

To Humanitarian Actors in Indonesia, Zimbabwe, Panama regional hub/El Salvador)

(National and international NGOs, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, UN agencies, intergovernmental organisations)

Principles of Partnership: Working Better to Enhance Humanitarian Response

Dear Colleagues,

Last July, the heads of humanitarian organisations from the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the NGO community, IOM and the World Bank came together to discuss ways to enhance humanitarian action. The participants at the meeting agreed that one of the major stumbling blocks to an improved humanitarian response was the lack of true partnerships between the three families working in humanitarian response (NGO, RC/RC, and UN and inter-governmental organisations).

Principles of Partnership

In order to improve the way we work together, the participants of last year's meeting felt that there was a need to develop "principles of partnership" that could be agreed by the three families and that would form the basis upon which we work together. The meeting formed what is referred to as the Global Humanitarian Platform (GHP), which brings the three families together on an equal footing. The GHP was tasked with drafting principles of partnership that could be used as a basis for comparison with actual field realities and relationships.

Putting the Principles into Action

By focusing on three contexts – Indonesia, Zimbabwe, and Panama regional hub /El Salvador – we are hoping that there will be a concerted effort among humanitarian actors in each of these countries to discuss the draft principles of partnership (PoP), which are attached, and to eventually put them into practice. While the draft PoP have been endorsed, as a working document, by the Steering Committee that oversees the GHP, there is a clear understanding that the views of colleagues from the field are essential both to improve the principles, where needed, and - more importantly - to start from the reality on the ground and see how the improved principles should translate into practice.

We hope that all humanitarian actors in Indonesia, Zimbabwe, Panama/El Salvador will be able to jointly discuss the draft principles, not as an aspirational document, but as a frame for changing relationships and our ways of working to optimise humanitarian action. The hope is that we can get your concrete examples from field situations on key ways to reach a practical relationship on an equal footing, which reflects principles of partnership. We would also like your conclusions on what needs to change and how who needs to make changes so that all of us can work better together.

Your ideas, comments, and feedback are needed by 15 June. Your feedback on the draft principles will form the basis for the discussions during the first meeting of the GHP, which will take place on 11 and 12 July 2007. The meeting will bring together the heads of some 45 humanitarian organisations, as well as one representative from each of Indonesia, Zimbabwe, and Panama/El Salvador. Once there is agreement on the principles, they should be put into practice to make a difference in the way that we carry out our humanitarian operations.

Discussing the Way We Work Together and How the Principles Can Improve Our Work

Coming together at the field level to find ways to work better together is key to improving the humanitarian system. The principles are one way to focus the discussion in this context. The hope is that there will be two co-convenors in each country: one UN person designated by the RC/HC and one non-UN person. We hope that you will feedback on each of the five principles specifically, and that you will let us know when suggestions are shared by all and when views diverge (including how and by which type of actor). You may also need to reflect on who should be involved in terms of discussing the principles at various stages in the process. In order to help you with your discussions, and using the draft principles to help guide them, some questions that you may wish to consider *could* include the following:

1. What practical suggestions do you have to improve humanitarian response and access to humanitarian relief in your country of operation?
2. What are the top three things that you would like to see changed in order to improve humanitarian action in your context?
3. What else needs to change? What do you think NGOs should do differently? What do you think UN agencies should do differently? What do you think the RC/RC movement should do differently?
4. Do you find these principles relevant in the context in which you are working? If you do not find these principles relevant, what would you change about them?
5. Are there operational changes that need to be made in order to put the principles into action or to work better, generally?
6. What type of mechanism/forum/action do you see as necessary in order to eventually put principles of partnership into action?
7. What kind of “indicators of success” do you see eventually being put into place to monitor how the principles are being used?

The Long-Term Value of the Process

We hope that you will see the long-term value in discussing the principles and eventually testing them, and that they are not seen as simply another item on your long list of things to do. The principles should help ensure a shift in the way that we all work together so that we can improve our ability to carry out our humanitarian action.

For more information on the GHP, please visit **www.globalhumanitarianplatform.org**. Do not hesitate to contact any of the organisations that are part of the GHP Steering Committee.

We look forward to your input on the principles as a first step in terms of improving the way that we all work together. Please feel free to send your input (by 15 June 2007) to either of the co-chairs through the e-mail addresses below, indicating GHP in the subject line.

With best regards,

On behalf of the Steering Committee of the Global Humanitarian Platform:

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Attachments:

Principles of Partnership, Final Draft, agreed by GHP Steering Committee
GHP- An Outline