

PROPOSING A SESSION IN RHPW 2023

11 to 13 December, 2023

Session Title:

Empowering frontline actors for equitable partnership for localization Democratization of development and de-colonizing aid

A. Abstract:

This concept paper outlines a proposed panel session for the Regional Humanitarian Partnership Week (RHPW) 2023, to be held from December 11th to 13th, under the theme "Empowering Front Line Workers and Equitable Partnerships for Localization: Democratization of Development and Decolonizing Aid." The session aims to shed light on the critical issues surrounding localization, emphasizing the need for empowering front-line workers and fostering equitable partnerships within the humanitarian and development sector. This concept note explores the key topics and objectives of the session, emphasizing the imperative role of local organizations in humanitarian architecture as key partners of other humanitarian stakeholders including donor agencies, UN bodies, and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and in advancing the localization agenda.

B. Introduction:

Localization in the context of humanitarian assistance and development entails the promotion and strengthening of local organizations to create sustainable, accountable, and community-centric civil societies. At the heart of this concept lies the conviction that empowering front-line workers and fostering equitable partnerships are essential for achieving genuine localization. However, it is pertinent to question whether we are receiving sufficient support in this endeavour, especially from key partners such as donor agencies, the United Nations, and international non-governmental organizations who have committed to the Grand Bargain and Charter for Change principles.

Key Themes and Objectives:

Complementarity and Inclusivity: We believe that humanitarian assistance and development efforts must involve a harmonious and inclusive collaboration among various stakeholders. In this context, we propose defining the roles of UN agencies, INGOs, and national/local NGOs. We further explore the proposition that local organizations should lead field-level operations, while UN agencies, INGOs, and more established national NGOs should contribute through fund-raising, compliance, technical assistance, and monitoring.

Frontline Actors' Empowerment: Recent experiences, notably during the COVID-19 pandemic, have highlighted the pivotal role of front-line staff from local organizations. Their intimate connection with the communities they serve underscores the importance of prioritizing Accountability to the Affected Population (AAP). This session will explore whether front-line workers possess the necessary facilities, management support, and capacities (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) to fulfil their roles effectively, particularly concerning protection, Protecting Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), and fiduciary management.

Best Practices: We will present five exemplary practices that organizations have adopted to empower front-line workers:

1. promoting cross and open communication while retaining line decision-making,
2. recognizing front-line workers as knowledge workers,
3. facilitating open and barrier-free interactions between executives and front-line staff,
4. providing benefits and compensation to support risk sharing of front-line workers, and
5. involving front-line workers in project cycles from inception to evaluation.

Civil Society's Role: Humanitarian and development civil societies are not mere service providers but should actively work towards advancing human rights and democracies in their respective societies. This approach aims to reduce the influence of aid colonization and promote the development of democratic societies at all levels. This also would further delve into the nexus agenda linking humanitarian to development and peace.

C. Session Details:

The proposed session, organized by the Alliance for Empowering Partnership (A4EP), aims to:

- Identify critical issues and share examples of empowering front-line workers to build sustainable and accountable civil societies in aid-recipient countries.
- Draw attention to the crucial role that UN agencies, INGOs, and national NGOs must play in advancing localization efforts.
- A4EP will collaborate with progressive organizations in the Asia Pacific region to implement this session, inviting prominent speakers and fostering a participatory discussion during the event.

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