



At the Community Health Centre in Nahuizalco, WFP implements the Nutrimos El Salvador project. The project aims to promote good child nutrition and reduce stunting. Thousands of e-vouchers are distributed to people who redeem them for fortified cereals at partnering Super Selectos supermarkets.

WFP/Rein Skullerud. April 2017.



7

LOCALISATION

**Global objective: Support CVA
integration with local systems**

Localisation is increasingly recognised as a priority in CVA, despite lack of clarity about what it means in practice

The Grand Bargain (GB) includes commitments to realise greater localisation of humanitarian aid through the GB Localization Workstream, which supports signatories to meet related commitments.¹ To date it is broadly agreed that, despite some relevant initiatives, progress towards localisation has been more theoretical and policy-based than achieving the practical “system-wide change” required.²

The GB commits to “making principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary”.³ This statement is open to interpretation⁴ and there is no single understanding of what localisation is, though there are some common threads. The GB framework, for example, includes agreement that localisation should result in more funding going directly to local stakeholders and the Charter for Change commits to actions that address inequalities in the humanitarian system.⁵ Another valuable reference point is the research undertaken by the Start Network in 2018⁶ which focuses on best practices in localisation and produced the “Seven Dimensions of Localisation” (see box 7.1).

BOX 7.1 The seven dimensions of localisation

- 1 Relationship quality and partnerships:** ensuring less sub-contracting and more equitable relationships.
- 2 Participation revolution:** ensuring participation of crisis affected populations and being inclusive with gender, age and disability.
- 3 Funding and financing:** minimum of 25% of total humanitarian aid to national actors being as direct and predictable as possible.
- 4 Capacity enhancement:** promoting institutional development and stop undermining local capacity.
- 5 Coordination, task forces and collaborative capacities:** promoting greater presence and influence of national actors.
- 6 Visibility:** clarifying and supporting national actors’ assumption of relevant roles, achievement of results and produce innovation.
- 7 Disaster and humanitarian policies, standards and plans:** with national actors having a greater presence in international policy debates.

Source: Start Network’s Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme (DEPP)

There is a growing consensus on the importance of localisation to the future of CVA. But, as with the wider localisation dialogue, this broad agreement is yet to evolve into a common understanding of what localisation means in practice and which aspects to prioritise. Key informant interviews and regional consultations highlighted that **shifting the balance of power would involve international actors:**

- Valuing the **knowledge, skills and experience** of national and local actors
- Ceding **power**
- Working in **true partnership** and recognising the strengths of all involved
- Directly **funding** national and local actors

1 More information about the Localization Workstream, including main commitments, work plan, resources and other information can be found here: http://media.ifrc.org/grand_bargain_localisation/

2 More information can be found in the report of the Localization Workstream Global Meeting held in Brussels on 23-24 October 2019.

3 UN Secretary-General’s Call at the World Humanitarian Summit 2016

4 ODI (2018) As Local As Possible, As International As Necessary. HPG Working Paper.

5 Ibid

6 The Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme (DEPP) was a multi-stakeholder, three-year programme, that invested in building national capacity for disasters and emergencies preparedness in 11 countries.

- Engaging with **national and local governments** and respecting their **leadership** in responses
- Ensuring **diversity** of actors and **effective representation in decision making fora**
- Increasing the **engagement of local stakeholders** in **CVA coordination** fora at local, national, regional and global levels
- Investing more in the CVA **technical and operational capacity** of national and local actors, including **preparedness**
- Involving more local **private sector** actors
- Ensuring a more **community-based** approach.



Integration – routing existing programmes through local partners – is not real localization, it is about inclusion – co-design, mutual learning and thinking about assistance from the local perspective.

Lebanon Red Cross – 2019 GB Report

Regional and country-based consultations also highlighted that localisation is also about contextualisation. This means working with local stakeholders to design and adapt tools and systems to the specific institutional, social and cultural landscape. To do this effectively requires working within the context of an equitable partnership, rather than local organisations being treated as disempowered implementing partners. Developing such partnerships requires commitment and the investment of time and resources on all sides.

