

## Summary Report

### GB WS2 Country Level Dialogues on Localisation

#### October 2021

## Background

The Grand Bargain Localisation Workstream launched a call for expressions of interest to support country-level dialogue processes on localisation in November 2020 to foster further the dialogue on how best to meet the Grand Bargain localisation commitments at the country level. In the discussions from the demonstrator country missions and regional conferences organised by the Workstream in 2018-2019 one of the most consistent feedback shared was the lack of sustained momentum around the Grand Bargain at the country level. Many field level representatives of signatories as well as local actors reported a lack of clarity as to their own roles and opportunities related to the GB localisation commitments. Workstream members therefore agreed to prompt this dialogue process and included this as one of the key activities in the Workstream workplan (2020-2021).

Initiated and led by country-based facilitators, these dialogue processes were aimed to catalyse collaboration between Grand Bargain signatories and to support in-country (Localisation Workstream member) counterparts to identify their context-specific opportunities and specificities and develop their own plans or solutions. It was also hoped that lessons learned from these dialogues can be used to inform discussions and strategic direction in relation to the next phase of the Grand Bargain beyond June 2021. The substantive focus and method for each of the country dialogues were to be determined by country-based facilitators composed of at least three actors, including at least one local actor and one signatory donor or signatory agency. Each country/group were asked as part of their self-nomination to develop a plan in consultation with country-level stakeholders, to share the finalised plan indicating specific requests for support to the Localisation Workstream, and to organise and manage the dialogues. The individual GB Workstream members were encouraged to take forward their engagement with the process at country level and helped shape it within the parameters of their global and country level capacity to do so and in coordination with the GB Localisation Workstream co-conveners and the Workstream country dialogue subgroup.

## Country selection and Workstream support

The Workstream received self-nominations from 10 countries - South Sudan, Nigeria, Somalia, Jordan, Syria, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, Philippines, and Colombia. Turkey also withdrew its proposal and Afghanistan decided to postpone its engagement. Given the Workstream's limited time and capacity to provide dedicated support to all 10 countries, it decided to select 'focus countries' where support and follow-up will be provided by the Workstream while for the rest, ad hoc exchange and feedback will be arranged as requested in addition to the provision of background and guidance materials.

Six countries – South Sudan, Nigeria, Somalia, Syria, Myanmar and Colombia were selected as 'focus countries' using the following criteria:

- **Composition of co-facilitators** – co-facilitators 'must be at least three actors, including at least one local actor, and one signatory donor or signatory agency'. They should be country-based and priority to those who have the ability to mobilise all constituencies.
- **Open and inclusive process** - in keeping with the GB character and as Workstream-facilitated process, it is important the process must be open and inclusive of Grand Bargain signatories and local actors (including government where relevant). A strong proposal should reflect how the relevant actors/stakeholders are engaged and or consulted at all stages of the dialogue process i.e. not as advocacy targets nor only as participants in some of the meetings/activities.
- **Build upon, rather than seek to replace or alter, existing Grand Bargain commitments and initiatives on localisation** – in countries where localisation dialogues or efforts are more advanced, it is important that the dialogue process make reference to and build upon these. Where localisation discussions are on their nascent stage or efforts are still limited, how a WS2-facilitated and supported process can add value in promoting and implementing the GB commitments in country as well as contribute to learnings globally.
- **mix of different kinds of humanitarian context and geographical spread** – considered at the last stage of the review specifically when making recommendations on which should be 'focus countries'

Technical and process support to the six focus countries were provided by the Workstream specifically through the country dialogue subgroup for a period of six months (January to June 2021). These included provision of background and guidance materials including a country dialogue resource kit that was produced in three languages (English, French and Spanish); briefing calls, periodic feedback and other process support through teleconferences between Workstream subgroup members and country-based facilitators and participation in virtual meetings and workshops organised by country-based facilitators.

The country dialogues kicked off in January 2021 with briefing calls for each country co-facilitators arranged and facilitated by the Workstream country dialogue subgroup. In March, the dialogue process had to be discontinued in Myanmar due to the coup. On 7 June 2021, a virtual peer to peer learning event was organised by the Workstream to capture, share and exchange learnings and outcomes from the country-level dialogue processes. The event was participated in by country-based facilitators from Colombia, Myanmar, Syria, Nigeria, Philippines and Turkey.

