

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



FRONTLINE
NEGOTIATIONS

CENTRE OF COMPETENCE ON
HUMANITARIAN NEGOTIATION

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JOËLLE GERMANIER,
CCHN DIRECTOR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2025, conflicts intensified, geopolitical fault lines deepened, and the rules-based international order that has long underpinned humanitarian action came under sustained pressure. For those negotiating access, safety and protection on the frontlines, the operating environment became harder.

At the same moment, the sector faced a funding crisis of historic proportions. Cuts swept across humanitarian organisations, hollowing out the very capacities that practitioners rely on – experienced staff, institutional knowledge, and the internal support structures that sustain effective negotiation over time. The people most affected were often those doing the most difficult work: frontline negotiators in active conflict zones, with fewer resources and less backing than ever before.

In this context, the CCHN reaffirmed its position as a shared platform for negotiation support. As internal capacities contracted across the sector, the CCHN remained a place where practitioners could access peer learning, methodological grounding, and a community of experience. What individual organisations could no longer sustain alone, a collective platform could continue to provide.

This shift also accelerated a broader evolution in how the CCHN's tools and methodologies are applied. The community of practice and other shared frameworks gained new traction as common services, both ways of working across mandates and organisational boundaries that deliver more efficiently in resource-constrained environments.

Throughout the year, the CCHN focused and scaled its work with intention. Rather than simply expanding reach, we prioritised depth of impact by working simultaneously at the frontline, with leadership, and at system levels within specific contexts. This layered approach reflects a conviction that sustainable negotiation capacity requires engagement with the people directly in the field, the decision-makers who shape how negotiations are approached, and the systemic conditions that determine whether good practice can take root and endure.

We are grateful to our strategic partners – the International Committee of the Red Cross, MSF Switzerland, UNHCR, and the World Food Programme – as well as to our donors and the more than 9,300 members of the CCHN community, for their continued trust and commitment. In a year that tested the humanitarian sector deeply, their engagement made this work possible. The pages that follow reflect what we built together.

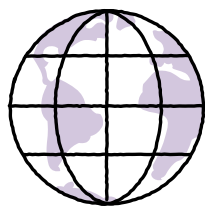
Joëlle Germanier,
CCHN Director

A YEAR IN NUMBERS

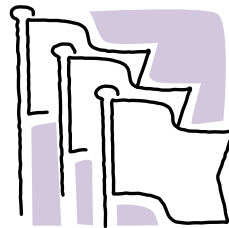
A thriving, global community of practice

The CCHN is home to a large and continuously growing community of humanitarian negotiators, who benefit from a range of learning and sharing activities. Once these professionals complete one of our foundational workshops, they gain access to additional opportunities to develop their negotiation skills while exchanging with colleagues facing similar challenges.

By December 2025, our community was composed of around... **9,350** humanitarian professionals

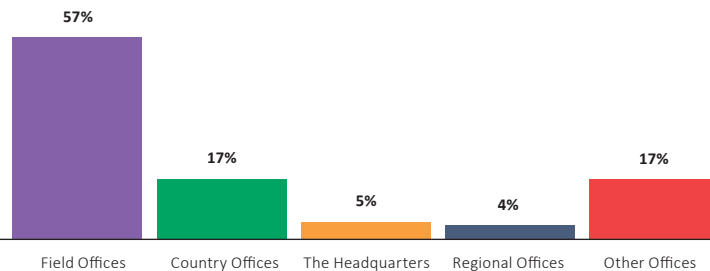


from **150+** countries



working for **400+** organisations

THESE PROFESSIONALS ARE BASED IN



Most represented organisations among members

International Committee of the Red Cross **11%**

UN World Food Programme **7%**

Médecins Sans Frontières **6%**

UNHCR **6%**

International Organization for Migration **3%**

UNOCHA **3%**

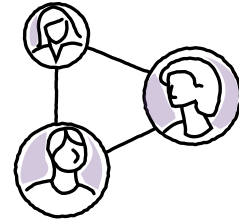
In 2025, the CCHN supported more than **2,500** humanitarian professionals

1,148 HUMANITIANS PARTICIPATED IN A CCHN EVENT

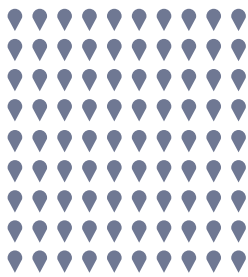
1,384 HUMANITIANS PARTICIPATED IN AN ADVANCED ACTIVITY

Welcoming new community members in 2025

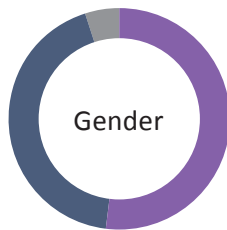
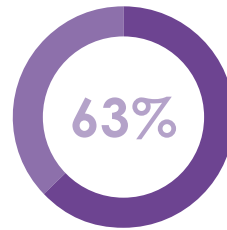
1,140+ *humanitarians completed a workshop for the first time in 2025*



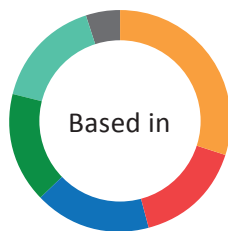
FROM 90 COUNTRIES



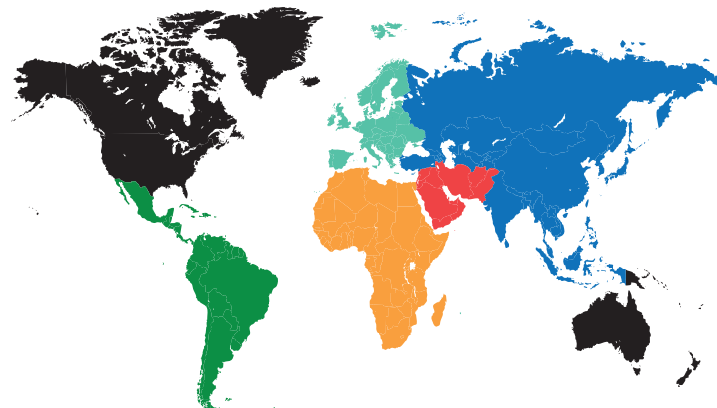
63% ARE NATIONAL STAFF
IN THEIR COUNTRY OF WORK



- Male **52%**
- Female **43%**
- Other gender / no response **5%**



- Africa **30%**
- Middle East and North Africa **16%**
- Asia **17%**
- Latin America and the Caribbean **16%**
- Europe **16%**
- Other regions / no information **5%**





Today, more than ever, humanitarians require confidential peer support and grounded analysis to ensure principled operations.



In this context, the ability to negotiate becomes the condition under which principled humanitarian operations can be implemented and sustained.

HUMANITARIAN NEGOTIATION AS A LIFELINE: PROTECTING PRINCIPLED HUMANITARIAN ACTION IN A TIME OF RESET

Preserving principled humanitarian action today requires a deliberate investment in negotiation: in the people who practise it, the structures that support it, and the platforms that connect them.

The funding crisis that reshaped the sector since early 2025 has done more than shrink budgets. As organisations were forced to cut staff and scale back operations, they lost experienced negotiators who carried years of frontline knowledge, hard-won relationships, and contextual judgement. Alongside them, the internal support structures that once helped colleagues work through stalled or high-stakes negotiations have also eroded.

This loss of capacity is happening precisely as the operating environment demands more negotiation, not less. Attacks on aid workers and humanitarian facilities have reached alarming levels. The obstruction of assistance, the targeting of civilian populations, and the erosion of the rules-based order are the backdrop against which every humanitarian operation unfolds.

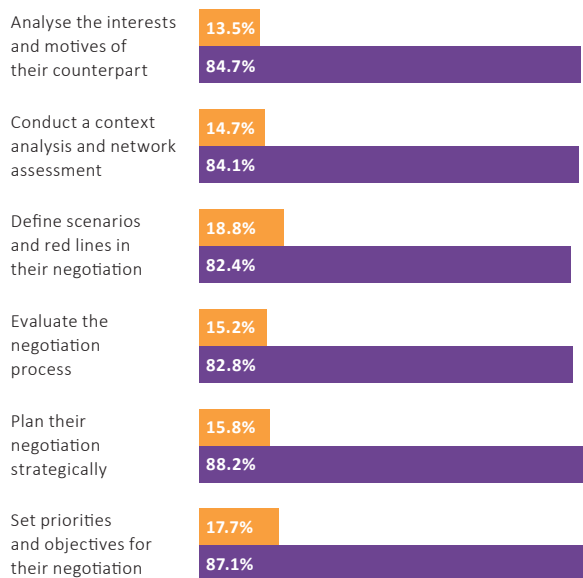
In this context, the ability to negotiate becomes the condition under which principled humanitarian operations can be implemented and sustained. That is precisely why a platform like the CCHN is indispensable: a space where frontline experience is gathered and made actionable, where practitioners find confidential peer support when negotiations stall, and where humanitarian leaders can access grounded analysis to guide principled, collective action. As the operating environment grows harder and institutional support thins, this kind of shared infrastructure becomes a practical necessity, and its value to the sector has never been greater.



