MAPPING REPRESENTATION PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP OF L/NHAS IN COORDINATION MECHANISMS AND CHALLENGES FACED



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HST-LHL

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AB	Advisory Board
AoR	Area of Responsibility
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Management Cluster
CEAAP	Community Engagement and Accountability to Affected People
et al	And others
FGDs	Focus Group Discussion
FSAC	Food Security and Agriculture Cluster
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GiHA	Gender in Humanitarian Action
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HNRP	Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan
HLP	Housing, land and Properties
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HPC	Humanitarian Project Circles
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IAHE	Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICCG	Inter-Cluster Coordination Group
ICVA	International Council for Voluntary Agencies
INGOs	International Non-Government Organizations
IRG	Internationally Recognized Government
JRC	Joint Research Centre
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
LNHAs	Local and National Humanitarian Actors
L/NNGOs	Local and National Non-Government Organizations
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NA	Not Applicable
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
NMO	Nahda Making Organizations
NNGOs	National Non-Government Organizations
No	Number
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OPDs	Organizations of Persons with Disability
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
RCTs	Regional Coordination Teams
RMMS	Refugees and Migrants Multisector
RRM	Rapid Response Mechanism
SAG	Strategic Advisory Group
ToR	Terms of Reference
TWG	Technical Working Group
UN	United Nations
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WLOs	Women-Led Organizations
WROs	Women's Rights Organizations
YHF	Yemen Humanitarian Fund



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Engaging local and national humanitarian actors in humanitarian responses is essential for success. These actors are often the first responders during crisis in their countries, possess a deeper understanding of local challenges and potential solutions and have the capacity to mobilize local networks. Their involvement ensures greater access to affected population, enhances accountability, and contributes to more effective and sustainable humanitarian response. This engagement should not be limited to aid delivery; it must extend to include humanitarian response coordination, leadership and planning as well. Recognizing this, the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 allocated one of its commitments to advancing localization, introducing a shift in the humanitarian coordination system to make humanitarian responses "as local as possible and as international as necessary".

In the context of Yemen, local and national humanitarian actors—particularly local and national NGOs—play a key role in aiding affected populations. Despite this, the 2022 baseline report on localization in Yemen found minimal evidence of these actors taking leadership roles, influencing decision-making, or actively engaging in coordination platforms. Thus, this study aimed to map the representation, participation and leadership of the L/NNGOs, including WROs, WLOs and OPDs, within coordination mechanisms and the challenges faced, with the aim of providing recommendations

for better engagement of local and national NGOs in coordination and decision-making mechanisms.

Data were collected using multiple instruments. An online survey was conducted to map the representation of local and national NGOs in coordination mechanisms including clusters and working groups. In addition, consultative workshops, focus group discussions (FGDs), key informants interviews (KIIs), and questionnaire were employed to capture perspectives, from both national and international humanitarian actors. These tools aimed to assess how this representation is perceived in terms of meaningful engagement and to identify the challenges that undermine local and national NGOs' meaningful participation in coordination, decision-making and leadership.

Findings from this study reveal varying levels of representation for local and national NGOs (L/NNGOs) in humanitarian coordination mechanisms. While L/NNGOs hold seats in all three key technical and decision-making bodies—HCT, YHF Advisory Board, and ICCG—their representation compared to their international counterparts is mixed: good in YHF Advisory board, somewhat satisfactory in the HCT, and very limited in the ICCG where they hold only two seats compared to six seats for INGOs and sixteen seats for UN agencies.

Regarding clusters, L/NNGOs are well represented among cluster partners and in technical/advisory groups (7 clusters and 2 AoR). However, leadership gaps persist: at the national level, all clusters are led and co-led by UN agencies and INGOs, with only one co-lead role for L/NNGOs in the GBV AoR. At the sub-national level, L/NNGOs hold all GBV AoR co-lead roles, five lead roles in Education Cluster, three lead and two co-lead roles in Nutrition Cluster, four co-leads in Health cluster, one co-lead role in WASH Cluster and three NGO co-chair roles in FSAC. Despite these gains, women's rights organizations (WROs), and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) remain significantly underrepresented across YHF AB, thematic working groups, RCTs and several clusters.

In thematic working groups, where this study fully mapped only two groups and reviewed leadership in the remaining seven, findings show that L/NNGOs have strong membership representation in the Cash and Market Working Group while leadership roles remain dominated by UN agencies and INGOs in these two groups. Regarding the remaining seven groups, L/NNGOs hold only a co-chair position in the CEAAP Working Group while all the other leadership roles are occupied by INGOs and UN agencies.



Regarding how this representation is perceived at the level of meaningful engagement—where local and national NGOs can influence decision-making processes—findings from this study indicate that their engagement remains below the desired level, leaving significant room for improvement. While L/NNGOs actively participate in sub-national cluster meetings—providing field-level input and advocating for community needs—their involvement in higher-level processes such as data analysis, setting indicators, and shaping humanitarian needs and response plans is limited. This does not render their lower-level efforts meaninglessly; many L/NNGOs have confirmed that locally raised needs are often reflected in Humanitarian Needs Overviews (HNOs), influencing decisions to some extent.

Despite L/NNGOs' presence across most coordination mechanisms, this presence has not been sufficiently translated into meaningful engagement. Their current engagement is neither fully meaningful nor entirely symbolic—it falls somewhere in between. The gap stems from multiple systemic challenges beyond representation. Key challenges include:

• POWER DYNAMICS

International actors hold greater financial and technical resources, often dominating coordination and decision-making.

• CAPACITY LIMITATIONS

L/NNGOs often lack institutional and technical capacity, affecting both their operations and engagement in coordination and decision-making process.

• FUNDING CONSTRAINTS

Lack of funding, short-term subordinate partnerships, inequal access to funding and funding restrictions hinder sustainability and undermine effective participation in coordination, leadership, and decision-making processes. The findings from this study show that funding restrictions, such as YHF's condition to implement projects of 200000$ in the last one year to be YHF partner, discourage small and newly established local NGOs, including WROs, WLOs, and OPDs, and contribute to marginalizing these vulnerable groups. In addition to this, allocating partnerships to specific NGOs with good access to UN agencies and INGOs and corruption practices both undermine equal and equitable access to funding opportunities and thus undermine inclusivity in coordination mechanisms.

• LACK OF CONCRETE AND LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATION

Few big local and national NGOs represent local NGOs in coordination mechanisms and national and international events but they sometimes lack legitimacy to do that and think individually, this leads to marginalizing the voices of WROs, OPDs, Muhamasheen, and newly established NGOs and limits inclusivity.

• UNDERREPRESENTATION OF LNNGOS IN CLUSTER LEADERSHIP, ICCG AND THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS

Lack of representation or absence of representation in these critical positions contributes negatively to their engagement in coordination and decision-making processes. Decision-making process in humanitarian system is a multi-stage process and if local NGOs are not present poorly present in ICCG for example their position will be poor in discussing issues in HCT if it is relevant to what has been discussed in ICCG.

• CLUSTER LEADERSHIP ASSOCIATED COMMITMENTS

Commitments such as "provider of last resort" discourage local leadership as national NGOs do not have such capacity and authorities may also have a concern of local NGOs' ability to provide or mobilize funds to fill any gap in sectors they lead at national level.

- **POOR NATIONAL COORDINATION WITH NO DEFINED SECTORAL ROLES**

Absence of defined sectoral roles and fragmented national coordination create gaps among local actors in the different platforms which affect their collective efforts in decision-making.

- **POLITICAL AND BUREAUCRATIC BARRIERS**

Political division and bureaucratic processes slow local NGOs' operation and participation in coordination and decision-making. It also represents a challenge for local NGOs to hold leadership roles as local NGOs are often perceived as aligned with political affiliations, and their neutrality and decisions are easily challenged by this political fraction or that. Their ability to provide or mobilize funds for any gaps in the sectors they lead can also be a concern for authorities which may impact authorities' support for local humanitarian leadership at national level.

- **LACK OF AWARENESS**

Limited awareness of the cluster approach and local roles in cluster system contributes negatively to the exclusion of some local NGOs from the cluster system and to the poor engagement of some other NGOs.

- **ENGLISH AND USE OF JARGONS**

Use of English and excessive use of technical terminology reduce local NGOs' engagement in coordination and decision-making.

- **USE OF TECHNOLOGY**

Reliance on technology in conducting meetings sometimes excludes rural NGOs from effective participation.

- **PROFIT-DRIVEN MINDSET AND THE HUGE PROLIFERATION OF NGOS**

High number of local NGOs undermine capacity building efforts while profit-driven motives affect both operations and engagement in decision-making as organizations with profit-driven motives prioritize their individual interests over vulnerable groups' needs.

These factors have been considered by this study as challenges which collectively undermine L/NNGOs' meaningful engagement in humanitarian coordination and decision-making processes.

To address these challenges and enable more meaningful engagement of local and national NGOs (L/NNGOs) in coordination, leadership and decision-making processes, this study recommends a set of integrated strategies tailored with each other to provide a comprehensive treatment for the problem. The recommended strategies include:

01

Invest in L/NNGOs' institutional development and capacity building through training and capacity building programs tailored with humanitarian principles.

02

Increase funding for local NGOs and ensure transparency with less restrictive funding requirement through pursuing direct and multi-source funding channels, including private sector, ensuring partnerships and sub-partnerships with small local NGOs including WROs, WLOs and OPDs, revising restrictive funding requirements to accommodate small NGOs including WROs, WLOs and OPDs through small grants matching their capacity with sustaining accountability standards, and ensuring transparency and equal access to funding opportunities.

03

Ensure legitimate and inclusive representation where all vulnerable groups' voices are represented.

04

Increasing L/NNGOs' representation in cluster leadership and thematic working groups to ensure local NGOs are present in all layers of the humanitarian system and thus can influence decision-making processes which are usually multi-stage processes and require discussion at various levels.

05

Create enabling environment for impartial and timely assistance through strengthening coordination with government authorities and commitment to humanitarian principles.

06

Enhance national coordination efforts to end fragmented coordination efforts and ensure collective local voice through establishing local and national sectoral coordination groups and enhancing national NGO Forum into a national coordination office.

07

Increase local NGOs' awareness of cluster approach and local roles within the system through induction sessions for new members and training on cluster approach and other procedures,

08

Ensure clear and simple communication through the use of Arabic and provision of interpretations.

09

Ensure meeting modalities are accessible to local NGOs, and.

10

Ensure institutionalized policies for registering and oversighting local NGOs underscoring humanitarian goals and core capacities.



This study concludes by calling on all national and international humanitarian actors to translate the recommendations outlined in this study into a practical action plan with SMART goals.. It further urges them to collaborate on implementing the action plan to ensure the meaningful participation of local and national NGOs in coordination and decision-making platforms. Such efforts are essential to achieving a more equitable and locally led humanitarian response system.





1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREVIEW

Engaging local and national actors in humanitarian responses is a key to success since they are often the first responders to humanitarian crisis in their countries, more familiar of local challenges and potential solutions, more capable of mobilizing local networks and offering greater access to affected populations, and hence they contribute to a more effective, efficient, and sustainable humanitarian response with an enhanced accountability to affected populations.(1) This engagement is not merely limited to involving LNHAs in aids delivery but it should extend to include humanitarian response coordination, leadership and planning as well. In this regard, the World Humanitarian Summit 2016 allocated one of its commitments to localization, presenting a shift in the humanitarian coordination system to make the humanitarian response "as local as possible and as intern‌ational as necessary"(2) with an aim to give more power to local and national humanitarian actors in humanitarian response delivery, decision-making processes and coordination.(3)

In the context of Yemen, local and national humanitarian actors, particularly local and national NGOs, play a key role in aiding the affected populations. However, progress toward localization has been slow due to the prevailing power dynamics within the humanitarian system, as international organizations (INGOs & UN agencies) continue to receive most of the funding and dominate decision-making processes.(4) The baseline report for measuring localization in Yemen has reported that there is a minimal evidence that local and national actors taking the lead, effectively influencing decision-making processes or actively participating in coordination platforms.(5) It argued that though local and national NGOs are present, active, and strong in the humanitarian response, more work needs to be done to enhance the meaningful participation of local actors in the leadership and decision-making processes. A survey for localization in Yemen education cluster in 2023 showed that L/NNGOs take part in the regular bi-weekly cluster's meetings and in the ad-hoc meetings while taking the lead only in two sub-hubs, Al Mukla and Marib.(6) A survey for the engagement of local and national NGOs in humanitarian coordination in Middle East and North Africa also reveals that Yemeni NNGOs based in the

(1) IASC: Guidance Strengthening participation, representation and leadership of local and national actors in IASC humanitarian coordination mechanisms, 2021
(2) UN Press Release. Secretary-General, at Round Table, Commits to Making Humanitarian Action 'Local as Possible, International as Necessary, 2016.
(3) Grand Bargain Localization Workstream, 2016.
(4) Project Proposal
(5) TYF. Measuring humanitarian localization in Yemen, Baseline Report, 2022
(6) Zakhia & Alsebaeai. Localization in Humanitarian Coordination in Yemen. YEC. 2023.



IRG-controlled part of the country "were perceived to be somehow disconnected from the primary decision-making forums in Sana'a, which was under the control of de facto authorities" while those based in the de facto authorities "were also reportedly affected by the de facto authorities to prevent their collective action, in which both international and national NGO forums were prohibited". Nevertheless, the study reveals that national NGOs held three seats in the HCT, one seat in cluster leadership (as co-lead of GBV sub-cluster) and two seats in the Yemen Humanitarian Fund (YHF) advisory board. [7]

The IASC Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) also reveals that local and national NGOs represent the backbone for the implementation of many programmes and projects; however th ey are treated by international agencies as merely sub-contractors, and not as equal partners.[8] The assessment has reported several problems in this regard, namely:

1. cost recovery for national institutions which allows for only implementation cost recovery, preventing national NGOs from building their own capacity and implementing their full mandates,
2. women's organizations are under-represented,
3. lack of trust and transparency,
4. sub-contracting partnership arrangements and
5. lack of accurate assessments in the selection of National NGOs as implementing partners for UN Agencies and international INGOs which contributes to lack of equal access and opportunities; i.e. favoring those who have better access to UN agencies and international NGOs at the expense of local NGOs' capacities and vulnerabilities.

(7) Clements et al. Localisation in humanitarian leadership: Profiling national NGO engagement in international humanitarian coordination structures in the MENA region. 2021, ICVA.
(8) IAHE. Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of Yemen humanitarian response, July 2022.

The marginal engagement of local and national actors in IASC cluster-based coordination system has been a common issue in several contexts and the coordination system has been criticized for this in several research studies.[9] Research has argued that the system's failure to effectively engage local and national actors in humanitarian response coordination mechanisms ultimately results in undermining the local ownership of the response and clusters' inability to gain broader perspective on the crisis that local and national NGOs can offer[10].

In recognition of the significant role of local and national humanitarian actors in coordination mechanisms, the World Humanitarian Summit 2016 allocated one of its commitments to localization and advocated for better engagement for local and national humanitarian actors in the coordination mechanisms. Since then, the meaningful engagement of local and national humanitarian actors has become a new trend in IASC cluster-based coordination system.

The IASC has also published guidance in 2021 for strengthening participation, representation and leadership of local and national actors in IASC humanitarian coordination mechanisms. Despite all these efforts, local and humanitarian actors are still facing some challenges in effective participation and leadership in some contexts.

In Middle East and North Africa (MENA), surveys reveal that though there is some development in localization agenda in some contexts with old crises, there is still significant room for improvement in some other contexts with fresh emergencies and recent emergence of local and national NGOs[11].



(9) Steets et al., 2010, Knox Clarke and Campbell, 2015; Steets et al., 2014; Patrick, 2011 as cited in A. Campell and P. Clarke. ALNAP 'COORDINATION WORKSHOP BRIEFING PAPER "How can we better involve national actors in humanitarian coordination?". 2016.
(10) Steets, J. et al Cluster approach evaluation 2: synthesis report. (2010)
(11) As cited in Clements et al. «Localisation in Humanitari an Leadership: Profiling National NGO Engagement in International Humanitarian Coordination Structures in the Mena Region,2021 . ICVA



It has added that NNGOs' proportion of seats in humanitarian structures began to increase and their impact is felt at operational level, but they rarely enjoy the same level of influence as their international counterparts, and they seldom lead technical coordination platforms by themselves.[12] It has outlined several challenges to localization and local leadership in MENA countries with recent emergence of local and national NGOs.

This includes the inaccessibility of complex coordination structures that are steeped in jargon and often not held in local languages, resource constraints, tendency of seeing humanitarian coordination structures serving international interests and offering little value to NNGOs.

Since there is a gap in the recent literature concerning the engagement of the L/NNGOs in the humanitarian system coordination structures in Yemen and the challenges undermining local and national NGOs' ability to effectively participate in or lead humanitarian coordination structures, this study aims to fill this gap by outlining a comprehensive mapping of L/NNGOs' representation and participation in humanitarian coordination structures in Yemen and to delve deeply into the challenges hindering the L/NNGOs' meaningful participation in the humanitarian system coordination mechanisms for the purpose of coming up with recommendations for improvement. The recommendations of this study will also be converted into a policy action plan for enhancing more meaningful participation and leadership of the L/NNGOs in cluster-based coordination system in Yemen.

Before stepping into the methodology of the study, this section will sketch in brief Yemen humanitarian context and cluster approach and humanitarian system coordination in Yemen to make the context of the study clearer for readers.

(12) As cited in Clements et al. «Localisation in Humanitarian Leadership: Profiling National NGO Engagement In International Humanitarian Coordination Structures In The Mena Region. 2021, ICVA.

1.2 YEMEN HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT

Yemen is currently enduring one of the world's most severe and complex humanitarian crises. Since the outbreak of civil war in 2015 between the internationally recognized government (IRG) and the Houthi movement (Insar Allah; currently known as the de facto authority), the country has been devastated by civil conflict and political and economic divisions. As of 2025, an estimated 19.5 million people—more than half the population—require humanitarian assistance and protection – with 7% deterioration compared to 2024.[13] The key drivers of the humanitarian crisis in Yemen can be summed up in the following lines with a reference to Yemen Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) 2025 and some other sources:

(13) OCHA. Yemen Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, Jan. 2025.



PROTRACTED CONFLICT

The civil war the country has been experiencing since 2015 has led to widespread destruction of infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, and water systems. Despite the reduced hostilities stemming from the De facto continuation of the UN-brokered truce in 2022, intermittent fighting continues in some frontline areas, landmines and explosive remnants of war continue to post deadly threats to civilians and hence conflict remains a key driver of humanitarian and protection needs. In addition to this, the escalation in the Red Sea and the broader region has negatively contributed to the existing humanitarian needs. The North De facto authorities' involvement in this regional conflict brought Israeli airstrikes against Yemeni infrastructures such as Hodeida ports, Sana'a airport and some power stations, exacerbating the suffering of Yemeni civilians.



