

# MISSION REPORT

Grand Bargain Localization Workstream  
Demonstrator Country Field Mission  
Bangladesh, 08 to 13 September 2018

*This Mission report is for public use and is primarily intended for the Grand Bargain Localization Workstream members and the various local and national organizations, donors, UN agencies, international NGOs, and the Red Cross/Red Crescent in Dhaka, Cox's Bazar, Kurigram and Sylhet who gave their valuable time and shared their views to the Mission Team. Results and findings will be shared with interested external persons via webinar and will also be highlighted in regional workshops by late 2018-early 2019.*

*The Mission was planned and organized by the Localization Workstream co-convenors, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), with support from National Alliance of Humanitarian Actors in Bangladesh (NAHAB), COAST Trust, Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator, IFRC, Oxfam, and Christian Aid.*

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## List of Acronyms

BDPC	Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre
BDRCS	Bangladesh Red Crescent Society
BWHP	Bangladesh Women Humanitarian Platform
CCNF	Cox's Bazar CSO NGO Forum
CPP	Cyclone Preparedness Programme
DRR/DRM	Disaster Risk Reduction/Disaster Risk Management
ELNHA	Empowering Local and National Humanitarian Actors
GB	Grand Bargain
HCTT	Humanitarian Country Task Team
HRGF	Humanitarian Response Grant Facility
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
ISCG	Inter Sectoral Coordination Group
JNA	Joint Needs Assessment
JRP	Joint Response Plan
LNHAS	Local and National Humanitarian Actors
MoDMR	Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief
NAHAB	National Alliance of Humanitarian Actors in Bangladesh
NIRAPAD	Network for Information Response and Preparedness Activities on Disaster
RC	Resident Coordinator
REACH	Rehabilitation, Education and Community Health
SAG	Strategic Advisory Group
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation
SEG	Strategic Executive Group
UNHCR	UN High Commission for Refugees

## Executive Summary

In recognition of the need for sustained political engagement and the shift of attention towards the relevance of the Grand Bargain (GB) Commitments to field operations, the first “demonstrator country” Field Mission of the Localization Workstream was held in Bangladesh between 9 to 13 September 2018. The multi-agency Mission was aimed at promoting and facilitating the achievement of the Localization Commitments through understanding what localization means for the various stakeholders, identifying good practices and barriers, and drawing up actionable recommendations for GB signatories and key stakeholders.

Bangladesh’s extreme exposure and high vulnerability to natural hazards has pushed the Government to invest heavily on disaster risk management. The country’s active civil society has worked with and alongside a high number of international aid agencies and donors from preparedness, response, to building resilience. The critical humanitarian emergency following the influx of people fleeing the violence from across the border in Rakhine, Myanmar to Cox’s Bazar in August 2017 presented a different and complex challenge to the local, national and international humanitarian community. The future of close to a million Rohingyas<sup>1</sup> in crowded camps in Cox’s Bazar remains uncertain while impacts of climate change and rapid urbanization are intensifying disaster risks in large parts of the country.

For local and national humanitarian actors, particularly civil society organizations, localization in the context of the Grand Bargain is about international actors’ recognition of and support for their leadership and capacity to lead effective and accountable response. Many international actors understand localization from an implementation partnership standpoint and as such there is limited attention and varied appreciation to issues around power, decision-making and leadership. The Rakhine crisis accentuated these differences on understanding of localization and its end goals but at the same time provided lessons around what combination of actors deliver the best positive outcomes for the affected population.

The advocacy and campaigns work of local and national actors towards increased voice and influence in humanitarian coordination mechanisms and decision-making bodies have produced positive results such as greater representation in the HCTT, but their work is far from being done. Coordination meetings remain intimidating for many due to complexity of documents, the use of English as main communication language and the absence of translation in local and comprehensible language that is jargon-free.

There is a strong agreement among all humanitarian actors that capacity strengthening (programmatic, technical, and organizational development support) should be two-way, built on the local actors’ knowledge and detailed understanding of how the context operates. In the context of great need there will always be some other reason why changing the *way* we respond, as is the purpose of localization, is pushed to the background. The Mission Team saw this as a critical issue and a function of the transition process in Cox’s Bazar. The crisis needs to be seen as a protection crisis and a coherent approach to capacity strengthening could contribute to a deliberate intention to shift the implementation of most humanitarian programming to local and national actors as soon as feasible.

Major donors are still constrained from partnering directly with national and local NGOs, and those who are able to face capacity constraints with more than a handful of local and national NGOs. A few pilot country-level financing mechanisms e.g., National Start Fund and Humanitarian Response Grant Facility, that are intended for or directly accessible to local and national actors have produced some good practices that may be scaled up or replicated and would be useful to study further. Apart from demands to address issues around overhead and core costs, there is a strong call particularly from the local and national NGOs responding to frequent small to medium scale natural disasters to establish and have direct access to pooled funds.

There are very few women-led or women organizations among the local and national actors that appear to be at the forefront of discussions on localization. The recent formation of the Bangladesh Women Humanitarian Platform is a good start to increase attention to gender equality and women empowerment in localization. Affected communities

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<sup>1</sup> The Government of Bangladesh refers to the same community as “Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals” and the UN system refers to the population as “refugees”.

can also be better included as localization is intended to strengthen outcomes for them. Reference to the recent Ground Truth report on the perspectives of beneficiaries in the Rohingya response would be good as an evidence base to strengthen the case for more locally led response.

