

PINGON Policy and Advocacy Working Group (P&A WG) Terms of Reference (ToR)

1. Background

The Policy and Advocacy Working Group (P&A WG) was created during the PINGON Strategic Planning Workshop held on 29 to 30 May 2025 in Tagaytay City, Philippines. Its formation built on earlier discussions during the Sixth Regular PINGON Meeting on 14 June 2024 and draws from the PINGON Terms of Reference, which state that "PINGON can establish working groups as needed." These groups may meet on an ad hoc basis when there is sufficient interest from the Membership, and members are encouraged to actively participate in the UN clusters relevant to their areas of expertise.

The establishment of the working group reflects a shared recognition among PINGON members that effective policy and advocacy engagement requires a coordinated and sustained effort. As NGOs continue to operate in contexts shaped by recurring disasters, internal displacement, under-resourced social services, and evolving peace and security dynamics, the need for structured and strategic advocacy has become more urgent. At the same time, humanitarian actors are expected to navigate increasing restrictions on civic space and recurring threats to operational independence, including incidents of red-tagging and bureaucratic bottlenecks. These operational challenges are further compounded by a shifting donor landscape, particularly with the pivot of the United States Government and other major donors toward new geopolitical priorities. This has led to a contraction in available funding for humanitarian and development programs in the Philippines, placing additional pressure on local and international NGOs to make the case for principled, needs-based assistance and to advocate collectively for enabling environments that allow civil society to thrive.

The P&A WG serves as a platform for members to share insights, develop common positions, and engage proactively with policy processes involving legislative and executive Philippine government agencies, including: House of Representatives, Senate, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Health, Office of Civil Defense, Department of National Defense, National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Armed Forces of the Philippines, Department of National Defense and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) ministries, among others. It aims to support the articulation of shared messages on issues such as humanitarian access including meaningful inclusion of vulnerable or most at risk members of the population, disaster risk reduction, protection, localization, and climate resilience. In doing so, it also strengthens members' ability to amplify community voices, conduct joint advocacy grounded in evidence and field realities, and influence both public discourse and institutional decision-making. Over time, the group is envisioned to contribute to raising the visibility and policy influence of PINGON while fostering solidarity and mutual support among members.

2. Purpose

The P&A WG exists to advance PINGON's collective voice on key humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding issues that affect the communities its members serve. It serves as a strategic and technical platform for shaping evidence-informed messages, influencing policy decisions, and engaging with relevant actors in government, civil society, and the international community, while also advocating to ensure that key humanitarian laws and principles are upheld by all humanitarian actors.. The group is responsible for coordinating and aligning the Network's advocacy efforts, ensuring that positions taken reflect the shared perspectives and priorities of PINGON members. It will work in tandem with other working groups that may be formed around specific themes or issues such as humanitarian access, climate and disaster resilience, protection, civic space, or localization. These thematic working groups will focus on technical work, stakeholder engagement, and issue-specific outputs. While thematic groups may lead the development of position papers, policy briefs, or recommendations on their respective areas, the P&A

WG will ensure coherence across themes and coordinate the finalization and dissemination of joint statements, alignment of messages, and timely engagement with external platforms. Throughout this process, the P&A WG will promote the meaningful engagement of affected populations, with particular attention to the perspectives and rights of the most-at-risk groups, including children, women, older persons, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, and LGBTQ+ communities, to ensure that advocacy reflects inclusive, community-informed priorities.

The working group may also initiate or support legislative engagement through dialogues with policymakers, submission of position papers, or participation in public hearings. It may coordinate media outreach, including the release of public statements, opinion pieces, and press briefings that elevate advocacy messages to wider audiences. In addition, it serves as a space for capacity strengthening and peer learning among members, enhancing the effectiveness and credibility of the Network's collective advocacy. In the interim, and while PINGON remains unregistered, members of the Network are expected to take the lead or represent PINGON in external policy and advocacy engagements, based on mandate, expertise, and existing relationships. This decentralized approach ensures continuity and presence in critical spaces. These arrangements may be revisited once PINGON achieves legal registration, which would allow for more formal representation and direct institutional engagement on behalf of the Network.

