

November 11-12  
2019

# 2019 UNICEF – NGO Consultation

## Consultation Report

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For Partnership in  
Humanitarian  
Settings ‘Enhancing  
the Culture of  
Partnership’

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A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK  
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE  
HUMANITARIAN ACTION



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## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CCCs – Core Commitment for Children  
CO – Country Office  
CRC – Convention on the Rights of the Child  
CSO – Civil Society Organizations  
DAPM – Division of Analysis, Planning and Monitoring  
DoC – Duty of Care  
DRC – Danish Refugee Council  
ED – Executive Director  
EMOPS – Office of Emergency Programs  
HAC – Humanitarian Action for Children  
HLCM – High-Level Committee on Management  
HRP – Humanitarian Response Plan  
ICVA – International Council of Voluntary Agencies  
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization  
PCA – Programme Cooperation Agreement  
PoPs – Principles of Partnership  
PD – (Humanitarian) Programme Document  
PSEA – Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse  
SGDD-ASAM – Association Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants  
WV – World Vision

## Introduction

The UNICEF-NGO Consultation for Partnership in Humanitarian Settings ‘Enhancing the Culture of Partnership’ took place in Geneva on 11-12 November 2019. This Consultation was the first one in a number of years and came as result of the acknowledgement by both UNICEF and NGOs that more regular exchanges are needed to enable a partnership fit to respond to the challenges faced by children in today’s humanitarian landscape. Jointly organized by UNICEF and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), it built on a number of previous initiatives, including a [scoping study](#) undertaken by ICVA which explores some of the strengths and challenges of partnership.

The Consultation was opened by **ICVA Executive Director (ED), Ignacio Packer** and **UNICEF Director, Office of Emergency Programs (EMOPS), Manuel Fontaine**. ICVA ED elaborated, among others, on the main findings of the scoping study. He underlined that the current Consultation was an excellent opportunity to address some of the challenges identified in the study. UNICEF EMOPS Director emphasised on the importance of the partnership with NGOs and UNICEF’s commitment to get it right for the sake of the children.

## Session 1: UNICEF Looking Forward: Challenges and Opportunities in Humanitarian Settings

The first session of the Consultation consisted of an exchange between UNICEF and NGOs on UNICEF priorities in humanitarian settings. **Manuel Fontaine, UNICEF EMOPS Director** highlighted in his [presentation](#) that today slightly over 50% of the agency’s funds go directly to humanitarian action. UNICEF responds to over 300 humanitarian situations per year on average, working with partners and governments to build community resilience, prepare and recover from emergencies. UNICEF EMOPS Director referred to the [Core Commitments for Children](#) (CCCs), which are UNICEF’s central humanitarian framework to uphold the rights of children affected by humanitarian crisis. Reflecting the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocols, the CCCs provide the framework for UNICEF engagement with partners. Manuel Fontaine also explained how UNICEF’s decentralized approach is one of its comparative advantage. He referred to supplies as being a major component of both preparedness and response, acknowledging, however, that for UNICEF, human resources are the real key to the quality of intervention. Most of the emergency personnel deployed in 2018 was composed of standby partners and out of the 1,403 civil society partnerships concluded at country level in 2018, 67 % were with national partners. In terms of priorities, Manuel Fontaine highlighted the need for UNICEF to be more predictable, more principled in advocacy and action, more focused on quality, more equitable and accountable, better prepared – and a better partner overall.

The second speaker, **Steven Lauwerier (UNICEF)** elaborated on the [UNICEF Humanitarian Review Process](#) and how some challenges were being addressed through this process. Exploring the extensive desk review on partnership, he detailed the preliminary “barriers” and potential “enablers” in UNICEF humanitarian action. Lastly, he highlighted four key challenges UNICEF’s and NGOs’ humanitarian responses will face in the upcoming five years: increase in number of protracted crises; spread of public health emergencies; climate change and large-scale migration/displacement. UNICEF has identified some of the areas where it could improve its humanitarian intervention, as per feedback received during the review process, which include cooperation with international actors, localisation and engagement with affected populations, the Nexus between humanitarian and development, advocacy, human resources as well technology and innovation.

After the presentations, the participants had the possibility to discuss a number of issues, such as the humanitarian review process and how NGOs can further contribute to it; how UNICEF defines its role at the country level; UNICEF's knowledge of its partners and its commitment to invest in their institutional development, also in terms of human resources; UNICEF's support to partners in risk management; the commitments to humanitarian principles UNICEF is making while extending partnerships are with the private sector; how UNICEF plans to change its rather expensive operating model, etc.

At the end of the session Manuel Fontaine emphasized several important take-aways for UNICEF including:

- Need to become more agile and further clarify its country level role, while recognising that it may vary from country to country;
- Need to promote a new partnership culture: The diversity in approaches makes partnership effective, but if analyses and agendas are not shared, organizations might be working against each other, thus hindering humanitarian effectiveness;
- Need to address donor conditionalities: UNICEF needs to avoid transferring risks to NGO partners. What needs to be transferred is readiness, support and preparedness;
- Need to avoid unnecessary layers: Only 2% of the humanitarian funds UNICEF received in 2018 were unearmarked and/or longer term, whilst 7% was partially flexible but allocated to a specific region or similar. More than 90% is marked for a particular project, at a particular time, and attached to conditionalities. Together, we need to be mindful of the conditions of our joint funding and partnership;
- Need for change of paradigm: Nowadays, humanitarians often have to compensate for development failures. Preferably, development funding needs to come in earlier and faster, which would allow for more flexibility, better absorption of humanitarian shocks and ultimately, better reflect the situation at the community level.

