

**2020 UNICEF-NGO Partnership in Humanitarian Action
2020 Annual Consultation (virtual)
'Working Together to Address Emerging Challenges'
17-19 November 2020
Concept Note**

1. Background: the 2019 revitalization of the UNICEF-NGO Consultations

To reach results for children, partnership is crucial to UNICEF and civil society organizations, including national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and academic institutions. This partnership acquires a specific significance in humanitarian settings, where the challenges faced in delivering results for children are even more critical.

In 2019, both UNICEF and ICVA invested in establishing an ongoing dialogue between UNICEF and NGOs to improve partnership in humanitarian settings. Following the results of a scoping study conducted by ICVA, in November 2019 UNICEF and ICVA organized the UNICEF-NGO Consultation on 'Enhancing the Culture of Partnership'. The two-day consultation was attended by 46 NGOs (national and international) and selected UNICEF staff members from Country Offices, Regional Offices and HQ Divisions (New York and Geneva). The Consultation was concluded with a number of important recommendations around the subjects discussed: challenges and opportunities in humanitarian settings; the Core Commitments for Children (CCCs); the Principles of Partnership (PoP); the protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA); the operationalization of partnerships; Duty of Care (DoC) and localization. UNICEF followed up internally on the recommendations of the NGOs and agreed on the following engagements:

- to invest in a comprehensive roll out strategy of the revised CCCs, involving a proactive reach out to NGOs;
- to renew investment in partnership management with clear organizational accountabilities;
- to diffuse clear guidelines on NGO partnership procedures, as well as an overview of whom NGOs can contact in UNICEF Country Offices, Regional Offices and HQ Divisions;
- to renew focus on understanding how and when UNICEF and NGO partners can jointly advocate to further support children's rights in humanitarian contexts;
- to draft a global strategy and roll out plan for the implementation of the localization agenda, in accordance with its NGO partners and donors;
- to advocate for a harmonized approach in the UN / Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) family at country level, based on consultations with NGO partners on, inter alia, PSEA, data management and Duty of Care.

During the 2019 Consultation, the need to continue the dialogue was emphasized and it was agreed to hold yearly consultations between UNICEF and NGOs.

The full report of the 2019 UNICEF-NGO Consultation for Partnership in Humanitarian Settings can be read [here](#), while more information on UNICEF engagements is available [here](#).

2. Partnership in 2020

The response to the coronavirus disease pandemic (COVID-19) remains one of the highest priorities both for UNICEF and NGOs in 2020. The pandemic has triggered an unprecedented global health, humanitarian, socioeconomic and human rights crisis, which has spread to over 215 countries and

territories, with over 580,000 reported deaths and 13 million confirmed cases. The related economic crisis is pushing more and more people into extreme poverty and continues to put significant additional pressure on already overburdened social and health service delivery systems which threatens to reverse decades of hard-won development gains for children. Ongoing lockdowns and other restrictions are exacerbating the vulnerabilities of children and their families globally.

The substantial negative impact of the pandemic on children and their rights became soon evident with the UN Secretary General calling it a children crisis¹. While children seem to be less vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus itself, more than 30 million children are still at risk of illness and death². Risk factors range from increased poverty and food insecurity to lack of access to education to disruption of community and social support services for children and caregivers.³ The long-term, indirect impact of the pandemic on children will be more damaging in the poorest countries, and in the poorest neighborhoods, and for those in already disadvantaged or vulnerable situations.⁴

Against this backdrop, UNICEF and civil society partners, at local, national and international levels, are faced with the challenge of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. In partnership, UNICEF and NGOs have increased efforts to protect and assist children and their families in humanitarian settings.⁵ Partnership has become even more critical in the COVID-19 context, and UNICEF has so far transferred over \$821 million in 2020, with transfers to civil society organizations reaching a record high since 2014 and 55% of the funding transferred to national NGOs and community-based organizations (“local CSO actors”).⁶ This highlights the critical role of civil society partners to rapidly mobilize in an emergency to meet critical needs of target communities and calls for an increased level of flexibility and support by UNICEF in its partnership with civil society actors.

