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A4EP event at the Regional Humanitarian Partnership Week-2023 in Bangkok, Thailand

**Global Humanitarian Actors call for empowerment of front-line workers in aid system**

**Bangkok, 12 December, 2023**. Frontline workers are the key to serve immediately the community and people affected by crisis. But the aid system often does not recognise the value and contribution of front-line workers engaged in aid system. Considering the invaluable contribution of the front-line workers, Alliance for Empowering Partnership (A4EP) organised a session titled Empowering frontline actors for equitable partnership for localization: Democratization of development and de-colonizing aid yesterday on 11 December at the Regional Humanitarian Partnership Weeek-2023 being happening from 11-12 December in Bangkok. The speakers call to identify the critical issues and showcase good examples of empowering front-line workers in order to build a sustainable and accountable aid system at country levels. And also call for attention to the crucial role that UN agencies, INGOs, and national NGOs must play in advancing localization efforts.

We embarked on a journey to explore the challenges and opportunities surrounding the localization agenda in relation to the plight of the frontline workers. Discrimination, the resource challenge working as volunteers, burned out local workers, brain-drain of local organizations – losing local workers to international due to insecured salary and lack of social security, contractual partnership, challenges to ensuring sustainability of local initiatives, locals bound to limitations set by donors (lack of flexible funding) affecting contracts and well-being of staff and sustainability of operation – are just among the issues confronting frontline workers, they opined.

The session was moderated by Smruti Patel, the secretary of A4EP alliance in Geneva while Md. Iqbal Uddin from COAST Foundation in Bangladesh presented the survey result. The speakers of the event were Renu Sijapati, General Secretary of Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO) in Nepal, Anwar Muhammad, Global Partnerships Advisor of People in Need in Pakistan, Aska Joanna Warchal- Beneschi, Coordinator of the Polish NGO Forum- Razem, and Ahmed Al Yubaidi from Health and Social Care Organization in Iraq. The session summarized by Regina Nanette Salvador-Antequisa, Chair of A4EP and Executive Director at EcoWEB in the Philippines.

The survey conducted by A4PE and presented by Md. Iqbal Uddin from COAST Foundation revealed challenges relating not only to practices but the perception and attitude among humanitarian actors within the sector that somehow perpetuates the remnants of colonialism that remain as obstacles to realizing the localization, empowering local actors and locally-led agenda. The survey also found confrontation by the power dynamic within local organization, between local and international partners and the power element in the aid architecture shaping the current state of frontline workers.

In the Question and Answers session, the participants from across the globe emphasized the need for empowering and ensuring accountability to front-line workers. Tangible solutions to challenges and issues are offered and already initiated, emphasizing the importance of locally-led humanitarian and advocacy actions, people-centered approaches and of local resourcing. We see the importance of shifting power, complementarity and inclusivity in humanitarian response, they opined.

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