



## PAPER 13

# Shifting the Power: Delivering the Localisation Agenda

## 1 Introduction

ActionAid has been leading the large international consortium project Shifting the Power (StP) under the START Network providing documented evidence and learnings around localisation. StP works in five disaster prone countries (Bangladesh, Pakistan, Kenya, Ethiopia and DRC) to strengthen the capacity of national and local organisations to prepare for and respond to disasters as well as document a transformational model to localisation covering different humanitarian contexts including fragile state, rapid and slow onset disasters.

This paper outlines some of the key learning from these initiatives and provides guidance for how localisation can be approached and contextualised in the Pacific region. It will also share the emerging Pacific centred Shifting the Power Coalition, which seeks to support localisation by specifically strengthening the role of diverse women's organisations in humanitarian response in partnership with key regional organisations. The Coalition is contributing to the localisation of humanitarian assistance, by strengthening local capability to prepare for and respond to emergencies by working with an established network of local partners who are seeking greater engagement in humanitarian action. It is catalysing localised gender responsive humanitarian action by strengthening Pacific women's capacity to engage in disaster preparedness, response and recovery. This includes building on indigenous knowledge, and existing good practices and capacities in the region with the goal to gradually reduce dependence on international actors for humanitarian assistance and protection.

## 2 Shifting the Power

ActionAid is leading the Shifting the Power consortium with CAFOD, Christian Aid, Concern, Oxfam and Tearfund to support 55 local organisations in 5 countries (Kenya, Pakistan, Ethiopia, DRC and Bangladesh) to strengthen their capacity to determine and deliver humanitarian preparedness and response. The consortium's vision is to support local actors to take their place alongside international actors in order to create a balanced humanitarian system that is more responsive and accountable to disaster-affected communities. The project was launched through the START Network and supported by the United-Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) through the Disasters Emergency Preparedness Programme (DEPP), which aims to develop decentralised approaches to capacity building and to improve the quality and speed of humanitarian response.

The project strengthens local and national organisational capacity for decision making and leadership in humanitarian response. It supports local organisations to have greater representation, voice and recognition, and at the same time, influence international organisations to promote the role of local and national actors and demonstrate how this approach can make national responses more effective. The project includes an in-depth 2-year programme of support for local organisations to strengthen their capacity to determine and deliver humanitarian preparedness and response.

Capacity strengthening has been viewed as a complex and organic journey of internal change process characterised by trust, collaboration and self-reflection. This journey is unique to each local organisation; however, all start by conducting a capacity self-assessment. The SHAPE framework (Strategic Humanitarian Assessment & Participatory Empowerment Framework) is a tool to support local and national organisations to assess their capacity to not only manage humanitarian programmes, but also to control and influence the

humanitarian response. The framework is based on a model of humanitarian capacity that emphasises the importance of power. During the assessment process organisations review their humanitarian capacity across governance and leadership; influence; and preparedness and response. A capacity strengthening plan (CSP) is then developed according to the needs and priorities agreed by the partner and the Shifting the Power Consortium. The priorities, needs and aspirations identified during the capacity assessment form the basis of a capacity strengthening plan. The completed SHAPE framework provides baseline information of the organisation's competencies at the start of the StP project and provides a basis to assess progress.

Power and influence remain innovative features of SHAPE and they are woven into the framework through its three main domains and by its power indicators. The complexity of these concepts and what they mean to different organisations requires unpacking and discussion, the outcomes of which are often difficult to reflect within CSPs, with the exception of capacity areas related to external resource acquisition, which has an immediate benefit to the NNGOs.

Engaging with the key humanitarian platforms and network in each of the five countries to advocate for improved representation and increased voice of L/NNGOs has required different strategies and approaches. In Pakistan, StP's partnership with the National Humanitarian Network, the Pakistan DRR Forum and the Human Resource Development Network has raised the profile of L/NNGO partners and provided opportunities for additional capacity building, networking, and advocacy for the localisation of aid. In Bangladesh, the formation of the first humanitarian platform for national NGOs – the National Alliance of Humanitarian Actors in Bangladesh (NAHAB) – was conceptualised through the project at a session attended by representatives from the Government DRR agency, UN, INGOs, NGOs and other civil society organisations.

