

Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week 2020

Session title

Learning and partnering for better local humanitarian outcomes (14:00 – 15:30, 5 February)

(Organisers: Geneva Centre for Education and Research in Humanitarian Action (CERAH) and ACAPS, with the participation of InZone from the University of Geneva.)

Two questions were addressed in three-group discussions, following brief presentations:

1. How can we include more local views in joint analysis and data sharing, to influence the humanitarian system from various perspective and ensure diversity?
2. How do relevant sectors (including the academic sector) contribute to increasing localisation within the humanitarian sector?

Session outcomes

Provide a maximum of 3 main outcomes from your session:

- **Challenge 1: Often it is challenging for local actors to understand humanitarian jargons and what/how these words mean to improve their lives.**
- **Outcome 1:**
 - Partnering with local communities, including academia, is a necessity.
 - Attention needs to be paid to the composition of international and local actors to ensure a balance and contain biases at the entrance level. Bias in needs assessments and humanitarian analysis exist, and adding more local perspectives would not solve the issue since they would come with their bias too. But it would balance the usual bias existing in the traditional humanitarian system.
 - The involvement of relevant sectors at the local level, e.g. media and academia, is helpful for communication and better understanding. Academia could also create spaces for NGOs and governments to collaborate and find solutions in disaster preparedness, response and recovery phases.
- It is indispensable to involve local communities in assessments, in order to understand needs and take the diversity of the needs and the ways they are expressed into consideration. Their engagement can also support exploring new models/systems suitable to local contexts.
- **For instance**, InZone provides higher education to refugees in refugee camps. In return, refugees share local knowledge and apply their learning in the camps. As a result, refugees are able to 'shape' their environment themselves, e.g. create web applications, do research in specific fields, etc. Their engagement to share and create knowledge is useful in protracted displacement situations for new knowledge to return to their communities.
- ACAPS is also facilitating joint analysis exercises that bring together a number of different actors, including local actors/responders, in order to build forward-looking analysis on a given situation (scenario building). Those are at the same time capacity building exercises and collective humanitarian analysis experiences.

- **Challenge 2: Lack of meaningful participation/inclusion and lack of support (including donors) for better understanding and capacity building is a hurdle.**
- **Outcome 2:**
 - Recognition of existing local capacity and the need of developing it, including local competencies in assessment, data collection (and literacy) and reporting, e.g. in disaster preparedness phase (not to wait for emergency response phase to start developing local capacity).
 - The willing to “include” could be a kind of bias and potentially diluting local voice into the system. The inclusion needs to be meaningful for local actors’ participation to become impactful.
 - It is not only a question of guidelines. An appropriate mind-set to listen, understand, and adapt, with flexibilities, to local interlocutors is a must for localisation. Local organisations can be interlocutors and facilitators for localisation. Their networks can help with signposting and implementation. Local population, government authorities, and academia can support too in data processing (collection, analysis, sharing etc.)
 - Localisation is a dynamic between local aspects and systemic approaches. It is crucial to consider this aspect for localisation to become a reality.
- **For instance**, when the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) entered into force in 2010, for its implementation in affected countries, awareness on this new convention in 2010 had to be raised for local actors to understand how it could be operationalised to address humanitarian consequences. Through the understanding, local actors can become partners to implement the CCM.

- **Challenge 3: Not enough collaboration between humanitarian and academic sectors.**
- **Outcome 3:**
 - The academic sector, particularly from social and anthropologic perspectives, can support better understanding of local contexts/needs and facilitate localisation. Spaces need to be created to facilitate cooperation across humanitarian and academic sectors.
 - Recognition in the need of time for better results. Though saving lives is imperative in immediate disaster response, taking time to include local actors in need assessment, strategic planning, and in all phases of project management is necessary.
 - Create connection between various sectors and rely more on existing resources at the local level.
- **For instance**, CERAH’s two-week training in Uganda, following distance learning, allow humanitarian professionals to apply in situ their learning. Students work, from assessment, strategic planning, to project management, with a local organisation to develop a project proposal addressing problems as identified.

Next steps to implementing solutions

Provide a maximum of 3 next steps:

- Next step 1: Explore trust and adapts: There are various actors, capacities, models, and systems existed at the local level. Take the time to understand and include more local views.
- Next step 2: Recognise local narratives: Use local resources and enhance local capacities, also consider local actors' knowledge. Attention needs to be paid to local narrative. Local actors shaping the narrative need to be given a real place. (The humanitarian narrative should not be shaped by the system only.)
- Next step 3: Build on complementarities (international and local, humanitarian and academia, etc.) and acknowledge local competencies. For actors (governments, IOs, donors) who are in the position to do so, they need to provide resources for capacity development, and create spaces to facilitate cooperation of humanitarian and academia at the local level.

Acknowledgement:

CERAH, ACAPS, and InZone appreciate the active participation of representatives from humanitarian, academic, and government sectors. We also thank HNPW Secretariat for the space to organise this session during the Inter-Network Day focusing on 'localisation'.

