

SHIFTING THE POWER

Learning Review – October 2017



**Increasing the Voice and Influence of
Local and National NGOs**





Cover Photo: Community members from Koronder, a remote village in Marsabit County, northern Kenya, fetching water during PACIDA's water trucking interventions in response to the drought. Photo @ PACIDA.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
CCONAT	Cadre de Consultation des Organisations Nationales
CCRDA	Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Organisations
CSG	County Steering Group
DDM	Department of Disaster Management
DEPP	Disaster Emergency Preparedness Programme
ECSF	Ethiopian Charities & Societies Forum
ELNHA	Empowering Local and National Humanitarian Actors (project)
FONAHD	Forum des ONG Humanitaires and Développement
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HHCT	Humanitarian Coordination Task Team
JNA	Joint Needs Assessments
L/NGO	Local and National NGO
NAHAB	National Alliance of Humanitarian Actors in Bangladesh
NDMA	National Drought Management Authority (Kenya)
NDMC	National Drought Management Committee (Kenya)/ National Disaster Management Committee
NHN	National Humanitarian Network (Pakistan)
RONDH	Réseau des organisations nationales de développement et humanitaire
SNA	Social Network Analysis
STP	Shifting the Power

Executive Summary

Shifting the Power (STP) is a three-year project that aims to strengthen the capacity and influence of local and national humanitarian actors, and to contribute to the development of a more balanced humanitarian system.

STP is part of the three-year Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme (DEPP) and is being implemented by a consortium of six INGOs: ActionAid, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Concern, Oxfam and Tearfund. The consortium is working alongside 55 local and national NGO (L/NNGO) partners in Bangladesh, DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya and Pakistan. The project is comprised of five 'outputs', relating to capacity strengthening, supporting representation and voice of local partners, consortium member INGOs 'walking the talk', collaboration with other DEPP projects, and learning and evidence sharing.

This Learning Review examines STP's work under Output 2, the aim of which is to increase the voice and influence of local and national NGOs across five countries. It finds that the strengths of this project are its ability to combine community, district and national level initiatives to increase the influence of a range of actors, and its adaptive approach, which has enabled actors in each country to develop activities relevant to five very different humanitarian contexts. The project has forged new relationships, increased participation of partners in humanitarian networks, Joint Needs Assessments (JNA), and clusters, and has seen early successes in influencing local government. There are opportunities to make the activities under Output 2 more strategic, to invest in advocacy and influencing expertise, and to ensure greater local ownership of activities in several locations.

The objectives of the review were fourfold: to document the approaches taken in each of the five STP countries in relation to voice and influence; to assess results and good practices to date; to identify how existing humanitarian networks operate and influence humanitarian decision-making; and to provide recommendations relevant to Output 2. This study builds on an earlier learning review of Output 1, which focused on STP's capacity strengthening approach.

Under Output 2, STP has focused on activities designed to increase the voice and influence of L/NNGOs in humanitarian platforms and networks. Within this overarching goal, different approaches have been adopted in different countries. For example:

- In **Bangladesh**, STP convened Power Cafés, which bring together local and international actors to discuss topics relating to local humanitarian leadership. Each of the four Power Cafés brought together a wide range of 40-60 stakeholders to explore the imbalanced representation of local actors in key humanitarian platforms and to develop initial agreements. The first Power Café led to the formation of a new national NGO platform – the National Alliance of Humanitarian Actors (NAHAB) – supported by STP.
- In **DRC** the project works through three existing NNGO networks, identified through a mapping study. The platforms have met together for training, and to develop individual and shared advocacy strategies. The DRC team has also prioritised increased involvement of L/NNGOs in cluster meetings and in zonal-level government coordination.
- In **Ethiopia**, STP has focused on revitalising zonal coordination forums and increasing L/NNGOs participation in bi-yearly humanitarian needs assessments. STP has also engaged with two large L/NNGO networks, and plans are underway to develop advocacy activities and support the development of a National NGO Humanitarian Forum.
- In **Kenya**, the focus has been on building partners' influence with county-level government, and supporting local community representatives to do the same. Partners have supported the creation of sub-county coordination groups and community clusters.
- In **Pakistan**, STP partnered with the National Humanitarian Network (NHN) and other networks to support better representation of partners and build an online resource library. STP partners have also worked to strengthen relationships with district governments.

The review explores lessons learned from the project at four levels: in building a grassroots constituency, and in increasing influence at the local, national and international levels.

In DRC, Kenya, and Pakistan, partners have undertaken activities to strengthen their grassroots constituencies through creating community clusters or other meetings. They report that these activities have increased their influence more broadly because they have a better understanding of local priorities. However, no formal mechanisms for linking community clusters to wider networks were identified.

STP adopted a variety of strategies to strengthen organisational influence, including skills-based workshops and creating new linkages between organisations, and with donors. All STP partners participated in workshops or joined new networks. Several reported that capacity building activities had allowed them to improve internal policies and management. In turn, this had led to recent proposals being accepted. Exploring in-country and international avenues for advocating on funding was a priority for all L/NNGOs interviewed.

The project has also fostered relationships between partners at the national level. Partners noted that networking opportunities had allowed them to form new relationships with other NNGO partners, and had led to an increased confidence in talking about humanitarian leadership and the commitments in the Grand Bargain and Charter for Change. Some partners have accessed new funding through building alliances to submit joint proposals to pooled funds.

Achievements have been made in strengthening L/NNGO networks in each country. However, the adaptive project design means that activities can appear disjointed. Moreover, only Bangladesh has recruited an Influencing Officer which has meant that most project resources have focussed on Output 1. There are opportunities to make the project more strategic, in particular in agreeing on broad advocacy objectives and building a clear 'working definition' of the concept of influence within the project. In April 2017 STP recruited an International Advocacy Advisor who is now working with country teams to develop and implement a global advocacy strategy.

Achievements to date are tentative and emergent. During 2016, time was spent embedding relationships and identifying appropriate activities, many of which commenced in 2017. The next year will be vital for embedding the L/NNGOs into new humanitarian spaces. Creating change and substantially 'shifting the power' within the humanitarian system in each country will take significant time, and will require longer than the three-year timespan of the project. Extension of the project timeline, particularly in countries where sustainability of activities is most fragile, would be beneficial; as would continued investment in sustainability by strengthening established networks.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Lessons from the last decade of humanitarian responses have demonstrated the essential role of local capacity. Yet the way the humanitarian system is financed, coordinated, staffed and assessed has been increasingly criticised for marginalising existing local capacity. Research has found that local actors participate less in decision-making fora than international actors and that even when they do participate they have less influence.

The Shifting the Power (STP) project, therefore, aims to strengthen the capacity and influence of local and national humanitarian actors. The project is part of the Disasters and Emergencies Preparedness Programme (DEPP), a three-year programme supporting a range of capacity building initiatives intended to improve the quality and speed of humanitarian response.

STP consists of 5 major components, formulated as outputs:

1. Capacity strengthening: Local partners in 5 countries have the knowledge, skills, processes, and policies to prepare for and respond effectively to emergencies
2. Enabling environment: Local partners are better represented and have a stronger voice in relevant humanitarian platforms and networks in their countries
3. Walking the talk: STP consortium member INGOs recognise and respond to local partner capacity, leadership, and voice
4. Collaboration within DEPP: STP collaborates with other DEPP projects for maximizing collaborative advantage
5. Learning: STP provides evidence of good practice in strengthening local partners' humanitarian preparedness and response work and their role/influence in humanitarian action

This is a learning review of Output 2, which includes the activities designed to increase the voice and influence of L/NNGOs in humanitarian platforms and networks.

For this review, we use the following definitions:

A network is a collection of actors benefiting from dynamic, ongoing and mutually beneficial relationships, with multi-dimensional exchanges, and a distinct group of recognisable functions.¹

A platform is an intermediary mechanism that supports and promotes the contribution and engagement of specific actors.²

1.2 Objectives

This document is the product of a learning review for Output 2. The purpose of the learning review outlined in the TOR is to identify, describe and share:

- How the five STP countries (Bangladesh, DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Pakistan) have approached increasing the voice and influence of local and national organisations in their respective contexts (including representation of women and girls);
- What are the results and good practices including those around processes, strategies, and approaches to date;
- How do existing humanitarian networks operate and influence the humanitarian decision-making; and
- Recommendations on how to effectively engage in the humanitarian and disaster management systems and increase the voice and influence of local and national organisations in these networks and platforms.

¹ Adapted from Scriven, K. (2013). A Networked Response. Exploring national humanitarian networks in Asia. London: ALNAP/ODI.

