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Localisation of Humanitarian Action: a case study on Myanmar.

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ABSTRACT

Humanitarian sector is facing the challenge of ever-increasing gap between humanitarian needs and resource available. A new and better way of financing to reduce the gap is one of the important agenda discussed at World Humanitarian Summit (WHS). This paper is a study on how localisation commitments made at WHS could be translated into actions in Myanmar context. The paper begins with the analyses of the definitions, reasons of localisation presented at WHS, why it is considered better, the strategies to achieve it and the critics around localisation agenda. The paper also researched if localisation discussed at WHS is a new concept, specifically in Myanmar context.

Localisation of humanitarian action is understood as local actors taking the leadership role and being at the centre of the humanitarian response. At the same time, international actors support the role of local actors using their strengths to complement rather than taking over the leadership role. In such efforts the principles of partnership should be observed at all time so that local actors play a key decision-making role at every stage, from needs assessment through project design to implementation and evaluation. A power shift has to happen allowing local actors to control and manage resources.

Key Words: Leadership, ownership, capacity building, participation.

ACRONYM

ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
CBPF	UN-led country-based pooled funds
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DREF	Disaster Relief Emergency Fund
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICRC	International Committee for Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
LDDR	Linking Relief and Rehabilitation to Development
Metta	Metta Development Foundation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
UN	United Nations
SNGO	Southern Non-Governmental Organisation
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

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A. INTRODUCTION

The first World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) was held on 23 and 24 May 2016 in Istanbul to set a new vision on how to meet the growing humanitarian needs. Ever increasing humanitarian needs and the widening gap in financing were two main reasons that led to calling for the WHS (WHS-UN Secretary General's report for WHS, 2016). The event was gathered by 9,000 participants from 173 Member States, including 55 Heads of State and Government, private sector representatives, people representing civil societies and non-governmental organisations. The event called upon states, international organisations, business leaders, and other relevant stakeholders to commit to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's Agenda for Humanity composed of five core responsibilities. The core responsibilities include to prevent and end conflict; to uphold the norms that safeguard humanity; to leave no one behind; to move from delivering aid to ending need; and to invest in humanity which were compiled from an extensive consultation done globally for almost 2 years. (Chair's summary, WHS, 2016).

There are 164.2 million people in need of international humanitarian assistance in 2016. Majority of the countries with humanitarian need experienced complex emergencies, a combination of natural disaster, conflict and refugee influx. In the same year, a record breaking number of 65.6 million people were forced into displacement by conflict or violence reached. It was also recorded that 27 percent of these people were internally displaced (Global Humanitarian Assistance Report, 2017). Globally the trend of disasters cause by manmade and natural hazards has increased constantly since 2007 (Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2013 and 2017). Consequently, global humanitarian needs have increased. At the same time international humanitarian assistance providing life-saving assistance to people devastated by wars and natural disasters worldwide has also increased significantly.

International humanitarian assistance has continued to increase providing life-saving assistance to people devastated by wars and natural disasters globally. According to the figure presented in Global Humanitarian Assistance Report for 2017 that "International humanitarian assistance increased for the fourth year running in 2016, reaching a new high of an estimated US$27.3 billion. This was a rise of US$1.5 billion on the previous year's total and an increase of US$11.2 billion, or nearly 70%, on the amount provided in 2012" (p.28). Despite the increased the gap between needs and funding available is still very wide. The UN-coordinated appeals have "a

shortfall of US$8.2 billion, or 40%. Though lower than the funding gap in the previous year (45%), it was above the average shortfall of 36% over the past decade" (p.29). The report also shows the continuous increase of funding gaps from 2011 which represent 38% (USD 3.6 billion).

There is another important estimated figure of USD 15 billion global funding gap in 2015 presented in the report from high level panel on humanitarian financing, with a specific topic on 'Too important to fail – addressing the humanitarian financing gap', at WHS. It also expressed that the amount might seem big, however, it is unacceptable that the amount cannot be generated from a world that has annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of USD 78 trillion. "Closing the humanitarian financing gap would mean no one having to die or live without dignity for the lack of money. It would be a victory for humanity at a time when it is much needed" (Global Humanitarian Assistance Report, 2017, p.v).

The increase of humanitarian needs and ever-increasing gap is the issue that need to be tackled to effectively assist and protect the crisis affected population. With this challenge, humanitarian actors/practitioners are constantly searching for new and better way of financing to meet the need of crisis affected people. The amount and the way humanitarian funding reaches to the crisis affected population has implication on the efficiency and effectiveness of the assistance provided (Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2016).

In many emergencies local and national organisations are the first responders and play vital role as they are mostly the first on the ground when the crises occur as they can reach area and populations beyond the reach of international actors (ALNAP, Network Response, 2013; Ramalingam, et al., 2013; Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2016). IFRC recalled the affected people and communities helping themselves immediate after the disaster in its World Disaster Reports. When a massive earthquake in April 2015 that devastated Nepal "local volunteers and emergency responders were digging people from rubble, providing first aid and organizing the first elements of what would turn into a massive humanitarian endeavor." (IFRC, 2015, P.11). The same happened when Typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines in November 2013 that claimed the lives of over 6,000 people and affected 14 million, the "survivors of disaster have saved people with their bare hands, and pulled themselves through the crisis by supporting each other. This core of the spirit of resilience is the greatest asset in the fight against crises, and needs to be strengthened, not undermined, in the course of aid efforts" (IFRC, 2016, p.23-24).

When Myanmar was hit by the cyclone Nargis that killed around 130,000 and affected the lives of 2.4 million population in May 2008, private citizens, local NGOs, faith-based organisations, businesses and other local groups emerged to provide emergency aids. International aids and organisations were not allowed to enter the country in the immediate aftermath of the disaster (Kramer, 2011; OPCS, 2009). Under this dire situation, "many individuals from all over the country, especially from nearby Yangon, simply started to collect money and relief items and brought these to the disaster areas with their own transport. Support came in the form of cash and in kind from all parts of the country, and it was, clearly, a citizens' response. They did not wait for permission from the government, but took their own initiative to help their fellow citizens" (Kramer, 2011, p.12). The report of the Organisation for Peace and Conflict Studies remarked that "Without the effort of local organisations, Cyclone Nargis would have had a much greater destructive impact. A great deal of international assistance was prevented from reaching affected populations due to Government restrictions on entering Myanmar" (OPCS, 2009, p.11).

"First responders should be better supported, and all humanitarian actors, both national and international, should complement local coping and protection strategies" (WHS-Restoring Humanity, 2015, p.10). At present, "global humanitarian policies take little account of the dependency of disaster affected populations on local actors, including local government, civil society, and Southern Non-Government Organisations (SNGOs), who are usually the first on the ground in the wake of humanitarian crises. These entities as well as local businesses and the national private sector play a vital role in responding to emergencies and post-crises rehabilitation" (ADESO, 2015.p.1).

How the humanitarian fund reach to the affected population is key to efficiency and effectiveness. Currently, a bigger sum of the funding is provided to international organisations, particularly to the UN agencies. It was found that in 2015 only 0.4% of global humanitarian funds were given to local and national NGOs directly (Global Humanitarian Assistance Report, 2016). However, a much lower percentage was presented in Charter for Change[1]: 0.2 %. From that level, it was encouraged to see the commitments made under Grand Bargain and Charter for

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Charter for Change is a network of NGOs committing a series of 8 commitments to change the way they work with, relate to, and fund national partners. It was now been signed by 30 organisations, with 160 national and local organisations endorsers. It is initially presented at the World Humanitarian Summit's (WHS) Global Consultation in Geneva in October 2015, and officially launched at the WHS in Istanbul in May 2016.

