

## Report on workshop to consult on the GBV AoR Task Team on Localisation

On 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> June 2018, a group of seven INGOs, two UN agency officials and six national NGOs met in Brussels with the following objectives:

- To share and map promising practices and priority challenges in addressing localisation of humanitarian GBV prevention, response and risk mitigation.
- To facilitate a space in which local civil society organisations can share their perspectives on how the GBV AoR and other relevant processes (e.g. Call To Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies) can meaningfully engage with them, be influenced by them, and support their work.
- To identify priorities and approaches for taking forward the GBV AoR Localisation Task Team.

The meeting was co-organised by the GBV AoR Task Team on Localisation and the GBV AoR Policy and Advocacy Reference Group. Whilst a more detailed report is available on request, this paper focuses on summarising key issues and recommendations emerging for ways forward by the GBV TT on Localisation. It is structured around the following three themes:

1. Summary of key challenges and opportunities raised by local CSOs
2. Summary of wider efforts of relevance to address concerns raised by local CSOs
3. Options for the GBV AoR TT on Localisation

### Summary of key challenges and opportunities raised by local CSOs

#### ❖ Stronger focus on gender and women's leadership in humanitarian GBV coordination efforts, as well as the wider humanitarian system and its localisation agenda.

A limited number of GBV actors have participated in localisation efforts on protection led from the Child Protection AoR. Various local NGOs have also partnered with INGOs like CARE International and Action Aid on advocacy to influence global gender and humanitarian policy processes, such as the World Humanitarian Summit. Networks of feminist activists, such as WILPF, have also undertaken critical analysis of how the UN system, including its humanitarian agencies, are failing on women's rights. However, workshop participants were unanimous in recognising that the gender-specific dimensions of localisation in general, and the role of leadership by women and local women's organisations in UN/NGO humanitarian GBV

*"In Nigeria, one minister told us that while the localisation slogan might be "as local as possible, as international as necessary", in their experience practice was actually "as local as necessary, and as international as possible" with national actors only resourced when access closes or adequate funding for international agencies dries up."* UN official



*"In our country, even under the GBV sub-cluster, the five national NGOs who benefited from GBV funding were all male-led NGOs. In the Strategic Advisory Group on GBV, all of them are men. Does that mean there are no women-led NGOs working on GBV? So we have a bigger challenge here. Beyond localisation, there needs to be specific steps to address participation by women. This also goes to the heart of gender dynamics which drive GBV."* Local CSO

efforts had not received the attention it requires. Women's organisations bring invaluable contextual knowledge, skills, resources and experience in GBV response and it's important that they are given space and opportunity to respond effectively. This will help reduce the male-dominated and gender biased international humanitarian system we currently have and make responses to humanitarian crises more effective and gender transformative.

❖ **Address lack of engagement of local NGOs in UN/NGO humanitarian needs assessment and analysis, coordination and decision-making processes.**

Whilst experiences vary across contexts, there was a common theme in how the country-specific GBV AoR or sub-cluster coordination efforts were not sufficiently inclusive of local NGOs. National NGOs described how international agencies would frequently involve them on a sub-contractual basis in generating analysis for needs assessments or other activities, but then they feel excluded from decision-making and are not given due credit for their inputs. In the Philippines, Rural Women's Coalition, PKKK, described their efforts to establish district, provincial and national-level women-led community structures on disaster risk reduction and GBV response, which have proven their contribution in times of crisis. Yet it was not apparent to PKKK how the GBV AoR or wider international GBV efforts, like the Call to Action, would support their work or engage them effectively. Whilst the Call to Action has set a target that 50% of GBV sub-clusters should be led or co-led by a local actor, there are currently no sub-clusters with a local led/co-led and transition plans are not yet in place to facilitate this (and ensure that it happens in a planned, responsible and appropriate way).

❖ **Hold international actors to account for their commitments on localisation and translate these into international humanitarian GBV efforts.**

Participants at the workshop discussed the Task Team, alongside the Call to Action and wider processes like the Grand Bargain, as entry-points to press for more robust accountability of international agencies for their commitments on localisation.<sup>1</sup> But these processes do not currently involve national NGOs effectively and consistently. Likewise, there remain inconsistent approaches by donors to factoring these commitments into how they assess, monitor and evaluate the agencies they fund.