² Oglesby, R. and Burke, J. (2012). Platforms for Private Sector Humanitarian Collaboration. Kings College Humanitarian Futures Project.

2. Approaches taken

This section describes the process taken in each country to map relevant humanitarian actors, conduct discussions, and develop a contextualised strategy for increasing voice and influence of local and national organisations and networks.

2.1 Bangladesh

Network

The basis of STP's work in Bangladesh was to host Power Cafés that would bring together national and international organisations to discuss barriers to greater local humanitarian leadership. The first Power Café led NNGOs to suggest the formation of a national NGO platform. STP supported the establishment of NAHAB (National Alliance of Humanitarian Actors) in early 2017. The project currently includes 45 local and national NGOs but plans to open to all humanitarian groups. NAHAB has defined its objective as increasing the role of local and national NGOs in decision-making in the humanitarian sector.

The partners have chosen to spend time developing structures and protocols before beginning any influencing activities. A strategic workshop was held in August to establish a constitution, describe the roles and responsibilities of the secretariat, and identify initial advocacy objectives.

All interviewees noted concerns about the longevity of NAHAB beyond the end of the project. STP partners are particularly conscious that previous attempts to establish a platform for national humanitarian actors all failed after several years. They stated that spending time developing the constitution was vital for safeguarding the future of the network. NAHAB members are learning from the experience of other platforms in Bangladesh and building a small committee structure based on the election of officials.

Government

The advocacy priorities of the network are yet to be agreed. However, in interviews team members and local NGOs said that the network should advocate on humanitarian issues to the local and national government. So far, the Department of Disaster Management (DDM) has met with NAHAB and invited them to attend a disability and DRR event. A representative was also present at the launch event and has written an official endorsement.

Engagement in the humanitarian architecture

The STP team developed Power Cafés as the main advocacy mechanism to bring representation and recognition of local humanitarian actors. Each Power Café has brought together a wide range of 40–60 stakeholders to explore the imbalanced representation of local actors in key humanitarian platforms and to develop initial agreements. To date, four Power Cafés have been held in the capital, Dhaka. Power Cafés have addressed the role of local actors in decision-making forums, and the role of women in disaster response, among other topics. So far, these have been led by STP, but future Power Cafés will be coordinated by NAHAB.



Participants of the 3rd Power Café held in Bangladesh in late 2016, discussing issues related to Women-Led Disaster Risk Management. Photo @ Kajal Ahmed, Christian Aid Bangladesh.

STP partners asserted the independence of NAHAB. Nevertheless, it is currently seen by donors and UN representatives to be ‘a Christian Aid network’. The secretariat is currently hosted by STP, yet the nascent network is actively considering future options including membership fees or funding from INGO partners.

To obtain credibility as a NNGO platform, NAHAB needs to demonstrate that it represents the voices of national organisations and that it has a mandate beyond the 11 STP members. In interviews, an OCHA representative noted that this would be necessary before the network could advocate for a position on the Humanitarian Coordination Task Team (HCTT).

At the organisational level, STP has worked with partners to obtain Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) alliance membership for 5 of its 11 partners. It has also conducted training on Joint Needs Assessments (JNAs)³ for 11 partners in nine districts. By participating in JNAs, national organisations feel they have greater exposure to international decision-makers and coordination spaces. Members were involved in leading a Joint Needs Assessment in one of four districts during floods in April 2017 (the other three were led by INGOs).

NAHAB members have also begun to collaborate together on disaster response. Following the JNA, four partners formed a consortium that received funding for joint humanitarian activities from the Empowering Local and National Actors (ELNHA) project (an Oxfam project).

³ A joint needs assessment (JNA) allows different organisations to use a single tool and methodology to carry out an assessment that identifies shared priorities for the humanitarian community. It is usually coordinated by a central body, often a government agency, the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), an inter-agency body like an assessment working group, a cluster, or a group of non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

2.2 DRC

STP partners in DRC are spread across the country with clusters in north and south Kivu where conflict is most severe. The DRC team has focused its efforts on supporting three existing networks for NNGOs, and increasing representation of its partners in clusters and the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT).

Networks

At the outset of the project, the DRC team commissioned a research study to map humanitarian actors. Three of the largest humanitarian NNGO networks were identified for partnership: Forum des ONG Humanitaires and Développement (FONAHD) and Cadre de Consultation des Organisations Nationales (CCONAT) based in North and South Kivu respectively, and Réseau des organisations nationales de développement et humanitaire (RONDH) based in Kinshasa.

The geographical spread of partners across large areas of the country creates challenges in building formal and informal relationships. Nevertheless, the STP country team believe that it is important for L/NNGOs to be able to advocate with a single voice. They have therefore focussed on developing joint advocacy work through:

- A two-day meeting to bring together leaders of platforms
- A workshop to provide advocacy training, identify weaknesses and opportunities for greater L/NNGO influence
- Development of a shared advocacy plan and individual strategies

The advocacy plan is a set of four position papers outlining shared positions towards government, UN-OCHA, INGOs and the private sector. At the government level, it aims to influence the adoption of a Country Humanitarian Policy and update related provincial laws as well as access to earmarked funding.⁴ With INGOs it sets out to push for the fulfilment of the Grand Bargain and Charter for Change commitments. To UN-OCHA it advocates for an increase in representation of L/NNGOs in coordination mechanisms.

In addition, STP partners themselves have formed an informal WhatsApp group, where they share information, advice and technical support. For example, one LNGO asked Caritas to provide advice on tools for data management. This type of informal information sharing has been found to encourage the free-flow of information and prevent 'institutional memory lapse' during staff turnover (which is particularly high in humanitarian organisations).

LNHAs and networks agree that there is now a need for greater accountability between platforms and local organisations, to encourage greater two-way information sharing.

Local and national government

The national government has changed three times during the course of STP, which has stunted engagement with the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs. Instead, STP activities have focused on local government authorities. Here, STP has encouraged seven partners to develop written MOUs, in order to give the local authorities access to more information on the needs of the population and to demonstrate how L/NNGOs are contributing to the response. One interviewee noted that following STP training his organisation ensures it obtains a signed permission letter from local authorities ahead of every activity.

More recently, five partners in South Kivu have begun advocacy work aimed at ensuring the provincial parliament adopts a new provincial law on humanitarian affairs.

⁴ Since completion of interviews, networks have met with MPs to discuss the need for a country humanitarian policy

Engagement in humanitarian architecture

Perhaps more than any other STP country, the team in DRC has focused on increasing influence of L/NNGOs in the HCT and clusters.

STP partners have been encouraged to attend cluster meetings at the provincial and national level and to share information. The partners aim to see an increasing number of local or national organisations co-leading clusters by the end of 2017. So far, a national organisation has been appointed as co-lead of the nutrition cluster. There are hopes for STP partners to take on the leadership of five other provincial clusters.

At the district level, HEAL Africa now coordinates the Mandya Protection Cluster and plays an active role in clusters in Goma. This is a step forward for the organisation, which had only attended cluster meetings intermittently before the project started. HEAL Africa has developed a TOR for people attending cluster meetings and the Executive Director has requested written feedback following attendance. The organisation believes that this has improved information sharing and will allow them to influence coordination issues.

A Technical Working Group (TWG)⁵ interviewee similarly stated:

“They have proven how able they are to lead the cluster and to bring relevant information – this is another way to raise their influence.” – LNGO, DRC

Caritas Congo, a network based in Kinshasa with members across the country, has played a leading role in delivering objectives under Output 2. Caritas is the chair of RONDH, which was created under a UN-OCHA initiative in October 2016 to organise, coordinate and manage humanitarian leadership in DRC. In early 2017, Caritas DRC was made a permanent member of the HCT (having enjoyed observer status for some time). Interviewees report that Caritas Congo is sharing agendas, gathering information from partners in FONAH, the NGO platform in North Kivu, and sharing feedback with local NGOs. L/NNGOs are now advocating for a rotating chair of the HCT to increase participation of local representatives.

2.3 Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, STP partners have participated in joint needs assessments and resurrecting zonal-level networks to influence the zonal-level disaster management system. STP is working to increase humanitarian networking within two large existing L/NNGO networks.

Networks

At the outset of the project, STP partners commissioned a consultant to review the humanitarian context in Ethiopia and to map relevant humanitarian platforms. The research findings were shared widely with national and international networks and government bodies. The research also generated a series of recommendations that have formed the ‘blueprint’ of STP activities under Output 2.

The exercise identified the role of two national networks – the Ethiopian Charities & Societies Forum (ECSF) and the Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Organisations (CCRDA) – and recommended formal collaboration on advocacy.