Change for the increment at WHS. The signatories of Grand Bargain to give 25% of global humanitarian fund to local NGOs by 2020 and signatories to Charger for Change commitments of giving 20% fund to southern-based NGOs by 2018 (UN, Grand Bargain 2016,CAFOD, Charter for Change 2016).

The justification for choosing this topic is because of the current development of the national humanitarian organisations' continuous endeavor in localisation of humanitarian response in Myanmar. There are matured and experienced local organiation like Metta Development Foundation (Metta), with a strong commitment for taking leadership role for humanitarian action in Myanmar. Metta together with other local humanitarian NGOs have been doing a lot of advocacy regarding donor policies that are hindering local NGOs to get direct access to institutional funding.

The purpose of this research is to explore the possibility of fully localized humanitarian action in Myanmar where national and local NGOs are taking the leadership role. The research will be guided by the following 2 questions.

- *Is the concept of localisation presented in WHS a new phenomenon? What has already been done in the past?*
- *Localisation of aid in Myanmar. Which challenges to address for an effective change?*

The paper is presented in 5 parts including introduction; literature review - breaking into 4 sections including concept of localisation presented in WHS, critics of localisation, localisation in history and localisation effort in Myanmar; discussion and analysis and conclusion. Section 1 of the literature review presents findings from the review of documents from WHS relating to the concept, purpose, why was it considered better and strategy to achieve localisation of humanitarian action. Section 2 summarises critics on localisatiaon concept presented at WHS. After that, section 3 outlines findings from the literature review about the localisation in history and how it was done. Finally, section 4 discusses about the capacity building and local NGOs' endeavor to take leadership role in humanitarian action in Myanmar. The last part of the paper is the discussion and analysis of the findings answering the research questions.

As no universally agreed definition has been found in the literature for the concept of "local organisations". Therefore, concept of local actors will be used in this paper for individuals or organizations engaged in humanitarian response to humanitarian needs existing in their country of origin. Some are named LNGOs, Community Based Organisations (CBOs) Faith Based

Organisations (FBOs), Volunteer Groups and Youth groups. Governments are not part of this concept of "local actors" and will be specifically mentioned when appropriate.

The methodology used in the study is literature review only. It includes reports on humanitarian action, evaluations done in major global humanitarian crisis over last 2 decades, books, articles written by development organisations, research institutes, academic institutions and practitioners gathered from, library, media articles and web sources. One of the main challenge related to the methodology used is that all the literature on Myanmar is mainly presenting the international point of view, written by non-Myanmar people. This makes it very difficult to bring in personal experience as there is no literature to back up the points. There was no time for interviews of people and that WHS is too recent to have the possibility to see documented its impact.

It is important to mention that I have worked for a local humanitarian organisation for over a decade, advocating for the concepts of localisation. I tried my best to keep my biases in check. However, I have to admit that my work experience may have influenced the views expressed here.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

B1. Concept of Localisation at World Humanitarian Summit

Localisation of humanitarian action is one of the main theme which has emerged at WHS. In this section I will present the concept of localisation discussed at WHS starting with what it may mean: definition, the reasons, why it is better, strategies to achieve it and commitments made by participants to the summit.

B1.1 Definition of localisation presented at World Humanitarian Summit

Though the term localisation is frequently used by the humanitarian sector, there is no clear definition of what localisation is in the document presented at WHS nor in any document issued prior to the summit during the global consultation period. Many other studies on localisation also express that there is no commonly agreed definition (Geoffroy et al, 2017; Wall et al, 2016). However, from my readings and interpretation of what is in the documents related to WHS, localisation is about local leadership and ownership. The humanitarian action is thus to be owned and led by the local actors. This leadership and ownership can be seen particularly under Core Responsibilities 4 and 5 of the Agenda for Humanity document (WHS-Agenda for Humanity,

2016). The descriptions could be found under the sub titles 'reinforced, do not replace local system' in 'working differently to end needs' section of core responsibility 4 of Agenda for Humanity. The theme 'as local as possible as international as necessary' was used to express the importance of local leadership for an effective humanitarian response. Under the Core responsibility 5, entitled 'Invest in Humanity', the sub title 'invest in local capacity' is one of the key components which embrace the need to support local leadership with enough resources for an effective and efficient humanitarian action. The theme 'as direct as possible' is used for bringing the resource closer to the affected population (WHS-Agenda for Humanity, 2016).

Secretary General's report for WHS highlights the need of local leadership and ownership in humanitarian action. He expressed that international organisations should respect local leadership in crisis and support them to enable them to fulfil better the role. They should not takeover or undermine local leadership nor should they put in place a parallel structure. Affected people should have their say in the leadership where issues about them and decisions for them are made. He asserts that "International partners need to make greater efforts to support and enable national and local actors, provide expertise and good practice and add capacity and capability rather than 'take over' and run the response" (WHS-UN Secretary General's report for WHS, 2016, p. 30). This is quite clearly stating that that humanitarian action should be led by locals.

In addition to that, the synthesis of the consultation process for the WHS report, entitled 'Restoring Humanity', documented the term like subsidiarity mentioned by a few organisations. The Irish Humanitarian Summit presented the concept of subsidiarity by outlining that affected people should be supported to cope in times of crisis and be assisted in their recovery in a way that enhances their resilience to future disaster. Subsidiarity was used as a principle: "humanitarian actors must respect the culture and capacities of affected people and recognize that the affected people are the central actors in their own survival and recovery" (WHS, 2015, p, 13). In the same document, a statement of the START Network proclaims "We call for a more decentralized global humanitarian system…comprised of highly diverse local, national and international organisations all operating according to the principle of subsidiarity, that is to say taking decisions and actions at appropriate levels with the affected people themselves and those closest to them. Such subsidiarity requires several major changes in the ways the humanitarian system operates, most importantly, a rebalancing, so that considerably more capability and

leadership resides at the local level; an increase in funding for local level organisations; new specialized international capability; and a real shift of power to crisis-affected populations" (WHS-Restoring Humanity, 2015, p. 96).

The term subsidiary has long been used in political environment as a principle for organizing divisions of labour (between central and local authorities). According to Oxford English Dictionary, subsidiarity is defined as "the principle that a central authority should have a subsidiary function in carrying out only those tasks that cannot be done effectively at a more immediate or local level" (Wall & Hedlund, 2016; ECCAS-CMI, 2016). This term subsidiary supports the local leadership better as its focus is more on autonomy in decision making power of the locals.

It could be summarized from all the discussions and commitments at WHS that localisation is giving a leadership role in humanitarian action to local actors. It is a collective process that gives to the affected communities and local actors in the humanitarian system, a greater leadership role in preparedness, response, recovery and development phases. To bring about this major change, there must be "a shift in power relations between actors, both in terms of strategic decision making and control of resources" (Geoffroy et al, 2017, p.1).

B1.2   Reasons for localisation

With my understanding of localisation as humanitarian action with leadership and ownership of locals in proximity with the affected population, it makes the local actors the first and last responders. The main reason is to make humanitarian response more effective and efficient. Humanitarian responses are effective if they were delivered when they are most needed. It is becoming very clear that the humanitarian action needs to be more rooted locally, meaning closer to the affected population: "Humanitarian actors must operate in closer proximity with affected communities, which requires building acceptance and trust" (WHS-final report (2015), p. 118).

For an effective response, "legitimate representatives of communities should be systematically placed at the leadership level in every context. People must also be able to influence decisions

about how their needs are met and rely upon all actors to deliver predictably and transparently" (WHS- UN Secretary General's report for WHS, 2016, p. 30).

