Time to Move On:
National perspectives on transforming surge capacity

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Executive Summary

Introduction and purpose of the research

It is widely believed that the practice of INGOs recruiting national staff, particularly in support of humanitarian response, can undermine national NGO capacity, but there has been very limited analysis about the ways in which it affects local NGOs' ability to respond to crises themselves or the impact that it has on their ability to retain high quality staff. This phenomenon is not new or novel and has periodically gained prominence (most notably in the evaluation of the Indian Ocean Tsunami response in 2006) but it has never received sufficient attention to galvanise policy or practice changes on the part of the international organisations that perpetuate it. The issue most recently came to prominence during the Typhoon Haiyan response in the Philippines and the Nepal earthquake response where research on humanitarian partnerships once again highlighted the challenges faced by the flight of front-line surge staff from national to international organisations.

In the consultations leading to the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), significant attention was placed on the important role that national actors play in crisis response linked to a concern that members of the international humanitarian system could do far more to stop hindering and to help national humanitarian action. Potential actions that could be taken to re-balance the system more in favour of national actors have been grouped under the banner of 'localisation' which seeks to promote a re-calibrated system which works to the relevant strengths of its constituent parts and enhances partnership approaches to humanitarian actors.

Aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, Philippines
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Objective of the study

This study aims to research national NGO experiences of recruitment for surge by international NGOs and attempt to identify good practices as well as document impact, and develop recommendations and an action plan for taking the findings forward within the Transforming Surge Capacity Project (TSCP)[1] and more widely in the humanitarian sector.

What is the scale of the problem?

Although documentation about the movement of staff from local NGOs to international organisations during surge responses is scant, it is a familiar issue for many people who have engaged in humanitarian action. In the Philippines during the Typhoon Haiyan response and more recently in the Nepal earthquake response, there were frequent reports of surge staff moving from national NGOs to INGOs with the most shocking example of one national organisation losing nine senior staff in the space of two humanitarian interventions (Typhoon Washi and Typhoon Yolanda). As illustrated in the bar chart below, the research shows that this is part of a wider problem that serves to undermine locally-led response in both rapid onset and protracted crises across the world.

What is the impact of staff movements from national NGOs to INGOs and UN agencies?

Very little information exists of the impact of the flight of surge staff but the research goes some way to describing the challenges it presents to national NGOs: Managerial and technical field staff were considered to be the category of staff that were most frequently recruited into international NGOs and UN agencies, both because of the transferability of the skills that they have but also because they are often among the most visible to international organisations. The impact and severity of staff movements on the ability of national NGOs to scale up for humanitarian response was considered to be significant in the initial relief phase as national NGOs were seeking to scale-up their operations (0-6 months), however it was in the rehabilitation phase (6-12 months) where the staff losses were considered to be greatest at a time when INGOs and UN agencies were scaling up their operations most aggressively.

Beyond the loss of staff there was considerable concern expressed by national NGOs about unethical recruitment practices which on many occasions were undertaken

> Like me, a few of the local staff from my former organisation moved to UN and INGOs
>
> *Regional INGO officer, Sindhupalchok*

> Four staff of ours left us to join INGOs - they can learn more than we can offer.
> *Senior national NGO staff member Sindhupalchok district*

> We have lost about 7-8 staff to UN agencies and others, byt not to our donors. Nowadays, INGOs and UN agencies are hiring more & more local people...There is already a dearth of young people to work for us. Though we cannot raise the salary, we have lowered down the experience of applicants
>
> *Senior national NGO staff member Sindhupalchok district*

> We keep losing one staff in every month. They go to INGOs.
> *Senior national NGOs staff member, Kathmandu*

Staff movements from NGOs to INGOs and UN in the Nepal earthquake

within established partnerships and frequently without reference checks being undertaken or notice being served. In countries where technical skills were in short supply, national NGOs were sometimes reticent to send talented staff to cluster meetings as they were treated as 'talent pools' where national staff with good language skills and technical knowledge were at risk of being cherry-picked by international organisations.

QUESTION: For your organisation, how frequently do staff move to an INGO or UN agency in each of the different phases of a humanitarian response?

SURGE: 0-6 months — 8, 8, 4, 2, 7
REHABILITATION: 6-12 months — 6, 12, 4, 4, 5
RECONSTRUCTION: 12-24 months — 7, 8, 5, 5, 5

# of survey participants

- We always lose several staff
- We always lose at least one staff
- We sometimes lose staff
- We rarely lose staff
- We never lose staff

FIGURE 1: Assessing the scale of the problem - results from the online survey

Why do people move from national NGOs to INGOs and UN agencies

Push and pull factors

There are many factors that influence the movement of staff from national NGOs which include pull factors such as opportunities to receive higher salaries and better benefits from better-funded INGOs and UN agencies, and push factors that included the longer hours that national NGO staff often work and the difficult working conditions that they sometimes have to endure (see the bar chart below). Project-based contracts were raised as a concern, but the same challenge frequently applied to INGOs and UN agencies. For many staff, movement from a local NGO to a national or regional NGO to an INGO or UN agency was considered to represent a natural career progression and offered the additional enticement of being able to compete for overseas posts.

While staff that had moved from national NGOs to INGOs or UN agencies were often placed on short contracts, many had been successful in moving between international organisations, and those that were interviewed as part of the research had managed to stay within the international sector. There was only one example given of a staff member seeking return to a national NGO which was ultimately unsuccessful; under current conditions, the gap in pay and benefits between national and international employment is too large to easily permit an ebb and flow.

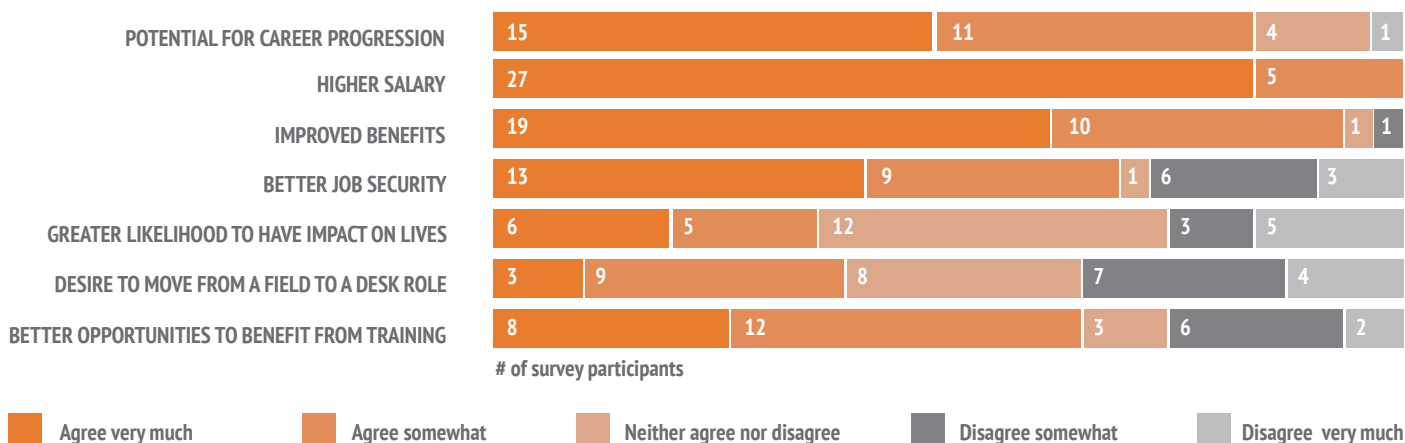### Structural factors that perpetuate the problem

While on the surface there are a discrete number of push and pull factors that contribute to the loss of surge staff, there are some important underlying causes that serve to perpetuate the status quo. The failure of long-term institutional development, imbalances in resource allocation, and the lack of progress that has been made by INGOs and UN agencies to shift power, and by local and national NGOs to claim power, has served to entrench a system that continues to prioritise the international humanitarian system above the national.

The research also found that the impact of staff losses on national NGOs are frequently exacerbated by poor HR practices on the part of the INGOs and UN staff that recruit them. Concerns raised during interviews included a failure to follow recruitment practices, poaching of national NGO staff and the refusal to permit newly-recruited staff to serve notice periods. Many national NGO staff expressed the difficulties they had experienced in trying to raise these issues; on the rare occasions when they were able to discuss them, it was common for senior staff to be blamed, or HR departments at headquarters. As a consequence, it has been difficult for organisations to be able to discuss the challenges presented by staff movements even when it occurs within established partnerships.

Many national NGO staff spoke of feeling powerless to raise concerns when recruitment practices failed to match up to professional standards. One NGO leader based in Africa laughed at the suggestion that he should raise

QUESTION: What do you consider to be the motivation for staff movement from national NGOs to INGOs and UN agencies?

	Agree very much	Agree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree somewhat	Disagree very much
POTENTIAL FOR CAREER PROGRESSION	15	11	4	1	
HIGHER SALARY	27	5			
IMPROVED BENEFITS	19	10	1	1	
BETTER JOB SECURITY	13	9	1	6	3
GREATER LIKELIHOOD TO HAVE IMPACT ON LIVES	6	5	12	3	5
DESIRE TO MOVE FROM A FIELD TO A DESK ROLE	3	9	8	7	4
BETTER OPPORTUNITIES TO BENEFIT FROM TRAINING	8	12	3	6	2

# of survey participants

FIGURE 2: National NGO staff perceptions of the reasons for staff movement to international organisations

concerns with the donor agency that had recruited a key field staff member saying that the funding relationship meant that the power was in the hands of the international organisation and he did not want to risk upsetting his donor.

Only one of the national NGOs that participated in the research spoke of efforts that they had taken to address problematic staff movements and poor practices which included making verbal agreements with their funding partners not to approach their staff, efforts that they had made to negotiate higher salaries to ensure that they were benchmarked towards the top of their peers, and the inclusion of the Principles of Partnership (PoP) in their contracts with INGOs and UN agencies where possible, in an effort to incorporate equitable and ethical partnership practices. The organisation had found the transparency principle in the PoP particularly helpful in offering an entry-point for discussions about recruitment practices that were considered unprofessional.

Models of surge that strengthen national capacity and mitigate the negative impact of staff movements

That is not to say that progress has not been made, and there are a growing number of initiatives that have been embarked on to strengthen national surge capacity and to support national response. In some cases, these have

begun to address some of the imbalances highlighted by the research.

Despite the range of strategies that are now being used to support national surge and to mitigate staff movements from national NGOs to INGOs/UN agencies as the table suggests, there are still very few practical examples, and the overwhelming perception of national NGOs is that the focus of attention continues to be on strengthening international over national surge practices. There were also mixed opinions expressed by national NGO leaders and staff about the extent to which these different strategies would address the flight of surge capacity (see figure 3).

Sierra Leone, Kambia District. CAFOD partner Caritas Makeni operated a safe and dignified burial programme during the Ebola response
©CAFOD/Louise Norton

Models of surge that have the potential to strengthen national capacity

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
Capacity building of national NGOs to lead humanitarian response	Replacing international with national surge was considered to have the greatest potential for reducing staff movements in the online survey and has been on the international humanitarian agenda for many years in theory, but good practice has been slow to emerge. The Philippines offered several examples of national NGO humanitarian consortia. Interviews during the research also highlighted the potential for a change in INGO response modalities from operational models of humanitarian response to a partnership model. This shift has the potential to place greater emphasis on supporting partner surge rather than relying on INGO/UN surge which undermines national capacity	Humanitarian Response Consortium Philippines, Christian Aid Rapid Response Team, Philippines
Working collaboratively to develop surge capacity	The second area where progress has been made is in strengthening inter-agency surge capacity where progress has been led by the Start Network's Transfroming Surge Capacity Programme (TSCP) which is testing new collaborative models and localised approaches to surge in the Philippines and Pakistan. The main goal of TSCP is more effective and accountable delivery of humanitarian assistance to disaster affected people and one of the outcomes is to have more effective civil society surge capacity capable of delivering more efficient collaborative and localised emergency response. Of particular relevance to this study is the progress that has been made towards the development of a surge roster in the Philippines which will serve both national NGOs and INGOs.	Start Network Transforming Surge Capacity Project Surge capacity roster, Philippines
Having prior agreements in place to reduce national NGO losses	The development of harmonised salary scales or prior agreements which aim to reduce staff movements was considered by many online survey participants to have significant potential to reduce staff movements during surge. The only example that was found was brokering of informal agreements by a national NGO in Lebanon with its international partners to prohibit the recruitment of its humanitarian staff. The same organisation also explicitly refers to the five Principles of Partnership in its partnership contracts in order to provide a basis for transparent discussions about recruitment practices.	Informal agreements with partners, Lebanon
Seconding INGO staff into national NGOs to strengthen response	There were a few examples found of INGOs seconding staff into national NGOs as a means of addressing capacity gaps and building capacity although it is noteworthy that feedback was mixed during the Nepal earthquake response. A more positive example was the response to Typhoon Winston in Fiji where INGO staff worked within a national NGO's structure to deliver a joint response.	Response to the Nepal earthquake Response to Typhoon Winston, Fiji
Financial compensation	The research found no examples of financial compensation and feedback on the potential effectiveness of such an approach was mixed; some expressed concern that there was a risk that it would legitimise the practice of head-hunting talented national NGO staff, particularly for INGOs or UN agencies that had greatest resources or were the most operational which would actively undermine the principles upon which the C4C is based. For others, there was concern that the risk and expense that national NGOs took in recruiting staff with little or no experience and nurturing and training them went far beyond the compensation that was being proposed. However there were some that considered the approach could have value as a disincentive for poaching as part of a broader strategy that sought to re-balance the humanitarian system towards local response.	None

QUESTION: How effective do you think each of the strategies could be in reducing the impact of staff movements on national NGOs during humanitarian response?
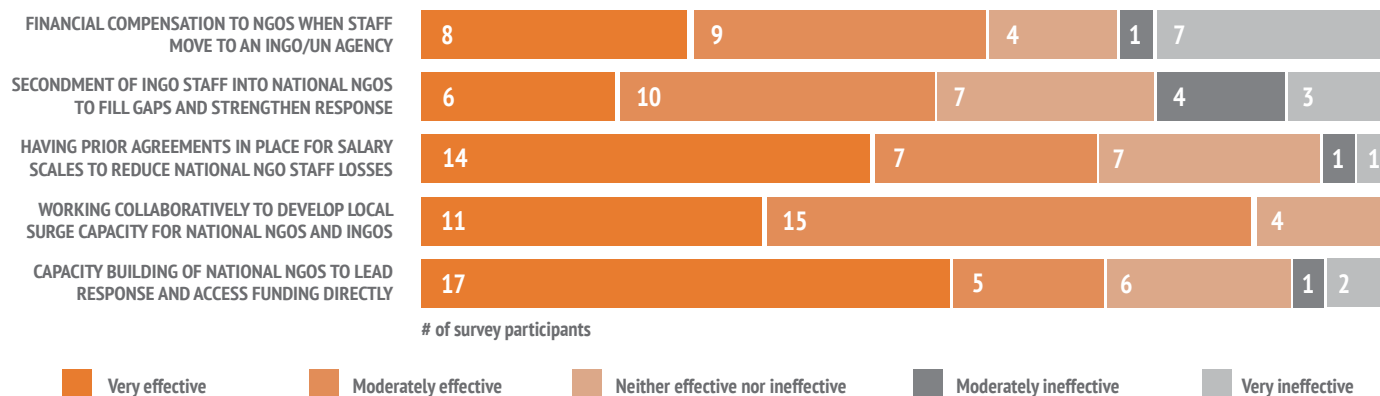
	Very effective	Moderately effective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Moderately ineffective	Very ineffective
FINANCIAL COMPENSATION TO NGOS WHEN STAFF MOVE TO AN INGO/UN AGENCY	8	9	4	1	7
SECONDMENT OF INGO STAFF INTO NATIONAL NGOS TO FILL GAPS AND STRENGTHEN RESPONSE	6	10	7	4	3
HAVING PRIOR AGREEMENTS IN PLACE FOR SALARY SCALES TO REDUCE NATIONAL NGO STAFF LOSSES	14	7	7	1	1
WORKING COLLABORATIVELY TO DEVELOP LOCAL SURGE CAPACITY FOR NATIONAL NGOS AND INGOS	11	15	4		
CAPACITY BUILDING OF NATIONAL NGOS TO LEAD RESPONSE AND ACCESS FUNDING DIRECTLY	17	5	6	1	2

# of survey participants

■ Very effective   ■ Moderately effective   ■ Neither effective nor ineffective   ■ Moderately ineffective   ■ Very ineffective

FIGURE 3: NNGO staff perceptions of the effectiveess of INGO/UN strategies to support NNGO surge capacity

Conclusions

The greater emphasis that has recently been placed on locally-led humanitarian response has galvanized action in some parts of the sector to address some of the practices and inequities that serve to undermine national NGO humanitarian capacity. Despite this, there are still a range of push and pull factors that serve to prompt staff to move from local and national organisations to international ones when they are needed the most; in the early stages of a humanitarian response. During this time, INGOs and UN agencies are often aggressively expanding their programmes, and national talent is often 'on show' which can exacerbate staff mobility.

