

HIGH-LEVEL PANEL & PROFESSIONAL ROUNDTABLE

**Strengthening the Capabilities of Humanitarian Organizations
to Negotiate on the Frontlines**

**Berlin, Germany
26-27 November 2019**



Under the patronage of:

The Government of the
Federal Republic of Germany,
Federal Foreign Office

Organized by:

The Centre of Competence on
Humanitarian Negotiation



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The Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation (CCHN) is a joint initiative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), Doctors Without Borders (MSF), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP). It was established in 2016 to provide concrete opportunities for frontline humanitarian negotiators to share and analyse their negotiation practices, to build practitioners' capacity to address recurring challenges and dilemmas in humanitarian negotiation, and to foster peer-to-peer exchange across agencies and regions in a safe environment. Its core objectives are:

- To foster a community of professionals engaged in frontline humanitarian negotiations;
- To promote critical reflection, learning and exchanges among peers within this community;
- To develop a stronger analytical framework and greater capacity for effective practice.

Photo credit: Photothek | Front cover picture: ICRC staff member listening to group of women who flee violence and were a victim of sexual violence. (ICRC/Shirin Sultana)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes reflections and recommendations of participants of the High-Level Panel and Professional Roundtable on Strengthening the Capabilities of Humanitarian Organizations to Negotiate on the Frontlines held in Berlin, Germany, from 26–27 November 2019.

The overarching focus of the two-day event was to consider the ways and means for strengthening the capabilities of humanitarian organizations to engage in complex humanitarian negotiation with governments, belligerents, and

communities in conflict situations. The event gathered over 100 professionals from leading humanitarian organizations, academia, governments, policy circles, and the private

sector. Participants brought a diversity of experiences and perspectives to the discussions. Contributions of frontline negotiators who traveled from their duty stations in emergency contexts were particularly appreciated.

The event opened with remarks and keynote speeches by **Rüdiger König**, Director General for Crisis Prevention, Stabilisation, Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Assistance at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, and **Bärbel Kofler**, Federal Government Commissioner for Human Rights Policy and Humanitarian Assistance. They touched upon the challenges faced by humanitarian organizations engaged in frontline negotiation and the benefits of the exchange of experiences and the systematic learning from experiential tools and methods in order to improve access and the delivery of assistance to populations in need. Highlights of these speeches can be found in Part I of this report.

The introductory remarks were followed by a *High-Level Panel* designed to discuss current challenges and dilemmas of building the negotiation capabilities of humanitarian organizations and to review a common vision proposal. The High-Level Panel was composed of:

- **Peter Maurer**, President, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- **Jean-François Huchet**, President of National Institute for Oriental Language and Civilization (INALCO)
- **Grainne Ohara**, Director of the Division of International Protection, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The panelists agreed on the proposed common vision toward the development of negotiation capabilities of humanitarian organizations and professionals operating in conflict environments.



- **Rehan Asad**, Chief of Staff, World Food Program (WFP)
- **Kathy Relleen Evans**, Director, Development Projects and Innovation Unit, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
- **Carl Skau**, Deputy Director General, Head of Department for Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- *Moderated by:* **Heba Aly**, Director, The New Humanitarian

Speakers on the High-Level Panel shared their experiences and views in dealing with complex and fragmented conflict environments, pressures on humanitarian professionals, and the recurring dilemma of principled vs. pragmatic decisions during negotiation situations in the field. A proposed common vision elaborated by the CCHN as part of its preliminary consultations with organizations and practitioners was discussed during the High-Level Panel. The panelists **agreed on the proposed common vision toward the development of negotiation capabilities of humanitarian organizations and professionals operating in conflict environments** (see Annex 1).

- Participants agreed that significant efforts will need to be devoted to responding to the realities and demands of field practitioners in terms of:
- **Developing practical negotiation tools and methods** to assist humanitarian professionals in their engagements with conflict actors in complex environments;
 - **Ensuring the maintenance of safe spaces for the sharing of negotiation experience** and peer support in times of crisis;
 - **Building the capabilities of organizations to plan and monitor negotiation processes** as well as to guide and support the efforts of negotiation teams;
 - **Sharing negotiation tools and capacity across agencies** in view of their growing interdependence regarding safe and principled access; and,
 - **Focusing attention on the training of national and international staff at the field level** and on the mobilization of their field experience.

Field realities were shared by frontline negotiators in a panel on Voices from the Field, composed of:

- **Wissam Al-Ahmad**, Programme Policy Officer, WFP, Kadugli – Sudan
- **Clarisse Uwambayikirezi**, Former Field Team Leader, ICRC, Gondar – Ethiopia
- **Oscar Sánchez Piñeiro**, Senior Field Coordinator, UNHCR, Cox's Bazar – Bangladesh
- *Moderated by:* **Joëlle Germanier**, Head of Operations, CCHN

The second practitioners-led panel set the tone for the event and the speakers' insights were echoed in each of the working group discussions during the two days. Highlights of their speeches can be found in Part I of this report.

Participants then engaged in a series of *Professional Roundtable* sessions, at the end of which they developed **an informal action plan for implementation of the common vision agreed on in the High-Level Panel session: to build the capacity of humanitarian organizations to engage in humanitarian**

negotiation on the frontlines. These sessions looked into practical ways of encouraging humanitarian organizations to strengthen their negotiation capabilities with the support of reputable policy and training centers and the contribution of the members of the CCHN's community of practice.

The Professional Roundtable discussion was articulated in the course of a series of thematic sessions of 1 hour and 30 minutes each, subdivided into working group discussions under the following subjects:

Session 1	Ascertaining the profile of humanitarian negotiators: On the required skills and competencies to engage in complex negotiations
Session 2	Designing professional development pathways on humanitarian negotiation: On toolkits and methods for humanitarian professionals
Session 3	On the framing and monitoring of humanitarian negotiation processes
Session 4	Review of experiential learning and peer-to-peer approaches
Session 5	On the development of an informal action plan

Each session entailed a plenary discussion during which the main conclusions and recommendations of the working groups were shared with the entire audience. Highlights of contributions and recommendations of the working groups can be found in Part II of this report.



The event also provided an opportunity to launch the latest version of the **CCHN Field Manual on Frontline Humanitarian Negotiation** and the **CCHN Toolkit on Frontline Humanitarian Negotiation**. The CCHN Field Manual stands as a cogent demonstration of the collective effort of the CCHN community in gathering its experience and sharing practices and reflections across agencies and field operations throughout over 40 peer workshops from 2016-2019. In addition, the CCHN developed a comprehensive toolkit as support products for humanitarian negotiators; the toolkit was inspired and developed based on the needs of humanitarian professionals shared during a series of in-depth interviews and informal exchanges during CCHN events. Highlights can be found in Part I of this report.

Finally, the meeting marked the beginning of a potential *Berlin Collaborative Process*, jointly established by the participants during the two-day deliberations. Achievement of two key results—(1) agreement on the common vision, and (2) the elaboration of an informal action plan by the participants—represented a significant step toward the orientation of efforts to strengthen the negotiation capabilities of humanitarian organizations and an opportunity to connect relevant initiatives in this regard.

The event closed with speeches by **Rüdiger König**, Director General for Crisis Prevention, Stabilisation, Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Assistance at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, who highlighted the key conclusions and recommendations of the meeting and called for further collaboration, and **H.E. Ambassador Paul Seger**, Swiss Ambassador to the German Federal Republic, who, on the occasion of the 70-year anniversary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, invited the participants to recall how invaluable this legal framework is for humanitarian assistance and protection and shared his negotiation experience with the participants. Highlights of these speeches can be found in Part II of this report.