3. Core Functions and Responsibilities

The P&A WG is tasked with guiding and coordinating the policy and advocacy efforts of the PINGON network. Its primary role is to ensure that member organizations can collectively engage with relevant stakeholders through coherent, informed, and principled positions on critical humanitarian and development issues. These efforts are grounded in internationally recognized frameworks, including the Core Humanitarian Standards, the Humanitarian Inclusion Standards, the Grand Bargain commitments, and the Principles of Partnership, as well as the broader body of international human rights and humanitarian law. The P&A WG also affirms PINGON's commitment to localization, accountability to affected populations, and inclusive approaches that uphold the dignity and rights of all. While the group does not replace the advocacy work of individual members, it serves as a collaborative platform to amplify collective voice and influence. It also acts as a central coordination body that connects various thematic working groups under PINGON, providing alignment, technical support, and quality assurance in the development of advocacy materials and strategies. The following functions define the scope of its responsibilities:

- **Coordinate network-wide policy positions and messaging**

The P&A WG will consolidate perspectives across the membership to develop and promote shared policy messages. This includes reviewing emerging issues, collecting field insights, and building consensus around advocacy positions that reflect the values and priorities of PINGON.

- **Support the development of thematic advocacy outputs**

In collaboration with issue-specific working groups, the P&A WG will help draft, refine, and package key advocacy products. These may include position papers, policy briefs, statements, or background documents intended for public, legislative, or multilateral engagement.

- **Facilitate joint engagement with government and policymakers**

The group will coordinate the network's participation in legislative hearings, policy consultations, and inter-agency dialogues. It will also identify opportunities for engaging with national government bodies such as DSWD, DoH, NDRRMC, DILG, and BARMM ministries, as well as relevant congressional committees and oversight bodies.

- **Coordinate public and media-facing advocacy efforts**

The P&A WG will support the production and dissemination of joint statements, op-eds, press releases, and other communication outputs. These efforts aim to amplify PINGON's messages in the public domain and ensure visibility of member perspectives on key issues.

- **Monitor and analyze policy developments and risks**

The group will track relevant policy trends, emerging legislation, and executive actions that may affect humanitarian and development work. It will share timely updates with the network and, where needed, recommend collective responses or adaptations.

- **Strengthen advocacy capacity among PINGON members**

The P&A WG will identify capacity gaps and facilitate peer learning opportunities on topics such as policy influencing, media engagement, messaging under risk, and legislative processes. It may also coordinate training sessions or learning exchanges with other networks.

- **Ensure coordination and alignment across working groups**

The group will work closely with other PINGON thematic groups to maintain consistency in advocacy framing, language, and strategy.

- **Represent the network in advocacy coalitions and platforms**

The P&A WG may coordinate or delegate participation in broader civil society coalitions, technical working groups, or policy spaces where PINGON's positions should be articulated. This includes advocacy events at the national or regional level and collaboration with like-minded networks.

- **Lead or coordinate rapid-response advocacy during emergencies**

In times of large-scale disasters, conflict, or sudden policy shifts, the P&A WG will help facilitate timely and coordinated advocacy responses. This may include developing joint humanitarian alerts, engaging with duty-bearers and the media, and advocating for principled access, civilian protection, or urgent funding support. The group will also ensure that advocacy during crises aligns with the needs and voices of affected populations and reflects the broader values of the network.

4. Composition and Selection Criteria

The P&A WG is open to all PINGON member organizations that demonstrate a commitment to advancing the network's collective advocacy goals. Participation is voluntary, but members are expected to actively contribute to the development and delivery of the group's workplan, including drafting, reviewing, and promoting advocacy outputs. Each participating organization shall designate one primary focal point and one alternate, both of whom should be authorized to represent their agency in joint policy and advocacy discussions. Representatives are expected to have relevant experience in policy engagement, communications, humanitarian affairs, or related advocacy work. Familiarity with humanitarian principles, human rights frameworks, or the legislative and institutional landscape in the Philippines is strongly encouraged.

The following criteria shall guide participation in the P&A WG:

- **Active PINGON membership and commitment to the Network's advocacy agenda**

Organizations must be current members of PINGON and committed to the principles of coordinated, rights-based, and people-centered advocacy.

