



## UNHCR's sixteenth meeting with NGOs partners on preparedness and response to Covid-19 in refugee situations

Theme: the update on the reforms in implementing partnerships.

8 July 2020

Online

### Participants:

#### UNHCR moderator and panelists:

- Stella Ogunlade, Chief, NGO and Civil Society Section, Partnership, and Coordination Service.
- Kelly Clements, Deputy High Commissioner
- Ashley Augsburger, Program Manager, Humanitarian Policy, InterAction
- Robert Hurt, Head of Implementation Management and Assurance Service, DSPR

#### Audience:

- About 60+, mostly NGOs.

### Agenda:

1. Opening remarks
2. Presentation of the high-level findings of the InterAction-UNHCR perceptions survey
3. Update on the reforms in implementing partnerships
4. Questions and Answers

### Stella Ogunlade

- This meeting focuses on reforms in implementing partnerships. Also an opportunity to present high-level findings of a perceptions survey that InterAction and UNHCR conducted with partners and UNHCR staff concerning the framework for implementing with partners.
- Delighted to have Ms. Kelly Clement, our Deputy High Commissioner, joining this weekly meeting for the third time. Kelly was already with us for the first meeting we had on the special measures for partnership agreements related to COVID-19 in early April.

### Kelly Clements

- Happy to join you for this meeting, in the margins of the UNHCR Standing Committee.
- Look forward to the InterAction presentation and the results of the survey.
- Wish to set a bit the stage on why we have embarked on some reforms. Apologies if some of this is a repeat for some of you, e.g. those involved in Grand Bargain discussions last week.
- The Grand Bargain discussions are very much linked to the exchanges we need to have on 'risk sharing' as opposed to 'risk transfer'. This is extremely important for us. All of this, with the goal of greater accountability on results for refugees and others that we are serving.
- Around late January, we held a workshop leading to 14 concrete initiatives we decided to undertake within this year but also in 2021. Many of you have been in touch with Rob Hurt and his team since then, about progress with those concrete initiatives.
- Those were designed to tackle some of the root causes of issues you have raised with us over the years and things that we have determined to change and fix, e.g. what has prevented a timely signatures of agreements (not limited the ability to spend and implement); what has hindered the execution of more multi-year agreements (a high priority, so you have some predictability); what has frustrated partners (and certainly our colleagues) in terms of sometimes cumbersome and heavy bureaucracy?
- These reforms are part of our reinigorated commitment under the Grand Bargain and all of the related work streams, particularly localization, multi-year planning and some of the harmonization and streamlined approach to make us as efficient as possible.



- Our reforms are very much part and a product of our consultations with you.
- Some of the questions shared in advance were about further consultations, particularly in this very strange year. In many ways, reflections started last year: with decentralization, our intention was to look at the global consultations as being not the only place for our conversations. Regional consultations are becoming important and our intention is to broaden engagement with NGO partners. We were able to organize several of those regional consultations last year in MENA, South Africa, the Americas and Europe.
- This year, regional consultations largely had to be cancelled in person because of COVID-19 but we are trying to make sure that we have as many virtual discussions organized by regional colleagues and I understand that Asia, Europe, MENA, and Central and West Africa Bureaus have already done so, with discussions particularly on responses to the pandemic.
- We are looking forward to organize an annual consultation that is a bit more streamlined, shorter and virtual, taking into account time differences. It will be focused very much on the on the COVID-19 response, tentatively held in late September, about a week before ExCom.
- All this is part of our common effort to identify shortcomings in our current approaches and areas for improvement.
- We will hear shortly from InterAction on some of the results of the survey on how we are dealing with partnerships. Some of the results are quite positive but they also show us where we have room for improvement.
- GHRP: we now have either received or been pledged about \$270 million. About a third disbursed but there is a very large part of that actually not cashed yet, from our largest donor to date (USA). We now have the information that we need from them about required earmarking and we are moving to push money quite quickly out.
- Initially, the allocations that we were able to make to NGOs was rather modest (about 8%). It has now increased and doubled to 16% of the resources we have received.
- You will remember from the last time we spoke that the main reason for the low rate of transfer of resources to NGOs so far was that most of the amount received was pushed out through cash-based interventions and procurements of supplies, etc. This will still be the case for some of the resources we have going forward and to prepare for the fall.
- Overall we are largely on track with the reforms, which is certainly helpful but we know that there are always improvements to be made.
- We hope very much that the communication that we have had with you will not only intensify but continue in a very frank and open manner. We appreciate the support. Your teams are doing an important work on the ground, every day.

