



**Localization of the Humanitarian Action**  
**Partnership Framework and Guidelines**

**December 2017**

## **Acronyms**

IHOs	International Humanitarian Organizations
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NHN	National Humanitarian Network
NNGOs	National Non-Government Organizations
StP	Shifting the Power
ToRs	Terms of Reference

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## **A. Introduction**

The nature and intensity of natural disasters in Pakistan has changed considerably over the last few decades bringing unprecedented misery to millions, as we are one of the worst hit countries by climate change in recent times. Humanitarian organizations, Disaster Management Systems and communities are converging for a more resilient and sustainable system and preparedness plans, that may reduce the impacts of these disasters in the future.

As seen in recent years, that less than 2% of total humanitarian funding goes directly to local organizations in Pakistan, despite their crucial role in crisis response. Being a developing country with limited resources, Pakistan is not in the position to face recurring natural calamities affecting the population in large numbers. There is a visible need for immediate action, to shift the powers to the local actors' also known as the first responders, for a timely and relevant response.

In the event of any disaster, whether natural or man-made, it is always the local and national humanitarian organizations that are the first to respond and the last to leave. The Guiding Principles of the 'Sendai Framework' also underscore the same reality and clearly identify the role of local humanitarian actors and the need for their empowerment. It emphasizes on empowerment of local authorities and communities through resources, incentives and decision making responsibilities as well as the full engagement of all State institutions of an executive and legislative nature at national and local levels, in order to build robust response mechanisms<sup>1</sup>.

In Pakistan the role of National Humanitarian Network (NHN) has been quiet encouraging, in the bid to bridge the trust deficit between local actors and International Humanitarian Organizations (IHOs) as it impedes resource channelization for creation and transfer of capacity at the local level. At the same time many international organizations are investing their resources in developing countries such as Pakistan, in order to build stronger and resilient systems for longer lasting impacts. 'Shift the Power (StP)' project is one such project, which is a consortium of six international non-governmental organizations, namely Action Aid, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Concern, Oxfam and Tearfund, working together in the hope of converging their global knowledge and understanding of local realities to make humanitarian action the fundamental competence and role of local actors.

Accordingly, these IHOs have signed a formal commitment on localization of humanitarian action, counter-signed by NHN as the representative body of Pakistani National Non-Government Organizations (NNGOs). This is an acknowledgement of an incredible and unprecedented collaboration achieved between IHOs and a national body of humanitarian organizations anywhere in the world. This marks the beginning of the evolution of a localized and sustainable model of resilience. It offers a tremendous potential for replication in their local settings by the global humanitarian fraternity as a best practice from Pakistan.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.preventionweb.net/files/44983\\_sendaiframeworkchart.pdf](http://www.preventionweb.net/files/44983_sendaiframeworkchart.pdf)

Therefore, easy access to information and resources can help people make better informed decisions and mobilize the right external support required during emergencies and disasters. But to do so effectively, connecting the local communities with Disaster Management Authorities, other state actors and national and local humanitarian organizations is an essential step towards building a robust response system.

## **B. The need for Partnership**

While there are many nationally and locally recognized humanitarian organizations working for the betterment of crisis inflicted communities, but the advantages of partnering with International Humanitarian Organizations will result in added value and more sustainable and effective response mechanisms. Establishing effective and inclusive partnerships takes time, but at the same time it is important to keep in mind that the benefits of operative partnerships do not appear overnight. The final results start appearing in due time. Therefore, developing the right framework is the key for a successful partnership, while continuously reviewing the structure and process of the partnership in order to measure its success or failure.