Negotiation skills are increasingly recognised as essential to implement a humanitarian response and ensure sustainable access to populations in need of assistance. Photo: UNHCR

An increasing need for skills development among frontline staff

Of those who participated in a CCHN negotiation workshop for the first time in 2025, they could confidently or very confidently:



KEY: ■ Before the workshop ■ After the workshop

“LOOKING AT THE CURRENT CRISES AROUND THE WORLD, IT IS CLEAR THAT BOTH ACCESS FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AS WELL AS SAFETY AND SECURITY OF HUMANITARIAN WORKERS ARE INCREASINGLY AND OFTEN SYSTEMATICALLY THREATENED. THE NEED FOR AND THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMANITARIAN NEGOTIATIONS IS CONSTANTLY GROWING. HONESTLY, IF CCHN DIDN’T ALREADY EXIST, WE WOULD HAVE TO INVENT IT RIGHT NOW.”

– H.E. Ambassador Deike Potzel, Director General for Crisis Prevention, Stabilisation, Peace Building and Humanitarian Assistance, German Federal Foreign Office



The CCHN negotiation methodology helps humanitarian professionals strengthen their negotiation skills, confidence and collective knowledge.

Why is humanitarian negotiation a critical tool in field operations?



Regular interviews conducted with humanitarians across the globe confirm that humanitarian negotiation...

- Helps **establish and maintain access** to affected populations while also ensuring the **safety of aid workers** and operations.
- Fosters cooperation and **reduces resistance from counterparts** by promoting sustainable relationships of trust in the longer term.
- Helps humanitarians navigate bureaucratic, administrative and logistical impediments, **preventing aid blockages and delays**.
- Facilitates an ongoing **dialogue with communities** receiving assistance, ensuring that the aid delivered is appropriate, timely and inclusive.
- Complements, supports and amplifies **diplomatic efforts** for conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

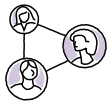
“THE HUMANITARIAN NEGOTIATION TRAINING I ATTENDED WAS AN EXCEPTIONALLY RICH AND PRACTICE-ORIENTED EXPERIENCE. IT OFFERED STRATEGIC INSIGHTS INTO BALANCING HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES WITH PRAGMATISM, EMPATHY WITH STRATEGY, AND DIALOGUE WITH RESULTS.

THE [...] CCHN'S APPROACH PROVIDES ADVANCED TOOLS TO NAVIGATE COMPLEXITY AND TO STRENGTHEN COLLABORATION AND TRUST, WHICH ARE THE CORNERSTONES OF EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE IMPACT.”

– M. Serra Ceylan
Humanitarian negotiator, Türkiye



CCHN research concluded that negotiating with communities works best when humanitarian actors invest time in building trust, cultural fluency, and sustained relationships, rather than relying on formal authority or one-off meetings. Photo: UNHCR



**Over
380**

HUMANITARIAN
PROFESSIONALS
PARTICIPATED
IN THE CCHN'S
RESEARCH ABOUT
HUMANITARIAN
PRINCIPLES IN
NEGOTIATIONS.

How well do humanitarian understand humanitarian principles?

Humanitarian principles are at the core of frontline negotiation. They guide, support, and enable humanitarian action, serving as both an ethical compass and an operational framework, including negotiations for humanitarian access. However, implementing and protecting these principles is not simple.

Humanitarian staff must first develop a deep understanding of these principles. Applying them requires navigating the complexities of humanitarian contexts while balancing the urgency to deliver aid. Additionally, many negotiators do not necessarily share a common understanding of the principles and, in some cases, have inaccurate definitions. Without a solid grasp of the principles, their definitions, and their functions, their application can be inconsistent or even absent. As a result, humanitarian negotiators often hold differing views on how these principles should be applied.

Supporting humanitarian negotiators through uncertain times



Inspired by the seismic changes brought by the regime change in Syria, the CCHN conducted an in-depth exploration of how shifts in political power impact humanitarian negotiations, unpacking different challenges humanitarians face, from negotiating with new authorities to rebuilding relationships and maintaining trust through political changes. The importance of investing in relationships prior to such a transition taking place was also highlighted.

As part of disseminating learning and raising awareness of best practices around impact on humanitarians during political power transfers, the CCHN conducted a series of four webinars, titled "When flags change," with the participation of experts from various organisations, including the ICRC and the Crisis Group. Overall, the webinars were attended by over 1,000 participants.

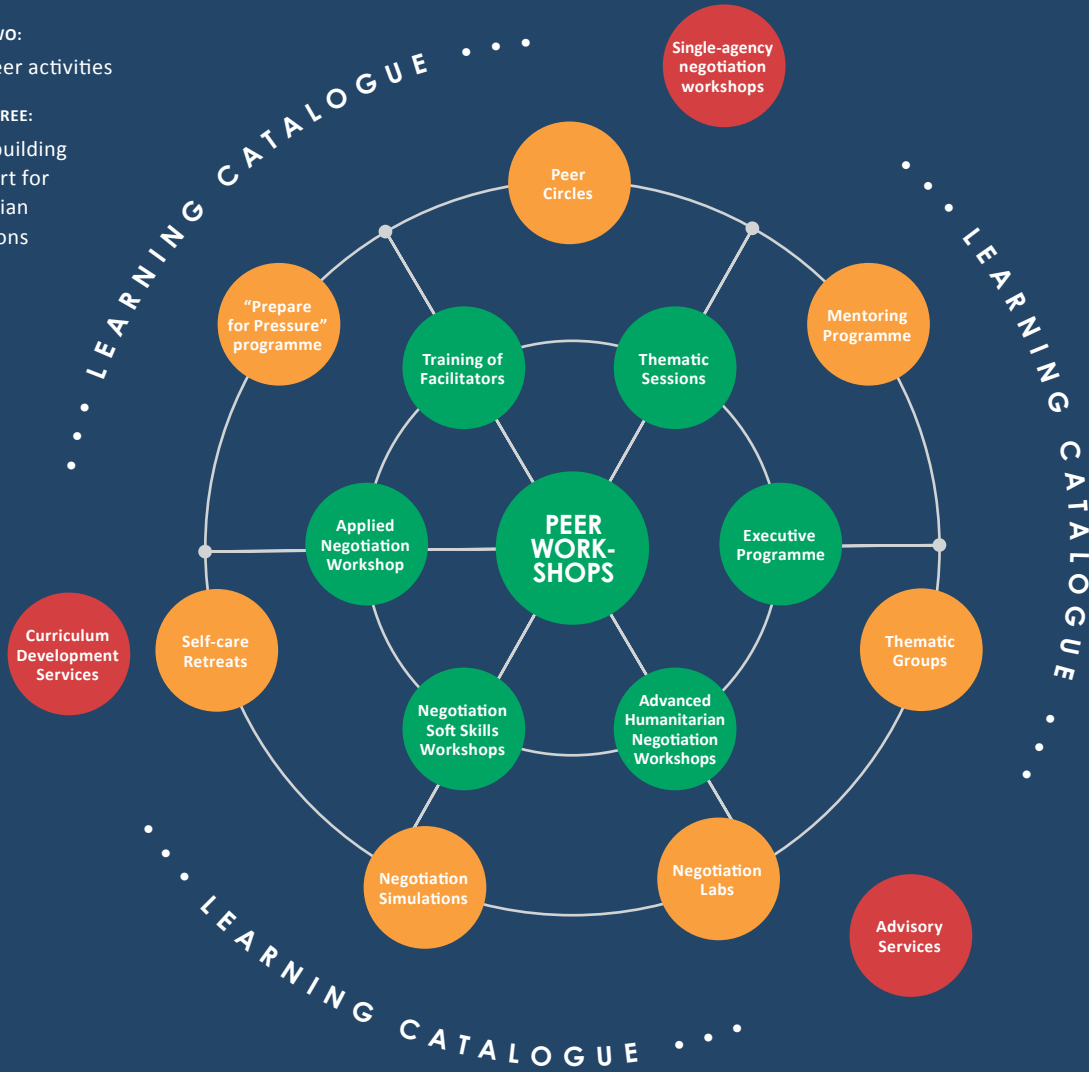
The CCHN launched a research stream to answer the following questions:

- How well do negotiators understand the humanitarian principles?
- Does their understanding help in applying the humanitarian principles in operations?
- How do aid workers put the humanitarian principles into practice in negotiations?

