Localisation and Locally-led Crisis Response: A Literature Review

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By Imogen Wall with Kerren Hedlund

L2GP is an initiative, which works to promote effective, efficient and sustainable responses and solutions to humanitarian and protection crises with an explicit focus on enabling locally-led responses. Contact us at **info@local2global.info** and read more at **www.local2global.info**

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Executive Summary

The policy discourse

The role of local actors in crisis response, and the nature of their relationship with international responders, has been discussed in the humanitarian discourse for many years. The importance of working with and supporting local responders is reflected in many of the key documents that frame the current humanitarian system, including the General Assembly resolution 146/82.

Evaluations of major responses and consultations with local actors themselves, however, have revealed that these institutional commitments rarely translate into effective relationships on the ground (in particular the TEC evaluation of the Tsunami response and the Synthesis Report capturing the consultation process for the World Humanitarian Summit).

As Obrecht notes in her 2014 paper on de-internationalising humanitarian action, the questions of localization are underpinned by two main themes: effectiveness and power. The question of whether local organisations can be as effective or more so than internationals has, she says, been answered "largely in the affirmative" (Obrecht 2014 p1). The question of power, however, is much more complex. In the last few years, particularly in the run-up to the World Humanitarian Summit, the discourse around local actors has become more prominent, with the establishments of groups like the Charter4Change which call for a radically overhauled approach to funding, supporting and building partnerships with local organisations. Practical factors such as the increasing security challenges for international aid workers and agencies are also driving an increased interest in working with and through local actors. Some agencies have now begun to recognise in their policy that power dynamics are at the heart of the localisation discussion: specifically, the unwillingness of international agencies to place local groups in the decision making driving seat.

Most of this work is described in the literature as 'localisation', yet despite the increased interest there is no agreed definition of the term in the literature. 'Localisation' is used across the sector to refer from everything to the practice of increasing numbers of local staff in international organisations, to the outsourcing of aid delivery to local partners, to the development of locally specific response models. The term often also encompasses work that originates with local groups or is in support of local initiatives. Some groups, including Local2Global, consider that work that originates with or is in support of local initiative is fundamentally different to other models included under the umbrella of 'localisation', and describe such work specifically as 'locally-led'. This is in line with concepts such as subsidiarity, which are currently prominent in the policy discourse (see the Synthesis Report). This paper uses 'localisation' as it is used in the literature: an umbrella term referring to all approaches to working with local actors, and 'locally-led' to refer specifically to work that originates with local actors, or is designed to support locally emerging initiatives.

The literature also offers a wide range of definitions as to who local actors actually are – from regional authorities to volunteer groups – with little discussion of the different roles, dynamics and needs of different groups. Some key terms in the literature, particularly 'partnership', have been widely challenged especially by local actors themselves, who experience relationships between international and local responders as more akin to subcontracting than a partnership of equals.

From the perspective of local actors and affected communities themselves, their marginalisation and the alienation they feel from the current humanitarian system are clear. While the documentation of the local perspective is limited, key papers including the book Time to Listen and the WHS consultation process, along with response-specific studies from the Philippines provide important perspectives. Key insights include the observation that for local groups, assistance is as much about social interaction as the aid itself, and the finding of the Time to Listen research that aid for affected people is as much about the process of delivery as it is about the assistance itself – a process from which many feel alienated.

Locally-led work in practice

While there is insufficient literature to draw definitive conclusions as to best practice in supporting and working with local actors, there are some preliminary indications. Research papers have identified what are perceived as the blocks to effective support, including time constraints, administration (especially challenges in working with small grants), language, the exclusivity of the current humanitarian coordination system and an institutional unwillingness to invest in capacity development and relationship building especially prior to a crisis. Some studies have also identified a deeper unwillingness on the part of agencies to cede power and responsibility to local organisations, often citing concerns over humanitarian principles, which in the eyes of some amounts to neo-colonial attitudes towards power and leadership.

The literature looking at effective locally-led work focuses overwhelmingly on the relationship between local and international actors (rather than, for example, the experiences of local actors). Case studies that rebut the assumptions made about the difficulties of supporting local responses include projects from Cyclone Nargis response in Myanmar, Gaza, Afghanistan, Sudan, Zimbabwe and the response to Ebola. All demonstrate that innovative, supportive work to support local responses, including relationship building and financing, is possible even in large-scale sudden onset crises. The Paung Ku project in response to cyclone Nargis, for example, created a mechanism for processing and disbursing funding applications in under two hours. While the research base is insufficient for definitive conclusions, key factors in supporting locally-led responses have been identified as a central role for local actors in designing and implementing support, resource transfers that allow for flexibility and decentralised decision-making (even at household level), investment in relationship building with local actors and technical support (a mentoring rather than a training approach is indicated as preferable in some case studies), and inclusion of local authorities where appropriate.

Some specific aspects of locally-led work have been more examined than others. Some headway has been made in terms of developing small grant mechanisms, for example, although strict transparency rules and other technical requirements are still challenges. The field of cash grants – regarded as inherently empowering of local responders especially those affected themselves – has provided important insights, especially their effectiveness in highly complex and political environments such as Gaza and Somalia. The particular challenges and opportunities of working with local volunteer groups – a rapidly growing area of interest given the growing role of local and international volunteer responders - have been explored by the Red Cross and also in developed countries such as the US, with evidence coming through that engaging with and training volunteers increases their capacity to handle a response. The work of Digital Humanitarian Network, an innovative project to create an interface between agencies on the ground (local and international) and a network of technical volunteers worldwide has proven successful. There is also much work going on now to understand

and engage with locally-led work – including diaspora responses – in conflict work in particular. Case studies of interest here include DRC's successful provision of grants to isolated communities in Somalia, and other local and international actors' support to local protection responses in Sudan and the Congo among those captured and researched.

Finally, anyone seeking to support locally-led work needs to explore and understand the profound changes that are going on within the operational environment. As Syria and the Ebola responses in particular, the role of diaspora groups is becoming ever more important and sophisticated as communications technology and online fundraising facilitates the development of international ad-hoc responses that currently operate mostly outside of the formal humanitarian sector. In places like Syria such initiatives are contributing a significant amount of the assistance on the ground. Humanitarian funding in the form of remittances is already thought to have outstripped official assistance in many emergencies, and is increasing – and has been associated in some research papers with increased empowerment and decreased vulnerability. The complexities of diaspora dynamics are, however, under researched and their levels of interest in working with/alongside formal humanitarian actors may be overestimated by some.

The changing operational environment

The role of social media in increasing the capacity to organize and coordinate has facilitated a notable growth in ad-hoc volunteer groups emerging within hours of a crisis: a phenomenon seen in New Zealand, and in the current European refugee crisis. The explosion in online fundraising platforms – now a multimillion dollar industry – is emerging as a key driver of next-generation locally-led responses, as agencies become increasingly able to fundraise online rather than depending on engaging with the established system of humanitarian funding. Online fundraising is, for example, widely used by the refugee response by volunteer groups across Europe. There is also growing evidence that technology is facilitating very different kinds of organizational structures: groups of individuals connected through a network rather than a traditional NGO, for example. Technology also facilitates very different kinds of projects: ones that provide information and connect local responders to those in need as well as allowing for self-organization of those in need using social media. Supporting such work presents considerable challenges to international responders, as these actors tend not to form the kind of institutions with whom aid agencies are used to establishing a formal relationship. Important alternative models for supporting these kind of locally-led responses are coming from the private sector (such as the incubation of the iHub movement across Africa) and academia (such as the Petajakarta project in Indonesia) as well as from affected communities themselves. Major agencies now beginning to engage with this approach include UNICEF, with their Innovation Lab approach to fostering local talent. Also emerging, however, is research indicating that lack of access to technology is becoming a new form of vulnerability in its own right, for individuals and for groups, and that in many places old power dynamics – such as male disempowerment of women – are also emerging in patterns of use and access of digital tools.

Contents

Introduction

"*With appropriate support, a response that places local action at its centre can achieve levels of speed, quality, scale and outreach to equal or better the direct implementation of the largest international agencies*." (Corbett 2010 p 11)

"*In the world of tomorrow, there will be professional humanitarians, like us here, working alongside unstructured workers, people themselves in the community doing their own proposals."* – Yves Daccord, Director-General, ICRC[1]

This literature review looks at the available material concerning locally-led responses to humanitarian crises and *ways in which institutional aid organisations (local and international) agencies can support them*. Drawing on a wide range of documentation (policy papers, evaluations, newspaper articles and blog posts), the paper focuses on describing locally-led humanitarian responses, be they protection- or survival- oriented, how to define or distinguish them, and support them.

Section 1 looks at the history of humanitarian policy, summarizing key documents in which agencies discuss and frame the role of local actors in theory, and in practice (through key evaluations). It concludes that the humanitarian system is in theory already committed to locally-led responses, but that this rarely translates in practice.

Section 2 looks at what have been identified as key factors in "successful" ways of working between local and international actors, and what have been identified as the blocks. This includes examining the literature on how local actors have viewed international agencies when working with them.

Section 3 looks at available case studies and experience of specific key aspects of localized responses including: local leadership, financing arrangements including cash based responses, working with local volunteers and governments and working in insecure environments or remotely.

Section 4 looks at emerging forms of localized humanitarian responses and what this means for humanitarians, including impact technology is having on how locals organize and manage disaster preparedness and response and diasporas.

This paper begins with Obrecht's position on humanitarian response, specifically one "that does not assume humanitarian action to be a universal entity replicated by international actors and international law across varied contexts, but rather the province of local actors that is encroached on by international agents" (Obrecht 2014 p2-3)

An important note on terminology: as discussed below, there is no agreed definition within the literature of the terms 'localisation' and 'locally-led'. Given the lack of clear or broadly accepted definitions, this paper will use the term "localisation" as the wider,

[1] https://www.devex.com/news/what-will-the-world-humanitarian-summit-offer-globaldev-87712

generic term referring any process that is seeking to involve local actors (governments, NGOs, and communities) in the design and implementation and coordination of humanitarian responses. Rather the term "locally-led" refers more specifically to responses that are conceived or shaped by the affected populations themselves that may be supported or strengthened by outside assistance.

Methodology

This paper draws on a wide range of sources including evaluations, reports and policy papers. In addition to these formal sources, the paper also seeks to draws on less traditional material including newspaper articles, blogs, webinars and recordings of events such as lectures and policy debates.