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PART 1

SUMMARY

Introductory Speeches

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Voices from the Field Panel

Introductory Speeches

SPEAKERS:

- **Rüdiger König, Director General for Crisis Prevention, Stabilisation, Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Assistance at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany**
- **Bärbel Kofler, Federal Government Commissioner for Human Rights Policy and Humanitarian Assistance, Berlin - Germany**
- **Claude Bruderlein, Director, CCHN**



The event commenced with opening remarks by distinguished speakers, who welcomed the participants to the conference and presented their vision of the humanitarian space and the role of negotiation in access and delivery of assistance to populations in need in fragile contexts. The overarching focus of the two-day conference was framed as a collective consideration of the ways and means for strengthening the capabilities of humanitarian organizations and front-line negotiators to engage in complex humanitarian negotiation with governments, belligerents, and communities in conflict situations.

Mr. Rüdiger König welcomed participants to the conference in his introductory address and outlined that humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law are facing challenges. He shared that more than ever, humanitarian negotiation has become key to gaining access to many millions of people in dire need of humanitarian assistance.

Furthermore, Mr. König expressed that Germany engages in humanitarian contexts and is highly committed to safeguarding humanitarian space and to ensuring that humanitarian workers are safe and well prepared when helping others. He elaborated that the German government supports initiatives aimed at advancing the negotiation capabilities across the aid sector in order to improve access to those most in need and to ensure safety of humanitarian professionals.

Ms. Bärbel Kofler presented the keynote address, maintaining that spreading knowledge and acceptance on international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles among counterparts should be part of negotiation efforts, to be followed by better monitoring and greater accountability toward the respect of these norms and principles at the field level. She stated that Germany is committed to go one step further and focus on the effective ways for humanitarian actors to help populations in need. For Ms. Kofler, the core concern is to concentrate on difficult situations where humanitarian workers are exposed to significant risks in the field. In this regard, she expressed that successful delivery of aid, as well as the safety of humanitarian workers, depends on their own ability to properly explain their humanitarian mandate and negotiate access to victims and those in need of assistance.

Moreover Ms. Kofler shared that donors are not on the ground when a humanitarian worker gets into a difficult and dangerous situation; in such cases, aid workers are on their own. She asserted that they are forced to negotiate their way in and their way out. To do more to prepare them to handle such challenges would be a big step forward. This would considerably improve the security and safety of humanitarian actors and significantly increase the chances of life-saving assistance getting through to those most in need. Ms. Kofler concluded that the German government is convinced that improving humanitarian negotiation skills is an essential way to increase the effectiveness of the humanitarian aid system.



In turn, **Mr. Claude Bruderlein** shared that, for years, the humanitarian system has been built on law- and principle-based entitlements granting humanitarian organizations a “right of access” to populations in need. In return, organizations had to maintain, at least publicly, a strict adherence to core humanitarian principles and ensure that arrangements in the field do no harm, do not favor any side, focus on those most in need, and are not affected in any way by undue influence. Yet, with the politicization and instrumentalization of humanitarian assistance, humanitarian professionals have also witnessed growing suspicions from the parties to armed conflict on the true nature of their presence and action. Mr. Bruderlein suggested that the necessity to engage, explain, and seek the support of belligerents has become even more compelling.

Mr. Bruderlein further pointed out that humanitarian negotiators often find themselves between a rock and hard

place: they are expected to advocate for the full implementation of humanitarian law and principles and abide by security regulations and political restrictions, while at the same time build trustful relationships with belligerents, taking into account the interests of the parties and affected communities. He stressed that humanitarian negotiators find themselves poorly equipped to navigate these dilemmas with their counterparts, constrained by limited long-term strategies, guidance, or monitoring in complex and hazardous environments.

With these concerns and the points raised by the distinguished speakers in mind, Mr. Bruderlein wished for the conference to be an opportunity to see how collective consideration can take place to identify ways for supporting negotiation efforts, considering that:

- a. Humanitarian negotiation has become an essential tool to seek safe access to populations in need in some of the most complex situations;
- b. The negotiation experience of humanitarian professionals on the frontline is a major source of expertise on how to mobilize parties to armed conflict toward accepting practical arrangements;
- c. The sharing of this experience and expertise represents a significant asset to enhance the access and resilience of humanitarian organizations on the frontlines.

SUMMARY

High-Level Panel

SPEAKERS:

- **Peter Maurer, President, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)**
- **Jean-François Huchet, President of National Institute for Oriental Language and Civilization (INALCO), Paris**
- **Grainne Ohara, Director of the Division of International Protection, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**
- **Rehan Asad, Chief of Staff, World Food Program (WFP)**
- **Kathy Relleen Evans, Director, Development Projects and Innovation Unit, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)**
- **Carl Skau, Deputy Director General, Head of Department for Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs**
- **Moderated by: Heba Aly, Director, The New Humanitarian**

Speakers of the High-Level Panel shared their experiences and views on such topics as complex and fragmented conflict environments, pressures on humanitarian professionals, and the recurring dilemma of principled vs. pragmatic decisions during negotiation situations in the field. The common vision was discussed during the High-Level Panel. The panellists agreed on the proposed common vision toward the development of negotiation capabilities of humanitarian organizations and professionals operating in conflict environments (*see Annex 1*). They agreed that significant efforts will need to be devoted to responding to the realities and demands of field practitioners in terms of:





Mr. Peter Maurer expressed that humanitarian professionals are more aware of the necessity to plan negotiation processes and to seek the contribution of colleagues in building sound analyses of contexts, mapping networks of influences, understanding interests, and drawing scenarios. He recalled how the vision of the Strategic Partnership on Humanitarian Negotiation established in 2016 is still valid today and stressed that in order to improve agencies' capacity to negotiate in complex emergencies, it is necessary to :

- **Developing practical negotiation tools and methods** to assist humanitarian professionals in their engagements with conflict actors in complex environments;
 - **Ensuring the maintenance of safe spaces for the sharing of negotiation experience** and peer support in times of crisis;
 - **Building the capabilities of organizations to plan and monitor negotiation processes** as well as to guide and support the efforts of negotiation teams;
 - **Sharing negotiation tools and capacity across agencies** in view of their growing interdependence regarding safe and principled access; and,
 - **Focusing attention on the training of national and international staff at the field level** and the mobilization of their field experience.
- Devote the necessary resources to learn from current humanitarian negotiation practices and collect in a systematic manner the best tools and methods to plan and undertake successful negotiation;
 - Build a safe space to foster informal exchanges and peer support in real time among field practitioners on current challenges and dilemmas of humanitarian negotiation; and
 - Facilitate the sharing of expertise across agencies to support the efforts of partner agencies and organizations to seek better and safer access.



Speaking about the needs and opportunities of collaboration between the academic, research, and humanitarian sectors, **Mr. Jean-François Huchet** mentioned the imperative to integrate the depth of local knowledge of a given humanitarian context into the curricula of degree programs. He also proposed that research agendas on the topics of humanitarian action and negotiation should be encouraged. He shared that there is an increasing number of students wishing to pursue careers in humanitarian action and that academia's role is to better prepare them for the challenges and realities they will face on the ground. Lastly, Mr. Huchet highlighted how important it is for universities and research institutions to join forces with initiatives like the CCHN to ensure the effectiveness of academic programs.

