



International
Council of
Voluntary
Agencies

2015 Annual Conference Report

Partnership: From Principles to Practice

*Considering partnerships in preparation for
the World Humanitarian Summit*

Monday, 9th March, 2015

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ICVA is grateful to its membership, Board and partners for dues, other contributions and in-kind support.

We would also like to thank the following governments and organizations for supporting this Annual Conference.



Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations'
International Development Fund (IDF)



German Humanitarian Assistance



Sweden Ministry of Foreign Affairs

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The **importance of partnership** remains a recurring theme of effective humanitarian programming. Its importance regularly arises in various World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) consultations, providing an important opportunity to further these discussions at a global level.

On March 9 2015 in Geneva, Switzerland, the 2015 ICVA Annual Conference gathered members and partners to **discuss the value and implementation of the Principles of Partnership (PoP)** in the lead up to the WHS and beyond - and to **generate ideas to further transform the PoP into reality on the ground**. Specifically, the 2015 Annual ICVA conference aimed to:

- Provide a platform for humanitarians to share experiences regarding:
 - The value of the PoP.
 - Important achievements and sharing of good practices.
 - Innovative solutions in their applicability.
- Suggest ways forward for the PoP in the lead up to, and beyond the WHS into the coming decade.
- Be interactive, promote learning among participants and encourage an exchange of views and experiences.

The conference, attended by over 160 participants, involved reflection and discussion based on the following key themes:

- ***Setting the scene & partnerships in the 21st century: Opportunities, challenges and the future.***
Including what drivers led to the development of the PoP in 2007
- ***Partnership in 2015: How are we doing in relation to the Principles of Partnership?***
Specifically discussing the value, impact and limitations of the PoP
- ***Partnerships in 2020: Where do we want to be? What happens if we don't change?***
Involving discussions on the state of partnerships within the humanitarian sector – the UN, NNGOs, INGOs, the private sector and affected populations: what needs to change in the lead up to the WHS - and beyond - to make the PoP foundational to relationships among humanitarian actors.



Michael Mosselmans @michaelatTASW

ACT WHS paper calls for reaffirmation of principles of partnership and their application to all kinds of partnership #icvaPoP #reshapeaid

SETTING THE SCENE: The Humanitarian community and the Principles of Partnership

Nan Buzard, the Executive Director of ICVA, stressed the increasing importance of partnerships – and the need to identify, embrace and practice enhanced ways of working together.

Quoting a report published in 1975 by the League of the Red Cross with the ICRC, Nan highlighted key drivers impacting the humanitarian sector 40 years ago, specifically:

“The particularly rapid changes of the past few years has sparked concern:

- Europe is no longer the center of the world.
- Technology has both magnified the horrors of armed conflict and facilitated the means of providing assistance.
- The stages of international political relations and private and public humanitarian actions are crowded with hundreds of actors.
- Disasters have grown in scope and complexity.”

These points remain deeply relevant. Whilst significant positive changes have occurred over the last 40 years, including the huge decreasing number of people in extreme poverty; we are living in a world in which crisis is the rule, not the exception.

The PoP, developed in 2007 were an attempt to acknowledge gaps within the 2005 humanitarian reform process – including the role of local and national humanitarian actors. The intention was to provide a framework for humanitarian agencies to guide their work and relationships - with an acknowledgment that no single actor could meet humanitarian needs alone. The PoP seek to encourage a more equal, transparent and constructive environment - essential for increasing effectiveness. For many agencies the PoP remain a key point of reference for partnership inception, development, implementation and review.

Building off studies, research and analysis undertaken over the preceding eight years, and applying lessons identified from the challenges in their application, Nan shared some thoughts of how partnerships could better operate in the coming years including:



‘There is a need for more **specificity in our complementarity** and **less generalizations** that lead to inaccurate assumptions and erroneous expectations’.

- The essential need for political leadership to address problems that create untenable humanitarian situations.
- Acknowledge that not everything needs to be undertaken in partnerships or in coordinated ways. The answer is not in creating an extensive homogenized group with stifled innovation. Rather, there is a need for more specificity in our complementarity and less generalizations that lead to inaccurate assumptions and erroneous expectations.
- More respect is vital. More equality. More results oriented approaches are required.

