LET US LEAD

A case study on the engagement of local and national non-government organizations in the humanitarian coordination architecture for the Syrian refugee response in Lebanon

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The decade-long Syria crisis remains one of the world's worst humanitarian emergencies. In response, the international community has established a complex humanitarian coordination architecture that operates within Syria and across neighbouring countries. Despite the critical role played by local and national non-government organizations, their leadership and engagement remain limited, and they lack adequate resources and support. Transforming the system demands fundamental changes in the existing humanitarian coordination architecture, and requires that international actors consciously cede power, resources and decision making to local and national counterparts.

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ACRONYMS

3RP	Syria Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
DOP	Disabled people's organization
EOC	Emergency Operations Cell
ERP	Emergency Response Plan
GoL	Government of Lebanon
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
INGO	International non-government organization
LHL	Local humanitarian leadership
L/NA	Local/national actor
L/NNGO	Local/national non-government organization
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex
LHDF	Lebanon Humanitarian Development Forum
LHF	Lebanon Humanitarian Fund
LHIF	Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum
NGO	Non-government organization
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
RLO	Refugee-led organization
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	UN Refugee Agency
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees
UNSCOL	United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon
WLO	Women-led organization
WRO	Women's rights organization

1 INTRODUCTION

The decade-long Syria crisis remains one of the world's worst humanitarian emergencies. Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, thousands of people have lost their lives, and many more have been injured. According to the United Nations (UN), 13.4 million people in Syria are in need of humanitarian assistance and protection.[1] The conflict has displaced over six million people inside Syria, and over five million people have fled the country as refugees.[2] In response to the enormous influx of Syrian refugees in the Middle East region, the international community has established a complex humanitarian coordination architecture that operates within Syria and across neighbouring countries.

Local and national actors (L/NAs) play a key role in humanitarian action, and are often the first and best responders when a crisis strikes.[3] L/NAs already provide leadership for the Syrian refugee response in Lebanon; however, they lack adequate resources and support. While the recent COVID-19 pandemic has further underscored the need for local leadership, international humanitarian actors, including donors, UN agencies and international non-government organizations (INGOs), continue to overlook the existing capacities of L/NAs including non-government organizations (NGOs) and government agencies to lead and implement effective humanitarian programming. Supporting the leadership of L/NAs is a moral imperative to ensure their self-determination.[4] L/NAs must drive the direction of policies and programmes in the emergencies and contexts in which they operate.

Shifting power and resources to L/NAs is fundamental to rooting out the systemic racism and colonial assumptions embedded in these global structures and processes. L/NAs have long called for greater leadership in humanitarian responses. Commitments such as the Agenda for Humanity, the Grand Bargain and the Charter for Change have accelerated efforts to ensure responses are 'as local as possible, and as international as necessary'.[5] However, transforming the system also demands fundamental changes in the existing humanitarian coordination architecture, and requires that international actors consciously cede power, resources and decision making to local and national counterparts.

METHODOLOGY

This case study summarizes research undertaken on the engagement of L/NAs in the international humanitarian coordination architecture for the Syrian refugee response in Lebanon. The research explores the barriers and enablers for the leadership, representation and participation of local and national NGOs (L/NNGOs). Oxfam reviewed academic and grey literature from publicly available sources on relevant themes, including localization,[6] local humanitarian leadership,[7] and humanitarian coordination architecture,[8] with a particular emphasis on publications focused on the Lebanon context. The review primarily covered English language documents published between 2015 and 2021.

The research also draws upon six semi-structured key informant interviews with representatives from L/NNGOs, which Oxfam conducted virtually between December 2021 and January 2022. Oxfam offered access to an Arabic-speaking interpreter; however, all the informants chose to conduct their interviews in English. Participating L/NNGOs included two women-led and women's rights organizations (WLOs/WROs), one disabled people's organization (DPO), one refugee-led organization (RLO) and one L/NNGO forum. Oxfam selected these organizations based on their current or previous relationship with Oxfam, and/or their familiarity with the humanitarian coordination architecture in Lebanon.