⁵ The Technical Working (TWG) group includes the humanitarian advisors from the six consortium members in each country. The TWG provides insight and advice on technical questions to guide the project.

The work in Ethiopia has been shaped by a unique humanitarian context, in which the government controls the flow of information and UN agencies manage significant humanitarian resources. Government policies place particular restrictions on the activities of L/NNGOs and INGOs including:

1. Restrictions prevent L/NNGOs from accessing foreign currency accounts
2. Restrictions on spending on humanitarian delivery, which means 70% of all humanitarian funding must go directly to affected communities (thus constraining L/NNGO capacity building activities)
3. INGOs based in Ethiopia must implement activities directly (i.e. those working in a partnership must do so remotely). This leads many humanitarian INGOs to choose to implement activities directly.

The first network, ECSF, was identified as an avenue through which to advocate on these challenges. STP partners hope to advocate for a policy change that excludes training activities from the spending restrictions, for example. Activities to address these issues are still being discussed.

The second network, CCRDA, is an umbrella organisation for development agencies with over 400 members. It already has a seat at the HCT, but, in the words of one participant, it is “not attending and not playing its full role.” STP has elected to support CCRDA in creating a National NGO Humanitarian Forum that can inform its positions in the HCT. It is also encouraging the network to take up membership of the humanitarian international NGO network, HINGO.

STP has met with the Executive Director of CCRDA, and they have agreed that a forum will be established before the end of 2017.⁶ STP staff emphasise that the next phase of the project should focus on building knowledge and skills among the CCRDA representatives on advocacy, humanitarian standards, and the humanitarian architecture.



Shifting the Power project partners participating in key networks, taskforces and coordination meetings at district levels to share emergency-related information and secure the support of government authorities and other relevant stakeholders. Photo @ CAFOD Ethiopia.

⁶ Since completion of interviews, founding members of the forum have established bylaws

Local and national Government

In line with recommendations from the national research, the STP partners have focused their own influencing efforts on the zonal coordination forums and on the bi-yearly humanitarian needs assessments.

Zonal coordination forums are local government led forums for coordinating humanitarian response to drought, food insecurity, and other emergencies. Partners outside of the capital of Addis Ababa report increased attendance in the forums since joining the STP project. Many of these forums are inactive or semi-functional and so some partners are working with local Government to revive the structures.

The bi-yearly humanitarian needs assessment is a Joint Needs Assessment led by the National Disaster Risk Management Commission. It incorporates all of the major sectors, such as food security, WASH, and nutrition, and is largely undertaken by INGOs.

Interviewees stated that 2017 saw the inclusion of several STP partners that contributed to each stage of the assessment: orientation, data collection, analysis and debriefing, and were also invited to compile district level data reports. This is important because the needs assessment feeds into the humanitarian needs strategy document. Interviewees argued that conducting the Joint Needs Assessment provides visibility and builds organisational experience.

2.4 Kenya

The Kenyan approach is unique among STP teams. It focusses exclusively on building influence with county-level government and supporting local community representatives to do the same.

County-level networks

In 2014, the Kenyan Senate operationalised the County Governments Disaster Management Act to provide for the effective management of disasters by county governments. The Act allows for the establishment of a County Disaster Management Authority (CDMA) in each county, to develop policies and plans for disaster management, and to approve the County Disaster Management Plan in line with the national policy.

The STP country team and partners felt that they should focus their influencing efforts on the County Steering Group (CSG), a body coordinated by the CDMA that brings together all humanitarian actors. During drought, the CSG works with NGO partners and Government departments to prepare quarterly response plans. Working groups are used for coordinating activities in WASH, Livelihoods, and Livestock.

The CSG's capacity to coordinate activities varies from place to place. In Wajir, for example, the CSG requires input into NNGO plans and supports coordination in terms of geographical targeting. However, in other counties, coordination and information sharing is very weak.

At the outset of the project, a series of County Stakeholder Engagement meetings were held with the CSGs in the six drought-affected counties in northern Kenya. The engagement meetings served to introduce the localisation agenda and to discuss CSO engagement in recent emergencies. STP partners then developed a strategy for increasing the voice of communities in decision-making at the CSGs.

All partners attend the regular CSG meetings and many are involved in sector working groups. Direct partnerships were built with the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) and Kenya Red Cross in Turkana County. The STP team in Kenya believes this will lead to the influence of key leadership and better partnering of the CSG with communities.

Overall, STP partners have long-established relationships with local governments. In interviews, local government emphasised the role that NNGOs play in providing technical input during planning activities. One partner has gained formal membership to the NDMA steering group. Others have been involved in attending planning meetings or supporting the development of Standard Operating Practices (SOPs) for drought response.

However, through STP training, partners developed some specific advocacy objectives for STP. Achievements in the past year are four-fold:

1. **Promoting more regular CSG meetings.** L/NNGO engagement is high in the county-level working groups, which are responsible for planning and preventing duplication of activities. STP partners are contributing to discussions on the County Preparedness Plans. In three counties, the partners have contributed to the development of the County Disaster Management Acts, which are intended to support better coordination.
2. **Establishing Sub-County Steering Groups (SCSG) in Wajir and Samburu Counties.** STP partners and local Government officials agree that sub-county coordination will help ensure better coordination and information sharing. There is not currently any formal mechanism for feeding SCSG meetings directly into the CSG. The current practice is for STP partners to take minutes of the SCSG and share them back to the CSG.
3. **Merging the Peace and Grazing committees in two counties.** This has increased coordination and information sharing on two deeply related issues.
4. **Development of community clusters** through the organisational activities of ALDEF and WASDA. The feedback from these meetings has been shared with the County Government for consideration into the draft Wajir County Disaster Management Act, 2014.



The STP country team and partners have clear ideas on how they can contribute to a stronger CSG, including through advocating for county-level laws that would clarify roles and responsibilities and funding for the body. This process would involve consultations, writing a position paper, and then passing a resolution in the County Assembly to formalise the CSG. Partners also believe they must use the CSG to support better coordination in order to prevent duplication of activities and to see more consistency in the approaches to, for example, cattle prices during de-stocking.

To further establish these roles, STP aims to have partners included in County Disaster Management Act documentation and to see partners contributing to future Kenya Integrated Risk Assessments (KIRA).

National level government

At the national level, several (local level) STP partners have attended meetings with the NDMA where they have discussed the national-level preparedness policy.

STP staff have discussed options to build on Caritas' network for peacebuilding organisations to develop an L/NNGO network. They have also considered options for building a network to advocate for disaster preparedness policy (based on the successful model of the climate change bill policy process in Kenya). The aim is to revitalise sector-wide consultations for re-tabling of the draft National Disaster Management Policy to the National Assembly. However, steps towards this are still being planned.

NNGO networks

The Kenyan approach has not included any formal network building. Instead, informal networking has happened via WhatsApp and at the county-level. STP partners have shared information and discussed local coordination. However, they have not yet embarked on attempts to present a single voice on advocacy issues.

An exception is a local network in Masabit County – MIONET. According to STP staff, the L/NNGOs in Masabit have been able to have a more substantive influence on county-level decisions made through the CSG. NNGOs in West Pokot and Wajir have discussed establishing similar county-level L/NNGO networks.

Engagement in humanitarian architecture

Activities in the CSOs have been complemented by engagement in county-level Clusters. For example, SIKOM and Caritas Maralal have taken on roles as County Cluster Co-ordinators of the peace and security pillars in West Pokot and Samburu counties respectively. Several organisations have participated in Joint Needs Assessments with INGOs.

2.5 Pakistan

In Pakistan, STP has partnered with an established network to support the better representation of partners at the provincial and district level and to build an online resource library. STP partners' own work has focussed on building stronger relationships with the district Government through written MOUs, joint planning, and training.

Networks

At the outset of the project, the STP country team commissioned research on the local context and existing networks. The research identified that NGOs in Pakistan tend to be members of multiple networks, including those for DRR and humanitarian response. Following the research, stakeholder consultations were convened with representatives from the four major national networks as well as STP partners.

Of the many networks in Pakistan, STP felt that the National Humanitarian Network (NHN), with its seat on the HCTT and focus on response, was the most closely aligned to its objectives. The NHN is formed of 170 organisations and hosts a digital resource centre, engages with local experts to deliver training, and has established resources on a variety of topics such as NGO management, Contingency Planning, Gender and GBV in Humanitarian Action. The NHN was already part of the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum, an INGO forum, and the NDMA committee, which reviews country-level policies and guidelines. It was already vocal on local humanitarian action.

