



MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON LOCALISATION OF AID
29-30 JULY 2019, AMMAN, JORDAN

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

INTRODUCTION

In 2016, major donors and humanitarian organisations signed the “Grand Bargain” with ten top-level commitments to reduce the costs of humanitarian aid and make it more effective. Among these was the commitment to increase international funding and support for national and local responders (known as the “localisation of aid”). Since the adoption of the “Grand Bargain”, signatories have continued to work together to support the achievement of their localisation commitments through a network called the “Grand Bargain Localisation Workstream.”

The regional conference on Localisation on Aid, hosted by the Jordan Red Crescent Society in Amman, Jordan, gathered more than 90 individuals, representing almost 60 organisations – local non-government and civil society organisations, government agencies, international non-governmental organisations, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, UN agencies, and donor agencies. This was the second in a series of regional conferences organised this year with the following objectives

1. Share recent developments in global processes, research findings, and progress on localisation;
2. Facilitate a dialogue between different stakeholder groups in the region on the opportunities and challenges of localisation;
3. Ensure perspectives from the region help guide planned global guidance products and other initiatives to promote localisation, and;
4. Initiate and/or support ongoing discussions and planning for individual and collective action in the region on localisation.

PRIORITY ISSUES

From the sharing and learning from global, regional, and national experiences, Conference participants identified a number of priority issues they felt need to be addressed to accelerate the realisation of localisation agenda

1 MULTI-DIMENSIONAL SYSTEM-WIDE CAPACITY STRENGTHENING AND SHARING

- The prioritisation of these capacity dimensions should be decided by local actors, with particular attention not just to the content of capacity strengthening but also the strategies (long-term and systematic) approaches (shift from training culture to coaching, job shadowing, accompaniment, etc) and sources of such capacity development, i.e., who is doing the capacity strengthening.
- Capacity strengthening, especially the institutional dimensions, remain significantly under-resourced. The available resources are largely short-term and often based on priorities of external actors.
- Capacity strengthening is not an end result but a process; need to shift from a training/workshop culture to streng

2 A COLLECTIVE VOICE AND LEADERSHIP IN COORDINATION MECHANISMS

- Local actors, especially local NGOs may develop and strengthen their own coordination platforms that can both be mechanisms for the acceleration of localisation commitments at local level and at the same time a point of leverage for credible and legitimate inclusion and representation in other coordination mechanisms that involve government and international actors.

- Locally-led coordination mechanisms can provide a platform for local actors (local NGOs, local and national authorities and relevant agencies) to appropriately and effectively share roles and responsibilities among themselves.
- Resources to enable collective representation of local actors in coordination mechanisms are largely inadequate or even non-existent.

3 FINANCING/FUNDING SITUATION THAT IS RELIANT ON EXTERNAL AID AND BASED ON MODALITIES THAT NEED TO BE IMPROVED

- There is a need for a more strategic and collaborative approach to humanitarian financing or funding that incrementally shifts dominant funding revenue from external sources to more locally-generated, diversified funding sources and revenue streams, including from national governments and the private business sector.
- Limited availability and or access to flexible, multi-year and predictable funding that supports institutional and core funding /overhead costs.
- Local NGOs are not included in conversations with donors
- Requirements of donors are becoming more complex and inhibiting localisation; compliance requirements are increasing; donors set the rules and the rules become stricter down the chain

4 TRANSPARENT AND GENUINE PARTNERSHIP RELATIONSHIPS AT ALL LEVELS NEED TO BE CONTINUOUSLY DEVELOPED

- The acceleration of localisation is founded on genuine partnerships among humanitarian parties/actors, based on mutual respect, transparency, trust, shared responsibility and two-way accountability. Relationships in humanitarian work/response should move from transactional, project-based and outsourcing relationship to true partnership. Communications and mutual learning between donors and local actors, and between international, national and local actors are important.
- Effective partnership relationship requires clarification of roles, rights and responsibilities of involved parties at all levels. While personal relationships are important, these should develop into institutional relationships with appropriate formality, clarity and standardisation of principles of engagement, quality and accountability benchmarks, coordination mechanisms and feedback.