Limitations of the literature review include the following;

- For practical reasons concerning time and scope, this paper concentrates on literature dating from 2009, with a few exceptions for key papers and case studies.
- This paper intended to focus on locally led responses but found that the majority of literature available is on traditional models of *partnership* which more accurately fall under the broader rubric of localisation.
- The research focuses on how *outsiders* (specifically international agencies) can support locally-led emergency response and does not attempt to describe local response *per se.*
- It focuses on humanitarian crisis not development, where the literature on supporting community-led action is plentiful. Neither does this paper take full account of the work done in disaster risk reduction[2] or resilience building[3]. Whereas literature in these fields contain important lessons learned that will be applicable to the emergency "response" stage. This was due to time and resource constraints in writing this paper.
- Literature on aspects of international response models such as accountability, community based monitoring and evaluation and communication with affected populations is not explored in depth in this paper.

Research was carried out by an independent consultant working under contract to Swiss Development Cooperation with the technical oversight of Local2Global, and a number of organisations and colleagues committed a better understanding of how to support locally-led response.

[2] http://www.unisdr.org/campaign/resilientcities/home/manage_private_pages
[3] http://www.preventionweb.net/english/themes/ See NGOs, Community-based DRR, Cultural Heritage, Indigenous Knowledge,

Section 1: "Localisation" in humanitarian policy and practice

1.1 "Localisation" in key humanitarian documents

The significance of local responses in humanitarian action is recognised in the principle founding documents of the sector: specifically UN Resolution 46/182, the Red Cross Code of Conduct and the principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship. From the development side, the Paris Declaration of 2005 also affirms the principle of local/national ownership as central to best practice work. In 2011, the IASC issued specific guidance for clusters entitled "Operational Guidance for Cluster Lead Agencies on Working with National Authorities", emphasising that appropriate government authorities should be invited to co-chair clusters (IASC, 2011).

More recent documents have emphasised the role of local organisations/civil society, as opposed to primarily states. Both the UN and the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) have adopted resolutions encouraging states to "provide an enabling environment for the capacity building of local authorities and of national and local non-governmental and community based organisations" (UN GA resolution 61/134, 2006; ECOSOC resolution 2006/5, 2006). The Global Humanitarian Platform in 2007 generated a set of Principles of Partnership that identified local capacity as "one of the main assets to enhance and on which to build" (GHP 2007). Donors have committed to strengthening local actors through the Good Humanitarian Donorship principles. The Humanitarian Accountability Report (HAP 2015), the Core Humanitarian Standard and the Charter for Change have all emphasized the central role of local organisations.

Numerous evaluations of field responses, however, have found that most agencies consistently fail to translate these commitments into practice. The review of the Asian tsunami (2007), the Real Time Evaluation into the Haiti earthquake (2010), the Disaster Response Dialogue initiative (2011), ALNAP State of the Humanitarian System Report (2012) and Business Case for the Disaster and Emergencies Preparedness Programme (DEPP) (2014) all emphasise this on-the-ground failure. The TEC evaluation called for a" fundamental reorientation in practice... a change in the organisational culture of humanitarian aid providers... that agencies cede power to the affected population... and that agencies... meet this problem by promoting distributed ownership, with the community and different levels of [national] government owning different levels of the response"(TEC 2006).

The marginalization of local communities and organisations in practice is most starkly seen in the data around financing. As Els and Carstensen noted in 2015, "the available data on humanitarian funding shows that funding directly from the largest donors does privilege a few large international agencies over other international agencies – and to an extreme degree over local and national actors." (Els and Carstensen, 2015 p1). Local organisations only receive around 1.6% of overall first level humanitarian funding available to NGOs (international and local) – and even this percentage is actually decreasing. According to the Global Humanitarian Assistance report 2014, local organisations accessed US$49 million of global humanitarian assistance in 2013, a decrease of US$2 million from 2012 (GHA 2015 p6).

It is hard to be more specific about the trends and dynamics regarding local responses as the literature is, unfortunately characterised by a lack of substantive written evidence. The literature is also skewed by a focus on crises in which an international response is mobilized. In fact, the vast majority of disasters are small scale and responded to entirely by local actors. In recent years, partly in recognition of this, more work has been commissioned, but the resulting papers have focused on the relationship between local and international organisations and most are written from the perspective of the international. In practice discussions of localisation have often revolved around institutional politics and interests – and a partnership model - rather than practical ways to address the needs of affected people (Zyck 2015).In 2010, for example, five INGOs (ActionAid, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam GB and Tearfund) launched a research project to look at current and future partnerships with national NGOs in humanitarian response, based on the commissioning agencies' experiences in four major humanitarian settings (Haiti 2010, Kenya 2010, Pakistan 2010 and DRC 2009-12) (Ramalingham et al, 2012).

Overall, the evidence from Syria and other conflicts is that "that the formal humanitarian sector finds it extremely difficult to establish genuine, inclusive partnerships" (Pantuliano and Svoboda 2015 piii).

An interesting insight into how partnering begins in practice is offered by Chudacoff et al in their study into partnerships in what they refer to as 'remote management situations'. Their study revealed that the most common INGO strategies for identifying partners were: "Contacting other INGOs to inquire about which organizations they were partnering with; participating in coordination meetings where LNGOs presented themselves; considering LNGOs that self-presented to INGO offices" (Chudacoff et al, 2015, p30). In other words, international actors – particularly those newly arrived in country – were likely to hear of and consider as reliable partners local organizations who were already known to internationals.

In recent years some agencies have been exploring new ways of supporting and strengthening autonomous self-help and local agency - or "locally-led" responses. The Ebola Crisis Fund, for example, established a way of providing small grants directly to local organisations and used a mentoring approach to support recipients through the process of applying for and delivering the work they elected to carry out (Gratier 2015). A consultant in-country managed the granting process, and provided hands on support to the organisations who secured funding.

The field of development is far richer in literature on locally-led – as opposed to localized - aid. While lying outside the scope of this paper, the work of researchers like Booth and Unsworth comes closest to providing empirical evidence of the operational effectiveness of the locally-led approach. They emphasise the key role that the providers of resources can play in driving a locally-led approach. The "central message" of their 2014 evaluation of seven successful case studies is that "donor[4] staff were successful because they adopted politically smart, locally-led approaches, adapting the way they

[4] Donors in this case was a fund developed by donors specifically to support locally-led aid with no intermediaries. However the lessons can be applied to any 'outsider' that provides essential resources.

worked in order to support iterative problem-solving and brokering of interests by politically astute local actors" (Booth and Unsworth, 2014, pv).

1.2 "Localisation" and "locally-led": evolving concepts

A key challenge – and a telling one – is that despite widespread use of the term, humanitarians have no consistent definition of "localisation", apparently an umbrella term used to refer to any and all activities considered to involve local actors. Neither localisation nor locally-led appear in Reliefweb's comprehensive 2008 Glossary of Humanitarian Terms (Reliefweb 2008) and no definitive definition has emerged since, despite the increased discourse around the role of local actors. Creating further confusion, terms like "involvement", "participation" and sometimes "leadership" are frequently used but also rarely defined, as are complex concepts like "community".

Some studies reflect a given organisation's approach to localisation as a process of tailoring their global model for a particular place. One study found that international staff actually describes localisation as recruiting and promoting national staff and focussing on programme delivery through local staff (Karim 2006 p28).

For others, localisation is articulated as the way they work with local organisations, usually described as "partnership". Frequently, as Zyck and others points out, this becomes in practice outsourcing the delivery of pre-determined assistance: "Where local aid agencies are drawn upon, it is often as subcontractors for international NGOs (Zyck 2015 p5). The relationship with communities, meanwhile, is usually described as "participatory", an approach described in humanitarian literature as engaging those affected but which several studies have found in practice means at best inviting "beneficiaries" to comment on predesigned projects (see Time to Listen 2012).

In recent years, both this terminology and the assumptions that underpin it have begun to be questioned, with the policy framework moving closer to an approach that actually supports local initiative and leadership. Terms like "subsidiarity" ("the principle that a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed more effectively at a more immediate or local level" – Oxford English Dictionary) have come to the fore. The Irish Humanitarian Summit described subsidiarity as the principle that humanitarians 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 p13). A more concrete expression of what subsidiarity might mean for the humanitarian system was put forward by the START Network in their submission to the WHS: "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 capacity and a real shift of power to crisis affected populations" (WHS 2015 p96).

Most recently the START network and Oxfam have used the language of power in policy work, acknowledging and calling for "shifting more power, resources, and responsibility from the international actors" (Oxfam 2016) and discussing how failure to invest in local organizations, including working with a sub-contracting model, can actually damage and undermine local capacity: "This role [sub contracting] leaves the local actors in no better position to prevent or respond to the next crisis" (Oxfam 2016 p1).

Some southern based organisations, such as ADESO, have started using the term "accompaniment" instead of "partnership" to emphasise the idea that international and local should work alongside each other. The idea that aid should be "as local as possible, as international as necessary" has also been increasingly articulated (Ian Ridley, Senior Director, World Vision)[5].

These calls for change have been consolidated into a concrete articulation by the southern NGO consortium led by ADESO and the INGO-led Charter for Change project. Point 6 of the Charter states that by 2018: "Our local and national collaborators are involved in the design of the programmes at the outset and participate in decision-making as equals in influencing programme design and partnership policies[6]." However this refers to partnership and not necessarily locally-led response.

An important caveat, however, is that the appetite for localisation is not universal, or at least where the aim of localisation is sustainable capacity. A Swedish Development Agency (SDA) review of the Norwegian Refugee Council, for example, notes that "The primary objective, however, is not capacity building and NRC does not enter into partnerships primarily for the sake of supporting or strengthening local organisations."

In this case, SDA would also not approve of supporting a "locally-led" response further stating the review recognises, and approves of, NRC's direct implementation model on the grounds that it "allows the organisation to maintain close control over project and programme formulation, as well as in prioritisation of limited resources." (Bert et al, 2013, p6).Discussions around the role of local actors have also caused considerable trepidation among international organisations, including discussions about what shifting financial resources, leadership and advocacy work to other organisations at the national level mean for their own operations[7].

1.3 Localisation and locally-led responses: current approaches

There is currently a great deal of interest in "localisation" within the humanitarian sector. This has been driven by a number of factors. At the fore is the challenge that international NGOs, UN agencies and Red Cross Movement are not "indispensable" and are in fact "just one part of the broader universe of assistance made up of a myriad of

[5]http://www.irinnews.org/report/102141/gloves-off-between-local-and-international-ngos
[6]http://charter4change.org/
[7]http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/mar/13/do-international-ngos-still-have-the-right-to-exist

other actors, with their own distinctive traditions and culture of care" (Bennett et al 2016).

The experience of Syria and, increasingly, continental Europe, has also highlighted a new phenomenon: that of the emergence of new groups of responders, rooted in both local actors and diaspora networks, who are procuring, transporting and delivering much of the assistance reaching affected communities. This phenomenon is also increasingly a feature of other responses but within the literature, Syria has attracted the most interest: notably Pantuliano and Svoboda's 2015 study. As Eugenio Cusumano of Leiden University puts it, "the diffusion of new technologies, new media, new funding opportunities and types of expertise that were previously available only within state law enforcement and military organizations has created new opportunities for private sector involvement." This phenomenon means that new working relationships are becoming an operational reality for international organisations working in this field. Given much of this work is currently taking place at local or national level and has not yet filtered through either to headquarters level organisational decision making or academic studies, available literature is minimal. Exploration of how these dynamics are playing out on is both urgent and important.

