Participation of National NGOs and NGO Fora Within Humanitarian Country Teams

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This report was commissioned by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies and carried out by a consultancy team comprising graduate students from the London School of Economics and Political Science Department of International Development. The consultancy team consists of Emily McDonald, Gabriel Green, Gillian Moir and John Kamau.

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Disclaimer

The following research will be used to inform ICVA's work in supporting national NGO participation in humanitarian coordination teams and published as part of ICVA's analysis of the issues surrounding localization.

Furthermore, the research will be used to promote targeted discussions with key stakeholder and to create recommendations for best practices on strengthening and standardizing participation between national NGOs and HCTs during the humanitarian coordination process.

THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE HUMANITARIAN ACTION

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1. Executive Summary

Introduction

Historical Context

To date, the agenda of localization has been focused on providing more direct funding to local actors, increasing decision-making at the local level, strengthening local capacities and developing international and local partnerships (ICVA,2018). This has primarily been carried out through the incorporation of National NGOs (NNGOs) and NGO fora into Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) and OCHA or INGO partnerships with NNGOs.

Yet, there remains a need to understand the effectiveness of these programs, as well as the quality and challenges of NNGO and NGO fora participation within HCTs.

Aim of the Project

The research was conducted with the aim of exploring the quality of participation, as well as the challenges inhibiting meaningful participation, by NNGOs and NGO fora within Humanitarian Country Teams.

Research Questions

A set of research questions have been proposed by ICVA for the purpose of this research:

→ Why is there a lack of representation of NNGOs in some HCTs, despite the amount of information available to senior humanitarian staff? What is the justification for this lack of representation?

→ Once participation between HCTs and NNGOs does take place, what are the factors that increase or decrease the quality of local participation? How is quality defined by stakeholders and how can it be measured?

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design, consisting of a literature review and a total of 29 semi-structured interviews with NNGO, INGO and UN agencies, along with Humanitarian Coordinators in Nigeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Myanmar.

Conceptual Framework

Resulting from a thorough review of relevant literature on localization and participation of humanitarian actors within the global humanitarian coordination system, four overarching themes were derived which framed the interview questions and subsequent data analysis:

1. Organizational Capacity
2. Trust
3. Accountability
4. Collaboration & Communication

Organizational capacity

Successes

→ HCT members recognize the ability of NNGOs to provide contextual knowledge and implement local-context specific programs

→ Mentorship and twinning programs have shown a great deal of results in capacity development of NNGOs and trust building between humanitarian actors

→ Country-based pooled funds have a significant impact on the development NNGO capacity – especially when funds are flexible and can be used for capacity development programs

Areas for Improvement

→ Technical expertise is in need of development, especially relating to financial management, knowledge of the UN Humanitarian System and other organizational capacities.

→ English as a primary working language poses a substantial roadblock for NNGOs.

→ Current training provided by OCHA and other international actors is often seen as ineffective and unsustainable.

→ High NNGO staff turnover and "poaching" of NNGO staff by international organizations.

→ NNGOs are generally viewed as subcontractors of humanitarian projects, rather than equal partners.

Trust

Successes

→ HCT members which meet and work together in person often reported much higher feelings of trust for one another.

→ When NNGOs feel like they are treated as equal partners, meaningful participation is improved.

Areas for Improvement:

→ Difficulties surrounding NNGO financial management capacities and practices causes conflict and breaks trust between national and international actors.

→ There exists a general lack of avenues for NNGOs to voice concerns and provide feedback

→ NNGOs often struggle to attend HCT meetings due to a lack of resources.

Accountability

Successes

→ The implementation of pre-HCT meetings hosted by OCHA or NGO fora offers NNGOs a space to freely express concerns and fosters both accountability and more meaningful participation in HCT meetings.

Areas for Improvement

→ UN and donor requirements, especially relating to funding, frequently was reported as overburdening for NNGOs – reducing trust and overall participation.

→ NNGOs felt that they lacked specific responsibilities and duties on HCTs, which was seen as a disincentivizing factor for their participation.

→ The ability for HCT members to hold their peers to account was also absent in all observed HCTs

Collaboration and Communication

Successes

→ The growing prevalence of NGO fora has helped to encourage collaboration and communication amongst both NNGOs and international actors.

→ Due to the use of information and communications technologies, there are a variety of channels of communication between HCT members.

Areas for Improvement:

→ Levels of collaboration appear to be very context dependent. Countries with issues of armed conflict for example appeared to have less inter-NNGO collaboration.

→ Open and constructive dialogue between NNGOs and international actors is a challenge. However, the reason for this was not agreed upon by HCs, OCHA, NNGOs or INGOs.

Transcending and Intersecting Issues

Successes

→ There appear to be many informal channels of communication between both NNGOs and international actors.

→ Some HCs possess a strong focus on localization, which has placed participation of NNGOs in the HCT and capacity development of NNGOs as a priority within their country teams.

Areas for Improvement:

→ NNGOs often feel that having just three or four seats out of 20 to 30 total seats on the HCT could be increased in order to reflect the diversity of organizations and issues present in the country.

→ High staff turnover has significantly reduced the ability of NNGOs to improve or even maintain their level of participation on HCTs

→ NNGOs often feel that they lack power and an ability to influence the agenda of HCT meetings or planning of humanitarian action as a whole.

→ Perceptions about localization and the role of NNGOs can be placed into two broad categories:

1. Localization as a paradigm shift vs. localization as a tool for aid delivery
2. NNGOs as subcontractors vs. NNGOs as equal partners

Recommendations

Organizational capacity

→ Expand capacity improvement initiatives by HCTs to focus on NNGO capacity development.

Trust

→ Promote relationship building through face-to-face interactions.

→ Consider the extension of HCT member term limits.

→ Establish means for HCT members to provide feedback and express concerns freely.

→ Create or improve training modules for the initiation of new HCT members.

→ Advocate for a shift in donor perceptions and priorities regarding funding for NNGOs.

Accountability

→ Utilize and build upon the HCT compact.

→ Strengthen the inclusion of NNGOs in agenda setting and humanitarian planning.

→ Implement regular sessions to reflect on lessons learned.

Collaboration and Communication

→ Foster and strengthen NNGO fora participation.

→ Ensure NNGO representatives are encouraged and enabled to speak during and understand HCT meetings.
→ Advocate for a HCT compact on localization.

Transcending and Intersecting Issues

→ Formalize a standard, election-based process for joining HCTs.

→ Advocate for the creation of roles within UN Humanitarian Coordination System specifically focused on the localization agenda.

2. Introduction

2.1 Historical Context

Since the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, localization has become a buzzword within the global humanitarian structure. The Summit outlined several commitments aimed at reinforcing national systems, shifting toward a more locally-led response (Agenda For Humanity, 2016).

Since the WHS, the commitment to localization has been institutionalized in the *Charter 4 Change* and the *Grand Bargain*, with both focusing on system changes and ensuring local organizations have access to international funding opportunities.

Without one established definition of localization, it was framed as "making principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary" (Agenda for Humanity, 2016, p. 5).

The objective of localization efforts is to improve humanitarian response with an efficient, effective and sustainable approach. It was widely understood that local actors were the key to these improvements as the first responders to a crisis, with greater access to crisis areas and a stronger understanding of the local context (IFRC, 2018.).

With this aim, the agenda of localization is focused on providing direct funding to local actors, increasing decision-making at the local level, strengthening local capacities and building international and local partnerships (ICVA, 2018). As such, much of the literature addressing localization focuses on building operational capacity of local organizations, developing partnerships with international organizations, and improving transparency (Els & Chéillachair, 2018; ICVA, 2018 Van Brabant & Patel, 2017; Zyck & Krebs, 2015).