To support a shift to increased implementation of humanitarian aid by local and national actors, a shift that is aimed towards equitable partnership, good practices on funding, and coordination approaches which increase leadership by local and national actors including women, host communities and affected people, the Mission Team proposes the following key recommendations:

1. **For institutional donors and bilateral donor agencies** to have partnership agreements that integrate good practices that support leadership and capacity of local and national humanitarian actors, and to increase the proportion of unearmarked and multi-year humanitarian assistance through direct or as-direct-as-possible (one transaction layer) partnerships with national and local actors or through country based pooled funds.
2. **For UN agencies and International NGOs** to develop ethical human resource standards relevant to surge, support mutual capacity strengthening systems, put in place more flexible, contextualized and inclusive coordination mechanisms, improve access to and engagement with the humanitarian donor architecture for the local and national actors, provide fair coverage of overhead costs, and foster the engagement of women through the work of the Bangladesh Women Humanitarian Platform (BWHP).
3. **For local and national actors** to work with smaller local humanitarian actors in a transparent and equal manner, to use existing networks to come up with a common definition of local and national actors, and to agree on ways on how to better collaborate, respect and build on one another's strengths.
4. **For the Government of Bangladesh** to identify opportunities to strengthen local and national leadership and decision-making in humanitarian action, including the enabling and regulating role of the NGO Affairs Bureau.

We also support/call for a sustainable transition in Cox's Bazar through:

- A three-year timeline of transition where each year, local actors, led by national and local government, have greater responsibility in directly managing and delivering the response;
- Greater investment in capacity strengthening on protection and refugee rights-based programming for local and national actors
- targeted investments in national and local organizations, which may have the ability and desire to scale up their responses to meet a greater proportion of need

## Introduction

In May 2016, on the occasion of the World Humanitarian Summit, several dozen donor Governments and international humanitarian organizations signed the “Grand Bargain”, making commitments to transform their practices in 10 areas (called “workstreams”) in order to make the humanitarian ecosystem more efficient, more effective and more people-centred. The Localization Workstream includes commitments on **funding** local actors as directly as possible, investing in the long-term institutional **capacity** of local actors, removing barriers and obstacles to and promoting more equal **partnerships** between international and local actors, and ensuring better integration with local **coordination** mechanisms.

In order to promote and facilitate the achievement of these commitments, Grand Bargain signatories participating in the Localization Workstream have chosen three “demonstrator countries” for group missions designed to:

- deepen understanding about what “localization” means for the various stakeholders
- identify good practices, challenges and barriers on delivering on the four above highlighted main areas of the GB localization commitments as well as on integrating gender into localization efforts
- promote progress on the localization commitments in each country

The first such mission took place in Bangladesh from 9-13 September 2018. A nine-member Mission Team<sup>2</sup> composed of headquarters representatives from donors (Australia, Germany, and Switzerland), UNHCR, international NGOs (Christian Aid and Oxfam), local NGO (REACH from Iraq), and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Australia Red Cross and IFRC) and met with key humanitarian actors as well as with disaster/crisis-affected populations in the capital Dhaka, Cox’s Bazar in the South and in the coastal Districts in the North (Kurigram) and East (Sylhet) of the country.

This report presents the Mission Team’s key findings and recommendations that have been initially presented for feedback from key stakeholders as part of the debriefing session in Dhaka on 13 September 2018. Details of the programme, meetings with key humanitarian actors and the list of Mission Team members can be found in Annex 1 and 2 respectively.

### I. COUNTRY CONTEXT

#### A. Disaster Risk Profile

Bangladesh is exposed to a wide range of natural hazards and is consistently ranked as one of the most vulnerable<sup>3</sup> countries in the world because of a disastrous combination of extreme exposure and high vulnerability. The country’s low lying and climatic features, combined with its population density and economic environment, make it highly susceptible to floods, droughts, cyclones and earthquakes with more than 80 percent of the population potentially exposed to these hazards. On average, the country experiences a severe tropical cyclone every three years and about 25% of the land mass is inundated with flood waters each year.

The Government of Bangladesh plays a leading role in the planning, delivery, and coordination of disaster prevention, preparedness, and response and has invested heavily in disaster risk management. Significant efforts to reduce the country’s vulnerability to disasters have been made following the devastating cyclones of 1970 and 1991 and these include a comprehensive disaster management framework with both structural interventions such as embankments, cyclone shelters, etc and non-structural measures such as Disaster Management Committees at all levels and notably community-based early warning systems, all of which have contributed to a dramatic reduction in the number of lives

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<sup>2</sup> Full list of Mission Team members can be found in Annex 1 of this report

<sup>3</sup> INFORM measures Bangladesh’s risk of humanitarian crisis and disaster to be high, at 5.8/10. Bangladesh’s exposure to hazards is of particular concern, at 7.5/10 (ACAPS, <https://www.acaps.org/country/bangladesh>)

lost from natural hazards. The 10-year average (2005-2014) on economic loss from disasters is reported at USD 285 million.<sup>4</sup>

The vulnerability of the coastal population and low-lying areas is on the rise as they are most at risk from the impacts of climate change and hydro-meteorological hazards. Acute hazards such as flooding and chronic hazards such as drought and sea level rise and saline intrusion are expected to be more frequent and severe in the coming decades. The country is also along three major seismic fault lines and its capital, Dhaka is extremely vulnerable to earthquakes. With its high population density and rapid urbanization, this risk is intensifying.