Given the range of alternatives, clients (communities, governments and donors) are also increasingly calling into question if mainstream humanitarian architecture and tools are the right way to address the multi-faceted needs of many of today's emergencies (Bennett et al 2015). This goes hand in hand with increasingly loud demands from southern NGOs for greater support and more equitable treatment by international NGOs (see above) (see also Oxfam's paper *Righting The Wrongs*).

Another important driver is the changing operational environment. The majority of humanitarian interventions today concern conflict environments that are often extremely risky places for international organisations to operate. Although this problem is not new, the challenges of Syria and Somalia have brought remote management to the fore. As one recent review notes, however, the humanitarian sector's emphasis to date has been on the mechanics delivery of assistance through local actors. It identifies Afghanistan and Pakistan as key case studies, with a lesser emphasis on Gaza, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Colombia and South Sudan.

One of the few sectors in which external agencies have made some attempt to support and study locally-led work is in protection, particularly in conflict areas. While this is far from complete, and local actors are still routinely marginalised, the available research to date is a rich source of insights. The research of L2GP(the Local to Global Protection programme) for example, describes the "important and inspiring finding… the manner in which vulnerable people take the lead in activities to protect themselves and their communities." (Harragin and South, 2012, p2-3). The L2GP research is also one of the few projects to explore the relationship between local strategies (of affected populations responding to crises) and those offered by international agencies, and have identified key issues that transcend a sector-based approach. In particular, Harragin and South find that communities often have different ideas of what constitutes protection compared to international actors, that failure to learn about and consider

cultural/social/political contexts can mean that international agencies implement practices that actually do harm. Nonetheless rarely are local self-protection strategies are sufficient and thus there is a role for external actors to support and expand them (Harrigan and South, 2012).

1.4 Who are local actors?

The discourse around 'localisation' and 'locally-led' is underpinned by a separate but rarely articulated issue: what is meant by local, and specifically by the term 'local actor'. As with localisation there is no single agreed definition of 'local actor'. Often the conceptualisation is very narrow: the World Bank, for example, regards the term "community" as synonymous with "community based organisations" with no recognition for local community structures outside those that resemble an actual organisation (WB 2015 p4).

Those who have an official role are the most easily identified – government officials, local NGOs representative, etc. But in a crisis this number swells exponentially as volunteers, private sector and groups previously uninvolved in disaster response (Surf Aid in Nias, boy scouts in Nepal, students in Christchurch) become responders overnight. In the Philippines, for example, those working after Typhoon Haiyan hit Tacloblan were challenged by a large number of spontaneous responses which ranged from individuals and extended families to religious groups and the private sector (IFRC 2015 p30). Similarly, the majority of grantees of the Paung Ku response to cyclone Nargis in Myanmar were emergent self-help groups made up of self-organising survivors with no organisational history (or future, beyond their brief but crucial period of activity as a group) (Corbett 2010).

This shift is slowly filtering through to the literature. A broader definition of local aid actors is offered by the WDR 2015 which includes "charities, civil society groups, faith based organisations, volunteer groups, private sector, communities and diaspora bodies." (WDR 2015 p152). In their paper looking at the "local" response to Syria, Pantuliano and Svoboda say the term can include "professional bodies that existed before the outbreak of the war, such as medical associations now providing emergency relief; charities; networks of anti-government and community activists, which have morphed from protest movements into relief providers; diaspora organisations; coordination networks; and fighting groups engaged in aid delivery." (Pantuliano and Svoboda 2015 p9). These groups also differ in other ways and are far from static. "Groups range in size from half a dozen volunteers on a shoestring budget to organisations drawing on hundreds of staff and volunteers." (Pantuliano and Svoboda 2015 p9). Since the Syria crisis began in 2011, the response has seen groups that started with just a few individuals become multi-sectoral, formally registered international organisations with offices, paid staff and long term plans, carrying out complex work such as running hospitals (e.g. Syria Relief and Hand in Hand for Syria). Similarly the refugee response in Europe has led to the formation of numerous NGOs, some now commanding budgets of millions of pounds and starting to work beyond the crisis they were initiated to help. The Migrant Offshore Aid Station or MOAS, for example, began in 2013 as a one-boat rescue operation in the Mediterranean run by a sailing a couple,

Christopher and Regina Catrambone. To date, MOAS has rescued over 11,000 refugees and migrants and has now expanded operations to the Aegean Sea and South East Asia[8]. Another example is the initiative of a single mother in Monrovia to set up home-schooling support to children when Ebola forced schools closure. Her work has led to a project now known as "KEEP" (Kids Educational Engagement Programme) responding to education needs of tens of thousands of children in Ebola affected communities around the country[9].

The field of "local actors", therefore, needs to be characterized as extremely fluid as well as extremely diverse. Complicating the question of local actors is the fact that the concept of "local", itself is a highly contextual concept (to an international organisation, a national government is seen as 'local', but to someone living in a remote part of the country in question, the national authorities may be distant and unfamiliar bodies). Sub national authorities will regard themselves as local compared to national ones. This complexity extends also to organisations: international NGOs, for example, may be run in-country by local staff. And the idea that "local" is a concept defined primarily by geography is also being seriously challenged by the growth of Diasporas. Those who identify as local to a particular place – and who become involved in a response – may now be resident in any part of the globe. Increasingly, these "actors" may not even be physically present, as diaspora responses and the Volunteer Tech communities have demonstrated.

Local responses may be widely acknowledged as the backbone of crisis management and their comparative advantages may be increasingly recognised, but this does not mean they are not problematic. "Local" may not always be "representative", for example: local responses may be dominated by particular ethnic or political groups (especially in conflict).

1.5 The view from the ground

"Humanitarian aid is basically a social interaction, not just the delivery of a service."

JSIA Conference Report, 2014

Key to all current discussions of localization/locally-led work is the important question of how those affected view the responding organisations. This is an understudied issue. The available literature consists of papers specifically commissioned to understand local perceptions, and such studies are rarely routinely carried out by aid agencies. The existing research does, however, present a clear and consistent picture. The most comprehensive is the CDA Collaborative Learning Project's 10 year study published as Time To Listen, which spoke with recipients of assistance in 20 emergency contexts over a 10 year period. The research found a remarkable level of consistency in the feedback they received, with specifically *international* agencies widely welcomed but criticized for failing to listen, engage with affected communities, or to treat them

[8]http://www.kpsrl.org/browse/browse-item/t/innovative-ways-to-tackle-humanitarian-crises-the-case-of-the-migrant-offshore-aid-station
[9] https://www.facebook.com/KidsEngagementProjectLiberia/info/?tab=page_info

meaningfully as equals in designing, providing and delivering assistance (Anderson, et al, 2012).

Perhaps the most profound finding, at least with respect to the current supply/delivery driven model of humanitarian response, is that for affected people, the manner in which assistance is delivered is as important as the assistance itself. From their perspective, humanitarian aid is not just the assistance delivered, it is also the process. This point is reflected in the discussions at a conference on South-South humanitarianism held in India in 2014, supported by ICRC and Save the Children, which noted that what makes local actors different is their understanding – and operationalizing – of the principle that humanitarian response is - or should be - a social interaction, not just the delivery of a service and that "big budgets don't make aid more effective, but understanding the needs and expectations of those affected by conflict and disasters does." (JSIA 2014 p11).

The conference report notes the extent to which local responses are, for example, rooted in social interaction rather than just delivery, and thus whether it is appropriate that international benchmarks of effectiveness are the sole criteria for evaluating response. The conference called for "new methods of research and representation to bring out the less tangible elements of what is appreciated by communities in a humanitarian response." (JSIA 2014 p13). This point is explored in more depth in the context of the 2011 Somali famine: the research of Maxwell et al finds that the ways communities adapt to crisis are inextricably related to their social networks (Maxwell 2011).

MSF is one of the few agencies to have commissioned research specifically to discover how they are perceived by affected people: the resulting paper, In The Eyes of Others, found that local people routinely misunderstood the name, acronym, logo and intentions of the organization: all things staff members saw as simple and easy to understand. The way in which local contexts led to differing interpretations of concepts such as neutrality also posed a challenge (Abu Sada, 2012, p23). Some of the regional consultations carried out as part of the World Humanitarian Summit also present important insights into how international agencies are often experienced by affected people, with participants in the Middle East and North African consultation describing aid agencies as arrogant, partisan, uninterested in the views of affected people and guilty of treating affected people without dignity or respect[10].

When looking specifically at the relationship between local and international organisations, the WDR report notes that "the commitment of international organisations is seen as short lived and their way of working non-consultative and disruptive of existing community relationships" (WDR 2015 p 154). Recent studies also indicate that organizations in Syria are often characterised by wariness towards international actors. Their concerns range from the perceived international political failure to end the conflict, international inaction on the humanitarian catastrophe generated by the war, a lack of wiliness to consult with or even listen to Syrian organisations. As a result, as a 2015 conference on working with local actors in Syria found, the most significant challenge in engaging with local actors on the Syrian

[10]http://www.irinnews.org/report/101197/what-refugees-really-think-of-aid-agencies

response is lack of trust (Wilton Park 2015, see also Mansour 2016[11]).

The deeper idea that aid is fundamentally neocolonial is also expressed by some, mostly in blogs and articles rather than systematic research. But for some, the divide between local and international organization is indeed an ideological one, with deep roots. Studies have identified that some Islamic actors frame "western" relief organisations as "a tool of power and hegemony" and thus Islamic relief as a form of resistance against colonialism and marginalization (Moussa 2014 p15).

There is insufficient research into the main forms of technical assistance that local actors want from international organisations. One study looking specifically at Iraq and Syria found that the key requests were: "Leadership and management skills within their organizations; Assessment and proposal writing skills; Financial capacity, including how to improve their internal documentation systems; Capacities for building and maintaining trust and capacity for improved systems of mentoring and mutual advice" (Chudacoff et al p 33).

The mentoring point in particular is reflected elsewhere. For those organisations interested in working with international bodies, the concept of equal partnership rather than sub-contracting is crucial. Organisations say it is vital they are involved in designing the support offered to them. Feedback from local organisations working with international responders working cross border between Turkey and northern Syria, gathered as part of research carried out by Tufts University, found that few of the training sessions offered by international partners met their needs. Local organisations wanted training that was small, tailored towards particular needs and with a defined end goal – which they had had a role in determining. Instead, the trainings only served to deplete local capacity by tying up badly needed staff in long workshops whose outcome was not felt to be useful. Local organization said they preferred to learn from focal points within international organisations who specialized in specific areas such as M&E, gender and finance who could provide continuous support and mentoring throughout the project cycle (Chudacoff, Howe and Stites, 2015).

