



Annex: 1

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Synthesis of insights and recommendations from 22 examples of best practice documentations of cooperation by German humanitarian actors with local actors

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1. Enhancing humanitarian effectiveness through local humanitarian actors (LHAs) and local NGOs (LNGOs)

- LHAs are the first to reach disaster sites, know cultural specifics, know the infrastructure, logistics, regional and local markets and the availability of assets, have faster access to the affected population and to the authorities, know the legal requirements
- LHAs can assess the needs more precisely, faster identify beneficiaries, select measures and necessary innovations needs-based, collect feedback from beneficiaries more efficiently and faster adapt measures, i.e. they enhance the chances of „accountability to the affected population“
- being close to the population (language, appearance, culture) LHAs gain the trust of the population and authorities, thus enhancing their identification with and ownership of the humanitarian action
- contacts of LNGOs to the affected population and their language competence facilitate the recruitment of volunteers for disaster response
- LHAs have easy access to the population and can build bridges between the affected population and international humanitarian actors
- LNGOs have access to specific vulnerable groups such as people with disability, who often remain invisible during disasters; they know where to find or how to contact them and how to make their voices heard; i.e. such cooperation facilitates the inclusion of and thus services for the most vulnerable
- LNGOs have easy access to host-families (esp. in conflict settings) and can assist them efficiently and thus reduce the need for refugee or IDP camps
- humanitarian assistance becomes less costly if run by LNGOs as these employ local staff, use local infrastructure and materials (especially relevant for labor intensive projects, such as health services)
- through their presence beyond the project duration LNGOs can contribute to the sustainability of measures
- for health prevention trainings (on hygiene, nutrition, breastfeeding etc.) knowledge on traditional health behavior is decisive for success

Preconditions

- **at national level:**
 - legal frame permitting and facilitating the work of LHAs and the unfolding of civil society
 - legal frame giving decision power to decentralized government structures
 - protection of LNGOs and their staff



- **at the level of local NGOs:**

- need to have a societal legitimation, i.e. a membership base, instead of working for private gains or serving governmental interests
- need to know and respect international humanitarian standards and principles
- need to be able to correctly administer funds (capacity assessment)
- need to take responsibility and develop ownership
- need to be well connected

- **at the level of INGOs and UN:**

- need to work at equal footing with local actors (cf. „principles of partnership“); do joint planning, monitoring, evaluation; give mutual support in terms of funding, capacity, experiences; have a shared goal and shared responsibility and ownership; no instrumentalisation/abuse of one party by the other; regular coordination
- the international actor should also have a long standing presence in order to build durable partnerships at the local level
- need to know and respect international humanitarian standards and principles
- need to be able to correctly administer funds (Capacity Assessment)
- need to train their staff on intercultural communication
- should strengthen local partners and their networks
- should carefully assess local partners (partnership assessments)

- **at the level of the international humanitarian system:**

- transparent and comprehensive flow of information (on needs, assessment results, gaps, funding, coordination etc.) between all actors and in all directions; build-up a data base on lessons learnt and best practice in working with local partners for joint learning and strengthening
- bottom-up approach of humanitarian assistance, focusing on priorities and procedures of local partners
- LHAs should be invited to all coordination fora and cluster meetings, and progressively take over the coordinating role
- the financial and administrative costs involved when applying international humanitarian standards need to be manageable even for local partners; funding requirements and procedures (financial, procurement, reporting etc.) have to be simplified and reduced
- conflict and context analyses should be obligatory for all actors
- local partners need to be involved in all phases (needs assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation) respectively steer them
- long-term funding / longer project durations that allow for LRRD, resilience strengthening, and capacity building of local partners
- the costs of capacity building should be eligible as standard procedure in funding guidelines
- **Capacity building for LHAs should be provided on:**
 - the international humanitarian system and coordination mechanisms
 - international humanitarian standards



