
Grand Bargain Localisation Workstream: VOICE Grand Bargain Task Force Input to DG ECHO

Local and national responders are fundamental actors in the humanitarian aid architecture. Being rooted in local communities and institutions, and because of the knowledge they have of the territory and resources and the ability to find solutions for different needs, make them essential partners in the humanitarian delivery. The Localisation workstream in the Grand Bargain (GB) generates high expectations and enthusiasm and is expected to contribute significantly to the vision to “Leave No One Behind” as set in the Agenda for Humanity.

Purpose of the paper:

The VOICE Grand Bargain Task Force is composed of both NGOs that are GB signatories and others that are not but wish to engage on the initiative. As reflected by the intensive discussions on the definitions to be used by the Grand Bargain signatories in delivering on the Localisation Workstream commitments which have been undertaken in the IASC + Localisation Marker Working Group¹, defining collective recommendations on behalf of the VOICE network has been a challenging exercise. Through this paper the Grand Bargain Task Force wishes to initiate a conversation with ECHO on localisation and to explore optimal approaches to achieving the 6 commitments of Workstream; recognizing that the paper does not provide a comprehensive analysis of localisation. For example some of the commitments of the participation work stream and the humanitarian development nexus could feed into future discussions.

Promoting a “localisation lens” in other workstreams is essential especially when it comes to ensuring front line responders’ access to information and role in the humanitarian decision making process. The reporting requirements and the overall administrative barriers preventing local actors from directly engaging with donors should be looked at in the relevant work streams on reporting and reducing management costs. The multi-year planning and funding work stream as well as the humanitarian – development nexus both also offer opportunities to contribute to the implementation of the first commitment of the localisation work stream to “*Increase and support multi-year investment in the institutional capacities of local and national responders*”. E.g. explore ways of leveraging greater inclusion of national and local actors in needs assessments.

Case Study – Supporting the NEAR Network of Southern NGOs to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian response through capacity building and strengthening the role of local organisations

ECHO is funding a two year project through its Enhanced Response Capacity HIP to work with national NGOs engaged in the NEAR Network in four countries: Turkey, Nepal, South Sudan, DRC and Somalia. The British based NGO, CAFOD (Caritas England and Wales) is the FPA contract holder for the project. The project has 2 elements, capacity building and work on pooled funding.

The project will provide capacity building for 50 local NGOs in five different countries; Somalia, South Sudan, Turkey, Nepal and DRC. This will be done by creating a library of resources for use by selected organisations who will undergo capacity building assessments. The reviews will use existing tools and if appropriate resources do not exist, they will be tailor made for this project. To support the organisations, a platform of mentors will be put in place to provide coaching and giving advice.

Secondly, the project will map existing pooled funding mechanisms in order to develop an in-depth understanding of key lessons and good practice. The mapping exercise will also explore financial resources needed to operate pooled funds. Following the research, a strategy paper will be produced which will identify a recommended process (in terms of structure, pilot countries etc.) and potential funding streams. Workshops will be held with NEAR network members to enable them to provide input. At the end of this process, NEAR will work to identify potential donors for a new national NGO pooled fund. These activities will be completed by March 2018.

This objective of the project is not to set up a pooled fund but to provide the framework, research and impetus from key decision makers on which future funds can build a pooled fund for national and local NGOs for humanitarian response.

¹ The Localisation Marker Working Group is an ad hoc group set up via the IASC Humanitarian Funding Task Team and it extends its participation beyond IASC participants as it includes donors and national NGOs representatives (see HFTT activities mapping [here](#))

Suggestions to DG ECHO

While we welcome the fact that international actors are paying more attention to the role of local and national responders, we also consider that the current debate and the gradual shift towards localisation needs to be more inclusive and decentralised. Although there has been a lot of discussion on the role of local actors and the necessity of making aid as local as possible and to reinforce, not replace local capacities, much of the discussion has taken place at an international level and between international actors. Local actors must be included in discussions to influence policy shifts, recognising that the approaches must be context specific. E.g. we propose that ECHO sets up an advisory group of representatives of national and local actors in a selected number of countries, to help it shift its practices towards more coherent application of localisation.

In line with the *Aide-Memoire on Gender Mainstreaming in the Grand Bargain* we also encourage a systematic gender perspective to be taken into consideration and inform the development of new policies or programmes within the framework of the localisation agenda.

