LOCAL Communiqué

Even after more than six years of the World Humanitarian Summit, more achievements have yet to be made under the global frameworks of Grand Bargain and Charter4Change to positively influence local and national actors' functioning. The localisation discourse has yet to take off in countries like India despite having scores of country offices of the signatories of the two. The new phase of aid colonisation through local fundraising by the country offices has further weakened the local response mechanism. This systematic marginalisation has severe ramifications for the local/national organisations and their nexus approach to seeking durable solutions for the communities they work with. There is a need to advance local humanitarian leadership with a solid collective voice and coordinated engagement by local and national actors. Still, there needs to be a mechanism to build and sustain this. With this realisation, 15 local and national organisations from 10 states of India assembled for a consultation on 7-8 February 2023 in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. They agreed to launch a Local Organisations' Coalition for Advancing Localisation (LOCAL) platform for a collaborative approach to transform the Indian humanitarian architecture, led by the local organisations and frontline actors.

Various consultation sessions were also joined by the BHA of USAID; DG ECHO, Brussels; Vitol Foundation, UK; Spark, the Netherlands; Start Network, UK; International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), UK and Catholic Relief Services, India. Sony Pictures Networks Pvt. Ltd., HCL Foundation and Financial Management Service Foundation ensured in-person participation.

Primarily functioning as a non-financial platform, LOCAL aims to set a new benchmark for sector-wide change and promote cooperative and locally-led humanitarian architecture. Following are the key outcomes and decisions of the LOCAL consultation:

Identify and address critical challenges to localisation:
Only a few local organisations have direct access to donors and they too rarely receive adequate operation and overhead costs. This has systematically been causing institutional weakening and, thereby marginalisation of the first-response mechanism, which is acknowledged as being timely, cost-efficient and following a nexus approach. The small size of local organisations often adversely affects their fundraising efforts. Therefore, a collaborative response mechanism was agreed upon through the LOCAL platform, which will also be presented to donors as the first intermediary. The Platform will offer an enabling environment for exchange and learning, actively provide membership services such as high-end training programmes to build resilient, disaster-ready local organisations, and build collective identity and credibility for member organisations.

A National Dashboard for Aid Transparency:
To address the trust deficit and an absolute dearth of financial data at the national level, it was agreed upon to set up an Indian version of IATI. To begin with, every member of LOCAL will publish their financial data on the national dashboard to ensure transparency and accountability to donors, communities and other stakeholders. Other organisations will be encouraged to join LOCAL and/or publish their data on the dashboard, which will have curated, contextualised, and simplified data on funding and transaction layers until it reaches the end beneficiaries. The dashboard will show the flow of funds, utilisation of funds in different categories, and overhead funds. The Platform will provide data analytics globally, sectoral information, cost per beneficiary, and geographical spread.

A National Pooled Fund:
Given the lack of direct access to donors, disaster responses often get significantly delayed. As of now, there is yet to be a pooled fund in India to support immediate lifesaving interventions. To address this challenge and to keep humanitarian interventions timely and relevant, it was agreed upon to establish a national pooled fund to initiate a response in 24-36 hours. The pooled fund can offer a space to donors to shift funding to local actors more directly by either making a contribution or a pledge to enable effective locally-led responses.

A National Roster:
Most of the LOCAL members are small organisations, therefore, often considered by donors as needing more capacity. To offset this gap, mapping of human resources and sectoral expertise across the LOCAL platform will be done to develop a roster to identify existing capabilities, collaboratively address gaps and provide surge support to LOCAL members leading an emergency response. Gradually, external professionals shall also be invited to join the roster to support the locally-led response mechanism.

Accountability Charter:
The platform will develop an **Accountability Charter** which will be a binding on each LOCAL member and any new organisations aspiring to join the platform. A donor consultation will also be held to design a **Donor Accountability Charter** to ensure donor systems are conducive to local actors and locally-led responses.

Promoting Country-Level Accountability of Signatories:
It was agreed to write to the signatories of Grand Bargain, Charter4Change and Pledge4Change, having country offices in India to share an update on their achievements under different frameworks. The LOCAL platform will also support them in better delivery of the commitments.

Wider and Shared Representation:
There are various networks locally, nationally, regionally, and globally but with limited space for local voices. Most of the network memberships come with a cost. It is time and resource-consuming for a resource-poor local organisation to join the networks. A mapping of essential networks was done to share the representation responsibility across LOCAL members as representative of the rest.

A Fully Functional Secretariat to Support LOCAL Members:
Most local actors are resource-poor and need access to overhead costs or institution-building support. That becomes a barrier to working on robust compliance mechanisms, accessing donors, applying for funding opportunities, ensuring effective communications and visibility online to build the organisations' credibility, and so on. It is almost impossible for each local organisation to recruit the necessary staff to support these functions. To address that, a LOCAL secretariat will be established, recruiting the necessary staff to support LOCAL members to build the systems and infrastructure required.

A National Programme on Safe Migration:
LOCAL members work in marginalised areas, also vulnerable to disasters. Trafficking, including sex trafficking, remains high, increasing during disasters. To address that, a **migration tracker** shall be developed to track distress migration and cases of sex trafficking to eliminate chances of sex trafficking, reduce instances of distress migration, provide the necessary support to migrants if facing exploitation, and rescue and rehabilitation of trafficked people. This will be an additional programme that LOCAL members with anti-trafficking expertise will lead and streamline across the platform.

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