Ms. Grainne Ohara touched on the complexities and realities of assistance to and negotiation on behalf of displaced populations. She mentioned that the scale of today's forced displacement and the complexity of the field scenarios put very heavy emphasis on the importance of humanitarian negotiation. Ms. Ohara further asserted that situations that had been taken for granted on the basis of clearly accepted legal frameworks are increasingly more problematic for humanitarian actors, making it more difficult for them to achieve positive influence in their professional activities, so the importance of humanitarian negotiation speaks for itself, considering the challenging circumstances. She also highlighted how restrictive attitudes and policies toward access to asylum are leading to negotiation situations around issues that were previously regarded as non-questionable and that the nature of negotiation is changing; that it is no longer just at the checkpoints.





Based on his experience in the field, **Mr. Rehan Asad** spoke about how humanitarian professionals operate in the midst of multi-level conflicts, under pressures from multiple stakeholders in complex environments. In order to reach families in need of food aid, humanitarians have to negotiate access with multiple parties, from armed

groups to local councils, in multiple locations, and at the same time ensure agreements on deconfliction. He explained that weather conditions can affect delivery of aid—e.g., rain can start and wash up mines on the ground. The dilemma is then whether to go ahead with food delivery to the people in need or pull out until the mines are cleared. Mr. Asad said that in each context it is important to understand the interests and positions of actors and be able to engage with multiple stakeholders.

He further highlighted that aid workers have to uphold humanitarian principles and engage in meaningful negotiation in the interest of populations in need. To this end, agencies need to support staff on the frontline to advance their negotiation skills and techniques. Lastly, Mr. Asad called for humanitarian organizations to embrace technology in a safe way and with due measures guaranteeing confidentiality for effective knowledge sharing.



Ms. Kathy Relleen Evans shared her views about the value of open conversations around humanitarian negotiations. She said that enabling an open dialogue on dilemmas and humanitarian principles in relation to humanitarian negotiations is key to increasing staff capabilities. A frank and open conversation about the challenges of staff and partners can provide them with the confidence to better engage in negotiations. Ms. Evans expressed that the Norwegian Refugee Council welcomes all in any space that allows for this dialogue to take place, for experiences to be shared, and for humanitarian professionals to be able to speak out about their practical challenges in the field.

Mr. Carl Skau offered his perspective on how diplomats and humanitarian professionals can support each other for better outcomes in complex humanitarian settings. Explaining whether high-level diplomacy is more effective than the field-level negotiation in humanitarian contexts, Mr. Skau said that the “middle middle level,” where each level (high and field) helps the other, is probably where win-win solutions are maximized. High-level diplomacy can help the situation on the ground when things start going wrong—for example, when negotiating for humanitarian corridors and there is a need for dialogue at all levels.

Furthermore, Mr. Skau shared that consistency with principles, building coalitions with non-traditional actors, and diplomatic dialogue with involved parties about the political cost of obstructing humanitarian aid are some of the important elements of humanitarian diplomacy. He concluded that exchanges between humanitarian diplomats and humanitarian practitioners need to take place more as what is at stake is people’s lives in those humanitarian contexts.



In the following debate moderated by **Ms. Heba Aly**, the speakers discussed issues such as how to achieve inter-agency information sharing on negotiation practices; how to encourage curiosity; the importance of considering the distinct challenges that the national partners face in the field; and the need to invest in quality relationships not only at the field and diplomatic levels, but also between the humanitarian organizations themselves.



SUMMARY

Voices from the Field Panel

SPEAKERS :

- **Wissam Al-Ahmad**, Programme Policy Officer, WFP, Kadugli - Sudan
- **Clarisse Uwambayikirezi**, Fmr Field Team Leader, ICRC, Gondar - Ethiopia
- **Oscar Sánchez Piñeiro**, Senior Field Coordinator, UNHCR, Cox's Bazar - Bangladesh
- **Moderated by: Joëlle Germanier**, Head of Operations, CCHN



The panel commenced with a 10-minute video prepared by the CCHN, which presented stories of a dozen members of the CCHN community about their frontline negotiation experiences. The community members were interviewed during a CCHN retreat, Humanitarian Negotiation under Pressure, that took place in October 2019 in Caux, Switzerland. The stories gave a rare glimpse into the work of frontline negotiators and the challenges they face on a daily basis in humanitarian contexts from Venezuela to Afghanistan.



Next, the panel was enriched by the field realities shared by frontline negotiators. They talked about the importance of building trust with the counterparts, how personal characteristics can play a role during a negotiation process, and the value of an avenue for sharing based on their experiences. Additional topics discussed during the Q&A session included how to manage stress and pressure on the ground, the importance of community acceptance, and the need for self-care. During the exchange, one of the speakers highlighted how critical the situation is in regard to mental health support to the staff on the ground, referring to an example of how, in 2019, 20 staff were evacuated due to stress by one agency alone in just one operational context.



Ms. Wissam Al-Ahmad shared that humanitarian negotiation is a continuous process of building trust with the counterpart, the most important aspects of this process being sensitivity and perceptions. She noted that the success or failure of the negotiation will have a big impact on the lives of those people who are waiting for assistance. Ms. Al-Ahmad then explained how counterparts can have different positions, interests, and motives, and how she has learned to adapt her negotiation strategy, tactics, and language to each counterpart in every given situation.

Ms. Clarisse Uwambayikirezi touched on how humanitarian organizations have the same mission but the vision and implementing methods are different in the field. She further remarked that humanitarian workers run after information and behave like competitors in the field. The mistrust is a reality in the field and counterparts are aware of it. For Ms. Uwambayikirezi, the CCHN peer workshop is a platform that allows frontline negotiators to reunite. She shared that the first day of the workshop starts with skepticism, the second day becomes more relaxed as participants realize that challenges are common, and on the last day, everyone departs with a feeling of belonging to a community.

Speaking about how behavioral change is highly complex and is usually driven by many forces, **Mr. Oscar Sánchez Piñeiro** elaborated on how luck and timing play important roles in the

field work process, and that causality is at times impossible to prove. For Mr. Piñeiro, the ambitious aim of humanitarian negotiation professionalization may bring about transformative

change in the way humanitarian practitioners conduct activities in the field. He shared that the CCHN has created something unique that allows

trust among staff of different institutions that have their own cultures. He stressed that in the field, there is a deficit of trust, and the CCHN platform allows for exchange among different views and perspectives in a non-confrontational or transactional manner.

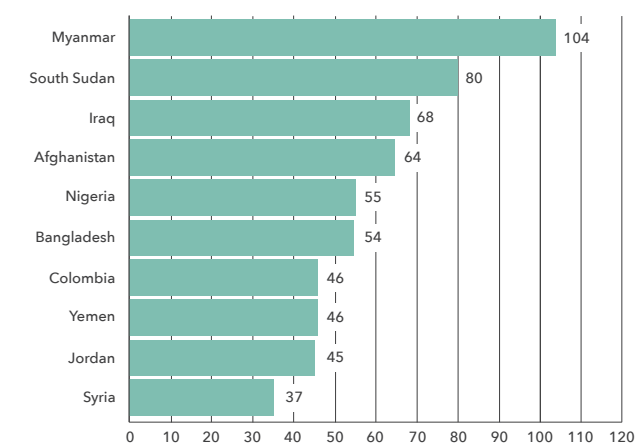
During the panel, **Ms. Joëlle Germanier** touched on how a community of practice can be a mechanism to support the transfer of negotiation experiences across regions and agencies. She then shared some of the key facts about the growing community of practice that has been facilitated by the CCHN since 2016.

The field practitioners talked about the importance of building trust with the counterparts, how personal characteristics can play a role during a negotiation process, and the value of an avenue for sharing based on their experiences.