## Session 2: Revised Core Commitments for Children (CCCs) in Humanitarian Action

The second session was dedicated to the review of the CCCs. **Carole Vignaud from UNICEF**, added to Manuel Fontaine's point about the importance of the CCCs, by defining them as [UNICEF's internal document](#) of core accountability and obligations for humanitarian action. She then elaborated on the need to revise the CCCs as they date back to 2010 and clarified the established review process while also discussing some of the content of the CCCs and illustrating the changes to be brought. Furthermore, she outlined how this document should be the primary resource for all organizations to use systematically when discussing projects and Programme Cooperation Agreements (PCAs). She presented this document as an advocacy and communication tool aimed at being used with governments, the private sector as well as NGOs. This should be a standard upheld by all countries and all teams, regardless of whether there is a crisis.

**Costanza Tognini (Save the Children UK)** facilitated a short Q&A session where NGOs had opportunity to better understand how the CCCs relate to their partnership with UNICEF and more broadly to their work on the ground. Participants were then divided in five working groups to look at specific subjects related to the CCCs, i.e. principled humanitarian action, programme commitments, operational commitments, partnership and roll out. Participants suggested to UNICEF to take into account the following points in the revision of CCCs and their roll out:

## Recommendations

### On Principled Humanitarian Action

- Strengthen mechanisms for development of Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) joint advocacy messages;
- Strengthen humanitarian advocacy: UNICEF should be more proactive in advocacy, covering the prevention of child rights violations, pursuing perpetrators and promoting access to justice for children. Advocacy should more consistently become a programme component;
- Invest in partnership to enable being bolder in advocacy both in influencing donors and governments.

### On Programme Commitments

- Extend the leadership part to go beyond the cluster system approach as clusters do not exist in preparedness and phase out in post crisis;
- Refer to skills for partnership management as a requirement for leadership. UNICEF needs more staff wholly dedicated to partnerships, particularly at country level;
- Refer to advocacy as a program area: make a distinction between State's requirements and needs for children;
- Ensure an inter-sectorial approach: specify what each UNICEF staff needs to know despite its programmatic area of work.

### On Operational Commitments

- Invest in standardized systems for partners as well as transparent and simplified procedures;
- Ensure more timely supply for delivery on the ground;
- Improve security for those on the field;
- Increase budget available to hire specialized staff. This will allow long-term improvement not just short-term crisis help.

### On Partnership

- Clarify what are the required documents for partnership agreements. Otherwise the 15-day deadline becomes difficult to meet;
- Specify if and how the Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) are reflected in the CCCs as they can change programme design;
- Make sure this part goes beyond emergency response (Syria, for example, is now already beyond emergency funding) and provide some guidance on how to maintain qualified staff. Also, reflect the fact that NGOs may need to cover the gap in between project cycles in terms of funding.

### On Rollout

- Highlight clearly what is new in the CCC's;
- Invest in raising awareness on CCC through clusters as well as different regional and global networks;
- Organize roll out sessions for every UNICEF country office (CO), open to NGOs as well.

## Session 3: The Principles of Partnership (PoPs) as the Framework of a Renewed Engagement

The third session was dedicated to the culture of [partnership](#). **Virginie Lefèvre from AMEL**, a national organisation in Lebanon, started the panel discussion by briefly describing the work of her organisation and the context of their work in Lebanon before moving on to the collaboration with UNICEF. She recognised UNICEF's strong commitment to the localisation agenda in Lebanon but added that such commitments are not always reflected when it comes to resources and budget, calling for more efforts to work in complementarity and not in competition. She then stressed the principle of equality, outlining that in Lebanon, UNICEF is holding consultations with partners and they help strengthening a healthy partnership culture. However, she also recognised that it is difficult to have an equal relationship when one party has the money and the other party is asking for it. She shared her concerns that NGOs are often named and treated as implementing partners, yet, they generally have a much better knowledge of the situation and understanding how to address it. She called upon UNICEF to recognize NGOs as more equal partners and work jointly with them to build and implement responses.

**Colin Rogers (Plan International)** also outlined his organization's partnership with UNICEF and how it was perceived by various CO colleagues. He referred to the PoPs as a strong framework to build upon, yet also highlighted the need for mutual accountability mechanisms, which would give partners the opportunity to raise issues of concern and ensure quality and transparency. Generally speaking, Plan International perceives partnership with UNICEF as highly positive. However, concerns also exist and Colin Rogers shared how surprised he had been to hear that some colleagues at the country level would be hesitant to share challenges, fearing a negative impact on their daily operations and budget. He stressed that in some countries the partnership is based on strong power imbalances: UNICEF has the required budget and a team of internationals in place, while on the side of NGOs, it is often the national staff leading the negotiations. Plan International staff has already felt the pressure to accept even when the fixed targets are not realistic and disproportional to the resources available. Consequently, this inequality affects the partnership throughout the implementation, hindering the establishment of trust and the delivery of results for children and their communities. According to Plan International experiences, their partnership is more in accordance with the PoPs when budgets are shared, as for example in co-leading clusters or other multi-agency fora.