When the disaster happens, local actors are the first on the scene to provide humanitarian response as they are close to the affected populations. They are also the best placed to understand the needs of affected communities. Nevertheless, local organisations face many challenges to deliver an effective response as they are overloaded, under-funded and most of the time inadequately prepared (WHS-Restoring Humanity, 2016). It should not be neglected the fact that affected populations and local actors have many things in common which is an advantage for timely and effective response to crisis. On top of these comparative advantages there is currently a wider gap between the needs of the disaster affected communities and what the humanitarian actors are prepared for response. Localisation can be a strategy to cover at least part of the gap.

B1.3   Why localisation would be better?

Global Humanitarian Assistance Report continuously indicates from 2015 to 2017 that poverty, vulnerability and crisis are interconnected. A person with extreme poverty will not have adequate resources to manage risks and shocks and thus will be hit harder by crises and will need more humanitarian assistance. This finding shows that globally, the majority of the poorest are living in contexts where natural disaster and conflict related crisis are more likely to occur: "93% of people living in extreme poverty are in countries that are environmentally vulnerable, politically fragile or both" (WHS-Too important to fail, p.5). Therefore, it is better that crisis affected people and their organisations become resilient and have a capacity for a better humanitarian action, starting from preparedness to response and recovery phases.

The long-term aim of localisation is to build the resilience of crisis-affected communities to better cope with future shocks by engaging with local and national institutions as well as establishing links with development activities (Geoffroy et al, 2017: ADESO, 2015). Localisation is described as better in many documents related to WHS by different actors. Most arguments put forward that it not only makes affected communities resilient but brings sustainability with local actors having more capacity to be better prepared, respond effectively and build back better. Because the "current humanitarian architecture invests very little in the sustainable capacity building of local actors, a factor which is driving an escalating culture of

dependency on international NGOs (INGOs) and other international agencies. These actors in turn often sideline local actors, treating SNGOs and civil society organisations (CSOs) as sub-contractors rather than partners. This capacity shortfall limits the effectiveness of first-responders in the immediate wake of disasters, reconstruction or recovery efforts and isolates them from policy and planning dialogue in which critical decisions that affect them as well as affected communities are taken" (ADESO, 2015.p.1).

It was also noted that locals are not only the first to get to the crisis affected area and provide assistance but they are also more cost-effective in the humanitarian response.

B1.4   Strategy to achieve localisation

Many strategies attempting to achieve localisation of humanitarian actions could be identified. Among them, improved financial support in term of amounts and methods, is the most obvious one shared by many.   Other strategies mentioned WHS related documents are the capacity building for local actor, humanitarian structure adjustment, launching of new initiatives as well as reaffirming important existing commitments, standards and principles.

Improve financial support: Grand Bargain and Charter for Change are the two most prominent initiatives coming out at WHS proposing more funding for local organisations. It called for more support and funding tools for local and national responders. During the grand bargain negotiation process, 51 commitments were made to reform humanitarian financing on transferring 25% of global humanitarian funding to local organisations by 2020 (WHS-Commitments to Action, 2016). It calls for making better use of funding tools such as UN-led country-based pooled funds (CBPF), IFRC Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) and NGO-led and other pooled funds, to strengthen responses done by local actors. It also encourages UN agencies, national and international consortium of non-governmental organisations and International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to make efficiency gains up to a billion dollars per year over five years. It suggests to reduce earmarked funds and to increase multi-year financing (WHS- UN Secretary General's Report on WHS, 2016). Charter for Change commits to provide 20% of their funding to local partner by May 2018.

Capacity building: Charter for Change committed to support their local partners to build their capacity by providing administrative support so that they become strong organisations and be able to share the global humanitarian response. The importance of capacity building for local

actors was stressed and mentioned repeatedly in several documents of WHS. In global consultation meetings in Geneva, Turkey suggested other refugees-hosting countries to establish a very sound and effective response system and build their capacity at local, regional and national levels as they did in response to Syrian refugee influx (WHS, 2016, Final Report, p.54). The UN Secretary General mentions in his report for WHS that "international actors must work together and sustainably, where necessary over multi-year time frames, to build and strengthen national and local response capacity. This will respect people's dignity and desire to be resilient, reduce dependency on foreign assistance and prevent longer-term, costly international engagements" (WHS- UN Secretary General's report for WHS, 2016, p. 30). This description covered other statements in the summit and shows that strengthening the capacity of local actors is in the common interest of many international actors engaged in preparedness and response to disaster, reconstruction and development for affected population.

Structure Reform and New Initiatives: "Localisation requires a shift in power relations between actors, both in terms of strategic decision-making and control of resources" (Geoffroy et al, 2017, p1). An ALNAP study entitled *The State of the Humanitarian System* exerts that modern humanitarian action requires sharing of power and a shift of mentality 'what support can I offer? rather than 'what can I give?' (ALNAP, 2015). This kind of shift requires "a *mindset reform* and the development of a more diversified model that accepts greater local autonomy and cedes power and resources to structures and actors currently at the margins of the formal system. This also requires a commitment by UN agencies and large, multi-mandate NGOs to embrace difficult changes in the approach and architecture under which the sector currently operates" (ODI, 2016, P.70). Commitment 5 of Grand Bargain, "Improve joint and impartial assessment", insist on making a structural reform, as uncoordinated needs assessments lead to duplications and waste of resources. Some commitments made under Grand Bargain and Charter for Change are focused on flexibility, rapidity and long-term funding modalities on a pooled basis where appropriate, and also to bridge emergency response, recovery and longer-term development phases.

Donor agencies and INGOs need to modify their structures, processes and financial systems at the headquarter levels to reinforce this new approach towards the collective outcomes identified and agreed upon (WHS Agenda for humanity).

To quote the Secretary General's report on outcome on WHS "Make greater use of funding tools which increase and improve assistance delivered by local and national responders, such as UN-

led country-based pooled funds (CBPF), IFRC Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) and NGO- led and other pooled funds. Networks and alliances were also formed, such as the Charter for Change and the Network for Empowered Aid Response to support and ensure genuine local leadership and community engagement" (WHS-SG Report on outcome of WHS, 2016, p.10).

Reaffirming important existing commitments, standards and principles: WHS recognized that many international humanitarian standards, commitments, and principles have not been properly translated into action or they have been used differently. In addition to the core humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, some other important ones are the principles of partnership, capacity building and participation. In this regard one of the important strategies to achieve localisation is to reaffirm these standards, commitment and principles.

Charter for Change re-affirms the adoption of the principles of partnership and equality in decision-making as well as the capacity building. UN document on WHS also highlighted the importance and called on to all countries and humanitarian actors to reaffirm their commitment to the principle of partnership. It stated that "Local and national leadership and responsibility for crisis management should be reinforced wherever possible, backed by stronger regional cooperation and supported by global institutions. However, the use of the vague qualification 'whenever possible' is problematic. This is the kind of expression which are problematic and leave loopholes for the commitments and principles in implementing.

Commitments for localisation at WHS: During WHS many governments and financial institutes committed to support and invest in local, national and regional leadership, capacity strengthening and response systems, avoiding duplicative international mechanisms (WHS-EU commitments, 2016). Some of the UN member States, INGOs, and international organisations committed to make internal reforms to improve joined-up humanitarian and development programming and financing. Others committed to shift to flexible and multi-year financing to support collective outcomes (WHS - SG Report on outcome of WHS, 2016, p.11).

Under the subtitle 'reinforced, do not replace local system' that is under core responsibility 4, a total of 399 commitments were made demonstrating support for making 'as local as possible, as international as necessary'. Under core responsibility 5, Invest in humanity, 88 commitments were made to invest in local capacities to strengthen local NGOs and frontline responders.

