

Localized Approach to Covid-19 Humanitarian Response

This document aims to provide some key considerations for the leadership of education clusters and humanitarian coordination groups in order to have a more inclusive and localized response to the COVID-19 global emergency.

As the leadership of the coordination groups and task forces plan their response to the COVID-19 global emergency, the critical role of the local actors, including National NGOs (*incl. women and youth-led organizations*), authorities, and community-based organizations are even more vital. Below are some of the suggestions that may be useful for coordinating a more *effective and solid* response:

- 1- Alignment with the existing national and local coordination mechanisms:** To the extent possible, coordination efforts should be aligned with national and local structures, instead of creating parallel mechanisms and duplicating efforts. With limitations to international travels, local actors should take more proactive roles in decision making. Consider ways to draw on the local Strategic Advisory Group's (SAG) knowledge and expertise when adapting the cluster strategy and approach.

- 2- Duty of Care and Business Continuity:** Many local organisations may not have the financial security and administrative structures that international organisations have. Please support local/national partners to adopt a Duty of Care Policy and put their Business Continuity Plans in place. Examples and templates are available from the GEC Helpdesk (help.edcluster@humanitarianresponse.info). Help local partners to support the physical and mental wellbeing of their staff through useful practices and policies.

Consider also supporting local partners to retain/reassign core staff, even if projects cannot be immediately implemented. This will enable them to recommence activities more rapidly when the situation allows.

- 3- Inclusiveness and Participation:** Local actors are at the forefront of disseminating life-saving messages to affected communities, so they should be encouraged to actively participate remote/virtual coordination meetings, particularly for response planning. Consider ways to facilitate local actors' access to internet. Where this is not possible, work with your local SAG members to find other ways for them to be informed and consulted on discussions before final decisions are taken.

Joint Needs Assessments and Analysis should be conducted with active participation from local/national organizations and authorities. These parties should be consulted during identification of most vulnerable population groups, prioritization of thematic needs and geographical areas.

Their contribution should be acknowledged through increased visibility (e.g. including their names and logos in reports, public documents, campaigns, and invitation to strategical meetings).

- 4- Risk-Sharing vs. Risk-Transferring:** International actors should not transfer pandemic-related health, financial, and operational risks to their local partners. International actors should adopt a responsible and principled partnership approach throughout the response, and share risks with their local partners on an equal and mutually respectful manner. Clusters should work for shared understanding and mitigation of the different risks through joint risk analysis, advocacy for increasing the operating budget, or permitting budget reallocations to enable local partners to put safe practices in place.
- 5- Language:** Language can be a critical barrier or facilitator during life-saving humanitarian action. Coordination documents, appeals, guidance, and awareness-raising messages should be in a simple language avoiding too technical wording or acronyms. National and local languages should be used as much as possible, and local actors should review translated documents for quality control. Consider identifying and supporting local partners to provide translation services if necessary, and reach out to GEC Helpdesk for existing documentation in different languages.
- 6- Humanitarian Funding:** In locations where the need to surge the response is critical for humanitarian action, local organizations' access to direct, increased, and flexible funding should be facilitated. They should be included in the humanitarian pooled fund appeals and bilateral funding opportunities. Special consideration should be given to financially disadvantaged local organizations such as minority, women and youth-led groups, supporting their operational continuity, risk management, and staff safety. Having access to direct, unearmarked or flexible funding is critical at times like these, to enable local partners to remain operational and retain their best staff.