

Report

STRENGTHENING COORDINATION AND LOCALIZATION (NORTH-EAST NIGERIA)

Good Practices from IASC Task Force 5

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Strengthening coordination and localization (North-East Nigeria)

Strengthened coordination with government, increased participation, and funding opportunities for local partners while strengthening local government level coordination

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Geographical coverage

North-East Nigeria



Context

In the framework of the new Global Food Security Cluster (GFSC) Learning Programme, the GFSC team initiated the process of strengthening the capacity of Food Security Cluster teams in selected country offices as well as increasing localization efforts for improving food security coordination. To increase localization efforts, a coaching module was developed, with the objective of reinforcing the coordination structure while strengthening the local coordination of food security. This is to strengthen capacity and ensure that the government continues to own its role after the coaching period.

Nigeria is one of the three pilot countries selected globally for this initiative. In the initial phase, personnel on secondment from a government department and another from the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) were deployed to the Food Security Sector (FSS). The State Emergency Management Agency and Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) staff were seconded for a six-month period from 2021.

The FSS Co-facilitator is coached as the focal point and representative responsible for collaboratively supporting the overall coordination of the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the FSS performance against key sector functions and accountabilities. The leadership of the sector supports partners to ensure participation and assume their responsibilities by placing Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) at the centre of decision-making. Under this initiative, the FSS also plans to liaise with the Agency for Coordination of Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Response ministry.

Financial partners of the coaching module include FAO; the Nigeria Humanitarian Fund; volunteers from various partners. Food assistance partners were KABHUDA, CARITAS, CRUDAN, etc; Plan International in Gwoza, Danish Refugee Council (DRC) in Ngala, Mercy Corps in Damboa, and Intersos in Bama and Banki. Funding for the coaching module activity was also not readily available since local partners do not have a large funding base.



Implementation and objective

The coaching programme was firstly implemented in 2021. People engaged in this practice were staff of the MoA and State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), jointly with the FSS. Local partner organizations and their staff were targeted for Nigeria Humanitarian Fund (NHF) funding. INGOs were trained on strengthening coordination locally in the respective Local Government Areas.

The objective of the good practice was to reinforce the coordination structure while strengthening the local coordination of food security, with the overall objective to ensure that

This good practice was identified and documented through a template developed on the basis of the [2021 IASC Guidance on Localization](#), which aims at supporting efforts to strengthen the meaningful participation, representation, and leadership of local and national humanitarian actors (L/NAs) within IASC humanitarian coordination structures. Its objective is to share knowledge and inspire progress and positive change regarding the meaningful participation of local actors in Humanitarian Coordination platforms. The original draft of this good practice template was developed by the [KORE \(Knowledge Platform for Emergencies and Resilience\) team](#) in the Office of Emergencies and Resilience of the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(FAO\)](#) and was tailored to the needs of this IASC initiative.

government continues to own this role after the coaching period. Building skills for immediate delivery of assistance to the affected population (wet-feeding) was achieved by also including local partners in various other training for capacity building and related programming, such as HPC, Protection Mainstreaming, etc.

Strengthening local-level coordination enhances further consultation with local communities and local decisions per context. For instance, for partners working in Dikwa, immediately after a recent Boko Haram attack, partners in the local coordination group were able to maintain a small team to jointly continue delivering assistance without having to wait for a decision from funders, UN agencies, or INGO partners. They worked well with the community leaders to ensure this was achieved.



Methodological approach

Firstly, the sector started consultations with respective government officials and cluster lead agencies on the planned activities. Terms of reference (ToR) were drafted and shared with the government and Cluster Lead Agencies (CLAs) for comments. Based on the ToRs, the government selected a focal point and sent an official letter to FSS CLAs. Then the cluster lead deployed the focal point to the sector based on the office procedures.

On facilitating funding: The FSS reviewed and mapped active local and national actors (L/NA) partners who demonstrated minimum capacity to deliver assistance, then assessed possible gaps and provided training and further preparation for receiving funding for immediate life-saving assistance. Finally, the FSS recommended L/NAs to the NHF board for consideration.

The main needed/thematic areas of localization were: funding, Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) and program cycle management, partnership, Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, gender-based violence, and Accountability to Affected Populations. FSS mapped the hot spots that required strong local government coordination for efficiency, and asked partners to coordinate.

For the Local Government Areas coordination, the hotspots in need of further coordination were identified and then partners were asked to volunteer as coordinators.

For the government secondment programme, no specific needs assessment was conducted but a selection was made from government agencies who lead or strongly interact with the FSS.

Activities included to support local actors and initiatives: The mentee or co-facilitator from the government took assignments of providing capacity-building training to the selected national non-government organization, under the supervision of the coordinator and with the support of Community Engagement, Accountability, and Localization Working Group; Task Force in crisis-affected areas of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states.

Representation and participation

- The national NGOs (NNGOs) chosen for capacity building were selected based on their active participation in the FSS fora and reporting. They received and shared information with all of the FSS partners. They also had a representative at Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) meetings.
- Local partners are the largest actors in the Safe Access to Fuel and Energy (SAFE) Working Group. They have been implemented with several INGOs and UN agencies. All FAO partners are local, and WFP implements via local partners. L/NAs take active part in meetings (presentation), and in needs assessments.
- In terms of gender programming, the sector gave priority to women-led organizations during the selection of partners for capacity building. The sector also requested selected national partners to send their female staff for localization capacity building training.

