



Summary Report 2016 Annual Partnership Consultation

Building the APC

WFP's 2016 Annual Partnership Consultation was not just an event – it was a process. As such, the discussions at WFP Headquarters on October 26 & 27 were the continuation of an ongoing conversation – a conversation in which WFP intends to remain engaged in the coming months.

With more than 60 organisations in attendance, and 30 CEOs, the APC involved new partners, including members of local and national of civil society, and faith-inspired groups. UN agencies FAO, UNICEF, UNHCR and OCHA also joined discussions, reflecting the emphasis on UN work towards harmonisation and simplification of partnership processes.

Fundamentally, the 2016 APC was about building better partnerships to deliver greater impact for the people we all serve – and also about understanding the impact of recent key milestones such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015, the World Humanitarian Summit and Grand Bargain on our mutual cooperation. The agenda was designed in collaboration with key advisory partners through consultations which started early in the year, with the aim of ensuring a relevant APC responding to NGO and WFP strategic interests.



In her welcoming remarks, Assistant Executive Director Elisabeth Rasmusson outlined two main objectives for the meeting:

- To arrive at a mutual understanding of what all the recent changes mean for our organisations, how they will impact collaboration, and what opportunities they bring for the people we serve.
- To learn how WFP can complement efforts led by the NGO community to provide more support to national and local first responders. WFP has embraced the localisation agenda, but wants to be sure our contribution is relevant and demand-driven.

Discussions were stimulated by high-quality background papers provided by partners, and all sessions featured high-calibre, challenging contributions from both panellists and the floor.



A WFP in Transition: The new Strategic Plan

WFP is currently re-fitting its internal architecture for the 21st century, and aligning itself with the Sustainable Development Goals, and particularly SDG 2 and SDG 17. While acknowledging the goals are indivisible and interconnected, WFP is building an outcome-based Strategic Plan which will allow the organisation to demonstrate how the work we all do in partnership is contributing towards achieving the SDG 2 and Zero Hunger in particular. A new Financial Framework will support longer-term planning, and seek to give Country Offices more authority for spending and investing in partnerships, earlier in the operational cycle.

Partners were reassured that the new Country Strategic Plan (CSP) process – including the Strategic Review (country-led, not by WFP) – will allow for more systematic inclusion and consultation in planning processes and programme design. WFP's continued focus on humanitarian assistance was also underlined, while more technical engagements would be expected in middle-income countries.

WFP Commitments

- NGO partners will have a key role to play in implementing the new CSP policy, and will be consulted at country level on its elaboration. Countries to feature soon include Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, DR Congo, Uganda and Sudan.
- WFP will maintain open lines of communication on roll-out of the CSPs.

The SDG2 Advocacy Hub

A new advocacy hub is under development to bring together multi-stakeholder voices able to mobilise political will towards the achievement of Zero Hunger. WFP is playing a supporting role for a hub which will be brand-neutral, facilitate greater coordination on SDG 2 advocacy, provide strategic advice for campaigns and mobilise and measure action. Staff may be initially located at WFP, but the vision is for an independent hub, with staff working in the global south.

WFP Commitment

- WFP will facilitate the development of the SDG 2 Advocacy Hub, which will evolve into an independent resource for all partners to coordinate, strategise and amplify advocacy campaigns.
- WFP will seek active engagement by NGO partners in SDG 2 Advocacy Hub.



Leave No One Behind: The SDGs and their Implications for WFP and its Partnerships

The WFP Executive Director noted that Partnership is one of WFP's four strategic areas of work, but asked how WFP could do more than pay lip-service to this and be the genuine partner of choice. Noting that we have come a long way – but not far enough – she acknowledged partnership as “key to our collective ability to ensure we have the capacity to change lives, not just save lives”. What is required is a culture shift to deliver long-term outcomes, not just ‘interventions’.

It was observed that this shift would be ‘a heavy lift’, and those present were asked for their inputs and ideas as to how WFP and its partners could work differently to deliver better outcomes. The SDGs should be seen as an opportunity for collective change, to speak one language and overcome individual and institutional challenges.

Speaking in response, Plan International CEO, Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen, acknowledged that the SDGs required everyone to think differently, because the people we serve are the real ‘auditors’ of our work. She stressed the need for a collaborative and holistic approach to the SDGs, resisting the urge to put our flags in specific goals, but working together with organisations whom we don't usually partner to highlight the indivisibility of the goals.

There is a greater need than ever to consult with those we assist and involve them in planning and targeting – especially women and girls. Plan will be working with KPMG to track how governments are delivering on promises to women and girls under the SDGs over the next 15 years.

WFP Commitment

- WFP will engage partners known to have expressed an interest to pursue pilot projects which demonstrate multi-stakeholder, joint approaches to planning and implementation throughout the programme cycle – from assessment through to the monitoring of outcomes. This approach would include joint advocacy with donors known to be supportive, and include national and local first responders in triangular partnership as possible.