A formal partnership was made between STP and NHN. STP partners were invited to become members of the network. Local NNGOs were very positive about this opportunity and felt that membership gave them “a presence at the national level.” Participatory Welfare Services (PWS), for example, believed membership of NHN would lead to opportunities to form consortiums and to build new partnerships with larger organisations looking to implement projects in their region, Punjab.

The TWG reviewed the NHN strategy to identify areas of overlap and determined to focus on building the leadership of the NHN. Together, STP and NHN developed the following areas of work:

1. Set up a digital resource library and web portal so that L/NNGOs can access national guidelines, preparedness plans, training materials, and other relevant documents.
2. Support better information flow between the Executive Committee and Provincial representatives. STP funded the NHN to develop forums to consult at the provincial and district levels. At the national level, consultations are currently being held quarterly, face-to-face, or via Skype and email.
3. Advocate for the localisation of humanitarian aid with external stakeholders. Activities under this strand of work are still being finalised, however interviewees state that by working with a strong, existing humanitarian network, the sustainability of activities is protected.
4. The SHAPE framework is being used to conduct capacity needs assessments for NHN’s member organisations and for the NHN’s own capacity building plan.
5. A key achievement in Pakistan is the signing of the Charter of Commitments by consortium members including Tearfund, Oxfam, Action Aid and Concern Worldwide as well as Trocaire. The NHN has been commissioned to undertake research under Output 3 and to monitor the implementation of commitments by signatories to the charter.

The STP team recognise that despite (2), the NHN provides significant engagement for active NNGOs, but very limited opportunities for district-level LNGOs. More attention must be given to building the skills of LNGOs to advocate and lobby for greater representation within the NHN and other networks.

Opportunities should also be sought for L/NNGOs in other networks, such as the Gender in Humanitarianism Task Force which ensure the IASC gender marker quality and capacity is maintained across humanitarian actors. This is associated with the country Humanitarian Strategic Plan (HSP) and Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO).

Finally, STP has introduced partners to other networks including Human Resource Development Network, and the national Pakistan DRR Forum. It has supported the Pakistan DRR Forum to establish a Provincial Chapter in Sindh province, an informal and voluntary forum for over 50 NGOs, institutions and UN agencies working on DRR and disaster management. The forum intends to work alongside cluster/working groups and government coordination mechanisms.

Local and national government

The Government’s humanitarian systems are devolved with decision-making forums at the national, provincial and district levels. Provincial and district government bodies have significant resource constraints and limited experience of humanitarian coordination: STP, therefore, identified district-level government as a primary focus of engagement efforts.

According to STP staff, the District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMA) frequently lack the ability to adapt their disaster management plans, and so the same plan may be published, without update or review, every year. STP partners identified this gap and determined to work with 11 DDMA to develop joint preparedness or contingency plans “for the first time.”

This was a significant achievement because NNGOs and local and national government have typically suffered from strained relationships. STP has supported partners to improve their engagement by signing formal MOUs that aim to demonstrate how NNGOs can support local government through sharing information and mobilising resources.

Specific engagement plans have been developed between STP and each partner, which aim to address specific gaps at the local level. In some districts, STP partners are advocating district authorities to ensure relief camps comply with SPHERE standards. In others, the STP partner has conducted training for local district authorities on the CHS and how to incorporate it into humanitarian response. (Tearfund, the lead STP consortium member in Pakistan, had previously completed training on SPHERE and the CHS with STP partners, who have replicated it in their own organisations and with local district authorities).

In Singh district, an MoU was signed between a local organisation and the DDMA in order to support women's leadership in DDR. In another area, REEDS worked with its local DDMA to develop written 'roles and responsibilities' of the DDMA. Similarly, in 2016 and 2017, it hosted workshops with district stakeholders (including women) to allow the DDMA to share its contingency plans and then worked with the DDMA to publish a directory of contact details and emergency information. The organisation has participated in district-level flood simulations and is an active part of the DDMA WhatsApp group, designed to support better coordination.

Partners credit STP for promoting a closer relationship with local government. However, there is greater scope for partner engagement in national and provincial level policy. So far, several STP partners have attended training on logistics and camp management at the Provincial level. There are now plans to support local partners in contributing to provincial level policy building – for example on Drought response in Singh Province. The team is also considering how to promote representation at provincial level committees.

At the national level, organisations are advocating for a national humanitarian actor to sit on the National Disaster Management Committee (NDMC). The process is not clear (the Prime Minister normally selects a representative). STP has met with the chair of the NDMC to advocate for the role to be filled.

Engagement in humanitarian architecture

The NHN has a seat on the HCTT and has been engaged in activities to promote local humanitarian leadership for some time, including advocating for local partners to be able to access pooled funds. In the past six months, 60% of STP partners have accessed pooled funding and, according to STP staff, UN-OCHA has committed to continuing funding for local actors.

STP in Pakistan has collaborated with other DEPP projects; most notably ensuring that STP partner staff are included on the Transforming Surge Capacity project's emergency surge roster.



Representatives of national STP partners participating in a 5-day training session on Localized Surge Roster, conducted in collaboration with the Transforming Surge Capacity project. Photo @ Sana Basim, Tearfund Pakistan.

3: Learning from STP approaches

3.1 Overview

This review found that the strength of the STP project lies in its attempt to combine community, district and national level initiatives to increase the influence of a range of national and local actors.

The review found that visible progress was limited during 2016 when relationships were being formed and approaches refined, but has been more rapid over the first half of 2017. This review has taken place at a time when new structures and relationships have been built but there is limited evidence of specific achievements from organisations and networks to influence decision-making given the short timeframe of the project thus far. A number of different activities have now commenced, some of which will need to be examined for learning later in the life of the project.

The STP programme has been implemented in an adaptive manner, allowing each country team to research opportunities for influence and then implement activities that exploit those opportunities. At the country level, it has involved trial and error as STP partners explore the options for increasing organisational influence and build networks that allow national and local agencies to work together. This is to be encouraged in an adaptive programme that is designed to seek opportunities to increase influence and change.

The downside of this is that activities may appear haphazard. There are opportunities to make the project more strategic, in particular in agreeing on broad advocacy objectives and building a clear 'working definition' of the concept of influence within the project. In April 2016, STP recruited an International Advocacy Advisor who is now working with country teams to develop and implement a global advocacy strategy.

In general, knowledge and experience of advocacy strategies and approaches is relatively limited among partner organisations and STP country staff. Partners themselves have recognised a skills shortage for advocacy: in the SHAPE Framework self-assessments conducted at the outset of the project, the lowest average scores were for the 'Advocacy' category (1.5 out of 4)⁷. Despite this, advocacy was not generally seen as a priority for capacity development. Organisations instead prioritised operational skills, such as Preparedness or Resource Mobilisation (the exception was in Bangladesh, where eight organisations prioritised learning activities relating to advocacy and influence).

3.2 Lessons on building a grassroots constituency

The STP approach has discussed linkages between the national, local and community levels, to ensure a holistic approach to building influence. Two approaches have been taken to building linkages with community and to promoting representation of disaster-affected communities.

The first approach has been to improve organisational feedback and accountability mechanisms. Caritas Maralal in Kenya, for example, believes that having a better understanding of community needs and priorities will increase their own influence.

The second is the development of "community clusters" or other community-level structures by partners in Pakistan, Kenya, and DRC. In DRC, for example, HEAL Africa created community clusters following training on the CHS. These are community meetings designed to encourage community level engagement in decision-making processes (mediated by the NNGOs) as well as community-led response.

⁷ Self-assessments were undertaken by all 55 partners and scores and sources of evidence/ examples provided. Scoring based on 0-4 scale, with 0 = not in place or scarcely addressed and 4 = functioning very well.

Similarly, in Rahim Yarkham in Pakistan, REEDS has provided joint orientation training for the DDMA and community members on humanitarian response. At the end of each session, ten union-level volunteers were selected to form a community emergency response team (CERTs). These teams receive three days of training as well as an emergency response manual that describes their three roles: rescue, registration of affected people, and contribution to registration in health camps. According to REEDS, the DDMA has noted the increased involvement of community during recent floods in two unions with trained CERTs.

So far, a formal mechanism for linking community clusters to wider networks has not been identified. In Kenya, for example, NNGOs have established ward-level committees to discuss drought management. However, there are no formal opportunities for these committees to feed into sub-county or county-level steering group meetings. Instead, information is currently collected by NNGOs who report sharing what they learn with other actors and in county level meetings.

