



**Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR)
Localization Task Team:
Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Workshop
Dead Sea, Jordan
June 26-27, 2019
FINAL REPORT**

1. Executive Summary



From June 26-27, 2019, the Localization Task Team of the Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR) hosted a Middle East and North Africa (MENA) regional workshop at the Dead Sea in Jordan. The meeting included a

total of 27 participants, including representatives from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen along with global and regional actors. In addition to including representatives from local civil society organizations, the workshop also included national or sub-national GBV sub-cluster coordinators as well as the regional emergency GBV advisor (REGA) for the MENA region.

The first in a series of three global workshops (with subsequent ones to be held in Asia and Africa), the aim of the meeting was to promote the exchange of learning across countries and to identify key priorities for enhancing localization efforts at the country level through GBV coordination mechanisms. Additionally, the workshop presented an opportunity to identify ways in which the GBV AoR's Localization Task Team could better support members in localization efforts to:

- Ensure strengthened coordination in GBV prevention and response;
- Establish priorities for joint learning and advocacy; and
- Enhance participation of local GBV actors.

This workshop sought to build upon two previous activities of the GBV Localization Task Team, including a Global Mapping Study and a meeting held in March 2019, both of which identified key challenges faced by local and women-led actors with regard to GBV localization in humanitarian contexts.

In addition to expanding on these initiatives, the workshop provided participants with an opportunity to share good practices related to GBV localization, while importantly allowing space for the country teams to identify priorities and to develop action plans. It provided practical action-oriented exercises that can be



used by the country-level sub-clusters as a starting point in their efforts to take forward the localization agenda in their respective countries. While there is much progress that needs to be made, the tangible action items identified during the workshop are an important beginning and will lead the wider country, regional, and global conversations related to the enhancement of localization within the GBV sector.

2. Background: The Global Localization Agenda and the GBV AoR Localization Task Team

In 2016, the first ever World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) took place to mobilize support and action for the Agenda for Humanity. The WHS resulted in a drive by all stakeholders to empower local humanitarian actors and to reinforce local systems. The WHS catalyzed numerous initiatives and partnerships, including the Grand Bargain – an agreement between many of the largest donors that commits to improving humanitarian efficiency and effectiveness – and to providing 25 percent of global humanitarian funding to local and national responders by 2020.

The WHS and the Grand Bargain committed the humanitarian community to “making principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary.”¹ The WHS culminated with the recognition that local and national partners have an essential role to play in responding to the needs of populations affected by humanitarian crises. Localization is subsequently a process in which the humanitarian response is re-configured to meet this collective commitment.²

¹ WHS (2016), p. 22

² Localization Q&A (2018)

In order to meet the commitments made to localization and to ensure local actor engagement in both field coordination mechanisms and global strategic decision-making, the Localization Task Team of the Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR) was formed, and is currently co-led by CARE USA and ActionAid International.

Due to the “particular risks faced by women and girls [that] can be heightened when humanitarians overlook women’s strength and [when] they do not work with local women’s organizations and female leaders”³ the task team is focused on the following primary objectives:

- Consolidating current research and lessons learned on localization in humanitarian GBV prevention and response in order to identify opportunities, challenges, and gaps to be addressed through joint action.
- Facilitating wider engagement by GBV AoR members as well as new partnerships with local organizations, ensuring coordination and alignment with wider efforts on localization within the Global Protection Cluster (GPC).
- Catalyzing shared analysis and joint initiatives through the GBV AoR’s Localization Task Team to promote effective approaches to localization with a particular focus on: the GBV AoR work plan for 2018–2020, the Call to Action: Road Map 2016–2020, and the localization work-stream of the Grand Bargain.

Based on these objectives, the Localization Task Team conducted a Global Mapping Study in early 2019 in order to examine the extent to which local actors are engaged in country-level coordination mechanisms related to GBV prevention, response, and risk mitigation efforts. It also sought to provide recommendations for ways forward to ensure the meaningful participation of local partners, including women-led organizations, national and local government authorities and other relevant actors, such as those in the private sector, academics, and faith-based institutions.



