Implementing Partnership Management Guidance Note No. X

Joint Monitoring and Partner Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject:</th>
<th>Joint Monitoring and Partner Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Reference Documents | – Chapter 4 of the UNHCR Manual  
– Enhanced UNHCR Framework for Implementing with Partners  
– Bipartite Project Partnership Agreement (non-governmental and other not-for-profit partners) |
| Reference No. | UNHCR/FP/S3-2 |
| Date of Issue | XX 2013 |
| Date of Revision | |

INTRODUCTION

This Guidance Note supports UNHCR Offices and partners for carrying out the joint monitoring and review requirements of the UNHCR Project Partnership Agreements.

The Project Partnership Agreement requires:

• Project monitoring plans to include joint monitoring and feedback activities with the partner.

This requirement is put into practice by:

• Formal joint monitoring and review taking place at least at mid-year and at the end of the Project.

• Completion of annual feedback forms by UNHCR and the partner at the end of each Project.
Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.................................................................................................................. 3

REQUIREMENT ................................................................................................................... 3

TOOLS TO COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENT ............................................................... 4

DEFINITIONS .................................................................................................................... 4

FURTHER GUIDANCE ......................................................................................................... 4

ANNEX A: JOINT MONITORING TERMS OF REFERENCE – GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND KEY CONSIDERATIONS......................................................................................... 5
  Objectives ........................................................................................................................... 5
  Outputs ................................................................................................................................ 5
  Scope .................................................................................................................................... 5
  Methodology and Approach ............................................................................................... 6
  Team Composition ............................................................................................................. 7
  Frequency ............................................................................................................................ 7
  Tools/Materials/Resources ............................................................................................... 7

ANNEX B: ANNUAL FEEDBACK FORMS ........................................................................ 9
  Partner to UNHCR Annual Feedback Form ........................................................................ 9
  UNHCR to Partner Annual Feedback Form ......................................................................... 10

ANNEX C: DEFINITIONS .................................................................................................. 11
INTRODUCTION

1. Joint monitoring of Projects strengthens collective ownership and shared responsibility for the implementation of Projects, to deliver intended results 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 to design, implementation and closure. The joint review of Project implementation should also include a mechanism for UNHCR and partners to provide feedback to each other.

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

3. In addition, joint monitoring and review of Projects implemented with partners are consistent with other inclusionary practices within UNHCR partnerships. Examples of such practices include: Age and Gender Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM); Participatory Assessments; Joint Assessment Missions (JAM); and, Mid-Year and End of Project review processes.

REQUIREMENT

4. The revised Bipartite Project Partnership Agreement (with non-governmental and other not-for-profit partners)\(^1\) institutionalizes the good practice of joint monitoring and review by making it a requirement for UNHCR Offices and partners. UNHCR Offices are encouraged to incorporate the practices described in this Guidance Note for all 2014 Projects regardless of which format of Project Partnership Agreement is being used.

5. Specifically, Article 8.1 of the revised Bipartite Project Partnership Agreement (with non-governmental and other not-for-profit partners) states:

   “The Parties shall hold regular consultation and coordination meetings. UNHCR shall initiate formal joint monitoring and review meetings that shall 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 serve the Population of Concern. These joint reviews shall be undertaken in good faith and take into account: (a) the progress of the Project; (b) working relationship of the Parties; (c) the compliance of the Parties with this Agreement; and (d) the success and challenges of the Partner in meeting the agreed objectives and desired results as reflected in this Agreement.”

---

\(^1\) Effective 01 April 2014.
TOOLS TO COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENT

6. This guidance note supports UNHCR Offices and partners in putting joint monitoring and review into practice by providing tools that were co-developed with partners. Specifically, this Guidance Note provides:
   a) Joint Monitoring Terms of Reference – Guiding Principles and Key Considerations, in Annex A.
   b) Annual feedback forms to be completed by the partner and UNHCR at the end of a Project, in Annex B.

7. Joint Monitoring Terms of Reference – Guiding Principles and Key Considerations is the output of the Field Reference Group\(^2\). Feedback received from NGO network organizations acknowledged joint monitoring and review as a critical component of Project implementation and documenting lessons learned, to improve both the partnership relationship and the response to the needs of refugees and persons of concern.

