Engage, Accompany, Transform

LOCAL CAPACITIES & LOCALLY-LED RESPONSE

The Spirit and Intent of the Grand Bargain regarding Localisation

The Grand Bargain invites international humanitarian actors to “engage with local and national responders in a spirit of partnership and aim to reinforce rather than replace local and national capacities”. It also asks us to “include people receiving aid in making the decisions which affect their lives.”

‘Localisation’ did not originate with the Grand Bargain. The Red Cross and INGO Code of Conduct is two decades old and commits us to “attempt to build disaster response on local capacities”. Similar principles, recommendations and commitments can be found in the Sphere Standards and the Common Humanitarian Standard. Reinforce rather than replace!

Why? The Grand Bargain, drawing on the report of the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, argues for ‘localisation’ because it will be more costs-effective. Unfortunately, who gets what share of the money has become a major consideration, and source of resistance to effective localisation. Why would supporting local capacities, to the point that they themselves can handle most crisis responses by themselves, not be a valued strategic objective? Governments, like the ones in Nepal and Indonesia, are also beginning to restrict the number of international relief agencies coming in and taking over. So, do we want to keep aid-recipient countries dependent? Are we trying to sustain and expand our relief business – or work ourselves out of a job?

Listening to over 250 local CSOs allowed GMI to identify seven areas where they often find the relationship with international relief actors frustrating – and where they want to see change. International agencies have roles to play, but local actors want equitable partnerships, with mutual accountability and -where needed- much more effective strengthening of their institutional capacities.

The framework has been tested with various local CSOs and is actively used e.g. by the Start Network, other INGOs, and UNICEF. But a broader perspective is needed, that asks more strategic questions.

- How do we make our collective, global, or ‘system-wide’ capacity better prepared to respond to a crisis in ways that maximise the participation of affected populations and reinforces rather than replaces local and national capacities?
- What will make our own organisation better prepared to do this?
- What strategic decisions for a particular crisis response, will create enabling conditions for this?
- What does localisation mean for our individual (and collective) operational practices?
The question of the roles and relationships between international and local/national relief actors is not a technical or simple financial one: it is about the political economy of relief and humanitarian action, and touches on the fundamental values and motivations that shape it.

FIND OUT MORE FROM GMI REPORTS RELATED TO LOCALISATION

Localisation in Practice: Our most-up-to-date report, with emerging indicators and practical tips.
Understanding the Localisation Debate: A structured journey through a confusing debate.
Debating the Grand Bargain in Bangladesh: A look at localisation in the Rohingya response.
Localisation: The partnership chronicles: Identifying risks of local organisations collaborating with more powerful international ones.
Capacity Development in International Cooperation. Time to get serious. Questioning the superficial approach to ‘capacity-development’ that prevails in the relief sector.
The Start Fund and Localisation: Baseline assessment: The first articulation of the seven dimensions framework.
Impact of the Tsunami Response on Local and National Capacities: The first comprehensive evaluation of this aspect of the international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004.
https://www.gmentor.org/localization/

The Global Mentoring Initiative (GMI) offers expertise and practical support in

Collaborative action: facilitation of multi-stakeholder processes, partnership brokering

Organisational development: governance, strategic analysis and strategising, change processes, inner leadership and responsible followership, positive atmosphere and healthy team work, prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation, individual and team coaching

Thematic areas and skill development: Conflict and peace analysis, working with conflict-sensitivity, peacebuilding, participatory approaches, community consultations, accountability to affected populations; public participation and citizen engagement

GMI works in partnership with others to find innovative approaches and practical solutions to deal with real time strategic and operational challenges

To take you to the next level, we can act as analyst, trainer, adviser, coach, mentor, facilitator, evaluator, (action-) researcher, connector and coordinator, partnership broker, critical sounding board and trusted friend.

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“WHEN THE BEING IS ALIVE, THE DOING THRIVES”