

# Business as usual or breaking the status quo?

*This study aims to examine the situation of localization of humanitarian actions and development aid in Bangladesh, especially with respect to Rohingya response in the view of the commitments of the Grand Bargain (GB)<sup>2</sup> and the Charter for Change (C4C)<sup>3</sup>. Information and data presented here have been collected from the staff of local NGOs, both expatriate and Bangladeshi staff of International NGOs (INGOs)/UN agencies. Qualitative and quantitative information was collected using specific questionnaire and organizing Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Some empirical observations have also been presented here as case studies. Study findings are presented in two categories i.e. some findings are on the types of partnership among LNGOs and INGOs/UN Agencies and some findings examine the situation of localization based on commitments. Key findings of the study are: 93% INGOs/UN agencies admit that they treat LNGOs/National NGOs (NNGOs) mainly as implementing partners. 82% LNGOs said they are 'happy' with the financial relationship with their partners while 18% described their relationship as 'acceptable'. 56.25% LNGOs reported that the INGOs and donors discuss with them the preparation of project agreement, which is an example of good practice in the development sector. 31% LNGOs never participated in joint evaluations with their INGOs/UN agency partners. 69% LNGOs informed that their partner INGOs do not seek their opinion while hiring any third-party evaluation. 68% LNGOs said they are not getting any space to seek arbitration from a third party in case of any problem with INGOs/donors. Only 38% LNGOs said they are getting appropriate visibility in the project documents prepared by the INGOs/UN agencies. In Cox's Bazar, 80% of the LNGOs alleged that their staff had been recruited by INGO/UN agencies and 90% LNGOs alleged that it was done without their prior consent and clearance. Most LNGOs (60%) said they have to arrange project costs from their own funds and INGOs/UN agencies reimburse them later. In nutshell, the study finds that, the idea of localization is yet to be achieved in view of the commitment made in Grand Bargain and Charter for Change. There are also some misconception about localization, and gap of perception on some issues among the LNGOs and INGOs/UN agencies. A lot to be done to ensure the localization in Bangladesh.*

## 1. Introduction

The UN agencies and major international NGOs (INGOs) have given commitments to ensure localisation of development and humanitarian aid by signing the Grand Bargain (GB), Charter for Change (C4C) and Principles of Partnership. There is no specific and broadly accepted definition of localisation of aid, but it is often referred to as a collective process by the different stakeholders of the humanitarian system (donors, UN agencies, NGOs) which aims to return local actors (local authorities or civil society) to the centre of the humanitarian system with a greater, more central role. It is also defined as a key commitment of the GB, which promises to bring about a paradigm shift in how various humanitarian aid actors respond to a humanitarian crisis.

The main commitment of localisation is to build capacities of local NGOs, local government institutions and local Civil Society Organisations (CSO) in implementing development and humanitarian aid-supported projects. Experience shows localisation is the best answer to any humanitarian and development response because it is more sustainable. The COAST initiated this study to examine the situation of localisation of humanitarian aid in Bangladesh, especially in Rohingya response.

## 2. Key Terms and Definitions:

In this report the term Local NGOs (LNGOs) refers to the NGOs whose leadership come from a particular local area. For example, the NGOs whose leadership are from Cox's Bazar or/and the NGOs that started its journey from

<sup>1</sup> So far, 706,304 Rohingya Muslims have fled to Bangladesh from Myanmar's Rakhine state to escape the military's large-scale campaign of ethnic cleansing since 25th August 2017. Along with the Rohingya living in Bangladesh who fled earlier, the total number is 921,000 (World Health Organization, Bangladesh, 21 December 2018 <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/weeklysitrep56cxbban.pdf>).

<sup>2</sup> The Grand Bargain is an agreement between more than 30 of the biggest donors and aid providers including almost all UN agencies and major INGO networks, which aims to get more means into the hands of people in need. The Grand Bargain was first proposed by the former UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing in its report "Too Important to Fail: addressing the humanitarian financing gap" as one of the solutions to address the humanitarian financing gap (Agenda for Humanity, <https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/3861>). It sets out 51 commitments distilled in 10 thematic work streams. (Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-hosted-iasc>). And it was adopted at the end of World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), a worldwide process during 2014-2016 conducted by the UN in Istanbul in May 2016.

<sup>3</sup> The Charter for Change is an initiative, adopted in July 2015 and it was launched at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in May 2016 ([https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/AP\\_C4C\\_0.pdf](https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/AP_C4C_0.pdf)), signed by 34 international non-governmental organisations (INGOs). It has been so far endorsed by 200 National and Local Organisations from 45 countries across the world. Signatories made eight commitments to be implemented by May 2018 (<https://charter4change.org>).

