

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

First ever African Regional Conference on efforts to “localise” International Humanitarian Aid



Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 17 July 2019: A meeting of African Union (AU) bringing together governments, donor agencies, African and international aid groups have explored ways of increasing investment in local humanitarian organizations and promoting their leadership in major response operations.



The conference, co-organized by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Government of Switzerland, took place from 15-16 July 2019 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Addressing the participants, the Head of the AU's Division on Humanitarian Affairs, Refugees and Displaced Persons, in the department of Political Affairs, Amb. Olabisi

Dare highlighted that, localization of aid should aim at increasing the quantum of funding that reaches national actors including Community actors; and more importantly enhance

the capacity development of the national and Community actors to effectively govern overall humanitarian assistance. “Localization is about being efficient and effective in the way we bring aid to the community level. We need to change the paradigm” he stated.

Eve Amez-Droz, Deputy Head of International Cooperation, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Ethiopia, said: “A localised approach to aid has many benefits. It improves local ownership and awareness of aid, promotes its relevance, and allows for a more inclusive response, integrating the participation of affected people.”

Jemilah Mahmood, IFRC Under-Secretary General for Partnerships, said: “It has taken us many years to get this issue on the international agenda. But now, the voice of local responders is being heard at the highest levels. We can transform how we collaborate and make aid work much better for people affected by crises. But we still have some hard work left to do in managing the real and perceived risks of change.”

Organized on behalf of the “Localization Workstream,” a network of major donors, UN agencies, international non-governmental organizations and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Each of the members of this network signed a “Grand Bargain” in 2016, including strong commitments to move toward “localising” international aid funding and processes. IFRC and Switzerland act as the co-conveners of the Workstream.

Conference participants agreed on key priorities to accelerate the localization agenda in Africa. These included greater representation of local actors in humanitarian decision-making bodies, more investment in local institutional capacities, and more targeted support for women-led organizations. They also highlighted the need for governments to support the development of their own civil society responders, to develop domestic laws and policies to facilitate and regulate international response, and to seize the opportunity of the African Union’s new Humanitarian Agency which will soon be established.

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