ECONOMIC COLLAPSE

The economy has shrunk by more than half between 2015-2023, pushing more people into poverty. An estimate of 74% of Yemeni people live extreme poverty, with rampant inflation and currency depreciation worsening living conditions.[14]

(14) World Bank. Yemen Economic Monitor: Persistent Fragility amid Rising Risks, Spring 2025

project (Supporting the OOSC through innovative and integrated programming in (child protection and education Funded by UNICEF, Implemented by NMO



CLIMATE CHANGE-RELATED SHOCKS

Yemen is the third most vulnerable country to climate change (score of 8.1).[15] This includes water scarce in some parts of the country and heavy floods in some other parts as those happened in Hodeida in 2024. Other climate shocks— including extreme weather events such as drought and cyclones–continue to overstretch people's resilience. All these climate-related shocks exacerbate the existing suffering of the Yemeni people.

FOOD INSECURITY AND MALNUTRITION

More than 17 million people face acute food insecurity, with 5.1 million on the brink of famine. Malnutrition is widespread, especially among children and pregnant or breastfeeding women, with an estimated 3.5 million children under five and pregnant or breastfeeding women face acute malnutrition.[16]

INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

Around 4.8 million people are internally displaced in Yemen, many of them were displaced more than once. Displaced populations often live in flood-prone or unsafe areas with limited access to basic services. As per August 2024, four of five IDP sites were left without sufficient CCCM support due to lack offunding.[17]

HEALTH AND EDUCATION HURDLES

Over 40% of health facilities are non-functional. Disease outbreaks like cholera and measles are common. Around 3.2 million children of school age (7 to 17 years) are out of school, and many schools are damaged or overcrowded.[18]

(15) European Commission, Joint Research Centre (JRC). (n.d.). In Form Risk Index: Results and Data. As cited in Yemen Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, Jan. 2025.

(16) OCHA. Yemen Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, Jan. 2025.

(17) CCCM Cluster Yemen. (2024). Power BI Dashboard: CCCm Data Overview. As cited in Yemen Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, 2025.

(18) HERAMS report as cited in OCHA. Yemen Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, Jan. 2025.



The humanitarian response in Yemen is coordinated by the UN and supported by nearly 197 aid organizations, including many national NGOs.[19] In 2024, over 8 million people received life-saving assistance and services though the humanitarian response was hindered by funding shortfall and several operational constraints, including bureaucratic impediments and interference, increased violence and threats to humanitarian actors' safety and security, and arbitrary detentions of humanitarian personnels.[20] The 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, which seeks $2.478 billion to reach 10.5 million people in Yemen, is severely underfunded since only 24.8% of the required funds has been received by December-2025.[21] Though the humanitarian response has helped millions of people in Yemen during the past years, the lack of a comprehensive political settlement continues to pose major humanitarian and protection hurdles for millions of Yemenis.

(19) Yemen Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, Jan. 2025.
(20) Yemen Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, Jan. 2025.
(21) OCHA Financial Tracking Service. Yemen 2025 | Financial Tracking Service. Accessed in December 2025

1.3 CLUSTER APPROACH AND HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION

Cluster approach is a coordination mechanism in humanitarian emergencies. It was introduced by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in 2005 as a part of a humanitarian reform for the improvement of the humanitarian system.[22] This reform entails measures for improving the effectiveness of humanitarian response, including employing cluster approach to address the identified gaps in humanitarian response and enhance humanitarian action. The cluster approach organizes humanitarian actors into groups (called clusters) based on sectors of humanitarian activity; each led globally by a designated UN agency with ample expertise in that sector.[23] The IASC principals agreed in December 2005 to designate global 'cluster leads' in nine sectors or areas of activity while it should be applied with some flexibility at the country level.[24]

The goal of the cluster approach at the global level is "to strengthen system-wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies by ensuring that there are predictable leadership and accountability in all the main sectors or areas of humanitarian response. Similarly, at the country level the aim is to strengthen humanitarian response by demanding high standards of predictability, accountability and partnership in all sectors or areas of activity." Lead agencies are then responsible for achieving the goals of the cluster approach in their respective sectors/areas.[25]

(22) Adinolfi, C., Bassiouni, D. et al. (2005). Humanitarian Response Review. UN. New York and Geneva.
(23) IASC. Guidance note on using the cluster approach, 2006
(24) IASC. Guidance note on using the cluster approach, 2006
(25) IASC. Guidance note on using the cluster approach, 2006

At the country level, the Cluster Approach is usually activated in case of complex emergencies and natural disasters where a multi-sectoral response by national and international humanitarian actors is required, and coordination becomes imperative for effective delivery of aids.[26],[27] It defines the roles and responsibilities of clusters and clusters' lead agencies clearly to enhance humanitarian response. It is applied to strengthen the existing sectoral coordination rather than to replace it as it involves clearly identified lead agencies in all sectors or areas of activity in comparison to the past sectoral coordination where only a few sectors were designated to lead agencies with specific mandates.[28] Country-level clusters broadly mirror the global IASC cluster architecture to ensure coherence with global mandates and standards. However, their configuration and leadership can be contextualised based on the humanitarian context, assessed needs, agency mandates, and demonstrated capacity to coordinate effectively. In consultation with the HCT, the Humanitarian Coordinator determines appropriate cluster or sector arrangements to ensure efficient, accountable and fit-for-purpose coordination. [29] The approach was first used in the response to Pakistan earthquake in 2005 and since then it has been used in more than 60 countries with humanitarian crises.[30]

The cluster approach at country level comprises several clusters as per need of the humanitarian crisis with a lead agency designated for each sector to coordinate and facilitate the humanitarian response in the sector. These clusters may have sub-clusters at regional level. Clusters work together to ensure inter-cluster coordination through the Inter-cluster Coordination Group (ICCG). Cluster lead agencies are accountable to the humanitarian coordinator and usually present the concerns of their sectors to the humanitarian country team, led by the humanitarian coordinator. The Humanitarian Country Team may be composed of UN agencies, INGOs and NNGOs, Donors and government and is responsible for humanitarian coordination and strategic planning[31]. The humanitarian system, adopting cluster approach, at the country's level usually comprises the following major coordination components:

(26) Humanitarian coordination and the cluster approach, 2020
(27) IASC. Guidance note on using the cluster approach, 2006
(28) IASC. Guidance note on using the cluster approach, 2006
(29)IASC. Guidance note on using the cluster approach, 2006
(30) Cluster Coordination | Topics | ReliefWeb

(31) Humanitarian coordination and the cluster approach: a quick guide for local and national organizations.

HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR (HC)

Appointed by the United Nation Secretary-General, the HC leads the overall coordination of humanitarian efforts in the country or crisis setting. In many contexts (like Yemen), the HC is also the UN Resident Coordinator (RC), appointed under the UN Development system.

HUMANITARIAN COUNTRY TEAM (HCT)

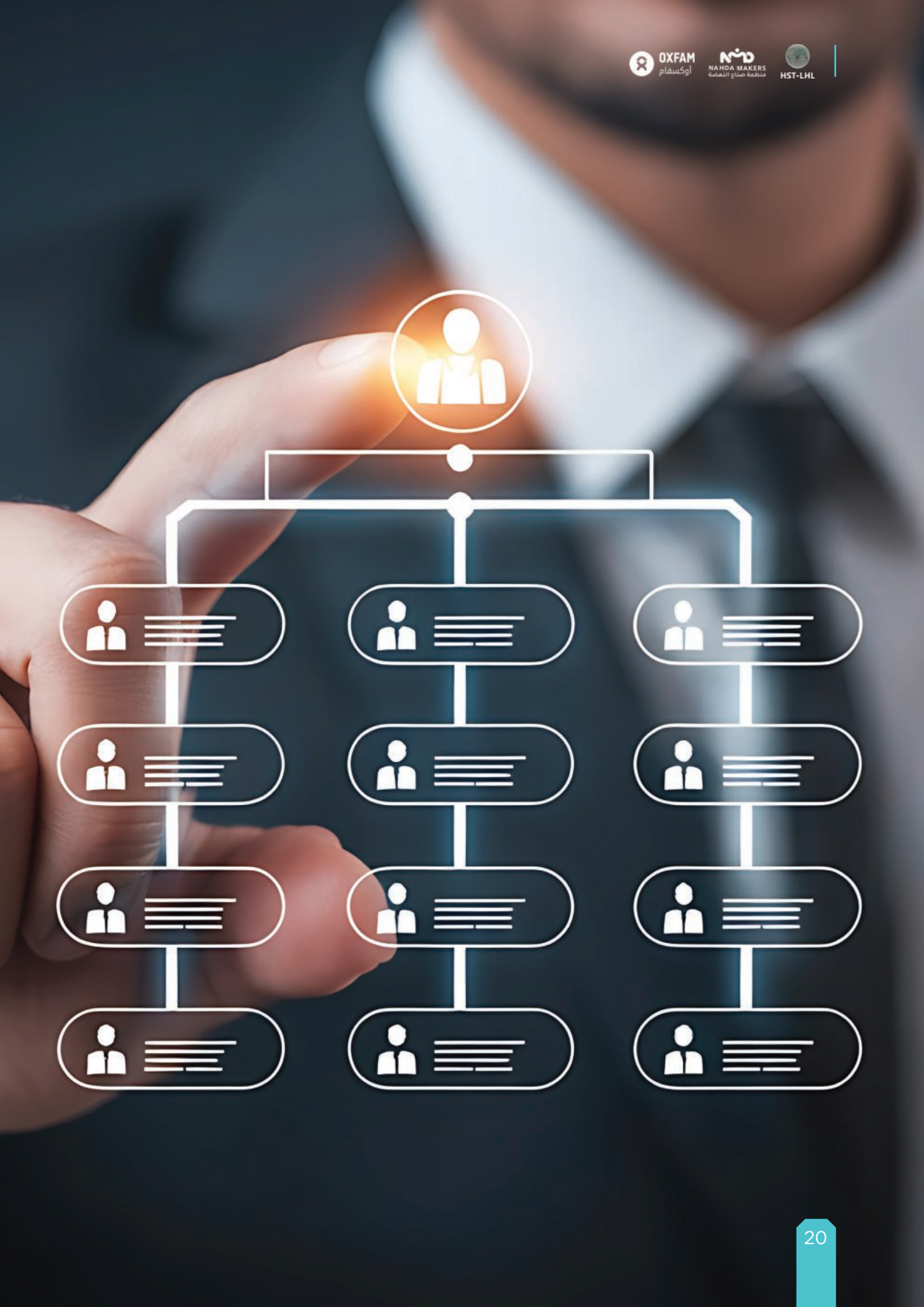
A strategic decision-making body at country level composed of UN agencies, INGOs, NNGOs, Observers and other key stakeholders under the leadership of the HC to provide strategic direction, agree on collective priorities, and ensure coherent and accountable humanitarian action.

CLUSTER SYSTEM

Introduced in 2005, this approach organizes humanitarian actors into clusters by sector (e.g., Health, Shelter, WASH, Protection). Each cluster is led by a designated agency (e.g., WHO for Health, UNICEF for WASH). Clusters work together through the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group to ensure proper coordination and comprehensive response across sectors.

OCHA (UN OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS)

OCHA is responsible for mobilizing and coordinating effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors, supporting humanitarian leadership, leading humanitarian needs analysis and response planning and advocacy.





2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 OVERALL METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This study has been conducted following a participatory and consultative approach. It collected quantitative and qualitative data through various data collection instruments to enable clear understanding of the Local and National Humanitarian Actors' (LNHAs[32]) engagement in the existing humanitarian coordination mechanisms in Yemen and the challenges they face within these coordination mechanisms.[33] It aimed to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the level of representation, participation and leadership of LNHAs, including women's right organizations (WROs), women led organizations (WLOs) and Organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) in humanitarian response coordination structures. This exercise will lead to establishing a baseline for barriers experienced by LNHAs, including WROs, WLOs, OPDs and will provide recommendations which will help the LNHAs to engage more actively in decision-making processes and play vital leadership roles within the coordination mechanisms.

2.2 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed at mapping the representation and participation of Local and national Humanitarian Actors (LNHAs[34]), including Women's Rights Organizations, Women-led Organizations and Organizations of persons with disability (OPDs) in humanitarian system coordination mechanisms. This major aim has been sub-divided into the following objectives:

- To map the representation, participation and leadership of Yemeni LNHAs, including WROs, WLOs and OPDs, in the humanitarian system coordination mechanisms in Yemen.
- To analyze the barriers that L/NHAs, including WROs, WLOs and OPDs, face within the existing coordination mechanisms.
- To provide recommendations for strengthening meaningful participation and leadership of Yemeni L/NHAs, including WROs, WLOs and OPD, in humanitarian system coordination mechanisms.

(32) The term ‹LNHAs› has been used in this ToR to refer to local and national NGOs.
(33) Humanitarian coordination mechanisms refer to clusters and working groups.
(34)LNHAs term has been used in this study to refer to Local and National NGOs.

2.3 QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study aimed at answering this major question:
To what extent do humanitarian system coordination mechanisms in Yemen enable representation, meaningful participation and leadership of local and national Humanitarian Actors (LNHAs)?
This major question has been sub-divided into the following sub-questions:

1. What is the level of representation, participation and leadership of Yemeni L/NHAs, including WROs, WLOs and OPDs, in humanitarian system coordination mechanisms?
2. How are the Yemeni L/NHAs, including WROs, WLOs and OPDs, participating and providing leadership in the Yemen's humanitarian coordination mechanisms?
3. What barriers do Yemeni L/NHAs, including WROs, WLOs and OPDs, face to advance from representation to active participation and leadership within the humanitarian system coordination mechanisms?
4. What actions are required to strengthen the meaningful participation and leadership of Yemeni LNHAs in humanitarian system coordination mechanisms?

2.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study has been conducted in the Yemeni context during the period between July – December 2025. It attempted to map the representation and participation of Yemeni LNHAs in the humanitarian system coordination mechanisms in Yemen, namely clusters and working groups, including RCTs, thematic working groups and key technical and decision-making groups, and the challenges faced.

Though the study covers the whole country, it shed light on the national level with conducting field missions to Aden, Hadhramawt, Taiz and Marib to collect on ground data about L/NNGOs' participation, experiences, and challenges. These RCTs have been selected purposively for field study due to safe access and security circumstances. The study also targeted L/NNGOs from Sana'a RCT virtually and circulated an online questionnaire to all RCTs to ensure the voices of the L/NNGOs under De facto authorities are present in this study. It should also be noted here that most of the organizations that have main offices under De facto authorities' areas have sub-offices in at least one of the targeted RCTs which enables us to cover L/NNGOs voices from the whole country.

In terms of challenges limiting the scope of this study, the study has faced two major challenges a. unavailability of accurate and updated database of local and national NGOs in Yemen; and b. lack of cooperation from some clusters' coordinators, thematic working groups' coordinators/ chairs and some INGOs and UN agencies. While the first challenge might deprive some local NGOs of their rights to present their views in this study, the second challenge has undermined the scope of the study in mapping all clusters and working groups, resulting in three clusters, one area of responsibility, and seven thematic working groups unmapped and one cluster partially mapped.

2.5 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS AND SAMPLING APPROACH

Data of this study have been collected through various data collection instruments as shown in this section. The sampling selection process has attempted to have a good representation for L/NNGOs, with special attention to representing women-led organizations, women's right organizations, organizations of persons with disability. The data collection instruments were developed by the researcher based on the objectives of the study and his review of literature relevant to strengthening local and national participation and leadership in humanitarian coordination mechanisms.[35],[36],[37],[38] Data collection instruments were then shared with Nahda Makers Organization and Oxfam for validation and got approved.

2.5.1 DESK REVIEW

Desk review is a form of secondary research or a document review conducted to assess a topic or analyze existing information about a topic. In this study, the research specialist has collected as many documents as possible which have helped to support the research. The documents collected include some previous studies on localization in Yemen and globally, guidance notes on strengthening national participation and leadership in humanitarian coordination mechanisms, guidance notes on using cluster system. All these documents helped with developing the data collection tools and served as secondary data for the study.

2.5.2 CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOPS/ FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGDS)

Consultative Workshops and Focus Group Discussions are both qualitative research data collection tools that involve participants in discussions about specific topics to explore their perceptions, attitudes and opinions and generate qualitative data about the topic under discussion. While FGDs involve a small number of participants (usually 6 to 12) and led by a facilitator with a moderator to write down notes if not recorded, a consultative workshop involves bigger number and usually led by a lead researcher with facilitators and moderators as per the participants in the workshop.

(35) HCT. Yemen Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Localization Strategy and Action Plan, 2023.
(36) IASC. Guidance Strengthening Participation, Representation and Leadership of Local and National Actors in IASC Humanitarian Coordination Mechanisms, 2021.
(37) TYF. Measuring Localisation: Framework and Tools. 2019.
(38) Some items have been taken directly/modified from the tools proposed in ‹Measuring Localisation: Framework and tools›

In this study, eight consultative workshops have been conducted with L/NNGOs in Aden, Taiz, Hadhramawt and Marib in August and September 2025, in addition to one online FGD with some L/NNGOs from Sana'a regional coordination team (RCT) in September 2025 and one FGD with L/NNGOs' representatives in HCT and Localization Task Force in October 2025, to generate qualitative data on L/NNGOs' current participation in coordination mechanisms and challenges faced within the coordination mechanisms existing in the country.

The consultative workshops also provided an opportunity for the participants to express their viewpoints for enhancing local participation and leadership in coordination mechanisms. The participants in these workshops were selected from both L/NNGOs with ongoing engagement and those with no engagement in regional coordination teams (RCTs). For strengthening the data collected from LNHAs regarding engagement and barriers of Yemeni L/NNGOs in the humanitarian system coordination mechanisms in Yemen, a focus group discussion (FGDs) was conducted with some representatives of UN agencies, INGOs and clusters in Taiz RCT and one FGD with clusters coordinators at national level. More than 200 people informed the research through these consultative workshops and focus group discussions as shown in the table below.

Table 1. General information about consultative workshops and FGDs conducted

Data Collection Tool	Frequency	Targeted Group	Number of Participants	Modality
Consultative Workshops	8	L/NNGOs in Aden, Taiz and Marib RCTs	190	In-person
FGD	1	L/NNGOs in Sana'a RCT	9	Online
FGD	1	UN Agencies, INGOs and Sub-clusters' coordinators in Taiz RCT	6	In-person
FGD	1	Local NGOs Representatives in HCT and Localization Task Force	7	Online
FGD	1	Clusters' Coordinators at national level.	3	Online
Total			**215**	

The samples for the L/NNGO consultative workshops at RCT level have been selected somehow randomly from the lists of RCTs' lists provided by the OCHA and from the lists of local and national NGOs available at NMO's databases and national NGO forum, with paying attention to ensuring representation of WROs, WLOs, OPDs and Muhamasheen in these consultative workshops. In Marib, some local NGOs were rejected by the office of social affairs and labor in Marib and replaced by other local NGOs as nominated by the office. From the total number of the NGOs invited to the consultative workshops (approximately 260), 190 L/NNGOs attended the consultative workshops (one participant each), of whom ٧٢ organizations (38%) are engaged in RCTs and 118 organizations (62%) are not engaged in RCTs. It should be noted here that those engaged in RCTs are usually partners in one or more clusters while those who are not engaged, 42 of which don't have any membership in any cluster, and the rest have membership in one or more clusters. The representatives of the local and national NGOs to these consultative workshops represent both genders (male and female). The following table provides detailed information about the participating NGOs in the consultative workshops.

