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Report

LOCALIZATION INITIATIVES IN AFGHANISTAN TO FACILITATE THE DELIVERY OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Good Practices from IASC Task Force 5

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Localization initiatives in Afghanistan to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance

A case study of the Afghanistan Child Protection Area of Responsibility and Education Cluster

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Geographical Coverage

Afghanistan

Context

The first World Humanitarian Summit, held in Istanbul in 2016, resulted in Grand Bargain (1.0) commitments that aim to make transformative changes in the way the humanitarian system operates and thereby deliver better outcomes for crisis-affected populations worldwide. Grand Bargain, (2.0) which commenced in 2021 has two enabling priorities: (i) A critical mass of quality funding is reached that allows an effective and efficient response, ensuring visibility and accountability; (ii) Greater support is provided for the leadership, delivery and capacity of local responders and the participation of affected communities in addressing humanitarian needs. These enabling priorities are often summarized as "quality funding" and "localization".

On 28 March 2022, the Afghanistan Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR), together with the Education Cluster, conducted a localization consensus-building workshop targeting its members. This workshop aimed to bring the members of the CP AoR together and to initiate a discussion on the localization of Child Protection coordination in Afghanistan. It provided a space for the members of the coordination group to discuss and agree on what localization means to them and what is required to advance localization in Child Protection coordination at the national and sub-national levels. One of the key deliberations was to set up a Localization Taskforce that will spearhead entrenching localization policies and practices within the sector.

Similarly, the Education Cluster began discussions with the Global Education Cluster on how to move forward with localization in 2022. Though not much progress has been made in this regard, it was agreed that the Education Cluster would join the Taskforce under CP AOR given that most partners also implement education programmes and there are clear synergies between education and child protection in Afghanistan.

Implementation and objective

Afghanistan has been a protracted emergency for over 20 years with UN and international NGOs (INGOs) present. However, the limited inclusion of local and national humanitarian actors (L/NAs) in various emergency response contexts has impacted the localization agenda. This includes low capacities, resulting in them not receiving humanitarian pool funding, as well as less participation, representation and leadership in coordination structures. CP AoR together with the Education Cluster established a Localization Taskforce to shift more power and resources to L/NAs. The Taskforce, which has representatives from INGOs, L/NAs and the UN, conducted a consensus workshop on localization and identified key areas of intervention which included: increasing participation, representation and

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This good practice was identified and documented through a template developed on the basis of the 2021 IASC Guidance on Localization, which aims at supporting efforts to strengthen the meaningful participation, representation, and leadership of local and national humanitarian actors (L/NAs) within IASC humanitarian coordination structures. Its objective is to share knowledge and inspire progress and positive change regarding the meaningful participation of local actors in Humanitarian Coordination platforms. The original draft of this good practice template was developed by the KORE (Knowledge Platform for Emergencies and Resilience) team in the Office of Emergencies and Resilience of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and was tailored to the needs of this IASC initiative.

leadership of L/NAs in coordination mechanisms; strengthening the institutional capacity of L/NAs, as well as advocacy to have them receive direct funding from the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF).

The Localization Task Force is composed of CP AoR and Education Coordinators from eight agencies, six L/NAs and two INGOs. These include four L/NAs in the CP AoR and three in the Education Cluster. In the CP AoR are: Village of Peace Organization for Afghans (VOPOFA), Social Humanitarian Assistance Organization (SHAO), Save the Children, and Children in Crisis/ Street Child (CIC). In the Education Cluster are: Afghan Women's Educational Centre (AWEC), Organization for Community Coordination and Development (OCCD), Afghan Amputee Bicyclists for Rehabilitation and Recreation – (AABRAR), and Citizens Organization for Advocacy and Resilience (COAR).

Methodological approach

Initial discussion on supporting the development of localization strategy was conducted with support from Global CP AoR followed by a webinar that recommended the need for a consensus building workshop. The workshop initiated a discussion on the localization of Child Protection coordination in Afghanistan. An action plan was drafted, however, due to competing priorities in the response following the earthquake emergency in Afghanistan, most of the planned activities didn't take place until Q4 of 2023.

Members of the Taskforce were identified and terms of reference (ToR) developed. The ToR was approved and launched in a CP AoR meeting in November 2022. Meanwhile, advocacy efforts directed at the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) led to more outcomes on due diligence assessment for Local National Actors, confirming eligibility and securing funding. Currently, one of the four agencies that were in the due diligence assessment process is eligible to apply for the pool fund.

