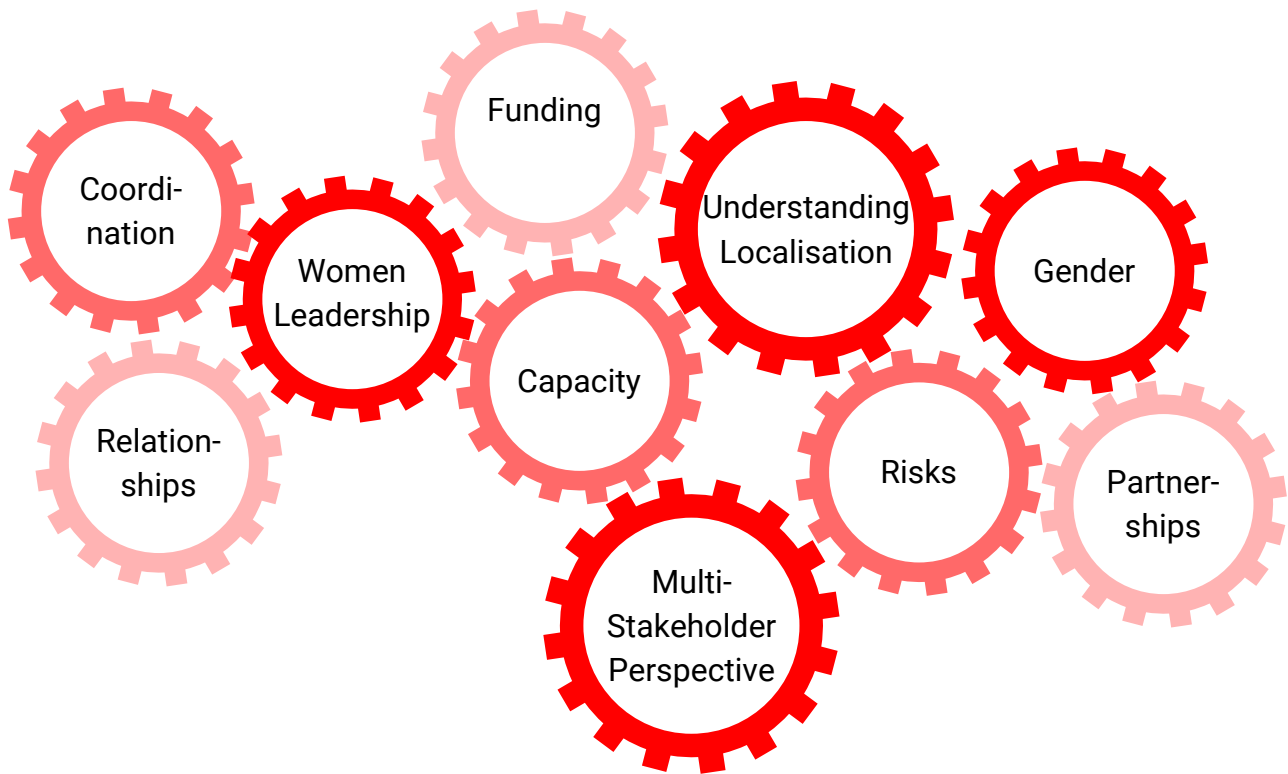


Africa Regional Conference on Localisation of Aid

HIGHLIGHTS DISCUSSIONS DAY 1



UNDERSTANDING LOCALISATION

- National and local actors in Africa still struggling to comprehend what localisation means specially in relation to the Grand Bargain commitments and what it would entail
- Who are local and national actors?
- Role of local and national governments in localisation; are there differences in how support for governments and civil society should be promoted?
- Localisation requires us to look beyond “usual” stakeholders; consider the real ecosystem of local actors
- Progress comes through real representation of local actors in decision-making

GRAND BARGAIN CONVERSATIONS

- Grand Bargain conversations at local and national levels as advocacy framework
- Ensuring that UN and INGO funded partners demonstrate concrete milestones to deliver against Grand Bargain localisation commitments
- Still many international actors doing “business-as-usual” (sub-contracting)
- Not just about financing or the 25% target but about respect, trust. Narrative cannot be about them vs us; it has to be about what is best for the (disaster) affected people
- Need to look at opportunities/link with other workstreams including the HD nexus

COORDINATION, PARTNERSHIPS, RELATIONSHIPS

- Complementarity between local/national and international humanitarian actors
- Lack of trust in L/NNGOs capacity, boils down to trust issue
- Trust and risk; need to ensure risk is not always transferred to local actors; international actors (donors, UN, INGOs) must develop strategies to manage risk and risk transfer
- An instrumental approach to “partnership” (meeting needs of crisis-affected people)
- Partnerships driven by funding and funding dynamics

- Partnerships between individuals/personalities, not systemic; need to build structures and institutionalise partnership
- Partnership assessment criteria often too stringent and exclusionary; establish minimum standards for quality and genuine partnerships
- Value of long-term partnerships; local actors not necessarily very visible but are long-lasting
- INGOs talk about principles, NNGOs talk about context – need to bridge the two
- Projects are a good way to start conversations; project design, or co-design; developing local projects or pushing INGO/UN agendas; real reporting or “creative” reporting
- NGO coordination fora at local and national levels; establish national level localisation clusters;
- Clusters not good at amplifying local voices (especially to global levels); ensure co-leadership of clusters is mandatory; role of regional coordination is not clear
- Limited space and opportunity to be represented and to be engaged meaningfully in coordination mechanisms
- It is not just the money; if we focus only on money, there is more potential to become “we” versus “them”

