Global Humanitarian Platform
Report on the Principles of Partnership
17 June 2008

Introduction

One year after the adoption of the Principles of Partnership (PoP) by members of the Global Humanitarian Platform (GHP), this document reports on the progress made in applying the PoP in our daily work. In adopting the PoP last year, the participating organisations agreed to take the lead in finding new ways of working and relating to each other. Although a real challenge, the effective distribution, dissemination, and inculcation of the PoP into our organisations is essential if we are to work better together. In this respect, the GHP has asked participants to report on the outcomes of applying the PoP.

Distribution and dissemination

Many of the participants undertook to broadcast the PoP throughout their organisations. Internal memorandums, briefings, or other explanatory messages have been used in order to raise the awareness of colleagues, especially of those in the field. Some organisations also integrated the PoP in training and staff induction materials.

Other agencies have resisted an organisation-wide broadcast. One consideration has been to avoid the image that the PoP is just another (headquarters') initiative presented to field-based colleagues, who repeatedly complain about an overload of such initiatives. It is felt that avoiding a top-down dissemination approach is critical if the PoP is to be embraced by field-based colleagues.

A number of organisations have also developed promotional materials, such as leaflets or posters. By posting these various materials on the GHP website, other organisations can use them or benefit from the ideas (see below for website). Several different language versions of the PoP are also available on this website. One NGO reported on having done a PoP briefing for the staff of a colleague NGO. Unicef also recently organised a workshop in Geneva to discuss best practices with partners in working with the PoP.

Consistent communication and mainstreaming of the PoP into general work processes is, however, a significant challenge for all organisations. ICVA's "10 Practical Ways to Use the Principles of Partnership" (*Annexe 1*) and SCHR's "Success Criteria and Indicators" (*Annexe 2*) provide some practical suggestions to help ensure that the PoP are part and parcel of everything we do together. As the SCHR notes, the PoP should become "household standards like the Sphere standards or the Code of Conduct."

The use of the PoP

The PoP have been used in various ways. One NGO reported on the use of the PoP not only in relations with the UN agencies, but also in a partnership arrangement with another NGO. It appears that there are conceptual differences in how agencies have used the PoP, which could affect overall monitoring of the progress of the PoP. A number of the reporting agencies noted that they have included the PoP in internal monitoring and evaluation tools for measuring their individual agency's performance in working with others. In this respect, two organisations added that it might be

difficult to attribute progress made in collaboration to the PoP or the GHP, as working in partnership had also been moved higher up on their own corporate agendas.

Other agencies, including OCHA, reported on using the PoP in measuring the quality of partnerships in the clusters, CERF, and general inter-agency coordination processes. Improvements have been made to cluster roll out, CERF and inter-agency coordination guidelines upon the basis of the PoP. In this context, it is clear that international NGOs use the PoP as an advocacy and accountability tool towards the UN (and donors) in order to stop or prevent practices which treat them as subordinates. It is worth noting that national and local NGOs may do the same towards their INGO partners (or funders).

Challenges and Suggested Next Steps
One of the most frequently asked questions is about the future of the GHP and PoP. Many have realised that the application of the PoP essentially requires a change in organisational behaviour, which will largely exceed the time-bound GHP process. There is a risk that the process may loose energy when agencies do not see a return on their investments.

In reporting on the PoP, a number of organisations have identified challenges and/or made suggestions on how to more forward in applying the PoP:

- all UN partnership agreements should include references to the PoP and the PoP should be applied at all stages of the negotiating process;
- the PoP are particularly relevant for decision-making in the context of humanitarian financing mechanisms, such as the CERF;
- the PoP should be made a topic and be used in all inter-agency coordination meetings at the field-level (e.g. among clusters and country teams);
- the PoP should also be used for consultations with donor governments and with affected populations.
- Some agencies have taken initiatives in developing indicators for measuring progress on the PoP. These initiatives should be shared and/or discussed in an inter-agency context.
- Joint missions (UN and non-UN) to identify good partnership practices at the field level and joint training on the PoP should be considered;
- Feedback mechanisms on the use of the PoP should be created within agencies and at an inter-agency setting.
- Much more effort should be made in including national and local NGOs in a dialogue on GHP and the PoP. When introduced to the PoP, these NGOs have expressed strong support for the PoP.

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Annexe 1- **ICVA- 10 Practical Ways to Use the Principle of Partnership (PoP)**

1. Make explicit reference and use of the PoP in all partnership agreements/memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with the UN, other NGOs, and the Red Cross/Red Crescent (RC/RC) Movement and evaluation how all parties to the agreement or MoU has adhered to the PoPs.

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

3. Ensure the PoP are part of the terms of reference/modus operandi of all coordination meetings/clusters.

4. In developing project proposals, refer to how the PoP will be used in the project's implementation.

5. In job postings, refer to the PoP and ask about candidates' views on partnership.

6. Ensure that partnership skills are an essential qualification considered when recruit and appraising staff.

7. Use the PoP to advocate for improved performance from those in other humanitarian agencies and from the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC).