Through Grand Bargain and Charter for Change, a significant commitment was made to increase flexible and predictable funding over longer term. The intention is to reinforce national and local leadership and capacity to manage disaster and climate-related risks through strengthened preparedness and predictable response and recovery arrangement (WHS-Commitment to action, 2016).

It is important to note that one of the main weaknesses of WHS is that there are no mechanisms of enforcement of those commitments. Hence, the localisation agenda is at risk of remaining just a declaration of good intentions.

B2   Critic of localisation

B2.1   Critics on the Definition of Localisation

No definition of localisation: There is no commonly accepted definition of localisation yet. Schenkenberg defines localisation as any activity involving local actors but questions who these locals are. Tese could involve many different actors like National NGOs, Civil Societies and community Base Organisations. The government authorities at various level in crisis-affected countries may claim that the term 'local actors' includes them (Schenkenberg, 2016). Therefore, it is not clear who would qualify for local actor.

Putting people at the center: Critiques came up on the outcome of WHS pointed out that the commitment at WHS on localisation is very lose with many aspects. Document entitled 'Winner and Loser' presented interesting facts on 'putting people at the centre'. For instance, accountability was not well tackled in the General Secretary report even though it was an important theme during discussions in the global consultation process. Many also hoped to see clearer guideline to ensure the affected population have an influence on aid by setting up a proper feedback and complaint mechanism. The 'participation revolution' was recognized as important in the Grand Bargain, but it was not well formulated though. It is disappointing, even though many governments and organisations pledged to adopt the CHS Alliance's accountability standards and recommendations made on how it can be applied in reality. The commitment was regarded as "governments have continued to only pay lip service to accountability" (IRIN News, 2016, p.v).

As direct as possible: With regards to the popular expression 'as direct as possible' for tracing and measuring the financial flows, Brabant points that it will create technical and reporting

challenges. In addition to that it could become controversial because it depends on who will determine how direct is "direct". This can be used as an excuse if the set target is not met in 2010 (Brabant, November 20, 2016).

As local as possible, as international as necessary: Brabant also presents the phrase 'As local as possible, as international as necessary' as a powerful but deceptive one. As the previous point, "who determines whether the right balance was achieved, and whether that balance evolved appropriately, as the situation evolved? My observation, over 25+ years of work, is that the international agencies' strong footprint may be warranted at particular moments in time, but often continuous for far too long. Sometimes national governments make the point when they start restricting the number of work-permits for expatriates, telling the international agencies that by now they should have trained enough nationals to be in charge. How do we assess this more pro-actively, with enough nuance and without excessive subjectivity?" (Brabant, 25 November 2016, p5).

Indeed, commitments taken at WHS with regards to localisation have a lot of loopholes for failure. It leaves a lot of room to justify the unmet target (i.e. one can always say they tried their best). Likewise, unmet target could also be presented as achieved using the same justification.

B3. Concept of Localisation in history

Over the last 2 decades several initiatives were undertaken, upgrading existing mechanisms and setting up new norms or standards to improve humanitarian actions around the world. Some of them are focused on putting affected communities and local actors at the center of the humanitarian actions which in other word means giving them a leadership role. However, local leadership is expressed and understood differently.

B3.1   What were the concepts?

In most cases, leadership is defined as the need for affected communities and local to own the process, participate effectively and meaningfully, increase their capacity and be treated as equal partners. Ownership and Leadership are sometime expressed as related. Sometimes leadership is seen as a prerequisite for ownership of the process, but sometimes it is the other way around, ownership gives the space for leadership. The Development co-operation report noted that "Aid is more effective when partner countries exercise strong and effective leadership over their

development policies and strategies. Ownership is therefore the fundamental tenet underpinning the Paris Declaration" (OECD, 2006, p.53).

A high-level forum with the participation of ministers of 90 developed and developing countries and 6 Heads of multilateral and bilateral development institutions delivered the "Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness" in 2005. The forum agreed on 5 components – ownership, harmonization, alignment, results and Mutual accountability – of ethical partnership. Donors committed to respect partner countries leadership and to assist in the strengthening of their capacity to exercise ownership by respecting their policies. True partnership is based on ethical value demonstrate a joint commitment to long term interaction, shared responsibility for achievement, reciprocal obligation, equality, mutuality and balance of power (OECD 2005). It was not clear whose leadership the declaration was referring to – government, Civil Societies or local communities? This ambiguity of the Paris Declaration remains open to interpretation and therefore to absence of results.

Less than two years after Paris Declaration, the Global Humanitarian Platform[2] adopted the Principle of Partnership with another 5 components. The five principles are "equality, transparency, result oriented, responsibility and complementarity: *Equality* means mutual respect between members of the partnership irrespective of size and power. It also means to respect each other's mandates, obligations and independence while recognizing each other's constraints and commitments. *Transparency* through dialogue, early consultations and early sharing of information as well as communications and transparency, including financial transparency. *Result oriented* refers to a reality-based, action-oriented programme which is achieved through coordination derived on effective capabilities and concrete operational capacities. *Responsibility* requires the ethical obligation to accomplish tasks responsibly, with integrity and in a relevant and appropriate way. It means also a commitment by any actors to develop activities only when they have the means, competencies, skills, and capacity. It also needs constant effort for decisive and robust prevention of abuses. *Complementarity* happens when diversity of the humanitarian community and comparative advantages complement each other's contributions. Most importantly, local knowledge is one of the main assets to enhance their competency and skills

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[2] The Global Humanitarian Platform was a stand-alone initiative which seek to strengthen relationships between humanitarian actors. It brings together the three main families of the humanitarian community – NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the UN and related international organisations. The overall goal of the HGP is to enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian action.

(Principle of Partnership, Global Humanitarian Platform, 2007). This lays out very comprehensive dimensions to address the gaps found in the relationship between international actors and local actors.

A joint research done by Global Public Policy Institute and the Centre for Transatlantic Relations at Johns Hopkins University on supporting local ownership in humanitarian action presents a wide range of definitions on ownership, partnership and participation in international aid discourse and how they are linked. The meaning of ownership, as in local ownership in humanitarian action, does not carry the conventional notion of 'right of exclusive possession', rather it refers to relations among stakeholders with regard to having capacity and influence to set and take responsibility for an agenda and consolidate resources for that. 'Local ownership' also means "the actual capacities of political, social and community actors in a particular country to set and take responsibility for the aid agenda" (Pouligny, 2009, p.9). That requires local actors to have the capacity to influence the decisions throughout the process starting from planning, implementation and review of the humanitarian actions.

The Transformative Agenda was initiated in 2010. It is meant to make coordinated responses to meet the needs of affected populations more effective and to be accountable to them. It was conceived with the hope to improve the humanitarian reform process initiated in 2005 which includes the introduction of clusters, the establishment of new financing mechanisms and strengthening humanitarian leadership (IASC Transformative Agenda, 2017).

The code of conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief, launched in 1994, recognizes the crucial role of the local capacity in humanitarian action. The principle 6, 'we shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities', indicates that people and communities have capacities even during disaster when they are in most vulnerable situation. It urged to work through them as partners in planning and implementation (IFRC, 1994). The humanitarian response to Tsunami (2004-2005), one of the most severe natural disasters, showed that it was local people themselves who provided immediate life-saving actions and most of the early emergency support. Therefore, in the immediate aftermath of a sudden onset natural disaster situation local capacities determines number of survivors (Cosgrave, 2007).

In addition, a recent study by CAFOD states that the importance of local capacity to be able determine their needs, plan accordingly and respond as described in the concept of subsidiarity.

The author recommended that "international humanitarian response should follow the principle of subsidiarity not substitution: our default position should be to build humanitarian response on the capacities of those closest to those communities affected" (Poole, 2013, p.8). The accountability of agencies and ownership by the affected population are linked with ability of local actors to exercise ownership and also to the capacity of agencies to work under such leadership (Cosgrave, 2007).

