

CASE STUDY: HOW THE HUMANITARIAN PARTNERSHIP LANDSCAPE HAS CHANGED IN THE LIGHT OF THE GRAND BARGAIN AND CHARTER FOR CHANGE (C4C) IN PAKISTAN



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Background and Context

Pakistan contributes only 0.9% to global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. However, the country is one of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, experiencing drastic changes in rainfall patterns, intense flooding, melting glaciers, and an increase in the frequency and intensity of climate-induced natural disasters. Since the 1950s, Pakistan has faced severe flooding every decade, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of people, damaging infrastructure, disrupting livelihoods, and displacing millions of individuals. Major floods have occurred in 1950, 1973, 1976, 1988, 1992, 1997, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015, and 2022, with the 2010 flood being the most damaging in its history.

In comparing the floods of 2010 and 2022, the 2022 flood affected 33 million people and 116 districts, compared to 22 million people and 78 districts in 2010. The 2010 floods damaged 1.6 million houses, while the 2022 floods damaged 1 million houses, though counting continues. The presence of humanitarian organizations decreased from 158 in 2010 to 70 in 2022. The crop area affected was 1.97 million acres in 2010, compared to 2 million acres in 2022. Road infrastructure damage was 5,646 km in 2010, compared to 3,457 km in 2022. Additionally, the number of major bridges damaged increased from 40 in 2010 to 157 in 2022, and the inflation rate rose from 15.7% in 2010 to 24.9% in 2022.

Lessons learned from these floods highlight the diminished capacity of the Indus River system, the complexity of the flood management system involving multiple institutions, and smaller humanitarian goals in 2022, where the number of people targeted for assistance was 50% lower than in 2010. Coordination and information-sharing issues also emerged, with some donors reporting a lack of coordination and information-sharing, impacting their ability to secure resources. Financial strategies for disaster management also differed, with global humanitarian aid exceeding US\$3 billion in 2010, compared to only US\$297 million in grant-based contributions in 2022.

Pakistan faces a complex and multifaceted humanitarian landscape, shaped by natural disasters, conflict, poverty, and socio-political instability. The country is highly susceptible to earthquakes, floods, and droughts, which have historically displaced millions and led to widespread loss of life and infrastructure damage. The ongoing conflict in certain regions, particularly the northwestern provinces, has compounded these challenges, leading to significant internal displacement and straining the capacities of local communities and humanitarian organizations. Chronic poverty and social inequality further exacerbate the situation, leaving vulnerable populations, especially women and children, at high risk.

Pakistan in the humanitarian context has witnessed a significant transformation over the past decade, marked by a decline in the presence and effectiveness of international

humanitarian organizations. This shift can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, Pakistan's ascent to middle-income status has prompted aid organizations to pivot towards long-term development initiatives, diverting attention from immediate relief efforts. Secondly, an increasingly restrictive operational environment has posed challenges for these organizations, hindering their ability to deliver aid effectively. Furthermore, the expulsion of multiple international aid agencies by the government in 2018 has exacerbated the reduction in external humanitarian support.

Despite these obstacles, there has been a notable rise in local initiatives aimed at addressing humanitarian needs. Communities, volunteers, civil society groups, faith-based organizations, and the private sector have mobilized resources and assisted at the grassroots level. This rise of local support is exemplified by the proliferation of donation collection points in cities across Pakistan underscoring a widespread community-driven effort to aid those in need.

Amid the pivotal role of local leadership in humanitarian action, there is a growing emphasis on empowering local actors. National and international NGOs, UN agencies, and governmental bodies are instrumental in championing the cause of promoting the Local Humanitarian Leadership (LHL) and ensuring a coordinated and effective humanitarian response.

The Grand Bargain, launched in 2016 during the World Humanitarian Summit, is a global initiative aimed at reforming the humanitarian system to make it more efficient, effective, and responsive. It involves commitments from donors and aid organizations to improve funding, transparency, and accountability in humanitarian actions, with a strong focus on localizing aid by channeling more resources directly to local and national actors. As of 2023, the Grand Bargain has received 66 signatures, including member states, NGOs, UN agencies, and other entities. Its 51 commitments are designed to minimize bureaucratic hurdles and ensure a more direct flow of assistance to beneficiaries.

The Charter for Change (C4C) is a complementary initiative driven by 130 international NGOs and local organizations. It seeks to promote the localization of aid by ensuring that at least 20% of humanitarian funding is directed to local organizations. C4C emphasizes the importance of partnership, capacity building, and empowering local actors to take the lead in humanitarian responses. The C4C commitments stipulate that 25% of funding should go directly to local communities, although the actual percentage often falls short due to the involvement of various actors. This shortfall contributes to the gap in humanitarian aid during disasters. INGOs have agreed to transform aid processes to address this issue, emphasizing the need for wise, efficient, and effective use of aid through local leadership. The principles of the Grand Bargain and C4C align closely with the needs of Pakistan's

humanitarian sector, where local organizations are often the first responders to crises. These initiatives encourage the shift of resources and decision-making power to local actors, which is crucial for a country like Pakistan, where local knowledge and cultural understanding are key to effective humanitarian interventions. The focus on transparency and accountability also resonates with the ongoing efforts in Pakistan to improve governance and reduce corruption in aid distribution.

Despite the potential benefits of the Grand Bargain and C4C initiatives, there is a significant gap in awareness and understanding among local organizations and activists in Pakistan. Many of these local actors, who are crucial in responding to humanitarian crises, lack the knowledge and resources to fully engage with these global initiatives. This gap hinders the potential for effective localization of aid and reduces the overall impact of humanitarian efforts in the country. Raising awareness and building capacity around these initiatives is essential to ensure that they can be fully leveraged to improve the humanitarian response in Pakistan.

Methodology

This case study adopted a qualitative research approach to examine the transformation of the humanitarian partnership landscape in Pakistan under the influence of the Grand Bargain and Charter for Change. A phenomenological lens was employed to understand the lived experiences of key stakeholders within this evolving context.

Data collection involved a combination of document analysis (desk review) on the current LHL landscape, comparing the 2010 and 2022 Floods operational partnership structures, and shift of power, resources and responsibility; The desk review encompasses the history and background of localization in Pakistan, and the current challenges restricting the strengthening of local actors., two (02) roundtable consultations with stakeholders in Islamabad, and three (03) focus group discussions conducted in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad with women's rights organizations (WROs). The primary data was utilized to identify and interpret patterns within the collected data. To ensure research rigor, member checking, peer review, and reflexivity were incorporated. Ethical considerations, such as informed consent and data confidentiality, were strictly observed throughout the research process.

This methodological framework allowed for an in-depth exploration of the complexities and nuances of the humanitarian partnership landscape in Pakistan, providing valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities presented by the Grand Bargain and Charter for Change. They questions include:

1. Identifying necessary support to strengthen the implementation of Grand Bargain commitments.
2. Increasing understanding of the challenges and opportunities for local humanitarian leadership (LHL) among participating organizations and government representatives.
3. Identifying concrete actions and recommendations to enhance support mechanisms for LHL and implement Grand Bargain commitments in Pakistan.
4. Developing a roadmap for follow-up engagements with the government and other stakeholders to advance LHL and humanitarian effectiveness in Pakistan.

