



UNHCR and partner staff celebrate world environmental day, alongside Somali refugees and members from the host community in Mirqaan, Ethiopia by planting seedlings at the local health centre. ©UNHCR/Diana Diaz.

August 2023

UNHCR-NGO Partnership Survey

2022 Report

InterAction – Humanitarian Policy and Practice



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Since 2014, UNHCR's Implementation Management and Assurance Service (IMAS) of the Division of Strategic Planning and Results (DSPR)—with support from InterAction since 2016—has systematically solicited UNHCR and non-governmental organization (NGO) partner feedback via an annual survey on the state of UNHCR-NGO partnerships. The purpose of the survey is to better track partnership dynamics and develop a body of evidence on perceptions of UNHCR-NGO partnerships. The survey is circulated widely to UNHCR and NGOs on an annual basis, and InterAction analyzes the data in consultation with UNHCR-IMAS. The questionnaire is distributed in Q1/Q2 of each year to gauge the previous year's partnership experiences. Therefore, although the report is disseminated in 2023, its findings reflect partnership experiences in 2022 from 155 UNHCR staff and 741 NGO staff, 63% of whom represent local or national NGO partners (LNNGOs).

KEY FINDINGS

Overall, the 2022 survey results demonstrated the strength and resilience of partnerships between UNHCR and NGOs. Increased access to Multi-Year Strategic Planning, adherence to permanent funding flexibilities, and usage of the newly streamlined Partnership Agreement (PA) were broadly popular with survey participants. Feedback from UNHCR and NGO respondents on these changes offers opportunities to build upon these successes in the longer term and to maximize flexibilities that enable rapid responses to humanitarian crises and facilitate operational adaptability. In many areas, particularly streamlining partnership practices and the use of the UN Partner Portal, NGO and UNHCR respondents offered insights for collaborative work to make their relationship even stronger in years to come, many of which continue to inform UNHCR's ongoing comprehensive transformation of its partnership management framework.

PLANNING AND CONSULTATION

As in previous years, all partnership methodologies were found to be useful by UNHCR and NGOs, with over 90% of respondents from both groups rating all methods as "somewhat" or "extremely" useful. In particular, participants found coordination meetings and one-on-one consultations the most useful. Multi-Year Strategic Planning (MYSP) was particularly well-received by survey participants, though many UNHCR and NGO respondents noted that the successful implementation of MYSPs hinges on increased availability of and access to multi-year partnership agreements and multi-year funding. At the country

level, NGOs increasingly feel that their feedback is taken into account in UNHCR's strategic planning, though they identified a few areas where existing consultation methods could be improved.

PARTNER SELECTION

UNHCR and NGO respondents report that the partner selection process remained consistent in 2022, with UNHCR utilizing Calls for Expression of Interest in addition to the standard practice of partnership continuation for ongoing programming. Overall, 58% of UNHCR respondents reported issuing one or more Calls for Expression of Interest (CFEI) for 2022 projects, comparable to 56% in 2021, with a further 37% reporting that they did not do so because it was not required (largely due to continuation of programming). Communication from UNHCR to non-selected applicants also increased slightly from 2021: of NGO respondents who indicated that they had applied for a partnership project but were not selected, 50% reported that they received proactive and clear reasoning of why they were not selected from UNHCR (a slight increase from 2021's 48%).

UN PARTNER PORTAL

The UN Partner Portal (UNPP) remains a key methodology for NGOs to learn about CFEIs from UNHCR. Most NGO respondents [96%, or 98% of INGOs and 96% of local and national NGOs (LNGOs)] reported they were registered on the UNPP in 2022. The majority of UNHCR respondents reported using the UNPP to post CFEIs in 2022 (used by 93%, up slightly from 91% in 2021). Additionally, most NGO and UNHCR respondents (65% and 61% respectively) reported that the UNPP positively impacted their PA management processes in 2022. This is a slight decrease from 2021, when 70% of respondents reported the UNPP's positive impact, likely due to necessary functionality improvements outlined below.

MULTI-YEAR PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

UNHCR introduced Multi-Year (MY) Partnership Agreements in 2019, offering NGOs opportunities for longer-term agreements of up to four-years, initially for a smaller group of operations piloting multi-year planning approaches, but later for all UNHCR offices. Qualitative feedback shows continued demand from NGOs for increased opportunities for multi-year programming, the need for clarification of MY PA

procedures and processes for UNHCR staff, and alignment between MY PA availability and MYSP to increase perceived value of these opportunities¹.

CAPACITY AND LOCALIZATION

In 2022, UNHCR transferred 23% of its overall program expenditures and 57% of its partnership funding to local and national responders. UNHCR respondents indicated having taken key actions to redistribute program expenditures via reduced direct UNHCR implementation and funding to INGOs. The slight drop in the proportion of overall global program expenditure (down from 25% in 2021) can be attributed to the Ukraine crisis, where UNHCR directly implemented large-scale programming, thereby reducing overall funds distributed to funded partners worldwide.²

As in previous years, UNHCR respondents have very high confidence in their INGO and LINGO partners to effectively manage Partnership Agreement (PA) funding (94% and 86%, respectively) and meet the needs of Persons of Concern. Only 49% of respondents reported being “somewhat” confident in Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs) to do the same. To help improve confidence, UNHCR could focus their efforts on maximizing capacity by enabling more equitable access to capacity strengthening and sharing resources like trainings or financing. In terms of capacity development methodologies undertaken in 2022, UNHCR’s efforts were concentrated in transferring knowledge/experience through training and coaching, provision of training materials, and provision of financial resources (96%, 95%, and 93% respectively).

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

In 2022, UNHCR’s light updates to the Partnership Agreement were found to be straightforward by NGO respondents, as the majority (86%) reported that they did not experience challenges utilizing the updated PA format.

PA signing delays decreased from 2018 to 2022 (from 53% to 43% of respondents reporting they had one or more unsigned PAs by January 1/project start date). More than half of NGO respondents (57%) indicated that all PAs were signed prior to January 1 or the start of the 2022 project. For those who reported PA

¹ These comments will feed into the upcoming reform of the UNHCR partnership framework, to ensure more predictability through the introduction of partnership framework agreements.

² In Ukraine, UNHCR directly implemented large-scale cash and relief items assistance programs. Discounting the Ukraine context from the overall calculation, an estimated 28% of UNHCR global program expenditure was implemented through local and national responders.

signature delays, the majority (55%) of NGO respondents experienced delays of less than one month, a significant improvement from 2020's average delay timeline of 1-3 months. As in previous years, UNHCR and NGO respondents reported that budget negotiations were the main cause for delayed PA signing.

Finally, most NGOs (91%) reported that UNHCR adheres to the reporting terms outlined in the PA, with very few NGO and UNHCR respondents sharing qualitative feedback that UNHCR requested additional information, reporting, or site visits not outlined in PAs. Of NGO respondents who did receive additional requests (despite the permanent partnership flexibilities instituted in 2021), the majority (79%) found the additional requests for information to be reasonable and understandable. However, the administrative burden of additional reporting remains a clear concern for many NGO partners, so more work to investigate the source and root causes of these requests is needed.

UNHCR FUNDING IMPLICATIONS

Nearly half (48%) of NGO respondents reported that at least half of their 2022 in-country budget came from UNHCR funding, indicating significant dependence upon UNHCR for programmatic and operational funding. There was a clear difference between LNNGOs and INGOs, with LNNGOs reporting greater dependence on UNHCR for funding (48% as opposed to 38% of INGOs indicating half or more of their budget comes from UNHCR).

Of critical concern to many NGOs is the need for funding to cover the full and fair costs of projects: only 50% of NGO respondents reported that UNHCR fully funded indirect/shared costs, and 51% indicated that UNHCR fully and fairly funded their staff costs for 2022 projects (unchanged from 2021), showing a clear gap between operational expectation and committed funding. Combined, these factors push NGOs to resort to alternative coping strategies for funding, and this gap likely contributes to the drawn-out negotiations over programs and budget that ultimately delay PA signing.

OVERALL PARTNERSHIP ASSESSMENT

Both NGOs' and UNHCR's assessment of the state of their partnership is overwhelmingly strong, with 90% of UNHCR and NGO respondents rating the relationship as good or excellent. Further, the majority of NGO and UNHCR respondents rated their relationship over the past three years as somewhat or extremely positive (93% and 95% respectively). NGO and UNHCR staff continue to report solid levels of confidence

in their ability to collaborate on issues of mutual concern (98% of UNHCR staff and 91% of NGO respondents felt moderately to significantly able to collaborate). Finally, 86% of NGO respondents reported having safe and accessible communication pathways with UNHCR colleagues, an indication that NGOs feel confident in their partnership with UNHCR colleagues.

OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNHCR

- **Continue to expand and leverage multi-year partnership and funding opportunities.** Increase the use of predictable funding and longer-term agreements to provide greater operational stability to NGO partners and improve outcomes for target populations. Ensure adequate guidance and training for UNHCR staff on the use of these agreements and that NGO partners are made aware of their availability and how to apply for them. UNHCR regional and headquarters staff should also regularly monitor country offices to ensure they are offering multi-year agreements to partners when appropriate and that, where possible, multi-year partnership agreements align with UNHCR's multi-year strategy in the country. Encourage all UNHCR Country Offices to offer these opportunities to meet NGO partners' demand for longer-term partnership and support operational stability.
- **Expand existing localization efforts and maximize partnership and engagement with Regional Bureaux.** Include more NGOs, particularly local and national NGO partners, in regional consultations, and ensure INGO and LNNGO partners are involved in planning and are able to provide meaningful input for the consultations. Delve into partnership practices to determine region-specific challenges and solutions to maximize localization efforts and achievements.
- **Continue streamlining the PA and reducing the number of information requests outside PA requirements.** UNHCR's recent review of the PA template simplified several critical components, in line with UNHCR's Grand Bargain commitments, and was well received by implementing partners. UNHCR staff should refrain from requesting additional information from partners, unless necessary due to changes in context or dynamics in the course of implementation and accepted in previous discussion/agreement with Partner.
- **Strengthen training and communications on the updated PA and permanent partnership flexibilities across UNHCR Country Offices.** Provide enhanced guidance to UNHCR Country Offices on PAs and permanently implemented partnership flexibilities to ensure adherence to the contractual clauses, especially regarding reporting frequency.

- **Commit to covering the full and fair costs of programs.** Implementing the [Money Where It Counts](#) (MWiC) cost classifications will help UNHCR and NGO partners gain a more transparent, equitable understanding of what it costs to implement a project.³ Dialogue with NGO partners around specific concerns, such as salary costs, to build trust around NGO decision making. Continue actively participating in and facilitating discussions in various multi-agency and multi-stakeholder venues to develop a common cost classification model and a common approach to cascading of overheads to further the overall goal of ensuring that the full and fair costs of programs are covered.
- **Continue to capitalize on the UN Partner Portal, in line with ongoing UN harmonization efforts, and seek to increase the system’s functionality.** For example, use the portal to process e-signing of PAs and relevant documentation and consider incorporating reporting templates and requirements for online submissions as appropriate. Support efforts to improve the notification system for Calls for proposals/expressions of interest and streamline status updates to improve communication with partners throughout the selection and award process.

³ Although UNHCR has not fully adopted MWiC, they are developing a common cost classification that takes into account some of the MWiC principles.

OVERARCHING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NGOs

- **Engage UNHCR Country Offices in a discussion on multi-year partnership options.** Identify how these agreements could result in strengthened programming, including capacity building for local partners. Initiate conversations with UNHCR CO staff on the reasons why multi-year agreements might be best suited for a particular operational context and how they can promote better outcomes for the target population.
- **Continue to share feedback on the UN Partner Portal.** Review the existing system and take note of gaps or areas for improvement. Provide feedback to UNHCR on how the UNPP can be better used to reduce administrative burden and enhance partnerships.
- **Request field-level harmonization trainings from UNHCR on updates to the PA and other policy changes.** Request that UNHCR Country Office staff actively participate in these trainings to ensure that UNHCR and NGO colleagues have the same understanding of the PA clauses and other policy changes. These trainings should focus on standardizing UNHCR and NGO expectations regarding additional reporting requests in order to align with recent and upcoming policy changes.
- **Leverage opportunities for planning and consultation at multiple levels.** Participate in local, national, and regional consultations to build relationships with UNHCR colleagues. Engage UNHCR early to demonstrate an interest in shaping and participating in processes such as multi-year strategic planning, Country or Regional consultations. Consider including UNHCR in internal planning processes to foster trust in internal decision making and prioritization of country program goals.

BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

As the international humanitarian community strives to meet the demands of increasing humanitarian needs, effective and collaborative partnerships between NGOs and UN agencies are of paramount importance. In the past, partnership strengthening initiatives between UNHCR and NGOs have been ad hoc and progress has been difficult to track. Dedicated efforts are required to analyze the range of specific challenges faced in partnership between UN agencies and NGOs, as well into what progress is being made toward resolving those challenges, while determining recommendations to strengthen those interactions.

NGOs are essential to UNHCR's fulfillment of its mandate, as implementers of a large portion of the agency's field programming and recipients of a large portion of its operational budget. However, the relationship between them is often challenged by power imbalances and divergent organizational cultures. For instance, the application of the Principles of Partnership – equality, transparency, results-orientation, responsibility, and complementarity – can vary greatly by operation and the individuals leading them.

Since 2014, InterAction, in partnership with UNHCR's Implementation Management and Assurance Service (IMAS), has conducted an annual survey to examine the state of partnerships between NGOs and UNHCR. This survey allows stakeholders, particularly UNHCR, to better understand and analyze the dynamics between UNHCR and its partners, and sheds light on opportunities for strengthening partnerships to better meet the needs of refugees and affected communities.

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on data gathered via quantitative surveys, with opportunities for optional qualitative comments. InterAction used two separate surveys—one for NGO staff and one for UNHCR staff—to gather both perspectives on salient partnership issues. The surveys were translated and distributed in Arabic, English, French, and Spanish to maximize participation and limit barriers to candid feedback sharing. InterAction developed these questionnaires and updates them annually to appropriately capture feedback on new initiatives based on changes UNHCR has implemented in the survey year, while maintaining questions for points that are unchanged to accurately track changes in the partnership dynamic over time.

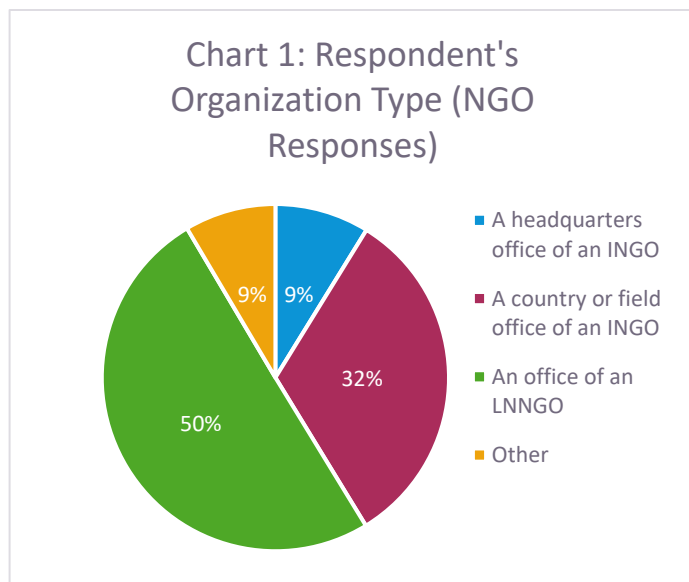
InterAction distributed the NGO staff survey via email to UNHCR’s 2022 funded partners based on a contact list shared by UNHCR. UNHCR distributed the staff survey via email to each of their country offices. To preserve the anonymity of survey respondents, and to empower respondents to answer as candidly as possible, respondents were asked to identify the UNHCR Regional Bureau with which they work most closely, with country-level denotation optional, to develop targeted Bureau-specific analysis and recommendations as appropriate. NGO respondents were also asked to indicate their organization type (local/national or international NGO) to allow for response comparison and determine any gaps or discrepancies.

Note that the authors of this report translated comments from Arabic, French, and Spanish, and have corrected grammatical misnomers where applicable while maintaining the spirit of the comments.