#### B. Cox's Bazar/Rakhine Crisis/Rohingya Crisis

Violence in Rakhine State, Myanmar, has driven an estimate of over 727,000<sup>56</sup> refugees<sup>7</sup> across the border into Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh since August 2017. The speed and scale of the influx was a challenge and the people and government of Bangladesh responded with generosity and open borders while the local, national and international humanitarian community stepped up to help mitigate a critical humanitarian emergency. As of today, refugees continue to arrive in Bangladesh, but the overall influx has slowed since the onset of the crisis. The 4,800 acres of undeveloped forest land, allocated for a new camp by the Government of Bangladesh in September 2017 is now very densely populated. In November 2017, the Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh signed an agreement on repatriation which affirms that return should be voluntary, safe and dignified. The operationalization of this arrangement is still under discussion between the two Governments.

The UN-led Joint Response Plan (March to December 2018) still has a sizeable funding gap<sup>8</sup>. The current monsoon rains and cyclone seasons bring added hardship to the conditions of the refugees living in congested sites with limited options for evacuation. Many refugees have expressed anxiety about their future, explaining that they would not agree to return until questions of citizenship, legal rights, access to services, justice and restitution are addressed.<sup>9</sup>

#### C. Humanitarian Actors and Structures

The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) plays a central role in planning and preparedness in addition to the coordination of response. Two (2) line agencies sit under the MoDMR: the Disaster Management Bureau (DMB) and the Directorate of Relief and Rehabilitation. Many of these national level coordination structures are replicated by similar bodies at regional and local levels, down to the lowest administrative bodies. The Standing Orders on Disasters (SOD), published by the DMB, provides the key reference point for all actors in the preparation, response and recovery phases of disaster response.

The main international humanitarian coordination mechanism for preparedness in natural disasters in Bangladesh is the Humanitarian Country Task team (HCTT), a working group which provides an operational level forum for coordinated disaster preparedness, response and recovery across sectors. The HCTT acts as an advisory group to the Local Consultative Group/Disaster and Emergency Response (LCG/DER) which is co-chaired by the Secretary of Disaster Management and the UN Resident Coordinator, providing advice, taking forward agreed actions on behalf of, and

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.preventionweb.net/countries/bgd/data/>

<sup>5</sup> The RRRC-UNHCR Family Counting Exercise has counted 857,922 refugees (199,132 families) in camps and settlements as of 31 August 2018 while the figure according to the Needs and Population Monitoring (NPM) exercise is estimated at 919,000 refugees (212,415 families).

<sup>6</sup> ISCG Situation Report 27 September 2018

<sup>7</sup> In keeping with its policies, the Government of Bangladesh refers to the Rohingya as "forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals" while the UN system refers to this population as refugees in line with the applicable international framework for protection and solutions

<sup>8</sup> As of September 2018, funding for the Joint Response Plan for the period March to December 2018 is only 34% funded (or USD320 million)

<sup>9</sup> ISCG Situation report, Rohingya Refugee Crisis, 05 September 2018

feeding back to, the wider LCG/DER group. It also acts as coordination platform on the thematic clusters.<sup>10</sup> Since it was established in 2012, one national NGO seat was taken by the Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre (BDPC) until in early 2017, an additional two seats were provided to other national NGOs. In 2013, the Joint Needs Assessment (JNA) approach was adopted where aid workers from various agencies team up with local government officials to assess humanitarian needs across different sectors to produce a single assessment, in a predictable time frame and based on methodologies that are commonly understood.

The Government of Bangladesh leads the Rohingya response, with the Office of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission on the ground, and since March 2018 the role and extension of the MoDMR in operational coordination of the response has been strengthened.<sup>11</sup> Overall humanitarian response is facilitated by a sector-based coordination mechanism, the Inter Sectoral Coordination Group (ISCG), which is co-chaired by the International Organization for migration (IOM) and UNHCR. The ISCG Secretariat is guided by the Strategic Executive Group (SEG) that is a decision-making forum consisting of heads of international humanitarian organizations, including participation by donors, and which recently added a representative from the national NGO, COAST Trust.

Bangladesh has an active civil society engaged in both humanitarian and development work. Various national and local NGOs and networks were engaged in the consultations leading to the World Humanitarian Summit and in the work of the Grand Bargain's Localization Workstream. A localization campaign by a group of 40 local and national NGOs led by COAST Trust is still on-going while in early 2017, the National Alliance of Humanitarian Actors in Bangladesh (NAHAB) was formed as the first national NGO humanitarian platform in the country. Other prominent national NGOs and CSO networks include BRAC, NIRAPAD and BDPC. BRAC is the largest NGO in the country and one of the largest in the world working on health, education, microfinance, food security, and disaster response. The Network for Information Response and Preparedness Activities on Disaster (NIRAPAD) is a network of 22 NGOs engaged on knowledge generation and management, providing technical support in DRR and CCA and promoting collaboration and partnership. BDPC is an independent NGO focused on DRR policy development and advocacy.

The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) is the largest national humanitarian organisation in the country with as many as 800,000 active volunteers. It has a branch in each of the 64 districts, four (4) branches in the metropolitan cities, and is an auxiliary to the government of Bangladesh. The International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and six foreign Red Cross Societies (known in Movement parlance as "Participating National Societies" or PNS)<sup>12</sup> are operational and support and work alongside BDRCS.

