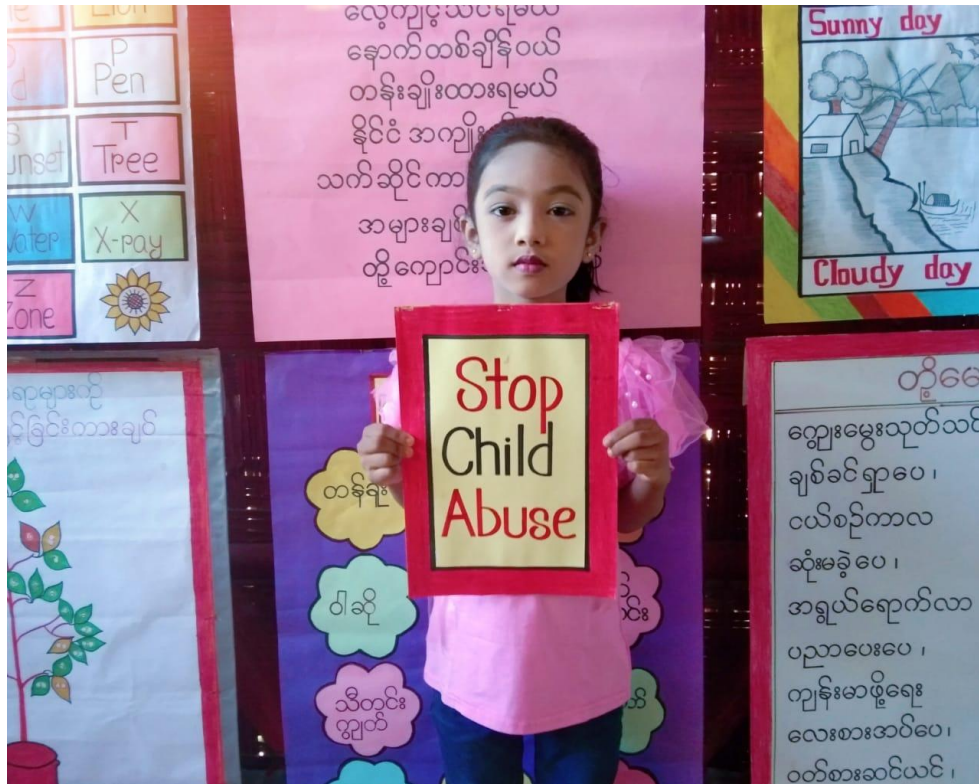


Draft

Study on Localization of Aid in Rohingya Response 2026

Reset the Rohingya Response: Local Led Humanitarian Response



A COAST Foundation and CCNF joint publication
September 2026



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Executive Summary

This study assesses the progress of localization in the Rohingya refugee response in Bangladesh by examining humanitarian governance, leadership, financing, and partnership arrangements. Drawing on document reviews, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and quantitative analysis, the study finds that localization commitments remain only partially realized.

In the Rohingya Coordination Team (RCT), UN agencies occupy 54% of the membership, while international NGOs, national NGOs, and local NGOs each hold only 15%, demonstrating continued international dominance in strategic decision-making. Across the eight humanitarian sectors, all sector leads are UN agencies, with only one international NGO serving as a co-lead, while no national or local NGO holds a sector leadership role. Humanitarian financing is even more unequal: under the 2026 Joint Response Plan (JRP), UN agencies received 87.96% of total funding, international NGOs 7.78%, national NGOs 4.26%, and local NGOs have no direct funding (0%).

During the recent three-month period reviewed, 63 humanitarian projects were approved, of which 50.8% were implemented by national NGOs, 44.4% by international NGOs, and only 4.8% by local NGOs. Although local NGOs managed just 2.5% of project funding, they remain critical frontline responders.

The study concludes that meaningful localization requires increased representation of local actors in coordination structures, equitable access to direct financing, stronger institutional capacity, and implementation of the Grand Bargain and Humanitarian Reset commitments. It also recognizes the significant advocacy contributions of COAST Foundation, CCNF, and the BDCSO Process in promoting locally led humanitarian action in Bangladesh.

Background of the Study

Since August 2017, Bangladesh has been hosting one of the world's largest refugee populations following the mass displacement of Rohingya people from Myanmar due to widespread violence, persecution, and military operations widely described as genocide and crimes against humanity. Currently, nearly 1.3 million Rohingya refugees reside mainly in camps located in Cox's Bazar, creating a prolonged humanitarian crisis that has entered its eighth year. The humanitarian response has involved a broad range of actors, including United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), national NGOs, community-based organizations, and government institutions.

Over the years, the Rohingya response has evolved from an emergency humanitarian intervention to a protracted crisis response requiring sustainable, locally driven approaches. However, despite repeated global commitments to localization under the Grand Bargain framework, the humanitarian architecture in the Rohingya response continues to remain largely dominated by UN agencies and INGOs. Local and national organizations, although playing frontline roles in service delivery, community engagement, protection monitoring, and emergency response, often remain underrepresented in strategic decision-making, funding allocation, and coordination leadership.

At the same time, the global humanitarian system is undergoing significant transformation due to increasing humanitarian needs and shrinking donor resources. In recent years, humanitarian funding has declined substantially worldwide, and the Rohingya response has experienced severe funding gaps. In response to these challenges, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) introduced the "Humanitarian Reset" initiative aimed at increasing operational efficiency, streamlining coordination mechanisms, reducing operational costs, and strengthening localization. The Humanitarian Reset emphasizes devolving greater authority and financing to country-level actors, promoting local leadership within cluster coordination systems, and enhancing collective resource mobilization under the 2026 Global Humanitarian Overview.

Within the Rohingya response, one important mechanism intended to promote localization is the pooled funding approach for local NGOs. These funding mechanisms seek to increase direct access of national organizations to humanitarian financing and strengthen their institutional participation in humanitarian governance. Nevertheless, questions remain regarding the effectiveness, inclusiveness, transparency, and long-term impact of such funding structures in advancing genuine localization.