8. The Partner and UNHCR feedback forms were also co-developed with the Field Reference Group. The forms must be completed at the end of each Project and discussed with the partner in efforts to improve partnership and Project implementation going forward. The forms should be signed by the same individual who signed the Project Partnership Agreement (generally, the Representative or Head of Office). Copies of the completed forms must be placed on the Project File and uploaded to eSafe.

DEFINITIONS

9. The definitions of terms used in this Guidance Note are provided in Annex C.

FURTHER GUIDANCE

10. The Implementing Partnership Management Service may be contacted at epartner@unhcr.org for further support.

---

\(^2\) The Field Reference Group is comprised of humanitarian practitioners from both UNHCR field operations and partner organizations and works to support the enhancement of the Framework for Implementing with Partners.
ANNEX A: JOINT MONITORING TERMS OF REFERENCE – GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The Field Reference Group stressed that a well-developed Terms of Reference provides the foundation for successful joint monitoring. However, a “one-size 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 included in a Terms of Reference for joint monitoring along with relevant guiding principles and key considerations.

Objectives

1. The key objectives of joint monitoring are:
   a) Joint assessment of progress and trends in implementation with reference to initial Project design criteria to ensure efficiency and effectiveness;
   b) Monitoring evolving situations during implementation that may impact on key Project parameters;
   c) Identifying the need for remedial actions to address weaknesses as well as promotion of best practices and strengths;
   d) Involvement and participation of refugees and persons of concern in providing grass-roots perspectives regarding enhanced implementation and promoting their empowerment, and
   e) Strengthened project risk management.

Outputs

2. The key outputs of the joint monitoring exercise include:
   a) Verification, validation, documentation and dissemination of outcomes of Project interventions at intermediate level(s) of implementation;
   b) Provision of feedback of joint monitoring to partners and other stakeholders;
   c) Provision of recommendations to fine tune project implementation;
   d) Strengthening of collective ownership of project/programme and overall shared goals for effective results for refugees and persons of concern, and
   e) Sharing of best practices amongst partners supporting capacity building.

3. 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.

Scope

4. A clearly defined scope is important to ensure that 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 Partnership Agreement.
5. Key considerations:
   a) The multidisciplinary nature of joint monitoring may be able to give an indication of overall trends in terms of the general welfare systems for the refugees and persons of concern. However, it is important to focus on the specific Project objectives and strategies as outlined in the Project Partnership 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 the scope.
   b) 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.
   c) Joint monitoring must address issues that impact the majority of persons of concern, and should utilize the core parameters in Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM).

Methodology and Approach

6. 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.

7. Ensure that:
   a) All key parties to the Project Partnership Agreement are well informed prior to the commencement of any of the joint monitoring activities;
   b) 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;
   c) There is a balance between monitoring processes and monitoring outputs (results) in order to avoid capitalizing on one at the expense of the other;
   d) Prior to the commencement of the joint monitoring activity, all the relevant primary sources of information (e.g. baseline thematic data, population information, project reports, etc.) are consolidated and availed;
   e) Joint monitoring activities include both review and analysis of relevant reports, data as well as on-site visits;
   f) 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 views and perspectives of persons of concern;
   g) Actual timing of joint monitoring is convenient to participating entities and is well placed in the programming cycle in order to enable partners to make the necessary programmatic adjustments, and
   h) All necessary precautions are in place to avoid unnecessary expectations, which may arise as a result of joint monitoring activities.

8. 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.
Team Composition

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

10. Key considerations when defining team composition are:
   a) Inclusion of external expertise, as and when necessary;
   b) Adequate representation of the UNHCR multi-functional team;
   c) Adequate representation of partners implementing the Project and their key resource persons;
   d) Adequate representation of refugees and persons of concern through their leadership structures;
   e) Adequate representation of the host government, as applicable in each country and Project area, and
   f) Representation of other important stakeholders with key roles in Project support, as applicable.

Frequency

11. Joint monitoring, as opposed to routine project monitoring and control, should take place at intervals in the Project cycle - and more importantly must be well placed to coincide with key milestones at 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.