However, in interviews, L/NNGO partners reported that knowledge of the community context and access to community perspectives is important for their influence. In Kenya, for example, local governments look to the L/NGOs to provide information on the needs and priorities of drought-affected communities. Caritas Maralal, for example, argued that its improved feedback and accountability mechanisms (delivered under in Output 1) allow it to exert greater influence in the County Steering Group.

Similarly, in Pakistan, the STP focal person at REEDS described how STP training has enabled it to decrease the time taken to complete a needs assessment, and begin a response, from one week to 72 hours. As a result, it was recognised by the local government as an early responder, and was contacted at the outset of recent floods to share needs assessments and reports.

3.3 Lessons in organisational influence

STP approach to building organisational leadership

The STP project should be seen as an effort to build local leadership, which includes building the capacity of individual leaders as well as their collective influences.

The Centre for Creative Leadership provides a list of the most frequently recognised traits for leadership, such as strategic planning, inspiring commitment, and managing change. It notes that current approaches to leader capacity development frequently fail to prioritise these traits, which it views as necessary to meet modern challenges. The leadership gap, it notes, appears notably great in high-priority, high-stake areas (Leslie 2009). The Centre has also compiled evidence of good practices for building leadership and influence, which include mentoring, experiential learning in real-world environments, 360-degree feedback, and exposure to other leaders.

The STP project has built upon several of these practices in its approach. The three core components of Output 2 are skills-based training and workshops, facilitating linkages between L/NNGOs, and providing introductions to donors. Overall, interviews suggest that more could be done to increase exposure to other leaders and decision-makers in the sector.

Workshops for increasing skills and capabilities

Across outputs 1 and 2, STP has used training and workshops to build individual skills and organisational capabilities. The programme of workshops has been loosely based upon the SHAPE framework capacity assessments, which included metrics for understanding 'power' and 'influence' of local partners.

In interviews, NNGOs noted two workshops that had been beneficial in understanding influence:

1. Training in organisational leadership in Kenya, which participants said had increased self-awareness
2. Advocacy workshops, which participants in Kenya, Pakistan, and DRC said had encouraged them to think about how to use relationships with local government to advocate for policy changes.

Several partners who were less experienced in humanitarian operations also reported that training on humanitarian architecture, standards, and technical skills has increased their organisational influence. The first learning review noted that many of the organisations involved in STP had limited previous involvement in delivering a humanitarian response. The humanitarian remit (measured as a % of staff time and focus on humanitarian work) was 50% or less for 77% of partners⁹.

NNGO partners in DRC and Kenya explained that they had previously focussed on development work but are now growing their humanitarian portfolios through engagement with STP. HEAL Africa, for example, is a large NNGO delivering healthcare in eastern DRC. The STP focal person noted that in the past, HEAL Africa had delivered humanitarian response where necessary but said "we weren't well trained in that domain... training from STP has helped us to understand the humanitarian situation." Through training, HEAL Africa has developed an organisational disaster response plan, become a member of the CHS, and now lead the protection sub-cluster.

An assessment of the STP capacity building approach is beyond the scope of this report. However, strong humanitarian response capacity allows L/NNGOs to provide technical insights that are a vital part of influencing local and national Government and other humanitarian agencies. In Kenya, where STP partners exert influence at the county-level, local Government interviewees noted that L//NNGOS had provided input in assessments, planning and resource mobilisation. Similarly, in Bangladesh, L//NNGOs have used their technical expertise to influence district flood and drought response plans.

Links with donors

Funding is key to increasing local leadership. Access to resources can increase influence, flexibility and organisational capacity. In Kenya, for example, Caritas Maralal suggested that it is seen by local government to be able to influence the coordination of activities during drought because it has flexible funding that allows it to move quickly and distribute resources.

This is not the case for the majority of STP partners. Although 20 of the 55 global partners have a budget in excess of £1m⁹, the majority report that they do not have access to flexible or unrestricted resources.

None of the partners interviewed reported direct introductions being made to donors. However, several said that capacity building activities had allowed them to improve internal policies and management. In turn, this had led to recent proposals being accepted. For example, two partners in DRC and one in Ethiopia have secured new direct funding from UN-OCHA. In Kenya, two partners have accessed funding from bilateral donors and one had accessed funding from UN-OCHA. The partners attributed the achievement to skills gained through the project.

⁹ Lewinsky (2013) GETTING INTO SHAPE? A Review of Shifting the Power's Organisational Capacity Assessment Approach

Other partners in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and DRC have accessed new funding through building alliances to submit joint proposals to pooled funds. Participatory Welfare Services (PWS) in Pakistan, for example, recently established a partnership that has allowed it to conduct WASH activities in a new geographic area. HEAL Africa in DRC noted:

“They have proven how able they are to lead the cluster and to bring relevant information – this is another way to raise their influence.”

In Bangladesh, the new Start Fund is seen as an opportunity for local and national organisations to have greater access to direct funding. However, so far, the fund has not registered any L/NNGO members.

Increasing linkages between organisations

A unique element of the DEPP is the extent to which organisations are brought together to exchange ideas and learning.

At the national level, STP has hosted joint workshops and trainings that have built linkages between the 55 national organisations included in the project (see section 3.4). At the international level, a selection of Executive Directors from partner organisations have been included in STP workshops in Nairobi and London, as well as advocacy activities in Manila and Geneva.

Partners noted that these opportunities had allowed them to form new relationships with other NNGO partners, and had led to an increased confidence in talking about humanitarian leadership and the commitments in the Grand Bargain and Charter for Change.

Effectiveness of organisational capacity building

All the STP partners have participated in workshops or joined new networks. However, these activities are reported to be more effective by some partners than others. Factors that influenced the effectiveness of STP activities under Output 2 included:

1. **Human resources available to invest:** There is a wide range of partner organisations included in the project. 26 partners have more than 100 staff, including all 11 of the Bangladesh partner organisations.¹⁰ At the other end of the spectrum, seven of the partners have only 1–15 staff, including three in DRC, and four in Kenya. Those with fewer available human resources struggled to find time to participate in additional forums and (unfunded) initiatives to increase influence.
2. **Pre-existing relationships with decision-makers.** By contrast, partners that already had strong relationships with district authorities, for example, were more likely to have benefited from training on how to develop advocacy positions.
3. **Pre-existing relationships with local government.** In Pakistan, for example, the support being given to the District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMA) is technical, rather than material, and so their receptiveness to the project varies. In districts where the partners are already working closely with the DDMA through other projects, STP can capitalise on the relationship and the advocacy work is more effective.

¹⁰ From ‘Shifting the Power – One Year Overview’

3.4 Lessons in national influence

Introduction

The STP approach to building national influence has been highly consultative but built around the belief that collaborative networks are the solution to increasing local leadership. This belief is echoed in the design of DEPP which states that it is important to support networks and platforms to develop capacity, as collaboration and collective action are central to achieving sustainable change.¹¹

In each country the STP team has followed a four-step process to building collaborative networks that can be summarised as:

1. Roundtable discussions with selected local organisations.
2. Identifying relevant humanitarian platforms and networks.
3. Activities that support existing networks to establish national platforms of local humanitarian actors.
4. Agreement on critical priority issues for collaboration.

This section explores the lessons learned in implementing the process in each country.

Step 1. Roundtable discussions

In each country, the process began with STP hosting a series of open discussions with the selected organisational partners that explored their current engagement in government and humanitarian networks and discussed the commitments made in the Grand Bargain. Overall, STP partners felt they had employed a consultative approach and that activities had been flexible and agreed together.

Step 2. Identifying relevant networks

Next, STP mapped out the existing forums, networks, and platforms in each location. In Pakistan and Bangladesh, this was an internal process undertaken by team members at the national level. In Kenya, STP worked with its partners to map out actors at the county level.

In Ethiopia and Bangladesh, STP commissioned consultants to conduct formal research and mapping on the humanitarian context and networks. The research was undertaken by local academics or researchers with an understanding of the national humanitarian context. The findings of the research studies were shared with partners and STP has hosted discussions on how to engage and complement the work of networks. The research findings were also shared widely with national and international networks and government bodies. The research generated a series of recommendations that have informed future STP activities under Output 2 in the two countries.

Step 3. Establishing and partnering with national networks and platforms

There were three countries where a network already existed: DRC, Ethiopia, and Pakistan. In each case, the STP country team negotiated access to the network for its partners. Significant time was taken to build constructive relationships with the networks: meeting to discuss objectives and to identify how STP might implement activities through the network.

Interviews suggest that networks found these engagements constructive and felt themselves equal partners when deciding upon collaborative activities. The networks were also invited to attend roundtable discussions to encourage NNGOs to share ideas on the ways in which INGOs can strengthen and support the role of national organisations through changing their own policies and practices. The most notable examples of this are Pakistan, where the NHN has been engaged to undertake research under Output 3, and Bangladesh, where STP has hosted a series of Power Cafés.

