



AIDA PNGO Principles of Partnership

PREAMBLE

RECOGNIZING that Palestinian NGOs Network (hereinafter PNGO) and the Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA) are two civil society platforms belonging to the same NGO community in Palestine and that international and national NGOs have more values in common than differences or divergence,

STRIVING to enhance the effectiveness of development and humanitarian action, based on strong ethics and accountability to the Palestinian men, women and children we serve,

ACKNOWLEDGING diversity and complementarity as an asset of the NGO community in Palestine and recognizing the interdependence among humanitarian and development organisations,

STRONGLY COMMITTED to building and nurturing an effective partnership for the benefit of all,

ARTICLE 1. DEFINITIONS

AIDA and PNGO hereby agree on the following definitions:

Accountability is defined as the means by which power is exercised in a responsible manner. In a humanitarian or development context, accountability requires involving and reporting to stakeholders and in particular to persons affected by the exercise of this power (Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International).

Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA) is a membership body and coordination forum of international non-governmental and non-profit organisations (INGOs) that share a common interest in promoting appropriate development and humanitarian programmes in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt).

Complementarity: refers to principle that aid work, either humanitarian or developmental, should be designed in coordination with other NGOs to ensure maximum benefit to Palestinians while avoiding unnecessary redundancy and programmatic gaps.

Impartiality: refers to the principle that aid, humanitarian or developmental, must be guided exclusively by needs and must not be discriminatory based on ethnic origin, clan, political opinion, gender, nationality, race, or religion.

International NGO (INGO): An INGO is a non-governmental organisation that was founded outside of the oPt, is legally registered in its country of origin, and which works legally in the oPt on a non-profit basis.

Neutrality: refers to the principle that aid, humanitarian and developmental, should be undertaken regardless and independent of existing political, racial, religious, or ideological controversies.

Non-Governmental Organization (NGO): NGOs are organizations, both national and international, that are independent from the government of the country in which they were founded and work for the public welfare on a non-profit basis.

Normalization: refers to the participation in any project or activity that seeks to bring Israelis and Palestinians and/or Arabs together and it not explicitly designed to resist the Israeli occupation and the various forms of discrimination and oppression inflicted on the Palestinian people.

Occupied Palestinian territory (oPt): The oPt, according to international law, includes the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The occupied territory includes any Palestinian land that was captured by Israel during the 1967 war.

Palestinian National Authority (PNA) is the authority formed in 1994 to govern the oPt: it controls policy on health, education, social welfare, direct taxation, tourism, and culture and manages elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council.

Palestinian NGO (PNGO): PNGO is an NGO that was founded in the oPt and is legally registered with the Palestinian Ministry of the Interior according to the Charitable Societies' Law carrying No. 1 and issued in the year 2000. PNGOs can include charitable societies, grassroots organizations, sports clubs, networks, unions, and other organizations that work for the welfare of Palestinians on a non-profit basis.

Palestinian NGOs Network (PNGO Network) is a coordination framework for the NGO sector in Palestine that has a developmental vision towards empowering and protecting the autonomy of civil society, consolidating its role in the national struggle and democratization process, based on the principles of democracy, social justice, rule of law and respect for human rights through;

Participation: refers to involving all stakeholders, men and women, directly and indirectly, in decision making through legitimate representative bodies to ensure the protection of local interests.

Substitution: refers to a situation in which the work of PNGOs is replaced, disrupted or otherwise prevented by work of INGOs implementing a project directly.

Transparency: involves providing reliable and up-to-date information on activities, procedures, resolutions, policies, and decision-making processes. Information should be openly shared with beneficiaries, the public, and any related bodies.

ARTICLE 2. CORE PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

AIDA and PNGO hereby agree to base their partnership on the following principles of partnership:

| INTERNATIONAL LAW | The guiding principles should be based on international humanitarian and human rights law and development standards. International and national NGOs operating in the oPt should respect, protect and promote the entire set of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people, including refugees' right to return and right to self-determination and freedom. Failure to do so may have far-reaching consequences including Palestinian aid dependency, entrenchment of Israel's IHL and IHRL violations such as expanding settlements, continuous blockade on Gaza, annexation.

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

| TRANSPARENCY | best achieved through dialogue on equal footing, with an emphasis on early consultations and early sharing of information. Communications and transparency, including financial transparency, increase the level of trust amongst organisations.

| RESULT-ORIENTED APPROACH | effective development and humanitarian work must be reality-based and action-oriented. This requires result-oriented coordination based on effective capabilities and concrete operational capacities.