Furthermore, while localization has become a widely used policy commitment in humanitarian discourse, evidence suggests a persistent gap between global commitments and operational realities. Local NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs) continue to face shrinking space in humanitarian coordination platforms, unequal partnership arrangements, limited influence in decision-making processes, and restricted access to direct funding opportunities. Therefore, there is a growing need for evidence-based research examining the extent to which localization commitments are being translated into practice within the Rohingya refugee response.

Against this backdrop, the proposed study titled "Localization of Aid in Rohingya Response" aims to critically examine governance structures, leadership dynamics, humanitarian financing, and partnership modalities in the Rohingya response. The study will generate evidence on the current status, challenges, and opportunities of localization and contribute to policy dialogue on strengthening locally led humanitarian action in Bangladesh.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

The overall objective of the study is to assess the status, effectiveness, and challenges of localization of aid within the Rohingya refugee response in Bangladesh.

Specific Objectives

1. To analyze the governance, leadership, and decision-making architecture of the Rohingya humanitarian coordination structure.
2. To assess the outcomes and effectiveness of pooled funding mechanisms for local organizations participating in the Rohingya response.
3. To examine the extent of participation, representation, and influence of local NGOs and CSOs in humanitarian coordination and strategic decision-making processes.
4. To compare the current partnership practices among UN agencies, INGOs, and local NGOs with findings from previous studies on humanitarian partnerships and localization.
5. To identify key barriers and opportunities for advancing locally led humanitarian action in the Rohingya response.
6. To provide recommendations for strengthening localization, equitable partnerships, and sustainable humanitarian governance in the Rohingya context.

Methodology of the Study

Study Design

The study will adopt a mixed-methods research approach combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. This approach will allow comprehensive analysis of humanitarian governance, financing, coordination mechanisms, and partnership dynamics related to localization in the Rohingya response.

The study will primarily be descriptive and analytical in nature, focusing on institutional structures, funding practices, and stakeholder perceptions regarding localization.

Data Collection Methods

Literature and Document Review

The study reviewed the below documents:

- Grand Bargain commitments and localization frameworks
- UNOCHA Humanitarian Reset documents
- Joint Response Plans (JRP)
- Cluster coordination guidelines
- Pooled fund policies and reports
- Previous studies on localization and humanitarian partnerships
- NGO coordination reports and policy papers

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Semi-structured interviews conducted with:

- Local NGO leaders
- Cluster coordinators
- Government stakeholders

The KIIs explored perceptions on leadership, funding access, coordination participation, decision-making influence, and operational challenges.

3. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

FGDs will be organized with:

- Local NGO practitioners
- CSO representatives
- Community volunteers
- Refugee representatives where appropriate

FGDs will help capture collective experiences and perceptions regarding localization and partnership dynamics.

Data Analysis

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data collected through KIIs, FGDs, and document reviews analyzed using thematic analysis. Key themes may include:

- Leadership and governance
- Funding accessibility
- Partnership equity
- Decision-making power
- Operational barriers
- Localization outcomes

Quantitative Data Analysis

Survey data analyzed using descriptive statistics, including:

- Frequencies
- Percentages
- Comparative analysis
- Trend analysis with previous studies

Findings from quantitative and qualitative sources triangulated to ensure reliability and validity.

Ethical Considerations

The study will ensure:

- Informed consent from all participants
- Confidentiality and anonymity of respondents
- Voluntary participation
- Respect for humanitarian principles and protection standards
- Safe handling of sensitive organizational information

Expected Outcome of the Study

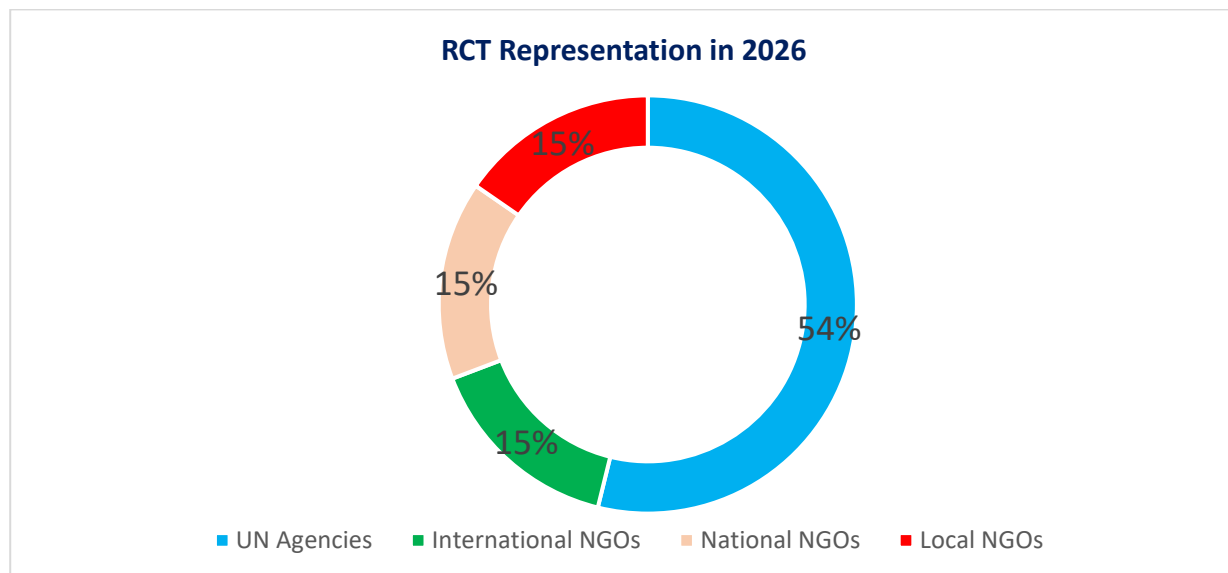
The study is expected to:

- Generate evidence on the current state of localization in the Rohingya response
- Identify structural gaps in humanitarian governance and financing
- Assess the effectiveness of pooled funding mechanisms for local actors
- Document evolving partnership dynamics between international and local actors
- Contribute policy recommendations for strengthening locally led humanitarian action and equitable partnerships in Bangladesh's refugee response sector.

Findings of the study

Rohingya Coordination Team (RCT)

The Rohingya Coordination Team (RCT) serves as the strategic coordination, decision-making, and oversight forum for the overall Rohingya refugee response in Bangladesh. The RCT comprises with seven UN agencies, two International NGOs, two National NGOs, and two Local NGOs.



