



Localizing Humanitarian Action

"Humanitarian action must ensure the protection of the rights and dignity and the full participation of communities affected by the crisis in order to provide a timely and relevant response".

Local humanitarian organizations are the first to respond to the crisis situations. Their response is timely and relevant to the priorities of the people affected. Their local presence before, during and after crisis situations can ensure an immediate and appropriate initial response and continuity of efforts leading to lasting impacts on communities. Regardless of the magnitude of a crisis situation and if it is noted outside, local humanitarian organizations are there to respond.

The role of local communities and organizations has long been emphasized in their resolutions, codes of conduct, and accountability and partnership guidelines by the United Nations (UN) and other international humanitarian agencies. The General Assembly Resolution on humanitarian assistance states, "recognizing that building and strengthening national and local preparedness and response capacity is critical to a more predictable and effective response." The Code of Conduct of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies states, "We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities". Core Humanitarian Standards states, "Humanitarian response strengthens local capacities and avoids negative effects." Sphere Standards states "Support local capacity by identifying community groups and social networks at the earliest opportunity and build on community-based and self-help initiatives." DFID's humanitarian policy states, "National civil society groups and local institutions provide the first line of response, and the last. Yet their contribution is often overlooked. Working through its international NGO, Red Cross and UN partners, DFID will support efforts to build the prevention and response capacity of these local organizations." USAID's policy for humanitarian action states, "OFDA strives to implement its programs in partnership with national- and local-level governments. OFDA increasingly seeks to build the capacity of national and local governments to manage disasters and crises in their own countries." The Charter for Change states, "We will support local actors to become robust organizations that continuously improve their role and share in the overall global humanitarian response. We undertake to pay adequate administrative

support. A test of our seriousness in capacity building is that by May 2018 we will have allocated resources to support our partners in this. We will publish the percentages of our humanitarian budget which goes directly to partners for humanitarian capacity building by May 2018.”

However, a paper by the Humanitarian Policy Group, commissioned by the British Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, states that the role of national and local actors has been taken over by the international humanitarian fraternity. The local and national humanitarian organizations receive only a fraction of the international humanitarian funding i.e. 1.2%. This is self-explanatory of the extent to which the international community has fulfilled its promise to the localization of humanitarian action.

The international humanitarian community is yet to take concrete steps to transfer the capacity and role the local organizations must have to deliver faster and reliable relief, recovery and long-term development services to crisis-affected communities. Towards this end, creating and strengthening the crisis response capacity locally is required. Measurable actions are needed to increase direct funding for national and local actors. However, while doing so all possible measures must be taken to prevent creation of another barrier hindering transfer of optimal relief to the crisis affected people. Accountability and transparency must underpin this transition process. Among others, the local organizations shall be credible, mature, and respected in the local communities. To fulfill their long pending commitment to the localization of humanitarian action, the international humanitarian community must adhere to under-mentioned:

- (I) **Local actors taking charge of the humanitarian action** - Increased financial and technical capacity transferred and leadership role entrusted to local actors to take charge of the local humanitarian action.
- (II) **Strengthening institutional capacities** - Bridging the capacity gaps of the local actors in the areas of internal governance, financial management, and service delivery.
- (III) **Networking among the humanitarian actors** – Developing linkages between local and national, and local, national and international humanitarian actors to strengthen the voice of crisis affected communities in humanitarian action.
- (IV) **Collaboration with the state institutions** - Building trust and creating synergy in mutual actions by promoting institutional linkages between the local and national humanitarian actors and the relevant agencies in the government.

The emphasis being placed on increasing the role of local organizations will not undermine the irreplaceable and distinctive role of the international community. Their role will remain

integral to guarantee rapid and effective delivery of relief, rehabilitation and development services to communities affected by the crisis.

Bridging the gap between international and local humanitarian actors which mainly results from the trust deficit and the capacity issues at the local level is the shared responsibility of the international aid agencies and humanitarian community, the government, and local and national humanitarian organizations and networks.