

AFRICA REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON LOCALISATION  
ADDIS ABABA

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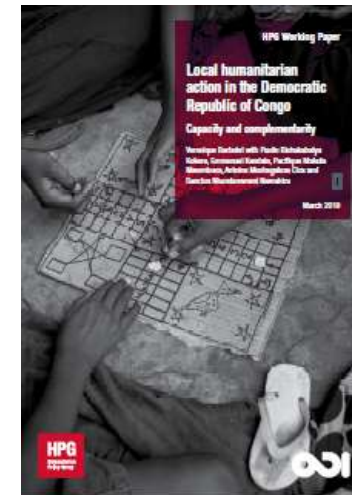
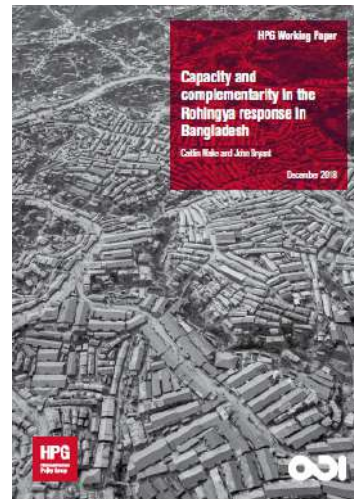
# CAPACITY AND COMPLEMENTARITY IN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES

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# HPG Research Project: capacity and complementarity

- How can capacity be better understood and applied to support more complementary and collaborative humanitarian response?
- What are the opportunities for and obstacles to harnessing the capacity of and forging more effective complementarity among local, national, regional and international actors responding to humanitarian crises?



# Case studies

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**Bangladesh: Response to the Rohingya displacement in Cox's Bazar**



**Democratic Republic of Congo: conflicts in South Kivu and Kasai**



**Models of complementarity: British Virgin Islands Red Cross, INGO brokering role, mixed consortium and more**



## Investigating capacity is difficult ...

- Capacity is not well defined or commonly understood
- One-sided conceptualisation of ‘gaps’ and ‘assessments’
- Capacity assessment is limited to bilateral processes

*... but critical*

- To recognise power dynamics and support local responses

*Complementarity is defined as an outcome where all capacities at all levels – local, national, regional, international – are harnessed and combined in such a way to support the best humanitarian outcomes for affected communities*

## Defining capacity: key findings

- Not one understanding of capacity
- Capacity defined as the capacity you have
- Capacity defined in isolation with context and crisis
- Capacity defined in isolation from outcomes for affected people

## Defining capacity: the problems

- Problem 1: who defines capacity leads to unequal power dynamics and narrow definition of capacity
- Problem 2: lack of consensus on definition means impossible to decide how local humanitarian action can be and the necessity of international humanitarian action.

## Assessing capacity: key findings

- Assessing the capacity of locals for the purpose of funding and partnerships lead to risk management approach rather than understanding who contributes what
- Lack of knowledge of who has capacity highlighting lack of context wide approach and failure of coordination



## Assessing capacity: the problems

- Problem 1: Who decides who has capacity? Power dynamics need to be addressed in how capacity is assessed.
- Problem 2: Burden of evidence on local organisations – to demonstrate they are better, cheaper, more effective leading to humanitarian action that is as international as possible, as local as necessary.

## **Strengthening** capacity: key findings and problems

- A process generally done for the purpose of delivering projects as implementing partners
- Capacity ‘strengthening’ not systematic, and focuses on technical skills and standards
- Little reflection on the ability of international actors to strengthen capacities, or evaluating what worked

## Capacity and capacity strengthening: ways forward

- Define capacity through a wider range of stakeholders, including affected people, and in relation to specific crises.
- Move toward context-wide capacity mapping
- Fill gaps through complementary approaches and capacity strengthening