



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE
HUMANITARIAN ACTION



Our Participation Revolution Needs a Rethink: Proposing a Pathway to Change

Rethinking local to global collaboration for a more accountable and equitable system for people in crisis
June 25-27, 2024, Bangkok, Thailand

Workshop Outcome Note

Executive Summary

The [International Council of Voluntary Agencies](#) (ICVA) and the [CHS Alliance](#) convened a workshop of local, national, and international humanitarian actors to consider what needs to change in terms of local and global collaboration to achieve a more accountable and equitable system for people in crisis. The gathered experts took stock of progress to date (including successes, failures from which to learn, gaps, and barriers to success), considered learning, and identified ideas to be taken forward. Participants defined a long-term [vision](#) to refocus efforts to truly shift power to people affected by crisis so their rights and dignity are respected and to ensure greater accountability of humanitarian responders. They identified [next steps to achieve that vision](#), including engaging others. This (3-page) note summarises the discussions, vision, and next steps. [Annexes](#) provide further details of the deliberations and the workshop [Agenda](#).

Why this Workshop? Why Now?

Humanitarian actors committed to repositioning aid to truly put people affected by crises at the centre of humanitarian responses over a decade ago. The lead up to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) saw different ideas of how to put people affected by crisis at the centre of humanitarian responses. Many of those ideas – but not all – were included in the Grand Bargain and WHS outcomes.

Since the WHS, different approaches emerged to reposition aid to put people affected by crises at the centre of responses, including, but not limited to: accountability to affected people (AAP); localisation; the ‘participation revolution’/meaningful participation; communicating with communities (CwC); and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Despite significant progress on different fronts, there is a growing feeling that these approaches are too often “siloeed.” The pieces are not yet adequately coming together to achieve the broader goals and commitments.

Several current events provided an opportunity to re-examine the various approaches, including the recent revision of the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS); The Grand Bargain 3.0; the hiatus of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) task forces in June 2024; the forthcoming appointment of a new Emergency Relief Coordinator/United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs (ERC/USG) in mid-2024; and the 20th anniversary of the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative. The decreased humanitarian funding – despite rising needs – provides a sense of urgency to find better ways to respond.

ICVA and the CHS Alliance gathered insights from the broader humanitarian system through an online survey, followed by a discussion with their members about what works and what needs to change around local to global collaboration for a more accountable and equitable system for people in crises. These results fed into the workshop with some 30 local, national, and international experts, primarily from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs), with some United Nations representatives and academics, from around the globe. Participants took stock of progress to date; revisited some of the original ideas; considered different opportunities; defined a broad vision moving ahead; and identified steps to achieve that vision and measure progress towards it. The workshop was the start of a critical conversation to reframe how humanitarian aid is coordinated and delivered, which will need to bring along others to achieve the vision.

Where Do Things Stand?

Progress and successes over the last decades are many. The [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief](#), including its annexes; the [Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response](#), and the revised [Core Humanitarian Standard](#) (CHS) refer to the rights, dignity, and agency of people affected by crisis. Other successes include:

- more specialised knowledge, frameworks, and approaches to (measure) AAP and localisation;
- greater visibility and accessibility for local and national actors;
- more community-led approaches and increased attention on community feedback;
- more access of local/national actors to international humanitarian spaces;
- increased and alternative sources of funding for local/national humanitarian actors;
- greater investment in data for decision-making; and
- a recognition of decolonisation through localisation.

Success can be controversial: Not everyone agrees on what is a success. Some see the increased nationalisation of international NGOs a success, but others disagreed. Many of the ‘successes’ on AAP, localisation, participation, and CwC filled gaps with new tools/guidance, instead of adapting existing ones and finding commonalities, resulting in an overload of tools/guidance.

Localisation and Partnerships: There are differing views on the success or failure of ‘localisation’ and whether the focus should be on those affected by crises and/or on local/national organisations. Some previously staunch advocates of localisation felt the over-focus on money (i.e. getting more funding to local/national actors) – instead of humanitarian responses that centre communities affected by crisis – had created greater divisions and a worrying loss of trust between local, national, and international humanitarian actors.