The figure titled “RCT Representation in 2026” illustrates the composition of representation within the Rohingya Coordination Team (RCT) among different humanitarian actors. The chart shows that UN Agencies hold the majority representation with 54%, indicating that the coordination and decision-making structure of the Rohingya response continues to be predominantly led by international institutional actors.

In contrast, International NGOs, National NGOs, and Local NGOs each represent only 15% of the total composition. Although local and national organizations play critical frontline roles in humanitarian

implementation, community engagement, and service delivery, their representation within the coordination architecture remains comparatively limited.

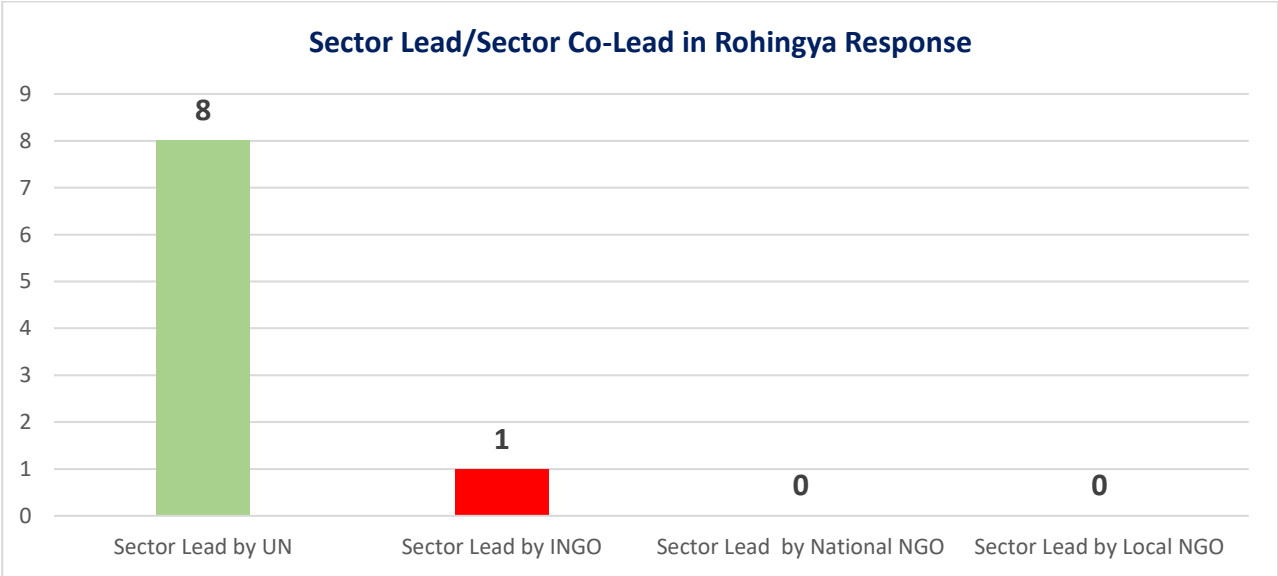
The findings reflect an imbalance in humanitarian governance and decision-making power, where international actors continue to dominate strategic leadership positions despite global commitments to localization under the Grand Bargain framework. The equal but relatively low representation of national and local NGOs also suggests that meaningful participation of local actors in policy influence and coordination mechanisms remains constrained.

This representation pattern highlights the ongoing challenges in advancing localization within the Rohingya response. While humanitarian reforms and the UNOCHA Humanitarian Reset emphasize devolving leadership and strengthening local participation, the current structure demonstrates that local NGOs and CSOs still have limited influence within key coordination platforms. The findings therefore reinforce the need for stronger institutional inclusion of local actors, increased shared leadership, and more equitable representation in humanitarian governance systems.

The existing coordination arrangement limits the participation of local organizations in strategic decision-making processes. Despite having contextual knowledge, long-term community engagement, and operational experience, local actors are largely excluded from leadership roles. As a result, the humanitarian system in Cox’s Bazar continues to operate under an internationally dominated structure rather than a genuinely locally led response model.

Sector Lead/Sector Co-Lead in Rohingya Response

In the Rohingya response coordination platform, there are eight major sectors. Among these, all eight sectors are led by UN agencies, while only one sector includes an INGO (Save the Children) as a sector co-lead. No sector is led by a national or local NGO. The Education Sector is led by UNICEF, with an international NGO serving as co-lead. The Food Security Sector is led by WFP, while the Health Sector is coordinated by WHO. The Livelihood and Skills Development Sector, as well as the Nutrition Sector, are both led by UNICEF. The Protection Sector is led by UNHCR, including its sub-sectors such as Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Child Protection. Similarly, the WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) Sector and the Shelter/NFI Sector are also coordinated by UN agencies.