**Luc Chavin (UNICEF)** also based his [presentation](#) on the PoPs recognising that there is no doubt that UNICEF partnership practices are not always in line with the [Principles](#). He highlighted some of the areas where, internally, UNICEF thinks it has strengths in terms of partnership, such as the work with a diversity of local and national NGOs, local and national authorities as well as community groups, including children and youth. He continued by mentioning some of the reasons UNICEF has identified internally for the existence of challenges in the partnership, such as culture and the architectural structure of the organisation, which can often be heavy, bureaucratic and fragmented. He also highlighted that the organisation was trying to address some of these elements, including the organisational culture but that time was required and that events like this were extremely useful to keep the moment and bring positive change.

The rich panellists' discussions were followed by a short session of Q&A. One of its focus was the role of UNICEF in advocacy, which goes beyond the PoPs and touches on the role of UNICEF in the positioning *vis a vis* the government and the agency's priorities in campaigning and advocacy. Participants suggested for UNICEF to:

## Recommendations

### Group 1:

- Invest in accountability mechanisms with one option being to include indicators on management of partnerships with NGOs in performance review of staff;
- Break the power barrier by strong and long-term leadership commitment on PoPs.

### Group 2:

- Extend the joint partnership review in all countries, which has proven to work well in those countries in which it is already applied;
- Invest in building trust and accountability with mutual investments in reinforcing attitudes and behaviours.

### Group 3:

- Create an open space for discussion of more programmatic issues and have a dedicated staff at UNICEF to take care of processes and guidelines;
- Strengthen the culture of recognition for the work of partners: consider how to adjust UNICEF regulations on visibility and utilisation of logos to be better aligned with the PoPs.

### Group 4:

- Build on existing forms of dialogue, including talking about the two-sided needs from both parties;
- Invest in sharing responsibility by coming up with the right tools and approaches.

### Group 5:

- Invest in adequate communication throughout the process. If we look at the needs of children, we can have a better and more respectful communication that is comfortable for everyone and also realistic;
- Ensure coherence as there should not be different interpretations governing the different COs or depending on the staff in charge.



Participation in  
small group  
discussion



## Session 4: Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

The session began with **Anne Attard (UNICEF)**, who spoke about [UNICEF's work on PSEA](#) and [PSEA assessment for partners](#). She described PSEA corporate work at a glance by outlining how it involves a cultural change, the creation of a common inter-agency tool and a PSEA portal with policy guidance and good practices. She further explained some of the key features of the assessment procedure for PSEA and how it will work in practice with the assessment being required for all partner civil society organisations (CSOs) and to be conducted by UNICEF or a contractor together with the partner. The assessment covers six areas which are aligned across the UN Agencies. Likewise, this means that no partner organization will have to do the PSEA assessment more than once and it will be valid for five years. Another tool developed by UNICEF is the PSEA Toolkit which includes many of the basics that CSO partners need in order to put in place the required PSEA policies. Both of the Toolkit and the Assessment tool are still in draft mode.

The next speaker was **Mohamad Mansour from ABAAD**, a local NGO in Lebanon. He spoke about the work of ABAAD in PSEA, including its involvement in developing the PSEA and SGBV policy on behalf of the government and reviewing the existing policies and their implementation, with the help of UNICEF. He spoke about how at the organizational level, challenges are still faced in putting the right policies in place to identify and respond to SEA incidents, emphasizing also on the lack of financial and technical/HR capacity to respond and investigate SEA incidents. He highlighted the need to raise better awareness with partners and affected populations on what services can be provided to assault or harassment victims and how to report incidents. He concluded by stating that despite the improvements at global level, more attention is needed to support PSEA work on the ground.

The last panellist, **Elysia Nisan (World Vision/WV)** shared some of the concerns referred to by Mohamed. She highlighted how many agencies, including WV, have progressed in developing various PSEA tools regarding safeguarding, while efforts to address organizational culture remain in initial stages. She welcomed tools such as the one presented by UNICEF and emphasised that it is important that such tools take into account the existing policies and tools CSO partners have and do not replace them for the sake of compliance. She briefly explained the WV safeguarding system and also elaborated on collaboration with UNICEF on PSEA, referring among others to a real-life example from the field where the collaboration on PSEA proved to be challenging. Case management of reported allegations was outlined by her as a remaining challenge, especially in cases where volunteers were allegedly involved. Often, they come from affected populations and can sometimes be the ones behind misconduct, including acts of SEA.