Yet, research is limited on the efforts to engage national actors within humanitarian coordination mechanisms, despite identified as commitment in the *Grand Bargain.*

2.2 Aim of the Project

Employing ICVA's view on localization as "creating an opportunity to critically examine and improve the structure and functionality of the entire humanitarian system (ICVA, 2018, p.4), the research aims to understand the type and quality of engagement of local and national non-governmental organizations (NNGOs) within humanitarian coordination structures.

The focus of the research is on the participation of NNGOs within Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs). HCTs serve as the strategic coordination body of country-level humanitarian action, ensuring effective and efficient humanitarian responses (IASC, 2017).

HCTs are tasked with supporting the engagement of NNGOs as strategic partners in humanitarian coordination (IASC, 2017). Yet, NNGO participation continues to be minimal compared to the number of international non-governmental organizations included in HCTs. Examining NNGO participation within HCT,s will inform the progress of localization, particularly as it applies to the international humanitarian structure.

2.3 Research Questions

In order to guide the research, two research questions were provided to the research team by ICVA:

1. Why is there a lack of representation of NNGOs in some HCTs, despite the amount of information available to senior humanitarian staff? What is the justification for this lack of representation?

2. Once participation between HCTs and NNGOs does take place, what are the factors that increase or decrease the quality of local participation? How is quality defined by stakeholders and how can it be measured?

3. Methodology

3.1 Description of Employed Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design, including a literature review and semi-structured interviews.

The research team chose to conduct a literature review for the purpose of informing the study's interview questions. While there is limited literature focusing on the issue of localization at the HCT level, there is sufficient information on localization in the cluster system or in programming.

Thus, a literature review helped the research team identify general trends affecting localization and formulate research questions surrounding the identified obstacles or best practices.

The review covered a variety of sources including academic papers, grey literature from organizations like the Humanitarian Policy Group, and documents provided by the ICVA, including minutes from conferences dedicated to bolstering localization within HCTs.

A total of 29 interviews were conducted. Interviewees included HCs, representatives from UN agencies, and members of national and international NGOs, including both those sitting on HCTs and those not. These individuals work in humanitarian situations in Nigeria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Myanmar.

Interviewees and country-cases were sampled in a non-random fashion. They were hand-selected by ICVA personnel in order to capture examples of where localization is considered to work well and where it is not. Interviews were administered via Skype and WhatsApp and usually lasted 25 to 75 minutes. They were run according to a set of open-ended interview questions. Questions were composed based upon the obstacles and best practices known to affect localization identified in the literature described above.

The questions were organized into the following themes:

· Organizational Capacity

· Trust

· Accountability

· Collaboration and Communication

· Transcending and Intersectional Issues

3.2 Research Limitations

This report's sample size means that actors who possess knowledge on localization in HCTs have been excluded. In addition, the number of country-contexts surveyed does not forbid the possibility that certain phenomena that affect localization was missed.

The countries and participants were selected with the intentions of covering as diverse a sample as time would permit. However, limitations could potentially still exist.

In one of the surveyed countries, the research team was unable to secure participation from an NNGO. This means the local perspective has not been

captured which skews the research in this case.

The use of interviews itself poses some limitations. Despite taking significant steps to ensure anonymity, interviewees could still feel compelled to self-censor as their identities were known to the researchers. Self-censorship may have also occurred seeing as participants' names are published, even if their opinions were not attributed to them.

Finally, as is true with most qualitative research, researcher bias is possible. To maintain objectivity the research team has taken a number of steps, including having multiple researchers code the data and review the findings. However, researcher bias still poses challenges and could possibly skew the conclusions and recommendations in this report.

4. Conceptual Framework

4.1 Organizational Capacity

This study first presents a framework for understanding capacities followed by a suggested framework for developing NNGO capacity that will in the long run improve representation and participation.

Capacity, in the context of humanitarian organizations, comprises two elements: the ability of an organization to contribute toward alleviating suffering and the application of skills, knowledge and experience relevant to alleviating this suffering in a specific context (Barbelet, 2018).

In contributing to alleviation of suffering, an organization requires *organizational capacities* (management structures, strategy, governance, internal controls, policies and procedures) and *operational capacities* (program delivery and program implementation).

Capacity	
Elements	Forms
Contribution of actor in alleviation of suffering	
Organizational capacity	Management structures, Governance, Strategy, Policy, Decision making, Internal policies, manuals and procedures
Operational capacity	Program delivery, contextual knowledge
Actors' application of knowledge, skills and experience in a context.	

Definitional framework adapted from Barbelet (2018)

A definitional problem exists in the local capacity improvement discourse. Stakeholders understand capacity improvement through a *capacity building* lens, which has two limitations. First, it overlooks the presence of pre-existing capacities of an actor which take different forms and need to be enhanced and developed further (Pouligny, 2009, pp. 7).

Taking on this approach creates a power imbalance among stakeholders where one party is seen to have more valuable capacities, while the other feels that their pre-existing capacities are undervalued. Secondly, a *capacity-building* lens limits intervention for improvement to administering training to NNGOs which lack specific capacities such as project and financial management. This research will consider the following definition of capacity development:

> *"Capacity development is a process occurring over a period of time, rather than a single intervention; a process that should be sustainable so that gains are maintained; a broad undertaking affecting knowledge, skills, systems and institutions; and a process that occurs at different levels – individual, organizational, institutional and societal."* (Barbelet, 2018)
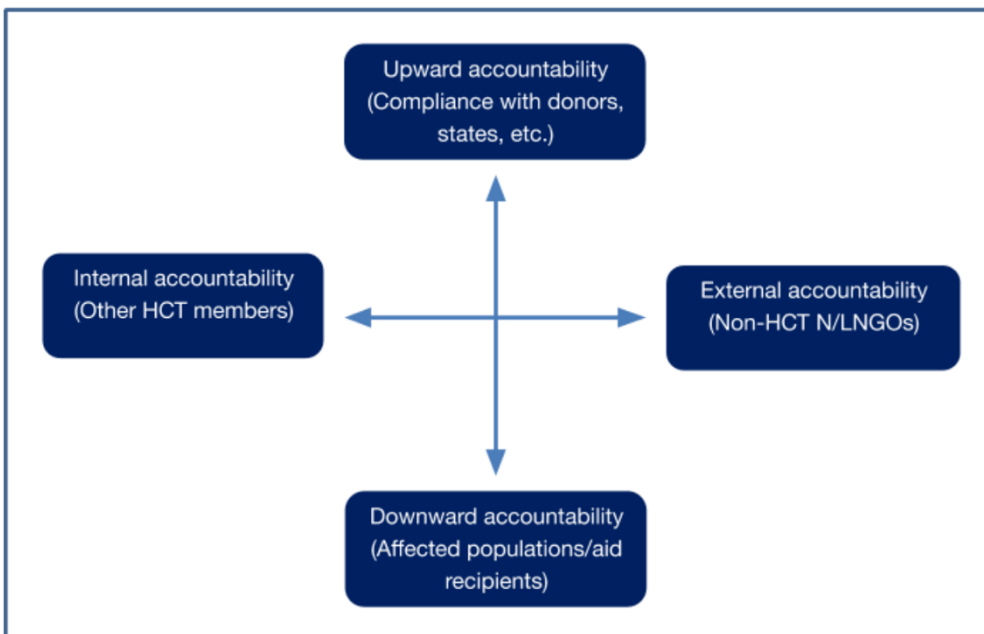
4.2 Trust

This report analyzes trust and its impact on localization in the HCT system against a framework laid out by Max Stephenson. Organizational scholars, including Stephenson, largely agree that trust is essential for creating cooperation among all

types of networks, including the humanitarian relief network. The definition that Stephenson subscribes to describes trust as being composed of three parts; It is the confidence that another can be depended on to fulfill commitments, conduct themselves predictably and to not succumb to acting unfairly when an opportunity to do so presents itself.