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CONTEXT

Lebanon currently hosts the largest number of refugees per capita globally.[9] The Government of Lebanon (GoL) estimates that the refugee population includes 1.5 million Syrians, along with almost 15,000 refugees of other nationalities, including those from Iraq and Sudan.[10] There are also 479,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria in Lebanon.[11] It is estimated that 90% of these Syrian refugees are living in extreme poverty,[12] as a result of a disastrous socio-economic downturn, coupled with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Beirut blast.[13] The relevance of these recent events cannot be underestimated as they changed the entire landscape of service provision in Lebanon, and many Lebanese civil society organizations (CSOs) have increasingly transitioned from development work and advocacy into humanitarian assistance and service delivery.[14]

Founded on the 1909 Ottoman Law, the regulatory environment for NGOs in Lebanon is outdated, and there are few government restrictions on the establishment of new NGOs in the country.[15] This has led to a relatively free and open operating space for humanitarian actors,[16] although some NGOs such as RLOs and LGBTQI+ organizations face particular discrimination, particularly during the process to obtain registration, and when establishing bank accounts to receive funds.[17] There is fierce competition, with estimates on the number of CSOs in Lebanon varying between 5,000 and 12,000 organizations.[18] Lebanese civil society is characterized by a diversity of NGOs – from large, established organizations to less formal community-based organizations.[19] Humanitarian actors also include Western and Gulf donors, UN agencies, multilateral institutions and private sector entities.

Lebanese civil society has a long history of inclusion of WLOs and WROs.[20] However, while the social and cultural context for women in Lebanon is more liberal than in Jordan or Syria, discrimination persists due to patriarchal family systems and historic tribal cultures, and women continue to be underrepresented in high-level positions.[21] Working on gender and human rights issues can attract hostility, especially if the L/NNGO is advocating for a change in legislation.[22] There are a number of DPOs and LGBTQI+ organizations operating in Lebanon, although many of them focus on policy and advocacy work as they do not have the resources or mandate to undertake direct service delivery.[23] Syrian and Palestinian-led RLOs operating in Lebanon face particular barriers and are also frequently excluded from the international humanitarian coordination architecture.[24]

OVERVIEW OF HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION ARCHITECTURE

Weak governance and unclear policies about the GoL's approach to refugee hosting (Lebanon is not a signatory to the 1951 UN convention and its protocol relating to the status of refugees) has made the coordination context more difficult.[25] In the early days of the Syrian refugee crisis, the GoL distanced itself by 'pursuing a disastrous policy of no policy, which created confusion and led to an uncoordinated approach', leaving the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) responsible for the first two years of the response.[26] However, in 2015 the GoL began to play a greater role,[27] which led to the creation of the first Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), in partnership with UNHCR and the UN Development Programme (UNDP).[28] The current LCRP 2022 supports the needs of Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in Lebanon.[29] The Ministry of Social Affairs leads the GoL's response to the crisis and is responsible for managing the approval of humanitarian projects with international funding.[30]

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)'s Emergency Operation Cell (EOC) leads the implementation of the Emergency Response Plan (ERP) 2021–22, supported by UN and NGO

sector coordinators.[31] The ERP addresses the impacts of the Beirut blast and COVID-19, with a particular focus on the needs of vulnerable host communities, migrants and Palestine refugees.[32] Lebanon is also one of five countries (along with Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Turkey) included in the UN-led Syria Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), which was first launched in December 2014, with a rolling two-year timeframe.[33] The UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL, similar to the Humanitarian Coordinator role) chairs the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and leads strategic coordination with the GoL through the Prime Minister's Office.[34]

MAIN FINDINGS

MODEST LEADERSHIP, REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION OF L/NNGOS IN DECISION MAKING AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS

There has been notable progress on the localization agenda in Lebanon in the last decade,[35] yet institutions headquartered in the Global North such as donors and UN agencies continue to dominate the international humanitarian coordination architecture. L/NNGOs account for 14% of the HCT membership (three seats), 6% of the EOC cluster leads (one seat), and 15% of the Lebanon Humanitarian Fund (LHF) Advisory Board (three seats).[36] While L/NNGOs constitute a minority on the HCT and LHF Advisory Board, they do enjoy equal representation with INGOs on these platforms.[37] L/NNGOs are not included as LCRP sector leads, although the GoL holds a prominent share of the leadership with 41% of these roles (12 seats).[38]

The participation of L/NNGOs differs markedly between clusters/sectors, and relies heavily on access to 'safe spaces' depending on whether government authorities are included in the membership, and the history and expertise of L/NNGOs. L/NNGO interview respondents felt creating smaller, more focused arenas for engagement through informal working groups or core groups had been an effective strategy to improve the quality of engagement by L/NNGOs. However, one WLO/WRO felt that while international actors had succeeded in increasing the participation of L/NNGOs, 'decision making is not really in the hands of the local NGOs'. Interview respondents suggested this was due to lingering apprehension about L/NNGO capacity and commitment to humanitarian principles.