After these three presentations, there was a Q&A session, where the discussion focused, inter alia, on how to focus on organizational culture; how to fully address PSEA particularly in countries where the government is not supporting efforts; how to better protect whistle-blowers and provide the necessary support and protection to victims. Many of these points were also further discussed in the working groups, which considered the challenges faced in progressing on the PSEA agenda, also within the partnership with UNICEF, and how the UNICEF-NGO partnership can support in addressing the challenges. The take-aways include:

## Recommendations

### Group 1

- Focus joint efforts to address power dynamics: we need to jointly create an environment where people feel encouraged to report and protected during the process. The culture around SEA still needs to change;
- Think together on solutions regarding resources: many organizations do not have appropriate HR/funding to put PSEA systems into place;
- Invest further in getting leadership engagement: senior leaders should embrace PSEA as a core issue in the organization, and not just another box to tick.

### Group 2

- Devote joint thinking and resources on data protection issues;
- Continue investing in awareness around PSEA focal points, particularly when reporting across agencies;
- Seek harmonization on PSEA initiatives among the various UN Agencies but also with donors (*i.e.* on PSEA assessment there are several processes being carried out, like the DFID one, which is already completed by many NGOs).

### Group 3

- Ensure adequate resources and joint efforts are invested in prevention;
- Avoid a retaliation approach: if an organisation recognises that it is investigating on reported PSEA cases, the organisation should not face any risks of funds and support being cut;
- Develop a strategy to support partners that do not have PSEA capacity, including plans to enhance PSEA shared capacities for partners at country and regional level;
- Reflect on how best to ensure that former staff does not offend again in other organizations; it requires finding a delicate balance between data protection and due process' considerations with prevention interests.

### Group 4

- Prioritise national NGOs in the rollout of assessment and start it from the local level;
- Support NGO partners to develop PSEA capacities when they score low in the assessment. It is very positive that the toolkit is available, but in itself is not enough to deal with the real cases. For instance, the multiagency investment in investigators needs to be made more accessible for NGOs;
- Support NGO partners to enhance their human resources (HR) capacities, especially in national and local NGOs as HR play a key role in PSEA.

### Group 5

- Invest jointly in advocacy towards national authorities in fragile and volatile contexts as they are not always involved in PSEA work;
- Further clarify who are the UNICEF PSEA focal points at country level, what are their responsibilities and what support NGOs can get from them.

## Session 5: New Initiatives and Opportunities in the Operationalization of Partnerships

**Frankie Chen (UNICEF)** began the first session of the second day by [presenting the March 2019 internal report](#), which sets out to review the partnerships agreements between UNICEF and NGOs and details recommendations for the better promotion of such partnerships. He also explained key changes to the CSO procedures, such as moving to online systems, the development of the UN Partner Portal, linked with WFP and UNHCR, and an extended length of the maximum duration of the Humanitarian Programme Document. He went into detail about the UN Partner portal, illustrating that partnership opportunities are available on the portal and that the portal is a place for CSOs to post and for UNICEF to answer and begin understanding the issues raised by CSOs. He referred to the draft [Guidance for CSOs on partnership with UNICEF](#), which was expected to further clarify some of the procedures and on which NGO participants were encouraged to comment. He concluded by outlining that UNICEF needs to receive feedback from NGOs on how to improve partnerships.

The second panellist for this session was **Ibrahim Kavlak from SGDD-ASAM** (Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants), Turkey. He discussed the details of the work of ASAM as a major partner of all UN agencies present in the country. He referred to the 1,100,000 Syrian children living in Turkey and how the partnership with UNICEF has enabled ASAM to assist more than 500'000 children with services, such as community-based child protection, including sustained psychosocial support, youth empowerment, family centres and services for children with disabilities. The primary goal of this agreement is to create a protective environment, focusing on unaccompanied children, addressing child marriage, child labour and children on the move. He concluded his presentation by setting out some recommendations on how to improve the PCA agreements based on the experience of partnership in Turkey: UNICEF needs to invest in more longer-term projects in order to avoid NGO staff turnover and financial problems in between projects by the NGO, there is a general need for more effective coordination for co-sharing offices costs and for more joint advocacy between NGOs and UNICEF.

**Sarah Badju (OXFAM)** concluded the fourth session by talking about the UN contract harmonisation work, which stems from the Grand Bargain commitments on harmonization and simplification. She emphasized that because of the wider systematic problems, some of the issues identified by the Consultation are not just 'UNICEF issue' – they are common to NGO partnerships with other UN Agencies as well. This is why a number of NGOs, under the coordination of ICVA, engaged in the analysis and comparison of the partnership agreements of five UN Agencies. Some of the concerns identified include unclear guidelines on misconduct and SEA, issues with reporting such as quantity of requirements and frequency of reporting, little value in the partnership as compared to time and money spent on reporting and evaluation, lack of proper financial management and the safety of data.

After the panellists' presentations, questions from participants covered issues such as what can be some of the quick wins in operationalising the partnership; what are UNICEF commitments and progress in providing multi-year funding; how does UNICEF navigate situations where a government might ask UNICEF to support its capacity development while contemporarily shrinking space for NGOs; what is UNICEF advocacy work on the rights of refugees and other people on the move; what was the response by the UN Agencies and, specifically, UNICEF to the analysis done by the NGOs, etc.

