

Phase II – Theme III: Localising Humanitarian Response

Introduction

This guidance document focuses on the third of the four themes identified by the Irish Consultative Process: ‘Localising Humanitarian Response’. It should be read in conjunction with the ‘Overview of Phase II – Irish Consultative Process to the WHS’ document. It summarises the key findings from Phase I of the Irish Process plus the update on thematic work by the global WHS process to date. It also suggests key questions developed from the work already conducted (at both an Irish and global level) which will be used to guide further study in Phase II.

Background to Theme Area

This key issue strives to address the top-down nature of many aspects of the current humanitarian system and focuses attention on ensuring that disaster-affected communities, civil society, and local and national governments are central to future changes to the humanitarian system. There are increasing calls for a more demand-driven humanitarian action and to contextualise, localise and diversify response. Currently, assessment mechanisms, planning and strategy development, programme design, coordination mechanisms, funding streams and delivery are top down. They either exclude affected people or only consult them in limited ways. There is a need to shift towards viewing affected communities as partners, who are consulted from the outset and have consistent access to information, resources, tools and decision making on what are their needs and priorities. The expectations of people in crises have changed – they now demand information as quickly as they demand shelter.

More actors are delivering more types of assistance than ever before. While they share a broad common purpose, they share little else and fragmentation ensues. Many new actors are exclusively local, ranging from community and faith-based organisations to national NGOs; many have risen from countries that have seen significant economic growth over the last decade and are becoming increasingly international. During the regional consultations for the WHS, four elements that have been repeatedly mentioned 1) reinforcing governments’ commitment to invest in managing risk and response; 2) promoting the role of regional organisations; 3) developing national-level deployable capacities (including urban experts) to support domestic, regional and international requirements; and 4) increasing preparedness and response finance to local organisations.

This requires shifting finance to regional, national and local organisations to support preparedness and response, whilst also meeting donor accountability requirements. This should increasingly come from investment from the post-2015 development and disaster risk processes, and climate finance. This should allow the international humanitarian community to adopt exit strategies, so it can focus on the most catastrophic events. This requires agreement on what layers of risk it may need to respond to and the triggers for these, as well as it being better prepared for mega-disasters in urban settings and speeding up the immediate response.

Phase II – Theme III: Localising Humanitarian Response

Findings from Phase I of the Irish Consultative Process and the Global WHS Working Groups

The five stakeholders groups involved in the Irish Consultative Process are: Public Sector Group (PG); Private Sector Group (PvS); NGO Group (NGO); Diaspora Group (DG); and Education Group (EG). The Phase I consultations in Ireland and the Global WHS working groups yielded the following proposals concerning localising humanitarian response:

- Humanitarian response and risk reduction over the longer term should be localised through agile and adaptable financing mechanisms (DG & PG);
- Corporate social responsibility of private sector in relation to humanitarian sector ought to be intensified (DG; PvS);
- Support for the rule of law and justice sector reform to enhance accountability (DG & NGO Group (NGOs));
- The standardisation of accountability indicators ought to be enhanced (NGOs);
- There is a need for greater participation of local people, including women, in key positions (DG, NGOs);
- The funding opportunities of local actors, in particular in relation to protracted emergency settings, ought to be increased (Public Sector Group (PG) & NGOs);
- Further systems strengthening in disaster-prone countries ought to be undertaken (DG, NGOs, PG & Education Group (EG));
- Further commitment to the regional pre-positioning of supplies is required (PG);
- Coordination mechanisms ought to appropriately reflect the capacity of the local government (PG & EG);
- There is a need for further promotion of south-south collaboration and experience sharing of municipalities and civil society (PG & EG);
- Further support for research and innovation is required, including investment in innovative early warning systems, infrastructure development, adaptation and retrofitting (PG & EG);
- Effective participation of populations, in particular urban populations, ought to be promoted in risk assessment, hazard mapping, safe shelter awareness and preparedness planning (DG, NGOs and PG).
- Build on findings from a scaled up consultation with affected communities, including the replication of measures used in recent crises to enhance feedback and accountability.
- Investigate feedback tools adapted from other sectors (e.g. development, private and national governments) to improve programme quality through user participation.
- Assess options for removing current blockages to closing the gender gap, including through accountability mechanisms and humanitarian financing.
- Examine opportunities for developing a network of regional and other organisations to share experiences, undertake training and exercises, and exchange of deployable capacity.
- Develop a proposal for building national and regional deployable capacities in core sectors.
- Assess opportunities for mechanisms that directly channel funding to national and local actors for preparedness and response.

Phase II – Theme III: Localising Humanitarian Response

Suggested Guidance Questions for the Focus Group Discussion meeting:

A paragraph¹ will be prepared on each suggestion bulleted indicating the ‘problem/ issue’ under review as identified in phase 1 and the WHS documentation. Then the focus groups will be asked the following questions:

- What needs to be done to address the issue/ problem?
- What should Ireland’s position be on this issue?
- What can the different stakeholders in Ireland do to address the issue? (public sector/ private sector/ NGOs/ diaspora/ education)
- Are there examples of how this issue has been addressed that can be documented as models/ case studies?

¹ These paragraphs will be developed in the coming days and may result in slight changes/ the merging of some of the above suggested bullet points.