- **Nomination of a focal point with relevant expertise and decision-making authority**

Member agencies should nominate representatives with direct knowledge of policy and advocacy work who are able to contribute substantively to discussions and act on behalf of their organizations.

- **Demonstrated ability and willingness to participate in activities**

Member representatives are expected to regularly attend meetings, respond to group communications, and contribute to the drafting, review, or dissemination of advocacy materials.

- **Geographic, thematic, and organizational diversity**

The P&A WG will strive to reflect the diversity of the PINGON membership, including organizations working across different regions of the Philippines and thematic areas. Participation of both international and national NGOs is encouraged.

- **Adherence to confidentiality and coordination protocols**

Members are expected to uphold confidentiality on sensitive matters and coordinate public messaging through the agreed mechanisms of the group to protect the integrity and coherence of PINGON's advocacy work.

- **Engagement of external technical advisors or observers**

The P&A WG may invite external individuals, such as technical advisors, subject-matter experts, or observers from allied networks or institutions, to contribute to specific discussions or activities. These invitations shall be agreed upon by the group and coordinated through the Convenor or Chair, ensuring that participation adds value and complements the objectives of the group.

Participation in the P&A WG may be reviewed periodically, and organizations that are inactive for an extended period may be asked to reconfirm their interest or step aside to allow for broader engagement. While all members are welcome, consistent and meaningful participation is essential for the group's effectiveness.

5. Leadership

The P&A WG shall be coordinated by a Chair, with the option of selecting a Co-Chair, to support shared leadership, continuity, and distribution of responsibilities. The Chair and, if applicable, the Co-Chair will be selected from among the participating member organizations through a consensus process. Their term shall be for **XX** year**X** and may be renewed by agreement of the group.

The responsibilities of the Chair include:

- Convening and facilitating meetings of the P&A WG, ensuring that agendas are developed in consultation with members and that meetings are focused, participatory, and action-oriented.
- Coordinating follow-up on agreed actions, including tracking progress on deliverables and providing regular updates to the group and, where applicable, to the broader PINGON membership.
- Representing the P&A WG in coordination with the PINGON Convenor, Co-Convenor, or Secretariat, including in presentations to the general membership or to external stakeholders when delegated by the group.
- Ensuring that the group's workplan, priorities, and outputs are aligned with PINGON's strategic directions and responsive to emerging issues.
- Facilitating collaboration with other working groups under PINGON to ensure consistency of messaging, encourage mutual reinforcement across advocacy themes, and avoid duplication of effort.
- Working closely with the PINGON Secretariat to ensure that administrative support, documentation, communication, and scheduling needs are met. This includes sharing meeting notes, updating tracking tools, and coordinating any joint outputs or external engagements.

Where possible, the Chair's organization is encouraged to designate staff support to help carry out logistical and coordination tasks, in collaboration with the Secretariat. In the absence of such capacity, the PINGON Secretariat may be requested to assist, depending on availability and workload. If a Co-Chair is selected, responsibilities may be shared or alternated based on availability, areas of expertise, or agreement within the group. In the event the Chair is unable to continue their role before the end of the term, the Co-Chair or a new Chair shall be selected through consultation among active members. The Chair and Co-Chair must commit to maintaining neutrality in guiding discussions, ensuring that all member perspectives are heard, and fostering inclusive and transparent decision-making.

6. Meeting Frequency and Reporting Lines

The P&A WG shall meet at least once every **XX** month**X**, or more frequently as needed based on emerging issues, advocacy opportunities, or requests from the PINGON Convenor, Co-Convenor, or other working groups. Meetings may be held virtually or in person, depending on accessibility and relevance to ongoing initiatives. Special meetings may be convened in response to urgent developments, such as major humanitarian emergencies, policy shifts, or time-sensitive advocacy windows. The Chair, in consultation with members and the PINGON Secretariat, shall be responsible for scheduling meetings, preparing agendas, and ensuring timely circulation of relevant materials. Members are encouraged to propose agenda items, raise emerging issues, or suggest guest resource persons through the group's agreed communication channels. Agenda planning shall remain inclusive and responsive to the interests and priorities of active members. Meeting summaries or minutes shall be prepared and shared with all members of the P&A WG, and relevant highlights may be reported to the broader PINGON membership through monthly meetings or official communications.