Cox's Bazar are LNGOs for Cox's Bazar. National NGOs (NNGOs) are those that started their journey from any other part of Bangladesh other than Cox's Bazar, or/and whose leadership are not from Cox's Bazar. International NGOs (INGO) are those registered in Bangladesh as foreign NGOs and/or those that work in any other country/countries apart from Bangladesh. Bangladeshi NGOs that work in any other country/countries other than Bangladesh have also been referred to as INGOs. The UN agencies are international organisations that coordinate their work with the United Nations through negotiated agreements.

### 3. Objectives and Methodologies of the Study

**A. Objectives:** The main objective of this study was to examine the situation of localization of humanitarian actions and development aid in Bangladesh, especially with respect to Rohingya response in the view of the commitments of the Grand Bargain (GB) and the Charter for Change (C4C). The specific objectives include:

- To learn about the nature of partnership and coordination among Local NGOs, National NGOs, INGOs and UN agencies;
- To find out the best practices and weaknesses of these partnership and coordination; and
- To identify challenges of localisations.

**B. Methodologies:** The study is in fact a 'Rapid Study' and it assessed the localization situation in Bangladesh based on information collected from LNGOs, NNGOs, INGOs and UN agencies. Information was collected mainly from the feedback of a questionnaire, which was prepared considering the key localization commitments mentioned in the Grand Bargain and the C4C. Some questions were also asked to get information in view of the Charter of Expectation of Bangladeshi CSOs and NGOs promoting localization of aid in Bangladesh.

#### Expatriate, Demand or supply driven?

After the Rohingya influx in Cox's Bazar, as many INGOs and UN agencies started their humanitarian response, many foreigners have come to Cox's Bazar. About 1,296 expatriates are working with different organisations in Cox's Bazar (as of 21 Nov; source: Office of the Senior Assistant Superintendent). The question is whether this expatriate influx is demand driven or supply driven? There is no study that Bangladeshi local actors are not experienced enough to handle such a huge humanitarian response. So it should be demand driven. In some cases, involvement of such expatriates is found to be inappropriate and unnecessary. One INGO, for instance, hired a warehouse specialist. When she visited an LNGO warehouse, it was clear that she was actually there to learn and has little experience in this regard.

### Strategic Partnership Vs Implementing Partnership

Bangladeshi NGO and CSO leaders involved in the campaign for localisation expect and recommend that INGOs/UN agencies should recognise their local partners as 'Strategic Partner'. In a Strategic Partnership, partners remain independent, share the risks of project failure, and have equal contribution in decision-making process. When strategic partnership is in place, it is expected that INGOs and UN agencies on the one hand will ensure active participation of LNGOs at different level of the project cycle such as need assessment, project design, project evaluation and so on. On the other hand, INGOs will provide capacity-building support to the LNGOs to achieve sustainability. Implementing partnership is a form of sub-contract, where LNGOs have very little participation in the decision-making process. Rather, they just implement the project with support and guidance from the INGOs and UN agencies. 82% LNGOs/INGOs described themselves as implementing partners of donors/INGOs. Only 9% LNGOs are being treated as strategic partners. On the other hand, 93% INGOs/UN agencies admit that they treat LNGOs/NNGOs mainly as implementing partners and 7% of INGOs/UN agencies also treat the local NGOs as sub-contractor, no INGOs/UN agencies claimed that they treat any LNGO as strategic partner.

Both quantitative and qualitative information was collected. For quantitative data, we used a specific questionnaire sent to LNGOs/NNGOs and also to INGOs/UN agencies. Collected data was later analyzed and presented publicly. For qualitative data we organized Focused Group Discussions (FGDs). Staff of LNGOs, both expatriate and Bangladeshi staff of INGOs/UN agencies participated in the FGDs held in Cox's Bazar and Dhaka. We are especially grateful to Inter Sectoral Coordination Group (ISCG) and the UNHCR in Cox's Bazar who have helped us organize the FGDs.

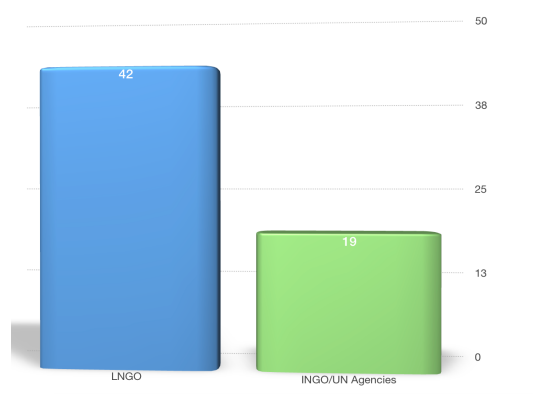
Respondents were selected randomly. We sent the link of the online survey to the LNGOs/NNGOs who participated in various events that COAST organized on localization. We also sent the link to NGOs listed in the Cox's Bazar District Commissioner's official website, the UN agencies and INGOs listed on ISCG contact list.