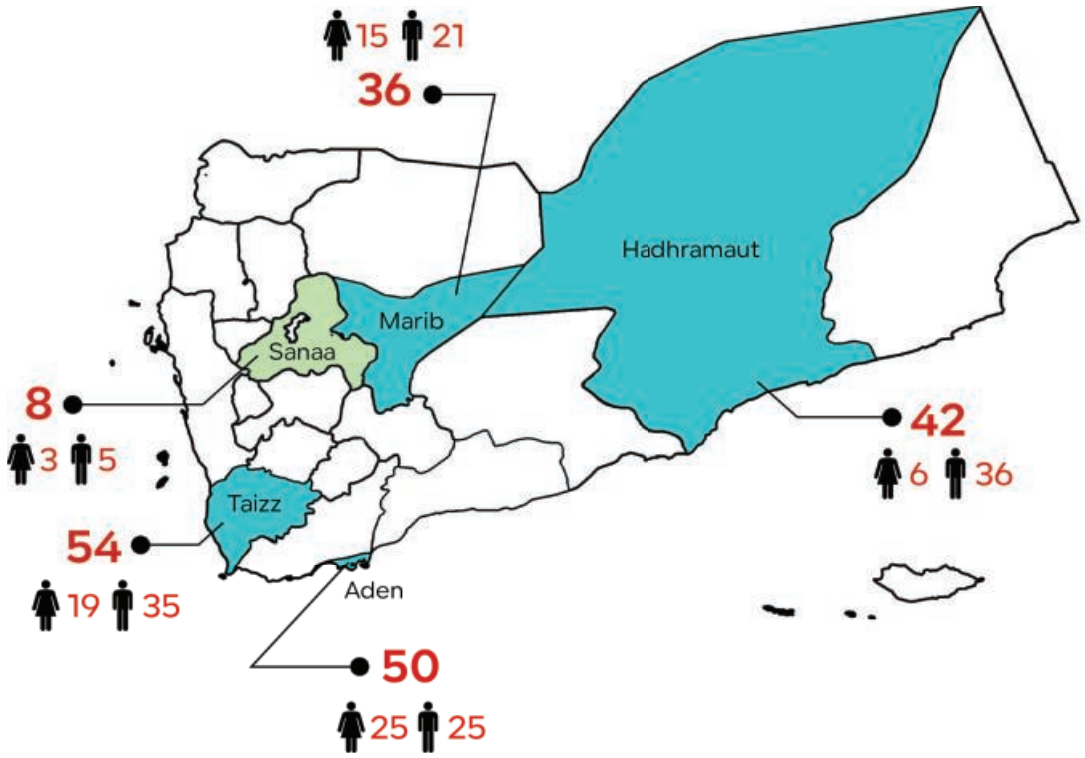


Table 2. Detailed information about consultative workshops and FGDs with L/NNGOs

Workshop Location	Total Number of participating NGOs	NGOs' representatives' Gender		Participating NGOs' engagement in RCTs		No./% of WROs/ WLOs/GIO among the participating NGOs	No./% of OPDs among the participants	No. of Muhamasheen organizations among the participants
		Male	Female	Engaged	Not engage			
Aden	50	25	25	24	26	17	2	1
Taiz	54	35	19	28	26	28	2	2
Hadhramawt	42	36	6	3	39	7	4	0
Marib	36	21	15	14	22	11	1	0
Sana'a (Online FGD)	8	5	3	3	5	2	0	0
Total	**190**	**122**	**68**	**72**	**118**	**64**	**9**	**3**
Percentage	**100%**	**64%**	**36%**	**38%**	**62%**	**34%**	**5%**	**2%**

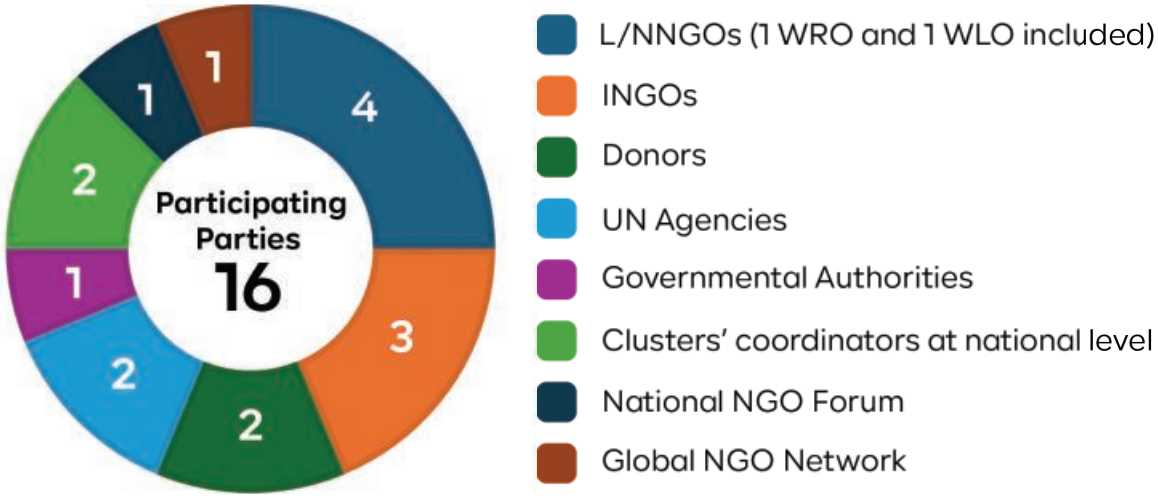
As far as the FGD with UN Agencies, INGOs and Clusters Coordinators in Taiz is concerned, the invitation had been sent to 12 participants in Taiz RCT (4 UN Agencies, 4 INGOs and 4 Clusters coordinators) and only 6 participants confirmed their participation and attended the FGD. Regarding the FGD with L/NNGO representatives in HCT and localization task force, all members had been invited while only 6 members attended the FGD. The same is for the FGD with clusters coordinators, the invitation was sent to all clusters' coordinators and only representatives of two clusters attended.

2.5.3 KEY INFORMANTS' INTERVIEWS (KIIS)

Key Informants' Interview is a data collection tool in qualitative research. It is used with few informants who are well familiar with the topic under research and have interest in the topic of discussion. It employs semi-structured questions and allows the researcher to explore personal experiences, opinions, and insights that may not be captured through surveys or group discussions.

In this study, a total of 16 in-depth semi-structured interviews have been conducted to deepen the discussion on local and national NGOs' engagement and challenges in humanitarian coordination structures as well as informants' viewpoints for improvement. These semi-structured interviews were conducted either in-person or online with representatives of L/NNGOs, INGOs, UN agencies, donors, clusters' coordinators and government authorities as shown in table 3 below. The sample of these interviews was selected purposively, i.e. those who may have better interest in the topic of the study and provide more informative responses to its questions.

A chart showing the list of interviews that were conducted :



2.5.4 ONLINE SURVEYS

An online survey is a structured questionnaire distributed and completed via the internet. It is designed to collect data from a target sample about their opinions, behaviors, experiences, figures ...etc. It is used to collect mapping figures or reach a broad audience quickly and cost-effectively and gather quantitative and/or qualitative data efficiently. In this study, two surveys have been carried out.

2.5.4.1 ONLINE SURVEY FOR MAPPING L/NNGOS IN CLUSTERS AND WORKING GROUPS

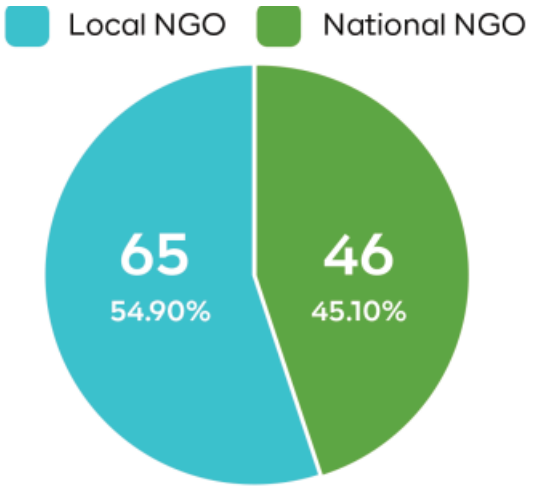
Online surveys were utilized to map the representation of local and national humanitarian actors, including WROs, WLOs and OPD, in clusters, sub-clusters and working groups. The surveys' online links were shared with clusters' coordinators (no= 11 clusters and 3 AoR) and working groups' leaders (no = 9 working groups) and they were requested to fill in the form about the numbers of UN agencies, INGOs, donors, governmental authorities and L/NNGOs including WROs, WLOs and OPDs in their clusters and working groups and submit it to the research specialist. The data collected from this survey show that coordinators of seven clusters, two areas of responsibility and two working groups have completed the survey.

2.5.4.2 L/NNGOS' QUESTIONNAIRE

To target the maximum number of L/NNGOs, an online survey (questionnaire) was also employed. The questionnaire was designed to get data about L/NNGOs, their engagement in humanitarian clusters and working groups, key challenges they face in accessing and influencing these coordination mechanisms and the L/NNGOs' perspectives for strengthening local participation and leadership in coordination mechanisms. The data collected by this online questionnaire is significant as it enables surveying the maximum number of L/NNGOs, particularly those who didn't join the consultative workshops. It also serves triangulation and increases the reliability of the findings.

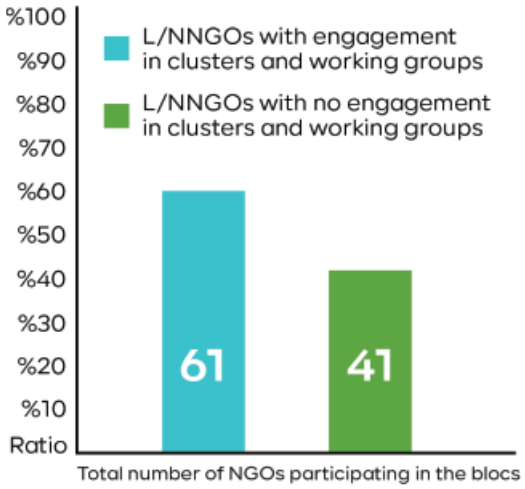
The questionnaire was sent to more than 200 L/NNGOs selected from the local NGO forum's list, RCTs' lists and NMO's databases, considering the representation of the local and national NGOs across the whole country, including WROs, WLOs and OPDs. The findings reveal that 102 local and national NGOs, distributed across 14 governorates in Yemen, responded to the questionnaire as shown in the following table and annex 2.

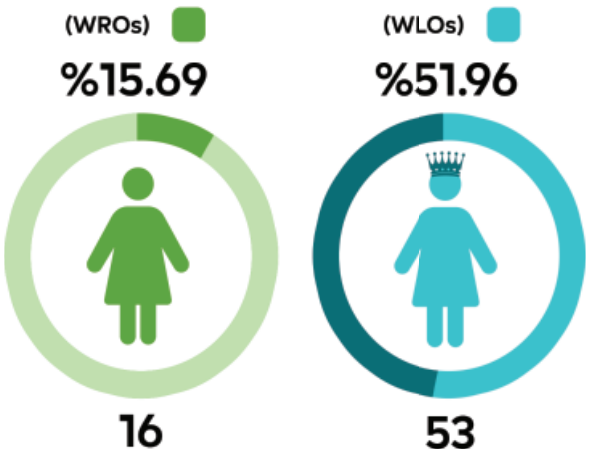
L/NNGOs' responses to the questionnaire.



As noted earlier, the sample were selected from those engaged in clusters and working groups and those with no engagement. The following figure shows the number and percentages of L/NNGOs with and without engagement in clusters and working groups.

Responders' engagement in clusters and working groups



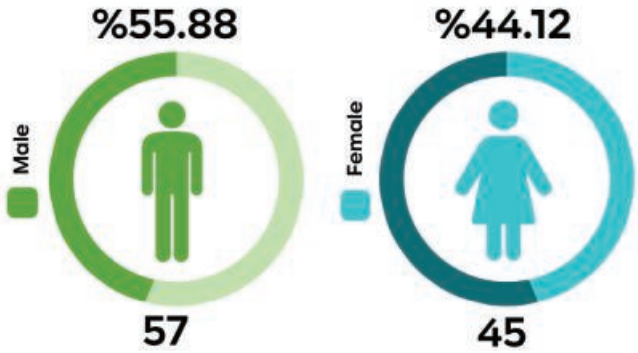


WLOs and WROs' representation in the responses

To ensure inclusiveness, the selection process considered the representation of WROs, WLOs, OPDs, and Muhamsheen in the sample. OPDs and Muhamasheen NGOs were removed from the figure due to respondents' confusion between NGOs belonging to these vulnerable groups and those serving them. The figure below shows the representation of WROs and WLOs in the responses.

The figure shows a good representation of WROs and WLOs in the survey responses, as they constitute more than 50% of the sample. It should be noted that the term "WLOs" was not clearly defined in the questionnaire instructions; therefore, some participants may have interpreted it as any organization led by a woman, regardless of whether its executive council includes 50% women or not. It should also be highlighted that cross values of WROs and WLOs revealed that 13 WROs are included within WLOs, as shown in the figure. This indicates that the total number of WLOs and WROs that participated in the survey is 56 NGOs, representing 54.90% of the sample.





Participant's Gender

So far as gender is concerned, the responders to this questionnaire represent both genders with 12 responses more from the male ones as shown in the table below.

2.6 RESEARCH ETHICS

This study strictly follows the research ethics as shown below.

Informed Consent and voluntary participation: The researcher informed the participants about the purpose of the study, questions to be asked, their voluntary participation and their right to withdraw or to reject answering some questions during the data collection session whenever they feel unsatisfied.

Confidentiality and Privacy: The researcher made it clear to all participants that their inputs will be protected and used only for the purpose of the study. In addition to this, he underscored that participants' identities and organizations will not be revealed at any point in the report when discussing the finding without prior permission.

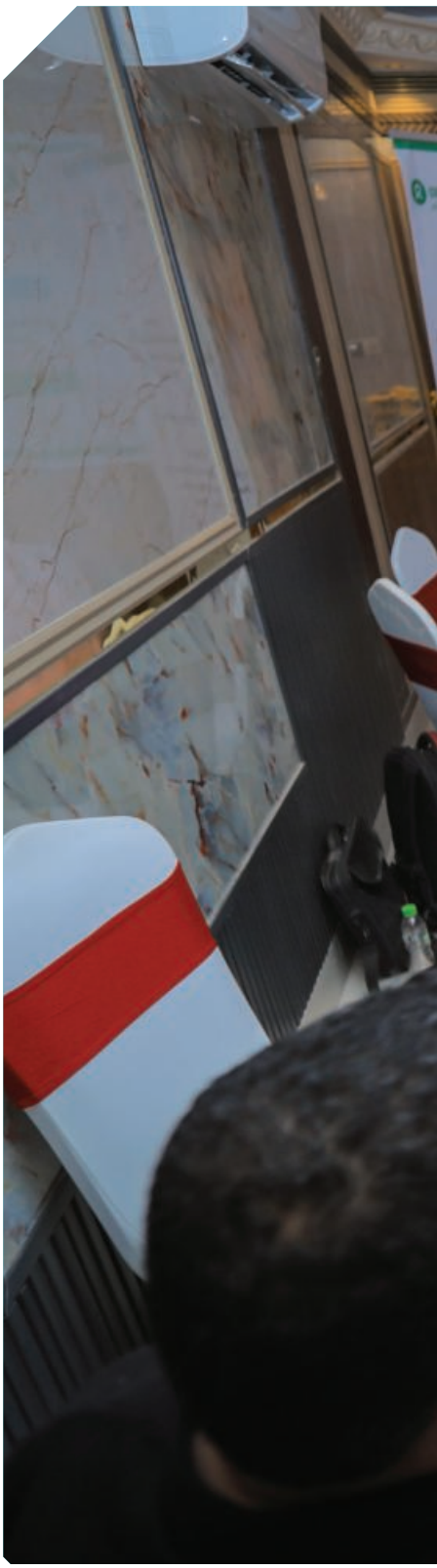
Integrity and honesty: The researcher drafted the findings of the study faithfully and honestly based on the data collected. All cited articles have also been attributed to its authors, avoiding plagiarism.

Do no harm: The researcher did his best to avoid causing any physical, emotional or social harm.

Beneficence: The study has been designed with the purpose of improving humanitarian system coordination mechanisms in Yemen, particularly including local and national humanitarian actors in the humanitarian system coordination mechanisms, to ensure a more equitable humanitarian system which better benefit the beneficiaries.

2.7 ANALYSIS AND VALIDATION

The collected data has been triangulated and analyzed thematically and statistically to identify the level of L/NNGOs' representation, participation and challenges in coordination mechanisms and the required actions for strengthening local participation and leadership. The quantitative part was analyzed statistically by Excel and SPSS while the qualitative part was analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke' thematic analysis framework.[39] The report findings were also validated in two workshops in Aden and Taiz with participation of approximately 77 participants from L/NNGOs and 1 participant from INGOs. The draft report had been reviewed internally within Nahda Makers Organization and then submitted to Oxfam for review and comments. The report was also shared with HCT, Localization Taskforce, OCHA, some INGOs, National NGOs Forum, some cluster coordinators, for their review and comments. Based on the reviews and comments received[40], the report has been finalized and submitted to Oxfam by the end of December. The final report has been translated into Arabic to be accessible by all L/NNGOs. The final report, in both English and Arabic versions, will be printed out and then disseminated with the L/NNGOs and the concerned INGOs, UN Agencies, OCHA, donors via taskforce, global NGO networks, and authorities. Consultative workshops will also be held in 2026 with all stakeholders (UN Agencies, INGOs, L/NNGOs, HCT, LTF, Government authorities) to present report's findings, including gaps in local humanitarian representation, participation and leadership, barriers impeding L/NNGOs' meaningful participation and leaderships and the recommendations for more meaningful participation and leaderships of L/NNGOs in humanitarian system coordination and decision-making mechanisms. These workshops serve as an advocacy for the findings of the report and aim at drawing an action plan for addressing the barriers to promote more meaningful participation of the L/NNGOs in the existing humanitarian system coordination mechanisms.



(39) Brawn and Klarke: Using thematic analysis in psychology (2006). It is a six-phase thematic analysis including familiarization with the data, initial coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and writing the report.
(40) Reviews only received from Oxfam, Health Cluster and OCHA.





3. FINDINGS

This section synthesizes the key findings from the data collection instruments. It presents quantitative data through tables and diagrams to illustrate the representation of local and national humanitarian actors in clusters and working groups. It also includes qualitative insights on how this representation is perceived in terms of meaningful participation in coordination and decision-making processes, as well as the challenges local and national NGOs face in joining clusters, leading clusters and actively engaging in coordination mechanisms.

3.1 MAPPING OF L/NHAS' REPRESENTATION, PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP IN COORDINATION MECHANISMS

The mapping of local and national humanitarian actors (L/NHAs) within humanitarian system coordination mechanisms in Yemen shows the presence of 11 clusters and 9 thematic working groups. In addition, three key technical and decision-making bodies operate at the national level: the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG), and the Yemen Humanitarian Fund Advisory Board (YHF AD). Recently, the HCT adopted a bottom-up approach by establishing seven Regional Coordination Teams (RCTs) at the sub-national level. The table below compares the representation of local and national NGOs in the HCT, YHF AB and ICCG against their international counterparts.

