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### Message by NHN Chairperson

‘Localization of Aid’ is one of the mandate of NHN and NHN has been advocating for the balance of power and resources across all platforms. With the support of Shifting the Power project NHN is presenting it more effectively and this research is one of the milestones that will lead to revisit roles and responsibilities of Humanitarian Architecture in Pakistan, in line with the outcomes of World Humanitarian Summit.



Regards.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Naseer'.

**Naseer Ahmed Memon**  
NHN Chairperson

### Message by Tearfund Country Representative.

Humanitarian disasters due to climate change and conflict are increasingly becoming a regular feature and coupled with the challenge of access is becoming increasingly difficult for International Non-Governmental Organisations to keep up. Shifting of Power to local actors or localisation of aid has become need of the hour as local National Non-Governmental Organisations NNGOs are the first to respond and the last to leave. The World Disaster Report 2015 and the recent World Humanitarian Summit have highlighted the importance of localisation of Aid and urgency to fast track the process. The research study conducted by Shifting of Power project in Pakistan has identified great examples of a few INGOs who have been exemplary in supporting NNGOs. The role of Pakistan Humanitarian Forum PHF and National Humanitarian Network NHN is also appreciated when it comes to networking, coordination, capacity building, Advocacy and promoting the cause of NNGOs. It is greatly hoped that this research study would assist both INGOs and NNGOs in taking practical steps in furthering the cause of localization of Aid not only at Pakistan level but globally.



**Ashraf Mall**

Tearfund Country Representative.

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### List of Abbreviations

HRDN	Human Resource Development Network
INGO	International Non Governmental Organisation
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NHN	National Humanitarian Network
NNGO	National Non Governmental Organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development of the United Nations
PAK	Pakistani Administered Kashmir
PDNA	Post Disaster Needs Assessment
PHPF	Pakistan Humanitarian Pool Fund
UN	United Nations



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## 1. Executive Summary

The humanitarian actors in Pakistan have come a long way since the watershed year of 2005 and the national NGOs have strengthened their capacities significantly. This has happened due to both targeted investment in their capacity by international actors or through self learning and exposure. The global humanitarian community has committed to the goal of “localising the humanitarian action”, most recently articulated in the World Humanitarian Summit, 2015. The “shifting the power” project under the START network - a global consortium of International NGOs (INGOs) – aims at providing structured capacity building support to the national NGOs (NNGOs). This research explores the various opportunities and constraints prevailing in Pakistan that may have implications for transferring the power to local humanitarian organisations.

The research reveals that the respondents identify “partnership” as a relationship between INGOs and NGOs that is based on equality; includes transfer of skills, knowledge and resources to the national partners and continues regardless of the presence of an immediate humanitarian challenge. “Partnership” is distinct from an activity specific, “vendor-client” working relationship that finishes with the accomplishment of a specific task. Similarly, “capacity” was defined as the programmatic, administrative and governance capability to ensure efficient, equitable and sustainable functioning of an organisation. The research points to the observation that there have been a number of successes in terms of developing the national humanitarian capacity and that, as well as the national presence of strong networks of both the national and international NGOs offers firm grounds to build the case for further empowering the NNGOs.

The constraints in the way of this achievement are of two kinds viz., structural/systemic and local. The structural/systemic issues include the donors’ negative perception about the Southern organisations, demonstrable superiority of INGOs in resource mobilisation and deployment of technical expertise, the questionability of some INGOs’ intentions to shift the power, and a lack of consistency among the INGOs in the manner they engage with the local actors. In addition to the constraints that are rather global in nature, there are certain Pakistan specific stumbling blocks in the way of fully empowering the NNGOs. These include, the variance of programmatic and technical capacity among the NNGOs, the legal and regulatory bottlenecks in the governmental systems that restrict the NGOs’ activities and access to international funding, the apparent lack of willingness on the part of NNGOs to accept the full responsibility that is coupled with increased power, and lastly, the entry of international private sector in the thematic areas where traditionally the NGOs used to hold sway.

In conclusion, it is deduced that the global trends as well as the local conditions show that localisation of humanitarian activities would be the imminent future. The INGOs can facilitate this shift by investing in the capacity of their local



partners in a sustained and needs-based manner and also launch an evidence based and forceful advocacy campaign among the important humanitarian actors, especially the donors, to recognise the importance of the local actors. At the same time, the humanitarian NGOs would need to revisit their role in the society to collectively consider balancing their work as service providers versus their role as the advocates and articulators for the vulnerable and marginalised sections of the society.