¹¹ Taking responsibility for complexity - How implementation can achieve results in the face of complex problems. Harry Jones, June 2011, Overseas Development Institute, Working Paper 330.

There were two countries with no existing humanitarian network: Kenya and Bangladesh. In Kenya, the STP team decided to use the first 18 months of the project to focus on supporting county-level networking through the local government CSG meetings. STP's work has been to support partners in identifying and pursuing their advocacy objectives through the CSG. These have proved to be effective spaces for L/NNGOs in Kenya to share their perspectives and influence county decisions. Therefore, there is a strong feeling of autonomy among partners in Kenya.

In Bangladesh, STP worked with its partners to form NAHAB. The origin of NAHAB in Power Café discussions means that partners see the network as originating from and belonging to the L/NNGOs, despite STP currently providing the secretariat functions and funding. Partners are actively engaged in creating a constitution and agreeing upon activities. However, externally, NAHAB is still viewed as an INGO project.

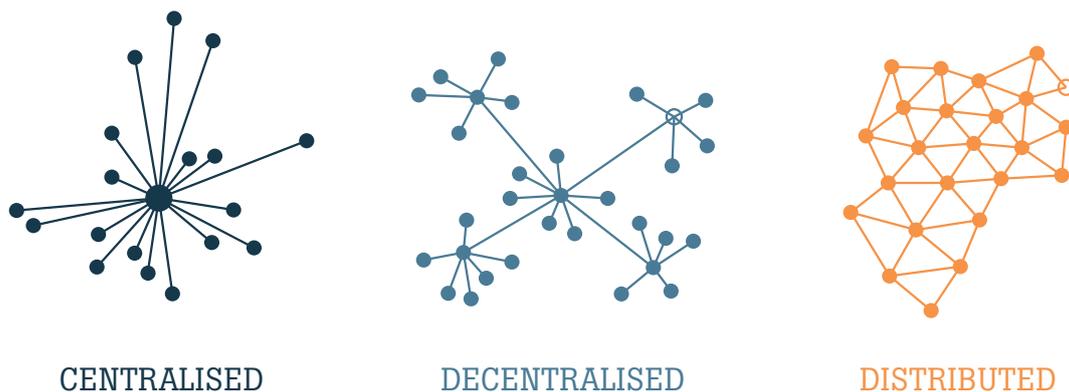
STP has focussed on supporting inter-organisational networks made up largely or exclusively of national-level actors. Scriven (2013) synthesised definitions of successful humanitarian networks in Asia and identified several common features: on-going mutually beneficial relationships, multidimensional exchanges, voluntary links between autonomous actors and recognisable functions. Analysis of STP networks against these criteria provides some clarity about how these networks can be strengthened.

1. Presence of dynamic, on-going, mutually beneficial relationships between autonomous actors

Partners in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia and DRC were positive about participating in a national or provincial level NGO network, identifying three primary benefits. First, the opportunity to learn from other L/NNGOs and to build technical skills; second, the chance to expand informal networks which might give them new opportunities to access funding and partnerships; and third, a sense that it might give them greater 'influence'.

Relationships between people in networks can be formed in three different ways (see Figure 1). In Pakistan, Bangladesh, DRC, and Ethiopia, STP has partnered with (or built) de-centralised NNGO networks. The networks all have ongoing, voluntary, and dynamic relationships between autonomous organisations, with a recognisable membership. Decision-making lies with a committee of NNGOs that set the strategic direction of the network.

Figure 1: Types of networks, adapted from Scriven (2013)



However, in several cases, LNGOs have struggled to deal with the politics of large networks. Nascent LNGOs often lack the capacity to influence decision-making. For example, in Pakistan, NHN provides significant engagement for active NNGOs, but very limited opportunities for district-level LNGOs. Additional funding and training are required to help LNGOs gain the skills to build alliances, forge effective partnerships and advocate for greater representation within networks.

In Kenya, the project has focussed on building informal social networks and encouraging stronger relationships with sub-county and community actors. However, in most Counties, there is nowhere for NNGOs to discuss the issues they face in delivering assistance and to develop shared positions. The exception is the local network in Masabit County, MIONET, which has facilitated NNGOs in the county forming joint positions and advocating for issues at the CSG together.

2. Multidimensional nature of exchanges

The contribution of the STP project to NNGO networks in the five locations is still emerging. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that STP partners are beginning to use these networks to build trust with other NGOs, to exchange information and ideas, and forge new partnerships. For example:

- Alliances being formed for joint funding of proposals in Bangladesh and DRC.
- Sharing of new tools and practices using the Joint Needs Assessment Resource Pool in Bangladesh and the online resource pool in Pakistan
- Informal WhatsApp groups formed between STP partners and other local actors for information sharing and peer support in Kenya and Pakistan.

3. Group of recognisable functions

To be effective, networks require an explicit purpose or goal that is focussed on improving humanitarian performance, or reducing the impact of disasters or conflicts, through advocacy, campaigning, coordination, learning, or information sharing. This is discussed as part of the final stage in the STP approach.

Step 4. Agreeing issues for collaboration

However, the ambition of Output 2 is to see greater influence of L/NNGOs within humanitarian architecture; increased participation in networks makes an important contribution to this aim but is not necessarily an end in itself. The agreed activities (outlined in section 2) must be a means to increasing influence within government and UN-led processes, something that requires further support and learning.

The process of agreeing on issues for collaboration was contextualised to each location. STP drew on the initial research papers, the perspectives of partners and the outcomes of roundtables and discussions. In early 2017, STP country teams and partners in each location agreed on a country advocacy strategy. This is a simple, one-page document that outlines 3-8 objectives, such as the number of partners to be leading clusters by the end of 2017. Crosscutting issues were identified and inserted into a global-level advocacy strategy that contains shared messaging and demands (see section 3.5).

Once the country strategies had been agreed, STP country teams began to consult with partners to agree on specific activities to implement. In the three countries where networks already existed, the STP TWG or country teams took leadership in identifying areas for collaboration. Partners were involved in this process, but did not take the lead.

Networks are now beginning to implement activities. In Pakistan, STP and NHN have agreed that NHN will undertake research under Output 3. In Bangladesh and Ethiopia, STP intends to support networks in advocating for seats in the HCTTs. If successful, these activities would allow L/NNGOs to develop shared positions on a variety of current humanitarian issues.

Results and lessons learned

Achievements in humanitarian system influence

The STP baseline study in 2015 found a lack of participation of local actors in humanitarian coordination networks, such as clusters and platforms. Involvement in networks and platforms among INGOs was much higher (92%) than among L/NNGOs (63%). There was a high level of variance between countries, with participation greatest in DRC (90%) and lowest in Ethiopia (27%). Only 39% of L/NNGOs had been involved in leading a humanitarian cluster or working group.

Partners in every country report that they have gained a greater appreciation of the humanitarian architecture, the importance of collaborative work, and an understanding of the localisation agenda. It is notable that in all countries partners are building a shared perspective on what localisation means in practice. However, few organisational partners are able to define specific advocacy objectives (the few that do exist relate to funding at the national level).

Partner organisations in every country felt that the project has begun to build their ability to influence humanitarian response, but that two years is insufficient for L/NNGOs to be able to participate in coordination and decision-making bodies “at the same level as the INGOs.”

Table 1 illustrates evidence of the increased influence of L/NNGOs and networks in humanitarian architecture:

Table 1: Results to date

Country	Evidence of increased influence with INGOs and in clusters	Evidence of increased influence with local and national Government
Bangladesh	A series of four Power Cafés have been organised to bring together local, national and international humanitarian organisations, and donors, to discuss how to create more space for NNGOs. So far, these have been led by Christian Aid, but future Power Cafés will be coordinated by NAHAB.	NAHAB has formed new links with relevant Department heads
	Participation in Joint Needs Assessments by STP partners	
DRC	Attendance and leadership of clusters and sub-clusters	STP partners have increased attendance at local government meetings
Ethiopia	STP partners are participating in Clusters, particularly at the zonal level	Future plans to develop network’s role in advocating for policy changes.
	Future plans to develop network’s role in the HCT	STP partners are contributing to multi-agency Joint Needs Assessments
Kenya		Successful advocacy to establish sub-county steering committees that allow for coordination at the local level. Funding of coordination meetings.
		Participation in Joint Needs Assessments
Pakistan	Some increased participation in the NHN network and additional opportunities for OCHA pooled funds	Stronger relationships between STP partners and DDMA including formal MOUs, training, and examples of better information sharing
	NHN participation in the HCT and the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum	

Achievements in influence of local and national Government

In DRC, the UN leads and coordinates the humanitarian response and local government has limited capacity or control. However, in the other four locations, the local and national governments are actively engaged in coordination and disaster management. Moreover, participation and leadership of clusters is seen as selective. In all five countries, L/NNGOs have seen local and national government as their priority for influencing activities.