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- disaster preparedness, early warning systems; first aid, vulnerability capacity assessments, land mine-risk-trainings
 - needs assessment, stakeholder analysis, project cycle management
 - logistics
 - proposal writing, narrative and financial reporting
 - setting up disaster response and development structures
 - technical topics as required (adaptation of orthopedic devices; nutrition, hygiene, health, WASH)
 - training of trainers (in various fields)
- during the capacity building phase administrative costs of both LNGOs and INGOs needs to be eligible
 - the staff costs of the supporting INGO – be it for project monitoring from HQ, country office or during field trips – needs to be eligible
 - more direct funding for LNGOs; provision and fast allocation of bridging budgets for local first responders
 - German donors should accept English project proposals
 - so far LNGOs are mostly sub-contracted by UN, bilateral development actors or by INGOs, and INGOs are mostly used by donors as risk-takers on behalf of LNGOs -> this should be replaced by more flexible cooperation models

Also the important role of INGOs in strengthening LHAs should be recognized:

- as a bridge builder between the LHAs and the international humanitarian actors (knowledge of donors, donor guidelines, translation of proposals and reports etc.), providing access to public and private donors
- to ensure the respect of international humanitarian standards
- provide capacity building, supportive monitoring, technical advice
- ensure neutrality (while LNGOs often have difficulties in being perceived as neutral due to the ethnic affiliation of their staff, where ethnic or other tensions exist) thus avoiding the politicization of ethnicity
- support for international procurement
- provide their first response capacity
- allow for ideal task sharing between local and international partners

2. Reducing vulnerability and managing risk

Advantages of collaborating with local actors:

- LHAs are familiar with (frequently recurring disasters); some have got very experienced disaster response teams
- LHAs have established contacts with local disaster response authorities, district authorities, local administrations and know-how to overcome bureaucratic hurdles without corruption
- LHAs have contacts to specific sub-groups such as youth or marginalized groups
- LHAs have networks and can easily connect to other local actors (such as the local Red Cross) and thus are able to coordinate efficiently
- some participate in humanitarian clusters
- once the crisis response capacity of LHAs is strengthened (through preparing their staff and infrastructure to become first response teams and first response centers) they are able to respond to a great variety of disasters (natural disasters, armed conflicts,



epidemics) in a flexible manner and can furthermore engage in disaster risk reduction

- they are present and active even in remote rural areas with scarce infrastructure

3. Transformation through Innovation

Which innovations are suitable to strengthen the role of LHAs in humanitarian response?

- mobile phones: allow for direct registration (during screenings or distributions) and thus reduce the otherwise sometimes (due to low levels of education of local staff) high error rate when entering data from hand written tables
- IT: translating software for manifold local languages can facilitate the flow of information between humanitarian actors

Why is the collaboration with LHAs especially fruitful for the development of innovations?

- local actors can ensure that innovations are based in local knowledge, and adapted to local needs and local conditions; they can rapidly test and adapt innovations
- some local actors are adventurous and like to take risks
- due to their closeness to the local population local actors are the most suitable to take up innovative ideas and practices which come from the local population (bottom-up); they can also encourage local innovations e.g. through local competitions

What are the preconditions for LHAs' engagement with innovations?

- the financial risks involved need to be manageable
- the local innovators need to be informed about the further use and enhancement of their innovations and participate in possible profit

4. LNGOs' humanitarian response in armed conflict

- LNGOs own historical and regional knowledge of the conflict, the conflict parties and conflict regions and thus can better assess the risks and political evolutions of the conflict or foresee conflict related reactions of the target groups; on the other hand security risks should not be shifted to local actors
- through their networks LNGOs have up-to-date information on security and on access to the affected population, on return movements etc.
- through their long-standing presence they might have the trust of all conflict parties, enhancing access to the affected population on both sides of the conflict; therefore they are able to work in conflict areas to which no international actor or staff has access; however in other cases they are NOT perceived as neutral and thus have less access
- LHAs can be the first actors in peace building and development and DRR, because they have acquired a lot of relevant knowledge and competencies; LRRD starts with local actors!
- LHAs and LNGOs can only engage in armed conflict if they and their staff are protected and the affected population is provided safe access to humanitarian assistance
- Security for humanitarian staff requires a clear separation of humanitarian assistance, private enterprise and military action; mixing their roles up endangers also local actors!