The recommendations have been organised under three categories of Advocacy, Capacity Development and Networking. Advocacy would be needed at various levels including: horizontally across the INGO community for the promotion of localisation and partnership models, vertically with the donors to devise funding mechanisms that are conveniently accessible for the NNGOs, and with the governments to reform the laws and regulations to facilitate humanitarian access. The Capacity Development support to the partners under the START network initiative is universally appreciated and acknowledged as being crucial to the localisation agenda. The humanitarian community should start considering how the Capacity Development activities can be sustained beyond the present project and with an expanded scope. Networking is recommended as the key to adoption of unified stances on important issues by the humanitarian community. The Pakistan based humanitarian networks should be strengthened to strengthen the bargaining position of the NNGOs vis a vis the donors, the government and the INGOs.

## 2. Background

The tradition of voluntary organisations predates the creation of Pakistan in 1947 wherein welfare organisations operated in various parts of the country, mostly on social welfare and service delivery initiatives. They would often get involved in assisting the disaster affected people on ad-hoc basis, distributing relief goods and providing emergency services<sup>1</sup>. International humanitarian NGOs have been active in Pakistan for many decades<sup>2</sup> – directly implementing programmes or in association with the local partners. Most of the large scale disasters in which international humanitarian NGOs got involved happened in the erstwhile East Pakistan (Bangladesh since 1971).

For the present day Pakistan, 2005 marks as a watershed year in the area of Disaster Risk Management in general and the to-scale involvement of humanitarian NGOs –both national and international- in particular. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2005, the Pakistani Administered Kashmir (PAK) and the adjoining hilly areas of the present Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province were struck by a powerful earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale. The affected area lies in a most rugged mountainous Himalayan terrain covering roughly 30,000 square kilometres of valleys and hills. Over 4000 villages were affected, 73,000 people were killed, more than 100,000 were injured and 3.3 million people were rendered homeless. Around 600,000 houses were affected out of which 463,000

<sup>1</sup> Rehman, 2005

<sup>2</sup> Davey et al, 2014



were completely destroyed, nearly 65% of the hospitals in the area were destroyed or badly damaged and an estimated 10,000 school buildings were affected<sup>3</sup>. Finding the challenge of disaster response overwhelming for its archaic, colonial era disaster response structure, the Government of Pakistan launched a Flash Appeal for international assistance and also opened its gate for the humanitarian actors.

Much of the humanitarian presence and the various modes of relationships observed between INGOs and NNGOs observed in Pakistan today are stemmed in the response to the 2005 earthquake.

In addition to the few INGOs already present in the country, working primarily on long term development through a variety of modes of engagement with their respective local partners, a large number of humanitarian INGOs entered Pakistan in 2005 and many of them continued working on recovery (and residual relief) issues after the emergency phase was as virtually ended by the Government of Pakistan in April 2006. Unlike the relief phase, with fairly standard sets of responses primarily aimed at saving lives and preventing secondary disasters, the Early Recovery phase required a deeper understanding of the local social, cultural and institutional complexities. This prompted the INGOs to start establishing partnerships with the NNGOs. As reflected by practically all of the respondents, the most prevalent mode of INGO-NNGO engagement has been a “vendor-client” relationship wherein the NNGO is engaged by the INGO under a time-bound and task-specific agreement. In most such cases, any support for building the technical, administrative, governance and financial capacity of the national partner would be incidental and not part of the design of engagement. This is in contrast with the established practice by numerically fewer INGOs who have had a long presence in the country and have an articulated policy and the follow up action plans for the development of the local/ national partners’ capacity. The four resident INGO members of the START network fall squarely in the latter category.

Subsequent to the earthquake emergency, the country has faced a number of natural and man-made disasters such as the internal displacements due to military operations since 2007, the mega floods of 2010, the excessive rains in Indus delta in 2011 and 2012 etc., and the humanitarian community has been involved in responding to them. A significant development during the last decade has been the deteriorating security situation in the country and the related increase in strictness of the government in monitoring and regulating the non-governmental actors, particularly the foreign entities<sup>4</sup>. The security situation as well as the governmental regulatory regimes put in place especially in the areas directly affected by internal conflicts (particularly the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa -KP and Balochistan provinces, and the Federally Administered

<sup>3</sup> Government of Pakistan, 2007

<sup>4</sup> <http://tribune.com.pk/story/965678/international-ngos-will-require-govt-consent-to-gather-funds-operate-nisar/>



Tribal Areas – FATA) have restricted the space for humanitarian actors, and has negatively affected the access and mobility of the INGOs in particular<sup>5</sup>.

