

**Grand Bargain
Localisation Workstream**

Guidance note on the
participation of local
actors in humanitarian
coordination groups

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This note builds on work done by ALNAP in 2016 on improving humanitarian coordination and the Global Protection Cluster and Global Education Cluster's work on localisation. The note further draws on the regional workshops carried out by the Grand Bargain Localisation Workstream in 2019, which included representatives from local and national NGOs, international NGOs, governments, donors and UN agencies. The guidance is predominantly focused on non-governmental actors, however much may also be relevant for engagement of national and local government authorities, depending on context.¹

This guidance note is a product of the Grand Bargain Localisation Workstream but does not necessarily represent the official position of Workstream members and co-conveners.

Practicalities

Substantial engagement of local actors² is critical for effective humanitarian coordination. Many of the barriers inhibiting local actors from more meaningfully and more frequently participating in coordination mechanisms are rooted in practical obstacles. Those facilitating coordination groups should take steps to understand the barriers for local actors' participation in coordination by proactively reaching out to key actors, such as local NGO forums and networks, development actors involved in response, academia, diaspora, women-led, private sector, and faith-based organisations, and taking appropriate steps to address the issues. A list of the most common barriers and the pragmatic solutions that can make a significant and positive impact include:

Membership: It is often not clear to local actors who is invited to coordination meetings and how membership of groups is determined. When reaching out to local actors and sharing information about the coordination groups and any membership criteria, guidance on the different ways in which organisations can engage, and the benefits of participation should be systematically provided.

Language: Coordination Leads should ensure that language does not constitute a barrier to participation in coordination. Translation and interpretation services should be considered as a routine operational cost. Use of jargon should be avoided. Ad hoc translation support from group members should be voluntary, rotational, and temporary. If the majority of members speak a common language, consider providing translation to the international members who may not speak the majority language.

Logistics: Coordination Leads should ask local actors the best way for them to access information and communicate; whatsapp, skype, facebook or zoom may be more suitable than slow or hard-to-navigate websites, for example. Sending critical information or meeting locations, dates, and times through several channels may mean the messages reach key actors who may not be on an email list yet. When deciding the location for meetings, coordinators should consider convenience, access (e.g. visa requirements), and safety of all actors. Consider rotating the location of meetings so that different groups can attend, and dial-in options, where suitable, for actors who cannot attend in person. As local actors have fewer staff available to cover simultaneous meetings, careful scheduling across sectors is key.

Processes

Local actors are an integral part of the humanitarian response across all contexts. Their engagement in needs analysis, strategic prioritization and decision making is essential. The quality, accountability and coherence of a humanitarian response will be strengthened if local actors are involved in all stages of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle.

Needs Assessment and Analysis: Make certain that local actors are part of the development of Humanitarian

¹ Other Localisation Workstream guidance notes on related topics are [available here](#).

² This guidance note uses the term "local actors" to refer both to local responders with a national and sub-national scope.

Needs Overview, including inputting into Secondary Data Reviews, coordinated assessments and are part of any validation processes. Analysis is an area traditionally dominated by international actors; so extra efforts should be made to ensure local actors play a role in data analysis. Coordination Leads should consider the institutional and technical capacity needs of local actors and reflect collective priorities in the Humanitarian Needs Overview.

Strategic Response Planning: Facilitate local actors' preparation and participation in HRP planning workshops and ensure they are involved in the discussion of response priorities. This could include funding of travel from sub-national locations to a national-level workshop. Coordination Leads should ensure institutional and technical capacity building priorities are reflected in the HRP and in sector response plans.

Resource Mobilization: Coordination Leads are often responsible for advocating for and coordinating pooled funding allocation processes, and thus have a key role to play in supporting local actors accessing direct funding, including to cover the costs of taking on coordination leadership roles. Create opportunities for local actors to interact with in-country donors to increase visibility.

Implementation and Monitoring: Coordination Leads should ensure that 5Ws (or other response tracking databases) collect data that can be disaggregated to all levels of actors involved in the delivery of the response (donors, project owners, reporting agencies, implementing partners) as well as by types of organisation (UN agency, INGO, NNGO, etc). This data should be analysed to better understand the role of local actors, the locations in which they are working, and who is receiving funding.

Peer Review and Evaluation: In advance of annual planning processes gather available data and annually document the complementary roles of local and international actors in the response. Actively seek out good practice from local actors who might be supported to scale up in future response plans. A culture of [principled partnership](#) should be modelled and monitored by coordination leads.

Leadership and representation

Leadership groups in the formal humanitarian coordination system should include representation from national and local organisations. Local actors bring contextual understanding and expertise that complements international capacity and is essential for effective decision-making in crisis.

Humanitarian Country Teams: The [Standard Terms of Reference for Humanitarian Country Teams](#) (2017) state "Representation from national NGOs should be particularly encouraged and supported", and note that HCT's are governed by the [Principles of Partnership](#). International actors should advocate for representation of local actors on HCTs if this is not already the case.

Cluster Strategic Advisory Groups and Advisory Boards: Cluster Strategic Advisory Group's should be representative, with a membership that reflects the complementary role all actors play in the response. Local actors should be encouraged and supported to participate in these advisory bodies. All Advisory Boards and Review Committees of Pooled Funds have representation of national actors, keeping in mind a gender balance.

Coordination Leadership – Sub-National Level: Local actors participate in cluster leadership at the sub-national level. However, sub-national coordination (including sector-specific, area based etc) is often poorly resourced, with programme staff taking on coordination responsibilities. Advocate for capacity support and funding for dedicated staff time for coordination at the sub-national level. Sub-national coordination groups are vital for engagement of local actors and should therefore be well represented in national level planning and decision-making processes.

Coordination Leadership – National Level: The [IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination](#) promotes shared cluster leadership, and, particularly in protracted crisis, national NGOs have taken on leadership roles at the national level. This approach should be further encouraged.