<sup>4</sup> The Global Humanitarian Platform (GHP) adopted Principles of Partnership (PoP) in 2007. The GHP was originally set up in 2006 by leaders of 40 humanitarian organizations including NGOs, UN agencies, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the World Bank, and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. The Principles of Partnership (Equality, Transparency, Results-Oriented Approach, Responsibility and Complementarity) were an attempt to acknowledge some gaps within the humanitarian reform process, which included neglecting the role of local and national humanitarian response capacity. (International Council for Voluntary Organization (ICVA), <https://www.icvanetwork.org/principles-partnership-statement-commitment>).

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.urd.org/IMG/pdf/More\\_than\\_the\\_money\\_Troaire\\_Groupe\\_URD\\_1-6-2017.pdf](https://www.urd.org/IMG/pdf/More_than_the_money_Troaire_Groupe_URD_1-6-2017.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> <http://ask.un.org/faq/140935>



Along with the findings using the above-mentioned methodologies, the study also captured some case studies. Qualitative Information places in the boxes as case studies are ‘empirical observations’ and which should not be considered as generalized inferences. We have to use such case studies where data is hardly available, people and agencies hardly open to provide figures, especially in respect of aid transparency, e.g. overhead or management cost of the operation. A social research can have such an observation to claim something in favor, e.g., we do like to provoke the discussion on public transparency of aid to promote continuous effort for reducing aid transaction cost, in view of the Grand Bargain commitment.

The type of information collected from the various groups of respondents was almost the same. The questionnaire was also almost the same for all. For example, to know how projects are being implemented in Bangladesh, our question to LINGOs/NNGOs was how many projects are you directly implementing at the moment with donors and how many projects are you implementing through INGO/ UN agencies? And the question to INGOs/UN agencies was how many projects are you implementing and funding in Bangladesh at the moment? To learn the nature of partnership among LINGOs/NNGOs and INGOs/UN agencies, our question to LINGOs was: How does your project agreement describe your relationship with INGO/ UN agencies/donor? The question to INGO/UN agencies was: How does your project agreement describe your relationship with LINGOs?

A total of 42 NNGOs/LINGOs and 19 INGOs/UN agencies participated in the online survey, FGDs and interviews.

The first presentation on the study findings was made in a multi-stakeholder open public dialogue, held in Cox’s Bazar on 25 November 2018 (report of the event can be found here: <http://coastbd.net/urged-for-transparency-of-rohingya-aid-participation-of-locals-in-rohingya-response-planning/>). The findings were also presented in another open public dialogue held in Dhaka on 1 December last year (<http://coastbd.net/urged-for-separate-development-plan-for-coxs-bazar-economy-and-recuperating-environment/>). Representatives from

The study also captured some case studies. Qualitative Information places in the boxes as case studies are ‘empirical observations’ and which should not be considered as generalized inferences.

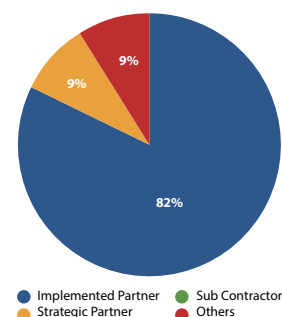
LINGOs, INGOs, UN agencies, government officials and local elected bodies were present at these events.

To be neutral in presentation of the data, different answers from LINGOs and INGOs/UN agencies on the same issues were presented. This summary report is following the same method. For example, against the question Can LINGOs working in partnership with INGO/UN agencies communicate directly with the main/back donors? as high as 81% LINGOs informed they could not. On the other hand, 84% INGOs/UN agencies informed they used to allow their partners to communicate directly with donors. Though there seems to be a gap in perceptions, we presented perceptions/answers of both sides for the sake of neutrality.

Before data collection, we reviewed some literature on localisation of aid. This helped us formulate the questions. Thus, the study methodology was as follows: literature review, studying the benchmarks of localization prepared by the Start Network , survey with LINGOs/NNGOs/ INGOs, FGDs for case studies, sending questionnaire to INGOs and NGOs, individual interviews, secondary findings analysis and reflection/ feedback.