The CP AoR sub-national structures are co-led by both national and International NGOs (three out of five regions, as well as in the Taskforce as Chair or Co-Chair). The Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) has two L/NAs, two UN and two L/NAs. In the Education Cluster, one sub-national cluster is led by a local actor. The SAG has three National NGOs (NNGOS) with one L/NA represented at the Humanitarian Country Team. Due to the limited capacity, training has been conducted for all CP AoR partners on MH, PSS EQUIPS and Case Management. The case management and work with the Community Based Child Protection Network/Child Protection Action Network (CPAN) under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA)/Department of Labour and Social Affairs (DOLSA) are strengthened for the safe identification and referral of children to specialised services.

The Education Cluster worked to strengthen the capacity of the sub-national clusters by conducting several field visits and monitoring programme implementation at the field-level throughout the year. Sub-national clusters can drive localization even further. By supporting local partners to implement their projects and showcase their work, it strengthens and builds the capacity of local partners to not only remain relevant, but to also show that they can effectively solve local education problems themselves. With the continued ban on secondary girls' education, the cluster is relying more and more on local partners to come up with solutions to help girls access education. The progress made in this direction would not be possible without local partners.

Additionally, the Education Cluster is working on revitalising the Community-Based Education (CBE) Working Group with the Ministry of Education, where we see the Ministry of Economy taking a leadership role alongside the cluster as they are the custodians of CBE policy.

Unfortunately, preparedness and response have always been the weakest link in CP AOR based on the Cluster Coordination Performances Monitoring report (CCPM), given that it's a complex emergency and we must take seasonal planning into account. Planning was utilized for the emergency response under the umbrella of the protection cluster and CP AOR responses were based on AHF allocations to support additional needs within the framework of the Humanitarian Response Plan 2022.

The localization task force discusses engagements based on a geographical mapping of areas with needs and then directly applies for AHF funding, or in partnership with an INGO jointly applies for funding to provide emergency response in a given location where they have a comparative advantage. Through localization, it's easier to coordinate response and mobilize partners and resources to respond.

Results and impact	The AHF has disbursed more than 30 per cent of the funding to L/NAs in the CP AoR which contributes toward building the child protection portfolio and response. Discussions to increase this to 50 per cent are ongoing in the respective clusters. L/NA participation in the clusters as registered members entitles them to participation in the CP AoR and Education Cluster, SAG membership, and task forces and working groups. Representation of the L/NAs in sub-national cluster leadership as co-leads increases their capacity and visibility. L/NAs participating in coordination activities have had more advantages and access to a strategic partnership for funding through recommendations from the CP AoR. This includes being part of a long-term partnership with the UN and INGOs that circulate expressions of Interest and calls for proposals through the CP AoR. Partnership opportunities and joint resource mobilization by sub-granting NNGOs to apply for AHF have increased efficient service delivery based on access and knowledge of the local context. L/NAs have benefited from technical capacity on child protection thematic areas from INGOs that are CP AoR members, as well as institutional capacity through the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief & Development (ACBAR).
Sustainability	The practice builds on the partners' institutional capacity to plan, fundraise, implement, and monitor projects within the given timeframes. The partners already have community social acceptance since they operate within religious and cultural values. Financially, L/NAs have depended largely on INGOs, including UN agencies, for funding. In this arrangement, NNGOs and L/NAs will continue to operate as implementing partners who are sub-granted to carry out activities and participate in leadership and coordination at the sub-national level and deliver humanitarian assistance.
Replicability and upscaling	Establishing a joint localization task team consisting of CP AoR and Education Cluster can be replicated as a good practice. This approach can be replicated in contexts with humanitarian pool funding, then the International NGOs can access funds and sub-grant NNGOS and L/NAs. INGOs, including UN agencies and ICCT, can advocate for more access to funding for NNGOs (e.g., 50 per cent of funding reserved for NNGOs). NNGOs and L/NAs can be further entrenched in the process through participation in local leadership and coordination roles. Capacity of L/NAs and NNGOs can be taken even further through increasing their participation, representation, and leadership in coordination mechanisms. L/NAs are now members of SAG, as well as participating in different task forces including the Localization Task Force. L/NAs are also co-leading, including Sub-National coordination of are Afghanistan Development & Welfare Services Organization (ADWSO) in the Northern Region, the Social Humanitarian Assistance Organization (SHAO) in the Southern Region, Today's Afghanistan Conciliation Trust (TACT) in the Central Region and Education Clusters at the sub-national level. Through advocacy from the task team, L/NAs have started receiving direct funding from the AHF, confirming that NNGO's technical and institutional capacities have been strengthened.
Key learning	It is possible to advocate for more local NGO engagement and participation in leadership, representation, coordination roles, and access to funding in a humanitarian context. The localization agenda should be prioritized in the programme context and the resources made available for its operationalization. If you build partners' capacity, they can participate in decision-making, mobilization of resources, and contributing to outreach in hard-to-reach locations.
Related resources	Afghanistan Localization Consensus Building Workshop Afghanistan Localization Taskforce Terms of Reference Minutes of the Localization Task Force in Afghanistan
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