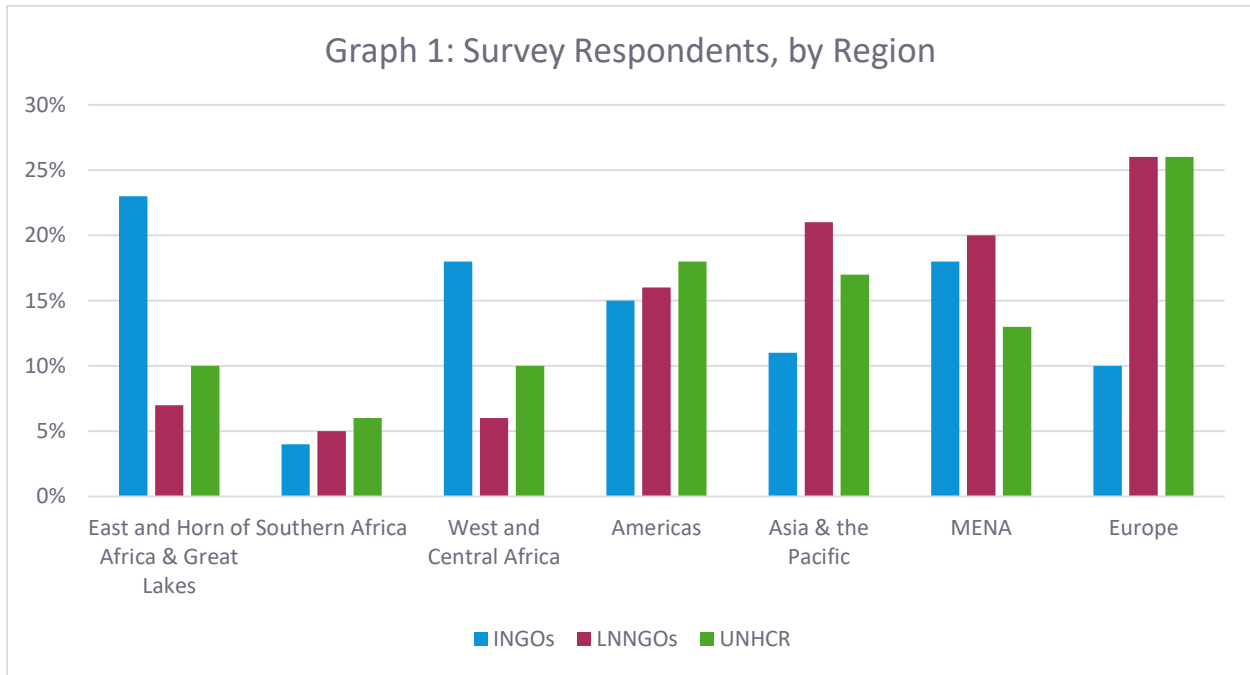
RESPONDENT PROFILE

This report reflects submissions from 155 UNHCR staff and 741 NGO staff. Compared to last year’s survey of 2021 partnerships, slightly more NGO partners responded (up from 723, an overall increase of 2.5%).

Approximately half of NGO survey respondents (348 individuals) were LNNGOs. Of the 286 INGO respondents, 79% were based in a country or field office, while 21% were based in a headquarters office.⁴ The majority of UNHCR respondents (78%) worked at a UNHCR Country Office, while the remaining 22% worked in Sub-Offices or Regional Offices.



⁴ The nine percent of UNHCR partners that identified as “other” include local churches or religious bodies, universities, and/or liaisons with local authorities/communities.

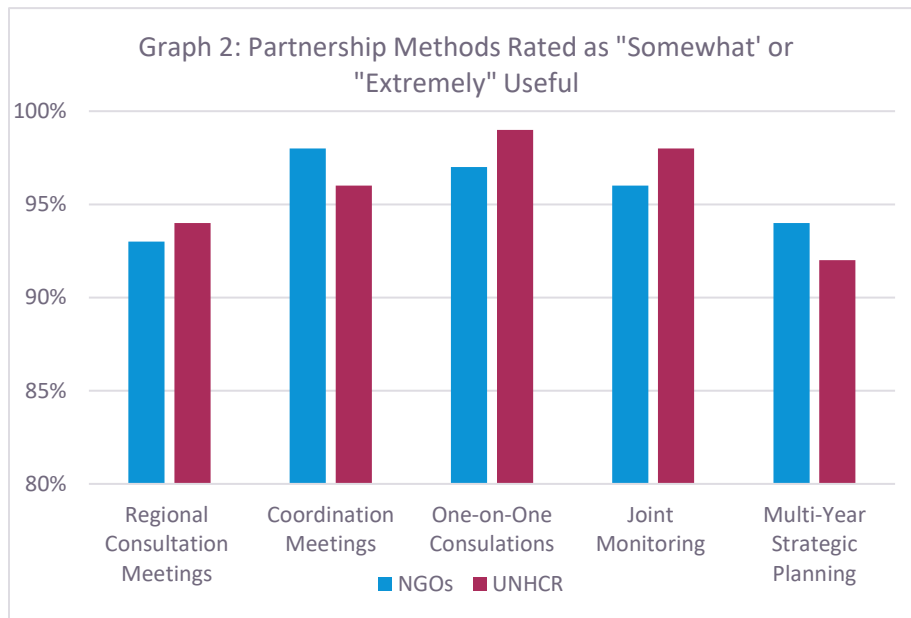


As shown above, the regional distribution of respondents was uneven. The largest proportion (26%) of regional UNHCR responses was from Europe, as was the largest proportion (26%) of LNNGO respondents. By contrast, INGO respondents were more varied, with the largest proportion from East and Horn of Africa & Great Lakes.

FINDINGS

PLANNING AND CONSULTATIONS

New program planning and partnership consultations norms, established during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, continued throughout 2022, with an in-person global partnership consultation in Geneva, in addition to standard one-on-one consultations and planning meetings.



As in previous years, NGOs and UNHCR found all partnership methodologies quite useful, with more than 90% of respondents from both groups rating all methods as “somewhat” or “extremely” useful. This is an improvement from 2021’s survey results, when less than 85% of NGO respondents

found Formal Country Operations Planning and Regional Consultations useful. In 2022, as in previous years, NGOs and UNHCR staff found Coordination Meetings and One-on-One Consultations to be the most useful partnership methods.

One NGO respondent specified,

“While the coordination meetings were quite useful for different respective parties to be up to date on the project, and how they play a role in it, the smaller, often more flexible, one-on-one consultations were most useful [because] they allowed for more direct feedback and advice as well as direct guidance where needed.” – NGO Respondent

Several UNHCR respondents noted potential areas for improvement:

“Regarding the Regional and Global Consultations, the participation and representation is very limited. Regional or global perspectives allow us to identify trends, opportunities, or to learn on best practices. However, the focus might be too general or detached from the local reality.” – UNHCR Respondent

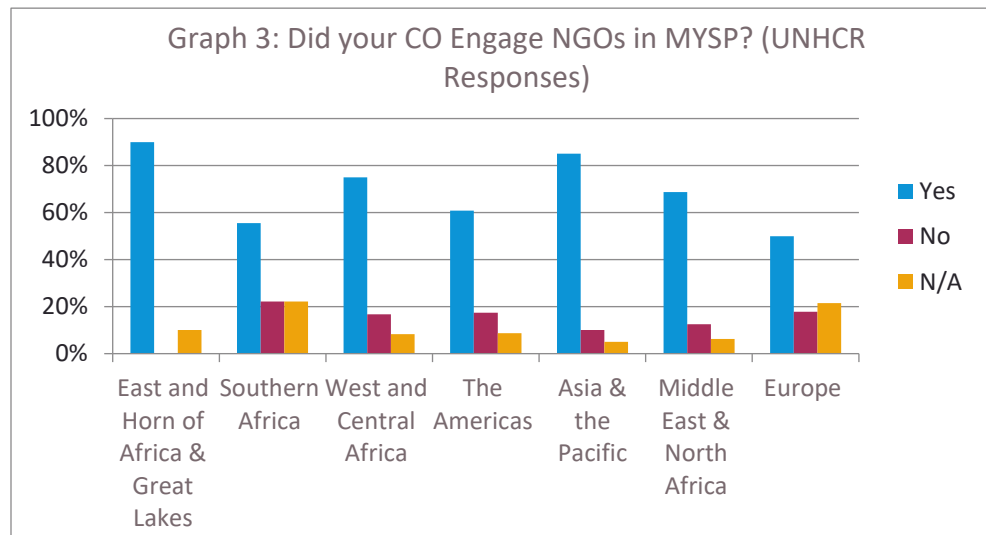
“All consultation exercises are important or valid; unfortunately, one-on-one consultations are difficult to carry out due to time and capacity issues. Also, the challenge of being able to systematize all the information and articulate it during the planning process remains a major challenge.” – UNHCR Respondent

Although challenges remain, consultations are very positively received, indicating that the operational difficulties of remote working environments raised in 2020 and 2021 (linked to the COVID-19 pandemic) have largely subsided and UNHCR is taking steps in the right direction to meaningfully involve NGOs in planning and consultation processes.

MULTI-YEAR STRATEGIC PLANNING

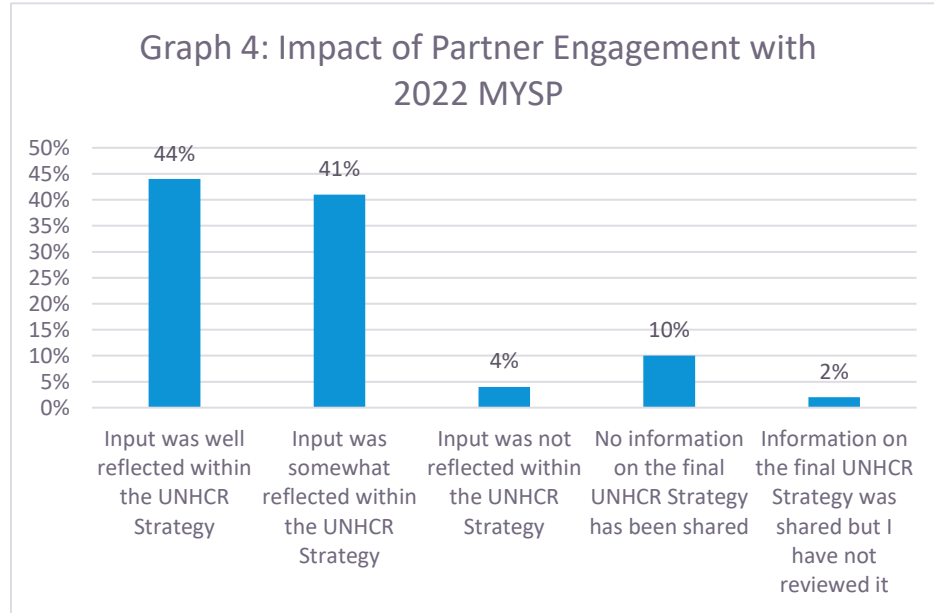
Additionally, InterAction asked NGO and UNHCR respondents more in-depth questions about each partnership process.

UNHCR introduced MYSP meetings in 2021 as part of UNHCR’s transition to multi-year strategic planning. In 2022, the majority of UNHCR respondents (72%)



reported that they did invite NGOs to engage in MYSP. As shown in Graph 3, 13% of respondents answered the question as “Not applicable”, which was explained by UNHCR respondents as due to a number of factors: lack of availability for MY funding because of the country context, due to the timing of the MY

strategic planning roll out process, and/or plans for multi-year projects to start in 2024. The total number of UNHCR respondents who did not invite NGOs to engage in MYSP was fairly small (15%).

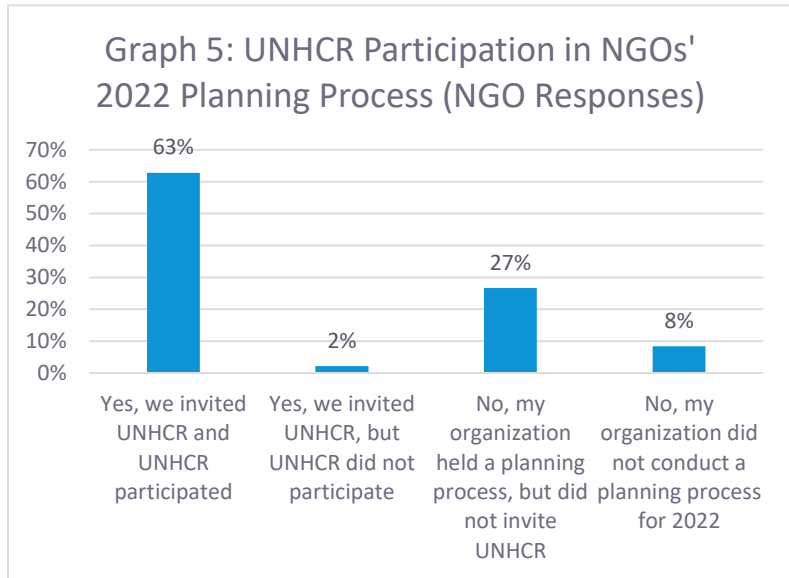


For comparison, NGO respondents were asked about the impact of their organization’s engagement with UNHCR’s MYSP. 85% of respondents indicated that their feedback was either “well reflected” or “somewhat reflected” within UNHCR’s country-level

Multi-Year Strategy, with only 4% of respondents reporting their input was not at all reflected. This is a significant accomplishment, and several survey participants shared ways to further improve MYSP moving forward: one NGO respondent stated that “NGO consultations for Multi-Year Strategic Planning have little impact when the Project Agreement timeframe is still annual.” UNHCR staff shared this sentiment, with UNHCR respondent noting that, “Multi-year strategic planning, while very much appreciated, still requires annual planning and budgeting, so [there is] no real value in supporting long-term planning.” Thus, steps taken to improve access to multi-year programming require additional exploration in planning stages, in addition to financing given the challenge of single-year donor budget cycles upon multi-year financing availability.

COORDINATION MEETINGS

The majority of NGO respondents (65%) reported inviting UNHCR representatives to participate in their own planning processes and that almost all UNHCR representatives who were invited (98%) participated. Of UNHCR respondents, 61% reported being invited to contribute to NGO partners’ annual planning processes, with an additional 19% of UNHCR staff reporting they were not invited,

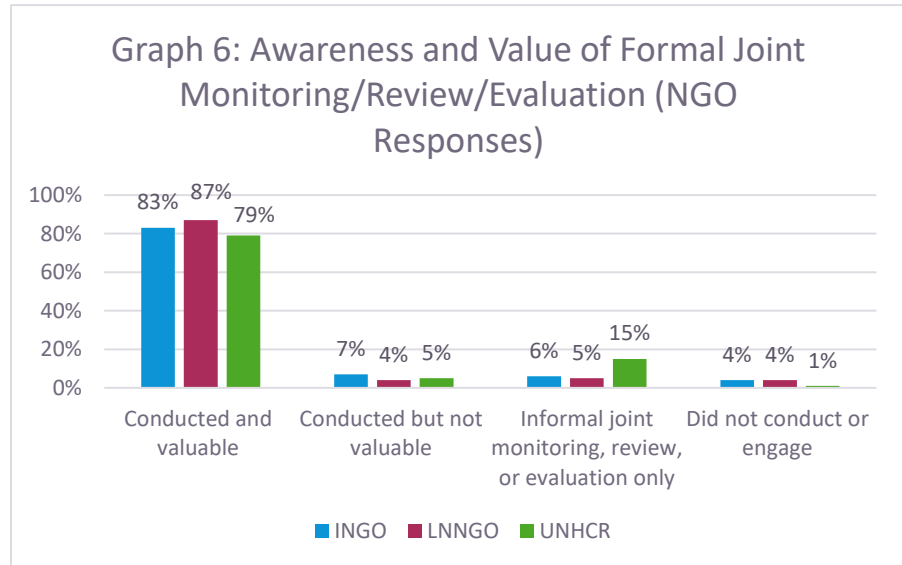


but proactively participated. Approximately 21% of respondents were not invited and did not contribute to NGO planning processes.

Several NGO respondents reflected upon the importance of these coordination meetings, with one respondent stating: “Meetings with UNHCR have been essential since the launch of project activities. Discussion between our project manager and the UNHCR contact person is constant.” While for some, this level of communication might amount to increased burden, most respondents indicated appreciation for UNHCR’s close coordination in this regard. Many NGO respondents who did not consult UNHCR during their planning process indicated that other forms of consultation, such as one-on-one consultations or the PA planning process, were the main coordination methods between UNHCR and their organizations.