Humanitarian: Development Coherence and Implications for Humanitarian Principles

Agenda 2030 poses specific challenges to organisations engaged in humanitarian action. Consensus emerged around one central observation – the humanitarian/development divide is irrelevant to the people we serve, and in the words of one participant, is “invisible, self-created and perhaps an excuse not to work together”.

NRC presented a discussion paper and highlighted the complementarity of humanitarian and development actors already working side-by-side, while underlining that humanitarian principles “should be part of our DNA”. It is the SDGs which give us the opportunity to address how we can best ‘stay and deliver’.

This was picked up by World Vision and WFP, who advocated for a hybrid approach to the humanitarian principles which acknowledged grey areas, but focused on a risk-tolerant approach to action, and defining red lines. World Vision underlined the importance of transparency in all things, and empowering communities as agents of change, noting that the principles are aspirational in the sense that it is not always possible to wait until they are fully met before taking action.

WFP noted its privileged relationship with governments that allow for quiet but robust discussions on options to deliver on its humanitarian mandate. WFP seeks to maintain ‘operational independence’, and to allow the principle of humanity to drive our thinking and engagement – this allows WFP to deliver in scenarios where otherwise it would not be possible.

The various case studies presented highlighted:

- HQ discussions are frequently academic – humanitarian workers face real dilemmas every day in the field.

- The humanitarian principles remain relevant to guide action and are not written in stone – they help actors make difficult decisions, especially in complex conflict situations.
- The application of the principles ultimately comes down to good judgment, not least which organisation is best placed to ‘step up’ and respond.
- Organisations must ask themselves whether they have the right leadership, staff and experience to make the correct judgment calls.

It was observed that our fundamental legitimacy comes from addressing needs. Impartiality is essential to our argumentation over how we target the assistance we bring, knowing we do not have the resources to meet all needs.

The New WFP Nutrition Policy

WFP’s proposed new Nutrition policy will be presented to the Executive Board in February 2017. It takes a holistic approach to tackling nutrition issues, considering the full spectrum from stunting through to obesity, and in the context of national nutrition plans. The key pillars are increased availability and access to safe and nutritious food, with an emphasis on young children (6-59 months), adolescent girls, pregnant and breast-feeding mothers, and other vulnerable groups.

WFP Commitment

- WFP will work with all partners that can add complementarity to nutrition programming, particularly where Clusters are activated, to ensure food interventions are layered with WASH and other vital elements, and properly coordinated.

WFP Oversight and Partners

WFP's Internal Audit of the management of NGO partnerships will be published. Its one high-risk observation concerned the operational and partnership implications of delays in finalising the signing of FLAs and in subsequent payments to partners. It was underlined that although WFP has zero tolerance for fraud and corruption, its risk sharing approach presupposes that the cooperating partners work in full transparency, notifying WFP immediately in case of fraud, corruption, or diversion. Risk assurance is a joint responsibility.

WFP Commitments

- WFP will publish the internal audit of NGO Partnership management in November.
- All Agreed Actions in the internal audit will be implemented to the extent possible within a one-year timeframe.
- WFP will continue to take a risk-tolerance approach to partnership, limiting the transfer of risk wherever possible.

More Support to First Responders

Localisation has become a buzzword in the humanitarian community, now visualised through Grand Bargain and WHS commitments – but how to make real progress against these pledges? This was a practical session, led by remarks from IFRC noting how partnership is defined by coming together across differences, and working closely with communities to identify needs and the support required for sustainable, long-term change.

Oxfam emphasized the importance of working alongside first responders before emergencies, of developing financial models which enable support to be tailored to need, and a shared approach to risk which can overcome counter-terrorism, fraud and other issues. NEAR brought the voice of national NGOs to the discussion, stressing that community capacity already exists – it needs to be strengthened, not built. A practical approach is necessary, starting with pilots, to get away from the concept of the subcontractor, and give due credit and respect to local partners. Defining 'local' is an important question which remains unanswered, especially as many international NGOs 'localise' at the country level.

Three break-out groups provided feedback:

1. **WFP's Added Value** – clarity of mandate, field presence, links to government structures, scale and ability to transfer expertise and resources, convening power with donors.

Partners require both institutional and programmatic support, pre-financing and longer term investment in capacity, and ongoing rather than intermittent support. Shadowing and mentoring, secondments, and an approach which goes beyond WFP's own operational needs were considered key for delivery.

2. **Funding** – competition between organisations can side-line national NGOs, who are hampered by short-term funding and strict vetting and compliance regimes. Proposals should include a specific (Gulf state-funded) fund for capacity strengthening, better access to pooled funds, and the involvement of the private sector in providing tailored support.
3. **Administrative frameworks** – there is a need for a simplification process which does not just transfer burden from INGOs to local first responders; for better mapping of NNGO presence in non-crisis periods; for greater donor flexibility to allow funding to flow to first responders, especially in early stages of emergency.