Ethiopia and DRC's mapping exercise to identify the key platforms and networks as well as opportunities and challenges for representation of local organisations has provided a full picture and better analysis of the humanitarian architecture in these two countries. Both are currently pursuing partnership with identified national platforms. Kenya made a strategic decision to initially focus its advocacy work specifically on the drafting of the County Disaster Management Policy in the six counties where its local partners are operating. Its advocacy strategy is grounded on community-informed and led disaster preparedness and response. The outcomes from strengthening organisational capacity and identifying power and influence to date have included:

In Kenya, partners have successfully engaged with the Disaster Management Authority in six counties and developed a joint needs assessment. Partners now have weekly coordination meetings with the County authorities to oversee the response. In Western Pokot, the POWEO's women network is prioritising the protection of women and other community members at risk. Women are at the centre of community-led proposals for intervention, and participate in them. POWEO is also ensuring that vulnerable families are enrolled in a cash for food programme. By using the media, StP partners have highlighted the needs of affected communities and influenced the authorities' role in drought response.

Overall, learning from the STP demonstrates that targeted interventions can enable L/NNGOs to strengthen their access to decision making and resources, but this needs to be combined with longer-term capacity strengthening. The Shape Framework provides a tool that can be used to identify capacity gaps and monitor progress of L/NNGOs to facilitate their greater representation, voice and recognition in influencing humanitarian response.

## **2.1 Localisation in the Pacific**

Building on ActionAid's Humanitarian Signature, Human Rights Based Approach and key lessons learnt from the StP, ActionAid Australia is contributing to the localisation agenda in the Pacific by strengthening local capability to respond to emergencies and working with an established network of local partners seeking greater engagement in humanitarian action. With an explicit focus on strengthening existing local and national organisations, the goal of the Pacific Shifting the Power Coalition is to gradually reduce dependence on international actors for humanitarian assistance and protection. It is also seeking to catalyse localised gender responsive humanitarian action by strengthening Pacific women's capacity to engage in disaster preparedness,

response and recovery. This includes building on local women's indigenous knowledge and capacities as well as existing good practices from actors in the region.

Specifically allocating resources directly to diverse women and their organisations to be able to engage better in risk reduction, preparedness and response is a key requirement to deliver on the Pacific localisation agenda. With access to funding and technical support, ActionAid is working with local organisations to deliver community-based women-led protection and DRR. This provides the platform for which women are not just participating in, but actively leading and making critical decisions on all stages of Disaster Risk Reduction, Disaster Management and Humanitarian Response, including in Early Warning Systems (EWS), Post-Disaster Needs Assessments (PDNA), logistics, procurement, etc.

## 2.2 Shifting the Power Coalition

The Pacific region has multiple, complex, deep-rooted power structures that can be challenging for international actors to understand, impacting the ability to establish appropriate mechanisms for delivering humanitarian response. The Shifting the Power Coalition (StPC) was established to catalyse localised gender responsive humanitarian action with a specific goal of strengthening Pacific women's leadership in emergencies, including disaster preparedness, response and recovery. The StPC recognises and facilitates women's voice, representation and participation in decision making through inclusive and targeted strategies. StPC draws on Pacific women's knowledge and expertise, as well as their extensive, well-established networks to reach remote communities and can assist governments, humanitarian and development organisations to deliver sustainable, equitable and inclusive humanitarian response.

StPC is comprised of femLINKpacific, Pacific Disability Forum, Pacific Community and ActionAid with country partners Talitha Project, YWCA Samoa, Nazareth Centre, Vois Blong Mere, Transcend Oceania and Vanuatu Young Women for Change. Coalition partners seek to increase recognition of the existing capabilities of women frontline responders, who play a vital role in supporting the most vulnerable and in ensuring the food security of families and communities in times of crisis. StPC draws on partners' respective strengths including: promoting accountability to crisis affected communities, shifting power to local actors, innovative support for women's access to information through community radio and other media, disability inclusion, commitment to inclusive, just and gender equitable societies and access to global humanitarian response capability.

