

## **GUIDANCE NOTE: TYPES OF CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIPS**

*(Refer to the Global Civil Society Engagement Strategy for a full description on how DRC partners)*

### **What types of partnerships?**

DRC engages in equitable partnerships with civil society organizations to design and reach joint DRC and partner response outputs (programming partnership), and in equitable and strategic partnerships with civil society organizations with objectives reaching beyond joint response outputs towards longer-term strategic objectives and impacts (strategic partnership). As part of DRC's implementation approach, we also enter contractual relationships with local civil society organizations for the purpose of meeting response outputs linked to DRC-owned projects. In itself, this transactional relationship, which resembles that of supplier and customer, is not considered a partnership as defined in this strategy, nor does it contribute to the objectives of DRC's civil society engagement.

### **How are they defined?**

**Transactional relationship:** typically characterized by short term contractual arrangements with local civil society organizations (CSOs) to deliver specific outputs of DRC projects. These local civil society organizations are contracted in a way similar to that of a supplier – tasked by DRC with producing a specific deliverable. For example, delivering a training or awareness campaign, or rehabilitating a school or other community structure, or delivering NFI kits, as part of a DRC owned project. In these transactional relationships, local civil society organizations do not participate in designing the intervention. This relationship tends to be a one-off transaction between DRC and the local CSO, with little to no consideration in planning for continued engagement following the deliverable of the agreed output. There is likely to be little to no capacity development support, where there is, it is limited to addressing gaps that may pose a risk to project implementation or financial management.

**Equitable partnerships:** characterized as either **project-based and/or strategic partnerships** that span beyond a single project cycle. While project-based partnerships vary depending on the length of the project, strategic partnerships are characterized as longer term with the relationship spanning beyond any one given project. The term 'equitable' implies that these partners are treated in a fair and transparent manner. Equitable does not necessarily mean equal, as DRC is cognisant of the power imbalances that exist in between international and national/local actors. Our equitable partnerships are guided by DRC's partnering principles – equitability, transparency, results orientation, responsibility, complementarity. Strategic partnerships tend to be more collaborative, meaning there is meaningful engagement in strategic planning processes outside a specific project. It is within this category of partnerships that DRC emphasizes the importance of amplifying local voices, prioritizing partnering with civil society organizations that are legitimate representatives of and advocate for rights holders affected by conflict and displacement. This includes a focus on partnering with groups that are traditionally marginalized – such as women, youth, persons with disabilities, SOCIESC minorities, ethnic minorities, to name a few.

### **What do they look like in practice?**

In reality, the distinction between categories of relationships between DRC and civil society organizations may not always be clear, furthermore our relationships with civil society organizations may change or evolve over time. The table below aims to further clarify the distinction between transactional supplier type relationships and equitable and strategic partnerships. The table includes examples of areas of engagement along the partner engagement cycle. The table is not meant to be strictly followed without exception, rather it is a non-exhaustive list of illustrative examples on how a country office may engage differently with the different types of partners.

4 Stages of the Partnership Engagement Cycle	Transactional relationship	Project-based partnership	Strategic partnership
<b>Define</b>			
Mapping relevant CS actors	Likely	Likely	Likely
Engage partners and other CS actors in CS context analysis	Unlikely	Likely	Likely
Engage partners in development of DRC strategy	Unlikely	Unlikely	Likely
<b>Engage</b>			
Selection, vetting, due diligence assessment, sub grant agreement	<i>Mandatory</i>	<i>Mandatory</i>	<i>Mandatory</i>
Memorandum of understanding	Unlikely	Unlikely	Likely
Form consortium	Unlikely	Unlikely	Likely
Joint needs assessment	Unlikely	Likely	Likely
Joint project design	Unlikely	Likely	Likely
Plan for transition/exit	Unlikely	Unlikely	Likely
<b>Implement</b>			
Capacity development	Unlikely	Likely	Likely
Joint project monitoring	Unlikely	Likely	Likely
Period partnership review	Unlikely	Likely	Likely
Joint advocacy	Unlikely	Unlikely	Likely
<b>Sustain</b>			
Activities/collaboration takes place between grants	Unlikely	Unlikely	Likely

The below spectrum adapted from USAID’s Locally Led Development Spectrum is another useful way to illustrate the distinction in the way DRC interacts with transactional and more equitable and strategic partners. In this spectrum, DRC as the signatory of the donor contract is ‘the implementer’, but this does not prevent DRC from sharing influence and power. Working in more equitable and strategic partnerships fosters local leadership – a commitment under the Go Local principle in Strategy 2025.



### How to measure which partnerships are equitable?

Refer to DRC's Civil Society Engagement Indicator guide which includes a dedicated indicator on % of civil society partnerships classified as equitable and/or equitable and strategic. The guidance includes a definition of the indicator and a description of the methodology which looks at conducting a partner feedback survey (including example questions). The guide can be found on the CSEU resource page here: [DRC Civil Society Engagement Indicator Guidance.PDF](#).