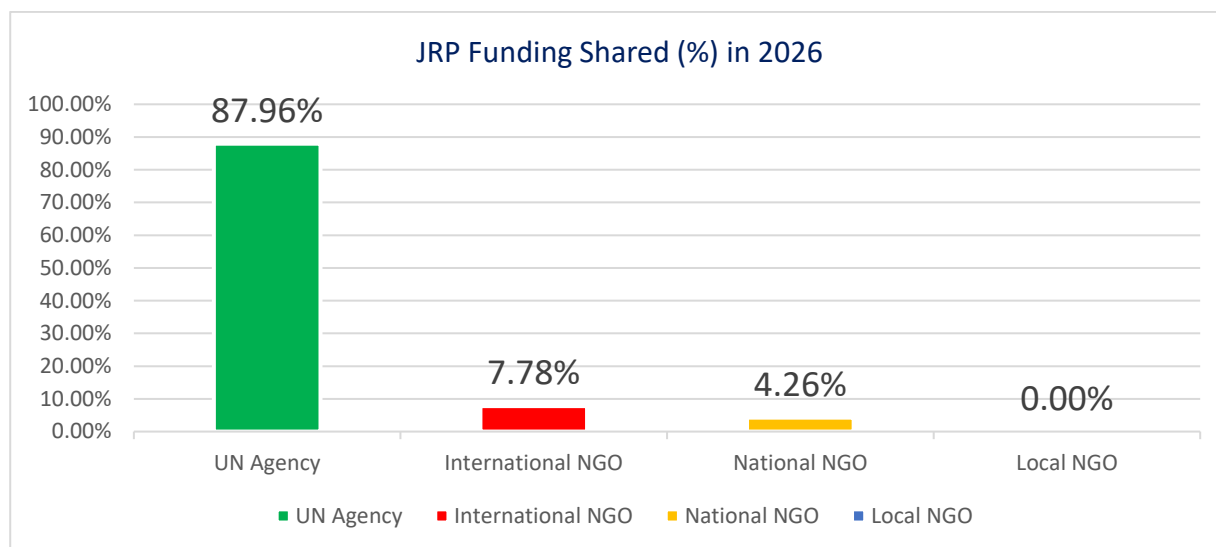


This structure clearly demonstrates that the Rohingya response coordination mechanism remains overwhelmingly dominated by UN agencies and international actors. Although localization and locally led response are repeatedly emphasized in global humanitarian commitments, there is still no sector led by local or national NGOs, not even in a co-lead capacity. This indicates a significant gap between the policy commitments of the Humanitarian Reset and the practical implementation of localization in the Rohingya response.

Joint Response Plan

The figure titled “JRP Funding Shared (%) in 2026” demonstrates the distribution of humanitarian funding among different categories of actors within the Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the Rohingya response. The chart reveals a highly unequal funding structure dominated by UN agencies.

According to the findings, UN Agencies received 87.96% of the total JRP funding in 2026, while International NGOs received only 7.78%, National NGOs received 4.26%, and Local NGOs received 0% direct funding. This indicates that the overwhelming majority of humanitarian resources continue to be concentrated within international multilateral institutions, leaving very limited direct financial access for local and national actors.



The absence of direct funding allocation to local NGOs highlights one of the major challenges to humanitarian localization in the Rohingya response. Despite local organizations being deeply involved in frontline implementation, community mobilization, protection services, and emergency support, they remain largely excluded from direct financing mechanisms. Instead, many local NGOs continue to operate as downstream implementing partners under subcontracting arrangements led by UN agencies and INGOs.

The findings also demonstrate a significant gap between global localization commitments under the Grand Bargain and operational realities in the field. One of the core commitments of localization is to increase direct funding to local actors and strengthen their institutional leadership. However, the current funding distribution reflects continued dependency on internationally led systems and limited trust in local institutional capacity.

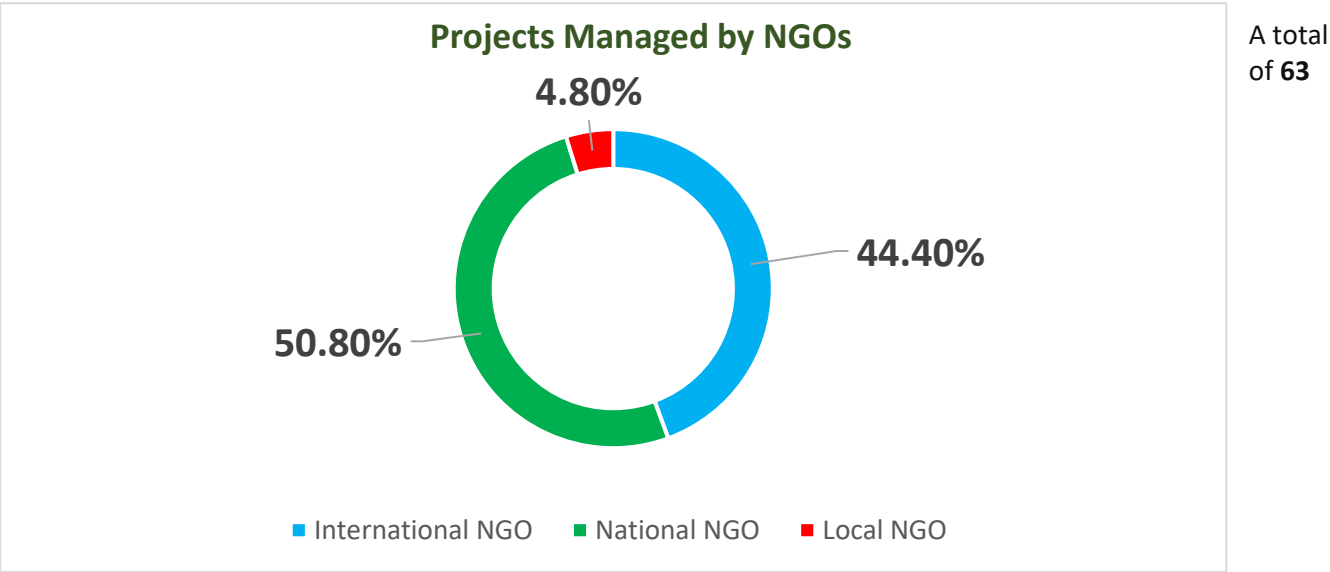
Furthermore, the unequal funding structure may contribute to power imbalances in humanitarian governance, as organizations controlling financial resources often hold greater influence over coordination, priority setting, and strategic decision-making. The limited financial access of national and local NGOs therefore restricts their ability to independently design, implement, and sustain humanitarian interventions.

Overall, the chart illustrates that although localization has become a central agenda in humanitarian reform discussions, meaningful financial localization within the Rohingya response remains extremely limited. The findings underscore the urgent need for more equitable funding mechanisms, increased direct financing to local actors, simplified donor compliance procedures, and stronger institutional investment in national and local humanitarian organizations.

Projects and Partnership in Rohingya camps

Types of Actors in Camps	Number Projects approved in last three months for Rohingya camps	Percentage of projects
International NGO	28	44.4%
National NGO	32	50.8%
Local NGO	3	4.8%
Total	63	100%

This analysis provides an overview of the recently approved humanitarian projects for Rohingya camps, specifically focusing on the types of organizations implementing them.



projects have been approved and initiated in the Rohingya camps within the last three months June to August 2025.

Dominance of the NGO Sector

The data confirms that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are the primary actors channeling aid and implementing projects in the camps.