StPC builds upon the commitment made at the World Humanitarian Summit to elevate the role of women in humanitarian action. It contributes to the broader agenda of localisation of humanitarian assistance by strengthening local capability to respond to emergencies and working with an established network of local partners to increase their engagement in humanitarian action. It also contributes to commitments under the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific.

Partners share a commitment to driving a transformative agenda during crisis that transforms gender relations over the longer term by demonstrating women's capability and leadership for the benefit of the whole community. StPC has established a number of objectives, including promoting women-led innovation in DRR, DRM and humanitarian response, and greater recognition and awareness of indigenous knowledge. It is also working to strengthening the capacity of diverse women to engage in district, sub-national and national disaster coordination mechanisms and their ability to organise and influence decision making. Alongside this, strengthening sex, age, disability disaggregated evidence and data across the region is seen as vital to inform decision making, as well as amplifying diverse women's voices at regional level and influencing key processes.

Research shows that women are the first responders in an emergency and can facilitate access into/sharing of information to and from communities that are remote and hard to reach by government and external actors. Women have detailed knowledge of community demographics and power dynamics that is different to those in formal decision-making roles. When involved in humanitarian response, women provide key insights to strengthening risk mitigation and disaster response activities, which in turn ensures more effective delivery of decentralised humanitarian response that is responsive to the needs of each village.

The StPC has identified that to deliver on the localisation agenda in the Pacific, governments and humanitarian actors need to draw on the existing knowledge and programs of local, national and regional women's

organisations and provide resources for women to strengthen their capacity to prepare for and respond to disasters. There is a need to ensure that women including young women, women with disabilities and lesbian, bi and trans women, and their organisations, are part of decision making at all levels of disaster planning and response. And actors need to recognise and resource women's alliances who can provide extensive outreach across the region. This will strengthen delivery of humanitarian response and longer-term development programs through a process where power is shifted from international actors to local and national actors, while also building on global commitments to localisation and addressing women's rights.

### 3 Summary and Conclusion

There is a global need to increase direct funding specifically targeting diverse women, including women with disabilities, and their organisations. This is especially true in the Pacific where women continue to be left out of formal decision making and leadership roles. Effective localisation in the Pacific region should target existing local and national NGOs, civil society organisations and community groups in order to reinforce capacities rather than establish competing priorities. This will also be more sustainable in the longer-term if the partnership is established according to locally driven priorities, demands and capacities. Partnerships should be equal in power dynamics and decision-making authority and grounded in shared values and principles which will facilitate clear roles and responsibilities. To facilitate this, donor governments must commit to ensure 25% of humanitarian financing goes to local and national organisations including women's groups and organisations representing people with disabilities, with more flexible timelines and direct funding for capacity development and preparedness.

In addition to direct partnership, a key mechanism for delivering localisation is supporting women's alliances. Existing groups and organisations in the region are often small in number, poorly resourced and are further constrained in collaborating due to the vast geography of the region and poor infrastructure limiting communications technology. This makes achieving effective localisation and demonstrating impact difficult. To support gender-inclusive humanitarian action, grassroots women and girls' groups require resources to support women's alliances and space for women's collective organising and influencing. This provides immeasurable impacts from the individual to the national level with women stating that their personal empowerment and confidence from such spaces provides them with the necessary confidence to lead and serve in their community. International agencies can also stand in solidarity with Pacific partners, by opening space and resourcing for community voices, including the voices of women and people with disabilities to engage in and influence high level policy events, and backing these demands. We are stronger together as a unified voice working for change and accountability in humanitarian response.

Recognising women's indigenous knowledge and making explicit links with DRR, disaster management, humanitarian response and climate change adaptation is also important for the Pacific region. Women have an in-depth understanding of the impacts changing weather patterns are having on daily activities over the short and longer term and how these impacts affect their overall resilience, and it is essential to draw on this knowledge. Delivering on the localisation agenda requires humanitarian and development actors to overcome their resistance to ceding power and control and redefining their role in a system that shares power with local and national actors, both men and women. Humanitarian actors should plan a clear exit strategy to ensure local ownership over disaster planning and preparedness, and ensure capacities are strengthened in line with local partner's needs and expectations.