Institutional development and capacity building are now significant elements of the new aid agenda. However, the system is finding it particularly difficult to achieve this, in part because it requires internal reforms to give more power to competent local actors.

According to Barry et al the term participation is used for engaging with affected communities and was used in development contexts much earlier than in humanitarian ones. It is also highly relevant for humanitarian actions after the emergence of the Do No Harm concept. A study to review the existing practices to ensure participation of disaster affected communities in humanitarian aid operations presents that for "better contextual analysis and understanding of local issues, which can improve humanitarian access and operational security, and improve the quality of needs assessment and the efficiency and effectiveness of the intervention throughout the programme cycle. "Protection concerns and issues of Do No Harm become much clearer through participatory approaches, and opportunities to build longer term impact beyond the limits of the programme. It may also arise through exploring Local Capacities for Peace and links into LRRD, DRR and longer-term building of resilience" (Barry et al, 2012, p.32). This expression reflects the study's definition of participatory of affected population in a much higher level than passive participation which came from the consultation of pre-designed project or their physical presence during the decision making if made in the close proximity. Participation is defined as "establishing and maintaining a relevant representative dialogue with crisis-affected populations and key stakeholders at every opportunity throughout the humanitarian programme to enable those affected populations to play an active role in the decision-making processes that affect them" (ibid, p.10).

This core concept has been around in history for about 3 decades through different expressions. Hence, the term 'localisation' which emerged at WHS is not a new concept if interpreted it as a humanitarian action with leadership of local actors.

B3.2   What went wrong with the concepts?

Despite the commitment of donor agencies in improving humanitarian actions by changing the ways in which the responses are carried out, many studies and researches show the failure of translating these concept into practice as in the international humanitarian response to Indian Ocean Tsunami. The "joint evaluation report of the response" report made four critical recommendations on ownership, capacity, quality and funding.

It states that direct implementation by international agencies minimized local capacity strengthening and points out that the existing institutional setting could not accommodate international humanitarian standards. Therefore, according to the report, the focus should be for international agencies to support local agencies to deliver humanitarian response. The resources also should be shifted completely to invest in local actors for better preparedness instead of focusing on investing in internationals actors for readiness to intervene. In fact, the same conclusions were made during the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda in 1996. Eriksson stated in the Synthesis report that "the international community cannot be expected to do everything, nor should it try to do so. Most of the responsibility for reconstruction, rehabilitation, reconciliation and recovery belong to the Rwandese. The ultimate determinant of the durability of solutions will be the degree to which they themselves believe in them and have, or would have, institute them even without outside assistance" (Eriksson, 1996. P.41).

A fundamental reorientation of the humanitarian sector is required to recognize that ownership of humanitarian assistance belongs to beneficiaries; that local and national capacities are the starting point and other players' roles are to support and build them. Cosgrave recommended that "the humanitarian aid community needs to go about its business in a different way. It needs to cede ownership of the response to the affected population and become accountable to them" (Cosgrave, 2007, p.4).

Another research was conducted by UK-based organisations (Christian Aid, CAFOD, Oxfam GB, ActionAid and Tearfund) on their partnership with national NGOs in humanitarian responses to four major crises in 2010: Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Haiti earthquake, the Horn of Africa food crisis in Kenya and the Pakistan floods. The report entitled 'Missed Opportunities' presents the important finding that partnership with local actors missed the opportunity in achieving its full potential to improve humanitarian performance. It was due

to systemic problem in the way the international response is planned and delivered. It concludes that principled partnership can: strengthen the appropriateness of assistance as the response will be based on what the affected community needs; offer efficiencies through local; and contribute to sustainability through a more connected response. In addition, it can bridge the gaps between resilience, response and recovery at community level (Ramalingam et al, 2013).

A year later, in 2014, the same group of UK-based organisations conducted another study entitled 'Missed Again' which focuses on the question of humanitarian partnership to bring out evidence from the Typhoon Haiyan response on partnership and its effectiveness. The report expresses that the scale of the disaster was too big for the capacity of the local actors to adequately respond. It mentions that more could have been done to strengthen partnership and capacity building in advance. What had happened was that even though locals were among the first responders, they played a less important role than INGOs that had access to bigger funding and the logistic capacity which prepared them to response in a greater magnitude. Missed again report also documents that most of the time partnership was not a priority and was thus disregarded. In addition to that the response was led by international actors with the Level 3 activation. In this leadership and coordination mechanism, local actors are felt out of place in the clusters and National NGOs received very little direct funding (Featherstone, 2014).

Turning in to the concept of participation, many international organisations argues that using participatory method, which implies decision-making at the local level with regards to the programme, is compromised due to the following reasons. A research carried out by Barry and Barham to review participation of disaster affected communities in humanitarian response includes the way participation is formulated in terms of policy and how it is implemented in different contexts. That research outlines the importance of the context and whether participatory approaches can be most effectively used or not. It summarizes expressions of different actors regarding their challenges in using participatory approach in practice. The reasons exposed are: speed: the response is done in an emergency mode; scale: due to the scale, local communities are overwhelmed; urban settings: interests among the stakeholders are very different; trauma and distress: traumatic experiences can affect everyone in the community; accepted discrimination/exclusion within existing cultural norms; the relevance of the programme for the community: agencies' priority sector on a single issue doesn't match with the one of affected community within their time bound; and humanitarian access. Some international actors

explained their reason for using remote management method in the area where security is an issue. The level of participation is greatly compromised as in the case of the contexts such as South-Central Somalia that international agencies must mainly operate through remote management and are only able to engage in participation through third party actors (Barry & Barham, 2012).

Humanitarian action is required where communities in distress are experiencing a traumatic situation, and are in need of an immediate response. As this is the starting point of the aid intervention, it cannot be used to justify not to use a participatory approach but eventualy can be seen as characteristics to take in account when designing a response. However, the research pointed out the one acceptable reason of not using participatory method could be in conflicts and complex emergencies. Barry and Barham stated that "even entering into a dialogue with victims of conflict in some contexts could pose serious protection risks for both community members and agency staff. These situations are probably the only instances where the potential implications of participation may outweigh the advantages at certain times" (Barry & Barham, 2012, p.35). A book on 'Time to listen' states that participation is often used to engage with communities. But several studies concluded that in practice it refers to inviting beneficiaries to comment on the project that were going to be implemented in their communities (Anderson & Brown, 2012).

Why the same focus has come around in the history over and over again remains an opened question. Many studies and evaluations on the responses of major humanitarian crisis showed that the commitments on the concepts had not been translated in to action.

It seems the goal is not reachable by actors which were not created and equipped for the concepts. It is clear that the most important evaluations done after responding to high profile humanitarian crises (1995 Rwanda genocide; 2005 Asian Tsunami; 2010 Haiti earthquake and Pakistan Flood; and 2013 Typhoon Haiyan) confirmed the weakness of the concept translation into practice. With this in view, is the situation in Myanmar context very different?

B4. Localisation Effort in Myanmar

B4.1 Humanitarian needs in Myanmar

Myanmar formerly known as Burma, is the largest country in mainland Southeast Asia, with a land area of 676,000 square kilometers and has a population of 51.4 million with a diverse ethnic

and religious makeup, including 135 officially recognized nationality groups. (ADB, 2015). Myanmar was ruled by military dictatorship for nearly 60 years, until the government reforms in 2011. The loosening of restrictions on the freedom of expression and freedom of association has been key in these reforms. As a result, this opened space for local organisations and civil societies to grow (Christian Aid Myanmar, 2016). During the rule of military dictatorship many ethnic insurgent groups emerged fighting for autonomy.