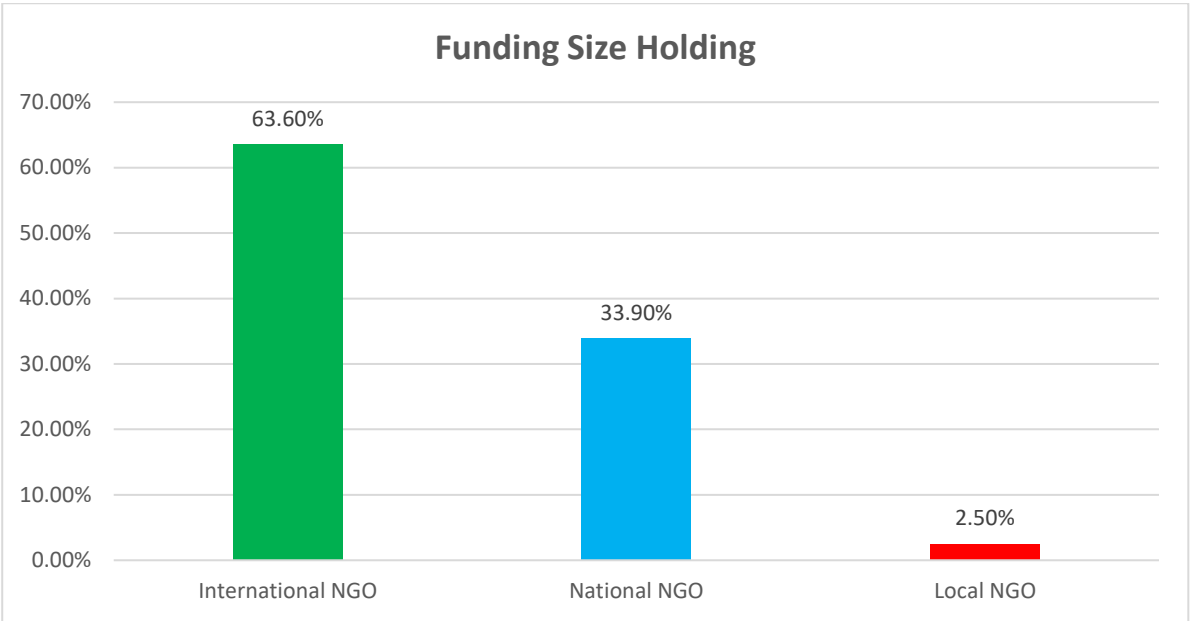
- National NGOs: The Leading Implementers**
National NGOs are the most prominent actors, responsible for **32 projects**, which constitutes a majority of **50.8%** of all approved projects. This suggests a strong reliance on and capacity within nationally-based organizations who likely possess valuable contextual knowledge, established networks, and cultural understanding of the operating environment.
- International NGOs: Significant Contributors**
International NGOs form the second largest group, implementing **28 projects**, or **44.4%** of the total. Their substantial involvement reflects the continued importance of international expertise, specialized capabilities, and access to global funding streams in supporting the large-scale Rohingya response.
- Local NGOs: Minimal Representation**
Local NGOs, which are typically smaller and community-based, have the smallest share of approved projects. With only **3 projects** approved, they represent just **4.8%** of the total. This minimal participation raises important questions about local capacity building, funding access for smaller organizations, and the degree of community-led intervention within the overall response strategy.

The findings reveal a response architecture heavily dependent on larger, established structures (National and International NGOs), which together account for **95.2%** of all projects. While this indicates a very limited role of Local NGOs indicate a potential gap in local, grassroots-level engagement and the empowerment of community-based structures.

The last three months have seen robust project activity in the Rohingya camps, predominantly led by National and International NGOs. To ensure a more sustainable and locally-owned response, stakeholders might consider strategies to increase the participation of Local NGOs, thereby fostering greater community involvement and resilience.

Project Funding Size Rohingya camps (million BDT.)

Types of Actors in Camps	Funding Size (million BDT.)	Percentage of funding size
International NGO	330	63.6%
National NGO	176	33.9%
Local NGO	13	2.5%
Total	519	100%



This analysis examines the distribution of financial resources among different types of actors implementing projects in the Rohingya camps over the last three months. The data reveals a significant disparity between the number of projects and the volume of funding allocated to each actor type.

Key Informant Interview Findings:

However, after many years, the funding capacity of local organizations, which previously relied on various donors, has become very fragile. They are now struggling due to a lack of funds. Yet, international actors have multiple commitments, such as the Grand Bargain, the Charter for Change, and most notably, the Humanitarian Reset declared by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in 2025. Based on this, my research collected substantial information, and in response to different questions, the study team gathered various answers.

Challenges or limitations for local NGOs in the Rohingya response

Many local NGOs responded that it was unclear who had established a baseline to measure their challenges or limitations. No comprehensive assessment had been done of all the Rohingya organizations working, which would identify gaps and guide future action. The leaders of these local organizations emphasized that no such baseline study had been conducted. Instead, international agencies and UN organizations use the term "localization" primarily to fundraise and attract donors, so they encourage donors to support local organizations. In reality, however, the major challenges for local organizations in the Rohingya response are that, previously, they had significant direct funding from various donors and INGOs. Over time, that direct funding has disappeared, making it very difficult for them to retain staff. Their employees, after training, often leave for international organizations and UN agencies when projects arise. Furthermore, if donors provided multi-year funding to grow these organizations from small to large, it would help. However, such arrangements are rare. They issue numerous proposal calls, but the funds tend to go to INGOs. After that, my second issue was how international organizations support local partners. They mentioned that in terms of partnerships, they provided software—such as IOM's Tally software—and various training to local organizations. Essentially, these organizations provided support mainly in the form of training and technical assistance.

Regarding the question asked the local NGO leaders whether they believed the capacity-building initiatives had been impactful in developing their organizations. The local NGO leaders stated that they did not have a very clear understanding on this matter. Although some training was provided, they observed that if these trainings had been truly impactful, it would have greatly supported local organizations. Instead, they noted that INGOs tend to support other INGOs, and UN agencies support other UN agencies, so the local organizations do not receive the same level of support. Consequently, the local organizations struggle because international agencies rely on a technical approach—they do not distinguish clearly between local organizations and national organizations. As a result, their reports and evaluations do not provide distinct data on which organizations are local and which are national.