We suggest DG ECHO to:

- **Ensure that a coherent policy dialogue is strengthened between ECHO HQ in Brussels and ECHO staff and where relevant EU delegations in the field**, concerning the willingness and priority to increase support to frontline responders, always keeping in mind accountability, standards and quality criteria as well as adherence to the humanitarian principles and the specificity of each context. The numerous EU Country Roadmaps for engagement with Civil Society² developed since 2014 may provide a strong basis for this policy dialogue and ensure, where relevant, links to longer term development actors. This dialogue should foster **inclusive coordination meetings** particularly in countries with active national and local actors. ECHO should also employ localisation advisers within regional offices or in a few pilot countries to drive change.
- **Explore options to support local and national actors in preparedness and response with appropriate funding lines to support core costs** beyond the timeframe of a response (such as adequate staffing, structure, and hardware). Recognising the current limit of the ECHO regulation, the VOICE Grand Bargain Task Force would like to emphasize the expertise and experience developed by many ECHO partners in working with and strengthening the capacities of local partners and frontline responders on which ECHO should further rely. The VOICE Grand Bargain Task Force is ready to support DG ECHO towards their colleagues from DEVCO in raising awareness on the importance of strengthening capacities of national and local actors to reduce need for international humanitarian aid.
- The Grand Bargain work stream on localisation promotes further **complementarity** between actors and its implementation would be strongly supported by the implementation of the **Principles of Partnerships (PoPs)** (which celebrate their 10th anniversary this year). In light of the revision of its Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA), and in view of fostering the implementation of the localisation workstream, the VOICE GB Task Force recommends **ECHO to further promote the PoPs and use them as guiding tool in its policy and programming cycle.**

² http://www.eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/georgia/documents/civil_society_library/eu_country_roadmap_guidance_2013_en.pdf
https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/eu-country-roadmaps-engagement-civil-society_en

As a major global donor and policy maker, **ECHO has a critical role to play in terms of advocacy** towards the UN system and other major donors, particularly European Union Member States. We call for ECHO to support and champion the following asks:

- **The humanitarian community to revise current capacities assessments practices to include the role of national and local actors.** This data could be used to shape tailored capacity building initiatives also in coherence with the GB “multiyear planning and financing” work stream. It could also help to build on existing “capacity assessment” mechanisms for local and national responders used by UN, INGO and other donors, as well as on the lessons learnt from the FPA, to pilot assessment and risk rating mechanisms for local and national actors;
- **Where the context allows, to ensure transparent access to information and frontline responders’ participation in decision making processes at country level.** Language of meetings has to be addressed and access to relevant information must be provided and appropriate to the local situation.
- **Encourage donors contributing to Country-Based Pooled Funds to promote greater transparency** in management of these funds as well as involving local and national NGOs in the governance and decision-making processes within these mechanisms. Harmonisation and simplification of administrative requirements of these funds should also be fostered to facilitate NGOs’ and other frontline responders’ access to them.

Case Study - Shifting the Power:

This three-year project is being delivered by a consortium led by ActionAid and CAFOD (Caritas England and Wales), with Christian Aid, Tearfund, Oxfam and Concern. It is part of the UK government’s Disasters Emergency Preparedness Programme (DEPP). It aims to strike a more acceptable balance between international and local responses to disasters, shifting the balance of power towards locally led humanitarian response. The Shifting the Power project strengthens national decision making and leadership capacity, and helps national organisations to achieve better representation, a stronger voice and greater recognition. At the same time it influences international organisations to support and promote the work of local and national organisations.

The capacity strengthening component of the Shifting the Power project revolves around an in-depth 2- year programme of support for 55 selected local partners in five countries (DRC, Kenya, Ethiopia, Bangladesh and Pakistan) to strengthen their capacity to determine and deliver humanitarian preparedness and response. The humanitarian capacity self-assessment and capacity strengthening plans was completed by each partner organisation using the 'Strategic Humanitarian Assessment and Participatory Empowerment' (SHAPE) framework. This framework is a tool developed by the project based on a model of humanitarian capacity that emphasises the importance of power in the humanitarian system and recognises organisational attributes to not only deliver humanitarian response but also to control and influence the shape of that response.