12. The recommended minimum frequency of joint monitoring for Projects is twice a year, as noted in Article 8.1 of the Bipartite Project Partnership Agreement:
   a) The first joint monitoring activity should coincide with the mid-year project review, in order to enable partners to utilize the information generated to reset project parameters, if required.
   b) The second joint monitoring activity should take place towards the end of the Project implementation period, and preferably coincide with the preparation of project proposals/discussions for the following year.

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

Tools/Materials/Resources

14. 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. An indicative list of tools, materials and resources includes:
a) A complete joint monitoring plan (schedule) clearly stipulating: the time frame (duration); project location; list of participants; list of focal persons; logistical arrangements and general administrative information;

b) Key project documentation (e.g. Project Partnership Agreement/Amendment(s) including “Planned Results” matrix, Project Work Plan/installment plan, budget; latest financial and performance reports; results of the previous joint monitoring exercise(s); relevant technical reports, etc.);

c) A well-designed checklist for data/information collection with key data collection guidelines as an addendum, if required;

d) Adequate supplies and materials (e.g. data processing, communication etc.), and

e) Thematically generated and up-to-date baseline information for each high impact intervention.
PARTNER TO UNHCR ANNUAL FEEDBACK FORM

Year:
Country:
Agreement Symbol:

UNHCR aims to enhance partnership and project management in order to achieve the desired results 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 the end-of-year report):

1. Was your organization invited to participate in the Country Operations Plan? ☐ YES ☐ NO
   If so, did you participate in the Country Operations Plan? ☐ YES ☐ NO
2. Was your organization informed about the outcome of the Operations Plan by mid-November? ☐ YES ☐ NO
   If yes, when?
3. Was the Project Partnership Agreement signed before the 2nd week of January? ☐ YES ☐ NO
   If no, when?
4. Was there a common understanding reached during the negotiation process leading to the Project Agreement? ☐ YES ☐ NO
   If no, please explain
5. Was there timely release of funds in accordance with the terms of the Project Partnership Agreement and implementation rate? ☐ YES ☐ NO
   If no, please provide further detail
6. Was a joint monitoring plan developed within the first trimester of the Project? ☐ YES ☐ NO
7. Was the monitoring plan implemented accordingly? ☐ YES ☐ NO
   If no, please provide further detail
8. Did UNHCR provide timely feedback on partner financial and performance reports? ☐ YES ☐ NO
9. Was your organization correctly informed about project closure and was it implemented in time? ☐ YES ☐ NO
   If no, please provide further detail
10. Was your organization informed of the results of the project audit? ☐ YES ☐ NO
11. In cases of UNHCR budgetary constraints, was the agreed Project Budget adversely affected? ☐ YES ☐ NO
    If so, was your organization informed in a timely manner? ☐ YES ☐ NO
12. Was your organization able to get in touch with UNHCR personnel when needed? ☐ YES ☐ NO
    If no, please provide further detail
13. 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 Partnership Agreement):

Signature: Date:
UNHCR TO PARTNER ANNUAL FEEDBACK FORM

Year:
Country:
Agreement Symbol:

UNHCR aims to enhance partnership and project management in order to achieve the desired results 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 the end-of-year report):

1. Was UNHCR invited to the partner’s strategic planning process?  
   - YES  
   - NO

2. Was UNHCR informed about the outcomes of the partner’s strategic planning process?  
   - YES  
   - NO

3. Did implementation start and proceed in accordance with the work plan (only related to delays entirely under the partner’s control)?  
   - YES  
   - NO

4. Did the partner provide UNHCR with timely information on major constraints related to Project implementation or undesired impacts of the Project?  
   - YES  
   - NO

5. Did the partner keep UNHCR abreast of relevant issues and changes in a timely manner related to:
   - Corporate changes of the partner  
     - YES  
     - NO
   - Changes of relevant partner personnel  
     - YES  
     - NO
   - Relevant additional funding towards the same/similar activities  
     - YES  
     - NO
   - Other projects that might have a bearing on joint activities  
     - YES  
     - NO

