

# PARTNERSHIPS STRATEGY: TRANSFORMING COOPERATION, RELATIONSHIP, AND COLLABORATIONS



Supporting children from vulnerable communities of  
Kabul to reach primary education  
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Démonstration culinaire à Lemera  
Prolonged partnership with ECHO - overview

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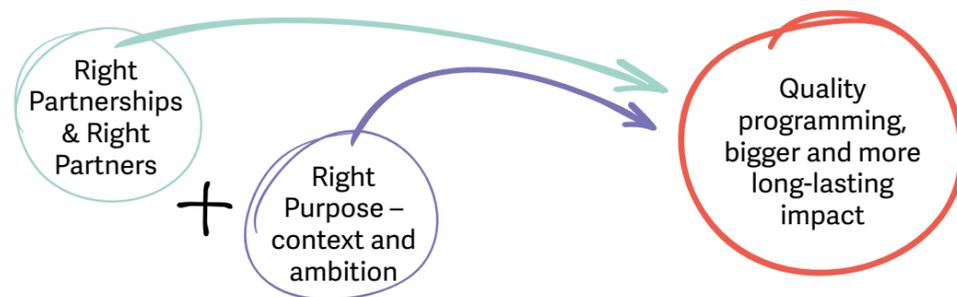
## Foreword

The partnership strategy describes People in Need's (PIN's) **approach and commitments to transformational partnerships, and the changes we want to see by the end of the strategy period**. This strategic document serves to frame and guide our partnerships work for the 2022-2026 period. The strategy is couched within the three strategic pillars of PIN's Relief and Development Department (RDD), i.e. climate resilience, emergency response and recovery, and civil society and inclusive governance. The RDD strategy has five organizational priorities, and strengthening and transforming partnerships has been selected as one of these for the next five years. This strategy is an annex to the RDD strategy.

PIN has been working with and through partners for almost three decades. This strategy consolidates our past experiences and learning, and strengthens our existing partnerships, cooperation, relationships, and collaborations to ensure quality programming, and greater and more long-lasting impact. This strategy will guide us in **transforming our partnerships approach** by helping us find the right partnerships with the right partners for the right purpose, for the various contexts which are key to PIN's programming. PIN will diversify its partners, increase aspects of mutuality, flexibility, and quality in partnerships and accelerate the establishment of local partnerships with diverse local actors.

This document is for all PIN (RDD) staff involved in partnerships with other organizations and institutions. It can be shared externally with all relevant stakeholders to learn about PIN's organizational approach to partnerships. This strategy is supported with the **Partnership Handbook** which is more descriptive and operational and translates this strategy into practice.

**The strategy has been developed in a participatory manner.** It builds upon PIN's existing practice and experience (particularly the internal reviews and audit findings), findings from the RDD Strategy workshops and consultations, survey findings from recent country programme partnership practices, and some validation interviews and discussions with country programme and regional office colleagues as well as with headquarter staff. It also draws significantly upon existing external trends and partnerships approaches by peer organizations, particularly Alliance 2015 members. The draft strategy was reviewed by the Partnerships Strategy Working Group which is comprised of PIN staff from country programmes, regional offices, and HQ. Furthermore, the draft strategy was presented at the RDD Sharing in June 2022, and feedback from the Sharing was incorporated before sharing it with RDD management for review and approval.



## External Global Context

In recent years, the external context has been changing rapidly which is having implications for the development and humanitarian work locally and globally. PIN defines localization as: 'shifting the power dynamics between development actors, by having more values-driven local engagement and empowerment, whereby local actors have more power, resources (financial and human) and are more inclusive at the grassroots level'. Localization is more than just establishing partnerships – it's related to PIN's overall commitment to systems strengthening and empowering communities (commitment to implement CHS standards). When thinking of partnerships and localization, current and future trends should be thought of as linked and occasionally the result of other trends. The major trends are shrinking civil society space, the bureaucratization of the sector, weak institutional capacities of CSOs, increasing funding gaps, increasing donor focus on climate change and environment, digitalization in the sector post-Covid new normal, local to global influencing shift and use of technology, the competitiveness of recruitment in the sector, the push to work in consortia, alliances and networks, growing humanitarian needs, growing trend of corporate partnerships in the humanitarian context, trust deficit among partners, and changing donor priorities and focus in development, humanitarian sectors and nexuses.

How these are being tackled by development actors is underpinned by the partnerships approach of 'we work together' and 'by working together we are stronger'. Different international initiatives and instruments have been sharpening the work around partnerships be it the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP,2003), Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly Goal 17 which focuses on partnerships. The conversion of HAP into nine Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) back in 2014 was a turning point on the localization agenda as later the Charter for Change (C4C), Grand Bargain and World Humanitarian Summit helped to shift the focus to local actors and power and resources. Progress on these initiatives and instruments vary from country to country and region to region but these are constantly guiding our partnership agenda and programming from the local participation and ownership perspective. PIN is a member of CHS and has gone through its assessment and validation process. It applies CHS commitments through its work and CHS 9 commitments are an integral part of PIN's work locally and globally. Through its work, PIN directly contributes to different international priorities and commitments by having representation in various forums and networks, e.g. Alliance 2015, VOICE, Start Network and CHS. The next section briefly presents PIN's contribution to global development.

## PIN and Partnerships

PIN has a three decades-long, rich history of sustainable impact at the local level through its multi-pronged programming. PIN has been working in the humanitarian and development context starting in the Czech Republic in 1992 and is currently operating in 23 countries across the globe. It responds to various disasters quickly, while taking local dynamics and contexts into consideration. In the countries where PIN operates, it pursues opportunities for support and collaboration. Since its formation PIN's partnership portfolio has been expanding in terms of the number of its partners, the diversity and types of partner, and the quality of relationships with them.

Over the past five years, the number and financial volume of partnerships has steadily grown. While partnering with local organizations in development contexts has become a standard practice often required by the donor; in humanitarian contexts the engagement of local partner organizations is underutilized. A particular issue is a lack of direct funding to the local NGO. However, many partnerships remain project-focused, limited to implementing a project together and formed at the time of a call for proposals. Limited resources and staff time are dedicated to capacity development or other activities nurturing the partnership.

PIN is a member of numerous regional and global networks, alliances and coalitions, e.g. Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), VOICE, Start Network and the UN Global Compact. Most notably, our Alliance2015 membership remains strategic for us as it enables us to share know-how with like-minded European organizations, form large consortia and advocate towards the EU with one voice. PIN actively works with different Alliance2015 members responding to emergency responses through its joint and collaborative working under [Alliance 2015 Compass](#).

Going forward, PIN's partnerships approach will draw on its accrued partnerships experience and become more transformational and will be guided by its partnership's principles, cycles and strategies. Working together and becoming stronger together to design, implement and have long-lasting impact will be our motto for all partnerships.

### PIN's RDD Strategy Goal on Partnerships:

*Our main goal in this strategic period is to expand our partnership portfolio, ensuring quality and sustainability of our partnerships, with a focus on local civil society organizations, in all three programmatic pillars.*



Food Programme (WFP), People in Need is engaged in a project to enhance the food security and resilience of vulnerable women and men returned to Salah al Din.

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## Defining Partnerships

For PIN (RDD), “A partnership is a collaborative formal arrangement between organizations and institutions with mutually agreed objectives, having a shared set of partnership principles with clear roles and responsibilities”.

The previous RDD strategy had a focus on strategic partnerships and it was defined as, “a relationship based on an agreement that commits its signatories to mutually beneficial cooperation, sharing of skills and enhanced capacities, sharing of resources and responsibility for the pursuit of commonly agreed goals within short and/or long-term duration”. This definition of strategic partnerships is still valid as for PIN partnerships go beyond project implementation or contractual relationship. We respect the diversity of and promote synergies and cooperation at different levels whether local, regional, or global. We should always understand and appreciate the role local organizations have and the role they play in their country and their context, therefore partnerships with local actors is our preferred choice. From the longer-term perspective, PIN’s partnerships should evolve and become strategic and transformational, an essential part of each country programme strategy.



Farmer Field School training in Huíla province, Angola. Part of Chitanda – Resilient Agriculture Systems to Improve Food and Nutritional Security project, implemented in partnership with national NGO ASD – Development and Solidarity Action\_EU\_FRESAN\_Camoes

## Why Partnerships, and Required Competencies for PIN

PIN believes in the value of partnerships for the following reasons, amongst others:

- Increased long-term impact and ensuring the sustainability of interventions;
- Ability to quickly respond to different crises and contribute to rehabilitation and recovery programming;
- Mobilization, development, and empowering of local civil society;
- Local knowledge, the variety of contexts, and experience sharing from diverse actors for quality programming;
- Mutual learning and growth through sharing of resources and complementarity;
- Joint influencing and effective campaigning;
- Utilize local best practices and innovate new partnership models;
- Access to areas difficult to reach and wider outreach; and
- Supporting access to direct funding to local CSOs through partnering with PIN.

In order to build a successful relationship for the above purposes PIN will invest in the following **staff competencies** to ensure good partnering and a genuine commitment to localizing development and relief work:

- **Empathy:** Understanding the perspectives of the other organization, based on honesty and integrity.
- **Self-Awareness:** Understanding our interests and the inequitable power relations that might exist, particularly with small community-based organizations (CBOs) and Non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- **Communication and negotiation:** Able to effectively communicate and negotiate with or between organizations and among stakeholders in a manner appropriate to the audience.
- **Conflict mediation and resolution:** Able to mediate and resolve a conflict between organizations or individuals in a manner that acknowledges the positions of all parties and is respectful of their concerns, while striving to find solutions or compromises that are acceptable to all parties.

## Principles for Partnerships

The guiding principle for PIN's partnership and localization approach is 'values-driven local empowerment'. We want to work with diverse actors that share our values, are based on human rights, and agree with the PIN Code of Conduct. PIN's partnership principles are interlinked and complement each other and are based on PIN's work in various contexts across the globe over the last three decades. Furthermore, these principles are drawn from other existing international instruments such as SDGs, Grand Bargain, CHS and the UN Global Compact and its principles. These principles are applicable to all our partners be it local CSOs or local government, or corporate or academic partnerships at national level, or alliance network engagement globally and international partners. We strive to support local initiatives and seek to support, not replace or undermine, existing local capacities. Thus, partnering with diverse local actors is our preferred strategy.

- **Participation:** We will continuously involve beneficiaries and partners in the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of our projects, and regularly inform them about progress and overall results of work. Meaningful participation will be the core of our programme quality.
- **Local engagement and empowerment:** PIN will systemically engage and empower the most vulnerable groups, individuals, and organizations throughout the project cycle. PIN will use traditional and innovative ways to support the empowerment of local stakeholder in alignment with its localization commitment. PIN's interventions are: facilitating local leadership development, effective partnership management to sustain local engagement and empowerment for sustainable impact.
- **Trust and power balance:** PIN will ensure that while working with different types and sizes of partner, 'power' will have a central role. PIN values equal relationships and truly wants to demonstrate equality through its actions to ensure shared and equal decision-making without using power or authority. In this way relationships and partnerships can be truly equal, rather than like a project donor-recipient relationship. Fair negotiations, mutual respect, and accountability will set trust from the beginning, and collective actions and joint oversight of projects will transform the relationship into a shared partnership.

### RDD Strategy and Partnership Commitments

*We will strengthen partnerships with local actors, in particular local CSOs. As an organization known for delivering both relief and development assistance, we will be well placed to empower local actors from the stage of humanitarian response to enable them to support recovery and long-term development. We will retain a strong understanding of the local contexts in which we work. In doing so, we will value and mobilize local expertise to the largest possible extent, and maintain a presence in the communities which we aim to serve.*