The purpose of developing partnerships with mutual interests is to achieve results through collective action for the larger good. In other words, partnerships are developed on the basis of shared vision that provide opportunity for sharing pools of capital, expertise and other resources for attaining the envisaged results. National Humanitarian Network has been a representative of NNGOs and acts as an independent and vibrant voice to engage with stakeholders throughout Pakistan for promotion of humanitarian values by influencing policies and building capacities to ensure right based humanitarian response. The collaboration between NHN and StP on this joint initiative was formalized a few years ago when StP was launched in Pakistan. While the StP consortium brings a wealth of global experience on the localization of humanitarian action, NHN is taking on the role of a catalyst and a torchbearer to transform the envisaged change into reality. Through their collaborative studies to understand, (i) the lack of trust between IHOs and NNGOs, (ii) the strengths and weaknesses of NNGOs, and (iii) IHOS limitations vis-à-vis their local knowledge, proximity, connectivity and capacity gaps, besides meaningful dialogues, NHN and StP succeeded in translating their efforts into measurable commitments on localization of humanitarian action.

This partnership will not only foster a relationship of trust, but will also create a sense of ownership through the transfer of skills, knowledge and filling of capacity gaps on both ends. Therefore, a formal agreement will take place for smooth operations of the program and a healthy partnership that promotes collective learning.

‘The Sphere Standards promote the active participation of affected communities as well as of local and national authorities, at all stages of a response. It strongly encourages international humanitarian actors taking part in a response to consciously address and support local and national actors, building on existing capacities. At the same time, attention is also drawn to the accountability of humanitarian agencies and governments towards those affected populations, donors and representatives from the private sector who might support a particular humanitarian response and civil society in general’.<sup>2</sup> In this light the IHOs and NHN have also given attention

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<sup>2</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/sphere-standards-in-national-humanitarian-response.pdf>

to transparency and accountability mechanisms and have agreed upon periodical monitoring and evaluation activities, aimed at improving each member's performance. The possible monitoring and evaluation methodologies have been explained in detail below in the relevant section.

### **C. Developing the Partnership**

It is important to make a legal binding agreement of the partnership and agree upon a set of ground rules and expectations of the partnership during the initial stages. It may seem obvious, but very few parties perform this fundamental requirement officially. Therefore, for complete clarity on each partner's role and the purpose of the partnership, it should be agreed upon in writing, the key aims, objectives, and outcomes of the partnership and each partner's specific role. These documents could take the form of a legal constitution or contract, also referred to as 'Terms of Reference (ToRs)'. At the same time a document reflecting the business plan or strategy needs to be developed to show the partnership's work that would be carried out and the results that we are aiming for.

The strategic alliance between NHN and the four IHOs of the StP project have a shared mission of strengthening the capacities of affected communities to be able to prevent, prepare, mitigate and respond to humanitarian crises. The goal is to ensure that the government authorities and local communities are better able to meet their responsibilities and coordinate effectively with humanitarian actors. The partnership between NHN and IHOs will ensure:

- collective ownership of robust humanitarian actions and rehabilitation plans
- administrative consolidation
- joint management of functions (if agreed upon) e.g. fundraising or M&E
- transparency and accountability

It is seen that International commitments such as the 'Charter for Change' also stress upon similar partnerships that involve local and national collaborators in the design of the program at the outset and ensure their participation in decision-making as equals in influencing program design and partnership policies. It emphasizes with donor fraternity to make working through national actors as part of their criteria for assessing framework partners and calls for project proposals.<sup>3</sup>

In this particular partnership NHN's primary role will be to provide strategic direction on when and how to monitor or evaluate the implementation of CRI framework and, more importantly, on specific amendments to harmonize the process of "shift in power" from IHOs to grassroots communities. NHN will focus less on the operational mechanics of IHOs; however, it will focus more on providing specific policy guidance. The NHN will assist IHOs in identifying the variables to be monitored or assessed and to determine when to monitor or evaluate them. Further, the NHN will propose outcome measurement frameworks taking into account actions already committed to or undertaken by IHOs and their expected results.