To address these questions, the CCHN surveyed over 380 humanitarian professionals to evaluate how well humanitarian principles are understood and applied in negotiations. The CCHN published the results in a blog and commissioned two researchers to conduct interviews with humanitarians to continue exploring these questions. The CCHN will continue to research and develop learning materials on the topic in 2026.

Learning Catalogue

- PART ONE:
Individual capacity building workshops
- PART TWO:
Peer-to-peer activities
- PART THREE:
Capacity-building and support for humanitarian organisations



Helping humanitarians learn and share negotiation practices

During 2025, the CCHN delivered:

49	5	7	2	37	55	14	1	6
FOUNDATIONAL NEGOTIATION WORKSHOPS	ADVANCED NEGOTIATION WORKSHOPS	TRAININGS OF FACILITATORS	SOFT SKILLS WORKSHOPS	THEMATIC AND EXPERT SESSIONS	INFORMAL EXCHANGES ON NEGOTIATION CONTEXTS AND CHALLENGES	INFORMAL EXCHANGES ON PRESSURE MANAGEMENT AND MENTORING	WORKSHOPS FOR SENIOR MANAGERS	PRESSURE MANAGEMENT WORKSHOPS
👤 1,148	👤 78	👤 72	👤 29	👤 307	👤 724	👤 168	👤 22	👤 44



In 2025, our participants' main reason to attend a CCHN negotiation workshop was to...

27.3%

DISCOVERING TECHNIQUES TO NEGOTIATE UNDER PRESSURE AND IN HIGH-STAKE SITUATIONS

23.5%

EXCHANGING WITH A NETWORK OF HUMANITARIAN NEGOTIATORS FROM THEIR REGION/LINE OF WORK

15.1%

DISCOVERING TECHNIQUES TO SHARE NEGOTIATION KNOWLEDGE WITH THEIR TEAM

14.1%

RECEIVING TRAINING FOR SENIOR MANAGERS LEADING THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS

17%

A MIX OF ALL OF THE ABOVE

3%

OTHER REASON/ NO RESPONSE



The CCHN provides humanitarian with a wide range of learning and sharing opportunities, from guidance on specific negotiation challenges to capacity-building services for organisations and staff on the ground. Photo: CCHN

THE CCHN'S SUPPORT IN 2025

Negotiation support

In 2025, the CCHN reinforced its commitment to strengthening the negotiation capacity of humanitarian professionals worldwide through a combination of peer learning, tailored training, and direct support. As humanitarian crises became more complex and access more constrained, the ability to engage effectively with counterparts and secure humanitarian space had never been more critical. CCHN's negotiation support played a vital role in helping humanitarian actors navigate these challenges, ensuring that aid reached those in need while upholding humanitarian principles.

A key element of CCHN's approach is the emphasis on peer learning and community exchange. Humanitarian negotiation often takes place in high-stress, unpredictable environments where strategic planning must be combined with real-time decision-making. Peer learning creates a space where humanitarian professionals can share experiences, exchange strategies, and reflect on challenges together.

In 2025, CCHN facilitated more than 55 informal exchanges, providing a platform for practitioners to discuss negotiation dilemmas and adapt successful approaches from similar contexts.

The CCHN community now includes over 9,350 humanitarian professionals from more than 150 countries, creating a powerful network for collective learning and support.

Supporting local actors remained a key priority in 2025. Recognising that national and local staff often face the most complex and high-risk negotiations, CCHN expanded its efforts to make negotiation training and support more accessible. Through the LocalLEARN initiative, CCHN financially supported national staff from frontline contexts by covering their travel and accommodation when attending its negotiation workshops. This effort not only increased the reach of CCHN's training but also ensured that local negotiators – who are best positioned to understand the cultural and political landscape – were equipped with the tools and strategies to lead negotiations effectively.

By combining peer learning, tailored guidance, and direct support, CCHN strengthened the collective negotiation capacity of the humanitarian sector, empowering professionals at all levels to navigate complex environments and secure better outcomes for affected communities.



CCHN advanced negotiation workshops help humanitarians deepen their skills to plan, manage and evaluate complex humanitarian negotiations.

Developing advanced negotiation skills

Building on its foundational training, the CCHN provides advanced negotiation skills-building opportunities through two initiatives: a three-day Advanced Humanitarian Negotiation Workshop and a wide range of thematic modules or expert sessions on complex negotiation issues.

The advanced workshop enables humanitarian professionals to develop specialised skills for proactively navigating complex humanitarian negotiations. Trained practitioners can delve deeper into designing a negotiation mandate and setting red lines to guide their teams before entering negotiations, or navigate dilemmas through an informed decision-making process, helping them identify which compromises are feasible without jeopardising their red lines.

The workshop also explores the behavioural aspects of negotiation, such as listening, building rapport, and fostering trust with counterparts. In 2025, the CCHN delivered five advanced negotiation workshops, supporting almost 80 humanitarians working in Jordan, Sudan, Syria and Ukraine.

The CCHN recognises that every negotiation differs and that complexity varies by context and counterpart. For this reason, it regularly offers modules, expert sessions, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities that address specific challenges, including negotiating protection with armed groups, navigating bureaucratic and administrative impediments through a negotiation lens rather than a compliance-only lens, and holding difficult discussions with communities.

“EVERY SUCCESSFUL HUMANITARIAN MISSION STARTS WITH ONE THING: NEGOTIATION, THE ART OF BUILDING TRUST AND GAINING ACCESS. IN HUMANITARIAN WORK, NEGOTIATION ISN'T JUST A SKILL, IT'S A LIFELINE. [THE ADVANCED WORKSHOP] WAS A VALUABLE SPACE TO EXCHANGE INSIGHTS, REFLECT ON FIELD REALITIES, AND ENGAGE IN HANDS-ON NEGOTIATION SIMULATIONS ALONGSIDE INSPIRING PEERS FROM ACROSS THE HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY. GRATEFUL TO THE CCHN TEAM, FACILITATORS, AND ALL PARTICIPANTS FOR FOSTERING SUCH A COLLABORATIVE, REFLECTIVE, AND EMPOWERING LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.”

– Sara Bahsass,
Humanitarian negotiator, Syria



Among those who participated in a CCHN workshop for the first time in 2025...

92%

RATED THE QUALITY OF WORKSHOP FACILITATION AS 4 OVER 5 OR HIGHER

91%

WOULD RECOMMEND THE WORKSHOP TO OTHERS



Our workshops would not be possible without the support of facilitators, who volunteer their knowledge to help colleagues develop stronger negotiation skills.

Training workshop facilitators

Most of the CCHN’s negotiation workshops would not be possible without the support of facilitators – experienced humanitarian professionals who volunteer their own time and knowledge to help colleagues become more skilled negotiators.

CCHN facilitators must have successfully completed a “Training of Facilitators”: a workshop in which they review the CCHN negotiation methodology and develop specific skills and techniques to support other humanitarian’s learning through peer approaches. In 2025, the CCHN also scaled its “Training of Host Facilitator” programme, and trained practitioners to deliver negotiation workshops independently, making the CCHN methodology accessible to negotiators working in hard-to-reach areas.

Throughout 2025, the CCHN onboarded some 80 new community facilitators from around the world. This brought the total number of CCHN facilitators to over 1,220. Two “Training of Facilitators” sessions were conducted in Colombia and Sudan, with a total of 30 participants.

“This week, I had the privilege of co-facilitating a [CCHN] advanced negotiation workshop. Sharing the space with dedicated humanitarian professionals from around the world was inspiring, and a reminder that learning goes both ways. I always walk away from these sessions with new, valuable insights. Grateful to CCHN for fostering spaces where humanitarians can reflect, learn, and grow together.”

– Anne Boomsma, Humanitarian professional, Europe



Throughout 2025, the CCHN assisted various agencies with humanitarian access and negotiation strategies, as well as teams confronting specific negotiation dilemmas in challenging environments such as Sudan and Yemen.

Providing advisory support

In a sector that deals with life-saving needs, professionals often feel an urgent need for negotiated solutions. In high-stakes situations where investing in long-term capacity building is not the most pragmatic approach, the CCHN steps in to provide expert, confidential guidance tailored to the problem at hand.

Throughout 2025, the CCHN assisted various agencies with humanitarian access and negotiation strategies, as well as teams confronting specific negotiation dilemmas in challenging environments such as Sudan and Yemen.

Recognising the critical role that States play in humanitarian diplomacy, in 2025 the CCHN expanded its advisory support to governmental and diplomatic staff engaged in negotiations pertinent to humanitarian issues.



Among those who participated in a CCHN workshop for the first time in 2025...

91%

SAID IT INCREASED THEIR CAPACITY TO NEGOTIATE



As part of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) programme for Political Advisors, the CCHN delivered a session on conflict analysis and negotiation approaches to strategically manage complex relationships.

Building the capacity of senior humanitarian leaders

After successfully implementing a negotiation curriculum tailored to the needs of humanitarians in leadership positions in previous years, the CCHN continued in 2025 to help senior leaders build their negotiation capacity within the framework of a partnership with Global Executive Leadership Initiative and European University Institute. Collectively, these activities have benefited 210 senior humanitarians since 2023. The CCHN delivered the last instance of the senior leadership programme in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, which concluded a series of workshops held in Panama City, Amman, Nairobi, Dakar and Bangkok during the previous year. Each six-week programme featured a combination of online sessions and in-person workshops.

In 2025, the CCHN delivered high-level negotiation and influencing training in complex environments to senior decision-makers from Ukraine and from National Societies across Europe and the Middle East. The training focused on how to structure, support and execute effective negotiations and leverage humanitarian and diplomatic efforts. Participants were able to explore collaborative approaches, common positions, and a clear outlook on contextual dilemmas.

As part of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) programme for Political Advisors, the CCHN delivered a session on conflict analysis and negotiation approaches to strategically manage complex relationships. The CCHN also delivered a session on influencing key actors in negotiations as part of GCSP's European Security Course.



In collaboration with the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency, the CCHN created a negotiation workshop curriculum designed to train families of missing persons and assist them in communicating effectively with authorities during their search for loved ones.

Providing curriculum support to humanitarian agencies

Throughout 2025, the CCHN designed and refined humanitarian negotiation curricula for a range of humanitarian organisations, including the Central Tracing Agency, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Organization for Migration, INTERSOS, and the World Food Programme.

The CCHN supported humanitarian agencies by developing tailored learning pathways that address specific operational realities and negotiation challenges they face. This included creating customised self-learning materials, as well as designing and delivering structured training programs for both middle managers and senior leadership.

These efforts aim to strengthen institutional negotiation capacities, enhance field-level decision-making, and promote more coherent and principled negotiation practices across the humanitarian sector.



The LocalLEARN initiative was established in 2024 to create more accessible negotiation training opportunities for local and national staff working in smaller NGOs.

The LocalLEARN Initiative: Elevating local negotiation expertise

Grassroots humanitarian organisations play a crucial role in responding to crises and negotiating assistance and protection for their own communities. However, local staff tend to have fewer opportunities for skills development and exchange with colleagues across the sector.

The CCHN supports these organisations by:

- Offering humanitarian negotiation training **free of charge** and in **multiple languages**, both online and in person.
- Providing eligible participants with **travel and accommodation support** to attend our workshops in their region of work.
- Offering skills-building and the assistance needed to **independently organise humanitarian negotiation training**.

In 2025, 63% of new workshop participants were national staff. With this initiative, the CCHN aims to make its learning activities accessible and inclusive to local actors, as well as to increasingly encourage the participation of practitioners at the grassroots level in its community of practice.



In May, CCHN Director Joëlle Germanier provided insights on leveraging multi-level humanitarian dialogue for the protection of civilians during UNOCHA's Protection of Civilians Week held in New York.

THE CCHN COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The CCHN community across key thematic areas

Protection negotiations

The CCHN activities placed significant emphasis on protection negotiations as a critical, cross-cutting topic across world regions.

Understanding the serious challenges around negotiating the protection of civilians, and with the aim of capturing practices, the CCHN commissioned the Humanitarian Policy Group at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) to research the topic. The findings were published in a report, "Protection negotiations with armed actors", released in October 2025. These insights will also inform future events and tailored negotiation workshops planned for the following year.

In close collaboration with UNHCR and the Global Protection Cluster, the CCHN delivered negotiation workshops with an emphasis on protection for practitioners working in Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia.

The CCHN continued to explore the topic throughout the year by participating in a panel on negotiating access to reach children in crisis during the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships week, and concluded a series of regular, informal online exchanges about protection negotiations and how they intersect with international humanitarian law, which started in 2024.

In May, during UNOCHA's Protection of Civilians Week in New York, the CCHN shared its expertise and that of its community of practice in multiple sessions. CCHN Director Joëlle Germanier spoke about leveraging multi-level humanitarian dialogue for the protection of civilians in a session hosted at the Permanent Mission of Norway, while other CCHN staff members participated a session organised by Permanent Mission of Canada on strengthening the protection of civilians through humanitarian diplomacy and a session hosted by the Permanent Mission of Belgium on recentring protection negotiations to reduce the impact of violence on civilians.



“In humanitarian work, negotiation isn’t a skill on the side – it’s the frontline. Completing the Humanitarian Negotiation Peer Workshop with the CCHN was a powerful reminder of this. I strengthened my ability to [...] design tactical plans and prepare the right strategies, [...] understand counterparts’ values and reasoning, [...] and de-escalate tense situations with practical techniques. [...] Beyond the learning, I am very grateful to have connected with inspiring humanitarian professionals and joined the global CCHN network of negotiators. Ready to apply these skills to foster dialogue, access, and protection in the field.”

Giliane Brauen,
humanitarian professional
specialised in protection
with experience in
Colombia, Democratic
Republic of the Congo and
Ukraine, among others

Negotiating the protection of civilians with armed actors: A CCHN research

Released in October, the report “Protection negotiations with armed actors” is based on 20 semi-structured research interviews with humanitarian workers of United Nations agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and non-governmental organisations, both international and national, who have all been directly engaged in protection negotiations with armed actors in various contexts – including Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Central Africa Republic, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gaza, Iraq, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, the Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen. Based on real-life practices, the report contains a series of recommendations for humanitarians who negotiate protection outcomes, including:

- **Clear institutional backing:** Define the legal scope, red-lines and risk-mitigation procedures for protection negotiations and make mandatory training on these guidelines for all staff who may engage armed actors.
- **Peer-exchange platform:** Establish regular, cross-agency forums where negotiators can share experiences, resources and lessons learned, fostering continuous learning beyond ad-hoc training.
- **Collective advocacy:** Coordinate a unified humanitarian stance to challenge restrictive host-state or donor policies and protect the space for engagement with all armed actors, including designated groups.

Negotiating bureaucratic and administrative impediments

Bureaucratic and administrative impediments pose significant challenges to humanitarian organisations, affecting their ability to operate efficiently, deliver aid, and uphold humanitarian principles. Whether dealing with complex registration processes, visa restrictions, financial regulations, or political and economic constraints, these barriers require strategic engagement, careful negotiation, and a deep understanding of local and institutional dynamics.

Understanding the serious hindrance that these challenges pose to humanitarian operations, the CCHN continued to explore the topic throughout the year by holding a panel negotiating bureaucratic and administrative impediments in humanitarian response during the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week and starting a series of regular, informal online exchanges about bureaucratic impediments in humanitarian contexts in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Ukraine, and Yemen.

In 2026, the CCHN will continue to support humanitarians confronted with bureaucratic impediments.



The CCHN helped senior leaders identify key humanitarian issues that could be addressed by engaging States and donors, and navigate dilemmas about staff safety and operating in high-risk environments in Ukraine.

Humanitarian diplomacy as part of frontline negotiation strategies

In today's humanitarian landscape, humanitarian work and diplomacy are bound to intersect. Humanitarian and diplomatic actors increasingly share the same operational space, often at the risk of politicising humanitarian assistance. In this context, it becomes increasingly important to complement frontline negotiation strategies with humanitarian diplomacy efforts.

In November, the CCHN delivered a Humanitarian Diplomacy workshop for senior decision-makers working in Ukraine, organised in collaboration with the Norwegian and the Ukrainian Red Cross Societies. The workshop helped senior leaders identify key humanitarian issues that could be addressed by engaging States and donors, and navigate dilemmas about staff safety and operating in high-risk environments. These reflections echoed discussions at a briefing held in May, where diplomats and humanitarians exchanged ideas on how diplomatic engagement can best support access, protection, and a principled humanitarian response.

“IN A WORLD WHERE HUMANITARIANS FACE GROWING RESTRICTIONS, DANGERS AND POLITICAL OBSTACLES, WE MUST RECONNECT DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS WITH THE LIVED REALITIES OF HUMANITARIAN PROFESSIONALS AND COMMUNITIES.”