JOINT MONITORING

In 2022, most UNHCR (79%) and NGO (85%) respondents conducted a formal joint project monitoring, review, or evaluation of at least one project, as required in the PA, and found it to be a valuable experience. UNHCR, INGOs, and LNNGOs all found joint monitoring to be similarly

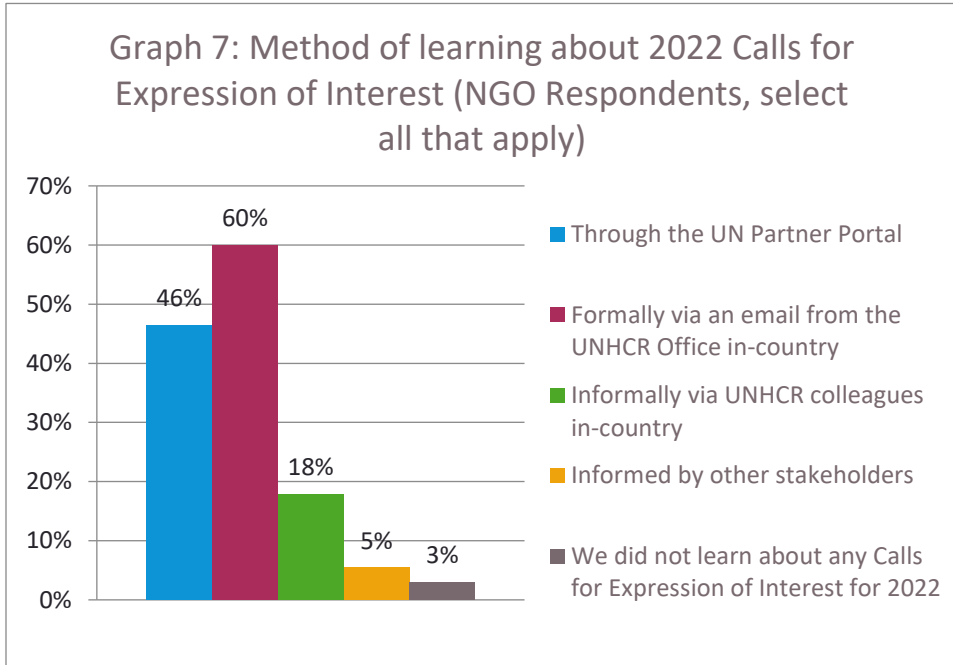


valuable, as shown in Graph 6, with INGOs slightly more likely to find the sessions less valuable.

Overall, while there are issues to address in the partnership planning process, NGO and UNHCR respondents remain satisfied with planning and consultation in 2022, as in previous years.

PARTNER SELECTION

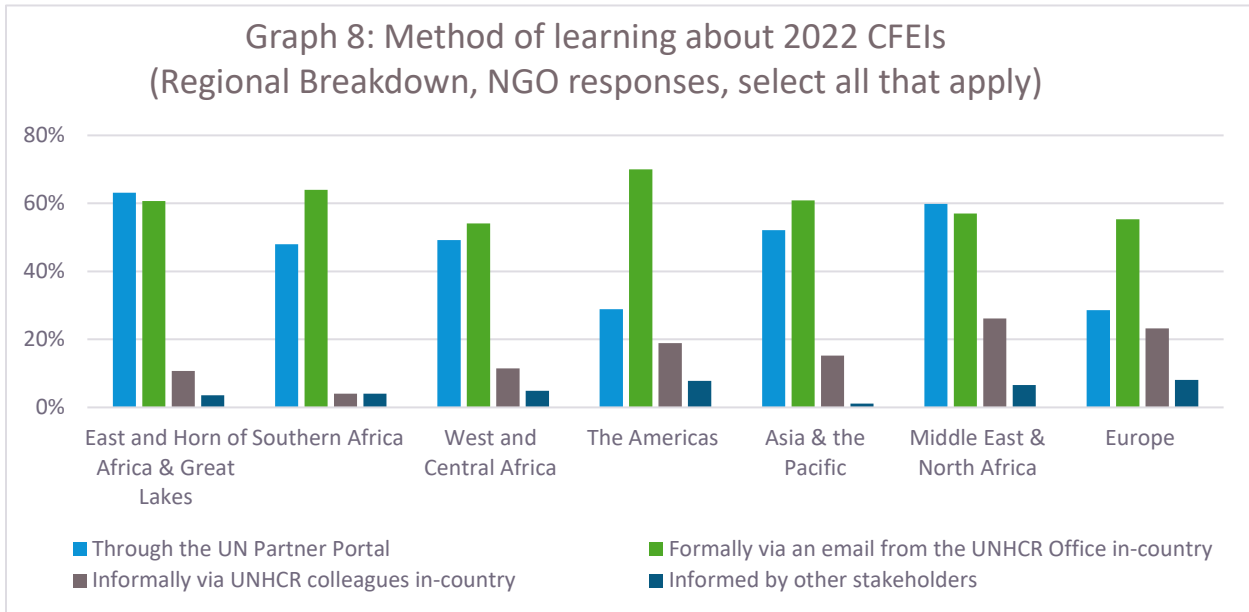
InterAction surveyed UNHCR colleagues regarding their practices for issuing Calls for Expressions of Interest (CFEI), including the number of Calls issued, number of applications received, and time given to NGOs to respond. In 2022, 58% of UNHCR respondents reported that they had issued one or more CFEIs, compared to 56% in 2021. Those that reported not issuing a CFEI in 2022 said that this was due to a combination of UNHCR’s PA/partnership retention policies and country-level operational constraints limiting the usage of CFEI. In terms of volume, 83% of UNHCR respondents said they issued 10 or fewer CFEI in 2022, down from 90% in 2021, and nearly half (48%) reported receiving 10 or fewer applications from NGO partners per call.



NGO colleagues shared how they learned about CFEI. The primary method was via email, followed by the UNPP (reportedly utilized by 46% of respondents, the same as in 2021).

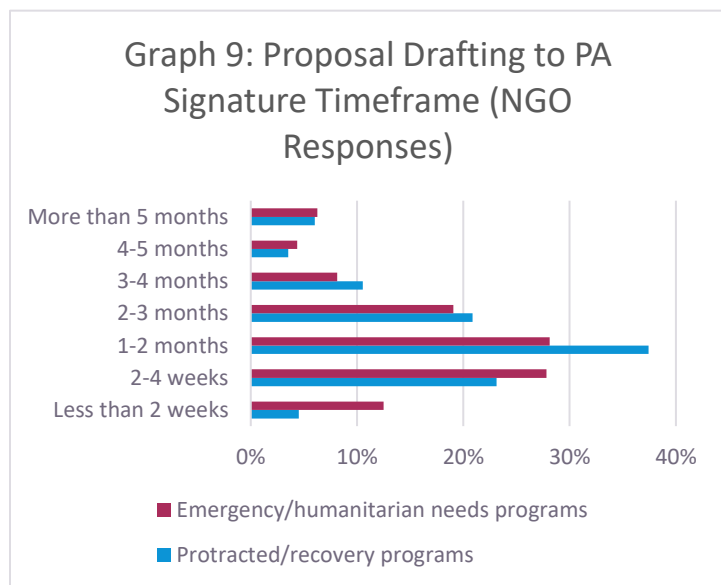
When compared across Regional Bureaux, NGO respondents in the

Regional Bureau for East and Horn of Africa & Great Lakes and Regional Bureau for Middle East and North Africa reported the highest usage of the UNPP for dissemination of CFEI (63% and 60%, respectively), whereas NGOs in the Regional Bureau for the Americas and the Regional Bureau for Europe learned about Calls via the UNPP the least frequently (29% each), as displayed in Graph 8 (next page). Regional analysis, as shown below, enables UNHCR to take a regionally-targeted approach to address issues of concern – in this case, UNHCR can investigate why the UNPP is more popular in some regions than in others and determine steps that will maximize its utility for all Country Offices.



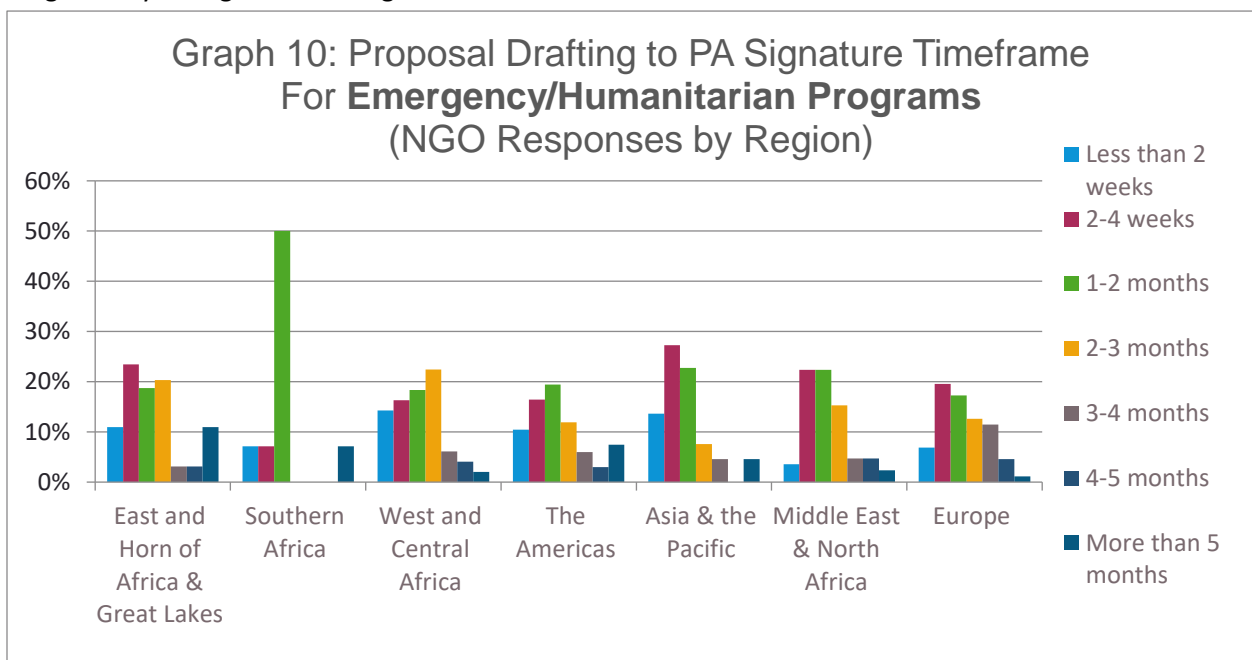
In addition to methodology, the survey investigated timeframe for CFEIs and overall time committed to proposal process from issuance of CFEI to PA signature, to evaluate UNHCR and NGO perceptions of the timeline. UNHCR respondents reported that half of CFEIs in protracted and recovery contexts are open for 1–2 months; in emergency and humanitarian contexts, the majority (58%) are open for 2–4 weeks. Most NGOs (89%) reported that these timelines are sufficient to prepare proposals, though several noted that it is difficult to comply with strict proposal guidelines within short timeframes, especially for multi-sectoral proposals that require disaggregated budgets.

In contrast to submission windows, NGOs (shown at right) reported that the average amount of time between receipt of CFEI to signing a contract was longer. In 2022, 68% of emergency programming contracts were signed within two months and 86% of protracted/recovery contracts within three months. 10% of NGO respondents noted significant contract delays of 4+ months, on average. However, although several NGO respondents found contract deliberations prohibited implementation,



especially for project extensions or continued programming, the majority outlined that standard practice includes program signature before expected program start date.

As shown below, there appear to be regional differences in typical drafting to signature timelines, which aligns with overall NGO feedback that the timeline varies widely across CFEIs, Country Offices, and even sometimes from sub-office to Country Office in the same country context. Some of these delays are due to the need for tripartite agreements (i.e., those needing to be signed by the government as well), causing longer delays in signature timing.

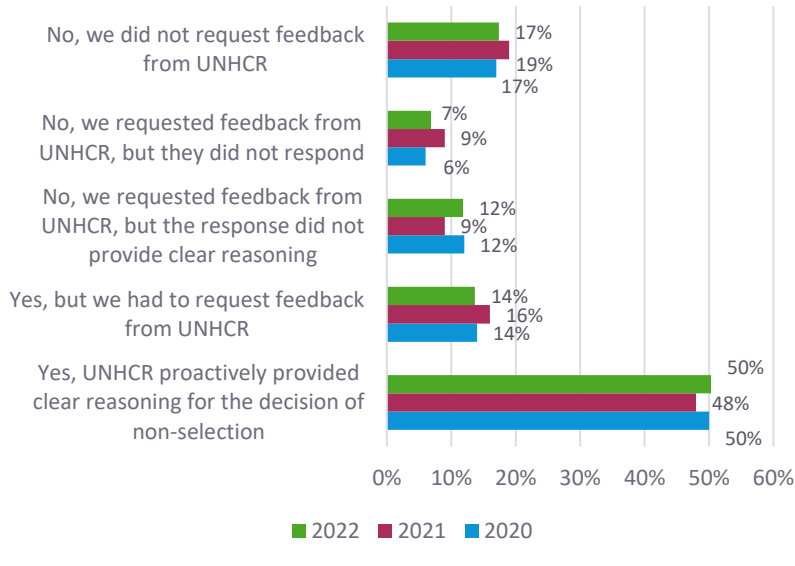


PARTNER SELECTION PROCESS

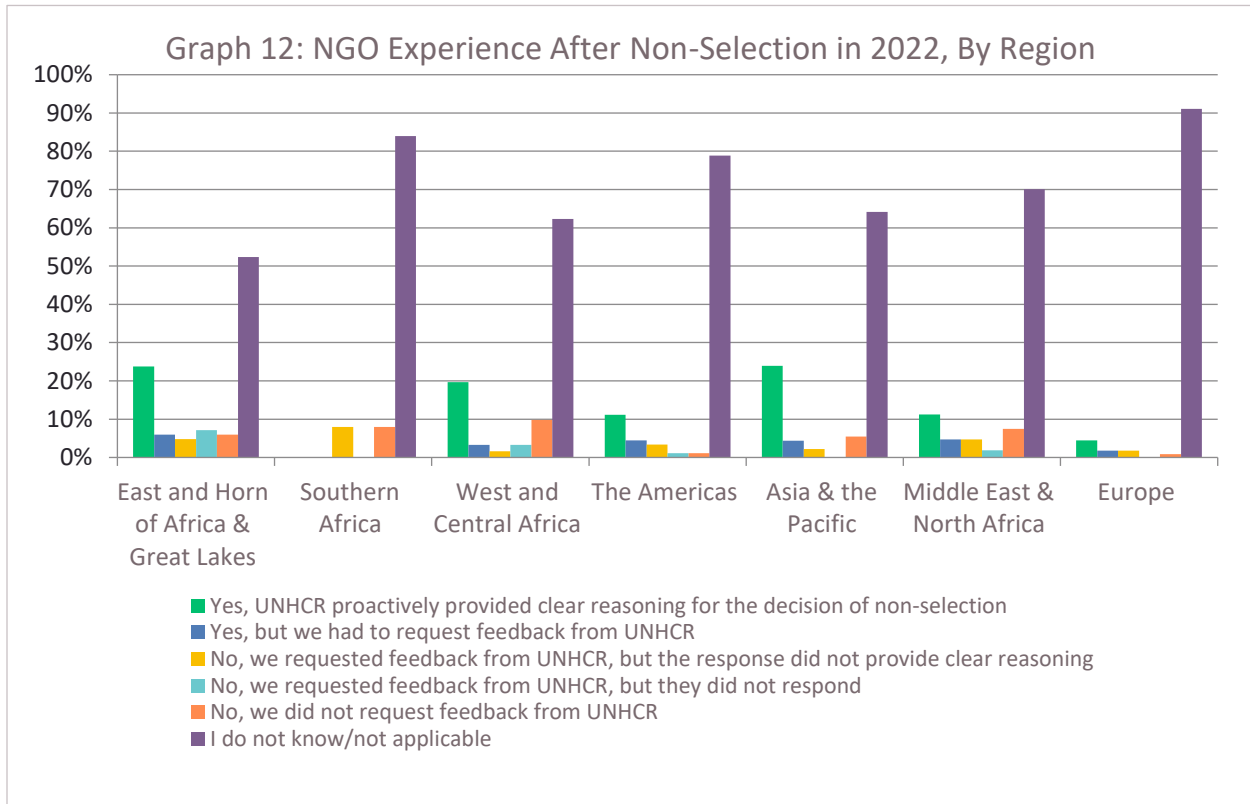
InterAction also asked NGOs about their perspectives on the partner selection process, particularly in regarding communication of non-selection for awards. Of those who indicated that they applied for a partnership project but were not selected, half reported that they received proactive and clear reasoning

from UNHCR when not selected for a 2022 project, a slight increase from 2021 (48%). Although there is negligible difference in the percentage of INGOs and LNNGOs who had to request feedback from UNHCR (33% compared to 31%), INGOs were twice as likely to request feedback and receive unclear or no responses (26% of INGOs said they received unclear or no response, compared to 13% for LNNGOs). Finally, 20% of NGO respondents reported receiving

Graph 11: NGO Experience after Non-Selection



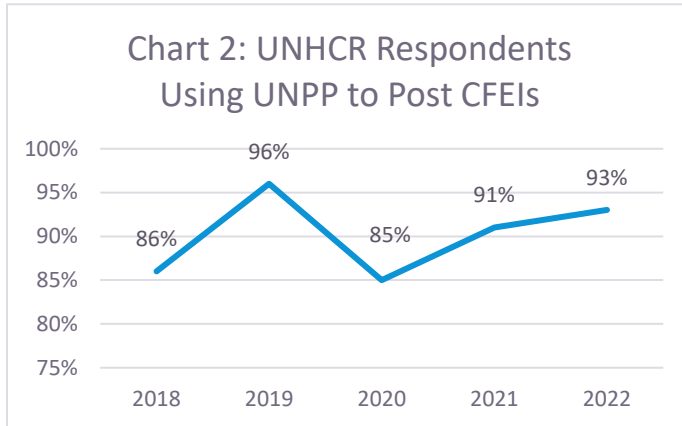
unclear or no feedback at all from UNHCR in 2022, comparable to responses in 2021, 2020, and 2019 (19%, 18%, and 18%, respectively), as shown in Graph 11. Overall, NGO reports of UNHCR’s post-submission practices have remained consistent.