While the GoL is ultimately responsible for leading the country's response to the Syrian refugee crisis, UN agencies including UNHCR, UNDP, OCHA and the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) continue to play a strong role. As such, many L/NNGOs reported limited engagement with government authorities on humanitarian coordination, although there was some engagement through sector working groups, and at the local or municipality levels. One WLO/WRO said that, 'the government is not here for the humanitarian response, instead NGOs manage this'. This comment reflected a broader lack of trust in government institutions due to a long history of political instability, dysfunction and corruption, concerns that have been magnified in light of the collapse of the Lebanese lira and handling of the Beirut blast investigation.

Some L/NNGOs agreed there was value in engaging with humanitarian coordination mechanisms, particularly the sector working groups and humanitarian response planning processes. A range of benefits from participating in these structures were mentioned, including the opportunity to share information, tackle programming challenges, coordinate on joint activities, and partner on advocacy and awareness raising initiatives. L/NNGOs also noted the benefits of being able to influence policies and planning at the local and national levels, share updates, and exchange experiences and learning on thematic or technical issues with international actors.

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However, there were also a range of barriers and challenges faced by L/NNGOs that limited their effective leadership, representation, and participation. The dual coordination structures of the LCRP and the ERP have compounded issues related to complexity of the humanitarian coordination system and the transaction costs of participating. One recent NGO report described the system as 'a patchwork of different ad-hoc coordination mechanisms'.[39] One interview respondent found it difficult to 'simplify the reality' of the different plans, coordination structures and reporting mechanisms, particularly given parts of the LCRP and ERP are very similar. This has limited the engagement of L/NNGOs in these processes.

While individual staff capacities in L/NNGOs are generally high,[40] several L/NNGOs, including one WLO/WRO, noted that having staff available to attend weekly, monthly and sometimes ad hoc cluster/sector meetings was challenging, particularly given the additional demands of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Requests by UN agencies and INGOs asking L/NNGOs to review documents and contribute to the development of humanitarian policies and plans were often time-consuming and accompanied by short deadlines. One WLO/WRO explained that most L/NNGOs, including their own, did not have dedicated staff capacity to participate in humanitarian coordination meetings.

Humanitarian coordination meetings were predominantly held in English, rather than Arabic or French. One WLO/WRO said that while this was initially a challenge for L/NNGOs, they had learned to adapt and 'the option of having meetings in Arabic is no longer being discussed'. The WLO/WRO went on to explain that if meeting participants requested translation support then it would be provided, normally by the chair of the group such as a UN agency or INGO. However, collectively L/NNGOs had stopped asking as they felt that international actors were not receptive to their requests or were not able to address them, given the lack of resources. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, accessibility of online meetings remained an issue, given the regular disruptions to internet and electricity.

Some L/NNGOs were more critical of humanitarian coordination mechanisms, as they felt there were few decisions taken, groups were not as efficient as expected, and there was a perception that multiple discussions and meetings led to limited concrete action. One WLO/WRO explained: 'We feel we're talking, diagnosing problems, and making recommendations. But there are no actions to create change'. Another RLO said: 'We don't have the luxury of employing people to attend. Most of these meetings are a waste of time. We don't really see how we can be of use, or how we can benefit. We don't have much of a voice'. In turn, international actors find it difficult to maintain engagement with a multitude of L/NNGOs with a diverse range of experiences and perspectives.

The research identified a number of good practice examples and enabling factors for greater local humanitarian leadership in Lebanon. Strong commitment from the UNSCOL, OCHA, donors, the Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum (LHIF), and Lebanon Humanitarian and Development Forum (LHDF) have been pivotal to advancing the localization agenda. In 2021, the National Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Taskforce created two additional seats for L/NNGOs on the core group. The LHF provided LHDF with funds to ensure the strong engagement and representation of L/NNGOs in the humanitarian response. Donors and the LHF are focusing on the engagement of partners in humanitarian coordination mechanisms as part of proposal submissions, and LHDF has undertaken a range of advocacy initiatives including outreach to donors and L/NNGOs.

LACK OF QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING FOR L/NNGOS

Despite the rapidly widening gap between humanitarian needs and available resources for the Syrian refugee crisis, financing for the overall response has continued to grow in recent years. In 2019–20, Lebanon was among the top 10 largest recipients of global international humanitarian assistance.[41] In 2020, humanitarian financing for Lebanon soared to $1.559bn, a 38% increase on the previous year, which can be partly attributed to a new UN-led flash appeal launched in August

2020 in response to the Beirut blast.[42] In 2021, the UN appealed for $168m under the ERP,[43] and $2.75bn to support refugees and host communities under the 3RP.[44]

INGOs continue to dominate the humanitarian funding landscape in Lebanon, and most L/NNGOs receive very limited direct funding. While disaggregated data for Lebanon were not available, L/NNGOs working in the five countries covered by the 3RP received just 2% ($31.1m) of funding, compared with 81% ($970.5m) for UN agencies and 17% ($198.1m) for INGOs.[45] In the 2020 Lebanon flash appeal, just 1% ($1.9m) of funding went to L/NNGOs,[46] and under the 2021 ERP, just 3% ($3.07m) of funding went to L/NNGOs.[47] The LHF continued to be one of the most accessible sources of funding, with 18% of funds in 2021 going to L/NNGOs.[48] In 2020, the LHF offered dedicated funding windows to support localization objectives.[49]

The lack of sustainable, multi-year funding for L/NNGOs is a fundamental obstacle to greater localization of humanitarian response in Lebanon.[50] These barriers are particularly acute for smaller organizations, WLOs and WROs. In 2021, the average duration of LHF grants was just 9.5 months. This reliance on ad hoc, short-term funding cycles means L/NNGOs, particularly WLOs and WROs, are constantly in 'survival mode'.[51] One WLO/WRO reflected that building long-term proactive relationships with donors who share their mission and priorities has been crucial in maintaining a steady flow of resources to support service delivery programmes.

One of the key barriers for greater access to direct funding for L/NNGOs is that donors often lack the staffing or financial resources to manage a multitude of small grants,[52] or have to abide by policies that restrict their ability to fund L/NNGOs directly. Instead, donors rely on intermediaries such as UN agencies and INGOs to broker funding to L/NNGOs.[53] In the key informant interviews, L/NNGOs explained that some funding mechanisms with explicit localization objectives still inadvertently excluded L/NNGOs. For example, the requirement for proposal budgets to fall within a certain percentage of the L/NNGO's total annual budget can exclude L/NNGOs that rely on just a few limited sources of funding.

Some L/NNGOs feel confident in accessing humanitarian funding, while others are less familiar with the country funding landscape, key donors and their priorities, and the different funding opportunities available.[54] Funding proposal and application procedures can be complex, often with short, fixed deadlines,[55] and donors may request unrealistic levels of project and budget detail.[56] Several L/NNGOs found proposal processes overly prescriptive, with significant 'back-and-forth' over minor issues or corrections. Several L/NNGOs also noted the high levels of competition for humanitarian funding, particularly for LHF funds, and some had stopped applying as a result.

Lack of coverage for overhead costs also remained a key issue. One RLO explained that at the beginning of the crisis, organizations could rely on other funding sources such as contributions from diaspora communities to cover overhead costs. However, as the crisis continued and these sources of funding were drying up, L/NNGOs were finding it difficult to renegotiate the terms they had previously agreed with international partners. The RLO explained that it was 'a lost battle and too late'. They also explained the financial burden this placed on the organization, recounting that 'every year we have an emergency meeting with the finance manager, and then by some miracle we find some funding'.

The LHF has demonstrated a number of positive practices to support greater access to funding for L/NNGOs. Under the LHF's localization strategy, OCHA is encouraging INGOs to collaborate more with L/NNGOs. Together with LHDF, the LHF is reviewing the partner assessments of those L/NNGOs who have been unsuccessful in meeting the minimum due diligence and capacity assessment requirements in order to provide tailored guidance and support. L/NNGOs commended the LHF for a number of good practices, including offering greater levels of budget flexibility depending on the partner's risk profile, facilitating workshops and clinics on proposal development and the Grant Management System, and the availability of OCHA focal points around the clock to provide support for proposal submissions.