- There is a need to reaffirm and recommit to the PoP. Not just with the original 40 entities that created the PoP back in 2007 – but - with the humanitarian community as it stands today – with representation globally: large actors, small actors, traditional actors, new actors. A re-affirmation of the PoP can be a key collective message to send on to the WHS – and beyond.
- The key foundational ingredient of *trust* remains ever important, but unfortunately, is often absent. Trust does not happen overnight – but by acting on the PoP, trust can emerge and in turn, enable humanitarian programming to be more effective, more coherent and comprehensive.

PARTNERSHIPS: Partnerships in the 21st century: Opportunities, challenges and the future

Ros Tennyson, initiator of the **Partnership Brokers Association**, has been closely involved in multi-stakeholder partnerships since 1992. Ros has supported various multi-stakeholder initiatives, with recent involvement with Start Network. Analyzing partnerships from a broad perspective, Ros discussed three main partnership types, including: **Conventional partnerships**, which are used as a strategy to deliver projects within the framework of the existing status quo; **Adaptive partnerships**, those partnerships designed to deliver development somewhat separate from, but alongside, the mainstream; and **Transforming partnerships** intentionally created to challenge and change mainstream systems and mindsets.

Partnerships within the humanitarian sector primarily fall under the *conventional category*. This status quo need to be challenged, with a much needed push to create partnerships falling within the latter two categories.

Ros shared key suggestions regarding how to improve overall partnering experience, including:

- Paying attention to the **partnering process**
- Understanding and **applying the Principles of Partnership**
- Valuing and **building on diversity** to optimize value for all parties
- Seeking to **influence the thinking of donors & decision-makers**
- Learning to **live and work with complexity**
- **Learning from mistakes** – don't abandon the paradigm too soon

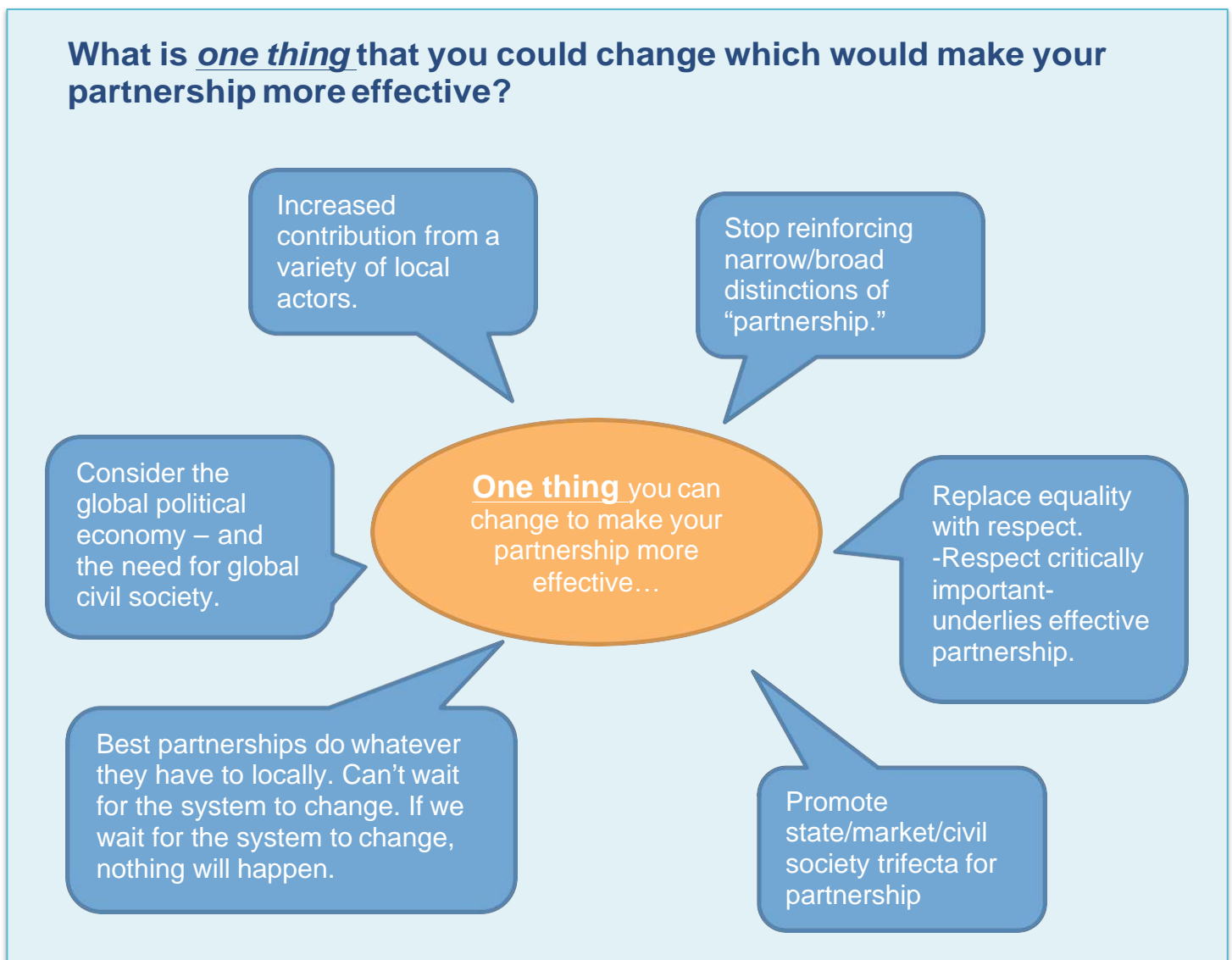
Challenging the status quo, Ros further shared a range of myths and possible truths in relation to collaboration and successful partnerships, including:

