HOW TO STAY

Addressing the Challenges of Humanitarian Remote Management in Myanmar through Localization

April 2023

OCHA United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UVA | FRANK BATTEN SCHOOL *of* LEADERSHIP *and* PUBLIC POLICY

"The adoption of remote management strategies should be inspired… by the humanitarian imperative. It should not be the ideal or deemed to be the best approach, but should be viewed more as a 'necessary evil' that must be undertaken in the meantime to save lives."

– INGO Representative in Somalia (Norman 2012)

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A report prepared by Noah Strike for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Myanmar

April 2023

FOREWORD

Acknowledgements

My deepest appreciation to the staff of OCHA Myanmar, who not only initiated this project but provided ongoing support, guidance, and feedback throughout the process. I cannot thank them enough for taking the time and making this project a reality. It is my sincerest hope that the recommendations made here assist them in their work.

I must also thank the faculty and staff of the University of Virginia Frank Batten School of Leadership & Public Policy. Extreme gratitude is owed to Kirsten Gelsdorf, a lifelong humanitarian and Professor of Practice, for her unwavering support. Without her, this project would not have come to fruition. I also thank Noah Myung, Associate Professor of Public Policy and Economics, for his unique perspective on the field, topic, and report.

Client Profile

With its partners, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs contributes to principled and effective humanitarian response through coordination, advocacy, policy, information management, and humanitarian financing tools and services. OCHA's country and regional offices are responsible for delivering the core functions in the field by leveraging functional expertise throughout the organization.

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Cover Photo
24 February 2014, Kachin, Myanmar: Between 24 February and 1 March, an OCHA-led crossline mission to areas beyond Government control in Kachin State in northern Myanmar carried food and aid supplies for thousands of people displaced by violence in and around the town of Laiza. Credit: OCHA/Eva Modvig

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ACRONYMS

AAP	Accountability to Affected People
CBPF	Country-Based Pooled Funds
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
DREF	Disaster Response Emergency Fund
EAG	Ethnic Armed Group
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
ICCG	Inter-Cluster Coordination Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent
IHAs	International Humanitarian Actors
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JST	Joint Strategy Team (Kachin State, Myanmar)
L/NPs	Local / National Partners
L/NS	Local / National Staff
MHF	Myanmar Humanitarian Fund (OCHA)
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSA	Non-State Actor
UN	United Nations
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNGA	UN General Assembly
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UN-HMACCA	UN Humanitarian Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan
UNOCHA or OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNSC	UN Security Council
UNSMS	UN Security Management System
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

KEY TERMS

Accountability: Using power responsibly, ensuring the voices of affected populations are valued and heard, and that affected populations have an opportunity to participate in and influence decisions affecting whether and how IHAs work with them (DRC, 2023).

International Staff: Humanitarian aid workers operating in a country different than that in which they were born (e.g., a British worker in South Sudan).

Localization: Making humanitarian assistance "as local as possible and as international as necessary" (WHS Secretariat, 2016).

Local Acceptance: Building a safe operating environment through consent, approval, and cooperation from individuals, communities, and local authorities (Skelly, 2021).

National Staff: Humanitarian aid workers operating in the country in which they were born (e.g., a South Sudanese worker in South Sudan).

Organizational Capacity: The "money, people, systems, policies, and technical resources" which together build or enhance an organization's ability to function effectively (Braun, 2004).

Operational Capacity: The ability of an IHA "to do something… to work with, and deliver on, its mandate" (People in Aid, 2007).

Remote Management: The less-than-ideal decision to shift some or all humanitarian staff to a temporary remote posturing because of protracted access constraints, and the subsequent transfer of some responsibility and decision-making powers to national staff and partners.

Risk Transfer: The relocation and consolidation of risk onto national staff which occurs when international staff are withdrawn or otherwise unable to operate in-country.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ability of international humanitarian actors to reach populations affected by crises has always been a challenging policy area. Rapidly changing conditions on the ground – including those related to weather, infrastructure, civil unrest, and domestic politics – routinely hamper the abilities of humanitarian actors to deliver aid to people in need. As such, an extensive library of resources, policies, best practices, and institutional support services exists for navigating the humanitarian access landscape.

When all else fails though, humanitarians turn to a strategy of remote management – an operational modality made possible by technological advances in the previous two decades which allows for those delivering aid to be physically distant from those receiving it. Remote management is a rapidly growing policy area; six-in-ten humanitarians report their organization has utilized remote management in one form or another (Jackson & Zyck, 2017). Yet only 38 percent of respondents to the same survey reported their organization had a contingency plan in place when remote management was first implemented, and only 25 percent consider it a 'very effective' modality. There is a clear gap between the widespread use of remote management and the availability of policies and best practices for implementing and optimizing it.

