific issues;

- There is a balance between monitoring processes and monitoring outputs (results) in order to avoid capitalizing on one at the expense of the other;
- Prior to the commencement of the joint monitoring activity that all the relevant primary sources of information (e.g. baseline thematic data, population information, project reports etc.) are consolidated and availed;
- Joint monitoring activities include both review and analysis of relevant reports, data as well as on-site visits;
- Recognized community/beneficiary leadership structures (such as Refugee Welfare Committees and important community groups e.g. women/youth groups) are actively engaged to capture the persons of concern's views and perspectives;
- Actual timing of joint monitoring is convenient to participating entities and that it is well placed in the programming cycle in order to enable relevant partners to make the necessary programmatic adjustments; and
- All necessary precautions are in place to avoid unnecessary expectations, which may arise as a result of joint monitoring activities.

Joint monitoring and review may encompass a variety of activities and the nature of the most value-added activity should to be tailored to each project.

### **3.5 Team Composition**

Joint monitoring should undertake both qualitative and quantitative assessments of the project intervention. Therefore, it is very important to have adequate technical expertise within the composition of the joint monitoring team.

Key considerations when defining team composition:

- Inclusion of external expertise, as and when necessary;
- Adequate representation of the UNHCR multi-functional team;
- Adequate representation of partners implementing the project and their key resource persons;
- Adequate representation of refugees and persons of concern through their leadership structures;
- Adequate representation of the host government, as applicable in each country and project area; and
- Representation of other important stakeholders with key roles in project support, as applicable.

### **3.6 Frequency**

Joint monitoring, as opposed to routine project monitoring, should take place at intervals in the project cycle - and more importantly must be well placed to coincide with key milestones as well as the end of the project period. Overall, it is important to plan joint monitoring activities so that findings and recommendations of partners (or other stakeholders) can be incorporated into the current project being implementing as well as utilized going forward. Incorporating findings and recommendations of joint monitoring activities is of particular importance in protracted operations.

Twice a year is the recommended minimum frequency of joint monitoring for projects:

1. The first joint monitoring activity should coincide with the mid-year project review so to enable partners to utilize the information generated to reset project parameters, if required.
2. The second joint monitoring activity should take place towards the end of the project implementation period and preferably coinciding with the preparation for the submission of project proposals/discussions for the following year.

It is important to note that certain implementation environments (such as the rapidly changing environments of emergencies) may warrant increased frequency of joint monitoring.

### **3.7 Tools/Materials/Resources**

It is vital to define and document the comprehensive list of tools that will be utilized, materials to be reviewed and resources to be mobilized.

The following provides an indicative list of tools, materials and resources:

- Complete monitoring plan (schedule) clearly stipulating the time frame (duration); project location; list of participants; list of focal persons; logistical arrangements and general administrative information.
- Well-designed checklist for data/information collection with key data collection guidelines as an addendum, if required.
- Adequate supplies and materials (e.g. data processing, communication etc.)
- Thematically generated and up-to-date baseline information for each high impact intervention.
- Partner Feedback forms.

## **4. RELATED REFERENCES**

Joint monitoring of projects is only one of the UNHCR monitoring activities that take place for projects implemented with partners. Additional reference material includes:

- Implementing Partnership Management Guidance Note: Project Monitoring
- Implementing Partnership Management Verification Toolkit
- Implementing Partnership Management Guidance Note: Remote Management
- Implementing Partnership Management Guidance Note: Project Risk Management
- Implementing Partnership Management: Partner feedback forms

## **5. INQUIRIES**

For assistance or support in using this guidance note contact Implementing Partnership Management Service at [epartner@unhcr.org](mailto:epartner@unhcr.org).



**APPENDIX A**
**PARTNER TO UNHCR ANNUAL FEEDBACK**
**Year:**
**Country:**
**Agreement Symbol:**

UNHCR aims to enhance partnership and project management in order to achieve the desired result in providing protection to refugees and other persons of concern. Please provide concise comments and suggestions (a maximum of 2 pages to be submitted with end of year report):

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Was your organization invited to participate in the Country Operations Plan?<br>If so, did you participate in the Country Operations Plan? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO               | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 2. Was your organization informed about the outcome of the Operations plan by mid-November?<br>If yes, when?   | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 3. Was the Project Agreement signed before the 2 <sup>nd</sup> week of January?<br>If no, when?  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 4. Was there a common understanding reached during the negotiation process leading to the Project Agreement?<br>If no, please explain  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 5. Was there timely release of funds in accordance with terms of Project Agreement and implementation rate?<br>If no, please provide further detail  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 6. Was a joint Monitoring Plan developed within the first trimester of the Project?  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 7. Was the Monitoring Plan implemented accordingly?<br>If no, please provide further detail  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 8. Did UNHCR provide a timely feedback on partner financial and performance reports?   | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 9. Was your organization correctly informed about project closure and was it implemented in time?<br>If no, please provide further detail  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 10. Was your organization informed of the results of the project audit?  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 11. In cases of UNHCR budgetary constraints, was the agreed Project Budget adversely affected?<br>If so, was your organization informed in a timely manner? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> YES<br><input type="checkbox"/> NO |
| 12. Do you have any suggestions for improvement in terms of partnership and project management?  |   |

**Name of Partner Organization:**
**Name of the authorized Official (same as the person who signed the Project Agreement):**
**Signature:**
**Date:**

**APPENDIX B**
**UNHCR TO PARTNER ANNUAL FEEDBACK**
**Year:**
**Country:**
**Agreement Symbol:**

UNHCR aims to enhance partnership and project management in order to achieve the desired result in providing protection to refugees and other persons of concern. Please provide concise comments and suggestions (a maximum of 2 pages to be submitted with end of year report):

|  |                              |  |
|--|------------------------------|--|
| 1. Was UNHCR invited to the partner's strategic planning process?  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO  |
| 2. Was UNHCR informed about the outcomes of the partner's strategic planning process?  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO  |
| 3. Did implementation start and proceed in accordance with the workplan (only related to delays entirely under the Partner's control)?               | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO  |
| 4. Did the partner provide UNHCR with timely information on major constraints related to Project implementation or undesired impacts of the Project? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO  |
| 5. Did the partner keep UNHCR abreast of relevant issues and changes in a timely manner related to:  |                              |  |
| Corporate changes of the partner   | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO  |
| Changes of relevant Partner Personnel  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO  |
| Relevant additional funding towards the same/similar activities  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO  |
| Other projects that might have a bearing on joint activities   | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO  |
| 6. Did the partner participate in joint monitoring, joint assessments and coordination activities?   | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO  |
| If yes, please comment on whether the partner's participation was adequate   |                              |  |
| 7. Did the partner provide complete and timely reports as per the Project Agreement?   |                              |  |
| Reports were provided on time  | <input type="checkbox"/>     | Reports were complete and of satisfactory quality <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reports were not provided on time  | <input type="checkbox"/>     | Reports were complete and of poor quality <input type="checkbox"/>         |
| 8. Did the partner take satisfactory actions to address any identified shortcomings in prior year project audit reports?                             | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO  |
|  |                              | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A   |
| 9. Did the partner transfer any unspent balances, revenues and/or ineligible expenditures in compliance with the Project Agreement?                  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO  |
|  |                              | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A   |
| 10. Suggestions for improvement in terms of partnership and project management:  |                              |  |

Name of the authorized UNHCR Official (same as the person who signed the Project Agreement):

Signature:

Date: