

**FRONTLINE  
NEGOTIATIONS**

**CENTRE OF COMPETENCE ON  
HUMANITARIAN NEGOTIATION**

# THE CENTRE OF COMPETENCE ON HUMANITARIAN NEGOTIATION

ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL EXCHANGES AND PEER LEARNING  
AMONG FRONTLINE HUMANITARIAN NEGOTIATORS



A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN



## Negotiating Humanitarian Action on the Frontlines

Frontline humanitarian negotiations play a critical role in providing safe access to populations affected by armed conflict and violence. These negotiations take place in highly contextual, confidential and personal environments. As a result, humanitarian negotiators as talented they may be often work in isolation from each other and enjoy only limited access to information and discussions on peer practices.

Yet, humanitarian professionals increasingly recognize commonalities in negotiation practices in complex environments – both within a given conflict and across conflict situations. The multiplicity of humanitarian actors and their growing interdependence on the ground imply a greater need for sharing of experience and peer learning in assistance and protection negotiations. Indeed, negotiators are increasingly aware of the impact of parallel negotiation efforts and the outcome of their own.

Humanitarian negotiations are inherently challenging, often involving unpredictable actors, considerable time pressure as well as political, security and institutional constraints. As humanitarian organizations expand their operational outreach and engage with a growing number and variety of actors, the task of negotiating access has become a central part of their activities and the crucial point at which humanitarian principles intersect with field practices.

### What are humanitarian negotiations?

Humanitarian negotiations are defined as interactions with parties to a conflict and other relevant actors aimed at establishing the presence of humanitarian agencies in conflict environments, ensuring their access to vulnerable groups and facilitating the delivery of assistance and protection activities.



## About the Centre of Competence

In October 2016, five leading humanitarian organisations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Program (WFP), Médecins sans Frontières (MSF-Switzerland) and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), launched the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation (CCHN), based in Geneva, Switzerland.

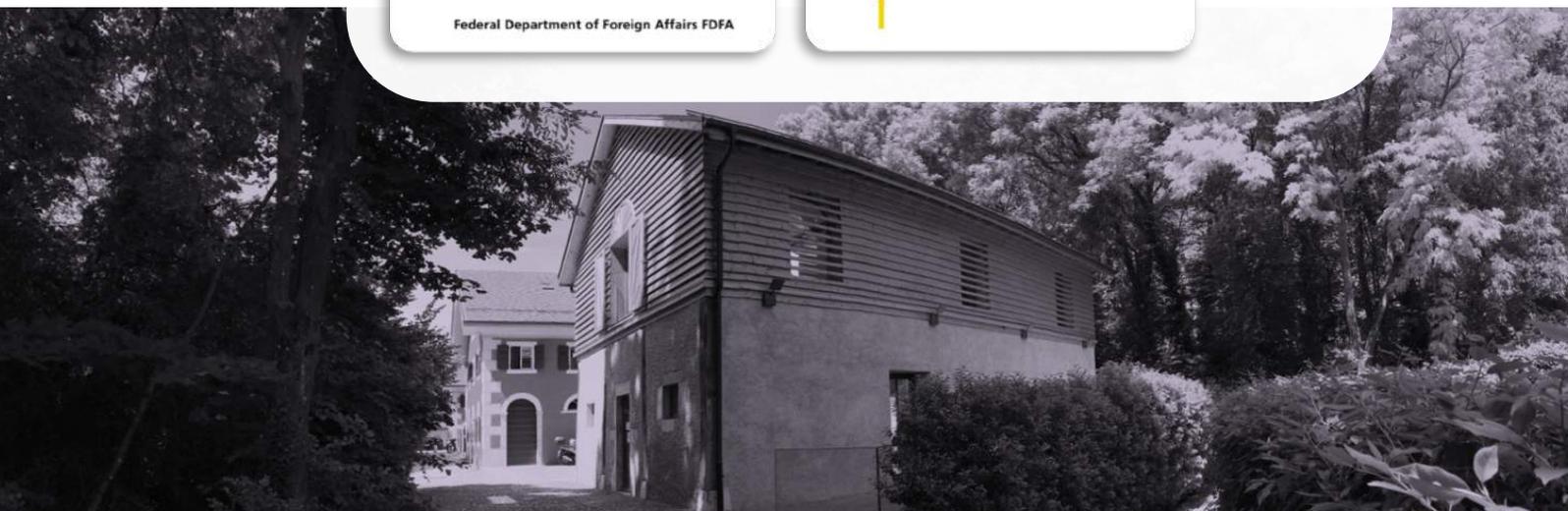
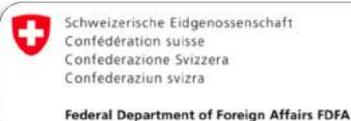
### A Strategic Partnership

The Centre is based on a Strategic Partnership between WFP, MSF, HD, UNHCR and the ICRC. It is staffed by seconded employees of the five Strategic Partners and operates out of Domaine “La Pastorale” at the heart of the international district of Geneva.

The Centre of Competence facilitates the capture, analysis and sharing of humanitarian negotiation experiences and practices with a view to supporting a more systematic approach to frontline negotiation. It provides a space for both multi- and single-agency dialogue and

intends to foster a community of practice among humanitarian negotiators.

This joint endeavor is supported by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and the German Federal Foreign Office (AA). During a five-year incubation phase (2016-2021), the Centre is hosted by the ICRC and, with the support of the five Strategic Partners, organizes dedicated events, peer-to-peer exchanges and carries out research on issues identified by practitioners.



## Strategic Objectives

### 1. Promoting critical reflections, learning and informal peer exchanges among frontline negotiators

The Centre offers a safe, informal and neutral space to discuss and review humanitarian negotiation practices in regions affected by conflicts. By fostering peer exchanges, the Centre aims to support individual negotiators and their organizations in addressing the growing challenges and dilemmas of complex humanitarian operations.

### 2. Developing a stronger analytical framework and greater capacity for effective humanitarian negotiation

Informed by current practices, the Centre contributes to the professional and policy debates surrounding frontline negotiation processes, tools and strategies. It cooperates with leading policy and academic centers in the elaboration of the necessary framework to analyze humanitarian negotiation experiences and to develop practical planning and evaluation tools.

### 3. Fostering a community of practice among humanitarian professionals engaged in frontline negotiations

The ultimate goal of the Centre is to facilitate the emergence of a global community of practice among professionals engaged in frontline negotiations across agencies, regions and themes.

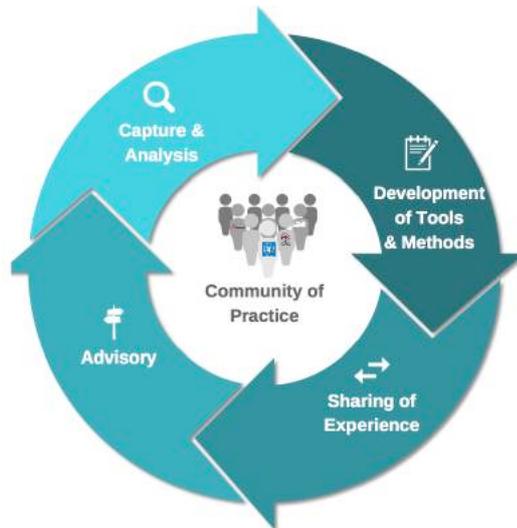
#### Learning from each other's experiences

The Centre provides a platform to tap into the vast experience of WFP, UNHCR, ICRC, MSF and HD in negotiating humanitarian action on the frontlines. Experiential learning and peer exchanges lie at the heart of the Centre's mission, aiming to foster the emergence of a global community of practice.



## Scope of Activities

The Centre organizes four types of activity to support a global community of professionals in preparing for and conducting humanitarian negotiations:



**Capture & Analysis of Negotiation Practices:** We collect and analyze the experiences and reflections of frontline humanitarian negotiators, as well as document their strategies, challenges and dilemmas at the local, national and regional level.



**Development of Negotiation Tools & Methods:** We create practical negotiation tools, methods, case studies and simulation exercises to support field practitioners in preparing for and conducting negotiations.



**Sharing of Experience:** We facilitate the sharing of knowledge, ideas and experience between experienced humanitarian professionals; providing a platform to listen to and learn from peers who face comparable challenges and dilemmas in current negotiations.



**Advisory:** We advise frontline professionals from partner agencies in terms of negotiation of access and protection based on analytical tools and policy work of the Center.

## List of Activities

The Centre's activities are conducted either in single-agency or multi-agency mode, according to specific demands and objectives. While some activities are reserved for staff from the five Strategic Partners, many are open to qualified practitioners from other humanitarian organizations. For more information and to sign up, please visit the [CCHN website](#).

-  Regularity of occurrence
-  Profile of participants
-  Modalities of participation

### Field Assessments

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**Listening Tours:** Bilateral and small group meetings with field practitioners to capture and analyze practices and challenges in current humanitarian negotiations.

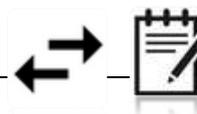
-  On demand of Strategic Partner
-  For field-based teams
-  By invitation

**Case Studies:** Participatory research related to humanitarian negotiations in a specific operational context, in close collaboration with field-based teams and academic partners.

-  On demand of Strategic Partner
-  For practitioners with in-depth knowledge of the case
-  By invitation

### Professional Pathway

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**Induction Workshops:** Field-level workshops introducing essential tools of humanitarian negotiation for national and international staff.

-  Regularly taking place in regional hubs

-  For practitioners with 5-8 years of experience in negotiations
-  On application

**Advanced Regional Workshops:** Workshops to enhance the capacity and skills of field practitioners through guided peer exchange of experience and reflections.

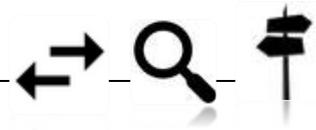
-  Regularly taking place in regional hubs
-  For practitioners who previously completed induction workshop
-  On application

**Trainings of Facilitators:** Three-step program to develop participants' capacity to train on the use of the CCHN methodology and enhance negotiation skills and techniques.

-  Twice a year in Switzerland
-  For individuals with previous experience in training practitioners
-  On application

## Peer Discussions

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**Regional Roundtables:** Peer discussions on specific challenges and dilemmas of humanitarian negotiations.

-  Regularly taking place in regional hubs
-  For experienced practitioners with knowledge of the context
-  By invitation

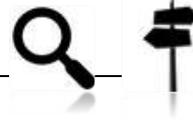
**Thematic Retreats:** Retreats for experienced frontline negotiators, supported by external subject-matter experts.

-  Regularly taking place in regional hubs
-  For practitioners with in-depth knowledge of the topic
-  By invitation

**Peer Reviews:** In-depth evaluations of the lessons learned in a specific negotiation, following a clearly defined protocol.

-  On demand of a Strategic Partner
-  For practitioners with in-depth knowledge of the case
-  By invitation

## Advisory Services



**Advisory Support Missions:** Missions to advise field-based teams on specific challenges and dilemmas of negotiating access and protection in an operational context.

-  On demand of a Strategic Partner
-  For field-based teams
-  By invitation

## Annual Meeting of Frontline Humanitarian Negotiators

The Annual Meeting of Frontline Humanitarian Negotiators is a global gathering of field practitioners and subject-matter experts. Featuring interactive panel discussions and breakout sessions, the Annual Meeting offers a platform for participants to share their insights on key challenges and dilemmas of humanitarian negotiations in selected operational contexts. It acts as an informal assembly guiding the orientation of the Centre.

-  Once a year in Geneva, Switzerland
-  For senior practitioners
-  On application





## Where We Work

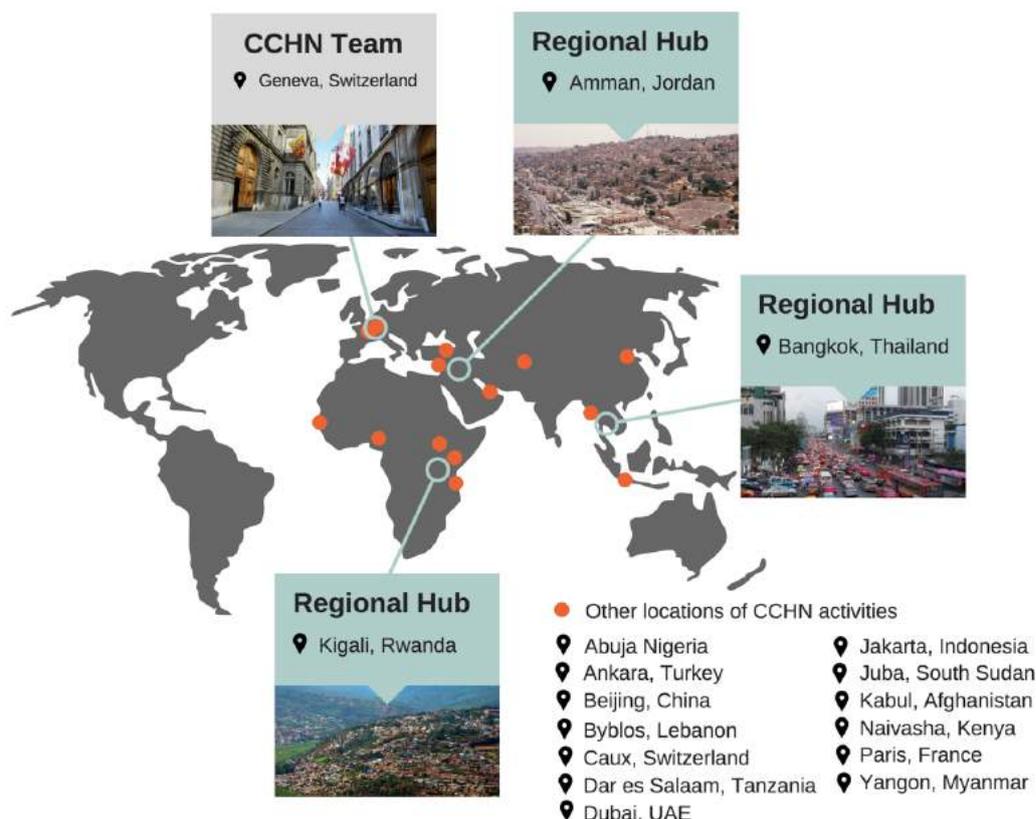
The Centre of Competence facilitated peer exchanges between practitioners at the local, national and regional level. Our activities are centered on humanitarian operations in **Afghanistan, Colombia, DPRK, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lake Chad Basin, Mexico, Myanmar, Pakistan, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen.**

### Regional Hubs

In an effort to propel its activities in selected regions, the Centre has established three Regional Hubs: in **Kigali, Rwanda** (for East Africa); in **Amman, Jordan** (for the Middle East); and in **Bangkok, Thailand** (for South/Southeast Asia). In each of these hubs, we organize regular activities, in close collaboration with local partners and field-based teams.

### A practitioners-driven regional agenda

The Centre works closely with field-based practitioners, organized in informal working groups. While informing the planning of CCHN activities in their respective region, the working groups also assist in the design of the Annual Meeting of Frontline Humanitarian Negotiators.



## Contact Us

For more information about the Centre of Competence and to sign up for an activity, please visit:

[www.frontline-negotiations.org](http://www.frontline-negotiations.org)

Or contact:

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## Internal Focal Points

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