During the WHS, localisation was championed as an overlooked and under-valued component of humanitarian action and agreements were made by members of the international humanitarian system and donor community to strengthen collaboration and start to address some of the inequities present in the system.

These efforts have complemented existing initiatives to strengthen partnership by the 29 INGO signatories of the Charter4Change (C4C)[2] which seeks to practically implement changes to the way the humanitarian system operates to enable more locally-led response. One of the Charter's 8 commitments obliges signatories to 'Stop undermining local capacity (and) to identify and implement fair compensation for local organisations for the loss of skilled staff if and when we contract a local organisation's staff involved in humanitarian action within 6 months of the start of a humanitarian crisis or during a protracted crisis.'

Despite these initiatives, there is much still to be done to rebalance the system in a way that will strengthen rather than undermine national surge capacity.

So, what can be done? As the title of this report suggests, it's time for the sector to move on; the research highlighted a number of changes that are required, internal to local NGOs, internal to INGOs and UN agencies, and across the humanitarian system more generally that have the potential to influence change. These include the following:

- The need for INGOs and UN agencies to commit to ethical and accountable recruitment procedures which should include proscribing the practice of using partners and cluster meetings as talent pools and a commitment to maintaining professional recruitment standards including taking up references and respecting notice periods;

- The need for national NGOs to seek to address the push factors by strengthening Human Resource Management (HRM) systems and to mitigate the negative impacts of staff movements by adopting succession planning – to the extent that resources will permit;

- An urgency for the humanitarian system including national NGOs, INGOs, UN agencies and donors to redress the imbalance that exists which serves to undermine local response capacity through a range of measures to strengthen resources and assistance in support of localised humanitarian response as outlined in the eight commitments of the C4C.

Even with the enthusiasm and momentum that was garnered in support of localisation during the WHS, change will take time and will require strenuous efforts on the part of humanitarian organisations and donor agencies alike to address the imbalances that exist – more difficult still will be the change of thinking that will need to occur if locally-led response is going to be more than just a series of empty WHS promises.

Recommendations

To strengthen locally-led response and to avoid undermining the capacity and effectiveness of local and national humanitarian response, the following actions should be taken by **INGOs and UN agencies:**

- Recent humanitarian responses have shown that very little progress has been made by INGOs and UN agencies in curtailing practices that undermine local surge capacity. It is now time that specific agreements should be made to limit 'poaching' of staff within established funding, implementing or strategic partnerships to ensure that local capacity is not undermined[3]. These should be written into partnership contracts.
- INGOs and UN agencies should shift from investing in their own surge capacity to supporting that of their partners' in advance of crises. This will require a broader and deeper level of engagement with local NGOs outside of disaster response. This will only be possible by committing to sustained investments in local NGO organisational capacity.

To strengthen locally-led response and to address unnecessary staff movements from national to international humanitarian organisations, the following actions should be taken by **national NGOs:**

- National NGOs should use the tools available to them to hold INGOs and UN agencies in contractual relationships with them to account for supporting surge practices. The PoP offers a set of important principles which have been endorsed by INGOs, UN agencies, clusters and donors alike. Where an international partner has endorsed the C4C, national NGOs should ensure that it is reflected in contracts and relevant partnership documentation.
- Competent and well-managed staff are at the heart of effective organisations. It is essential that, to the extent that resources permit, national NGOs continue to strengthen Human Resource Management (HRM) systems. Surge planning should be at the heart of this so that organisations will be better-positioned to keep their humanitarian staff and ward off poaching attempts by INGOs/UN agencies.
- Staff development and capacity building with a focus on humanitarian competencies should also be the responsibility of national NGOs especially outside of humanitarian responses. In addition to strengthening capacity, this may also serve to strengthen staff retention.

For locally-led humanitarian response to be more than a set of empty WHS promises, **all members of the humanitarian system** urgently need to take the following actions:

- For far too long, investment in surge capacity by the humanitarian system has focused on its international members. The progress made by the TSCP in developing a surge roster that has the potential to strengthen national response represents an important breakthrough. As it is operationalised, it will be important to document lessons with a view to encouraging similar practice in other countries frequently affected by disasters.
- Despite important progress having been made, addressing the imbalances in the humanitarian system will only happen if there is a shift in resources to national humanitarian organisations. It is essential that all members of the humanitarian system deliver on the promises that were made during the WHS to increase investment in national capacity. The provision of funding before disaster strikes will allow time to establish surge capacity outside of the pressures of response

[3] It is noteworthy that this same proposal was included in the overarching recommendations of the TEC evaluation in 2006.

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Glossary of terms

Charter4Change
The Charter4Change is an initiative, led by both National and International NGOs, to practically implement changes to the way the humanitarian system operates to enable more locally-led response.

International Organisation
An international organisation is one that has an international membership, scope or presence. There are two main types of international organisations, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and inter-governmental organisations which includes the United Nations (UN).

National NGO
A variety of terminology is used to describe entities in the non-governmental and civil society sector. Some of the most common terms include: private voluntary organizations (PVOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), community-based organisations (CBOs) and faith-based organisations (FBOs). NGOs are often defined by two major aspects: function and focus. For the purposes of this report, the term "national NGO" will be used to refer to local indigenous organisations that include national NGOs, FBOs, and CBOs that fall within the functional categories of advocacy and service delivery, and are located in developing countries. Where a distinction is necessary to indicate the geographic breadth of an NGO's activities, a local NGO will refer to an organisation which works in a single geographically-defined area of a country and a national NGO refers to an organisation that works across two or more geographical areas of a country.

Localisation
There is no single definition of 'localisation' but for the purpose of this research, it refers to a series of measures which different constituent parts of the international humanitarian system should adopt in order to re-balance the system more in favour of national actors, so that a re-calibrated system works to the relevant strengths of its constituent parts and enhances partnership approaches to humanitarian action.

Partnership
'Partnership' can be defined as mutually empowering relationships, which are aware of power imbalances and focused on mutual growth, organisational development, institutional strengthening and above all, on achieving impact.

[Humanitarian] Surge Capacity
'Surge capacity' relates to the ability of an agency to scale-up quickly and effectively to meet increased demand to stabilise or alleviate suffering in any given population. It requires access to staff and resources as well as systems to mobilise and manage them. It involves a changed way of thinking and culture across organisations.

List of abbreviations and acronyms

C4C	Charter for Change
CARRAT	Christian Aid Rapid Response Assessment Team
CBO	Community-based organisation
CODE NGO	Caucus of Development NGO Networks
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FBO	Faith-based Organisation
HRC	Humanitarian Resource Consortium
HRM	Human Resource Management
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
L&L	Live and Learn
NASSA	National Secretariat for Social Action
NCCP	National Council of Churches in the Philippines
NEAR	Network for Empowered Aid Response
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
TEC	Tsunami Evaluation Coalition
TSCP	Transforming Surge Capacity Project
UN	United Nations
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

Photo: As soon as the handover ceremony finished, Gemma and Rey Matinon began to install the curtains they had been making for their new house. Barangay Sicaba, Cadiz.
© Integral Alliance/Tom Price

1. Introduction and purpose of the research

This section provides an introduction to the research; it discusses the momentum that has been built in support of localisation and the impact that has had on prompting changes within the humanitarian system. It provides an overview of the purpose of the research and briefly outlines the methodology.

1.1 Background to the research

It is widely believed that the practice of INGOs and UN agencies recruiting national staff, particularly in support of humanitarian response, can undermine national NGO capacity but there has been very little analysis about the ways in which it affects local NGOs' ability to respond to crises themselves or the impact that it has on their ability to retain high quality staff. This phenomenon is not new or novel and has periodically gained prominence (most notably in the evaluation of the Indian Ocean Tsunami response in 2006) but it has never received sufficient attention to galvanise policy or practice changes on the part of the international organisations that perpetuate it. The issue recently came to prominence during the Typhoon Haiyan response in the Philippines where research on partnerships between local, national and international NGOs once again highlighted the challenges that it presented;

"The implications of the movement of senior staff to higher salaried positions in international organisations are that national NGOs experience fairly constant turnover of staff which tends to peak when capacity is most needed, for example at the time that disasters occur when international organisations are aggressively expanding their programmes and often their staff also. Many national NGOs felt frustrated that an opportunity for strengthening their own capacity was being missed due to the loss of their staff."[8]

In the consultations leading to the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), significant attention was placed on the important role that national actors play in crisis response linked to a concern that members of the international humanitarian system could do far more to stop hindering and to help strengthen national humanitarian action. Potential actions that could be taken to re-balance the system more in favour of national actors have been referred to under the term 'localisation' which seeks to promote 'a re-calibrated system which works to the relevant strengths of its constituent parts and enhances partnership approaches to humanitarian actors.'[9]

The Charter4Change (C4C)[10] offers INGOs and UN agencies a route map towards localising humanitarian action and was the subject of much discussion during the Summit. It contains a set of eight commitments which signatories agree to implement by 2018 which will deliver change within their own organisational ways of working so that southern-based national actors can play an expanded and more prominent role in humanitarian response (see figure 1 for an overview of the commitments). To date, the C4C has been signed by 29 INGOs and has been endorsed by nearly 150 local and national organisations based in 44 countries.

In a separate initiative, the START Network, a humanitarian network of leading NGOs seeking to promote a way of working that enables the international and local to coexist has embarked on a challenging initiative to change the way that the humanitarian system responds to crises; the aim of the Transforming Surge Capacity Project (TSCP) is to adapt surge capacity by testing new collaborative models and localised approaches which have the potential to strengthen national surge.

The fact that so many agencies have signed up to initiatives like the C4C[11] and the TSCP demonstrates an appetite for change in the way the sector scales up to respond to crises. However, the practicalities of driving or implementing change, particularly when it requires a collaborated effort across actors, are a major hindrance and the inter-linked nature of the problem which fundamentally speaks to issues of power, resourcing and professionalism makes it extremely complex.

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[8] Featherstone, A. (2014) Missed Again: Making space for partnership in the typhoon Haiyan response, Actionaid, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Tearfund, p.11.
[9] ActionAid, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Tearfund (2015) Missed Opportunities No More: An Agenda for Change – localization of aid and humanitarian partnerships, June 2015.
[10] The Charter for Change is an initiative, led by both National and International NGOs, to practically implement changes to the way the Humanitarian System operates to enable more locally-led response.
[11] In October 2016, 29 INGOs and 130 national and local organisations from over 43 countries had signed the C4C.

Direct Funding
Commit to pass 20% of humanitarian funding to National NGOs

Advocacy
Emphasise the importance of national actors to humanitarian donors

Partnership
Reaffirm the principles of partnership

Equality
Address subcontracting and ensure equality in decision-making

Transparency
Publish the amount or percentage of funding that is passed to NNGOs

Support
Provide robust organisational support and capacity building

Recruitment
Address and prevent the negative impact of recruiting NNGO staff during emergencies

Promotion
Promote the role of local actors to media and public

FIGURE 1: The eight commitments of the Charter4Change[12]

[12] See www.charter4change.org

1.2 Purpose and objectives of the research

The purpose of the TSCP is to influence and inform innovative human resource models and strategies that ensure sufficient human resources for surge demand (both at international and local level) without undermining local capacity. In line with the spirit of the coordination and collaboration required to transform surge the project will also research alternatives approaches in how to support the C4C agenda by providing recommendations for ways in which agencies might comply with Commitment four which obliges signatories of the Charter 'to identify and implement fair compensation for local organisations for the loss of skilled staff if and when we contract a local organisation's staff involved in humanitarian action within 6 months of the start of a humanitarian crisis or during a protracted crisis, for example along the lines of paying a recruitment fee of 10% of the first six months' salary'.

The main objective of the study is to support international actors to identify surge recruitment practices and alternatives approaches which have the potential to strengthen national NGO capacity, whilst at the same time supporting improvements in the effectiveness and efficiency of surge across the whole humanitarian sector.

1.3 Methodology

The study was undertaken by an international researcher (Andy Featherstone) and used the methods outlined in figure 2. The ToR for the study is reproduced in annex 1.

### The focus of the research on learning from national NGOs about staff movements and surge capacity

Surge capacity is an issue that is attracting significant interest within the humanitarian sector and benefits from an expanding literature on issues of surge practices, staff engagement and motivation but nearly all of these documents either focus on or are written from the perspective of international humanitarian organisations. **This study is different in that it seeks to capture and amplify the perceptions of national responders about staff movements and surge capacity and uses this feedback to make recommendations about how the international humanitarian system can stop undermining national capacity and provide better support for the development of predictable national surge capacity in the future.**

Approach to confidentiality

It was agreed that feeding back on sensitive issues linked to INGO/UN agency performance may be problematic as some participants may be unwilling to go 'on record' which could compromise participation in and the findings of the research. For this reason, it was decided that where quotes from interviews are used, attribution would offer a reasonable level of anonymity.