## Summary of key outcomes and learnings

Throughout the country-level dialogue process, countries involved designed and carried out surveys and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with donors, INGOs, local and national NGOs, and community groups as well as multi-stakeholder thematic workshops e.g., financing, capacity building, humanitarian coordination and decision making. The dialogue process had different starting points in each country including the level of engagement from the different stakeholder groups. Due to the size and diversity of stakeholders involved, some countries took a bit more time to kickstart this process, and, in the case of Myanmar, the process was highly impacted by security issues. In Turkey, the dialogue process started even before the Workstream-supported process through the initiative of a group of local NGOs which has now been formalised as a Localisation Advocacy Group with a Secretariat and funding from a local NGO network. In Syria, the NGO Forum in NW Syria coordinated the process from start to end while in the Philippines a consortium between a local NGO (ECOWEB), A4EP, OCHA and Oxfam was formed.

In South Sudan, the setup of the group was a bit long and chaotic but it results in a stronger grounding being under the umbrella of the Localization Working group of the NGO Forum, involving donors and UN agencies too. While in some countries such as in Syria, they struggled to get UN agencies to engage in the process, in the Philippines the (OCHA) Resident Coordinator himself has been very supportive and engaged. Both countries are planning to publish and share their country dialogue reports to their respective HCTs, with Syria looking for endorsement and the Philippines suggesting a working group to take the recommendations forward.

The substantive focus of the dialogue process in each of the countries covered a wide range of topics including reciprocal capacity building/strengthening, representation and leadership in HCTs, new ways of working due to COVID, advocacy, intermediary roles, and funding issues such as overhead costs.

While the short timeline of the dialogue process was noted as an impediment to carrying out actual changes, many pointed out that the process for designing and discussing how to enact changes can be as important. The success of the process can be measured by how it was inclusive, collaborative and complementary whereby the value of each actor is recognised. As a Workstream-supported process, emphasis was made on the distinct and added value of ensuring that all key stakeholder groups are engaged even if this was difficult in some locations.

With the short timeline and the competing demands and priorities for each of the stakeholders involved, it was both a necessity as well as a challenge to find a way for everyone to work. In some countries, co-facilitators found a lack of goodwill by some key actors to practice/walk the talk of localisation while in others, it was difficult for people to agree on the definition of localisation. The dialogue process encouraged and raised the level of interest in and support for localisation and the Grand Bargain specifically in countries where the discussions are less advanced.

Since it was not funded, the work of carrying out these country-level dialogues took a lot of time and resources from co-facilitating organizations. The question was thus raised of how do we make sure that there is support and resourcing for these locally-led processes in GB2.0?

Having real buy-in from UN actors is vital for the success of these change-making processes. Participants noted that IASC coordination and locally-led coordination processes should be linked and that it is helpful to

factor this into roll-out of the IASC coordination/localisation guidance and GB 2.0 approach to 'connecting to the country level'.

Another important learning that was identified is that when we have the discussions, the input of affected populations should be central. Using the seven-dimensions framework was helpful in design the dialogue process while incorporating local voices.

The importance of determining how each country can work with government actors during the planning, coordination, and implementation of humanitarian programs was also identified as a key learning. Participants noted that not all governments will engage in the same way and that each government will likely have their own version of what localisation should look like. This supported the notion, which was repeated by multiple participants, that country-specific context is highly important to consider going forward.

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## Summary of Country Reports – Including Plans for Next Steps

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### COLOMBIA

#### Co-Facilitators

Colombian Red Cross

Swiss Embassy in Colombia, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (COSUDE)

OCHA Colombia

Pastoral Social- Caritas Colombia

#### Main Activities

- Socialization in Humanitarian Country Team with the participation of more than 40 humanitarian actors in Colombia, including heads of delegations of UN agencies, local actors, and donors.
- Online Survey on what localisation looks like in Colombia, sent through OCHA's communication mechanisms to all the members of the Humanitarian Country Team and Local Coordination Teams.
- Literature review of previous localisation-related studies to develop a baseline and analyze localisation in Colombia.
- Virtual National Localisation Workshop and Dialogue, with the participation of more than 130 representatives from humanitarian organizations in the country, to discuss the main gaps, challenges, and opportunities during implementation of the Localisation Commitments.

#### Key findings and recommended actions

International humanitarian actors in Colombia have significant knowledge of the Grand Bargain and Localisation, while among local actors, the information and awareness decrease the more local the actor is. Access to direct funding is a key challenge for local actors and administrative capacities of local actors to manage these funds were stated as one of the barriers for donors to provide these. There is limited multi-annual funding, including for institutional strengthening, and there is little flexibility on the funding provided to local actors.

