

## *Guidance Note on Improving Information-Sharing among Partners*

### **Introduction**

Acknowledging that working together in humanitarian response requires trust and transparency, UNHCR, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working together during an operation agree to ensure strategic **information-sharing** and to clarify mutual expectations in this regard from the outset of collaboration.

The ability of UNHCR and all operational partners to gather analyse and share information regarding key strategic issues is critical to the success of any operation. Information-sharing underpins a comprehensive and coordinated approach, helps ensure complementarities and avoid gaps and optimizes protection and program delivery in refugee settings. Transparency, efficient information-sharing and appropriate consultation help partners address issues of mutual concern locally, in a manner that is not detrimental to the partnership and the credibility of the operation.

### **Guidance**

From the onset of the yearly planning for the country operations and throughout the year, UNHCR and relevant operational partners, including those not funded by UNHCR, should ensure that information-sharing and consultation mechanisms are established, reviewed and improved on a regular basis with a view to optimising coordination, delivery, advocacy and fundraising.

These mechanisms should include clarity on the timing and nature of decision-making processes in UNHCR and in NGO partner organisations, such that partners understand better when information-sharing is most needed and useful. For example, key opportunities in UNHCR's programme cycle include *a) March-April – Country Operations Planning for following year; b) July – Mid-Year Review; c) Oct/Nov – detailed planning; d) Dec/Jan – signing of agreements with partners*. However, information-sharing should be ongoing and appropriate to issues and circumstances, not tied to particular agendas and not limited to stages in the programme cycle.

While there is much good practice and experience, a joint challenge can be to better determine what information partners need from one another.

Mechanisms for information-sharing may include regular email distributions and messages, briefings, ad hoc focused meetings, regular coordination meetings at sectoral or multi-sectoral levels, joint planning discussions, and regular access to senior-level colleagues.

**For example, in a refugee response coordinated by UNHCR, information-sharing at field level among operational partners is recommended to include:**

- Short and long term operational objectives; core responsibilities and scope of activities;
- Changing commitments; planned or potential disengagement from an operation and hand-over arrangements;

- Partnership strategies with both international and national/ local NGO partners and other stakeholders, and any changes envisaged in these strategies;
- General operational updates including the highlighting of successful activities and good practice;
- Operational data-sharing (assessments, emergency surveillance data, data analysis methodologies), within the management and confidentiality parameters agreed in the operation;
- Operational constraints and challenges;
- Advocacy initiatives planned vis-a-vis various stakeholders, including the media;
- Funding levels, potential shortfalls and fund-raising strategies pertinent to the refugee response as a whole, or to relevant cluster responses;
- Budget constraints in UNHCR that may affect contract revisions;
- Relevant organisational policy developments and significant institutional change (outside the field of operation)