Stephenson's framework lays out four types of trust that can occur in network relationships and that are helpful for creating collaboration. They are trust developed on the basis of personal relationships, contextual cues, the perception of competence, and those built on achieving contractual requirements. Many of the findings identified in the research mirror Stephenson's two matrices for organizational trust. Thus, this report hopes to ground the findings of the interview process against Stephenson's framework. It will do so in the recommendations section.

4.3 Accountability

This study analyzed accountability based on the framework developed by Edwards & Hulme, (1996), Najam A., (1996) and Ebrahim A., (2003) which recognizes three broad categories of accountability; *upwards* to donors and governments (compliance),
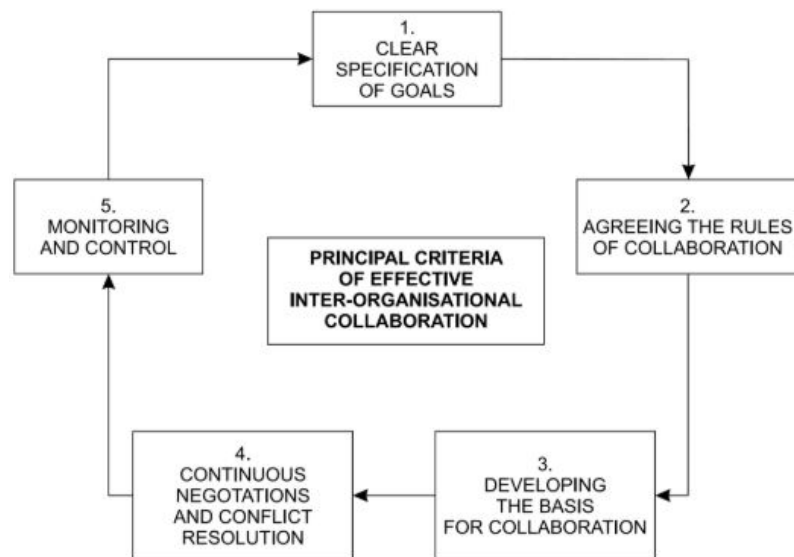
downwards to beneficiaries and *internally* within organizations. Due to the unique mechanism of the HCT, a fourth *lateral external* dimension to accountability was introduced where accountability to non-HCT NNGO peers was evaluated.

4.4 Collaboration & Communication

Inter-organisational collaboration model adapted from Sienkiewicz-Malyjurek (2017)

The study employs Sienkiewicz-Malyjurek's theory on inter-organizational collaboration as it provides a lens by which to examine the level of collaboration within HCTs.

Because of the variety of actors included within this study, the research employed Sienkiewicz-Malujurek's concept of collaboration which emphasizes the process by which individuals with varying perspectives are able to explain these differences in a constructive way (2017).

Through their framework, Sienkiewicz-Malyjurek outlines five key factors that are necessary for effective collaboration. By employing this

framework, the report aims to highlight the aspects of collaboration that are proven to be successful in HCTs, while identifying areas of improvement.

5. Research Findings

5.1 Introduction

All 29 interviewees praised localization as important and worth investing in, despite the myriad of obstacles and critiques that participants reported. The prevailing rationality to empower NNGOs is that they are the most optimally positioned actors to inform other HCT members on local needs and perspectives as well as the cultural, political and other contextual specificities of humanitarian crises.

Despite this shared view amongst national and international actors, there remain significant challenges to HCTs to implement nearly everywhere.

This section will review the dominant challenges which prohibit participation of NNGOs within HCTs on a global level. It is important to note that while this section is delineated into sub-sections, many of the obstacles that interviewees reported are not mutually exclusive.

Instead, they are interconnected and interdependent. Issues in one domain often feed into and compound obstacles in another – or a problem can arise which harms participation across all of the following domains.

For the sake of conceptual clarity, the report will be divided into the following sections: organizational capacity, collaboration and communication, trust, accountability, transcending and intersectional issues.

5.2 Organizational Capacity

5.2.1 Successes

Respondents acknowledged NNGOs knowledge of the local contexts and awareness of beneficiaries' needs. In most contexts, respondents recognized NNGOs' representation of beneficiaries at the HCT which informed meetings' deliberations. Despite the recognition of this key capacity, opportunities for improving objective representation of beneficiaries' needs by NNGOs still exist in some contexts.

Interviewees in Afghanistan applauded the Department for International Development (DfID) Twinning Program which supports NNGO's capacity development. NNGOs receive training, cooperative activities, mentorship and guidance on institutional management, humanitarian practices and strategy from other members within the NGO/INGO forum (ACBAR) who have been accepted as advisors to the program.

Country based pooled fund (CBPF) mechanisms have enabled organizations to access funding for activities thus building their technical and organizational capacities.

In Myanmar, OCHA reported that 50% of the CBPF was allocated to local actors in 2019 following implementation of practical strategies for engaging with local partners (such as mentorships) and prioritization of the localization agenda.

In addition, NNGOs receive training, conduct joint capacity assessments with OCHA and are supported in the registration process for the fund. OCHA's engagement of NNGOs in broader processes beyond provision of funds has improved these organizations' reporting and representation in coordination meetings.

5.2.2 Areas for Improvement

Strategic and Functional Expertise

A recurrent theme in most countries was on the existing potential for NNGOs to build on their strategic and functional expertise. For example, respondents from the UN, HCs, INGOs and some fora representatives noted that NNGOs experienced difficulties in participating in policy discussions relating to the country wide humanitarian response during HCT meetings.

Language and Technical Capacities

In all the contexts examined, English is a second language which is only used during official settings. NNGOs experience challenges in representation due to their limited professional proficiency in the language. Their inability to clearly and effectively express their views during HCT meetings was identified by respondents as an impediment to the quality of their participation. Discussions are also conducted in high level English and use of technical jargon further limits the ability of NNGOs to contribute constructively.

In response to the capacities needed for effective participation, respondents recognized organizational management and technical capacities as essential competencies among HCT members. NNGOs and international actors alike noted the potential for growth for NNGOs particularly in technical aspects of humanitarian action and knowledge of the UN humanitarian architecture which has hindered effective participation in HCTs.

Leadership and Advocacy

HCT representatives noted that NNGOs' professional, leadership and advocacy abilities could be improved during HCT meetings as these skills are key in driving progress on strategic discussions that are holistic to the NNGO community they represent. NNGO's inability to effectively lobby and advocate for issues pertinent to the HCT has led HCs to prioritize other pertinent concerns brought forward at the expense of those considered pertinent by NNGOs.

> "At the HCT level, advocating, lobbying and networking, these three things, in my opinion vital ones for a person who wants to be representative at the HCT level. Because most of the time, the role requires to do lobbying and to do networking and to do advocacy at that higher level, where really your voice gets heard." (NNGO interviewee)

Staffing and Capacity building

Adequate staffing was identified by respondents as a constraint to quality NNGO participation. In most cases, NNGOs have one key representative who cannot be deputized. Respondents also noted that key staff members not only represent the organization in HCT meetings, but they also play an important role in management of internal organizational affairs. In the absence of this staff, meaningful participation in HCT meetings is affected.

NNGOs cited remuneration ceilings imposed by donors as an impediment in attracting and retaining highly skilled staff who prefer working for INGOs and the UN. This results in high staff turnover and the need for developing capacities for new staff.

Based on the interview responses, efforts to improve capacity were mainly viewed from a capacity building lens. A heavy emphasis was placed on conducting capacity assessments and thereafter training NNGOs on the identified needs. In Central African Republic (CAR) for example, OCHA has provided over 480 hours of training aimed at helping NGOs meet international standards. Whereas these efforts are good, they are seen to be unsustainable.