The IHOs will ensure a full-fledged and robust organizational support to local actors in order for them to be able to play their crucial role in the overall national and global humanitarian response.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://charter4change.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/charter-for-change-july-20152.pdf>

The IHOs will allocate resources for capacity building of national, sub-national and local level humanitarian actors as well as providing them adequate administrative support. The local actors will be involved in all strategy building and decision making processes of the program design for an inclusive and comprehensive procedure.

With NHN paving the way for localization of humanitarian action in Pakistan the desired change is gradually unleashing. NHN acts as a catalyst in promoting coordination at three levels i.e. (i) among NNGOs, (ii) between NNGOs and state institutions, and (iii) between NNGOs and state institutions and IHOs. NHN seeks to strengthen the capacity of NNGOs and advocates inclusion and leadership role of the crisis-affected communities in the humanitarian actions aimed for them. As NHN advocates, and very rightly so, the neutrality while measuring transparency and impact shall be central to all humanitarian actions.

#### **D. Partnership Values and Principles**

Partnership norms must be decided upon through mutual consultations, keeping in view each partner's working style, cultural values, expectations, and self-interest. If these values and norms are set from the very beginning of the partnership, it leaves very little space for misunderstandings and disagreements that may surface at some point or the other and impact the ability of the group to effectively work together. Creating and following partnership norms is an effective mechanism to maintain a healthy working relationship and avoid all unnecessary deviations.

Partnership norms act as informal guidelines on how the members of the partnership must interact and behave with one another under all circumstances. The partnership kick-off meeting is a good time to discuss the norms and rules of the partnership where both sides must take time to listen to each other's perspective on each topic/value and list down all the values and principles. At the end, as a group they must decide upon shared values and principles that have to be followed and respected by each member. These guidelines must be agreed upon by all members of the group. Below are some of the guiding principles of the NHN and IHOs partnership:

- The level of commitment towards collective goals has to be assured by senior management on both sides of the partnership, through senior directors, managers, trustees, Chief Executive Officers, etc. Strong commitment from each partner has to be reflected through equal presence where possible.
- All partners must take equal responsibility to lever funding from a range of sources.
- Developing and maintaining trust within partners and with all relevant stakeholders such as government authorities and local communities for effective and smooth implementation of work is essential. The partnership must have a certain level of trust when faced with external problems that may obstruct the performance of each partner.
- The explicit role and share of each partner has to be clearly agreed upon at the start of the partnership to avoid any delays or disruptions during the partnership.

- Leadership roles and decision making authorities will be identified from the very beginning in order to avoid any confusion or conflict during the partnership.
- In case of conflict, open dialogue, mediation and negotiation methods will be used for smooth and neutral solution for the issue.
- Open, honest and effective communication/dialogue at all levels within the partnership and with partner organizations must be prevalent. Developing shared understandings and values through an open network will be a norm on both sides for promoting effective communication.
- A learning culture will be promoted within the partnership. One where all partners will be able to learn from one another by allowing new ideas to come forward in an open exchange. Resources, knowledge, know-how and ideas will be shared regularly within the partnership and transfer of information amongst partners will be practiced as a norm.
- Resource management, knowledge management and knowledge sharing responsibilities will be identified at the very beginning of the partnership.
- Equal opportunities within the partnership will be a norm.
- Participation at review meetings, or any other consultation meeting will have to be from both parties, through one or more representative each. Regular attendance is compulsory and in case of absenteeism, members must be notified in advance and preferably the meeting should be attended by another colleague.
- Honest and good practice in financial controls, accounting procedures, human resource management, etc. will be advocated.
- Ownership of the partnership must be visible in all written and verbal communication by using phrases such as, 'We will', 'We agree', 'Our goal', 'Our results', etc.
- Once the norms are documented, they have to be made easily accessible to everyone in the group. No matter how important or relevant information is, it is useless unless people are able to quickly access it.
- Partnership norms are only effective when all members of the group agree on some certain shared values and are aware of them. Therefore, it is essential to revisit and revise partnership norms every now and then based on the current developmental stage of the partnership and staff turnover.
- Regularly communicating partnership norms is essential and will be undertaken by various means, such as laminated cards or fact sheets that can be distributed to members or attaching a copy of partnership norms to all meeting notes.



