



WEBINAR SUMMARY

As Local as Possible, as International as Necessary: Practical Steps

19 July 2016

The value of local actors to humanitarian response efforts is increasingly recognised. Local actors are often the first responders when disasters strike, they can have the best access to local populations and have critical knowledge of local context and people. Yet, local actors often struggle to move beyond implementing projects to being treated as strategic and equal partners with international actors. Recent developments including the Grand Bargain have seen the largest humanitarian donors and aid organisations commit to strengthening local ownership and capacity. This includes directing 25 per cent of their funds to local and national actors by 2020. This webinar outlines a number of good practices and practical steps, for concretely supporting local actors within humanitarian response.

Panellists

Gwendolyn Pang

Head of the East Asia Country Support Team, International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Beijing

Jamie Isbister

Humanitarian Coordinator and First Assistant Secretary, Humanitarian Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia

Neil Buhne

Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Pakistan



Gwendolyn Pang

Head of the East Asia Country Support Team, IFRC, Beijing

It is necessary to not only recognise national and local actors' roles and their importance but also to empower them to play a stronger role during humanitarian responses. In the Philippines, local volunteers from the national society were in the driving seat across the response.

Practical steps for promoting localisation in the Philippines

Invest in the training and capacity building of volunteers, including with 'quality money': National/local volunteers are present in all contexts and can make a real difference within a response if they are properly trained. There also needs to be a constant effort to build a culture of volunteerism in the communities. Investment needs to be with a long-term focus and with 'quality money.' For example, the new RC/RC National Society Investment Fund and I Billion Coalition.

Support governments: Government need support in implementing the disaster risk reduction law, which serves as a foundation for building community resilience.

Invest in preparedness: The Red Cross always works with governments and private sector companies within clusters to agree on coordination and establish contingency and disaster management plans. This exercise is useful for identifying roles and responsibilities for when a crisis/disaster strikes, and helps avoid duplication and overlapping efforts.

Put in place Memorandum of Understandings: MoUs with national and local authorities can be established before a crisis/disaster. They help to identify relevant actors on the ground and define roles, responsibilities, and commitments of everyone involved in the response.

Engage with established community disaster management committees for assessments and accountability: Put in place a strong monitoring system, so that levels of trust in national and local actors can increase.



Jamie Isbister

Humanitarian Coordinator and First Assistant Secretary, Humanitarian Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia

Localisation means that affected communities are not just passive receivers of assistance, instead affected people are actively involved in defining and prioritising needs and allocating assistance. Local ownership of disaster response supports a demand driven more than a supply driven response.

Practical Steps for promoting localisation in the Pacific

- **Develop long-term partnerships with local actors:** Be inclusive when collaborating with local governments, civil society organisations, affected communities, and private sector companies. Inclusivity is required at a deeper level, when engaging with women and other vulnerable groups, to ensure that they are truly taking an active role in defining the response.
- **Engage with the private sector:** More effort is required to define what the private sector can contribute to a response, and how a response can mobilise this expertise. For example, during protracted crises, local transport companies can reach hard to access communities. A useful exercise would be to develop a database of local businesses, their specialisation, stock and ability to deploy merchandise quickly to remote places.
- **Invest in risk reduction, preparedness and response efforts:** Localisation in practice means, that funding is not siloed, but instead is used in a collective way that includes local actors. A key part is investment in preparedness. The Australian Government is finalising a framework with governments in the Pacific which sets out a menu of items that can be offered when a disaster occurs. The idea is to move from a supply driven approach to a demand driven approach.
- **Link local, regional, and international efforts:** Local actors often have established structures in place that are useful during the sudden onset of a disaster. Activities that can be done locally through local expertise should remain the responsibility of local actors. What cannot be done locally can then be complemented by regional and international efforts. International surges should not overwhelm and decapitate local structures.



Neil Buhne

Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Pakistan

For localisation to work in practice, international and local actors must work together. Relationships need to be built at different levels and between international actors, the government and civil society actors.

Practical steps taken in Pakistan:

The HCT in Pakistan has endeavoured to include local actors in the driving seat and decision-making processes. There are 3 national NGOs that are members of the HCT. In the last four years, between 87 – 100 per cent of the Pakistan Humanitarian Pooled Fund has been granted to national civil society. The fund has trained national NGOs in project application and design.

Support local partners deal with donor and other reporting requirements as internal procedures can be a disincentive for receiving international donor funds. A good example from the 2005 earthquake response, was Oxfam deploying INGO staff within national NGOs building on its long-term partnerships. It helped mitigate risks with reporting and build capacity according to international good practice.

Invest in supporting and training the National Disaster Management Authority and Provincial Disaster Management Authorities in the areas of emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction, secondments and long-term commitment/institutional analysis. This was done in Pakistan following the 2010 floods by the HCT/UNCT.

International actors play an important role in providing support to and advocating for space for local and national NGOs. The role of local partners may be contested in some contexts by national governments. This is especially the case in conflict situations, although normally less so in natural disasters.