#### 4. Summary of Results:

The study tried to look mainly into the existing nature of partnership among LINGOs, INGOs



#### Vehicle Use: Where is the limit?

A previous COAST research titled Crisis within Crisis found many students cannot go to school due to heavy traffic on roads along the Rohingya refugee camps. During that study, some families said they do not feel safe to send their children to schools alone. Normally, children in these areas walk to their schools alone. Now that the roads are always crowded and chaotic with heavy vehicles, it is difficult for the children to go through it. Many parents do not feel safe anymore to send their daughters to schools due to the crowded transport and chaotic situation in the locality (<http://coastbd.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/COAST-Publication.pdf>). Our study found that UN agencies and INGOs running about 545-575 cars every day. On one occasion, three people went to a camp in three cars .To avoid these, a central vehicle pool can be established. To reduce excessive traffic, shuttle services between Cox’s Bazar town and the camps can be arranged.

<sup>7</sup> This charter of expectation was prepared by a network of Bangladeshi CSOs and NGOs named Bangladeshi National NGOs for WHS in a participatory way. The network actively participated in WHS process during 2014-2016, organized country wide focus group discussions, three national level dialogue. Primary charter was prepared with the outcome of those events. During April to July 2017 four meetings and consultations process were organized, developed a country wide campaign proposal on this and finally came out with a list of expectations. Which have had lunch publicly during the first week of August and discussed in a public seminar/ dialogue on 19th August 2017, the world humanitarian day. The charter of expectations can be found from [http://coastbd.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/CSO\\_Common-Space\\_Campaign-Paper.pdf](http://coastbd.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/CSO_Common-Space_Campaign-Paper.pdf). The charter of expectations was signed by 50 Bangladeshi national and local NGOs and which contains 21 points expectations.

<sup>8</sup> Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), hosted by IOM and UNHCR, is coordinating the overall Rohingya Refugee Responses.

and UN agencies, ‘Modus Operandi’ of the projects being implemented in Bangladesh, participation of LNGOs in decision-making, realization of some commitments of INGOs/UN agencies, harmful practices of INGOs/UN agencies hampering the equitable and sustainable development of LNGOs. The major findings are:

## A. Existing nature of partnership among LNGOs, INGOs and UN agencies

### i. Implementing Partner or Strategic Partner?

Bangladeshi NGO and CSO leaders involved in the campaign for localisation expect and recommend that INGOs/UN agencies recognise their local partners as ‘Strategic Partner’. In a Strategic Partnership, partners remain independent, share the risks of project failure, and have equal contribution in decision-making process. When strategic partnership is in place, it is expected that INGOs and UN agencies on the one hand will ensure active participation of LNGOs at different level of the project cycle such as need assessment, project design, project evaluation and so on. On the other hand, INGOs will provide capacity-building support to the LNGOs to achieve sustainability. Implementing partnership is a form of sub-contract, where LNGOs have very little participation in the decision-making process. Rather, they just implement the project with support and guidance from the INGOs and UN agencies.

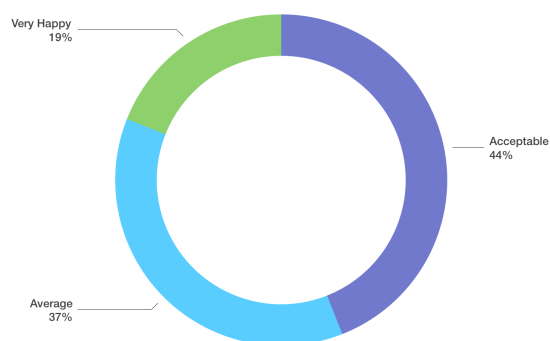
To explore the nature of partnership in Bangladesh, especially as to how INGOs/donors are treating local/national NGOs, we asked the LNGOs: How does your project agreement describe your relationship with INGO/UN agencies/donor? To this, 82% LNGOs/ NNGOs described themselves as implementing partners of donors/INGOs. Only 9% LNGOs are being treated as strategic partners.

Almost all the INGOs/UN agencies (93%) admit that they treat LNGOs/NNGOs mainly as implementing partners. Some of them (7%) also treat the local NGOs as sub-contractor.

The study found a huge gap in understanding or perception among LNGOs and INGOs about the nature of their partnership, especially about the definition of strategic partnership. Though 9% LNGOs said they are treated as strategic partners, no INGO/UN agencies claimed that they treat any LNGO as strategic partner.

### Capacities of local actors are being enhanced

Working with a huge refugee crisis is clearly new for many local actors, especially for many LNGOs. INGOs/UN agencies are enhancing capacities of LNGOs by providing technical and financial support. Supportive supervision is also helping LNGOs to enhance their managerial skills.



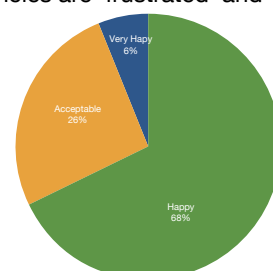
### ii. Honor the values, policies and culture of local NGOs

We tried to find out how much the INGOs honor the values, policies and culture of local NGOs. When asked how much do you think INGOs/donors honor the values, policies and culture of local NGOs, only 19% LNGOs said they were ‘Very Happy’. Most respondents (44%) said it was ‘Acceptable’ while 38% termed it as ‘Average’.