Seven myths	Seven possible truths
• Agreement/consensus is essential	• Alignment / relishing diversity is more important than agreement / consensus
• Partnerships must have common objectives	• Partners must have complementary objectives and be willing to understand and respect each other's priorities & drivers
• Much depends on leaders	• Much depends on the new models of leadership
• Successful projects are the most important outcome	• Changed mindsets, more 'fit for purpose' systems and innovation may be more important than project outcomes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermediaries / partnerships brokers must be neutral 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermediaries / partnership brokers must be transparent about their world view/ basis for working and be willing to change their views if necessary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration requires compromise and being prepared to lose control 	<p>Collaboration, at its best, involves sharing control and re-defining / re-building each sector's key roles and responsibilities</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration is simple – it just takes common sense. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration is complex – it takes a range of skills, patience, impatience, persistence, vision rigor and courage.

To access an electronic copy of Ros' PowerPoint presentation, please click [here](#).

What is *one thing* that you could change which would make your partnership more effective?



PARTNERSHIPS IN 2015: Panel Discussion: How are we doing in relation to the Principles of Partnership?

A panel discussion was held in the late morning, comprising five representatives from NGOs, the UN and foundations within the humanitarian sector, to discuss the implementation of the PoP in current practice. Key discussion points included:

In light of the PoP, **Dr Faizail Perdaus (Mercy Malaysia)** stressed the need to progress further. Since the development of the PoP eight years ago, much time and effort has been invested into the implementation of the PoP, however - we have seen limited impact. Faizal challenged participants to reflect on *how genuine are we when we try to establish partnerships?* As partnerships are more than just financial – and are built more strongly around having and receiving value, it is vital to acknowledge the value of local and smaller NGOs.

In further discussions, Faizal highlighted how partnerships provide a vital opportunity to not only build from commonality, but to *leverage the strength in diversity*. In a crowded humanitarian landscape increasingly driven by competition, complementarity is becoming harder to achieve – yet ever more important. In such a context, *transformational leadership to challenge and change the status quo is required*.



Faizal highlighted the common occurrence of local and national NGOs losing capacity when their staff move on to the UN/larger organizations. Using the analogy of footballer transactions, it was suggested that larger organizations should provide something in exchange when recruiting staff members from smaller organisations. This could involve technology, information, skill, innovation or a financial contribution.

From his experience, **Mr Michael Mosselmans (Christian Aid)** highlighted that much progress has been made in the previous eight years in relation to partnerships within the humanitarian sector. However, *equitable access to humanitarian financing remains a significant gap*. Specifically, the extent of access to direct funding needs to improve. To encourage this change, significant effort needs to occur in “peacetime situations” to support local NGOs to absorb and program high levels of funding in humanitarian contexts.

Through further discussion with participants, Michael stressed the importance of reflecting on the overall structure of coordination and leadership mechanisms within the humanitarian sector. National NGOs often feel the UN or other large international organizations set the agenda, with a significant proportion of National and local NGOs

‘Systems must be established that certain percentages of funding **must** be given to national NGOs’.

unaware of the international humanitarian architecture and decision making mechanisms. The exclusion of national and local NGOs in these discussions represents a significant missed opportunity.