Myanmar's humanitarian context is characterized by UN as complex with a combination of vulnerability to armed conflict, natural disasters, food and nutrition insecurity, inter-communal tensions, statelessness, displacement, trafficking and migration. In 2016 a total population who need humanitarian assistance and protection documented in Myanmar was about 525,000 including 218,000 internally displaced in camps and host villages in Kachin, Shan and Rakhine states. At the same time the country remains highly vulnerable to natural disasters. The nationwide floods in 2015 temporarily displaced more than half a million people throughout the country and number of person needed for humanitarian assistance reached to over one million (Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan 2017).

B4.2   Humanitarian Actors in Myanmar

When talking about humanitarian response in Myanmar the distinction need to be made at least two categories, International: UN agencies and INGOs on the one hand and, on the other hand the Locals: NGOs (local and national) and CSOs. Local organisations and CSOs are mentioned interchangeably in Myanmar context. From my reading it was noted that definition of CSOs are slightly different. According to Glossary of Statistical Terms, CSOs is defined as "all non-market and non-state organisations outside of the family in which people organize themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain". In a slightly different meaning presented by Fioramonti et al reads "the arena, outside of the family, the state and the market where people associate to advance common interests" (Fioramonti et al, 2007.p.8). From these definitions, the main characteristic is autonomy form government thus outside its structure and influence (Tomlinson, 2013). For a clarification, according to a paper presented at the conference 'Strengthening Civil Society in Burma, organized in 1997 "CSOs in Myanmar is used as composed of those non-ephemeral organisations of individuals banded together for a common purpose or purposes to pursue those interests through group activities and by peaceful means. These are generally non-profit organisations, and may be local or national, advocacy or supportive, religious, cultural,

social, professional, educational, or even organisations" (Steinberg, 1997, p.3). CSOs play a very important role filling the gap of government social services and humanitarian response in the country even during the military rule.   They are also the ones who respond to the humanitarian needs in Myanmar hand in hand with local NGOs referred to as local actors in this paper. Myanmar people are very generous when it comes to helping people who are in need. Many donors, INGO representatives agree the local organisations are demonstrably and deeply committed to relieving the suffering of Myanmar's poor and marginalized (LRC, 2012). The response to Cyclone Nargis highlighted Myanmar's strong culture of volunteerism and civic responsibility.

After the government signed a series of cease-fire agreements with ethic armed group in 1990s, some NGOs were able to be created and to be registered.   At the same time informal organisations, Civil Societies were able to function and grow filling the gap created by declining government services (Kramer, 2011).   One such organisation is Metta Development Foundation, established in October 1998, one of the few independent NGOs permitted back then. It was the first organisation to be officially registered as a NGO under the Ministry of Home Affairs. Metta, like other local NGOs, can work in remote areas as it does not need memorandum of understanding with the government, unlike international NGOs, which are restricted to communities within a narrow radius of large towns. As long as Metta sticks to its mandate and stays away from politics and carefully manages its relations with authorities at various levels, it was able to operate independently (ICG, 2001). Metta's primary objective is the evolution of self-reliant and peaceful societies through social and economic growth. Stated in its' core value that it believes in the fundamental value of self-reliance and supports initiatives which lead to increased ability of peoples to develop their own resources and determine their own futures. Metta has positioned itself as the main non-faith-based and non-political organisation. It strives to demonstrate no specific ethnic identity feature, and focuses on remaining unconnected with politics (Metta, 2014). Metta is operating using 8.7 million US$ with over 700 staff throughout the country.Metta is also leading a network of 9 local NGOs, Joint Strategy Team (JST) that are responding to humanitarian needs in Kachin and Northern Shan States. Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan for 2017 recognizes that "JST is providing the bulk of humanitarian delivery in the conflict-affected townships in Kachin and Shan states. It has developed a joint strategy for the humanitarian response in Kachin and northern Shan states as well as a joint programming

strategy for the safe and dignified return and relocation of IDPs" (Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan for 2017, p.22).

The Cyclone Nargis that claimed the lives over 130,000 in May 2008 prompted large-scale emergency response and the subsequent relief and rehabilitation efforts several new local organisations emerged. The need to respond to this mega crisis created the space for not only the creation of new organisations but was also a chance to grow for the existing ones. For some organisation like Metta the growth was exponential from two million US$ annual budget to 11 million US$ with over 100 staff to over 1000 including volunteers in the affected area (Metta Development Foundation, 2011).

In addition to humanitarian access denial of the government to the UN agencies and INGOs in the immediate aftermath of the crises further pushed the local organisations, new and old, to take more responsibilities in the response. This is evidence for the importance of the need for local actors that are in the closest proximity to the disaster affected communities to have the capacity to provide immediate and sustained humanitarian support.

B4.3   What are the localisation models?

Localisation attempt in Myanmar with the meaning of local actors taking the leadership of humanitarian response in line with ownership, capacity building, partnership and participation could be found in a few models. A good model for building capacity of local actors emerged after Cyclone Nargis response in Myanmar through Paung Ku, a local NGO which was established in 2007 by a consortium of international and local agencies in Myanmar to build capacity of the civil societies. Paung Ku conducted a study to learn from the model in 2013. It clearly demonstrated employing partnership principle empowering the organisations to take ownership of their own development initiatives. Paung Ku provided small grants for relief and rehabilitation projects defined by Nargis affected village groups in 2008. In 18 months over 700 groups were supported and some of these groups later evolved into formalized network groups. Paung Ku provided support to these network groups with funding, training, facilitate linkages and mentoring. As the network developed, customized trainings were provided in response to the need identified by each group. The organisation *facilitated linkages* with external actors local and international NGOs as the next level and finally, *mentoring* followed to further support both network committees and village level groups. Mentoring was designed to encourage reflection

on group processes in order to make them both more inclusive and effective. As the network member groups are farmers one of their focus issues was land rights. As the network developed they had a clear picture of the macro level changes they are targeting and eventually lead them to develop perspectives about the new Farmland Law (Paung Ku, 2013).

An important lesson learned from this is that during the study, network leaders reflected that while Paung Ku had been engaged in various ways, its staff had not sought to control the network. It was recorded that Network leaders themselves repeatedly expressed that they were firmly in the 'driver's seat' of the networks. It was also learned that the external influence of Paung Ku and other NGOs such as Oxfam were seen to encourage the networks to be more inclusive – especially in relation to participation of women in decision making level. The norms of the committees, composed of only men which lead the four different networks were seen to be changing. Training and mentoring process were seen to be influential in supporting this shift (Paung Ku, 2013).

There were a few international NGOs working around Myanmar with a specific mandate to strengthen civil society. One such group is ActionAid Myanmar, which provides intensive training to local organisations and assistance through its fellowship program. The program deployed youth leaders in targeted communities to facilitate participatory processes which promote democratic norms and forms of decision making. The youths helped the communities analyze their problems, made development plan, mobilize resources, and facilitate the implementation of community-prioritized action points through village development banks. The model was recognized as an example of people-centered development (ADB, 2015, P.7). As the country was under military dictator for an extended period of time people in Myanmar were not familiar with participator decision making process. This type of model gives the community a chance to practice democratic process especially when selection members and leader of project management committee.

Myanmar LRC and Oxfam conducted a joint study on partnership approaches between international and local organisations in Myanmar. The report presented various types of partnership with local NGOs found in Myanmar and the most prominent one being technical support to build technical capacity through funding support. The other three are joint

implementation, sub-contracting and creating local organisations out of international NGO projects. Sub-contracting the project or programme is designed by international organisations and the LNGOs are contracted to meet the agency targets, objectives and goals. Local organisations did not participated in setting the agenda not even for the capacity-building that were intended for them (LRC & Oxfam, 2010). Partnership became finding an organisation to deliver a project that was pre-designed by subcontracting to implement it.