- **Equality and fair negotiation:** To bring equality to our relationship with various stakeholders, PIN will ensure an empathic approach towards partners by ensuring fair negotiations, which are free of any use of clout and power. Moreover, the conditions and requirements given by external frameworks, or our contracts with donors might not be negotiable, but PIN will always explain these to its partners and provide support to comply with such conditions if needed. PIN will support mutual respect for each other's mandates, obligations and independence, and provide space for constructive dissent.
- **Transparency and mutual accountability:** PIN will ensure the transparency and mutual accountability of all partners, both upwards (boards, governments, donors) as well as downwards towards individuals and communities – our major stakeholders and our main constituent. PIN will promote joint oversight mechanisms and ensure they are participatory. Participation of partners and their regular feedback will strengthen mutual accountability and bring effectiveness to our programming.
- **Sharing responsibility and risks:** To demonstrate the equal relationship and true power balance among partners, responsibilities and risks will be shared among partners, rather than burdening one partner with most responsibilities and any major financial risks. Instead, these risks will be fairly discussed and distributed among partners based on their roles and capacity to absorb risks in order to achieve the shared purpose. PIN's past experience with partners can be a good resource for determining better ways of sharing responsibility and risks in the Country Programme context. It will also dilute donor-grantee dynamics and will demonstrate equal relationships.
- **Mutual learning and complementarity:** PIN, as a learning organization, will be open and proactive about learning, as partners bring different capacities, experiences, resources, and socio-cultural and organizational diversity in different contexts. PIN values diversity and builds on the comparative advantages and complementarity that comes out of it as a way of bringing mutual growth and ensuring that local communities benefit from the results.



PIN works with different development actors from local to national, regional to global. Working with different segments of the public/government sector, private sector, and civil society sector means greater diversity, perspectives, partnership principles, and values. PIN will promote the above principles and will also adhere to the partnership principles of its partners, while bringing synergy to the way it works with its various partners.



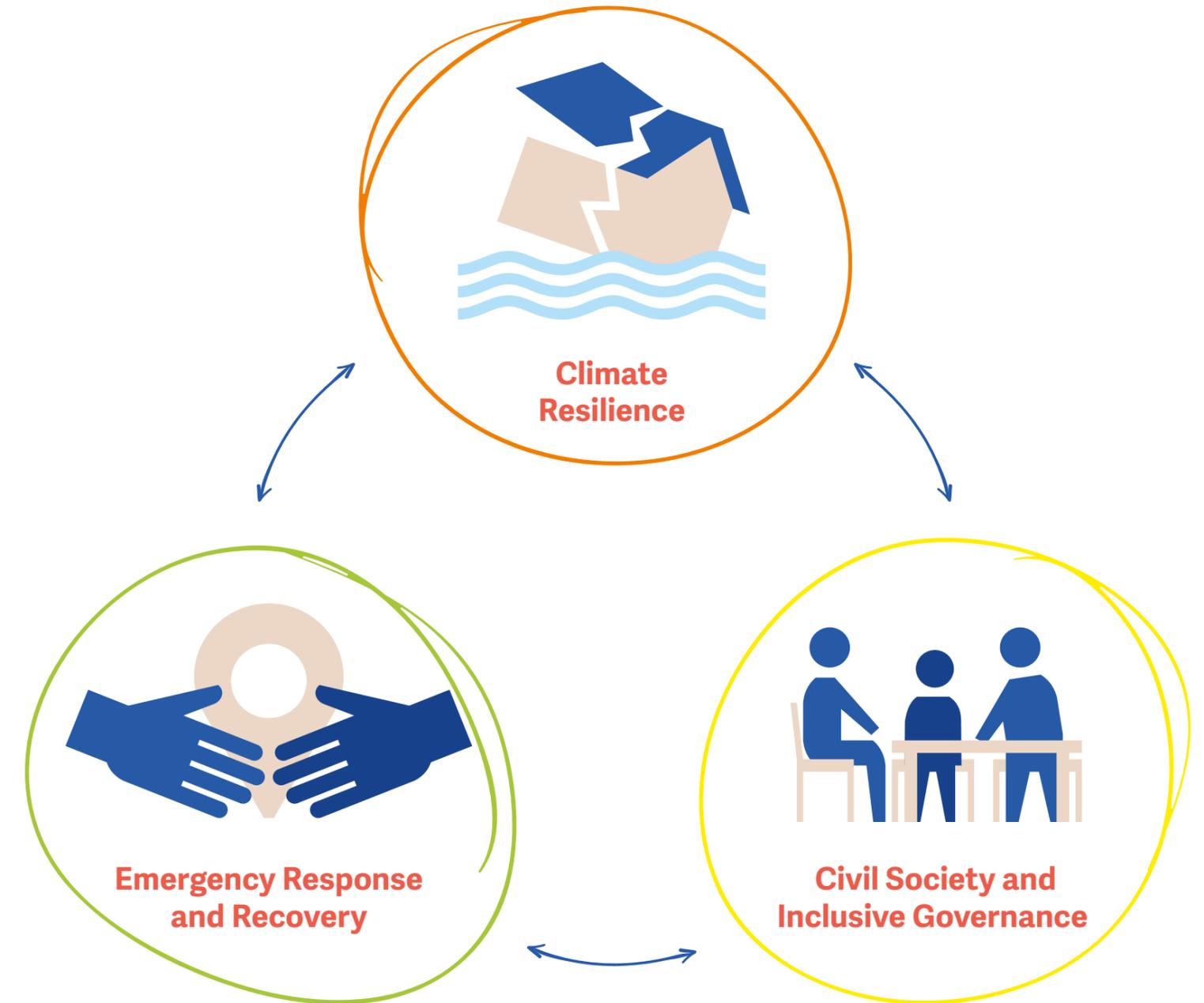
## Three Pillars of RDD Strategy and Partnership

