Addendum to:
The Current Status of Remote Partnering

As a final step in the research, we organized a remote round of sense making, whereby we asked Design Lab participants to read through the research finding: the theoretical concepts, the challenges, opportunities, and possibilities to improve – and asked them to what extent they resonate with them. Did they recognize them in their daily work, and could they agree that they were relevant to further understand the concept of remote partnering?
The fact that only two participants responded to our query illustrates the heavy workload that practitioners in this area carry. We are grateful for the responses we received, and will summarize them here, as a way to add further value to the research findings.

While some findings were seen as more relevant or recognizable than others, none were seen as irrelevant – so they were all recognized as relatively important for working in remote partnerships. One respondee felt very strongly that a psychologically safe communication climate (where people are open and failures can be discussed) is vital for remote partnering. *'Remote partnering is often an approach of last resort for INGOs and is often taken as a result of the presence of a series of risk factors on the ground. And wherever risk exists, there will need to be failure, adaptation and experimentation. These three outcomes can only happen safely where open communication and trust exists'*.

Understanding the dynamics of the relationships is seen as important too. It was recognized that working in difficult contexts can put additional pressure on the relationship: *'There isn't time to understand the challenges that affect a partner that don't effect your own organization and vice versa. Perhaps there needs to be more narrative around things that go wrong. Also, there are fewer check-ins and close day-to-day personal relationships so there needs to be trust that work is ongoing. Remote partnering seems to need more communication and clearer terms of reference'*.

One thing that did not show clearly from the research, but can be very important, is the impact of insecurity or access constraints. There are many contexts in which such issues are in fact the main drivers for working remotely, especially in conflict areas.

Using a skilled partnership broker / process facilitator was also seen as particularly important in remote working. To this end, it is probably necessary to invest in skills development, also to allow for different styles of facilitation to be used in remote conversations.[1]

Finally, the biggest bonus of working remotely is seen as the opportunities it creates to foster local ownership and independent ways of working for partners.

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[1] This finding endorses our decision to focus on remote partnering skills and confidence building via the proposed on-line platform