

Dhaka and Coxsbazar, 13th January 2022

Subject: **Coordination in Rohingya Response is not a Luxury.** Comments from local and national NGO representative in SEG, on the report “Streamlining of Coordination Mechanism” submitted by the consultant Andy Barash.

- 1. The process should not be to bury the issue.** We the local and national NGO representatives (who were elected in a meeting with local and national NGO held at Coxsbazar around three years ago, we are not picked with someone request), happy that, we have given the opportunity. We also represent a network also Coxsbazar CSO NGO Forum – CCNF (www.cxb-cso-ngo.org). In our Bangladeshi management culture, we have proverb that, if you want to bury an issue, form a committee. May be these has happened in Localization Task Force (LTF), after two years of hard effort, for successful blending of opinion of key stakeholders and also the consultant team interaction and interview in field, we feel the report and the issue for localization almost a forgotten issue now in Rohingya response. We hope that, these streamlining of coordination should not be a forgotten issue like LTF report.
- 2. Rohingya response should not be a place to create counter narrative toward localization.** There are some international agency who has funded to create counter narratives (e.g., locals are not safe, Rohingyas do not like locals) to localization, while the issue of localization widely accepted and still it is the key priority issue in Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC). International agency who are not the signatory of Grand Bargain commitment and Charter 4 Change are in key leadership position in response management. We have significant examples that how the local NGOs is being driven out from the response, and how the NGOs from far brought and being engaged in response. Definite that those NGOs will fly back while there will be no money or little of money.
- 3. Presentation are systematic, methodology were participatory.** We do like to appreciate present ISCG senior coordinator to flag the issue, SEG has appointed the consultant for study. We also appreciate the consultant who has given a great effort, especially for two reasons that (a) his presentation is very systematic, especially we the people who are in operation, will be able to find recommendations to prepare our course of actions and (b) it is the only consultant Andy Barash who is the first who use the term local and national NGOs, otherwise, most of the UN and ISCG literatures in Bangladesh and in Rohingya response, who always use either “ Bangladeshi NGO ” or national NGO, we have notified to high officials of UN that, such an approach progressively create confusion thereby conflict toward the path of localization.
- 4. A coordination to cope with reduce level of aid with complementarity and inclusiveness.** We know there were another one study on coordination done by OCHA, in early stage of response. The report has hardly examined to pick the issue for implementation. But now, it is the different situation now, (a) the response have to be manage with reduce level of aid and (b) there are growing sense of insecurity among refugees and host community too, how it will be managed so that there will be acceptable level of normalcy will be prevailed that a level of humanitarian work is possible with participation of important stakeholders. CCNF believes that, repatriation with dignity of Rohingya people is a priority, we feel sorry to observe that, there are disproportionate approach from international agencies, developed

countries. A political approach should get priority over humanitarian response. Bangladesh is already overburdened with a lot of other problems, especially induced from the climate crisis.

5. **Language is a matter, consolidation is needed.** We support the report, which recommends (a) reconsideration of sectors, especially recommending dissolving of CwC and formation of AAP, they have also recommended dissolving of ETL, integration of health and nutrition. (b) consideration of language in sectoral management, such a recommendation has been done by Grand Bargain field mission during September 2018, we believe it could have happened in introduction of Bangla in Coxsbazar level, while English could remain for higher level communication. These will enhance the participation of local NGOs in response management and in coordination leadership. There are a lot of capable staff in UN agencies and NGOs working in Coxsbazar, who are well capable in translation, thus we wonder, whether it is needed a pool of interpreter.
6. **RRRC and DC is needed to have authority.** But, we propose following to strengthen the streaming of coordination, (a) Officially RRRC should be brought in as Chair of the ISCG while DC will be brought in as Co-Chair of the ISCG, it could be done simply by a resolution in NTF. These positions will bring authority or power in the ISCG, without such a power, control for optimum use and quality control of available resources will hardly be possible, please note that there are some international agencies who hardly report to ISCG, (b) there should be a planning and monitoring unit in the ISCG, all need assessment should be cleared by the unit, prior to the project preparation done by any UN agency or NGOs. We also in dilemma, whether there is any need of separate information office in this regard, as suggested by the consultant.
7. **No more island of happiness, access for locals is a matter.** We reiterate our position is that, (a) local and national NGOs should have access in HoSoG and ISCG, which were our demand since October 2017, (b) same space should also be given for local government. We observed that some of the national and international NGOs are already participating in HoSoG and ISCG, it has done as because these were wish of donors or by any agency. While our proposal was rejected, we / locals have been officially branded as “not safe”. We feel, any representation should be organized in an open democratic process.
8. **Partnership or grantee selection must be policy based and transparent.** On top of these, we also propose, all UN agency and INGOs should prepare a partnership policy, which should be followed for partnership selection in Coxsbazar. The partnership policy should have following, (a) long term objectives for building sustainable and accountable local organization, (b) good governance and lifelong commitment of the leadership to the CSO sector have to be fundamental, (c) the process of partnership selection should be free from all sort of conflict of interest, and (d) all above the NGO and leadership have proven track record toward advocacy for refugee and human rights issues. Taking this in view international agencies should be careful to choose intermediaries too, any intermediaries in the sector, must be a signatory of Grand Bargain and Charter 4 Change, otherwise it will hamper the growth of local NGOs. Funding to local NGO in view of localization it is not only the matter of fiduciary management, indeed it is the matter of organization and leadership building in local level primarily for sustainability and accountability.
9. **Our detail comments have given in matrix as attached.**