Section 2: Supporting localised responses in practice: what are the challenges and what is working to address these challenges?

"The aid community does not respect anyone outside the industry: development actors/diaspora/locals."

Dame Barbara Stocking, ALNAP SOHS launch, 2015

2.1 What are the challenges?

To reiterate a limitation, the following literature focuses on challenges and potential solutions to the broader term "localisation" rather than specifically locally-led. Where

[11]http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/let-syria-have-its-voice-130165384

humanitarian action is specifically locally-led will be highlighted.

The comparative advantages of localised responses have been articulated and lauded in the literature for some years (see above). But as Ramalingham, et al wrote in 2011, "little has been translated into the formal humanitarian policies that shape the system" (Ramalingham et al, 2011). A further complication is the notable lack of studies examining the reasons that policy commitments so rarely translate into action on the ground.

In the papers that do exist, multiple factors are cited regarding the difficulties of supporting locally-led response work. One is speed: humanitarians often take the view that the operational speed required in a crisis makes investing time in reaching out to local partners, identifying successful work and creating a functioning partnership impractical, and not a solution to the challenge of working at scale. That said, there is evidence in the literature to suggest that the traditional approach to post-disaster needs assessment, which relies on time-consuming standardised and extractive approaches, means that agencies are often not fully operational until weeks, if not months, after the disaster has occurred, needs assessments and subsequent appeals are resourced, human resources recruited, and material resources purchased (Hedlund et al 2012).

INGOs studied by Ramalingham et al concurred that in their opinion "partnerships"for response have clear limitations of scale and coverage for the delivery of programmes (Ramalingham et al, 2011, p18). This perspective is challenged however by other studies on projects whose starting point is to support and strengthen the autonomous self-help that is already happening at scale – that is a locally-led response – rather than the establishment of organisational "partnerships" (Corbett 2015a, HPG 2016).

Another is administration, particularly regarding financing. Evidence is a key issue here: with overall data rare and information on local funding amounts provided by agencies found to be "sporadic and inconsistent"(Els and Carstensen, 2015 p3). Direct funding appears to be around 0.2% in 2013. While this is not the whole picture, as the amounts channelled via INGOs and UN agencies are thought to be much higher, it clearly indicates there are at present challenges to directly funding local actors.

Certainly, the literature is clear that major donors are often unable to administer grants of less than several hundred thousand dollars. DfID's attempt to devolve funding to regional level in West Africa, the West Africa Humanitarian Response Fund, invited applications from NGOs but could not provide amounts less than 400,000 GBP (WAHRF 2009). Major donors tend to rely on intermediary organisations (INGOs or UN agencies) to administer small-scale grants.

As several studies point out, current approaches to direct funding – whether funding comes directly from donors or via intermediaries - typically create many obstacles for local organisations. To apply, organisations have to complete extensive paperwork, in English, and demonstrate a capability for financial and narrative reporting. This problem is widely recognised: A survey of 195 representatives from national organisations carried out by CAFOD in 2014 found a wide variety of political and practical factors made sourcing international funding difficult for such organisations.

For an excellent summary of the challenges created, see Pouligny'sreport Supporting Local Ownership in Humanitarian Action (Pouligny 2009). For an overview of the current funding sources for Southern NGOs, see CAFOD's policy brief Southern NGO's Access to Humanitarian Funding, 2013.

Studies to date suggest that efforts to address these challenges within the direct funding model have not, largely, been successful. According to the CAFOD paper, 63% of national organisations felt it had become more difficult to access international funding in the last three years. Lack of awareness of opportunities, short deadlines, language, the need to comply with technical requirements were cited as key issues (CAFOD 2014 p10). As Corbett notes in his research in Sudan, this issue returns to the fundamental tension within donors and organisations between adapting to local contexts, and financial management requirements. "Without a change in how aid agencies attempt to balance their bureaucratic need for centralised control with the grassroots need for flexibility and spontaneity, action arising from accumulated local learning will remain limited" (Corbett 2011 p70).

Many studies also point not just to the challenges for local organisations created by the culture of individual agencies, but also to the inaccessibility of international humanitarian architecture. The Global Humanitarian Partnership (GHP 2007), ADESO and Charter for Change (2015) all mention the need to reform the currently very exclusive cluster system, and responses that have been criticised for inaccessibility include, most notably, the Haiti response in 2010, during which even the base where most major agencies worked was effectively off limits for Haitian nationals (Binder and Grunewald 2010). The need for more accessible coordination systems has also been noted throughout the World Humanitarian Summit consultation process, although no alternative models are recommended or discussed in the core WHS policy documents published to date.

Less reflected in the literature, but felt by many agencies, is the issue of reputational risk. While this is rarely formally articulated in the literature, leading southern humanitarian representatives like Degan Ali of ADESO have spoken about it frequently, based on their own experience[12].This issue is felt to be one of bias, according to Ali, rather than evidence based. There is little evidence in the evaluation literature for such a bias: on the contrary, one evaluation of cash based responses in Somalia found that "it appears better to judge NGOs on a case-by-case basis and not on whether it is a Somali NGO or an international NGO" (Hedlund et al, 2012).

Sustainability (a complex concept rarely unpacked in the literature) is also seen as a particular issue when working with local organisations. The Ebola Crisis Fund evaluation found that very few of the 34 organisations supported were able to mobilise further funding (Grantier 2015) from other organisations as anticipated in the Fund's original design. What sustainability means, or the extent to which it is actually a desirable objective, is not discussed widely.

[12]http://adesoafrica.org/newsroom/newsroom/surprising-ground-truths-on-the-release-of-us-international-aid-data/

What is clear, however, is that local organisations feel their sustainability as organisations is often dramatically weakened by the current approaches of international agencies to working together. According to research carried out by Adeso (Ramalingam 2015), local organisations feel international agencies weaken them by poaching staff, failing to invest in capacity development and undermining rather than investing in their local relationships. The network of Southern organisations led by Adeso describes their experience of the cycle this sets up: "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 side-line local actors, treating SNGOs and civil society organizations (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" (Ramalingam 2015 p1).

Other blocks cited in the literature include language and "cultural barriers" (GHP 2007). These can also be physical, as in the policing of the UN base in Haiti that kept many organisations out (Grunewald and Binder, 2010), but mostly refer to the inability of international responses to work effectively in any language other than English. The cluster system has long and hard been criticised for its inability to attract and integrate local actors (Currion and Hedlund, 2011, Steets et al 2010, Stoddard et al 2007).

In short, due to their existing structure and approaches, Ramalingam et al found that agencies that do attempt to work with local organisations in "partnership" often set themselves up for failure. Typically they under-estimate the necessary investment in partnership building, both in terms of financial cost and man-hours (Ramalingam 2013 p17). "Costs of partnerships that need to be considered in any efficiency assessment include setting up, maintaining and on-going capacity support." A paper published by CAFOD, Funding At The Sharp End, also pointed to the lack of funding available for relationship building, and found that government donors are "unlikely to substantially increase their bilateral funding and capacity to engage with national civil society at recipient country level" (CAFOD 2014 p4). The evaluation of the Ebola Crisis Fund found that the project had notably underestimated the cost of actually running a fund for local organisations, particularly the amounts needed for overheads and for the consultants on the ground who worked directly with, and mentored, the recipient organisations (Gratier 2015). This is in contrast to the Paung Ku Nargis response (PKNR) fund in Myanmar, which reported total overheads of 13% (including contribution to IO country and head office) with the remaining 87% going directly to local actors (Corbett 2010 p9).

On a deeper level, several key studies, notably, Ramalingam et al and more recently Bennett et al in Humanitarian Policy Group's flagship report "Time to Let Go" (2016), have identified wider institutional attitudes that play an important part in explaining how these problems come about. The practical challenges – real as they are – are underpinned by a sense that working with local organisations requires "*transformative changes* in the way things are done – which pose threats to the status quo of the sector,

in terms of resource distribution, power and control" (Ramalingam et al 2013, p6) which agencies are not prepared to contemplate. Bennett et al note that"The sector's power dynamics, culture, financing and incentive structures create compelling reasons to remain closed and centralised and averse to innovation, learning and transformation..." (Bennett et al, p7).

Among the research seeking to understand why this should be so, Ramalingam et al note a "notable ambivalence" among international actors when it comes to working with local partners. A similar finding is made by Zyck, who describes how local institutions and organisations are "kept at arm's length" by international actors (Zyck p1). As Oxfam notes, while international organisations laud local actors in theory, typically "it does not appear that international actors conduct any sort of assessment of whether their leadership is necessary" (Oxfam 2015 p38). In other words, the current approach of aid agencies to working with local responders means that their efforts to work with local organisations are seen as politically desirable but also inherently problematic, and thus hobbled from the start. For some, this amounts to a neocolonial approach to power and leadership[13].

On a more existential level, INGOs are expressing concern that locally-led responses will lead to them being redundant on the ground, challenging their authority in advocacy work and even their very existence[14]. "Legitimacy comes from service we provide so if you are just a broker/convenor where's the credibility," one senior policy advisor told the author at a World Humanitarian Summit event. "If you aim to do yourself out of a job at country level then that's fine, but how do you have any legitimacy at global level?" As Obrecht phrases it, "International relief agencies face an unpalatable choice between defending an international right to provide humanitarian assistance, and taking the actions necessary to build local response capacity" (Obrecht 2013 p 2). While there is little formal literature exploring this challenge in depth, it has been the topic of much closed-door discussion during the WHS process.

While the above "challenges" are applicable to the broad rubric of localisation, directly supporting locally-led action has additional challenges. This begins with a "change of mindset" or how we see communities in disasters (Bennett et al 2016). Moving from what Bennett et al describe as "what can I give" to "what support can I provide?" in an effort to reinforce and amplify what communities are already doing for themselves. Mainstream actors are increasingly asking in emergency needs assessments what are affected communities' capacities as seen in more recent revisions of the Multi Sector Rapid Assessment or MIRA.[15]One promising methodology used in Disaster Risk Reduction, Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments, is however time consuming and focuses on planning rather supporting subsequent action (IFRC 2006 and Christian Aid 2009). What appears to be missing is a rapid locally-led emergency needs assessment methodology that informs a humanitarian response that wants to

[13]for example, Degan Ali and Adeso have described the humanitarian system as racist and neocolonial (Ali, in conversation with the author)
[14]http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/mar/13/do-international-ngos-still-have-the-right-to-exist
[15] https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/programme-cycle/space/page/assessments-tools-guidance

shift from using "its own goods and services to deliver its own solutions, in favour of a diverse, devolved and decentralised model" (Bennett et al 2016).