FIGURE 2: Methods and approaches

- A web-based document search and literature review on issues of localisation, surge capacity and human resource practices in the humanitarian sector (46 documents);
- Data gathering and document review of initiatives to support surge capacity in the Philippines (13 documents);
- A two-week trip to the Philippines during which key informant interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with local and national NGOs (14 interviews) and International NGOs (10 interviews). A list of key informants is provided in annex 2;
- Participation in the Technical Working Group for the Philippines Surge capacity roster;
- Consultations with a global group of senior national NGO leaders (5 interviews) representing 5 disaster-affected countries;
- An online survey to obtain feedback on current practices, to analyse challenges and to identify solutions (33 national NGO participants);
- A consultation, feedback and validation workshop in Manila after the preparation of the draft research report (participants from 4 INGOs and 1 network);
- A consultation, feedback and validation workshop in London after the preparation of the draft research report (participants from 6 local and national NGOs).
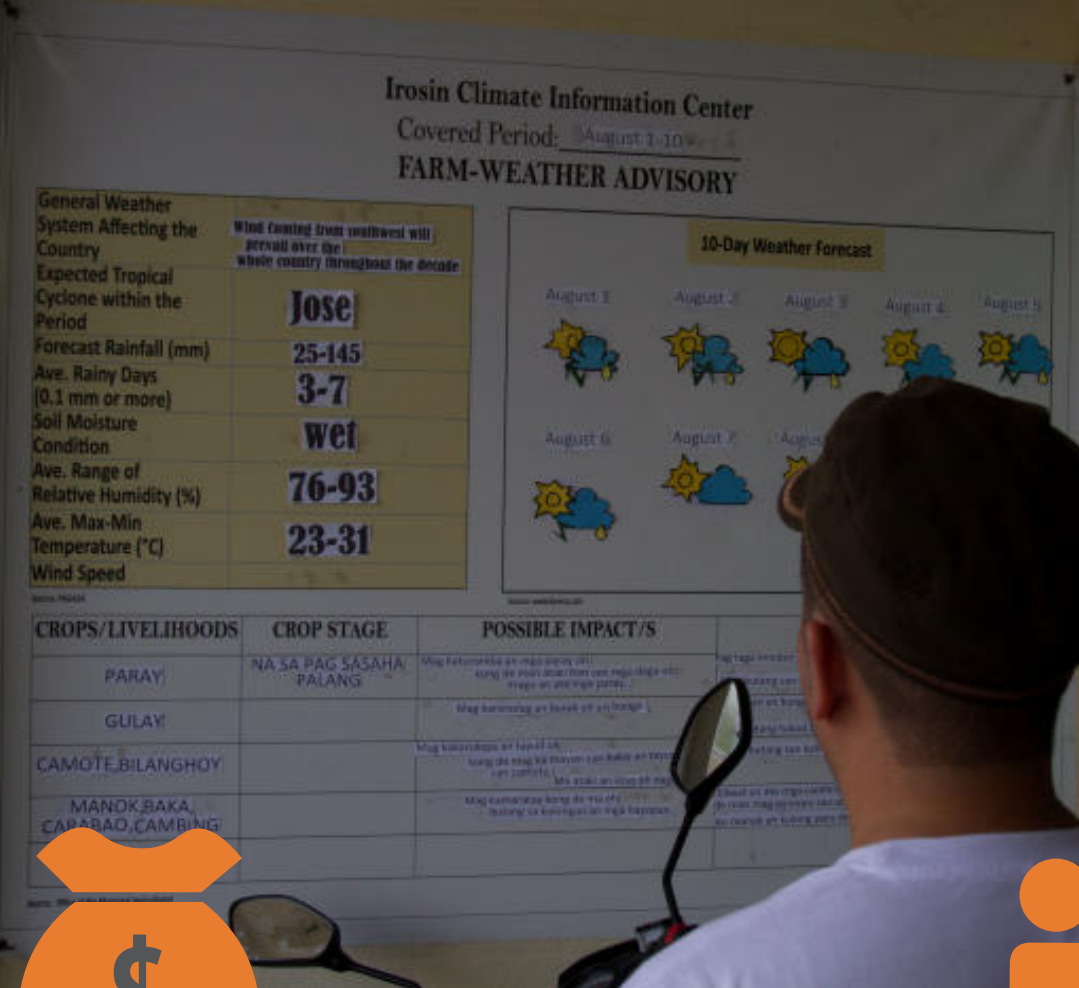
Charter4Change Commitment 1: Direct Funding

Increase direct funding to southern-based NGOs for humanitarian action: At present only 0.2% of humanitarian funding is channelled directly to national non-government actors (NGOs and CSOs) for humanitarian work - a total of $46.6 million (USD) out of $24.5 billion (USD) (see global humanitarian assistance report 2015). Agencies signed up to the Charter4Change commit that by May 2018 at least 20% of their own humanitarian funding will be passed to southern based NGOs (Either national NGOs or local NGOs as defined by the GHA categorisation). They also commit to introduce their NGO partners to their own direct donors with the aim of them accessing direct financing.

Charter4Change Commitment 2: Partnership

Reaffirm the Principles of Partnership: Agencies signed up to the Charter4Change endorse, and have signed on to, the Principles of Partnership, (Equality, Transparency, Results-Orientated Approach, Responsibility and Complementarity) introduced by the Global Humanitarian Platform in 2007

Photo: A Farmer checks the province's climate information center for advisory on incoming tropical cyclone, Philippines
© Rice Watch Action Network

2. How do staff movements affect locally-led humanitarian action?

This section draws on the findings from the Philippines case study and documentation on recent disaster responses to offer a detailed description of staff movements during surge and explores the advantages and disadvantages that these have for national response capacity.

2.1 Getting beyond the anecdotes

Although documentation about the movement of staff from local NGOs to international organisations during surge responses is scant, it is a familiar issue for many people who have participated in humanitarian response. In the Philippines during the Typhoon Haiyan response, there were frequent reports of staff moving from national NGOs to INGOs as exemplified by an account from the Executive Director of a national NGO;

"During our previous emergency responses in Mindanao five years earlier and in response to Typhoon Washi in 2011-12 we had been able to train nine senior staff with the necessary expertise in humanitarian response. One year after Typhoon Yolanda hit all nine of these staff members had been recruited by international NGOs or UN agencies, who were able to offer salaries three or four times higher that we could". [13]

The challenge most recently came to light in a report on humanitarian partnerships in the earthquake response in Nepal; while the INGO surge was far smaller than that which occurred during the Typhoon Haiyan response, there were still incidences of district and national NGO staff being absorbed into INGOs as explained by senior staff from a national NGO working in the affected districts and by a former district NGO staff member;

"We keep losing one staff in every month. They go to INGOs, as they get more salary. We pay USD 400 whereas they pay USD 1200 for the same sort of staff and position". [14]

- Senior national NGO staff member

"A few staff moved from my former [district] NGO to UN agencies and INGOs soon after the earthquake. I also joined our partner INGO just after the earthquake".

- INGO district officer

The issue applies equally to humanitarian response in Africa as it does in Asia and in response to conflicts as well as disasters as highlighted in a 2015 report on humanitarian partnership in South Sudan in which several CBOs which frequently engaged in responding to conflict-related displacement reported the challenges that they faced in retaining their staff. [15]

The online survey which accompanied this research and which was undertaken by 33 national NGO staff (two-thirds based in Asia and one-third based in Africa) offers a clearer picture of the frequency of staff movements across different phases of a crisis including the initial surge (0-6 months), the rehabilitation phase (6-12 months) and the reconstruction phase (12-24 months (see figure 3)). Over half of the respondents indicated that their organisations had lost one or more staff to INGOs or UN agencies during the first 6 months in each of their humanitarian responses, with less than a quarter of survey participants indicating that they had never lost a staff member. While the C4C focuses on the first 6 months of a response, the survey results show that there continues to be significant staff movements during the rehabilitation phase; in this phase 58% of respondents indicated that their organisation lost at least one staff member each time they responded to a crisis with only 16% indicating that they had never lost any staff members during this phase. It was suggested that trends in INGO/UN scale-up accounted for these losses as many operational organisations rely heavily on international surge staff to deliver the early response, only replacing these with partner organisations or with national surge staff as funding is secured and when operational strategies are in place – it is this secondary wave of recruitments

[13] A Paradox in Practice: To localise aid international agencies need to address practices that undermine national capacity, Regina Salvador Antequisa, Executive Director, EcoWEB (Ecosystems Work for Essential Benefits), Philippines.
[14] The issue was raised during the research presented in Featherstone, A (2016) Opportunity Knocks: Realising the potential of partnership in the Nepal Earthquake response, Actionaid, Cafod, Care, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Tearfund.
[15] Tanner, L. & Moro, L. (2015) Missed Out: The role of local actors in the humanitarian response in the South Sudan conflict, CAFOD, Trocaire, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Tearfund.

QUESTION: For your organisation, how frequently do staff move to an INGO or UN agency in each of the different phases of a humanitarian response?

# of survey participants

SURGE: 0-6 months
8 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 7

REHABILITATION: 6-12 months
6 | 12 | 4 | 4 | 5

RECONSTRUCTION: 12-24 months
7 | 8 | 5 | 5 | 5

■ We always lose several staff ■ We always lose at least one staff ■ We sometimes lose staff ■ We rarely lose staff ■ We never lose staff

FIGURE 3: Assessing the scale of the problem - results from the online survey

QUESTION: In the last humanitarian response your organisation participated in, what was the impact of staff movements on different aspects of your organisations operations?

# of survey participants

SUPPORT STAFF
9 | 9 | 5 | 7

SURGE CAPACITY
8 | 11 | 6 | 6

FIELD STAFF
11 | 9 | 7 | 3

SENIOR LEADERSHIP
12 | 6 | 3 | 8

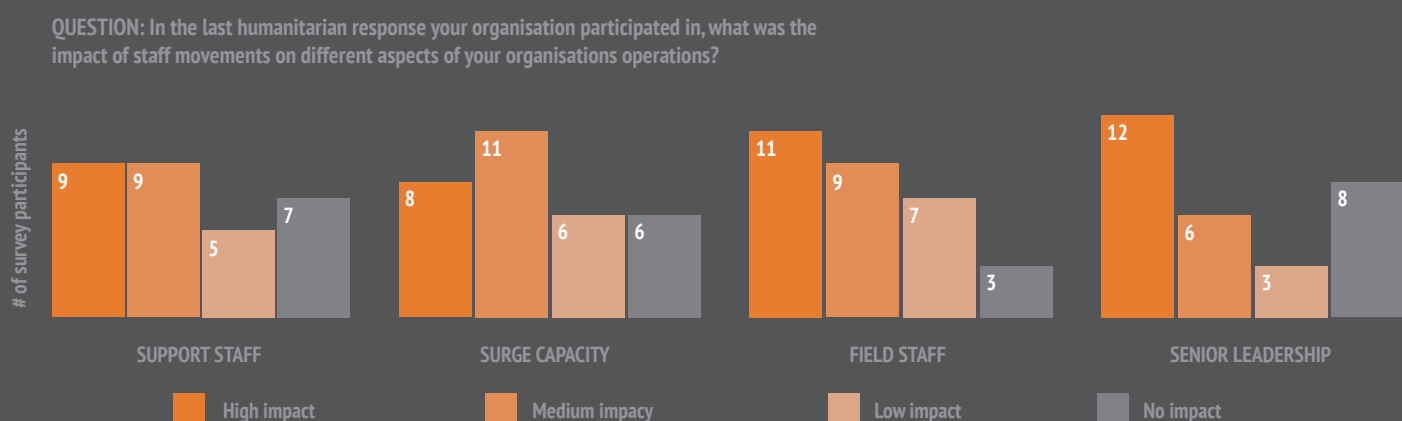■ High impact ■ Medium impacy ■ Low impact ■ No impact

FIGURE 4: The impact of staff movements on national NGO humanitarian capacity

which often attracts senior national NGO staff which can be particularly problematic as it deprives organisations of the strategic leadership that is required to deliver the large multi-donor project portfolios which are often in place 6 months into a humanitarian response.

It is important to emphasise that this is not a new problem, but has existed for many years; looking back through the literature, there are numerous examples given of humanitarian surge staff moving from national to international organisations. Published ten years ago, the report of the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (TEC) provides a high watermark in terms of its examination of staff movements and is damning in its judgment that staff of local NGOs were routinely 'poached' by international agencies. This competitive practice, which may be defined as making a direct offer to someone already in other employment regardless of the consequences, was considered to have occurred 'widely' in the early stages of the response and only 'after the damage had been done' did agencies start to try to address the capacity gaps.[16]

2.2 The challenges presented by staff movement during humanitarian response

While there is an important headline about the number of national NGO staff that move during humanitarian response, as is often the case, there has been a dearth of testimony about the ways in which this has impacted on the ability of national organisations to scale-up to deliver humanitarian response. The online survey offers a more detailed view of which types of staff which move most frequently (see figure 4) and interviews held with national NGO staff in the Philippines and with global national NGO leaders provides offers a more detailed analysis of the impact of these staff losses.

Senior leadership

Senior leadership was the category of staff that interviews suggested moved less frequently, and the survey received mixed feedback about the impact of the losses when they occurred – with some considering it to be significant and others considering that it was negligible. The most important factor in determining this is the size of the organisation and the proximity of the leader to the response. Some smaller national NGOs which lost director-level staff

that had oversight of humanitarian response felt the loss far more keenly than their larger counterparts. A factor that played an important role in limiting the movement of senior leadership staff was the commitment that many had to the organisation – interviews with NGO leaders in disaster-affected areas highlighted several instances when they were offered roles in international organisations which they subsequently turned down;

"Even the Executive Director was offered a post in an INGO but she declined. She said she would be able to have more impact as a local partner".

- Senior local NGO leader in the area affected by Typhoon Haiyan, Philippines

What is important to bear in mind is the broader role that senior NGO leaders have in shaping the destiny of their organisations and the lives of the people that they work with which goes far beyond the impact that can be delivered in a single humanitarian response. While the movement of leaders to INGOs can have important benefits, the limited pool of candidates with the range of skills required to effectively lead national NGOs can present an existential threat to the organisations that they leave.

In the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan 2013, In Leyte province, Philippines, Anita and her husband Jaime received an emergency shelter kit provided by Christian Aid partner RDI-Leyte.
©Christian Aid/Melanie Smith

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[16] Schefer, E. et al (2006) Impact of the Tsunami Response on Local and National Capacities, Tsunami Evaluation Coalition, July 2006, p.35.

Surge capacity

The impact and severity of staff movements on the ability of national NGOs to scale up for humanitarian response was considered to be significant. In countries where there is limited experience of humanitarian action and in contexts where there have been protracted responses, the same challenges exist in scaling-up and maintaining assistance programmes, as a senior NGO leader in Lebanon explained;

"Given the importance of local staff to national NGOs, the institutional knowledge they possess, and the time and resources Lebanese NGOs have invested in them, it is worrying, though understandable, to see many of them moving into better paid jobs with international organisations".[17]

In the survey, 61% of respondents considered the flight of surge staff to have high or medium impact. A recent study of the role of partnership in the humanitarian response to the Nepal earthquake found that even in a largely national NGO-delivered response, there was still significant movement from national NGOs to INGOs as the testimony below highlights;

"We have lost about 7-8 staff to UN agencies and others, but not to our donors. Nowadays, INGOs and UN agencies are hiring more and more local people…There is already a dearth of young people to work for us. Though we cannot raise the salary, we have lowered down the experience of the applicants".