The restricted access and space for INGOs introduces an added imperative for the need to transform the INGOs' relationship with the NNGOs, leading to a likely expansion of the latter's role in humanitarian responses. While the members of the START network as well as some other INGOs have been pursuing the "localisation of aid" agenda under a global normative imperative since before, the peculiar regulatory environment in Pakistan is likely to entice the other INGOs too to start enhancing their relationship with the local partners, shifting additional responsibilities (with the associated power shift) to them.

This qualitative research study seeks to explore the latest experience of the INGO members of the START network in "shifting the power" to 12 national partners who have varied experiences of humanitarian work in Pakistan and have been identified as potential civil society actors that possess at least a vision for becoming independent entities capable of providing high quality humanitarian services to the affected communities in different parts of Pakistan. Consultations with the humanitarian stakeholders including (but not limited to) the START network partners were aimed at identifying the existing and potential opportunities and constraints for empowering the national humanitarian NGOs, leading to the framing of recommendations for further enhancing the process.

### 3. Methodology and Assumptions

The study comprised of a combination of research methods including individual In Depth Interviews (face to face or online), Focus Group Discussion and Literature Review. In total, 24 persons, representing various stakeholders are included in the list for consultation. These include International Non Governmental Organisations (INGO) both from within and outside START network, national NGO partners of the START network and government agencies. A list of these stakeholders is attached as Annex 1.

The questions around which consultations were held included exploring the understanding of salient terms such as Partnership, Power, Capacity and Capacity Development as perceived by the respondents. The consultations also solicited the respondents' views about existing and potential challenges and opportunities for shifting the power to the national humanitarian NGOs. Supplementary questions related to the organisations' history, interaction with and experience of partnering with the INGOs and recollection of any breakthrough/ watershed event in the process were also raised, where needed and relevant.

The sequence of the question is based upon the assumption that a shifting of power to the National NGOs is, to an extent, contingent upon them having adequate capacity to both assume and exercise that power to achieve their humanitarian objectives.

<sup>5</sup> <http://tribune.com.pk/story/984022/eight-days-later-ngos-asked-to-obtain-nocs-before-continuing-relief-work/>

As a part of the consultation protocol, the participants' consent was sought for being interviewed with the assurance given that no remarks, opinions or information shared by them would be directly attributed to any single individual or organisation.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Key Concepts

As mentioned in the previous section of this report, the consultations were initiated with a set of questions about the respondents' perception of the two key terms that would recur in the analysis of the information collected viz., *Partnership* and *Capacity*. Remarkably, the perception of the key concepts did not reflect a huge variation among the respondents. The working definitions used for the key concepts are as follows:

#### Partnership

The discussions reflect on the fact that a number of modes of relationship are prevalent between the INGOs and the National NGOs (NNGO) in the area of humanitarian cooperation. On one extreme of the spectrum and the most prevalent one is the “vendor- client” relationship in which the INGO outsources a component of a humanitarian initiative to a NNGO under a project-specific agreement. The relationship often ends with the completion of the task and can be re-established for a subsequent project.

The other end of the spectrum is denoted by a notionally equal “partnership”<sup>6</sup> relationship between the INGO and NNGO. This relationship is defined by the respondents as being based on the following parameters:

- A “partnership” is based on long term engagement, regardless of whether any specific humanitarian initiative is under joint implementation of the partners. It goes beyond deliverable-based funding and has the spirit of two-way flow of learning behind it;
- In a “partnership”, the INGOs and NNGOs join each other's planning and resource mobilization processes and seek out synergies to optimally use their respective strengths to improve the quality of humanitarian response;

<sup>6</sup> At least four of the interviewed NNGOs acknowledged that their partner INGOs always ensure their participation in the strategic and periodic planning and review exercises and incorporate the NNGOs' feedback into the products and processes.



- Under this type of relationship, the INGO partner actively transfers its global knowledge and corporate skills to the national counterpart to enable it to act independently;
- When the two partners are engaged in an actual humanitarian activity, the programming, administrative and financial powers are delegated to the national partner to the maximum possible extent, and
- Investment is made into improving the governance, programmatic and administrative systems of the national partner, to develop sustainable national capacity for high quality humanitarian preparedness and response.

### **Capacity**

It was acknowledged by most respondents that, like many development jargon, the terms “Capacity” and “Capacity Development” too are defined variously by diverse actors. It was repeatedly mentioned during the consultations that *Capacity Development* is often used interchangeably with *Training* only. There is however an emerging understanding in both humanitarian and development circles that Capacity and Capacity Development entail much more than that.