A focus on rebuilding trust, bringing the broader NGO community together, and putting the [Principles of Partnership](#) into action to create sustainable partnerships – including risk sharing – was viewed as preferable. Others felt that localisation in their contexts is broader than funding and called for localisation to be contextualised. Given that localisation and meaningful participation efforts should ideally involve people affected by crisis, questions were raised if these efforts should remain separate or be brought together.

Varied understandings: It became clear during the workshop that despite common terminology (e.g. AAP, localisation, meaningful participation, etc.), there are varying understandings and interpretations of the terms. “Accountability” and AAP, in particular, are not easily translated into many other languages. How accountability or AAP are interpreted varies significantly, making it challenging for people affected by crisis to understand what their rights are and what they can demand of humanitarian actors. The focus of “meaningful participation” and “localisation” are understood differently, with some focusing on local/national organisations and others focusing on affected communities. The result is that efforts focused on the same topics can, in fact, go in quite different directions.

Barriers to Success: Commitments to put people at the centre have yet to be fully put into practice. Barriers to fulfilling these commitments include systemic challenges; personalities; a lack of funding; the unwillingness to work together as a collective; increased competition; the lack of incentives; the lack of transparency; focusing on organisational needs and donor requirements and not on communities affected by crisis; and an unwillingness to relinquish power. Increased competition and ‘prioritisation’ exercises in light of reduced humanitarian funding could put the progress of the last 10-20 years around quality and accountability at risk.

Opportunities to Improve and measure progress: Several opportunities exist for significant shifts to be made to improve ways of working and to bring back good ideas that got lost or diluted after the WHS. The incoming ERC/USG presents an opportunity to rethink how the IASC approaches its commitments, including how special projects, such as the [Flagship Initiative](#), can support a more equitable and accountable system for people in crisis. Despite reduced humanitarian funding, some donors want to better support quality and accountability efforts.

The revised [CHS Verification Framework](#) helps to measure all aspects of the CHS based on what communities (not donors) require. A tool to [measure the impact of localisation](#), developed by the Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG), takes the focus away from funding and measures if the right assistance is provided to the right members of communities affected by crisis, at the right time, and in the right way. The [IASC Discussion Paper: Exploring the linkages between AAP, localisation, and the HDP Nexus](#) based on the learning from the IASC Task Forces on AAP, Localisation, and the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus makes recommendations that include building aid governance structures around people affected by crisis.

What is Critical to Achieve?

While acknowledging that there is no one humanitarian ‘system,’ the following critical agreements emerged:

- Change the focus from humanitarian actors to people affected by crisis. People need to be part of the ‘system,’ which will help build communities’ trust in humanitarian actors.
- Shift power to people affected by crisis so they can hold humanitarian actors to account. Identify incentives to ensure greater accountability.
- Humanitarian actors need more sustainable partnerships, with greater unity amongst NGOs/CSOs to better serve those affected by crisis.
- Humanitarians do not work in a vacuum. Efforts to better relate to other actors, including States, donors, and non-State actors, are needed for a more accountable system.
- Refocus on ideas that have not yet been fully implemented, including mutual accountability, ensuring more inclusive responses, and putting communities and local actors at the centre of humanitarian responses so that the rights, dignity, agency, and needs of those affected by crisis are respected.

What is the Long-term Vision?

Recognising it takes time to change mindsets, organisations, and ways of working, a 10-15 year vision with **next steps**, building on participants’ spheres of influence, was developed (see [Annex](#)):

Putting people affected by crisis at the centre of humanitarian responses has progressed on many fronts. Yet many commitments remain unmet. Changes need to be made to ensure that people affected by crisis have their agency, rights, and dignity respected and their diverse needs met.