This report thus aims to fill the remote management policy gap by examining case studies of remotely managed humanitarian responses and developing policies and best practices to address OCHA Myanmar's use of remote management. Primary research questions are:

- → What is humanitarian remote management and how has it been used in contexts with protracted access constraints?
- → While a solution to access constraints, what, if any, new challenges does remote management create for humanitarian actors?
- → What is the remote management situation in Myanmar, and how can OCHA's use of remote management be optimized? What are the most useful policies and best practices?
- → What are the managerial and/or logistical challenges of remote management in general (i.e., not necessarily in humanitarian contexts), and how can these be addressed?

After exploring these questions, the report considers different approaches to the localization of humanitarian aid as potential strategies for addressing the challenges of remote management. It evaluates them based on the needs of OCHA Myanmar, and ultimately recommends a two-stage approach. In the short-term, OCHA Myanmar should look to a strengthen its decentralized localization efforts, and in the long-term, it should look to progressively localize. The report concludes with an implementation plan and list of best practices and policies for remote management.

Remote management offers a unique opportunity for policy innovation in the global humanitarian sector. If localization can be successfully implemented as a response to the challenges of remote management, the effects would reverberate throughout the humanitarian sector. Not only will aid programming be secured despite access constraints, but local populations will be empowered to guide their own aid, and with it, their own destiny.

INTRODUCTION

This report examines OCHA Myanmar's use remote management as an operational response to protracted access constraints – particularly restrictions on the issuances of visas for international staff. It begins by defining the humanitarian challenges posed when using remote management in humanitarian contexts and by reviewing the current remote management arrangement some of OCHA Myanmar's staff are following. Logistical and managerial challenges of remote management are very briefly discussed; this report focuses more intently on humanitarian challenges of remote management as policy guidance in this area is lacking. The report then details relevant background on humanitarian access, constraints to it, and the current operational context for the Myanmar response.

A literature review of similarly situated and remotely managed humanitarian responses is conducted. It considers the policy learnings and best practices reported on by IHAs and L/NPs facing similar challenges. The literature review uncovers that robust localization – making aid "as local as possible and as international as necessary" (WHS Secretariat, 2016) – is the key to effectively addressing the humanitarian challenges of remote management. Thus, the report then briefly reviews the history of the localization agenda in the global humanitarian sector before considering OCHA Myanmar's localization progress and stated short-term goals.

The report then defines evaluative criteria for use in evaluating the potential localization strategies which may alleviate some of the humanitarian challenges of remote management. These criteria are administrative burden, donor government interest, effectiveness, and equity. The report then defines three potential strategies for positioning the localization agenda as a solution to remote management and compares them against one another and a hypothetical, counterfactual 'reversal' strategy. The three strategies explored are:

1. **Instrumental localization,** which primarily focuses on conditional grants to L/NPs;
2. **Decentralized localization**, where authority over funding and programming is shared;
3. **Progressive localization**, where authority is transitioned over to L/NPs.

After evaluating these proposed strategies against the stated criteria, the report formally recommends OCHA Myanmar adopt a two-stage approach. In the first stage – the short-term – it is recommended that OCHA Myanmar focus on decentralizing funding and programming authority so that they may be shared with L/NPs. In the second stage – the long-term – it recommended OCHA Myanmar adopt a strategy of progressive localization so that affected populations can independently, but with the advisement and assistance of IHAs, determine the best ways of responding to their humanitarian crises. An implementation plan is offered, consisting of both policies and best practices identified in case study research as well as direct recommendations from Burmese L/NPs (OCHA, 2023). A supplementary set of recommendations addressing the logistical and managerial challenges of remote management is also included.

The report concludes by reiterating the localization opportunity posed by remote management. Despite its challenges, responding to remote management with robust and innovative localization has the potential to revolutionize the way the global humanitarian sector conducts aid delivery in light of protracted access constraints and insecurity, and the potential to position OCHA Myanmar as a leader in filling the remote management policy gap.

Problem Statement

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Myanmar is utilizing a remote management operational modality for some of its staff due to protracted access constraints, including restrictions on visa issuances, since the end of 2022. While remote management is traditionally viewed as a solution to access constraints, its use in the humanitarian sector has been associated with challenges related to accountability and local acceptance, aid quality and effectiveness, and risk transfer. More broadly, the use of remote management has also been associated with logistical challenges related to employee supervision and productivity, information asymmetry, and social isolation.

The humanitarian need in Myanmar is immense and urgent; OCHA's targeted population has increased 500 percent since 2020, and its 2022 funding appeal received just 42 percent of its requirement (OCHA, 2023). As such, it is critical that OCHA Myanmar can optimize its use of remote management and answer the question of *how to stay.*

Remote Management Arrangement

As of this writing, OCHA Myanmar's remote management arrangement generally involves international staff in Bangkok, Thailand managing national staff throughout Myanmar.