“Capacity” was stated to be the ability of an organisation to discharge its humanitarian functions in an efficient, accountable, equitable and needs-based manner. This statement was further unpacked by the respondents into three sets of functional areas:

- *Programmatic Capacity* includes technical know-how for: needs assessment; resource mobilization; programming; execution; monitoring; evaluation, and, knowledge management.
- *Administrative Capacity* covers the physical asset management, procurement, human resource management, financial management, and logistics functions.
- *Governance Capacity* includes the role of the Boards of Directors/ Governors, accountability towards the beneficiaries, Grievance Redressal Mechanisms, internal normative environment (including adherence to harassment related policy, affirmative action, gender considerations), etc.,

All the respondents underscored the need for strengthening the NNGOs’ capacity in all three functional areas.

## **4.2 State of the Capacity of National NGOs – A Snapshot**

The NNGOs consulted during the exercise offer a wide variety in terms of their age and exposure to humanitarian work. Virtually all of them identify themselves as primarily “development” actors, who have ventured into the humanitarian thematic area either by design or by default. Most have established track record of working as “Implementing Partners” of INGOs in both development and disasters. Some of these started off as faith-based



organisations and have been receiving funds from their supporters in OECD countries, under less than stringent conditions. Lately, as result of a desire to expand, as well as some drop in the remittances from the foreign donors, these organisations have started feeling the need to strengthen their capacity through the technical assistance of INGOs. Apart from these, a number of NNGOs that had started as community based and often sector specific groups, have evolved into formal professional entities.

In addition and prior to the on-going START network initiative, six of the twelve NNGO respondents have had the experience of getting into “Partnerships” (as defined in a previous section) with the INGOs and have, over the years, received hardware, financial support for procuring physical assets, technical assistance for strengthening their governance, and, programmatic, administrative and financial systems. Eight NNGO partners have had their Strategic Plans compiled with assistance from some INGO in the past and are presently revising them to make them responsive to emerging trends and challenges. Four have started from scratch and are venturing anew into the exercise of compiling their Strategic Plans, Policies, Systems and Procedures, with support from the START network.

The areas where virtually all the respondents expressed the need for varying degrees of continued capacity development support are:

- Networking with the support organisations and donors
- Resource Mobilisation and Proposal Development
- Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA)
- Programming, Monitoring and Evaluation
- Knowledge Management
- Administrative, Human Resource Management, Financial Management and Procurement Systems

### 4.3 Opportunities and Successes

As mentioned above, most of the assistance provided to the local NGOs by the INGOs and other donors is project based and activity linked. There are however shining exceptions to the rule. Some major INGOs including Oxfam, ActionAid, Care International and Concern Worldwide have since long been practicing the policy to put in place long-term partnerships with the local actors<sup>7</sup>. This policy decision entails a sustained handholding of the partners and providing them with resources exclusively allocated for their capacity development.

Ten NNGO respondents appreciated the fact that the partners INGOs facilitated them to actively and meaningfully participate in the strategic and programme planning and review of the INGOs, and the NNGOs’ contribution in the form of local knowledge and insight was not only welcomed but is also reflected in the

<sup>7</sup> For instance, Oxfam Novib have lately adopted a policy decision that it would not directly respond to even a severe emergency (Category 3, as per the Oxfam typology) and would work *only* through the local partners.



products emanating out of the process. Additionally, some INGOs facilitate the participation of the NNGO staff in national and international training events and exposure trips along with the INGO staff, when an opportunity arises. In addition to the learning from such events, these overtures also enhance the sense of meaningful partnership between the two sets of entities.

The long term engagement model has shown positive results wherein some local organisations have markedly strengthened some of their systems and policies and are now better placed to discharge their humanitarian functions. It was reported by some respondents that, in some cases of INGO-NNGO collaboration, 70% to 85% of projects' budgets were spent using the operational, procurement and recruitment systems of the local NGO partners with minimal involvement of the INGO in the process.

A Pakistan specific pooled humanitarian response fund (previously called Emergency Response Fund and recently renamed as Pakistan Humanitarian Pool Fund - PHPF) is managed by UN OCHA. The Fund provides financial assistance to respond to both prolonged local crises as well as acute localised disasters. The statistics from the previous year reveal that out of 355 organisations funded from the pool, 226 are local. From the USD 72 million disbursed, the local NGOs received USD 43 million<sup>8</sup>. Apart from the procedural efficiency and simplicity of the PHPF process, the figures also demonstrate the dividends of investment in the capacity of NNGOs. A similar mechanism in the INGO realm is the *RAPID Fund* (RF) managed by Concern Worldwide. Since 2009, working with 97 NGO partners including 73 local NGOs, RF has supported over 220 projects in response to a number of localized or major emergencies. The RF has allocated about US\$ 44 million to NGOs including US\$ 34 million to Local NGOs. Apart from the quick assistance to affected communities, the RF also operates a window for developing the capacity of local NGOs.