BOX 7.2 Localisation in the GB Workstream on Cash

In 2019 GB Cash Workstream identified localization as a critical gap in its work and took steps to address this. Priority was given to building effective and inclusive partnerships with local actors, including the private sector, and increasing their participation in CVA forums. In September 2019, the Sub-Workstream on Cash and Local Partnerships, co-led by Oxfam, SDC, and People's Disaster Risk Reduction Network (PDRRN) from the Philippines, was established. It has an overall objective of aligning the cash workstream with the broader localization agenda, including identifying potential areas for collaboration with the GB Workstream on Localisation. Planned work includes defining how to foster the participation of local and national stakeholders in CVA discussions and platforms at all levels.

The sub-workstream will also serve a knowledge management function for learning and evidence on CVA and local partnerships and it intends to map opportunities, barriers and challenges between CVA and localisation. At the time of writing the sub-workstream has been established for less than a year, but it has ensured some presence in relevant global events, conducted a practitioner survey on challenges and opportunities, and developed its initial work plan.

The GB Cash Workstream recognised the importance of developing partnership models which identify and value the roles of national and local stakeholders in CVA, and acted on this in 2019 by establishing a new sub-workstream on localisation (see box 7.2). This aligns with the GB Localization Workstream and clear linkages now also need to be established with the GB Workstream on participation.⁷

⁷ Referring here to Grand Bargain Workstream number 6: Participation revolution aiming to include people receiving aid in making the decisions which affects their lives. This should ensure that local systems are also integrative with community-based organizations and end users.

Localisation has the potential to strengthen CVA, this requires a shift in power and changes in the system

One key informant warned against setting up duplicate systems and new structures, advocating that the localisation agenda in CVA should drive a more community-based approach and involve handing over, as much as possible, to local stakeholders. At the same time, localisation should include a diversity of voices rather than being dominated by only larger local organisations, potentially replicating INGOs' systems and ways of working.



Localization is about shifting the balance of power in the humanitarian system to communities and local actors – CVA discourse to date has been dominated by UN and INGOs – We must do more to free up space for national and local actors to shape the future of CVA from the bottom up. **Action Aid**

For some key informants localisation represents a double opportunity whereby: i) CVA can strengthen local stakeholders and systems capacities, and ii) local stakeholders and local systems can support the quality and impact of CVA. Ideally, both will occur in parallel, strengthening and complementing social protection

systems where these exist (see chapter 8), and working in collaboration with local organisations for better access, reach and local accountability. Box 7.3 provides a non-exhaustive list of some key opportunities.

BOX 7.3 Localisation opportunities for and through CVA

How localisation can contribute to better quality CVA:

- Increase the **sustainability** of CVA, especially MPC, through linkages with social protection and longer-term development programming with government partners.
- Improve the **timeliness** of responses by ensuring local actors are “cash ready” (building systems and capacities, institutionalisation, preparedness).
- Improve the **extent and quality of last-mile delivery**, including direct contact with recipients and identification of/access to vulnerable populations.
- Increase the **effectiveness** of CVA systems and processes (design, delivery and monitoring) through adaptation to the nature of local humanitarian crises and contexts, including social and cultural specificities.
- Improve **access**, e.g. locations that international agencies cannot reach for security reasons.

How CVA uptake can be an opportunity for more localised response:

- Develop **new partnership models** to support direct access to donor funding, co-design, and programme decision-making i.e. partners as partners, not just implementers.
- Leverage CVA to **strengthen local markets and systems**, with better participation and use of local knowledge, actors and networks.
- Increase the use of CVA as an effective entry point to bring in and build **private sector partnerships**.
- Use localisation processes to progress the ‘**participation revolution**’ to better include recipients and community-based organisations.

Several key informants highlighted concern that CVA could end up replicating the same mistakes as other humanitarian localisation initiatives which lack a clear commitment to shifting power and so risk becoming another “top-down initiative”. As a key informant from a local organisation remarked, the “*decision-making power has been with international actors (UN, INGOs) who sub-contract local organisations, and there is a fear from local organisations to challenge this for fear of losing funding*”.

Such power dynamics underlines that the push for localisation must be an opportunity to help address structural issues of power and influence within CVA and the sector more broadly. As well as impacting the relationship between local, national and international actors, structural change should include efforts to increase local engagement of community-based organisations and aid recipients. Consultation processes and participatory methodologies, which ensure broad and diverse local representation and community engagement in decision informing and making will be important.