- Senior national NGO staff member, Sindhupalchok district

"Four staff of ours left us to join INGOs - they can learn more than we can offer."

- Senior national NGO staff member, Sindhupalchok district

Field staff

Managerial and technical field staff were considered to be the category of staff that were most frequently recruited into international NGOs and UN agencies, both because of the transferability of the skills that they possess but also because they are the most visible to international organisations. A good example of the challenge this presents was provided by a national NGO working in a field location in the Upper Nile region of South Sudan;

"We lost a field protection monitor to the UN agency that was funding us. It is a complex skillset and so we had provided training to this staff member over a period of three years. We had to get a new person to replace him but it took a long time and he did not have the same level of experience".

- Senior national NGO leader, Horn of Africa

While in the example above the post was advertised and the staff member was recruited through a competitive process, the implications of the recruitment are numerous; not only did the national NGO lose a valued staff member, but their UN donor also suffered a loss of implementation capacity. Moreover, the staff member moved from an operational role which had direct impact on the lives of refugees to a coordination and oversight role. It is this move of capacity from field to coordination roles which can be problematic, particularly in a context where there is a dearth of specialist skills. It is also important to note that the shift happened in the context of a protracted refugee crisis rather than in a rapid onset crisis where it is far easier to define specific response periods which the C4C is targeting for compensation. For many protracted complex emergencies, the loss of a field staff member in the first year or second year is felt just as keenly as it is in the first 6 months, if not more so as it is often far harder to replace the skills and experience that were lost.

A second concern that was raised by two national NGO leaders from different regions was that humanitarian forums such as the clusters had been used to spot national talent. As a consequence, some national NGOs were reticent to send their best staff to clusters for fear of them being offered lucrative jobs with international organisations.

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[17] Mohanna, K. National and international NGOs: equal partners? Association Amel, in CHS Alliance (2015) Humanitarian Accountability Report 2015, CHS Alliance, p.46.

At the opposite end of the 'field staff' spectrum are volunteers or graduates often recruited by national NGOs with very little experience, from universities which provide a key talent pool for national NGOs. There was concern expressed from several interviewees in Lebanon and the Philippines that international organisations were increasingly competing for their attentions. Worse still, rather than remunerate this cadre in line with that of national NGOs, the high salaries they offered not only meant that this pool of potential staff were fewer in number, but that when their contracts came to an end, the disparities between international and national salaries meant that they were far less keen to move to a national NGO and instead moved to the private sector or continued to search for opportunities with international organisations. As a result, it was often considered easier to recruit and retain seasoned national NGO staff than it was to attract younger graduates. By tapping into labour markets that have historically been used by national NGOs, international organisations are now directly competing for staff – albeit form a considerably advantageous position.

In the aftermath of the floods in Uttarakhand state, northern India, in 2013, Christian Aid's local partner CASA helped distribute food to children in the Government Inter College camp in Uttarkashi. Several NGOs provided meals and medicines to the camp's residents. CASA supported local organisations to provide immediate relief, such as food, water, blankets and facilitating essential medical care.
©Christian Aid

Support staff

The results of the online survey were more mixed concerning the loss of support staff the impact of which was largely dictated by their proximity to field operations. There were also fewer examples given of support staff movements, although 1 Filipino NGO gave an example of a budget monitoring manager that moved to an INGO during the response to Cyclone Pablo; it was at the end of the first 6 months of the response that he left and he was mid-way through the project which was INGO-funded. The 3 years of experience that he had with the organisation meant that he had a good understanding of budget preparation and financial systems and as a consequence had been able to quickly establish systems. It took the NGO 2 months to find a replacement who had less experience than the person who moved. The organisation lost a further 2 staff to INGOs, and as a consequence failed to implement the project in a timely way and had to request an extension.

Poor practice that exacerbates the impact of staff losses

Specifically linked to the South Sudan example cited above, while the staff member responded to an advert and went through a formal recruitment process, once offered the UN post, the pressure to fill the post meant that he was pressured to leave without serving his notice period which presented a significant problem both to the national NGO which was unable to replace him for several weeks, but was also short-sighted from the perspective of the UN agency as it meant that their partner was unable to deliver the project in a timely way. Similar examples were given by other national NGOs with concerns expressed that on the rare occasions when these practices were raised with the responsible agency, they frequently blamed more senior staff or HR departments at headquarters. As a consequence, it has been difficult for organisations to be able to discuss the challenges presented by staff movements even when it occurs within established partnerships. There was also some surprise expressed about the regularity with which international organisations put pressure on staff to leave without serving notice and the infrequency with which references were requested for departed staff. One interviewee from the Middle East expressed disbelief that so many of her staff had been recruited without reference requests. Once again, the professionalism of INGOs was questioned.

> "INGOs keep hiring our staff and they do not even ask us for our references on the hired employees. We just lost two of our experienced staff to INGOs".
>
> - Senior staff member from a Syrian NGO[18]

All too frequently, national NGO staff felt powerless to raise concerns when recruitment practices failed to match up to professional standards. One NGO leader based in Africa laughed at the suggestion that he should raise concerns with the donor agency that had recruited a key field staff member saying that the funding relationship meant that the power was in the hands of the international organisation and he did not want to risk upsetting his donor.

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[18] Els, C., Mansour, K. & Carstensen, N. (2016) Funding to national and local humanitarian actors in Syria: Between sub-contracting and partnerships, Local2Global Protection, May 2016.

Only one of the national NGOs that participated in the research spoke of efforts that they had taken to address problematic staff movements and poor practices which included making verbal agreements with their funding partners not to approach their staff, efforts that they had made to negotiate higher salaries to ensure that they were benchmarked towards the top of their peers, and the inclusion of the Principles of Partnership (PoP) in their contracts with INGOs and UN agencies where possible, in an effort to incorporate equitable and ethical partnership practices. The organisation had found the transparency principle in the PoP particularly helpful in offering an entry-point for discussions about recruitment practices that were considered unprofessional.

Caritas Greece helps recently arrived refugees in Lesbos, Greece
©CAFOD/Ben White

2.3 Identifying the benefits of staff mobility for National NGOs

While the overwhelming response received from national NGOs about staff movements was negative, there were a handful of positive outcomes received about the benefits of staff mobility to NGOs. The most frequently cited of these was that 'allies' within INGOs and UN agencies were often able to advocate for greater engagement with national NGOs – where organisations had lost staff, they often maintained contact with their previous employers in both a personal and professional capacity. The existence of a former-staff member was sometimes considered to assist international staff in better understanding the situation of national NGOs and there were some examples given of this resulting in stronger partnerships or better relationships between international and national organisations.

There was also acknowledgement that for some people, employment with an international organisation was ultimately their career objective and so their tenure with national organisations was always going to be a short-term one. When viewed from this perspective, short-term access to a pool of dynamic staff who sought to rise to the top in order to meet their career aspirations was considered beneficial – if not disappointing when they moved on. The challenges associated with engaging these sorts of staff is that their tenure will always be unpredictable as they will look to move when the opportunity arises. As this report has shown, such opportunities all too often coincide when organisations are scaling-up to respond to humanitarian crises and often occur at short notice.

While some national NGOs spoke of the potential for staff to return to their organisations from INGOs and UN agencies, no examples of this were given during the research. In reality, once staff had made the shift, irrespective of the difficulties that people faced in securing long-term INGO contracts or permanent employment, there were no successful cases encountered of staff returning to a national NGO. The closest example was in the Philippines, where a senior manager tried to return to a national NGO only to leave 6 months later because the differential in salary and benefits were too great to make the shift sustainable.

Charter4Change Commitment 3: Transparency

Increase transparency around resource transfers to southern-based national and local NGOs: A significant change in approaches towards transparency is needed in order to build trust, accountability and efficiency of investments channelled to national actors via international intermediaries. Agencies signed up to the Charter4Change commit to document the types of organisation we cooperate with in humanitarian response and to publish these figures (or percentages) in their public accounts using a recognised categorisation such as the GHA (which defines 5 categories of NGOs: international NGOs, southern international NGOs, affiliated national NGOs - which are part of an INGO, national NGOs and local NGOs) in real time and to the IATI standard

Charter4Change Commitment 4: Recruitment

Stop undermining local capacity: Agencies signed up to the Charter4Change commit to identify and implement fair compensation for local organisations for the loss of skilled staff if and when we contract a local organisation's staff involved in humanitarian action within 6 months of the start of a humanitarian crisis or during a protracted crisis.

Caritas South Sudan (St Teresa's Catholic Cathedral), Juba, South Sudan
© CAFOD/Joseph Kabiru

3. What factors affect national NGO recruitment and retention?

This section explores the motivations for volunteers and employees to join and stay with local and national NGOs. It seeks to describe the factors that influence the decisions of staff to move to INGOS and UN agencies and places these in the broader context of the imbalances in power and access to resources that exist between national and international organisations.

3.1 Why do people join local and national NGOs

In order to examine the different reasons why staff shift from national to international organisations, it is important to first understand why people join local and national NGOs in the first place and what motivates them to stay with these organisations. While the reasons are many and varied, the literature and interviews highlighted three of the most important reasons which play an important role in attracting and retaining staff:

- Community solidarity and societal contribution:
  For local NGOs, significant importance is attached to strengthening the lives and livelihoods of community members and of the country as a whole. Many people may have suffered the injustices that they are seeking to address through their membership of an NGO and have a strong solidarity with the themes or issues that underpin the vision of the organisation.[19] For many people interviewed during the Philippines case study, the desire to work with a particular community or the desire to work in close proximity to people more generally was given as a reason for continuing to work with local NGOs as there is a strong perception that international organisations have far less ability to engage at a local level.

- Increasing employable skills:
  In many countries, NGOs are considered to offer good opportunities for skills development both in community development but also in disciplines that have closer links with the private sector such as project management, finances, human resources and logistics. At a sub-national level, opportunities to engage in these activities and to develop skills may be very limited and at a national-level, where job opportunities require work experience, graduates may consider work with an NGO as a means of building skills and knowledge.

- Professional development and networking opportunities:
  While the focus of this research is on the movements of staff between national and international organisations, the same shift in staffing occurs between local NGOs working at sub-national level, regional NGOs that work at district-level and national NGOs that work across a particular country. Interviews with national NGO staff in the Philippines, Pakistan and Nepal highlighted the mobility that exists between each of these levels of this perceived hierarchy and highlighted the motivation for professional development that many staff attach to their work with NGOs.

For many people interviewed at a sub-national level or whose careers started with local NGOs, the desire to support their community played a significant part in their motivations to join an organisation. As a consequence of this, its vision and mission were considered very important and several interviewees also spoke about the importance of NGO leadership, with inspirational leaders playing an important role in attracting staff to an organisation.

"The Executive Director [of the national NGO] moulded and trained me and gave me space to explore and grow".

- Staff member that moved from a national NGO to an INGO/UN agency

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[19] For a case study of motivations for NGO membership in Nepal, see Riehl, U. (2008) "So, Why do you Work in the NGO-Sector?" Differences in Work Motivation and Involvement between Full-time Professionals and Local Activists, Development, Democratisation and Belonging, 2008/2009 University of Bielefeld Faculty of Sociology, p.16.

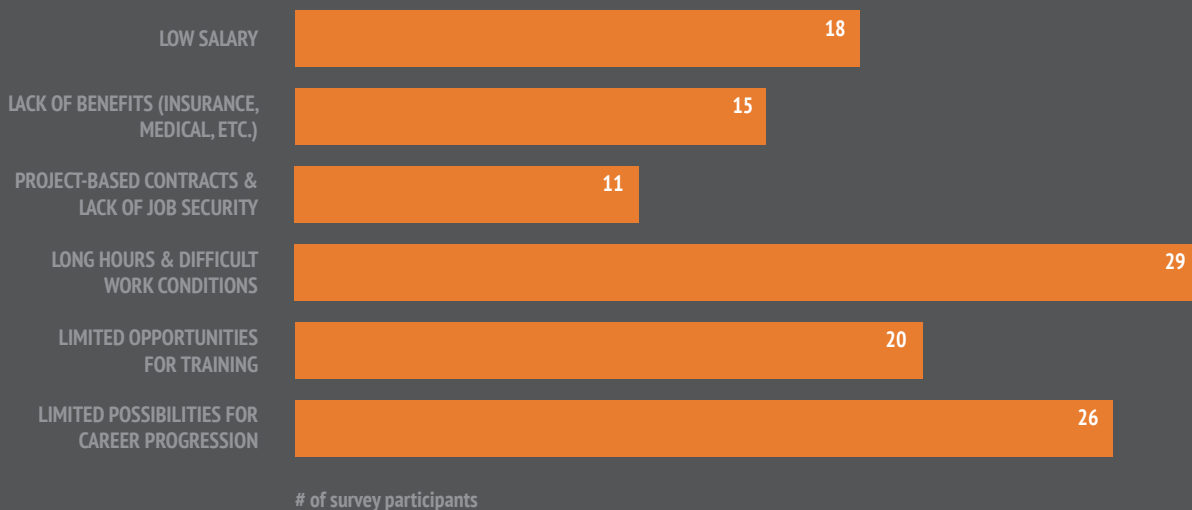**QUESTION: What do you consider to be the main challenges that your organisation has in retaining staff?**

LOW SALARY	18
LACK OF BENEFITS (INSURANCE, MEDICAL, ETC.)	15
PROJECT-BASED CONTRACTS & LACK OF JOB SECURITY	11
LONG HOURS & DIFFICULT WORK CONDITIONS	29
LIMITED OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAINING	20
LIMITED POSSIBILITIES FOR CAREER PROGRESSION	26

# of survey participants

FIGURE 5: National NGO staff perceptions of the factors that 'push' staff out of National NGOs

QUESTION: What do you consider to be the motivation for staff movement from national NGOs to INGOs and UN agencies?