5 WOMEN LEADERSHIP AND INCLUSION

- Inclusion of women and women's leadership of humanitarian action needs to be acknowledged to be at the heart of localisation.
- Localisation efforts need to focus on women-led organisations and women's community-based organisations.

6 THE NEED TO DEEPEN AND WIDEN SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE GRAND BARGAIN AND LOCALISATION

- Despite some progress on fostering a common understanding of the "goal" of localisation, there is still a significant range of "understandings" of localisation itself. There is value in pursuing efforts to deepen and broaden shared understanding of localisation, focusing on shared principles, parameters, and even measurement, building on some existing frameworks. Identifying targets and indicators for inclusive localisation remains a challenge.
- There is still a significant gap in understanding or even awareness of the "Grand Bargain" and "localisation" among the broader public beyond the humanitarian community.
- Counter-terrorism legislation challenging localisation progress in the region
- Need to address the risks emerging from localisation such as those around fiduciary concerns and compliance to humanitarian standards and principles, but also not to forget the risks of making no change

TAKING ACTION – 2020-2021

The conference participants, in sub-regional and country discussions, proposed a number of priority initiatives that have the potential of accelerating and making localisation a reality at the country level. Included in these discussions were specific asks of regional and global level dynamics to support country-level change.

These proposed priority initiatives were also framed by normative, strategic, and practical progress happening at the global level, as illustrated by the Grand Bargain independent annual report, the learning from demonstrator country visits¹, and the work of the localisation workstream (that includes the development of practical thematic guidance notes).

ON BROADENING THE UNDERSTANDING OF LOCALISATION AND THE BROADER GRAND BARGAIN AGENDA

- The most important level for fostering understanding of localisation is the national/local level. Towards this, key humanitarian actors at the national level should disseminate localisation principles and agenda to the broader public, and at the same time start initiatives towards creating spaces for dialogues, developing and sharing case studies, and mapping of existing networks on localisation.
- At the global level, international actors should introduce localisation elements throughout the project cycle, provide support on developing and implementing training courses on localisation, and support advocacy for providing more funding for institutional capacity development of local actors.
- The dialogues on localisation should also offer opportunities to revisit roles of international NGOs in direct humanitarian service delivery.

ON COLLECTIVE CAPACITY STRENGTHENING AND SHARING

- Develop methodologies and approaches in capacity development towards more locally-owned, collective, system-wide capacity strengthening and capacity sharing that acknowledge and respect local capacities. All humanitarian actors have something to contribute to capacity strengthening.

¹ Learning visits to Iraq, Bangladesh and Mozambique to understand developments around the localisation of aid in particular.

- Set up appropriate, long-term funding to capacity strengthening, including institutional capacity development, and mitigate negative implications of short-term funding on effective and sustained capacity strengthening.
- Support better access to information for local NGOs on funding, global processes, opportunities for engagement.

ON STRATEGIC FINANCING/FUNDRAISING APPROACH

- Advocate for innovative, multi-year, predictable and flexible financing arrangements that include support to core/institutional and overhead costs.
- Pilot collaborative approaches to humanitarian financing/fundraising, e.g., pooled fund mechanisms, funding consortia, learning from such initiatives as the National Society Investment Alliance. Explore national and public gift-giving revenue streams.
- Advocate for more focused and substantive funding to women’s organisations and women-led organisations.
- Continue dialogue and find mutually agreed measures to address counter-terrorism regulations that make it difficult to support local actors

ON INCLUSION AND REPRESENTATION – IMPROVED COORDINATION MECHANISMS

- Support the setting up of effective coordination mechanisms for local and national NGOs to strengthen their capacity for collaborative work and leverage their engagement with donors and other coordination mechanisms that involve international actors. Existing networks at national and sub-national levels need to be mapped, as a starting point.
- Empower local actors to engage coordination mechanisms by bringing local and national actors as co-chairs of clusters.
- Enhance women representation and role in decision making spaces and platforms at all levels.

ON BUILDING GENUINE PARTNERSHIPS

- Broaden bases of partnerships beyond the “funding” and “project” dimensions to include mutual learning, institutional partnerships, more long-term/strategic partnerships; address residual unequal relationships that are defined by the power of the purse.

- Support trust-building initiatives that can be embedded in formal project relationships on the one end, to post-project relationships.
- Explore meaningful/robust relationship with the private business sector.