2.2 Supporting local responses: what works?

To summarise the previous section, perceived obstacles to supporting local partners and/or locally-led response are time, extractive needs assessment designed to identify gaps that can be filled with externally provided goods and services, administration and inflexible funding mechanisms, coordination systems that are largely self-serving, perceived lack of capacity of local actors, relevance of sustainability, cultural barriers, perceived risks, and prevailing attitudes of international organisations. The former are practical. The latter require a "change of mindset" (Bennett et al 2016).

On the issue of time, at present the standard approach to needs assessment, a pre-requisite for at-scale international humanitarian response, requires considerable time and resources.[16] Whereas innovative approaches to assessment **utilise the readily available information available from communities' own action** to complement or triangulate more comprehensive or standardised needs assessment findings (Simon et al 2015). For example, the Paung Ku Nargis Response found that survivors' shifting needs over time could be tracked simply by recording the changing objectives of the flow of proposals being submitted by self-help groups seeking micro-grants. Collectively these proposals (which were submitted by hundreds of local groups serving hundreds of thousands of survivors) reflected the changing priorities of the autonomous response and provided a reasonable picture of changing needs and opportunities without any assessment ever having to be carried out(Corbett 2010 p8). Participatory action research, combining needs and capacity, action and learning has also been used successfully as a substitute to traditional needs assessment (Corbett 2015a and b).

Considerable time is required to establish relationships with local actors, particularly when the aim of establishing a "partnership" is developing sustainable local capacity. Where sustainable organisational capacity is an explicit aim, the literature suggests that the partnership approach is not *always* problematic. According to Ramalingam et al, some models of local partnership employed by INGOs are strong in delivering responses that are more relevant and appropriate, effectiveness through accountability and bridging the divide between development and humanitarian response (Ramalingam et al, 2013). The paper, however, does not look at "success" in terms of operational output and delivery of actual assistance, not least because often the aim is not short term outputs but longer term organisational sustainability.

Based on the same premise, numerous studies stress the **advantage of having pre-existing relationships** with the local actor in question. The experiences of organisations like Afghan NGO NPO/RRA, who have a longstanding partnership with Norwegian Church Aid, are a case in point (see "*What value the middle man*?", WDR 2015, p108). Featherstone's study of the impact of local/international NGO partnerships in the response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines also found that "the

[16] https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/programme-cycle/space/page/assessments-overview

most successful humanitarian partnerships were those that have developed over time" (Featherstone 2014). However it is also true that these relationships are often based on the assumption that over time the local partner will eventually" conform to [mainstream] operational models" (Bennett et al 2016).

In contrast are relationships with local actors that do not presume local actors should operate as international ones. There are examples of where international organisations support the spontaneous initiative of self-help groups or community-based organisations that operate according to local norms and standards, while respecting humanitarian principles. In the following two case studies, the relationship is less fraught with the challenges mentioned above. Indeed they require less time to develop, as they are **not based on the premise of long term sustainability, employ different administration and funding mechanisms, and focus on providing short term punctual capacity building inputs and/or mentoring.**

The idea that lack of time is an insurmountable obstacle to successful provision of support to local responders, for example, has been proved inaccurate by field experience. During the Ebola response, the Global Ebola Fund in 2014 looked for community-based organisations that had the trust of the community (Gratier 2015, p8). They then developed a grant management process that was designed to take just eight days. Although this wasn't always possible in practice, it does demonstrate that some of the technical aspects of contracting and disbursement can be done far faster than at present (Gratier 2015 p8). The evaluation recommended a **stronger emphasis on monitoring than reporting** (providing the opportunity for an iterative approach).

The Paung Ku Nargis Response used an existing mechanism for disbursing small grants to local organizations and self-help groups, again who had been rapidly screened triangulating information from the broader community and networks. PKNR then developed a methodology that involved four page application form and a contract that would allow disbursement of funds within two hours of a proposal being agreed (Corbett 2010). In practice, processing an application took anything from 30 minutes to four hours. IRC are currently developing a rapid response programme that aims to disburse cash grants within 72 hours of initiation. This is currently being piloted in Ethiopia, with lessons from a simulation exercise due to be published in early 2016[17].

Similarly, a major study of the partnership between ICRC and national Red Cross Societies noted that the benefits of partnership were related directly to **complementarity**, whether in terms of mandate, financial capacity or internal skills and expertise (Steets, Sagmeister and Norz, 2013).

Addressing the challenge of trust and risk management, the same review noted that high quality communication and clearly defined relationships were key (Steets, Sagmeister and Norz, 2013). Similarly, MSF's recent review of partnerships with "new" aid actors, including activists turned humanitarians in the Syria crisis, stresses the importance of

[17] See http://www.cashlearning.org/news-and-events/news-and-events/post/303-bigger-better-and-faster

collaboration based on clear criteria and responding to needs (Hoffman and Tiller 2015).

The literature reveals a widely held assumption among international actors that capacity building is central to working effectively with local actors (Featherstone 2014 p7). Featherstone's study, which contains many interesting and detailed case studies of a wide variety of working relationships, finds that the nature and form of capacity building support is a key factor in whether the partnership is successful or not. The evidence suggests that to succeed, the local organization needs –at the very least - **to decide the focus and form of capacity building**. Many local organisations actively seek training and capacity building – investment in local capacity is core, for example, to the Charter for Change programme. For a detailed analysis of the differing positions and approach of international organisations on capacity building and why a far deeper commitment is needed, see Francois Audet's paper for the International Review of the Red Cross in 2011 (Audet 2011).

Others argue, however, that capacity building *as it is presently conceptualised* is complex and problematic. Firstly, it is often underpinned by the idea that external actors bring a an organizational framework into which local actors must be trained to fit if they are to make acceptable partners, a model which (as Adeso have pointed out) frequently under**values existing knowledge**. Secondly, it is usually seen as a one way process. The idea, as expressed by humanitarian leaders from the Global South like Jemilah Mahmood of Mercy Malaysia, that local actors should be the ones "capacity building' internationals: the value of explaining contexts and culture and how to work in specific environments, is not widely recognized by international agencies.

Whereas, similar to the Tufts study mentioned earlier, Corbett suggests that capacity building can (and indeed in the initial aftermath of a disaster should) be **demand-led, short** (less than half a day), and focus on **"capacities" that are relatively easy to acquire** and have **immediate relevance**, e.g. first aid training and management of dead bodies in Cyclone Nargis, or facilitating local to local capacity building such as identification and preparation of wild foods after the resumption of conflict in South Kordofan (Corbett 2015a and b).

Preparedness is also a means of developing both relationships and capacity. Therefore where possible, preparedness exercises, including disaster risk reduction, can be used to pre-define both the roles and responsibilities of local (and international actors) and the capacities required (Bishop 2014, Kenney 2015). Indeed the literature on disaster risk reduction and reinforcing community resilience to disasters is an area that holds rich lessons learned for supporting locally-led crisis response (but is not explored in depth here).

Ramalingram et al note the imperative of preparedness exercises being managed by national governments: "There have been some improvements in how humanitarian response activities link to longer- term objectives, but these have largely come about thanks to the efforts of host country governments and institutions rather than the international system itself" (Ramalingam et al, 2013 p20).

In their research of working in countries such as Myanmar, Sudan and Zimbabwe, South and Harrigan (2013) note that where the government is not playing a supportive role and where mainstream humanitarian aid is not seeking to enable local civil society, the autonomous response of crisis affected communities remains highly significant.

Finally, to reiterate a lesson learned from non-crisis contexts, the "central message" of Booth and Unsworth's 2014 evaluation of seven successful case studies is that supporting locally-led response was successful because [the donor] adopted politically smart, locally-led approaches, **adapting the way [the donor] worked in order to support iterative problem-solving and brokering of interests by politically astute local actors**" (Booth and Unsworth, 2014, pv).

Section 3: Addressing specific challenges and opportunities in locally-led responses: case studies and evidence

This section will look at some of the key technical challenges and opportunities in localized disaster response, specifically local leadership, financing locally-led responses including the use of cash grants, working with volunteers and local governments, and locally-led protection response in conflict.

3.1 Local leadership

Leadership as it is used here reflects its definition in ODI's Time to Let Go report, i.e. "greater local autonomy, ceding power and resources to structures and actors currently at the margins of the formal system" (Bennett et al 2016).

There are relatively few case studies of work that was begun or led by local organisations and subsequently gained international support, despite the policy discussions that identify this as a desirable way to work (see above). Yet this finding is reinforced by recent research in the development sector. Booth and Unsworth's review of seven case studies of projects regarded as successful found that models that put local actors in the driving seat were a common factor in *all* seven. "The starting point is a genuine effort to seek out existing capacities, perceptions of problems and ideas about solutions, and to enter into some sort of relationship with leaders who are motivated to deploy these capabilities." Key to this, they found, was a considerable investment in relationship and an iterative approach to problem solving (Booth and Unsworth, 2014, p19).

In the case of the Ebola Crisis Fund, the evaluation recommends moving towards this approach: it suggests supporting local organisations to develop their own policies and manuals as good practice, rather than imposing or transplanting those developed for international organisations (Grantier 2015).

The Ebola Crisis Fund evaluation also suggests supporting networking and coordination efforts to ensure that the work of local organisations is known to the wider relief effort -

and vice versa (Grantier 2015). Operation Mercy's reflection on the Typhoon Haiyan response reiterated the regrettable lack of local actors noting again the lack of an accessible location, communication in local language on coordination fora and benefits of participating, dedicated liaisons *for* local organisations that can speak the local language, prohibited local organisations in participating in the cluster-led coordination system (Tipper 2015).

A project that actually addressed these issues – the Local Resource Centre following cyclone Nargis in Myanmar – proved able to link local organisations to internationals when there were grounds for collaboration and provide a vehicle for capacity building on issues such as do-no-harm and other humanitarian principles (Hedlund 2011). Another recent example is the Coordination Unit (CU) in South Kordofan, which has a liaison office in Juba, but is managed and attended entirely by civil society organisations that are providing relief behind the front lines (Corbett 2015a). The CU has gone even further by employing third party monitoring of the food security situation to address potential criticisms of reporting bias - similar to efforts of the Somalia Cash Consortium during the Somalia famine in 2011-2012 (Corbett 2015a and Hedlund et al 2012).

Case studies suggest that a pragmatic approach to working with local organisations in times of acute crisis is essential. Corbett's description of PKNR's approach is "do less harm": "Some mistakes and misuse were viewed as an inevitable consequence of providing grants in a crisis situation" (Corbett 2010 p7). Syrian activist Dr RoubaMhaissen's call for international organisations to "take a leap of faith" in supporting the plans drawn up by national actors, instead of "repeating programmes that were designed for other regions.[18]" See also Hedlund et al on the realities – and successful experiences – of working with local organisations in Somalia, which clearly demonstrate that working with local partners is no less risky than working without them (Hedlund et al 2012). MSF has reported similar experiences in Syria (Hofman and Tiller 2015).