#### **Robert Hurt**

- For the last few years, we have had a practice of running, with InterAction, a joint survey of partnership issues involving colleagues from our implementing partners but then also from within UNHCR. These surveys are very useful to us in developing our reform agenda.
- We held the survey this year a bit later than usual mainly because of the COVID-19 situation. But it is now coming to its conclusion and InterAction has been consolidating the inputs over the last few days and doing some analysis, so that Ashley (on behalf of InterAction) can present some of the high level findings of that survey, also as a good introduction to the core of this presentation which will be about the progress that we are making on reforms.

#### **Ashley Augsburger**

- A bit of background: This survey started in 2014 with the goal of tracking, building a body of evidence on, and better understanding the dynamics between UNHCR and its implementing NGO partners. This year, we started the survey in March and due to low response rates obviously linked to the context, we kept the survey open a bit longer, until mid-June.



- Methodology: it is sent both to NGOs and UNHCR offices, which ideally try to identify one focal person per office, whereas NGOs had multiple staff members completing the survey.
- Demographics: ended up with an incredibly high response rate, which was great given the low start. 550 NGO respondents (343 more than the previous years) and 32 additional UNHCR. NGO respondents this year were split about 50/50 between national and INGOs.
- UNHCR responses mostly came from MENA. NGOs: mostly from Africa and Asia/Pacific.
- Most of UNHCR respondents represented program / project control staff (about 88%). NGO responses were more diversified, most being program / project managers, dealing with partnership. Over 1/3 were higher level staff.
- Results: very strong, overall tone as 77% of both UNHCR and NGO respondents reported an increase in improvement in the partner relationship, an 11% increase from NGOs from the previous year (2018 survey).
- Overall there was an interesting trend as national NGOs rated the relationship with UNHCR as positive or more positive than INGOs did.
- NGOs most engaged with things they found most useful (coordination, one-on-one consultations, cluster meetings at a local level), whereas UNHCR was most likely to engage in country operations planning.
- NGOs felt joint monitoring focus more on compliance, administrative and finance dynamics as compared to a program quality technical support.
- Country operations planning is not seen as the most useful means of engagement by either NGOs or UNHCR. Regional consultations were new component of this survey, introduced in 2019 with the caveat that regional consultations did not take place globally. This may explain a low response from NGOs which said they were invited (32%). However, those that did participate found it useful (significantly or moderately). National NGOs did find those regional consultations more useful than international NGOs.
- Selection: overall it was not very different from 2018. UNHCR offices issued an average of 4 calls, with 9 submissions per call. This is one less call and 2 less submissions than in 2018. However, out of all the NGOs that did PPS, over 91% were selected for at least some projects. There was an improvement since only 16% of NGOs who were not selected did not receive a clear reason as compared to about 1/4 of NGOs that did not get selected in 2018.
- We also queried on the UN partner portal: both UNHCR and NGOs felt that it did definitely improve significantly or moderately their grant management and partnership agreement process. Very utilized by UNHCR (96% use it to post calls of expression for interest); less than half of NGOs learned about the calls for expression of interest from the portal.
- 80% percent of NGOs that responded are registered. This is a decrease of about 10%. Maybe explained by the additional NGO respondents that could just be qualified as new partners engaging in the survey.
- We solicited feedback on how to improve the UN partner portal and qualitative responses. Both UNHCR and NGOs responded with multiple ways to increase the functionality of the portal, primarily focusing on aspects of the project management cycle such as reporting. UNHCR respondents noted they would appreciate the ability for the portal to provide automatic updates or update partners about where they are in the selection process.
- Multi-year PPAs: This is also a new component introduced in 2019. Feedback received highlighted that many UNHCR offices chose not to pursue these multi-year partnership agreements while NGOs felt there was some lack of transparency and did not understand the process. Moreover, multi-year agreements are still very much new and given the uncertainties faced in various contexts, they perceive these opportunities as being somewhat of an additional burden rather than a simplification of a process or an opportunity for improved partnerships.