To build on the findings of the Global Mapping Study, the Localization Task Team convened a global meeting in New York on March 14, 2019, which identified various themes related to the challenges and obstacles to GBV localization efforts. These themes were consistent with those identified by the Global Mapping Study and included: 1) Participation in coordination and decision-making; 2) Funding; 3)

³ GBV AoR (2015) *Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies: Road Map 2016–2020*. Geneva, Switzerland.

Engaging with national and local governments; and 4) Options for linking global, regional, and country-level efforts. Overall, the workshop recognized the highly contextual nature of localization with many participants emphasizing the important role of GBV sub-cluster coordinators as essential in shaping the localization agenda at the country-level.

Based on the learning and recommendations from the Global Mapping Study and the New York Conference, three regional workshops were planned in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Asia, and Africa. The regional workshops were designed to include participants from local organizations and GBV sub-cluster coordinators with the aim of building upon best practice through the development of tangible action plans. The structure and content of the first workshop was informed by the findings of the Global Mapping Study and New York Conference. An overview of the outcomes of the first workshop held in the MENA region is the focus of this report.

3. The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Regional Workshop

3.1. Overview of the Workshop



The MENA regional workshop hosted by the GBV AoR Localization Task Team took place from June 26-27, 2019, at the Dead Sea in Jordan. The workshop included a total of twenty-two (23) participants from Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq and Syria, representing a total of thirteen (13) national NGOs and civil society organizations. It also included GBV national or sub-national sub-cluster coordinators and

the regional emergency GBV advisor (REGA). The local organizations present at the workshop were either members of the GBV sub-cluster or were partners nominated by core members of the GBV AoR.

The aim of the workshop was to promote the exchange of learning and promising practices amongst countries at the regional level, in order to identify key priorities and actions to enhance localization efforts at the country-level through GBV sub-clusters or working groups.

Additionally, the workshop presented an opportunity to identify ways in which the GBV AoR's Localization Task Team could better support members in localization efforts to:

- Ensure strengthened coordination in GBV prevention and response;
- Establish priorities for joint learning and advocacy; and
- Enhance participation of local GBV actors.

While the Global Mapping Study and the New York Workshop organized earlier in the year by the Task Team focused on identifying challenges, gaps, and opportunities with regard to GBV localization, the regional workshops, beginning with the one in Jordan, were designed to be forward-looking, and build upon what had been learned through these earlier processes. As a result, the Jordan workshop sought to provide space for participants to work together in country teams and to develop concrete action plans that could be used for further planning and consultation with country coordination groups and shared with the Localization Task Team and GBV AoR more broadly to prompt further action. In order to connect the workshop with efforts to promote localization within related humanitarian sectors, workshop materials were based on examples and lessons learned from the experience of the Child Protection Area of Responsibility (CP AoR) and the Education Cluster.

Materials were also based on commitments to localization indicated in core GBV AoR documents, such as the GBV AoR's Strategy, the GBV AoR Handbook for Coordinating Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, and the Minimum Standards for Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies. Other resources that informed the workshop design included various localization-



related recommendations, such as those highlighted in the Global Protection Cluster's learning paper entitled, "Advancing the Localization Agenda in Protection Coordination Groups."

In building upon examples of good practice, the workshop aimed to provide participants with:

- Basic background knowledge on global localization efforts (Global Protection Cluster, World Humanitarian Summit and Grand Bargain);
- Knowledge of the humanitarian architecture of the Protection Cluster, GBV AoR, and GBV Localization Task Team;

- Common understanding of localization and what is meant by “local partners”, according to the regional and country contexts of participants;
- Overview of the challenges and themes identified in the Global Mapping Study and New York Conference;
- Opportunity to identify priorities and concrete actions that can be included the GBV coordination groups’ annual work plans.

Day one of the workshop focused on providing participants with an overview of localization and the themes, challenges and ways forward identified by the Global Mapping Study and the New York workshop. Participants were encouraged to identify recommendations to enhance the localization agenda at the country-, regional- and global-levels. Day two of the workshop focused on practical action planning in which country teams identified where the current balance of as local as possible, as international as necessary falls in relation to five key concepts: governance and decision making; influence and participation; partnerships; funding; and institutional capacity development. Participants were then presented with the space to identify priorities, actions and indicators to monitor progress with the support of the facilitators. While it was not possible to finalize action plans without the input and consensus of the GBV coordination group members in each respective country, the workshop acted as a starting point for participants to identify priorities and actions, which can be built upon.