– Joëlle Germanier,
Executive Director, CCHN

Invited by the Red Cross European Union Office and the Platform for Cooperation on Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants (PERCO) Working Group on Reception, the CCHN facilitated a discussion on humanitarian diplomacy in Brussels. During the session, National Societies explored how they could engage with donors and states on the management of migration. The session saw the participation of various Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, including from the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Turkey.

In 2025, the CCHN supported various member states in priority humanitarian contexts by helping them integrate the voices of humanitarian negotiators into their diplomatic policies. The work conducted to engage humanitarian and diplomatic actors will shape CCHN's strategy for 2026, which will focus on 1) supporting humanitarian organisations' humanitarian diplomacy efforts, 2) continuing to develop the CCHN's body of knowledge and practice on humanitarian diplomacy, and 3) creating collaboration and discussion opportunities for diplomats and humanitarian organisations.



Throughout 2025, the CCHN invested efforts into making skills-building opportunities more accessible to women negotiators, including by organising a workshop exclusively for female negotiators working in Afghanistan.

Supporting women negotiators

An effective negotiation team should be diverse in its composition. Research has proven that women-inclusive negotiation teams bring a broader range of perspectives and strategic approaches and tend to ensure more sustainable negotiation outcomes in the longer term. Despite this, the CCHN found that female negotiators have traditionally been underrepresented in frontline negotiations and their contributions remain overlooked. In 2025, the CCHN continued to support female professionals as they strengthened their negotiation capacity while creating a safe space for exchanges across organisations.

In the framework of the Women's International Day in March, the CCHN led a month-long campaign to highlight the challenges and contributions of female negotiators. Three webinars explored the realities women negotiators face in French-speaking Africa, Latin America and Europe – and particularly in Ukraine.

In Afghanistan, the CCHN organised an in-person workshop exclusively for female negotiators. For the third consecutive year, CCHN facilitator Mariama Sawadogo led a workshop tailored to the challenges faced by female humanitarian professionals. The workshop was extremely successful, receiving very positive feedback from participants: all rated the CCHN methodology as “useful” or “very useful”.

“THE CCHN WORKSHOP ENABLED ME TO STRENGTHEN MY HUMANITARIAN NEGOTIATION SKILLS AND PUT THEM INTO PRACTICE AS A FACILITATOR. I WAS ABLE TO SUPPORT OTHER WOMEN IN THEIR LEARNING, SHARE PRACTICAL TOOLS AND CREATE A SPACE FOR LISTENING AND TRUST. THIS EXPERIENCE HAS GIVEN ME GREATER CLARITY, CONFIDENCE AND IMPACT IN MY WORK WITH COMMUNITIES. IT CONFIRMS THAT WOMEN HAVE A RIGHTFUL PLACE IN NEGOTIATION PROCESSES, AS AGENTS OF CHANGE AND PROVIDERS OF SOLUTIONS.”

– Diane Nanema, Humanitarian Negotiator, Burkina Faso

In collaboration with the Global Network for Women Leaders in the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, two sessions were organised to support women involved in negotiation and the broader humanitarian sector. The sessions explored resilience tools and the application of humanitarian negotiation soft skills to navigate difficult workplace interactions.

Finally, the CCHN organised four “Mastermind sessions: Women at the negotiation table”, a series of online events where participants presented challenges and explored possible solutions with other attendees.

Community negotiations

Supporting families looking for their loved ones

The families of people who went missing in the aftermath of conflict play a critical role in the search for their loved ones as frontline negotiators. As they interact with authorities, armed groups, religious leaders, communities and other families, they require solid negotiation skills and plenty of support in navigating emotionally charged situations.

Established in 2023, the CCHN's ongoing collaboration with the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency culminated in two negotiation workshops tailored specifically for families of missing persons in 2025. This included a first-ever in-person workshop held in Armenia, after which participants highlighted the value of meeting other families and requested follow-up support on how to avoid being instrumentalised by authorities. The online workshop was held in English and Spanish, with interpretation into Arabic, Armenian, Bosnian, Georgian, Hausa, Sinhala, and Tagalog.

Overall, participants reported increased confidence, a clearer understanding of how to engage with authorities, and a stronger sense of empowerment in their advocacy efforts. Between 2023 and 2025, CCHN workshops enabled nearly 130 family members from 25 contexts worldwide to be trained.

“THIS WORKSHOP EQUIPPED ME WITH THE KNOWLEDGE AND CONFIDENCE TO APPROACH THE AUTHORITIES.”

– Alvard Shahakyan, wife of a missing person, Armenia

Negotiations with, by and through communities

Failed negotiations with communities may restrict access, disrupt operational continuity and create resistance to aid. In extreme cases, it can lead to security incidents for humanitarian staff. Aware of these challenges, in 2025 the CCHN spent several months researching community-led negotiations, including negotiations with, by and through communities. The research findings were published in the report “Communities at the table: Insights from the field,” while a series of blog articles supported practitioners in translating the insights into day-to-day operational choices.

Building on this work, the CCHN convened an informal discussion with humanitarian staff from the Sahel, creating a confidential space to unpack concrete dilemmas linked to negotiations with communities and to compare approaches across contexts. Going forward, the CCHN will continue collecting case studies from diverse practitioners worldwide to identify and share practical tactics, tips and strategies that can strengthen the sector's engagement with communities in complex operating environments.

Negotiating with, by and through communities: A CCHN research

Released in September, the report “Communities at the table: Insights from the field” distils insights from ten years of field interviews, peer exchange workshops, and case studies collected by the CCHN across five regions. Based on real-life practices, the report contains a series of recommendations about humanitarian negotiations and their link to communities, including:

- **Negotiating with communities** works best when humanitarian actors invest time in building trust, cultural fluency, and sustained relationships, rather than relying on formal authority or one-off meetings.
- **When communities lead negotiations**, their local legitimacy, cohesion, and strategic use of empathy-based tactics can secure protection and access, but negotiators face heightened personal risk that must be mitigated through demand-driven support and safety measures.
- Using **communities as intermediaries** (“negotiation through”) often transfers security and ethical burdens onto civilians; therefore, humanitarian actors need conflict-sensitive analyses, clear protective safeguards, and tailored guidance to avoid unintended harm.



SINCE THE
START OF THE
MENTORING
PROGRAMME
OVER

200

PRACTITIONERS
HAVE BECOME
MENTORS
FOR OTHER
NEGOTIATORS

Pressure management and mentoring

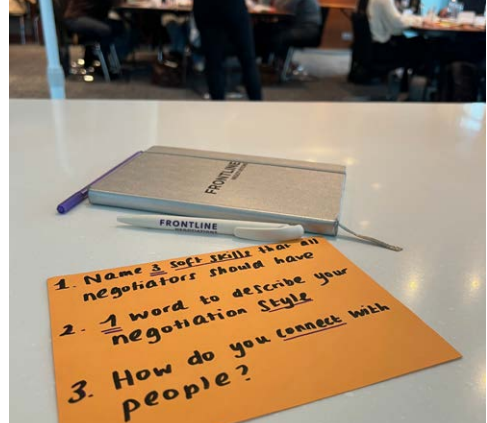
Negotiating in high-stakes environment can take a toll on a team's mental health, impact productivity and turnover, and ultimately affect humanitarian operations. For several years, the CCHN has placed particular attention on helping negotiators develop resilience techniques while providing them with a safe and confidential environment where to discuss challenges and receive guidance.

Throughout 2025, several "Prepare for Pressure" workshops were organised in multiple languages, tailored for professionals working on the front lines of humanitarian action. Additionally, CCHN staff organised a series of "Resilience Coffees" – informal discussions on self-care and mental health – in collaboration with experts on topics such as the art of negotiation and managing uncertainty.

At the same time, the CCHN continued growing its mentoring program, which puts frontline negotiators in touch with experienced colleagues willing to provide support and guidance in a confidential way. New mentors were onboarded, while professionals already taking part in this initiative met regularly online to exchange experiences and practice their skills.

"Excited to share that I joined the mentors pool with Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation (CCHN). Mentoring is important because it supports personal and professional growth through guidance, knowledge sharing, and encouragement. It helps individuals gain practical experience, build confidence, develop essential skills, and overcome challenges. Mentoring also fosters a culture of learning and collaboration, contributing to stronger individuals, organisations, and communities."

– Amani Al Bohisi,
humanitarian professional, Jordan



Practitioners who joined the "soft skills" workshop in Ukraine had the opportunity to test their new conflict resolution and stress management skills in a series of simulations.