On the other hand, 85% INGOs/donors believe that they honor the values, policies and culture of local NGOs ‘Very Much’ and 15% believe it to be ‘Acceptable’.

### iii. Feeling about partnership

How happy are you with your partner? Both LNGOs and INGOs/UN agencies were asked to answer this question in five categories --Very Happy, Happy, Acceptable, Unhappy and Frustrated. Most LNGOs (68%) are ‘happy’ with their partners, 26% rated it as ‘Acceptable,’ while only 6% LNGOs are ‘very happy’. No LNGO was found ‘frustrated’ or ‘unhappy’ with the relationship with INGOs/UN agencies. On the other hand, 18% INGOs/UN agencies are ‘frustrated’ and 10% ‘unhappy’ with their local partners. Another 36% INGOs/UN agencies are ‘very happy’ with their partnership while 27% are ‘happy’ and 9% see their partnership as ‘Acceptable’.



*LNGOs feelings about the partnership with INGOs/UN Agencies*

The study also tried to learn how LNGOs and INGOs feel about the financial relationship with their partners. In reply, 82% LNGOs said they were ‘happy’ while 18% described their relationship as ‘acceptable’. But 20% INGOs/UN agencies were found ‘frustrated’ with the financial relationship of LNGOs. Only 26% said they had a ‘happy’ relationship. Most INGOs/UN agencies (54%) said it was ‘acceptable.’

The study also tried to find out why only a few LNGOs were ‘very happy’ with their partnership with INGOs/UN agencies and why INGOs were ‘frustrated’ about the financial dealings with LNGOs. FGDs and

observations reveal that many INGOs were strict about rules and policies that the local NGOs found 'very tough' to implement. Also, many of those rules and policies are not appropriate in the local and national context. For example, the definition and/or perception of corruption in European culture are great, but that is not practical in Bangladeshi socio-economic and cultural context. For example, money receipts are mandatory for ensuring transparency of expenditure. But it is not always possible to collect money receipts for buying, say, one kilogram of orange from a local market in a remote island in Bangladesh. Sellers in such remote areas do not provide any money receipts. So, if anyone asks for receipts, the seller may not be interested even to sell. Some INGOs and UN agencies also put financial burden on LNGOs, making LNGOs 'unhappy' sometimes. In some cases, INGOs/UN agencies do not provide project fund in advance, and the LNGOs have to meet the cost from their own fund. This creates a huge burden for them, however temporary (Detailed discussion on this in section 6, titled: Practices that may hamper sustainable development of LNGOs).

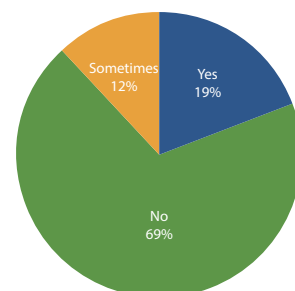
LNGOs have to do a lot to ensure effective and transparent governance. Special attention must be given to financial governance. Poor financial management of LNGOs is making the INGOs/UN agencies frustrated in some cases. Role of NGOs in the socio-economic development of Bangladesh is definitely enormous, but still many NGOs are suffering from a lack of internal good governance. Transparency International Bangladesh identified some major problems of NNGOs regarding governance such as ineffective governing body, discretion of the executive head in decision-making process, a lack of transparency in financial dealings, institutional anomalies, procurement-related anomalies and corruption in recruitment and promotion.

#### iv. 'Modus Operandi' of the projects being implemented in Bangladesh

The LNGOs who participated in the survey are now implementing 161 projects. Of them, 109 are being implemented in partnership with INGOs/UN agencies, which is about 68%. The rest 32% projects are directly funded by donors. On the other hand, 75% projects of INGOs/UN agencies are being implemented in partnership with LNGOs/NNGOs. INGOs are funding 48% projects directly and they are collecting funds from other donors for the rest 52% projects. Clearly, INGOs/UN agencies are implementing projects mainly in partnership with LNGOs, which is very much expected and it is committed by INGOs/UN agencies. But unfortunately, most INGO/UN agency projects in Bangladesh are funded by back donors. This means INGOs are acting as intermediaries in most cases.

#### v. Some Characteristics of Partnership

a. Participation of LNGOs in decision-making: Most LNGOs (56.25%) reported that the INGOs and donors discuss with them the preparation of project agreement, which is an example of good practice in the development sector. Response from the INGOs is also encouraging: 75% of them said they discuss the matter with their local partners.