Partnerships between international and local humanitarian actors are described mainly along the terms 'implementing partners' and 'sub-contractors'. Visibility for local actors in communication pieces and reports to donors is lacking. There was an expressed need to strengthen dialogue and communication between international and local actors including around improving joint context and needs analysis. While there are strong humanitarian coordination mechanisms in place at national and local levels, some local actors including those from the government note that these mechanisms are not accessible to all.

During the final activity, a national workshop and dialogue from the different humanitarian organisations, the following recommended actions were agreed:

- Guarantee different types of actors (especially local and community actors) are involved with the localisation process, are aware of its importance, and are committed to its implementation. Further training, discussions, and events should be developed to make this happen.
- Partnerships with local actors must guarantee more equal conditions and be labeled as peer partners.
- Communication, visibility to local actors, common dialogue, and common implementation of formulation and evaluation processes needs to be strengthened in all phases of partnerships.
- Financing to institutional capacity strengthening must be increased, along with flexible, multi-year financing that covers indirect costs and the changing needs of local actors.
- Coordination mechanisms should be accessible to different actors at the national and local level, including local governments and community-owned and based organizations.
- Planning mechanisms promoted by the government and humanitarian architecture should better include local partners, and Government information on cooperation should be accessible to local actors.
- Security issues in Colombia must receive a higher priority. Common responsibilities, common evaluation, and inclusion of security strengthening should be part of every partnership with local actors.
- Investment should be increased in terms of social innovation.

The participants also agreed to organize 1 or 2 local level workshop during the second semester of 2021 to deepen the conversation and provide further inputs for decision making.

## North West Syria

Co-Facilitators: Syria Relief , CARE International , and UK FCDO

### Main Activities

- Introductory session with parties involved in the NW Syria response to introduce the planned dialogue
- Separate surveys for the different humanitarian actors to identify baselines and perceived key areas for improvement
- Three separate Focus Group Discussions (donors, INGOs and NNGOs) to present and discuss survey results and analysis and agree on focus areas
- Thematic workshops on financing, partnership and capacity building, and humanitarian planning and decision making
- A consultation session with UN agencies (UNFPA, UNHCR, UNDP and OCHA SCHF) to review the outputs of the survey and FGDs, discuss their role on localization and identify improvement opportunities

### Key findings and recommended actions

The surveys and FGDs revealed the different views between donors, INGOs and NNGOs on what each consider as key localization issues and areas of improvement. For donors, the main issues are around humanitarian coordination and representation, NNGO's influence on humanitarian planning and decision-making, and financial planning. INGOs identified issues specific to their relationship with local actors – partnership modalities, evaluation and monitoring, and influence on donors and programmatic planning - while for NNGOs finance-related issues in particular on multi-year funding and overhead costs as well as capacity building and sharing. These issues were then pulled together as basis for a dialogue through a series of thematic workshops between all three stakeholder groups. The main outcomes of these workshops can be summarized as follows:

**Financing** – While some donors provide multi-year funding to their international partners, local organizations have no access to such funds. Local organizations claim that there is a lack of transparency from INGOs on their agreements with donors including on timeline and funding which cause them funding stability concerns. Only some INGOs cover limited overhead costs of their local partners but in most cases these are covered under itemized budget line items. There remain donor and INGO concerns over transparency, monitoring and risk management when it comes to providing overhead costs as a percentage indirect cost. Some donors provide direct funding to local organizations and many contribute to the existing pooled fund mechanisms eg Syria Cross-Border Humanitarian Fund. There is limited investment in capacities of local organizations beyond project implementation.

**Recommended actions** – Donors to increase minimum funding guarantees for the duration of multi-year projects, systematize the inclusion of NNGOs in donor program/response planning, work with INGOs and NNGOs to explore ways of providing adequate overhead costs to local partners, and to allocate a dedicated portion from each grant for capacity building activities of local partners. International organizations to standardize the process for overhead costs consistent with the needs of donors and local partners and set up mechanisms to facilitate transitioning to multi-year funding to NNGOs. For NNGOs to develop clear and auditable policies and tools with INGO partners to monitor accountability and mitigate risks associated with overhead funding.