It was pointed out during the validation workshop that the level of unity among the humanitarian NNGOs in Pakistan is quite significant. It is, for instance, the only country in the region where a vibrant National Humanitarian Network (NHN) and a vocal Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF) exist to advocate the positions of the NNGOs and INGOs respectively, at various forums. The presence and visibility of these platforms at the formal decision making forums of the country indicate the potential for Pakistan to take a lead in transforming the national humanitarian landscape with a re-appropriation of the roles of INGOs and NNGOs to shift maximum powers to the national humanitarian community.

The unique environment due to the existence and position of NHN and PHF offers an opportunity for the entire humanitarian community working in Pakistan to come up with a nationally appropriate and agreed upon *Code of Conduct* for the INGO-NNGO partnership, based on the experiences from the recent past. This code might include a set of objectively verifiable indicators for what constitutes a genuine and meaningful "partnership". These indicators

<sup>8</sup> <http://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/fact-sheet-pakistan-humanitarian-pool-fund-phpf-pakistan-august-2016>



could crystallise into a “Partnership Marker” that would help standardise the forms of engagement between the NNGOs and INGOs and help remove the prevailing ambiguity emanating out of an interchangeable use of varied taxonomy.

The “Shifting the Power” initiative of START network is nascent and no significant disasters have occurred during the past two years in the areas where the NNGO partners of the network operate, so the impact of investment in NNGOs’ capacity under this initiative remains untested to date. The aforementioned statistics however, indicate that the direction taken under the START network initiative is promising in terms of localising the humanitarian response.

#### **4.4 Challenges**

The consultations and literature review bring to forth a number of challenges to the idea of “localisation of aid” and “shifting the power”. These can be classified into two categories viz., Systemic/ Structural Challenges and Local Challenges. The following narrative aims at presenting them in a summarised manner:

##### **4.4.1 Systemic/ Structural Challenges**

###### ***The “Trust” Issue***

Though not the only one, but an important measure of the capacity of the NNGOs is considered to be their ability to independently attract humanitarian funding. Considering this, among the challenges encountered or anticipated for localising the aid in general and shifting of power to local humanitarian actors in particular, the most significant one was stated to be the donors’ mindset.

The general impression is that the international donor agencies tend to be more comfortable working through their familiar international partners than chart the relatively unfamiliar territory of the local NGOs. One of the factors behind this mindset related issue was stated to be the stereotypical perception about the developing countries, including Pakistan being “corrupt” societies. It was expressed by most respondents that the donors associate the intangible element of “trust” more with the actors from developed countries<sup>9</sup>.

###### ***The Financial and Expertise Edge of INGOs***

Apart from the stereotyping and image/ perception related issues, there are a few areas of capacity where the INGOs have an objectively demonstrable edge over the NNGOs. The INGOs mostly have quick access to funds through

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<sup>9</sup> Davey et al, 2014

endowments, network of institutional and private donors that they can mobilise at a relatively short notice. Secondly, because of their international presence, the INGOs can rapidly mobilise technical experts from other country offices and standby rosters to horizontally expand their humanitarian operations. Thirdly, the fiduciary regulations and financial auditing and standardisation regimes in the INGOs' countries of origin are perceived by the donors as being more reliably strict. In the same manner, the creation, promotion and accounting for both the humanitarian as well as management standards is stemmed in the "Western" societies where most INGOs are based and the NNGOs (and their countries of origin) are perceived as lacking in all these aspects.

### ***Genuine Interest in "shifting the power"?***

As per some respondents, the INGOs genuinely interested in shifting the power to the local actors form an important but partial segment of the whole spectrum of the humanitarian actors. In an ideal world, any reform efforts including "shifting the power" initiative should eventually lead to rendering the INGOs (and other intermediaries) obsolete or at least reduce their significance in the humanitarian power structure<sup>10</sup>. Some respondents are of the view that the initiative would face significant resistance from the vested interests.

### ***Inconsistent Modes of Engagement***

It was stated by some respondents that the lack of consistency of policy and engagement mechanism among the INGOs is another challenge. This challenge is related to undue insistence by some INGOs on imposing their global "corporate" systems on the NNGOs. In some cases, the administrative, monitoring and governance systems of the local organisations, developed with the assistance of one INGO, are not recognised or trusted by another INGO and the latter insists on adoption of a different set of tools and protocols as a precondition for assistance. At least two NNGO respondents shared this concern during the interviews and also during the validation workshop that they have to prepare both the narrative and expenditure reports in multiple formats to cater for the demands of multiple INGO partners.