Brief Desk Review

In Pakistan, the landscape of local humanitarian leadership has been evolving, especially in response to natural disasters like the floods of 2010 and 2022. The operational partnership structures have seen a shift in power, resources, and responsibility towards local actors. The floods of 2010 were triggered by anomalous weather patterns that funneled warm moist air into the region (Rasmussen et al., 2014). In contrast, the floods of 2022 were exacerbated by extreme monsoon rainfall, highlighting the challenges faced by South Asia in adapting to climate change (Nanditha et al., 2023). The 2022 floods affected millions of people, causing significant damage and loss of life (Qamer et al., 2023; Fraehr et al., 2023).

The government of Pakistan has acknowledged the cascading crises caused by the 2022 floods, emphasizing the need for addressing long-standing issues in energy and water policies to mitigate rural poverty and food insecurity (Kamal, 2023). The relief efforts post-floods have also seen the textile industry seeking greater access to international markets for recovery (Ijaz, 2024). Additionally, the floods have had a severe impact on agriculture, resulting in crop losses and infrastructure damage (Qamer et al., 2022).

Challenges persist in strengthening local actors in humanitarian response. The need for climate mitigation and adaptation is crucial to reduce the risk of such catastrophic events in the future (Nanditha et al., 2023). Building water resilience, creating water spaces, and enhancing community resilience are highlighted as key strategies post-flood to ensure a more water-secure Pakistan (Naveed, 2023). Furthermore, the role of institutions in combating flood hazards, as seen in the case study of District Chiniot, underscores the importance of effective structures and functions in disaster response (Shah, 2020).

Localization in Pakistan

The concept of localization in humanitarian response emphasizes empowering local actors to lead disaster relief efforts. In Pakistan, localization efforts have a mixed history.

The term “*localization*” gained significant attention in the lead-up to the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, aiming for a more balanced humanitarian system where local and national actors are valued, supported, and recognized by international agencies, donors, and NGOs. The debate on localization has gained momentum, particularly in the last two years, focusing on achievements and challenges in supporting its operationalization.

Despite increasing needs and demands creating a gap in humanitarian financing, the Grand Bargain, launched at the World Humanitarian Summit 2016, encourages working more efficiently and transparently with existing and new humanitarian partners. Following the 2005 earthquake, international NGOs (INGOs) played a dominant role, raising concerns about limited local ownership and sustainability. This led to a gradual push for localization, with initiatives such as the “*Charter for Change*” promoting greater inclusion of local actors.

The 2010 floods exposed limitations in the localization process. While some local NGOs participated, INGOs still held significant decision-making power and resources. The complex bureaucratic structure and limited capacity of some local actors further hindered a truly localized response. In comparison, the 2022 floods demonstrated a notable shift towards localization. The Humanitarian Leadership Academy (HLA) deployed staff to Pakistan, partnering with local organizations such as ‘Save the Children’ to develop a localized response strategy. This approach focused on strengthening local capacity through training and needs assessments. The deployment aimed to improve responsiveness and ensure interventions aligned with community needs. The 2022 response suggests a transfer of power and resources towards local actors. The HLA’s role was primarily capacity building, highlighting a shift from direct intervention to empowering local leadership. This trend aligns with the global emphasis on localization in humanitarian response.

Local action during the 2022 floods saw communities, volunteers, civil society, faith organizations, and the private sector raising funds and providing support. Aid collection tents were set up at every street corner in various cities, collecting clothes, food, non-food items, and cash. A significant volume of assistance came from local and community-based efforts and philanthropic, faith-based, and private actors, although much of it went untracked. Despite the progress, challenges persist. Limited financial resources, bureaucratic hurdles, and uneven capacity among local organizations remain significant obstacles. Additionally, political instability and complex security situations in certain regions can further hinder localization efforts.

The 2022 floods in Pakistan witnessed a crucial step towards strengthening local humanitarian leadership. While challenges remain, the increased focus on capacity building and collaborative partnerships offers a promising trajectory for future disaster responses. To summarize, the comparison between the 2010 and 2022 floods in Pakistan showcases the evolving landscape of local humanitarian leadership and operational partnerships. While challenges persist, there is a growing recognition of the need for climate resilience, community engagement, and effective institutional responses to mitigate the impact of future disasters.

Changes in Partnership Dynamics: Before and After the Grand Bargain and C4C

Before the introduction of the Grand Bargain and the Charter for Change (C4C), humanitarian partnerships around the world were heavily skewed towards international NGOs (INGOs) and donors, with local and national NGOs (L/NNGOs) playing a secondary role. Local organizations often lacked the capacity, resources, and influence to lead humanitarian responses effectively. The Grand Bargain and C4C aimed to address this imbalance by promoting the localization of aid and encouraging more equitable partnerships.

Practically, collaboration among humanitarian actors in Pakistan has seen mixed results. On one hand, there is increased dialogue around the need for localization and the involvement of local NGOs in decision-making processes. On the other hand, the practical implementation of these ideas has been stymied by a lack of understanding and resources, leading to continued dominance by INGOs and limited genuine collaboration. Many local WROs/NGOs report that, despite the rhetoric of partnership, they often remain on the periphery, with their input undervalued. Many of the respondents from the local organizations heard about the Grand Bargain and C4C for the first time through the FGDs and sessions with WROs/NGOs organized for this case study.

The government of Pakistan (GoP) plays a complex role in humanitarian partnerships, often acting as both a facilitator and a gatekeeper. While the government has the potential to support the localization agenda by creating enabling policies and frameworks, bureaucratic hurdles and a lack of trust in local NGOs have hindered progress. The government's regulatory environment often slows down the clearance and operational processes for local NGOs, reducing their effectiveness in responding to crises.

Local and national NGOs are crucial first responders in Pakistan's humanitarian landscape. However, their roles remain underutilized and underrecognized. The lack of awareness of Grand Bargain and C4C among these NGOs has limited their ability to

leverage these frameworks to secure more equitable partnerships and resources. As a result, they often struggle with financial instability, limited access to decision-making processes, and inadequate capacity building. One of the most important common points highlighted by actors was the complexity of funding proposals and the required technical expertise to bid for funding.

International NGOs continue to dominate the humanitarian space in Pakistan, often acting as intermediaries between donors and local NGOs. While they have the potential to be key allies in promoting localization, their continued control over funding and decision-making processes means that true partnership with local actors remains elusive. Some INGOs have made efforts to shift power to local partners, but these initiatives are often piecemeal and lack the comprehensive support needed for long-term change. A participant in a focus group discussion (FGD) shared, *“We hear about the Grand Bargain and localization, but in practice, nothing changes. We are still treated as sub-contractors rather than partners.”* This sentiment reflects the frustration of many local WROs/NGOs that have yet to see the promised changes in partnership dynamics.