The new RDD Strategy focuses on three core pillars each with sub-areas and sectors. PIN has been working in these areas for many years and has rich experience. The three pillars are:

- **Climate Resilience**
- **Emergency Response and Recovery**
- **Civil Society & Inclusive Governance**

Effective partnerships are central to the quality of our work in each pillar. Each pillar has key interventions and elaborates on key stakeholders and global partners. Each country programme will have a country programme strategy elaborating programme, sector, theme and key interventions and will be based on a strengths and gaps analysis potential. Diverse partners will be identified and engaged for development, humanitarian and nexus programming. Partnerships are one of the key enablers and priority areas for each pillar. This partnership strategy directly contributes to the RDD and CP strategy implementation and complements each pillar and also fundraising strategy.

PIN will leverage its external global linkages and connections and will promote global partnerships (South-North vis-à-vis North-South) for each pillar that could support the country programmes and their partnerships for different areas, sectors and themes. PIN will cascade existing academic and corporate partnerships globally and locally. PIN will further strengthen local and global multi-sector (public, private, civil society sector) partnerships by joining new relevant networks, alliances and consortiums, and contributing proactively to existing ones. PIN will promote its local programme and partnerships work in the relevant global forum and will promote its local partners.



## Partnerships: Approach, Outcomes and Key Interventions

PIN will leverage local knowledge, quality programming, outreach, and scale of its existing and potential diverse partners for impactful and sustainable programming. PIN will bring further innovation into its programming, partnerships in development, and humanitarian context. Partnering in a humanitarian context will be one of the key priorities to enhance local response capacities, learn from the local context, evolve, and become stronger.

The RDD strategy has set four key outcomes for 2026 for the partnership strategy. To achieve the above four outcomes and their indicators, multi-pronged interventions will be carried out in the next five years which will be regularly reviewed and refined based on progress and changing internal and external contexts. The broader areas of interventions and investments for each outcome are elaborated in the below section:



People in Need is supporting local partner „Smile“ who is running child-friendly space in the humanitarian hub in Zaporizhzhia.

© Albert Lores

Outcome 1	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic and impactful partnerships with diverse partners;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in overall number and types of partners for each pillar by end of 2026;</li> <li>Increase in number of local partnerships with local actors, e.g. CBOs, NGOs, networks, unions, associations.</li> </ul>

### Key interventions

- Develop a strategic approach to partnership and refine the existing partnership handbook;
- Review existing partnership development and management tools and where needed refresh them;
- Develop new tools that are critical for partnerships development or management;
- Develop guidelines and tools for mapping partners and help country programmes in conducting systematic partner mapping for projects and country programmes;
- Improve partnerships management practices by streamlining processes, systems, and structure of PIN;
- Create a system for data collection (# of organizations / institutions we collaborate with) and comparison of trends and share the report for improving new partnership development.