Localisation in CVA can offer many opportunities, as Box 7.3 highlights, but many key informants and focus group discussion participants felt that the current focus is primarily on the opportunity to improve



Localisation for us is ensuring inclusivity of local communities and local government.
**Ecosystems Work for Essential Benefits-
ECOWEB, Local organization, Philippines**

the value for money (VfM) of CVA. For many, reducing operational costs and increasing CVA efficiency is a key rationale for supporting localisation strategies. But localisation strategies should be more ambitious and aim to improve the quality of CVA responses. Ensuring local cash readiness and promoting local systems can provide the basis for better quality programming, with the development of innovative, adapted and harmonised

responses. The Turkish Red Crescent (TRC), for example, is a national organisation that has worked in partnership with international organisations, first with WFP and now with IFRC, to implement the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) programme.⁸ As a key informant from the TRC highlighted, their added value as a local partner is, among other things, their close links with the local community – which improves acceptance of the programme – their ability to advocate with the Turkish Government and local authorities for cash assistance for refugees and their field presence which enables effective community engagement and monitoring.

Localizing CVA may also require new approaches to collaborative models. The British Virgin Islands (BVI) Joint Cash Platform, for example, saw the BVI Red Cross, British Red Cross and CRS come together to provide MPC in collaboration with the local government, and with other local partners also having important roles. This, according to an independent evaluation, was a cost efficient and effective model with 86 percent of funds reaching targeted households, although weaknesses were found in terms of community engagement and accountability to affected populations.⁹

Localisation of CVA could also provide opportunities in terms of sector-based programming, particularly for sectors with more experience of working with local partners and coordinating with local authorities, e.g. health, shelter, food, WASH, education. In general, localisation is well established in cluster agendas with, for example, efforts to include national NGOs and other local stakeholders in sectoral CVA discussions. While it is sometimes noted that local organisations could encounter difficulties engaging across multiple sectors due to staff limitations (also a challenge for smaller international organisations) such factors could be a prompt to consider how more inclusive dialogue can be managed.

Key informants from local organisations noted they have a lot to offer in terms of programming across the nexus, linking emergency CVA with development and resilience processes, and that localizing CVA offers opportunities to strengthen this type of work. For example, the People’s Disaster Risk Reduction Network (PDRRN), who play an important role in CVA response in the Philippines and are co-leads of the GB sub-workstream on Cash and Local Partnerships, advocate for using CVA “within more developmental approaches”.

A key informant from an organisation in the Philippines highlighted that community-based engagement can help limit the risk of a CVA programme generating social unrest or negatively affecting community social cohesion. Similarly, several key informants noted that the capacity of local actors to influence public opinion in target communities, a quality that is especially valuable in contexts where assistance is provided to refugee or displaced populations and requires social acceptance from the host community. As another key informant noted, while local staff of international organisations may know the local context, the organisational and social networking of local organisations is important.

⁸ Phase three of the ESSN is €500m programme, funded by the European Commission, providing cash grants for 1.7 million refugees in Turkey.

⁹ British Red Cross & British Virgin Islands Red Cross (2018) British Virgin Islands Joint Cash Platform Evaluation: Building an evidence base on operational models for the delivery of cash transfer programming. BRC.

Private sector engagement is often a missing piece in the CVA localisation agenda. Several key informants recognised that the local private sector could add value in many ways, potentially contributing to more creative, innovative or efficient programming, and providing knowledge of the local context (see chapter 6) but, so far, attention is largely focused on financial service providers and delivery mechanisms. In many cases, local private sector participation in CVA discussions at national level has been rare and, in some cases, it has been difficult to find private sector actors interested in participating in specific CVA programmes.¹⁰

Despite CVA stakeholders' interest in localisation, there is limited evidence of changes in practice with many barriers to address

64 percent of surveyed practitioners considered humanitarian actors took account of the local policy and regulatory environment when designing and implementing CVA compared to 63 percent in 2017. Two years on, 57 percent of surveyed practitioners believe that in the last two years national and local organisations have been increasingly involved in the implementation of CVA, which is similar to the previous report.

Several key informants reflected that some INGOs, UN agencies and donors are trying to further prioritize working with local partners, but progress is slow. There are multiple factors – structural, technical,



As NGOs we need always to pay attention to the NGO code of conduct to make sure that we are always targeting those who are most in need, independent of political and religious affiliation and that goes for both international and local organizations.

