

October 2016

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Filling the funding gap for community protection

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An initiative to help local communities build resilience against violent extremism may offer useful lessons in how to help local communities access funding to support their self-protection efforts.

One of the main obstacles to communities organising to protect themselves is a lack of funding. Often they have a better understanding than outsiders of what the challenges may be, and have innovative ideas for overcoming them, but they lack the finance to put these ideas into action.

Research by the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) has identified three main reasons why local communities cannot raise money. First, they lack appropriate networks. They are not sufficiently aware of or within easy reach of funding opportunities – for example, through national governments, small grants programmes of donor agencies, or international or national non-governmental organisations. Second, even where there is awareness of the opportunities, local communities are often either not eligible or not able to apply for funding. They may not be registered; they may not be able to complete the requisite log frames and budget proposals; and they may not be able to conduct the monitoring and evaluation that are usually required. Third, there may be a lack of trust between local communities and prospective funders, whether the national government, bilateral donors or NGOs.

The GCERF funding model attempts to overcome these challenges in three main ways. It is a blended fund, meaning that it pools contributions from governments and other donors, and issues grants under the GCERF banner. This in effect makes the funding neutral, and is one way to overcome the trust deficit between local communities and certain bilateral donors. In addition, GCERF funds consortia of local initiatives centred on a principal recipient, often a local NGO, and one of the main criteria for their selection is their outreach to local communities. While these principal

recipients need to have some experience of managing funds, it is not a prerequisite that the sub-recipients in their consortia have previously received funding. Furthermore, the intent is to overcome the funding gap in a sustainable way, by providing successive three-year rounds of investment, and at the same time supporting capacity development on fundraising skills.

As important as supporting selected vulnerable local communities is to try more systematically to address the funding gap. One way GCERF does this is by engaging a range of stakeholders – national governments, civil society, the private sector and local donor representatives – in the funding mechanism. Thus, for example, as governments develop national action plans on preventing violent extremism, funding for local communities is highlighted as a critical component. Similarly, awareness has been raised among local businesses about the potential for their investments to help stabilise fragile environments.

GCERF's particular focus is supporting local community initiatives¹ to build resilience against violent extremist agendas. While the linkages between violent extremism and displacement have not yet been fully explored, much displacement around the world today is within and from societies beset by violent extremism. In some cases GCERF is focusing its support directly on displaced communities, for example Rohingya communities in Bangladesh. But even if the communities in question may not be directly affected by displacement, lessons learned in supporting resilience among communities vulnerable to violent extremism certainly apply to efforts to support those vulnerable to the risk of displacement.

The initiatives supported by GCERF in its first round of grant making (mid-2016) fall

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into three main categories. One is to raise awareness of violent extremism, for example through working with local media. Another is to mobilise against violent extremism, for example by establishing community response teams. A final set of interventions is designed to provide alternatives to violent extremism, for example through income generation. Significant challenges still need to be overcome – such as monitoring and evaluation, security, and controlling management costs to ensure that the maximum funding possible reaches local

communities – but eventually the lessons learned from this initiative should be of wider value, including to those supporting local communities vulnerable to displacement.

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1. Currently in Bangladesh, Kenya, Kosovo, Mali, Myanmar and Nigeria.



The Grand Bargain – more funding for local agencies?

As anticipated, ‘localisation’ came out a winner in discussions at the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, with a target agreed in the ‘Grand Bargain’ to direct 25% of humanitarian funding “as directly as possible” to local and national agencies.

Twenty-seven international NGOs also signed the new Charter4Change (<https://charter4change.org>), committing themselves to passing 20% of their funding to national NGOs by 2018 (and publishing the actual percentage transparently) as well as addressing the negative impact of recruiting local staff into international NGOs, thus draining local organisations of their capacity.

The summit also saw the launch of NEAR (www.near.ngo), a network aiming to “reshape the top-down humanitarian and development system to one that is locally driven and owned, and is built around equitable, dignified and accountable partnerships”.

Adapted from ‘The World Humanitarian Summit: winners and losers’, IRIN, 26th May 2016
<http://bit.ly/IRIN-WHS-winners-and-losers>