6. Did the partner participate in joint monitoring, joint assessments and coordination activities?  
   - YES  
   - 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 Partnership Agreement?  
   - Reports were provided on time  
     - YES  
     - NO
   - Reports were not provided on time  
     - YES  
     - NO
   - Reports were complete and of satisfactory quality  
     - YES  
     - NO
   - Reports were complete and of poor quality  
     - YES  
     - NO

8. Did the partner take satisfactory actions to address any identified shortcomings in prior year project audit reports?  
   - YES  
   - NO  
   - N/A

9. Did the partner transfer any unspent balances, revenues and/or ineligible expenditures in compliance with the Project Partnership Agreement?  
   - YES  
   - NO  
   - 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:
ANNEX C: DEFINITIONS

The following definitions, listed in alphabetical order, will apply:

“Head of Office” means the UNHCR Representative/Chief of Mission or the Head of Office/Division/Unit or delegated person (either in the field or at Headquarters) that is responsible for an operation and has been delegated with the authority to sign agreements with Partners.

“Implementing Partner” (referred to in this document as “partner”) means an entity with which UNHCR has entrusted to undertake the implementation of Projects specified in a signed document (Project Partnership Agreement), along with the assumption of full responsibility and accountability for the effective use of resources and the delivery of outputs as set forth in such a document. The entity could be a governmental, intergovernmental or non-governmental body, a United Nations organization, or another non-profit organization.\(^3\)

“Implementing Partnership” means the collaborative relationship between UNHCR and a partner in order to respond to the needs of refugees and persons of concern. The Principles of Partnership guide the nature of the relationship. Such partnership starts with early engagement in needs assessment, planning and project formulation, dialogue and negotiations, and is not limited to the mere implementation of a predefined Project solely by UNHCR. Partnerships involve risks as well as benefits. Among others, UNHCR participates with financial contributions and other resources to partners, as stipulated in a Project Partnership Agreement. Partners are responsible to account fully to UNHCR for the resources entrusted by UNHCR. However, UNHCR remains solely accountable to donors for resources entrusted to UNHCR to respond to the needs of refugees and persons of concern.

“Principles of Partnership” means the principles 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:

a) **Equality.** Equality requires mutual respect between members of the partnership irrespective of size and power. The participants must respect each other’s mandate, obligations and independence and recognize each other’s constraints and commitments. Mutual respect must not preclude organizations from engaging in constructive dissent.

b) **Transparency.** Transparency is achieved through dialogue (on equal footing), with an emphasis on early consultations and early sharing of information. Communications and transparency, including financial transparency, increase the level of trust amount organizations.

c) **Result-orientated approach.** Effective humanitarian action must be reality-based and action orientated. This requires result-orientated coordination based on effective capabilities and concrete operational capacities.

d) **Responsibility.** Humanitarian organizations have an ethical obligation to each other to accomplish their tasks responsibly, with integrity and in a relevant and appropriate way. They must make sure they commit to activities only when they have the means,

\(^3\) See: Article 1.6, Financial rules for voluntary funds administered by the High Commissioner for Refugees, A/AC.96/503/Rev.10.
competencies, skills and capacity to deliver on their commitments. Decisive and robust prevention of abuses committed by humanitarians must also be a constant effort.

e) Complementarity. The diversity of the humanitarian community is an asset if we build on our comparative advantages and complement each other’s contributions. Local capacity is one of the main assets to enhance and on which to build. Whenever possible, humanitarian organizations should strive to make it an integral part in emergency response. Language and cultural barriers must be overcome.

“Project” means an undertaking to meet agreed objectives for refugees and persons of concern and delivery of specific outputs as measured by defined performance indicators within a set time frame and budget. Project in this document refers to a project fully or partially funded by UNHCR.

“Project Partnership Agreement” means a legal and binding agreement entered into by UNHCR and an Implementing Partner whereby UNHCR delegates to the Implementing Partner responsibility for the implementation of Projects with financial participation from UNHCR. The document stipulates the terms and conditions, and obligations, of all involved parties. It concludes the agreed understanding of all previous discussions and negotiations of all involved parties.

“UNHCR Office” refers to any division or unit at Headquarters, or regional, country or field office that is responsible for engaging a partner in signing a Project Partnership Agreement.