An important alternative source of case studies that demonstrate local leadership comes from countries that have not requested international assistance. These are unsurprisingly underrepresented in the literature, particularly the case studies of South American and of India: countries widely prone in particular to sudden onset disasters. Regional groups such as the AHA centre (ASEAN's coordination centre for disaster response) are also becoming important repositories of knowledge about local leadership in crises[19]. Tearfund has a number of case studies of local church leadership in India[20]. An excellent analysis of the growing role of regional bodies in humanitarian response, focusing on the experiences of ASEAN and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), researched by Armstrong and Obrecht, was published by ODI in 2015 (Armstrong and Obrecht, 2015). The key question for humanitarians, they found, also involved a shift in perspective: "The key question should be how humanitarianism fits within the mandates and interests of regional organisations, rather

[18]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CYipvP4aUz4
[19]http://www.ahacentre.org/about-aha-centre
[20]http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/themes/church/church_and_disaster_management/case_studies_of_local_church_involvement_in_disaster_management/

than how regional organisations fit within the humanitarian system" (Armstrong and Obrecht, 2015, p1).

There is also, of course, an understanding of local responses to crises independent of the role of international agencies. While the Tufts and Local to Global Protection case studies are a good start, the lack of more literature says a great deal about the extent to which humanitarians currently value existing community coping mechanisms. One important study into the local experience of famine in Somalia in 2011 presents a typology of resilience and coping which emphasizes the role of personal connections particularly clan relationships and family (particularly diaspora) in determining levels of resilience, and comments pertinently that resilience is a matter of relationships, "whether and how social connectedness can be strengthened by external intervention is not always clear." (Maxwell et al, 2015, p18). The paper acknowledges that understanding the capacity of communities to cope with deteriorating circumstances is both necessary – and complex particularly in Somalia (this paper was based on two years of field research conducted after famine).

The on-going research and action research of Local to Global Protection, initiated in 2010, remains one of the few sustained efforts that focuses specifically on improving understanding of the locally-led, autonomous emergency responses that continue independent of external aid support (see http://www.local2gobal.info). Local to Global Protection contends that understanding coping mechanisms is not that complex, it first and foremost starts by asking the question (Corbett 2015b). And indeed the question is increasingly being in asked in mainstream needs assessment methodologies (see above).

3.2 Financing

As previously noted, the challenge of providing money directly to local organisations (as opposed to contracting an organization to deliver a service) can be a complex one. But there are some examples of direct funding models for local organisations that are considered successful. The RAPID fund in Pakistan, established by USAID and managed by CONCERN, has administered130 grants mostly to Pakistani NGOs since 2009. The fund both finances immediate humanitarian response and provides longer-term capacity building for NGOs, providing practical support to applicants throughout the process. (CAFOD 2014 p22) An evaluation of the RAPID fund was commissioned by Concern and USAID in 2013, but the final report has not to the knowledge of the author yet been made public.

A more recent initiative, the CBHA Early Response Fund, was established in 2010 by 15 British NGOs. The fund cites a figure of 52% of funding passed to national organisations, but only through partnerships with international organisations. A project evaluation in 2012 found that the ERF had succeeded in raising funds for low profile emergencies (Cosgrove, Eekelen and Polastro, 2012, p24). The CBHA pilot later influenced the establishment of both the START Network and DfID's Rapid Response Facility (RRF). The current RRF partners are, however, limited to Western based international NGOs. The START fund has, however, had some important successes channelling funding to

local organisations, albeit through international organisations: in 2014 and 15, CAFOD negotiated grants of between $80,000 to $140,000 for emergency response work for partners in DRC, Sri Lanka and Turkey (SEE 4.4 in WDR 2015 – Lydia Poole).

A further model has been developed by OXFAM America and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Having established platforms of civil society actors and brokered funding from the Foundation, Oxfam America stepped back and supported the group in negotiating funding directly with the Gates Foundation, leaving Oxfam with a much smaller technical support role (WDR 2013).

On the key area of transparency (local organisations are often challenged to meet the reporting requirements of international donors), there have also been demonstrable successes - not only in the ability to adapt funding and reporting mechanisms but also in monitoring the financial accountability of funds spent. The independent evaluation of the Global Ebola Fund found that none of the 34 organisations funded had misused funds (Gratier 2015). The PKNR in Burma/Myanmar reported that slightly under 10.5% (around 50) of the 539 groups supported may have either misused grant money or been negatively affected by the project (Corbett 2010). The PKNR started small and the iterative approach to funding local action also meant that risks could be managed and bigger projects could be entrusted to more reliable local actors. MSF noted a similar process when funding networks to provide medical supplies in the Syria Crisis (Hofman and Tiller 2015).

The key to success from the development and (limited) humanitarian literature is the need to "prioritise the programming need for adaptability, creativity and an approach based on local, iterative lesson learning" rather than "an organisational need for strict compliance with internal procedures and bureaucracy" (Corbett 2011 p69-70).

3.3 Cash grants

Cash grants– providing money directly to individuals, households or communities to spend how they choose - have emerged in recent years as a major model for crisis response. Cash grants are usually made either to individuals or to households, and are one of several forms of direct financial support. In some situations, organisations are exploring the greater use of community-grants for community-wide impact, e.g. Geneva Global in the Ebola Crisis, Humanity United in South Kordofan, DRC in Somalia, Save the Children in the Philippines, and UNHCR in South East Asia. Part of their popularity lies in the idea that cash grants are by definition empowering, handing the power of choice into the hands of affected communities. A library of independently researched case studies capturing experiences from the field is hosted by the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) on their website.[21] This paper will not pretend to review the broader merits or risks associated with cash grants but wish to highlight here how lack of financial resources or cash is often the primary constraint to local people doing more to help themselves.

[21]http://www.cashlearning.org/information-sharing/case-studies

It is now widely accepted that cash grants are the only aid modality designed to offer people affected by crisis a maximum degree of flexibility, dignity and efficiency commensurate with their diverse needs (Cabot et al 2015). Cash is furthermore being used as a viable, even preferred, alternative to material aid where access is problematic given the increasingly reliable money transfer business in Gaza for example (Ferretti 2010).

As with all types of material or financial, a key issue is the extent that agencies consider the possible wider social and cultural impacts, either in their design or their evaluations of the aid they are providing. Berg and Seferis note that this is an important omission as CBIs (as with all types of aid) inevitably have protection impacts (positive or negative) whether or not they are designed to do so (Berg and Seferis 2015 p10). Their paper contains a comprehensive and important list of recommendations to this end.

While enabling individuals, households and communities to act based on their own priorities, cash-based programming still requires establishing a reliable distribution network and clear roles and accountabilities for local and international actors (Hedlund et al 2012 and Hughbanks 2010). However as use of cash grants to support protection outcomes has demonstrated, individuals, households or communities will use cash grants innovatively to meet a broad range of humanitarian and protection needs that don't "fit in" to traditional humanitarian silos, e.g. psychosocial support to bereaved mothers or local conflict resolution through bi-cultural events in South Kordofan (Corbett 2015a).

3.4 Working with volunteers

Volunteering is a core concept in locally-led humanitarian response. Many local responders work unpaid, and many local organisations are also run on a voluntary basis. Many organisations were started with volunteers, some (notably Red Cross and Red Crescent societies) still function primarily through volunteers and many local organisations are formed and run by those who receive no payment for their work. The phenomenon of volunteer groups forming in response to a given crisis, and quickly becoming complex and multinational organisations has also been a notable feature of recent responses, particularly Syria (both the response in country and the European response to the refugee influx). Working with volunteers – whether directly, through recruitment, or indirectly, through supporting or working with volunteer organisations, is a critical aspect of working with local communities. Volunteer groups, particularly those formed immediately after a crisis, present particular challenges for international organisations (FEMA 2006 and Whitaker et al 2015).

In 2015 the Red Cross published a comprehensive global study of volunteering which looks at the changing environments and contexts in which volunteers operate. As the paper notes, “There is a particular need for more nuanced research and knowledge development in partnership with volunteer engaging organisations across the global South” (Hazeldine and Baillie Smith, 2015, p10).

Existing case studies on working with volunteers often stress the importance of building and investing in volunteer networks as a key pre crisis activity. One analysis of a programme called Step Up in Florida, USA that was designed to train volunteers in disaster response found that investing in pre-disaster training for volunteers in particular paid off. "Initial findings suggested that the involvement of professional volunteer managers could enhance the ability of communities to respond to disasters and provide a better link between government and community organizations" (Brower and Word 2012 p78). Based on research carried out after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the study particularly recommends engaging with and training volunteers from marginalised or disadvantaged communities as a way of reaching out to marginalised communities in a crisis and bridging the gap between responding institutions and those affected. Such work can also be carried out *during a crisis,* as the programme of free training currently being offered by RedR to volunteers working with refugees in Europe illustrates.[22]

Local responses in crises are increasingly characterised by volunteers who come together and organise extremely fast – sometimes within hours – a phenomenon dramatically expedited with social media (see section on emerging models below). The Christchurch earthquake in New Zealand and the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan are good examples here (an excellent compendium of studies of the Christchurch experience focusing on community roles is hosted by the Tangata Whenua Community and Volunteer Sector Research Centre)[23]. Engaging with such groups will become an increasingly important aspect of connecting with a local crisis response in disasters to come, but this issue has been little studied to date.

A further challenge is the new forms of volunteering in recent crises, most notably what is known as the "volunteer technology community" or VTCs. These are technical experts – in, for example, coding or mapping – who have become increasingly interested in contributing their skills to crisis response, for example by translating satellite imagery into useable maps. VTCs started as an American phenomenon and volunteers can work from anywhere in the world, but their work is increasingly led by/delivered in partnership with local technology groups. In Nepal, for example, a group called Kathmandu Living Labs provided mapping expertise to response to the earthquake of April 2015, developing online open source maps of the affected areas using satellite imagery that could be used by all responders: international, local, official and non official.

Such groups are difficult to work with using a conventional partnership model as they are neither official organisations nor ones with any geographical centre. To meet this challenge, in 2011 OCHA and VTC partners worked instead to develop an interface through which organisations can call upon VTC capacity as and when they need it. The Digital Humanitarian Network is an online platform which provides an interface between humanitarian responders and tech experts, both individuals and organisations (the organisations involved include MapAction and Translators Without Borders.