Table 3 : L/NNGOs' representation in the key working groups

Constituency Working Group	UN Agencies	INGOs	Donors	Gov. Authorities	LNNGOs[41]	WROs/WLOs	OPDs
HCT	14	6	0	0	6	3	1
YHF AB[42]	3	3	3	0	3	1	0
ICCG[43]	16	6	0	0	2	2	0

Source: OCHA

Table shows that local and national NGOs (L/NNGOs) are represented in all three key groups, but their representation varies significantly. In the YHF Advisory Board, seats are distributed equally among UN agencies, INGOs, and NNGOs—three each. However, in the ICCG, N/NGOs hold only two seats compared to six for INGOs and sixteen for UN agencies. Within the HCT, NNGOs occupy six seats, matching INGOs but still falling short of the fourteen seats allocated to UN agencies. While assigning six seats to NNGOs—including women-led organizations (WLOs) and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs)—is a positive step toward inclusiveness and localization, NNGOs remain underrepresented compared to UN agencies. It should be noted here that the addition of NGO representation has been mentioned in one HCT meeting and there is a possibility of three additional NNGOs to HCT, however this requires further discussion, follow-up and agreement.

> "The way the HCT is also structured is that we are overwhelmed. They are overwhelming. Numbers of UN people are within the HCT, so they take up a lot of space. (from an interview with an INGO)"

(41)The number of L/NNGOs in this table includes local WROs, WLOs and OPDs.
(42) The process of selecting NNGOs members is totally being led by NNGOs themselves.
(43) There is a plan to include one NNGO as co-chair for the CMWG according to OCHA. This will increase the number of NNGOs into three in the ICCG.

The findings also show that the HCT has recently adopted a new approach by establishing seven Regional Coordination Teams (RCTs) at the sub-national level. OCHA facilitates leadership in all RCTs, while both national and international humanitarian actors are represented in their membership, as illustrated in Table 10 below.

Table 4 : L/NNGOs' representation in RCTs

Constituency RCT	UN Agencies	INGOs	Donors	Gov. Authorities	NNGOs	WLOs/WROs	OPDs
Aden	5	42	0	0	42	0	0
Sana'a	8	4	0	0	5	0	0
Al-Hodeida	8	17	0	0	8	2	0
Taiz	6	26	0	0	82	0	0
Sa'ada	7	9	0	0	22	0	0
Marib	8	17	0	0	19	1	0
Ibb	6	4	0	0	6	0	0

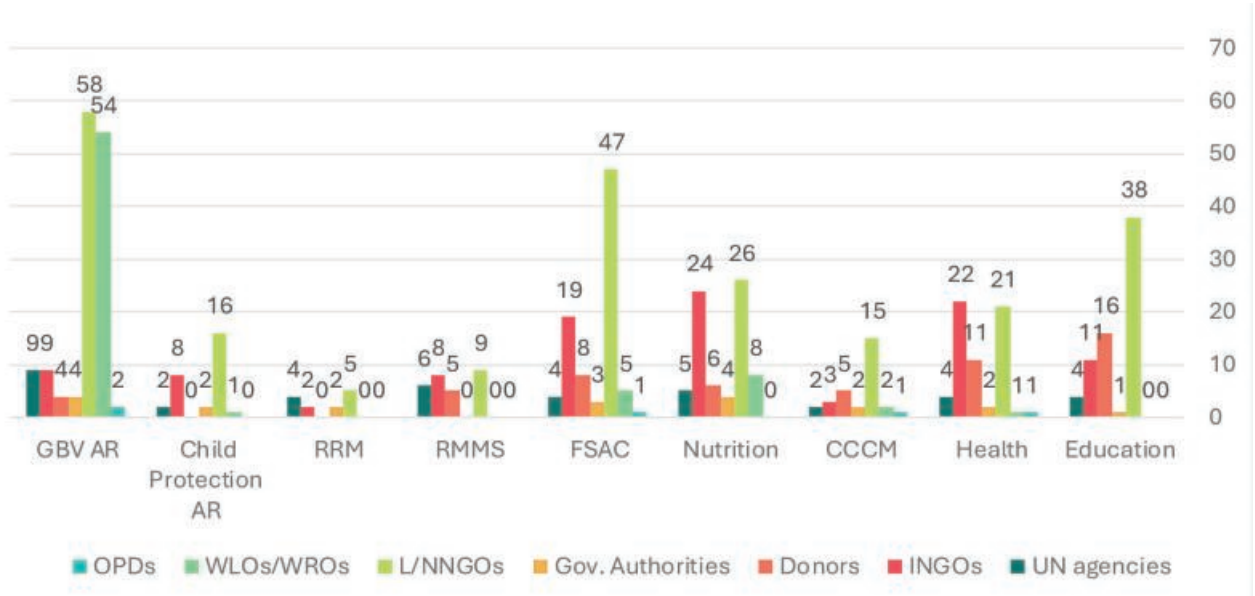
Source: OCHA

Regarding L/NNGOs' representation in RCTs, table 10 shows strong participation in Taiz, Aden, Sa'ada, Marib and Ibb, with 82, 42, 22, 19 and 6 seats respectively. In contrast, representation is low in Sana'a and Hodeida. It is important to note that the RCT structures is still evolving, and these figures may change as the process progresses.

Regarding cluster mapping, the study provides a detailed overview of seven clusters—Education, Health, Nutrition, FSAC, RRM, RMMS, and CCCM—as well as two Areas of Responsibility (AoRs) under the Protection Cluster: GBV AoR and Child Protection AoR. The representation of L/NNGOs in cluster partners is shown in fig. 1 below. [44] (look at annex 1 for more details about L/NNGOs representation in cluster partners and leadership at both national and sub-national levels).

(44)L/NNGOs in this figure includes WLOs/WROs and OPDs.

Fig. 1: Representation of L/NNGOs in Cluster Partners



This chart shows that local and national NGOs are present in all clusters, and they hold more seats than UN agencies and INGOs in some clusters. This is consistent with data from the consultative workshops, which indicate that local and national NGOs attend cluster meetings in greater numbers than INGOs and UN agencies. However, representation of women's rights organizations (WROs), women-led organizations (WLOs), and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) remains limited. Except for the GBV AoR and Nutrition Cluster, WROs and WLOs are either underrepresented or absent. OPDs also have minimal presence, with only two seats in the GBV AoR and one seat each in three clusters—Health, FSAC, and CCCM clusters.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) with clusters' coordinators identified two types of cluster partnerships: partners and members. Partners are selected based on criteria such as the operational presence in the field with an ongoing project and the ability to report regularly. Members, by contrast, are admitted through simpler criteria—primarily being a registered NGO in the area with interest in the sector. While partners can attend and actively participate in meetings, members are limited to attending as observers, only for listening. Although many non-RCT NGOs surveyed in this study perceive local and national NGO representation in clusters as insufficient, the cluster partnerships criteria appear relatively accessible, and L/NNGOs already hold a good presence within cluster partnerships.

> We have two criteria, one is partnership and one is membership. Members, you know, any organization can be a member of the cluster where they can only sit in the cluster meeting and they receive information only, but then there is another criteria, you know, to be a partner with the cluster, so that is, Uh, they need to have an ongoing project under implementation. They should be reporting on the (cluster name) cluster platform Uh reporting platform for at least six months. They have the capacity; they have the resources (from the FGDs with clusters' coordinator)

> In terms of the partnership with the national NGOs, we allow all national NGOs who are doing (cluster-related) work on ground and they are registered. So we have a list of few criteria for to be a partner with the (name of the cluster) cluster, their legal presence, their office, (sector relevant) staffing and we don't really make a criteria of a certain technical criteria for them to be part of the cluster, so it's very easy to be a member,... an online form where you upload your documents. Then we assess and if they all meet the criteria then they are added to our mailing list. (from the FGDs with clusters' coordinator)

> Clusters are accessible to local and national NGOs. There may be some lengthy procedures for application, or some clusters may not sufficiently facilitate the joining process to new local NGOs but clusters' membership is accessible to local NGOs. (from an interview with local NGO).

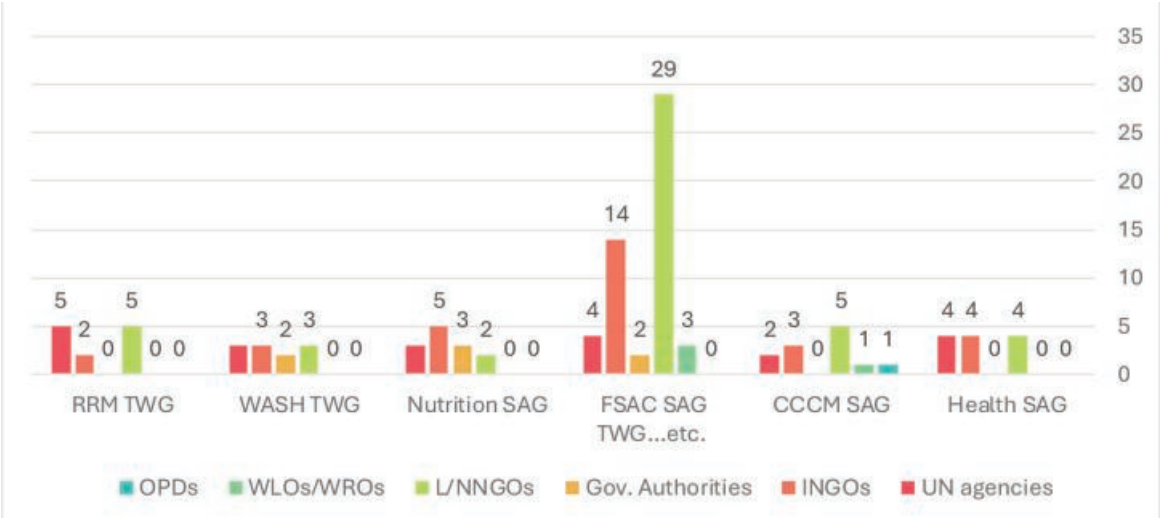
> The humanitarian coordination mechanisms are accessible to NGOs. (from an interview with a UN agency, pointing out to all coordination mechanisms including clusters).

> I do see a good representation of local NGOs, including WLOs and WROs; I am less certain about OPDs. (from an interview with an INGO)

Although local and national NGOs hold several seats in each cluster (as shown in fig. 1), there is a clear gap in leadership roles. At the national level, all clusters are led and co-led by UN agencies, with L/NNGOs having no representation except for a co-lead role in the GBV AoR under the Protection Cluster. At the sub-national level, L/NNGOs hold five lead roles in the Education Cluster, three lead and two co-lead roles in the Nutrition Cluster, four co-lead roles in Health Cluster, one co-lead role in WASH cluster, three NGO co-chair roles in FSAC, and all co-lead roles in GBV AoR. However, all other sub-cluster lead and co-lead positions are occupied by UN agencies and INGOs. (look at annex 1 for these details)

Inputs from cluster coordinators via online surveys and interviews reveal the existence of technical working groups (TWGs) and strategic advisory groups (SAGs) in six clusters: FSAC, CCCM, RRM, WASH, Nutrition, and Health[45]. These groups play a critical role in technical analysis and strategic planning. Local and national NGOs are represented in all TWGs and SAGs, often holding seats equal to or greater than those of INGOs or UN agencies—except in the Nutrition TWG, where L/NNGOs have two seats compared to five for INGOs, three for UN agencies, and three for government authorities as shown in fig. 2 below.[46]

Fig. 2: L/NNGOs representation in cluster SAGs and TWGs



In terms of the leadership of these groups, national NGOs hold co-lead roles in FSAC APP and TWG. However, lead and co-lead positions in all other TWGs and SAGs remain limited to UN agencies and INGOs.

The mapping study also identified nine thematic working groups, as shown in Table 11. While the study fully mapped the first two groups—Disability and Age Inclusion Task Force and Cash and Market Working Group—it was only able to map leadership roles for the remaining seven groups. The Disability and Age Inclusion Task Force is led by an international NGO and co-led by the Protection Cluster (UN agency), with no national or international NGOs in its membership. In contrast, the Cash and Market Working Group shows strong representation of local and national NGOs, with 30 L/NNGOs in its membership, although leadership remains with two UN agencies and one INGO as co-chairs.

For the other seven working groups, coordinators did not respond to requests for membership data, so only leadership mapping was completed. As shown in table 11, national NGOs are represented in leadership only within the CEAAP Working Group, while leadership of all other groups is limited to UN agencies and INGOs.

(45) It should be noted here that some clusters did not share their mapping details with the research specialist. Education cluster shared its mapping, and no technical or strategic group is there. RMMS shared its mapping, but the research specialist could not get the mapping of its underlying technical working groups.
(46) L/NNGOs in this figure includes WLOs/WROs and OPDs.

Table 4: L/NNGOs' representation in thematic working groups[47]

Leadership & Constituency Working Group	Lead Agency	Co-chairs	UN Agencies	INGOs	Donors	Gov. Authority	L/NNGOs
Disability and Age Inclusion Task Force	INGO	UN Agency	0	0	0	0	0
Cash and Market Working Group	NA	UN Agencies/ INGO	9	25	5	0	30
PSEA	UN Agency	NA	-	-	-	-	-
Durable Solution	UN Agency	NA	-	-	-	-	-
GiHA	UN Agency	NA	-	-	-	-	-
HLP	INGO	NA	-	-	-	-	-
CEAAP	NA	2UN Agencies/ 1N/NGO	-	-	-	-	-
RH	UN Agency	NA	-	-	-	-	-
Country Representative	INGO	NA	-	-	-	-	-

(47) Thematic working groups from 3 – 9 were left without mapping in this table as their coordinators/chairs did not respond to the online mapping survey. Only leadership was mapped based on the data provided by OCHA.

In summary, the mapping of local and national NGOs (L/NNGOs) within humanitarian coordination mechanisms reveals different levels of representation. L/NNGOs hold seats in all three key technical and decision-making bodies—HCT, YHF Advisory Board, and ICCG. Their representation is relatively fair in YHF, somewhat satisfactory in HCT, but very limited in ICCG, where they occupy only one seat compared to six for INGOs and sixteen for UN agencies.

Within clusters, L/NNGOs are well represented as partners and in technical working groups and strategic advisory groups. However, leadership gaps persist: at the national level, all clusters are led and co-led by UN agencies, with only one co-lead role for L/NNGOs in the GBV AoR. At the sub-national level, L/NNGOs hold all GBV AoR co-lead roles, five lead roles in Education, three lead and two co-lead roles in Nutrition, four co-leads in Health, one co-lead in WASH, and three NGO co-chair roles in FSAC.

In thematic working groups, L/NNGOs have strong membership representation in the Cash and Market Working Group, while leadership roles remain dominated by UN agencies and INGOs, except for a co-chair position held by a national NGO in the CEAAP Working Group.Despite these gains, women's rights organizations (WROs), women-led organizations (WLOs), and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) remain significantly underrepresented across thematic working groups, RCTs and several clusters.

3.2 FROM REPRESENTATION TO MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION: L/NNGOS' POSITION

Moving from representation to meaningful participation within the humanitarian system requires progressing beyond mere presence in coordination mechanisms to active engagement in decision-making processes. Representation acknowledges the existence of local and national humanitarian actors (L/NHAs), while meaningful participation ensures they have a genuine voice—advocating for community needs, providing input, shaping agendas, and influencing decisions. Such engagement is critical, as evidence from diverse humanitarian contexts demonstrates its value in improving both the quality and coverage of humanitarian responses.[48]

The findings of the study indicate that local and national NGOs' participation in humanitarian coordination and decision-making mechanisms is still below the desired level, leaving significant room for improvement. While L/NNGOs attend clusters' coordination meetings in greater numbers than INGOs and UN agencies, only some of them participate actively in these meetings—providing input, advocating for community needs, accessing information, and networking. Active participation largely depends on two factors:

(1) the operational presence of the NGOs on the ground, as discussion space is typically reserved for active organizations,

(2) the capacity of staff representing the L/NNGOs in these meetings.

When these conditions are met, participation becomes more meaningful, allowing L/NNGOs to effectively represent local voices and reflect community needs in clusters.

Data collected from local and national NGOs reveal that some L/NNGOs send unqualified staff to these meetings - irrelevant to the sector or those who are free, resulting in passive attendance rather than meaningful contribution. This perspective aligns with feedback from clusters' coordinators confirming that L/NNGOs are present in meetings in high numbers and those with strong field presence and skilled representatives participate actively like their international counterparts.

The consultative workshops with local and national NGOs have also revealed that participation varies across clusters and coordination levels. While some participants appreciate the space provided in clusters' HNO and HRP-related workshops—such as those in FSAC—many criticized clusters and OCHA for insufficient engagement of L/NNGOs in these discussions. Local NGOs also perceive their engagement at lower levels (sub-cluster meetings) as more meaningful than at higher levels. They report contributing field-level input in sub-cluster meetings but being excluded from data analysis, indicator identification, and intervention-related decision-making, which typically occur at higher levels.

Interviews with clusters' coordinators have confirmed that the processes of analyzing data, identifying indicators and setting strategic directions are usually handled by technical and strategic working groups, where L/NNGOs also have representation. The coordinators also noted that local and national NGOs now lead some sub-clusters, facilitate communication between field and national levels, and thus play a role in coordination and decision-making. They also underscored that L/NNGOs' presence in technical and strategic advisory groups provides opportunities for meaningful engagement in decision-making processes.

(48) IASC Guidance on Strengthening representation, participation and leadership ...

> Just to allude on the presence of the national NGOs in the leading role. So yes, as (colleague's name) mentioned... Three or four sub-national clusters are led by the national NGOs. That means that, you know, they are leading the process, they are coordinating with the partners, they are coordinating it with the national authorities, they are participating in the area-based consultations, and they are shaping the HNO and HNRP for the (cluster's name) cluster. ... The presence of the national NGOs in the strategic advising group of the (cluster's name) cluster. That means that they are part of the decision-making process of the (cluster's name) cluster and they do provide and engage within all the (cluster's name) cluster activities." (from the focus group discussion with clusters' coordinator)

> We don't have a SAG, which is a strategic advisory group, So we adopt a different decision-making mechanism for the (cluster's name) cluster where we take the decision through endorsement, to the general assembly or the general membership. So that's why we usually discuss the issue, address the concerns, have the feedback in our monthly coordination meetings and then we do a sort of a survey or a form for endorsements... they (local NGOs) also as sub national coordinators in those hubs, they participate in the RCT and they are part and parcel of the RCT platform which has recently been formalised with a clear ToR regarding the task and responsibilities". (From the focus group discussion with cluster's coordinator)

> We have several technical working groups in our cluster,... and local partners constitute, are there, in these groups with percentages reach to 50% based on their experience. The governmental authorities are there too. ... We have national NGOs in the analysis process; we encourage National NGOs to participate... We also have consultations at hub level when there is preparation for HNRP, all documents are shared with partners, and we collect and discuss all issues till we reach the HNRP national consultation workshops. (From an interview with clusters' coordinators).

Regarding the highest technical and decision-making bodies—HCT, YHF AB, and ICCG—local and national NGOs (L/NNGOs) are represented at varying levels, as noted earlier. However, when assessing how this representation is translated into meaningful participation, findings from both national and international actors indicate significant room for improvement. Local NGO representatives attend HCT meetings but often lack critical data needed to support their positions, limiting their influence in decision-making. Preparatory discussions—such as informal calls among UN agencies and INGOs and prior work by technical groups at ICCG, cluster level or specifically created for a task —typically occur without L/NNGO involvement. As a result, local representatives often enter HCT meetings without sufficient background, leading to passive participation and consensus on decisions they were not fully informed about the data behind. The FGDs with HCT local representatives showed dissatisfaction regarding their influence in decision-making process, citing examples where their requests to join technical groups were denied or where access to essential information was restricted.