## **E. Managing the Partnership**

Partnership is a group of people working together for mutual objectives but this group consists of people from varied backgrounds and organizations having different opinions, working styles, ethnicities, etc. Therefore, bringing everyone to the same page can often be very challenging. It is seen that often in partnerships ambiguities or at times even conflicts can arise from various issues, such as division of responsibility or decision making authority. The reluctance to delegate authority to the other partner is also one key issue that usually arises right at the beginning of formalizing things. Therefore, a clear procedure has to be adopted right from the start for everyone to understand how agreements on action will be taken and to help create a sense of shared responsibility for achievements and failures of the partnership.

NHN and IHOs must agree upon procedures during the initial meetings, starting out by laying down the key aims, objectives, and outcomes of the partnership in writing. These documents will then take the form of legal constitution, contract or ToRs. An official business plan or strategy shall also be developed and documented so that both parties have a basic guideline of how the partnership will work. This will not only give the partnership a proper shape and boundaries to work within, but will also allow room for flexibility to change and grow the terms and conditions agreed upon initially, as and when needed.

The explicit mention of all tasks, resources and cost implications must be mentioned in black and white before the partnership is operational. Agreements based on distinguishable responsibilities and joint rights and obligations, must be signed by both partners for clarity in roles. All tasks will be focused towards strengthening and empowering of local humanitarian actors, therefore it is important that the response and mitigation plans of local organizations are fully integrated with the government plans to establish a comprehensive response mechanism. In order for the members of the group to have clarity on what they are meant to do in a certain time frame, a mutually developed and agreed-upon work plan must be promulgated by NHN and the IHOs. Similarly, they must establish a document of Standard Operating Procedures regarding shared responsibilities/agreements, developing protocols, delivering synergetic responses, etc. This is essential for avoiding all unnecessary duplication of activities and frustration caused by disagreements.

Lastly, with the changing dynamics of the partnership and other factors such as any sudden disaster or calamity, it is important to keep revisiting and reviewing the goals, targets and strategies of the partnership for relevant and real change to take place.

## **F. Monitoring and Evaluation**

To assess a partnership's achievements against the set indicators, determine the improvements that need to be made and ensure further planning, a comprehensive monitoring system needs to be in place. The partnership must be evaluated periodically through monitoring exercises and the findings should be documented formally to demonstrate the added value of its work. The IHO commitment documents, counter-signed by NHN, have mandated NHN to constantly monitor their implementation and periodically evaluate their results. The NHN will therefore monitor and

evaluate their implementation in addition to working closely with the IHOs to further scale up/contextualize (need-based) them in future.

In order to evaluate the workings of a partnership it is vital that both parties recognize and agree upon the need. Identifying the partnership achievements, targets, indicators, other factors associated with success, principal barriers and the added value of this partnership, will help develop the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks more comprehensively. One or more of the following five options, as deemed appropriate will be adopted by NHN for monitoring and evaluation. However, it is vital to note that none of these, if implemented in isolation, will yield desired results. A coordinated, inclusive and a win-win approach will be needed to promote the cause of localization of humanitarian action.

### **1. Independent Monitoring by NHN**

NHN will lead, devise and oversee independent regular monitoring to measure the implementation of planned actions by IHOs vis-à-vis their commitments to localization of humanitarian action. Such independent regular monitoring may either be carried out by NHN's own teams and/or by a third party (an individual consultant or a firm). However, the tradeoff between cost and need for regular monitoring can be balanced by reaching consensus with the IHOs on quarterly reporting against the agreed indicators and activities planned/proposed under each indicator.