The lack of meaningful integration of the Grand Bargain and C4C principles has resulted in missed opportunities for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian aid delivery in Pakistan. While there have been isolated examples of successful localization, these are not widespread, and aid delivery often remains slow, top-down, and disconnected from the needs of affected populations. Local NGOs, with their deep community ties, are the best positioned to access affected populations quickly and efficiently. However, their limited involvement in the broader humanitarian architecture means that their potential is not fully realized. International actors often take the lead, which can lead to delays and a lack of culturally appropriate interventions.

True local ownership and leadership in humanitarian responses remain aspirational rather than actualized goals in Pakistan. The dominance of international actors and the limited, or rather nonexistent, understanding of the Grand Bargain and C4C among local stakeholders mean that local WROs/NGOs are often relegated to supporting roles rather than leading the response efforts. Representatives of local NGOs reported that they are excluded from decision-making processes and that funding rarely reaches them directly, with most resources still flowing through international channels.

The push for greater accountability and transparency in humanitarian aid has had limited impact in Pakistan as local NGOs struggle with navigating complex donor requirements, and the lack of direct engagement with global frameworks such as the Grand Bargain means that these principles are not always fully understood or implemented. They also face numerous challenges in navigating the humanitarian landscape, including

bureaucratic obstacles, limited access to funding, and exclusion from key decision-making forums. These challenges are compounded by a lack of trust from both the government and international donors, who often view local NGOs as lacking the capacity or integrity to manage large-scale humanitarian efforts.

Challenges

The most significant gap in the implementation of the Grand Bargain and C4C in Pakistan is the lack of awareness and understanding among local actors. Without sufficient knowledge of these initiatives, local NGOs cannot advocate for the changes they need to become more effective partners. This gap also hinders the ability of international actors to fully engage with local partners in a meaningful way. Additionally, Pakistan's complex political environment, security concerns, and regulatory challenges, significantly affect the partnership landscape. These factors can create an environment of mistrust and competition rather than collaboration, particularly between local and international actors. There is a need for greater awareness-raising and capacity-building efforts among local NGOs, the importance of simplifying bureaucratic processes to enable quicker and more effective responses, and the need for international actors to genuinely commit to partnership principles rather than maintaining control over resources and decision-making.

Discussion and Key Findings

For qualitative data and analysis for this case study, two roundtable discussions and three focus group discussions with local leaders from various NGOs and women rights organizations (WROs) were held which helped collect tangible information, data, findings, and recommendations by the key informants from NGOs/WROs, experts from across the board. This section describes the major outcomes of the discussions.

The participants viewed that the local organizations frequently struggle with weak organizational systems and a lack of necessary policies and expertise to develop comprehensive annual reports. Unlike international NGOs, many local organizations do not have policies on gender, child protection, and safeguarding, making it necessary to strengthen their capacities. The process for obtaining No Objection Certificates (NOCs) for NGOs and INGOs to provide humanitarian assistance in disaster-hit areas is overly complicated, often taking one to three months despite the need for assistance within 6 to 12 hours. Local actors, NGOs, and INGOs require government support to streamline and expedite the NOC process, ensuring it is swift, transparent, efficient, and effective. This may enable the local organizations to play their due role.

A significant communication gap exists within the government system and between the government and NGOs/INGOs. Establishing a technical group that includes INGOs, NGOs, and other stakeholders to engage with the government during disasters is necessary. Information should flow seamlessly from federal to provincial, district, and village levels to disseminate early warnings and other critical information to communities, with village-based organizations playing a key role. Coordination between the government, civil society, and INGOs is often lacking. For example, NOCs for six-month projects are sometimes issued after 7-8 months, causing project failures. The government should simplify documentation, reporting, and NOC requirements. The technical capacities of local actors in finance management, WASH, and other areas need enhancement to assist the government and other stakeholders in disaster response.

District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs) play a critical role in the humanitarian aid process but only become active during disaster events. Their role should be anticipatory, with a presence extending to the village level. The government needs to be proactive, maintaining activity not only during emergencies but also in pre- and post-disaster situations. The coordination should be structured so that the coordination unit has decision-making authority and can collect feedback from NGOs and INGOs. A participant from WRO said: *“Although various organizations provide reports to DDMAs, there is no mechanism for analyzing these reports. Furthermore, there is a need to integrate soft components of humanitarian aid, such as considerations for gender, women, children, the elderly, and those with special needs, into the overall humanitarian structure”*.

International NGOs (INGOs) face numerous issues due to fluctuating government policies, forcing them to constantly adjust. A shared database is needed to allow organizations to learn from each other’s experiences, creating a roadmap for better strategies and outcomes. Faith-based and other charity and civil society organizations played a fundamental role in the 2022 floods but faced less stringent scrutiny from the government. Strengthening these organizations’ capacities is essential due to their significant contributions to humanitarian aid. While scrutinizing INGOs and NGOs is necessary, it is also essential to understand their role as resources during crises. Instead of imposing blanket bans, a robust mechanism should be established to ensure their reliability, transparency, and security through stringent reporting.

The government’s approach to emergencies tends to be reactive rather than proactive. Ensuring the resilience of infrastructure in disaster-prone areas and avoiding unsustainable development practices are critical. The lack of data and a centralized data system make it harder to reach vulnerable communities, particularly women, differently abled persons, children, and the elderly. This data gap leads to duplication of efforts,

with multiple organizations providing aid in one area while other areas remain neglected. Involving local communities and national NGOs (NNGOs) in INGOs and government systems is essential for success. During the 2010 floods, UNOCHA effectively coordinated aid distribution, but such mechanisms were absent in 2022.

Local infrastructure maintenance is neglected, as seen in D.I. Khan, where streams and rivers have not been cleaned for 20 years, exacerbating flood impacts. Post-disaster aid is often overlooked, leaving affected communities without support. Changing seasonal patterns and new agricultural challenges further strain local resilience. Amid this situation, the participants suggested that the government, INGOs, and NGOs need to strengthen local governance at the district level, as these entities are more connected to communities. Continuous aid provision can erode indigenous coping capacities, making communities dependent on external help. Over the past decades, KPK has lost significant agricultural land due to climate change and urbanization. Emerging crop diseases and insects are additional challenges reported by local farmers.

The participants from media said that the journalists, who previously provided solution-based reporting, now lack the skills to do so, and their stories often go unreported. Journalists should be trained to produce solution-based stories that respect local culture and dynamics. Media houses should be included in consultations on humanitarian issues to bring these topics into mainstream media. Successful community-led organizations like AKRSP and NRSP in northern areas demonstrate effective engagement in humanitarian and disaster responses.

Integrating disaster management education into school curricula through pictorials and graphics can enhance children's understanding of disasters. When discussing capacities, it is important to recognize that they vary in nature. Skill-based capacities can often be acquired through a few training sessions, but shifting gender perspectives requires a long-term strategy aimed at changing mindsets. Many INGOs previously worked on these mindset and gender issues, but their diminished presence has left a gap in this crucial area.

In the context of Global Bargain and C4C, a participants raised a significant question in the humanitarian sector whether INGOs and major players are willing to transfer power to local actors. The sustainability of INGOs in the country depends on their approach and mindset toward localization. Oxfam has been a leader in this area, empowering local leadership and committing to transferring funds directly to communities, said a partner of Oxfam. For instance, while the Grand Bargain calls for 25% of funds to be transferred to local partners, Oxfam has managed to transfer 70% while rest has to still give this a serious thought. Including donors in local humanitarian consultations is important. There

needs to be a mutual understanding between donors and recipients, such as local NGOs, to develop effective risk-sharing mechanisms. Additionally, understanding donor preferences is vital, as donors often prefer funding INGOs over local actors due to compliance and accountability requirements imposed by their own governments.

There is a shared understanding among donor organizations and INGOs that their effectiveness depends on collaboration with NGOs, governments, and local actors. This collaborative approach aims to ensure that all parties work together seamlessly to address humanitarian needs. The National Humanitarian Network (NHN) was established as part of a localization initiative by a consortium of six UK-based organizations, including Oxfam. One notable outcome of this process is the National Humanitarian Forum. Many organizations have committed to the Charter for Change (C4C), and several local organizations in Pakistan have endorsed it. There are 21 endorsing organizations of C4C in Pakistan, including NHN. From 2016 to 2023, there was a lack of country-level reporting from these endorsers. However, in August 2023, a negotiation process began titled *"Strengthening the Agenda of Localization through Strategic Partnerships."* During this process, five C4C signatory organizations and several local organizations were brought together to create a platform for negotiation and discussion on advancing the localization agenda.

The humanitarian landscape in Pakistan is characterized by a diverse network of national and international organizations collaborating to ensure effective disaster response and capacity building, with a strong emphasis on local leadership. The National Humanitarian Network (NHN), consisting of 192 member organizations, plays a central role in coordination, alongside key players such as NEAR, the Start Network, CHS Alliance, GNDR, ToGETHER, and ICVA.

Analyzing funding mechanisms like the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPF) reveals important insights. While CERF primarily allocates funding to UN agencies, CBPF funding is accessible to both international NGOs (INGOs) and local organizations. Notably, countries like the UK and Sweden emerge as significant contributors to CERF, highlighting potential targets for localization negotiations. By engaging with these key donors and advocating for increased support to local actors, the humanitarian community can advance the localization agenda and ensure more equitable distribution of resources. Overall, these collaborative efforts aim to create a more effective, sustainable, and locally driven humanitarian response in Pakistan. Navigating challenges such as funding constraints and donor priorities is crucial for enhancing localization efforts in humanitarian aid. ToGETHER stands out as an exemplary model, having successfully transferred overhead funds to local actors/partners, demonstrating the potential for greater empowerment of local organizations.

The absence of dedicated environmental desks in mainstream media underscores the need for broader awareness and coverage of climate-related issues, particularly in disaster-prone regions like Pakistan. Enhancing media coverage of nonprofit organizations' relief efforts during disasters can amplify their impact and garner support from both local and international audiences.



A view from consultation - SDPI photo



Addressing regulatory and compliance issues, the participants called for collaboration within existing forums as a means to streamline the processes and establish common frameworks leveraging international networks and forums such as those focusing on anticipatory actions and disaster risk financing models that offer opportunities for localized interventions. Incentivizing consortiums led by local organizations could improve compliance while capacitating them within the donor landscape. Amidst shrinking humanitarian funding and escalating disaster frequency, there's a pressing need for cost-effective local solutions. To address this, it's proposed that international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and donors should channel their projects and aid through local civil societies and community-based organizations (CBOs). However, due to stringent due diligence systems within INGOs, direct access to funding has been made impossible.

Maintaining the sustainability of a Civil Society Organization (CSO) over two decades, from 2004 to 2024, presents significant challenges. Initially, there was a trend of collaboration between International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) with local CSOs and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), which contributed to enhancing the capacities of these grassroots entities. However, recent practices have shown a concerning shift, where New NGOs (NNGOs) engage CSOs and local organizations initially for mapping and assistance but subsequently withdraw support, often hiring non-local staff for project implementation, thereby hindering the inclusive development of local communities. Despite being the first responders during disasters, CSOs face bureaucratic hurdles, with the government treating them as NNGOs or part of INGOs and demanding extensive documentation akin to INGOs and NNGOs for basic tasks like opening bank accounts.

One CSO representative from Laiyah, South Punjab, shared the frustration of attempting to open a bank account, encountering demands for affiliation and commitment letters from INGOs before proceeding. However, examples, such as the successful operation of a mother and child center and Gynae Hospital in Laiyah, funded by local donations and being run for two decades, highlight the potential of CSOs when provided with platforms, funding, and involvement in decision-making processes. Moreover, there are numerous successful instances of Local Support Organizations (LSOs), WROs, CBOs, and Volunteer Organizations (VOs) operating in Pakistan. Models such as the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP) and Rural Support Program Network (RSPN) serve as examples that can be strengthened, mainstreamed, and regularized to empower local communities and foster sustainable development initiatives at local levels across the country.

A representative from a WRO says, *"In the humanitarian system, there is a pressing need to encourage understanding of gender-related issues, yet many partners in various forums are discouraging such discussions. Gender-based funding has also emerged as a significant concern within emergency funding, with a noticeable lack of support for gender-sensitive*

issues as these funds diminish.” Moreover, there’s a necessity to enhance the technical capacity of the government, as often officers are assigned to departments outside their areas of expertise, leading to reliance on consultations with think tanks and experts to formulate strategies, which is deemed a positive practice.

Proposals and projects must be grounded in reality and focus on achievable objectives. While project-based approaches have their merits, they may not sufficiently address the capacity and comprehension of humanitarian issues, necessitating a shift towards long-term programs. Such an approach can aid in strengthening the resilience of communities over time. However, the current mobilization process tends to be project-oriented, resulting in discontinuity as organizations enter and exit, neglecting to build upon the efforts of predecessors.

One of the participants from FDG says, *“When an International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) evaluates a national or local Community-Based Organization (CBO) and collaborates with it for project implementation, there should be a mechanism to prevent redundant scrutiny by other INGOs and NGOs. Instead, subsequent organizations should rely on the evaluation conducted by the initial organization.”* Mapping humanitarian needs nationwide is crucial for identifying vulnerable communities and their requirements for effective assistance. Similarly, mapping developmental needs based on the Human Development Index (HDI) can guide resource allocation to priority sectors. Anticipatory approaches need to be prioritized, ensuring proactive measures are in place to address impending challenges before they escalate into crises. These collective efforts are essential for a more effective and sustainable humanitarian response. – explain in DRR

Improving the government's capacity for system strengthening is imperative for effective governance. Often, when capacity-building workshops are arranged to enhance preparedness among government officials, some key personnel fail to attend, citing other commitments. This underscores the importance of nominating suitable individuals who can fully participate in such programs without compromise. Similarly, the United Nations (UN) aims to collaborate directly with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), yet many lack essential infrastructure, staff, bank accounts, and reporting mechanisms, rendering them ineligible for UN due diligence requirements. To address this issue, the UN could establish agreements with CBOs possessing diverse expertise in areas such as WASH, health, and education, enabling collaboration across multiple thematic areas. However, there's a growing concern regarding donor fatigue, leading to a shrinking donor landscape, which further complicates humanitarian efforts.