	Agree very much	Agree somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree somewhat	Disagree very much
POTENTIAL FOR CAREER PROGRESSION	15	11	4		1
HIGHER SALARY	27		5		
IMPROVED BENEFITS	19	10	1	1	
BETTER JOB SECURITY	13	9	1	6	3
GREATER LIKELIHOOD TO HAVE IMPACT ON LIVES	6	5	12	3	5
DESIRE TO MOVE FROM A FIELD TO A DESK ROLE	3	9	8	7	4
BETTER OPPORTUNITIES TO BENEFIT FROM TRAINING	8	12	3	6	2

# of survey participants

Legend:
- Agree very much
- Agree somewhat
- Neither agree nor disagree
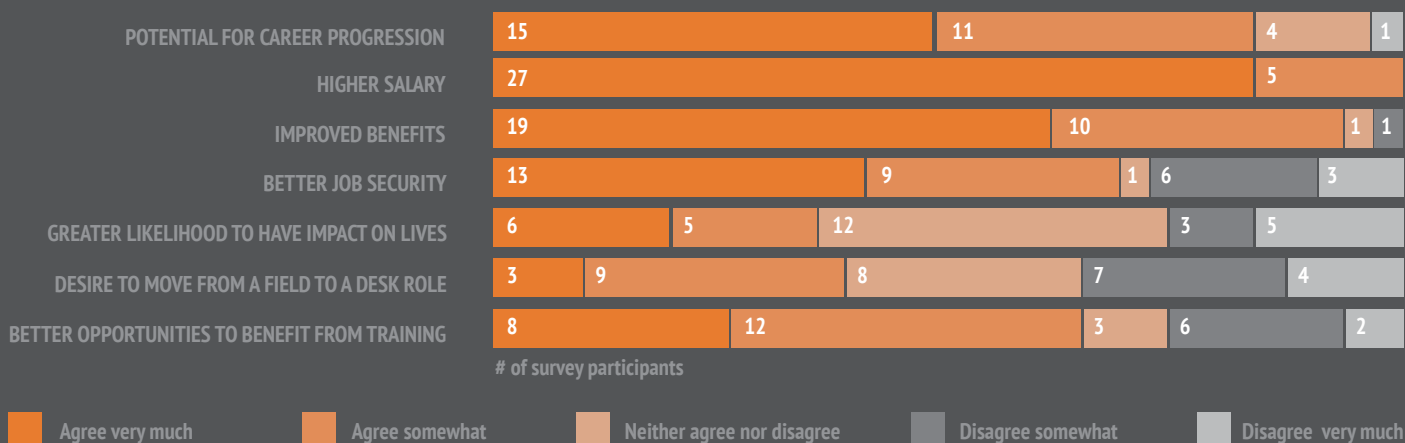- Disagree somewhat
- Disagree very much

FIGURE 6: National NGO staff perceptions of the factors that 'pull' staff into INGOs/UN agencies

Contrary to the prevailing INGO narrative, a large number of interviewees also considered that they had access to significant training opportunities and listed sub-national, national and even international trainings that they had participated in.

"The National NGO was very generous in training me which included participating in international training opportunities. Overall there was significant capacity development opportunities in the organisation, more so than in government or with some other national NGOs".

- Staff member that moved from a national NGO to an INGO/UN agency

In many cases, graduates or community members started working in the NGO sector as volunteers with limited capacity and experience. There was recognition from many of those interviewed that their tenure with local and national NGOs was transformational as it provided them with a core set of skills, knowledge and training and allowed them to achieve their aspirations.

3.2 What factors influence staff loyalty to local and national NGOs?

A desire to contribute to the local community and the greater proximity that local NGO staff have to communities was also cited as an important reason why many staff remain in organisations, often for many years. This is often underpinned by an attachment to the area where the NGO is based – interviews with volunteers and staff of local NGOs highlighted their desire to remain within communities which provided an important driver for loyalty to an organisation. Studies on motivation of national NGO employees and activists in Nepal[20] considered this an important reason for loyalty to local organisations and interviews in the Philippines endorsed this finding:

"We didn't lose staff during Haiyan as there is a strong commitment to local NGOs, although there are also many challenges".

- Senior local NGO leader, Philippines

There was also a concern expressed that career progression and movement from local to national to international NGOs placed staff at a greater distance from communities, which acted as a disincentive for some who were motivated by their wish to work with communities. For several local NGOs working in the Visayas region affected by Typhoon Haiyan, their grounding in the local area and local communities was an important reason for staff loyalty to the organisation despite numerous opportunities to move to better paid international organisations.

"Before Yolanda, we had 16 staff but after it had hit we scaled up to 47 employees and 20 volunteers...in the first 12 months we retained all of our staff...As an organisation we always educate our staff and volunteers on the purpose of our work and we have strong links [to communities] that go far beyond financial incentives".

- Senior local NGO leader, Philippines

""I now work for an INGO, but my work was most fruitful when I worked with a local NGO – I had much stronger links with local communities".

-Staff member that moved from a national NGO to an INGO/UN agency

3.3 Factors that affect staff movement between national NGOs and INGOs/UN agencies

Despite the strong solidarity that all those who participated in the research had with the cause of local and national NGOs, most considered that the trend of staff moving to international NGOs and UN agencies was inevitable. Where there was less certainty and agreement was on the range of push factors that served as disincentives for staff to work for national NGOs (figure 5) and the pull factors that attract staff to international organisations (figure 6).

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[20] Riehl, U. (2009) "So why do you work in the NGO-sector?" Differences in work motivation and involvement between full-time professionals and local activists, Lehrforschungsbericht, Presented in the Winter term, 2008/9, University of Bielefeld, Faculty of sociology, Matrikelnr. 1762266.
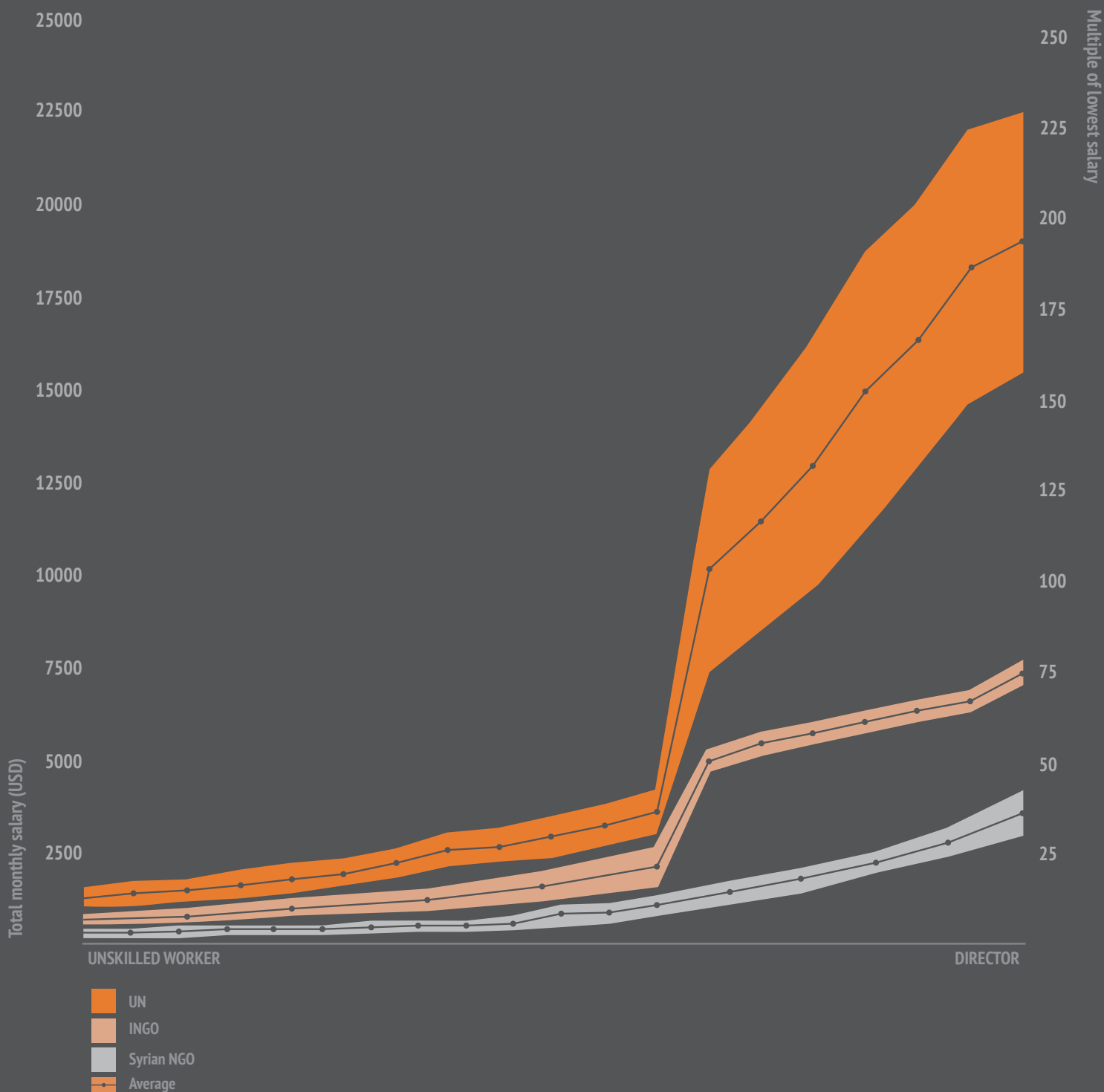
FIGURE 7: Syria Salary Comparison[21,22,23]

[21] Els, C., Mansour, K. & Carstensen, N. (2016) Funding to national and local humanitarian actors in Syria: Between sub-contracting and partnerships, Local2Global Protection, May 2016, p.23.
[22] The graph displays available information on salaries for staff engaged in the humanitarian response in Syria. The range represented spans the highest paid expatriate UN country director (in the range of USD15,000 – 23,000 per month) to the lowest paid Syrian NGO cleaner (approximately USD100 per month).

Higher salaries and better benefits

The issue of salaries was a pervasive issue during the research with consensus from all of those interviewed that local and national NGOs cannot compete with international NGOs and UN agencies. The significant differentials in salaries are highlighted in a study undertaken in Syria (see figure 7).

The figure illustrates one of the main challenges that local and national actors face in trying to hold on to their qualified staff. As an example, a senior officer working for a local NGO earning the lowest salary would increase his/ her monthly pay check by more than five times if he/she transferred to the INGO/UN agency paying the highest salary. Interviews highlighted similar salary differentials in the Philippines and in Pakistan;

"If a local NGO staff member gets 50,000 Pakistan Rupees, a regional NGO staff member will get 100,000 Pakistan Rupees and an INGO staff member [undertaking the same task] will receive 150-300,000 Pakistan Rupees".

- Senior NGO leader, Pakistan

The large salary differentials between local and international organisations has a negative impact on the standing capacity and capacity building for local organisations – not least when it comes to crucial staff positions such as project managers, technical staff and finance staff. Continuously building the capacity of their staff, just to see them leave for better-paid positions with INGOs and UN agencies is an uphill battle for local actors and was an issue that was raised frequently during interviews. In addition to paying higher salaries, INGOs are also able to offer better benefits including medical and insurance, which interviews suggested often became a more significant motivating factor with age. On several occasions health concerns among staff members or their families played an important role in decision-making about moving to or staying in the national NGO sector.

"I worked for a local NGO in community development for 6-years but I wanted to explore other jobs... In the future, my priority will be to stay with INGOs near to my home, but my second option would be to apply to INGOs outside of the Philippines."

- Staff member that moved from a national NGO to an INGO/UN agency (2)

Career Progression

The survey found that salary and benefits was by far the most significant pull factor for national staff, but opportunities for career progression were also considered to have an important influence on decision-making. Interviews with staff in the Philippines who moved from national to international organisations referred to the lure of national and global mobility as a motivating factor for movement, although none of those interviewed considered it to be their primary reason for moving organisation.

With the growing professionalism of the humanitarian sector, there is now a much clearer career path which goes beyond a single step from a national organisation to an international one. Interviews with NGO staff from the Philippines, Pakistan and Nepal, all spoke of a series of smaller jumps between local, regional and national organisations with a view to finding work with an INGO or UN agency in their country of residence, either at regional or capital level, with the final step being to move to a post overseas.

"My main motivation isn't money but my needs have changed over time; I now have a family and I am getting older. I have specific medical costs that I need to pay and I also need to think about paying into a pension."

- Staff member that moved from a national NGO to an INGO/UN agency (1)

A review of the career history of two people who started working for local NGOs in the Philippines and moved to international organisations offers an interesting perspective on the potential for career development (figure 8).

STAFF MEMBER THAT MOVED FROM A NATIONAL NGO TO AN INGO/UN AGENCY (1)			
TYPE OF ORGANISATION	POST	DURATION	REASON FOR MOVE
LOCAL NGO	EDUCATOR	3-YEARS	PROJECT ENDED/PROMOTED
LOCAL NGO	ADVOCACY OFFICER		PROJECT ENDED/MOVED
LOCAL NGO	-	2-YEARS	PROJECT ENDED/VOLUNTEERED
VOLUNTEER	VARIOUS ROLES	2-YEARS	JOINED LOCAL NGO
LOCAL NGO	COORDINATION	4-YEARS	LOOK FOR NEW OPPORTUNITIES
UN	COORDINATION	1-YEAR	-
INGO	PROJECT MANAGER	1.5-YEARS	CURRENT POSITION

STAFF MEMBER THAT MOVED FROM A NATIONAL NGO TO AN INGO/UN AGENCY (2)			
TYPE OF ORGANISATION	POST	DURATION	REASON FOR MOVE
LOCAL NGO	VOLUNTEER	6-YEARS	PROMOTED
LOCAL NGO	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT		PROJECT ENDED/MOVED
INGO	FIELD ROLE	2-YEARS	PROJECT ENDED/MOVED
LOCAL NGO	PROJECT OFFICER	3-YEARS	PROJECT ENDED/MOVED
UN	PROJECT ROLE	5-YEARS	CURRENT POSITION

FIGURE 8: Career history of staff who moved from a local NGO to INGOs/UN agencies

The two examples are supported by similar feedback from other NGO staff in the Philippines and offers insights into NGO staff mobility, career progression and job security. With regards to career progression, it is evident from both the examples that at a certain point within their careers, both people started to seek opportunities within the international NGO/UN agency job market. For both, the opportunity to move from a local NGO to an INGO/UN agency occurred in the context of a humanitarian response, albeit one being a rapid onset emergency and the other being a more protracted situation. While in one case there was initially some back-and-forth between INGOs and local NGOs, now that both staff have settled with international organisations, they feel it would be a challenge to return to a national NGO. While the research failed to find significant difference in the job security of staff who moved from national NGOs to INGOs, once the shift had occurred, they tended to be fairly successful in maintaining paid employment within INGOs and UN agencies and, with time, have been able to transition out of less stable surge-related posts.

Long hours and difficult working conditions

40% of those who completed the online survey considered that long hours and difficult working conditions that many national NGO staff faced negatively affected staff retention, and during the interviews a number of staff commented on the basic conditions that they faced when responding to humanitarian crises. While many considered that this demonstrated important solidarity with those that they were seeking to assist, some conceded that it made it difficult to sustain their motivation over weeks and months of a humanitarian response.

Staff who had moved to INGOs and UN agencies spoke of the benefits of working office hours and praised the efforts that had been taken by their employers to address work-life balance and the difference that this made to their lives. While there was an expectation that this would and should change during humanitarian response, there was an appreciation of the importance of this balance as part of achieving a sustainable career as a humanitarian worker. With significant research having endorsed the long-term benefits of positive work-life balance for both employees and organisations,[24] it is difficult to argue against it. But it is also important to acknowledge that it requires human

and financial resources to prepare and enact such policies, and in the resource-poor environment that many national NGOs work in during humanitarian response, achieving work-life balance is often considered a luxury that is only attainable for a minority of people.