Outcome 2	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A larger partnership portfolio in all contexts (development, humanitarian and nexus);</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of CP strategies having partnerships milestones and actions plans;</li> <li>Gradual increase in number of diverse partners in humanitarian and nexus programming;</li> <li>15% increase in financial volume channelled to local partners by end of 2026.</li> </ul>

### Key interventions

- Identify and conclude strategic partnerships as a 'partnerships preparedness' measure in all contexts;
- Build partnership practices and competencies into the staff job description and development plans. Invest in capacity building for all staff who are involved in working with partners;
- Provide advisory support to Country Programmes in partnerships development and management, particularly for the development of the country programme strategy from a partnerships perspective, with concrete partnership targets aligned with localization commitment.

Outcome 3	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our local partners value partnerships with PIN.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li># of new, innovative and tailor-made partner capacity building initiatives started and offered to partners by PIN;</li> <li># of partners reporting with increased capacity (organizational and programmatic capacity).</li> <li>Gradual increase in applying and leading call or grant applications by local actors where PIN is partner;</li> <li>% of partners satisfied with PIN's partnership and there is gradual increase in higher satisfaction levels.</li> </ul>

### Key interventions

- Co-review needs assessments; co-design, and co-deliver innovative and tailor-made systematic capacity-building programmes for local partners and PIN staff for effective partnerships management and mutual growth; explore models where PIN provides technical and management expertise to local partners and showcase them in appropriate forums;
- Socialization of partnership: Dissemination of PIN's partnerships strategy, handbooks, and tools to various stakeholders including PIN and partners' staff. Sensitization of Leadership and Management (HQ, Region, Country Programme) to partnerships approach, commitment, and areas of investment.

Outcome 4	Indicators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PIN's work showcased in relevant local, regional and global forums</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in partnership products globally and by CPs, e.g. case studies, survey reports, reviews, evaluations and learning papers;</li> <li>Increase PIN's representation and branding in relevant local, regional and global forums;</li> <li>PIN technical knowledge on partnerships utilized by Alliance2015 or other networks and alliances.</li> </ul>

### Key interventions

- Support for knowledge management and consolidation of learning in partnerships work, and ensure that learning from the country programmes feeds into the existing Global Pillar's programme strategies and new project ideas;
- Promote the learning from country programmes' partnerships experience across PIN and foster a vibrant community of practice;
- Disseminate learning internally and externally, and promote PIN's partnerships work in relevant regional and global forums.

## Investment areas and doing things differently

In order for the outlined partnerships strategy to be implemented and effective, there will be some changes needed to the overall working of the organization, and the below highlights those areas of future investment:

**Investment in competencies and human resources:** Through the Partnerships Investment Fund (PIF), both PIN's country programme staff and to some extent partner's staff, will be trained in those competencies needed for partnerships work. Staff will be capacitated on proper understanding of partnerships documents and processes and will become an excellent resource for identifying the right partners, carrying out partners mapping and nurturing partner relationships. A dedicated partnerships role will be introduced in CPs where these are needed, otherwise existing relevant staff will be regularly trained and enabled to ensure effective partnerships development and management with the changing internal and external context.

**Strengthening and transforming partnerships:** PIN will critically review and consolidate its past experiences and learn from its partnerships, cooperation, relationships and collaborations. It will draw from these experiences for quality programming; bringing bigger and long-lasting impact. The roles of different stakeholders will be analyzed and recorded and PIN will use different stakeholders' capabilities for strengthening and transforming its partnerships approach. In a humanitarian and nexus context PIN will increase partners' roles and will be flexible whenever possible in processes and systems while considering the challenges and obstacles of working in such a context. PIN will have the right partnerships with the right partners for the right purpose, context, and goals, and its partnerships approach will be deeply rooted in PIN's three pillars and local programming.

**Unpacking typology and purpose of partnerships:** Within the broader public, private, and civil society sectors, PIN will diversify its partners' portfolios and will have a wide range of partners at the country programme and global level. Diversifying and broadening the range of PIN's partners helps support each of the four strategic pillars, as well as the country programme strategies. Similarly, PIN will broaden the purpose of its partnerships by moving from contractual or implementation relationships to more strategic partnerships. Strategic partnerships are elaborated as long-term, with a shared vision and clear roles and responsibilities, and are formalized with an agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU) which is beyond the project contractual relationship. At the CP level through partners mapping, strategic partners will be identified from various sectors and PIN will have long-term strategic MoUs with them as per the CP strategy.