> "I have very limited staff, I can send this staff to capacity training for two days, three days, and who will work with me in my organization? I have only few staff members, if [I can get] capacity training to come over to my organization...to give training to my staff and to improve [illegible], that would be an effective way to build capacity." (NNGO interviewee)

Humanitarian Experience

Respondents from Cameroon and Iraq noted that humanitarian programs are relatively new in comparison with other contexts with protracted crises. NNGOs working in such contexts lack humanitarian experience since they are either newly formed or have transitioned from implementing development activities.

Despite being able to respond quickly due to their access, some NNGOs are seen to have a relatively lower level of response efficiency and scalability demanded within the sector thus unable to cope with the pace of the humanitarian environment. In CAR, interviewees noted NNGO's participate actively in operational conversations and less in strategic conversations during meetings

Logistics and governance

The amount of time allocated for preparation to HCT meetings was varied. While some NNGOs attended

pre-HCT meetings, others were unable to make time for preparation due to competing priorities and thus attended meetings unprepared.

Respondents also pointed out issues such as inadequate access to technological infrastructures, ICTs, governance and management structures, as impediments to improving their organizational and operational capacities. These aspects not only limit

their ability to effectively implement humanitarian programming but also contributed to actors'

perceptions of NNGOs' inability to effectively contribute within HCTs.

Funding and Contracting

Respondents noted inadequate funding for capacity building as a major impediment. Funding received from donors prioritizes implementation of program activities over operational costs and developing staff capacity.

Some respondents reported that NNGO's engagement as INGO sub-contractors is ring-fenced to achieving project aims. While this engagement enables NNGOs to gain more experience in project implementation, broader concerns on institutional capacity development, knowledge transfer related to humanitarian and UN systems, and strategic organizational growth remain unaddressed.

Responsibility for capacity development

Varied opinions exist regarding where responsibility for developing NNGOs capacity lies. In some cases, HC's strongly argue for NNGOs to be fully responsible for their own capacity development through their respective fora, while others argue for NNGO's demonstration of value addition in HCTs as a prerequisite for receiving support in capacity building.

A recurrent theme however was the need for collective responsibility among HCT members in development of NNGO capacities.

5.3 Trust

5.3.1 Successes in Trust Building

Building Relationships Through Proximity

One commonly discussed method for fostering trust was to have HCT members meet and work together in person. A number of interview participants described face-to-face meetings as crucial for fostering confidence between actors. One interview

participant noted that when NNGOs in their country had consistently attended HCT meetings, trust between actors grew.

These participants suggested this was the case as it introduces NNGOs with the international members of the HCT and allows actors to exchange information and signal their intentions.

Historical Relationships

Some participants reported that historic relationships between international and national HCT members allowed for trust between actors and catalyzed meaningful localization.

Participants in Lebanon articulated their mutual trust was borne from NNGOs having a long-standing relationship with UN representatives. Participants noted this trust helped facilitate meaningful localization in a number of ways.

When Lebanese NNGOs wanted to establish a formal network to support their advocacy efforts within the HCT, UN representatives already had a good relationship with the NNGOs, trusted them, and threw their support behind the project.

Feeling Like Partners

Finally, a number of interviewees from NNGOs reported that localization became more meaningful when they were perceived as partners by other HCT members (rather than being sidelined or perceived as actors to outsource tasks too).

They articulated that being seen as equals was both reflective of the trust other HCT members put in them and enhanced their trust in other HCT members.

This improved the localization process in the countries it occurred as interviewees noted that it prompted NNGOs to value their work in the HCT more and view it as "their duty".

5.3.2 Challenges in Trust Building

Humanitarian Principles

In HCTs whose actors report low trust, HCs and OCHA representatives often reported concerns surrounding NNGOs' ability to adhere to humanitarian principles. There was trepidation that these NNGOs would be unable or unwilling to uphold humanitarian principles while carrying out their programming.

The degree to which HCs were concerned by this varied across country contexts. In some countries, HCs and OCHA representatives did not worry that NNGOs would intentionally disavow their humanitarian obligations. Instead, they had a perception that NNGOs lacked competence and worried that organizations might unintentionally struggle to uphold humanitarian principles. In certain cases, HCs feared that NNGOs would succumb to pressure by states, political and militant groups to act partially.

In other cases, international HCT representatives reported that local actors had failed to uphold humanitarian principles simply because they were new to the field and lacked a thorough understanding of humanitarian principles.

On the other hand, other HCs expressed that NNGOs were purposefully flouting their humanitarian obligations.

Some participants suggested that this was the case because of differing opinions on how humanitarianism should be done; "we have to recognize that not everybody is necessarily operating with the same lens when it comes to implementing humanitarian response." Others ascribed more opportunistic or nefarious reasons.

This sentiment is expressed by the following quote:

> *"Impartiality is also a problem for local NGOs. They are always considered as non-needs driven, driven by interests. Interests of the different ethnic groups, interests of their clans, driven by interests of their areas of origins. They really face challenges compared to UN agencies and other international NGOs."* (HC interviewee)

Thus, many of the interviewed HCs felt distrustful that NNGOs could act in accordance with humanitarian principles.

A number of international actors reported that distrust in this domain blocked meaningful localization almost all together.

One interview participant told the research team that the humanitarian donors on their HCT choose to not fund NNGOs because they are seen as high risk in this area.

Not being trusted to uphold humanitarian principles meant that many NNGOs were not seen as legitimate players, regardless of whether or not international actors perceived this behavior to be intentional.

Thus, in some HCTs, NNGOs were unlikely to be given space to contribute, be built into the agenda, or to be given seats in the HCT at all. Those with the power to advance NNGO participation often did not see the value in doing so or were conflicted by the risk of elevating those who they perceived to be untrustworthy.

Financial Management

Another reported concern regards NNGOs' management of finances. Primarily, interviewees expressed concerns surrounding issues of misuse or mismanagement of funding, conflicts brought about by audits of NNGOs and resource competition.

In a number of countries, international HCT members reported that issues surrounding corruption spoiled trust in NNGOs. In these HCTs, HCs have reported cases of NNGOs falsifying documents,

misusing funds and lacking accountability with their finances. NNGOs have also reported that they have been accused of overestimating program-related needs in order to receive extra funding.

Another cause of distrust among HCT members was the subpar or non-existent financial record keeping practices of some NNGOs.

Interviewees noted that the issue of audits of NNGOs by OCHA created conflict and distrust between NNGOs and international actors and contributed to perceptions of NNGO corruption.

In one HCT, when UN agencies arrived, forming the HCT, and began incorporating NNGOs into their funding schemes, retrospective audits of NNGOs conducted by OCHA found that many lacked proper record-keeping practices, had misused funds, or had gaps in their reporting of expenditures– generally failing to comply with OCHA and donor standards.

As a result, NNGOs were required to overhaul their accounting mechanisms and increase their organizational capacities. If they did not, they risked being excluded or "blacklisted" from funding, being able to participate on the HCT, or having partnerships with international actors.

Interviewees in this HCT noted that this event significantly eroded trust between international actors and NNGOs and was seen as a major sticking point for the localization process.

Finally, competition for financial resources is another reported reason for distrust among HCT members. In one HCT, a number of the NNGOs expressed that trust between INGOs and themselves was lacking as a result of this competition. Several NNGOs reported distrust of INGOs and believed them to be undermining localization efforts for the sake of maintaining their grasp on funding.

Many interviewees reported that financial trust-issues undermined meaningful NNGO participation.

In countries, marked by the perception of NNGO malpractice, trust and funding for NNGOs was largely absent.

Similar to the consequences of flouting humanitarian principles, a lack of trust in NNGOs' financial integrity made international HCT members see NNGOs as illegitimate and dismiss them as a result. In other cases, where trust in other domains remained robust and NNGOs were seen as lacking proficiency rather than unscrupulous, the consequences were similar but lesser.