Danish Church Aid

contextual, behavioural – influencing the pace of change. While most issues apply to the humanitarian system overall, there are also some CVA specificities. For example, key informants identified the existence of a “CVA and localisation double reticence”, whereby some international stakeholders may be reluctant to push forward with localisation, and some local stakeholders may be unsure about the use of CVA. Other potential barriers to effective localisation highlighted in the research were:

- Although key informants noted improvements, **conservative attitudes towards CVA are not uncommon among local stakeholders**, particularly state actors, but also non-state actors in some countries. 35 percent of respondents perceive that a lack of government support for CVA is a challenge to effective localisation (see box 7.4). While local stakeholders are often willing to use vouchers initially, and then transition to more use of cash, MPC tends to generate more pushback, particularly from governments who might perceive it as a political tool. In some contexts, international actors have concerns about the independence and neutrality of some national and local actors – especially in situations of conflict. This may limit the degree to which they feel able to engage with local CVA systems.
- **A lack of CVA expertise amongst governments and local organisations is perceived by survey respondents as the most significant challenge to effective participation and leadership** (see box 7.4). Practitioners working with international organisations consider this more of an issue than national and local organisations. Issues relating to local stakeholder CVA capacities and strategies to address them are covered in more detail below and in chapter 4.
- In some cases, donors, UN agencies and INGOs have **complex partnership requirements** that can make it difficult to working together effectively. This can be particularly acute in conflict situations where partnership requirements can be more stringent and contextual conditions to meet them are most difficult. A key informant from the Alliance for Empowering Partnership - a global network representing 15 local and national organisations, and increasingly interested in CVA - emphasised that donors' compliance requirements are very high and a lack of structure and funds makes it difficult for local organisations to fully meet them. Several key informants consider it is a matter of finding a better balance between what is asked of local organisations and what they can provide.

¹⁰ Focus Group Discussion with West and Central Africa Regional CWG.

BOX 7.4 Perceived challenges for effective participation and leadership of national government and civil society organisations in CVA



- **Actual or perceived risks** can be a barrier to localisation. For example, 42 percent of survey respondents cited concerns about corruption at the local level and 33 percent considered it an issue with donors' restrictions on directly funding governments and local actors (box 7.5). The reticence of some local actors to use CVA can also be examined through a risk lens: with concerns about lack of control, especially in unstable situations, and a fear that cash may reach the “wrong hands”. This is a matter of perceptions, with similar problems found with in-kind assistance, and can be addressed, in part, through better awareness raising and advocacy. Concerns about CVA were seen as being especially sensitive in fragile political contexts (Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism measures, security situations) and a barrier for effective localisation. For many international organisations, intentionally or not, localisation becomes a risk transfer strategy, whereby risks are ‘down-streamed’ to local actors who are contracted as implementing partners. This is especially sensitive in conflict-affected and insecure areas where the role of local partners is often limited to accessing the region, implementing and justifying activities, without having a relevant role in programme design.¹¹ Local stakeholders can be subject to huge risks in terms of restrictive AML/CTF regulations, insecurity and dealing with formal or non-formal local authorities. Moving from risk transference to risk sharing is key.
- Most local organisations have **limited access to CVA funding**, reflecting structural issues within the humanitarian system. While there is evidence of some progress (e.g. local organisations are increasing their access to pooled funds like those administered by OCHA), the vast majority of CVA funding still goes to international actors. Funding local organisations is also a matter of priorities, requiring investment in systems strengthening and preparedness over time.
- While there is little evidence on the impact of operational models on localisation, key informants highlighted that **existing large-scale operational models involving INGOs and UN agencies tend to exclude local organisations**, as they were designed as a “top-down process and were not done with localisation power lens”. How to design models and approaches that genuinely enable localisation is a critical question to explore. There are, however, some positive examples of consortiums involving local and international organisations, like the Kenya Cash Consortium.¹²
- **Differences in investment in and access to technological platforms and solutions** between international and local actors – including national governments – can be a barrier to localisation if it increases dependence on international partners. Technological innovations need to be adapted to both local contexts and local capacities, with investment in systems and capacity to use them.
- All actors need specific skills and competencies for **responsible data management**, especially in sensitive humanitarian spaces. In partnership arrangements, differences in the data protection requirements of different agencies need to be worked through. Some international agencies have multi-country agreements in place with specific financial service providers and ask local organisations to work within those frameworks, this may require investment in training and systems development.

¹¹ CVA and Risk workshop in Gaziantep (Turkey) organized by CaLP about contextual risks and CVA in the Syria crisis response.