### ***The Push for Quick Results***

There is often pressure on the local organisations to show "quick" results which require procurements, recruitments and spending at larger and quicker scale than was anticipated by the NNGO. In other words, the NNGOs' procurement, recruitment and financial management systems sometimes get overwhelmed with the INGO partners' expectation of the "pace" of spending and "scale" of implementation. Anecdotes were quoted by at least three responding NNGOs that in such cases, they had to devolve these functions to the INGOs whose corporate systems allowed for the required pace and scale.

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<sup>10</sup> Steets et al, 2016



#### 4.4.2 Local Challenges

##### *The Low Capacity Perception*

The most significant challenge that recurred during most consultations was the prevalent perception about the lack of both programmatic and operational capacity among the NNGOs. This in turn translates into their potential being undervalued by the donors and intermediaries. The consultations with the NNGOs pointed to numerous instances where different unit rates were applied to the INGOs and NNGOs for exactly similar tasks in the same geographical location<sup>11</sup>. This reported financial discrimination against the NNGOs results in a continued state of financial fragility, leading to a number of negative implications for their efforts at strengthening their own capacity. This also leads to a loss of trained human resources who cannot resist the attraction of a higher salary with an INGO for a similar or comparable workload.

##### *Legal Ambiguity and Bottlenecks*

A local structural constraint is due to an ambiguity in the Pakistani laws governing the NNGOs' accessing foreign funding. According to the respondents who had given this aspect some thought, the regulatory provisions are rather confusing and internally contradictory and subject to the chronic suspicion by the governmental authorities about the NGOs' activities, further deepened during the recent years by the heightened security paranoia. In addition to the regular registration under one of the various laws, the NNGOs must register with the government before using foreign money, services, and goods and must sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the government stipulating, among other things, their geographical areas of work. In the past, the responsibility for monitoring and security clearance of NGOs was with the Economic Affairs Division. Recently, additional clearances at the national and sub-national have been introduced with the formal involvement of Interior Ministry as well as quasi-formal involvement of security agencies. These additional bottlenecks, particularly in the conflict affected areas, are making it increasingly cumbersome for the NNGOs to function with international financial assistance<sup>12</sup>.

##### *The Power – Responsibility Bargain*

A fact sometimes overlooked in the discussions around “shifting the power” is the fact that with the devolved power, the onus for responsibility and – both

<sup>11</sup> Also, there were unconfirmed reports that the international donors and multilateral humanitarian agencies allow a higher administrative costs in the proposals submitted by international NGOs, while the local organisations are only paid the activity costs. No written document to this effect could be found, though multiple sources testify to such instructions being given verbally.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/pakistan.html>



upwards and downwards- accountability also shifts to the local actors. There are questions about both the management ability of the NNGOs and the socio-legal environment of the country to ensure a demonstration of an internationally accepted standard of accountability. This challenge is basically rooted in the increasingly exclusive focus of the international aid institutions on financial accountability, often at the expense of evaluating the normatively important aspects like equity, sustainability and targeting etc., Though this is essentially a global challenge, but is especially problematic in Pakistan where the NGOs cannot rely on the other segments of the civil society to vociferously advocate against this trend.

### ***The New Faces in the Street***

Another challenge, becoming increasingly significant in Pakistan is the entry of the mostly foreign, corporate, for-profit entities into the areas that were traditionally considered the primary domain of NGOs –both national and international. From initially being providers of support services such as accounting, technology and logistical support, corporate entities have started assuming the role of frontline service providers in the realm of needs assessment, project management, distribution of relief goods and services and even media management. Arguably, this phenomenon is also linked to the NGOs' deviating from their primary mandates of being advocates, innovators, community mobilisers and humanitarian capacity developers to that of distributors of goods, contractors for civil works and providers of technological services etc., Intuitively, one can deduce that compromising on rights-based agenda from a moral high ground, the NGOs let themselves be led into an arena for which they have no competitive edge over the specialised private sector firms. It is appreciated that often the fund-starved NGOs, (especially the NNGOs) have little choice when such opportunities present themselves, but ideally, the NGOs should only get involved if the task would somehow support their advocacy agenda. This blurring of line between what used to be the distinct realms of the NGOs and the private firms respectively, has thrown the gate open for the idea of competitive bidding for projects where the NGOs do not necessarily have an advantage. Much of it has to do with the donors' pressure where, in many cases, the resource-starved local organisations feel that the communities' needs assessed by them are not always in consonance with the donors' priorities and sectors/ themes of interest. This entices them to deviate from their areas of strength, mandates, strategic plans and commitments to the communities and get involved in the projects that do not necessarily fall into their areas of strength.