3.2. Country-Level Action Planning



To date, much of the work related to localization has either centred on pilot initiatives or the efforts of individual agencies rather than being led by country-level coordination mechanisms. However, the coordination system has a critical role to play due to its considerable influence over the strategic direction of the humanitarian response.

Country-level GBV coordination groups also act as forums to promote good practices and pilot initiatives with members, donors, and other relevant actors. Localization within the GBV sector should therefore be an ongoing process that continually seeks to find the balance between what is “as local as possible and as

international as necessary.”⁴ As previously described, the workshop was designed to be forward-looking, incorporating an opportunity for participants to identify country-level priorities and to develop action plans related to localization. Prior to the action planning exercise, however, it was important that the participants came to a common understanding of “localization”. Participants agreed that while there is no standardized definition of the term, related initiatives tended to focus on one or more of the following areas:

- Increased *participation of local actors* in governance, program design, and decision-making.
- Increased *resources* allocated or available to local actors.
- *More equitable partnerships* with local actors, providing tailored capacity building and empowering their efforts to retain staff, scale up, and sustain their services.

Secondly, it was necessary for the group to reflect on what was meant “local” partner in accordance to the region and country contexts. The participants highlighted the need to refer not only to national non-governmental organizations (NNGOs) and civil society organizations, but also to government and local authorities.

Once these common understandings had been determined, time was allocated to wider discussions related to how localization could be promoted and supported at country, regional and global levels. The second day of the workshop revolved around action planning. In building upon best practice of the GPC and the CP AoR, as well as on the themes identified by the Global Mapping Study and New York Conference, the prioritization and action planning exercise was structured around five localization framework dimensions: governance and decision making; influence and participation; partnerships; funding; and institutional capacity development. The purpose of the prioritization and action planning sessions was to contextualize approaches to localization in line with the unique factors of each country’s humanitarian context.



⁴ Grand Bargain (2016): http://www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/resources/2017/Jul/WHS_Co_mmitment_to_Action_8September2016.pdf

Each group was asked to identify where along the continuum of each of the five framework dimensions they believed best represented the phrase “as local as possible and as international as necessary”, which enabled them to visualize the dimensions requiring further support or focus. Once priority areas were identified, teams were asked to identify key actions that could be implemented by country-level sub-clusters to achieve a greater degree of localization. They were also encouraged to identify timeframes and to develop indicators to monitor progress.

3.3. Country-level Action Plans

All participants worked in their respective country groups to identify key priority areas and action plans. Some teams also developed indicators by which to monitor progress. Each group also agreed that they would share the action plans developed during the workshop with their wider sub-clusters following the meeting order to gather input and to ensure implementation.

An overview of key outcomes from the action planning exercise is included below:

Iraq



The Iraq team included three members from civil society and women’s led organizations. They mentioned that while there are strong local partners in Iraq, international agencies still hold most of the authority in relation to governance, decision-making, and funding. Therefore, partnerships between local and international organizations are not equitable. They also mentioned that there are gaps in institutional capacity

of local partners, and the lack of direct relationships amongst local partners and donors inhibits the ability of local partners to identify and secure funding opportunities. The team included several important priority actions, and while the GBV sub-cluster coordinator was not present at the workshop, the team planned to introduce the action plan to the wider coordination group to gain input. Their priorities included:

- **Governance:** The team committed to developing a strategy related to decision-making to ensure that local partners have more decision-making power. They also recommended that an annual election be held by the GBV sub-cluster to encourage co-leadership of local partners.

