"What will Jordanian civil society look like
if localization is achieved?"

JONAF -Working together towards Localization

Briefing of JONAF's

3rd Event - held on July 2019 ,21

"What will Jordanian civil society look like if localization is achieved?"

JONAF -Working together towards Localization

Briefing of JONAF's

3rd Event - held on July 21, 2019

JONAF- Working together towards Localization

As part of its advocacy efforts and role in promoting localization of humanitarian response, the Jordan National NGOs Forum (JONAF) held its third annual event On July 21, 2019, seeking to address and answer this question "What will Jordanian civil society look like if localization is achieved?".

JONAF has begun to play an important role in the follow-up of several significant agendas such as the Humanitarian Action Localization agenda, which calls for the inclusion of local and national representatives in the planning and implementation of humanitarian and development strategies to ensure that targeted community needs are met.

Current challenges to implementing localization include different interpretations of the Grand Bargain by local and international organizations; conflicting approaches between government agencies, local organizations, and international organizations to implementing localization; and finally, the capacity and understanding within national organizations to carry out aid work.

This event, which was launched by a word from her excellency Senator Sawsan Al Majali, aimed to generate discussion amongst JONAF members, government officials, and CSOs to encourage the commitments made in the Grand Bargain in 2016 and in the Charter 4 Change in 2015. At the core of this commitment was to enable locally led humanitarian and development architecture and practices, and Jordanian civil society, to scale up and sustain investments from the aid sector by enforcing accountability and localization. The event also aimed to increase resilience to challenges posed by a shrinking space for civil society, funding limitations, and increased due diligence requirements by governments and donors.

Localization and Global Progress

The event featured two international experts from Alliance for Empowering Partnerships (A4EP), Smruti Patel and Koenraad Van Brabant, who were invited to speak to share their reflections on the localization movement globally as well as discuss their organization that seeks to encourage the localization of humanitarian aid. This includes the Global Mentoring Initiative, which encourages respectful collaborations within and between organizations and people. A4EP works across multiple countries on issues surrounding localization globally in humanitarian contexts. The organization's approach to localization centers on changing the relationship between local and international actors and creating a clear vision of what successful localization would look like.

Patel gave a brief on localization, and how it addresses numerous problems such as filling the humanitarian funding gap, excessive centralization, too few first receivers, hierarchical and fragmented approaches, international organizations not responding first and not staying long-term in a particular context, financial unsustainability in the medium term, and political unsustainability in a changing world. By involving local people in the decision-making process about decisions that affect their lives in a spirit of partnership, local and national capacities will be reinforced rather than replaced.

Van Brabant spoke about localization efforts occurring concurrently in the Philippines, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Nigeria and how Jordan is part of this larger solidarity movement. He shared the history of localization, noting that the idea of localization isn't new but was first mentioned in 1994 in the Code of Conduct of Disaster Relief. The Principles of Partnerships (PoP), adopted in 2007, also mentions the concept of localization. PoP was set up by leaders of forty humanitarian organizations to address gaps within the humanitarian reform process including the role of local and national responders. The Charter for Change, launched in 2016, focused on localization and sought to transform the way the humanitarian system operated to permit actors in the global south to play a more prominent role in humanitarian response efforts and to improve the relationship between local and national actors. The Grand Bargain agreement, also launched in 2016, centered on improving localization efforts by creating an agreement between some of the largest humanitarian organizations and donors who have committed themselves to reducing the humanitarian financing gap, as well as improving humanitarian action's efficiency and effectiveness, by improving the aid delivery system. The Grand Bargain consists of commitments such as more collaborative multiyear planning and funding, reducing earmarking, harmonizing and simplifying reporting, greater transparency, improving joint and impartial needs assessments, reducing duplication and management costs with periodic functional reviews, increasing cash-programming and greater engagement in humanitarian development.

Van Brabant also spoke about The Start Network, a UK based organization working towards the localization of aid. This organization divides localization into 7 dimensions to create structure, indicators, and targets in order to develop a measurement system to better understand localization in humanitarian action and programming. The dimensions include: relationship quality; participation revolution; funding and financing; capacity; coordination mechanisms; visibility; and policy.

The presentation ended with suggestions on how to move forward towards a localized humanitarian approach, with the A4EP speakers suggesting that international organizations review how to best collaborate with local organizations, that organizations that have signed the Charter 4 Change and the Grand Bargain honor their commitments to the document, and finally that organizations agree on the benefits of a localized approach and how it can best be implemented.

Officials' Perspectives

The third presentation featured Omar Nuseir, a representative from the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, who shared his perspective on localization. He credited CBOs and CSOs as being the first to respond in times of humanitarian crises and playing a large role in conducting humanitarian work. The representative spoke about how the Ministry first began to hear about localization in the early 2000s and has more recently begun to pay attention to tactics like exit strategies from INGOs and the importance of working together to ensure a smooth transition. He stressed the importance of implementing the outcomes of the Grand Bargain and UNSCR 1325. He also spoke about how many international organizations prefer to stay in cities like Amman because of the services available in these areas; however, vulnerable people are often in rural areas and the reach of INGOs is thus limited. Nuseir suggested it would be helpful to have an objective party assess humanitarian projects and whether they have achieved the targeted outcome. Finally, he recommended creating an action plan that detailed the different roles and responsibilities of CSOs and governmental actors to achieve localization.

OCHA's Head of Humanitarian Financing Unit Ms. Amani Salah, presented her perspective about the UN's localization efforts and how she found that very few qualified organizations were applying to receive UN funding. She stated that of the 40% of funding available for CBOs, the UN was only able to reach about 30% as so few applications for funding were received.

JONAF's Perspectives

The event concluded with a roundtable discussion in which panel members and participants shared their perspectives on localization. One major point brought up was that when international organizations arrived in Jordan, they began to receive more funding than CBOs, leaving little funding to support local organizations.

CBO members expressed that in addition to the increasingly limited funding; there is also little appreciation for the efforts of CBOs. On a bureaucratic level, CBOs shared that they felt it was far more difficult for their organizations to receive governmental approval for their projects when compared with international organizations.

One panelist, Ms. Manal Wazani, spoke about how those at CBOs specifically during times of crises were overwhelmed during humanitarian responses. As such, CBOs were not able to build their capacity to the level of international organizations.

Mr. Farae Al Masaeed spoke about how local organizations should be involved in the implementation of projects because they have a better understanding of what might or might not work in a particular context.

Another participant spoke about how more money should be directed towards the needs of people including local needs, rather than serving others' agendas.

Ms.Linda Kalash, CEO of Tamkeen, explored the current challenges facing national organizations in ensuring the active, fair, and transparent participation between national and international NGOs and CBOs in responding to crises in the humanitarian and development contexts. One example brought up was licensing in organizations and the exploitation of consultancy contracts in which consultants receive no paid leaves, weekends, or health insurance. Volunteering can also prove problematic where volunteers are expected to do the work of a full-time employee but are given no social security, salary, or other rights granted to employees. With regards to employment, there are numerous challenges including the high rate of unemployment in Jordan. Jordanians that are employed tend to be paid less than their international counterpart. Language abilities are another challenge where work is often produced in English rather than Arabic. International organizations tend to have an advantage in obtaining governmental approval when compared with local organizations which Kalash suggests may be due to either the strength of international organizations or the weaknesses of local organizations. In addition, another major challenge is the relationship and power dynamics between the government, national organizations, and international organizations in which national organizations tend to be the weakest link. She closed her speech by stating that international organizations should be equal partners with local organizations in order to ensure the localization of aid work and thus the sustainability and effectiveness of an organization's impact.

Glimpses from the event