Local actors – civil society organizations (national and subnational), governments (national and subnational), the private sector, women’s networks, youth organizations, indigenous groups, faith-based organizations, human rights organizations, trade unions, as well as communities themselves (including displaced communities) and other specific-interest groups – are critical in every humanitarian operation, and even more so in the current context that is shaped by restrictions on travel and movement because of COVID-19. While local actors are also affected by preventative measures, they retain a comparatively greater possibility to maintain and potentially scale up operations, provided they are given the means to do so. They do, however, continue to face key barriers in accessing international funding and influencing decision-making, continue to be burdened by heavy administrative processes and risk management. The shift towards more support and funding for local and national actors is, therefore, both a necessity and an opportunity for effectively meeting humanitarian needs and recovery efforts post COVID-19.

¹ UN NEWS, [UN chief calls for greater protection for children caught up in COVID-19 crisis](#), 16.04.2020; see also UN Policy Brief, [The Impact of COVID-19 on children](#), April 2020

² WORLD VISION, [COVID-19 Aftershocks: A Perfect Storm](#), 14.05.2020

³ See: The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, End Violence Against Children, UNICEF, WHO; COVID-19: Protecting Children from Violence, Abuse and Neglect in the Home ; Version 1, May 2020 ; see also UNICEF, [COVID-19 and children](#)

⁴ UN SG Policy Brief, supra no.1

⁵ For the latest comprehensive overview of the challenges and UNICEF’s response, visit https://www.unicef.org/appeals/files/UNICEF_Global_COVID19_Mid-Term_Situation_Report_No_9_Feb_Jul_2020.pdf

⁶By October 2020, UNICEF had transferred \$821 million of cash to 3,451 civil society organizations. This is around 10% more than what was transferred to CSOs during the same time period last year. Of the 3,451 CSOs, national NGOs and community-based organizations (“local CSO actors”) account for 71% of the total.

Another important movement, the global Anti-racism protests which are led by the Black Lives Matter movement and others, has put a spotlight on deeply ingrained historic and systemic racist attitudes and racial discrimination that deny people their fundamental human rights. It has established an opportunity to act against racism, discrimination and violence, in all sectors, including that of humanitarian aid. Further efforts are needed to work in partnership to tackle inequality and injustice, not only in the society around us, but also within the context of humanitarian action. Both UNICEF and NGOs are undertaking jointly and individually important measures to examine and address racism and racial discrimination within their respective organizations, including by expanding diversity at all levels of workplaces and fostering more inclusive and diverse ways of working in order to ensure that the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination are fully realized.

3. The 2020 UNICEF-NGO Consultation: Subjects of focus

The 2020 UNICEF-NGO Consultation follows up on the commitments undertaken in 2019 and focuses on the ongoing efforts to address emerging challenges in 2020. As such, this consultation will be an opportunity for dialogue on a wide range of issues. The key issues to be covered during this event include:

- Looking back at UNICEF 2019 commitments
- COVID-19 impact on partnerships
- UNICEF simplified partnership procedures
- Funding flexibility for NGOs
- Localization
- Anti-racism, anti-discrimination and decolonization of aid

Agenda items	Expected outcomes
Opening session: Looking back at UNICEF 2019 commitments	Discuss progress on the 6 main recommendations from the 2019 Consultation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The revised Core Commitments for Children (CCCs) in Humanitarian Action; • Principles of Partnership (PoP) as a framework for renewed engagement; • UNICEF operational partnership procedures; • Joint advocacy for children rights in humanitarian contexts; • Localization agenda; • Harmonization of approach in the UN/HCT family at country level on Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and Duty of Care (DoC) to staff and partners.
What has changed? A panel discussion on how COVID-19 has impacted partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on new developments from UNICEF and the NGOs; • Challenges and opportunities in humanitarian settings; • Consider how COVID-19 impacted partnership; • Agree on areas (covered by the 6 recommendations) where continued investment is needed.
<u>Operationalizing partnership:</u> UNICEF Civil Society Organizations partnership survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of the UNICEF 2020 partnership survey key findings; • Brief comparison with ICVA 2019 humanitarian partnership survey.
<u>Operationalizing partnership</u>	This session will discuss how new partnership modalities can support the delivery of results for children. What are some of the remaining challenges faced? How can UNICEF and NGO partners address such challenges in the future?