Major International NGOs have been present in Bangladesh for many years, with many of them operating humanitarian programs through local partners. Many of these implementation partnerships are long-standing and run over multiple years, ideally contributing to the increase in the response capacity of national actors.

## II. MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

### 1. *There is limited and, at times contradictory understanding of localization and its end goals*

For local and national NGOs, localization is about international actors' recognition of and support for their leadership and capacity to lead effective and accountable response. For them, it is a process that must be inclusive, contextualised and sustainable and that it recognises the value of working together including with international actors in large scale and complex disasters such as the current Rohingya refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar.

<sup>10</sup> Bangladesh: Understanding Humanitarian Networks, ALNAP Case Study, Kim Scriven 2013

<sup>11</sup> Joint Response Plan for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis (March-December 2018), Mid term Review

<sup>12</sup> There are currently 12 Participating National Societies operating in Cox's Bazar in response to the refugee influx and 6 that are operating across the country.



For members of the Cox's Bazar CSO NGO Forum (CCNF), localization is also about national NGOs (not only UN agencies and INGOs) to roll back from their field operations and work in partnership with local/Cox-based NGOs, CBOs, and local government.

For the Red Cross Movement, it is about complementing and supporting the work and strengthening the capacities of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society and its local branches. BDRCS as auxiliary to the government is active in response and recovery interventions in all types of humanitarian crises. It also implements a numbers of risk reduction programs for different vulnerable communities through developing its branch capacities.

For the various international actors, there is no shared articulation and understanding of what localization means and its end goal. Some UN agencies noted that one of their main approaches to localization is to recruit and build capacities of local and national staff while others speak of procuring goods and services locally. National NGOs noted that while some INGOs are strongly supportive of localization in global policy fora, in the context of Cox's Bazar many localization-leaning INGOs resorted to large-scale direct implementation programming. This was partly justified given that the scale and complexity of the crisis challenged local capacities. However, it is also the case that INGOs tend to be strongly motivated by resource mobilisation opportunities, which do not always sit comfortably with their localization rhetoric. One year on, the case for large-scale INGO direct implementation may be less compelling than it was at the beginning.

The Mission's interactions with Government did not gauge government awareness or engagement in processes of localization. However national leadership in disaster preparedness and response is strong and government is keen to express its leadership and coordination function at multiple levels.

While the objectives of localization include to deliver better outcomes for them, there is as yet little consideration of the role of affected communities themselves in strengthened capacity and leadership of local and national actors.

## ***2. Partnerships between local/national actors and international actors were tested and re-defined by the Rohingya crisis***

The country has well-developed existing capacity, skills and resources preparing for and responding to frequent and cyclical cyclones, floods, and other natural hazards. The Government's Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) that has saved thousands of lives is a joint programme by the Bangladesh Government and the BRC with support from various international agencies. Community-based Disaster Risk Management that aims to reduce disaster risks and impacts through community participation is integrated into the government's Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme and is a common approach among many local and national NGOs implemented with support or in partnership with different UN agencies and international NGOs.

Several UN agencies and international NGOs have had long-term partnerships with local and national actors including the government. UNHCR reported that more than 30% of its funding goes to local/national actors, most of the work of UNFPA is carried out with local NGOs and local government, and FAO and UNICEF work closely with the government. INGOs such as Oxfam, Christian Aid and Action Aid have worked with and built capacities of local NGOs for many years. The more recent localization projects such as Shifting the Power, Empowering National and Local Humanitarian Actors, and Start Fund in Bangladesh supported by donors such as DFID and ECHO assisted local and national actors to prepare for and respond quickly to emergencies such as the severe floods in large parts of the country in 2017.

Many of the unresolved issues on partnerships were magnified and further complicated in the Rohingya crisis especially at the early stages when most humanitarian actors felt overwhelmed by the scale of the crisis. In an effort to respond quickly and at scale and given the operational challenges, UN agencies and INGOs relied heavily on international surge while some INGOs did a hybrid of both direct implementation and partner-managed programming. The few local and national NGOs who partnered with UN agencies and INGOs felt overly stretched with some of them suddenly increasing their staff and funding more than tenfold. INGOs which used a hybrid approach balancing their

direct operations with supporting partner-managed responses found challenges in determining the right balance between self-implementation and working with local actors.

The Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement starting in February 2018 adopted the One Window Framework which provides the basis for the One Window Plan where IFRC and the partner National Societies committed to support BDRCS in providing humanitarian assistance. The plan currently provides humanitarian assistance to a total of 200,000 people from Rakhine through resilience-building response, while providing targeted support to 60,000 people from the host communities as well as taking into consideration potential new influx. The number of participating National Societies in the country increased from 6 to 12 in response to the Rakhine crisis.

A year on after the influx of refugees from Rakhine, local and national actors describe their partnerships with UN agencies and INGOs as generally good, provides value for money, and supportive and strengthens capacities. Key challenges and barriers identified include : (1) the lack of flexibility of donors/international partners and their demand to do things their way; (2) limited overhead costs; (3) problematic HR practices specifically around recruitment and staff movement which undermine local and national capacity; (4) competition for funding; and (5) different approaches and understanding of capacity strengthening.