- Notably multiple UNHCR respondents said that without the ability to carry over that budget from first to second year agreement, they did not find it useful. This seemed to be a factor in choosing not to pursue them.
- This confusion and uncertainty carried over to the NGO experience in deciding when and how to engage in the process. However, while only 32% did apply, up to 81% of those who applied said they received a MY PPA. Those that did not receive one said they did not receive a reason.
- PPA signing and implementation: there is a lack of improvement from 2018 as regard delays and PPA signings. 39% of NGO partners (a 2% increase from 2018) reported having at least one or more PPA not signed by either January 1<sup>st</sup> or the project's start. Almost all UNHCR respondents reported at least some delays in one or more PPA signing, the main cause being budget and project negotiations (same as 2018). UNHCR respondents also noted that engaging with government can create delays. 42% said delays lasted an average 1-3 months.
- Additional information requests: 86% of NGOs reported that UNHCR adhered to PPA, something that is reflected in qualitative responses, noted and appreciated. However, this should be nuanced by the fact that there was multiple reports of additional information requests. 70% of UNHCR respondents noted that they did request additional information outside of the PPA and this is similarly paralleled in NGO qualitative responses. NGOs reported one-on-one requests being the most common from UNHCR, whereas UNHCR reported that they were more likely to request formal reports.
- A critical concern is surely about lack of funding to cover what NGOs see as the full and fair cost of projects. This is specifically critical for national NGOs. We queried and found that 50% of national NGOs reported that 50% or more of their budget came from UNHCR.
- 45% of NGOs respondents feel that their cost, project management, implementation and indirect shared costs, are not fully covered by UNHCR. As a consequence, NGOs report using other funding to cover these costs. When it comes to staffing and project management they often report having to lower the quality and responsibilities of the staff that they are seeking or add additional responsibilities to cover the job to be able to get funding.
- Some recommendations from NGO and UNHCR respondents: From UNHCR, some say policies are sometimes unclear as the written language may be difficult for non-native speakers. Clarifications provided by HQ are sometimes informal and these changes of policies and requirements may cause confusion. PPA documents are also seen as complex.
- NGOs say while it is a very positive relationship, UNHCR provides 3% of funding but it takes 15% of management time. The continued improvement in the relationship seen over the years and specific components of the dynamics speak to the ability to identify challenges and work through them. Hopefully this information will contribute to the ongoing strengthening of the relationship between UNHCR and NGO partners.

#### **Rob Hurt**

- The survey was completed by most respondents in the last couple of months, so the findings are still very relevant and timely for us.
- In some ways we were comforted by the fact that it resonates with many findings and messages delivered over the past year. They are also very consistent with the messages that we were bringing to the table earlier on.
- Our overall reforms comprise 14 initiatives. While I update you on where we stand, just bear in mind that for many of these, the intention was to use 2020 as a year to create a foundation, a platform for our partners to feel the benefit of those reforms in 2021.
- A lot of the reforms are quite structural in nature. We really needed to analyze and address the root causes of many issues often reported as symptoms or indicators of a deeper issue.