From a regional perspective, Graph 12 (above) shows that UNHCR operations in most regions proactively provided clear reasoning for non-selection to NGOs. This was least commonly done in the Middle East and North Africa (38% of NGO respondents said UNHCR proactively explained non-selection of NGO partners). NGO responses from Southern Africa are an anomaly; however, NGO feedback indicates that this is because most NGO respondents affiliated with the Southern Africa Regional Bureau were selected for partnership and therefore the non-selection experience was not applicable to them.

UN PARTNER PORTAL

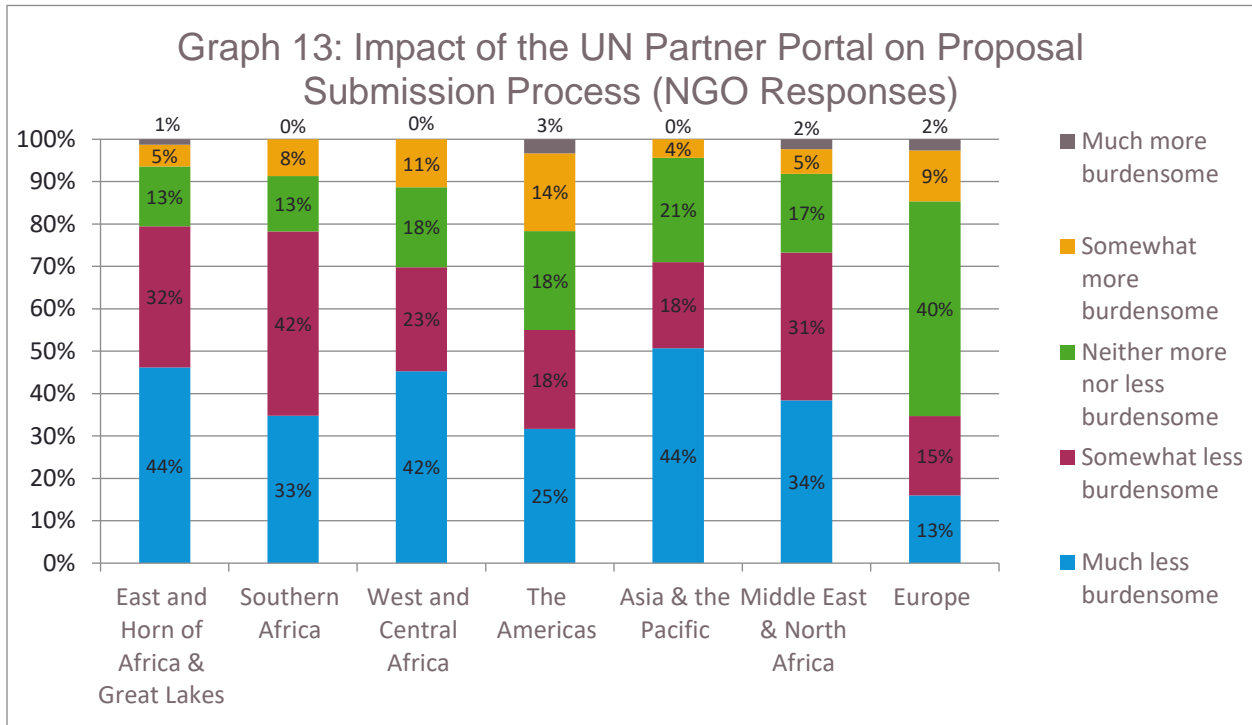
As outlined above, the UN Partner Portal (UNPP) is a key platform to support UN-NGO partnerships, especially when it comes to publication of CFEI. UNHCR has intentionally maximized use of the UNPP and streamlined the proposal submission process, so NGOs and UNHCR staff have been surveyed upon the use habits and utility of the portal since its inception. In 2022, 98% of NGO respondents (98% of INGOs and 96% of LNNGOs) report that their organizations are registered on the UNPP, with very few respondents indicating that they do not ever plan to register and use the portal (1%, n = 6).



Although 93% of UNHCR respondents reported using the portal to post CFEIs in 2022, less than half of NGO respondents learned about Calls through the UNPP in 2022, showing a discrepancy between UNHCR and NGO perceptions of UNPP usage. However, this is due in part to UNHCR’s partner retention policy, which enables continuation of programming from year to

year for ongoing contexts/programs.

When it comes to utility, NGOs and UNHCR agree that the UNPP improves the UNHCR–NGO partnership process: 65% of NGO respondents (67% of LNNGOs, 58% of INGOs) feel that the portal makes the proposal submission process less burdensome than in the past, similar to the 61% of UNHCR respondents who find that the UNPP somewhat or very positively impacts their CO’s partnership agreement management processes. Regionally, NGOs working within the Bureau for East and Horn of Africa & Great Lakes and the Bureau for Southern Africa had the highest approval ratings: 76% and 75%, respectively, noted that the UNPP made proposal submission somewhat or much less burdensome than in the past.



Although the majority of respondents indicate positive impacts from the UNPP, several highlighted aspects of the UNPP that merit further investigation:

“The perception is that the partner portal is still seen as a compliance tool for participating in Calls for expression, but not as an operational tool for consultation.... Some partners perceive it as confusing and with many information requirements.” – UNHCR Respondent

“We have mixed feelings about it. As much as the UN Partner Portal allows us to exchange key information with other agencies and partners, the new grass-root organizations or POC-led organizations do not know the Portal. Hence, we observe that the application through the portal may signify an additional level of complexity on these smaller organizations.” – UNHCR Respondent

Feedback on the UNPP outlined a growing discrepancy. While UNHCR is posting more CFEIs on the portal, the percentage of NGO respondents who learned about CFEIs through the UNPP is relatively low. This demonstrates a need for improved notification systems to alert NGOs of posted CFEIs. Additionally, more

trainings, especially video instructions, are needed to familiarize UNHCR and NGO staff with the UNPP interface and functionality. Respondents clearly noted the portal’s potential if several key components are addressed⁵:

- Technical issues such as lack of user-friendliness, no notification system, and frequent crashing;
- Lack of awareness of user training for the UNPP, which is especially an issue for smaller NGOs and new implementing partners⁶;
- Lack of a functional module for PSEA evaluation and other relevant resources⁷;
- Platform errors such as being unable to view concept notes submitted via the UNPP, and inability to modify Calls for expression of interest after they are posted;
- Harmonize UN agencies’ use of the UNPP to avoid duplication and maximize streamlining efforts.

Of these proposed functionality improvements, **the most commonly requested was the implementation of a notification system for status updates on CFEIs submissions**. Although the UNPP does have a notification system for status updates, the blend of online and offline processes to manage CFEIs does present a challenge and, as such, UNHCR should do more to ensure that its offices maximize the use of the UNPP for the full partnership selection life cycle.

MULTI-YEAR STRATEGIC PLANNING

UNHCR introduced Multi-Year Partnership Agreements (MYPAs) in 2019, offering longer term opportunities for partnership agreements in several pilot countries. UNHCR then expanded the option for MYPAs to all COs, with varying levels of uptake based on the operational context, programmatic needs of vulnerable communities, and funding availability. Given the challenging contexts in which UNHCR operates, Country Offices utilize MYPAs where possible and, globally, UNHCR is transforming its partnership management framework to ensure more predictability for partners and better alignment with its Multi-Year Strategic Planning methodology to meet humanitarian needs with limited funding visibility.

⁵ InterAction has also flagged these areas of concern in the 2020 and 2021 Annual UNHCR-NGO Partnership Survey reports and, as of time of writing, these remain unchanged in a significant way.

⁶ The UNPP does have a partner-facing resource library that includes user guides and videos, located at <https://supportcso.unpartnerportal.org/hc/en-us>. However, the lack of awareness by many partners indicates that UNHCR and the UN must do more to publicize the availability of these features.

⁷ At the time of writing, this issue has been addressed and a PSEA module was launched in 2023.

In 2022, 82% of UNHCR respondents reported inviting NGO partners to participate in Multi-Year Strategic Planning (MYSP), a significant increase from 2021 when 88% of UNHCR respondents indicated that they did not provide these opportunities. (The few respondents that indicated MYSP did not take place in 2022 said that it will begin in 2023 or 2024.)

Beyond the existence of MYSP, InterAction aimed to evaluate its usefulness and offer recommendations for improvement. The majority of UNHCR (92%) and NGO (94%) respondents found MYSP somewhat or very useful. This shows that, not only has UNHCR listened to NGO requests for expanded multi-year partnership opportunities, but it has developed and is implementing appropriate solutions to resolve the MYSP challenges NGO partners face. This is a welcome shift that recognizes the longevity of partnerships and operations in many humanitarian contexts. When asked to reflect on participating in multi-year processes and provide feedback for improving them in the future, respondents noted:

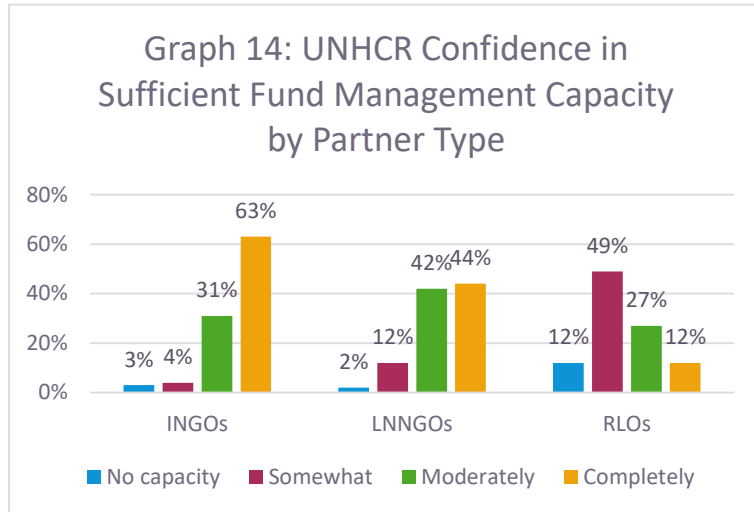
“MYSP enables us to provide feedback on the challenges in our area of work and to jointly plan adequate actions, assess achievements and future challenges, and place our focus on most important things.” – NGO respondent

“Country-level MYSP [also] played an important role in that partners were able to plan towards long-term goals and found better ways to have them achieved.” – UNHCR respondent

“MYSP is useful for analyzing the context in terms of [programming needs]. This allows activities to take into account trends and relevant political factors, as well as the dynamics of migration flows.” – NGO respondent

One UNHCR respondent did share a critique of MYSP, however, noting that “NGO consultation for MYSP has little impact when the PA timeframe is still annual,” a sentiment with which several NGOs agreed. The effort undertaken by UNHCR thus far is greatly appreciated by NGO partners as evidenced by survey responses, although expansion of multi-year funding opportunities to all contexts and partners is dependent upon the discretion of the country office, its strategy, funding received from back donors, and operational context. As UNHCR continues to address key partnership issues and capitalize upon recent changes, aligning multi-year strategies with increased availability of multi-year partnership opportunities is a fundamental step to success.

CAPACITY AND LOCALIZATION

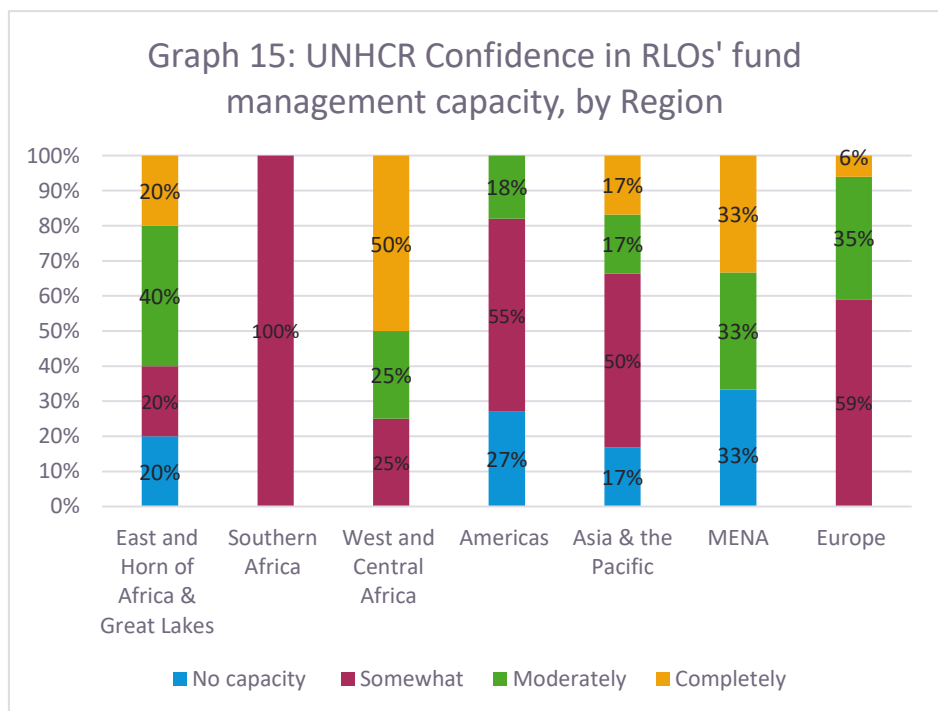


Given the importance of localization and of refugees themselves to UNHCR’s partnership practices, the 2022 survey added Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs)⁸ to questions about partner capacity assessments, reflecting the introduction in 2021 of a light, small grant agreement modality specifically designed for RLOs. UNHCR respondents indicated high levels of confidence in INGOs’ and LNNGOs’ capacity to

manage UNHCR funding (94% and 86%, respectively, indicating moderate to complete confidence in their partners’ abilities to manage funds). For the new category of RLO partners, 49% of UNHCR respondents indicated that they are only somewhat confident in RLO partners’ capacity to effectively manage partnership funding. As

shown at right, confidence varies significantly between and even within regions, indicating that targeted capacity strengthening of RLO partners is necessary.

Several UNHCR respondents offered explanations for this discrepancy:



⁸ For the purposes of this report, RLOs are defined as an organization led by forcibly displaced, stateless people, and/or members of the host population.