Another participant was of the view that the withdrawal of International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) from disaster-stricken regions can destabilize the entire system. For instance, during floods, organizations like Indus and Shifa Foundation provided

crucial health services to affected communities, but when the UN withdrew its support, these services collapsed, revealing the fragility of the system. Although numerous health facilities were rehabilitated, the lack of medical personnel underscores the need for CBOs to step in, provided they meet the compliance standards set by the UN.

Documenting the activities and impacts of local organizations is essential for advocating localization and demonstrating the effectiveness of local actors in addressing community needs. Moreover, integration into global networks is imperative, aligning with their agendas while contextualizing strategies to local realities. Understanding international humanitarian diplomacy is necessary for advocating localization within the global humanitarian system. Arguments should be evidence-based to effectively promote localization strategies. Moreover, comprehending the context and approaches of international organizations towards localization is imperative in today's landscape of multi-stakeholder collaborations and consortiums. Building confidence among local actors, forming consortiums, and fostering collaboration are vital steps in strengthening their role in the humanitarian field.

A participant from media said that media can be used to spotlight the efforts of local actors who often go unrecognized. By using media platforms awareness can be raised of the valuable contributions of the local humanitarian actors and also facilitate networking among various stakeholders. This increased visibility and connectivity can enhance collaboration and support for local initiatives. Utilizing social media platforms for the dissemination of humanitarian efforts and other pertinent issues is crucial in today's digital age. These mediums not only facilitate coordination but also raise awareness about localization efforts. Utilizing Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), WROs, Local Support Organizations (LSOs), and Urban Councils (UCs) presents promising opportunities for effective humanitarian aid and developmental projects, given their close proximity to community needs.

A significant challenge in humanitarian projects is the effectiveness of community ownership and decision-making. Despite frequent emphasis on these principles, their actual implementation remains inconsistent. This inconsistency undermines the potential for truly participatory and sustainable humanitarian efforts, as local communities often have limited influence over the decisions that affect them directly. The humanitarian sector



A view from consultation - SDPI photo

is highly *"colonized,"* making the decolonization process slow and challenging. There are also misconceptions about the ability of local leadership to absorb funding and meet compliance standards. These misconceptions further hinder the effective participation of local actors in the humanitarian sector. Oxfam's implementation of decolonization initiatives through partner-led approaches and the establishment of the CHANGE network exemplify how INGOs can support localization efforts. These initiatives highlight the potential for INGOs to facilitate meaningful change and promote local leadership in humanitarian projects.

A representative from WRO/NGO said: *"Women's empowerment presents a noteworthy opportunity, as demonstrated by successful projects in Sindh. Focusing on empowering women can lead to more resilient communities and improve the overall effectiveness of humanitarian efforts. By integrating gender-focused strategies into humanitarian projects, organizations can address specific vulnerabilities and leverage the strengths of women in*



A view from consultation - SDPI photo



During three special focus group discussions organized for WROs, the women representatives narrated how they have empowered women, addressed their challenges, and strived to fulfill their needs. They shared the inspiring stories of their efforts to support and uplift women in the face of various obstacles.

On 'Ensuring Gender Integration and Creating Space for Women Under Grand Bargain and Charter for Change', the participants demonstrated how to ensure gender integration and create space for women under the Grand Bargain and Charter for Change. Drawing from their experiences in the field, offices, or personal life, they viewed they can work to create space for women within these frameworks by exploring two main aspects- the perspective of the beneficiaries receiving aid and where do women stand in humanitarian aid plans and how they can include them. Women require urgent humanitarian assistance as they are disproportionately affected during crises, yet their voices and needs are often overlooked. When working under these frameworks, the first step is to understand the objectives and commitments of Grand Bargain and Charter for Change. Once a clear understanding is developed, the next step is to connect this understanding with the principles outlined in the Grand Bargain and the Charter for Change, using relevant experiences. The global criticism of the Grand Bargain is that it has essentially just become a charter without any meaningful distribution of resources and power. This is partly due to perception issues related to corruption and fraud in developing countries, which are valid to some extent. To address this, local organizations need to be empowered.

Talking about the challenges, the WROs' representative predominantly women identified the challenge of lack of hygiene and sanitary requirements of women as the decision makers happened to be men who may not have an understanding of these requirements so there is a need to raise women at top decision making leaders. They called for transparency and need assessment, especially in education and empowerment of all kinds. Providing education to the marginalized groups can be challenging, as some prefer to have their young children work to support the family instead of attending school. However, if these young children get an education, they still have limited opportunities for employment in the future.

Sharing their achievements, one of the women leaders hailing from a women's rights organization (WRO) said: *"They are contributing to enhancing women's political awareness through mobilization sessions so that they are trained to raise their voice. As a result of these sessions, a charter of demands was created. Afterward, high-ranking officials from various city districts, as well as representatives from human rights and social welfare organizations, were invited to a convention. At the convention, these women presented their charter of demands. This marks the first step, and if more similar initiatives are taken, significant*

societal change can be ensured.”

In the Women Voice Leadership Pakistan project, 250 women from rural and urban areas in Mirpur participated in sessions on women's laws and leadership. From this group, 50 women attended orientation sessions and 25 were selected for the Champions of Change award. These women have formed an agency called Women Agency of Champions of Change and are involved in their own small businesses and entrepreneurial activities. They have received training on gender leadership, laws relating to women, and leadership. The training, conducted by Oxfam, has empowered these women to engage in activities such as bike riding, opening small shops in their villages, and starting online businesses. These women have also received advanced training on leadership and women's rights. Notably, the first women's bike rally took place on November 30th in 2023, with support and security provided by the Mirpur-based police and district administration. Additionally, the SSP in Mir Pur Khas is now providing training to the Women Police. As a result of these trainings, women who previously couldn't afford school fees, are now able to provide their children with tuition facilities.

A participant from said Aurat Foundation focused on women's leadership. They formed a group of 50 leaders and selected them to lead at the district level. These leaders were