*LNGOs response on taking their opinion on hiring third party evaluator*

- b. Joint Evaluation: Joint evaluation of project is crucial for co-financed programmes to ensure effectiveness of development aid and also to develop capacity of the partner organizations. But the study found 31% LNGOs never participated in joint evaluations while 37% did joint evaluation only occasionally. Only 32% LNGOs were found to have done joint evaluations. On the other hand, 66% INGOs said they ensure participation of LNGOs in evaluation in case of all projects.
- c. Partners' Opinion in hiring third party evaluator: Most LNGOs (69%) informed that their partner INGOs do not seek their opinion while hiring any third-party evaluator. Only 19% LNGOs said their partners seek their opinion. Another 12% LNGOs said some of their partners seek their opinion on the matter. On the other hand, more than 55% INGOs said they seek opinion of their LNGO partners while hiring third party evaluators. Another 27% said they do not consult their local partners in this regard.
- d. Opportunity of seeking arbitration: In respect to arbitration, 68% LNGOs said they are not getting any space to seek arbitration from a third party in case of any problem with INGOs/donors. Only 6.25% LNGOs said they get the required space while 26% get the space only occasionally. On the other hand, about half of the INGOs (55%)

#### Local actors are Participating in Project Design

The study found that UN agencies and INGOs are now ensuring participation of local actors, especially the LNGOs in project design. It found that 90% LNGOs participate in project design process. As for the INGOs, 91% said they involve LNGOs in project design. During the need assessment, participation of affected people was also considered.

<sup>9</sup> Smruti Patel & Koenraad Van Brabant, The Start Fund, Start Network and Localisation: current situation and future directions (April, 2017)

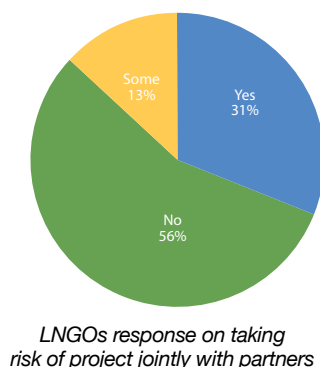
**Programme cost only 16%** (This is a case, please don't consider as a generalised inference.)

Involvement of local actors can reduce operation cost. Operation cost of LNGOs is lower than that of INGOs. One INGO involved in Rohingya response assigned 3-4 expatriate staffers. Its operation cost for one year is \$600,000, but the organisation has so far spent \$112,000 for programmes. This means that that INGO spent 86% of its funds on operation and 16 percent on its programmes. Involving more LNGOs, hiring more local staff and hiring only necessary expatriate staff can reduce operational cost.

said they provide that space. It can be an ideal solution to include a provision for this space in the partnership agreement.

- e. Communication with back donor: As mentioned earlier, the study found INGOs are collecting funds from other donors for 52% of their projects. Their LNGO partners in many cases do not know about the donor of those projects. The study sought to know from the LNGOs if they can communicate with the donors of the INGOs. In response, 75% LNGOs said they are not allowed by their INGO partners to communicate directly with the main/back donors. Only 13% LNGOs were found to do so regularly and 13% only occasionally. The response of the INGOs and UN agencies were different, however. As high as 83% INGOs said they allow their partners to communicate with their donors.
- f. Joint Risk of Project: Usually, project achievements and successes are shared by all partners. In any partnership, risks (negative outcomes in projects, i.e. project threats and potential problems, damage or loss of assets etc.) should also be shared among all actors of the project, including the donor and local implementing partners. However, most LNGOs (56%) who participated in the study said their INGO/UN partners do not share the risk of their project and that they are left to take full responsibility for any risk all by themselves.

About half of the INGOs/UN agencies (45%) also admit this. The study also obtained one project agreement that insists LNGOs must take full responsibility for any damage or loss of project assets. In case of such



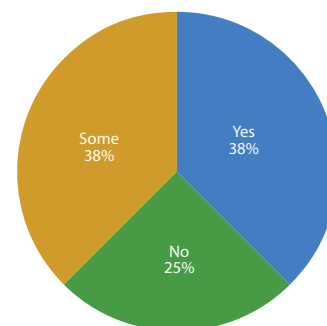
damage or loss, the LNGOs have to compensate. To ensure protection of project assets LNGOs can have insurance but, according to the agreement, there will be no allocation for the premium in the project budget.

## 5. Realization of some commitments of INGOs/UN agencies

### i) C4C Commitment no.8: Visibility in Media

The Charter for Change promotes visibility of local partners by the INGOs. The visibility means proper recognition of the LNGOs contributions in the reports of INGOs-UN agencies project/program reports. But the experience of LNGOs in this regard is not that pleasant. Only 38% LNGOs said they are getting appropriate visibility in the project documents prepared by the INGOs/UN agencies, 25% LNGOs none at all and 38% of them are getting proper visibility in some cases.