Project-based contracts and a lack of job security

It is curious that project-based funding and job insecurity was positioned at the bottom of the list of push factors as the limitations of jobs being linked to project funding was frequently considered a challenge by national NGO interviewees. A review of partnership practices in South Sudan exemplified the difficulties that many national NGOs face in retaining staff during fallow periods (see below).

"The majority of national NGOs operate on a project-to-project basis and there are widespread examples of staff continuing to work as volunteers when funding ends. National organisations emphasized their access to a committed workforce who are willing to work without salary when necessary. The Director of a national NGO working in Juba reported that he does not take a salary in between projects and that his staff also continue to volunteer while he seeks new funding opportunities." [25]

One of the implications of the lack of job security within national NGOs is that staff are frequently looking for employment opportunities elsewhere as they require employment to survive, even if this requires moving between organisations. Furthermore, studies suggest that project-based staff often leave towards the end of project, in the third quarter, before funding ends, which can be extremely detrimental to reporting and exit strategies.[26]

In both the examples cited of Filipino staff moving from national NGOs to INGOs/UN agencies, the shift primarily came about as a consequence of a project finishing and a lack of resources to extend staff contracts. However, it is important to add that it is rarely the case that national staff can attain better job security by moving to INGOs or UN agencies; the erratic nature of humanitarian career paths can exacerbate the mobility of staff and cause them to jump from one organisation to another if a better-paid, more stable or more intellectually satisfying opportunity comes along.

[24] See Lankester, T. (2003) Work-life balance: Guidelines for the aid sector, People in Aid.

[25] Tanner, L. & Moro, L. (2015) Missed Out: The role of local actors in the humanitarian response in the South Sudan conflict, CAFOD, Trocaire, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Tearfund. P.17.

[27] Vale, I (2010) Addressing staff retention in the Horn of Africa, Report, People in Aid and Emergency Capacity Building Project, Horn of Africa Consortium Project, March 2010, P.8.

The key importance of strong human resources management (HRM) systems to address the push factors and mitigate the pull factors

An additional factor which plays an extremely important role in determining staff engagement is a strong HRM function. There was insufficient time during interviews for detailed discussions about HRM capacity but the literature is extensive[27] and while this report will not seek to reproduce it, some of the findings that are most relevant include the following;

- The importance of professional management practices and systems as part of a strategic approach to engaging staff as individuals and understanding what they need and want from a humanitarian organisation;

- A solid foundation of good HR practices is essential if staff are to remain committed to an organisation;

- An organisational focus on the journey that staff are undergoing with an organisation which focuses on their arrival and induction, that ensures that organisational change processes are well-communicated and undertaken and that strives to adopt an operating and funding model that is long-term and strategic;

- The importance that all managers have in engaging staff in order to improve their employees' experience of the organisation;

- The key motivational role played by inspirational NGO leaders.

Studies, including one conducted by People in Aid in the Horn of Africa found that insufficient attention was paid to ensuring that retention was a management priority as much as it was an HR priority and that 'organisations were relatively weaker at implementing initiatives that mitigate the consequences of turnover such as inductions, succession planning, and preserving institutional memory.'[28] Having a strong HRM system is all the more important as there are significant disincentives to staff moving between different organisations and while national NGOs cannot compete with the terms and benefits offered by INGOs and UN agencies, it is possible to better understand and take greater control of push factors if there are good human resource practices and systems in place (see figure 9).

While these solutions should not be considered a panacea as they are still resource-dependent, it is a lesson that several national NGO leaders have already learnt and are trying to act on with some success:

"We understand the challenges of project-based funding on our staffing and are addressing these in our business model...Resource mobilisation is key as this permits organisational sustainability and allows [us] to invest in our people. We pay competitively - although not as much as INGOs - we engage our staff in the strategic thinking and we have moved most people onto core contracts. 25 of our 35 staff have been in the organisation for 4-5-years."

- Senior NGO leader, Philippines

FIGURE 9: Improving retention - findings from a study in the Horn of Africa[29]

Improved retention begins with the organisation's strategic thinking. Knowing what must be achieved leads automatically to asking what competencies and qualities are needed to deliver that success. Knowing who you must retain; means you must also understand what they need and want and what you are prepared to offer them (within standards and guidelines). This implies retaining your best people means focusing on and engaging your best people... A solid foundation of good HR practices is essential if retention strategies are to be successful. Organisations whether large or small are competing against their peers for talent and if organisations in specific circumstances are equally attractive to a candidate it is safe to assume the employers that are recognised exemplars of HR practice will have an advantage.

[27] See (i) Vale, I (2010) Addressing staff retention in the Horn of Africa, Report, People in Aid and Emergency Capacity Building Project, Horn of Africa Consortium Project, March 2010; (ii) PĂCEȘILĂ, M. (2014) Analysis of key motivators in the Romanian NGO environment, in Quality, Innovation Prosperity, 18/2 – 2014; (iii) Batti, C. (2014) Human resource management challenges facing local NGOs in Humanities and social sciences, Vol. 2, No. 4, 2014, pp. 87-95. Doi: 10.11648/j.hss.20140204.11; (iv) FRONTERA (2007) Motivating staff and volunteers working in NGOs in the South, prepared for People in Aid, January 2007; (v) Bakuwa, R., Chasimpha, F. and Masamba, J. (2013) Staff retention in developing countries: A case study of an NGO in the Health Sector in International Journal of Human Resource Studies, ISSN 2162 – 3058, 2013, Vol. 3, No. 1; (vi) Loquercio, D. (2006) Turnover and retention, General summary, People In Aid, January 2006.

3.4 Beyond the push and pull - what are the factors that perpetuate the problem?

At the root of the pull and push factors are a set of structural obstacles that exist in the humanitarian system that make it very difficult for national NGOs to compete with INGOs and UN agencies for resources, and hobble their efforts to effectively scale-up in times of crises. These obstacles include imbalances in humanitarian funding, the failure of institutional capacity building and a lack of power. Each will be discussed below.

Imbalances in humanitarian funding

One of the most important factors that is driving the salary differential between national and international organisations is the dearth of funding that is provided directly to local and national organisations. This was particularly evident during the Typhoon Haiyan response where despite the availability of experienced national NGOs, it is estimated that only 2.4 percent of international donor funds were channeled **directly** to front-line Filipino organisations (figure 10). While some of the funding would have been provided **indirectly** to local and national NGOs via INGOs and the UN, pass-through would have taken time and a proportion would have been deducted by international organisation to cover administrative costs, negatively impacting on the timeliness and efficiency of the response.

The lack of direct funding to national NGOs serves also to exacerbate the salary differentials between different members of the humanitarian community that plays a significant factor in perpetuating staff movements. While the commitments that have been made by INGO signatories to the C4C to pass twenty percent of their funding to national NGOs backed up by similar commitments by donors during the WHS may begin to address this imbalance, it will take time for the changes to be felt.

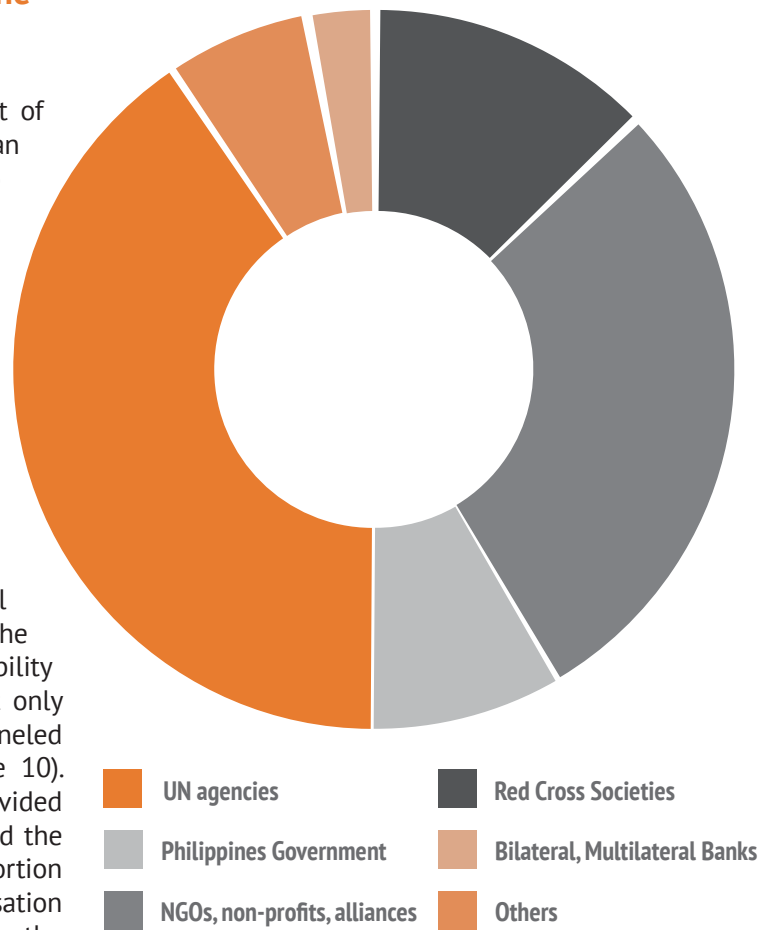|	
🟧 **UN agencies**	⬛ **Red Cross Societies**
⬜ **Philippines Government**	🟫 **Bilateral, Multilateral Banks**
⬛ **NGOs, non-profits, alliances**	🟧 **Others**

FIGURE 10: Distribution of foreign aid for humanitarian response to Typhoon Haiyan

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[28] Vale, I (2010) Addressing staff retention in the Horn of Africa, Report, People in Aid and Emergency Capacity Building Project, Horn of Africa Consortium Project, March 2010, p.7.
[29] Ibid, p.10.

A failure of long-term institutional capacity development

A recent study on partnership in the Nepal earthquake response highlighted continuing weaknesses in INGO approaches to humanitarian capacity development and concluded that 'there needs to be a far greater emphasis placed by the international humanitarian system on identifying partners and investing in capacity development for surge and response in advance of crises. This will require a broader and deeper level of engagement with local NGOs outside of disaster response with a view to reducing the need for support when crises occur'.[30] This echoes the findings of the TEC evaluation which presented almost exactly the same findings ten years ago, concluding that;

"The underlying problem seems to be that international agencies were not clear about making partnerships with local CBOs and NGOs from the outset. They saw service delivery as the objective, and such partnerships were simply a means to that end. This led to problems when it was necessary to change gear from relief work to more developmental approaches in the recovery phase. By that stage, local organisations had already been weakened, either by being starved of support or pushed into a 'sub-contracting' mode. The loss of staff from these organisations was a particularly severe problem." [31]

As the excerpt highlights, resources and time for investments in skills that are needed before a disaster paradoxically tend to be more readily available in the aftermath of a major disaster, just when local agencies are laying off staff. What is needed is a move from buying-in organisational capacity through staff recruitment to investing in the effectiveness and efficiency of the core organisation to deal with the expanding workload. This aspiration is enshrined in the sixth C4C Commitment which seeks to address subcontracting and ensure equality in decision-making in the context of partnerships.

Resources and power and the importance of preparing for surge

Ten years ago, the Indian Ocean Tsunami evaluation lamented the role that international organisations played in undermining local ownership and perpetuating imbalances as a consequence of their poor partnership practices and lack of investment in capacity building. Recent studies of humanitarian partnerships in diverse contexts such as the Typhoon Haiyan response in the Philippines, the response to conflict in South Sudan and the earthquake response in Nepal suggest that limited progress has been made in addressing these shortcomings and in strengthening capacity development of national NGOs over the last decade.

In trying to address these imbalances in the sector, the START Network's 'Shifting the Power' project has articulated a vision that is consistent with the changes that are required.[32] While these efforts have been welcomed, interviews in the Philippines highlighted the need for a shift in power that went beyond humanitarian response and which fundamentally re-framed international–national relationships across both development assistance and humanitarian aid. It was felt that only through a holistic approach could skills gaps be addressed and capacity strengthened outside of crises in order for it to be used during crises. Furthermore, while efforts by INGOs to 'shift' power offers an important entry point for national NGOs, there was acknowledgement that success will not be possible unless that power is 'claimed'. The importance of claiming power was stressed by several national NGO leaders in the Philippines who recognised the challenges that they faced in building organisational structures and humanitarian capacities that were fit for purpose and ready to take on the challenges of humanitarian leadership. This distinction sets an important shared agenda for international and national organisations to work together to re-shape the nature of their relationships as the cornerstone of transforming surge capacity.

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[30] See Featherstone, A. (2016) Opportunity Knocks: Realising the potential of partnerships in the Nepal earthquake response, ActionAid, CAFOD, CARE, Christian Aid, Tearfund and Oxfam.

[31] Schefer et al (2006) Impact of the tsunami response on local and national capacities, Tsunami Evaluation Coalition, July 2006, p.38.

[32] the START Network's 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. See https://startnetwork.org/start-engage/shifting-the-power

Charter4Change Commitment 5: Advocacy

Emphasise the importance of national actors: Agencies signed up to the Charter4Change commit to undertake to advocate to donors to make working through national actors part of their criteria for assessing framework partners and calls for project proposals

Charter4Change Commitment 6: Equality

Address subcontracting: Agencies signed up to the Charter4Change commit to involve local and national collaborators in the design of programmes at the outset and ensure they participate in decision-making as equals in influencing programme design and partnership policies.

Caritas Myanmar running an emergency response drill, Pathein Diocese, Myanmar
© CAFOD/Ben White

QUESTION: In your experience what strategies have INGOs and UN agencies used in the past to reduce the impact of staff movements or to compensate your organisation for the loss of staff during humanitarian response?