The study of LRC and Oxfam also presented keys effective partnerships and the factor that contributed to the effectiveness. These most important ones were "shared goals and objectives; a clear division of roles and responsibilities; complementary strengths of each organisation, contracts and agreements negotiated over time and not done hurriedly; transparent communications and open, friendly staff relations; flexibility in operations; and time and space created for the organisational development of the local partner" (LRC & Oxfam, 2010, p.5).

The most obvious improvement in UN agencies in Myanmar around localisation efforts after WHS could be seen in the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan. Among its overall strategic objectives are the strengthening of national capacities in preparation for humanitarian response and the building of resilience of the communities. It also expresses that allocation of Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) or the country-based Myanmar Humanitarian Fund (MHF) funds will be aligned with the objective. The document also provided indicator of the amount of fund local organisation will received through this country-based pooled fund. It expressed that "[it] is a flexible, efficient and responsive funding mechanism. It aims to ensure that at least 50 per cent of its funds are channeled through national and local NGOs, in recognition of the critical role they play in service delivery and to strengthen their response capacity" (Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan 2017, p.21). The capacity building support mentioned in the document is somehow limited to the management of the fund only. However, there are few examples of good practices that have been documented in Myanmar.

B4.4   What are challenges faced by humanitarian actors?

Many studies and researched has documented challenges faced by both local NGOs, International NGOs and UN agencies, working in Myanmar as well as donors supporting humanitarian actions and development work. A research done by Deakin University on

Contextualisation of International Development Principles to difficult contexts, using Myanmar as a case study, analyzed INGOs working under the ideas of partnerships, capacity building, advocacy, rights-based approach and accountability. It concluded that working with CSOs and LNGO in Myanmar is complicated as they are new and not registered. It is difficult to find suitable local NGO to partner with, so they do direct implementation (Ware, 2010). With regards to local being not registered, another similar expression was made by Saha that for institutional donors not providing director funding are that local NGO are not registered while their policy barred them to fund an organisation that do not function as a legal entity. This make INGO which has more flexible policies and practices, sub-grant to the local unregistered organisation (Saha, 2011).

Another challenge commonly shared by international actors about their concern over respecting humanitarian principles especially impartiality and neutrality when working with local actors. Some writers argue that in Myanmar "local organisations are rooted in their historical, cultural and religious constituencies and have to report back to them in formal and informal ways" (Geoffroy et al, 2017, p.5).

UN agencies and INGO working in Myanmar usually gain legal status through getting Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) from the government which covers intended programming sectors and geographic areas of the project. This makes them geographically restricted. Besides, there are a lack of mobility of expatriate staff to certain areas, visa restrictions and limited humanitarian space. In general, the areas that INGOs are restricted for access are conflict affected areas where ethnic minority live in need of humanitarian assistance and protection (LRC, 2012). In addition to these, Saha also documented that "INGOs operating in Myanmar confront serious ethical and operational dilemmas, including: how to work with the government without bolstering or appeasing it; how to provide impartial assistance in a state where humanitarian access is so highly controlled; how to avoid creating power asymmetries between themselves and local NGOs; how to invest in grassroots capacity building when funding cycles are short-term; and how to avoid creating parallel systems of aid delivery" (Saha, 2011. P.19).

Some of the donor policies for direct funding for local is frequently expresses by local actors as unfair. Local organisations are usually not provided with overhead cost by their sub granters. The organisation without flexible institutional administration fund face difficulties accessing

funds that require matching funds and pre-financing capacity. Lack of flexible institutions to retain skilled and competent staff members in between projects and programmes, affecting institutional memory of the organisation (LRC, 2012). Local NGOs express many challenges accessing funds through INGOs. Some of the challenges are not directly related to policy but rather the personality and attitude toward local actors. For instance, according to a local CSCO leader, a respondent of a research by LRC, some of the sub granter INGOs did not even inform the termination of the ongoing project that was meant for a longer term. Attitude of the person in charge is more important than having a good policy and procedure on partnership. Other more important and most common cases are "de-stabilizing effects of requests for both rapid scale-up of projects and use of end of the year INGO surpluses; …. asymmetrical power arrangements in which the autonomy of their programs or organisational structures is compromised; …financial procedures of donors and then also INGO or UN are layered and can create strict, inflexible, demanding processes for CSO's. When partnerships, collaborations and other forms of sub-granting occur, the financial procedures and policies of the original grant can be passed onto sub grantees" (LRC, 2012, p. 17-18).

This analysis shares the same view with the one presented by LRC and Oxfam's study finding on the factor hindering the effective partnership in the previous section. It expressed that important factors that lead to less effective partnerships are mainly due to INGOs' "frequent changes in procedures and personnel, language and cultural barriers, disagreement over how funding is allocated between agencies, [their] lack of flexible internal procedures … and donors and INGO partners who cluster around or compete over the same local NGOs" (LRC & Oxfam, 2010, p.5). It also expressed that INGOs are more inclined to partner with Faith Based Organisations "because they are more likely to have some sort of registration or have organisation, scale, and governance more in meeting with Western requirements" (Ware, 2010, p. 58). This indicates the true reason of the international regarding partnership and capacity building for local partners: the aim is that the organisation has the potential to fulfil the requirement imposed by donors. It tends to show that the partnership is not fully implemented, international aid actors fearing to lose control. Because of that locals do not access the external resources and means and they are treated unfairly.

C.   DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

To summarize the previous sections localisation can be understood as local actors leading humanitarian actions with full ownership. Localisation is important because local actors are at the closest proximity to the affected population and they are the first and last responders. Humanitarian actions is not only about responding to emergency needs but also about preparedness, reconstruction and development of the affected populations. It has higher potential to save more lives as it will be faster and better grounded in local realities. It will also be more cost effective. It was also found that the idea of localisation is not new and has already been around in humanitarian context for an extended period of time using different concepts and approaches with the final aim to strengthen the capacity of local actors for a more effective humanitarian action. Among them partnership, capacity building and participation are the most common ones with the ownership very closely linked to leadership.

However, from the studies and researches conducted to review the experience of localisation endeavor also documented many challenges encountered by both international actors and local actors. Interestingly, many good examples around effective ways of engaging with local actors in preparations to the way toward localisation have also been found in Myanmar and internationally shared. For example, how Paung Ku supported network of disaster affected farmers groups gradually evolved and gain capacity to influence in the country's land policy drafting. The key to a success of this model was capacity building based on customized training identified by the network provided when they need. Mentoring support given through the process reinforce the success coupled with financial support for the administrative cost. It shows that capacity building efforts work best in close collaboration and dialogue with local actors by providing assistance which is tailored, flexible and compatible with local changing context, by continuous supports including resources needed for an extended period of time. Possible components presented by Gingerich et al includes "comprehensive support and trainings on disaster management principles, coordination mechanisms, global financial and regulatory systems, organisational financial and human resources systems, and monitoring, evaluation and learning; and include training on gender justice, international humanitarian and human rights law, and humanitarian

principles and standards" (Gingerich et al, 2015, p.43). When it comes to capacity building for local actor how is more important and what in a continuous manner.

When talking about local it is difficult to avoid the role of government which is the primary duty bearer to meet the needs of their citizen.in extreme distressed situation. However, in the complex political context of Myanmar they are the problem at the origin of most of the crisis. They fail to do what is necessary to avoid crisis or minimize the vulnerability of the people. Therefore, it is difficult to open up the discussion regarding the role of the government.