The vast majority of partners held pre-existing relationships with local government. Nevertheless, five of the partners interviewed explained that involvement in STP enabled them to understand how to make these relationships more strategic.

In Samburu, Kenya, for example, partners emphasise how they have focussed on single advocacy priorities, such as the establishment of sub-county steering groups. STP supported partners to identify, monitor and record their priorities and achievements. There is a perception among NNGO partners that coordination is increasing as a result.

“Since getting into contact with STP we have developed an agenda. We are focussed on the CSG, and then we try and capture what changes there.” - (Caritas Maralal)

Similarly, in Pakistan, STP partners have developed MOUs with the local DDMA which they believe has led to more trusting relationships. In particular, partners have now conducted training and are more actively sharing information on their activities. In DRC, partners noted that they are more active in sharing their activities with local Government and attending coordination meetings.

3.5 Lessons in international influence

International influence has been limited in the first two years of project implementation. However, in 2017, STP recruited an International Advocacy Advisor who has supported country teams in developing their own advocacy plans and has developed a global strategy. The global strategy provides four key messages on the role of L/NNGOs in humanitarian response and identifies advocacy targets and tools. There are 11 activities at the global and national levels, which include inclusion of L/NNGOs in national cluster meetings, partners being recognised as legitimate actors by the humanitarian coordinators, and donors having access to the evidence generated through the project.

There have been several achievements in the six months since the International Advocacy Advisor was recruited. Most notably, STP has formed a relationship with the team at UNICEF responsible for the Child Protection Area of Responsibility inside the Protection Cluster. STP has shared information on its SHAPE framework with the team, which is considering how to localise child protection, and has been asked to provide training in SHAPE to L/NNGOs in Nigeria. STP and UNICEF have had a series of productive conversations on opportunities and challenges to facilitate greater engagement of L/NNGOs in Protection Clusters.

STP has also worked to bring the experience of national branches to the international stage. This has primarily happened through four events:

1. Several partners participated in the WHS, or attended the follow-up sessions to the Grand Bargain in Geneva. More recently, the Executive Director of Caritas Bangladesh participated in the CHS conference in Helsinki.
2. Partners participated in DEPP learning meetings in Nairobi and Manila and two partners will be attending the WHAF event in November in London.
3. Project Managers have taken partners to meet with UN OCHA (in DRC, Pakistan, and Ethiopia, for example) to discuss how to promote the role of L/NNGOs in coordination meetings.
4. Project managers have taken several partners to meetings with DFID in-country

Partners who participated in these events were positive about the experience. They emphasised the chance it had given them as individuals to network with INGOs as well as the positive exposure it gave to their organisation. The experience had also given partners greater confidence in talking about the Grand Bargain and the commitments made in the Charter 4 Change. In general, partners did not yet perceive any increase in space arising from these activities.

The Networks that attended these meetings emphasised the opportunity to learn from approaches taken in other countries. For example, CCONAT in DRC stated that through the DEPP meetings, it has learned about approaches to direct funding, lobbying government for humanitarian budgets, and contingency planning for preparedness.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

“We now understand that the project is advocacy based. We now understand the importance of messaging and of championing localisation. We now need to identify audiences and advocate more effectively” – National NGO Pakistan

This review has examined the progress and achievements of STP in achieving Output 2: increasing the voice and influence of local and national humanitarian actors.

The social network analysis conducted with STP partners illustrate a humanitarian system where L/ NNGOs are numerous but poorly connected to their peers or to decision makers. This project has tried to address both issues, by supporting stronger NNGO networks and by encouraging STP partners to participate in decision-making fora.

1. Activities under Output 2 were implemented using an adaptive approach that allowed for contextualisation

The strength of the STP project lies in its approach to flexibly exploring influencing activities at the community, district, national and international level. STP partners and networks were able to discuss and identify the most relevant initiatives in their own context. One partner in Bangladesh expressed this well:

“One beauty of the project is its flexibility. It is not like typical projects that have certain activities. It has openness. Initially, that was individual. Now it is looking at how we can collaborate together to address capacity building and policy issues collectively.”

– NNGO Bangladesh

This has allowed STP country teams and their partners to identify the most relevant structures for their influencing activities. In Eastern DRC, for example, STP has focussed its efforts on the district and provincial cluster network, in Ethiopia, STP has focussed on working with established networks and in Kenya, STP partners have targeted the local government CSOs.

The NNGO variation in terms of size, budgets, and humanitarian remit increases project complexity. The Project Manager in Pakistan, for example, noted that it is difficult to have a clear idea of the challenges that partners are facing. Interviews suggest that the activities to date have been most effective among larger L/NNGOs who have established relationships with local Government and the human resources to make use of new opportunities. Smaller partners would benefit from flexible support that would allow them to build better linkages with their own national networks.

2. In Bangladesh and Kenya, consortium partners have so far led decision making on national activities

In DRC, Pakistan, and Ethiopia, STP has worked through established networks to engage local actors in decision-making on project activities. For example, in DRC, STP facilitated convening spaces for three autonomous L/NNGO networks. Similarly, in Pakistan, the NHN identified its own priorities and co-designed network activities.

This has been more difficult in Bangladesh and Kenya, where there was no established humanitarian L/ NNGO network. STP partners have participated in discussions and activities, but the majority of national level activities have been designed by INGO staff within the consortium partners.

This is particularly pertinent in Bangladesh where STP has supported the establishment of NAHAB. The network is still seen by donors and UN representatives as an INGO project: STP must actively avoid taking credit for the project, and seek out multiple funding streams for the network if it is to be seen as representative.

In Kenya, opportunities for convening local actors at the national level are still very limited.

3. Achievements to date are tentative and emergent

So far, the STP project has forged new relationships and supported increased participation of STP partners in local humanitarian networks, Joint Needs Assessment, and local information sharing. L/NNGOs and STP teams now have a good understanding of the actors operating in their area, and of who holds decision-making power. There have been early successes in influencing local Government and district and provincial level cluster meetings.

The outcomes of these activities are still emerging and the next year will be vital for embedding the L/NNGOs into new humanitarian spaces. The activities with networks in particular will need to be re-examined for learning later in the life of the project.

4. Activities are beginning to look beyond the current partners

Several networks commented that the approach to identifying STP partners was 'messy,' and lacked transparency. By actively engaging in networks, STP is now building relationships with a wider network of partners. It should continue to pursue joint activities with autonomous networks. In future, projects such as STP should consider how to identify future partners in a more transparent way.

5. The project would benefit from greater investment in advocacy and influencing expertise

Despite these successes, there is not yet a shared understanding of what concepts such as voice and influence mean in practice for STP partners. Only two of the partners interviewed were able to describe specific demands (or 'asks') that they are making of their networks, partners, or the broader system in the short term (i.e. the project life).

The STP country teams and their partners have few staff members with experience of influence and advocacy within the humanitarian architecture. The majority of STP project managers have an operational background. Working alongside other team members they take advantage of influencing opportunities that arise – such as attending meetings with DFID or OCHA – but they have limited time to devote to supporting activities in this area. Bangladesh is the only country to have recruited an Advocacy Officer, who provides secretariat support to the NAHAB network. The Kenya team attempted to recruit an Advocacy advisor in May 2017 but were not able to fill the role.

An important next step is for STP to support partners to think more critically about how to achieve their objectives, what works in influencing decision-makers, and what doesn't. New ideas and approaches should be encouraged and, as ideas are tested, the outcomes should be shared with other partners and networks.

6. High expectations, limited space

The inclusion of Outputs 2 and 3 were important components of the project for many Executive Directors. Partners were motivated to participate because it offered opportunities to increase their influence and to discuss changes needed in the system. The project title 'Shifting The Power' created high expectations of the changes that could be expected within a three-year project.

Creating change within the humanitarian system at the national level will take significant time. Partners in each country have built a shared understanding of what 'localisation' involves and of the commitments made in the Grand Bargain and the Charter for Change. However, they anticipated more significant shifts in power, and suggest that the greatest barrier is a lack of space within both formal and informal humanitarian networks. In Ethiopia, for example, partners emphasised that their challenge is not only attending cluster meetings and other decision-making forums, but also feeling poorly equipped to engage in the informal networking that happens among INGO and UN staff 'in hotel lobbies' and outside of meetings.