INEQUITABLE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL ACTORS AND L/NNGOS

Given the continued challenges faced by L/NNGOs in Lebanon to access direct humanitarian funding from donors, the most common model of partnership is between UN agencies or INGOs and L/NNGOs.[57] Yet this reliance on indirect funding is also one of the main drivers fuelling inequitable partnerships between international and local actors, many of which are characterized by highly inequitable and tightly controlled 'implementing partner', 'service delivery/provider' and 'subcontracting' relationships.[58] A range of factors drive this strong power imbalance, including inflexibility of donor funding and compliance mechanisms, high levels of competition for funding, short-term agreements, risk aversion, and outdated attitudes towards L/NNGOs.[59]

Some L/NNGOs felt that many international actors are striving to aim for equitable partnerships with local actors, while another interview respondent explained that in practice partnerships were on a scale of 'equitable, to patronizing, to colonial'. Some L/NNGOs viewed partnerships with UN agencies as more favourable, while others preferred working with INGOs. One DPO explained they had a very positive working relationship with UN agencies: 'We are equal, we discuss the challenges, and we try to find solutions together'. However, a WLO/WRO expressed difficulties in partnering with UN agencies: 'They are the master … they do not see what we need'.

These types of transactional partnership arrangements also affect opportunities for L/NNGOs to be involved in project planning, design and decision making.[60] Several L/NNGOs including one DPO described experiences where an INGO partner led on all aspects of project planning and design, and provided the L/NNGO with limited or no visibility of donor reports. A WLO/WRO explained that when negotiating project designs with UN and INGO partners: 'There is no direct pressure, but the relationship between donor and recipient is already out of balance. Sometimes INGOs dictate to us and take a condescending approach'.

Many UN agencies and INGOs have their own stake in maintaining the status quo.[61] These large bureaucracies can be resistant to change, worried about losing their own reach and influence, and reluctant to share power, decision making and funding.[62] Influenced by the commitments of the World Humanitarian Summit, in 2017 the UN directed INGO partners in Lebanon to expedite 'handovers' to L/NNGO partners, partly driven by tightening government restrictions on expatriate staff work permits.[63] However, some INGOs resisted these instructions, viewing the proposed timeframes as unrealistic and raising concerns about the absorptive capacity of L/NNGOs.[64]

The literature highlighted some interesting dynamics between L/NNGOs. Lebanese civil society is characterized by high levels of competition and a proliferation of L/NNGOs with different goals and capacities.[65] In some cases, international actors have fuelled the concentration of funding, resources and visibility among a few larger L/NNGOs, often at the expense of smaller, grassroots L/NNGOs.[66] As such, there is a risk these larger L/NNGOs may serve to replicate the inequitable partnership models similar to those held between international actors and L/NNGOs.[67] There is also a 'growing gap in capacity' between larger L/NNGOs and smaller NGOs.[68] One interview respondent noted that many of the L/NNGOs represented on humanitarian coordination mechanisms were the larger, more established organizations, or as they described them: 'the usual suspects'.

Several L/NNGOs expressed the importance of pursuing partnerships between international and local actors that go beyond funding arrangements. These L/NNGOs stressed that more holistic collaboration could present greater opportunities for strategic planning, joint advocacy, profile building, and learning and sharing of complementary expertise. A recent study from Lebanon highlighted the need for stronger coordination between L/NNGOs on issues such as joint fundraising.[69] One WLO/WRO also saw a need for an umbrella NGO network to bring together the multiple NGO networks already operating in Lebanon, and provide strategic direction for national humanitarian planning processes.

