

Shifting the Power: localisation in action

Christian Aid supports GUK towards CHS Alliance membership

[Gana Unnayan Kendra](#) (GUK), a community-led development organisation combating poverty in Bangladesh, has recently joined [CHS Alliance](#). This is largely due to the hard work of Nahed Chowdhury, widely known as ‘Lucky Apa’ in the humanitarian sector in Bangladesh, in partnership with [Christian Aid](#).

In the last years, within the framework of [Shifting the Power](#), a project aiming to strengthen national humanitarian and development agencies, Christian Aid has supported Lucky and her NGO to apply the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) and join CHS Alliance. Lucky has spearheaded GUK’s application process and guided other national agencies along the way.

In January and February 2016 all Shifting the Power partners participated in a training session about the various existing International Humanitarian Standards, such as the [Core Humanitarian Standard](#) (CHS) and the [Sphere standards](#), to name only a few. Somewhat later, in April 2016, Lucky and other Christian Aid partners joined another training session in Nepal which particularly focused on the CHS. There, she learnt about its operational dimension, especially what to do within the framework of a humanitarian response. She was also informed about the application process and criteria for CHS Alliance membership.



Following these two training sessions, Shifting the Power moved the process a bit forward and approached Christian Aid to organise basic orientation sessions for partners who wish to apply for CHS Alliance membership. As a result 11 Shifting the Power partners and four Christian Aid partners took part in an information session in November 2016 during which they were familiarised with the CHS and the step-by-step application process towards CHS Alliance membership. Within this framework, key organisations also carried out (CHS-prescribed) [self-assessment](#) exercises to gain a better awareness of their current performance.

Six organisations signed up for more accountability and efficiency

All in all, six organisations expressed their interest to apply for CHS Alliance membership and Shifting the Power consequently started following up with each of them separately, acting as a facilitator in the membership application process and offering financial support in order to help some organisations cover their first-year membership fee.

As a partner of Christian Aid, GUK has been following humanitarian accountability partnership (HAP) standards since 2014. Consequently, they have developed an open information policy and set up a complaint handling and response mechanism. Back in the days, Lucky already widely contributed to making this happen. Therefore, GUK considered the application process for CHS Alliance membership as a further opportunity to showcase their support towards strengthened accountability in the field.

Lucky is familiar with similar application processes, as she has previously managed GUK's membership process for the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations' Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). She was confident that she could manage the CHS Alliance membership application process too. In February 2017 GUK submitted their application and circulated the news among Shifting the Power while other organisations were still drafting their applications.

GUK supports peers towards CHS Alliance membership

"I started receiving calls from other Shifting the Power's focal points, who had agreed to apply for CHS Alliance membership, namely Amra Kaj Kori (AKK), Dushtha Shasthya Kendra (DSK), Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB), Association for Voluntary Actions for Society (AVAS) and Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), " Lucky recalls. "The common question was the range of documents required for the process, and how to make these comply with CHS requirements. One major lesson I have learnt is that if an organisation regularly reviews and updates their organisational policies and procedures it can be an effective way to showcase organisational capacity."

GUK is continuously rearranging their organisational capacity for humanitarian response. Within the framework of their partnership with Shifting the Power, they have reviewed their organisation's disaster management policy, developed a humanitarian strategy, and updated their contingency plan. Also, they have updated their staff's code of conduct, and their human resources (HR) and gender policy in line with humanitarian needs and contexts. All these changes in the policy and procedures are also been communicated with staff members.





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“Support from Shifting the Power really helped us to manage many issues related to our organisational development, for example, covering the fee for CHS Alliance membership, and reviewing a range of organisational policies and procedures,” says Lucky. “Now it is our own responsibility to take these forward for our own benefits. As we have started the process of being linked with the Core Humanitarian Standard, we should now concentrate on follow this within the framework of our humanitarian actions.”

“Being a humanitarian organisation it is also our mandate to ensure an accountable and quality response on the ground,” she concludes. “During our humanitarian actions, in most cases, we follow many participatory measures. Considering the local context in which we work those measures respond, to some extent, to the CHS commitments. But we need to strengthen those as good practices at the local level and further align them with the Core Humanitarian Standard. If we are able to do this, I believe that we will eventually obtain certification too.”

The Shifting the Power project aims to strike a more acceptable balance between international and local responses to disasters; shifting this balance of power towards locally led humanitarian response. The Shifting the Power Project will strengthen national capacity for decision-making and leadership, helping national organisations to achieve better representation, voice and recognition. At the same time it will influence international organisations to support and promote the work of local and national organisations.

The project is being delivered by a consortium led by ActionAid and the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), and including Christian Aid, Tearfund, Oxfam and Concern.