For example, one INGO published a 9,000-word report on their Rohingya Relief work. The project was implemented by an LNGO, but the report used just nine words about that LNGO. That INGO is a signatory to the C4C whose point no. 8 says: We will promote the role of local actors and acknowledge the work that they carry out.



### ii) C4C commitment 4 i.e. stop undermining local capacity: Creating Erosion by Staff Poaching

In Cox's Bazar, 80% of the LNGOs alleged that their staff had been recruited by INGO/UN agencies and 90% LNGOs alleged that it was done without their prior consent and clearance. This can damage the sustainability of the LNGOs, but 100% INGOs/UN agencies said they are not considering any compensation for hiring local NGO staff as committed in the C4C.

## 6. Practices that may hamper sustainable development of LNGOs.

### i) Cash Contribution: Is it Possible by LNGOs?

There are some financial practices/cultures/policies of UN organisations and INGOs that are creating a huge financial burden on LNGOs, especially the small ones. LNGO partners of almost all the UN organisations, including the UNICEF, demand cash contribution from LNGOs. To ensure that cash contribution, LNGOs sometimes show fake expenditures.

### ii) Holding the Last Tranche of Budget

<sup>10</sup> Transparency International Bangladesh: Problems of Governance in the NGO Sector: The Way Out (<https://www.ti-bangladesh.org/research/ExecSum-NGO-English.pdf>).

## Presentation of Findings and Influencing the Policymakers and Planners

Primary findings of this study have been presented to policymakers during preparation of the draft of Joint Response Plan 2019. An open dialogue was organized in Cox's Bazar on 25 November 2018 and in Dhaka on 1 December 2018. Details of the Cox's Bazar dialogue are available here:

<http://coastbd.net/urged-for-transparency-of-rohingya-aid-participation-of-locals-in-rohingya-response-planning/>.

A brief report on Dhaka dialogue is also available in this link: <http://coastbd.net/urged-for-separate-development-plan-for-coxs-bazar-economy-and-recuperating-environment/>. Both the dialogues got huge print and electronic media coverage. Following are the two prominent news clips:

On the other hand, some UN agencies and INGOs do not provide the last tranche of the approved budget until the project has ended and final accounts have been submitted. As a result, partner LNGOs have to meet the cost of the last quarter from its own fund before being reimbursed. In one example, an LNGO got reimbursed \$140,000 for two projects (about \$110,000 by a UN agency and \$30,000 by an LNGO) after the projects ended. The LNGO had to run the projects with its own fund for about two months and four months respectively.

### iii) No Advance, Reimbursement-based Finance

Most LNGOs (60%) said they have to arrange project costs from their own funds and INGOs/UN agencies reimburse them later.

### iv) No office rent in project budget

For small LNGOs in Bangladesh, managing its office is a big headache. The study found that many LNGOs have to use their own office, but cannot charge for office rent. Most LNGOs (69%) use their own office without any charge for the projects funded by INGOs/UN agencies.

accordance with the commitments of the UN agencies made in the Grand Bargain agreement.

They also expressed their dissatisfaction at the preparations for the UN-led joint repatriation process (JRP) and the present coordination process.

Cox's Bazar NGO-CSO Forum (CCNF), a platform of 42 local/national NGOs working on the Rohingya issue, along with COAST, organised the dialogue titled "Rohingya Response and Grand Bargain Commitments: Aid Transparency and Solidarity Approach" at a resort at Kolatoli in Cox's Bazar with financial support from Oxfam.

Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Abul Kalam was present at the programme as the chief guest.

Among others, Annika Sudland, Senior Adviser of Inter Sectoral Coordination Group

## Call for participation of locals in Rohingya response plan

Asian Age Online

Speakers at a dialogue on Sunday demanded transparency in the Rohingya aid and participation of locals in the response planning in



### \$682 for each Rohingya! How much have they actually got?

Till November 2018, \$682 million has been received against the Joint Response Plan (JRP 2018). It is about \$682 for each Rohingya refugee and \$3,283.58 for each of the 207,700 families for 11 months. Monthly minimum wage in Bangladesh is about \$100, meaning a single income-earner family earns only \$1,200 a year. One Rohingya family is getting almost three times more than a local family. In reality, how much has been spent for each Rohingya? How much of the total fund has been spent on operation? What is the overhead cost of the central offices? What is the field operation cost? How much has been spent on expatriates? What is the cost of vehicle and transport? What is direct input support?