***3. Local and national actors' voice and influence in coordination mechanisms and decision-making bodies are moving in the right direction but more needs to be done***

Since the HCTT was established in 2012, one national NGO seat was taken by the Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre (BDPC). In early 2017, as a result of advocacy by local and national actors, two additional two seats were provided to national NGOs (NAHAB and COAST Trust). IFRC represents the RC/RC Movement including BDRCS in the HCTT. In April 2017, following the Hoar Basin floods, NAHAB was designated by HCTT to lead the Joint Needs Assessment (JNA) in one District. This was the first time that a JNA was not led by a UN agency or an INGO.

The Strategic Executive Group (SEG), a decision-making forum consisting of heads of international humanitarian organizations responding to the Rakhine crisis, recently added a representative from the national NGO, COAST Trust. The NGO Platform, a coordination body for local, national and international CSOs and NGOs involved in the Rohingya crisis is currently being co-led by a national NGO member. Efforts have also been made to ensure co-leadership by NGOs, particularly local and national NGOs in Sectors and Strategic Advisory Groups (SAGs), but there is currently a lack of active and constructive participation by NGOs in these roles. The reasons for the absence of local national NGOs are manifold: the complexity of documents, the use of English as main communication language and the absence of translation in local and comprehensible language. This is not simply an issue of language, but also of jargon and exclusionary discourse.

***4. Capacity strengthening should be two-way, built on the local actors' knowledge, and detailed understanding of how the context operates***

The country has highly developed existing capacity, skills and resources in preparing for and responding to frequent and cyclical cyclones, floods, and other natural hazards. The Government's Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) that has saved thousands of lives is a joint programme by the Bangladesh Government and the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society with support from various international agencies. Community-based Disaster Risk Management approaches that aim to reduce disaster risks and impacts through community participation, are integrated into the government's Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme. It is a common approach among many local and national NGOs implemented with support or in partnership with different UN agencies and international NGOs.

The strong national DRM system that is built and relies on local capacities was extended for the first time in the refugee response in Cox's Bazar through the emergency preparedness activities for the monsoon season. The local and national actors for their part recognized that they need technical support from international actors, which have worked in crisis contexts similar to Cox's Bazar such as on protection programming and how to engage with the humanitarian donor architecture.

Many local and national actors mentioned “learning by doing” as an attractive approach. International actors could fund local actors to plan and implement projects but including mentoring and accompaniment as necessary, as a way to develop capacity. UN agencies are looking at capacity transfer to communities and putting in place effective exit strategies. Other specific approaches are on-the-job or shadowing for local actors, training and building pipeline of leaders, building organizational systems and capacities and, investing in long-term partnership.

One of the main sources of frustration among local and national actors is that well-trained staff leave their organizations to work in an international organization, which is able to pay higher salaries and offers international career possibilities. In the initial relief phase of the refugee response operation, staff movement impacted on the ability of local and national NGOs to scale up, and undermined their capacity while UN agencies and INGOs were scaling up their operations. It was argued that this practice gives basis to the perceptions that priority is on strengthening international over local/national surge. Capacity development investments cannot be made in the absence of broader strategies to help local and national actors retain as much as possible trained, experienced and qualified staff. Some agencies such as CAFOD and Tearfund and the Transforming Surge Capacity (TSC)<sup>13</sup> project have identified some modalities for more ethical recruitment practices such as ensuring notice periods be respected, not lobbying specific staff to join but rather using open advertising through normal channels, and considering the scope for secondments rather than permanent transfers where relevant.

***5. The scale and complexity of the Rohingya crisis necessitated timely and huge intervention from all actors. There is still a strong need for presence of international actors but transition to local actors should now begin.***

In the context of great need in the response, there will always be some other reason why changing the way we respond, as is the purpose of localization, is pushed to the background. The Mission Team saw this as a critical issue and a function of the transition process.

Many of the local actors’ capacity is on DRM and the crisis needs to be seen as a protection crisis. Local actors require technical and programming support on protection (standards, confidentiality, GBV, etc). The approach to capacity building in Cox’s Bazar is ad hoc and uncoordinated. Part of the HCTT roadmap to localization could include a strategic plan for a more coherent approach to identifying and delivering on capacity needs in Cox’s Bazar. This could contribute to a deliberate intention to shift the implementation of most assistance programming to national actors as soon as feasible. International actors’ role would then evolve into covering some protection activities as well as advocacy, capacity building, coordination, resource mobilisation.

A mapping or good understanding of existing capacities and or a national surge plan would have been useful to have at the start of the crisis. There is also a need for a better understanding of and agreement on who is local and who is a national actor, what each brings in, and how to collaborate, respect and build on each other’s strengths.

Involvement of government, host communities and affected communities at the outset of roadmap development is important. Local actors including the government are in the best position to engage host communities and facilitate communication/relationship with new international actors. Identification of capacities and civil society organizations in affected communities would strengthen the participation in decision-making and leadership by affected people, as well as strengthening the ability of local and national actors to lead humanitarian action. More can be done by international actors and donors to engage government in endorsement and engagement in the roadmap to strengthening local and national leadership and opportunities in the response.

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<sup>13</sup> TSC is one of the projects under the DFID-funded Disaster and Emergency Preparedness Programme (DEPP) managed by the Start Network. The project took place at national, regional and international levels with ActionAid Pakistan and Christian Aid Philippines as the national actors. The regional platform was led from Bangkok and Delhi by Plan International. The international platform was led by ActionAid.