Consistent Attendance

Another challenge that was identified surrounds the difficulty of creating consistent NNGO meeting attendance in some HCTs. Participants often reported that consistent attendance was crucial for building relationships and trust, as discussed above.

Interviewees expressed that NNGOs often lack the necessary resources to attend HCT meetings. This creates a cycle where NNGOs do not have the facetime needed to overcome trust problems and thus, the benefits that could ensure their more consistent attendance that are borne from good trust remain out of reach.

Another cycle emerges, as a number of interviewees articulated that some NNGOs rarely attend HCT meetings when they do not feel they will feature on the agenda enough to justify going. However, HCs told the team that this lack of trust in NNGOs (that could be fostered with greater participation) is what prevented them from elevating the localization agenda.

5.4 Accountability

5.4.1 Successes

The existence of HCT compacts is a positive step in strengthening accountability among members albeit pending adoption by all countries. The framework covers all four accountability categories designed for this research by setting out the key commitments of the HCT members towards the HC and one another,

enhancing mutual accountability and reinforcing collective accountability towards people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection (IASC, 2017).

The majority of Interviewees noted that NGO fora have enabled NNGOs to be organized and facilitated fruitful engagements among HCT members and non-members. They create a space where NNGOs are free to express themselves and voice out pertinent issues.
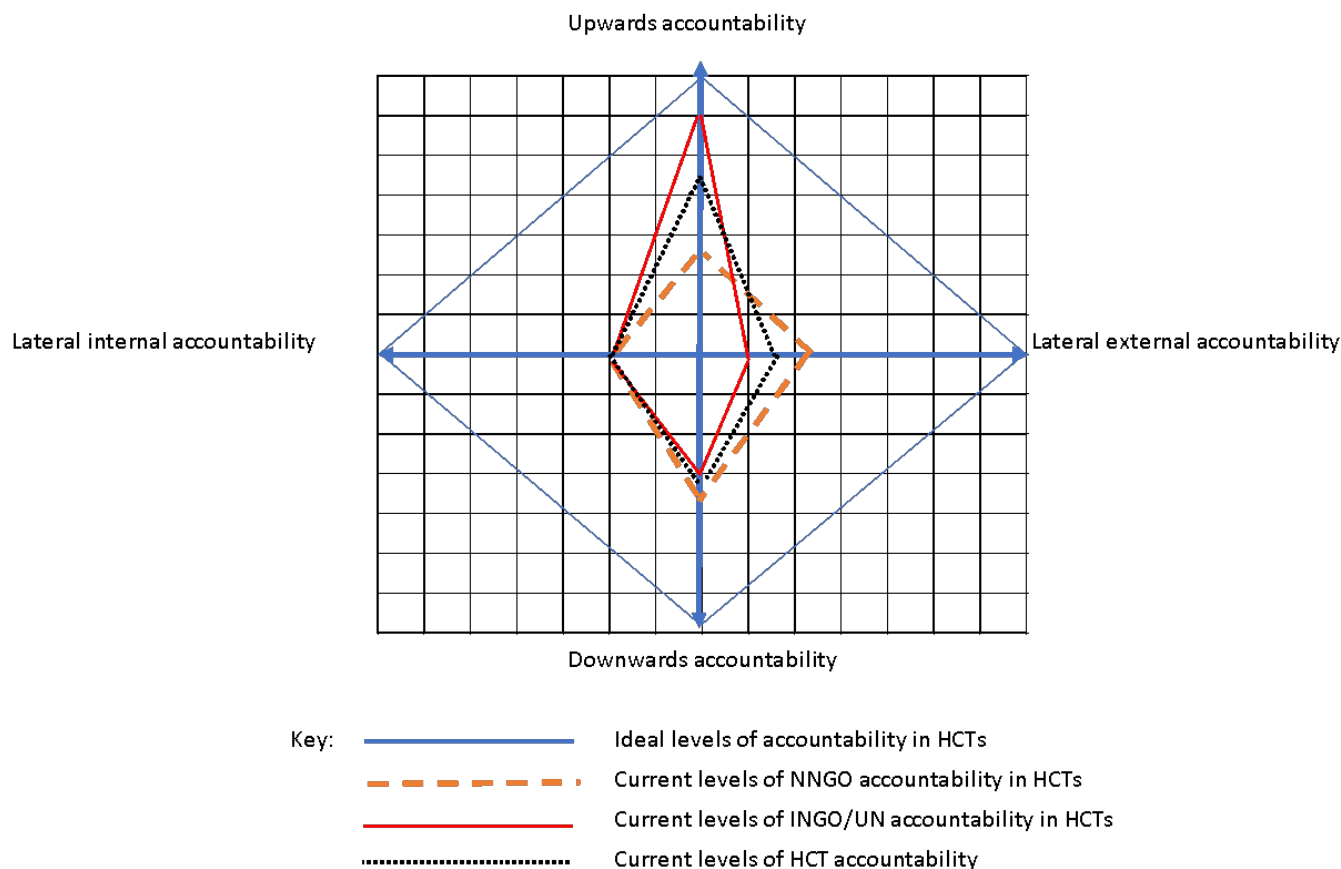
5.4.2 Areas for Improvement

Upward & Downward Accountability

Respondents from stable contexts reported that NNGOs accountability to donors was generally good. However, respondents from fragile contexts generally reported a lower level of accountability, citing NNGOs as being prone to pressures of fraud, diversion and waste. In the latter case respondents reported a loss of confidence in NNGO's ability to receive funds and implement a principled humanitarian action.

Upwards accountability

Lateral internal accountability

Lateral external accountability

Downwards accountability

Key:
— Ideal levels of accountability in HCTs
- - - Current levels of NNGO accountability in HCTs
— Current levels of INGO/UN accountability in HCTs
··· Current levels of HCT accountability

There was a generally good level of NNGO accountability to government regulations as noted by respondents in the study however concerns were raised in volatile contexts where NNGOs received pressure from the government for political purposes. HC and OCHA representatives noted that some NNGOs would at times represented the voice of the government or their own organization's voice more than that of the beneficiaries and other L/NNGOs.

UN and donor standards and monitoring were reported as frequently overburdening already overstretched, resource scarce NNGOs.

Lateral Internal Accountability

Lateral internal accountability within HCT members was generally missing across the board. Few respondents referred to adoption of the HCT compact as a tool for ensuring internal accountability.

A vast majority of respondents reported a lack of peer accountability by HCT members. Responsibilities among members in the HCT were found to be broad and collective with the only

expectation being that NNGOs represent their beneficiaries.

In some cases, the agenda setting process for the HCT was unclear, excluding participants from contributing to the discussions. NNGOs cited their lack of influence in agenda setting as a justification for exempting themselves from attending or participating in HCT meetings. Some NNGOs also noted that HCT members put little effort in understanding their (NNGOs) position on the issues brought forward.

A number of NNGOs reported a lack of institutionalized avenues to voice their concerns. Some NNGOs suggested that the inability to hold other actors to account undermined localization as it represented a lack of reciprocity between themselves and international HCT members.

Interviewees in certain countries expressed that HCTs are coordination bodies with minimal decision-making duties. Respondents from both

NNGOs and International agencies also noted that HCTs do not assign responsibilities and specific

deliverables to members that they can be held accountable to during HCT meetings.

With no particular responsibility assigned to members, and limited decision-making function of the HCT, meaningful participation is affected as members may skip meetings while others regard them as a formality. This was noted from one of the representatives from Lebanon.