Participation in ICCG appears even weaker, as this high-level technical group consists mainly of cluster leads and co-leads, with L/NNGOs holding only two seats (as GBV AoR co-lead and CEAAP co-chair). In YHF AB, while L/NNGOs have equal seats to INGOs and UN agencies, their influence remains limited and final decisions rest with OCHA and the Humanitarian Coordinator. This pattern seems somehow consistent across all three bodies: L/NNGOs have representation but lack meaningful influence and the ultimate decision-making authority lies with the Humanitarian Coordinator.

In conclusion, local and national NGOs' participation in coordination and decision-making processes remains below the desired level, leaving significant room for improvement. While L/NNGOs actively engage in sub-national cluster meetings—providing field-level input and advocating for community needs—their involvement in higher-level processes such as data analysis, indicator setting, and shaping humanitarian needs and response plans is limited. This does not render their efforts at lower levels meaningless; many L/NNGOs have confirmed that needs raised locally are often reflected in Humanitarian Needs Overviews (HNOs), influencing decisions to some extent.

Despite representation across most coordination mechanisms, this presence has not been translated into sufficiently meaningful participation. Current engagement is neither fully meaningful nor entirely symbolic—it falls somewhere in between. The reasons for this gap are multifaceted, extending beyond sufficient representation to a range of systemic challenges, which are to be discussed in the next section. Below, further data from L/NNGO questionnaires with quotations from the consultations with both national and international actors illustrate this conclusion about the level of the current engagement of local and national NGOs in coordination and decision-making processes.

> In Yemen, I would view the influence of LNNGOs as being less strong than in other contexts I have worked in (e.g., Syria, Lebanon)... I am not close enough to the details to know about how local NGOs are engaged, but I am sure they are, and I understand they participate regularly in cluster meetings and information sharing mechanisms. (from an interview with an INGO)

> Local NGOs participate in planning, but they have not yet reached the level required. The level required is that HNRP is prepared by local partners. (from an international humanitarian actor)

> There is an observable improvement in the preparation of HNRP... we see larger engagement for local and national NGOs in the process. However, their role is still limited to a consultative role; the preparation of the of HNRP depends on clusters; clusters' coordinators perform the technical part; the technical part is quite difficult, and local NGOs may face difficulty in engagement and in understanding how the HNO is produced and how the HRP has been prepared. (from an interview with a UN Agency)

> Local NGOs' engagement in clusters differs from one cluster to another. Some clusters engage local NGOs well. Local NGOs' engagement in HNRP is limited. It is a consultative role.(from an interview with a national NGO)

> I think there is a bit of a room for improvement for OCHA, of course, to ensure a kind of an inclusive process to get all of the inputs from different stakeholders, including the local organizations... I mean, there has been already also other exercises where we have felt and we have acknowledged as well that there has been no sufficient inclusiveness in the process. (with reference to local NGOs' engagement in HNRP and similar exercise, from an interview with a donor)

> Local NGO's engagement in the humanitarian coordination mechanisms is not sufficient; in the development sector it is almost not there. Participation in coordination mechanisms and in setting plans and policies is still below the level required... We are usually invited to a ready plan (in the final stage) ... We are represented in HCT and YHF, but our influence is still limited. (From the FGD with HCT local NGO representatives and localization taskforce local NGO representatives)

> Those working in the field should ideally be the ones planning, as they are most aware of the actual needs. To be honest, we are not saying there is no participation—we do identify needs in the field and report them to clusters, UN or international organizations, discuss them, and they are addressed. However, we have not been involved in the HNRP to the extent required.(from an interview with a national WRO)

> Local NGOs' engagement is low. Most local NGOs attend meetings to listen, just receivers of information. They are sometimes engaged in limited discussions. They don't have a viewpoint in planning though they are closer to the field. (From an interview with National NGO forum).

The quantitative data collected through the L/NNGOs' questionnaire also aligns to some extent with the qualitative data discussed in this section. It shows that the current engagement by L/NNGOs is not totally meaningful nor fully symbolic but somewhere in between as the total mean for the items associated with L/NNGOs' participation in decision-making processes is 3.20 which indicates an average level of participation as shown in the table below.

Table 12: local and national NGOs' views of their influence on decision-making processes

Frequency Item	Never (to very low extent)	Rarely (To low extent)	Sometimes (To average extent)	Often (To high extent)	Always (to very high extent)	Mean
Do you think local and national NGOs lead or influence decision-making processes in case of emergencies in your country?	6 9.84%	14 22.95%	22 36.07%	10 16.39%	9 14.75%	3.03
Do you think your views and suggestions are heard in coordination and decision-making meetings?	1 1.64%	5 8.20%	27 44.26%	24 39.34%	4 6.56%	3.41
To what extent does your organization influence or provide input for developing humanitarian plans and policies in your country?	4 6.56%	10 16.39%	23 37.70%	19 31.15%	5 8.20%	3.18
Total mean	**3.20**					

3.3 KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY LNHAS IN COORDINATION AND DECISION-MAKING MECHANISMS

As shown in the previous sections, local and national NGOs are represented in most clusters and working groups. However, their meaningful engagement in coordination and decision-making processes is still below the level required. This indicates that there are some challenges which impede their attempt at advancing from representation to meaningful participation in humanitarian system coordination mechanisms. These challenges are to be presented and discussed in this section based on the data collected in this study. Understanding the challenges faced by local and national NGOs in engaging in coordination and decision-making processes in humanitarian coordination mechanisms is a step towards recommending appropriate strategies and solutions for strengthening local and national NGOs' engagement in coordination and decision-making mechanisms.

The challenges can be summed up in the following:

1) POWER DYNAMICS

Data from consultative workshops with local and national NGOs (L/NNGOs) show that though they are represented in most humanitarian coordination mechanisms, decision-making power largely remains with the humanitarian coordinator, UN agencies, donors, and INGOs. While Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) often reflect most needs raised by the field and Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) address some of these needs, they primarily reflect international actors' priorities, especially those of donors and UN agencies.

Several local and national NGOs underscored that even when they implement interventions as sub-contractors, their perspectives and priorities are often overlooked. They must follow plans set by donors and intermediary UN agencies and INGOs to gain partnerships. This power imbalance extends beyond financial power to technical influence. Many L/NNGOs reported being perceived by UN agencies as lacking technical capacity and therefore unsuitable for coordination and decision-making roles compared to international counterparts.

Conversely, data from donors, UN agencies, INGOs, and cluster coordinators suggest that while some local NGOs demonstrate strong capacities and active participation, others lack the technical and financial resources needed for meaningful engagement. Overall, the data from both national and international actors indicate that L/NNGOs face significant capacity gaps and resources shortage, resulting in power imbalances that marginalize their role in favor of dominant international actors.

> Local NGOs' participation is, unfortunately, almost marginal... I see what we are doing is symbolic. Even when local NGOs have a decision or input, they are often dismissed either the input is not liked or it is simply sidelined with an excuse that local NGOs do not understand well... When local NGOs push for strong advocacy, it often leads to nowhere because the international humanitarian system acts as a unified group that pushes for its own agenda. Take an example the YHF, we, as local NGOs within the structure, are directed to focus on protection issues for example instead of livelihood issues, though we have economic crisis and our people need food... So, no matter how strong local NGOs are, the final word is for the humanitarian coordinator. It is clear in YHF ToR that the last decision will be for the HC. (From an FGD with HCT local NGOs' representatives)

> I do not view the UN agency set up, which views local NGOs are mere sub-contractors, as advancing equitable localization in any meaningful sense.(from an interview with an INGO)

> Local NGOs are often hesitant to express a desire for active participation or to share their priorities, fearing that doing so may jeopardize specific partnerships with donors or UN agencies.(from an interview with a donor)

> One of the issues with UN Agencies and sometimes INGOs is that they are influenced by a global North superiority mindset. There is a perception that they are more knowledgeable than us and that we need to listen to them. They have development and humanitarian experience from their countries or other contexts, and we have to learn from them how to apply it here in our context. (From an FGD with HCT local NGOs' representatives)

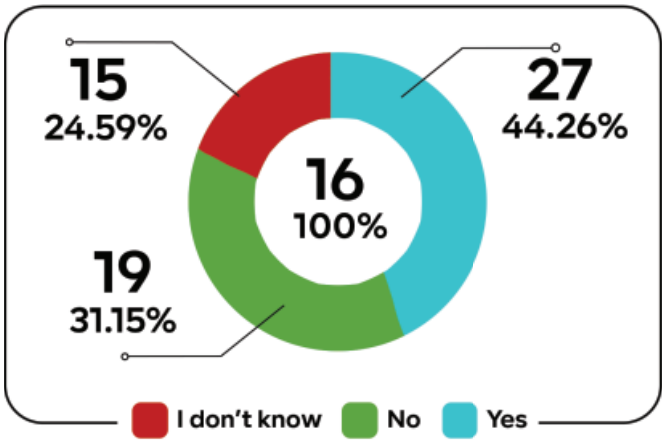
> He who has the money will lead, and he will make the decisions. (From a consultative workshop with local and national NGOs in Taiz)

> The dynamics of power balances are natural in interactions between individuals or organizations. Ultimately, they depend on the balance of power, which in turn relies on the positioning of local NGOs within humanitarian response efforts and on the nature of how plans are written ... For example, an international or UN organization with strong capacities may dominate cluster discussions and outcomes in one way or another, whereas a local organization lacking similar capacities may end up marginalized. This marginalization does not necessarily come from the larger international or UN organizations but could stem from the local organizations themselves due to their limited capacities and resources.(From an interview with a UN agency)

> We all take part in the response and decision-making, but the final decision largely remains in the hands of UN agencies and donors. There is a power imbalance within the system, but it doesn't necessarily mean marginalization – it rather reflects shortcomings on all sides. (from an interview with a national NGO)

The data from L/NNGOs' questionnaire regarding local NGOs' perception of how local and international NGOs are treated in coordination mechanisms with reference to setting agenda, providing inputs and influencing decisions, show contradictory views. While 44.26% of the participants state that local and international NGOs are treated equally, 31.15% of the participants feel that local NGOs are not treated equally as their international counterparts and 24.59% of the participants say that they don't know. These contradictory values reflect that local and national NGOs are not totally marginalized in coordination mechanisms but there are times when their voices are not valued as those of their international counterparts.

Whether national and international actors are equally treated in coordination mechanisms



Strong institutional and technical capacities are essential for local and national NGOs (L/NNGOs) to access funding, operate effectively, and engage meaningfully in humanitarian coordination and planning. In Yemen, despite the presence of thousands of L/NNGOs[49], only a small fraction has invested significantly in institutional development and technical capacity building[50]. While these NGOs possess deep contextual knowledge and actively deliver aid, many struggle with weak administrative systems, limited technical expertise, and insufficient human resources. Staff turnover—often due to skilled personnel being recruited by INGOs and UN agencies—further exacerbates these challenges.

Findings from this study confirm that capacity limitations remain among the main barriers to L/NNGOs' meaningful participation in coordination and decision-making mechanisms. Robust administrative systems, high technical expertise and qualified staff are prerequisites for partnerships with international humanitarian actors and effective engagement in coordination and decision-making mechanisms. It has been discussed earlier in this research that L/NNGOs are represented in most coordination and decision-making platforms but their meaningful engagement in coordination and decision-making processes is still below the level required. To this end, there is no doubt that the technical expertise of local NGO representatives—both sector-specific knowledge and communication and negotiation skills—is pivotal to their meaningful participation in cluster meetings and working groups' discussions. The data collected indicate that meaningful engagement by L/NNGOs in clusters' discussions is largely confined to a limited number of L/NNGOs who have operational presence in the field and qualified representatives to these discussions. Consequently, local NGOs lacking these attributes often remain marginalized; unable to contribute meaningfully to discussions, nor influence outcomes. This status of participation is not only limited to clusters but to all other platforms where local and national NGOs have presence.

(49) An interview with the MoSAL revealed that there are more than 5000 civil society organizations in the IRG-controlled areas. The number is not clear in the de facto authorities› area.
(50)Data from this study show that multiple training sessions have been organized for local and national NGOs by international actors, clusters, and NGOs themselves. Clusters also provide training modules on their websites and recommend specific online courses for local NGOs to enhance their technical capacities.

Interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs)with local and national NGOs have also revealed that effective participation in humanitarian discussions often varies: a few local and national NGOs actively contribute, while others remain passive listeners. However, being passive listener doesn't always indicate a lack technical capacities as some other factors may also contribute to this problem. In addition to this, some L/NNGOs pursue funding opportunities outside their core sectors, resulting in poor implementation and weak participation in technical and strategic discussions. even though their NGOs may have the capacity in other sectors.

International actors, including INGOs, UN agencies and clusters' coordinators emphasized that technical expertise is essential for meaningful participation. While some L/NNGOs demonstrate strong capacities—sometimes surpassing those of some INGOs—capacity gaps persist, particularly in country-wide planning and leadership roles at the national level. Even large L/NNGOs face challenges in engaging effectively in technical discussions across all clusters and platforms.

In conclusion, institutional and technical capacity deficits remain among the top challenges contributing negatively to L/NNGOs' participation in coordination and decision-making mechanisms. While some L/NNGOs cannot access coordination mechanisms due to these limitations,, others have joined but struggle to achieve the expected level of influence. Even those massive local and national NGOs which play a vital role in service delivery today and undertake the representation seats of L/NNGOs in coordination and decision-making mechanisms may still face capacity-related issues in terms of country-wide planning such as HNRP and cluster leadership at national level. Therefore, limited institutional and technical capacity remains one of the major challenges contributing negatively to L/NNGOs' representation and participation in coordination and decision-making mechanisms.

> "In some technical analysis, specific capacities are required, if it is available in the local and national NGOs, they can be part of the process... However, cluster encourages capacity building and there are websites with full training packages, we guide local and national NGOs to take these self-training to be part of the process. There are good NGOs with good capacities and experience, they participate effectively, there are new local NGOs who just start in our sector, they are often silent, but we have cluster's guidance and standards and we guide them to read and to learn.(From an interview with clusters' coordinators)."

> "Most local and national NGOs lack institutional and technical capacities; participation is limited to a few local and national NGOs; unfortunately their influence is sometimes negative as they direct interventions to the areas of their work, which results in depriving other vulnerable communities. (from an interview with a governmental official)"

> "Other challenges as well which have been faced by these national NGOs while in a coordination role or a co-lead role in the sub-cluster, it comes to, you know, the technical capacities of the organizations.... Once an organization commits and they are being, you know, put into a core lead role that automatically, you know, qualifies them for to take decisions and whether those decisions are implemented or not, that is another issue, but they have to provide when they're providing the needs or they're identifying the needs or they're providing a data from the field level. That also means that they need to identify some remedy for all those needs as well to advise on the interventions to advise on the response mechanism, to advise on how those needs would be met at the ground level..... So this is all part of the process and probably because they are not yet in that capacity or at that level where they can have that full understanding. It depends on the person who is nominated to co-lead from their organization. It depends on his technical capacity, it depends on his technical knowledge, it depends on his coordination skills, it depends on his communication skills. So, all these things matter. (From the FGD with clusters' coordinators)"

> There are challenges related to local and national NGOs' experience and capacities, we don't deny that; however, there are local NGOs with good capacities, maybe better than some international ones. (from an interview with a national NGOs)

> One of the challenges is the technical skills and capacities, there is also staff turnoff as local staff start working with local NGOs and when they get good experience, they are recruited by INGOs and UN agencies. (from an interview with a donor)

> Then there's a lot of capacity strengthening that needs to be done so that these same NGOs and local actors are able to not only engage in the programming, but also contribute confidently in the the discussions, in the technical discussions, so on. (From an interview with a UN agency)

> I would assume it really requires a lot of time and it requires capacities and representation in all of the different working groups that come together to make these processes right. So it's it's information management, it's data collection, it's analysis, it's the different clusters and so forth.(A comment on local and national NGOs' participation in HNRP from an interview with a donor)

> Poor capacities, particularly specialized human resources in local NGOs. Coordination processes require time and resources, and this is what some local NGOs in Yemen lacks. No availability of specialized personnels who can participate in discussions in various sectors either at technical level and setting policies or that relevant to partnerships. I think we see these gaps in several countries not only in Yemen.(from an interview with a UN agency)

3) FUNDING CONSTRAINTS

Funding constraints, including lack of funding, short-term subordinate partnerships, lack of transparency and equal access to funding, and funding eligibility restrictive requirement, remain one of the major challenges faced by Yemeni local and national NGOs. It does affect both their field operations and their ability to participate in coordination and decision-making platforms. Data from this study show that these NGOs depend heavily on funds coming from international sources (YHF, UN Agencies, INGOs and Donors) to sustain their activities and serve their communities. This heavy dependence on international funding has become increasingly problematic as international funding for Yemen continues to decline every year and cannot cover the needs of all local and national NGOs[51]. The recent U.S. funding cuts have further worsened the situation, forcing some local and national NGOs to halt their activities and lay off their staff.

In addition to this, international humanitarian funding often focuses on short-term emergency programmes, which undermines the sustainability of local NGOs, particularly in retaining their resources including qualified staff. Data also show that local and national NGOs' competition for such kind of funding pushes them prioritize donor-driven projects over their own priorities and strategic goals, making them more vulnerable to international funding priorities. Partnerships with UN agencies and INGOs - as highlighted in the consultative workshops with L/NNGOs - are often inequitable—local and national NGOs are required to adopt pre-planned interventions and align with donor tools and priorities, while having little or no influence on policy decisions. There are only a few chances with flexible funding where local and national NGOs participate with intermediary UN agencies and INGOs in the planning phase and can set together the intervention plan as per the needs of the community.

(51)It should be mentioned here that L/NNGO received 70 % of YHF allocations in 2024 according to YHF 2024 Annual Report.

The data collected also reveal that funding eligibility restrictions represent a challenge for many local NGOs, particularly small and medium size NGOs. An example of this is the implementation of projects costing 200,000USD during the last one year to be eligible for YHF funds which seems to be beyond the financial capacity of most local NGOs[52]. Other restrictions seem to be related to robust administrative and governance systems which many local NGOs lack. These restrictions constitute an obstacle for small and medium size NGOs, leaving eligibility space for a few massive national NGOs, resulting in marginalizing small local NGOs and excluding them from the decision-making platforms.

The data also indicate that UN agencies and international NGOs started their partnerships with some national and local NGOs several years back and it seems that they often depend on a limited list of local and national NGOs in their partnerships due to the experience they had with. This decreases equal access to funding opportunities. In addition to this, some local NGOs indicate corruption by some senior national staff working with some international humanitarian actors which results in minimizing equal access to funding opportunities among local and national NGOs and directing funds opportunities to specific local and national NGOs. Since local and national NGOs primarily depend on international funding in carrying out activities on ground, the inequal access to funding opportunities contributes to the exclusion of many local NGOs from coordination and decision-making structures.

The two previously discussed challenges in this section are closely linked to this challenge. Funding constraints restrict local and national NGOs from building their capacities, retaining their qualified staff and securing the resources required for effective participation in coordination and decision-making processes. Heavy dependance on international funding, combined with inequitable partnerships in the Yemeni context, makes these NGOs vulnerable to funding priorities, forcing them to balance the needs of their communities with the funding requirements. Consultative workshops, interviews and FGDs with national and international actors consistently highlight lack of funding as a major challenge for local and national NGOs affecting their operations, capacity development and participation in coordination and decision-making platforms. It also hinders local NGOs' aspirations to lead clusters at the national level, since cluster lead agencies are expected to act as providers of last resort as per the ToR— a responsibility that exceeds the capacity of local NGOs who still depend heavily on international funding to sustain their operations.

(52)It should be highlighted that YHF achieved a remarkable increase in direct funding to NNGO, reaching 70 per cent of total allocation in 2024, up from 44 per cent in 2023.

> The next step is where you actually want to undertake the coordination, which is the cluster leadership which for me is perfectly fine for an NGO to be a cluster-lead or a cluster co-lead. However, that responsibility comes with a lot of or that position rather comes with a lot of other responsibilities. One of it being that you need to be the provider of the last resort. Yeah, exactly. And and in a situation where we're seeing that NGO's for instance are still receiving support from international actors. Are they then able to step up to that role? So, so I mean the, the chosen ones who are leading us as cluster leads or co-leads have been able to say that yes, we are able to provide that being the provider of the last resort. (from an interview with a UN agency)

> One of the challenges local NGOs faces is the lack of funding. You know, most local NGOs depend on international funding; in other words, they are sub-contractors with INGOs and UN agencies. Whenever international funding decreases or stops, these organizations will suffer or fade. (from an interview with a government authority)

> Funding is one of the challenges for local NGOs... Local NGOs do not get direct funding from most donors. ... Looking at local NGOs as sub-contractors, particularly for performing a part of the project, not all the project; the part which international organizations think it fits local NGOs since they have better access to the field. This disparity between a contractor and a sub-contractor may cause a kind of incomplete engagement in decision-making and humanitarian response. (From an interview with a UN agency)

> One of the major challenges is the lack of funds; today we see local NGOs which were partners with YHF or UN Agencies closing their offices or about to close. They returned to the first step though they were very active in the past. Neither did we think about our sustainability nor did our partners. (From the FGDs with Sana'a RCTs local and national NGOs).

> Lack of funding is a challenge, yes. And the biggest challenge; and it is the recent challenge is the US funding cut. This is not only challenge for Yemen civil society organizations but for all organizations as the US funding constitutes more than 40% of the humanitarian funding... Yemen NGOs also face another funding challenge with UN agencies reducing their activities in Yemen. UN agencies were conducting many of their activities through partnerships with Yemen local organizations. (from an interview with a global NGO Network).

> The structure of these meetings also requires a lot of preparation, and it seems that you need to do quite a bit of pre pre-work, pre-work in terms of preparing the documentation and pre-work in terms of just speaking to other participants so that you can get some some traction for your ideas. Or for your decisions that is not easy for local organizations, that organization because they don't have access to these people, they don't have enough resources also to travel to people... That is of documentation, gathering evidence, putting documents together, most national and local organizations do not have that resource, right? So, they come into these meetings just to listen, to listen to decisions, decisions that have already been made elsewhere. (about local NGOs' participation in HCT; from an interview with an INGO)

> Coordination processes require time and resources, and this is what some local NGOs in Yemen lacks. No availability of specialized personnels who can participate in discussions in various sectors either at technical level and setting policies or that relevant to partnerships. I think we see these gaps in several countries not only in Yemen. (from an interview with a UN agency)

4) LACK OF LEGITIMATE AND CONCRETE REPRESENTATION AND MARGINALIZATION OF WROS, OPDS, MUHAMASHEEN AND NEWLY ESTABLISHED LOCAL NGOS

As noted earlier, though Yemen has a large number of local and national NGOs, only a small fraction have managed to establish partnerships with international humanitarian actors and engage in coordination mechanisms within the humanitarian system. Mapping tables (9–11) and figures 1-2 clearly show that Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and Women's Rights Organizations (WROs) remain underrepresented in most clusters, RCTs and working groups. Their representation seems better in the high technical and decision-making groups: Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) where OPDs hold one seat and WLOs hold three seats; YHF AB where WLOs hold one seat; and ICCG where WLOs and WROs hold two seats.

Partnerships with clusters are typically granted based on specific criteria, such as being operational on the ground with an ongoing project relevant to the cluster and regularly reporting to the cluster. No special privileges exist to prioritize NGOs representing vulnerable groups. Consequently, the mapping tables show low representation of vulnerable groups in most clusters, except for GBV, where their representation is higher. This is largely because most WLOs and WROs prioritize GBV-related activities and remain active in this area—even if only through awareness initiatives—which enables them to join the cluster.

The data collected reveal that persons with disabilities and Muhamasheen community are recognized as targeted groups in the humanitarian system. However, their organizations have not been given adequate opportunities to represent their communities, advocate for their needs, or build partnerships with international humanitarian actors to serve their own people. Interventions targeting these vulnerable groups are often implemented through other local and national NGOs that do not belong to these communities. This practice deprives OPDs and Muhamasheen organizations of their right to represent their communities, build partnerships, and strengthen their capacities. As a result, some have withdrawn from clusters they initially joined.



> As people with disabilities, we are targeted communities only. We don't have sufficient space to represent our community's needs. Unfortunately, even interventions targeting our community are often performed by national and international NGOs who are not specialized in serving people with disabilities... When international donors and UN agencies create partnerships with organizations of people with disabilities, they can provide better service for our community and at the same time they invest all project budget in helping our community to work, learn and develop; instead of spending a big part of project budget for operational costs and capacity building of NGOs not belong to our community. (OPD's representative said in Aden workshop).

> I was a member in one cluster three years back, just attending to listen and submit data about my community's needs to the cluster; but I couldn't participate effectively in discussions, nor build partnerships. Even if there is an intervention based on the needs we submitted, it was usually performed through other local and national NGOs. I felt that our participation was a waste of time and efforts as we could not be a part of the system. For this reason, I left the cluster. (Muhamsheen organization said in Aden workshop)

> I am a member with two clusters, and I attend meetings and submit needs of people with disabilities in my area. Unfortunately, no one responded to us. We are just there to be added to the list of attendees as representatives of OPDs in clusters. We just lose time and efforts from this participation. (OPDs' representative said in Seyun workshop)

> We always consider these vulnerable groups such as persons with disability in all our activities; we include them in our target... but I don't think we have a partnership with an OPD. (from the FGD with clusters' coordinators)

> All the offices of the organizations I visited are not equipped to accommodate persons with disabilities, even for attending a meeting. This does not mean there is no work being done—there is work with vulnerable groups—but there is still much more needed, and some of it may fall under developmental interventions. We help all persons with disabilities and marginalized groups in the humanitarian response by providing them with basic necessities, but have they truly been integrated into society?(from an interview with a UN Agency)

This marginalization is not limited to OPDs and Muhamasheen organizations; it also extends to small and newly established local NGOs, including WROs and WLOs. Consultative workshops with local and national NGOs reveal that UN agencies, INGOs, and a few large local and national NGOs dominate access to international funding. Meanwhile, many smaller and newer NGOs—including WROs, WLOs and OPDs—struggle to survive outside the system. This dynamic perpetuates their exclusion from the humanitarian architecture.

Data indicate that during the early years of the conflict—and even beforehand— UN agencies and international NGOs actively sought partnerships with local NGOs and invested in building their capacity. Today, however, the situation has changed dramatically. With hundreds of local NGOs now operating in Yemen and competing for partnerships, international actors—facing funding declines and already maintaining extensive partnership lists—are less inclined to onboard new organizations. This competitive environment exacerbates the marginalization of newly established and less experienced NGOs, leaving them unable to secure partnerships. As a result, they lack access to clusters and working groups, preventing them from contributing to planning and policy development.

> Some few national NGOs have partnerships with clusters and UN agencies in almost all RCTs, including our RCT Aden while many local NGOs could not get partnerships with clusters or UN agencies. The national organizations possess better capacity because they got partnerships in the past; therefore, we tend to lose our competition when there is any partnership. (Local NGO participant in Aden workshop)

> As an old WRO with capacity and projects on ground, we have partnerships with clusters and UN agencies. For small WROs and newly established WROs, their situation is similar to any other small or newly established local NGOs. (WRO participant in Taiz consultative workshop)

> Although we hear a lot about supporting and empowering women, women-led organizations and women' right organizations do not enjoy good representation or inclusion in coordination mechanisms. In the clusters, the main criteria are effectiveness on the ground and submitting regular reports to the clusters. In other words, the criteria apply to every organization, and there are no special privileges for women's organizations or organizations for persons with disabilities to build partnerships with clusters." (from the FGDs with Sana'a RCT's L/NNGOs)

> Unfortunately, they (WROs and OPDs) are not visible. They might be there and represented by others who are visible, but they are not visible in terms of the planning and the strategic conversations. (from an interview with an INGO)

While the data collected from both national and international actors align with the mapping tables regarding the presence of local and national NGOs in cluster meetings and other working groups, many non-RCT local NGOs participating in the consultative workshops consider this representation insufficient. Organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), Muhamasheen organizations, and newly established local NGOs—including WROs and WLOs—remain significantly underrepresented. Some participants even question the concept of representation itself, arguing that NGOs engaged in clusters and humanitarian platforms often represent their own organizational interests rather than those of the broader local NGO community.

Power dynamics appear to influence not only interactions between national and international humanitarian actors but also representation among local and national NGOs in the humanitarian system. A few large local and national NGOs dominate most partnerships with international actors and undertake most representation seats allocated to local NGOs in coordination mechanisms and national and international events. However, these organizations may not reflect the diverse voices of local communities and lack accountability to the wider local NGO community and stakeholders. This concentration of influence in a few national NGOs—without clearly defined responsibilities and accountability toward the broader NGO community— silences the collective local voice in favor of individual interests and undermines the ability of local and national NGOs to shape decision-making processes

> Generally speaking, there is a poor representation and participation of local and national NGOs. Not only nominal and poor participation but also even if there is participation for a local NGO, there is a shortage in its role and responsibilities, in its individual view. It is supposed to represent a number of local NGOs, but we find it representing only itself and its interests... even for NGOs elected by other local NGOs for specific seats in boards, some of them just think how to serve themselves and their own organizations. No accountability towards others. (from the FGD with Sana'a RCT's local and National NGOs)

> So we already heard from local organizations when I was in one of the field visits in the South that they have never heard, for example, of the localization task force ... So there is a lack of representation in terms of, like, reliance, legitimacy. And all of that, you know, so and maybe honorary positions, it's something that you feel that all of these big organizations are just feeling that there is a little bit of pride of having the names of their organizations present in such forums, but at the same time, this pride does not for them come with accountability in taking the lead, chairing, and all of that... So I think this is, this is also not clear if it's basically, if we have two NNGO representatives in an HCT, do they have two voices or is it two representatives of the broader community? (from an interview with an international humanitarian actor)

> You still have all of these big or like massive local organisations who managed to have this kind of exclusive access to funding, you know, while others, they are still actually trying to survive. So, we don't see, this kind of like, knowledge sharing, you know, sharing like lessons learned, having clear leadership like a focal point, you know, where everyone or all of these, I'll say other stakeholders can refer to whenever in need. (from an interview with an international humanitarian actor)

5) UNDERREPRESENTATION OF LOCAL AND NATIONAL NGOS IN CLUSTERS' LEADERSHIP, ICCG AND THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS (SOME STAGES OF THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS)

As noted earlier, aside from holding co-lead roles in GBV AoR and CEAAP, local and national NGOs (L/NNGOs) have no representation in the leadership of clusters and thematic working groups at the national level. Their representation is also limited in sub-cluster leadership and in the membership of some key and thematic working groups. This lack of representation significantly reduces their influence on decision-making processes.

Clusters and the ICCG play a critical technical and strategic role in analyzing inputs, identifying indicators, shaping strategies, and informing decisions that are ultimately approved by the HCT, led by the Humanitarian Coordinator. Although L/NNGOs hold six seats n the HCT—the highest decision-making body in the humanitarian system—their absence from certain thematic and technical working groups[53] as well as their limited presence in the ICCG, undermine their ability to contribute meaningfully to HCT discussions and some other decision-making processes. The data collected indicate that HCT meetings are often preceded by informal communications—such as calls or meetings among UN lead agencies—and preparatory work by technical groups at ICCG, clusters, or thematic groups. Local NGO representatives are typically excluded from these informal exchanges and unaware of some technical discussions that shape HCT decisions. Consequently, they often attend HCT meetings without the necessary data to support their positions. Feedback from FGDs with HCT local members reflects dissatisfaction with their level of participation in decision-making. They cited instances where requests to join specific technical working groups were denied or where they faced challenges accessing critical information. As a result, they often participate passively in HCT meetings, agreeing to decisions without understanding the underlying data or rationale.



(53) Local and national NGOs are represented in all clusters' technical working groups shared by clusters with the esearch specialist. However, there are technical working groups sometimes created for specific tasks and LNNGOs are excluded from these groups, according to HCT local members. An example of this the technical working group created for population census in recent months.

> We are in the HCT but our influence is limited... There are technical working groups that prepare for HCT's decisions... if we don't know what are these groups, how can we participate in them?... Then how can we discuss in the HCT and influence decisions?
> (from the FGD with HCT local members about their influence on HCT's discussion)

A similar issue exists with L/NNGOs' involvement in planning processes such as the HNRP. While HNRP is a multi-stage process, local NGOs report that their participation is largely confined to the initial data collection phase and the final consultation on the end product[54]. If this is accurate—despite differing views from clusters' coordinators and OCHA—this level of engagement is largely symbolic. Final consultations hold little value if L/NNGOs are unaware of the preceding stages that shaped the outcome. This challenge applies to all other similar exercises as well.

> We are usually invited to a ready thing, our role in these consultations is limited as we don't know how it was produced... we ask them to be a part of the process, but they give excuses... They don't not respond to us, then they say it is difficult for you to participate, ... we will involve you next year, ... then when we ask them for capacity building for next year, they say next year we may follow a different approach, just wait .(from the FGD with HCT local members about HNRP and similar planning exercises)

> I think where national partners then have a voice is basically discussing the overall result of this overall assessment and analysis and planning process which is quite difficult if you're not involved in all stages of the process itself, right? So of course you can then have an opinion on a prioritization of different districts based on maybe your presence on the ground or Conversations with other partners in these areas but but then behind this you have this whole system of indicators and thresholds and what what ... it really requires a lot of time and it requires capacities and representation in all of the different working groups that come together to make these processes.
> (from an interview with an international humanitarian actor, donor)

(54)Local NGOs also write the Localization chapter in the HNRP.

6) CLUSTER LEADERSHIP ASSOCIATED COMMITMENTS

The data collected from both national and international actors indicate that some commitments associated with cluster leadership at national level represent a challenge for local NGOs. An example of this is the provider of last resort for the NGO leading a cluster at national level. This commitment has been viewed as a big challenge for local NGOs as per the consultative workshops. It has also been underscored as a challenge for local NGOs in the discussion with both national and international humanitarian actors. Local NGOs lack financial assets, direct access to most donors, networking at international level in comparison to UN agencies. This deprives them from being in national cluster leadership as coordination at this level requires human and financial resources; and thus, impacting their participation in coordination leadership and decision-making processes.

> The next step where you actually want to undertake the coordination, which is the cluster leadership which for me is perfectly fine for an NGO to be a cluster-lead or a cluster co-lead. However, that responsibility comes with a lot of or that position rather comes with a lot of other responsibilities. One of it being that you need to be the provider of the last resort. Yeah, exactly, and in a situation where we're seeing that NGO's for instance are still receiving support from international actors. Are they then able to step up to that role? (from an interview with a UN agency)

> Do you think there is a local NGO with the capacity and resources of, for example, (name of UN agency)? You know, for UN agencies, sometimes two or three share the cluster leadership as it is heavy responsibility. (from an interview with cluster's coordinators)

> For financial resources, it will require a dedicated full time cluster coordinator having all the technical capacities, ... it's not only just coordinating, you know, just taking up a phone and calling people here and there, he need to know (sector aspects) and plus also his acceptance or their acceptance within the national Authorities. National NGOs, you know, have limited awareness, access and exposure to, you know, global Tools, global resources.. (from the focus group discussions with cluster coordinators)

7) LACK OF NATIONAL COORDINATION WITH NO DEFINED SECTORAL ROLES

Poor coordination among local and national humanitarian actors in Yemen remains a major challenge to their effective participation in coordination and decision-making mechanisms. Although local and national NGOs are represented in most clusters and working groups, poor coordination among them creates gaps in collective understanding and joint efforts. Decision-making in the humanitarian system is a multi-stage process that requires not only representation and capacity but also consistent information sharing and strong coordination. Currently, coordination among these actors is minimal, and information exchange is insufficient, leaving many unaware of discussions and decisions across forums.



Coordination roles within NGOs are often handled by staff with other responsibilities, such as program managers or executives, rather than dedicated focal points and the process of information sharing and internal documentation and reporting is often not in place. This results in lack of awareness of what has been discussed in the different groups since different representatives attended these groups. In addition to this, unlike UN agencies, which have clearly defined sectoral roles, local NGOs lack structured accountability and clearly defined sectoral roles. As a result, their efforts are fragmented and often fail to achieve the collective understanding needed for meaningful participation.

HCT local members reported limited influence on decision-making, citing exclusion from technical working groups. However, this is not the sole reason, as NGOs do participate in some technical and strategic groups at cluster level. Their limited influence stems from a combination of factors: insufficient capacity, resources, awareness, representation and weak coordination. For example, HCT local members cannot effectively participate in HCT discussions unless they are aware of what has been discussed in clusters' technical and strategic groups and thematic groups. NGOs invited to HNRP consultations cannot contribute effectively without understanding previous stages, from data collection to final consolidation of the end product.

> The structure of these meetings also requires a lot of preparation and it seems that you need to do quite a bit of pre pre-work, pre-work in terms of preparing the documentation and pre-work in terms of just speaking to other participants so that you can get some some traction for your ideas ... that is of documentation, gathering evidence, putting documents together, national and local organizations do not have that resources, right? So they come into these meetings just to listen,...So all that lobbying, the preparation is done prior, the Where inputs were collected, the extent to which all these engagements came into the final document. I'm not sure, the local organizations who are around the table were not, also I think, connected enough to the regional level conversations to actually say, OK, this actually looks familiar and this looks like something that we did discuss. (a comment from an interview with an INGO about local NGO participation in HCT meetings)

> If you are part of the HCT, but you don't really know what has been discussed in the ICCG for example, and if you don't have a formalized mechanism in the back that the national NGO that represents in one actually speaks and conveys all this information to the other then this strategic linkage, which maybe happens a bit more naturally in with kind of international NGOs or UN agencies, But that's also not a given that this link is there (with national NGOs). (from an interview with a donor)

> If you participate in a cluster meeting but you don't document what has been discussed; your NGO, itself, doesn't know what has been discussed! Your colleague who may attend the next meeting also doesn't know what has been discussed in the prior meeting, no sharing of information among local NGOs, so how influence will be made? (from the FGD with INGOs, UN agencies and clusters' coordinators in Taiz)

Strong local coordination is therefore a prerequisite for meaningful participation in humanitarian decision-making. This coordination must extend beyond local actors to include communications with INGOs and UN agencies to ensure comprehensive information sharing, good traction of local ideas and then effective participation in decision making processes.