- Talking about our framework for implementing with partners, we talk about 2 dimensions and 4 stages of partnership. From selection to the agreement phase, to monitoring and verification, through to closure and audit. We also talk about the strength of our system, structures, people and process, in support of those stages in the partnership cycle.
- What we were told and comes out of the survey is that there are still complaints about our process being heavy, cumbersome, bureaucratic, slow, with a huge amount of paper shuffling, with overly restrictive controls, that we are not really acting in accordance with the Principles of Partnership and that there are a number of our procedures which are not harmonized with other UN agencies, thus leading to duplication.
- These problems manifest themselves in many ways: lengthy negotiation periods and delayed signature of agreements, the length of our agreements being over 100 pages, on average delays not only on the signature of a PPA but also during the course of a partnership, complex and excessive reporting, duplicative procedures, excessive needs for amendments.
- Striking that, in 2019, on average every partnership agreement was amended 2.4 times in the course of one year. Quite a staggering high number. There is also high levels of illegitimate expenditures, not – in the majority of cases – because a partner is trying to do something wrong, but because of the complexity of how to manage a budget.
- We are not going to address issues just by taking each of the symptoms and each of the indicators one by one. We have to look at what is lying behind these and this is how we came up with a list of 14 initiatives.
- We looked at the underlying principles of what we wanted in our reforms. We wanted to focus primarily on results and not be fixated on control of inputs and management of resource but actually on what it is that we are actually accomplishing together in these partnerships. Around that, we need to ensure simplicity, cost effectiveness, be able to provide assurance to stakeholders, including donor governments.
- We need reforms that are bold but implementable in the short term. We do not want to kick the ball down the road and say we will tackle this in 2022/23.
- We need processes and systems that actually add value to project managers, who are sitting in our partner organizations perhaps in the deep field, trying to implement a health and education project. They need to feel that we are not simply imposing obstacles and burden but that we are actually indeed a partner, adding value to the work.
- On the 14 initiatives, where we stand and were hoping to be: none of the reforms are the product of simply one person or service. They require active and regular engagement with various divisions inside UNHCR. These are really transformative reforms for the way in which we work with partners, requiring active engagement from many different parts of UNHCR.
- The 14 initiatives started in January and then, of course, we were hit by COVID-19. As was mentioned in previous meetings, we saw COVID-19 not just in terms of challenges but also in terms of the opportunity that we have had, as a result of social distancing. This new operational environment led to test some of these reforms.
- The flexibility measures put in place will, in most cases, endure as durable and sustainable measures. They may not look exactly the same but you will see that all of the reforms that we have implemented will be durable and will continue in 2021 and beyond because they are very much consistent with the principles highlighted earlier.
- The first one is the partner selection process: COVID-19 flexibility measures that we put in place were a consequence of the High Commissioner declaring a global emergency, thus allowing country representatives to select partners much quicker and without going through normal procedures, which require quite an amount of work. Some of those reforms or at least some of those simplifications will continue through 2021 and beyond.
- We have also worked with other UN agencies to try and ensure that we are benefiting from each other's assessment of our partners' capacity. We learn from the work of UNICEF, WFP



and UNFPA and they can learn from us. By capturing a better profile of a partner, we are in a position to actually reduce the amount of bureaucracy and form-filling that goes into a selection process. It also means that we have better information on risk. This then may be used to lighten the requirements for some responders and maintain controls or checks where necessary. We are trying to move away from a one size fits all approach.

- We have reflected on the programming part of our systems that have been responsible for delays in signature of agreements: Because of the way our systems operate, the first time that a country operation could actually print and then sign an agreement for 2020 with the partner was in mid-December 2019. We are now hoping to be able to prepare and have draft agreements in place in our systems much earlier, so that they can be signed as soon as budget is released. This means we will be in a much better position from a systems perspective to be signing 2021 agreements earlier and hopefully we will again address one of those indicators or symptoms of a larger problem mentioned in the survey.
- Our legal affairs service has been working very hard on the need to simplify our standard agreements, to come up with a fairly radical reform of our standard partnership agreements. This comprises both simplification and reduction in the number of clauses, simplification of language, but also how we might be able to incorporate some of the standard provisions into the registration process on the partner portal. It is too early to give an indication as to exactly how radically this will reform the agreements, but it is exciting.
- Hoping that in the not too distant future we can provide a similar positive concrete feedback on work we are also undertaking to revise government partnership agreements. We have also revised the standard agreement that we have with IOM.
- We also recognized that we need more templates in our standard armory of agreements, so it is not just about simplification of template but how we might be able to create other templates to adjust to the way in which our programs and operations go.
- One of the exciting developments from the localization agenda viewpoint: we have been working on coming up with a very simple form of agreement to provide support to Refugee-Led Organizations. It will not be of great relevance to many of you but it will be for partners or potential partners at the refugee level, where they have grown up an organization from grassroots. We look at how we might be able to provide support.
- One of the biggest challenges we have had is coming to an agreement on how we share data between organizations, particularly data that is sensitive because it comes from protection interventions and assessments. We exchanged to come up with some guidance and supporting documentation to ensure there is not only a better understanding of the principles around data protection and how they apply to protection data, but also how those principles can actually be implemented when, e.g. there is a need to agree on how partnership agreement governs the way in which data is shared.
- That work has been very intensive, not been easy but thanks to all of those who are part of that task force. Guidance and documentation will now be rolled out or tested first with UNHCR colleagues in the East Africa, Horn and Great Lakes region. We are hoping to learn some lessons from that exercise but hopefully the guidance and supporting documentation will help overcome some of challenges and disagreements faced at country/office level.
- A major root cause of so many of the issues we face (in terms of delays in negotiations, complexity, number of agreements, frustration over our approach to verifications, and constantly checking finances, and input on management rather than results) comes back to the way in which budgets are developed for partnership agreements and how they are managed with COVID-19. We increased budget flexibility from 20% to 30% within an output but this is just the tip of the iceberg of how much needs to be done in this area.
- You have a slide with just one example of an agreement with a national NGO with a sizable project worth about \$8,000,000 in one year. The budget is broken down according to 7 cost