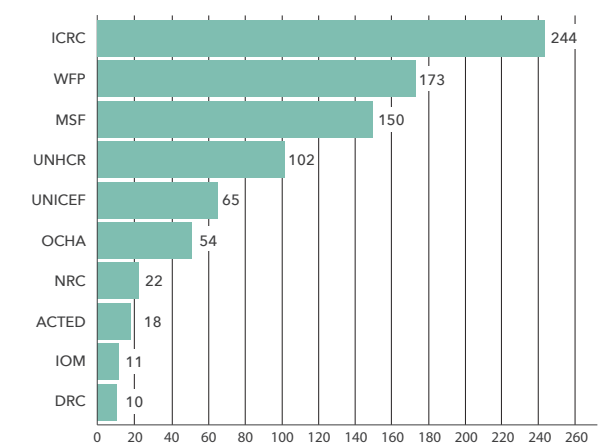
Member profiles per field operation (top 10)

Last updated : January 2020



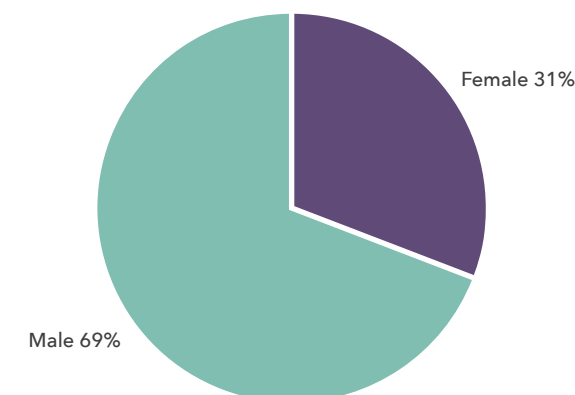
Member profiles per organization (top 10)

Last updated : January 2020



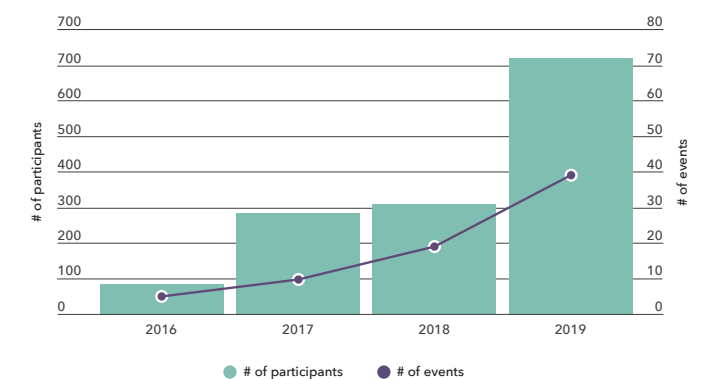
Gender balance

Last updated : January 2020



Growth of activities

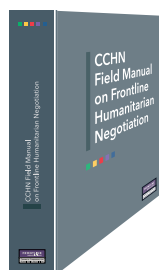
Number of events and participants (excl. Annual Meetings)





LAUNCH OF THE CCHN FIELD MANUAL 2019

The event provided an opportunity to launch the latest version of the *CCHN Field Manual on Frontline Humanitarian Negotiation* and the *CCHN Toolkit*.



The **Field Manual on Frontline Humanitarian Negotiation** offers a comprehensive and systematic method for carrying out humanitarian negotiations. The manual includes a set of practical tools, drawn from field practices, and a step-by-step pathway to plan and implement negotiation processes in a structured and customized way.



The **Negotiator Handbook** offers the collection of tools for direct use during negotiation processes. It outlines how to apply each tool of the *CCHN Field Manual* with background guidance and step-by-step instructions.



The **Facilitator Handbook** provides information and references needed to facilitate a peer workshop on humanitarian negotiation with members of staff. It assists CCHN facilitators as they build their own skills in presenting and using CCHN tools and methods.



The **Negotiator's Notebook** is designed for note taking during meetings and includes fact sheets related to humanitarian negotiation and templates from the *Field Manual on Frontline Humanitarian Negotiation*.



CCHN Connect is a community-powered online forum on humanitarian negotiation. It provides a platform for humanitarian professionals to discuss challenges and dilemmas of humanitarian negotiations and connect with peers from around the world. The forum is packed full of interviews with frontline negotiators, blog series, research papers, and more.



The **Case Studies** present the application of the negotiation tools of the *CCHN Field Manual* to real-life situations from the field that have been synthesized and decontextualized for the purpose of learning and maintaining confidentiality. Each case study takes the reader through a negotiation process, illustrating application of the tools at the different stages of the process.

The development and update of the **CCHN Field Manual on Frontline Humanitarian Negotiation** have been possible thanks to the active contributions and continuous guidance of the strategic partners of the CCHN, namely, the ICRC, WFP, MSF, UNHCR, and HD. It has benefited greatly from the reflections of a series of academic researchers and negotiation experts. The generous support of donors has also been crucial, in particular the governments of Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, and Luxembourg.



PART 2

SUMMARY

Professional Roundtable

SUMMARY

Professional Roundtable

The High-Level and Voices from the Field panels were followed by the professional roundtable sessions divided into five sessions:

Session 1	Ascertaining the profile of humanitarian negotiators: On the required skills and competencies to engage in complex negotiations
Session 2	Designing professional development pathways on humanitarian negotiation: On toolkits and methods for humanitarian professionals
Session 3	On the framing and monitoring of humanitarian negotiation processes
Session 4	Review of experiential learning and peer-to-peer approaches
Session 5	On the development of an informal action plan

Each thematic session of 1 hour and 30 minutes was subdivided into four working group discussions in different breakout rooms. Each working group was facilitated by designated facilitators and attended by approximately 20-25 participants representing humanitarian organizations, academia and research, government, and the diplomatic and donor communities. Rapporteurs from each working group presented key points and recommendations of their respective groups in the plenary with all participants.

SESSION 1

Ascertaining the profile of humanitarian negotiators: On the required skills and competencies to engage in complex negotiations

The first session prompted a discussion on the required knowledge, attitudes, and skills to conduct effective humanitarian negotiations in complex environments. Participants shared their perspectives on the proposed Competence Chart developed by members of the CCHN community (see Table 1).

- The group discussions were facilitated by:
- **Alain Lempereur**, Brandeis and Harvard Program on Negotiation – Plenary moderator
 - **Gerard McHugh**, Conflict Dynamics International
 - **Bettina Weitz**, MSF
 - **Toufik Naili**, CCHN

Participants reported that the Competence Chart can be useful for talent acquisition and hiring procedures of organizations. Humanitarian organizations may also benefit from being able to map out existing competencies within teams and identify gaps that are critical for negotiation processes based on the Chart. As such, this would allow a certain level of in-house “skill transparency.” Lastly, the Competence Chart can help the development of a professional pathway for enhancing capabilities of frontline negotiators within organizations.

Other participants questioned whether such a Competence Chart brings additional layers of complexity to organizations on the topic of staff competencies, and to what extent the proposed Competence Chart reflects the needs of humanitarian negotiators in the field. These reflections pointed to the importance of an iterative approach in the process of development of the Competence Chart and its application. Organizations’ ability to scale up on the depths of such a competency chart was also mentioned as essential to consider. Some participants elaborated on the required competencies during the session and recognized that their list of competencies was similar to the proposed Competence Chart that includes capacity to analyze contexts, intercultural flexibility, emotional intelligence, and sense of tactics. It was then highlighted that the hierarchies within the mandating organizations need to have a level of un-

derstanding about the required competencies for humanitarian negotiators. The need is not only at the individual level in the field, but also at higher levels, and a proper combination could constitute an organizational competence.