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

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

The above principles of partnership are without prejudice to existing commitments AIDA members and/or PNGO members may have taken including on the four core principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and operational independence. All agency members of the global Inter-Agency Standing Committee have agreed to them.¹

| HUMANITY | Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The life, health, dignity and rights of all persons must be respected and protected.

| NEUTRALITY | Humanitarian action must be carried out in a manner that does not take sides in hostilities or engages in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

| IMPARTIALITY | Humanitarian assistance must be guided solely by needs and therefore be provided without discriminating on the basis of ethnic origin, clan, political opinion, gender, nationality, race or religion. Priority must be given to the most urgent cases of distress.

| INDEPENDENCE | Humanitarian actors must be autonomous from political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

ARTICLE 3. CONTEXTUALIZATION TO PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

This document seeks to define a set of guiding principles that will be the foundation of any and all partnerships between INGOs and PNGOs in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt). Recent discussions about inclusiveness, ownership, and local participation in the aid process in the oPt, as well as the more controversial and larger issues of aid effectiveness and conditional aid, have prompted a discussion about the most efficient way to deliver aid and affect real change in Palestine.

AIDA and PNGO believe that the best way to increase effectiveness in the aid process while continuing to adhere to separate, but similar, organizational values is to define and agree upon the shared principles that will serve as the basis for all future partnerships and relationships between AIDA members and Palestinian NGOs operating in the oPt.

This document represents a resolute departure from situations in which local NGOs are relegated to sub-contractor status or purely as delivery mechanisms. If the comparative advantage of both entities are not genuinely valued, an imbalance of power can occur easily, often resulting in an increasingly strained partnership, and reduced potential for longer term partnerships, which are crucial themselves for future preparedness and resilience building. Limited investments by INGOs to further strengthen preparedness and response capacity of Palestinian NGOs - often further limited by a systemic lack of financing, places increasing strain on partnerships driven by reactive emergency response programming. Effective partnership building between INGOs and Palestinian NGOs requires investment by both parties – yet, the benefits are clear. To highlight this importance, there is a need to continue developing a body of knowledge capturing the benefits, challenges and lessons in effective NGO partnerships.

¹ These core principles were recognized by the UN General Assembly (Resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991 and 58/114 of 17 December 2003) and have been incorporated into voluntary codes of conduct and organisational mission statements guiding humanitarian agencies and donors, such as The Code of Conduct of the International Red Cross Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations in Disaster Relief (1994).

Fundamentally, International NGOs do not seek to replace civil society in Palestine, but support its development and links with other global actors and movements. AIDA members respect the right of Palestinian partners to determine their own direction and priorities.

AIDA encourages its members and other INGOs to implement programmes in partnership with Palestinian NGOs, to reach greater impact and to invest in building their capacities.

AIDA members are open, within the limits of their respective mandates and missions, to being influenced as to where, how, and with whom they work, and on the advocacy messages they convey. This includes being open to learning from different experiences of, and approaches to, development, advocacy, and humanitarian work that may challenge AIDA members to question their own assumptions about effective practice. INGOs are encouraged to request input from Palestinian human rights organizations to their legal studies and advocacy materials and messages & from PNGO members on projects related to Civil Society.

Conflict-sensitivity and respect for Palestinian culture and values: AIDA and PNGO members are aware of conflict-sensitive approaches and commit to implement projects throughout the oPt. They commit to do everything they possibly can to avoid exacerbating divisions and factional splits between the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. All NGOs, local and international, must work in a culturally sensitive manner. They should strictly follow a do no harm approach, and may respect Palestinian culture and values insofar as these values do not contradict human rights.

AIDA and PNGO consider social justice, gender equality/equity and rule of law as a very important basis of their work in Palestine.

Coordination: In order to most effectively provide aid while holding paramount the interests and needs of the Palestinian people, NGOs in the oPt must coordinate and cooperate with each other. Whilst recognising and respecting differences, sufficient common grounds in terms of shared values and beliefs must be found for INGOs-PNGOs partnerships to be viable. Relationships are best built on trust, mutual respect, and the belief in a common set of values.

Accountability: We commit to develop needs analyses together (INGOs and PNGOs) and to define joint goals and strategies based on this analysis. When our perception of priorities changes, we share our rationale for this and are transparent in exploring what this means for the relationships we have. All NGOs operating in this context whether national or international endeavour to assist and protect Palestinian people and not to legitimize the illegal situation created by occupation and annexation. NGOs commit to respect lawful, non-violent civic engagement of our Palestinian staff and/or Palestinian NGO partners, when this activism serves to uphold international and national law or protect human rights. Such engagement must not prejudice the selection of partners for project implementation. International and national NGOs commit to respect the rights of individuals to freedom of expression without prejudice to official organisational positions.