**Partnership and capacity building** – There is a need to better define and level off on understanding of the partnership principles in the context of NW Syria including the cross-border nature of the response. Much has been done in terms of the capacity building of National NGOs in terms of tools and activities, but actions are needed to take it to the next level and enhance sharing and supporting capacity building in priority areas. A unified capacity assessment tool has been used by some NNGOs after some adaptation but many others deem it to be too extensive and detailed for application. Only the larger and more experienced NNGOs are being contracted.

**Recommended actions** – International actors share capacity assessment results with local partners and agree on required actions and progress reporting, provide capacity building activities beyond program implementation and include institutional capacity building, and to review processes of proposing, planning and approving capacity building activities with their respective HQs to improve timeliness and effectiveness.

**Humanitarian planning and decision-making** - The coordination structure includes mechanisms that enable National NGOs to be in leading positions in humanitarian coordination for Northwest Syria. Clusters provide

the platform for local influence on planning especially through certain National NGOs taking on co-lead roles -adding a different perspective to humanitarian planning that positively impacts the development of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). Outside of established humanitarian coordination mechanisms, National NGOs have limited influence of programmatic planning and specific response decisions and such decisions and priorities are often dictated by donor strategies or INGO proposals. Program planning is conducted differently from one donor or INGO to another. While some utilize a more participatory and contributory approach, others adopt a more prescriptive approach where programmatic priorities and plans are identified early on and cascaded down for implementation.

**Recommended actions** – Increase information dissemination and communication between donors and NNGOs through meetings and utilizing existing coordination platforms. For international actors to carry out joint proposal development with local partners whenever possible. For National NGOs to ensure continuous development of internal systems with focus on accountability and risk mitigation, HR and duty of care, and internal financial controls.

## NIGERIA

### Co-Facilitators

Ohaha Family Foundation  
Women in Humanitarian Response in Nigeria Initiative  
Catholic Agency for Overseas Development  
Christian Aid

### Main Activities

- Series of virtual consultations and a forum with participants from donors, INGOs, L/NGOs, and representatives of three government ministries.
- Rapid assessments (one for donors and another for L/NGOs) on localisation and the Nigeria COVID response
- Bilateral talks with donors and a meeting with the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria.

### Key outcomes and recommended actions

The majority of the L/NGOs noted that experience in relation to their **engagement with HCT was either poor or weak** and consultations with L/NGOs only done on 'a needs basis'. Increasing participation of L/NGOs in HCTs would require investment and commitment on capacity building/strengthening alongside trust building and forming long-term partnerships. Local organizations reported that during the Covid-19 pandemic they experienced **funding cuts, shortages of funds due to bureaucratic impediments** occasioned by the Covid-19 protocols which impacted heavily on jobs & salary cuts, offices & operational infrastructure, followed by **restricted spaces for L/NGOs and lack of inclusion in the decision and coordination process** in the humanitarian response.

Donors raised **concerns about the security situation** in the region which makes localisation challenging. There is a huge data gap and increasing local partners in the coordination structures, and longer-term investments in institutional capacities of local partners would improve localisation efforts. INGOs criticized in strong terms and discouraged competition between INGOs and L/NGOs which could negatively impact on collaboration and inclusion of localisation. There was consensus by the INGOs to prioritize and encourage capacity strengthening of local organizations and its staff member in proposal and report writing, financial reporting, provide flexible and direct funding to cover administrative and ICT systems.

### **Recommended actions**

- Support and encourage more local partners to engage in decision-making and coordination structures. Trust building and long-term relationships/partnerships would improve participation of L/NGOs by recognizing the input and impact of local partners and encourage greater active participation of local partners.
- Build/strengthen institution capacities of local organizations.
- Prioritize capacity building and promote partnership, linking localisation efforts to the Nexus.
- Promote advocacy and awareness-raising in terms of compliance with the localisation commitments, and expand information sharing to intensify localisation efforts in-country.
- Provide flexible funding and empower local partners by demonstrating localisation commitments, promoting greater participation of local partners the humanitarian country teams and coordination groups.
- Increase consultation and dialogues with local partners in program design and long-term partnerships.