Finally, participants discussed and questioned how does one progress from Core to Advanced to Expert levels. Some participants believed that the Core level should be about reaching clarity on basic rules and obtaining knowledge of the given context by a humanitarian negotiator; the Advanced competences should be linked with the development of due diligence. The Expert level should be about leadership and strategic-level work. Participants raised further questions, as well as ideas, among which were the need for a self-assessment tool, mentoring and feedback mechanisms, and the need for peer-to-peer exchanges and learning.

Table 1: Competence Chart on Humanitarian Negotiation
Compiled by members of the CCHN community in Caux (Switzerland), June 3-5, 2019

LEVEL/ FEATURE OF DEVELOPMENT	Knowledge	Attitudes	Skills
Core	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding of humanitarian principles and basic rules Capacity to map and build conducive networks Capacity to analyze contexts and interests Knowledge of cultural protocols 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-awareness Emotional intelligence Accepting complexity Intercultural flexibility Empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to think tactically and critically about one-self, one's organization, and one's objectives Ability to work under pressure Ability to deal with difficult people Ability to share experience and perspectives openly
Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity to manage multiple external stakeholders Method to leverage influence Capacity to balance interests and find the right compromises Method to engage in strategic thinking and decision-making Capacity to reflect and deliberate on complex issues in a systematic manner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adaptability to changing environments Ability to create options out of complex problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to address negotiations tactically, including the use of social media Ability to understand complex environments
Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity to forecast changing environments and positions Capacity to develop multi-stakeholders, multi-faceted strategies Capacity to leverage competing sources of influence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to take and manage risks Ability to lead a negotiation process Ability to align priorities within one's organization and maintain a clear mandate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to mentor and coach negotiation teams in complex environments



SESSION 2

Designing professional development pathways:
 On toolkits and methods

The second session of the Professional Roundtable focused on discussing potential avenues to equip humanitarian professionals with the required tools and methods to engage in successful negotiations on the frontlines. Participants were encouraged to imagine innovative ways to build the capacity of individual negotiators through various pedagogical and experiential approaches.

The group discussions were facilitated by :

- **Robert Weibel**, CENAD – Plenary moderator
- **Anaïde Nahikian**, Harvard Humanitarian Initiative
- **Karl Blanchet**, CERAH
- **Larry Hollingworth**, Fordham University

Participants underlined the importance of doing a proper action mapping, not only of what frontline practitioners need to know but also what they need to do during negotiation processes in the field. Equipping humanitarian professionals requires not only a focus on knowledge, but also on behaviors and attitudes.

On the design of professional development pathways by humanitarian organizations, attendees discussed the so-called “rule of 10/20/70” on adult learning experiences. 10% of learning comes from formal settings, 20% is from informal settings like peer-to-peer exchange, and 70% comes from on-the-job learning. The CCHN and other organizations should consider this perspective when developing learning pathways.

Some participants raised the institutional challenges regarding the required investment in building staff capabilities in view of staff turnover or shifts in roles of staff, as well as the changing contextual realities. Humanitarian responses are not the same as they were in the 1980s or the 1990s. The professional development pathways need to reflect such evolution. Many participants suggested prioritizing the needs of the national staff, as well as national implementing partners, on negotiation capabilities. National staff and partner organizations are at the forefront of building relationships and negotiating with authorities, belligerents, and communities. While they are the most knowledgeable about the given local context, practices, and dynamics and are instrumental to the successful outcome of negotiations, they are also the ones most exposed to the challenges, dilemmas, and risks of frontline negotiations. Yet they are often ill equipped regarding important elements of humanitarian negotiation. Field-based trainings in local languages on topics such as divergent norms, engaging in difficult negotiations, risk of compromises and red-lines can better equip the frontline negotiators.



Later on in the session, participants discussed the need for a solid and stable basis for learning—a “skeleton” of the professional development of humanitarian negotiators, where core modules are defined and optional modules can be added based on the specific needs of a given context or the culture of a particular organization. Such a skeleton of a professional development pathway should be based on a comprehensive assessment of needs, self-assessment tools, and agreed standards to assess performance. In this process of developing a pathway for humanitarian

negotiators, it is likely that there will be a need to categorize diverse negotiation practices according to the level of the engage-

Equipping humanitarian professionals requires not only a focus on knowledge, but also on behaviors and attitudes.

ment and staff involved. For example, routine negotiation takes place on a daily basis and is done by many humanitarian staff, who may require a level of awareness on negotiation capacity, while there are high-risk negotiation situations for which a more advanced level of competencies are required.

Participants also mentioned that certification of acquisition of knowledge and skills may be pertinent to specific fields of negotiation such as hostage or crisis negotiation. Others argued that certification of humanitarian negotiation competences could potentially become too rigid; the subject needs further exploration and discussions.

In general, participants were divided about the value of certifying frontline negotiators. Some participants argued for the usefulness of such validation, while others shared their skepticism. One common assessment was that recognition of acquisition of academic and operational competences by humanitarian professionals can be valuable across contexts. Since many professionals move between humanitarian organizations during their career, having a common recognition of both academic and operational capacities would support the individuals, as well as the organizations, to tap into the existing competences.



Participants in favor of certification recognized that frontline negotiators need to have a basic skills set. Other participants argued that basic practice and experience are not easy to capture because experienced negotiators rely on contextual and local knowledge, so developing a reliable measure of capacity will be difficult. Lastly, certification could create a sort of exclusion, where it becomes a “gatekeeper” for those who have not participated in the trainings and workshops. Some proposed that, instead of certification, tagging of competencies could potentially be more useful, especially for human resources departments, where tagging would allow internal knowledge of available competences among the staff.

Participants suggested that a certificate of attendance could be a more flexible pathway toward certification in that it resembles the idea of “tagging.” It was

also shared that it may be challenging to mainstream negotiation capabilities if these are over-professionalized through a certification process. Some believed that certification should be about recognition of transferable skills within the humanitarian negotiation space. Such a certification can enable individuals to realize their own strengths and recognize areas for further development. It can also allow reflection into past negotiation experiences, whether successful or less so, and identify the lessons learned. Ultimately, a certification process should be developed based on the needs of humanitarian professionals. Whatever the learning method, be it a training, a peer workshop, or case studies, participants believed that there needs to be a feedback loop from practitioners on the impact of the gained knowledge and skills on the work and experiences in the field.

Whatever the learning method, participants believed that there needs to be a feedback loop from practitioners on the impact of the gained knowledge and skills on the work and experiences in the field.





Participants also discussed whether capacity building on humanitarian negotiation should be organized in-house by humanitarian organizations themselves or be outsourced to external institutions. Some suggested that these two are not mutually exclusive. The content of capacity-building programs depends on individual needs and learning styles. It was recommended that capacity building should be based on needs, especially of the national staff who most often negotiate in the field, and be delivered

locally to reach a wide number of humanitarian professionals.

Participants discussed whether capacity building should be organized in-house by humanitarian organizations themselves or be outsourced to external institutions.

In terms of scalability, the CCHN Program of Training of Facilitators, particularly locally, and the use of digital platforms were referred to as the most efficient means for reaching a large number of practitioners in need of negotiation tools and methods. It was noted several times that these two are complementary approaches and that the digital platform cannot replace face-to-face interaction. In-person communication during the CCHN peer workshops allows for establishing personal networks and trust as the basis of the exchange among peers, while digital platforms can offer further opportunities for in-depth discussion and learning. It was also mentioned that even if internet connectivity remains a challenge in some “deep field” contexts, content and online networks via mobile phones are ever more accessible for humanitarian practitioners across contexts. Finally, almost all groups felt that striking the right balance between the use of the two approaches, face-to-face and digital, is key to building the community of practice.