Access to safe drinking water in dry season is challenging in Rakhine state, with the most vulnerable people in IDP sites. Through this challenge, PIN and its partners organizations have provided emergency water trucking to cover the water shortages in IDP sites and distributed water storage tanks, LifeStraw sawyer water filter, and water treatment solutions to over 16,000 people in the IDP sites in Mrauk-U, Minbya, Kyauktaw and Ponnagyun townships.

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### RDD Strategy and Partnership Commitments

*As a certified member of the CHS Alliance, we will integrate Core Humanitarian Standards in our processes, measure our progress and transparently report on challenges encountered. In particular, we will work to meaningfully involve local communities in assessments, designing interventions, monitoring the implementation and results, and channelling feedback and complaints.*

# PIN's Partnerships Cycle

Based on the past learning PIN has divided its partnerships cycle into six areas and the initial three are related to **Partnerships Development** whereas the later three are linked with **Partnerships Management**. Each step is elaborated under the Partnerships Handbook with operational information and linked with relevant tools and processes. These steps will be followed in all contexts e.g. development and recovery.

**Partners identification:** PIN will identify potential partners by mapping the development and emergency context while developing a country programme strategy, programme and sector (pillar strategies) strategies, fundraising strategy, project concepts, and proposals. Before developing concrete partnerships for a particular purpose, PIN should identify the full range of potential partners from its stakeholder analysis. This identification is an ongoing process and comprehensive partners mapping can serve to find partners for various purposes.

**Partners assessment including risks:** Once partners are identified and before entering into a formal partnership, PIN

and the potential partner will assess each other's capacity and conduct a due diligence process in a structured manner. This process will allow flexibility for different types of partners. A partnership can bring reputational and operational risks. For each partnership risks should be assessed regularly and a mitigation plan should be developed. PIN will be open to entering into high-risk partnerships that have strategic importance. In such instances PIN will establish a careful and evolving mitigation plan which is periodically reviewed.

**Contract signing:** Once an assessment is completed and risks mitigation plans are developed, a written agreement should be negotiated between partners and signed by the relevant signing authority of each partner. The written agreement should be appropriate for the nature of the partnership, should undergo suitable legal review, and follow the PIN contract manual.

**Quality implementation:** To ensure quality implementation of the agreed partnership's agenda throughout the partnership cycle all partners and stakeholders will contribute by monitoring it constantly. To ensure

quality and maintain good oversight of agreed activities and intervention implementation, partners should have processes and mechanisms in place. PIN's systems and the processes will be flexible to support quality implementation of the agreed partnership commitment while ensuring required legal and donor compliances.

**Monitoring and evaluation:** Partners will jointly develop a partnership M&E framework and relevant action plans and will follow these in true spirit to ensure quality implementation and mid-course corrections in a timely manner. Joint oversight and M&E framework will go together and will cover aspects related to partnership reviews, project progress reviews, review of different action plans related to capacity building, risk mitigation, regular field visits, and exchange of lessons learned will be a critical element for a successful partnership. Following the partnerships principle, having open and honest discussions will boost trust in each other and will help in the implementation of plans and improving PIN's overall partnership approach.

**Exit and sustainability:** Sustainability of the outcome is critical for PIN and it needs to be ensured from the beginning. Concrete steps need to be taken at each partnership cycle to make it systematic and organic. Where required, exit and sustainability modalities should be defined and need to be implemented by respective partners in all contexts. Beginning with an end-point in mind is key to effective partnerships to avoid dependencies and mitigate risks. Where needed and relevant, PIN should also contribute to the sustainability of partner organizations by facilitating them in organizational development and institutional strengthening through its structured and tailor-made capacity-building support. This process of exit and sustainability will ensure long-lasting, impactful strategic partnerships with true transformation in relationships and give more power to local actors.