<p>UNICEF simplified partnerships procedures</p> <p>Funding flexibility for NGOs in the context of COVID-19 and beyond</p>	<p>This session will focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility to and flexibility in funding as well as reporting requirements, especially in the light of COVID-19; • Cascading benefits and risk transfer.
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Agenda items	Expected outcomes
<p><u>Anti-racism, anti-discrimination and localization efforts for an inclusive, diverse & equitable partnership</u></p> <p>-Decolonization of aid</p> <p>-Localization</p>	<p>While Covid-19 brought a large number of challenges, it provides also with an opportunity to progress in decolonizing aid and building more equal partnerships.</p> <p>This session will focus on how reaffirmed principles of partnership can better ensure diversity and equality in partnership.</p> <p>This session will discuss how the international humanitarian community can adapt its delivery modalities in response to COVID-19 consistent with existing commitments on localization of aid, strengthening partnerships with local and national actors.</p>
<p>Closing session and ways forward, with concluding remarks by UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore</p>	<p>Concluding remarks and next steps presented by UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta H. Fore and ICVA Executive Director Ignacio Parker.</p>

4. Format

The consultation will take place virtually from 17 to 19 November 2020. Each day will consist of 2 discussion sessions taking place from 2 to 5 pm GVA time. The first two sessions will serve as an introduction to discuss progress on the engagements agreed during the 2019 Consultation and to give an update on where we currently stand. Over the next two days, the focus will be on operationalizing partnerships and addressing anti-racism, anti-discrimination and localization, while conclusions and action points for the future will be discussed and agreed on during the last day of the consultation. NGO colleagues are thus encouraged to be represented at a senior management level during the last session of the Consultation. It should be emphasized that the 2020 UNICEF-NGO Consultation will be closed by UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta H. Fore, whose intervention will be centered on institutional engagements and ways forward, and ICVA Executive Director Ignacio Parker. Please note that due to platform limitations translation will not be possible, and the Consultation will be held in English. All sessions will be recorded and made available after the Consultation. For more information, please refer to the [draft agenda](#), which will be updated regularly.

5. Participation

The consultation is open to all NGOs member of ICVA and other NGOs that are working in the partnership with UNICEF in humanitarian settings. The online platform enables the participation of a maximum of 1,000 colleagues. Participation from local and national NGOs is strongly encouraged. Colleagues can either register for the entire Consultation or for specific sessions only. Further information on registration and participation will be shared soon. The online format for this year's consultation will allow for a large number of participants.

At the country and local levels, colleagues participating, are expected to pro-actively interact prior to the consultation with other NGOs and bring to the consultation the diversity of experiences in partnership with UNICEF at national level. They are also expected to ensure follow up by providing feedback on the consultation and its action points within their respective organizations and within their networks.

Colleagues from international NGOs working at regional and international levels are also encouraged to reach out to their country office colleagues and share in the meetings institutional experiences with the partnership across countries. Participation of local NGOs/CSOs will be essential.

From UNICEF's side, although the overall coordination and leadership of this consultation remains with EMOPS, other key HQ Divisions (i.e. DAPM, DoC, PD and OED) will actively participate and contribute to this organization-wide effort. Regional Offices will be invited to join notably through their Deputy Regional Directors, Regional Emergency Advisors (REAs), Regional Partnerships Implementation Specialists, etc. Relevant UNICEF Country Offices staff whose office is part of the 2021 Humanitarian Appeal (HAC) are also expected to participate in and will be key participants in the Consultation.