We need to work towards a longer-term vision that:

- Centres affected people’s agency, rights, and dignity, including by recognising their priorities, capacities, and ownership.
- Empowers and supports people affected by crisis in an inclusive manner via an ecosystem of humanitarian and non-humanitarian actors, including development and human rights actors, States, and non-State actors.
- Ensures collective accountability to implement commitments, including the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), the Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles (GHD), the Grand Bargain, and IASC commitments, with consequences for non-implementation.
- Measures the real impact of aid on people’s lives and uses this evidence to adapt and to shift power to those most able to support people affected by crisis, including people themselves.

What are the Immediate Next Steps to Achieve the Vision?

- 1) Convey the long-term vision and proposed next steps to the incoming ERC, copying IASC Principals.
- 2) Workshop participants, supported by ICVA and the CHS Alliance, to implement the [proposed next steps](#) to achieve the vision, particularly to bring others on board and using their spheres of influence.
- 3) Reconvene on a virtual and regular basis, with ICVA and CHS Alliance support, and bringing in others, to ensure the momentum and implementation continues to achieve the vision.

22 August 2024

The workshop was made possible thanks to the generous support of USAID.

Annex 1 – Next Steps to Achieve the Vision

Year(s)	Steps	Who
Immediate and ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow up to workshop: Meet to discuss, monitor all steps virtually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All
2024		
2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going ahead with the assessment of local NGOs on localisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPONG
2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce the local NGO capacities on the CHS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPONG
2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build local staff capacities on the CHS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andal and Pinal
2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for CHS to peer organisations in Yemen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abdullah/BFD
2024 and onwards		
2024 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABCD Tool – share 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
2024 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for more funding to community driven grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs
2024 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-design programme on SLR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGO
2024 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy for meeting commitments to AAP and CHS → Grand Bargain signatories and all humanitarian actors (local and global) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
2024 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing open two-way feedback mechanism with communities/affected people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
2024 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy to donors to make CHS a requirement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
2024 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local NGOs and communities directly interact and talk with donors/Grand Bargain and extend global to local 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
2024-2025		
2024-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoom meetings on CHS and AAP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs
2024-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect good practices on locally led approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs
2024-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot 2024-25: Locally owned pooled funds working group → advocate to donors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suleikha, Alex, Alix, NEAR, Ilyas
2024-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative information sharing and awareness raising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A4EP, NEAR, START +
2024-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure UN to use CHS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New ERC • Security Council – ICVA • EcoSoc – Suleikha, ICVA • UNHRC – Marvin • IASC – Charles-Antoine
2024-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask new ERC to mandate equal representation on HCT decision-making bodies – and fund it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who pulls together recommendation – CHS/ICVA workshop?
2024-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHS AAP COP – develop meaningful participation marker/minimum standards with communities → closing loop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link with Grand Bargain? • Carly to Tanya + Giovani