- **Participation:** A key action point was to increase the number of local NGOs in the GBV sub-cluster and to provide opportunities for local partners to participate in conferences, including international conferences, meetings, and workshops.
- **Institutional capacity building:** The team recognized the need for further institutional capacity strengthening of local partners and recommended developing an action plan with the aim of assessing local partner capacity to identify gaps, and working with international organizations to determine ways forward and opportunities for capacity strengthening.
- **Equitable partnerships:** The team highlighted the need to increase the equitability of partnerships between local and international organizations by strengthening communication and information sharing, encouraging visits from international NGOs to local partners (as opposed to vice versa), and to mention the names of local partners in donor reporting.

Jordan

The Jordan team included four members from local partners, including women-led organizations. The team emphasized that there was a need for greater equitability in relation to decision-making, governance, funding, and participation of local actors. The group highlighted the need to have core funds available for local partners.



Based on this objective, the priority was identified to develop a partnership framework with the GBV working group that clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of local and international NGOs. In order to accomplish this, the group determined a possible ways forward could include having annual elections and empowering local partners to co-lead the working group.

To support in increasing decision-making and funding opportunities for local partners, the team prioritized the involvement of local partners in project design and proposal development. They also mentioned the need for greater transparency in relation to funding. They planned to propose a mapping exercise be facilitated in order to map the recipients of funds to identify whether donors are actually shifting funds from international agencies to local partners. They particularly highlighted the need for support from the GBV Localization Task Team in linking them with donors willing to fund local partners. In summary, the teams' priorities included:

- **Governance and decision-making:** Orientation to the coordination group on the global localization mechanisms. The development of a partnership framework that is equitable, and which defines the roles and responsibilities for INGOs and NNGOs. To measure the progress of these actions, they developed indicators:
 - Number of coordination meetings focused on localization.
 - Demonstrated change in the level of knowledge and attitudes of coordination group members related to localization efforts.
 - Number of organizations involved in the development of the Partnership Framework.
 - Number of organizations adhering to the Partnership Framework.
- **Equitable partnerships:** Ensuring meaningful partnerships between the INGOs and NNGOs and better engagement of NNGOs and local partners in the design of proposals. The following indicators were included:
 - Communication and coordination tools are used to facilitate a common ground between the two parties.
 - Number of proposals developed with the meaningful participation of local organizations.

Yemen



The Yemen team consisted of three participants, including the sub-national GBV coordinator. The team decided to focus their action plan and priorities on the GBV sub-cluster's strategic plan in order to emphasize the localization agenda. In Yemen, the GBV sub-cluster was not functional for one year due to the security situation and has more recently re-started activities.

One of the main challenges raised was related to the high turnover of local authorities' staff, which requires continual re-orientation by GBV sub-cluster members on issues pertaining to GBV. As a result, the team identified the need to enhance GBV activities by firstly working to introduce local authorities to GBV concepts and activities in order to strengthen the response capacity in areas, such as the case management of survivors and the humanitarian principles of do no harm. The team's main priority was to establish a GBV strategy at the national level.

Secondly, they aimed to encourage membership of the GBV sub-cluster to promote common approaches and ways of working, as well as to ensure that all actors are adhering to inter-agency minimum standards related to GBV. In particular, they mentioned that increased membership would lead to GBV actors being better able to support one another at the country-level. They did not set a timeline because they wished to present their action plan to the wider GBV sub-cluster in order to agree altogether on next steps.

The team developed several indicators by which to monitor these actions:

- Number of participants of the GBV sub-cluster that are local
- National GBV Strategy in place
- Teamwork/equitable partnership agreement in place
- Number of new partnerships
- Number of orientation sessions with local authorities provided by GBV sub-cluster members
- Number of co-leads at hub level
- Revision of the sub-cluster terms of reference to include reference to a localization strategy
- Development of operational manuals

Lebanon



The group from Lebanon included three participants from local organizations. Lebanon in comparison to the other country contexts has experienced more progress in relation to the localization agenda. The overall Lebanon Crisis Response, which was put into place by the Humanitarian Coordination Team (HCT) includes a component on GBV.

In all of the country-level coordination platforms an agreement has been into place to include equal number of international and local members. As a result of these factors, the main priority identified by the Lebanon group was for increased funding opportunities for local partners. Participants mentioned that even though there was strong capacity of local partners, funding for GBV activities remained predominantly with international agencies.