The Humanitarian Reset:

The vision of the Humanitarian Reset is to transform the humanitarian system into one that is locally led and globally supported, rooted in communities and driven by the greatest needs. I asked the local NGO leaders whether they saw any positive reflection of this vision in the Rohingya response and how the response was locally led. In reply, the local leaders stated they did not perceive any positive reflection. They explained that neither the local organizations nor the INGOs are mentally prepared to hand over the response. In fact, INGOs favor INGOs, and UN agencies favor UN agencies, meaning that all sectors remain led by these large international actors. Thus, the system is still dominated by the UN. As a result, they argued, there is a significant gap: the system is not truly locally led. Much remains to be addressed and changed in order to realize a genuinely local humanitarian response.

Leadership and Coordination

Regarding leadership and coordination in the Rohingya response: According to the Humanitarian Reset, the response aims to empower local leaders by integrating them into humanitarian coordination teams. These teams are intended to operate strategically, in a unified manner, with stronger accountability and performance management. Furthermore, the roadmap outlined in Humanitarian Reset, Roadmap 15, suggests that coordination should adapt to context-specific models built around community needs, with leadership by local actors where possible.

In the Rohingya response, however, a new coordination system was established in 2026, called the Rohingya Coordination Team (RCT). Previously, the Inter-Sectoral Coordination Group (ISCG) led the response, dominated by UN agencies. Under the new structure, the RCT is chaired by UNHCR, in partnership with the government, and

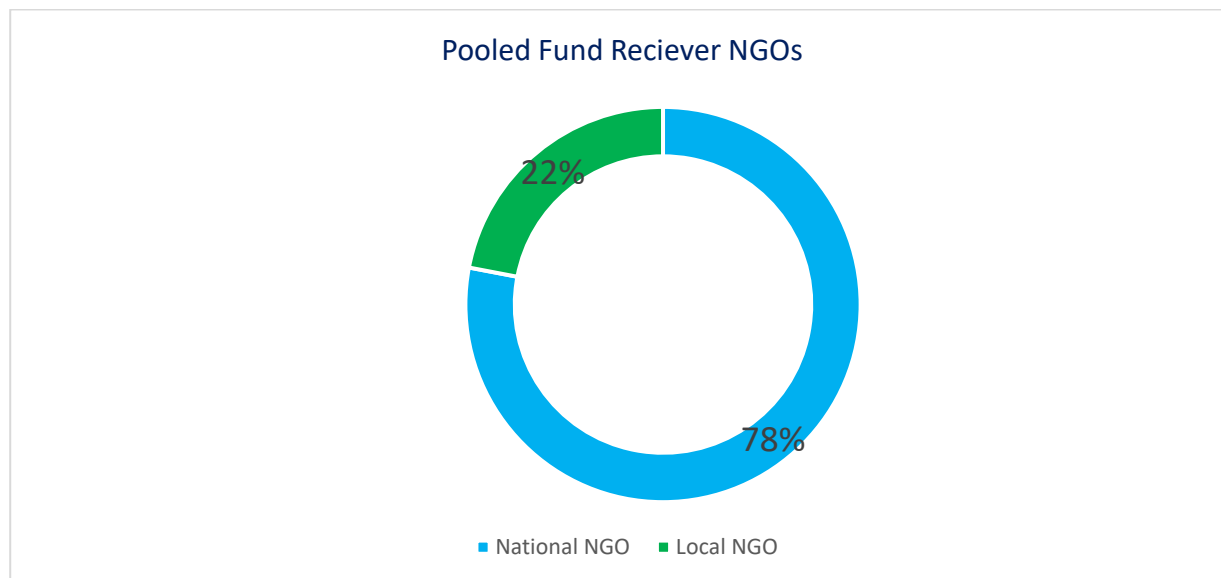
includes seven UN agencies—UNHCR, FAO, IOM, UNFPA, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO. Additionally, two international organizations and two national organizations were selected from the NGO platform, along with two local organization leaders. Despite this, the coordination remains heavily UN-dominated, as seven out of nine members are from UN agencies. Thus, even though the roadmap promises local leadership, in practice, local actors have very limited opportunity to contribute or shape decisions, as the process remains controlled by international actors.

Local Voices are excluded from decision-making-A case study:

In the first coordination meeting of the RCT, one of the local NGO leader experiences how their voice excluded. Representatives from INGOs, national NGOs, and UN agencies attended. A national organization representative—who typically represents a local organization—raised his hand to speak early in the agenda. His name was M Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Executive Director of COAST Foundation. He was present in the RCT meeting and wished to speak, but by the end of the meeting, his input was never heard. Despite multiple attempts to raise his points, he was asked to submit them in the chat box, effectively minimizing his voice. Thus, it was evident that international and UN organizations dominated the discussion, leaving little space for local or national NGOs. This raises the critical question: how can we claim that local organizations are being empowered when, in reality, they are excluded from decision-making and the UN remains in full control of the coordination structure?

BRAC Managed Pooled in Rohingya Response

BRAC has been managing a Pooled Fund for local organizations in Rohingya response. But the limited number of Pooled Fund partners from local NGOs but most of Pooled fund partner are National NGOs who are not from Cox's Bazar district. As this fund is only for local NGOs, we have found that, among the fund receiver only 22% are local NGOs (6 local NGOs) and 78% are national NGOs (21 NGOs).



It has been observed that although this pooled fund is officially intended for local organizations, nearly 78 percent of the participating NGOs are national-level organizations. As a result, concerns and negative perceptions have emerged among local communities and local NGO representatives regarding the actual localization objectives of the fund. Many stakeholders believe that a funding mechanism designed for local NGOs should primarily prioritize local organizations in both leadership and implementation roles. However, this expectation is not yet fully reflected in the current structure and allocation process of the pooled fund.

Local NGO representatives further emphasized that, despite ongoing discussions about promoting localization and increasing refugee-led or locally led initiatives, sufficient institutional capacity development support has not yet been provided to local organizations to enable them to effectively lead sectors or large-scale humanitarian interventions. Consequently, local actors continue to play comparatively limited roles in decision-making and sector leadership processes.