¹² The Kenya Cash Consortium is led by ACTED in partnership with Oxfam, Concern Worldwide, and 6 local members of the ASAL Humanitarian Network: Arid Land Development Focus (ALDEF), Pastoralist Community Initiative Development and Assistance (PASIDA), Pastoralist Integrated Support Program (PISP), Pastoralist Girl Initiative (PGI), Sustainable Approaches for Community Empowerment (SAPCONE) and Turkana Pastoralist Development Organization (TUPADO).

- The **lack of representation** of local actors in CVA discussions and platforms, at national, regional, and global levels, is a major barrier to progress. Key informant interviews and regional consultations reflected on the limited participation of local actors in country-based Cash Working Groups and their marginal participation in key regional and global events, including events related to localisation. Despite some inclusion efforts, progress is hard to detect, begging the question: how can the localisation agenda move without all actors at the table? The following section on coordination explores this issue further.



Local organizations have been absent from the debate on delivering cash at scale. We lack examples of large scale CVA being co-designed by local and international actors. Up till now it has more been about transferring risks to partners than sharing power.
Key Aid Consulting at Cash Week 2019

Several key informants noted that **these challenges are often influenced by context** and affect local capacity and engagement in general, risk management procedures, monitoring and evaluation systems and finally discussions about neutrality and independence. On the other hand, there was also a feeling that **some international organisations simply do not want to change**. It is necessary to **be aware of this and differentiate between general behaviours and context-specific realities**.

Inclusive coordination remains a key challenge

46 percent of surveyed practitioners agree that host government involvement in coordination of humanitarian CVA has increased since 2017. Survey respondents closer to national coordination structures



As a humanitarian actor, how do you engage with a Government involved in an internal armed conflict and therefore perceived as being partial to certain segments of the population? **SDC**

perceive this more strongly, with 61 of respondents at sub national level noting an increase in involvement, compared to 50 percent of country based respondents and only 31 percent of global level respondents – perhaps reflecting the lack of participation of local actors in national and global discussions. See chapter 5 for more about coordination of CVA.

Use of CVA is highly politicized between conflict and natural disasters even when where you are dealing with the same government entities. **Anonymous**

When talking of national government engagement, there is need to differentiate between being involved and leading. Only 28 percent of survey respondents agreed that national governments have taken leadership roles in the design and implementation of CVA since 2017. So even while engagement seems to have improved, in countries with

an established humanitarian coordination structure, there are few examples of national governments leading or co-leading the CVA response. At the time of writing, according to the OCHA country-based cash working group (CWG) database only four national governmental bodies currently co-lead any CWGs, out of the 24 listed (16.7 percent)¹³ and local organisations do not lead/co-lead any. Box 7.5 provides examples of the diversity of government engagement with national CWGs in East and Southern Africa.

When talking about government there is a need to differentiate between national and sub national government structures. Local authorities are more in touch with the community and have key roles to play in facilitating implementation, while national government sets overall policy frameworks. National and regional consultations highlighted that limited local government participation makes it difficult to ensure the complementarity of CVA with local systems and can make exit planning harder. Further, much as stronger engagement with government at all levels is sought, the challenges should be recognised. For example, attitudes to CVA often vary between different levels of government and between ministries, as a result coordination across Government can be difficult. In some cases, risks associated with working with governments were also noted. One example from Iraq was of some municipalities trying to interfere in recipient selection or getting access to sensitive information from recipients.¹⁴

¹³ Database is accessible here. <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1jOccDgPMRTe7tqzJTPIEyaToZhZwNtDXMNinbLV2qDU/edit#gid=1523972502>

¹⁴ Country based Focus Group Discussion with CVA practitioners in Erbil (Iraq)

BOX 7.5 Government engagement in CWGs in East and Southern Africa

Examples of the involvement of national governments in CWGs, highlighted during regional consultations:

- Government of Kenya leads Kenya’s CWG, through the National Drought Management Authority. It is co-led by the Kenyan Red Cross. The social assistance unit, which falls under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, is a member of the MEB workstream of the CWG.
- Madagascar’s CWG is led by the Government and co-chaired by UNICEF. The humanitarian agencies supporting the government’s strategy supports the CWG.
- Burundi’s CWG sits under the Social Ministry, with WFP and IRC as co-chairs. With the CWG being under the Social Ministry, discussions are focused mainly on development activities – related to social protection – with little time for issues related to humanitarian coordination.
- WFP and the Somali Cash Consortium co-chair Somalia’s CWG. The CWG and government communicate with each other to facilitate cross-learning between government actors and humanitarian actors. A social protection law was signed in March 2019, and in April 2019 the federal Government of Somalia unveiled the first nationwide social safety-net programme funded by the World Bank that will be delivered by WFP through the SCOPE platform.
- WFP and Save the Children International co-chair Ethiopia’s CWG. There is little contact between the CWG and the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), including on issues related to transfer values and targeting.