> *NNGOs aren't willing to participate because they don't see the value of HCT since it doesn't make decisions and isn't addressing the wide variety of groups needing assistance in the country.* (NNGO interviewee)

Lateral External Accountability

Lateral external accountability to other NNGOs was generally well established. NGO fora facilitated external accountability by creating a platform where NNGOs discussed issues pertinent to the HCT level and provided peer to peer feedback for improved coordination.

However, there were cases where feedback to non HCT NNGOs was missing. Some participants noted that HCT minutes were either rarely shared or only shared to HCT participants for confidentiality. This closed the feedback loop to NNGOs meant to be represented, raising concerns on representation and the level of participation of NNGOs during the meetings.

By considering the feedback from all interviewees regarding the levels of accountability within HCTs, the research team mapped out the degrees to which the four aspects of accountability were realized. Overall, downward and lateral accountability are the areas HCTs need to reflect on further and put in place measures for improvement while upward accountability was generally reported as being well observed.

5.5 Collaboration & Communication

5.5.1 Successes

NGO Fora

The role of NGO fora in facilitating collaboration between NNGOs was identified as a significant factor in improving NNGOs' participation within HCTs. For NNGOs who participated in a forum, they identified them as key assets in facilitating inter-NNGO collaboration.

In Afghanistan, the pre-HCT meetings run by the NNGO forum serves as a platform for non-HCT members to share concerns or feedback they would like added to the agenda for the HCT. These meetings were reported to increase NNGO engagement during HCT meetings, as they felt more prepared to speak to agenda items.

NNGO fora were reported to strengthen NNGO participation during HCT meetings, as NNGOs are able to engage with greater credibility, as they represent all forum members.

> *"If an NGO has a specific agenda, has a specific problem, we could raise it at the HCT level. We ask them. So, this is a platform where we give the opportunity for all Afghan NGOs working to come together under one [room]. And discuss what could be done better or what could be discussed at the HCT level."* (NNGO interviewee)

In Lebanon, NNGO fora strengthened NNGO engagement, as NNGOs on the HCT were able to reach a broader spectrum of actors than OCHA or INGOs.

This can encourage more meaningful participation of NNGOs with in HCTs, particularly as the majority of participants identified the key of strength

of NNGOs, as their ability to speak to the local context. NNGO fora provide greater information and legitimacy to NNGO members, thereby increasing their participation.

Channels of Communication

Participants from NNGO and OCHA reported good communication, with regular emails identified as a key channel of communication between HCT members, allowing them to share updates and relevant documents.

In Lebanon, WhatsApp group chats and other informal channels were mentioned as useful means to share up to date information regarding ongoing operations. Sharing of information proved critical, as there is a resource gap between NNGOs and international organizations, therefor equitable access to information could prove to be an equalizer during meetings.

> *"Information is shared through emails….The communication within the HCT is relatively efficient and good...We have [informal] WhatsApp groups, sometimes online meetings and chats within local NGOs [and] members of the forum."* (NNGO interviewee)

5.5.2 Areas for Improvement

Inter-NNGO Collaboration

Reports of inter-NNGO collaboration varied across countries and amongst HCT members. Several respondents from OCHA indicated NNGO collaboration was dependent on the context of the country of NNGOs. In countries with ongoing conflict, some OCHA staff reported meaningful participation was inhibited by a lack of inter-NNGO collaboration.

This was said to be a consequence of NNGOs' competing interest inhibiting collaboration as they were perceived to only speak to issues concerning their own sector or operations. As a result, NNGOs were perceived as unable to speak to national issues.

It should be noted that this issue was mainly raised by OCHA and INGO informants. Furthermore, this was not indicated as an issue in all countries, suggesting that situational factors affect NNGO participation within HCTs.

> *"Most of the national NGOs…have a very housebound view, it's my problem, it's my area and if we are debating about an area, I'm not necessarily coming to raise points that could benefit. Why? Because they are in terrible competition for resources."* (OCHA interviewee)

Open and Constructive Dialogue

One finding that pointed to limited communication between HCT members was that when asked about collaboration HCs, NNGOs, OCHA and INGOs identified different areas of improvement.

One OCHA participant pointed to competition amongst NNGOs for resources and funding as a main factor inhibiting NNGO collaboration. Yet few NNGO participants mentioned this as a concern, instead speaking to feeling neither their feedback nor agenda items were addressed during meetings.

One NNGO reported they no longer shared HCT minutes to their forum, as forum members did not see the point if their concerns were not included in the agenda. Limited opportunity for NNGOs to contribute to agenda setting demonstrates minimal NNGO engagement and overall participation in the HCT.

> *"At the beginning of the meeting they tried to add their input on some points of the meeting, because I use to share to them the agenda, but now they are not doing because they are tired of giving their input and the humanitarian response is always going [by] what the international actors needs and thinks."*
> (NNGO interviewee)

In one country, international HCT members reported reaching out to NNGOS for pre-HCT meetings, while NNGOs in that same country reported feeling unrecognized in meetings and unsupported by international members. The variance in responses from organizations within the same HCT points to a lack of meaningful dialogue between HCT members.

Limited collaboration was also attributed to ongoing power imbalances within HCTs, as one OCHA participant reported that limited NNGO participation was related to NNGOs feeling intimidated by larger international members.

> *"When you have a round table, you have these donors, and these heads of agencies, and UN agencies, it's a bit intimidating. They feel intimidated to contribute because these people have broad based experiences from several countries. And local NGOs can only talk about their country, they don't have to compare the different contexts."* (OCHA interviewee)

Throughout the interviews conducted with NNGOs, INGOs, HCs and OCHA staff, there emerged a range of issues which either transcended the categorizations which this study had conceived or intersected with several of the predominant categories.

5.6 Transcending and Intersectional Issues

5.6.1 Successes

In HCTs that possessed HCs who had a strong focus on the localization agenda, improving participation of NNGOs within the HCT, developing capacities of NNGOs and on fostering partnerships between INGOs, NNGOs and UN agencies, the quality of participation of NNGOs within the HCT appeared to be higher than in HCTs with HCs who did not place emphasis on these issues.

A similar issue which also appeared to be a strong determining factor in NNGO participation is the personalities of NNGO representatives on the HCT.

In countries where NNGO representatives expressed more extroverted personality characteristics and appeared to more actively push issues related to localization and issues aligned with NNGO and local interests, matters of power imbalances and the agenda setting capacities of NNGOs in the HCT appeared to be less significant.

The impact of individual personalities of HCs and NNGO representatives on NNGO participation and the localization agenda within the HCT could be explored in further research.

5.6.2 Areas for Improvement

Architecture of HCTs & UN Humanitarian Coordination System

NNGOs often feel that even with three or four out of 20 to 30 seats on the HCT, the representation of local actors at the table could be greater in order to reflect the diversity of the organizations and region-specific issues present in a country.

Participants voiced that this causes actors to not only be separated by geography, but also often means that actors responding to different regional issues have little coordination or communication amongst each other.

Across the board, the number seats on the HCT for NNGOs and NNGO fora could be increased according to many of those who were interviewed.

Interviewees from NNGOs, OCHA and HCs also expressed that NNGOs require further assistance in developing their agenda-setting capabilities and that there should be increased encouragement for NNGO representatives to present during meetings in order to foster more meaningful participation.

An additional challenge that was voiced by NNGOs in several countries was that the typical one year term length of NNGO representatives on the HCT does not allow them the time to learn about the humanitarian coordination system, how they can successfully operate within it and how they can best utilize their positions as representatives on the HCT.

NNGO participants expressed widely varying experience and understanding of the HCT and the UN humanitarian coordination system as a whole.

It is often difficult for NNGO actors to understand which coordination bodies are responsible for which functions and to whom they should appeal to in order to advocate for specific issues.