Ms Liliane Bitong (ICVA) focused on the challenges in promoting and implementing partnerships successfully inline with the PoP. Specifically, there remain both systemic barriers and operational challenges in promoting change. In light of these barriers, Liliane stressed the need to view the language of partnerships as having *the right to collaborate*.

‘We need to view the language of partnerships as having *the right to collaborate*’

Building on a range of case studies and professional experience, Liliane focused on the importance of transparency in building and maintaining strong partnerships, particularly around helping resolve partnership conflict.

Ms Myriam Marcuelo-Lopez (Cordoba Foundation) stressed the *importance of the partnership process*. Myriam challenged participants to consider whether partnerships are designed in a way that caters to diversity of parties? Specifically, within an ever growing, ever complex humanitarian sector, Myriam highlighted the challenge of acceptance for Islamic Charities as legitimate and effective partners, and the need for continued illustration and dissemination of the impact of the PoPs.

Through further discussion, Myriam highlighted the importance of valuing diversity and understanding the perspective of each partner as a key means of improving partnerships. In an ever increasing and complex humanitarian landscape, diversity must be embraced. However, the PoP must not be compromised.

Mr George Okoth-Obbo (UNHCR) highlighted the continued existence of structural contradictions, needing to be addressed within the humanitarian system in relation to partnerships. Strengthening the *foundation of mutual agreement, joint prioritization and strategic information sharing* were highlighted as key ingredients to improve the quality of partnerships – leading to *more consultation and more respect*.

George further discussed the *importance of individual behavior in line with the PoP* as a key catalyst to improve the state of partnerships. With increasing complexity of humanitarian contexts, the principles of transparency and complementarity are being increasingly tested. However, the position taken by humanitarian entities, and most importantly, individual’s attitudes and actions within those humanitarian agencies, can influence movement towards, or away from, the implementation of the PoP.

Further general discussion highlighted the importance of *not generalizing the term ‘local’*, especially in relation to local NGOs. There is significant diversity with local and national NGOs – as with International NGOs and other humanitarian actors. Much effort is required to improve equity between International organizations and local/national NGOs, with a key issue of local access to humanitarian financing and financial security for smaller NGOs.



Parsu Sharma-Luitai @apchundu78
RT @UNHCRPartners: "To strengthen & mutually reinforce #Partnership, this is what is fundamental for UNHCR" G. Okoth-Obbo, AHC-O #ICVAPoP ht...

Less anecdotes, more evidence

Access and capability will trump money and mandate

New models of partnership are necessary

Partnerships built on the basis of equity, justice, trust and shared vision

Visionary snapshot:
'What could partnerships look like in the coming *five to 10 years*'?

PARTNERSHIPS IN 2020: Where do we want to be? What happens if we don't change

The afternoon sessions involved participants dividing into groups, specifically discussing partnerships



Chetcuti Pauline @ChetcutiPauline
RT @McIlreavyP: @ACF_France CEO: in five years time? access and capability will trump mandates @ICVANetwork #ICVAPoP @PenroseMike

involving NGOs with other humanitarian actors. In relation to four partnership types *NGOs and UN; INGOs and NNGOs; NGOs and affected populations, and: NGOs and the private sector*, groups were asked to respond to four questions:

- What to start doing?
- What to stop doing?
- What to keep doing?
- What can ICVA members and partners, through ICVA, do to strengthen these partnerships leading to the WHS and beyond?



A summary of outputs from these discussions is documented on the following pages.



Dr Jemilah Mahmood @JemilahMahmood
RT @McIlreavyP: how do you translate principles of #partnership into commitments? @WHSummit @JemilahMahmood #ICVAPoP @ICVANetwork

Partnerships between NGOs & UN

<u>What to start doing?</u>	<u>What to stop doing?</u>	<u>What to keep doing?</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on products and not on processes • Improving internal mechanisms • Take risks • Amplify voice of local actors • Rely more on NNGOs (local knowledge) • Pro-activeness from NNGOs – innovation (cash programming) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating without a purpose • Sidelining potential partners from decision-making processes • Equating money with power • Outsourcing risks • Sub-contracting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardizing/simplifying procedures • Cooperation – capacity strengthening • Dialogue: leading to genuine partnerships, 2-way and structures • Consultation • Harmonize approaches (capacity assessment) • Coordination efforts

What can ICVA members and partners, through ICVA, do to strengthen these partnerships, leading up to the WHS and beyond?