In answering several of the questions, Frankie Chen referred to the humanitarian programme document (PD), intended to be used after the humanitarian response in rapid deterioration, with a current validity of 12 months. After the 12-month response and if there is still a situation on the ground, there is a chance to sign the regular programme document, whose validity is extended to 5

years. Thus, there is a possibility for multi-year funding, but only if UNICEF has a Fund Reservation in the system, and this fund is available at least near the end of the partnership agreement. The need for more multi-year funding was recognised, as this is far from being the norm currently. Regarding quick wins, he expressed that the Reporting Portal is an improvement in the PCA process. This is a quick win - it says when the PD is signed, when the program should start, etc. Another project is digital collaboration for the programme document aimed at tracking comments and inputs for both parties.

Sarah Badju elaborated on the response by the UN Agencies highlighting the positive answers by UNHCR which had already addressed some of the concerns shared, while this was not yet the case with UNICEF. Ibrahim Kavlak also answered some of the questions on advocacy and linked them to the need for better data, as without them programme and advocacy cannot target those most in need or the real issues faced. He also acknowledged the need to invest in proper data collection and protection and joint advocacy towards donors and governments on these points. Group work followed this discussion, with each of the groups looking at specific issues and with recommendations to UNICEF summarised as per below:

## Recommendations and Conclusions

### **Group 1: On processes around the signing of PCA**

- Clarify further timelines and how they are measured; sometimes it takes too long to negotiate and get the funds;
- Streamline: After signing the PCA, sometimes NGOs do not get approvals for a certain activity when they need to adjust, which negatively impacts the programme. This needs to be streamlined;
- Better specify the responsibility sharing between CO and sub-offices for projects implemented in a given location where there is a sub-office.

### **Group 2: On reporting obligations**

- Reduce reporting obligations;
- Clarify reporting modalities and make sure partners are properly involved from the beginning, in order to ensure there is no misunderstanding about the reporting obligations;
- Harmonize and streamline as much as possible various processes, as it is a time-consuming and a financial burden on CSOs to report that often as required by UNICEF.

### **Group 3: On budgeting and financial management**

- Expedite release of funding for 'life savings' interventions'. Determine jointly with NGOs what 'life savings interventions' entail.
- Increase the flexibility in funding commitments, e.g. allow for pre-financing from NGOs, eligible to reimbursement later;
- Harmonize with other UN agencies and follow existing best practice on issues such as overhead costs, cost-sharing and national staff salaries - there are too many discrepancies over what is allowed.

### **Group 4: On communication in addressing challenges to partnership**

- Specify the content and format of the information UNICEF has to share with NGOs: currently it is only clear what information NGOs have to share but not the other way around;
- Clarify who are the focal points at UNICEF - whether in COs, ROs or HQ - where NGOs can report and seek support for issues impacting delivery such as embargo's, sanctions, counter-terrorism legislation, etc., especially for national NGOs;

- Enhance transparency on UNICEF commitments in the Grand Bargain and IASC and what do they mean for the requirements to partners;
- Make the use of the e-tools mandatory for all COs and ROs;
- Provide training/ in-country briefings on the UN Portal to all partners;
- Mainstream partnership tools alongside the Emergency Preparedness Platform and Emergency Procedures.

#### Group 5: On data protection and intellectual property

- Map data protection risks and what can be done to mitigate such risks;
- Identify clearly who is responsible for data protection;
- Acknowledge that data protection goes beyond PSEA and safeguarding and invest and support partners to adequately protect also programmatic data;
- Harmonise the different policies and procedures on data protection with other UN Agencies following the best existing standards;
- Advocate towards donors on the importance of data protection. We need to consider jointly, if in extreme cases, when we are not able to duly protect them, we should stop collecting data.



Recommendations coming first-hand from NGO's attending the consultation

## Session 6: Duty of Care (DoC)

This session began with **Lauren Cheshire (UNICEF)** who described how UNICEF is attempting to create a “healthy, safe, and respectful working environment”. Work has been initiated by the [High-Level Committee on Management \(HLCM\)](#) on developing new mechanisms and practices to support staff, provide resources and training for all staff, non-staff and volunteers, from pre-deployment/hire, through deployment and post-deployment. In the new CCCs, DoC will also be a major point and will be rolled into the Occupational Health and Safety Forum. She highlighted five major principles that arise from DoC in UNICEF which are: risk awareness and transparency, safe and healthy working and living environment, inclusion and respect for dignity, consequences of risk and accountability at all levels.

The second panellist to speak in this session was **Stephan Maurer from the Danish Refugee Council (DRC)** who outlined DRC's investment on DoC following a staff kidnapping in Somalia. He revealed how the incident showed that DRC was not ready for security risks, however, since then, much work has been done to care for staff. The organization worked on implementing protocols following the emergency, such as a security/risk map for all countries where DRC operates, ranking through different risk markers and granting rankings accordingly. There is also a mandatory security training for high risk areas, and, even after attending the training, staff can choose not to go. There are still issues such as the need to have more specialized and technical staff dedicated to risk and funding is

still short for DoC. He also highlighted an important issue: you cannot apply cost-effectiveness to DoC as any investment less than what is required threatens staff.

