Partnership practices for localisation; a guidance note

More than 400 humanitarian agencies contributed to identifying the priority partnership practices for localisation; approximately 85% of them were local/national actors. The basis of the guidance note is the findings of the research conducted in Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria and South Sudan in 2018 as part of the *Accelerating Localisation through Partnerships* programme[1]. Research respondents, representing more than 350 agencies, highlighted partnership practices they believe are most conducive to localisation. This guidance note was further validated by participants of the three Grand Bargain Localisation Workstream regional conferences in 2019. All humanitarian stakeholders are urged to note the partnership practices below and make concerted efforts to action them, while keeping crisis-affected people at the centre of all responses.

Project and financial management

1. **Local organisations design projects and budgets** or co-design with international humanitarian actors who provide technical expertise on proposal writing and technical issues where needed.
2. **Local actors are treated as equal partners**, not as sub-contractors presented with already agreed projects and budgets. Partnership agreements include roles and responsibilities of *both* parties.
3. **Partners conduct joint monitoring visits** to beneficiaries, providing opportunities for joint reflection on progress, obstacles and required modifications. Local partners maintain relationships with local communities, and international partners and donor agencies visit communities in agreement with, or when accompanied by, local actors.
4. **International actors and donors are open to discussions on findings** from local partner monitoring, and allow flexibility to adapt programmes and budgets in response to evidence of changing needs and community feedback as much as is practicable.
5. **Project budgets include funds for local partners, relevant to the context and needs,** for: 1) reasonable overheads; 2) indirect costs (as % of project budget); 3) assets vital for project implementation, safety and/or organisational financial sustainability; and 4) organisational strengthening. Budgets should clearly show core funding allocations.
6. **All humanitarian actors follow ethical recruitment practices.** International actors attempt to keep salaries/benefits within as close a range as practicable to local actors. Local actors strive to support staff to do their job effectively and treat them fairly and equitably.
7. **All actors support the active participation of crisis-affected people** in project design, monitoring, implementation and evaluation. With particular focus on involving marginalised, minority and vulnerable groups such as women, children, and persons with disability.
8. **All humanitarian actors identify their added value in any partnership and work on the basis of complementarity**. International actors provide support to local partners based on demand (rather than supply); longer-term institutional strengthening support is generally preferred over short-term project-related support. Strategic partnerships tailored to partner needs, with complementarity identified before crises, are important.

Capacity strengthening and sharing

9. **Joint capacity assessments are conducted for both local *and* international partners**. Strengths are recognised, and gaps used to develop tailored, long-term, capacity strengthening/sharing plans which are shared with other partners to coordinate effective support and investment.

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10. **Capacity strengthening/sharing plans are long-term, not solely based on project needs, and include comprehensive training and mentoring plans**. The most effective approaches are identified, such as secondments, mentoring, and on the job training, with follow up monitoring.

11. **International actors and donors include/allow capacity strengthening and organisational development budget line(s) in all projects and partnership agreements**. Ideally an explicit % of budgets and/or specific funds are earmarked for this. Local actors commit time and other resources to invest in their own capacity and organisational development.

12. **International actors assess their capacity strengthening skills**, and address gaps by either strengthening staff skills or investing in local training providers.

13. **International agencies show a clear intention to adopt an advisory, backstopping or secondary role once adequate local capacity exists**. Review and partner 'graduation' strategies are key.

Financing

14. **International actors and donors support local actors to build their sustainability** (including retention of key staff) by providing multi-year funds, allowing core funds in project budgets, and supporting local actors in income-generating activities or generating local funds.

15. **Local organisations actively participate in meetings, communication and coordination with donor agencies** to support relationship building, facilitated by international actors if needed.

16. **International actors credit the role of their local partners** in communications with supporters and donors, recognising the positive impact narratives have on reframing perceptions of local leadership of humanitarian response.

17. **Donor agencies coordinate to identify minimum standards for accountability and compliance**, reforming processes where necessary. International actors and donors support local partners to meet these minimum standards. Local organisations invest in meeting these standards.

Coordination

18. **International actors, particularly UN agencies and cluster coordinators, promote and facilitate active participation of local partners and other local actors in relevant coordination fora**, and ensure a diversity of organisations represented, including women-led/focused organisations.

19. **International actors highlight the role their local partners play** in partnership-based / joint humanitarian response at cluster and other humanitarian coordination fora meetings.

Safety and Security

20. **Training, advice and timely information on security and risk management, and safeguarding is provided to local actors** for operations in high-risk areas. Donors and international actors allocate funds/budget to establish and maintain sustainable national provision of such services.

21. **Local actors are involved in decision-making about security risk management with their international partners**, with adaptations made for local context as advised by local actors.

Advocacy

22. **International agencies support national actors to engage with the government**, when requested, to influence humanitarian response decisions to ensure effectiveness.

23. **Local actors are facilitated to connect crisis-affected people with relevant international actors and government authorities for advocacy** related to the humanitarian response.

For the Accelerating Localisation through Partnerships research reports, and global paper *Pathways to Localisation*, visit the webpage: caid.org.uk/54. Refer also to: Principles of Partnership (Equality, Transparency, Results-Oriented Approach, Responsibility, and Complementarity); Charter 4 Change; NEAR Localisation Performance Measurement Framework (Section 1: Partnerships); and Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS).