



PHILIPPINE LOCALISATION LAB

Driving Change from the Ground Up

30 April 2024
Ardenhill Suites, Quezon City



Summary

The launch of the Philippine Localisation Lab was a transformative event that underscored the critical role of local and community leaders in the humanitarian and development landscape. Facilitated by the CDP Foundation and NEAR, the event emphasized the importance of locally-driven, equitable, and accountable partnerships. The day began with

an engaging warm-up session, followed by insightful discussions on localization, community philanthropy, and the #ShiftThePower initiative. Participants engaged in activities designed to foster deeper connections and reflections on personal, organizational, and community levels. Key sessions included an introduction to NEAR and its impact in the Philippines, highlighting NEAR's mission to reshape the aid system to be more inclusive and locally-led. A dynamic session on setting commitments and collaborative approaches facilitated strategic planning among participants, focusing on the four pillars of movement building, building bridges, lab solutions, and learning. The event concluded with the symbolic signing of the #ShiftThePower Manifesto, led by Ka Pabs Rosales, which solidified commitments to promoting equitable partnerships and shifting power to local actors. This powerful act of unity and solidarity left participants empowered and motivated to bring the manifesto's commitments into their communities and organizations, reinforcing the movement towards a more participatory and locally-driven humanitarian and development system.

Session Details and Key Points

Warm-up and Introduction



The event commenced with an engaging warm-up session facilitated by Eena Geslaine Barrun and Precy Dagooc, who warmly welcomed the participants and set a positive tone for the day. They introduced the theme "Driving Change from the Ground Up," highlighting the interconnectedness of global movements such as #ShiftThePower and Community Philanthropy.

Eena and Precy emphasized the importance of the Philippine Localisation Lab, explaining its origins and the collective action needed to uplift Filipino development workers, DRR-CCA advocates, and peacebuilders. They stressed the goal of fostering equitable, accountable, and empowering relationships among all stakeholders.

After formally greeting the attendees, both in person and virtual, the facilitators addressed the concept of localization and its relevance to community-led development. They posed thought-provoking questions about localization, the shift of power, and the roles of various organizations in this movement.

To engage participants further, Eena and Precy introduced an interactive activity, **"Tinimbang Ako, Bakit Parang Kulang?"** Participants approached a scale to answer questions related to their awareness and engagement with the ShiftThePower Movement and Community Philanthropy. These questions included:

1. Awareness of discussions on the ShiftThePower Movement and Community Philanthropy.
2. Aspirations for progressive development within their sectors and communities.
3. Confidence in their ability to advance their organizations and communities.
4. Ease in finding solutions to community problems.
5. Equity in accessing financial support for DRR-CCA and development interventions.
6. Fairness in trust among different organizations.
7. Personal empowerment.

Through this collaborative exercise, the facilitators highlighted the significant role of local actors and communities in driving change at local, national, and global levels. They acknowledged the progress made in strengthening the voices and capacities of sectors responding to disaster, climate, and peace issues while also addressing ongoing challenges related to inequitable processes and cultural misalignments.

Sensing and Describing the Feelings of Participants



Rosanna Villegas facilitated a dynamic session designed to explore both the emotional and professional landscapes of the participants. This exercise was crucial in identifying the diverse contexts and perspectives present in the room, setting the stage for meaningful dialogue and collaboration.

Participants were given a unique and engaging set of instructions to facilitate deeper connections and reflections. They were first asked to choose a partner and look closely at them. Without looking at the paper they were holding, they then drew their partner. At the facilitator's signal, they stopped drawing. Following this exercise, participants reflected on three main categories: "**Sarili**" (Self), where they shared personal experiences, feelings, thoughts, dreams, current state, work, love, or studies; "**Sektor**" (Sector), where they highlighted the work or campaigns of their organization, including achievements, challenges, projects, and other relevant activities; and "**Solidarity**," where they discussed how their organization helps the community, including advocacies, practices that support the shift of power, partnerships, and resource mobilization.

Participants then chose one aspect from each subcategory to share with the group. For "Sarili," they offered personal reflections or states. For "Sektor," they provided key highlights or challenges within their organization. For "Solidarity," they shared their

organization's contributions to the community and broader movements. By openly discussing their feelings and organizational missions, participants recognized shared challenges and opportunities in their work.

Introduction of NEAR and Its Presence in the Philippines



Rosalinda Gobrin delivered an insightful introduction to the Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR) and its significant impact in the Philippines. NEAR, founded in 2016, is a movement of local and national civil society organizations (CSOs) from the Global South, united by a common goal: to create a fair, equitable, and dignified aid system. Rosalinda highlighted NEAR's mission to transform the traditional top-down humanitarian and development model into one that is locally driven and owned, built around equitable, dignified, and accountable partnerships.

Rosalinda outlined NEAR's journey, starting with its foundation during the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016. She described how NEAR has grown into a network of over 230 local and national NGOs from 35 countries, extending its reach through strategic partnerships. NEAR's vision is a world where local communities have the resources and agency to address the challenges that impact them. The network focuses on reinventing ideas, sharing knowledge, and influencing policies to support locally-led humanitarian and development practices.

NEAR's work involves influencing policy and attitudes to create a more equitable and locally-led aid system. Rosalinda discussed NEAR's initiatives to establish platforms for exchange, learning, and sharing, which enrich Global South approaches to humanitarian and development practices. She emphasized NEAR's efforts to pioneer new financing mechanisms that offer more inclusive, efficient, and impactful funding for humanitarian and development initiatives.

In the Philippines, NEAR's priorities include consolidating and expanding its membership and partnerships, exploring country-pooled funds for locally-led actions in humanitarian, climate, and disaster risk reduction and management (DRRM), and driving movement building to shift power and decolonize aid. Rosalinda also highlighted the importance of contextualizing and adapting the Localisation Performance Measurement Framework (LPMF) and sustaining initiatives to establish a National Resource Group (NRG) in the country.

Rosalinda briefly touched on NEAR's LPMF, which focuses on six key areas: **partnerships, funding, capacity, coordination and complementarity, policy influence and visibility, and participation**. She emphasized the importance of fostering genuine and equitable partnerships, improving the quality and quantity of funding for local actors, building strong institutional capacities, enhancing the leadership and presence of local actors in humanitarian coordination mechanisms, increasing the visibility and influence of local actors in international policy discussions, and ensuring that crisis-affected people have a significant voice in humanitarian responses. She also encouraged the participants to seek membership in the NEAR Network.

Providing a Safe Space for Local CSOs and Community Champions



Loreine dela Cruz delivered a powerful message about the Localisation Lab as a transformative and inclusive space for local CSOs and community champions. She emphasized the critical juncture at which the humanitarian sector stands, particularly as we approach the decade mark since the launch of the WHS Grand Bargain. Despite the global commitment to channel 25% of humanitarian funding directly to local actors by 2020, as of the 2022 SOHS report, only 1.2% of funding had been channeled to local and national actors. Loreine stressed the urgent need for continued advocacy and effort to push for more equitable and inclusive funding mechanisms.

Loreine's presentation delved into NEAR's definition of localization: a process of changing how support and solidarity are activated, designed, funded, and delivered. Localization ensures that local communities and response systems have the resources and agency to address the challenges they face. This approach aims to make aid more effective, sustainable, and responsive to the needs of people affected by crises. By challenging power dynamics within the existing aid system, localization places local response systems at the heart of supporting communities, providing a solution to sectoral challenges by shifting power to local actors.

She elaborated on the characteristics of Local and National Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), highlighting that they are present before, during, and after crises, accountable to

local laws and communities, and led by local nationals without international affiliations in branding, governance, or financing. Loreine underscored the importance of these organizations in the humanitarian landscape, contrasting them with national NGOs that operate within their home countries and local NGOs that work within specific subnational areas.

Loreine also discussed the role of international actors, emphasizing that their global knowledge and experience are most beneficial when contextualized by local and national actors. She advocated for a supportive approach characterized by trust, equity, solidarity, and complementarity, where international actors complement and support local initiatives rather than imposing external solutions. She cautioned against the instrumentalization of localization by some international actors, where decentralization efforts may still undermine local autonomy.

The change NEAR aims to see is transformational. It envisions a new system of international solidarity based on complementarity, driven by local and national actors. Loreine called for a cultural shift through clear policies, principles, and strategies on localization, ensuring that aid delivery systems are led by the needs and leadership of local communities. She also highlighted the necessity for incremental changes within the current aid system, recognizing that small, critical steps are essential for achieving transformational change.

Loreine shared the overarching values and theory of change guiding the Labs, emphasizing long-term change towards a more effective and supportive ecosystem for local civil society, underpinned by dynamic accountability, equity, and local leadership. The Labs aim to increase the participation of traditionally excluded groups in decision-making processes, develop blueprints for localization-supportive spaces and solutions, and cultivate transformative commitments from diverse actors in the system. Stronger relationships between local leaders and key enablers, built on mutual accountability and trust, are central to this vision.

In her overview of the Labs' strategic objectives, Loreine outlined four streams of work: **movement building, establishing common ground, generating innovative solutions, and promoting learning.** These streams are designed to foster a cohesive network of Global South actors, cultivate shared values and collaboration, address unique challenges with locally-driven approaches, and facilitate knowledge exchange and capacity sharing.

Loreine concluded by highlighting why the Labs are becoming NEAR's institutional framework. They embed NEAR's core principles within its structures and members, promote responsibility, and ensure that humanitarian and development shifts align with NEAR's mission. The Labs are starting in seven contexts, including regional and country-specific focuses in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, and Africa.

The session underscored the transformative potential of the Localisation Lab and inspired participants to actively engage with NEAR's goals and principles. Loreine's powerful articulation of the need for a shift in power dynamics within the aid system reinforced the critical role of local CSOs in achieving sustainable development and equitable humanitarian response.

Open Forum

During the open forum, a thought-provoking question was raised from the perspective of an observer: **"How will the government and this group establish a connection? Is there potential for conflict? How do we achieve unification? What is our stance and response to the spectrum of inclusivity, and which particular group are we focusing on?"**

The response highlighted the essence of localization, which involves both national and local actors and includes partnerships with the government, private sector, and academia. The Philippine Preparedness Partnership, which has demonstrated for seven years the critical role of the government in leading humanitarian actions, was cited as an example. This partnership shows the complementary roles that the private sector, civil society organizations (CSOs), and the government play, particularly with CSOs as first responders in communities. The goal is to strengthen local and national groups, ensuring that past experiences, such as those during Haiyan, are not repeated. The inclusion of the media as the fifth sector was also suggested, underlining the importance of broad-based participation in shifting power and decolonizing aid.

Setting Commitments and Collaborative Approaches



Maria Fellizar Cagay and Veronica Cabe facilitated a dynamic and interactive session focused on setting commitments and fostering collaborative approaches within and across organizations. Participants engaged in strategic planning, discussed shared goals, and explored methodologies to enhance collaboration. This session was particularly impactful as it addressed the practical aspects of partnership building, especially among those operating within the same geographical areas and themes in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

The facilitators guided participants through an exercise titled "**Ganito Tayo Ngayon, Paano Tayo Bukas?**" Participants were grouped according to their sector or thematic issue and were tasked with discussing specific questions related to the four pillars of the Lab's strategic framework. Each group used colored metacards to write their answers, which were then posted on designated Manila Paper sections. The questions were as follows:

Blue Metacard: What challenges are you facing in implementing localization?

Pink Metacard: What solutions do you see? What are they?

Green Metacard: What are the next steps/actions that you can undertake? List the activities and target dates.

This structured approach allowed participants to identify challenges, propose solutions, and outline actionable steps. This collaborative exercise led to a collective commitment to work together towards common objectives, strengthening partnerships and enhancing coordination within the network.

The workshop results highlight several key challenges faced by local organizations. To address these, participants recommend:

- **Facilitate Regional Collaboration Hubs:** Instead of a single central hub, consider creating regional hubs for knowledge sharing, training, and co-creation. This ensures easier access and caters to the specific needs of each area (Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao).
- **Resource Mapping & Partner Matching with Geolocation Focus:** Prioritize mapping resources and potential partners within the same geographic areas. This fosters stronger local partnerships and leverages existing knowledge.
- **Develop Localized Public Awareness Campaigns:** Encourage the creation of public awareness campaigns tailored to the specific needs and contexts of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.
- **Promote South-South Knowledge Exchange:** Facilitate knowledge exchange not just within regions but also between them. This leverages the unique experiences and expertise of organizations across the Philippines.

Summary of Workshop Results

Pillar	Challenges	Solutions	Actions
Movement Building (Pillar 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizing and sustaining movements - Political control and bureaucracy - Youth disengagement and colonial mentality - Unifying diverse narratives- - Developing second-liners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusive data management - Empowering community through education and training- - Building and expanding partnerships - Reviewing and developing approaches and messaging - Developing new tactics based on grassroots needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training in digital solutions - Forums, dialogues, and cultural events - Collaboration with stakeholders - Documenting processes, best practices, and experiences - Creating and scheduling forums, trainings, seminars, and capacity-building
Building Bridges (Pillar 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of awareness and divided attention - Fragmented efforts and exclusivity - Exclusivity of funders - Lack of resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Massive information dissemination - Inclusive and responsible media practices - Establishing credibility and trust - Reorientation of organizations - Mindfulness of resource usage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public awareness campaigns - Dialogues with stakeholders - Co-creation platforms- - Continuing dialogues - Learning sessions - Convenings
Lab Solutions (Pillar 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of resources and accessibility issues - Lack of consultation and beneficiary mindset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusive programs - Tapping potential partners and donors- - The mindset shift 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project proposal making - Consultation dialogues - Disability awareness training - Mapping and scanning of like-minded organizations
Learning (Pillar 4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inequal organizational capacities - Different perspectives and adherence to international standards - Monopoly of knowledge and intellectual superiority - Complacency in documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evidence-based monitoring and evaluation - Synergy and collaboration - Documentation of local practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop monitoring tools - Initiate evaluation plans - Trainings and seminars - Community-led action - Establish platforms for knowledge exchange

#ShiftThePower Manifesto Signing and Singing



The event concluded with a symbolic and inspiring #ShiftThePower Manifesto signing, led by Ka Pabs Rosales. Representatives from various sectors came on stage to sign the manifesto, which outlines commitments to promoting equitable partnerships, decolonizing aid, and shifting power to local actors. This act of signing was accompanied by singing, creating a powerful moment of unity and solidarity. The #ShiftThePower Manifesto, presented in Tagalog, called for the creation of a genuine alternative to existing decision-making and action approaches. It emphasized embracing a vision of a 'good society' based on equality, democracy, and sustainability, rejecting the oppressive framework of 'international development,' moving away from rapid 'solutions' focused on fund transfers, and creatively revealing the inherent power of communities. The manifesto also stressed moving away from 'capacity building' defined by external actors, ensuring external funding recognizes and respects local resources, expanding our view beyond money as the primary force of change, changing our language to facilitate new ways of working and thinking, and transforming ourselves with humility and courage.

Ka Pabs emphasized the importance of community-driven initiatives and the collective effort required to bring about systemic change. This closing session left participants feeling empowered and motivated to take the commitments of the manifesto into their communities and organizations. The act of signing and the accompanying messages reinforced the dedication to fostering a future that is collaborative, participatory, and widely owned, built through practices and processes rooted in movement philanthropy rather than the success or failure of individual organizations.

Kung nais nating lumikha ng tunay na alternatibo sa mga umiiral na paraan ng pagdedesisyon at pagkilos, kailangan nating:

1

YAKAPIN AT ISULONG ang isang pangitain ng 'magandang lipunan' na nakatungtong sa pundasyon ng pagkakapantay-pantay, demokrasya, at pagpapanatili ng pagkalikas-kaya, at isang hanay ng mga prinsipyo sa pag-oorganisa batay sa pandaigdigang pagkakaisa at malawakang pamumuno.

2

IWAKSI ang nakakasukol na balangkas ng "internasyonal na pag-unlad", na itinatakda ng salapi at kapangyarihan na siyang lumilikha ng artipisyal na mga balakid sa pagitan ng mga komunidad at kilusang nasa global north at global south.

3

LUMAYO mula sa isang sistemang nakatuon sa mga mabilisang "solusyon," at nakadisenyo batay sa paglilipat ng pondo. Baguhin ang ating pamamaraan at pagsusukat sa konsepto natin ng tagumpay.

4

NAPANGLIKHANG HUMANAP ng mga paraan upang maisiwalat ang likas na kapangyarihan ng mga komunidad sa pagtukoy ng kanilang sariling landas sa pag-unlad - kung paano man nila ito itinatakda - at hayaan na ang mga salitang "mga benepisyaryo" at "mga tatanggap" ay maging bahagi na lamang ng nakaraan.

5

LUMAYO mula sa "pagpapalakas ng kakayahan" ayon sa tinukoy ng mga dayuhang aktor at mga pangangailangan patungo sa pag-oorganisa ng komunidad at pagbuo ng kilusan, kung saan ang "kakayahan: ay nangangahulugang ito ay may kaugnayan, kahalagahan, at lapat sa mga miyembro ng komunidad.

6

TIYAKIN na ang panlabas na pagpopondo ay kinikilala, nirerespeto, at ginagamit ang lokal na mga mapagkukunan at ari-arian sa halip na ang mga ito ay ipagwalang-bahala, isinasantabi, o pinapalitan.

7

PALAWAKIN ang ating mga pananaw mula sa salapi bilang pangunahing puwersa ng pagbabago, at bigyang-pansin ang mas malaking halaga sa iba't ibang uri ng mga likas-kayang di-pinansyal na ari-arian at mapagkukunan (kaalaman, tiwala, mga network, atbp.)

8

BAGUHIN ang wika na ginagamit natin upang ito ay magbigay-daan sa mga bagong paraan ng pagtatrabaho at pag-iisip sa halip na limitahan ang mga ito. At hamunin ang pangunguna ng Ingles.

9

BAGUHIN ang ating sarili. Kailangan natin ng kababaang-loob at tapang, at maging handa upang hamunin ang ating sariling kapangyarihan at makinig at makipagtulungan sa iba.

Sa madaling sabi, nais nating magkaroon ng isang hinaharap na pinagtutulungan, partisipatibo, at may malawakang pagmamay-ari, na nabuo sa pamamagitan ng mga asal at proseso na batay sa pagkakawang-gawa ng kilusan kaysa sa tagumpay o kabiguan ng isang organisasyon kumpara sa iba.

Key Takeaways and Next Steps

The event highlighted the empowerment of local and national actors in humanitarian response, focusing on shifting power from large INGOs to local organizations. Building partnerships and networks to advance localization and community-led development was emphasized, along with the importance of documenting and sharing knowledge from local organizations to develop locally-driven solutions and boost the capabilities of national actors. Key topics discussed included the significance of engaging local perspectives, advocating for community participation and localization, addressing challenges with the current aid system, and proposing new frameworks for local performance measurement and movement building. Participants expressed a desire to converge, collaborate, and build inclusive networks, setting goals to document and share local knowledge, develop locally-driven solutions, and enhance national actor capabilities. The discussion also included engaging dialogue on member engagement, alignment with the network mission, and connecting with government and private sector partners, reflecting on past localization efforts and lessons learned. The next steps involve developing a one-year work plan based on strategic objectives, convening working groups and partners to create action plans, and continuing advocacy and influencing work with donors and aid actors within Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

Links

- [Photo Documentation](#)
- [Workshop Results](#)
- [#ShiftThePower Manifesto](#)

Background

It is essential for local and community leaders to take on a pivotal role in the humanitarian and development landscape. The unique insights and deep connections of local champions and grassroots organizations have been proven to drive sustainable initiatives and impactful change over the years.

NEAR was founded in 2016 as the Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR): a movement of local and national civil society organizations from the Global South that share the common goal of a fair, equitable, and dignified aid system. It aims to reshape the traditional top-down humanitarian and development system into one that is more inclusive, locally driven, owned, and built around equitable, dignified, accountable partnerships. It has 256 member organizations and 20 partner networks in 41 countries across four regions worldwide.

Its founding coincided with the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016. Held in Istanbul, the WHS has launched the Grand Bargain: a unique agreement between several largest funding institutions and humanitarian organizations to *"provide 25% of all humanitarian funding directly to local and national responders by 2020."* The founding members of NEAR have lobbied and engaged in high-level dialogues

for this advocacy to be part of the solutions to address the identified humanitarian aid financing gap. NEAR and its members are active in the Grand Bargain's localization workstream, challenging definitions for who can be considered a local organization. The network is the first signatory of the agreement from the Global South and has remained so until the end of 2020.

The Center for Disaster Preparedness Foundation was one of the active civil society organizations in the WHS policy dialogues, leading to the formation of NEAR, serving as one of its founding members. At present, there are four full members in the Philippines, including the KAISA KA, the Ranao Women and Children Resource Center, the Young Women Initiative, and the CDP Foundation. The country's partner is Balik-Lokal (formerly Balik-Bayan), a network of local CSOs that has been lobbying for localization in the Philippines since 2016.

Objective:

The Localisation Labs — a **space** for change centered on community philanthropy and the #ShiftThePower initiative — are increasingly becoming NEAR's institutional framework because these embed NEAR's core principles, work, and ideas within their structures and members, promote their responsibility, and ensure that humanitarian and development shifts align with its mission.

The following are the objectives of the Lab:

1. **Movement building.** Initiate and foster a cohesive and vibrant network of Global South actors, united by a shared vision of transformative change.
2. **Common ground.** Cultivate an environment of shared values, collaboration, and shared decision-making among diverse stakeholders in the humanitarian and development sectors
3. **Solutions lab.** Generate innovative, locally-driven approaches to address unique challenges in the Global South.
4. **Learning and sharing.** Build evidence to promote knowledge exchange and capacity sharing among actors, with a strong focus on fostering a learning agenda that is driven, facilitated, and owned by actors from the Global South.