IDENTIFYING ALTERNATIVES TO SURGE SUCH AS CAPACITY BUILDING OF NATIONAL NGOS TO LEAD HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND ACCESS FUNDING — 3

WORKING COLLABORATIVELY TO DEVELOP LOCAL SURGE CAPACITY FOR BOTH NATIONAL NGOS AND INGOS — 7

HAVING PRIOR AGREEMENTS IN PLACE ON STAFF MOVEMENTS AND SALARY SCALES TO REDUCE NATIONAL NGO STAFF LOSSES — 5

SECONDMENT OF INGO STAFF INTO NATIONAL NGOS TO FILL GAPS AND STRENGTHEN RESPONSE — 13

FINANCIAL COMPENSATION TO NATIONAL NGOS WHEN STAFF MOVE TO AN INGO/UN AGENCY — 10

# of survey participants

FIGURE 11: Strategies that have been adopted by INGOs to support NNGO surge capacity

QUESTION: How effective do you think each of the strategies could be in reducing the impact of staff movements on national NGOs during humanitarian response?
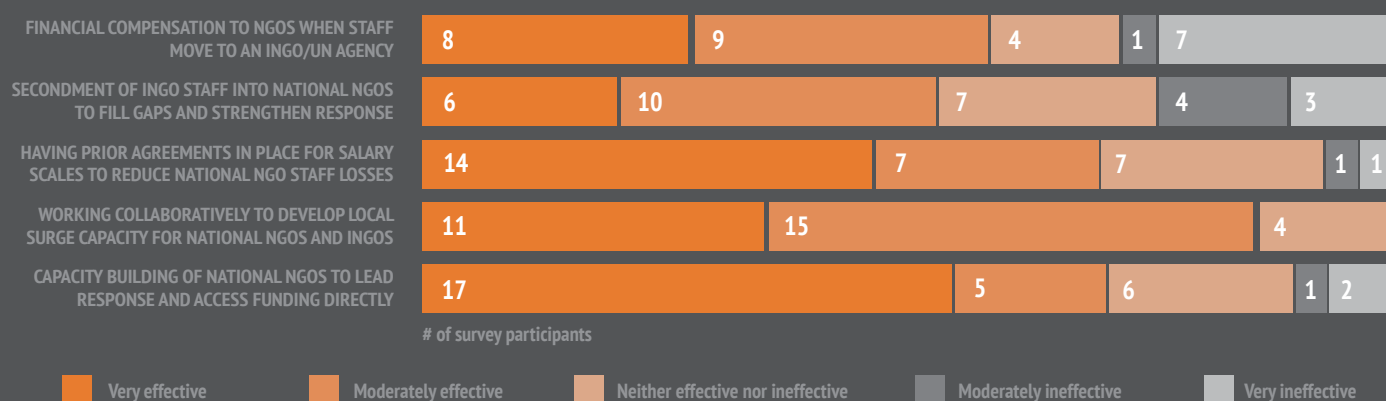

FINANCIAL COMPENSATION TO NGOS WHEN STAFF MOVE TO AN INGO/UN AGENCY — 8 | 9 | 4 | 1 | 7

SECONDMENT OF INGO STAFF INTO NATIONAL NGOS TO FILL GAPS AND STRENGTHEN RESPONSE — 6 | 10 | 7 | 4 | 3

HAVING PRIOR AGREEMENTS IN PLACE FOR SALARY SCALES TO REDUCE NATIONAL NGO STAFF LOSSES — 14 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 1

WORKING COLLABORATIVELY TO DEVELOP LOCAL SURGE CAPACITY FOR NATIONAL NGOS AND INGOS — 11 | 15 | 4

CAPACITY BUILDING OF NATIONAL NGOS TO LEAD RESPONSE AND ACCESS FUNDING DIRECTLY — 17 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 2

# of survey participants

■ Very effective   ■ Moderately effective   ■ Neither effective nor ineffective   ■ Moderately ineffective   ■ Very ineffective

FIGURE 12: NNGO staff perceptions of the effectiveness of INGO/UN strategies to support NNGO surge capacity

4. Models of surge that strenghten national capacity and mitigate the negative impact of staff movements

This section will draw from the feedback from the online survey, interviews conducted in the Philippines and with global national NGO leaders and a review of the literature to examine surge practices that have been used to support local and national NGOs with a view to offering consolidated feedback on the perceptions of local and national partners on their success or otherwise.

Despite the inequities present in the humanitarian system, there have been initiatives that have sought to prepare partnerships or build specific organisational capacities for national and local surge responses. There is also some evidence of efforts having been made to mitigate the negative effects of international surge practices (figure 11).

4.1 Efforts to strengthen national leadership of humanitarian response

Replacing international with national surge was considered to have the greatest potential for reducing staff movements in the online survey (see figure 12). This has been on the international humanitarian agenda for many years in theory, but good practice has been slow to emerge as figure 11 indicates.

CAFOD offers an example of an INGO taking action to strengthen national humanitarian leadership. The organisation is working with its partner in the Philippines, Caritas Philippines, known locally as the National Secretariat for Social Action (NASSA), to strengthen its capacity to lead humanitarian response based on lessons from the Typhoon Haiyan response. A humanitarian unit has been created and efforts are being made by NASSA to ring-fence resources to retain a small standing humanitarian team at national and diocesan-level. Technical capacity and logistics and procurement systems are being strengthened within the organisation to facilitate rapid response. Efforts have also been made to strengthen its sub-regional cluster to become a "one-stop shop" hub in emergency response in the region.

Interviews during the research also identified one INGO that had made a strategic change in its response modality from an operational model of humanitarian response to a partnership model. While still a work in progress, this shift has the potential to place greater emphasis on supporting partner surge response rather than relying on an expansion of INGO activities which is the main contributor to the movement of staff from national NGOs.

"Pre-Haiyan we had about 200 staff, post Haiyan we had about 400. These were recruited through a range of strategies including from a pre-existing roster that we had created after our Typhoon Pablo response…However, in our new country strategy we're now shifting to a partnership-based response model and so we're looking to develop strategic partnerships which will include investment in surge capacity."

- Senior INGO HR manager, Philippines

Importantly, the INGO will focus on building the capacity of its development partners to shift gear in times of crisis in order to deliver humanitarian response, which establishes an important support agenda including both staff capacity building and institutional capacity development.

The Philippines case study also offered several examples of national NGOs coming together to strengthen surge capacity, often with the support of an INGO (figure 13).

FIGURE 13: National humanitarian response consortia

Developed with support from Oxfam, the Humanitarian Response Consortium (HRC) was initially formed of five organisations (it is currently formed for four organisations) with a mission to provide high quality humanitarian services to humanitarian partners. Each of the local organisations has complementary specialisations and has strategic operations across all three major island groups of the Philippines. In the event of a natural disaster or conflict, these organisations can come together and launch an emergency response as one consortium.

The Christian Aid Rapid Response Assessment Team (CARRAT) was formed with the support of Christian Aid to build disaster preparedness and response capacity across development and emergency partners. It has a country-wide mandate and its members' support capacity building and response of local partners based in areas affected by disaster. It has been progressively strengthened over a period of eight years and has responded to typhoon Ketsana in 2011 and Haiyan in 2014. CARRAT has now expanded its reach to all of Christian Aid's partners and their associated networks. It offers an example of targeted capacity development for surge over a number of years which focuses both on the capacity of staff as well as the humanitarian capacity development of the organisation.

FIGURE 14: Establishing the Philippines surge response platform - the story so far...[33]

Experiences and capacities for disaster response are varied among the Philippines platform members, however, it has been largely successful in providing each member a space, where open and candid discussions can be held. As a consequence, the development of the platform has been highly consultative and the process to date has been successful in finding practical solutions that work for the diverse membership. There is also recognition that instead of skirting around discussions on sensitive issues, addressing them directly offers the advantage of paving the way for solutions that work for all. These issues which include - inclusivity/exclusivity, competition for and poaching of staff, the challenge of accommodating different staff pay scales, differences of staff care benefits between expatriates and locals - have all been discussed with a view to finding pragmatic solutions that can accommodate the diversity that is necessary to allow the platform to meet the needs of multiple users.

The membership of local NGO networks in the platform is an extremely important step, which has resulted in offering a shared space to discuss views on how to successfully transform surge. Whereas, historically there have been questions about whether local NGO capacity is adequate to lead humanitarian responses, there is acknowledgement of the important role that all actors play in response. There have also been discussions about specific tensions and mistrust that exists between INGOs and NGOs which includes the important question of whether INGOs are willing to concede space to their national counterparts and whether there can be a shared definition about what localisation means in practice. This platform has been instrumental in harvesting different views and in moving towards a consensus that can shape the future of surge in the Philippines.

The formation of the roster has been an inclusive process with agreement on its essential characteristics of being 'a nationally-led, managed and maintained surge roster'. Plans are for it to be activated only during a humanitarian response and not be used for recruitment for regular programming. Capacity building has been identified as the top priority and an initial training event has been successfully completed. The enthusiasm behind the two main activities of the project has served to strengthen collaboration in an area where agencies have historically been competitors.

[33] Adapted from Iqtidar, U. (2016) Transforming surge capacity, mid-term learning document, START Network, p.6.

4.2 Working collaboratively to develop surge capacity

The second area of work to strengthen surge has been on the development of surge capacity at the inter-agency level. Progress here has been led by the START Network's TSCP which is testing new collaborative models and localised approaches to surge in the Philippines and Pakistan. One of the main goals of the TSCP is to balance power relations between international and national organisations by harnessing their strengths with a recognition that INGOs are better able to get funds and local organisations are better positioned to understand local needs and access affected populations. Of particular relevance to this study is the progress that has been made towards the development of a surge roster in the Philippines which along with Pakistan were selected as 'proof of concept' countries, based on disaster profile (high incidence of rapid-onset emergencies) and partner interest and capacity (figure 14).

4.3 Having prior agreements in place to reduce national NGO losses

A pragmatic approach to reducing staff movements during surge, and one that the online survey suggests may have significant potential to reduce staff movements during surge, was the development of harmonized salary scales or to have agreements in place that are targeted to reducing staff movements. Despite this, it proved difficult during the research to identify specific examples. The only example was from Lebanon where a national NGO has adopted a strategy of negotiating informal agreements with INGO funding partners not to poach staff and to share information about potential recruitments. This is the closest match but this was initiated based on previous negative experiences rather than constituting good INGO practice. There were no examples found in the literature of instances when national and international NGOs harmonised their salaries to reduce national NGO losses.

Following the Earthquake in Attapur, Nepal, hygiene promotion training was facilitated by Christian Aid partners Clean Energy Nepal. Facilitator Saneja Giri (23) works for Clean Energy Nepal as a Community Health Promoter
©Christian Aid/Claudia Janke

FIGURE 15: As local as possible, as international as necessary: A different kind of surge support[34]

The first wave of surge recruitment was conducted mainly by CARE, using its global network of experts as well as drawing on outside resources. While most placements were effective within the joint response context, some aspects proved challenging. There was an initial tendency for surge support to operate in a traditional 'direct delivery' mode, where leadership, decision-making, autonomy and quick action are prized. The joint response required a radically different way of operating, where success is defined by transferring skills, by helping the local team to 'learn by doing,' by mentoring, supporting, advising, accompanying, by showing respect, humility and trust, yet being firm about what is required of a life-saving intervention.

Operating within the structure and policies of the partner organisation also proved novel and challenging for some surge staff, as they were supporting programmatic decisions, not directly implementing them. 'Once funding was transferred from CARE Australia to L&L under sub-contracting arrangements, it was 'their' money and to be spent and accounted for based on their policies with CARE supporting to ensure quality, donor compliance and effective implementation,' recounts the first phase Team Leader. 'If volunteers were hired, they were to be compensated on L&L terms, not necessarily with new rates negotiated by surge staff,' adds the second phase Team Leader. CARE Australia's finance unit reviewed the accounting and compliance procedures of the partner at the outset of the emergency and continuously ensured they provided adequate control and were consistent with donor requirements. Embedding surge staff within the L&L structure and pairing local L&L staff with surge advisors for key functions (team leadership, technical leads, operations) proved successful strategies in making the locally-led response work.

Eventually, CARE and L&L started being more explicit about the nature of surge positions: expectations and success factors for deployment were clearly outlined in the selection process, from job descriptions to interviews – making it clear that the goal was not direct delivery of aid but supporting the local partner to deliver. For the second wave of surge staff, L&L took part in the recruitment of key positions to ensure that successful candidates appealed to both partners. In the medium to long term, the two partners have decided to invest in national surge capacity, to collectively pool Pacific regional staff capacity from both agencies, and to further develop the CARE-led Pacific roster. L&L also plans to review its HR policies to ensure they facilitate rapid deployment and job rotation during emergencies, particularly when the Pacific pool is activated.

[34] Lehoux, F. (2016) Localisation in Practice: A Pacific case study, What CARE and local partner Live and Learn have learned from jointly responding to Cyclone Winston in Fiji, October 2016, p.4.

4.4 Seconding INGO staff into national NGOs to strengthen response

There were a few cases that were found of INGOs seconding staff into national NGOs as a means of addressing capacity gaps and building capacity. However, it is noteworthy that the responses of the online survey suggest that this is not considered a very effective strategy for reducing staff movements during humanitarian response, as it fails to directly address the root cause – that of differentials between national NGO and INGO salaries and benefits.

In the Nepal earthquake response, several INGOs sought to strengthen knowledge and fill skills gaps by seconding expatriate staff into their local and national partners. Where the duration of the secondment was sufficiently long to permit the transfer of skills and where the secondee had the right mix of technical knowledge and training skills, this approach was welcomed by the organisation. However, on a few occasions, concerns were raised that the secondments were too paternalistic and responsibility should have been handed over to the local organisation more quickly.[35] Research from Syria also offered positive feedback from national NGOs about the use of outside 'experts' seconded to work with them for extended periods of time.[36]

One of the most informative recent case studies is CARE International's response to Cyclone Winston in Fiji which it undertook with its local partner Live & Learn Environmental Education (L&L). The partnership between CARE and L&L had been struck five years prior based on a shared vision and complementary strengths. L&L wanted to extend its physical presence and reach in the South Pacific region while CARE sought to remain 'light on the ground' while delivering on its humanitarian and disaster resilience mandate (see figure 15).

4.5 Financial compensation

The idea of compensation for poaching humanitarian staff originally came out of a discussion between two leaders of NGOs based in the global South during which the 'footballer analogy' was proposed; professional footballers are trained by their club and when a second club which buys that footballer, it pays compensation to the club for the training, in addition to the salary offer they make to the player.[37] In the online survey, financial compensation was the strategy least frequently adopted by INGOs and UN agencies to compensate national NGOs for the loss of staff and its potential impact on reducing staff movements was also considered to be limited. During the research, none of the agencies interviewed had first-hand experience of this strategy being used and no examples were found during the literature review.

During interviews, feedback on the utility of such an approach was mixed; some agencies expressed concern that there was a risk that it would legitimise the practice of head-hunting talented national NGO staff, particularly for INGOs or UN agencies that had greatest resources or were the most operational, which would actively undermine the principles upon which the C4C is based. For others, there was a concern that the risk and expense that national NGOs took in recruiting staff with little or no experience and nurturing and training them went far beyond the compensation that was being proposed and as a consequence the proposal was unpalatable. However, there were some that considered that the approach could have value as a disincentive as part of a broader strategy that also included capacity development as part of a re-balancing of the humanitarian system towards local response. Such an approach that included both carrots and sticks was considered to have some appeal.

Of the 285 houses on the island, only 8 survived the storm. Tearfund organised the relocation of this vulnerable community to a suitable plot on the mainland. Barangay Sicaba, Cadiz.
© Integral Alliance/Tom Price

[35] See Featherstone, A. (2016) Opportunity Knocks: Realising the potential of partnership in the Nepal Earthquake response, Actionaid, CAFOD, CARE, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Tearfund.
[36] Els, C., Mansour, K. and Carstensen, N (2016) Funding to national and local humanitarian actors in Syria: Between sub-contracting and partnerships, Local to Global Protection, May 2016, p. 21.
[37] See Potter, J., People management: the shape of things to come, in CHS Alliance (2015) Humanitarian Accountability Report, p.94.