“[Level of confidence] really depends on the partner, more than their classification as INGO or NGO. For refugee-led orgs, this needs to be reviewed more deeply, as of now we have not made financial verifications on them. However, their financial structure is limited. We have plans to evaluate this further in 2023.” – UNHCR Respondent

“Many RLOs do not yet have the capacity to effectively manage full-fledged UNHCR PA funding (but have enough capacity to manage RLO funding up to < USD 4,000 USD). This is why the RLO agreement is an interesting tool to expose RLOs to the management of UNHCR granting process, finance management requirements, and collaboration with UNHCR. Eventually the same RLO—if they qualify—could in the future work under full-fledged PA funding.” – UNHCR respondent

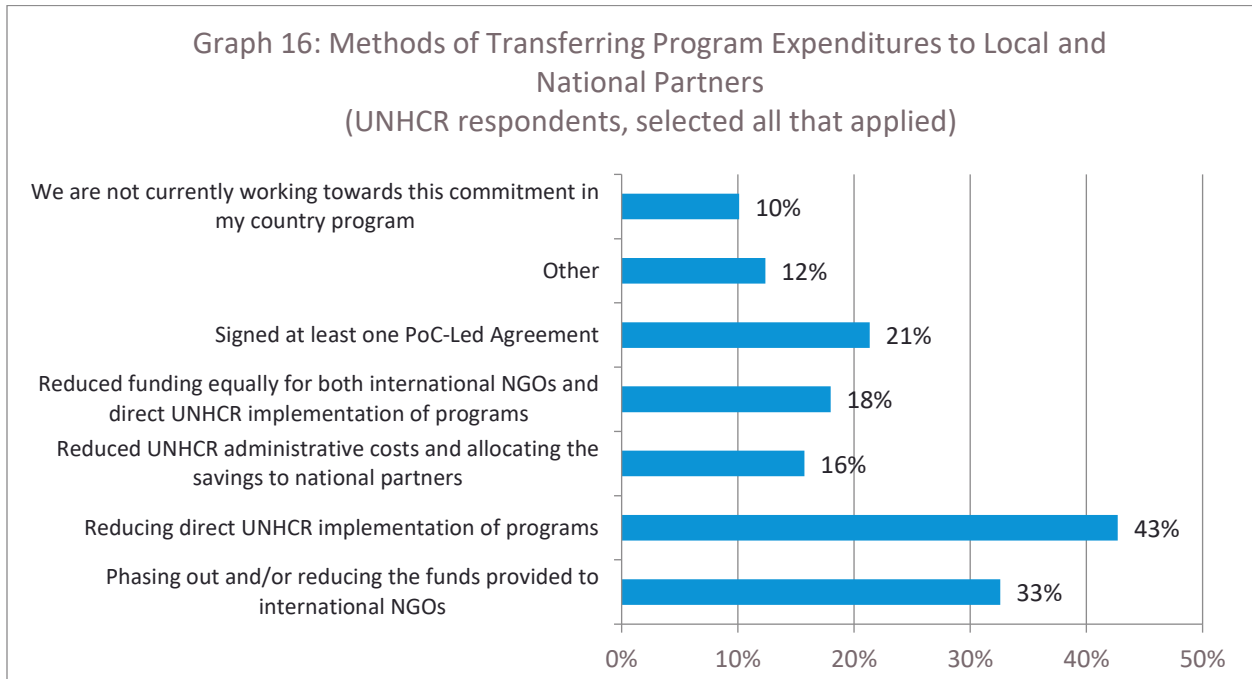
UNHCR respondents stated that RLOs will need support to improve in several areas, including grant and finance management, governance structures, and administrative and budget capacity. However, RLOs do face distinct challenges that international and local organizations often do not; as one participant reported, a lack of documentation⁹ prohibits RLO access to some capacity building opportunities. To address the confidence gaps, UNHCR should facilitate equitable access to capacity strengthening resources, such as financial management and organizational strategy trainings, to maximize localization efforts and expand support to RLOs.

LOCALIZATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

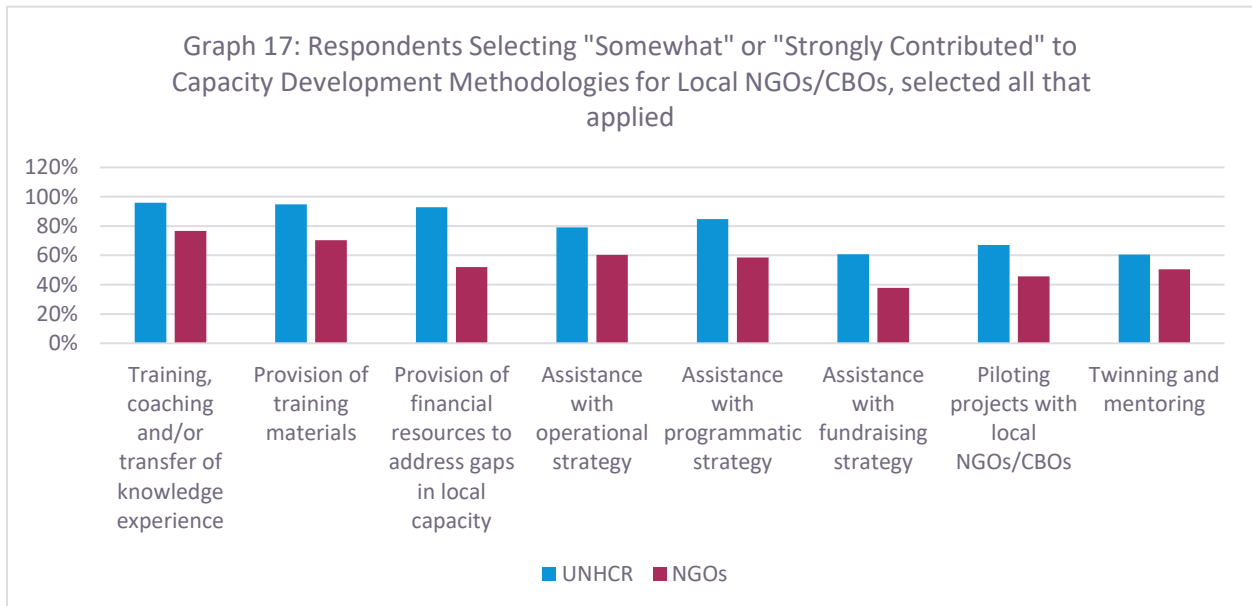
As a Grand Bargain¹⁰ signatory, UNHCR committed to minimizing links in the humanitarian funding chain and transferring at least 25% of its program expenditures to local and national responders by 2020. Although UNHCR successfully achieved or exceeded this commitment between 2019 and 2021, 2022 saw a decrease in funding percentage (down to 23%). The drop in proportion of expenditure implemented by local and national partners was largely a result of the Ukraine situation, where UNHCR directly implemented large-scale cash and in-kind assistance programs. When asked how they pursued the Grand Bargain commitment at country level, many UNHCR respondents noted they reduced direct UNHCR program implementation and phased out or reduced INGO funds.

⁹ No specifics were shared to maintain anonymity, but presumably “documentation” means either an individual’s documentation/permit to prove their legal residence in the area or an organization’s documentation/permit to legally operate in the area.

¹⁰ For more information, visit <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/content/grand-bargain-hosted-iasc>.



Capacity building is often seen as key to supporting localization efforts. In 2022, the majority of UNHCR’s efforts to support local capacity were transferring knowledge/experience through training and coaching; providing training materials; and providing financial resources to address local capacity gaps (96%, 95%, and 93% of UNHCR respondents, respectively). For NGOs, the most common approach was transfer of knowledge/experience through training and coaching (77%).

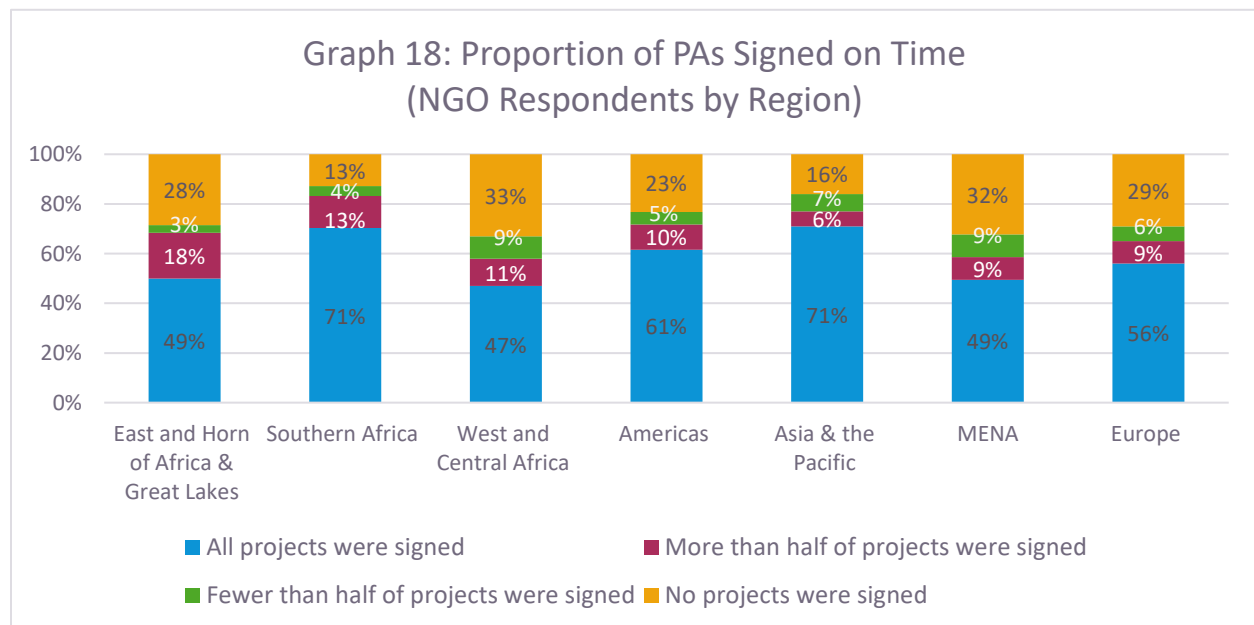


The least common forms of capacity building reported by UNHCR staff were twinning and mentoring, and assistance with fundraising strategies (61% for each), with minimal variation across regions. Similarly, the least common form of assistance provided by INGOs was assistance with fundraising strategies (38%). Importantly, UNHCR and NGOs are reporting overall increases in capacity development support compared with 2020 and 2021, a significant accomplishment for the sector.

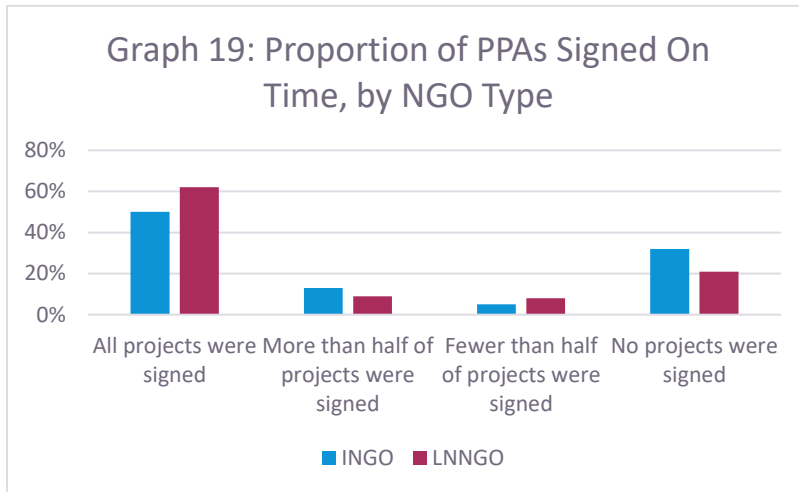
PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

Partnership Agreements (PAs) are a significant component of partnerships between UNHCR and NGOs. In 2022, UNHCR only introduced small tweaks to partnership agreements to reflect its new Results Based Management structure and results framework, and otherwise continued to focus on ensuring operations were aware of the major changes to the PA template implemented the previous year (fewer annexes; a simplified risk and capacity assessment for partners; increased budget flexibility and simplified installment plan). Although these changes are much appreciated, PA signature delays remain one of the biggest stumbling blocks for program implementation, given that PAs are essential to partners beginning program activities.

Further investigation into signature times is shown below in Graph 18. NGO respondents in Southern Africa and Asia & the Pacific reported the highest number of PA signatures on time: 71% of NGO respondents in these regions reported that all their PAs were signed by the intended program start date,



a significant achievement. By contrast, other regions faced challenges in timely signature of PAs. Approximately 1/3 of NGOs reported that none of their PAs were signed on time in East and Horn of Africa & Great Lakes, West & Central Africa, MENA, and Europe. In these regions, more investigation is required to determine the root causes of the delays and develop appropriate solutions where possible.

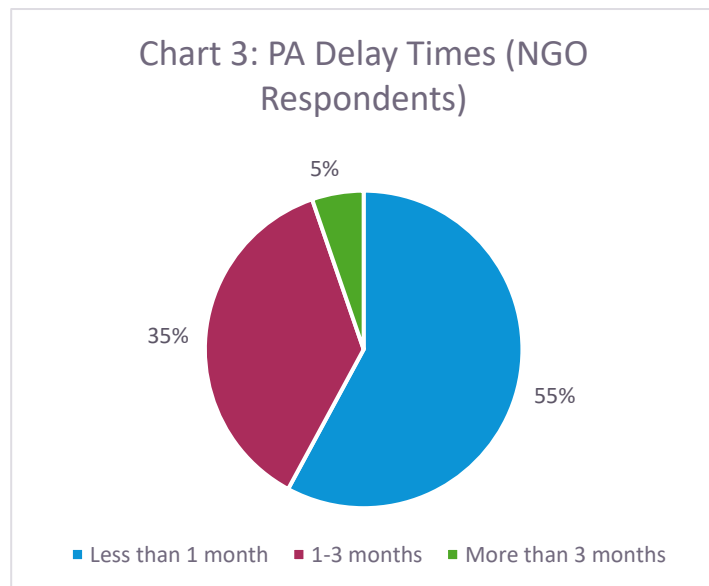


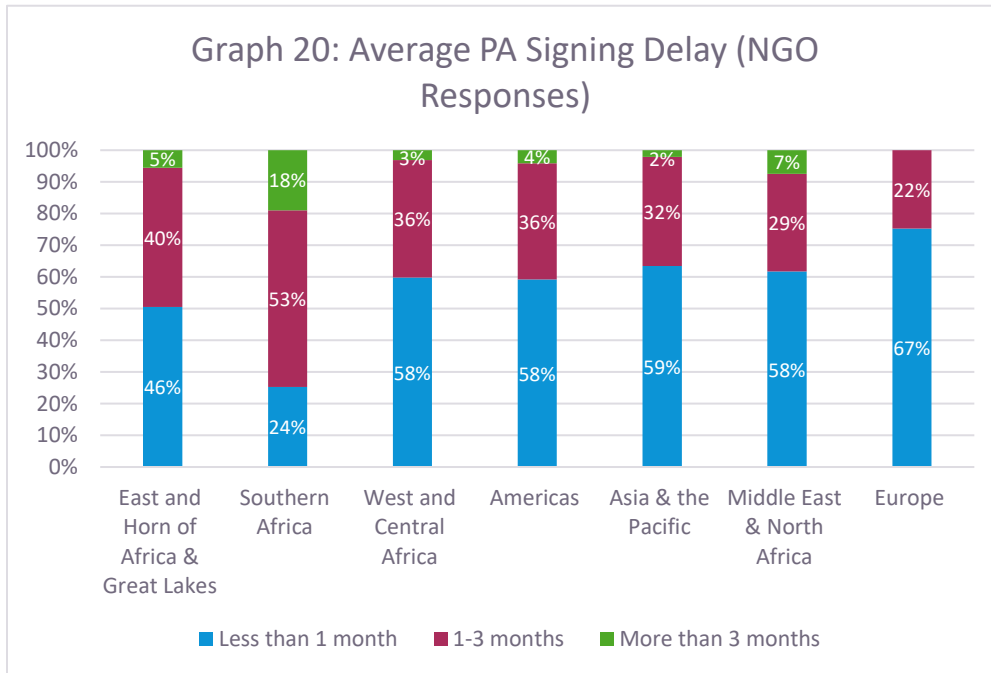
The survey revealed discrepancies between INGO and LNNGO experiences in contract signature delays. In 2022, more than half of NGO respondents (57%) indicated that all of their PAs were signed prior to January 1/planned program start date. However, INGOs report higher rates of signature delay than their LNNGO counterparts: 50% of

INGOs reported all projects were signed on time, compared to 62% of LNNGOs, and 32% of INGOs reported that none of their PAs were signed on time, compared to 21% of LNNGO respondents.

PA DELAYS AND ROOT CAUSES

InterAction also asked about the average delay times for the 43% of NGO respondents who experienced delays in PA signatures, as these can seriously impact the efficacy and efficiency of NGO partners' humanitarian interventions. As shown in Chart 3, 55% of the delays were less than 1 month in duration, a significant improvement from 2020 where 1–3 months was the most commonly reported delay (by 44% of respondents).





