Principles of Partnership?

A reality check

UNICEF/NGOs consultation

Geneva, 11-12 November 2019
What it is?


• The GHP was originally set up in 2006 by leaders of 40 humanitarian organisations: NGOs, UN agencies – including UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the World Bank, and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.
Principles of Partnerships are...

1. Equality
   - The participants must respect each other’s mandates, obligations and independence and recognise each other’s constraints & commitments. This doesn’t preclude constructive dissent.

2. Transparency
   - Achieved through dialogue (on equal footing), with early consultations and early sharing of information. Communications and transparency, including financial, increase the level of trust.

3. Results-oriented approach
   - Effective humanitarian action must be reality-based and action-oriented. This requires results-oriented coordination based on effective capabilities and concrete operational capacities.

4. Responsibility
   - Ethical obligation to each other to accomplish their tasks responsibly, with integrity and in an appropriate way. Decisive and robust prevention of abuses must be a constant effort.

Complementarity
   - Building on our comparative advantages. Local capacity is a main asset.
The PoP in practice:

Since 2007, practical avenues have been identified for humanitarian actors to implement PoP:

- Make explicit reference to, and use, the PoP in all partnership agreements/ MoUs with the UN, other NGOs, and the Red Cross/Red Crescent and evaluate how all parties to the agreements/MoUs adhered to the PoPs.

- Report in annual reports on how you are putting the PoP into practice.

- Ensure the PoP are part of ToRs/modus operandi of all coordination meetings/clusters.

- In developing project proposals, refer to how the PoP will be used in project’s implementation. In job postings, refer to the PoP and ask about candidates’ views on partnership.

- Ensure that partnership skills are an essential qualification when recruiting and appraising staff.

- Use the PoP to advocate for improved performance from humanitarian agencies and the HC.

- Ensure that Common Humanitarian Action Plans and Consolidated Appeals Processes (HRPs) are developed in line with the PoP.

- Ensure that governments, local authorities and media know you apply the PoP in your work.
Challenges in implementing the PoP

- Principles need to be contextualized in different situations.
- Recognition that the PoP are hard to imbue across organizations – as they often relate to people’s work and efforts within those organizations.
- Across various actors, there remain operational challenges around transparency (including financial transparency), inclusion in coordination mechanisms and improved information management and sharing.
- PoP have been viewed in a light of being yet another layer of work imposed by headquarters.
- Underlying drivers of money and power imbalances, place increasing pressure on partnerships within the humanitarian sector – on occasion resulting in withholding of information between the UN & NGOs & INGOs dominating NNGOs.
In UNICEF...

UNICEF Strategic Framework for Partnerships and Collaborative Relationships
(adopted by Executive Board, June 2009)

Principles:
1. Focus on delivering results for children and promoting child rights
2. Partner selection criteria
3. Alignment and ownership
4. Transparency and equity
5. Integrity and independence
6. Cost-effectiveness
7. Form of cooperation
Managing partnerships: Findings from the ICVA scoping study

Strengths

- UNICEF works a lot with local and national NGOs;
- The UN joint portal has improved the partnership; The information is clearer, and the process is more transparent;
- There is ongoing and good quality communication on the partnership with UNICEF;
- UNICEF is open to discuss partnership challenges and reacts upon concerns (e.g. PSEA);
- In some countries UNICEF’s consultation with NGOs is ‘very satisfactory and useful’;
- Participants from Africa mentioned improvements in the PCA.
Managing partnerships: 
Findings from the ICVA scoping study

Weaknesses:

**Heavy administrative process and unclear guidance:**

- Heavy bureaucracy for the negotiation of the PCAs; the negotiations take too long, which may create delays in emergency contexts;
- The PCA guidelines are not clear and interpretation of the guidelines sometimes differs from one UNICEF Country Office (CO) to the other, and on occasions even within the same CO, depending on the staff;
- Deadlines are not always realistic and the reporting obligations are too frequent and heavy to comply with.
Managing partnerships: Findings from the ICVA scoping study

Weaknesses:

Little financial support and too many risks for the partners:

- **UNICEF’s financial support for partners is not always realistic** taking into account the effective costs of doing business in some settings and the need to meet increasing requirements;

- Some partners feel the financial risk is transferred to them and there is limited flexibility among budget lines to accommodate changes;

- According to some respondents, UNICEF had not contributed to the safety and security costs of the partners;

- Financial reporting and closure of accounts on quarterly basis is burdensome and not productive;
Managing partnerships: Findings from the ICVA scoping study

Weaknesses:

A top - down culture of partnership:
- The term ‘implementing partners’ does not reflect an equal partnership, and neither UNICEF’s own strategic framework for partnership;
- UNICEF appears in need to lead all the time and takes all the visibility without leaving enough space for the visibility of partners;
- Not enough communication and consultations with partners.

UNICEF complex structure and its lack of predictability:
- A very decentralized modus operandi + the overall UNICEF structure is very fragmented; no one-stop-shop NGO partners’ entry point.
- In some settings, UNICEF remains unpredictable.
Managing partnerships: Findings from the ICVA scoping study

Weaknesses

- *High turnover of UNICEF staff*; each staff has its own approach and every-time the NGO has to explain the logic of intervention and agree on adjustments;
- *Unclarity of UNICEF’s role in the humanitarian architecture*.

Lack of engagement in advocacy:

- UNICEF appears to have *stepped back in advocacy*; it shies away from the public authorities and is not strongly supporting the advocacy of partners;
- UNICEF *advocacy on humanitarian issues with NGOs in Geneva remains timid*. 
GROUP WORK

Question:

What are the key challenges that NGOs face with UNICEF in terms of implementing the Principles of Partnership (PoP)? How can they be mitigated?

Methodology:

- 30 minutes discussion in Working Group
- 1-2 recommendations per Working Group
- Report back and presentation in plenary