CAPACITY

- Understanding capacity/capacity building; capacity often still defined as technical skills and not in terms of value/contribution; need to have conversations to understand capacity (especially its contextual nature); define capacity at local level; continue conversations at national level as to what capacity means
- For national governments, capacity also includes the capacity to oversee, regulate and facilitate international relief. Few African governments currently have legal, regulatory or institutional frameworks in place for this purpose, but several are moving forward – including in West Africa, where National Red Cross Societies, IFRC and ECOWAS are cooperating in supporting them to assess and strengthen domestic frameworks.
- Capacity discussions need to move towards recognising capacity that already exists and building/investing in this
- Consortia approach and equal learning opportunities; capacity assessments to become two-way street; capacity strengthening of local actors must ensure that complementarity is identified from the onset in order to shift the power
- Strengthening takes time; Continue to advocate for resources for long-term capacity strengthening are given directly to local actors so they can decide themselves what to focus on
- Continue institutional strengthening and sharing – capacity as ability to influence, create impact; how to strike balance between money (funding) and the sustainability of organisations and their activities; balance between governance/systems/skills versus local knowledge, socio-economic dynamics
- We need to remove the issue of capacity
- Opportunities and voices of women in regular needs assessment processes; use of gendered assessment tools (e.g., SHAPE)
- SHAPE to be used as a self-assessment tool

FUNDING/FINANCING

- CBPF seems to be access to funds solution but insignificant percentage of global funding; leave its access to L/NNGOs
- Where donors reach limits in providing direct funding, could international intermediaries arrange for direct communication between local actors and the back donors at the time of project design?

This would allow local actors more influence in decision-making, improve the information available to donors, and foster a greater sense of cooperation across the value chain.

- Consider separate funding baskets for local organisations at different levels; this will might better enable women organisations to apply and access funds
- Focus on multi-year funding as entry points to earmark funding for women's rights-organisations or women-led organisations
- INGO/NNGO presence on board of pooled fund resulted in increase of funding to local actors to 47% of total
- Access to Ethiopia Humanitarian Fund limited by banking/financing requirements and capacity (local actors to manage large funding and OCHA support)
- Opportunities for funding in-country

GENDER MAINSTREAMING, WOMEN LEADERSHIP

- Capture and represent better the contribution of women's organisations
- Limited presence of women's rights-based organisations in coordination platforms; take deliberate action to allocate specific positions within coordination platforms for women for inclusivity; change mindsets of decision makers with affirmative action; gender-responsive coordination; create opportunities for women's voices at decision tables
- Meaningful participation for women-led organisations in humanitarian coordinations fora. They have local knowledge so they should be on leadership of coordination mechanisms; unique role of women's rights-based or women-led organisations access to communities, understanding of the needs and priorities of women and girls
- Unhealthy competition for funding within local organisations which sideline women's organisations ; women-led CSOs get less funds than other CSOs
- Women-led organisations are not traditionally involved in humanitarian response and might not want to be
- When including women-led organisations, it can often be the "usual suspects" only
- Timelines are not conducive to gender outcomes (for example, programming to reduce violence against women cannot be effective overnight)
- Investing in gender responsive localisation as part of "build back better"
- Investing in understanding the context and implications for gender advocacy/women's leadership
- Working on norm change with the awareness that it is a long-term task, advocacy does not bring quick gains and male engagement has not brought great change for women's leadership
- Importance of exploring the role of refugee and IDP women in sharing and driving the localisation agenda; the need to strengthen relationships and collaborative efforts between women in host communities and refugee/IDP women

NOTES FROM ANNUAL GLOBAL INDEPENDENT REPORT

Substantive progress is being made

- Evidence of shifts in norms and operational practice
- Measurable gains in efficiencies and effectiveness
- Increased country-level engagement
- Furthering gender equality
- Conviction that Grand Bargain can achieve its potential

Progress on localisation

- Growing normative shifts towards more support and more funding for local and national responders
- Increased sharing of information within and outside the workstream

Challenges

- Progress remains uneven
- High transaction costs for, as yet, relatively limited returns
- “Quid pro quo” still not functional
- Progress at technical level but limited political dialogue to resolve challenges

How to maximise the potential of the Grand Bargain

- Adopt a strategic approach:
 - Address or better navigate remaining challenges
 - Exploit opportunities and scale up successes
 - Enhanced quality funding
 - Harmonised reporting
 - Focus on quality of investments in local/national partners
 - Achieving localisation in practice will require
- Radical shifts in policy and operations
- Peer-to-peer learning and exchanges
- Incentives from donors to encourage shift in approach
- Predictable funding for capacity strengthening programmes

LEARNING FROM DEMONSTRATOR COUNTRY MISSION

- Localisation as long-term strategic, equitable partnership versus service/project delivery and cost efficiency
- Localisation is progressing but further dialogue is needed to address lack of trust on both sides
- Capacity strengthening (programmatic, technical, organisational) should be two-way, built on local actors' knowledge and detailed understanding of the context
- Only limited and short-term funding available for institutional capacity strengthening for local actors
- Little progress in representation in HCTs and coordinating bodies
- Major donors still constrained from partnering with L/NNGOs and inadequate overhead cost and short-term partnership is still major concern for many
- There are various women-led organisations but many remain on the sidelines of localisation discussions with little or no knowledge
- Transformative changes require local actors to agree on ways on how to better collaborate, respect and build on one another's strengths irrespective of gender; donors and INGOs need to recognise the strength as a means to improve humanitarian response