Survey results revealed regional discrepancies in delays. As shown above, West and Central Africa and Europe experienced the shortest delays, with 94% and 89%, respectively, of PAs in those regions signed within 3 months of

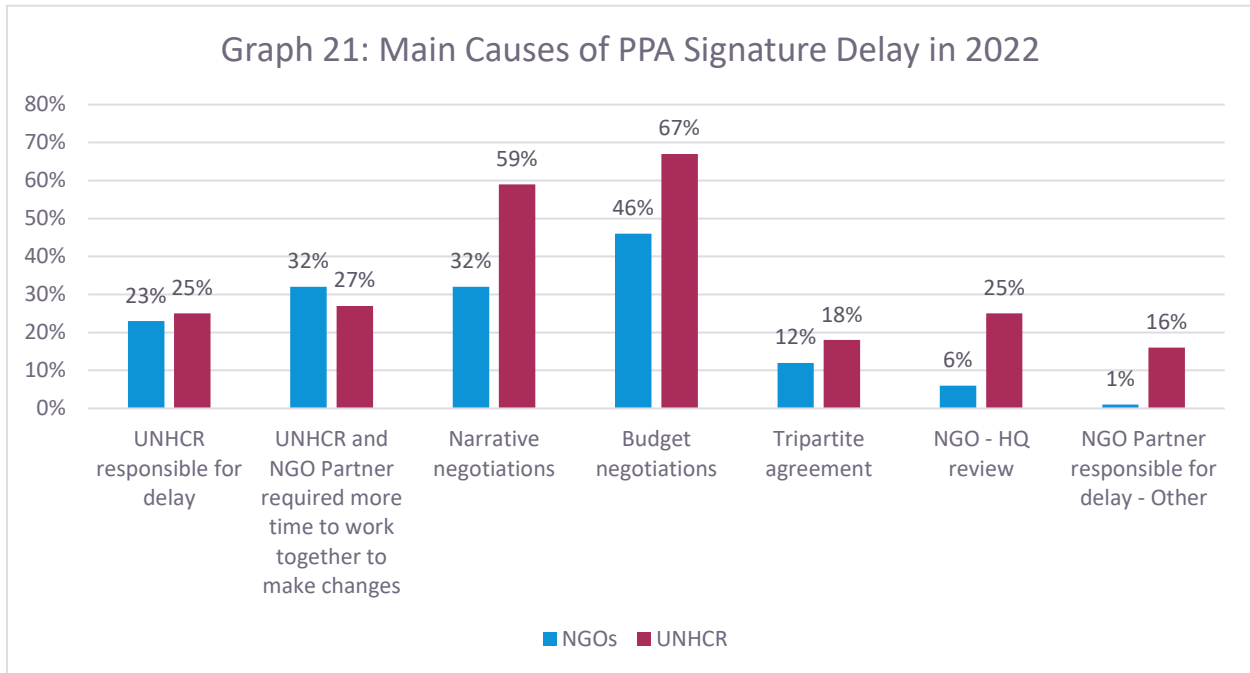
Jan 1/the project start date. Southern Africa had the highest rate of significantly delayed PA signatures, with 18% of respondents noting that the average PA signing delay was more than 3 months. There was no major difference between INGOs and LNNGOs with regard to delay times.

These delays present significant risk to implementing NGOs, especially with regards to program continuity and operations; the longer the delay, the more harmful the impact, especially for PAs linked to continuation programming. Several NGO respondents shared the impact of delays upon their operations:

“We can’t conduct any activities in the camp if there is a [PA signature] delay.” - NGO respondent

“Indicators keep changing before and after signing the PA, a lot of back-and-forth meetings and emails to agree on the PA and each time we [go] back to the first block... leaving the partner stressed and frustrated, [and] staff not using their leaves or having personal time.” - NGO respondent

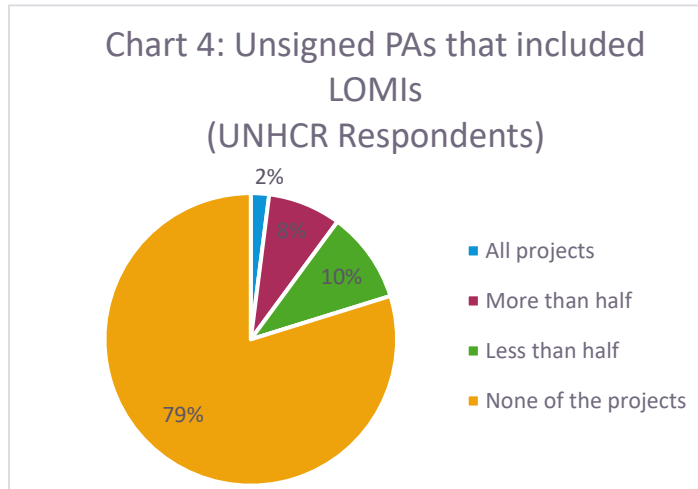
“We [could only] conduct activities such as coordination with local authorities, NGOs and other activities that did not require budget [expenditure].” – NGO respondent



Given the harm that delays can cause, it is important to accurately determine the major causes so that they can be addressed. In 2022, as in previous years, budget negotiations are the main cause for delayed PA signing, as indicated by 45% of NGOs and 66% of UNHCR respondents. Project narrative negotiations and joint UNHCR–NGO changes were also selected frequently by UNHCR and NGO respondents. Although there is no difference in responses from region to region, there is a discrepancy between INGOs and LNNGOs: INGOs were more likely to perceive delays as caused by UNHCR or due to the budget than their LNNGO counterparts (30% and 47%, respectively, compared to 19% and 44%).

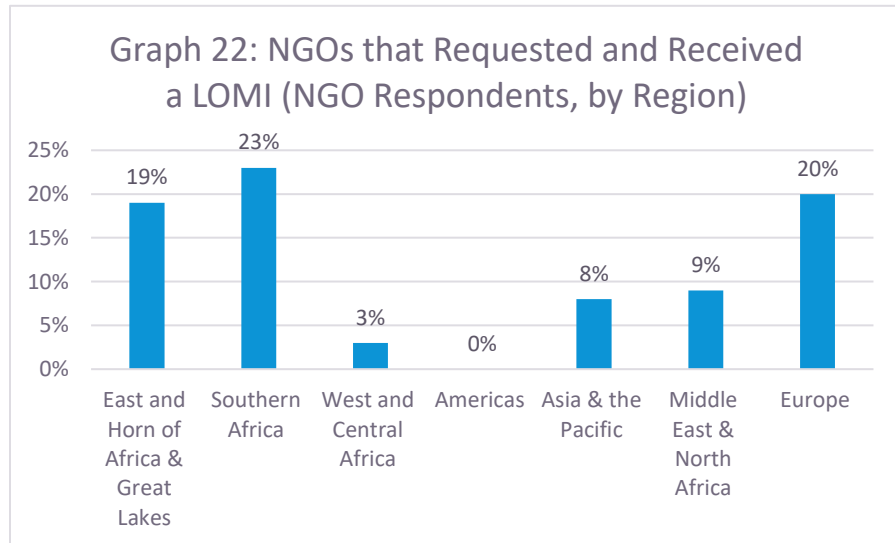
Both UNHCR and NGOs tended to perceive the other as the reason for PA signing delays. This is likely due to each party’s perception of the main sticking point. For example, from UNHCR’s side, a budgetary issue must be addressed by the NGO either through program activity or budgetary revision, leading UNHCR to perceive the delay is caused by the NGO. From the NGO perspective, if UNHCR requests changes to the budget, then they would perceive the delay to be caused by UNHCR.

LETTERS OF MUTUAL INTENT



To bridge signature delays and gaps in program implementation, UNHCR can issue Letters of Mutual Intent (LOMI) to NGO partners. However, only 21% of UNHCR respondents indicated having used LOMIs on any PAs in 2022. Similarly, only 11% of NGO respondents who experienced PA signature delays reported receiving LOMIs to bridge the gap between start date and PA signature.

Although LNNGOs and INGOs reported receiving similar percentages of LOMIs (10% compared to 12%), geographically, NGOs in Southern Africa, Europe, and East and Horn of Africa & Great Lakes most often received LOMIs before project start dates (23%, 20%, and 19% respectively), with West and Central Africa reporting only 3% and the Americas reporting none. Given the limited number of LOMIs reported, it is likely that the majority of LOMIs are being issued by a minority of UNHCR



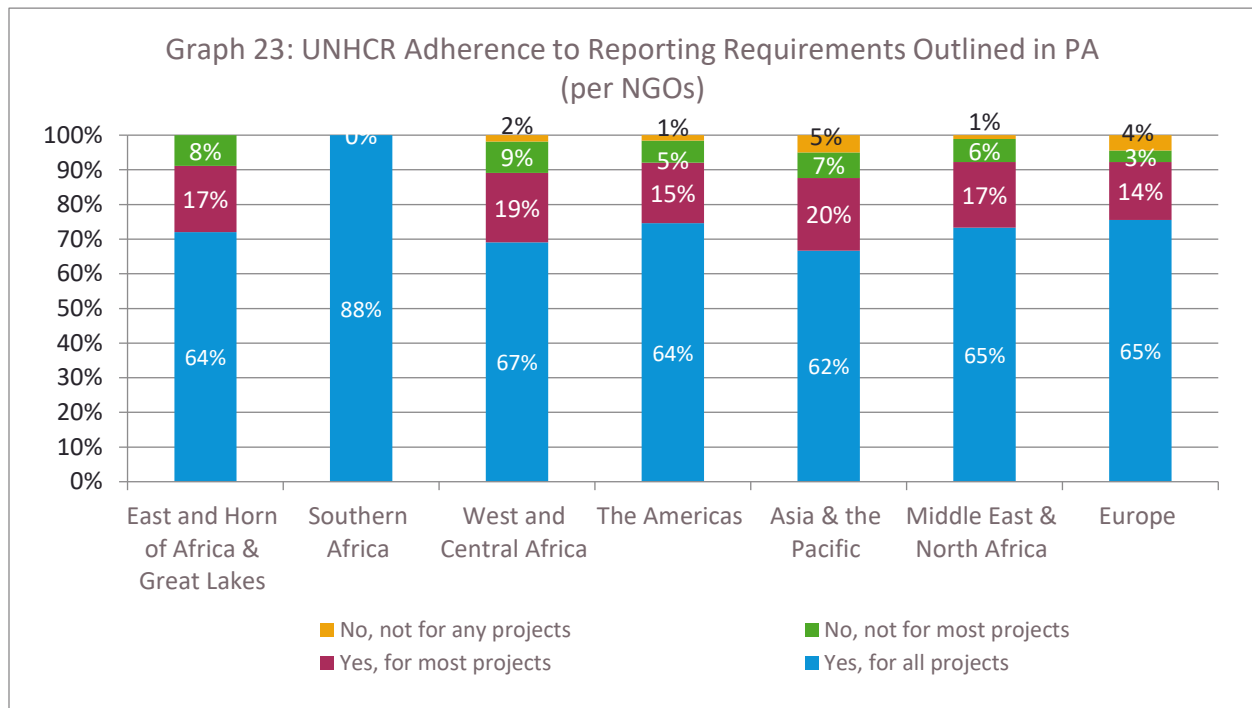
Country Offices, and LOMIs are therefore not being used universally to fill the gap caused by PA delay.

This presents a significant financial risk to UNHCR’s NGO partners. Without a signed PA or LOMI, NGOs either cannot start on time—thus affecting the community they aim to serve—or are forced to assume responsibility for implementation costs, should they begin performance and the process fall through. Moreover, because PA signatures vary in terms of retroactivity, NGOs’ ability to fully and fairly cover costs

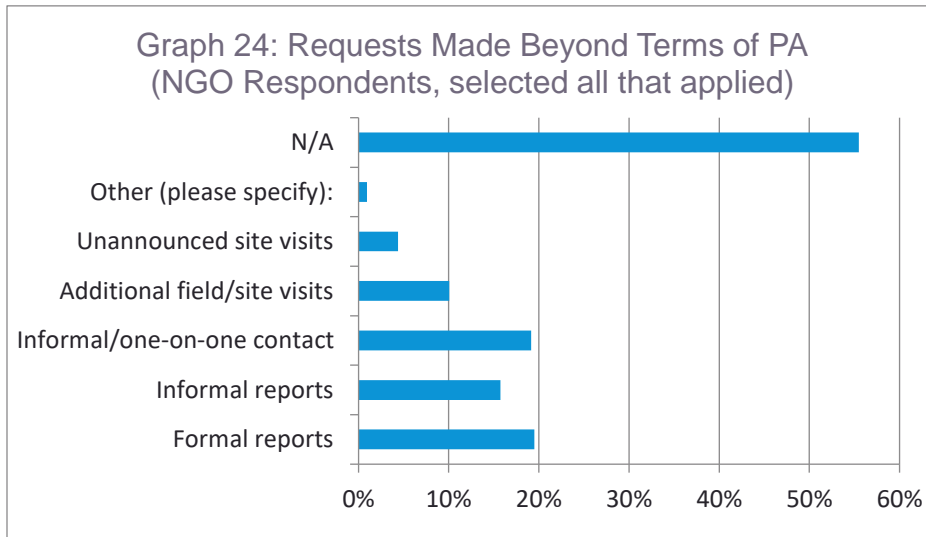
for UNHCR-funded programs incurred before the date of signature is affected. Both risks place undue financial burden upon NGO partners that significantly impact their ability to implement programs. UNHCR should consider the expanded use of LOMIs to reduce risks for implementing partners.

ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR permanently instated funding flexibilities, including reduced reporting requirements to limit administrative burden upon NGO partners. To gauge the efficacy of these measures, survey respondents were asked about the application of these flexibilities. Based on participant feedback, UNHCR colleagues in the field are progressively adhering more closely to PA stipulations for reporting, demonstrating commitment to overall reduction of administrative burden on NGO partners.



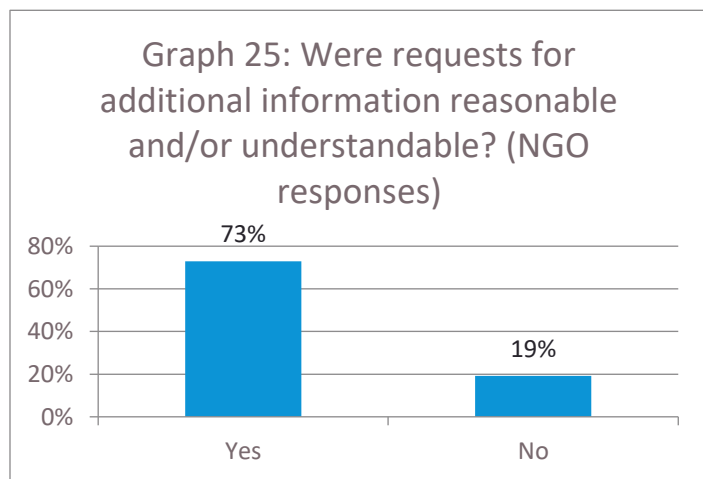
Most NGOs (91%) reported that UNHCR does adhere to reporting requirements outlined in PAs. However, qualitative feedback did reveal that UNHCR makes requests beyond the terms stipulated in the PA. This was particularly true in West and Central Africa and Asia & the Pacific, where 11% and 12% of respondents, respectively, indicated that UNHCR did not adhere to the reporting requirements outlined in the PA.



Of those who reported additional requests were made, the most common requests were for formal reports, informal/one-on-one contact, and informal reports (reported by 20%, 19%, and 16% of NGO respondents, respectively). The N/A

responses shown above demonstrate a significant overall reduction in administrative burden. Just 35% of NGO respondents reported requests for additional informal reports from UNHCR, a 55% decrease from last year’s 77%.

This year’s survey questionnaire asked participants whether these requests for information were considered reasonable by NGO respondents; as show in Graph 25, the vast majority of NGOs (73%) found these additional requests for information reasonable and/or understandable. However, the administrative burden on NGOs who are still asked for additional reports and monitoring/evaluation processes remains a clear concern. NGO respondents shared the following challenges:



“The purpose of the site visits was not shared always, weekly reports were required, sometimes with additional information that exceeded the indicators in the project.” – NGO Respondent

“Sometimes the request was reasonable, but the timeframe provided to respond to it was too tight.” – NGO Respondent

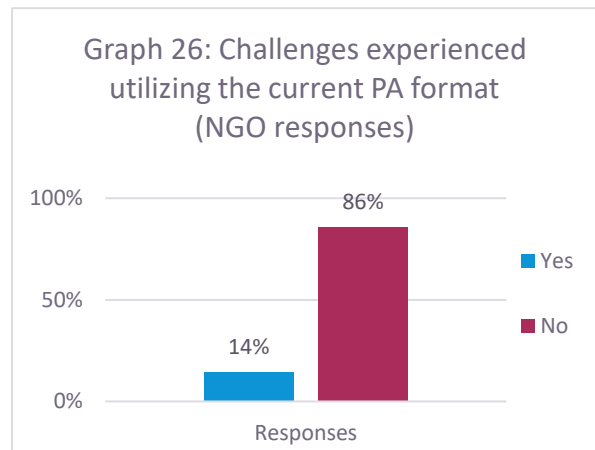
UNHCR feedback somewhat mirrors NGOs’ responses. 27% and 23% of UNHCR respondents stated that they had requested additional formal or informal reports from NGO partners, primarily via informal/one-on-one contact (reported by 37% of UNHCR respondents). Explanations for additional requests include:

“Most of the requests for information are prompted by the changes in the operational environment in order to inform programmatic decisions and develop further implementation guidance. Some of the additional information is requested from partners for the purpose of donor reporting.” - UNHCR respondent

“We usually don't ask. We will only request if there is any significant change in the local scene, activity or organization - a case that will require further investigation and follow-up.” - UNHCR respondent

PA UPDATES

In 2020, UNHCR updated the PA for 2021 PAs and beyond. The 2022 survey requested feedback from NGO and UNHCR staff on implementation of the new PA in its second year. Overall, the majority of NGO respondents (86%) reported experiencing no challenges utilizing the current PA format.