The last panellist was **Bob Jones, of the South Sudan NGO Forum (SSNF)**, who detailed insights of [DoC in South Sudan](#). He highlighted that with incidents on the rise, most staff who are attacked are nationals and discussed some ways that the UN can get involved to prevent and deal with emergency conflicts. The SSNF and the UN are currently working on safety standards and standardizing costs. There are, however, also other ways in which the UN is involved: through the creation of a large investment by UN in security management logistics and health insurance for national staff of NGOs and the creation of a space for NGOs to find pragmatic ways to stay and deliver results in situations of conflict or emergency. He concluded his presentation by giving suggestions of how to improve DoC within the humanitarian sector. These recommendations include developing unified NGO and UN security costing positions, engaging in frank conversations about acceptable risk and advocating jointly around the conditions NGO partners are dealing with.

The participants were engaged in the topic and asked many questions such as on how to budget for unforeseen security costs; role of UNDSS, the accountability framework and acceptable risk; what can be done to get more management support for DoC; whether there is a need for plans on evacuation of national staff and their families; how to balance management responsibility with staff individual safety responsibility; how to weave local knowledge into training; etc.

In answering the questions, Lauren Cheshire discussed how UNICEF HLCM is working on a one week-long course centred around “working in high risk environments” that will be taught to managers going into these areas. Bob Jones reacted to the question regarding protection of national staff. He highlighted the situation in South Sudan, where national staff usually live away from Juba, which is actually safer. Stephan Maurer responded to the questions of management and weaving local knowledge into training. He emphasised that for DRC there are now clearer management responsibilities on DoC and this helps move the agenda forward. He responded to the second question of weaving local knowledge by expressing that staff come from different regions, and regardless of where they are from, they still need training. The working groups that followed provided the recommendations as per below to UNICEF:

## Recommendations

### Group 1

- Provide guidance and lead in the area of DoC. For NGOs, high level opportunities to discuss DoC are rare, so they are always very welcome;
- Support NGOs in following up, also in the longer term, on DoC issues;
- Lead discussions in the HCT and bilaterally with other UN agencies on harmonized costs. Due to different agencies underselling each other, it is becoming more important to look beyond security into a DoC bucket of costs;
- Record successful risk-sharing or other DoC best practices for reference.

### Group 2

- Internalize what DoC is. A participant of the group presented the case where an Oxfam volunteer was murdered in a refugee camp, but the NGO did not have a chance to reach out to the family due to security concerns for them. The incident was registered to the UN system. A letter was sent to the UN agencies asking if they could provide psycho-social support to the family as Oxfam was unable to do so;

- Develop training for partners and their own teams and provide a wellbeing package for partners; discuss less about national staff salary and more about services and wellbeing;
- Enhance support to NGOs on DoC: on occasions NGOs and CSO are treated poorly when asking for assistance;
- Promote DoC to be a standing item during discussions with the partners;
- Do not send partners to the field if UNICEF cannot send its own staff. Make this position public and visible.

### **Group 3**

- Raise awareness with donors of the needs to invest in DoC for staff, particularly in hardship postings;
- Include coverage of mental health and wellbeing and DoC in staff costs in the NGO partnerships;
- Pay particular attention to and support local NGO partnership, as they have weaker capacity for DoC than larger INGOs. Between INGOs and NNGOs, the capacity to implement DoC is different, thus there is a need to take that into account;
- Be a lead advocate within the HCT in granting secure access to partners on the ground;
- Ascertain that implementing partners receive the right information regarding security and issues on the ground, because UNDSS has its weaknesses.;
- Internalize and mainstream DoC on all levels of UNICEF.

### **Group 4**

- Broaden understanding of DoC: DoC is not only about security issues, but also about Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS). A good example can be found in Syria, where there is a shared hotline to help and support staff;
- Advocate for higher flexibility in security budgets with donors. When operating in high-risk contexts, NGOs should be able to adapt their programmes, which may lead to higher security costs;
- Collaborate closer: UNICEF should collaborate closer with NGOs on comprehensive security and evacuation plans;
- Ensure different and flexible methods of payment could be implemented, e.g. in volatile situations such as the cash freezes in Lebanon;
- Develop insurance scheme for national staff working in high-risk zones.

### **Group 5**

- Establish a budget lines within the PCA that covers training, particularly security training, risk mitigation and equipment;
- Develop enhanced preparedness measures for evacuation and prioritize also the protection of national and other at-risk staff. (consider e.g. ethnicity, gender, and other factors which may lead to further risks for local staff);
- Develop security training for staff, which should include simulation activities of real-life practices to improve preparedness;
- Provide MHPSS training to staff, e.g. psychological first aid;
- Engage in trainings on the inter-agency level and coordinate these with all actors, particularly local NGOs. This would avoid duplication and systematize preparedness measures.