Syria

In Syria, the humanitarian response has been driven by local organization due to the security situation and access constraints faced by international organizations. In total, within the GBV sub-cluster there are sixty-five members, only five of which are international organizations. Similar to the other contexts, however, the majority of funding is still directed to international organizations.



The Syria team included four members, including the national and sub-national GBV sub-cluster coordinators. Due to the strong membership of local actors in the GBV sub-cluster, one of the priorities of the team was to encourage national NGOs to support in building the institutional capacity of smaller local partners operating in the same locations and to encourage local partner leadership and systems strengthening. They also questioned, however if it was the responsibility of the GBV sub-cluster to facilitate institutional capacity development and suggested that specific budget lines to capacity development. One issue raised by the team was the lack of sustainability of restricted funds, which make it challenging for local partners to fund support staff positions, meaning high staff turnover due to short project cycles.

The team echoed the Jordan team by recommending that one way the GBV Localization Task Team could support was by mapping funding opportunities for local partners at the regional or country levels. They mentioned that there was a need for greater transparency in relation to the recipients of funds and the amount of funding received by international organizations in comparison to local partners.

While the team wanted to take back their recommendations to the country coordination group for further input before determining key actions, they suggested establishing a thematic group specifically on localization and developing a terms of reference for the group. They also requested more frequent and strategic communication from the GBV Localization Task Team on localization efforts, as well as greater efforts to share examples of best practice. Upon approval from the other sub-cluster members, the team aimed to prioritize preparing regional statistics and information to support advocacy and fundraising efforts, as well as to develop guidance on localization, particularly differentiating priorities between the government and NNGOs and civil society organizations.

3. Discussion: Common Themes and Implications for the Task Team



During the workshop in Jordan, three primary themes emerged: 1) A lack of equitable partnerships between local and international organizations; 2) Insufficient opportunities for funding and direct donor engagement for local actors; and 3) A need for additional institutional capacity strengthening. These themes were also consistent with those identified by the Global Mapping Study and the New York Workshop

held by the Task Team—both of which emphasized the fact that strong and meaningful partnership remains central to humanitarian response.

Based on discussions that took place during the workshop, several key strategies were identified as ways in which country, regional, and global GBV coordination bodies can seek to address these issues, including the following:

- **Coaching partnerships:** Specialists working alongside the local partner for an agreed period time to assist them in developing core competencies, skills and organizational systems.
- **Mentoring partnerships:** Involving regular, defined support focused on helping to review implementation, support problem solving and brainstorm ways of improving a program.
- **Joint implementation:** Involving both the international and national organization to hire staff and work alongside one another to jointly achieve common targets or goals.
- **Long term, strategic partnerships:** Agreeing on a long-term strategy with a local partner, focused on mutually agreed upon goals and long-term results, rather than a single project.

In order to have equitable partnerships, local organizations need equitable access to information so that they can make informed contributions. This means that they also need access to available data and for it to be presented in a way that can be used by local actors (for instance being translated or adapted to different communication modalities for those who cannot attend coordination meetings). Regional and global coordination mechanisms can support in promoting the equity of partnerships.

All country teams also raised the issue of funding. The difficulty of accessing humanitarian funding remains one of the main challenges for local actors. Without core funding, they experience high staff turnover and are unable to build the

capacities of staff to strategically position their organization within the cluster system, as highlighted by many of the teams during the workshop. Structural changes related to increased funding to local partners will take time and political will.



While donors may want to work more directly with local actors they often do not have a sufficient number of staff to manage multiple small direct funding agreements. However, coordinators can play a role in ensuring that local actors who have sufficient capacity are prioritized in the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and that they have approved project sheets. They can also ensure that pooled funding selection criteria enables local actors to access available funding. Coordinators can also advocate for approved local partners when discussing with donors.

At the global or regional levels, the Localization Task Team can advocate for the greater availability of un-earmarked funds or flexible overhead budget lines for local partners with donors. As highlighted by the Syria team, few national organizations receive un-earmarked funding, which leads to challenges related to the sustainability of operations. The Task Team can also support in mapping donors who have funding available for local organizations and make the links between country-level sub-clusters accordingly.