[22]http://www.redr.org.uk/en/News/News_Stories.cfm/Calais-Training-An-emphasis-on-needs-and-dignity
[23]http://www.communityresearch.org.nz/learning-from-christchurch/

Responders who have a problem they think DHN volunteers can help with (such as turning satellite images into maps, or searching social media content for operationally useful information) submit a request for assistance. If accepted, the DHN is then "activated" and the task undertaken. The platform is a new initiative and model as there is no financial transaction or formal contract. It is open to any organisation, not just international. In 2013, for example, the NGO Seeds India, responding to floods in Uttarakhand, submitted a request to the Network for assistance in mapping previously unmapped villages affected by the floods[24]. The model created by the DHN has thus developed a way in which an international organisation (OCHA) can take a role in brokering relationships between professional and volunteer responders regardless of location. An excellent analysis of the origins, model and applications of the DHN was published by the Global Solutions Network in 2014.

A further highly successful model for working with digital volunteers has been developed by the Kenyan Red Cross. The iVolunteer programme has created a cadre of online volunteers who report emergencies (e.g. car accidents), share accurate information and advice, publicise key initiatives like blood donations. During the Garissa terrorist attack, for example, volunteers' publicised emergency hotline numbers and family tracing services, and shared accurate information about the incident. KRC is frequently informed of incidents faster than the official emergency services (CDACN 2015).

There are also some interesting case studies of the private sector providing "incubator" support for local volunteer groups, particularly in the technology centre. Google, for example, have provided support to a group called Mapping Bangladesh who, when Cyclone Mahasen was approaching the country in 2013, worked to create an interactive map showing every storm shelter along the coast available to the public[25]. Very recently (February 2016) UNICEF has also piloted a similar model, inviting applications from technology start-ups developing tools that could support vulnerable children. Their $9 million fund is actively seeking applications from countries where there is little capital investment in technology[26].

The autonomous emergence of the "Nafeer" response to devastating floods in Sudan in 2013 speaks to the issue of scale of self-organising volunteer response[27]. Within weeks of an initial core group of 15 young men and women beginning to mobilising a self-help local response, over 7,000 volunteers and hundreds of thousands of dollars of financial and in-kind support had been generated. Similar self-help initiatives have been seen in response to floods in Myanmar,[28] bush fires in Australia[29] and earthquakes in Chile[30] and New Zealand.[31] Indeed a shortcoming of this literature review was not to explore further

[24]http://digitalhumanitarians.com/content/dhn-deployment-uttarakhand-flood
[25]https://sites.google.com/site/mapmakerpedia/regional-hubs/mapping-bangladesh
[26]http://www.unicef.org/media/media_89993.html
[27]http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/30/world/africa/as-floods-ravage-sudan-young-volunteers-revive-a-tradition-of-aid.html?_r=0).
[28] https://www.youcaring.com/myanmar-flood-victims-in-ayeyarwaddy-delta-area-406896
[29] http://www.civilsociety.org.au/FireandRainConferenceNominations.htm
[30] http://www.preventionweb.net/publications/view/48289
[31] https://www.familyservices.govt.nz/documents/working-with-us/programmes-services/connected-services/supporting-canterbury/building-community-resilience-report.pdf

these self-help initiatives for lessons they hold for "outsiders" wishing to support them. However recommendations from the Student Army of New Zealand, 8000 students who worked 75,000 hours in the Christchurch earthquake response, that resemble findings included herein on how to support local response include:

- Recognise leaders at every level;
- Build on existing capacity;
- Community action is response;
- Community action is resilience;
- Let the need define the approach;
- Use common sense, keep systems and procedures simple;
- Designate liaisons for effective communication; and
- When the rules don't provide for the greater good, break them (Tephra 2012).

3.5 Working with local governments

There is an on-going discussion – and tension – within humanitarian response as to the extent to which work with "local actors" should include government authorities, both national and regional. In the literature, work with local authorities is mostly focused on preparedness and institutional response capacity. Harkey's 2014 study of countries with successfully strengthened national disaster preparedness capacities, for example, draws lessons from the work of El Salvador, Mozambique, Indonesia and The Philippines. Key factors common to all countries: government recognition of the need for improvement, civil society advocacy for better disaster management, a process of change that takes in every level of government and a partnership approach for working with international agencies – but with government leadership (Harkey 2014). Walker, Rasmussen and Molano's study of the specific relationships between international agencies and national governments in preparedness identified the key factor in successful partnerships as trust (Walker et al, 2011). Their analysis of three case studies – Indonesia, Mozambique and Colombia – found that disaster response systems worked best when led by national authorities, and commented that the reluctance of the IASC to adapt the Cluster system to mirror or complement domestic arrangements as "at best an irritant and more frequently as an inefficiency and cause of discontent" (Harkey 2014 p45). In the case of Colombia and Indonesia, the paper also identifies regional bodies as a key form of support.

An complementary perspective is offered in a recent World Bank paper which stresses the importance of relationship between community organisations and local governments, particularly in the context of delivering on disaster and climate resilience. The paper sees an important role for international bodies in facilitating these partnerships and ensuring the accountability of governments to their people (WB 2015). Preliminary research by Fernando Espada of Save the Children warns that some national authorities use crises and the power implicit in their role as disaster managers to "narrow the autonomy of non state actors and the influence of international

donors.[32]" Culturally- and politically-appropriate support to local organisations can help local organisations to withstand that threat. Research on civil society in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis saw the cyclone response as a vehicle for civil society growth, contributing to a present-day civil society that is capable of influencing national development agendas.[33]

3.6 Locally-led protection

Humanitarian needs generated by conflict now make up by far the highest percentage of the global humanitarian caseload. In 2015, over 80% of the UN's annual appeal was for countries impacted by conflict[34]. Conflict environments have also been characterised in recent years by an emergence of "new actors". As the 2015 WDR points out, the range of local actors in conflict environments is both growing and diversifying, as diasporas and the private sector in particular play an increasingly significant role. Many such groups are formed in response to specific emergencies and thus have little experience: "In many conflict contexts, a majority of actors are new to the provision of assistance" (WDR 2015 p152). In Syria, for example, OCHA estimates that 600-700 groups have formed since the beginning of the conflict five years ago (Pantuliano and Svoboda 2015, piii). Many new groups operate entirely outside the humanitarian system and thus their activities are not even captured by the conventional mapping of humanitarian responses, dependent as that tends to be on engagement with the established humanitarian system (e.g. clusters).

Work in complex crisis has been one of the key drivers of localisation in aid work as the risks for international organisations increase, humanitarian space shrinks and aid agencies increasingly turn to remote management models, including remote management of partnerships with local agencies. While many follow the traditional model of outsourcing project implementation to local organisations, others have explored more interesting models of local leadership including community leadership. Projects that have attracted particular attention in the context of localisation include Danish Refugee Council's Community Driven Recovery and Development project in Somalia, which applies a transformative approach to delivering small grants to communities. Partner communities have the ability to request, design, monitor and implement programmes and thus engage in a dialogue with the local governments on the developments of their community. The project has so far transferred grants of more than $7 million USD directly to communities. The project has also developed transformation models of locally based transparency and M&E strategies, using social media and SMS. The model has now been replicated in Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Guinea, Sudan and Yemen (WDR 2015 p 141-143; Bryld and Kamau 2011).

Far less attention has been paid by humanitarians to local initiatives that seek to

[32] http://www.humanitarian-quest.org/fernando-espda/ - subsequently published as part of the Humanitarian Effectiveness Project at http://humanitarianeffectivenessproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/South-Asia_Fernando_Espada_HAT.pdf

[33] http://www.adb.org/publications/civil-society-briefs-myanmar

[34] http://www.unocha.org/top-stories/all-stories/2015-global-appeal-164-billion-help-57-million-people-22-countries

address the issues generated by armed conflict, notably protection. But as Professor Michael Semple notes of Pakistan and Afghanistan, the popular portrayal of civilian groups as passive and disempowered in the hands of armed actors is far from the truth: on the contrary, "there is intense interaction between armed groups and community figures" (Haspeslagh and Yousuf 2015 p5). While this research focuses on understanding community roles from a peace-building perspective, their finding that community engagement with armed groups is also an important part of local security/protection strategies and suggests there may be insights on how humanitarians can better support local initiative in the peace-building literature (Haspeslagh and Yousuf 2015). This is consistent with the Local to Global Protection case studies in Zimbabwe, Myanmar, Darfur and South Kordofan, Sudan, Syria and the occupied Palestinian Territories.

Responsibility to Protect has also received increasing attention and an interesting parallel to UN peace-keeping missions is the idea of supporting community-based protection. Examples of how this is done is provided by Gorur and Carstensen (Willmot et al (eds) 2016). UNHCR, which has made a commitment to supporting community based protection have recognised that protection work, particularly issues such as Gender-Based Violence and Female Genital Mutilation, must by their nature employ community-led approaches. An interesting and frank commentary on the challenges of mainstreaming a community-based approach can be found in UNHCR's 2013 analysis of their community-based protection work, noting particularly a the direct conflict between the time staff needed to spend with the community and their other duties, particularly coordination and project management, and remote management (UNHCR 2013).

Finally a field that has been attracting a lot of attention in recent years is the use of digital tools to create ways in which communities can report and map human rights abuses, voting irregularities or incidents of conflict, but these have had mixed track records. The Ushahidi platform, founded in Kenya as a tool for Kenyans to report and track violence following the election in 2008 was hugely successful. Voix des Kivus in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)began as an external research project investigating the potential of information supplied by locals via mobile phones as a way of generating real time maps of conflict. Contrary to Ushahidi, Voix des Kivus was designed by academics to serve research needs rather than arising from local demand. For issues of accountability and ethics, the project leads quickly realised that they could not create channels of communication and information sharing without also linking the information to a response, which the researchers could not guarantee (Humphreys and van der Windt, 2012).

Section 4: Local response: a few more models

Local responses in disasters, as discussed above, take many forms and involve many different groups and actors. This section of the paper looks at the ways some of those models are changing, bringing in new ways of organisation, new actors and new forms of response and particularly the way in which diaspora and private sector groups are

increasingly able to engage in crisis response in a far more immediate way. Many of these are the result of the explosion of communications technology in the developing world. The challenge of identifying, understanding and working with these models will be an increasingly important one for any agency that seeks to develop locally-led programming in future humanitarian responses.

4.1 Technology-facilitated models

The different models emerging here include those facilitated by increased access to technology, the so-called "many-to-many" model, and private initiatives using tools such as crowd funding to support local initiatives.