Experience from the past endeavors for localisation show that there is a need for power shift to locally-led humanitarian response and more needs to be done to achieve this. It requires a shift in power relations between actors, both in terms of strategic decision-making and control of resources (Geoffroy et al, 2017). It is crucial that local actors are in the leading role and international play supporting role base on the assessed complementary factors. One researcher expressed that "it it does not appear that international actors conduct any sort of assessment of whether their leadership is necessary" (Gingerich et al, 2015, p.38). The problem is also that when the crisis strikes, it is too late to start to assess what are the potential local capacities. The need to save lives, response to the urgent needs and protection were given priority over other agendas that have been discussed as important in the past.

While the discussion around localisation is moving fast since WHS with the focus more on the strengths the local actors have. Finding complementarity facts of local and international should be done properly. Some issues expressed by international aid organisations as weakness of local actors are also found to be their limitation in some context. For instance, international including UN agencies operating in Myanmar confront serious ethical and operational dilemmas due to the complex political situation of the country. These challenges include working with "the government without bolstering or appeasing it; how to provide impartial assistance in a state where humanitarian access is so highly controlled; how to avoid creating power asymmetries between themselves and local NGOs; how to invest in grassroots capacity building when funding cycles are short-term; and how to avoid creating parallel systems of aid delivery" (Saha, 2011. P.19).

The Transformative Agenda is another important moment in the attempts to improve humanitarian actions through working with local actors. Nevertheless, it is found to be a

problematic hindrance to local leadership. The first sentence of the IASC's transformative protocol for Responding to Level 3 Emergencies does not even mention the role of the government which is the primary duty bearer in responding to humanitarian crises, let alone the role of CSOs and NGOs. It appears to be a UN centric method undermining the role of local actors. The Transformative Agenda gives more emphasis on international capacity than on the local capacity as the preparedness part focus only on the international level. This was experienced in the Philippines in 2013 during Cyclone Haiyan response that triggered level 3 emergency. The whole response system was influence by the global humanitarian system for level 3 and many local actors including the government were left out in the response. A study carried by UK based organisations presented in section B3.2, entitled Missed Again outline that even after 6 months of the response international actors did not have any concrete plan to hand over the response to the government. Transformative agenda weakens local system because it requires locals to fit in the system rather than to empower the locals to take the lead.

At present many local organisations are unable to meet the requirement of institutional donors. As most of the local organisations are relatively new and functioning in a very difficult context the requirements and standard set for direct funding of recipients should be adjusted accordingly. As discussed Myanmar local organisations being relatively new and also working in an unstable situation is the very reason why capacity building is needed. Current arrangement of partnership between international actors and local actors in Myanmar should also be changed. International actors should support local actors in preparation for crisis, provide assistance during the response and reconstruction and development rather than making them implement their plans by sun-granting their project.

According to Geoffroy et al some international organisations work systematically with local organisations even in the sub-contracting arrangement due to the donor restrictions on direct funding access. However, there are organisations that use locals particularly as "a way of gaining access to difficult regions or a way of saving money in a context where there is pressure from donors to cut costs" (Geoffroy et al 2017, p1).

Gingerich et al argues that if locals are to take the leading role they need to be supported from different ways and some donors as well as UN agencies and INGOs should reassess their risk management strategies to determine if some adjustments are possible to increase direct funding of local and national NGOs and governments and to loosen the eligibility and reporting

requirements tied to such funding. Leading humanitarian actors should strive to provide partners with multi-year funding …. All donors should increase the core funding provided to local actors, including payment of overhead costs, which donors already cover for international actors. Funding of local humanitarian actors in all crises, including protracted and recurrent crises, should more closely resemble funding of development partners, in that it should conform to an extended timeframe" (Gingerich et al, 2015, p. 41). Inter personalities and interpersonal communication style were seen as the determinants of successful funding partnerships.

Charter for Change document presented that at present only 0.2% of fund goes directly to national NGOs. From that point, Grand Bargain called for 25% as direct as possible. That does not ensure any increment due to the phrase 'as direct as possible' which means it is still acceptable to have a few layers of sub-granters. It means no direct funding. The phrase is problematic and could become a source of conflict. It could be considered as 'directly' with lower percentage if concerned about meeting target from the current level. If the term is put directly there is no ambiguity but to fund direct. And the achievement could be measured clearly.

In some documents UN agencies argues that the 25% should include the value of in kind assistance. This seems not fair as what normally happen in Myanmar, during emergencies situation, UN agencies and INGOs that have received rapid response funds stocked materials and gave them to local NGOs and CSOs for distribution without any management or transportation cost. In this kind of arrangement there is no added value of having international NGOs. They do not even provide transportation cost for the material let alone management cost. A question could be posted regarding accountability to donors providing humanitarian fund in modality.

Funding conditions of some donors pose an influence on project cycle management and earmark funding to favor specific activities leaving very little or no room for adjustment. Due to donor agencies, tightened control and accountability measures has resulted in the widespread adoption of professional standards and lead to more contractual relationships than real partnerships. As donors have become more demanding and relationships have become more formal, local NGO are left with no choice but to operate as sub-contractors in a rigid competitive environment.

This weakens the strength and autonomy of local organisations. Strengths and opportunities that local NGOs bring to the negotiation table, such as local knowledge, languages skill, social

connections and experience, proximity, weight less than the monetary value international organisations put forward (Elbers et al 2011). Therefore, Elbers et all argues, "tightly defined programmatic frameworks, priority of outcomes over process, tight funding arrangements, short-term funding periods and single contracts make it difficult for SNGOs to pursue local priorities, experiment and innovate, engage in process- oriented activities, respond to unexpected events and ensure sustainable outcomes" (ibid, p.3).

D.   CONCLUSION

The concept of localisation presented at the WHS appeared bold and exciting. However, as stated above, the same aim through different concepts had already been promised in history in terms of promoting of equal partnership, local ownership, capacity building and meaningful participation of local actors. There were few good examples of localisation processes done in Myanmar that could be further explored and, if appropriate, replicated in different parts of the country and even beyond. To be effective, the localisation process requires a shift in power relations between local and international actors at the decision-making level and the control of resources.

Given that local NGOs in Myanmar are relatively new and are operating with many restrictions, donors' financial and institutional requirements and conditions are presently not supportive for their growth and their ability to take the leadership role. Rather, the arrangement of sub-granting with pre-designed projects without any meaningful participation when strategic decisions are made, compromises the local organsations' sense of ownership. Another critical issue for the local organisations to be able to take the leading role in humanitarian action is to have flexible institutional overhead management funds to allow them to make long-term plans with full confidence while still remaining in line with their original mission.

Localisation ought to be that local organisations are taking the leadership role and the ownership of the humanitarian action undertaken in response to a humanitarian crisis. In such efforts involving INGOs and UN Agencies, the principles of partnership, particularly equality that call for mutual respect, should be unequivocally observed at all time. This involves seeking and recognizing the complementarity, challenges and strengths of each other. Local organisations, the first and last responders, should be entrusted to be at the forefront doing what they can do best in the 'driver's seat' in the context they survive. The role of international actors with their

strengths - rather than taking over or creating a parallel system – could be more effective by supporting local actors in preparing for a better response to the crises. In addition, the support needed must be extended not only to be able to 'build back better' their communities but also to reduce future disaster risks.

It is time to seriously reevaluate the Localisation Agenda and to ensure that the promises of the WHS are put in practice. For this to happen, there is an urgent need for an equal partnership, the build-up of a space and support to local actors enabling them to grow and be in charge of humanitarian action affecting their lives. This imperative is best summarized by Seng Raw Lahpai, a prominent Myanmar CSO leader who implored INGOs and UN Agencies in her remark at the World Humanitarian Summit: "we ask for you to trust us and work with us - not around us – so that we can reach the most in need".

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