Year(s)	Steps	Who
2024-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on community priorities and showcase how community driven assistance works → building evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> REACH
2024-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather evidence which can be given to donors to advocate for promoting community priorities at the centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGOs
2024-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage local NGO consortiums to mobilise funds from donors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPONG
2024-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess communities needs for common actions for any humanitarian project based on participation and accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Andal and Pinal
2024-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participate to the follow up of the recommendations of the Grand Bargain summit between UN agencies and the government (advocacy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPONG
2024-2026		
2024-2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountability frameworks within organisations to hold organisations accountable with each role and responsibility outlined with their accountabilities outlined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
2024-2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building of NGOs on humanitarian standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rafat
2025 (and onwards)		
2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build more relations with diverse donors in the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICVA
2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and revision of organisational standards, strategies, and reporting templates with humanitarian standards' lens to see if any revision or alignment required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rafat
2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing success stories with UN and donors after applying the CHS in Yemen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abdullah/BFD
2025→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy to donors to use evidence on community priorities for funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
2025-2027		
2025-2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy to shift need assessments to needs and capacities' assessments aimed toward: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ Donors ↳ Grand Bargain ↳ IASC ↳ Consider a pilot? Maybe internally in our organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
2025-2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shifting TPM/evaluations to outcome based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
2025-2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy to donors for AAP + AAP system to be funded <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ Accountability benchmark scorecard not instruments (CBPF) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daniel OCHA, CHS, CAAP
2025-2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHS and Code dissemination and operational use (contextualise) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peter and Maria
2025-2030		
2025-2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICVA + NEAR + InterAction make CHS a requirement of membership – self-assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jeremy, CWS
2027-2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutionalise community led approaches to access all humanitarian actors (UN, NGOs, donors) By 2030: new ways of working across humanitarian-development-peace-climate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Year(s)	Steps	Who
2035		
2035	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post 2030: New framework (centred on people) 	•
Ongoing		
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to civil society to discover/share/scale better ways (an advocacy process) 	•
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased consultations with communities to understand their needs and priorities 	• Rafat
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet billionaires 	•
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund research and evidencing what works from local level to global level 	•
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating realistically for localisation = based on the contextualised needs of local NGOs 	•
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICVA to follow up with/for members on report/recommendations/action 	•
Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue supporting independent local organisations to track perceptions 	• Meg
Timing?		
Timing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICVA advocate to pilot focus/implementation on standards good practice 	•
Timing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight community agency 	• Meg
Timing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scale up advocacy and research process on community capacity/mutual aid 	• Meg
Timing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five-year strategy for mutual accountability to members/ownership 	• COAST
Timing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICVA can support members connect with CHS resources and change 	•
Timing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grand Bargain should continue after 2026 with these in mind: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ Localisation ↳ Participation ↳ Transparency 	•
Timing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support evidence on better intermediary systems (e.g. DERF) 	• Meg
Timing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who to help advocate for independent feedback mechanism and safe reporting? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↳ CHS AAP CoP raise awareness → complementarity, mapping, added value. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carly + Giovani • Link with Grand Bargain?

Annex 2 – Workshop Agenda

Our Participation Revolution Needs a Rethink: Proposing a Pathway to Change

Rethinking local to global collaboration for a more accountable and equitable system for people in crisis

Tuesday, June 25 – Thursday June 27, 2024

Ballroom 2, 2nd Floor – Rembrandt Hotel and Suites Bangkok

19 Sukhumvit Soi 18, Khwaeng Khlong Toei, Khlong Toei, Bangkok 10110, Thailand

Workshop Agenda

(Version of June 24, 2024)

Overall Workshop Objectives

- 1) Take stock of progress and successes to celebrate related to:
 - putting people affected by crises truly at the centre of humanitarian responses;
 - meaningfully engaging local actors in humanitarian responses and decision-making; and
 - ensuring true accountability to those affected by crises.
- 2) Identify challenges and barriers that prevented further progress.
- 3) Develop a collaborative vision for a more accountable and equitable system for people in crises.
- 4) Identify the necessary steps, actions, and pathways to make that collaborative vision a reality.
- 5) Identify ways to measure progress towards that vision.

NB: *The timings and topics in the agenda are indicative so they can be adapted based on the discussions.*

Monday, June 24, 2024 (Pre-workshop)

Time	Activity
18:00-20:00	Informal welcome dinner (<i>Optional, self-paid</i>) Venue: Palm 18, next to the Rembrandt Hotel on Sukhumvit Soi 18 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• As most are arriving on Monday, we will gather for a light dinner and a chance to get to know each other ahead of the workshop. The dinner will be a casual setup, self-paid and is fully optional. You are also welcome just to stop by and say hello.