WFP Commitments

- Capacity Strengthening work with national NGOs will be taken forward, initially through WFP's joint initiative with IFRC.
- WFP will seek partnerships with international NGOs already prioritising capacity strengthening to provide support to first responders.
- WFP will explore the creation of a 'coalition' of like-minded partners to advocate for stand-alone funding to support this work.



The Transformative Power of Cash: Achieving a Common Vision

Cash encourages collaboration, and this session sought to explore how we can together deliver better outcomes for people in need. CaLP's discussion paper outlined the need for a stronger evidence base to inform programming choices, new operating models – including government social protection schemes, and better coordination to reduce duplication.

The Kenya Red Cross described how cash has been a game-changer, speeding up delivery and encouraging better preparedness measures – even in areas with limited infrastructure, markets may be functional and cash a good option. The move from food-for-work to cash-for-assets has given people dignity, and is allowing them to build resilience. Mercy Corps echoed the strong support for cash, indicating that more evidence-based learning and piloting is required, particularly in partnership with local and national organisations. Cash provides flexibility in project design, and the ability to evolve hybrid food/cash programmes, blended with other interventions.

WFP has scaled up its internal capacity and is now examining what it has learned and what to do next. The challenge is how can we partner with government social safety nets which are increasingly delivering cash? This presents us with an opportunity beyond 'humanitarianism' – something we have already engaged in through helping millions of people open bank accounts and join the global financial ecosystem. Inter-operability of data will also be vital to avoid duplication, and is a space where we can collaborate.

Overall it was agreed that cash is giving dignity to people in need and transforming the humanitarian world – underlining the importance of continued collaboration that delivers real impact.

WFP Commitment

- WFP will deepen NGO partnerships which support joint policy and evidence work on cash, particularly where it provides a bridge to longer-term social protection.

Innovating Together: Partnerships for Zero Hunger

Lightning Talks providing a fresh perspective on how innovation, technology (low and high tech), data and communications can deliver better outcomes in our sector led a final session focused on the future.

The International Rescue Committee, Technoserve, Flowminder and WFP all made some key observations:

- Innovation requires a long-term engagement/perspective to achieve real results, and should be focused on outcomes, and what makes sense in the field.
- Innovation is not only about technology and data – it may be programmatic, such as connecting farmers with 'old' technology, such as tractors.
- The innovative use of data can underpin a robust response to emergencies.
- Technology can help us rationalise data collection processes.

Plenary discussions raised the potential of harnessing virtual reality, for example in giving the general public access to the reality of life in a refugee camp, and the use of drones for the delivery of small-scale humanitarian assistance.

WFP Commitment

- The WFP Innovation Accelerator is open to all partners from the NGO community (and beyond) to jointly identify ideas that can change the way we work and to share them across the world for maximum impact.

Harmonization and Simplification

UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP are committed to delivering on commitments to harmonise and simplify partnership processes. Three main work-streams have been identified:

- Partner eligibility and selection
- Agreement templates
- Reporting formats

In addition, opportunities for common approaches to partner audit are being explored. Working level meetings have started, but not on all work streams. OCHA is being brought into the process to ensure their experience of working with NGO partners, particularly through pooled funds, is properly considered. The next step in terms of collaboration will be to involve NGO partners directly.

UNHCR/UNICEF/WFP commitments

- NGO partners will be brought into the process as a next step





In Conclusion

The APC was closed by the Executive Director, who thanked partners for their support to WFP's internal transformation under the new Strategic Plan, and for the reminder that as partners we share a collective ambition not only to saving lives, but also to changing lives. She appreciated the warm reception from partners for WFP's new direction, aligning itself with Agenda 2030 through the new Strategic Plan.

"Let me assure you – we hear you. As WFP we intend to continue to engage in order to build better quality partnerships that are not just about MOUs that we sign on paper or FLAs that we sign for implementing partners, but quality partnerships, which deliver real impact and results for the people we serve, together."

Thank You

To our moderator Richard Blewitt, who invested enormous energy and intellect in being the thread that held the APC together from start to finish. Richard has returned to Trinidad & Tobago, where we wish him well as he continues his role as Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative.

And to Christina Bennett (ODI), Charlotte Lattimer (Development Initiatives) and Kate Half (SCHR) for their facilitation of break-out groups during the More Support to First Responders session.

For follow-up on any of the above commitments, sharing of additional ideas and any other APC-related issues, please contact wfp.ngounit@wfp.org

NGO Unit
Partnership, Advocacy and Coordination Division
World Food Programme,
Via Cesare Giulio Viola 68,
00148 Rome, Italy



Photo credits: WFP/Rein Skullerud