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LIMITED INVESTMENT IN LONG-TERM INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY STRENGTHENING OF L/NNGOS

Many L/NNGOs in Lebanon already possess strong capacity, particularly those with previous experience of operating during the civil war.[70] However, some gaps do exist and more targeted, longer-term support is required to strengthen the capacity of L/NNGOs, particularly in areas such as project management, monitoring and reporting, proposal development, technology skills, financial management, and systems and policies.[71] In some cases, there were perceptions that international actors were better placed to respond to rapid onset emergencies. In 2020, the LHF primarily funded INGOs rather than L/NNGOs to respond to the Beirut blast, with the justification that INGOs were 'partners with the capacity to handle large amounts [of funding] and program immediately'.[72]

Training is the most common approach for capacity strengthening of L/NNGOs in Lebanon, with the majority of the content driven by the needs and priorities of donors and INGOs, or skewed towards the latest 'humanitarian buzzwords'.[73] As such, many L/NNGOs view capacity strengthening initiatives as top-down and one-way.[74] Training also tends to be generic and geared towards transferring technical knowledge, rather than cultivating skills to promote broader institutional strengthening.[75] Training courses are typically delivered in person rather than online, which can limit participation, and the majority of providers deliver courses in English, which can disadvantage staff in junior roles.[76]

L/NNGOs in Lebanon often lack the time and resources to participate in capacity-strengthening initiatives,[77] particularly as limited funding for overheads and support costs continues to be a key challenge.[78] This lack of core funding can exacerbate issues related to staff retention and turnover, resulting in the loss of institutional knowledge and requiring the repetition of capacity-strengthening efforts each time new staff join the organization.[79] Capacity-strengthening opportunities are often accessible to just a few staff, leading to a concentration of knowledge and skills within the organization.[80] There was also limited evidence of training providers carrying out follow-up exercises or evaluations with participants, or providing ongoing support to apply their learning.[81]

While some L/NNGOs, particularly WLOs/WROs, criticized the lack of funding for capacity strengthening, one interview respondent felt that: 'Sometimes there is even too much funding [for capacity strengthening]. It's more about the needs and priorities of local actors'. L/NNGOs frequently referenced the need for demand-driven capacity-strengthening approaches in both the literature and key informant interviews.[82] Each year LHDF undertakes a capacity mapping of its 80-odd L/NNGO members to identify priority needs and gaps, which can support this process. One L/NNGO shared an example of how a European bilateral donor supported them with their request for funding and access to a technical expert to help them develop their mission and vision. The LHF has also had success in using accompaniment methods to support smaller L/NNGOs to become more competitive in funding applications.[83]

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TARGETED RECOMMENDATIONS

ALL INTERNATIONAL ACTORS TO:

- Fulfil existing commitments to the Grand Bargain and Charter for Change and ensure that at least 25% of humanitarian funding is shared directly with L/NNGOs. This should include support for efforts to agree on a common definition and methodology for calculating that percentage.

- Create spaces for regular dialogue within humanitarian coordination mechanisms on issues of colonialism, racism, power and patriarchy to reflect on how these dynamics continue to drive inequitable partnerships between international actors and L/NNGOs, and to identify opportunities for reform.

- Ensure the equitable and meaningful participation of women and men from L/NNGOs representing local civil society and marginalized groups in leadership, decision making and coordination of the humanitarian response. International actors should reinforce the role and capacities of L/NNGOs in line with Grand Bargain commitments. Specific funding to support L/NNGO positions in these mechanisms is crucial.

- Advocate to the GoL and UN agencies for more inclusive ERP and LCRP planning processes that amplify the roles, views and contributions of L/NNGOs.

- Promote a stronger enabling environment for local humanitarian leadership. Allocate specific funding to support L/NNGOs, including WLOs, WROs, RLOs, community-based organizations (CBOs) and informal movements working on human rights issues, and provide targeted assistance to these organizations to navigate bureaucratic impediments related to registration and banking.

- Review the use of existing language, including acronyms and jargon, in humanitarian operations, and commit to phasing out terms such as 'aid', 'beneficiaries', 'developing countries', 'capacity building' and 'the field'.

- Develop a package of induction, information and training materials to improve knowledge and understanding of L/NNGOs on the humanitarian coordination architecture in Lebanon. These materials should be published in Arabic, English and French, and made available in accessible formats.

- Improve reporting of direct and indirect funding flows to L/NNGOs, including WROs and WLOs, using OCHA's Financial Tracking System.

DONORS TO:

- Make greater levels of direct, flexible and multi-year funding available to L/NNGOs. Take steps to address specific barriers faced by L/NNGOs by reviewing due diligence requirements, making proposal applications available in Arabic, and providing technical support and feedback during proposal development.