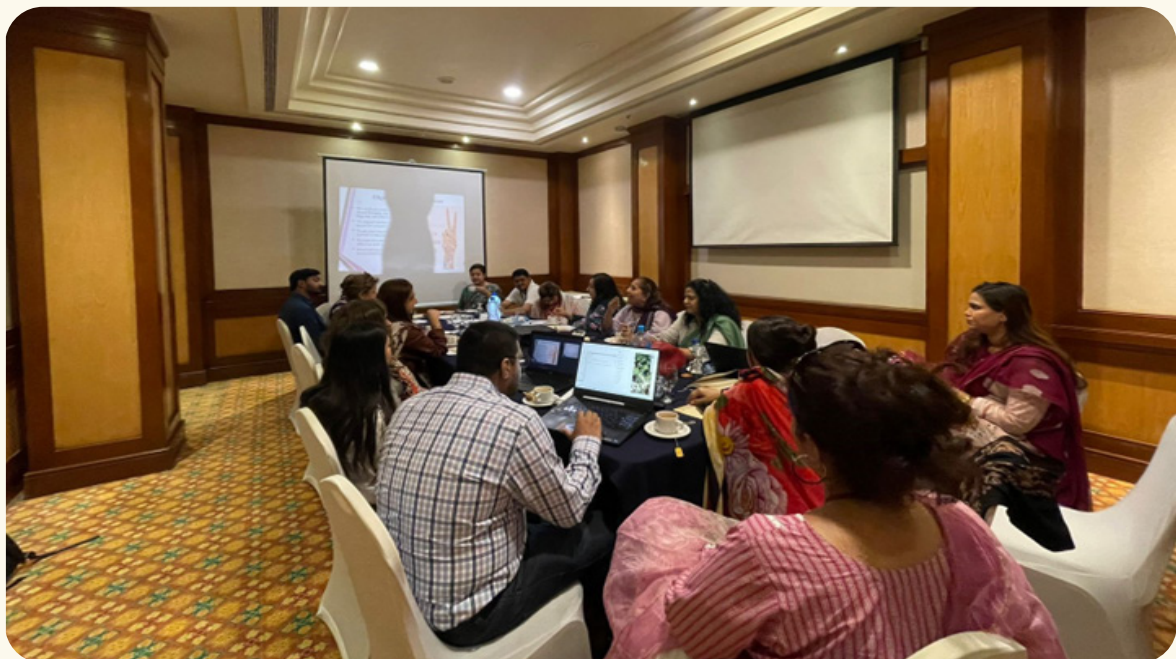


then provided with training in laws, and their connections with various departments were established. This was done so that in case of any issues at the district level, they could address them effectively. Aurat Foundation also had a positive experience with legislation when the domestic violence law was passed on March 8, 2013, in the Sindh Assembly.

Women participants from Lahore at the FGD told that local actors possess an asset of indigenous knowledge, providing invaluable resources for international humanitarian

A view from consultation - SDPI photo

actors. Their ability to act swiftly and appropriately in crises often exceeds that of the international actors. The concept of localization is aimed at empowering these local actors through direct funding and harmonized reporting requirements, such as financial and narrative reporting, as well as grant-making processes. Simplifying these requirements is necessary, as it removes major barriers for local organizations, which often struggle with the complexity of templates and financial reporting demands. The Grand Bargain commitment to harmonization seeks to streamline the reporting mechanisms to ensure they are accessible and easy to understand. This effort is fundamental in addressing the primary challenge faced by local organizations and understanding localization to replicate its benefits. By gathering accurate data, we can effectively implement localization strategies. It involves Indigenous practices, cost reviews, and simplified templates.



A view from consultation - SDPI photo

To strengthen localization, the participants suggested to develop Integrated and gender-responsive Programs with risk sharing and accountability mechanisms through simple reporting systems. There should be a nexus between Humanitarian and Development works taking care of the fact that the humanitarian work addresses immediate crises, while development initiatives focus on long-term infrastructure programs. There is a need for better education and outreach to help stakeholders effectively use these frameworks to bridge the gap between emergency response and sustainable development at local level.

One participant hailing from FemConsortia, a network of feminist organizations, suggested that instead of restricting beneficiaries to specific card usages such as the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Kisan Card, and Watan Card, direct cash should be disbursed to exemplify cash-based programming. It empowers the affected people to address their specific needs more effectively. This flexibility allows individuals

to utilize funds according to their particular circumstances. Another participant opined that while the cash-based programs offer flexibility, they also present challenges such as repaying debts, which can divert funds from their intended purpose.



Pictures from the sessions with women leaders- SDPI Photos



Globally, it has been observed that women are more effective in managing household finances when they control the cash flow. This is largely because women are more likely to invest in areas that benefit the whole household. Women prioritize spending on food, utilities, and other basic needs that ensure the stability and well-being of the family. Women prioritize education, healthcare, and nutrition for children. Women allocate funds to maintaining livestock, which can provide a sustainable source of income. They are more likely to use cash transfers to support small business that builds economic resilience.

The majority of participants called for strengthening local government system with women in leadership role to act better at local levels while responding to any humanitarian emergency or development work. Funding and interventions should be channeled through local actors. Strengthening the local government system is fundamental to support these



A view from consultation - SDPI photo

funding processes. Although governments operate according to specific political agendas, non-profit organizations and civil society have the space to pursue non-governmental agendas. While governments focus on development areas, humanitarian aid, particularly crisis-related and gender-specific assistance, is best handled by civil society organizations.

The respondents from Islamabad highlighted a severe gap between humanitarian and developmental funding. Humanitarian funding is relatively small and focused, whereas development funding encompasses broader areas such as education, infrastructure, and health. Tracking the allocation and efficient use of these funds is essential, particularly for climate change and disaster response initiatives. Community-based organizations face significant challenges due to bureaucratic delays in certification and fund allocation. This not only impacts project timelines but also erodes donor confidence. The regulatory system should facilitate rather than hindering these organizations, ensuring timely access to funds and enabling them to continue their critical work within communities.

Educated women often lack awareness about managing their finances. There is a need to provide clear and practical solutions. International organizations take an interest in local initiatives, but they emphasize the importance of education, legal aid, and economic opportunities for women. Programs must be designed in collaboration with local organizations to address specific needs effectively.

To ensure effective and transparent implementation of programs, there is a need to empower women with education and economic opportunities. One of the participants

discussed that recently, they completed the nation's largest intervention program for out-of-school children. They went door-to-door to convince parents to send their daughters to school, built restrooms for girls, and trained teachers on menstrual hygiene management. They also provided dignity kits and transport support for girls' safety. Highlighting success stories to international donors is fundamental. For instance, a story about their literacy mobilizer and a student was so inspiring that they were invited to Qatar to share it on a global platform. Empowerment driven by women who can inspire, mentor, and lead by example is essential. Providing platforms and documentation for their stories is vital to continue this work effectively.

One of the major challenges is the lack of platforms for women to raise their voices and empower themselves. Encouraging women to learn digital skills is essential in this AI-driven era. But the first hurdle is the image of NGOs; many people mistrust them. Convincing family members, especially men, to allow women to participate is another challenge. There is a need for more awareness and supportive platforms to implement our initiatives effectively. Despite these challenges, there have been success stories where women have excelled in digital skills and business. However, there is a need for continued support and awareness sessions to maintain this momentum.

There are practical issues that are faced by local leaders associated with the small scale organizations amid lack of resources and the way NGOs/CBOs/WROs are being handled by the bureaucratic channels. Bringing money to support local organizations is a challenge, since they often do not transform resources effectively. What we need is capacity strengthening. Our civil society leaders are often unaware of current happenings. For example, from 2016 to 2024, we did not have enough debates on the charter of change. One of the participants said that funding agencies and NGOs often focus on their ideas rather than listening to local needs, which affects the effectiveness of the efforts of local organizations. We need to move away from the Request for Proposal (RFP) culture and focus on localization to strengthen local civil society and women's and youth's issues.

The emphasis on localization and the Grand Bargain aims to shift resources and decision-making to the local level. However, practical implementation has been slow, with significant challenges remaining. For instance, organizations have closed central offices to work more directly with local partners, but the enabling environment for such initiatives is still lacking. There are significant regulatory and logistical hurdles; and civic spaces are increasingly restricted. Promoting effective humanitarian action and leadership at the local level requires addressing these systemic issues and ensuring that organizations have the support and resources they need to succeed. The goal is to create a more equitable and efficient system that empowers local communities and leaders.