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Conclusions**

A number of conclusions drawn from the analysis above are summarised below, with a view to translate them into concrete recommended actions in the



subsequent sub-section. The conclusions have grouped into three categories, as follows:

### 5.1.1 To “Walk the Talk” is the Way to Go

The consultations and literature review point to the conclusion that an appropriately and realistically designed strategy for “shifting the power” to the national humanitarian NGOs is the most appropriate course to be taken, in view of both the global normative imperatives on the part of INGOs as well as the increasingly constricting humanitarian space for INGOs locally. The Pakistani humanitarian NGOs have come a long way from the watershed year of 2005 and their programmatic and financial capacity has significantly increased both by design through INGO assistance, as well as by default learning from experience and exposure. The time is ripe to initiate discussions around a transformation of the roles of both the INGOs and NNGOs in view of the changed landscape.

### 5.1.2 A two pronged approach – Capacity Development and Advocacy

It can also be concluded that a concerted and consistent effort at a meaningful “shifting the power” would require a two pronged approach comprising of both Capacity Development of the NNGOs as well as an equally –even more- forceful advocacy campaign with the donors. At the end of the day, much of the “power” in the aid business is closely associated with the entity that controls the strings of the purse. An equally assertive and politically appropriate advocacy campaign would be required to work closely with the government to promote a smooth interface with it and an enabling environment for the humanitarian agencies in general and the NNGOs in particular.

### 5.1.3 Revisiting the Role of NGOs

The NGOs, especially the NNGOs, need to introspect collectively on revisiting their primary mandate and decide whether getting involved in delivery of goods and services in a country like Pakistan is the best use of their energies. They need to determine, as a community, ways and means to strike a balance between their desires or compulsions to get involved in delivery of goods and services, and as advocates, watchdogs and lobbyists on behalf of the vulnerable sections of the population.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The recommendations for promoting the agenda of “shifting the power” in Pakistan can be classified under three headings, covering *Advocacy*, *Networking* and *Capacity Development*. In accordance with the Terms of Reference of the study, the primary audience of these recommendations is the INGO community, but the NNGOs and other stakeholders may also find some action points herein.



### 5.2.1 Advocacy

- As observed above, the INGOs are not the main source of fund-related power in the humanitarian landscape. In many cases, they act as intermediaries between the donors and the NNGOs and perform the function of a fund manager. As an important indicator of the NNGOs' empowerment, the NNGOs should be able to access and manage humanitarian funding directly. It has also been reported above that the lack of donors' "trust" is, (objectively verifiable indicators of technical and administrative capacity of the recipient notwithstanding) stemmed in complex historical and cultural reasons. Developing the capacity of NNGOs through training and system development is indeed a necessary step towards that purpose, but is definitely not sufficient to build a trust based relationship. The INGOs should work closely with the donors to demystify some of the negative historical images of the NNGOs. This can be done through private advocacy as well as through researching, documenting and widely publicising the demonstrated successes of the NNGOs in humanitarian work.
- Among the vast array of INGOs working in Pakistan, only some have a policy to work in "partnership" with the NNGOs, while many well resourced and sizeable actors execute humanitarian work through direct implementation or, at best, get into a "vendor-client" relationship with them. The INGO members of the START network should try to "convert" the others too to this demonstrably more effective and relatively sustainable mode of engagement.
- Advocating with the government to make the regulatory environment more enabling would primarily be the mandate of NNGOs, as they can claim to be the *Right Holders* and hold the governmental *Duty Bearers* accountable. The INGOs should provide technical assistance in documenting the good practices and designing and executing effective advocacy campaigns. In parallel, the INGOs should also assist the NNGOs in advocating their causes with the other segments of the civil society such as the media, the social activists and the trade unions etc.,
- The "shifting the power" initiative provides an opportunity for both INGOs and NNGOs to re-examine their respective roles in humanitarian work. The NNGOs have certain strengths such as social capital at the

community and national level, permanent and established legal presence in the country, first hand experience with managing local disasters, and insight into the dynamics of the local vulnerabilities. The INGOs, in addition to acting as the conduits of humanitarian funding, can bring in the knowledge and experience from elsewhere in the world. The most optimal arrangement would be for the INGOs and NNGOs to complement each other's strengths. Especially the INGOs need to transform their role to being "facilitators/ mentors" rather than acting as "implementers". As mentioned above in this section, there are various important actors outside the START network who need to be taken on board on this aspect as well and a concerted advocacy effort would be needed to "convert" them to the idea.