The majority of teams also mentioned the issue of institutional capacity. At present, international organizations often invest in the technical capacity development of their local partners, as well as in the assessment of their local partners to identify risk or in compliance monitoring. Whilst this is critical in managing risk, it is not sufficient for many local partners who are seeking to strengthen their institutional systems. There are several practical steps that international organizations can take to strengthen the institutional capacity of their local partners.

The Localization Task Team and regional mechanisms can support by encouraging country-level sub-cluster coordinators to include in the work plans and project sheets:

- Support to local partners to develop their own institutional capacity-strengthening plan, based on their own strategic priorities.
- Ensure that partnership agreements more explicitly link capacity assessments, partnership agreements, partnership budgets and mutual monitoring systems and processes.

- Ensure that budgets explicitly address the capacity strengthening commitments.
- Draw on coaching and mentoring strategies, in addition to centralized training efforts.
- Provide un-earmarked funding, which national organizations can use to invest in their own institutional and individual staff development.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations



The workshop provided participants with the opportunity to share good practices related to localization, while importantly allowing space for the country teams to identify priorities and to develop action plans. It provided practical action-oriented exercises that can be used by the country-level sub-clusters as a starting point in their efforts to take forward the localization agenda in their respective countries. While

there is much progress that needs to be made, the tangible action items identified are an important beginning and will lead the wider country, regional, and global conversations related to the enhancement of localization within the GBV sector.

The main recommendations provided by participants to the global level Localization Task Team related to the common themes that were identified. In particular, participants encouraged the Task Team to:

- Promote the co-leadership of local partners at the sub-cluster level;
- Have a local partner co-lead of the global Localization Task Team;
- Advocate with donors for increased direct funding to local partners;
- Map existing funding opportunities for local partners;
- Engage more frequently with country-level sub-clusters to share learning and best practice; and
- Establish a regional mechanism that is able to track progress related to the localization agenda among countries with the regions.

5. References

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Appendix: Workshop Agenda

Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR) Task Team on Localization Middle East Regional Workshop 26-27 June, 2019 Crowne Plaza Hotel	
DAY 1	
Timing	Session
8.30 – 9.00	Registration and Coffee
9.00 – 9.30	Welcome and Introductions
9.30 – 9.50	Session 1.1 Security Briefing, Introduction to the Workshop, learning outcomes, ground rules, housekeeping
9.50 – 10.30	Session 1.2 Overview of GBV AoR and GBV Localization Task Team, Global Mapping Exercise, and Outcomes of the New York Conference
10.30 – 10.45	Coffee Break
10.45 – 11.30	Session 1.3 Understanding Localization: Current Climate and Conceptual Framework
11.30 – 12.30	Session 1.4 Small Group work: What are the priority challenges and opportunities in engaging with local actors?
12.30 - 13.30	Lunch
13.30 – 14.00	Session 1.4 cont. Presentation of key challenges and opportunities and plenary
14.00 – 15.00	Session 1.5 Sharing of Good Practices and Lessons Learned
15.00 – 15.15	Coffee Break
15.15 – 15.30	Session 1.6: Introduction to the Call to Action and Opportunities for Engagement
15.30-- 16.30	Session 1.7: World café: Rotating in small group discussions to brainstorm ways forward, including key recommendations for the GBV Localization Task Team (country, regional, global)
16.30 – 17.00	Wrap up and Q&A
DAY 2	
Timing	Session
9.00 – 9.20	Admin & Recap of Day One: What struck you on Day One?
9.20 – 9.30	Overview of Day Two
9.30 – 10.45	Session 2.1 Establishing the Current Situation and Future Vision
10.45 – 11.00	Coffee Break
11.00 – 12.30	Session 2.2 Action Plan Development and Prioritization: Identifying priorities to better engage with local GBV actors at the global, regional and country levels
12.30 - 13.30	Lunch
13.30 – 14.45	Session 2.3 Indicators and Monitoring
14.45 – 15.00	Coffee Break
15.00 – 16.15	Group Presentations and Plenary
16.15 – 16.45	Moving Forward Together: Function and Membership of the Task Team
16.45 – 17.00	Wrap up and Q&A