A view of the consultation with women leaders at a hotel in Islamabad. SDPI Photo.



Sarah Zafar and Shahnawaz Ali from Oxfam in their blog said that the modest yet significant advance in women's mobility – offering dependable transport in areas where public options are scarce or fraught with danger – has been spearheaded by the Advocacy, Research, Training & Services (ARTS) Foundation, a local Women's Rights Organisation (WRO) and a partner in the Global Affairs Canada-funded Women's Voice and Leadership – Pakistan program.¹ Like ARTS, Oxfam Pakistan has strategically selected partners deeply rooted in grassroots communities as part of the emergency and early recovery phases for its 2022 Flood Response, in accordance with Grand Bargain and Charter for Change (C4C) commitments.

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Dharmi, a farmer from Mirpurkhas in Pakistan, is an active participant in discussions about women’s protection, empowerment and local community issues convened by the ARTS Foundation, a local WRO (Picture: Sarah Zafar/Oxfam)

Small, local WROs play a key role within their communities. Formed and led by women who themselves have struggled against patriarchal norms of their families and communities, they are uniquely positioned to advocate for women’s issues from the grassroots all the way to the higher chambers of power, such as Parliament. In Pakistan, WROs have joined social movements that have resulted in the passing of critical pro-women laws and policies.

One WRO representative told us: *“We have a saying at our organisation, ‘once anyone boards our trains, they never disembark’. We create deep connections with our programme participants. When a woman is thrown out of her house by an abusive husband in the middle of the night, it is us she will call, and we will make sure her dignity is restored and she finds a safe place to stay.”*

Crucially, women’s rights groups and WROs can play a pivotal role in ensuring that humanitarian responses are safe and inclusive for women and children. *“WROs are crucial in emergencies. They can mobilise youth and community groups who are often the*

first responders. Yet, somehow, during emergencies, WROs are not prioritised as a key stakeholder,” a WRO representative told the bloggers.

In fact, the conversations in consultation meetings with WROs held in Karachi and Lahore revealed that WROs were largely unaware of the Grand Bargain and C4C and how these could be leveraged to advance women’s rights work in Pakistan. This suggests a disconnect between the global pledges and the key stakeholders in the localisation agenda – an oversight that must be addressed to ensure that humanitarian responses are truly effective for women, particularly in the context of Pakistan. The consultation participants also highlighted the need to make WROs and grassroots women-led movements self-sufficient, reducing their dependence on funding from international NGOs (INGOs). They said achieving this goal would require investment in their institutional capacities.

“We have a great passion to learn and improve our systems. It’s like the saying, ‘Give a person a fish and you feed them for a day, but teach them how to fish, and you feed them for life.’ If INGOs provide training on safeguarding and child protection in emergencies, we will be better prepared. After all, we are often the first to reach and respond with whatever resources we have,” said another participant.

WROs and other NGOs also voiced their frustration over the lack of recognition for their work by larger INGOs. *“During the COVID pandemic, it was the members of local Community-Based Organisations who risked their lives to carry out awareness and protection programs, and yet their work went unrecognised,”* said a participant from Lahore.

A participant from Sindh, representing women fisherfolk, also raised the pressing challenges posed by climate change and the urgent need to safeguard women from its escalating threats. *“We are at the forefront of the climate threat, and we possess an intimate understanding of our geographies and our waters. With some technical and financial support, we can devise better solutions to these problems,”* she said.

There is a need for a roadmap to empower grassroots organisations in Pakistan and deliver on local humanitarian leadership. The aim is to promote collaborative dialogue on the localisation agenda in Pakistan, ultimately producing a report that explores the intricacies of localisation, its challenges, and the potential it holds for enhancing the effectiveness of humanitarian and development work within the country.²

Some of the broad top-line findings indicate that:

2 <file:///Users/shafqat/Desktop/Grand%20Bargain%20Case%20Study-Oxfam/When%20will%20the%20'grand%20bargain'%20deliver%20a%20better%20deal%20for%20women's%20organisations%20in%20Pakistan%3F%20-%20Views%20&.html>

There is a “*trust Deficit*” when it comes to local NGOs. A significant gap exists between the government, donors, and local NGOs, leading to limited funding and partnership opportunities for local actors. For example, local NGOs frequently report being excluded from key funding discussions due to perceived capacity issues.

1. NGOs are often left out of Information Loops and excluded from critical decision-making processes, which limits their ability to contribute meaningfully to humanitarian responses. Many participants and Local NGO representatives reported that they are, often, informed of decisions only after they have been made, reducing their role to mere implementers.
2. Bureaucratic Hurdles, including stringent NGO registration and clearance processes, significantly delays humanitarian interventions and reduces the efficiency of local actors.
3. Despite the stated goals of the Grand Bargain and C4C, there has been limited investment in building the capacity of local NGOs, leaving them ill-equipped to lead responses, manage large-scale funding, or even to bid for funding in most cases; The latter continued to emerge as a significant issue for most participants and the organizations they represent.
4. Many local NGOs feel that their involvement in partnerships is ‘merely for show’, with international actors controlling the agenda and resources. This, in turn, undermines the very principles of localization, partnerships, and decolonization.
5. The low awareness of global frameworks has led to a lot of missed opportunities for genuinely localizing aid, with international actors continuing to dominate the humanitarian space.
6. The Oxfam’s local-led partnership initiatives in Pakistan, such as the CHANGE program, emphasize shifting power and resources to local actors. This strategy aims for national and local organizations to lead humanitarian and development efforts by 2030, based on principles of equitable partnerships and systemic change.
7. The Government support for humanitarian aid in Pakistan means ensuring that aid reaches the intended recipients, particularly at the district level through the District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs).
8. Pakistan’s disaster management system includes the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs), and DDMAs. While DDMAs are crucial for disaster response at the local level, they need strengthening, as they are often only active during emergencies and operate with limited resources. Effective disaster management requires continuous activity and preparedness before, during, and after disasters at the local level with the involvement of local leadership, especially the women leadership.

Key Asks

Following are some clear and concise Statements of the case study's main messages:

- There is an urgent need to increase awareness and understanding of the Grand Bargain and C4C among local NGOs and other stakeholders in Pakistan.
- The current partnership dynamics remain skewed towards international actors, limiting the potential for genuine localization and local leadership. There is a need to enhance transparency and accountability in humanitarian operations as well as increase the involvement of WROs and other stakeholder groups in decision-making
- Bureaucratic hurdles and a lack of trust in local NGOs continue to impede effective humanitarian responses. There is a dire need for accelerating bureaucratic processes for NGO clearance, grounded in national-level trust building mechanisms between humanitarian sector and the Government.
- Greater investment in capacity building and inclusive decision-making is essential for improving the humanitarian landscape in Pakistan.

Proposed Urgent Actions

- Formation of a working group to address identified challenges.
- Development of clear guidelines and procedures for NGO registration and operations.
- Strengthening of civil society organizations to advocate for the rights of vulnerable communities, especially hit by climatic hazards and disasters.
- Increased funding for local NGOs to enhance their capacity.
- Implementation on the commitments of Grand Bargain and Charter for Change reducing stringent layers of due diligence for local NGOs/WROs to access funding.