This situation has created dissatisfaction among grassroots organizations, who feel that the current funding structure does not adequately align with the principles of humanitarian localization. Therefore, many local stakeholders recommend that the pooled fund mechanism be reviewed and revised to ensure greater participation, leadership opportunities, and direct access to funding for genuinely local organizations. Strengthening the institutional and technical capacities of local NGOs is also considered essential to achieving meaningful localization and sustainable humanitarian leadership in the Rohingya response.

COAST, CCNF and BDCSO process contribution in advancing localization

Since the adoption of the Grand Bargain at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, localization has become a central commitment in global humanitarian reform, emphasizing greater leadership, decision-making authority, and direct financing for local and national actors. In Bangladesh, the Rohingya refugee response that began in August 2017 created one of the world's largest humanitarian operations and simultaneously exposed longstanding structural inequalities between international and local humanitarian actors. While local civil society organizations (CSOs) and national NGOs were among the first responders, their participation in humanitarian leadership, coordination, funding, and strategic decision-making remained disproportionately limited. This context stimulated a sustained localization movement led by Bangladeshi civil society.

Among the organizations at the forefront of this movement, COAST Foundation has played a pioneering role in promoting localization as both a humanitarian reform agenda and a broader civil society movement. Building upon its long-standing engagement in aid effectiveness, accountability, and civil society strengthening, COAST aligned its advocacy with the commitments of the Grand Bargain and the Charter for Change following the World Humanitarian Summit. Rather than treating localization solely as a project objective, COAST has consistently promoted it as a structural reform that seeks equitable partnerships, strengthened national ownership, accountable humanitarian action, and sustainable capacity development of local institutions. The organization's advocacy has been grounded in research, policy dialogue, evidence generation, media engagement, and constructive collaboration with government institutions, UN agencies, donors, international NGOs, and national civil society organizations.

To institutionalize this agenda nationally, COAST initiated the Bangladesh CSO NGO Coordination Process (BDCSO Process) in 2017 as a countrywide platform of local and national NGOs committed to advancing localization, humanitarian accountability, and civil society leadership. The network has organized numerous national consultations, seminars, policy dialogues, research initiatives, and advocacy campaigns aimed at promoting equitable partnerships and strengthening the voice of Bangladeshi civil society in humanitarian governance. Through sustained engagement, BDCSO contributed to the development of the Charter of Expectations and the Charter of Accountability, facilitated dialogue between local organizations and international humanitarian actors, and strengthened Bangladesh's representation in global localization discussions. Its recognition as a Grand Bargain signatory further reflects the growing international acknowledgement of locally led humanitarian coordination in Bangladesh.

Following the massive Rohingya influx into Cox's Bazar in 2017, COAST also facilitated the establishment of the Cox's Bazar CSO NGO Forum (CCNF) to ensure that local organizations could collectively engage in the humanitarian coordination architecture. CCNF emerged as a platform representing local NGOs and CSOs working in the Rohingya response, advocating for meaningful participation of local actors in planning, implementation, coordination, and policy discussions. Since its establishment, the forum has organized policy dialogues, localization studies, public seminars, World Refugee Day and World Humanitarian Day events, position papers, and consultations involving government representatives, UN agencies, donors, INGOs, academics, and local humanitarian organizations. These initiatives consistently highlighted the comparative advantages of local actors, including rapid response capacity, contextual knowledge, community trust, accountability, and long-term presence in affected communities.

The advocacy efforts of COAST, BDCSO, and CCNF have contributed to important developments within Bangladesh's humanitarian system. Their sustained evidence-based campaigns and policy engagement helped elevate localization from a normative commitment to an operational policy discussion. These efforts contributed to the Grand Bargain Localization Field Mission to Bangladesh, the establishment of the UN-led Localization Task Force under the Strategic Executive Group, the commissioning of localization studies in the Rohingya response, the preparation of a Localization Road Map, and increased dialogue on equitable partnerships, quality funding,

and accountability to affected populations. Throughout this process, the three platforms have consistently emphasized that effective humanitarian action requires complementarity between international and local actors, where international organizations provide technical assistance, resource mobilization, and quality assurance, while local organizations lead community engagement, implementation, and long-term resilience building.

This research builds upon that evolving policy and operational context. By examining the localization of humanitarian aid in the Rohingya response, it seeks to assess the extent to which global localization commitments have translated into practice and to identify the opportunities, challenges, and lessons that can strengthen locally led humanitarian action in Bangladesh and other protracted humanitarian settings.

Countrywide Localization Movement (BDCSO)

Year	Event/Initiative	Contribution
2017	Formation of BDCSO	Established a nationwide network of local and national NGOs to advocate for localization and civil society leadership.
2018–Present	National seminars and webinars on Grand Bargain and Charter for Change	Regular dialogues promoting locally led humanitarian action and accountability.
2019	Divisional localization meetings	Expanded localization discussions beyond Dhaka through regional civil society engagement.
2020–2024	Resource publications on localization	Published guidance on partnership, Grand Bargain, localization frameworks, and humanitarian reform.
2024	Grand Bargain Annual Meeting dissemination	Shared key outcomes and recommendations with Bangladeshi civil society.
May 2025	Connecting Localization Mobilization in the Greater Civil Society Movement	Proposed linking localization with broader civil society movements rather than project-based initiatives.
October 2025	Grand Bargain 3.0 Survey Report	Published findings on localization implementation and country-level progress.

Localization in the Rohingya Response (CCNF & COAST)

Date	Event	Main localization contribution
3 March 2018	Dialogue on Integrating Grand Bargain Commitments in Rohingya Relief	Called for reduced transaction costs, transparency, and partnerships with local NGOs.
20 June 2018	World Refugee Day Program	Promoted dignity, refugee rights, and stronger local leadership.
2018	Film Show on Rohingya Genocide in Ukhiya and Teknaf	Raised public awareness, promoted social harmony, and justice for Rohingya refugees.
19 May 2019	Study on Localisation of Humanitarian Aid	Released one of Bangladesh's earliest evidence-based localization studies focusing on the Rohingya response.