## Session 7: Localization

The final session of the consultation was opened by **Damien Noma Eloundou (Respect Cameroon)**. He highlighted the Cameroon Humanitarian Initiative Network by sharing some of their major accomplishments, such as having five regional representations in the country and containing over 100 CSO members. He also expressed the success surrounding localization within Cameroon by sharing the 2016 donor commitment to remove barriers that prevent organizations and donors from partnering with national organizations and responders, their support of national coordination mechanisms, and their inclusion of national responders and organizations in cooperation mechanisms. He then spoke about how often the challenges experienced in partnership with UNICEF are not due to the procedures of UNICEF, but rather because of UNICEF staff. He referred to some situations of conflict of interest and malpractices reported on UNICEF staff. He concluded his presentation by giving many recommendations for improvements including more multi-year and flexible funding, more prominent UN support for coordination systems such as NGO fora, more support towards the office of OCHA and an increase in accountability and management capacity. He stated his belief that localization will only be fully successful once local actors are considered equal partners and their capacity to respond before international assistance is needed, has been built.

The second speaker of the session was **Fiona Gall from ACBAR**. She discussed how there are sometimes tensions between national and international NGOs, and as a mixed forum, ACBAR navigates these challenges and seeks that NGOs work in complementarity, not in competition. She further stated that it is apparent that the playing field is not equal and that INGOs and UN need to ask themselves “when are we leaving”. She also added that ideally NGOs should meaningfully co-lead with the UN, following the example existing in Afghanistan where INGOs twin with NNGOs to train them on due diligence. She suggested that UNICEF should strengthen advocacy with donors and function as a platform for others. She concluded her intervention by highlighting the importance of having national NGOs be connected and working alongside UNICEF in all discussions.

The final panellist in the localization session was **Michael Copland (UNICEF)** who presented an [UNICEF study on localization](#), based on findings from South Sudan, Niger and Lebanon. Localization is important for UNICEF, but what does it concretely mean for the organization? Through his presentation he revealed that it means building capacity of local organizations and explained that UNICEF does not always do this directly, but works with international NGOs, which then carry this downstream. He focussed on four specific areas: partnerships, capacity development, coordination and leadership. Within the topic of partnerships, he discussed direct partnerships with local governments and local CSOs at the decentralized level being dependent on country dynamics. He also mentioned that if one wants to increase participation, it has to be done through improved partnerships with local civil societies. For capacity development, he pointed out that investing in internal systems enables CSO to scale up very quickly in emergencies. Within coordination and leadership, he illustrated how local actors are involved in humanitarian coordination structures led by UNICEF.

Participants then asked whether there any standard capacity assessment tool for local partners; how needs are identified, especially funding needs of partners; what is UNICEF definition of localisation etc. The panellists responded to the question about the assessment around funding by explaining that the assessment is the Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) compliance check, which is used to reveal where local actors do not have funding or capacity and where UNICEF can come in to fill the gap. The panellists also recognized that there might be major tensions between local NGOs and government, but these tensions can also be an opportunity to strengthen collaboration with the government. The participants were then divided in five working group considering each a specific topic linked to localisation. The recommendations are summarised as below:



## Recommendations

### **Group 1: How can UNICEF further improve ongoing work on localization?**

- Support the capacity strengthening of local NGOs through the establishment of a long-term strategic plan which envisages extensive consultations with partners on needs on the ground;
- Adapt or create a global framework for localization, in consultation with partners;
- Create an enabling and capacity building environment that is context specific;
- Design initiatives to compensate for the loss of staff due to “poaching” approaches of UN agencies with local trained staff.

### **Group 2: How can UNICEF, INGOs and NNGOs work better together to ensure stronger participation of affected people, including children, in their joint programs?**

- Develop a model that can be adapted to various contexts as a framework for change;
- Share information with local NGOs, engage more with local organizations to understand what needs are acute;
- Improve and strengthen advocacy among UNICEF, NGOs and local communities;
- Foster empathy and further engagement with local population and children;
- Provide training to local staff as there is a lack of preparation in the field on how to engage with children.

### **Group 3: How can the partnership with UNICEF contribute to joint learning, development and enhancement of skills and knowledge?**

- Assess the capacity of local actors in different contexts from a local and not a donor perspective (acute emergencies, post-emergencies, development, etc.) and in particular in the transition from acute emergency to development;
- Switch the donor driven assessment, i.e. the HAC, to locally driven capacity development;
- Emphasize mutual learning: local organizations who are strong in an area may be able to train others local NGOs, or even IOs or INGOs;
- Build trust: When there is a distrust between governments, UN and NGOs, the clusters could be a good place to exchange and build trust.

### **Group 4: How can UNICEF and international NGOs better support fundraising and fund management capacities of local and national NGOs?**

- Analyze funding competition between INGOs and UNICEF, while paying attention to local needs;
- Strengthen institutional capacity through the development of a management fund;
- Implement capacity building into HRPs;
- Help partners raise funds locally.

### **Group 5: How can UNICEF and international NGOs better support national INGOs to have a voice in decision-making processes in country, but also at regional and global level?**

- Ensure that national NGOs are represented in relevant conferences and forums at the global level, when specific crises are being discussed, as they better represent the situation on the ground, but also represent the relevant partnerships;
- Make sure local NGOs have a voice in HRPs launches and cluster systems. When absent, inquire into the reasons and barriers why not. UNICEF can help create more space;
- Use privileged relationship with governments to bring NNGOs, LINGOs, INGOs and UN agencies together and lessen tensions.