Overall Recommendations

- Donor organizations and INGOs recognize the importance of collaboration with NGOs, governments, and local actors to effectively address humanitarian needs to comprehensively respond to crises.
- Emphasize the importance of empowering local organizations, as demonstrated by successful models such as ToGether, which effectively transfer overhead funds to local actors. Encouraging similar practices can enhance the capacity and sustainability of local NGOs in delivering humanitarian aid.
- Addressing challenges related to limited media coverage, bureaucratic delays, and inconsistent partnership practices is important for enhancing the visibility and collaboration of local organizations. Stakeholders must work together to overcome these barriers and foster greater collaboration, transparency, and advocacy within the humanitarian ecosystem.
- Advocate for the inclusion of environmental desks in mainstream media to raise

awareness of climate-related issues, particularly in disaster-prone regions of Pakistan. Enhancing media coverage of nonprofit organizations' relief efforts during disasters can amplify their impact and garner support from both local and international audiences.

- Collaborate with communication experts to develop effective communication strategies and articulate Pakistan's needs and priorities effectively on the global stage. The Government support, in terms of easing the stringent processes of approval and NoCs, is essential in facilitating international support for disaster aid and raising awareness of humanitarian issues.
- Develop and implement long-term strategies to change mindsets, particularly regarding gender perspectives, to address deep-rooted issues effectively.
- Create mechanisms to ensure the reliability, transparency, and security of INGOs and NGOs through reasonably effective reporting, rather than imposing blanket bans.
- Encourage INGOs to transfer power and resources to local actors, following examples of Oxfam, which has successfully transferred a significant portion of funds to local partners.
- Involve donors in local humanitarian landscape consultations to enhance mutual understanding and develop risk-sharing mechanisms between donors and local NGOs. Investigate why donors prefer funding INGOs over local actors and address the complex donor compliance mechanisms to make local funding more feasible and attractive.
- Enhance the organizational systems and capacities of local NGOs, including policy development and annual reporting skills. Develop a centralized database for organizations to share experiences and strategies, promoting collective learning and better outcomes.
- Ensure the resilience of infrastructure in disaster-prone areas and avoid unsustainable development practices.
- Establish a centralized data system to improve the reach to vulnerable communities and reduce duplication of aid efforts.
- Enhance the technical capacities of local actors in areas such as finance management and WASH to improve disaster response effectiveness. Integrate local communities and NNGOs into INGOs and government systems to leverage their local knowledge and networks.
- Conduct training for journalists to develop solution-based reporting that respects local culture and dynamics. Equipping journalists with the necessary skills and knowledge enables them to navigate the complexities of local contexts more effectively. Involving media houses in humanitarian consultations promotes collaboration and ensures that media coverage accurately reflects the needs and perspectives of affected communities.
- To enhance a more inclusive and equitable approach to humanitarian aid, it is

essential to provide direct support to local communities. Reducing intermediary layers and enhancing local capacity are crucial steps. Capacity-building efforts should prioritize long-term empowerment with continuous and organized strategies that deeply empower grassroots movements. Strengthening the capacity of marginalized communities is vital for realizing the benefits of decolonization in the aid sector.

- Enhancing the technical capacity of government officers through comprehensive training programs is essential. Governments should also develop mechanisms such as District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMA) and conduct local evaluations to ensure disaster preparedness at all stages. Furthermore, promoting anticipatory approaches to address impending challenges before they escalate into crises is imperative.
- Advocating for equitable participation of local organizations in partnerships and ensuring visibility and accountability of on-ground efforts can enhance trust and efficacy in humanitarian interventions. Capacity building for local humanitarian leaders is essential to overcome misconceptions about their ability to manage funds and meet compliance standards. The decolonization process must reflect at all levels of the humanitarian sector, empowering real local players and ensuring they receive the necessary support to lead effectively.
- The use of social media platforms for disseminating humanitarian efforts and raising awareness about localization is important. Documenting the activities and impacts of local organizations can advocate for localization and demonstrate their effectiveness in addressing community needs. This approach helps in building trust and securing support from a broader audience.
- Strengthening the district-level disaster management system and integrating faith-based and other local organizations as first responders can enhance resilience and efficiency in emergency responses.
- The global aid landscape is facing increasing challenges, with overall aid shrinking. Humanitarian aid has seen minimal growth in recent years, with much of it directed towards the Ukraine war. Emerging crises, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict, are likely to cause further reductions in aid. In the realm of climate finance, there is hope, but significant challenges remain. However, the opportunity for decolonization presents a positive shift in the international humanitarian landscape.
- Government support, both financial and managerial, is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of the humanitarian aid system. Strengthening the local government system is a practical and legitimate approach for the government to provide financial resources to the local sector. INGOs also play a crucial role in this process. Reports have highlighted a significant issue with capacity in the humanitarian sector, particularly at the local level. Building the capacity of local actors in various thematic areas is imperative.
- Strengthening local organizations and revising due diligence processes for local

actors are necessary steps. These processes currently have a colonial aspect that needs addressing. Before the proliferation of NGOs and INGOs, social movements carried out humanitarian aid processes. There is a growing trend of reverting to social movements and decolonization within the humanitarian sector, and strengthening these movements is vital.

- Empowering women through education is fundamental. Education is not just about obtaining a degree; it also involves developing an understanding and empathy towards other women. With 60% of our population facing poverty, if 50% of them are women, then they are also experiencing poverty. Without addressing the correlation between poverty and lack of skills, access to microfinance, and income generation, all efforts will be in vain. Therefore, it is essential to establish systems to empower marginalized women.
- Youth development programs are essential in all areas of the community.
- It is important to have a fundamental understanding of women's awareness and psychology. Men often do not give women the space they deserve, especially in the political system where decisions about women's activism are often in the hands of men. Women face significant struggles in reaching higher positions and need to be economically empowered first. It is important to include women in the decision-making process to empower them financially and politically.
- Vocational training is necessary for enhancing the mobility of girls and providing them with essential skills. These trainings not only empower girls but also help change mindsets and develop leadership skills. These are essential for achieving the objectives of programs and have a positive impact.
- It is a need to have women in leadership positions to effectively address women related issues. It is fundamental to have women represented in departments that deal with women's affairs. Without women representatives to address these issues, it is challenging to resolve them and empower women in real terms.
- There is a need to raise awareness about the Grand Bargain and the Charter for Change among those who are unfamiliar with these frameworks.
- NGOs, INGOs, and various sectors often operate in silos within their capacities. There is limited interaction and collaboration among different organizations. The challenges of working in isolation and limited funding notably impact the ability of NGOs, INGOs, and educational institutions to work together effectively and achieve their research and advocacy objectives.
- The Women Development Department in Punjab aims to empower women, but capacity and funding constraints often limit government support. Collaboration with the government provides some support, but additional funding from external agencies is needed to address these limitations.
- There is a need to focus on creating partner-led responses, especially involving women and marginalized groups.

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