> *"[N]ow you have a place at the table, but have we prepared people to use that place as effectively as possible? We probably haven't...We need to do more to prepare."*
> (NGO forum interviewee)

> *"We need to more actively enable the local orgs to actually be a part of the whole architecture of the system, this includes the participation of clusters, this happens at a subnational level, but more national level participation is needed"*
> (NNGO interviewee)

Structural Issues with the Grand Bargain

Many participants mentioned that the grand bargain placed too much of an emphasis on funding quota instead of on building partnerships and meaningful participation of NNGOs at a country and international level.

Much of the funding provided to NNGOs has been allocated only for programming and aid delivery, placing NNGOs in a position of being utilized as subcontractors for international actors, rather than as equal partners.

> *"I look at localization, on really, strategically using these local NGOs, to deliver services to the people. But also give them resources and funding."* (NGO forum interviewee)

Tenure of Staff

Many of the interviewees spoken to had only around six months to one year of experience in-country and were still relatively unfamiliar with the HCT functions and – for internationals – with the contextual specificities of the environment and with the involvement of local actors.

High turnover rates of NNGO, INGO and OCHA employees poses a constant challenge to the ability of HCT members to improve, or even to maintain the quality of participation of local actors in the HCT. On the side of the NNGOs, this has been at least partially instigated by the "poaching" of employees by UN agencies and INGOs.

Power Dynamics and Agenda Setting

Nearly every actor that was interviewed mentioned the pervasiveness of power imbalances between international actors and NNGOs.

Localization does not appear to be present on the agenda of any HCT examined within the study. Some may have localization in the TORs of the

HCT, but it rarely if ever is discussed during HCT meetings.

Perceptions About Localization and the Role of NNGOs

The lack of a clear, widely accepted and contextually flexible definition and agenda for localization has served as an overarching inhibiting factor to NNGO participation within HCTs. Many interviewees provided a wide range of definitional and functional understandings of localization and what it should achieve.

From the interviews, there appeared to be two lines of competing perception of localization and the role of NNGOs which have been seen to influence how actors structure and carry out their localization agenda:

1. Localization as a paradigm shift vs. localization as a tool for aid delivery

2. NNGOs as equal partners vs. NNGOs as humanitarian subcontractors

Those perceiving localization as a paradigm shift focused on the need for the UN humanitarian coordination system to fundamentally restructure its top-down approach to aid delivery, work on eliminating power imbalances and delegating more planning, coordination and agenda-setting functions to local/national actors.

Those who perceive localization as a tool for aid delivery place their focus on the ability for international actors to utilize the contextual expertise and other specific capacities of local and national actors in order to more cheaply and effectively implement humanitarian programs.

These two broad perceptions of the localization agenda directly relate to how each group perceives the role of NNGOs within the HCT: those who perceive localization as a paradigm shift also appear to perceive the role of NNGOs to be equal partners, whereas those who perceive localization as a tool for aid delivery see NNGOs more as humanitarian subcontractors.

However, these are not mutually exclusive camps. Often interviewees had more nuanced opinions

about the purpose of localization and the role of

NNGOs. Yet, the dominant perceptions which actors possessed did seem to impact their actions related to localization.

These potentially divergent perceptions of localization and the role of NNGOs may contribute to the inability of NNGOs to effectively collaborate with international actors and participate within the HCT.

> *"One of the challenges is that as a wider community, the UN has really shaped the idea of what localization looks like"* (NNGO interviewee, 2020)

6. Conclusions

The emergence of localization as a key commitment during the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit signaled a shift within the humanitarian coordination structure towards a response system that was "as local as possible and as international as necessary" (Agenda for Humanity, 2016), p.5). Despite the international humanitarian system institutionalizing their commitment to localization within *the Charter 4 Change* and the *Grand Bargain* the progress on localization remains unclear, particularly within the coordination structure. This research aimed to understand the quality of localization at the HCT level, by examining the level of engagement of NNGOs and quality of participation of NNGOs.

Interviews with key stakeholders revealed that engagement of NNGOs at the HCT level was dependent on how international actors pursued localization as an agenda item. One key finding was the variance in the definitions of localization. Some participants understand localization as a tool for effective and efficient aid delivery, whereas others understood localization as a complete paradigm shift in how humanitarian response operates and coordinates. The difference in definition directly impacted the engagement of NNGOs at the HCT level, as some felt treated solely as tools for aid delivery while others reported feeling like equal partners in decision making. Meaningful engagement and participation of NNGOs at the HCT level is dependent on the perception of NNGOs' capacity and their accountability, impacting the level of trust between HCT members. Instances where meaningful engagement and participation occurred experienced strong collaboration between all HCT members and support for NNGOs. Furthermore, where NNGOs were viewed and treated as equal partners, meaningful engagement and participation was reported.

To encourage NNGO engagement at the HCT level, this report recommends that efforts be made to promote an overall shift in the humanitarian structure to view NNGOs as equal partners. Requiring the humanitarian structure to be more accessible to NNOGs, while creating greater opportunity for NNGOs to participate in decision-making process. This report recognizes that in order for meaningful engagement to be achieved a greater paradigm shift needs to occur in the way in which NNGOs are viewed within the international humanitarian structure.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Capacity

Expand Capacity Improvement Initiatives by HCTs to Focus on NNGO Capacity Development

By adopting the framework below, HCTs will ensure coverage of broader areas identified for capacity strengthening in a sustainable manner. The latter approach provides a more holistic view, ensuring NNGOs experience sustainable growth of both organizational and operational capacities.

> *"The piece that is more substantively missing is the investment in capacity development overall not just on technical but more towards the overall organizational side."* (OCHA interviewee, 2020)

Components	Forms
Sustainable process	Material, infrastructural and technical support measures for key organizations and institutions.
A broad undertaking affecting knowledge, skills, systems and institutions	Transfer of skills and knowledge, joint planning and designing of response mechanisms, needs assessments and organizational manuals, policies and strategies.
A process that occurs at different levels; individual, organizational, institutional and societal	Mentorship, training, attending and participating in workshops and forums (nationally and globally), coaching and shadowing.

Framework adapted from ODI (2018), Béatrice Pouligny (2009) and LSE/ICVA (2020)

7.2 Trust

Promote Relationship Building

A number of recommendations can be derived from the research. Building relationships has been highlighted as an important area for fostering trust and one with notable room for improvement. Research done by organization scholars like Stephenson backs this finding up and notes that personal relationships are crucial as proximity and closeness can lessen the assumption of negative intentions among actors.

Having historic relationships allows actors to reinterpret what they perceive as intentionally negative slights as the product of misunderstandings or structural issues.

A number of participants suggested that the best way to build these relationships is by ensuring regular interactions between HCT members. Given the difficulty some NNGOs have attending meetings, many interviewees proposed different scheduling practices for HCT meetings. This included having fewer meetings or consulting NNGOs' schedules to ensure maximized participation.

Potential Modification of HCT Member Term Limits

In addition, this report recommends reviewing the term limits laid out in the TORs that dictate how long NNGOs can sit on the HCT. Interviewees noted that only having short tenures on the HCT limits NNGOs abilities to acclimatize to the position before they are relieved.

Given the importance of personal relationships, highlighted by both organization scholars and interview participants, longer interactions between NNGOs and other HCT members could potentially bolster trust and improve localization.

Another relationship-building tool that interviewees proposed is a twinning program. Informants from Afghanistan described how the program was being used so that mentoring by large NGOs could help NNGOs access pool funds and get certified for funding.

This program could also be leveraged in fostering trust between participants as it creates the close proximity relationships required for trust. It is seen as potentially effective as it could incentivize NNGOs participation and seem valuable to them because it helps them secure funds.

Mutual Feedback Mechanisms

Another recommendation that participants suggested was to establish mutual feedback mechanisms. As discussed above, their absence made some NNGOs distrustful of other actors because NNGOs felt that the absence implied that they were not as valued as other members of the HCT and that international HCT members were not dedicated to localization.