Much as challenges are highlighted, 48 percent of organisations surveyed consider they are working with government to implement CVA and 32 percent consider they have been building the capacity of governments to lead the delivery of CVA. When it comes to CVA, there are multiple points of engagement with government including, but not limited to, disaster management units, ministries of social protection (see chapter 8 about CVA and social protection), and ministries of labour, education and more – providing opportunities for broader engagement than is often considered.



Here, the army doesn’t want us to do cash. The Government is concerned that they don’t have control over CVA. **INGO**

Governments and local authorities often perceive cash as different to in kind, and they tend to care more about the ‘ownership’ of this. With NFIs they didn’t mind humanitarian actors coming in and distributing, whereas cash is perceived to be more valuable and can be used as political tool. They often want increased association or ownership over this.

Anonymous

While more effective coordination with national governments is sought, it is not always feasible. Several donors who were interviewed felt that host government opposition to the use of CVA could be a major barrier to localisation. In most cases when the political situation is stable, CVA coordination with government is much easier than in unstable and conflict contexts (e.g. Northern Nigeria and Syria), including working with refugees in host countries, as in the case of Bangladesh.

Where governments have opted to ban CVA interventions (in general, or particular types of CVA, or provided by specific types of organisations), some stakeholders (for instance large INGOs, UN agencies, and donors) may have more power of negotiation than others (for example small INGOs or local organisations), and joint advocacy could facilitate the overall CVA space. In situations where

governments are not keen to facilitate CVA activities, their presence in the coordination structures can reduce different stakeholders’ participation and information sharing. National government engagement may also vary within a country depending on the type of crisis that is affecting its population. For example, in the Philippines CVA is used as part the response to natural disasters such as Typhoon Haiyan, but rarely used as part of the response to in-country conflict situations such as after the siege of Marawi.

In regional and country-based consultations, the limited participation of other non-state local actors in CVA coordination structures was also highlighted. An array of issues that discourage participation were noted including:

- Limited effort of some CVA coordination structures to be inclusive, despite agreement about the need to increase local engagement
- Lack of clarity about where CVA stakeholders fit in the humanitarian architecture
- Perceptions that coordination systems are foreign and local actors are not welcome
- Limited opportunities, beyond basic participation, to engage or lead
- Lack of understanding of CVA specific terminology
- Use of working languages that are not mastered by all
- Local organisations may be scattered in the territory (at a sub-national level) and/or do not have the capacity (people and funds) to attend face to face meetings
- Limited number of staff, due to lack of funding, involved in or dedicated to coordination functions.



Feedback we almost always get is the question of language and the coordination in its broadest sense to get local actors to engage with foreign coordination systems. **GFFO**

In discussions Oxfam has had with local partners, one issue that comes up regularly is the cash coordination system specifically the role of cash working groups, who leads and participates in them, and how they sit within the humanitarian system. **Oxfam**

When we go to working groups, we don't need capacity building, we need learning by doing, we need bigger organizations to take us into projects with them. **Yemen Family Care Association (YFCA)**

There are positive initiatives which have increased inclusivity in some places. The Haiti CWG, for example, reported increased engagement from local organisations and interest in partnership for CVA following the development of a decentralised capacity building strategy. The CWG ran the CaLP CVA Fundamentals Course for local NGOs and staff from several departments of local government, which resulted in increased knowledge about CVA as well as demystifying the role of the CWG.¹⁵ The development of sub-national CWGs has also demonstrated good results and increased local stakeholders' involvement in CVA coordination structures in some contexts. For example, the participation of local organisations in the Somalia CWG has improved since 2018 when a) meetings were moved from Nairobi to Mogadishu, and b) sub-national CWGs were strengthened. Local NGOs currently lead two of the five subnational CWGs.

There are also cases where the creation of platforms for local organisations to collectively advocate and engage with government can provide an added value as compared

to doing so individually. For example, the National Anti-Poverty Commission - Victims of Disaster and Calamities (NAPC-VDC) in the Philippines has been able to bring together many local stakeholders and influence policies – including advocacy for CVA consideration – at a national level. The primary challenge to sustain these types of coordination bodies is the lack of dedicated funding.