One challenge is the tensions that arise as consortium members themselves struggle for funding in several of the STP contexts. INGOs are trying to demonstrate their own added value in running 'localisation' projects while also working to create space for national and local actors. There have been positive efforts to bring these tensions into the open for discussion – through the Power Cafés in Bangladesh, for example. A meaningful step in Pakistan is agreement that the NHN will be responsible for conducting research under Output 3 and monitoring how STP consortium members implement their Charter for Change commitments.

ANNEX 1: List of Interviews

Distance interviews

Name	Organisation	Role	Country
Emmanuel Mbuna	Caritas Congo	Emergency Manager	DRC
Agnes Kalekye Kithikii	CAFOD	Humanitarian advisor	Kenya
Gang Karume	CCONAT	Director of RHA	DRC
Anjum Nahed Chowdhury (Lucky)	Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK)	Executive Director	Bangladesh
Rahima Sultana Kazal	AVAS	Executive Director	Bangladesh
Patrice Mulamba	Heal Africa	Operations Coordinator	DRC
Achar Bozdar	Fast Rural Development Program	Executive Director	Pakistan
Hayat Khan	Participatory Welfare Services	Executive Director	Pakistan
Shahid Saleem	REEDS	Executive Director	Pakistan
Arsene Kirhero	StP	Project Manager	DRC
Ange Kayumba	StP	Capacity building officer	DRC
Daniel Gebremedhin	StP	Project Manager	Ethiopia
Vittorio Infante	StP	International Advocacy Advisor	London
Mohammad Asim Jaleel	StP	Project Manager	Pakistan
Janvier Ngambwa	Oxfam	MEL Coordinator	DRC
Albert Mushiarhamina	Christian Aid	Emergency Programme Officer	DRC
Ayele Sebaro	Action Aid	Humanitarian advisor	Ethiopia
Desalegn Demisse	Tearfund		Ethiopia
Syed Sulaiman Shah	Concern Worldwide	Humanitarian advisor	Pakistan

Kenya interviews and focus groups

Organisation	Role	Location	Type
Samburu North Sub County Commission	Deputy County Coordinator	Samburu North sob-county	DRC
Samburu North Sub County	Sub-County Steering Group	Samburu North sob-county	Kenya
StP Kenya	Capacity building coordinator	StP	DRC
Caritas Maralal	Head of Programmes Project officer	Maralal, Samburu County	Bangladesh
Samburu County NDMA	Coordinator	Maralal, Samburu County	Bangladesh
Wajir County Disaster Coordinator	Coordinator	Wajir town, Wajir	DRC
Wajir County NDMA	Coordinator	Wajir town, Wajir	Pakistan
ALDEF	Programmes	Wajir town, Wajir	Pakistan
WASDA	Programmes	Wajir town, Wajir	Pakistan
Oxfam	Programmes	Wajir town, Wajir	DRC
StP Kenya	Project Manager	StP	DRC

Bangladesh interviews and focus groups

Organisation	Role	Location	Type
StP	StP Bangladesh briefing	Dhaka	STP
Caritas	Executive Director, STP Focal person	Dhaka	NNGO
NAHAB	Executive Director DAM, Chariperson NAHAB	Dhaka	Network
Oxfam	Humanitarian Programme Manager	Dhaka	TWG
DAM	StP Focal person	Skype	NNGO
POPI	Executive Director, STP Focal person	Dhaka	NNGO
DSK	StP Focal person	Dhaka	NNGO
StP	Project Manager	Dhaka	STP
Christian Aid	Country Director	Dhaka	NSC
UN OCHA	Humanitarian Affairs Advisor	Dhaka	UN
DFID	Humanitarian Advisor	Dhaka	Donor
Department of Disaster Management	Director General and Joint Secretary	Dhaka	Government
Start Fund	Country Manager	Dhaka	START
CARE Bangladesh	JNA Working Group lead	Dhaka	INGO

ANNEX 2: Methodology

The learning review was intended to be a participatory, consultative and inclusive exercise. It employed a document review and interviews with a diverse group of key informants to gather evidence on the approaches taken to achieve Output 2 and achievements to date. The approach included:

1. A review of all project documents, including partners' SHAPE Framework self-assessments
2. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups, during fieldwork in Kenya and Bangladesh and by distance in the other three STP countries, including with:
 - nine STP team members
 - 16 local and national NGOs
 - five networks and platforms
 - six local and national Government representatives
 - three donors and UN representatives
 - ten INGOs
 - two focus groups with local Government representatives
3. Social Network Analysis workshop involving partners from each country. The workshop was attended by 17 people including STP representatives from each of the five countries where the project is being implemented and local partners from three countries.

There were two main limitations in applying this review methodology. First, that it was only possible to visit two of the five implementation sites, and second that all interviews in Bangladesh were conducted in Dhaka. Inevitably this has led to more interviews being conducted with larger NNGOs based in major cities who were often easier to contact. Second, while interview participants were generous with their time, it was not possible to gain the same depth of understanding in the project sites that were not visited. The detailed feedback of STP teams in DRC, Pakistan, and Ethiopia was therefore particularly valuable.

OUR LOCAL PARTNERS

BANGLADESH

- AKK - AMRA KAJ KORY AVAS
- ASSOCIATION FOR VOLUNTARY ACTIONS FOR SOCIETY
- DAM - DHAKA AHSANIA MISSION
- CARITAS BANGLADESH
- SAJIDA FOUNDATION
- UDPS - UTTARA DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM SOCIETY
- GUK - GANA UNNAYAN KENDRA
- CCDB - CHRISTIAN COMMISSION FOR DEVELOPMENT IN BANGLADESH
- DSK - DUSHTHA SHASTHYA KENDRA
- SHUSHILAN
- WCB - WORLD CONCERN BANGLADESH

DRC

- COMITE POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT ET ASSISTANCE HUMANITAIRE (CODEVAH)
- PACODEVI - PROGRAMME D'APPUI AUX COMITES DE DEVELOPPEMENT DES VILLAGES
- HEAL AFRICA
- CEPROSSAN - CENTRE DE PROMOTION SOCIO-ECONOMIQUE SANITAIRE
- BOAD - BUREAU OEUCEUNIQUE AU DEVELOPPEMENT
- ECC-MERU - MINISTERE DE L'EGLISE POUR LES REFUGIES ET LES URGENCES
- CARITAS CONGO
- CARITAS GOMA
- PROGRÈS SANTÉ SANS PRIX (PPSSP)
- CENTRE DE DEVELOPPEMENT RURAL DE KIBUTU (CEDERU)
- COMITE D'ACTION POUR LE DEVELOPMENT INTERGRAL (CADI)

ETHIOPIA

- COMMUNITY INITIATIVES FACILITATION AND ASSISTANCE (CIFA)
- ACTION FOR DEVELOPMENT (AFD)
- ETHIOPIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH APOSTOLIC VICARIATE OF HOSANNA (AVH)
- WOMEN SUPPORT ASSOCIATION (WSA)
- ASSOCIATION FOR NATION WIDE ACTION FOR PREVENTION AND PROTECTION AGAINST CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT - (ANNPCAN)
- RIFT VALLEY CHILDREN AND WOMEN DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (RCWDA)
- CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (CDI)
- TEREPEZA DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (TDA)
- SOS SAHEL
- HUNDEE - GRASS ROOT DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

KENYA

- PACIDA
- CARITAS-MARSABIT
- CARITAS-MARALAL
- CARITAS-ISIOLO
- ADSTMKE
- POWEO
- SIKOM
- ALDEF
- WASDA
- KENYA RED CROSS
- NMDA

PAKISTAN

- PARTICIPATORY RURAL DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY (PRDS)
 - BRIGHT STAR DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY BALOCHISTAN (BSDSB)
 - RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION (RDF)
 - FAST RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (FRDP)
 - PARTICIPATORY VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (PVDP)
 - ASSOCIATION FOR WATER APPLIED EDUCATION AND RENEWABLE ENERGY (AWARE)
 - SOCIETY FOR SAFE ENVIRONMENT AND WELFARE OF AGRARIANS IN PAKISTAN (SSEWA-PAK)
 - VEER DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (VDO)
 - RURAL EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY (REEDS)
 - GRASSROOTS PAKISTAN (GRP)
 - PARTICIPATORY WELFARE SERVICES (PWS)
 - MULTAN DIOCESE TRUST ASSOCIATION (MDTA)
-

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