centers and below that 16 situation codes, 16 PPGs (population planning groups) and then this is broken down into 22 goals also broken down into 63 outputs.

- In the end, this partnership agreement has 458 account codes that need to be managed and one account code (634100: Communications) was used on 27 different occasions in this budget and the total value of all of those 27 lines was less than half a percent of the total budget. You can just imagine the issues that come if you have to manage that many account codes and split communication costs across 27 different accounting codes itself. This is why it is necessary to amend project agreements 2.4 times every year. We have to radically change the way in which we are budgeting.
- Colleagues working on the results based management project produced a simplified results chain to tackle some of the just mentioned issues. We are also undertaking a really fundamental review of the accounts chart, trying to reduce significantly (maybe by half) the number of different account code options available when budgets are put together. This will be of benefit to our partners (greater flexibility within the use of a particular account code as to what can be charged to that account). It should also radically reduce the need for amendments in the course of the year.
- We are considering who to take the lead on the Money Where It Counts initiative and how it could actually impact an existing project. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to pursue that further significantly. But it does not mean that we are not willing to go in that direction, especially for those INGOs which have been engaging in the initiative.
- Evident that some structural change to our accounting structure and the chart of accounts was necessary to be able to implement the Money Where It Counts initiative appropriately.
- Simplifying partner personnel rules: again one of the biggest complaints heard from partners is about the fact that the rules we put around the management of partner personnel are stricter than any other UN organization or donor. The UN Office of Internal Oversight Services has done a review of the partner personnel policy and some of you have actually fed into that. We are expecting the results within the next couple of weeks and that will provide the basis to fundamentally revise the policy in time for the 2021 agreements.
- Simplifying risk management procedures: Many of you know the acronym HACT stands for Harmonizing Approach to Cash Transfer. There are three HACT Agencies, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA. They have a harmonized approach on how they integrate risk into the design of projects with partners. We have identified how to align our procedures with those HACT Agencies. If we can bring that alignment, then we have greater opportunities to cooperate during the verification process, implementation, and joint audits after closure of projects.
- Monitoring and verification: We all acknowledge how badly we should improve monitoring and verification, do more remote-based monitoring, more real-time monitoring, and more engagement of refugees and persons of concern in that monitoring process. So, we had already identified that as an area of weakness, to tackle. That weakness has become extremely evident and has been exposed by COVID-19 and the social distancing measures that have resulted in a reduction in travel and the ability of people to conduct site visits.
- We have looked, under these extraordinary circumstances, at what good practices currently exist and where those good practices could actually be replicated. We have looked at ways in which we can improve, e.g. code based technology monitoring that is being employed in Kenya and also in Libya and how we could develop a tool for different organizations, looking at rolling it out in places like Yemen.
- We also look at how we can strengthen refugee feedback mechanisms. This is going to be work over the course of many months, an area in which we have to continue to improve over the years to come.
- Delegation of authority to fields and regions: COVID-19 flexibility measures has delegated authority to our representatives. One area that has come up in many conversations is



whether or not we should be delegating the authority to extend the implementation liquidation dates of agreements. This is traditionally a very centralized process.