- Enhance advocacy (national and international) for:
 - Building an evidence base for results based partnerships
 - Build the culture for risk taking and innovation

Partnerships between NGOs & Affected Populations

<u>What to start doing?</u>	<u>What to stop doing?</u>	<u>What to keep doing?</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using PoP to check in regularly with community – real engagement & dialogue • Involve affected persons in decision making • Make sure to close “loop” after/ act on consultation outcomes; • Relationship with affected populations must continue beyond initial consultation sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop the unexamined rhetoric with expectations of ‘everyone’ understanding the project cycle and principles • Stop working with deadlines and constraints which discourage meaningful partnerships with affected populations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to improve context analysis to understand each other as partners • Preparedness with communities - understanding that this needs to happen on a continued basis • Keep listening to affected persons and expand complaints and feedback mechanisms

What can ICVA members and partners, through ICVA, do to strengthen these partnerships, leading up to the WHS and beyond?

- Feedback to diverse partners what is being discussed, proposed and planned
- Use the collective voice to plan activities
- Involve affected populations as partners in formulating ICVA position papers using PoP tools
- Expand ongoing consultations in WHS processes – ICVA members can be multipliers

Partnerships between INGOs & NNGOs

What to start doing?

- Acknowledge the power dynamics:
 - INGOs to go to negotiations with donors with NNGO partners
 - Advocate for specific funding percentage to NNGOs, while recognizing that partnerships are more than just about financing

What to stop doing?

- Reducing some partnerships to 'subcontracting relationships'
- Privileging accountability to donors over accountability to affected populations

What to keep doing?

- Value complementarity: recognizing diversity as a strength

What can ICVA members and partners, through ICVA, do to strengthen these partnerships, leading up to the WHS and beyond?

- ICVA members and partners should acknowledge power dynamics between INGOs and NNGOs.
- Transparency is best solution in light of such power dynamics.
- NNGOs must be brought to initial meetings and always be a part of the discussion.
- Advocate for funding to go to NNGOs but make sure partnership goes beyond pure financing.

Partnerships between NGOs & the private sector

What to start doing?

- Expand sustained dialogue: share with donors the risks we take

What to stop doing?

- Being simplistic about systems, values/ownership, risks & benefits and the types of private sector entities.

What can ICVA members and partners, through ICVA, do to strengthen these partnerships, leading up to the WHS and beyond?

- Change mindsets and engage with the private sector through:
 - Building an evidence base of where the private sector has impact - with or without us (documenting this evidence)
 - Showcase successful public-private partnerships in the lead up to the WHS
 - Development of guidelines of engagement
 - Long term investment in partnerships

PARTNERSHIPS: Putting it all together in the lead up to the World Humanitarian Summit.

ICVA's 2015 Annual Conference provided a successful platform for humanitarian practitioners to raise questions, discuss and suggest paths forward in relation to partnerships and the PoP.

Participants acknowledged the importance of the topic of partnerships, and appreciated the participatory nature of the conference. The presence of a very diverse group of people allowed for stimulating dialogue on the PoP, and highlighted the need to continue to progress in the implementation of the PoP across the entire humanitarian community.

To close the annual conference, Jemilah Mahmood, (Chief of the World Humanitarian Summit), was joined by Penny Lawrence, (Deputy Chief Executive of Oxfam Great Britain and ICVA's Chair), and Nan Buzard to reflect on the Annual Conference proceedings, and emphasize key next steps in relation to the PoP.

In addition to the actions and recommendations listed throughout afternoon group discussions, emerging discussions highlighted the need for:



Partnership Section @UNHCRPartners
 RT @GermanyUNGeneva: Great ideas from #ICVAPoP how to take humanitarian partnerships from principles to practice will be fed into the #WHSu...

- Increasing the evidence base of successful partnerships and the application of the PoP.
- A revitalization of the PoP to foster commitment from a large body of humanitarian actors.
- An agreement on a concrete goal for local and national NGOs to directly access humanitarian financing.
- Utilising the WHS as a platform to set the agenda for change for improved partnerships with NGOs all humanitarian actors, including affected populations, the UN and the private sector.