## Conclusions and next steps

Both participants from UNICEF and NGOs appreciated the two days discussions as open and constructive. The consultations did not only contribute positively to trust building and enhancement of partnership culture but also provided for many concrete recommendations destined to improve joint results on the ground.

UNICEF committed to seriously consider all the recommendation coming out of this consultation. Because of the diversity of topics covered and the number of recommendations suggested, UNICEF will identify the ones it will commit to. Through an ICVA facilitated platform, UNICEF will share with NGOs how it plans to work towards implementation of selected recommendations in partnership with NGOs. It will clarify some of the processes and timeframes required. ICVA will continue to liaise with UNICEF and ensure NGOs are regularly informed on progress. Similar consultations will take place on regular basis with the periodicity and the next location still to be defined.

## Annexes

### List of participants

ABAAD- Resource Center for Gender Equallity	Mohamad Mansour
ACBAR	Fiona Gall
Action Contre la Faim	Nicolas Govaert
Amel Association International	Virginie Lefevre
American Near East Refugee Aid (Anera)	Samar El Yassir
Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM)	İbrahim Vurgun Kavlak
AVSI	Carolina Jaman
Bishop Gassis Relief and Rescue Foundation (BGRRF)	Jane Andanje
Caritas Internationalis	Floriana Polito
Caritas Internationalis	Maria Amparo Alonso Escobar
Caritas Internationalis	Suzanna Tkalec
Child Rights Connect	Alex Conte
COAST	Smruti Patel
COOPI Cooperazione Internazionale	Lorenzo Bianchi Carnevale
DanChurchAid	Kristina Møller
Danish Refugee Council	Stephan Maurer
Danish Refugee Council	Sara Granlund
Federation Handicap International (HI)	Jean Pierre Delomier
Federation Handicap International (HI)	Amélie Drillet
FM4 Paso Libre	Maria José Lazcano
Foundation for Rural Development (FRD)	Azmat Khan
GOPA-DERD	Sara Savva
HIAS	Cristina Garcia Brito
ICMC	Linda Besharaty
International Catholic Migration Commission	Veronica Forin
ICVA	Ignacio Packer
ICVA	Mirela Shuteriqi
ICVA	Jeremy Rempel
ICVA	Alon Plato
ICVA	Christian Benadum
ICVA	Katelyn MacLellan
ICVA	Vania Gobbo
IFRC - International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	Ian O'Donnell
International Medical Corps	Mary Pack

INTERSOS	Miro Modrusan
Islamic Relief Worldwide	Kate Wiggans
Mercy Hands for Humanitarian Aid	Michela Maccabruni
Norwegian Church Aid	Kit Dyer
Norwegian Refugee Council	Kaela Glass
Oxfam	Dipankar Datta
Oxfam International	Sarah Badju
Plan International	Colin Rogers
Respect Cameroon	Damien Noma Eloundou
RET International	Marina Anselme
Save the Children	Silvia Ciacci
Save the Children	Costanza Tognini
South Sudan NGO Forum	Robert (Bob) Jones
Syrian Family Planning Association	Adel Jrab
Terre des hommes Foundation (Tdh)	Andrea Koller
Terre des hommes Foundation (Tdh)	Steven Fricaud
The International Rescue Committee (IRC)	Magda Cavanna Highams
The International Rescue Committee (IRC) - UK	Khusbu Patel
The Lutheran World Federation (LWF)	Matendo Lokiru Yohana
Trócaire	Cathal Reidy
UNHCR	Armando Castro Figueredo
UNICEF	Christiaan Weeren
UNICEF	Marin Dikanoic
UNICEF	Lilian Reyes
UNICEF	Sonia Silva
UNICEF	Jose Luis Chung
UNICEF	Gaizka Mentxaka
UNICEF	Carmen Van Heese
UNICEF	Jonathan Mutebi
UNICEF	Ahdad Al Mobayed
UNICEF	Paulin Nkwosseu
UNICEF	Yuko Kusamichi
UNICEF	Andreas Wuestenberg
UNICEF	Christine Muthee
UNICEF	Patrick Shing
UNICEF	Filippo Mazarrelli
UNICEF	Jennifer Taylor
UNICEF	Carole Vignaud
UNICEF	Michael Copland
UNICEF	Frankie Chen
UNICEF	Slavi Nikolov
UNICEF	Fitsum Assefa
UNICEF	Anne Attard
UNICEF	Manuel Fontaine
UNICEF	Meritxell Relano

UNICEF	Luc Chauvin
UNICEF	Berina Arslanagic
UNICEF	Lauren Cheshire
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UNICEF	Eric Frasco
UNICEF	Kehkashan Beenish Khan
UNICEF	Steven Lauwerier
UNICEF	Esther Waters-Crane
World Vision	Nathan McGibney
World Vision International	Elysia Nisan
World Vision International	Miralana Atoui
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