The P&A WG reports directly to the PINGON Convenor and Co-Convenor, and may be requested to provide updates or inputs to the Governance Committee or other established bodies within the Network. In cases where advocacy messages or outputs are intended to represent the network publicly, the Chair will coordinate with the Convenor and Co-Convenor to seek necessary endorsements prior to release. The P&A WG may also be asked to support the preparation of network-wide briefings, updates, or statements presented during HCT meetings or engagements with government and donor stakeholders. To promote alignment across PINGON's advocacy and coordination functions, the P&A WG will regularly share updates with other working groups and support two-way information flows on relevant policy developments or strategic opportunities.

7. Decision-Making and Quorum Rules

The P&A WG serves as a technical and advisory body that formulates and refines policy and advocacy recommendations for consideration by the PINGON Convenor, Co-Convenor, and the wider membership. It does not have the authority to make final decisions on behalf of the Network unless specifically authorized to do so for a defined issue or timeframe.

Decisions within the P&A WG shall be made through collaborative discussion and consensus wherever possible. Consensus is understood as general agreement among members present, even if not all members participate in a given meeting. The group will prioritize inclusive and consultative processes rather than formal voting. Rather than enforcing a strict quorum, the P&A WG will aim for broad engagement by encouraging members to attend regularly and provide timely feedback through asynchronous channels such as email or messaging groups. Where a position or output needs to move forward but only a subset of members is available, the Chair may proceed with circulating a draft for wider review and input before finalizing a recommendation to the Convenor and Co-Convenor.

When advocacy products or statements are intended to represent the voice of PINGON as a whole, endorsement must be sought from the Convenor and Co-Convenor, and if needed, referred to the full membership. Members who wish to opt out of endorsing a specific output may do so, and this will be noted respectfully. Urgent advocacy situations may warrant accelerated consultation. In such cases, the P&A WG may recommend messaging or action within a short timeframe, while ensuring that the Convenor and Co-Convenor remain informed and involved in clearance or escalation.

8. Coordination with Convenor, Co-Convenor / Secretariat

The P&A WG shall coordinate closely with the PINGON Convenor, Co-Convenor, and Secretariat to ensure that its activities, messages, and outputs are aligned with the overall direction and priorities of the Network. While the P&A WG may lead the development of policy recommendations and draft advocacy products, the Convenor and Co-Convenor retain the responsibility of endorsing network-wide positions or referring them to the full membership for approval. The PINGON Secretariat will provide logistical, administrative, and communication support to the P&A WG, depending on available capacity. This includes assisting with scheduling meetings, documenting discussions, maintaining records of decisions and drafts, and facilitating communication between the P&A WG and the rest of the Network. Meeting minutes, once reviewed and agreed by the group, shall be submitted to the Secretariat to ensure documentation is complete, accessible, and reflected in broader network records. The P&A WG will maintain regular communication with other working groups to promote coherence, avoid duplication, and reinforce cross-thematic advocacy efforts. Where possible, joint meetings or cross-group consultations will be encouraged, especially when policy issues intersect across sectors such as climate resilience, protection, and humanitarian access. The Chair of the P&A WG will serve as the primary liaison to the PINGON Convenor and Co-Convenor and will present key updates, proposals, or draft advocacy products for review. The Chair may also be invited to share briefings during regular PINGON meetings or represent the WG in coordination forums, in agreement with the Convenor and Co-Convenor.

9. Review and Sunset Clauses

The relevance, composition, and functionality of the P&A WG shall be reviewed annually in coordination with the PINGON Convenor, Co-Convenor, and Secretariat. This review may consider the group's level of activity, alignment with evolving strategic priorities, and responsiveness to the advocacy needs of the Network. Feedback from members may be collected to inform adjustments in the group's structure, leadership, or scope. Should the P&A WG become inactive or if its purpose is determined to be no longer relevant, the Network may decide to deactivate or sunset the group. Any such decision will be made in consultation with the members of the P&A WG and approved by the Convenor and Co-Convenor, or by the full membership if warranted. Conversely, the group may also be expanded or adapted based on future needs, including the formation of permanent or standing policy teams once PINGON becomes a registered entity.