Capacity continues to be a barrier to localisation, requiring medium to long- term strategies to develop cash readiness

Local stakeholder's capacity has not significantly improved since 2017 and survey respondents still perceive that the lack of CVA expertise is the main barrier to effective local participation and leadership (box 7.5). Several key informants argued that such



perceptions may not be accurate and, rather, they are used to justify international humanitarian agencies' added value in CVA responses globally. On the other hand, a key informant from a local organisation felt that some

There will always be an intended lack of local capacity so international actors don't lose their role. **A4EP**

perceptions may not be accurate and, rather, they are used to justify international humanitarian agencies' added value in CVA responses globally. On the other hand, a key informant from a local organisation felt that some

¹⁵ CaLP (2020) Winds of Change: Lessons and recommendations on the use of Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) for the Caribbean Atlantic Hurricane Season (Webinar, 19th of May 2020).

local stakeholders have a negative perception of their own capacities and potential role in CVA, creating a further barrier to change. These perceptions of local capacity, which may or may not reflect reality depending on the case, pose a challenge to integrating local stakeholders in operational models for scaling the delivery of CVA, at least in the short term. There may be need to further analyse these views on a case-by-case basis and better define capacity gaps and what is needed to fill them. Alongside this, according to another key informant, local cash readiness may require a concrete policy shift from donors towards investment in local capacity development as a priority.



We need to increase our visibility to donors and our direct communication with them – not through the international partner – so they know the work we are able to do.

Jago Nari “Fighting for Women Empowerment”, local organization, Bangladesh

Let’s put credit where credit is due and fully acknowledge the role of national actors.

IFRC

Several local organisations’ key informants highlighted that their CVA role is normally very “field centred”, and that they are demanding more visibility and direct communication with donors. This is seen as a means to increase donor acknowledgement of local capacities and work that international partners may otherwise overshadow, and could positively impact direct funding to local organisations.

Addressing local CVA capacity issues requires mid- to long-term strategies. Many donors, UN agencies, the RCRCM and INGOs have strategies and initiatives to increase local partners’ CVA preparedness. However, as also noted in the previous report, training processes targeting local stakeholders continue to be mainly related

to implementation, without covering more strategic aspects like response analysis, CVA coordination structures or strategic decision making. This approach could mean ongoing dependence on international partners for design, planning and access to funds.

Ultimately, as highlighted in one key informant interviews, cash readiness requires policy and operational understanding to shift from a paradigm of local actors being implementing partners working at the instruction of international agencies to one based on full partnership, which includes handover of power, responsibilities and funding.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

Achieving localisation is a process which requires significant changes in terms of roles, systems, and resourcing. To make progress in localising CVA, the following actions are recommended.



All humanitarian actors should agree **on clear, measurable, and shared priorities for localisation of CVA**, and commit to action.



All humanitarian actors should recognize that progress on CVA localization will mean **shifts in power, as well as changes to funding processes, systems, and requirements to enable the systematic consideration and strengthening** of local systems and structures.



Donors should **increase predictable funding to local structures and systems for CVA planning and delivery.**



All humanitarian actors should **make changes to ensure the meaningful participation and visibility of local actors in CVA** discourse at national, regional and international levels.



Humanitarian actors should **make changes to CVA coordination platforms to ensure effective participation and engagement of local stakeholders.**



Local stakeholders, international agencies and donors should **build true alliances, including for strategic planning and decision-making**, acknowledging the trade-offs that localisation may require in the short to medium term.

REFERENCES

British Red Cross & British Virgin Islands Red Cross (2018) *British Virgin Islands Joint Cash Platform Evaluation: Building an evidence base on operational models for the delivery of cash transfer programming*. BRC.

CaLP (2020) *Winds of Change: Lessons and recommendations on the use of Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) for the Caribbean Atlantic Hurricane Season* (Webinar, 19th of May 2020).

Grand Bargain Localisation Workstream (2019) *Grand Bargain Localisation Workstream Global Meeting- Outcome Report 23-24 October 2019*, Brussels.

Metcalfe-Hough, V., Fenton, W. and Poole L. (2019) *Grand Bargain annual independent report 2019*, Humanitarian Policy Group, ODI, London.

ODI (2018) *As Local As Possible, As International As Necessary*. HPG Working Paper. London.