- We worked with accounts colleagues in the Department of Finance and Administration to see whether we could ease our traditional process. We see a quite exciting change in approach on how we account on our projects. This will bring benefits through more flexible extension of liquidation dates but also overcome core obstacles to multi-year agreements (because of rules associated with carryover and carry forward into the next year).
- Some partners made reference to digital tools they use and the attractive point that it may eliminate, to a large extent, the need for paper-based processes during implementation. We are indeed looking at implementing a project management system that will create the badly needed interface between partner portal monitoring tools, results-based management system and feed into our ERP. There is real potential to actually go completely paperless.
- Considering that we have an average length of agreement of 100 pages and in relation to all other parameters, we find that one partner organization or host government may print about 990,000 pieces of paper annually and many of those are actually scanned and signed. To go completely paperless from that situation would be huge, not just in terms of what it means for a Greening UN but also just in terms of efficiency. So, we look at how we have been designing the project management oversight system and at related reforms to come in late 2021. This is a longer initiative but one that could really make a massive difference to the life of our program officers and budget control officers.
- In all this, we should still work to strengthen procedures on handling allegations of improper conduct by partners. We have an opportunity to better collaborate with other UN agencies, trying to develop common operating procedures and better integrate our processes.
- PSEA and Safeguarding: we have been actively engaged with a number of other UN agencies in developing a common template for assessing ability to manage the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse. The template is almost final. The idea is that the template will be used along with other UN agencies so that partners organizations are assessed twice through a much more streamlined process.
- As mentioned, if we are able to harmonize approaches with other agencies, we have the ability to implement more joint audits in the course of the year. We did some joint audits with UNICEF and UNFPA this year but we hope the number will increase next year.
- Oversight / due diligence, assurance review: We have undertaken a review of the way in which we do assurance. UNHCR tries to move away from a high level dependency on after-the-fact orders to better integrate risks and checks during the course of implementation, to actually be able to reduce the number of audits that will be conducted in the future.
- Review of financial rules on multi-year planning: We looked at the accounting rules getting in the way of more multi-year agreements. We hope that by adjusting those we will create a more conducive environment for multi-year agreements. The work that we have been doing with accounts division will hopefully address the repeated call by our partners. At the end of 2020 we may see a higher than normal number of agreements that need to be extended.
- So, most of the reforms are on track although we had to delay just a couple of these.

## Q&A

### ICVA

- From the NGO perspective we see a good alignment on understanding which underlying issues we need to work on. Also certainly when it comes to carrying forward certain pieces of work whether that is reducing paper burdens, working on the partnership form, or reducing some of the administrative burden.
- It comes down more to the timeline with which we can push these things forward.
- On the NGO side, to the extent possible, we support implementing as quickly as possible.





- Is there any guidance on how to adapt reporting (narrative and financial) to potential COVID-19 disruptions? Is there anything specific that one should keep in mind, sections or information that should be inserted in this year's reports?
- Do you see new areas of partnerships emerging between UNHCR and NGOs?

#### **Norwegian Refugee Council**

- Good to see all the progress made even in difficult circumstances.
- The DHC mentioned the Grand Bargain annual meeting and the Money Where It Counts. We also heard from the annual meeting that this was a great initiative, specifically noting the UNHCR pilot coming-up. Great that it is still on the agenda. We would be happy to pick-up this conversation and identify next steps whether it is now or even more towards year-end.
- It is also interesting to see the opportunities related to the multi-year partnerships and the blockages there. One of the comments was on testing and sharing best practices. Surely many NGOs on the call, including NRC, would love to highlight those in some countries to be able to take some learnings from the MY PPAs and see where some of blockages still exist.
- Very interesting to see the budget changes that are coming up and radical changes as you describe them. We are quite hopeful and just eager to see NGOs continue being consulted or involved in the process, to ensure that the work you are pushing forward really resonates.
- Turning to the COVID-19 issue, we see only 8% of the funding received by UNHCR passed on to NGOs, which has now increased to 16%. This is definitely going in the right direction but we would be interested to hear – besides supply purchasing and preparedness for the fall – what are some of the joint actions that we could take together to really unblock this funding and ensure that most of the \$270 million pledged or received thus far gets out to frontline NGOs, into communities, as quickly as possible. Then, as we see more funding coming in over the summer and into the fall, we can see a peak in our responses.