**6. *There are good practices as well as learnings from the pilot humanitarian funding mechanisms for local/national actors that can be adapted or inform efforts towards meeting the localization funding commitments.***

Start Fund Bangladesh is a Start network, DFID funded project that aims over the course of four years (2017-2021) to put more support and funding in the hands of national and local responders. The process of nationalising the Fund began with the devolution of the governance responsibilities from its global network members/colleagues to Bangladesh network members. Focus on year two is on “enabling national NGOs to start accessing the fund directly”. Around 57 local and national NGOs are in the process of securing eligibility for this mechanism that will activate funding to respond to a crisis within 72 hours of an alert. Start Network members and their partners, in particular NAHAB members, were given the space for co-creation and joint planning on the evolution of the Fund. Flexibility and creative strategies were adopted for local/national NGOs to comply with due diligence requirements. The fund being open to both national and international NGOs, make the former feel that the playing field would not be equal for them as they will not be able to compete in terms of producing high quality proposals (in English) in a very short time.

The Humanitarian Response Grant Facility (HRGF) a funding mechanism under the Oxfam project, Empowering Local and National Humanitarian Actors (ELNHA) created in 2016 to fund local and national NGOs to lead humanitarian responses to emergencies in their contexts. The facility promotes leadership of local and national humanitarian actors, by providing the opportunity to access funding to strengthen and demonstrate their capacity and to provide learning for the wider humanitarian community. In the two sub-districts Kurigram and Sylhet, the Mission Team had the opportunity to meet with the two local disaster relief organizations that received HRGF grants following the severe flooding in August/September 2017. In both locations, the small grant (approximately USD 65,000) were provided to around 1,000 families to cover their emergency basic needs as well as emergency hygiene kits. The head of the Sadar Upazilla (a sub-district of Kurigram) noted that the assistance they received was small but was useful and very timely. In Sylhet, local civil society actors commented on their inability to receive funding for small-medium scale disasters and called for a simple pooled funding mechanism. Recipients of the funding advised that they were not registered for government humanitarian support and hence reliant on these small grants.

Main lessons from an [Independent Review](#) of HRGF in mid-2017:

- An enthusiastic endorsement by all participating organisations; has enormous potential to be replicated elsewhere
- The funding mechanism’s grant parameters should remain flexible to the extent that they can fit the technical strengths of the individual organizations and response
- Engage the grantees to lead the review of their responses through an adapted Real Time Review (RTR) Lite methodology
- Be prepared to give space and not interfere
- Provide space for capacity development and learning
- Striking the right balance in taking risks
- Prioritise mentoring and resource it well

**7. *Majority of local and national humanitarian actors and local governments/disaster management councils are still very dependent on funding from international agencies that are short term and project-based***

Many local and national actors believe that direct funding to them will mean quicker response and more beneficiaries reached. NAHAB is advocating the establishment of a national pooled fund that can be accessed directly by local and national NGOs both for emergency response operations and capacity strengthening. CCNF is calling for a Cox’s Bazar pooled fund for local actors and managed by them. There were positive suggestions from local actors on supporting

local consortium to apply collectively, a practice that NAHAB has had some success in the past. This could support greater collaboration and more learning between large and small local NGOs.

Priorities of donors and international actors are sometimes imposed on local and national actors such as earmarking for a specific sector. Overhead costs allowed or passed on to local and national partners are limited and described by many as unfair as these do not represent the true cost incurred by the local/national partners for implementing the project.

**It has to be noted, however, that without a clearer sense of the volume and quality of funding to local and national actors, progress against the Grand Bargain cannot be made. There must be greater effort to share, collect, and publish first, second, and third-tier humanitarian funding – both at international and *national* levels.**

**8. *There has been limited support for more gender-responsive and women-led organizations in localization discussions***

There are very few women-led or women organizations among the local and national actors that appear to be at the forefront of discussions on localization. Language barriers, power relations and cultural aspects do not seem to allow an equal participation of women in meetings but as well in humanitarian responses. Many of the established women-led and women organizations in the country are engaged only in development programmes. The Bangladesh Women Humanitarian Platform (BWHP) formally established in July this year with the support of Oxfam is a welcome initiative to push the women and girls' agenda in the localization discussions in all sectors of the country.

### **III. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Mission Team commends the work of local and national actors in promoting the Grand Bargain, in particular the localization workstream, and advocating the delivery of the commitments. We call on Grand Bargain signatories to hold regular discussions within their teams and organizations to learn more about the Grand Bargain and identify actions. Concerted, constructive and honest dialogue by local and national humanitarian actors and international actors should be continued towards building a shared understanding of and jointly progress on localization.

The Mission Team proposes the following recommendations that seek to support a shift to increased implementation of humanitarian aid by local and national actors supported by planned, targeted and mutual capacity development. This shift should aim towards equitable partnership, good practices on funding, and coordination approaches that increase leadership by local and national actors including women, host communities and affected people, resulting in sustainable long-term solutions for the affected people.

#### **Donors (Institutional and bilateral donor agencies)**

1. Partnership agreements with implementing partners and their subsequent implementing partners should integrate a number of good practices supporting leadership and capacity of local and national humanitarian actors. This should include defining a minimum percentage coverage for overhead costs<sup>14</sup> provided by international actors who pass funding to local and national NGOs in partnership agreements.
2. Increase the proportion of unearmarked and multi-year humanitarian assistance either through direct or as-direct-as-possible (one transaction layer) partnerships with national and local actors or through country based pooled funds, which are directly accessible for local and national actors.