The 'human' side of negotiation: Why soft skills matter

Following a successful pilot phase in 2025, the CCHN will continue to develop the "Soft Skills" programme in 2026. These workshop modules focus on developing interpersonal and emotional intelligence abilities that enable negotiators to manage relationships and navigate complex human dynamics.

Delivered in person in Switzerland and Ukraine and online in collaboration with the Global Protection Cluster, these learning modules were built around three core pillars of negotiation: building trust, fostering connection and influencing effectively. Participants had the opportunity to explore new communication, conflict resolution, and stress management techniques and put them into practice during a series of simulations.

A public session, which allowed participants to test their interpersonal skills under pressure, was held online as part of the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week.

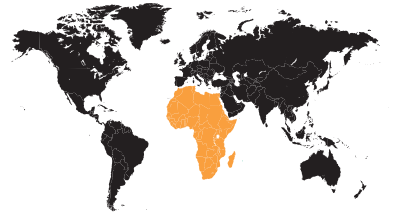


“ THIS TRAINING COURSE WAS A TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE! I AM MORE MOTIVATED THAN EVER TO PUT THESE SKILLS INTO PRACTICE TO SUPPORT VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES, BUILD RESILIENCE AND CONTRIBUTE TO IMPACTFUL HUMANITARIAN ACTION.”

— Pêgdwendé Aymard Sawadogo
Humanitarian professional, Burkina Faso

Most of the professionals trained in 2025 were based in...





Africa

Priority negotiation topics in the region included



PROTECTION NEGOTIATIONS

NEGOTIATIONS WITH ARMED AND DESIGNATED GROUPS

NEGOTIATION WITH COMMUNITIES

NEGOTIATING BUREAUCRATIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE IMPEDIMENTS

ACCESS NEGOTIATIONS

HEALTH NEGOTIATIONS

This workshop, organised in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, gathered first responders and operational teams to discuss their humanitarian negotiation challenges.

In 2025, the African continent faced escalating humanitarian challenges. Particularly in Sudan, the Central Sahel and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, access to affected populations continued to be problematic; humanitarian workers faced severe restrictions due to the targeting of personnel and assets, administrative and bureaucratic hurdles, and armed groups limiting access.

Bureaucratic and administrative hurdles narrowed the margins for humanitarian operations, making it difficult to reach those urgently needing protection and assistance. While the situation impacted all humanitarian actors and operations, national and local organisations or smaller NGOs disproportionately bore the brunt.

In response to this critical situation, the CCHN increased targeted efforts in the African region by facilitating an even wider range of workshops, sessions, and other learning and exchange opportunities in the most high-stakes contexts, focusing on local and national agencies and staff.

Activity highlights

- For the second consecutive year since the start of the conflict, the CCHN supported humanitarian practitioners in **Sudan** through a series of negotiation capacity-building activities. This included an advanced humanitarian negotiation workshop and a workshop for senior humanitarian leaders focused specifically on elaborating negotiation strategies, mandates and red lines, compromise, and approaches to collective negotiations. Two additional workshops were delivered for healthcare professionals and for teams working for the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement. In parallel, the CCHN provided negotiation guidance to the World Food Programme’s Emergency Coordination Team in response to ongoing access negotiation needs. To strengthen local ownership and enable future scale-up, the CCHN also trained the first cohort of negotiation workshop facilitators in Sudan.



Alaa Alsheekh
Humanitarian professional, Sudan

“In Sudan’s complex and evolving crisis, negotiation isn’t a peripheral skill – it’s a core component of delivering aid effectively and safely. This workshop provided us with a critical framework and practical tools to navigate the high-stakes environments we face daily. [...] This experience has been invaluable. I return to my role as a CVA Coordinator with a refined skill set and a renewed commitment to ensuring that principled and effective negotiation underpins our work.”

- In June, the CCHN trained humanitarian national staff to independently organise negotiation workshops in the **Central Sahel**. Trained practitioners went on to deliver a workshop in Burkina Faso, in collaboration with the local NGO forum SPONG, and in Mali, attended exclusively by national staff. This training model allows the CCHN to support frontline staff working in hard-to-reach areas where negotiation capacity-building is needed most but is severely limited. Throughout the year, practitioners working in the region joined online discussions on principled humanitarian action in the Sahel, including during an online negotiation workshop for francophone Africa and monthly meetings to unpack negotiation challenges in a context where humanitarian space is shrinking and violence against civilians is rising.
- In the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, the CCHN delivered three humanitarian negotiation workshops, including a workshop on protection negotiations in partnership with UNHCR and the Global Protection Cluster, and a workshop for frontline teams in collaboration with the World Food Programme.
- To support practitioners in the **Horn of Africa**, the CCHN organised multiple negotiation workshops for humanitarians working in Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and others.



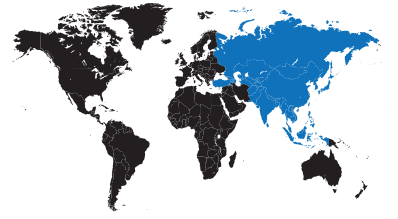
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THE WORKSHOP BROUGHT TOGETHER HUMANITARIAN NEGOTIATORS FROM MYANMAR, THAILAND, AND BANGLADESH [...]. AS A RESEARCH AND ANALYTICAL EXPERT IN THE CONFLICT ANALYSIS SECTOR, THIS EXPERIENCE DEEPENED MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE COMPLEXITIES THAT HUMANITARIAN STAFF ENCOUNTER ON THE GROUND. THESE INSIGHTS ARE INVALUABLE IN DEVELOPING MORE EFFECTIVE ANALYTICAL TOOLS AND MAPPING SOLUTIONS THAT TRULY REFLECT OPERATIONAL REALITIES.

— Adrian Aung,
humanitarian practitioner in Myanmar

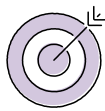
Most of the professionals trained in 2025 were based in...





Asia

Priority negotiation topics in the region included



NEGOTIATING WITH DE-FACTO AUTHORITIES

NEGOTIATION WITH AND THROUGH COMMUNITIES

NEGOTIATION ON BUREAUCRATIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE IMPEDIMENTS

In response to the severe limitations to humanitarian access and the threats to the security of humanitarian workers recorded in Asia throughout 2025, the CCHN worked to support the negotiation efforts of local humanitarian staff and community negotiators, including by conducting research on their practices. To expand the effectiveness of its services, the CCHN consolidated its collaboration with humanitarian agencies which enjoy a solid presence on the ground.

Activity highlights

- The CCHN continued to support humanitarian actors working on **Myanmar**. For the first time since 2019, the CCHN delivered an in-person negotiation workshop in Yangon. Another in-person training was organised in Chiang Mai, northern Thailand, a more accessible location for humanitarian staff who coordinate Myanmar operations remotely.
- In **Afghanistan**, the CCHN trained two new cohorts of humanitarian negotiators in Jalalabad, with a workshop adapted to allow female practitioners to attend despite local restrictions. Started in 2024,



Anonymous feedback response
Myanmar

“The most useful part was learning concrete negotiation tools and frameworks, especially the structured approach to preparing and conducting dialogues with stakeholders. The peer feedback sessions also helped me understand how to apply these tools effectively in complex field situations.”

these workshops are the continuation of a project focused on supporting female negotiators and practitioners who negotiate for a better inclusion of female humanitarian staff and affected communities in humanitarian activities.

- The CCHN delivered a negotiation workshop in Cox’s Bazar, **Bangladesh**, where humanitarians are facing a protracted crisis with limited resources due to funding cuts that began in early 2025.
- In 2025, the CCHN conducted three thematic sessions on **negotiating bureaucratic and administrative impediments**, a topic particularly relevant to humanitarians in the region.

The CCHN continued to support the negotiation efforts of local staff and community negotiators, with a focus on key humanitarian contexts including Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar.



In August, the CCHN delivered two negotiation workshops in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, equipping frontline humanitarian staff with the necessary skills to secure access to affected populations.

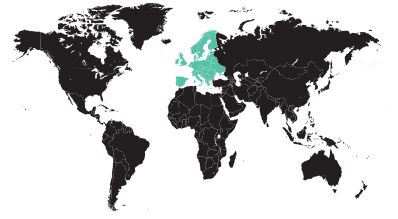


“ I RECOMMEND THIS WORKSHOP TO COLLEAGUES WORKING ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION, RISK MITIGATION, PROTECTION, PEACEKEEPING AND SOCIAL COHESION INITIATIVES GLOBALLY. WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY STRATEGIC FRAMEWORKS AND ANALYSIS TOOLS, SUCH AS THE NAIVASHA GRID, AND APPLY THESE TO REAL-LIFE SCENARIOS GUIDED BY PROFESSIONAL FACILITATORS, CCHN'S WORKSHOP IS REALLY RELEVANT AND MEANINGFUL.”