SESSION 3

On the framing and monitoring of humanitarian negotiation processes

Participants were invited to explore the ways and means to build the capability of humanitarian organizations to manage and monitor humanitarian negotiation processes, taking into consideration their stakes both in terms of impact on the affected population as well as the risks associated with some of the operational compromises.

The group discussions were framed by specific questions and were facilitated by:

- **Joyce Luma**, WFP – Plenary moderator
- **Marc Hofstetter**, HD
- **Toufik Naili**, CCHN
- **Casie Copeland**, WFP

Question 1:

What are potential ways to enhance the capabilities of the management of humanitarian organizations to frame negotiation processes on the frontlines?

Participants first suggested that having an internal buy-in on negotiation and engagement at the senior management level is important. This buy-in needs to be translated into internal policies on negotiation; these policies need to be shared, acknowledged, and endorsed across the different functions within a humanitarian organization. Integration of the negotiation function into relevant positions and job descriptions was mentioned as one of the steps that can



be taken by management. Participants also suggested that it is the role of managers to define and put in place a risk management system that is specific to frontline negotiations.

Other participants raised the importance of striking the right balance between the different levels of commitment in terms of operational objectives, humanitarian principles, and the safety of staff. Finding that balance is a recurring challenge for frontline negotiators. Management has a role and responsibility to support the negotiation teams in finding a proper way to balance the varying interests and values. Upskilling management teams was viewed as an opportunity. Common understanding and ability to dialogue in the “same language” by management and the field teams were highlighted as important, especially in situations where a specific negotiation becomes stuck at a certain level. In this context, participants recommended simulation trainings for management on the roles and responsibilities in framing the negotiation processes and facilitating a better understanding of recurring risks and the duty of care by the management.



Most participants highlighted the challenges related to internal communication and the absence of a common lexicon between HQ, the capital and field offices, sometimes resulting in missed opportunities for learning. There is a fundamental friction around negotiation strategies and tactics between the HQ and field levels. Often HQs are worried about setting precedents in terms of compromises, while the negotiation teams in the field are more concerned about the delivery of aid.



Question 2 :
How should organizations guide and monitor negotiation processes? Who should decide on red lines and how? What does an acceptable compromise look like? What are the risks involved; how are they evaluated and treated?

Participants believed that the shared ownership of the negotiation processes is key, where the roles and responsibilities of those guiding and monitoring the negotiation processes must be clear for all. Negotiation teams need to be trained to function within such a system as well as within a collaboration with other agencies and stakeholders. In this context, some participants suggested that the limits of the negotiation mandates (red lines) need to be considered at two levels: (1) at the broader level of the humanitarian community, and (2) at the operational level by an indi-

vidual organization. Some participants suggested that senior management has to establish the red lines in order to relieve the pressure on the negotiator, while others contended that red lines are set at the field level, depending on the local context. Red lines need not be theoretical but should be contextualized with proper understanding of the consequences on the operations and on the field teams.

Linked with red lines and the management of risks, participants recommended that the impact of compromises on humanitarian action needs to be monitored not only in view of delivery of aid, but also in terms of the long-term implications on the humanitarian sector. Common frameworks on subjects where compromises are largely unacceptable, such as the safety of teams, duty of care, and the principle of do-no-harm, can support field teams and managers during the planning of complex negotiation processes.

Question 3 :
How far should agencies invest in the development of monitoring tools such as digital journals to support the collective learning of the organization?

Some participants believe that there is a need to invest in the management of knowledge within and across negotiation processes. Important negotiation experiences are often lost, preventing the ability of organizations to learn from their practices. Tools and systems are required to systematize capturing and filtering information and learning experiences for knowledge management purposes. Many participants highlighted that humanitarian negotiation remains a sensitive topic and organizations are not always willing to capture and share certain information—for example, about their engagement with armed groups—in a systematic manner, even within the same organization. Participants suggested that information sharing, for example, for case studies, requires a safe space to allow

confidential and respectful exchange of experiences and views. The group recognized that sometimes lessons learned are shared and discussed informally within organizations, yet there are no proper and organized approaches. Some participants proposed consideration of developing a new organizational mindset to invest in learning from shared experiences among humanitarian negotiators and across organizations. They believed that it can be useful to have real-time evaluation of the negotiation experience by a non-operational team that can take an overview of the negotiation situation and draw lessons from it.

Some of the participants believed that investing in negotiation tools can lead to better onboarding of staff. Monitoring the negotiation process, not only the outcome of the negotiation, is a way for agencies to manage risks. The information accumulated could create a basis of evidence that can help organizations to generate a dialogue with stakeholders and donors on the challenges faced on the ground. This dialogue needs to be transparent based on concrete evidence collected through a functional monitoring system.

Important negotiation experiences are often lost, preventing the ability of organizations to learn from their practices.



Question 4:

What are the opportunities for and constraints to developing a library of case studies and simulations?

Some participants recommended that a library of case studies on diverse negotiation experiences can be useful for frontline practitioners. For this purpose, the cases need to be well selected so that learning can be generated for a wide range of practitioners. The cases need to be decontextualized with due respect to confidentiality of the person or the organization involved. One participant added that organizations and the CCHN

should encourage colleagues to proactively share information to be captured, analyzed, and

The cases need to be decontextualized with due respect to confidentiality of the person or the organization involved.

shared with other practitioners. Some believed, however, that there are tendencies to share success stories only, as well as to create “ready-made” solutions that can fit other situations. These tendencies should be avoided as solutions are specific to each organization, context, or negotiation situation. Other participants discussed challenges related to information sharing in large vs. small organizations; for instance, due to limited staff and resources, smaller organizations might be more willing to share information in order to learn quickly and put in place mechanisms for improving the outcomes of negotiation processes.

In conclusion of the session, the moderator highlighted the three key outcomes of the discussion:

- Operational hierarchies should be trained to guide and support negotiation processes, including determining the red lines and discussing the objectives of the negotiation with the teams in the field;
- Feedback, sharing of lessons learned, and guidance can help the frontline negotiators, especially in high-risk and complex situations; and,
- More support is needed in terms of tools, knowledge, and skills for better monitoring and framing of negotiation processes. Case studies on diverse negotiation situations can be useful for practitioners, particularly those in the field.

SESSION 4

Review of experiential learning and peer-to-peer approaches

Participants discussed the relevance of a peer community and the opportunities of peer exchanges to learn advanced negotiation techniques and tools as well as to develop a critical understanding of negotiation environments.

The group discussions were framed by specific questions and were facilitated by:

- **Stefan Szepesi**, Negotiation & Public Service – Plenary moderator
- **Brett Davis**, MSF
- **Oscar Sánchez Piñero**, UNHCR
- **Bruno Pommier**, ICRC

Question 1:

How should organizations facilitate the emergence of a community of practice around humanitarian negotiation? What should the role of the community be? What support can the members of the community provide?

Participants discussed the role of the CCHN in facilitating the emergence of a community of practice around humanitarian negotiation. They believed that the needs of field practitioners should be identified from a bottom-up approach to ensure a clear vision for the community of practice. Participants shared views about the role of the community as a platform for informal networking, knowledge manage-



ment, experimenting, and, more importantly, a safe and confidential space where open discussions and exchanges can happen among the humanitarian practitioners. Trust among individuals can be built in this space as organizational hats are off and individuals are free to agree or disagree. Ideas about actors mapping, including respective capabilities in humanitarian negotiation and mainstreaming the existing tools on negotiation, were raised by a number of participants.