The only structured platform for local and national NGOs is the National NGOs Forum, which includes about 200 organizations. It mainly shares updates on training, advocacy, and HCT updates. However, there is no clear mechanism for sector-wide or area-wide coordination among local and national NGOs. Consultative workshops with local and national NGOs revealed that many local NGOs do not know who represents them in key technical and decision-making bodies such as HCT, YHF AB, ICCG, clusters, or thematic groups—some of these mechanisms were entirely unfamiliar to some NGOs. This reflects weak local coordination among local NGOs which negatively impacts their performance in various forums.

Regarding vulnerable groups, there is a National Union for Muhamasheen with eight branches in IRG-controlled areas, as well as a union for people with disabilities in Seiyun. However, their operational structures remain unclear. Similarly, while there are networks for women's organizations, representation is ambiguous due to conflicts of interest among local NGOs, resulting in multiple forums claiming legitimacy. Competition for funding, lack of trust, conflicting interests, and lack of institutionalized guidelines are major barriers to establishing effective coordination mechanisms for local NGOs.

8) POLITICAL DIVISION, GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACY AND LACK OF SUPPORT

The persistent political division in the country since 2015 has created a fragmented governance landscape that significantly constrains the operational capacity of local and national NGOs. This fragmentation has resulted in competing authorities, each imposing distinct regulatory frameworks, permissions, and registration requirements. Consequently, local and national NGOs are compelled to navigate duplicative administrative processes, which increase transaction costs, delay program implementation, and undermine organizational efficiency. The data collected also raise some concerns about if L/NNGOs lead clusters such as their ability to sustain pressure on authorities to ensure neutrality and resolve humanitarian issues as well as their ability to provide and mobilize funds to fill any gaps in sectors they lead, which are viewed as challenges they will face with government authorities

Consultative workshops with local and national NGOs reveal that government bureaucracy further compounds these challenges. L/NNGOs often face prolonged delays in obtaining necessary approvals, which restricts their ability to respond promptly to humanitarian needs. In some cases, bureaucratic hurdles are exacerbated by informal practices, including demands for illegal fees or bribes to facilitate operations, thereby institutionalizing corruption and eroding accountability. The data also indicate lack of support from the government side towards local and national NGOs in terms of fulfilling some of the government commitments towards local NGOs such as provision of training and offices and lack of support in advocating for international actors and massive national actors to sub-partnership with local NGOs through legalizing some rules for this.

The intersection of political fragmentation and bureaucratic rigidity not only limits the effectiveness of L/NNGOs but also threatens their neutrality. Local NGOs are frequently perceived as aligned with specific political actors, a perception that politicizes decision-making and undermines trust. These dynamics collectively constrain the humanitarian space, reducing the capacity of L/NNGOs to deliver impartial and timely assistance and lead coordination and decision-making processes.

> The current political context in Yemen, with two regions and two governments, makes movement and access difficult. New laws are emerging, and organizations must adapt to them whether in the north or the south. Obtaining the necessary approvals—whether bureaucratic procedures or newly imposed laws—is another challenge. How can these organizations maintain offices in both the north and the south? How can Yemeni organizations protect their staff, especially since in recent months there have been arrests and increasing risks.(from an interview with a global NGO Network)

> Local and national NGOs can not meet the principle of neutrality with the practices of (De facto Authorities) in the North... Some local NGOs are also not neutral and aligned with political parties. (from an interview with a government authority)

> The third thing is, you know, the leverage of the international NGOs or the UN agencies over the national authorities to influence them for a certain decision-making or other processes. So that is also, you know, we see that this is kind of lacking here in the national NGOs and they may not be able to sustain the pressure to, you know, to comply with the national authorities' needs and the requirements from the UN and from the international NGOs as well. (from the FGDs with clusters' coordinators)

> UN agencies and international NGOs are here now because there is a need for international solidarity, mobilize funds ...etc. If local NGOs or government can lead humanitarian action, it is fine. I think there is still a need for this international solidarity in the context of Yemen. (from an interview with a UN Agency)

9) LACK OF AWARENESS OF CLUSTER APPROACH AND THEIR ROLES IN CLUSTER SYSTEM

The consultative workshops with local and national NGOs revealed a lack of awareness regarding the cluster approach among many local NGOs. Several NGOs are not engaged in the RCTs and have not joined any cluster. Conversely, other NGOs are involved in clusters but some of them still lack a clear understanding of cluster approach and their roles within clusters and working groups.

Data also indicates that many local NGOs are unaware of who represents them in higher-level technical working groups and strategic advisory groups, underscoring gaps in both awareness and coordination. This lack of awareness extends to leadership roles: some NGOs hold positions such as co-chair or co-lead in sub-clusters but do not understand their responsibilities and have never reviewed or got the chance to review their Terms of Reference.

> We don't know about clusters and how to join it. We did not hear about any training or workshops by clusters to increase local NGOs' awareness of cluster approach. (from the consultative workshop with local NGO's in Sana'a)

> If you want to understand local NGOs' participation in clusters, check whether they took cluster approach training. I think the last training was held in 2016 as per my knowledge. (from the FGD with local NGOs in Sana'a)

> It could be the lack of awareness. It could be the lack of capacity or the lack of knowledge of how of how decisions are made. They have to come prepared. They have to come prepared with a statement, with a position. Whether or not it agrees or aligns with the overall global decision. (A comment on reason behind the low influence of local NGO representatives on HCT's decisions, from an interview with an INGO)

When local NGOs do not fully understand what the cluster approach is, how it operates, and their responsibilities within it, their participation inevitably loses value. The workshops highlighted that while some local NGOs have no knowledge of the cluster system or how to join it, others attend cluster meetings without preparation—sending staff who are available rather than relevant, failing to review agendas, and neglecting documentation or outcomes sharing internally. These practices reflect a lack of awareness of both the cluster approach and the importance of local NGOs' meaningful engagement.

The root causes of this issue appear to be twofold: insufficient efforts by cluster coordinators to clearly communicate the cluster approach, and a lack of initiative by many local NGOs to learn and build their understanding of the system.

10) ENGLISH AND USE OF JARGONS

One more barrier to local and national NGOs' participation in coordination mechanisms is language and use of jargons. Data indicate that the short period allocated to clusters' meetings and humanitarian discussions generally doesn't allow proper and accurate interpretation, resulting sometimes in lack of communication which impacts local and national NGOs' participation. Though most sub-clusters meetings are held in Arabic and interpretation is often provided if there are national NGOs who don't understand Arabic, data indicate that the use of English remains one of the barriers undermining the meaningful participation of local and national NGOs in coordination mechanisms, particularly national level discussions, as the short time devoted for these meetings does not allow accurate and comprehensive interpretation and there are also times when Arabic interpretation is not provided. In addition to this, data also indicate that the use of jargons represents a challenge to local NGOs as these terminologies are usually defined internationally within the humanitarian system and local and national NGOs sometimes face difficulty in realizing the accurate interpretation, impacting their overall engagement. Following are some quotations supporting the discussion above.

> There is an obstacle that many often overlook, but from my experience in the humanitarian system, I see it as a fundamental challenge for local organizations and one that limits their ability to fully engage. There is a linguistic dominance of English, even though we are in an Arab country, and this hinders the full involvement of local organizations.(from an interview with a UN agency)

> Language barrier, most national NGOs that are more, let's say, grassroot field base, province based, they don't have a proficient level of English to participate to these coordination meetings. The coordination mechanism has to be an arena where both English-Speaking colleagues and Arabic-speaking colleagues can both come in and then participate in decision making process. So, like I don't have access to (clusters' meetings held in Arabic), in the same way that NGO in Al Mahra governorate would not have access to the meeting that I'm chairing because it's only done in English. (from an interview with a cluster's coordinator)

> All these fora are mostly in English and some of them should perhaps be in Arabic, or we should normalize the use of transl"You know, they are perfect in employing terminologies; one day they say life-saving; then after some time they say life-sustaining, confusing us with these terms. They defined it as they like. (from the FGD with HCT Local Members)

11) Use of Technology

Since most of the meetings are held online, the use of technologies as well as poor internet connection represent a challenge for local NGOs, particularly those in rural areas with limited resources. These difficulties result in lowering their participation.

12) Profit-Driven Mindset and the Proliferation of Local NGOs

The data collected in this research show that the number of local and national NGOs in Yemen is extremely high. While this growth reflects strong local solidarity, it also reveals profit-driven motives among some organizations. This mindset has fueled the rapid proliferation of NGOs within the humanitarian sector, resulting in hindering capacity building initiatives and complicating government's efforts to support and oversight them. This profit-driven mindset has also led many organizations to focus on securing funding rather than fulfilling community priority needs, strengthening their core capacities or adhering to their original mandates. Profit-oriented practices were highlighted—both directly and indirectly—in some interviews and consultative workshops as one of the challenges affecting local NGOs' influence in decision-making processes. This includes local NGOs' hesitation to express their views and share their concerns fearing to lose partnerships with donors or UN agencies, competitive behavior in securing partnerships which conflict with priority needs and NGOs' mandates, engaging in corruption (bribes) to secure partnerships , directing interventions to areas where certain NGOs operate despite greater needs elsewhere, and misusing resources during program implementation to maximize profits.

Such practices not only undermine trust of beneficiaries, authorities and donors, but also affect the overall humanitarian response and undermine local NGO collective efforts in the humanitarian system



> As a new local NGO with a strong aim to help our society, we suffer from the big number of NGOs, particularly bag-based organizations (refer to organizations without offices aiming to get funds) who made international humanitarian actors in confusion how to differentiate among the organizations who want to serve their communities and those who want to secure money. (from the validation workshop with local NGOs in Aden).

> Local organizations often hesitate to express their willingness to participate in humanitarian discussions or share their concerns, fearing the loss of specific partnerships with donors or UN agencies. This hesitation is one of the challenges. (from an interview with a donor)

> There is corruption, none can deny that. Openly speaking, there are NGOs who pay thousands of dollars to staff of intermediary UN agencies or INGOs to secure partnerships. (from the consultative workshops in Taiz)

> The profit-oriented thinking made some local and national NGOs direct interventions to specific areas where they can work regardless of the needs. There are some big NGOs in the North - and even in the IRG area - direct interventions to specific governorates where they work to be able to implement these interventions. This reduces the effectiveness of the programmes in targeting the people in most need. (from an interview with a government authority)





4. RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance more meaningful participation of Yemeni local and national NGOs (L/NNGOs) in humanitarian system coordination mechanisms, the challenges outlined in the previous section must be addressed. Therefore, this section offers recommendations for addressing the challenges raised in the previous section based on data collected in this study and the research specialist's experience of best practices for strengthening representation and participation of L/NNGOs in coordination and decision-making mechanisms. Since the challenges are interconnected, the strategies recommended here will not necessarily deal with each challenge individually. Some strategies may contribute to addressing two or more challenges while some challenges may require more than one strategy. Thus, this study recommends the following strategies for addressing the challenges faced by local and national NGOs in participation in coordination and decision-making processes. In other words, this study aims, through these strategies, to enable more meaningful participation for local and national NGOs (L/NNGOs) in coordination and decision-making processes.

1) INVEST IN L/NNGOS' INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

As noted earlier, capacity gaps limit L/NNGOs' ability to build partnerships with international actors and clusters and restrict their meaningful participation in coordination and decision-making mechanisms. These gaps also contribute to power imbalances in technical and strategic discussions, often resulting in international dominance in decision-making processes.

Addressing these gaps through targeted investments in strengthening institutional systems and technical expertise will enable local and national NGOs, including WROs, WLOs and OPDs, to access partnerships with humanitarian actors and clusters, engage effectively in coordination and decision-making mechanisms, improve operational quality and compliance, and enhance leadership roles within the humanitarian system. Thus, this study recommends all national and international humanitarian actors in Yemen, particularly L/NNGOs, to invest in the institutional development and capacity building of L/NNGOs, including WROs, WLOs and OPDs, through the following strategies:

a. Invest in L/NNGOs' Institutional Development

- Supporting L/NNGOs in establishing robust administrative and financial management systems.
- Providing L/NNGOs training in compliance, reporting, and donor requirements to improve credibility and access to funding.
- Developing human resource strategies to reduce staff turnover and retain skilled personnel.
- Supporting L/NNGOs in developing clear strategic plans aligned with their core competencies and community needs to strengthen organizational capacities and address competitive spirit and sector misalignment.

b. Enhance L/NNGOs' Technical Expertise and coordination and leadership skills

- Offering L/NNGOs sector-specific technical training tailored to humanitarian standards.
- Strengthening skills in communication, negotiation, coordination and strategic planning through training.
- Facilitating mentorship and peer-learning opportunities between local and international actors as well as between Yemeni L/NNGOs and their peers from other countries in both sector-wide technical skills and coordination and leadership skills.
- Offering targeted training and mentorship programs specifically for WROs, OPDs, and Muhamasheen organizations to enhance their technical, administrative, and advocacy skills.

c. Align Funding with Capacity Building

- Encouraging donors to allocate dedicated resources of project budgets for institutional strengthening and technical training.
- Linking funding opportunities to capacity-building initiatives to ensure sustainable growth.
- Promote multi-year funding agreements in humanitarian and development sector to allow L/NNGOs time to invest in organizational development.

d. Strengthen Inclusive Capacity-Sharing instead of Substituting Local Expertise

- Enhance L/NNGOs' engagement in technical working groups and advisory boards where they can learn and contribute.
- Encourage INGOs and UN agencies to adopt capacity-sharing approaches rather than substituting local expertise.
- Recognize and showcase successful L/NNGO-led interventions to challenge stereotypes about technical capacity.

2) INCREASE FUNDING FOR LOCAL AND NATIONAL NGOS AND ENSURE TRANSPARENCY

Without adequate and predictable funding, L/NNGOs cannot build robust institutional capacity, retain skilled staff, or participate meaningfully in coordination leadership and decision-making processes. Addressing L/NNGOs' funding gaps is essential for strengthening their capacities, enhancing operations and strengthening participation in coordination and decision-making platforms as well as in leadership. This study recommends the following strategies for addressing Yemeni L/NNGOs' lack of funding and lack of transparency:

a. Pursue Direct and Multi-Source Funding Opportunities

- Advocate for international donors to allocate a fixed percentage of humanitarian funding directly to L/NNGOs.
- Advocate for YHF to allocate a larger portion (a fixed percentage) of humanitarian funding directly to L/NNGOs.
- Enhance communication and trust with private sector to ensure better access to local funding.

b. Encourage Partnerships and Sub-partnerships with Small Local NGOs, including WROs, WLOs and OPDs

- Advocate for YHF to allocate small grants for partnerships with small and newly established local NGOs, including WROs, WLOs, OPDs, and Muhamsheen Organizations.
- Encourage UN agencies and INGOs to expand their partnerships with local and national NGOs, including WROs, WLOs, OPDs, and Muhamsheen Organizations
- Advocate for donors, UN agencies and INGOs to force their massive local and national partners to allocate fractions of their partnership projects for sub-partnerships with smaller and newly established rural NGOs, including WROs, WLOs, OPDs, and Muhamsheen Organizations.
- Facilitate access to pooled funding and small grants tailored to organizations representing marginalized communities.
- Increase flexible/unrestricted funding that can support L/NNGOs, particularly small NGOs, including WROs, WLOs, OPDs and Muhamasheen.
- Advocate for MoPIC to set clear policies forcing greater partnerships with local and national NGOs, including WROs, WLOs, OPDs and Vulnerable communities organizations.
- Advocate for MoSAL to set clear policies for partnerships and sub-partnerships with small and newly establish NGOs, including WROs, WLOs, OPDs and vulnerable communities organizations.

c. Revise Funding Eligibility Restrictive Requirements

- Lower financial thresholds for funding eligibility (200000$ in case of YHF partnership for example) to accommodate small and medium-sized LNGOs through tiered funding mechanisms that match organizational capacity and experience.
- Simplify administrative requirements while maintaining accountability standards.

d. Expand Funding Opportunities and Diversify Partnerships

- Create dedicated funding windows for emerging and small NGOs, including WROs, WLOs and OPDs.
- Promote pooled funding mechanisms managed jointly by local and international actors to ensure fair distribution.
- Encourage UN agencies and INGOs to rotate partnerships and include new NGOs.

e. Enhance Transparency and Accountability

- Publish clear guidelines and criteria for funding eligibility and selection.
- Establish independent monitoring systems to prevent favoritism and corruption in partnership decisions.
- Implement confidential reporting channels for NGOs to report unethical practices

3) ENSURE LEGITIMATE AND CONCRETE REPRESENTATION OF L/NNGOS IN COORDINATION AND DECISION-MAKING MECHANISMS WITH DEFINED RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Inclusive representation is essential for ensuring that humanitarian responses address the needs of all vulnerable groups. Though some coordination mechanisms and advisory bodies cannot accommodate all local and national NGOs to their platforms, it is necessary to have inclusive representation of all voices. Ensuring concrete and inclusive representation of L/NNGOs, including WROs, OPDs, Muhamasheen organizations, and newly established rural NGOs, will enhance local and national NGOs' participation in coordination and decision-making mechanisms and thus enhance response equity, improve accountability and advance localization commitments. This can be achieved through the following:

a. Establish Inclusive Representation Policies

- Allocate dedicated seats for WROs, OPDs, and Muhamasheen NGOs, and small rural NGOs in clusters, RCTs, thematic working groups, and strategic advisory bodies in the seats allocated to L/NNGOs.
- Develop clear guidelines outlining representatives' responsibilities and accountabilities towards NGO community and stakeholders to ensure concrete and equitable representation of local and national NGOs in coordination mechanisms.

b. Revise Partnership Criteria

- Introduce flexibility in cluster partnership requirements to accommodate organizations representing vulnerable groups and rural communities, even if they lack large-scale operational projects to ensure good representation of all groups.
- Balance between partnerships that strengthen advocacy and community engagement and those solely focusing on service delivery in cluster partnership.

c. Provide Targeted Support for Vulnerable Groups' NGOs

- Offer training and mentorship programs for WROs, OPDs, and Muhamasheen and small rural organizations to enhance technical, administrative, and advocacy skills.
- Facilitate access to pooled funding and small grants tailored to organizations representing marginalized communities and rural communities.

4) INCREASE L/NNGOS' REPRESENTATION IN CLUSTERS' LEADERSHIP, THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS AND DECISION-MAKING BODIES AND ENSURE L/NNGOS ENGAGEMENT IN PLANNING

Local and national NGOs' representation in all coordination and decision-making mechanisms, including cluster leadership, thematic working groups and decision-making boards, is essential for ensuring that local and national NGOs are present in all layers of the humanitarian system architecture. Decision-making in the humanitarian system is a multi-stage process starting with collecting data from the field by the actors on ground and ending with approving People in Need (PiN) and then interventions by higher level technical groups and decision-making bodies. Therefore, the poor representation or the absence of the local and national NGOs from one layer/stage of the decision-making process will affect their influence in decision-making processes. Thus, this study recommends the humanitarian system in Yemen to ensure good representation for local and national NGOs in all coordination mechanisms and in all technical, thematic and strategic working groups affiliated to coordination mechanisms.

a. Increase L/NNGOs' Representation in Leadership Roles

- Allocate co-coordinator roles for L/NNGOs at cluster national level to ensure their presence in cluster leadership and in ICCG. This role - cluster co-coordinator - enables local and national NGOs to be in cluster leadership and forgives them from commitments beyond their capacity such as provider of last resort.
- Allocate co-coordinator/co-chair roles for local and national NGOs in thematic working groups.
- Allocate more lead and co-lead roles for L/NNGOs in sub-clusters.

b. Increase L/NNGOs' Representation in HCT, Thematic Working Groups and Technical Working Groups

- Increase the seats allocated to local and national NGOs in HCT to equal those allocated to UN agencies.
- Ensure having good representation for local and national NGOs in all thematic working groups and in any technical working group established for work on a specific task.

c. Ensure L/NNGOs' Engagement in HNRP

- Simplify HNRP process and provide training support for L/NNGOs to ensure their participation.
- Ensure OCHA and cluster coordinators engage L/NNGOs in the process of HNRP preparation.

d. Encourage L/NNGOs to participate actively in coordination and planning and to designate full-time staff for coordination leadership roles which require full time jobs through:

- Encouraging L/NNGOs to invest in coordination and Planning.
- Providing L/NNGOs with coordination funds wherever possible.

5) ENHANCE NATIONAL COORDINATION EFFORTS

Effective participation in humanitarian decision-making processes requires not only representation and technical capacity but also strong coordination and timely exchange of information. Strengthening coordination among L/NNGOs will enable them to present unified positions, improve advocacy, and contribute meaningfully to strategic discussions.

a. Expand National NGO Forum into National NGO Coordination Office

- Increase national NGO forum capacities and resources to be able to play coordination roles and facilitate local-local coordination and local-international coordination with clear policies and guidelines.
- Create sector-wide coordination platforms for local and national NGOs at RCT level and national level and link it to the national NGO coordination office. Ensure information sharing, technical skills exchange among the sector wide platforms and among sectors.

b. Improve Information Sharing for Better Coordination

- Establish mechanisms for information sharing, timely dissemination of meeting agendas, technical updates, decisions, and preparatory documents to all L/NNGOs.
- Use digital tools (e.g., shared portals or messaging platforms) to ensure real-time access to coordination updates.

c. Define Clear Roles and Responsibilities

- Develop clear guidelines outlining coordination responsibilities in each sector and local NGOs which should be nationally mandated with sector coordination.
- Develop guidelines outlining the tasks and responsibilities of local representatives in HCT and YHF.
- Promote accountability by assigning specific tasks and reporting requirements to coordination focal points.

d. Link Coordination to Capacity Building

- Integrate coordination training into broader capacity-building programs for L/NNGOs.
- Provide resources and technical support to strengthen coordination.

e. Enhance High-Level Bilateral Coordination

- Enhance mechanisms for high level bilateral coordination with UN agencies and INGOs as this bilateral high-level coordination will enable local NGOs to have access to information and find traction for their input and decisions.

6) CREATE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR IMPARTIAL AND TIMELY ASSISTANCE

Reducing bureaucratic barriers and mitigating the impact of political fragmentation are essential for enabling L/NNGOs to operate effectively, maintain neutrality, and participate meaningfully in coordination and decision-making processes.

a. Advocate for Streamlined Regulatory Processes

- Engage with IRG authorities and De facto authorities to harmonize registration and approval requirements across different regions.

b. Enhance coordination with Government Authorities

- Strengthen communication and coordination with government authorities through regular meetings to address bureaucratic delays and ensure timely approvals.
- Involve international actors, wherever necessary, in advocacy efforts to reinforce authorities' compliance with humanitarian principles.

c. Strengthen Anti-Corruption Measures

- Develop and enforce codes of conduct for interactions with authorities, including zero-tolerance policies for bribery.
- Establish confidential reporting mechanisms for L/NNGOs to report corruption and bureaucratic abuse.

d. Safeguard Neutrality and Impartiality

- Promote awareness campaigns on humanitarian principles among L/NNGOs and authorities.
- Encourage joint statements and collective advocacy by L/NNGOs to reinforce neutrality and depoliticize humanitarian action.
- Conduct Meetings with governmental authorities and local communities to address any concerns relevant to cluster leadership by national NGOs and to explain the significance of local humanitarian leadership.

7) INCREASE L/NNGOS' AWARENESS OF THE CLUSTER APPROACH AND THEIR ROLES WITHIN THE SYSTEM

L/NNGOs' awareness of the cluster approach as well as their awareness of their roles in cluster approach is essential for enhancing partnerships with clusters and participate effectively in coordination and decision-making mechanisms. Thus, this study recommends clusters' coordinators and humanitarian system in Yemen to:

a. Conduct Orientation Sessions about Cluster Approach

- Organize regular induction sessions for L/NNGOs on the cluster approach, coordination structures, and roles, ensuring that local NGOs are aware of all the components of cluster approach, including technical working groups, strategic advisory groups and thematic working groups, and their expected roles in cluster approach structures.
- Provide specific training for L/NNGOs holding leadership and technical positions, including technical analysis, coordination and communications skills, leadership roles and responsibilities.

b. Develop Accessible Guidance Materials

- Create simplified guides, FAQs, and visual resources explaining the cluster system and participation requirements.
- Translate materials into Arabic and distribute through multiple channels, including online platforms, cluster meetings and MoSAL.

c. Strengthen Communication by Cluster Coordinators

- Ensure cluster coordinators proactively share agendas, meeting summaries, and key decisions with all members in Arabic and English.
- Establish clear communication protocols for informing NGOs about representation in technical and strategic groups.

d. Promote Internal Accountability within L/NNGOs

- Encourage L/NNGOs to designate trained focal points for cluster engagement rather than sending available staff.
- Require internal documentation and sharing of meeting outcomes to improve organizational awareness.

e. Link Awareness to Leadership Development

- Offer mentorship opportunities pairing experienced cluster members with NGOs new to the system.
- Provide targeted support for L/NNGOs in leadership roles to ensure they understand and fulfill their responsibilities.
- Ensure peer-learning though including local and national NGOs in co-coordinators and co-chairs in clusters and working groups.

8) ENSURE CLEAR AND SIMPLE COMMUNICATION IN COORDINATION MECHANISMS

Language barriers and excessive use jargons undermine L/NNGOs' engagement in coordination mechanisms. To this end, this study recommends using Arabic in coordination mechanisms whenever possible, improving interpretation services and simplifying communication.

a. Enhance the Use of Arabic in Coordination Mechanisms

- Use Arabic language in coordination mechanisms whenever most of the attendees are local actors and they don't understand English.
- Translate meeting agendas, minutes, key documents and reports into Arabic to be accessible by all local and national NGOs.

b. Improve Interpretation Services

- Allocate sufficient time in meetings for interpretation to ensure clarity and accuracy.
- Provide simultaneous interpretation for all major coordination meetings, particularly national wide consultation sessions such as HNRP consultations.
- Train interpreters on humanitarian terminology to improve interpretation precision.

c. Simplify Language and Reduce Jargons

- Encourage cluster coordinators and international actors to use plain language during meetings and in written materials.
- Develop glossaries of humanitarian terms and acronyms, translated into Arabic language, and distribute it widely among L/NNGOs.
- Conduct orientation sessions on key humanitarian concepts and technical terms for new cluster members.

d. Enhance Linguistic Skills

- Invest in improving English skills of L/NNGOs' coordination staff.
- Invest in improving Arabic skills of International NGOs coordination staff.

9) ENSURE MEETING MODALITIES ARE ACCESSIBLE TO L/NNGOS

Some local and national NGOs, particularly those in rural areas with limited resources, face difficulties in joining online meeting modality due to lack of experience in using technology and lack of facilities. Same local NGOs also face financial constraints to travel long distances. Thus, it is recommended to these local NGOs and coordination mechanisms to find middle solutions for ensuring the voices of these local NGOs heard in coordination meetings. This can be done through encouraging local NGOs to invest in their technological capacities, conducting sub-cluster meetings in middle areas close to all NGOs instead of having it only in key cities, and providing transport allowance.



10) ENSURE INSTITUTIONALIZED CRITERIA FOR REGISTERING AND OVERSIGHTING LOCAL NGOS, UNDERSCORING HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Though establishing a big number of civil society organizations is a good indicator for willingness to assist communities in critical crises, it becomes a challenge when it is led by profit-driven mindset apart from the humanitarian principles. In the case of Yemen, the profit-driven mindset has played a role in the establishment of many organizations. This mindset has not only played a role in the proliferation of NGOs but also in deviating from mandates and ethical and humanitarian principles to secure funding and partnerships.

To address this challenge, in addition to the strategies recommended earlier such as strengthening the institutional and technical capacities of local NGOs, enhancing humanitarian principles, and ensuring transparency in partnerships, this study recommends MoSAL to revise its policy for establishing, registering and oversighting civil society organizations. This includes setting clear criteria - or implementing it if it is already there - for granting registration only to those NGOs needed by their communities, with clear humanitarian and development goals, and capacities meet the minimum criteria for conducting their core goals as well as oversighting NGOs' commitments to its mandates and communities. This practice will assist in reforming the current situation, reducing the profit-driven mindset consequences and thus improving NGO participation in Yemen humanitarian response.

This study concludes by calling on all national and international humanitarian actors to translate the recommendations outlined in this section into a practical action plan with SMART goals. It further urges them to collaborate on implementing this plan to ensure the meaningful participation of local and national NGOs in coordination and decision-making platforms. Such efforts are essential to achieving a more equitable and locally led humanitarian response.



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Annex 1: Local and National NGOs in Cluster Partners and Cluster Leadership[1]

Cluster and its technical advisory group/s	Lead Agency at National Level	Co-lead Agency at National Level	RCTs/Hubs	Lead Agency at RCT level	Co-lead Agency at RCT Level	No. of UN Agencies	No. of INGOs	No. of Donors	No. of Gov. Authorities	No. of LNNGOs [2]	No. of WROs/ WLOs	No of OPDs
Education	UN Agency	INGO				4	11	16	1	38	0	0
			Aden	NNGO	NA							
			Sana'a	NNGO	NA							
			Hodeida	NNGO	NA							
			Taiz	NNGO	NA							
			Sa'ada	NA	NA							
			Marib	NNGO	NNGO							
			Ibb	NA	NA							
Health						4	22	11	2	21	1	1
			Aden	UN agency	NA	4	15	11	1	11	0	1
			Sana'a	NA	NNGO	4	5	11	1	3	1	0
			Hodeida	UN agency	NNGO	4	8	11	1	6	1	0
			Taiz	NNGO		3	10	11	1	6	0	1
			Sa'ada	NA	NA	2	0	4	1	1	0	0
			Marib	NA	NNGO	4	5	11	1	5	0	0
			Ibb	UN agency	NA	2	1	3	1	1	0	0
Health Strategic Advisory Group	UN Agency					4	4	-	-	4	0	0
CCCM & Shelter	UN Agency	NA				2	3	5	2	15	2	1
			Aden	UN agency	UN agency	1	3	0	8	0	1	1
			Sana'a	UN agency	NA	1	1	0	4	6	1	0
			Hodeida	UN agency	NA	1	1	0	2	3	1	0
			Taiz	[3]NA	NA	1	2	0	3	5	1	1
			Sa'ada	UN agency	NA	1	0	0	2	2	0	0
			Marib	UN agency	NA	2	3	0	1	1	0	0
			Ibb	UN agency	NA	1	0	0	3	3	1	0
SAG	-	-				2	3	-	0	5	1	1
Emergency and Telecommunication	UN Agency	-										

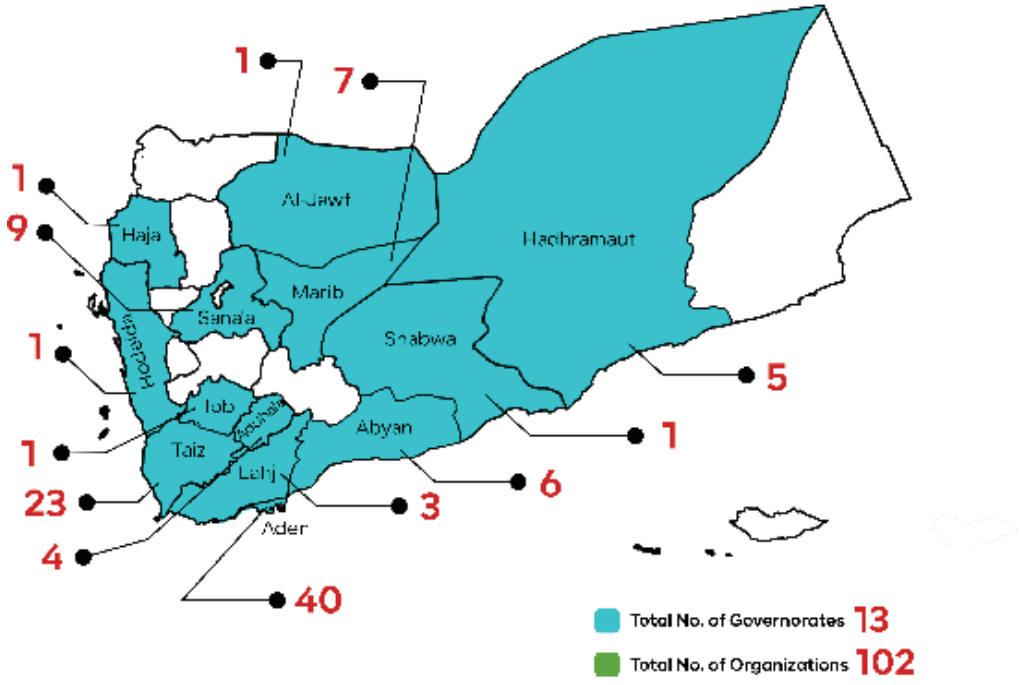
(1) Some clusters' coordinators did not respond to the research specialist's request to share their mapping and thus left unmapped in this table.
(2) The number of L/NNGOs in this table includes local WROs, WLOs and OPDs.
(3) No dedicated lead. Area-based structures by 2 NNGO and 1 INGO.

Cluster and its technical advisory group/s	Lead Agency at National Level	Co-lead Agency at National Level	RCTs/Hubs	Lead Agency at RCT level	Co-lead Agency at RCT Level	No. of UN Agencies	No. of INGOs	No. of Donors	No. of Gov. Authorities	No. of LNNGOs	No. of WROs/ WLOs	No of OPDs
FSAC	UN Agency	UN/ Facilitated by INGOs				4	19	8	3	47	5	1
			Aden	UN agency	/UN NGO CO-Chair NNGO	3	15	0	2	35	4	1
			Sana'a	UN agency	NGO CO-Chair NNGO	2	4	0	2	14	2	0
			Hodeida	UN agency	UN/ NGO CO-Chair NNGO	2	8	0	2	17	2	1
			Taiz	UN agency	UN/ NGO CO-Chair INGO	2	8	0	2	17	2	1
			Sa'ada	UN agency	UN/ NGO CO-Chair INGO	2	1	0	2	5	0	0
			Marib	UN agency	UN/ NGO CO-Chair INGO	2	5	0	3	12	2	0
			Ibb	UN agency	UN/ NGO CO-Chair INGO	2	2	0	2	5	2	0
SAG, FSAC Minimum Food Basket TWG, FSAC Assessment TWG, FSAC AAP TWG, FSAC Emergency Livelihood Assessment TWG	UN Agencies/ INGOs	UN Agency/ INGOs/NNGOs				4	14	-	2	29	3	0
	LNNGOs in sub-groups	NNGOs in) FSAC AAP, TWG										
Logistics	UN Agency											

Cluster and its technical advisory group/s	Lead Agency at National Level	Co-lead Agency at National Level	RCTs/Hubs	Lead Agency at RCT level	Co-lead Agency at RCT Level	No. of UN Agencies	No. of INGOs	No. of Donors	No. of Gov. Authorities	No. of LNNGOs	No. of WROs/ WLOs	No of OPDs
Nutrition	UN Agency	INGO				5	24	6	4	26	8	0
			Aden	INGO	NA	3	24	5	4	20	0	0
			Sana'a	NNGO	UN agency	3	24	2	4	14	2	0
			Hodeida	UN agency	NNGO	3	12	1	4	10	2	0
			Taiz	NNGO	NA	3	8	3	4	12	2	0
			Sa'ada	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			Marib	NNGO	NA	3	12	3	3	8	2	0
			Ibb	UN agency	NNGO	2	2	0	3	4	0	0
SAG	UN Agency	INGO				3	5	?	3	2	0	0
Protection	UN Agency	INGO										
Child Protection AoR	UN Agency	INGO				2	8	0	2	16	1	0
			Aden	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			Sana'a	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			Hodeida	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			Taiz	INGO	NA	0	2	0	1	10	2	0
			Sa'ada	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			Marib	UN agency	NA	1	2	0	1	5	0	0
			Ibb	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
GBV AoR	UN Agency	NNGO				9	9	4	4	58	54	2
			Aden	UN agency	NNGO	3	5	0	2	13	11	1
			Sana'a	UN agency	NNGO	2	6	0	2	21	28	1
			Hodeida	UN agency	NNGO	2	2	0	0	11	6	1
			Taiz	UN agency	NNGO	1	2	0	0	5	2	0
			Sa'ada	UN agency	NNGO	1	2	0	1	4	2	1
			Marib	UN agency	NNGO	4	5	0	1	18	5	1
			Ibb	UN agency	NNGO	3	2	0	1	8	4	1
Mine Action Protection AoR		UN Agency										
WASH	UN Agency	INGO				?	?	?	?	?		
			Aden	UN agency	NA							
			Sana'a	UN agency	NA							
			Hodeida	UN agency	NA							
			Taiz	INGO	NA							
			Sa'ada	UN agency	NA							
			Marib	UN agency	NNGO							
			Ibb	UN agency	INGO							

Cluster and its technical advisory group/s	Lead Agency at National Level	Co-lead Agency at National Level	RCTs/Hubs	Lead Agency at RCT level	Co-lead Agency at RCT Level	No. of UN Agencies	No. of INGOs	No. of Donors	No. of Gov. Authorities	No. of LNNGOs	No. of WROs/ WLOs	No of OPDs
WASH Technical Working Group	UN Agency	INGO				3	3	0	2	3	0	0
RMMS Multisector) for Refugees and Migrants		UN Agencies				6	8	5	0	9	0	0
RRM (Rapid Response Mechanism)	UN Agency	UN Agency				4	2	0	2	5	0	0
			Aden	UN agency	UN agency	4	0	1	1	3	0	0
			Sana'a	UN agency	UN agency	5	2	1	1	4	0	0
			Ho-deidah	UN agency	NA	4	2	0	0	0	0	0
			Taiz	UN agency	NA	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
			Sa'ada	NA	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			Marib	UN agency	UN agency	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
			Ibb	UN agency	NA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
RRM Technical Working Group	UN Agency	UN Agency				5	2	0	0	5	0	0

Annex 2: Geographic representation of L/NNGO questionnaire responders as per main office base.




Done


OXFAM
أوكسفام

NAHDA MAKERS
منظمة صناع النهضة

HST-LHL