8. Ensure that Common Humanitarian Action Plans (CHAPs) and Consolidated Appeals Processes (CAPs) are developed in line with the PoP and potentially refer to how the PoP will form part of the coordination efforts in the country.

9. When talking to governments and local authorities, ensure that they know you will apply the PoP in your work.

10. When talking to media, refer to partnerships and how you are carrying them out with regard to the PoP.

Preface

These success criteria and indicators are aspirational in the short term and are introduced to be concrete around what the long-term goals could look like. The immediate commitment up to GHP July 2009 is to meaningfully disseminate and incorporate the
PoP into all partnership discussions and agreements.

For those who want to take the PoPs to a higher level of accountability for each principle, the following are some concrete measurements that may prove useful:

Success Criteria

- Robust application of the PoPs in coordination mechanisms, recalled in meetings and participants reminded of their commitment to the PoPs.

- Inclusion of PoP in handbooks, (including in the next edition of the Sphere Handbook,) guidelines, annual programmes, annual reports, and other main documentation and communication.

- Inclusion of PoP in staff recruitment criteria, performance appraisals, briefings of new staff, trainings at HQ and in the field offices etc.

Indicators

- The PoP are a "household" standard like the *Sphere standards* or the *Code of Conduct*, PoP posters appear on humanitarian office walls.

- Most humanitarians know the 5 principles.

- PoPs are used to strengthen NGO and Red Cross and Red Crescent positions in negotiations with UN partners.

- PoPs are used as a basis for partnership discussions and agreements.

- Number of agencies that include partnerships in their institutional strategies.

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

Success Criteria

- Interaction is flexible and constructive and includes main operational humanitarian partners. On country level, open mechanisms are the basis rather than closed structures, and coordination is based on facilitation, not hierarchy.

- Global humanitarian financing instruments provide plurality of funding channels and do not jeopardize the principle of independence.

- PoP-based, strategic, goal-oriented, multi-year partnership is the main model on global and country-level.

- Equitable partnerships are engaged in a process of mutually defining rights and responsibilities, in relation to each partner's capacity, required to achieve the goal of the partnership.

Indicators
- Examples of flexible and facilitating mechanisms.

- The views and expertise of both UN, international organisations, NGOs and Red Cross and Red Cross Movement are considered and respected in the coordinated response.

- Percentage of goal-oriented, multi-year partnership agreements that express commitment to improve equality; and satisfaction with agreements.

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 among organizations.

Success Criteria
- Mechanisms for early consultations and early sharing of information exist, are well-known and accepted by main humanitarian actors.

- Common financial resource mechanisms have transparent and independent governance. Allocation criteria are well-understood and accepted by all, including national humanitarian actors.

Indicators
- Efficient consultations and information sharing take place on a timely basis and upon request. Information is easily accessible for all partners.

- Humanitarian actors are aware of common financial resource mechanisms and accept allocation criteria.

Result-oriented approach

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

Success Criteria
- Humanitarian organisations exchange operational information about capacities and activities, and overviews of operational mapping, overlaps, and gaps in country are provided in an effective and reliable way. Overlaps are avoided.

- Crisis-affected persons are well-informed about entitlements and services, and mechanisms for feedback and complaints exist and are safe to use.

Indicators
- Rate of implementation of commitments made in coordination meetings.

- Feedback from crisis-affected persons confirms that they are well-informed, consulted, and well-served; relevant feedback is acted upon; complaints mechanisms are known and seen as safe to use.

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, competencies, skills, and capacity to deliver on their commitments. Decisive and robust prevention of abuses committed by humanitarians must also be a constant effort.

Success Criteria
- Frank exchange on malpractice, inappropriate and wasteful response etc is encouraged and improves quality of response.

- Staff in-country is well trained for their function in relation to abuse prevention, investigation and complaints mechanisms. These exist, are safe and known throughout the humanitarian community in-country. A spirit of zero tolerance is continuously promoted.

Indicators
- Positive results of frank exchange on cases of malpractice, inappropriate and wasteful response are mentioned as lessons learnt and best practice.

- Complaints and investigation mechanisms for abuse exist, are safe for crisis-affected persons and staff and are known throughout the humanitarian community in-country.

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.

Success Criteria
- Coordination takes place based on independence of organisation, added value, comparative advantage, and complementarity. Humanitarian agencies do not speak in the name of other organisations, or on behalf of the humanitarian community, and mention name of organisation rather than "the NGOs" when specificity is needed.

- Coordination includes local and national capacity, which means that documentation and meetings are translated into local languages.

Indicators

- Coordination mechanisms (seek to) avoid overlaps and gaps

- Local and national partners feel confident enough to truly participate and contribute; capacity building involves all partners and agencies and is not viewed as something only needed by the local and national partners.