• National NGOs are now members to OPAG

With ICVA receiving two additional seats in the OPAG for national and local NGOs, the membership of OPAG was extended with Fiona Gall, Director of the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR), Afghanistan; and Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Executive Director of the Coastal Association for Social Transformation Trust (COAST), Bangladesh. Together with Azmat Khan from Foundation for Rural Development (FRD) Pakistan, OPAG now has three members representing national NGOs. Their engagement brought a strong new dynamic to OPAG, linking the various discussions to the context of their country and adding to the ‘reality-check’ and legitimacy needed by this body.
At ICVA we are very grateful to InterAction for co-funding together with us the costs of participation for our national NGO colleagues and to SCHR for its willingness to do so.

• RGs are delivering on priorities

During the last six months, the RGs have worked hard to deliver on the agreed priorities. Many of you have been a driving force behind the various products, which will improve our joint actions on the ground. This was duly recognised by OPAG and allow me also to congratulate all for the work done.
Deliverables produced include the analysis on the impact of counter-terrorism legislation in humanitarian action; the finalization of the Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action and the revision of IASC Principal 4 on PSEA/SHA; the Financing the Nexus study, etc. Other important products are in the pipeline for the upcoming six months. However, few challenges were also discussed during the OPAG meeting as per feedback of the RGs. The challenges discussed include the increased impediments to humanitarian actors due to counter-terrorism measures, the unequal contribution of members to the RGs work, the long-term vision for the RGs and how they could more regularly bring up challenges to OPAG and through it further to the Principals etc.

• Prior coordination through the networks enabled stronger messages from NGOs

The number of OPAG NGO members have extended now to 12 (please see at the end of the notes for list of OPAG members). I felt all the NGO’s raised valid points and strongly echoed each other throughout the meeting. The three networks (us, InterAction and SCHR) facilitated the establishment of this joint agenda. The day before we met and agreed on the following four common concerns which were shared with OPAG Co-Chairs:

1. Concern about **how the OPAG takes decisions** (particularly between meetings and around supporting and endorsing specific pieces of work)
2. The need for clarity on the **relationship** between OPAG, the RGs and *subsidiary bodies* to give them the space and freedom to do their work
3. The need to address the **mismatch** between the ‘growing concern’ nature of the problems we are trying to address and the fixed term nature of the results groups
4. The **role of these structures** beyond delivering specific outputs.

As result of our joint voices, we managed to steer the agenda of the meeting. All the issues proposed were seriously considered by OPAG, although on some of them solutions are still to be found. There is clear agreement that the work of the OPAG with the support of the RGs, has to be meaningful and in support of the field and in this regard we can and should do better.
Fiona, Reza and Azmat please feel free to add further to this message and your impression of the OPAG meeting.
I remain available for questions and further exchanges

Best wishes

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