<sup>11</sup> The commitment 4 of C4C says: We will identify and implement fair compensation for local organizations for the loss of skilled staff if and when we contract a local organization's staff involved in humanitarian action within 6 months of the start of a humanitarian crisis or during a protracted crisis, for example along the lines of paying a recruitment fee of 10% of the first six months' salary.

<sup>12</sup> Under the leadership of the Government of Bangladesh, the humanitarian community has engaged in multi-sectoral needs assessments, consultations and strategic planning, which has culminated in this Joint Response Plan. The main objective of this plan is to address the urgent humanitarian needs of the Rohingya refugees and their host communities in Cox's Bazar in a coordinated manner. (<https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/jrp-rohingya-humanitarian-crisis-march-december-2018-0>).

(ISCG)), and Anita Kattakuzhy of Oxfam International and member of Global Localisation Working Group, addressed the dialogue. Mujibul Haque Munir of COAST presented the keynote paper based on the report of a study on localisation in Rohingya response.

In their presentations, Rezaul Karim Chowdhury and Abu Morshed Chowdhury claimed that there are hardly any transparency and accountability in the \$682 million fund received by UN agencies as well as the fund received by international NGOs for Rohingya relief.

In his speech, Abul Kalam said the government has long been emphasising on voluntary repatriation of Rohingyas. "As no Rohingya family was found interested to go back to their homeland, we never forced them."

Annika Sudland said they want to work with everyone for the JRP 2019 under the leadership of the government so that everyone knows what everyone is doing.

(The Asian Age: 25 November 2018. Link: <https://dailiasianage.com/news/150975/call-for-participation-of-locals-in-rohingya-response-planning>).

## **AID FOR ROHINGYAS**

### **Make it more transparent, cost-effective**

Urge NGOs, civil society members in Cox's Bazar

**Porimol Palma and Mohammad Ali Jinnat**  
(The Daily Star)

The humanitarian operations for the Rohingyas should be more transparent and cost-effective as their repatriation may take longer than expected and the funding is inadequate.

Members of Cox's Bazar civil society organisations and NGOs shared the observation yesterday in a district hotel.

The programme titled "Rohingya Response and Grand Bargain Commitment: Aid transparency and solidarity approach" was organised by Cox's Bazar CSO-NGO Forum (CCNF) and COAST Trust to discuss the 2019 Joint Response Plan (JRP) for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis.

During the programme, Co-chair of CCNF Rezaul Karim Chowdhury said at least 1,296 expatriates were involved in the humanitarian operations and they used around 550 vehicles every day, making the operation more expensive.

He suggested building local capacity to cut cost and invest more for Rohingyas as well as the host community.

According to the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), 10 UN agencies and 68 international NGOs are involved in the refugee response. A total of 136 organisations are involved in the work.

Abu Morshed Chowdhury, another co-chair of CCNF, said the host community had largely been sidelined through the JRP talks.

"As per the JRP 2018, 25 percent of the total fund was supposed to be spent on the host community but there is no clue as to how much financial assistance has been given to them," he said.

The lack of coordination among local NGOs, local administration and international NGOs should be addressed properly, he added.

"All the stakeholders need to have a clear understanding of what is happening and how the problems can be addressed effectively. This requires regular interactions among themselves," Morshed said.

The JRP of 2018 appealed for \$951 million in financial assistance for the Rohingyas and host community. However, \$682 million, which is 72 percent of the expected amount, was received.

Addressing the dialogue as chief guest, Refugee Rehabilitation and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) Abul Kalam said Rohingyas need to be protected until their repatriation but the resources for it are limited.

He suggested that aid agencies have an institutional mechanism to train locals for human resources improvement.

Anita Kattakuzhy of Oxfam International said there was limited understanding on the Grand Bargain among UN agencies and international NGOs, including Red Cross, and the governments.

"This lacking needs to be addressed," she said.

She also suggested that the ISCG, UN and INGOs sit together and see how they can meet the demands of the Grand Bargain.

Annika Saudlund, senior coordinator of ISCG, said there were a lot of improvements in the Rohingya situation since the beginning.

Rohingya children's vaccination coverage went up to 89 percent from 30 percent. The refugees have better shelters and healthcare services now, she added.

Annika assured the JRP 2019 will incorporate the suggestions made by the local NGOs and civil society groups regarding capacity building of locals and cost effectiveness.

Around 750,000 Rohingyas fled military campaign in Myanmar's Rakhine State since August last year, joining 300,000 more who had fled earlier.

The refugees are now sheltered at camps in Ukhaia and Teknaf upazilas of Cox's Bazar, having massive environmental, social and economic impacts in the area.

(<https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/make-it-more-transparent-cost-effective-1665295>).

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*Disclaimer: The divisional workshops reported here is funded by Oxfam. The views reflected here do not necessarily represent those of Oxfam.*