Interviewees told the research team that remedying this perception could bolster meaningful participation as it would encourage NNGOs to view HCT meetings as worth going to.

Training Modules for New HCT Members

A last recommendation that participants suggested was to introduce more rigorous and robust training modules for when NNGOs join the HCT. These trainings could cover a number of topics but should especially touch on financial management methods

and expectations of NNGOs under the humanitarian principles. While there are a number of challenges that lessen the efficacy of said training, having clear expectations allows NNGOs avoid potentially

alienating their peers in the HCT when they simply are unaware of what is expected of them. If training could decrease the number of times NNGOs breach

expectations, trust could be improved as it would allow HC and OCHA representatives to see NNGOs as more competent and knowledgeable about humanitarian action.

Stephenson's theories also highlight that seeing actors successfully meet their contractual obligations bolsters trust, regardless of a perception of competence. Thus, training could help NNGOs meet their contractual obligations and increase others' perception of their trustworthiness in a number of ways.

7.3 Accountability

Utilize and Build Upon HCT Compact

The study recommends strengthening the utilization of the HCT compact. The compact has proven very effective in certain countries where it has been used to resolve issues and govern accountability practices.

It would be useful for the HC to determine the extent to which the commitments can be broken down further to create a space for NNGO contribution.

Include NNGOs and NGO Fora in Agenda Setting

In the same light, the study would recommend inclusivity of NNGOs in agenda setting and a proactive approach to discussing localization.

Implement Regular Reflections on Lessons Learned

The study also recommends a collective reflection of lessons learnt in the HCT at a frequency agreed upon by HTC members for all countries. A year-end review for example, would be useful in identifying areas of improvement and documenting successes.

The review would also present a good opportunity to discuss ways of strengthening the four levels of accountability within the HCTs. A self-reflection guided by the four accountability categories for example would ensure HCT members maintain humanitarian operations at the required standard.

7.4 Collaboration and Communication

Strengthen NGO Fora Participation

In order to help foster greater collaboration between NNGOs and international members of the HCT, OCHA could play a larger role in coordinating with NNGO HCT members by facilitating pre-HCT meetings.

In one interview, an OCHA participant had suggested hosting pre-HCT meetings with NNGO members. This recommendation was aimed at helping to prepare NNGOs for HCT meetings, particularly helping them to navigate the humanitarian structure.

"I even thought about even having pre-HCT meetings with them (NNGOs), before the HCT. Have 30 minutes with them to prepare them, it's what we are going to discuss, do they have any issues. And then I can help them frame the question to be asked." (OCHA interviewee, 2020)

Sienkiewicz-Malyjurek identifies one of the key aspects of inter-organizational collaboration is the means by which effective collaboration can allow for the development of partner relationships. With OCHA playing a greater role in facilitating NNGO

engagement at the HCT level, this could help to

foster not only a more constructive dialogue but may also serve to bridge the gap between NNGOs and international organizations.

In addition, evidence from Afghanistan clearly points to the importance of NGO fora in encouraging both engagement at the HCT level and inter-NNGO collaboration.

NGO fora provide a mechanism of accountability, as NNGO representatives are responsible for reporting on the meeting back to their forum. But most importantly, NGO fora can provide NNGOs with greater weight during HCT meetings because of the wide range of actors they represent.

Therefore, in order to encourage greater fora participation, HCTs should actively seek out fora engagement. This could either be through allocation of seats on the HCT or through the creation of a formal observer role for fora.

The creation of NGO fora in countries where none are present may be useful in developing partnerships, bridging the gap between INGOs and NNGOs, enabling NNGOs to develop capacities and encouraging participation within HCTs.

Ensure NNGO Representatives are Encouraged and Enabled to Speak During and Understand HCT Meetings

Allocate speaking time for all actors at the table and make it mandatory that every representative utilizes their allocated time productively. Additionally, allow non-native English speakers to speak in their native language with the use of a translator

HCT Compact on Localization

As part of their terms of reference (TOR), HCTs are responsible for encouraging NNGO engagement. However, the TOR does not include a clear series of identifiable commitments encouraging localization.

Currently outlined in the TOR are a series of compacts that encourage mutual accountability while identifying a clear set of commitments undertaken by the HCT.

To further encourage meaningful participation of NNGOs within HCTs, each country, as part of their TOR, should develop a compact on localization.

The compact could be renewed annually, serving as a feedback mechanism allowing HCT members to address the necessary areas for improvement. Furthermore, because each HCT compact is developed in country, it would be adaptable to situational factors that influence NNGO participation.

Sienkiewicz-Malyjurek's inter-organizational theory outlines continuous negotiations and monitoring and control as two of their criteria in achieving effective collaboration (Sienkiewicz-Malyjurek, 2017).

By reviewing and adjusting this compact annually, all HCT members will be able to actively engage in constructive dialogue. The variance in answers between NNGOs and HC/OCHA clearly indicates that there is limited opportunity for feedback for either parties.

This would further help to develop a relationship while building up trust amongst HCT members, which through Sienkiewicz-Malyjurek's theory is understood as the groundwork for effective collaboration.

Furthermore, by including localization within an institutionalized framework, such as an HCT Compact, will further encourage the commitment of HCTS to engage with NNGOs in humanitarian coordination by identifying it as a clear priority.

Accountability Area: Localization		
Commitment	**Actions**	**Responsibility**
Ensure that NNGO engagement leads to meaningful NNGO participation.	Include NNGOs with agenda setting, ensuring that time is set aside during each HCT meeting for NNGOs to speak	All members with additional support from the Chair of meetings
	Enable an information sharing platform	All members facilitated by OCHA
	HC/OCHA meetings with NNGO Fora	OCHA and NNGO Fora

Advocate for the Creation of NGO Fora

The creation of NNGO/INGO fora in countries where none are present may be useful in developing partnerships, bridging the gap between INGOs and NNGOs, enabling NNGOs to develop capacities and encouraging participation within HCTs.

7.5 Transcending and Intersectional Issues

Formalize a Standard, Election-Based Process for Joining HCTs

The process of joining HCT should be consistent and standardized in a manner which fairly enables NNGOs of varying sizes and professional levels to have a seat at the table. Direct appointments by the HC or OCHA may not serve this goal and may reduce perception that NNGOs that haven't formed close relationships with UN agencies have a chance to participate in the HCT.

A number of NNGOS and international actors expressed that adopting an election-based system for selecting HCT representatives from the NNGO community – either via NGO fora or other existing coordination structures – rather that via appointment by the HC would encourage more meaningful NNGO participation while increasing the diversity of NNGO voices present in the HCT.

Advocate for the Creation of Roles Within UN Humanitarian Coordination System Specifically Focused on the Localization Agenda

Some OCHA members and HCs have expressed that it's not in their responsibilities to create coordination capacities amongst NNGOs and that they need to be the ones responsible for organizing themselves.

However, this could be mitigated by advocating for the creation of roles within the UN system which are geared specifically toward assisting NNGOs and other local actors in developing capacities.

Advocate for a Shift in Donor Perceptions and Priorities Regarding Funding for NNGOs

HCTs should focus a level of attention to advocating for a shift in funding priorities and appealing to donors to rethink the ways in which they allocate to NNGOs and other local actors.

Primarily, many participants expressed a desire for the HCT to appeal for donors to see NNGOs less as subcontractors and more as vital actors with unique contextual skills, perceptions and capacities which – although often limited in terms of scale and professionalism – should be developed.

This can be done through pooled funds specifically oriented toward building coordination capacities at a local and national level amongst NNGOs, INGOs

and other CSOs, as well as professional skills which will allow NNGOs to better adhere to upward accountability criteria such as accounting, M&E, reporting etc.