

Principles of Partnership

Recommendations from the Global Humanitarian Platform Workshop

How can the GHP Principles of Partnership help us work better together?

Bangkok 21 May 2008

Introduction

A regional Global Humanitarian Platform workshop was held in Bangkok on 21 May 2008, which brought together NGOs – both national and international – from around the region, as well as UN agency staff from Bangkok, and International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement representatives.

Overall, it was felt that there is still much work to be done in terms of getting the PoP known within organisations – both international and national – and to get them used in everyday work. There is also a need for heads of organisations to be clearer about how they see the PoP in terms of their organisational priorities. The PoP could be potentially very useful in terms of ensuring better humanitarian responses, but more work needs to be done to make them more practical and accessible. In addition, the importance of developing partnerships and relationships *before* humanitarian crises is essential to their success.

The following are some results of the workshop, which include findings about the *Principles of Partnership* (PoP), as well as suggestions on how to integrate the PoP into our daily work and to make sure they are reflected in our actions towards each other.

Application of the *Principles of Partnership*

- The ultimate aim of the *Principles of Partnership* is to provide better protection and assistance to affected populations and to save more lives by working better together. This is very important and could be stated more clearly in the wording of the *Principles* themselves.
- The PoP must be contextualized for different situations. For example, is their application in the response to natural disasters different than in conflict settings? There is a need to develop indicators that fit different contexts, and which include both quantitative and qualitative (described as intangibles) measures.

Wider Dissemination Needed

To date, there has not been adequate dissemination of the PoP within the humanitarian community. There needs to be greater dissemination and “socialization” of the PoP, which involves the following:

- ↳ better explanations of the history and background of the PoP and GHP, by perhaps including a paragraph at the beginning of the PoP explaining where they came from;
 - ↳ clearer expectations of how the PoP should be used within agencies;
 - ↳ sending out the PoP with dialogue tools and process notes describing how to carry out a dialogue to deepen understanding; and
 - ↳ identifying focal points who can answer questions, distribute materials, etc.
- Each agency subscribing to the PoP should conduct advocacy work to ensure that the *Principles* are widely known and understood by staff.
 - It is necessary to follow-up to make sure that once the PoP are known they are being used on a regular basis.

Practical Ways to Disseminate the PoP

- Further translations of the PoP must be encouraged: availability in more languages ensures a broader potential reach with the PoP. Translations are available on www.globalhumanitarianplatform.org and new translations will be posted there.
- Develop more practical tools like the “10 practical ways to use PoP”.
- Add the PoP into existing, well-known documents, such as the Sphere Handbook and the Code of Conduct. Such efforts would help to give the PoP more legitimacy and help to get them more widely distributed.
- Agencies need to internalize the *Principles* and mention them explicitly where they are being used (for example in IASC and cluster meetings). This way the practical application of the PoP will be understood by working partners. The best way to disseminate is to teach by example.

- The PoP should be included into Memorandums of Understanding and partnership agreements. Once the PoP are formally agreed in this way, it is possible to evaluate if they were used (and if they were useful) to at a later stage.

Building Relationships

We need to build relationships ahead of disasters and armed conflicts in order to be able to respond together: what could be called “sustained capacity building”. There must be a continuous work on strengthening partnerships, using the PoP as a guideline. These relationships will allow national and local NGOs to fully participate in partnership dialogues.

- Highlight the PoPs utility as a tool to explore and talk about partnership relations.
- Contingency planning process, disaster risk reduction (DRR), or response preparedness are among the ways to work together, thus creating relationships that work.
- Humanitarian principles should be included in DRR for people on the ground, even affected populations, local communities, local municipalities. This is an OCHA job, but maybe NGOs should take the initiative and push for the creation of forums to coordinate with, not be coordinated by, the UN
- Humanitarian organisations also need to look closely at “their” own preparedness and also be prepared to re-examine the assumptions they make about how they work.
- Partnership should be enhanced by building on the existing capacity of partners, as well as building the capacity of partners, which needs to be integrated into that organisation’s total institution, including fund-raising capacity.

Real Cases

As soon as we talk about a real case, the *Principles* show their importance and that they are needed and relevant. By examining each principle through the scenario of the restrictions being removed for aid workers and organisations to enter Myanmar to respond to Cyclone Nargis, the following were suggested for each principle:

- ↳ **Equality:** We need to earn respect through our actions (for all NGOs, in particular, to do)
- ↳ **Complementarity:** Develop a plan/strategy based as dividing up complementary roles, which needs to be developed ahead of time; relationships must be built and used; coordination needs to be focused around relationship, not just task lists. Complementarity must be ensured by sharing our best information, capitalizing on information exchange and knowledge by mapping networks, competencies, capacities, and agency criteria transparently and with criteria
- ↳ **Transparency:** Share information early.
- ↳ **Results-oriented approach/Responsibility:** What results will agencies commit to deliver and be accountable for? What capacities do they have? Being honest about capacities and the ability to deliver is what counts the most.
- Develop useful case studies of the PoP being used in humanitarian work on the field level. Local examples could be used along with translations to ensure the practical implications and uses of the PoP can be more easily grasped.
- Document and distribute positive and negative lessons and case studies.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- The ideal way to monitor whether the PoP of partnership is being used effectively is to adopt a middle ground between the “carrot approach” and the “stick approach”.
- We must determine the success of the PoP on whether or not more lives have been saved as a result of their use.

Follow-Up by Heads of Agency to the Field

- The heads of agency should follow-up on the recommendations from the July GHP meeting of 2007 and report back to the field on the status of their implementation.
- Six months after the 2008 meeting, there should be a similar report back to the field on the follow-up to the recommendations agreed.