### **2. Independent Evaluations by NHN**

NHN will lead, devise and oversee independent periodic evaluations to measure the extent to which planned targets vis-à-vis localization of humanitarian action have translated into tangible results, and to determine the 'cause and effect' relationship between specific commitments (actions) and changes that can be attributed to them. Such independent periodic evaluations shall ideally be carried out by a third party (an individual consultant or a firm) hired by NHN. The frequency of such evaluations should not be less than one year and more than two years. This essentially means that such periodic or mid-term evaluations shall ideally be planned and executed/completed in one year duration following completion of at least one year of the task at hand.

### **3. In-house Monitoring by IHOs**

The IHOs will lead, devise and oversee in-house regular monitoring to measure achievement of their own planned actions vis-à-vis localization of humanitarian action. The IHOs existing M & E teams may report progress on planned actions.

### **4. Independent Evaluations by IHOs**

The IHOs will lead, devise and oversee independent periodic evaluations to measure the extent to which their planned targets vis-à-vis localization of humanitarian action have translated into tangible results, and to determine the 'cause and effect' relationship between their specific

commitments (actions) and changes that can be attributed to their actions. Such independent periodic evaluations shall be carried out by a third party (an individual consultant or a firm) hired by IHOs. The frequency of such evaluations should not be less than one year and more than two years. This essentially means that such periodic or mid-term evaluations shall ideally be planned and executed/completed in one-year duration following completion of at least one year of the task at hand.

## **5. Collaborative Monitoring and Evaluation**

In order to reduce costs resulting from parallel work, improve mutual working relationship and trust, and better utilize the outcomes of M & E exercises to improve results of future actions, the NHN and IHOs may agree on a shared mechanism. The mechanism may be collectively drafted/developed, and executed to generate evidences, which both will own and act upon equally.

### **G. End of Partnership**

An exit strategy for a partnership ensures that even if one or more of the partners depart from the partnership, their absence does not bring an end to the entire mission and the remaining partners are still able to stay afloat. Therefore, a strategy must be developed by, and between all partners considering the issues of transition/ending of a partnership.

NHN and IHOs will develop a formal document as the exit strategy or dissolution plan, for a smooth and hassle free closure of their partnership. The exit strategy should be such that there is room for both, either renewing goals or commitments to extend the partnership further, or to be able to end the partnership altogether. The strategy will guide the partners regarding concluding activities such as completion of last ending tasks including their timelines, any pending payments, final tax returns, contracts, other official documentation that needs to be filled and notifications for stakeholders such as contractors, partners, etc.

An ‘end of partnership’ meeting should take place so that there is an opportunity for both partners to be able to have an open and honest discussion at the time of conclusion, to understand whether the coalition is transitioning into a stage of renewal or ending. Every partnership is different. Each organization/partner or individual has their own goals and expectations. Therefore, what motivates and engages each of them to continue working collaboratively is different. This last meeting must be utilized appropriately to assess the current situation then, in order to determine the best course of action.

In case NHN and IHOs decide to continue the partnership further, it is important to ask the primary question, ‘Why continue and what will we gain by extending this collaboration?’ Continuing the partnership means more resources, more cost and better designed tasks. Therefore, all these areas need consideration before a decision is taken for extension of partnership. In case, they decide to close the partnership, they must consolidate the learning of this coalition for future use. It is important to think and rethink what worked, what didn’t, who they learned from, and who they want to continue to learn from.

Consolidating the learning' can happen through individual or group reflections on lessons learnt, failures, accomplishments, or what still needs to be tackled.

A good partnership agreement also includes a dissolution strategy, although not required legally; but it can be dicey to operate without one. A good agreement brings structure to the partnership, therefore without one, the partnership has the risk of being treated like separate businesses within one partnership, where each partner is doing their own thing. Giving time to developing these crucial documents and discussing the essential working terms and conditions amongst each other is the only fitting way to enter into a partnership, and for it to be sustainable.