Leadership

- Trainings for the local organizations aimed to strengthen local leadership, create transparency, accountability, coordination, and local engagement. With local government engagement, the resultant trust-building and partnership helps the humanitarian organization to intervene as efficiently as possible.

- In Nigeria, the role of government in the FSS must be further emphasized through capacity and technical training to enforce the leadership role.
- The government coaching staff deployed and co-facilitated FSS SAFE working group, Agriculture Livelihood Working Group, Livestock and Fisheries Working Group, and others are a strong example of engagement. The FSS facilitates the programme while FAO and different line ministries (Ministry of Agriculture, SEMA, and Agency for Coordination of Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Response) engage directly in the coaching programme. Community Engagement, Accountability, and Localization Working Group support the capacity-strengthening initiatives of the FSS.

Capacity strengthening

- In 2022, the FSS provided a capacity-building training on selected thematic areas for a total of 60 people. This included participants from the government, INGOs and NNGOs and local partners. This was a joint training with the Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) AAP lead and the localization focal point. The FSS facilitated a protection mainstreaming training as well. In 2022, 53 per cent of attendants were female. Two female staff of MoA and SEMA were trained and mentored and equipped with the skills and knowledge of coordination mechanism.
- The training lasted three days and among the topics covered were: Community Engagement, Accountability and Localisation (CEAL) Working Group; The Humanitarian Planning Cycle (HPC); Leadership Strengthening Efforts – Case Study of women-led CSOs; Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Considerations in Localization – Messages, Practice, Support; Accountability to Affected People and Community Engagement; Action in Gender Equality.
- The MoA co-facilitator under the coaching program worked in collaboration with Community Engagement, Accountability, and Localization Working Group. During the training, the FSS provided support to local partners for better understanding of the existing humanitarian funding mechanisms. This brought most L/NAs to apply to the Nigerian Humanitarian Fund and other pool funding mechanism.

Partnership

- Partners involved in this practice were: Ministries of Agriculture, FAO, State Emergency Management Agency, Agency for Coordination of Sustainable Development, Humanitarian Response and Community Engagement, Accountability, and Localization Working Group/OCHA and 60 NNGOs.
- All FAO partners are national and local partners. WFP and other INGOs have also partners with several L/NAs to cooperate for delivering humanitarian assistance; this partnership increased the ability in accessing hard to reach locations. Partnerships were both on short term and long-term bases.
- Among the benefits of partnership between local partners and other actors are: technical support for staff capacity building; Policies in place (mainly procurement, security and finance); Sector opened opportunities for learning, collaboration with other partners, training and guidance on NHF grants and partnering.

Resourcing

- One fully dedicated NGO co-facilitator (funded by Mercy Corps) facilitated all the localization coordination mechanism at the Food Security Sector level under the supervision of the Food Security Sector coordinator. OCHA has one staff member who is dedicated to lead the Community Engagement, Accountability and Localization Working Group and represent the Localization Working Group at the HCT level.



Results and
impact

- **REPRESENTATION:** The practice strengthens the NNGO ability to engage and be represented actively in the Humanitarian Program Cycle (HNO/HRP), increase opportunities in relation to funding and create relationships with donors by engaging with the sector, ISCG, and HCT decision-making fora. L/NAs voice is now heard at the higher level of decision.

- **LEADERSHIP:** Localizing coordination at the Local Government levels made leadership and decision-making stronger. Local government coaching staff adds technical capacity and increases trust.
- **PARTNERSHIP:** Creation of smooth relationship between the FSS, CLAs, government, and NNGOs by deploying government staff to the FSS for co-facilitator role: good opportunity for the sector and CLA to tie strong links with the government and create partnership and trust. Local government offices and NNGOs more engaged with each other, in meaningful actions and decisions across all levels of humanitarian actions in the food security sector.
- **CAPACITY STRENGTHENING:** Local government offices and L/NAs can better understand and are more actively engaged in the over-all humanitarian program cycle (HNO/HRP) starting from designing to the planning resource mobilization, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. While they engage at different levels, they will influence the decision making at all stages.



Sustainability

To create a sense of ownership and sustainability of localization from the social and financial point of view, the sector consults the government, CLAs and the working group about the coaching program. The sector agreed to give priority for women staff members of the government for deployment.



Replicability and upscaling

This practice has not yet been replicated in different contexts. The food security sector implements the coaching program at the state level. Thus, there is an opportunity to scale up at a lower level of administration.



Key learning

The coaching program lessons learned are:

- It creates a strong sense of partnership with the government.
- It builds trust between the government, the sector, CLAs and NNGOs and strengthens equitable engagement.
- It can also strengthen the capacity of the local administration and NNGOs, so that they can actively engage in over-all humanitarian actions (from designing to planning, resource mobilization, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.
- It can also be replicated at the grassroots level
- It creates a sense of ownership and sustainability/durability

The NHF funding creates awareness and ownership, and helps local partners gain interest in the response while striving to deliver and to be a good example.

Localization allows quicker access. Especially such as with the data collection for hard-to-reach areas. Local partners collect data and deliver assistance much faster than INGOs or UN agencies.

Local Area Coordination groups generate local consultation with communities and quicker decision making.



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