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<sup>14</sup> For definition of overhead costs see: RANA Raj (2017), Initial Research: Provision and Conditions of Core/Overhead/Indirect Costs for Local/National Humanitarian Sectors, p.5.

“Humanitarian organizations require infrastructure that enables them to deliver on their mission and objectives. This can include, amongst other items, office rent, utilities, support staff costs, IT, HR and financial systems, insurance and HQ support costs.”

3. Work with the **Resident Coordinator (RC)** and the **Government of Bangladesh** to identify opportunities to strengthen local and national leadership and decision-making in humanitarian action, including by civil society actors.

#### UN agencies and International NGOs

4. Based on mapping of humanitarian actors in-country, international humanitarian actors and local humanitarian actors should together develop a roadmap to a localised humanitarian response including:
  - a. **Strengthening data and awareness on localization goals and progress:** with greater sharing, collection, and publishing of data on first, second, and third tier humanitarian funding – both international and *national*
  - b. **Drawing on the Core Humanitarian Standard, development of ethical human resource/ recruitment principles/ practices/ minimum standards,** relevant to surge and other stages of the emergency
  - c. **development and supporting for mutual capacity building systems** (learning-by-doing approach, buddy system, ensure access to platforms and networks and increased participation and leadership of local and national actors, etc.),
  - d. **putting in place more flexible, contextualized, inclusive coordination mechanisms** (providing translation, using simplified language and making joint assessments). The mission reaffirms the recommendations of the ICVA for “**Strengthening the NGO Platform and improving Coordination** (overall, and sector leadership), Advocacy, Leadership and Partnerships for a more principled, accountable and effective response.”
  - e. **improved access to and engagement with the humanitarian donor architecture** for local and national actors (some sort of forum could be considered with the theme of demystifying funding processes, helping local and national actors to understand, navigate and focus their efforts in applying for funds as well as pooled funds), supported by **donor/donor and donor/government advocacy** (such as strategic discussions, information sharing, best practice, etc.). Beyond working with national actors, donors can do more internally.
  - f. **support for facilitated reporting / reviews** (the establishment of a forum could be considered with the theme of facilitating reporting processes, helping local and national actors to understand, navigate and focus their efforts in reporting),
  - g. **fostering the engagement of women** through building on and supporting the work of the Bangladesh Women Humanitarian Platform around increased women leadership in humanitarian coordination mechanisms and decision-making bodies, strengthening capacities of local/national humanitarian actors in addressing gender-based violence, and improved humanitarian safeguarding and protection measures for female staff; and

#### Local and National Actors

5. Local and national humanitarian actors should work together with smaller local humanitarian actors such as Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) or grassroots organizations in networks in a transparent and equal manner, applying the same standards defined in the roadmap and including them adequately in the work with international humanitarian actors.
6. Use existing networks such as NAHAB, CCNF, and the NGO Platform to come up with a common definition of local and national actors and agree on ways of how to better collaborate, respect and build on each others’ strengths.

#### Government

7. **Government of Bangladesh** to identify opportunities to strengthen local and national leadership and decision-making in humanitarian action, including the enabling and regulating role of the NGO Affairs Bureau with reference to civil society actors.

**Additional recommendation on Cox's Bazar**

We support/call for a sustainable transition in Cox's Bazar through:

8. ISCG and local actors working with government officials to agree on a three-year timeline of transition, where each year, local actors, led by local government, have greater responsibility in directly managing and delivering the response;
9. Capacity strengthening efforts that are integrated and specifically focused around protection and refugee rights-based programming (which has been raised by ISCG Heads of Sub-Office), camp management, and coordination;
10. Supporting targeted investments in national and local organizations, which may have the ability and desire to scale up their responses to meet a greater proportion of need.

## Annex 1 : Good Practices on Localization

NOTE: The following list identifies examples of initiatives or investments made by Grand Bargain signatories in support of Commitment 2 measures that the mission team observed/learned about.

### A. Partnership

1. The **One Window framework** of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies response to the Rohingya population influx. This framework is premised upon an inclusive approach towards the significant humanitarian footprint of the Federation-wide humanitarian response in the camps and settlements, the state of Movement-wide coordination, and the host National Society role, based on the Principle of Unity. Under the One Window Plan, IFRC and the partner National Societies have committed to support BDRCS in providing humanitarian assistance to a total of 200,000 people from Rakhine through resilience-building response, whilst providing targeted support to 60,000 people from the host communities as well as taking into consideration a potential new influx.