Furthermore, participants underlined that peer-to-peer learning must not be confused with psychosocial support. There could be a tendency of saying to professionals in need of psychological support to address traumatic stress, “OK, we’ve got you covered, you were supported by your peers who go through similar pressures.” Peer-to-peer learning with the purpose of advancing negotiation skills and techniques is different from psychosocial support that individuals may need due to various stresses they encounter in the field. These are different types of support to the frontline humanitarians and must be separated.





Question 2:
How can agencies benefit from this community of practice in terms of standard setting, training, and peer support?

Participants recognized that exchanging and learning outside the organization can benefit not only the individual practitioners, but also the wider humanitarian sector, as advanced negotiation techniques will imply better negotiation outcomes for the benefit of populations in need.

Some participants believed that there has been resistance within the institutional levels, but there is a sense that this resistance is breaking down over time. Resistance comes from the fear of exposure and loss of control over staff. Also, one of the fears of the management comes from the sense of validation of what can be perceived as a bad practice. On the other hand, field staff appreciate the existence of a safe space for exchange. Participants themselves make the community of practice

sustainable. Most participants believed that the buy-in of organizations is very important. Clarity and transparency in membership and governance of the community can help organizations better understand and accept the initiative.

Question 3:
How should agencies deal with the confidentiality requirements while maintaining the safe character of these informal exchanges?

Exchange of information should take place without compromising confidentiality of persons and locations. CCHN activities and products already respect such confidentiality. Guidelines on the topic could help organizations better understand how the CCHN organizes the events. When organizations send their staff to participate in the events, they should be reassured that sensitive information will not be disclosed. Learning generates from the content of a given negotiation experience, but the cases must be decontextualized, i.e., names and locations should be changed.

Participants recognized that exchanging and learning outside the organization can benefit not only the individual practitioners, but also the wider humanitarian sector.



Question 4:
What should the role of the CCHN be in the development of the community of practice?

Participants believed that the CCHN has created a safe space for exchange and that the value of this sharing of negotiation experience overshadows other concerns. They suggested that the CCHN should stay focused on the subject of frontline negotiation and invest in the accessibility and depth of its programs and tools for field practitioners. Case studies, simulations, and field-based peer-to-peer workshops in local languages were mentioned as valuable for the community. All discussions stressed the importance of CCHN's support being needs-based.

Participants discussed ideas to structure and guide the governance of the community of practice. A participatory governance mechanism, where community members are part of the governance structure, was commonly suggested. It was highlighted that the CCHN should follow bottom-up approaches in the design and implementation of its support activities.



SESSION 5

Designing of an informal action plan

In line with the core objectives of the Berlin Conference, the last professional roundtable session was focused on the elaboration of a collective and informal action plan toward building the negotiation capabilities of humanitarian organizations.

Based on the common vision endorsed by the High-Level Panel and the more programmatic discussion of the Professional Roundtable sessions, participants were invited to identify priority objectives and means to put the plan into practice. The informal action plan will serve as a point of focus on the orientation of future activities of the CCHN and its community of practice.



Participants were divided into four different working groups, each focusing on one of the four sessions of the Professional Roundtable. The groups elaborated an informal action plan building on the discussions and conclusions presented in the previous four sessions.

The discussions in working groups were facilitated by CCHN Negotiation Support Specialists:

- **Joelle Germanier** – Plenary moderator
- **Karim Hafez**
- **Naima Weibel**
- **Will Harper**



Questions for Working Group 1:

What are the processes and methods for the use of the Competence Chart by humanitarian organizations and frontline negotiators? How can the Competence Chart be reviewed? What can the contributions of humanitarian organizations in this be?

The following action point recommendations were shared by the rapporteur based on the group discussion:

1. The CCHN Competence Chart should be endorsed by the participating agencies. Review, discussion, and endorsement of the Chart would allow the CCHN to organize its work and support to the frontline negotiators based on consideration of the cultures of individual institutions.
2. The Competency Chart needs further review and refining. The CCHN should seek feedback from counterparts, ensuring inclusion of perspectives from the field, specifically those of the national and international staff, as well as from the local organizations.
3. The idea of self-assessment and verifiability linked to the negotiator's learning pathway was proposed. With the guidance of the Competence Chart, frontline negotiators should be able to do self-assessment and evaluation of progress in simple and accessible ways.
4. Financing and sustainability of CCHN's work and activities are questions that demand focused discussions and a strategy.

Questions for Working Group 2:

How do we overcome the scalability issue? What are some of our common goals for scaling up and maintaining quality?

The following action point recommendations were shared by the rapporteur based on the group discussion:

1. Encouraging participation of more national counterparts (e.g., staff of implementing partners, national NGOs, and societies) in CCHN events will increase the impact on local levels.
2. Participation of more female negotiators in the peer workshops and community events on negotiation capabilities is important. The CCHN and the community of practice need to pay attention to creating further opportunities for women in contexts where limitations exist. Women-only workshops should be considered in certain contexts and online learning and exchange methods should be more available.
3. Senior management of agencies should participate equally in the CCHN events along with the frontline negotiators in order to ensure that hierarchical levels speak the same language and have a common understanding and recognition of the needs and the ways and means to support staff in the field.



Questions for Working Group 3:
What are our common goals in terms of monitoring the negotiation processes? What are our goals in terms of framing the negotiator's mandate and delegation of responsibilities to the frontline negotiator?

The following action point recommendations were shared by the rapporteur based on the group discussion :

4. Training of facilitators is an excellent approach that the CCHN is implementing already. Widening the network of facilitators will support replication within organizations and in operational contexts. Field-level workshops, including some in local languages, are recommended as the needs are predominantly in the field.
5. Impacts of the workshops and other learning processes need to be evaluated.
6. Depository of negotiation tools and best practices can be helpful for the frontline negotiators and humanitarian organizations in order to increase accessibility to learning opportunities.
1. Structural issues at an organizational level and whether it is possible to have sequential steps in place at the organizational level in order to have guidance and policies.
2. Trainings for managers of negotiation processes for better awareness of their specific role toward negotiation teams under their supervision; for better monitoring, evaluation, and support to the field teams; and to give better understanding of principles and tactics for defining and giving a clear mandate to negotiate.
3. High-level introductory sessions to gain the institutional buy-in of the participating agencies and to align vision and objectives for prioritizing negotiation training.



4. Regular review of the CCHN negotiation tools with pragmatism in mind. The more the negotiation tools are used, the more feedback there will be.
5. Advocacy for the purpose of gathering regional support, be it advisory board or getting influential supporters on board.
6. Clarifying the role and responsibilities of governance bodies and practitioners with regard to liability; reviewing processes both positive and negative; and setting mandates.
2. Utilize existing forums such as Access Groups and INSO groups for partnerships with the CCHN. These forums are not mutually exclusive and can be complementary to each other. Participants of one working group can equally be an active member of the CCHN community of practice in the same operational context.
3. Trust and confidence are important subjects when speaking about the community of practice. Sharing of experiences and storytelling are hard to achieve outside a physical space and cannot always be recreated online. Digital platforms like *CCHN Connect* can be utilized for sharing of case studies and stories and for online interaction following the peer workshops and other CCHN events.

Questions for Working Group 4:
What are the common goals we are setting as a community and how can we support the growth of the community of practice?

Discussions of the group focused on the question of how can the CCHN community serve the wider community of humanitarian negotiators and also nurture the CCHN community without being exclusionary toward others in the wider community. The following action point recommendations were shared by the rapporteur based on the group discussion :

1. Encourage participants of the CCHN peer workshops to become mentors for the wider community and develop relevant tools and skills for mentorship. The mentorship program needs to be modeled. Mentors can be within their own organizations or within specific operational contexts.