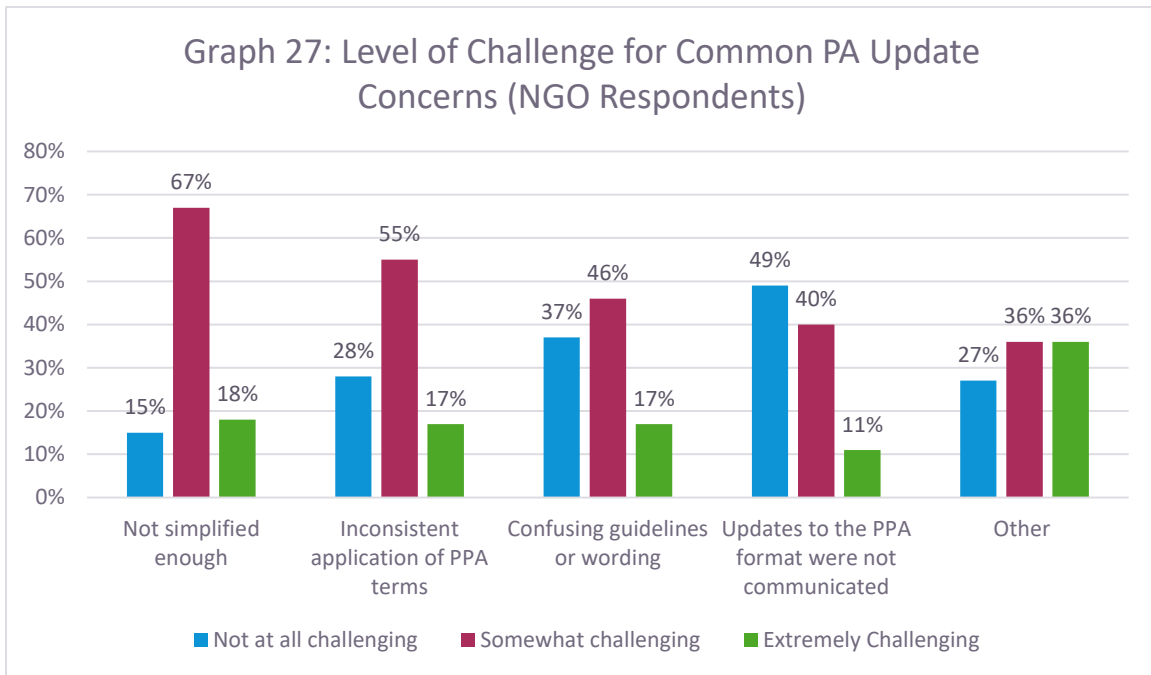


Those that did experience challenges with the PA update were asked about a range of specific challenges and how challenging they found each one. NGOs reported the primary difficulties as limited simplification, inconsistent application of PA terms, and confusing guidelines or wording (see Graph 27 below). In their own words:

“Sections regarding the mapping of the affected population were not clear enough, but during our direct discussions with the [UNHCR] programme team they supported us in filling in the section.”

– NGO respondent

Other NGO respondents noted that interpretation and enforcement of the new PA changes are dependent on the UNHCR Country Office, and NGOs are therefore unable to fully benefit from the intended simplification measures.



UNHCR respondents also noted some challenges. A majority (60%) of UNHCR respondents reported some issues due to confusing guidelines or wording. Not receiving notice from headquarters of updates clearly and far enough in advance were second- and third-most reported challenges experienced (51% and 59% of UNHCR respondents, respectively). Specifically:

“Changes in the [PA] format came in a short notice, and with short time for partners and UNHCR to comprehend and implement the changes.” - UNHCR respondent

“The process of communicating changes, or formalisation of changes, within UNHCR was still rather too late and too ad-hoc. Still somewhat confused by the changes over the last couple of years.” - UNHCR respondent

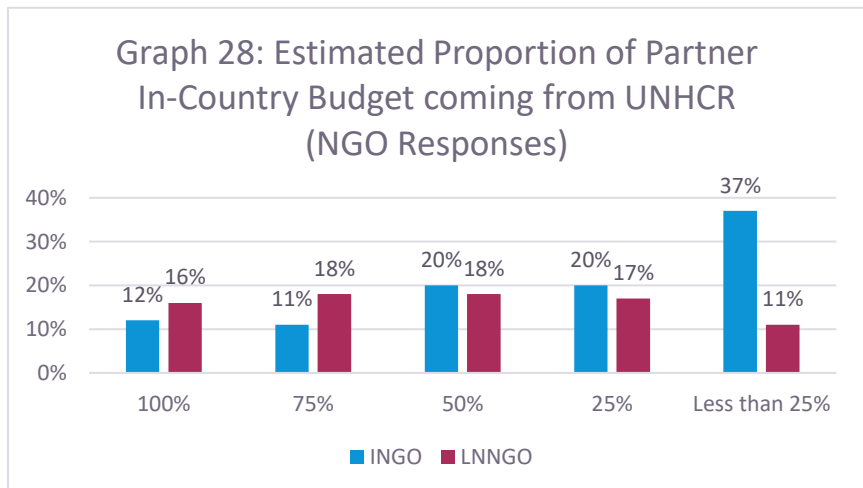
“There were certain contradicting clauses related to the sharing of personal data of PoCs within the Partnership Agreement including in the sample Annex C published on Intranet, mostly related to the retention of those data for audit purposes.” - UNHCR respondent

“Delayed communication in the introduction of new account codes and the separation between budget and expenditure codes made it difficult to do budget and cost analysis, and for mapping account codes on the partner side.” - UNHCR respondent

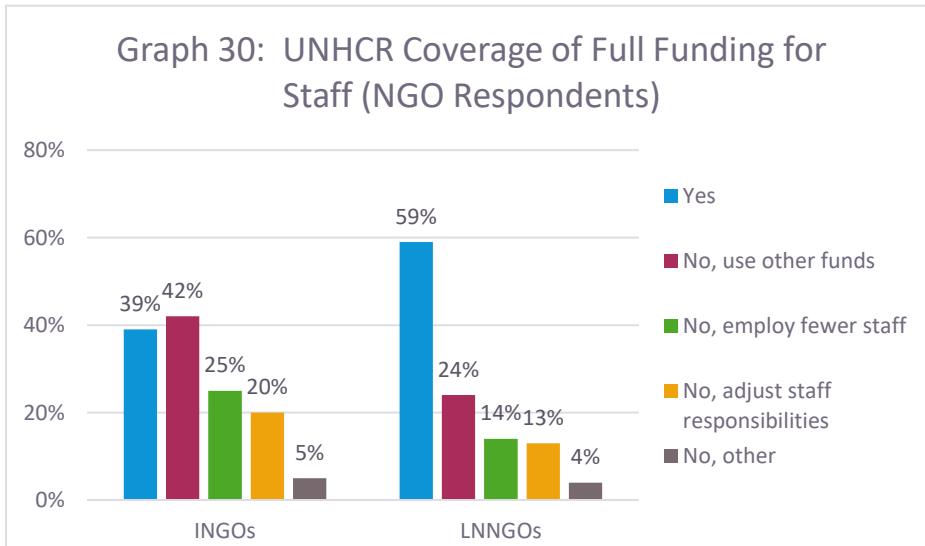
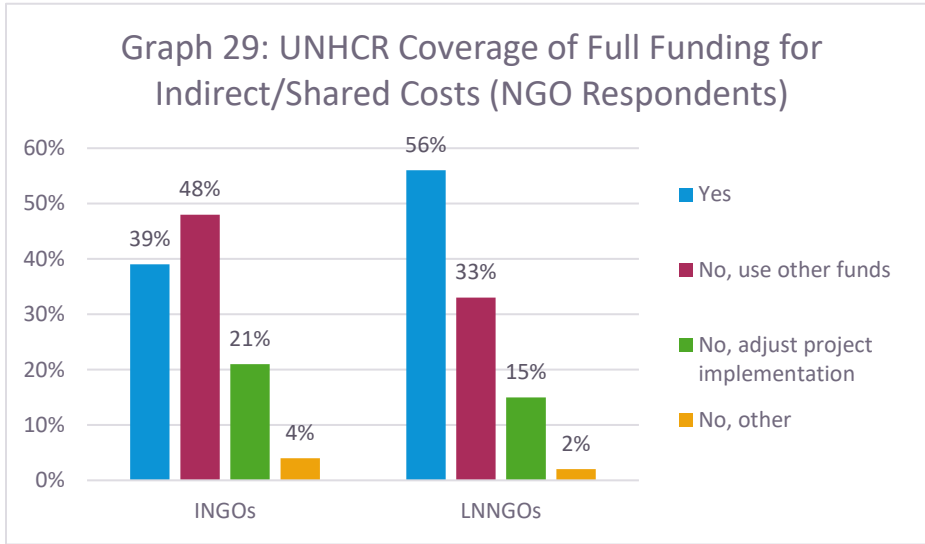
Despite these concerns, there is noticeable improvement, which was well received by UNHCR and NGOs.

UNHCR FUNDING IMPLICATIONS

To better understand the funding support dynamic between NGOs and UNHCR, InterAction asked NGO partners to share the proportion of their in-country budget provided by UNHCR and reflect on the potential effect that reduced UNHCR financial support would have on their programming. Survey results indicate that NGOs continue to draw a significant amount of their funding from UNHCR. 47% of NGO respondents reported that at least half of their 2022 in-country budget



came from UNHCR funding. Overall, LNNGOs reported greater dependence on UNHCR for funding (52%, as opposed to 43% of INGOs, indicated that half or more of their budget comes from UNHCR).



InterAction also asked NGOs whether UNHCR project budgets provide full and fair funding for staff and other indirect or shared costs. For both, approximately half of responding NGOs reported that UNHCR fully and fairly covered costs (51% for staff and 50% for indirect or shared costs). LNNGOs were more likely to be satisfied with the funding than INGOs (57% for staff costs and 55% for indirect/shared costs, compared to 43% and 41%, respectively, for INGOs). NGOs were slightly less positive

regarding coverage of indirect and shared costs. The gaps between costs and what UNHCR provides pushed NGOs to resort to alternative coping strategies; most commonly, using other funding. In their own words:

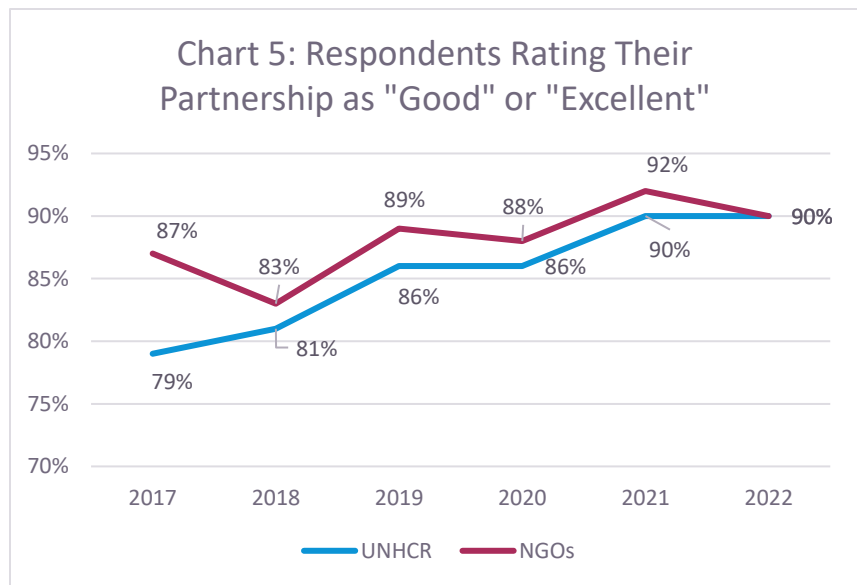
“Due to budget constraints, we were unable to compensate staff members in alignment with current market rates.” - NGO respondent

“We utilize our own funds to cover part of the management costs and to widen the scope of project implementation.” - NGO respondent

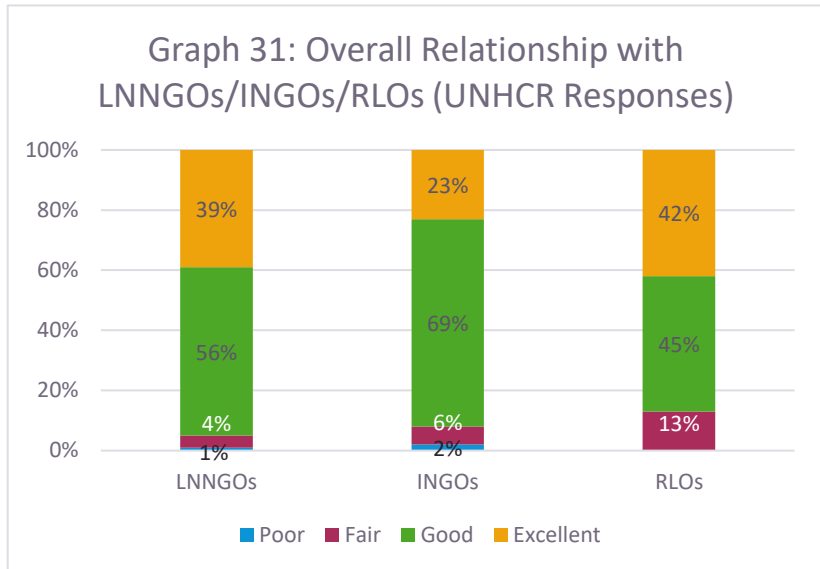
Many NGO respondents were forced to employ fewer staff or adjust staff responsibilities and project implementation to meet personnel policies and cost parameters defined by UNHCR. NGOs reported that making such operational and programmatic adjustments resulted in reduced program quality, a decrease in sick and long-term leave coverage during a pandemic, reduced salaries and benefits, and an unfair workload on their staff, all of which transfer significant risk to NGO organizational operations. Combined, these factors likely contribute to the drawn-out negotiations over programs and budget, which delay PA signing. In the long-term, expecting NGOs to cover these costs and/or risk delivering sub-par programs is unfair to funded partners. UNHCR should work to fairly cover to be a more equitable partner.

OVERALL PARTNERSHIP ASSESSMENT

To better understand perceptions of UNHCR-NGO partnership more broadly, InterAction asked respondents to reflect on their ability to address areas of mutual concern, communication, and overall partnership in 2022. 90% of UNHCR and NGO respondents rated the relationship as good or excellent, which is largely consistent with 2021 responses.



In 2022, UNHCR respondents rated partnership with LNNGOs, INGOs, and RLOs separately, to evaluate different partnership types, as shown in Graph 31. UNHCR respondents were slightly more favorable regarding their relationships with LNNGOs than with INGOs (95% as “good” or “excellent” compared to 92% of INGOs). Based on feedback received, this is largely due to the

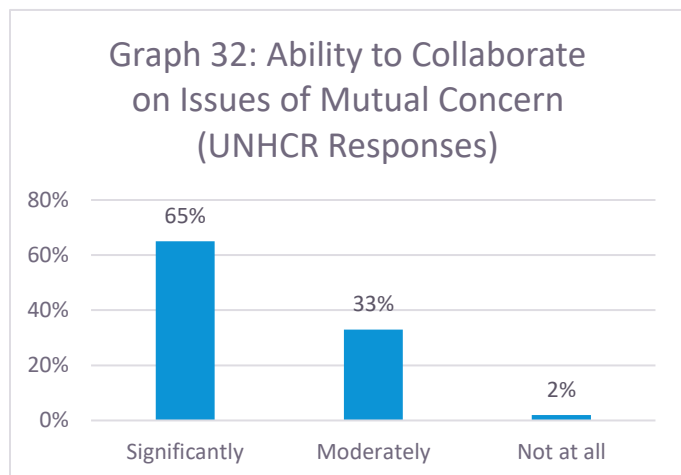


types of partnerships that vary from country context to context as each Country Office partners with different total numbers of INGOs, LNNGOs, and/or RLOs.

When asked to rate the extent to which COs treated funded partners as equals in 2022, 64% of UNHCR respondents that worked with RLOs reported a 4 or 5, in contrast to 89% for INGOs and 78% for LNNGOs. This notion of an equitable working dynamic between UNHCR and RLO funded partners could be an area focus for improvement as COs become better equipped to work with RLOs.