## SOMALIA

### Co-Facilitators

Save Somali Women and Children (SSWC)  
Somali NGO Consortium (SNC)  
Save the Children

### Main Activities

#### *Partnership practices for localisation*

- The workstream is in coordination with the Nexus platform and OCHA who are planning to conduct research on localisation. The Nexus platform has rolled out research on aspects of funding and capacity building. The outcome of the research will be useful in the future workstream facilitation of localisation.
- SNC/SSWC/SCI have been involved in various global platforms and groups to push the localisation agenda for an increase in the inclusion and representation of national and local NGOs in the International Humanitarian System at the national and global level through increased knowledge, capabilities, leadership capacity and organizational integration.
- SNC/SSWC/SCI, in conjunction with IOM conducted 2 workshops on localisation for the Global CCCM Cluster coordinators held in March.

#### *Humanitarian financing for local actors*

- Capacity strengthening for localisation Somalia Donor Group paired three INGOs with 12 local NGOs for capacity building based on local NGOs existing gaps, with INGOs conducting a capacity assessment for all organizations involved.
- Safeguarding training conducted with SC and three partners
- Capacity assessment for the SONYO, KAALO and ASAL conducted by DRC
- Risk management training conducted by Save the Children with TASKO, WASDA and HLDI
- Financial and compliance training
- Monitoring and Evaluation training conducted by World Vision for six local NGOs.
- SNC/SSWC/SCI through the localisation working group initiated the move to harmonize the capacity assessment for local actors by INGOs.
- SNC/SSWC/SCI was involved in the selection process for NNGOs representatives globally joining IASC RG1 Sub-Group.
- SNC/SSWC/SCI was part of the selection panel and ensured there is good gender and geographical representation of the selected participants
- SNC/SSWC/SCI contributed to the IASC Guidance on strengthening participation, representation, and leadership of local and national actors in IASC humanitarian coordination mechanisms.
- Localisation working group and task force established and held regular meetings.

#### *Gender-responsive localisation*

- SNC/SSWC/SCI, in collaboration with OCHA Somalia, conducted training for Cluster Inclusion Focal Point (CIFP) Working Group (WG) on PSEA, Localisation and Mine Action.
- SNC formed a Gender Working Group. SNC also conducted women forums in Somaliland, Puntland and South, through local NGOs NAGAAD Network in SL, SWA in Puntland and SSWC in South.

### Challenges

- There is a wide gap between international organizations and actors who dominate the humanitarian space and local stakeholders.



- Communities across Somalia face pressing humanitarian challenges which are exacerbated by successive shocks from natural disasters and conflicts.
- Limited Community engagement and capacity building
- Limited funding to support localisation agenda in Somalia

#### Recommendations

- There is a need to put emphasis on allocating more resources to local actors and efforts that support localisation, i.e., facilitating the localisation workshops, supporting direct funding for local actors.
- There is a strong case for investing more in national actors and for international organizations to support rather than lead wherever possible.
- Many actors who committed to localisation should fast-track the practical implementation of the localisation efforts.
- Participation of national actors in strategic processes should be increased and more national actors should be given prominent leadership space in the program designs
- There is a need to continue discussing the localisation agenda within the country. This tends to make the subject more relevant and create awareness on the stakeholders working in the country.

## PHILIPPINES

### Co-Facilitators

A4EP

ECOWEB

Oxfam

OCHA

### Main Activities

- The process started with development of collaboration between UN OCHA, ECOWEB, Oxfam and A4EP with strong support from UNRC's office. A committee was formed to facilitate planning and resourcing. It meets every Friday to discuss developments and to make decisions and to iron out issues as they arise. The idea of the country level dialogue was first presented to the Humanitarian Country Team to raise awareness amongst the agencies and to encourage them to take part in this important process.
- Using the seven-dimension framework used in many other countries, a guide for the dialogue process was developed and online survey was conducted to determine the state of localisation based on views and perspectives of the Local and National CSOs, business sector groups doing humanitarian work, INGOs and UN agencies.
- A guide was also developed to carry out focus group discussions with the affected populations. This was deemed a key element to put the affected population at the centre of this process.
- Twenty-five (25) FGDs were carried out with the population affected by crisis in different parts of the country in March, while an online survey was completed by local and national CSOs, private sector, INGOs, and UN agencies during March to April. The results of the FGDs with the affected population and feedback from the online surveys are shared in the on-going online dialogue sessions with INGOs, UN, CSOs, the business sector and the government.

### Next Steps

The insights gathered throughout the dialogue process will be documented and shared at the final multi-stakeholder internetwork dialogue in June to plan the way forward and develop an action plan for Localisation in the Philippines. The report of the whole process will be published at the end of the process.