23 May 2019	Localization Workshop	More than 80 participants from 47 NGOs urged UN agencies and INGOs to adopt a multi-year localization strategy.
13 June 2019	COAST–Samakal Roundtable	Discussed sustainable and localized approaches ahead of World Refugee Day.
19 August 2021	World Humanitarian Day Seminar	Called for greater participation of Union Parishads and local governments in the Rohingya response.
2022	Fifth Anniversary Press Conference	Reviewed progress and challenges in localization after five years of the Rohingya response.
December 2023	Regional Humanitarian Partnership Week (Bangkok)	Shared Bangladesh's localization experience in a regional forum.
20 June 2024	World Refugee Day Seminar	Focused on dignity for Rohingya refugees, Bangladesh's responsibilities, and localized humanitarian action.
19 August 2024	World Humanitarian Day Discussion	Humanitarian actors called for safety, security, and a sustainable, locally led Rohingya response.
2025	Position Paper on UNHCR Partnership Practices	Criticized declining partnerships with local NGOs and advocated equitable localization.
20–21 June 2026	World Refugee Day Seminar	Called for a localized response, support for host communities, and a safe repatriation roadmap.

Major Policy Outcomes Attributed to COAST, BDCSO, and CCNF

COASTs have several published documentations, these localization initiatives contributed to several broader policy developments:

- The **Grand Bargain Field Demonstration Mission** visited Bangladesh, including the Rohingya response.
- The **UN Strategic Executive Group** established a **Localization Task Force** led by UNDP with participation from UNHCR, Save the Children, Oxfam, and local NGOs.
- A localization study for the Rohingya response was commissioned and informed a **Localization Roadmap**.
- Donors introduced a **Localization Pooled Fund**.
- Bangladesh civil society developed the **Charter of Expectations** and **Charter of Accountability** to strengthen locally led humanitarian action.
- In 2025, **BDCSO became a Grand Bargain signatory**, strengthening the representation of Bangladeshi local and national NGOs in global humanitarian policy discussions.

Recommendation

Based on the study, the following recommendations are highlighted:

1. Increase the representation of local NGOs in humanitarian governance: The Rohingya Coordination Team (RCT) and other strategic coordination bodies should ensure meaningful representation of local NGOs and CSOs, with decision-making authority rather than symbolic participation.

2. Introduce local NGO co-leadership in humanitarian sectors: At least one national or local NGO should serve as a co-lead in each humanitarian sector, with a roadmap for qualified local organizations to assume sector leadership over time.

3. Expand direct funding to local organizations: Donors and UN agencies should establish measurable targets for increasing direct financial support to local NGOs, reducing dependence on subcontracting arrangements and strengthening local ownership.

4. Reform pooled funding mechanisms: Funding mechanisms designed for local organizations should prioritize genuinely local NGOs through transparent eligibility criteria, simplified compliance requirements, and equitable allocation processes.

5. Strengthen institutional capacity through long-term investment: Capacity strengthening should move beyond short-term training and include multi-year institutional support, organizational development, leadership mentoring, digital systems, financial management, safeguarding, and compliance strengthening.

6. Promote equitable partnerships between international and local actors: Partnership agreements should be based on shared decision-making, mutual accountability, fair cost recovery, transparent overhead allocation, and recognition of the comparative advantages of local organizations.

7. Develop a Bangladesh Localization Strategy for the Rohingya response: The Government of Bangladesh, UN agencies, donors, INGOs, and local NGO platforms should jointly develop a time-bound localization strategy with clear indicators, responsibilities, and monitoring mechanisms aligned with the Grand Bargain and Humanitarian Reset.

8. Strengthen accountability to affected communities through local leadership: Community engagement, complaint and feedback mechanisms, participatory planning, and monitoring systems should be increasingly managed by local organizations that possess contextual knowledge, community trust, and long-term presence.

9. Establish a localization monitoring and reporting framework: Annual reporting should track progress using measurable indicators such as local representation in governance structures, sector leadership, direct funding to local organizations, partnership quality, and community participation to assess progress toward localization commitments.

10. Recognize and institutionalize the role of local NGO networks. Platforms such as the Bangladesh CSO NGO Coordination Process (BDCSO) and the Cox's Bazar CSO NGO Forum (CCNF) should be formally engaged in humanitarian policy dialogue, coordination, research, and advocacy to ensure that the perspectives of local civil society inform humanitarian decision-making at national and global levels.

11. Considering the operational and financial challenges JRP and overall funding, localization should be expedited, a clear focus on the cost-effectiveness and long-term sustainability that local NGOs bring to the response.

Annex 1: Definition of Terminology

Definition of NGOs (Local, National and International) working in the Rohingya response in Cox's Bazar. NGOs definitions supported by **IASC localization marker** definitions paper 24 January 2018.

National NGOs/civil society organisations (CSOs): National NGOs/CSOs operating in the aid recipient country in which they are headquartered, working in multiple subnational regions, and not affiliated to an international NGO. This category can also include national faith-based organisations.

The NGO have countrywide operation only in Bangladesh is considered as national NGO. For example- TMSS, Jagorani Chakra Foundation, BRAC, etc.

Local NGOs/CSOs: Local NGOs/CSOs operating in a specific, geographically defined, subnational area of an aid recipient country, without affiliation to an international NGO/CSO. This category can also include community-based organisations and local faith-based organisations.

And the local NGO also defines as the organization originated in a local community and grown up with the local leadership is considered as local NGO. For example, Mukti, COAST, Nongor, PHALS, etc in Cox's Bazar district.

International NGO: The NGO have presence at least two or more than two national boundaries and working in a country as an international federation member is considered as INGO. For instance, Save the Children, Tearfund, Plan International, DCA, IRC, etc.

UN agencies: The United Nations agencies (UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP, IOM, WHO, etc.) those who have direct and partnership in Rohingya refugee response.

Annex 2: FGD and KII questions

Annex 3: Reference

<https://cxb-cso-ngo.org/2021/08/04/thanks-for-rohingya-response-localization-roadmap-but-what-about-implementation/>

<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain/mission-report-bangladesh-localization-workstream-demonstrator-country-field-mission>