❖ **Address challenges in funding for local actors working on humanitarian GBV prevention and response – both GBV-specific and wider institutional resourcing needs.**

Participants shared challenges that echo those raised by other local NGOs in localisation discussions (e.g. donor funding criteria being inappropriate for local CSOS, and the lack of multi-year, flexible funding, and tendency towards local CSOs only getting

*"We operate in a remote, conflict-affected area where there is no functioning medical facility. We report violence but the international agencies tell us they need an international agency to verify this. It gets drowned in bureaucracy. In February there was violence in one area, including GBV incidents, and only yesterday there was follow-up in that area." Local CSO*



*"In the global Child Protection AoR having national NGO members in its Strategic Advisory Group has completely, radically changed what it prioritises and how it works. Now the criteria for the global AoR is much more clearly, 'how will this support work on the ground and local actors?' and if this criteria isn't met, an activity does not go into the global AoR workplan." UN official*

short-term, highly earmarked, projectised funding on sub-contractual basis without involvement in either funding strategy by donors or programme strategy by the agencies passing on funding to them). However, specific challenges facing local actors on funding for GBV work also emerged. In particular, participants highlighted the struggle for local women-led CSOs to access funds through the inter-agency coordination processes which tend to be male-dominated and exclusionary to women. Furthermore, current modalities of funding do not enable effective GBV programming which requires a multi-sectoral approach and longer-time frame. Lastly, as GBV is frequently underfunded compared to other sectors of humanitarian response, the competition amongst international agencies and local actors to access these funds is higher. This inevitably further reduces the opportunity and space for local actor funding. Some participants advocated for pooled funding mechanisms for local actors only (to avoid competition with international actors).

❖ **Increase focus on on-going institutional capacity-building, mentoring, and shift away from trend of one-off and often duplicative training workshops.**

Local CSOs should have the autonomy to choose the type of capacity building which works best for their needs (content and modality) and also be recognised as a capacity builder themselves for other actors in country or with international actors. The view that they need to be “rescued” does not recognise the ability of many local CSOs in their field of expertise. At present, most examples of capacity building support focus on the technical aspects of their work – and whilst this remains important, local NGOs are unable to responsibly and effectively scale up their work unless they receive support to strengthen their internal systems and organisational capacities (admin, finance etc). This is often not perceived to be a program issue, but given that it has a direct impact on whether local actors can scale up and maintain quality services, it is important to consider how institutional capacity strengthening approaches could be integrated into broader GBV response strategies.

**Move away from the “blessed few” approach where a carefully chosen small group of local actors receive the lion’s share of funds.**

Often the criteria for this special relationship is based on ability to meet particular requirements in grant management or ability to speak English for example. Use of consortia ways of working, including support to community based approaches and networks, was highlighted. As Claudine from DRC highlighted: *“Localisation should not just stop at national NGOs. It should connect down to communities. We need to involve communities in monitoring and evaluation, and participation by women in particular, if we want stronger GBV work and sustainability.”* Whilst pooled funds offer one of the most flexible and accessible sources of funding for

*“We signed up to the Call To Action, but it’s hard to see entry-points for follow-up on the ground. Neither UN agencies, cluster coordinators or donors seem to be aware of their commitments on this!”* Local CSO



*“We need to avoid localisation just benefiting the few ‘darling national NGOs.’ This would just reproduce the power dynamic between international and national agencies at the country level.”* Local CSO

*“Most funding goes to UN agencies and INGOs, and yet most frontline work is done by local NGOs. Yet locals get smaller grants, their capacity isn’t built, and the system isn’t in place when internationals transition out.”* Local CSO

local NGOs, this still remains largely inaccessible for smaller organisations and informal structures (including women's groups).

❖ **Adopt a two-way relationship in order to shift the power.**

Recognise the capacities and skillsets of local organisations and look for ways to strengthen them and draw on them through in country learning, leadership and mentorships. Ensure that processes such as Call to Action have clear "added value" for local partners and look to identify what that may be in order to incentivise new partners to join. Creating space for partners to have a voice in platforms. This could also include a commitment from international partners to report back to their local partner on their contributions to a partnership (as frequently as they require the local partner to report to them).

❖ **Mitigate the consequences of international agencies recruiting staff from local NGOs and depleting their capacity.**

UN agencies and the private sector should adopt the INGO Charter4Change principles in this regard, and all international agencies should be held accountable to this.

❖ **Address the logistical and funding challenges that prevent effective input and participation of local actors in regional and global fora.**

Few donors allocate money for travel or translation in order that local CSOs can be present, take part and fully engage with important coordination, advocacy and decision making opportunities. Most meetings and conferences take place in Europe where visa restrictions impose severe limitations on many to attend. (Out of the seven partners due to attend the meeting, two were unable to have their visas granted in time). Furthermore, the emphasis on skype calls, requiring strong internet connection and suitable time zones, impedes many to engage. More consideration is required on how to regionalise meet ups and design input for balanced participation.