SUMMARY

Closing Remarks

SPEAKERS:

- **Rüdiger König, Director General for Crisis Prevention, Stabilisation, Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Assistance at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany**
- **H.E. Ambassador Paul Seger, Swiss Ambassador to the German Federal Republic**
- **Claude Bruderlein, Director of the CCHN**



The two-day conference came to its end after the deliberations of panelists of the High-Level and Voices from the Field panels about today's realities and needs in humanitarian contexts and Professional Roundtable discussions that represented a collective consideration to identify ways for supporting negotiation efforts of humanitarian organizations and professionals. The conference marked the beginning of a proposed *Berlin Collaborative Process*, jointly established by the participants. Achievement of two key results—(1) agreement on the common vision, and (2) the elaboration of an informal action plan by the participants—represented a significant step toward the orientation of efforts to strengthen the negotiation capabilities of humanitarian organizations and the opportunity to connect relevant initiatives in this regard.

In his closing remarks, **Mr. Rüdiger König** highlighted the key conclusions and recommendations of the conference and called for further collaboration. He recalled the key outcomes of the Professional Roundtable discussions: that

- Negotiation skills can be learned; they are not necessarily a question of personality or innate talent. Instead, they are based on knowledge, attitude, and technical skills;
- The types of training and tools required to support aid workers to advance their negotiation capabilities should be developed based on the needs in the field and collective discussion among relevant professionals;
- Humanitarian organizations negotiate their way to people in need, but also have to reach agreement with other parties on the safety of their staff before they enter an area. Organizations should develop systems to acquire negotiation skills; and
- Humanitarian practitioners in the field are the experts on these processes. Exchanges between humanitarian workers on the negotiation practices need to increase.

Mr. König concluded that if aid workers' humanitarian negotiation skills are improved, not only will this foster their personal safety and security in the field, it can also considerably facilitate access to the large numbers of people in need.

On the occasion of the 70-year anniversary of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, **H.E. Ambassador Paul Seger** invited the participants to recall how invaluable this legal framework is for humanitarian assistance and protection. He explained how critics say that international humanitarian law (IHL) is violated every day with tragic humanitarian consequences, and that they are right; yet the arguments that IHL has become irrelevant due to its persistent lack of respect are rather weak. Ambassador Seger made an analogy to traffic laws: if we commenced disregarding rules according to the degree of violations, the traffic laws would be quickly abandoned. He continued that it is a fact that the traffic laws are violated a thousand times every day, everywhere, mostly with impunity, and yet without these regulations the "law of the mighty" would prevail. The big, strong trucks would rule the streets; cyclists and pedestrians, the "weaker" ones, would be the losers and the unprotected victims. He stressed that what is true for traffic regulations is true for international law and for humanitarian law in particular: it protects the weak against the strong. Hence, the Geneva Conventions are as relevant as ever as a universally ratified body of law.

Ambassador Seger concluded that IHL establishes minimum standards to safeguard lives and human dignity in armed conflict; and that IHL reminds humanitarian professionals what it is all about—the life-saving mission and the risks taken by humanitarian professionals to improve the lives

of others. He said that IHL reminds us not only about obligations, but about values which are universally shared, and that the frontline negotiators are finding the courage to negotiate for these fundamental values.

Mr. Claude Bruderlein delivered the final remarks by thanking the speakers, participants, and the partners for making this event possible. He noted that now the collective journey of the *Berlin Collaborative Process* has begun, and mentioned the endorsed common vision, the informal action plan developed by the participants, the community of practice, and the actors interested in the process. He stated that this journey will continue in order to monitor the accomplishments and to strengthen the collective effort as the mission to negotiate one more mile, one more access to one more village at the field level is at the core of the humanitarian action. Mr. Bruderlein closed the event with this focused sense of purpose after thanking each and every participant.

If aid workers' humanitarian negotiation skills are improved, not only will this foster their personal safety and security in the field, it can also considerably facilitate access to the large numbers of people in need.

ANNEX 1:

Toward a Common Vision
on Humanitarian Negotiation

Elaborated on the basis of the preparatory
consultation and interviews of participants
June-September 2019

Endorsed by the High-Level Panel
on 26 November 2019

Humanitarian organizations operate in increasingly complex and fragmented conflict environments. The access of humanitarian organizations to populations affected by armed conflicts is subject to competing local, regional, and global forces that tend to instrumentalize relief aid and set conditions for the delivery of life-saving assistance to people in need. As a result, the core principles of humanitarian action are under increasing pressure by conflict actors.

To ensure the impartial delivery of humanitarian assistance and protection activities, independent and neutral humanitarian organizations must find ways to engage with all relevant stakeholders on the terms of their activities. This engagement requires at times the ability to conduct complex negotiations with varied actors to seek the consent of the parties involved in a wide range of situations.

Humanitarian organizations have been engaging in negotiation processes all over the world for several decades. There is a vast amount of negotiation experience dispersed among field

practitioners. Yet, this experience has rarely been collected or analyzed. There are few training opportunities on humanitarian negotiation that draw from current practices. Negotiation tools and methods have not been systematized and there has been limited investment so far in the capabilities of humanitarian organizations to conduct complex negotiations in conflict environments in view of the political, social, and security risks associated with such engagements. The creation of the Strategic Partnership on Humanitarian Negotiation, composed of the ICRC, WFP, UNHCR, MSF, and HD, and the launch of the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation (CCHN) in 2016, have been first attempts to identify basic tools and methods of humanitarian negotiation on the frontlines and to build a community of practice at the field level. Several other programs initiated in recent years have also focused their attention on building the capacity of humanitarian professionals to engage with state and non-state actors in securing access to populations in need, deploying effective programs, and ensuring the protection of people most affected.

The demands for professional tools and methods on humanitarian negotiation as well as for opportunities to exchange field practices have been growing steadily over several years. Most of these demands emanate from field practitioners, particularly national staff, who build and maintain relationships with conflict actors and communities on a daily basis. Humanitarian organizations have also expressed a growing interest in building their institutional capacity to plan and monitor negotiation processes in a coherent manner at national and regional levels. Further, the connection between field negotiations and humanitarian diplomacy has been a growing sector of inquiries

as the challenges and dilemmas of frontline negotiations tend to recur across contexts. There is a new awareness of the importance of developing more nuanced strategies and negotiation plans to address some of the most salient challenges and dilemmas of humanitarian action.

Significant efforts will need to be devoted to responding to these demands in terms of:

- Developing practical negotiation tools and methods to assist humanitarian professionals in their engagements with conflict actors in complex environments;
- Ensuring the maintenance of safe spaces for the sharing of negotiation experience and peer support in times of crisis;

- Building the capabilities of organizations to plan and monitor negotiation processes as well as to guide and support the efforts of negotiation teams;
- Sharing negotiation tools and capacity across agencies in view of their growing interdependence in terms of safe and principled access; and,
- Focusing attention on the training of national and international staff at the field level and the mobilization of their field experience.

In this context, the Berlin Conference represents a significant opportunity to discuss the orientation of these efforts and connect relevant initiatives.

ANNEX 2: Acronym List

CCHN	Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation
CENAD	Centre for Experiential Negotiation and Applied Diplomacy
CERAH	Centre for Education and Research in Humanitarian Action
HD	Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
INALCO	Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales
INSO	The International NGO Safety Organisation
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRW	Islamic Relief Worldwide
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WFP	World Food Programme



FRONTLINE
NEGOTIATIONS

CENTRE OF COMPETENCE ON
HUMANITARIAN NEGOTIATION