#### **Lutheran World Federation**

- We heard some concerns from our programs on the varying levels of engagement from Regional Bureaus, particularly in Africa, indicating that UNHCR seems to be engaging only with limited groups of NGOs.
- In January we had a discussion about possibly a message coming out to partners on information relating to the Bureaus, the technical support that we can get from that. Could we follow up on that? Is it forthcoming? It could be really helpful for our country programs to understand how they can best engage with the Bureaus.
- On the PSA self-assessment, UNICEF already has its own self-assessment. Could you clarify whether this self-assessment will be acceptable to other UN agencies?
- We thank UNHCR for showing a great example in partnership and for exchanging with us. How can we ensure this relationship continues not just at the Geneva level? How can we help you as NGOs push all this forward?

#### **Rob Hurt**

- On the Money Where It Counts, we will be in touch shortly. Apologies for the lack of communication. We are still interested in seeing how to take advantage of this initiative.
- We hear the request to be consulted on the reforms, particularly around budgeting and that is fully understood. I am quietly confident that what we have in mind is something that will greatly benefit all of our partners but I should not just make that bold assumption. There should be some consultations indeed.
- To LWF, quite right to point out that we promised to send out a communication identifying entry points in each Regional Bureau. That is something that, perhaps, we can work on with PCS and we will be able to communicate something to you shortly. We will also encourage



regional colleagues to regularly engage. Some consultations are taking place at regional level but I also hear the need to ensure all relevant actors are engaged, not just a select group.

- Good to hear appreciations for the positive attitude displayed by the High Commissioner and others. There needs to be people walking the talk at country level.
- On funding levels, the statistics are indeed from the original allocations of money. Only 8% of COVID-19 earmarked funding was allocated through to partners. Now that figure is a little bit healthier, at 16%. You would like to know how best to engage to try and increase those percentages and the speed at which allocations are made.
- Difficult to say whether we will get up to the usual allocations we would see in a normal year but the trend is in the right direction. Let's also not forget the larger picture: we have released, as of mid-June, 58% of the overall budget allocations for partners already. This is higher than in previous years. We really tried to stay true to the flexibility measures we issued by making sure we get as much money as possible to our partners, to allow for implementation of business continuity plans.
- Of the money that has been identified for partners for COVID-19 specific activities, over 70% of those allocations have been made so it is quite a high percentage.
- To ICVA, I do not have any tips on narrative reporting. At UNHCR we tried to push back on specific reporting requirements for the COVID-19 response and GHRP, on attempts to have new indicators and new things to report against. We tried to harmonize wherever possible and take advantage of existing data collection processes.
- We were worried a little while ago that the COVID-19 situation and the appeals would generate a massive amount of new work. We have managed to have some success but we can give some more thought to that with other colleagues.
- On newer partnership areas, cash will continue to be a very important form of intervention and increasingly so. Some of our partner organizations have cash programs. It was interesting at one of the Americas regional consultations to hear that some partners were able to rapidly put together some cash-based intervention modalities even under social distancing. Cash is an area where we also have our own programs, through financial service providers. Capital is certainly an area of interest and importance to all of us.
- The localization agenda, the imperative to be working with local partners has been emphasized or is being reinforced by the COVID-19 situation. We have always been committed to supporting local partners and we have hit certain targets in that respect but we want to see how much higher we can make our targets in that area.
- With the results-based management system coming online, probably subject to availability of these meetings, our colleagues might actually say whether there could be another session on the results-based management forms that we have, those being reformed and those that require we revisit our indicators and result chain to know about the population of concern. This may result in new surveys and new form of assessment around the profile of refugees.
- Again, we do not want to reinvent the wheel but to improve what already exists and also see how we can partner with other organizations similarly interested in those assessments.

#### **Ashley Augsburger**

- Concerns were voiced over the past year and were well reflected in the survey. These are also reflected in the initiatives underlined today and where they are heading towards

#### **Grainne O'Hara**

- DIP has been working very closely with Rob and all those NGOs who have expressed specific data protection concerns around proGres V4 and the sharing of protection data more broadly. This work has been ongoing for at least 2 years and it is good to know that we have now reached a point of mutual agreement to test our concerns against operational realities.