This event is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Day 1 – Tuesday, June 25, 2024

Time – Day 1	Topic
09:00-10:30	<p>1) Welcome, Objectives of Retreat, Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome by ICVA and CHS Alliance • Workshop objectives and agenda • Introductions • Expectations of the workshop • Measuring the ‘success’ of our workshop • Ground rules
10:30-11:00	<i>Coffee/Tea Break</i>
11:00-12:30	<p>2) Taking Stock of Progress to Date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recollecting the momentum and ideas leading up to the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) and the commitments made at the WHS and beyond • Identifying: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Successes and how they were achieved ○ Failures from which to learn ○ Gaps to be filled ○ Barriers to success <p>Expected Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Recalling the ideas that fed into the WHS</i> • <i>Identifying progress to set the scene of where things currently stand</i>
12:30-14:00	<i>Lunch</i>
14:00-15:30	<p>3) Getting back to ‘basics’?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering some of the original thinking and ideas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What has changed? ○ Have we been focused on – and measuring – the ‘right’ things? ○ Are there some ‘basics’ we need to bring back? <p>Expected Outcome: <i>Identify ideas that may need to be revisited/reframed moving ahead</i></p>
15:30-16:00	<i>Coffee/Tea Break</i>
16:00-17:00	<p>4) Digging further into gaps and barriers to success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further exploring the gaps and barriers to success, including the role of donors, and what we should learn <p>Expected Outcome: <i>Unpacking gaps and barriers to help identify what needs to change moving ahead</i></p>
17:00-17:15	Recap of the Day and Looking Ahead to Day 2

Day 2 – Wednesday, June 26, 2024

Time – Day 2	Topic
09:00-10:00	<p>5) Considering the current landscape and opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of Day 1 • Looking at the ongoing changes taking place and opportunities in the current humanitarian landscape • What ideas came out of the survey and the exchange of views with CHS Alliance and ICVA members? • What are other opportunities to consider? <p><i>Expected Outcome: Agree on the current changes and opportunities in the humanitarian landscape</i></p>
10:00-12:30 <i>with coffee/tea break</i>	<p>6) Defining the vision to achieve a more accountable and equitable system for people in crisis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group discussions <p><i>Expected Outcome: Define elements of the vision for a more accountable and equitable system for people in crisis</i></p>
12:30-14:00	Lunch
14:00-15:00	<p>7) Defining the vision to achieve a more accountable and equitable system for people in crisis (continued....)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group discussions <p><i>Expected Outcome: Define elements of the vision for a more accountable and equitable system for people in crisis</i></p>
15:00-15:30	Coffee/Tea Break
15:30-17:00	<p>8) Agreeing on a broad vision and looking at the steps to get there</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coming to an agreement on the broad vision, as well as the steps to achieve it <p><i>Expected Outcome: Look at the range of ideas and agree on the elements for the vision for a more accountable and equitable system for people in crisis</i></p>
17:00-17:15	Recap of the Day and Looking Ahead to Day 3

Day 3 – Thursday, June 27, 2024

Time – Day 3	Topic
09:00-12:30 <i>with coffee/tea break</i>	<p>9) Charting the Path Forward</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of Days 1 and 2 • Reaffirming the broad vision for a more accountable and equitable system for people in crisis and adapting as necessary • Identifying the necessary steps, actions, measurements, and pathways to make that vision a reality <p><i>Expected Outcome: Identify steps/actions/pathways to realise the vision for a more accountable and equitable system for people in crisis</i></p>
12:30-14:00	<i>Lunch</i>
14:00-15:30	<p>10) Agreeing the Vision, Path Forward, Measuring Success, and Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coming to an agreement on the proposed vision, path forward, elements to measure success, and next steps <p><i>Expected Outcome: Agree on the vision, path forward, and (immediate) next steps and who should do what</i></p>
15:30-16:00	<i>Coffee/Tea Break</i>
16:00-17:00	<p>Summary and Closing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the agreements from the workshop • Revisit any outstanding points • Measuring our outcomes against expectations • Summary • Closing – ICVA and CHS Alliance
17:00	<i>Workshop Ends</i>
17:30-19:30	<p>Post event gathering and sunset photo opportunity (<i>Optional, self-paid</i>)</p> <p>Venue: Brewksi, Level 30 of the Radisson Blu Hotel, Sukhumvit Road Soi 27</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An open-air rooftop restaurant nearby to the venue.