## **Wider efforts of relevance to addressing issues raised by local partners**

We were joined by a number of representatives from international organisations involved in different ways in GBV humanitarian policy and practice, as well as wider efforts on protection and localisation. The following processes were highlighted as entry-points for the GBV AoR Task Team on Localisation to connect, align with and inform wider efforts on GBV, protection and localisation:

**Global Protection Cluster and Child Protection AoR localisation agenda:** A UNICEF representative, who leads work on localisation within the Child Protection AoR and wider Global Protection Cluster, alongside IRC, shared inspiring examples of initiatives underway to address the obstacles facing local CSOs in engaging with protection related coordination and programming. One example was analysis undertaken which illustrates the different perspectives of local actors in contrast to international protection coordinators or international agencies that fund local actors. Another example was work underway to pilot new approaches to engaging local actors in input to UN Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Humanitarian Response Plans. Whilst some GBV actors have participated in these activities, the specific challenges faced by GBV actors, or in GBV-related spaces for policy and practice, have not yet received dedicated attention. As such, there was strong interest to follow-up and catalyse joint work between the GBV AoR Task Team and these wider efforts, building on the methods developed and lessons learned so far.

**Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies:** Women's Refugee Commission, CHAD Nigeria and Association of Women Lawyers from DRC, shared insights on the Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies at global and country level in its two field pilot contexts (Nigeria and DRC). Whilst a limited number of national NGOs have endorsed the Call to Action, they noted that the process was yet to fully engage them as equal partners or address priorities they have raised. One minor example shared was that the annual Call to Action online reporting format had no option for local NGOs. It was

likewise unclear who the focal point for CSOs should be to promote follow-up on the ground (with even local GBV sub-cluster coordinators often being unaware of their agencies' commitments under the global process). Participants also acknowledged, however, the importance of commitments to promote localisation under the Call to Action Roadmap to 2020 and saw this as a potential entry-point to advocate for reforms in how local actors are perceived, supported and engaged in future.<sup>ii</sup>

**Grand Bargain and the Humanitarian / Development / Peace Nexus:** CARE International shared insights from wider humanitarian reform processes of relevance to localisation efforts. The Grand Bargain process saw increasing momentum and attention to gender issues at its last Annual Review Meeting earlier in June 2018. Each of its workstreams – notably ones on localisation, participation and cash – offer potential entry-points for local actors working on humanitarian GBV prevention and response. Likewise, the Humanitarian / Development / Peace Nexus offers potential entry-points; the CSO partner from the Philippines highlighted the critical importance in longer-term disaster risk reduction and preparedness efforts to support local activists in GBV response teams, ready to react when crises occur. This process does present some challenges as implementation of the 'Nexus' approach has been associated with empowering national governments in conflict-affected contexts with the space for independent civil society then squeezed (including local women's groups working on GBV).

**Wider efforts on the Global GBV AoR:** The GBV AoR Global Coordinator shared various examples of how local CSOs were already, and could become increasingly engaged with different workstreams under the AoR. Examples of entry-points include work on programmatic learning as well as on minimum standards. Whilst mapping so far indicates only one local CSO co-chair of a GBV sub-cluster at national level (in the Syrian response), there are examples of local CSOs both participating at national level (albeit facing various issues as described in the previous section) and adopting co-chair roles in GBV coordination at the sub-national level. In terms of governance of the GBV AoR, the current arrangements mean that it cannot simply adopt the same approach as the Child Protection AoR without undertaking some reforms to establish a structure akin to the CP AoR's 'Strategic Advisory Group' – however, many of the agencies in the GBV AoR Core Group are signatories to the Grand Bargain and the Charter4Change and have made a commitment to localisation. Challenging these structural barriers and finding appropriate and equitable leadership and decision-making arrangements should be a priority for the GBV AoR, moving forward. Representatives from the GBV AoR Policy and Advocacy Reference Group also played a key role in this workshop, leading on facilitation of Day Two. A number of entry points were discussed on how best local CSOs might engage with the policy and advocacy efforts, looking for approaches that would support, strengthen and expand national level advocacy related to specific crises or pertinent issues affecting their work.

## Options for the GBV AoR TT on Localisation

1. Develop a time-bound plan for the GBV AoR Localisation Task Team to have a local NGO co-chair and/or advisory group, and work with the wider global GBV AoR to clarify and strengthen the status of local NGOs/actors in its membership (including its governance structure) ensuring a range of local CSOs in geography, scope and experience.
2. Develop ways of working that ensure that local members can participate effectively with one regional meeting taking place in between annual meet ups.
3. Map wider efforts on localisation, protection and GBV and explore scope for collaboration at global, regional and country levels. Particular attention will be given to the Global Protection Cluster and Child Protection AoR localisation agenda, and the Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies.