### B. Capacity Strengthening

1. For the past three years, British Red Cross has been funding the Bangladesh Red Crescent National Society to invest in **Community Disaster Management Committees (CDMC) across Kurigram district**, a flood and flash flood prone area in northern Bangladesh. In total, there are 30 CDMC's facilitate a range of community resilience activities including first aid and search & rescue. Overall an excellent program, with positive resilience outcomes for flood affected communities, but what makes it an example of success is the investment in sustainability by supporting CDMC's to make links with local government, and in some places CDMC's have been registered with local authorities, supporting the longer-term survival of community-based institutions.
2. Although not strictly multi-year, the **Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Crisis in Cox's Bazaar** has included localization and investments in capacity strengthening of local actors, explicitly. This is a significant success, as it should ensure all international actors operating in the Rohingya response are considering and contributing to capacity strengthening work: "all sectors have included capacity building elements within their plans with Government counterparts and partners in their relevant technical areas, and all agencies are encouraged to include *organizational capacity building* as an integrated element of their partnerships... and to diversify their partnerships with national NGOs;" also "efforts will be made to support national NGOs *through capacity assessments, training and mentoring in governance and administration in order to enhance their absorption capacity and effectiveness.*" Using language like 'organizational capacity building' or 'governance' shifts the perspective of capacity strengthening beyond the technical, towards institutional strength. Interviews with stakeholders in the response suggested that these plans will continue.
3. For the past three years, Oxfam has been funding various local and national organizations and networks through a **Humanitarian Capacity Development Fund (HCDF)**, an umbrella fund which local actors access to fund self-identified capacity strengthening activities. In part with HCDF funding, the National Humanitarian Actors of Bangladesh (NAHAB) platform was able to train Bangladeshi humanitarian professionals in joint needs analysis and in proposal writing. Mahideb Jubo Somaj Kallayan Somity (MJSKS) has similarly accessed HCDF funding to support capacity strengthening activities for more than 40 local actors in Kurigram, which strengthened the relationship *between* actors.
4. Although many local actors suggested awareness of gender in emergencies outcomes, there was a suspicious dearth of women in local and national actor meetings – and in this context, the **Bangladesh Women's Humanitarian Platform** appeared as an important network of women's rights organizations that are interested in humanitarian advocacy – serving first as a national pressure group, but also in support of



increasing the skills and experience of women's rights organizations in emergency responses. Oxfam is currently supporting this platform and UN Women have also pledged support.

### **C. Financing**

1. The UN Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) is looking to rapidly mobilize resources to support women's organizations in Bangladesh to address urgent challenges facing Rohingya refugee women. Dedicated funding in Bangladesh would focus on supporting the participation of Rohingya women across all phases of relief and self-recovery that is vital to building back Rohingya communities.
2. Oxfam's Humanitarian Response Grant Facility (HRGF) under the ELNHA programme was created in 2016 to fund local and national NGOs to lead humanitarian responses to emergencies in their contexts. The facility promotes leadership of local and national humanitarian actors, by providing the opportunity to access funding to strengthen and demonstrate their capacity as well as to provide learning to the wider humanitarian community.
3. Around 57 local and national NGOs have applied for access the National Start Fund in response to small-to-medium-sized disasters. This is a four-year project with a total value of £10 million of which around £8.5 million will be for crisis disbursements.

### **D. Coordination**

1. Two local/national NGOs, COAST Trust and NAHAB, were given seats on the Humanitarian Country Task Team while for the Rohingya response the consortium of local NGOs, CCNF, is also represented in the Strategic Advisory Group.
2. Establishment of the NGO Platform and the co-leadership by NGOs, particularly local and national NGOs, in Sectors and Strategic Advisory Groups (SAGs).

## ANNEX 2 : Programme

Date	Activity
08 September 2018	Mission team members arrive in Dhaka
09 September 2018	Welcome and briefing Meeting with Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, NAHAB and other local actors Meeting with the Ministry Of Disaster Management and Relief Meeting with RC, humanitarian team and donors
10 September 2018	Flight to Cox Bazaar Meeting with Heads of Sub Office Group and donors Group 1 visit to Camps 9 and 13 Group 2 visit to Camps 15 and 18 Meeting with local actors and RRRC
11 September 2018	Debriefing with ISCG and local actor representatives Flight to Dhaka Group 1 - Flight to Saidpur and travel by road to Kurigram Group 2 – Flight to Sylhet
12 September 2018	Group 1 Meeting with CDMC and visit courtyard session & community activities in Rajarhat Meeting with local government authorities and community members/project participants local actors in Jatrapur Meeting with local actors in Kurigram  Group 2 Field visit in Daskhin Sreepur union, Tahirpur Upazilla Meeting with local actors in Sunamgonj
13 September 2018	Flight back to Dhaka Meeting with the Bangladesh Women Humanitarian Platform Debriefing/Power Café

## ANNEX 2 – List of Mission Team Members

Name	Position and Organisation
1. Mr. Jagan Chapagain	Under Secretary General, Operations - International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, (Switzerland)
2. Mr. Stephen Close	Assistant Director, Humanitarian Reform - Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
3. Ms. Hedwig Matt	Desk Officer, Quality Assurance and Compliance – Federal Foreign Office Germany
4. Mr. Michael Mosselmans	Head of Humanitarian Policy and Practice – Christian Aid (United Kingdom)
5. Ms. Hero Anwar Birzw	Deputy Country Director – Rehabilitation, Education and Community Health (REACH), (Iraq)
6. Ms. Anita Kattakuzhy	Humanitarian Policy Advisor, Localization – Oxfam (Netherlands)
7. Mr. Arafat Jamal	Head, Partnership and Coordination Service – UNHCR (Switzerland)
8. Ms. Regina Gujan	Deputy Head, Multilateral Affairs Division, Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation
9. Ms. Fiona Tarpey	Manager, Internal Policy, Strategy and Communications – Australian Red Cross

## Secretariat:

1. Coree Steadman, Senior Officer – Localization, IFRC
2. Sarah Herrendorf, Academic Intern, SDC