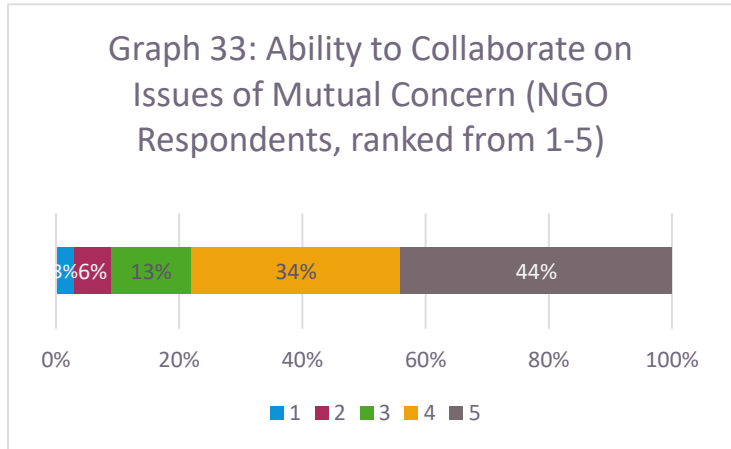
ADDRESSING ISSUES OF MUTUAL CONCERN

Another component of successful partnerships is the ability for UNHCR and NGO partners to collaboratively address issues of mutual concern. Per 2022 responses, 98% of UNHCR respondents felt moderately to significantly able to collaborate to address issues of mutual concern and 78% of NGO respondents rated this aspect as a 4 or 5 on a



scale of 1-5¹¹. Given the shift in rating for NGOs from three-step to five-step scale, it is not surprising that there appears to be a significant difference between UNHCR and NGO responses; however, the relationship is clearly positive for all parties.

NGOs and UNHCR do note areas for further improvement. NGOs respondents requested more UNHCR-led joint advocacy actions, especially in developing durable and sustainable long-term solutions and programs to strengthen local capacity overall. Additional qualitative feedback includes:



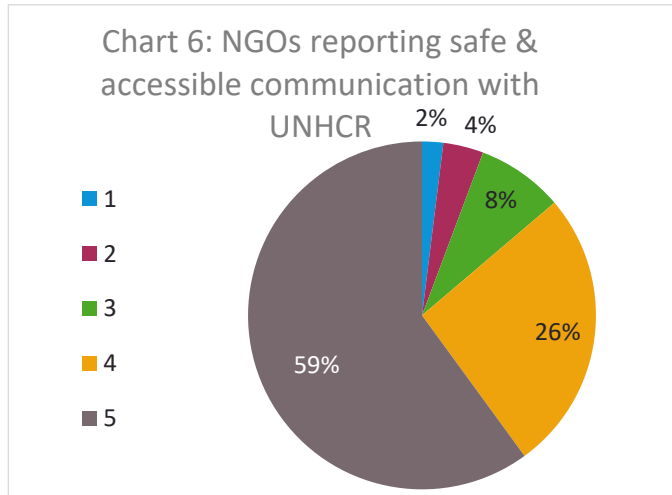
“A lot has been going in good directions in the last few years. UNHCR’s focus on rational simplifications has been a slow but steady improvement. With PSEA, more and wider focus on mutual engagement on understanding, workforce and POC awareness and risk mitigation, and less on compliance with bureaucratic processes (one size does not fit all) would be better.” - UNHCR respondent

“There may be issues with communication and power dynamics between UNHCR staff members and their partner organizations. To address these issues, it may be helpful for UNHCR to reevaluate their approach to working with partners. This could include providing more training and support to partner organizations and creating opportunities for staff members to work collaboratively with partners as peers rather than just as supervisors.” - NGO respondent

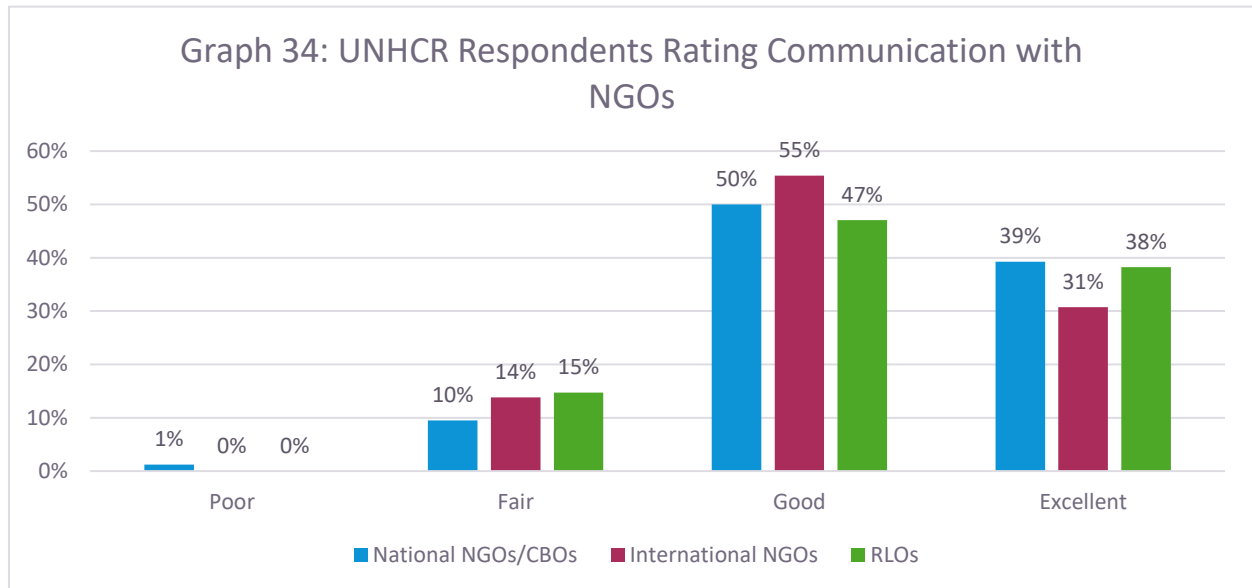
¹¹ The survey questionnaire moved to a different measurement scale in 2022, from a 3-option not at all/moderately/significantly to a 5-option ranked satisfaction scale; however, this scale was not applied to UNHCR’s questionnaire in 2022 so comparison between the two is not optimal. This will be corrected for the 2023 survey.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is a critical component of successful partnership and, as shown in Chart 6, NGOs were overwhelmingly positive about their communication with UNHCR. When asked to rate the extent to which they were provided with an accessible and safe communication pathway to UNHCR colleagues during implementation on a scale of 1-5 (with 5 being the most positive), 86% of NGO respondents responded with 4 or 5.



Similarly, UNHCR respondents found communications with partners as good or excellent (89% for LNNGOs, 86% for INGOs, and 85% for RLOs).

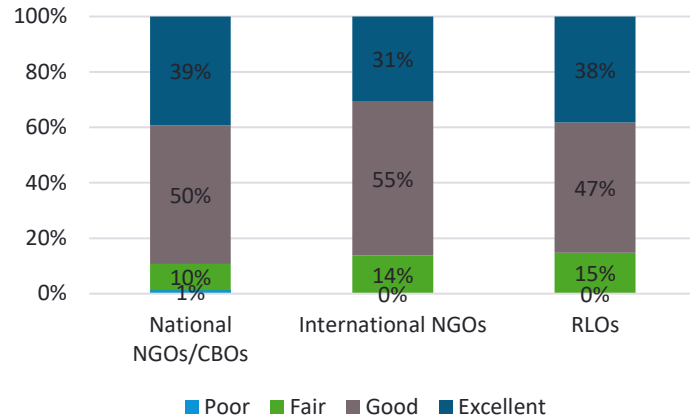


Graph 35 (below) gives UNHCR perspectives on communication success by type of partner. UNHCR respondents reported “good” or “excellent” communication across all three types of partner organizations (86% for INGOs, 89% for LNNGOs, and 85% for RLOs, relatively evenly split across regions). A few UNHCR respondents provided feedback and reflections:

“The communication between the RLOs has improved significantly as we plan to pilot the Grant Agreements in 2023.” – UNHCR respondent

“There is still need for assurance on UNHCR side that we have an equal partnership, and both sides have an equal responsibility, especially in situation of funding constraints. The need to mobilize resources and strengthen collaboration with other actors falls on both parties.” – UNHCR respondent

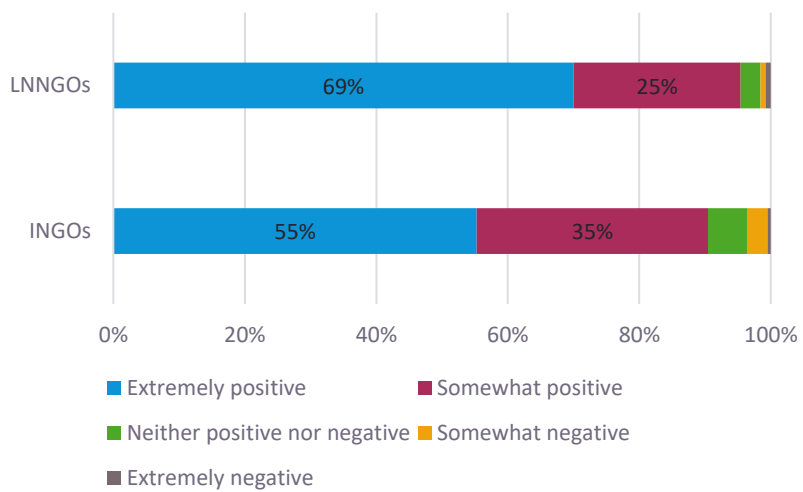
Graph 35: Rating Communication with Different Partner Types (UNHCR Responses)



LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP ASSESSMENT

When asked to look at the course of the last three years, **NGOs overwhelmingly rated their relationships with UNHCR as somewhat or extremely positive (93%)**, with no major discrepancy between regions or in INGO versus LNNGO responses. In characterizing their relationships with UNHCR, NGO respondents mentioned qualities such as “professional” and “supportive.”

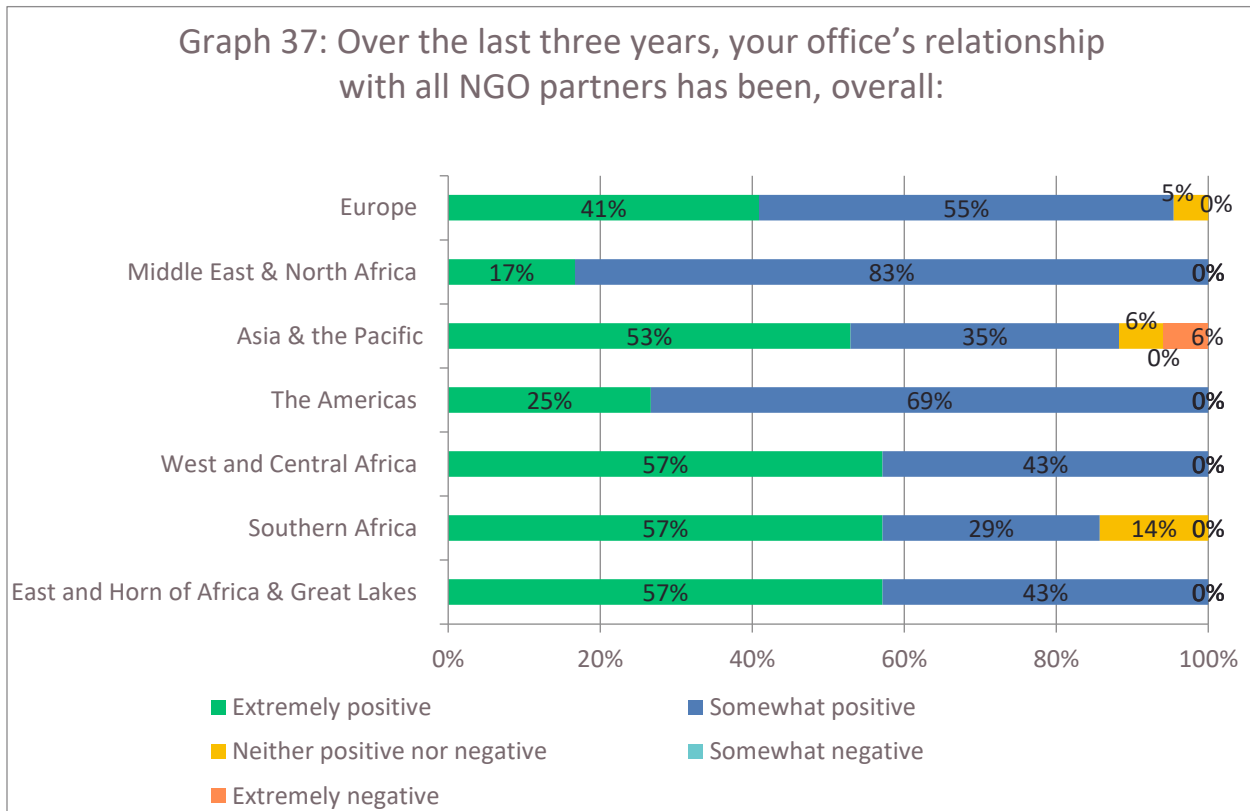
Graph 36: Overall Rating of Partnership with UNHCR for Last 3 Years (NGOs)



“UNHCR is very communicative both for changes that occur within UNHCR and related to partnerships,” while another respondent shared that their 9-year partnership with UNHCR has

“built and created the conditions for peaceful cohabitation and social cohesion.” – NGO respondents

A small number of respondents felt that the UNHCR–NGO relationship has deteriorated and is marked by a power imbalance, with one NGO respondent observing that “local staff have a huge effect on the decision-making, and personal relations may impact the project implementation, which could be negative or positive, depending on the relationship with the focal point in the agency.” Another respondent pointed to “examples of very poor behaviour by UNHCR staff which then damages the relationship and UNHCR’s reputation.” This type of feedback is rare but should be investigated when reported.



UNHCR respondents reported similarly positive relationships over the past three years, with 95% reporting their relationship with all NGO partners has been somewhat or extremely positive. Key positive factors include open and constructive communication and mutual respect. In terms of room for improvement, a few UNHCR respondents noted that they are perceived solely as “a source of funding” by some NGOs, leading to “anxiety” and a feeling of “intimidation” about expressing their true opinions. As shown above, this positive trend is largely consistent across regions, with only isolated negative or even

neutral feedback, clearly showing the net positive relationship between UNHCR and its NGO partners around the world.

CONCLUSION

2022 survey results demonstrate the strength of the relationship between UNHCR and its partners, a consistent finding over more than five years. Even in strong relationships, however, there is room for improvement. UNHCR has made a strong commitment to incorporating NGO feedback and adjusting partnering practices in order to address implementation challenges and provide humanitarian aid more effectively. This survey's feedback from UNHCR and NGO staff presents additional opportunities for UNHCR to build upon the successes of recent changes, such as permanently incorporated flexibilities and PA changes, in the years to come.

As in previous years, surveying UNHCR and NGO staff enabled candid reflection on areas where UNHCR can improve. UNHCR is offering multi-year partnership agreements for the fourth year, and NGOs requested a continued expansion of this program and the need for further, more widespread training on and availability of this funding option to align with UNHCR's shift towards multi-year strategic planning. NGOs continued to report administrative burdens from PAs, particularly from requests for formal and informal reports beyond those stipulated in the PA terms. UNHCR and NGO respondents agreed that delays in PA signings are largely linked to budget negotiations, though each was more likely to perceive the other as the root cause of delay. There is still a notable gap between policies and procedures developed in UNHCR headquarters as compared to awareness and implementation in UNHCR Country Offices, a gap that requires exploration and action by UNHCR to standardize practice.

Furthermore, in the interest of streamlining and decreasing the administrative burden on NGO partners, there is room for expanded success with the UNPP: improving notification systems, ensuring the smooth functionality of the portal, and offering additional trainings to orient UNHCR and NGO staff to the UNPP interface. Maximizing the UNPP will allow for a stronger, more efficient relationship between UNHCR and NGOs. Further investigation into the perceived challenges with various partnership methodologies is necessary to determine what solutions, such as additional trainings or support, are needed to streamline partnership processes and utilize the UNPP to its full potential.

Finally, respondents provided useful feedback for improving this survey. UNHCR and NGO respondents requested that the survey be tailored to the country or regional level, as they did not always feel able to address global-level questions. Additionally, respondents requested that survey questions be shared in

advance to enable information collection from various departments and/or for those in contexts with limited access, which can easily be addressed by sharing a pdf version of the questionnaire. Other suggestions related to the number of questions and the wording of specific questions and response options. InterAction will share these suggestions with UNHCR in the lead-up to next year's survey.

ABOUT INTERACTION

InterAction is a membership organization and voice for nearly 200 NGOs working to eliminate extreme poverty, strengthen human rights and citizen participation, safeguard a sustainable planet, promote peace, and ensure dignity for all people.