ICVAASIA @ICVAAsia
 RT @ICVAnetwork: We need to acknowledge the power dynamics between NNGOs and INGOs. #ICVAPoP @ICVAnetwork
<http://t.co/oAnCH0MdNI>

Principles of Partnership

A Statement of Commitment

Endorsed by the Global Humanitarian Platform, 12 July 2007

The *Global Humanitarian Platform*, created in July 2006, brings together UN and non-UN humanitarian organizations on an equal footing.

- ✎ Striving to enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian action, based on an ethical obligation and accountability to the populations we serve,
- ✎ Acknowledging diversity as an asset of the humanitarian community and recognizing the interdependence among humanitarian organizations,
- ✎ Committed to building and nurturing an effective partnership,

... the organizations participating in the **Global Humanitarian Platform** agree to base their partnership on the following principles:

• **Equality**

Equality requires mutual respect between members of the partnership irrespective of size and power. The participants must respect each other's mandates, obligations and independence and recognize each other's constraints and commitments. Mutual respect must not preclude organizations from engaging in constructive dissent.

• **Transparency**

Transparency is achieved through dialogue (on equal footing), with an emphasis on early consultations and early sharing of information. Communications and transparency, including financial transparency, increase the level of trust among organizations.

• **Result-oriented approach**

Effective humanitarian action must be reality-based and action-oriented. This requires result-oriented coordination based on effective capabilities and concrete operational capacities.

• **Responsibility**

Humanitarian organizations have an ethical obligation to each other to accomplish their tasks responsibly, with integrity and in a relevant and appropriate way. They must make sure they commit to activities only when they have the means, competencies, skills, and capacity to deliver on their commitments. Decisive and robust prevention of abuses committed by humanitarians must also be a constant effort.

• **Complementarity**

The diversity of the humanitarian community is an asset if we build on our comparative advantages and complement each other's contributions. Local capacity is one of the main assets to enhance and on which to build. Whenever possible, humanitarian organizations should strive to make it an integral part in emergency response. Language and cultural barriers must be overcome.



ICVA 2015 Annual Conference:

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SHIP: FROM PRINCIPLES TO PRACTICE CONSIDERING PARTNERSHIPS IN PREPARATION FOR THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

8.30 – 9.00	Registration and coffee	
9.00 – 9.30	Welcome and introductions	
9.30 – 9.45	Setting the scene The Humanitarian community and the Principles of Partnership (PoP); A vision of humanitarian partnerships in 2020	Nan Buzard: Executive Director (ICVA)
9.45 – 10.30	Viewpoint: Partnerships in the 21st Century: Opportunities, challenges & the future	Ros Tennyson: Development Director C Strategy (Partnership Brokers Association) Moderator: Penny Lawrence, Deputy Chief Executive (Oxfam GB)
10.30 – 11.00	Coffee break	
11.00 – 12.15	Partnerships in 2015: How are we doing in relation to the Principles of Partnership? Panel discussion: Experiences of partnership within and between the NGO community, the UN, the private sector and other actors.	Panelists: Representatives from the NGO community, the UN, and the private sector Moderator: Heba Aly (IRIN)
12.15 – 13.45	Buffet lunch and informal lunchtime discussions	
12.30 – 13.00	Reflections on pooled funding mechanisms from recent Pakistan & Afghanistan mission	GwiTYeop Son: Director, Corporate Programmes (OCHA)
13.10 – 13.40	Reflections on recent Middle East & North Africa World Humanitarian Summit Regional Consultation	Jemilah Mahmood: Chief of WHS Secretariat
13.45 – 15.00	Partnerships in 2020: Where do we want to be? What happens if we don't change? Open space group discussions Considering the application of the Principles of Partnership in relation to: T NGO and UN partnerships T NGO and private partnerships T INGOs and NNGO partnerships T NGOs and Affected Populations	ICVA members and partners
15.00 – 15.30	Coffee Break	
15.30 – 16.45	Partnerships – putting it all together towards the WHS	Jemilah Mahmood: Chief of WHS Secretariat
16.45 – 17.00	Conference Close	
17.00 – 18.30	Cocktail Reception	



www.icvanetwork.org

International Council of Voluntary Agencies

Geneva Office

26-28 Avenue Giuseppe Motta 1202 - Geneva - Switzerland

Tel: +41 (0)22 950 9600 - Fax: +41 (0)22 950 9609

Email: secretariat@icvanetwork.org

www.icvanetwork.org

[@ICVANetwork](https://twitter.com/ICVANetwork)

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