4. Take the Task Team's efforts to the field-level through regional cross-country learning and/or country-specific engagement on the issues raised above. Several international AoR members are investing in strengthening their partnership efforts at field-level, and in several contexts there is an overlap between agencies, contexts and issues (for example, South Sudan is a focus for both an ECHO-funded localisation consortium, the ECHO-funded protection localisation programme led by IRC); and these could be leveraged to facilitate inter-agency work through the Task Team in selected contexts.
5. Identify 3 contexts to provide dedicated support to participation by women-led CSOs in the Humanitarian Needs Overview and the Humanitarian Response Plan. Building on this, one goal for the Task Team could include ensuring that localisation is prioritised and promoted in all stages of the HPC.
6. Work with the wider Global Protection Cluster, research institutions with relevant expertise and national NGO partners to share learning on engagement with national government authorities on humanitarian GBV prevention and response.
7. Review, adapt and develop tools together with local actors related to organisational capacity building support from the perspective of localisation and GBV (including the SHAPE Framework) and actively promote their adoption in national response plans and project sheets.
8. Support joint-up advocacy by Task Team members and national NGO partners, in partnership with the Call to Action NGO Working Group and the GBV Policy and Advocacy Reference Group, towards the wider UN, NGO and donor communities on localisation and GBV with a particular focus on:
  - a. Leveraging the Call to Action field pilots
  - b. Dialogue with donors (in particular through the States and Donors working group in the Call to Action) on funding modalities to more sustainably and equitably empower local NGOs, in particular local women-led CSOs
  - c. Exploring options for cross-sectoral engagement given the expertise of local women-led CSOs in different sectors of response (eg FSL) and their relevance for GBV risk mitigation, prevention and response
  - d. Overcoming replication of patriarchal norms by the localisation agenda and its implementation (upholding do no harm principle).
  - e. Leveraging the Global Localisation Workstream (the various GPC/AoR Localisation structures could discuss before each call/meeting to agree on some common advocacy priorities in relation to coordination).
  - f. Common advocacy by members at country level to ensure localisation and localisation approaches are visible, prioritised and resourced in HRPs.
9. Model good practice by collaborating on the design of joint initiatives that involve national NGO partners as equal partners from the outset in their design. Examples of this could involve fundraising for a multi-country programme to implement any of the above options. This could also be framed towards informing planning towards the post-2020 Call to Action. The Task Team could also actively fundraise for and document the trialing/expansion of these models and the subsequent lessons learned.
10. Ensure collaboration, complementarity and alignment between the GBV AoR Task Team's work and that of related initiatives; in particular the localisation in protection agenda led by

the Child Protection AoR on behalf of the wider Global Protection Cluster, the NGO working-group of the Call To Action, national NGO networks at global (e.g. NEAR) and country-level (e.g. national NGO forums and women activists networks), and global and/or regional women's rights activist networks engaged in advocacy on humanitarian and wider crisis response (including CSO networks focused on women, peace and security advocacy).

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<sup>i</sup> The Global Humanitarian Assistance Report released in Jun 2018 found that local and national NGOs received only 0.4% directly of all development assistance in 2017, a rise of just 0.1% from 2016.

<sup>ii</sup> Policy recommendations delivered by participants from this workshop at the annual Call To Action review meeting in Brussels, 27-29 June 2018:

- **LOCAL WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP:** Plan steps to elevate and accelerate localisation within the Call to Action (in particular -Women Led CSOs)
- **TARGETED AND DIRECT FUNDING:** Donors in Call to Action and Grand Bargain join up the dots and identify specific steps to localise funding from a GBV and women's empowerment lens
- **AUTONOMY TO CHOOSE TYPE OF CAPACITY BUILDING - CONTENT AND MODALITY:** Increased focus on institutional capacity building of local CSOs to accompany GBV projectized capacity building and recognition of local expertise.
- **FUNDING CRITERIA:** Donors make participation of women and women-led CSOs criteria for funding to host governments, UN agencies and NGOs
- **PROTECT RETENTION OF STAFF FOR LOCAL AGENCIES:** UN agencies and private contractors should adopt the INGO "Charter for Change" commitment on not undermining local agency staff capacity.
- **TWO WAY ENGAGEMENT:** Reduce power imbalance between local and international actors by promoting two-way engagement on commitments/requirements (clarifying incentives for local actor engagement in Call to Action)