- As repeatedly alluded in the report, the INGO and donor support to NNGOs seldom leaves them adequate financial cushion to spend resources on developing their capacity. The activity based funding is also budgeted so stringently that the NNGO is merely able to complete the assigned task within it. Wherever the INGOs have assisted the NNGOs with a focused and exclusive capacity development support, the capacity of the NNGOs has improved remarkably. It is acknowledged that advocating for a large scale replication of "partnership" approach is an uphill task, but the START network partners should at least advocated with the INGOs and donors to allocate a portion of their activity/ project based funding exclusively for development of the capacity of the partner NGOs.
- The country based humanitarian pool funds have a demonstrably better track record of assisting the NNGOs in humanitarian funds, while maintaining the standards of financial audits and effectiveness of disbursements and actions. INGOs should consider studying the successful model of PHPF and advocating for its up-scaling or replication.

### 5.2.2 Capacity Development

The NNGOs in Pakistan in general and the ones consulted in this study are at various stages of institutional maturity. Some have strategic plans, programmatic, administrative and fund management systems in place with fairly robust governance mechanism for oversight and strategic direction setting. The others are in the process of reforming themselves to enhance effectiveness, accountability and sustainability. START network partners have embarked upon a capacity development plan for the 12 NNGOs, under which each NNGO has framed a customised capacity development plan for itself. It must be pointed out that this task requires longer term engagement than is possible under a short



term project, as demonstrated by the evidence in Pakistan. START network partners (and other INGOs) should collectively consider how the existing initiative can be turned into a longer term capacity development engagement, covering the three essential areas of functional capacity introduced in the beginning of this report.

### 5.2.3 Networking

The position of the NNGOs in the humanitarian landscape would be contingent upon how consolidated their collective stance is on humanitarian issues. A number of networking arrangements are in place in Pakistan and some of them have proven themselves to be more effective and representative than the others. START network partner INGOs should consider strengthening the national networks with a view to leave behind an institutional arrangement that caters to the advocacy, capacity building and lobbying needs of the NNGOs on humanitarian issues<sup>13</sup>. Some of the themes that need long term, concerted pursuance are:

- Evolving a “Partnership Marker” to rank the INGOs and donors on the basis of qualitative assessment of their modes of engagement with the NNGOs
- Putting in place a mechanism for the adoption of unified stances on issues of humanitarian concerns and advocating for them
- Establishing standing support mechanisms for providing capacity building, institutional strengthening and organisational development support to NNGOs
- etc.,

<sup>13</sup> Two such networks viz., the National Humanitarian Network (NHN) and Human Resource Development Network (HRDN) may be considered worthy of attention in this regard

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### Articles

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### Web Resources

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/965678/international-ngos-will-require-govt-consent-to-gather-funds-operate-nisar/>

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/984022/eight-days-later-ngos-asked-to-obtain-nocs-before-continuing-relief-work/>

<http://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/fact-sheet-pakistan-humanitarian-pool-fund-phpf-pakistan-august-2016>

<http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/pakistan.html>



## **Annexure 1: List of Organisations Consulted**

### **Government**

- National Disaster Management Authority
- Ministry of Economic Affairs Division

### **START Network INGO Partners**

- Tearfund
- Concern Worldwide
- Actionaid
- Oxfam

### **START Network NGO Partners**

- Association for Water, Applied Education and Renewable Energy- AWARE
- Participatory Welfare Society - PWS
- Veer Development Organisation - VDO
- Participatory Village Development Programme - PVDP
- Grassroots Pakistan - GRP
- Research and Development Foundation - RDF
- Bright Star Development Society Balochistan - BSDSB
- Fast Rural Development Programme - FRDP
- Participatory Rural Development Society - PRDS
- Rural Education and Economic Development Society - REEDS
- Society for Safe Environment and Welfare of Agrarians Pakistan - SSEWA-PAK
- Multan Diocesan Trust Association – MDTA

### **“Others”**

- Pakistan Humanitarian Forum - PHF
- Care Pakistan
- Action Against Hunger – AAH
- Islamic Relief
- United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)



Tearfund is the lead agency for the START Build 'Shifting the Power' consortium in Pakistan striving to strengthen national and local partner's capacity in emergency response both within institutions and at a country framework level. Overall goal of the project is to strengthen capacity in specifically selected disaster-prone areas while generating evidence for further broader roll-out. Project aims to enhance capacity of the first respondents of the disasters i.e., Local NGOs and improve effectiveness and efficiency of the response. The vision of the project is to support national and local actors to take their place alongside international actors in order to create balanced humanitarian system that is more responsive and accountable to disaster affected communities. The project will strengthen local and national organizational capacity for decision making and leadership in humanitarian response. It will link local to national organizations and at the same time influence international organizations to promote the role of local and national actors. The project is underway in five countries viz. Pakistan, Bangladesh, DRC, Ethiopia and Kenya, and will demonstrate through an effective learning and documentation process to establish that this approach can make national responses faster, better quality and more effective.