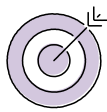
— Kristy A. Evans
Humanitarian negotiator, Ukraine

Most of the professionals trained in 2025 were based in...





Priority negotiation topics in the region included



NEGOTIATING IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION MOVEMENTS AND DETENTION ISSUES

NEGOTIATING ACCESS TO EASTERN TERRITORIES

HUMANITARIAN DIPLOMACY

In December, the CCHN delivered a tailored negotiation training to the Ukrainian Red Cross Emergency Response. By supporting local staff's efforts to gain sustainable access, the CCHN helps teams meet the real-life needs of people who require assistance.

Europe

In response to the challenges generated by the ongoing conflict, the CCHN intensified efforts to support humanitarian practitioners working in Ukraine and its surrounding region. As humanitarian organisations must manage complex negotiations with both state authorities and armed groups to reach vulnerable populations, the CCHN continued investing additional resources into building the humanitarian negotiation and diplomacy capacity of humanitarian professionals.

Activity highlights

- Continuing its previous work in **Ukraine**, the CCHN organised multiple workshops in the country in 2025. These included negotiation training delivered entirely in Ukrainian for the Ukrainian Red Cross' Emergency Response Teams, a soft skills workshop to help negotiators manage relationships, build trust and navigate complex human dynamics, and an advanced negotiation course for national staff working in Dnipro, Mykolaiv and Kherson, focusing on complex access environments and principled humanitarian engagement.
- The CCHN also organised a **humanitarian diplomacy** workshop, where senior humanitarian leaders explored the intersection of humanitarian negotiation and diplomatic efforts in the Ukrainian context, and practised engagement strategies during simulation exercises. A leadership breakfast was held in Kyiv, bringing together key stakeholders to reflect on how to bridge the field-diplomacy gap, and embed humanitarian priorities into ceasefire and political discussions.
- Piloted in 2024, the first official edition of the CCHN **"soft skills" workshop** was held in Geneva, Switzerland. The modularity of this workshop allows participants to experiment with their non-verbal language, emotional response, and trust-building capacity while discovering new tools they can immediately bring back to their teams in the field.
- The CCHN continued its successful collaboration with the **Central Tracing Agency**, the ICRC entity providing services around missing persons. For the first time, families who negotiate while searching for their loved ones attended a negotiation workshop in person in Armenia. An additional workshop was organised online for better accessibility for families based worldwide.
- In October, the CCHN organised a webinar on **search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea**. The webinar brought together humanitarian professionals with extensive experience, including speakers from Emergency ONG, the International Federation of the Red Cross, the captain of the Aurora Boat operated by Sea-Watch, RESQSHIP's Media Officer.
- The CCHN participated in the **European Negotiation Conference** in Paris, France, where it delivered a session on negotiating with communities in high-stakes situations. This simulation scenario was designed to challenge decision-making under pressure and highlight the key role of active listening, empathy, non-verbal communication in navigating tense situations.

Humanitarian negotiation: A lifeline for affected populations in Ukraine

In Ukraine, the war continues to cause immense suffering. Cities, homes, and civilian infrastructure have been destroyed. Millions of people remain in need of humanitarian aid and have been displaced from their homes. Reaching vulnerable populations in all parts of the country, especially in the temporarily occupied territories, is still a big challenge for humanitarians. Humanitarian organisations are working very hard to respond, but many barriers remain. Local actors and first responders are dealing with constant attacks, as well as access and trust issues during their negotiations. The CCHN supports them to engage counterparts confidentially and safely by equipping those negotiating on the ground with practical tools to navigate dilemmas around protection and assistance, both critical to humanitarian operations. Since 2023, the CCHN has invested in building sustainable, locally-led negotiation capacity in Ukraine. Alongside frontline practitioners, the CCHN has also brought together senior staff and decision-makers who connect operational realities with higher-level advocacy, ensuring that diplomatic efforts are grounded in grassroots insights and in the needs of people requiring assistance.

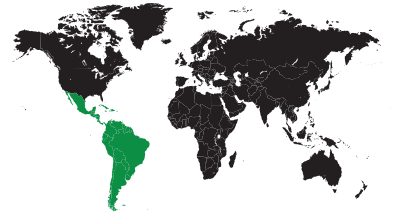


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**HUMANITARIAN
NEGOTIATION IS A
COMPLEX PROCESS
THAT GOES BEYOND
THE SIMPLE EXCHANGE
OF RESOURCES.
IT REQUIRES A DEEP
UNDERSTANDING OF
HUMAN, CULTURAL
AND CONTEXTUAL
DYNAMICS, AS WELL
AS THE BUILDING OF
TRUST AND STRONG
ALLIANCES.**

— Jimena Jiménez,
Humanitarian negotiator, Venezuela

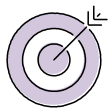
Most of the
professionals
trained in 2025
were based in...





Latin America and the Caribbean

Priority negotiation topics in the region included



NEGOTIATING WITH CRIMINAL GROUPS

NEGOTIATING WITH COMMUNITIES

NEGOTIATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION MOVEMENTS

NEGOTIATING BUREAUCRATIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE IMPEDIMENTS

NEGOTIATIONS WITH ASSERTIVE STATES

The CCHN provided practical and strategic negotiation tools to professionals who are working in the complex context of Haiti.

Throughout 2025, Latin America and the Caribbean grappled with humanitarian access impediments, a surge in migration movements, and heightened tension due to the activities of guerrillas and criminal groups, paired with the absence of solid governmental institutions. The CCHN focused its efforts on responding to the negotiation challenges emerging from this complex situation.

Activity highlights

- Amid heightened tensions in the country, the CCHN was able to conduct essential capacity-building activities in **Haiti** in September. The CCHN staff provided three negotiation workshops, where professionals from the World Food Programme built their negotiation capacity in order to secure safer humanitarian access and assistance for communities in the country.
- Humanitarian practitioners trained by the CCHN independently led a foundational negotiation workshop in **Venezuela** and delivered an advisory session to support the World Food Programme and its partners in developing an access strategy adapted to the Venezuelan humanitarian context.

Making humanitarian negotiation capacity-building accessible in the region

In November, humanitarian professionals attended a Training of Host Facilitators in Bogotá, Colombia, to learn a set of techniques to share their negotiation knowledge with other practitioners.

By learning how to deliver negotiation workshops independently, other humanitarian teams in the region, especially those working in hard-to-reach areas in Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela, can benefit from the CCHN negotiation methodology.



Anonymous feedback response
Colombia

“Theory is important, but practical work and group exercises are a great way to consolidate what you’ve learnt. I really enjoyed putting what I’d learnt into practice straight away using real-life examples.”

- A collaboration with UNHCR yielded one workshop focusing on the **protection of civilians** in armed conflict, targeting professionals in Colombia. In October, CCHN members in Latin America adopted a proactive stance and independently delivered a community-led negotiation workshop in the country.
- An online foundational workshop was delivered for humanitarians working in **Ecuador**, who have seen an escalation of violence affecting the country since April 2025.
- A session on **bureaucratic and administrative impediments** was organised for professionals working in the region and particularly affected by this barrier to their work. Additionally, a session on humanitarian diplomacy from the donors’ perspective was organised to facilitate conversations between humanitarians and funding institutions.

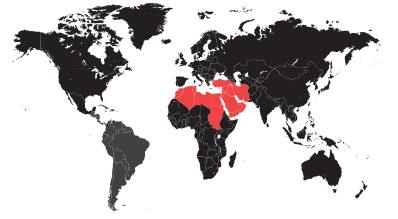


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WHEN YOU'RE DEEP INTO A HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE, IT IS EASY TO FORGET ABOUT YOUR OWN CAPACITY BUILDING. THANK YOU FOR THIS PEER WORKSHOP. THE SYNERGY AMONG PARTICIPANTS AND FACILITATORS ENABLED THE HARDEST QUESTIONS, AND CONVERSATIONS WERE REALLY AT A HIGH LEVEL.

— Beatrice Barco, Humanitarian negotiator,
Occupied Palestinian Territories

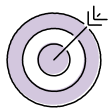
Most of the professionals trained in 2025 were based in...





Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

Priority negotiation topics in the region included



NEGOTIATIONS AMID BUREAUCRATIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE IMPEDIMENTS

NEGOTIATING DURING REGIME CHANGES

PROTECTION NEGOTIATIONS

In 2025, the humanitarian situation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) continued to present challenges due to ongoing conflicts and political unrest, particularly with the war in the Gaza strip. The CCHN continued to be mindful of the challenges of humanitarian practitioners in the most critical contexts while also focusing on community negotiators and those who negotiate bureaucratic and administrative impediments.

Activity highlights

- In a transitional period for **Syria**, where building trust with new counterparts is essential, the CCHN provided strategic tools and skills to humanitarians working in the country. The CCHN delivered three in-person negotiation workshops on fundamental and advanced negotiation skills in Aleppo and Damascus. These workshops were the first in-person trainings held in the areas that were under the control of the former regime in more than a decade.



The CCHN delivered a workshop in Jordan for humanitarians working in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Syria and Yemen, creating a safe space where they could share their negotiation challenges.

- The CCHN organised multiple regional negotiation workshops, both online and in **Jordan**, which brought together humanitarian negotiators working in the **Occupied Palestinian Territories, Syria, Yemen**, and the region. In addition to capacity-building opportunities, the CCHN ensured that humanitarians in the region had ongoing negotiation support and a safe space to exchange on their negotiation challenges.
- Given the highly politicised context in the region, the CCHN convened two thematic sessions on **humanitarian diplomacy** for senior humanitarian leaders and diplomats. During these sessions, participants developed strategies to overcome barriers to humanitarian action, such as the politicisation of aid and the distrust between humanitarian organisations and duty bearers.
- In collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross, the CCHN delivered a negotiation workshop to the **Egyptian Red Crescent Society** staff in Cairo.

Mindful of the complex crises that are taking place in the region, the CCHN supported Middle East negotiators by providing them with training and guidance.



Haneen Abdeen
Humanitarian negotiator,
Occupied Palestinian Territories

“After a year of being involved in access discussions and daily coordination in sensitive contexts, taking part in the Peer Workshop on Humanitarian Negotiation with the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation (CCHN) offered a valuable moment to step back and reflect. The workshop provided a structured space to analyse real negotiation experiences, understand the theory behind humanitarian dialogue, and exchange perspectives with peers facing similar challenges in the field. It deepened my appreciation of the balance between principles, empathy, and strategy that underpins effective humanitarian negotiation.

Grateful for the facilitators and participants who created an atmosphere of trust, reflection, and learning that will continue to shape my approach in future missions.”



COMMUNICATION

Sharing practices and showing impact through storytelling

Since 2022, the CCHN has been exploring storytelling through podcasting as a tool for humanitarian professionals to share their expertise and encourage additional learning. “Frontline Negotiators: Stories from the Field”, the CCHN’s podcast series, is available on Amazon Music, Apple Podcast and Spotify, as well as on the CCHN website.

The third season, comprising 10 episodes, aired in late 2024 and concluded in early 2025, featuring stories from practitioners across a variety of humanitarian agencies and geographic contexts. For the first time, the interviews were recorded in French and Spanish as well as in English, allowing for a broader audience.

“Frontline Negotiators” episodes were streamed more than 2,600 times throughout 2025, while the entire series recorded around 14,750 listens since inception. The most successful episode of the year, “Protecting communities in conflict, at the crossroads of negotiation and mediation”, was streamed 575 times.

The CCHN continued to systematically conduct interviews to gather information on the way community members apply negotiation tools and learnings in their day-to-day operations. This ongoing effort is producing a growing archive of practices and testimonials, painting the picture of a thriving community of practice which greatly benefits from negotiation skills development and mutual exchanges.

“When dealing with national authorities, I had no previous training. I had no knowledge to improve my skills, my abilities to craft an argument that was useful to find common ground and get an agreement. That’s why I came to the CCHN. And I took the peer workshop and I learned a lot”.

– Arquímedes Farías, Venezuela
Excerpt from a podcast episode



After two successful seasons, the third season of “Frontline Negotiators: Stories from the Field” concluded in early 2025. For the first time, interviews were recorded in French and Spanish as well as English, allowing for a broader audience.



In March, the CCHN was present at the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week organised by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA). Photo: CCHN



82,400

PEOPLE VISITED THE CCHN WEBSITE



23,000

FOLLOWED THE CCHN ON LINKEDIN



13,000

SUBSCRIBERS RECEIVED CCHN NEWSLETTERS

Digital community engagement

The CCHN Communication department disseminates negotiation tools and learning through a variety of formats and platforms.

In 2025, the CCHN website recorded almost 192,000 visits by more than 82,400 users. The most popular blog piece of the year, “How to start a negotiation: Four simple steps to build your opening argument”, received around 2,400 views.

Social networks continued to witness extremely positive growth, with a +24% follower increase on LinkedIn (reaching a 23,000-strong audience) and a +12.5% follower increase on Facebook, while Instagram followers almost tripled.

Over 820 new members joined the CCHN’s community-powered interactive forum, “CCHN Connect”, which reached a total of 9,080 contributors. About 17.8% of members actively contributed to the CCHN community by creating a post, messaging, commenting, answering a question, RSVPing to an event, voting on a poll, cheering a post, or sharing.

Throughout 2025, the CCHN Communication department sent a monthly newsletter in English, French and Spanish to almost 13,000 subscribers. Both the newsletters’ average open rate (26.9%) and click-through rate (16.5%) were above the sector’s average.



The CCHN and ICRC teams presented the AI-based negotiation simulation during the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week 2025, which was received with great interests by the conference’s participants.

Training negotiators with AI-powered tools



In collaboration with the ICRC Virtual Reality team, in 2024 the CCHN began developing a digital negotiation simulation based on Artificial Intelligence which allows humanitarians to fully immerse themselves in a realistic field negotiation scenario.

By attempting to negotiate passage through a checkpoint, users can exchange with an avatar whose reactions are trained through the experiences of actual humanitarian negotiators, putting their skills and strategies to the test.

The tool is currently in its pilot phase. While working to constantly improve the model, the CCHN and ICRC teams regularly demonstrate the simulation at international conferences and events, where participants can explore its features and provide feedback for future development.



“We have to remain adaptable as organisations, as diplomats, as frontline negotiators [...] to cope with the enormous transformation of technology and communication and how we leverage it for humanitarianism today.”

Peter Maurer,
former ICRC president
and Chair of the
CCHN governing
board

GOVERNANCE

During the year 2025, the CCHN successfully transitioned from being hosted by the International Committee of the Red Cross to being hosted by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. Its governing board was composed of four representatives of the CCHN’s founding agencies, a negotiation expert, and three members of the community of practice who act in their personal capacity.

In 2025, the CCHN governing board was composed of:

- Peter Maurer – President of the board (ad personam)

Representatives of humanitarian agencies contributing to the CCHN:

- Stephen Cornish – Director General, Médecins Sans Frontières Switzerland
- Filippo Grandi – High Commissioner, UNHCR
- Pierre Krähenbühl – Director General, International Committee of the Red Cross
- Carl Skau – Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer, World Food Programme

Members of the CCHN community of practice (ad personam):

- Hanalia Ferhan
- Esther Opoka
- Dr Apostolos Veizis

Recognised negotiation experts (ad personam):

- Michael Møller

The CCHN governing board is composed of representatives of its four founding agencies, a negotiation expert, and three members of the community of practice.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

In 2025, the CCHN focused on diversifying its sources of funding, deepening existing relationships and onboarding new partners. The CCHN secured funding through multi-year agreements as well as contributions from strategic partners, government donors and special projects. Collaborations with local partners supported the implementation of the CCHN’s programmes across regions.

Sources of funding

- Strategic partners (ICRC, MSF Switzerland, UNHCR, World Food Programme);
- Institutional donors (Governments of Germany, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, ECHO, UK FCDO);
- Other funding sources, including operational partners and partnerships for field implementation.



ABOUT THE CENTRE OF COMPETENCE ON HUMANITARIAN NEGOTIATION

Founded in 2016, the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiation (CCHN) is a joint initiative of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Médecins Sans Frontières Switzerland, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the United Nations World Food Programme.

Our aim is to facilitate the capture, analysis, and sharing of experiences and practices around humanitarian negotiation and to provide a space for dialogue across organisations. At the core of our activities is the CCHN community of practice, a global network of humanitarian practitioners working at the frontlines of humanitarian action.



ICRC



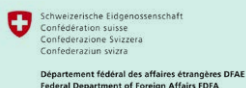
World Food Programme



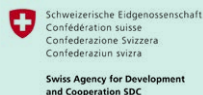
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**FRONTLINE
NEGOTIATIONS**

CENTRE OF COMPETENCE ON
HUMANITARIAN NEGOTIATION

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