

## 2021 NGO Consultations for the Southern Africa Region 1 – 3 September 2021

### Background Note Day 2: Partnerships in challenging times

Effective partnerships rely on ongoing communication and a shared understanding of responsibilities, acknowledgement of differences, identification of shared goals and commitment to a joint plan of action or the pursuit of a common goal. There may be multiple players involved in a partnership, hence the need to keep a clear line of communication and, in some cases, to maintain written agreements and protocols that outline the basic elements of the partnership.

Partnership is at the heart of delivering UNHCR's mandate. Partnerships are critical for the inclusion of persons of concern in the social protection and development programmes of their host country, and the importance of the multi-stakeholder approach is highlighted by the Global Compact on Refugees. In Southern Africa, UNHCR works with a broad range of stakeholders to assist, protect, and deliver solutions for persons of concern. In 2021, UNHCR is implementing its programmes in Southern Africa in direct partnership with 56 NGOs, and with further strategic operational engagements and partnerships with many more NGOs.

UNHCR has in place a new results-based management (RBM) approach that builds on past experience and intends to strengthen collaboration with partners in line with UNHCR's commitment under the Global Compact on Refugees.

Changing times have brought with them several challenges that have impacted UNHCR-NGO partnerships. In addition to a more complex and increasingly securitized humanitarian operating environment, climate change and COVID-19 have affected partnerships in humanitarian work. These consultations offer an opportunity to review and reflect on the state of UNHCR-NGO partnerships in Southern Africa in these challenging circumstances.

The impact of climate change and consequent forced displacement is a recurring issue in Southern Africa. Every year extreme weather events including tropical cyclones, floods and drought are causing loss of lives, destruction of property, and internal displacement: the latter most notably in Angola, DRC, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Climate extremes are a major impediment to resilience in the region, as livelihoods and economies are highly sensitive to weather fluctuations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the very basis of humanitarian work. It has prompted rapid and innovative adaptation, as well as the need to harness synergies and strengthen collaboration. UNHCR and its NGO partners stayed and delivered throughout the worst of the pandemic. It is important to reflect on how partnerships have been enhanced since the onset of the pandemic, and what more could be done.

Preparing for and addressing these challenges requires urgent collaborative effort by all actors. While prioritizing collaboration with the forcibly displaced and stateless people, host governments and communities, UNHCR works with UN member States, international organizations within and outside the UN system, other humanitarian and development actors, international and regional financial institutions, regional organizations, local authorities and civil society, including faith-based organizations, academics and other experts, the private sector and the media.

In this context, the partnerships session provides an opportunity to reflect on UNHCR-NGO partnerships at the implementation, operational and strategic levels. It will reflect on challenges, opportunities and progress since 2020 to improve UNHCR's operational and strategic

partnerships with NGOs. The session will also review lessons learnt, good practices, opportunities and innovations that have aided or affected partnerships in challenging times, particularly in the context of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. These issues will be considered in relation to accountability to affected people.

## Session Outline

**Date and time:** Thursday, 2 September, 09:30-12:30 (SAST)

**Moderator:** Sakura Atsumi, UNHCR

- **Welcome and opening remarks** (15 minutes):
  - Overview of the session, and an interactive opportunity for participants to express their views on partnerships using the comments function and Mentimeter.
- **Presentations: The evolving nature of UNHCR-NGO partnerships** (50 minutes):
  - The evolving nature of UNHCR-NGO partnerships with a focus on challenges, opportunities and lessons learnt in the context of COVID-19. Jeremy Rempel, ICVA.
  - The key attributes of the new results-based management approach and how it impacts partnerships. Robert Hurt, UNHCR.
  - Discussion
- **Break** (15 minutes)
- **Presentations: Enhancing protection in the context of climate change through partnerships** (70 minutes):
  - Enhancing partnerships in the context of climate change. Andrew Harper, UNHCR.
  - Enhancing protection in the context of climate change through partnerships: Angolans displaced into Namibia and Zambia. Fr. Celestino Tchitata Butao Epalanga, Jesuit Refugee Services.
  - Discussion
- **Session 2 wrap up**, using Mentimeter (30 minutes)

## Guide Questions

### Introduction: (Mentimeter)

- What can UNHCR do to better support partners to strengthen, expand and enhance their impact?

### Session 1:

- What are the lessons learned in engaging with each other, and communicating with and empowering refugees and other persons of concern in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What are the key attributes of the new RBM approach, and how does it impact partnerships in refugee assistance and protection?

### Session 2:

- How have COVID-19 and climate change affected partnerships, especially in relation to accountability to affected people?

### Question to Panel/ Audience via Mentimeter

- How can the partnerships between UNHCR and NGOs be further strengthened to enhance the effectiveness of programming? What opportunities are there for joint advocacy and coordinated programming, messaging, and resource mobilization?