



From Principles to Realities

Implementing the Principles of Partnership and Enhancing Equity in Partnerships

A discussion with national and local actors

Background

To address the today's substantial humanitarian challenges, ICVA strongly believes in the imperative of quality partnerships. Since the early 2000s, ICVA has been working intensively in strengthening partnerships between NGOs and States, UN Agencies, regional organizations and other stakeholders in the humanitarian settings. In 2007, [the Principles of Partnership](#) (PoP) were introduced as a framework for all actors in the humanitarian space to engage on a more equal, constructive, and transparent setting. Emphasizing on the importance of Equality, Transparency, Result-oriented approach and Complementarity, the PoP were strongly welcomed by the sector. In 2021, ICVA members reaffirmed during the General Assembly their commitments to principled and effective humanitarian action, including on PoP.

However, putting these principles into practice has proved to be challenging. The system continues to suffer from strong power imbalances, lack of representation and trust, weak transparency and accountability for decisions taken. On many occasions, although the NGOs are in the frontline of intervention and work closely with affected people, they are still mainly seen as implementing agencies with no to little space for input into strategies and related decisions, design of activities, use of budgets etc. Local and National NGOs are the most marginalized. Whilst on many occasions they are the most closely connected to the individuals and communities affected by the crisis, they are also the ones who have the least space to negotiate and have a say in decisions made. With little possibilities to invest into their own institutional capacities due to the current nature of funding, they are faced with increasingly heavy administrative requirements by the donor agencies and their own governments. Risk transfer practices remain still widely spread in the sector, with national and local NGOs often paying the highest price.

It is against this background that ICVA continues to invest in promoting the PoP and transforming them into realities on the ground. As a diverse network of NGOs, ICVA plays a crucial role in nurturing quality partnerships among its members. In 2015, the ICVA Annual Conference was dedicated to the PoP and progress in their implementation on the ground. The PoP also continues to be in the focus of various consultations co-organized by ICVA between NGOs and UN Agencies or NGOs and donor agencies like ECHO. As a standing invitee to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, ICVA advocates for NGOs voices in coordination and decision-making mechanisms at global, regional and local levels. In recent years, an increased attention has been dedicated to bringing in the voices of the local and national NGOs and to support their various coordination and exchange platforms at the country level. In March 2022 a meeting co-organized in the Netherlands by ICVA together with Voice and members in preparation of the European Humanitarian Forum also focused on the quality of partnership, with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs invited to participate and contribute to the discussion.



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To facilitate further the implementation of the PoP and strengthen equity in partnership, ICVA is inviting several of its local and national NGOs to exchange and discuss them in further detail. The focus of this discussion will be on partnerships within the broad humanitarian sector, including not only humanitarian response, but also longer-term efforts such as early recovery, disaster risk reduction, and efforts to build resilience.

To facilitate frank discussion with donors, ICVA plans to invite a select number of representatives from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA), given that USAID/BHA is the largest humanitarian donor in terms of funding flows and field-presence.

More specifically, this meeting aims to:

- Establish initial dialogue between national and local actors, ICVA, and select donor governments with the objective of gathering views to inform the development of USAID/BHA's localization strategic framework;
- Gather views from national and local actors on constraints and opportunities for strengthening local engagement and leadership, including constraints imposed by major donor governments;
- Explore multiple areas for increased local engagement, not only limited to increased funding but identifying opportunities to place local actors at the center of humanitarian action;
- Identify ways in which localization efforts differ between development and humanitarian action;
- Discuss how localization may be applied in non-permissive and insecure environments;
- Explore how localization may impact different types of stakeholders, e.g. NGOs, local government agencies, and private sector;
- Strengthen further equity in partnerships throughout the humanitarian sector and ensure a better implementation of the PoP.

Date, time and participants

The meeting will take place on the 21st of April 2021, 2-5 pm CET, and will be held virtually, given its global nature, and current Covid-19 constraints

Over 25 participants from various national and local NGOs are expected to participate and contribute by sharing their experience with partnerships at different levels.

The meeting will be moderated by Ignacio Packer, ICVA Executive Director.

Meeting is in English but will have interpretation services for participants to share their views in Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic and French.