Charter4Change Commitment 7: Support

Robust organisational support and capacity strengthening: Agencies signed up to the Charter4Change will support local actors to become robust organisations that continuously improve their role and share in the overall global humanitarian response. We undertake to pay adequate administrative support. Agencies commit that by May 2018 they will have allocated resources to support their partners in capacity building and will publish the percentage of their humanitarian budget which goes directly to partners for humanitarian capacity building.

Charter4Change Commitment 8: Promotion

Communication to the media and the public about partners: In any communications to the international and national media and to the public agencies signed up to the Charter4Change will promote the role of local actors and aclnowledge the work that they carry out, and include them as spokespersons when security considerations permit.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

This section offers a series of conclusions based on the findings of the study. Recommendations are made to strengthen national surge capacity and to re-balance the humanitarian system in order to reduce the frequency and impact of humanitarian surge staff movements from national NGOs to INGOs and UN agencies.

5.1 Conclusions

The greater emphasis that has recently been placed on locally-led humanitarian response has galvanized action in some parts of the sector to address some of the practices and inequities that serve to undermine national NGO humanitarian capacity. Despite this, there are still a range of push and pull factors that serve to prompt staff to move from local and national organisations to international ones when they are needed the most; in the early stages of a humanitarian response. During this time, INGOs and UN agencies are often aggressively expanding their programmes, and national talent is often 'on show' which can exacerbate staff mobility.

During the WHS, localisation was championed as an overlooked and under-valued component of humanitarian action and agreements were made by members of the international humanitarian system and donor community to strengthen collaboration and start to address some of the inequities present in the system. These efforts have complemented existing initiatives to strengthen partnership by the signatories of the C4C

which seeks to redress some of the factors which serve to 'push' staff out of national NGOs and 'pull' them into international organisations. Despite these initiatives, there is much still to be done to rebalance the system in a way that will strengthen rather than undermine national surge capacity as the results of the online survey suggests (figure 16).

So, what can be done? As the title of this report suggests, it is time for the sector to move on; the research highlighted a number of changes that are required, internal to local NGOs, internal to INGOs and UN agencies, and across the humanitarian system more generally that have the potential to influence change. These include the following:

• The need for INGOs and UN agencies to commit to ethical and accountable recruitment procedures which should include proscribing the practice of using partners and cluster meetings as talent pools and a commitment to maintaining professional recruitment standards including taking up references and respecting notice periods;

• The need for national NGOs to seek to address the push factors by strengthening HRM systems and to mitigate the negative impacts of staff movements by adopting succession planning – to the extent that resources will permit;
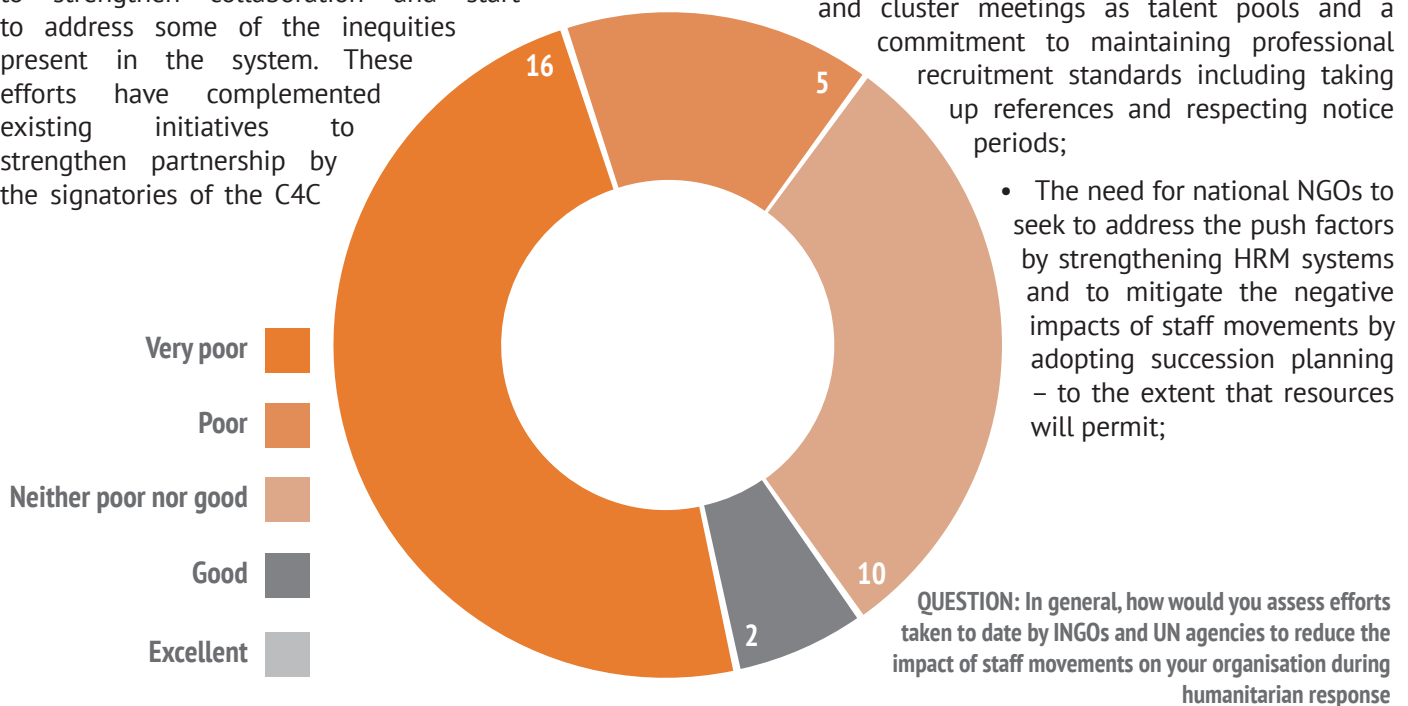

Very poor
Poor
Neither poor nor good
Good
Excellent

16
5
10
2

QUESTION: In general, how would you assess efforts taken to date by INGOs and UN agencies to reduce the impact of staff movements on your organisation during humanitarian response

FIGURE 16: Work to do - an assessment of INGO/UN efforts to reduce the impact of staff movements

• An urgency for the humanitarian system including national NGOs, INGOs, UN agencies and donors to redress the imbalance that exists which serves to undermine local response capacity through a range of measures to strengthen resources and assistance in support of localised humanitarian response as outlined in the eight commitments of the C4C.

Even with the enthusiasm and momentum that was garnered in support of localisation during the WHS, change will take time and will require strenuous efforts on the part of humanitarian organisations and donor agencies alike to address the imbalances that exist – more difficult still will be the change of thinking that will need to occur if locally-led response is going to be more than just a series of empty WHS promises.

5.2 Summary of recommendations

To strengthen locally-led response and to avoid undermining the capacity and effectiveness of local and national humanitarian response, the following actions should be taken by **INGOs and UN agencies:**

- Recent humanitarian responses have shown that very little progress has been made by INGOs and UN agencies in curtailing practices that undermine local surge capacity. It is now time that specific agreements should be made to limit 'poaching' of staff within established funding, implementing or strategic partnerships to ensure that local capacity is not undermined.[38] These should be written into partnership contracts.
- INGOs and UN agencies should shift from investing in their own surge capacity to supporting that of their partners' in advance of crises. This will require a broader and deeper level of engagement with local NGOs outside of disaster response. This will only be possible by committing to sustained investments in local NGO organisational capacity.

To strengthen locally-led response and to address unnecessary staff movements from national to international humanitarian organisations, the following actions should be taken by **national NGOs:**

- National NGOs should use the tools available to them to hold INGOs and UN agencies in contractual relationships with them to account for supporting surge practices. The PoP offers a set of important principles which have been endorsed by INGOs, UN agencies, clusters and donors alike. Where an international partner has endorsed the C4C, national NGOs should ensure that it is reflected in contracts and relevant partnership documentation.
- Competent and well-managed staff are at the heart of effective organisations. It is essential that, to the extent that resources permit, national NGOs continue to strengthen Human Resource Management (HRM) systems. Surge planning should be at the heart of this so that organisations will be better-positioned to keep their humanitarian staff and ward off poaching attempts by INGOs/UN agencies.
- Staff development and capacity building with a focus on humanitarian competencies should also be the responsibility of national NGOs especially outside of humanitarian responses. In addition to strengthening capacity, this may also serve to strengthen staff retention.

For locally-led humanitarian response to be more than a set of empty WHS promises, **all members of the humanitarian system** urgently need to take the following actions:

- For far too long, investment in surge capacity by the humanitarian system has focused on its international members. The progress made by the TSCP in developing a surge roster that has the potential to strengthen national response represents an important breakthrough. As it is operationalised, it will be important to document lessons with a view to encouraging similar practice in other countries frequently affected by disasters.
- Despite important progress having been made, addressing the imbalances in the humanitarian system will only happen if there is a shift in resources to national humanitarian organisations. It is essential that all members of the humanitarian system deliver on the promises that were made during the WHS to increase investment in national capacity. The provision of funding before disaster strikes will allow time to establish surge capacity outside of the pressures of response

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[38] It is noteworthy that this same proposal was included in the overarching recommendations of the TEC evaluation in 2006.

Annex 1: Summary of the research Terms of Reference

Research study examining Transforming Surge from national NGO perspectives in the Philippines

Supported by DFID's DEPP and part of the START Build portfolio Transforming Surge Capacity project, this study is a collaborative effort between 4 agencies, CAFOD, Islamic Relief, Christian Aid and Tearfund, focusing on national NGOs in the Philippines who lost staff to international NGOs and UN agencies in the immediate aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan (November 2013). The project will aim to research national NGO experiences of recruitment for surge by international NGOs and attempt to identify good practices as well as document impact, and develop recommendations and an action plan for taking the findings forward within TSCP, feeding into the evolving Philippines surge roster, and more widely in the humanitarian sector.

The research will approach the issue from 4 angles:

1. Firstly, it will undertake detailed research to provide an evidence base on the impact of INGO and UN agency recruitment practices during sudden onset emergencies on national NGO capacity.

2. Secondly it will undertake detailed research with a small number of international NGOs (and possibly UN agencies) which have recruited national NGO staff to identify if and if so how they have worked with national NGOs they have recruited staff from. This aspect of the research will examine what strategies the international NGOs used to support their partners and other national organisations to address their subsequent capacity gaps.

3. Thirdly, drawing on the findings from this research, and using the technical knowledge and advice of People in Aid/CHS Alliance, the project will outline recommendations for how INGOs and UN agencies could work with national NGOs to support their humanitarian response capacity and develop alternative approaches and possible new ways of working which are collective and collaborative. The consultation will be done both through means of an on-line survey as well as workshop to be held in the Philippines. If there is sufficient project funding the reach and impact of this project would be greatly enhanced by opening this workshop up to participants from outside the Philippines. The intention would be to invite 10-15 participants from national NGOs in Africa, and Asia which have signed the Charter4Change and are committed to collaborative practices and identifying alternative approaches to surge. The findings, learnings and approaches from the research and the ensuing Action Plan would then have a far greater reach internationally, particularly in the global south.

4. Finally, in consultation with relevant stakeholders (INGOs and National NGOs, including Charter4Change signatories and endorsers), and drawing on the technical expertise of People in Aid/CHS Alliance, this project will draw up a strategy for dissemination of the findings and recommendations and work with members of the TSCP to devise an Action Plan for implementation of C4C Commitment 4. Those involved in the project will work together, with other TSCP members and with C4C signatories and endorsers to implement the Action Plan over the remaining duration of the project and thereafter.

Inter-alia the research will:

- Collect positive case studies where national NGOs have worked collaboratively with international NGOs or wider sector to support 'surge'

- Identify the impact of the loss of human resources on national organisations, in the delivery of their projects, (e.g. disruption of their relationship with communities, delays to recruiting, inducting and getting new skilled staff fully functional). It will also explore wider impact for the national organisations, such as impact of the loss of institutional memory, loss of momentum.

- Identify positive impacts of recruitment of national staff to international organisations, for example career development for national staff, return of staff after a period in international organisations, bringing with them new skills and approaches

- Explore what might happen if we 'collaborated' with national organisations in terms of offering compensation for staff, e.g. beyond financial compensation examining issues such as support for hiring and training replacement staff, mentoring new staff, providing secondments, etc.

- Gather ideas of how we might collaborate and work together so staff loss from national NGOs is minimised.

The project will produce 2 main inputs:

1. Firstly, a detailed research report, including case studies, together with recommendations, outlining national and international NGO experiences of staff recruitment and retention during sudden onset emergencies in the Philippines.

2. Secondly, on the basis of the research findings and recommendations the project will consult with commissioning agencies involved this project, (Christian Aid, CAFOD, Islamic Relief and Tearfund) as well the wider INGO membership of the Transforming Surge Project together with INGOs which have signed the Charter4Change and national NGOs which have endorsed the Charter4Change, to produce an action plan for approaches for implementing Charter4Change Commitment 4, which could also be adopted by Transforming Surge Project participants.

Annex 2: Research participants

Local and national NGO participants, Philippines

Dam Vertido, Mindanao Land Foundation
Richel 'Ching' Borres, Ranaw Disaster Response and Rehabilitation Assistance Center (RDRRAC)
Kevin Lee, A Single Drop for Safe Water (ASDSW)
Nanette Antequisa, Ecosystems Work for Essential Benefits (EcoWEB)
Esteban 'Bong' Masagca, People's Disaster Risk Reduction Network (PDRRN)
Bennette T. Manulit, Philippines Relief and Development Services (PHILRADS)
Richard Rejas, Balay Mindanao
Beckie Malay, Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM)
Malu Fellizar-Cagay, CDN
Joy Lascano, Balay Rehabilitation Centre
Pauline Nayra, Eastern Visayas Network (EVNet)
Cecilio Guardian, National Secretariat for Social Action (NASSA)
Jeanie Curiano, National Secretariat for Social Action (NASSA)
Jazmin Jerusalem, Leyte Centre for Development (LCDE)

INGO/UN participants, Philippines

Maria 'Jing' Alexander Pura, Christian Aid
Cyra Bullecer, Christian Aid
Reggie McRae, Care
Miraflor Silva, Care
Lorna Umali, Save the Children
Sanjeev Bhanja, Tearfund
Mary Joy Gonzales, Tearfund
Sherly Malanos, Plan International
Sumayya Sajjad, Islamic Relief Worldwide
Leah Bugtay, Islamic Relief Worldwide

National NGO participants, global

Dr. Ahmad Faizal Perdaus, MERCY Malaysia
Niaz Mohammad Khan, Seed, Pakistan
Sema Genel Karaosmanoğlu, Support to Life, Turkey
Filbert Leone Ahmat, Human and Development Consortium, South Sudan
Virgine Lefevre, Amel Association, Lebanon

UK validation workshop participating NGOs

CAFOD
Christian Aid
START Network, TSCP
ActionAid
Islamic Relief Worldwide

Manila validation workshop participating NGOs

PDRRN
MinLan
EVNet
CODE NGO
TRIPOD
EcoWEB

DISASTERS&
EMERGENCIES
PREPAREDNESS PROGRAMME