- Provide dedicated funding to support simultaneous interpretation and translation services in humanitarian coordination mechanisms including the HCT, cluster/sector working groups and the LHF Advisory Board.

- Reform partnership policies and guidelines to include requirements for international actors to demonstrate evidence of equitable, genuine and strategic partnerships with L/NNGOs in proposals, and share overhead costs with partners.

UN AGENCIES AND INGOS TO:

- Develop multi-year plans to strengthen the capacity of L/NNGO members in the HCT, clusters/sectors, and LHF Advisory Board. Where possible, elevate national staff of UN agencies, INGOs or L/NNGOs to sector leadership positions.

- Pursue equitable, genuine and strategic partnerships with L/NNGOs that include opportunities for joint project planning and decision making, support for overhead costs, and investments in capacity-strengthening initiatives that are defined and prioritized by L/NNGOs. UN agencies and INGOs should prioritize support for WLOs, WROs, RLOs, CBOs and informal movements in Lebanon.

- Support stronger linkages and collaboration between international NGO forums such as LHIF, and national NGO forums such as LHDF.

LHF TO:

- Increase the average LHF project duration to 12 months, and influence updates to the Country-Based Pooled Fund Global Guidelines to increase the maximum project duration from 12 months to 24 months.

L/NNGOS TO:

- Advocate for equitable levels of L/NNGO representation on humanitarian leadership, decision making and coordination forums, including the HCT, cluster/sector working groups, and the LHF Advisory Board. L/NNGOs should encourage a particular focus on the role of WROs, WLOs and Lebanese women leaders.

NOTES

1 OCHA. (2021). *Humanitarian Needs Overview – Syrian Arab Republic*. Retrieved 10 January 2022, from https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/syria_2021_humanitarian_needs_overview.pdf

2 Ibid.

3 L/NAs are not a homogenous group and can include a diverse range of organizations such as local and national organizations, civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, and local and national government authorities. This case study specifically focuses on the engagement of L/NNGOs.

4 H. Slim. (2021). *Localization is Self-Determination. Frontiers in Political Science*. Retrieved 10 January 2022, from https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.708584

5 V. Barbelet. (2018). *As Local as Possible, as International as Necessary: Understanding Capacity and Complementarity in Humanitarian Action*. London: Overseas Development Institute. Retrieved 10 January 2022, from https://odi.org/documents/5889/As_local_as_possible_as_international_as_necessary_understanding_capacity_and_comp.pdf

6 Localization is understood by Oxfam as the 'process through which a diverse range of humanitarian actors are attempting, each in their own way, to ensure local and national actors are better engaged in the planning, delivery and accountability of humanitarian action, while still ensuring humanitarian needs can be met swiftly, effectively and in a principled manner'. Oxfam Canada. (2019). *A Feminist Approach to Localization: How Canada can Support the Leadership of Women's Rights Actors in Humanitarian Action*. Retrieved 10 January 2022, from https://www.oxfam.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/a-feminist-approach-to-localization.pdf

7 Local humanitarian leadership (LHL) is understood by Oxfam as 'local humanitarian actors (whether civil society, government or both) leading humanitarian response and ensuring it is fast and appropriate and meeting the needs of the affected population'. LHL 'refers to a transformed humanitarian system: one which is collaborative, inclusive, agile and diverse in nature, and where aid decision-making processes are equitable and closer to affected people. "Localization" is therefore part of the process towards that transformation, and not necessarily an end in itself'. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2017). *Localising the Response.* Retrieved 10 January 2022, from http://www.oecd.org/development/humanitarian-donors/docs/Localisingtheresponse.pdf

8 The global humanitarian coordination architecture is primarily composed of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, and the Global Clusters. This case study focuses on some of the key humanitarian coordination mechanisms, including Humanitarian Country Teams, cluster/sector working groups, and UN humanitarian pooled funds. International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA). (2017). *The IASC and the Global Humanitarian Coordination Architecture: How can NGOs Engage?* Retrieved 10 January 2022, from https://reliefweb.int/report/world/iasc-and-global-humanitarian-coordination-architecture-how-can-ngos-engage

9 United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). (2021). *Fact Sheet – Lebanon*. Retrieved 10 January 2022, from https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/1262

10 Ibid.

11 UNRWA. (2021). *Where We Work – Lebanon*. Retrieved 10 January 2022, from https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/lebanon.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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