Local communities – including those overseas - have always stepped up and provided help in times of crisis. But responses from local groups are being impacted profoundly by communications technology, as local people in crisis prone countries leverage technology to reach out, share needs, communicate assistance and self organise. As Kentaro Toyama notes in his book Geek Heresy, technology, particularly communications technology, is core to the way disaster response is changing because its greatest significance is its capacity to amplify existing social and community networks and thus capacity to respond (Toyama 2014). Technology has been described as “the most significant driver of the growing ability of diaspora populations to play an increasing role in humanitarian response activities” (Grullon and King 2013). It is also, however, important to note also what is not changing: these groups will still be impacted by the cultural and social constructs in which they operate. The digital divide remains very real: many of the most marginalised do not have access to these services. And the most recent research suggests that digital divides are also forming along long established fault lines such as gender (for example, women experiencing online sexual harassment or being deliberately prevented by male family members from accessing technology) (WDR 2015 ch7).

The forms of response facilitated by technology tend to be structurally and operationally different to traditional response models. In particular, technology has facilitated the creation of networked responses: groups of people who are able to contribute regardless of their location, for example by providing translations services, sending money or offering services such as transport. The JalinMerapi project in Indonesia, for example, is an excellent example of how digital technology has enabled the development of an organization based on a many-to-many network model rather than a hierarchical structure. JalinMerapi was founded in 2009 by a group of journalists and local activist living by the Merapi volcano in central Java, after locals felt that the government had been slow and obstructive in providing information about a major eruption and the government’s response. Using local radio stations and digital platforms, the project’s founders developed a multi-platform way to share information about volcanic activity in real time. When the next eruption happened, they found that locals were using the platforms to ask for help, report impact and make specific requests for resources such as food or shelter. Others were using the same platforms to respond directly. With the help of local authorities and a nearby university, the project has now expanded to run a

permanent online platform sharing information, facilitating preparedness and supporting response (Wall 2012 p12).

Part of the challenge for international organisations is that such networks do not and will not resemble the established, formal organisations with whom they are used to work. The challenge for complex professional organisations of trying to working with a group that has no formal leader, or any legal status is considerable.

Some international organisations, however, are starting to find ways of working to support many-to-many platforms and digitally facilitated interventions. The Petajakarta project, for example, works with the municipal authorities in Jakarta to develop real time ways in which the local government can interact with affected communities during the annual floods. The project, which brings together expertise from academia (University of Wollongong in Australia) and the private sector (Twitter) has taken a mentoring approach, placing platform designers within the relevant government departments, working alongside the those who will use the tools they are co-creating (WDR 2015, p191).

There has also been some interesting work around fostering and seed funding local capacity to develop tools and projects that can deliver local solutions to local problems. One of the best known is the iHub in Kenya, a technology innovation hub that fosters innovators in Nairobi. The iHub was founded by local Kenyan tech specialists and was initially funded by private sector actors such as Omidyar Network and Hivos. The iHub has fostered platforms such as Umati, which identifies and monitors online hate speech (MahihuMoraraSambuli 2013).

UNICEF have also developed a model of fostering local talent through their Innovation Lab model of which there are now 12 globally, including Labs in Uganda, Lebanon and Afghanistan. The Labs vary according to context and need, but are based on the idea of a space in which local academics, technologists, entrepreneurs and civil society can collaborate to develop projects and tools to address the country's most pressing needs (especially those facing children)[35]. Labs are also being used to tackle challenges such as long term monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian projects[36].

Another important emerging area is the growth of online fundraising platforms through which organisations and individuals can solicit funding directly The rapidly growing crowd funding industry has been increasingly used to channel funding to local responders, particularly in high profile emergencies like the Nepal earthquake of 2015[37]. One of the biggest, Global Giving, uses a business model that includes capacity to vet and support the organisations who appeal for donations on their platform. Global Giving raised over $4 million dollars for the response to the Nepal earthquake and was used by organisations like Kathmandu Living Labs to source the funding that they were unable

[35]http://www.unicef.org/innovation/innovation_73201.html
[36]http://www.unicefstories.org/2015/08/24/researching-innovation-labs-4-measuring-the-impact-of-the-lab/
[37]http://www.irinnews.org/report/101643/the-changing-face-of-disaster-funding

to secure from international donors and organisations[38].

It is notable that most of the case studies outlined above involve actors other than traditional humanitarian agencies. The humanitarian community has much to learn from academia, the private sector and ad hoc diaspora networks in applying different models of partnership and community led engagement.

4.2 Diasporas

"Diaspora communities believe that through their remittances they make an immediate and significant impact on humanitarian aid efforts before, during and after crises. However, their skills, expertise, dedication and insight remain underutilized"

Humanitarian Forum, Diaspora led consultations for the WHS, 2015

Diasporas have always played a key role in crises in their countries of origin. This capacity has been dramatically increased in recent years through digital technology, particularly facilitating real time communication, and a vastly increased capacity to organize (particularly using social media). Not only have remittance flows increased considerably, but diaspora groups have also become deeply involved in designing and running relief projects, from groups in Syria like Syria Relief (based in the UK) to the Sierra Leonean diaspora in London supporting Ebola response (WDR 2015).

In 2012, the global total of remittance flows to humanitarian recipients (as defined by the Global Humanitarian Assistance report, was USD 43.9 billion. The total of official humanitarian assistance, meanwhile, was just USD5.5 billion. (GDA 2014 p5). But there is far more to the growing diaspora role in crisis preparedness and response than remittances. Not only are diasporas a source of skills and expertise, especially linguistic, but they are also powerful advocates and also an affected population in their own right: they lose relatives and loved ones in crises, own property and investments in disaster areas, and may be overseas as a result of fleeing a conflict (Talbot 2011).

The role of Diasporas in development work, particularly conflict related, has been far more extensively studied than comparative experiences in humanitarian environments. The available literature is detailed below.

One development organisation that has a long track record of working with Diasporas is the UK based Volunteer Services Overseas (VSO). VSO has been organising long-term placements in countries of origin for Diaspora members since 2005 and considers Diaspora partnerships as an integral part of their way of working. A DfID review noted that diaspora volunteers "settled in quickly to their host communities, dealt better with local businesses, realistic expectations of living conditions kept costs down, and that volunteers were able to talk freely with communities with fewer cultural misunderstandings"(Talbot 2011 p20). VSO also provides support (financial and technical) to 14 UK diaspora organisations to develop their own international volunteer

[38] ibid

programmes in the countries of heritage/origin. This programme has been also reviewed positively by DfID (Talbot 2011 p20).

Remittances have attracted particular attention from humanitarians. An HPG study in Pakistan in 2006 (following the 2005 earthquake) found that remittances "can make people less vulnerable and more resilient to disasters" (Savage and Suleri 2006 pi). Not only do remittances help recipient individuals but they can also have important multiplier effects within communities. The paper concludes that a stronger understanding of the role of remittances in crises – currently under researched – would be of considerable benefit to humanitarians. A subsequent paper, which includes case studies of the impact of remittances on crises in Haiti, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Aceh, Pakistan and Somalia, suggests that for humanitarians, projects to strengthening remittance flows (making them easier/cheaper) and focusing on restoring them in a crisis could be important ways to strengthen resilience, and as a quick and effective way of supporting livelihoods recovery (Harvey and Savage 2007 p37).In recent years, the impact of counter terrorism legislation in particular on remittances has become an increasingly important issue for humanitarians. More detailed, context specific analysis of the role of remittances and for humanitarians in supporting remittance flow as part of crisis preparedness/response work can be found in Wu's study of Aceh (2006) and Young's study of Darfur (2006).

In addition to these case studies, a number of consultations were held by and with diaspora groups as part of the World Humanitarian Summit process. The Humanitarian Forum coordinated an extensive consultation process with diaspora groups in the UK, France, Germany, Canada, USA, Italy and Norway. This study identified the multiple ways in which diaspora groups feel they can contribute to disaster response. From connecting international and local responders, providing key services like translation, diaspora groups felt they had access to networks of highly skilled and dedicated people, many of whom are already involved in supporting their countries of origin, who would like to be more involved in crisis response. Many felt, however, that INGOs and professional responders are difficult to communicate or coordinate with. (Humanitarian Forum, Diaspora Led Consultations, 2015 p5). This frustration was exacerbated by the difficulties many groups and individuals reported in working with governments in their countries of origin.

In recent years some humanitarian organisations have piloted approaches to working more closely with Diasporas. Unfortunately, once again, there are few formal evaluations. The Diaspora Emergency Action and Coordination (DEMAC) project, a partnership between the African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) in the UK, the Berghof Foundation in Germany and Danish Refugee Council works primarily with the Somali diaspora in Denmark, the Syrian diaspora in Germany and the Sierra Leonean diaspora in the UK. The project, which seeks to understand current intervention methods and capacities used by diasporas, and improve coordination between them and professional responders, is currently carrying out a baseline survey to map existing engagement of diasporas' current involvement in countries of origin. The report will be

published in early 2016[39]. Their submission paper to the WHS calls for states and international bodies to "engage in genuine, equal partnerships with diaspora based relief providers", support inter organisational networking and to provide training in key skills such as (DEMAC 2015 p2)

The Sierra Leone UK Diaspora Ebola Response Taskforce, established with the support of the Sierra Leonean High Commission in London, worked with Bond (who helped SLUKDERT connect with formal coordination mechanisms) and with DfID, but no evaluation is yet available. BOND's Ebola evaluation notes that "It was clear from content posted on MyBond and participation in face-to-face meetings that the non-traditional humanitarian actors engaged in coordination in a meaningful way" but little detail of how this worked is available (BOND 2015 p5).

A study carried out specifically by Muslim Aid in Canada with Canadian based Muslim diaspora communities found that those consulted were very keen to become more involved in assisting in crisis response, but lacked the skills and capacity to do so. Specifically they wanted to know what more they could contribute beyond just donating cash. (Dewidar 2015 p31). The process also identified the need for a stronger network between diaspora organisations to coordinate responses and knowledge sharing (Dewidar 2015 p47).

There are important caveats to working with diasporas, notably that they are not always a benign force or one welcomed domestically, especially in conflict environments. COMPAS's study of the contribution of UK-based Diaspora to development and poverty reduction in 2004 analyses how the perspective of diaspora groups may be direct contravention of humanitarian aims. "There are also outcomes that are negative or at best ambivalent, as when diaspora groups (Tamils, Somalis, Indians) support warring parties and warlords and help to foment conflict, or when their interventions contribute to socio-economic differentiation (all groups)" (COMPAS 2004 p22). In a blog for HPN, Chukwu-EmekaChikezie (Director of Up!-Africa) also describes how diaspora initiatives and groups can have complex and highly problematic relationships with domestic governments, citing the case of Sierra Leonean diaspora medical project SLA whose work was almost entirely blocked on the ground by the Sierra Leonean Health Ministry[40]. It is worth noting that this experience took place in a country where the government infrastructure included a specific Office for Diaspora Affairs.

[39]http://www.demac.org/about-demac/reports-and-recommendations
[40]http://odihpn.org/magazine/the-ebola-crisis-and-the-sierra-leone-diaspora/

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