Conflict resolution: Building effective relationships will depend on direct and frank discussions between PNGOs and INGOs and a clear understanding about the goals, direction, and interests of all sides. Every effort will be made to build mutual respect within each operational partnership, as characterised by open dialogue and a willingness to give and receive constructive criticism. Problems and disagreements are dealt with openly and transparently through agreed procedures within operational partnerships, including formal complaint mechanisms, to ensure that complaints about INGO or PNGO work are heard and properly dealt with.

Finally, we share a desire to work towards joint positions on important issues in the Palestinian context, including normalization, counter-terror legislation, self-determination, Palestinian right of return.

Gender

AIDA & PNGO will continue to work on strengthening affected populations by empowering and including local actors in decision-making processes including women and girls in all phases of humanitarian work, building a coordinated approach with ambitious commitments to prevent and respond to Gender-based violence in crisis context. NGOs must ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. End all forms and discrimination and promotion of gender equality and empowerment.

Optional Protocol to AIDA PNGO Principles of Partnership

The undersigned AIDA members and PNGO members have agreed as follows:

Respect for Palestinian Human Rights and International Law

We commit to design and implement programmes that contribute to the achievement and protection of human rights for all Palestinians, including the right to self-determination; all programmatic and advocacy activities are firmly based on international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL), including, specifically, the Fourth Geneva Conventions, the Hague Resolutions and UN resolutions pertaining to Palestine.

We are aware that humanitarian access is a fundamental right and will insist, in partnership with PNGO, the UN and the diplomatic community, in being granted unconditional access, particularly but not exclusively to Gaza.

We commit to reevaluate operational partnerships with local partners if and where credible evidence is provided pointing to violations of international law by said partner.

Responsible partnerships

We commit to sustainable development rather than unsustainable, short-term aid;

We commit to formally consult our Palestinian partners at various stages of the project cycle, from preparation and project design, to implementation, monitoring and evaluation;

We prefer to work in partnership with Palestinian NGOs instead of implementing development projects directly, where capacity allows. This preference shall be without prejudice to any decisions of direct implementation provided they are considered exceptional in nature, temporary and are justified. In these projects where direct implementation is preferred, we also commit to maintain active local input and responsiveness to local priorities;

We encourage Palestinian ownership and responsibility by instituting a mechanism of consultation with Palestinian beneficiaries, authorities and civil society at the local and national level;

We endeavour to consult Palestinian NGOs on the researches, surveys, legal studies we undertake;

Conditional Funding

A number of AIDA Members are required by their internal regulations to ensure that none of their assets are provided either “directly or indirectly” for the benefit of an individual or group designated as terrorist under the Terrorism Asset Freezing Act 2010 (UK), EU Council Regulation (EC) No 2580/2001 on combating terrorism and various USAID and US Foundations regulations. However, AIDA also acknowledges that many NGOs and civil society organisations around the world and in Palestine, including some partner organisations, have expressed concern about the process undertaken by governments when designating an organisation as “terrorist”. Therefore, should a partner be subject to investigation or “proscription” by the relevant authorities in circumstances where an AIDA Member has reason to doubt the soundness of the decision taken to “proscribe” that organisation, then the said AIDA Member may make representations to the relevant authorities to review the designation. The undersigned also recognize how conditional funding may hamper the ability of Palestinians organisations, including the PNA, PNGOs, and other civil society actors to express local priorities and access funding to address the needs.

Conclusion

The aforementioned priorities and issues clearly demonstrate the necessity of a healthy, coordinated, and respectful relationship between PNGOs and INGOs. For many years, Palestinian and international NGOs, together with UN agencies and the Palestinian government, created a model of partnership based on a mutually respectful and understanding relationship to ensure that the needs of poor and marginalized communities were addressed and supported in an efficient manner.

The undersigned agencies are eager to continue enhancing this model to ensure that the partnership is based on cooperation rather than competition. The role of international and UN agencies should be to complement, support, and strengthen the work of PNGOs and the PNA, not to replace them. All partners are keen to see the full participation from all the stakeholders throughout the entire project cycle, based on needs and priorities of Palestinian communities.

Also such a relationship must be based on mutual trust, transparency, accountability, and neutrality. Moreover, the cooperation between international organizations and their Palestinian counterparts must be founded upon recognition of and support for, above all, international law and basic human rights. Indeed, such cooperation between PNGOs and INGOs is essential to ensure that aid delivered to Palestine is efficient and meeting the real needs of the Palestinian people.

SIGNATURES

Sorted alphabetically by Name of agency