Table 1. OCHA Myanmar's Remote Management Structure

Remote Staff – Bangkok, Thailand	National Staff – Myanmar
Head, Sub-Office for Kachin and Northern Shan States	Kachin: 6 Northern Shan: 3
Head, Sub-Office for Southeast Region	Southeast: 2
Head, Humanitarian Financing Unit + 2 staff	Yangon: 7
Head, Humanitarian Access Unit + 2 staff	-
Staffer, Accountability to Affected People	-

Map Sources: UNCS, ESRI.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Map created in Sep 2013.

Map Sources: UNCS, ESRI.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Map created in Aug 2013.

BACKGROUND

This section first overviews the importance of humanitarian access and identifies the most common access constraints globally, noting how many are observed in Myanmar. It then reviews differing forms and competing definitions of remote operations and explains how they may be used to circumvent access constraints. Lastly, it reviews the current operational context for OCHA Myanmar, with key statistics and projections provided, to demonstrate the importance of optimizing remote management and addressing its challenges.

Access, Presence & Proximity

Access – defined by the UN as the ability of humanitarian actors to reach populations in need, and the ability of populations to reach assistance and services (UNGA, 1991) – is the foundation of an in-country presence for humanitarian actors. Assuming no constraints, this access allows for the direct delivery of aid to affected populations, the facilitation of accountability mechanisms and local leadership, and the strengthening of national partnerships. However, and especially in complex emergencies, there are additional positive externalities resulting from unconstrained access. It is widely recognized that a visible in-country presence serves as a stabilizing force against insecurity by deterring further violence and fostering peacebuilding activities (Hybersten, 1998; Perrin, 1998; Cohen, 1999) – in other words, protection by presence. Belligerents, knowing their actions will face heightened scrutiny, behave differently under the gaze of the international community. Norwegian People's Aid cites its operations in Bosnia and Kurdistan as examples of protection by presence, claiming their operations made local counterparts feel safer and helped to reduce violence in project areas (Hybersten, 1998). Unconstrained access is thus considered the ideal operational modality given its productivity for aid delivery and positive externalities.

The unfortunate reality is that access is nebulous. It is not constant, often shifting day-to-day depending on conflict, weather conditions, information availability, and infrastructure reliability (Howe et al., 2015). It is highly relational, usually predicated on personal networks, reputations with government or military leaders, and the trust of local populations (Howe et al., 2015). Access is most importantly a form of power, and controlling it is a demonstration of authority and legitimacy. In complex emergencies where hostile actors are pursuing power and international recognition – such as in Myanmar – humanitarian access quickly becomes a tool at their disposal. As a result, access usually poses a significant challenge in humanitarian response. Most commonly, access constraints arise from theft of aid materials, bureaucratic or legal restrictions imposed on humanitarian actors, targeted attacks on aid workers, asymmetric conflict with NSAs or EAGs, and/or the lack of a legal and legitimate government (Egeland et al., 2011; Donini & Maxwell, 2013; OCHA, 2022). Humanitarian actors have historically also faced access constraints arising from UN sanction regimes, which limited their ability to mobilize funds, goods, and services to support operations in sanctioned territories. In December 2022, the UNSC addressed this by creating a standing "humanitarian carve-out" for sanctions measures, including for entities designated as foreign terrorist organizations (UNSC, 2022). All these discussed access constraints are or have previously been observed in Myanmar.

Remote Operations

When conditions deteriorate to a point where an in-country presence is no longer practical or acceptably safe, humanitarian actors adapt by switching to remote operations for some or all their staff. There are many forms of remote operations, but generally they involve removing staff from the area of response and having them work from in-country cities, neighboring countries, or in extreme cases, regional or international headquarters offices. In other contexts, including Myanmar, remote operations may be implemented for staff who are unable to enter the country

given legal barriers (i.e., visa issuance). The policy implications of remote humanitarian operations are major – the use of remote management as an access circumvention is increasing worldwide because of several trends in the Global North humanitarian sector. These include: 1) an involvement in areas previously out of reach due to insecurity, sovereignty limitations, lack of national support, and/or geographic isolation, 2) a growth of partnership-based approaches, and 3) an increased reluctance on the part of INGOs, the UN, and their donors to take security risks (Stoddard et al., 2010; Howe et al., 2015). A 2017 survey of over 1700 humanitarian workers – 50 percent of which were national staff – operating in more than two dozen countries found that six in ten (60 percent) humanitarians reported that their organization had adopted remote operations in one form or another (Jackson & Zyck, 2017). In the five most insecure countries surveyed – Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen – 77 percent of respondents said their organization was using remote modalities (Jackson & Zyck, 2017). However, just 38 percent said their organization had a contingency plan for remote operations ready to go, just 25 percent considered it a 'very effective' modality, and over half said it came with 'considerable downsides'. Despite this, there is a substantial sector-wide desire to improve and optimize remote operations. The emphasis, so-to-speak, has shifted from *when to leave* to *how to stay* (Jackson & Zyck, 2017). It is thus important not just for OCHA Myanmar, but for the entire humanitarian sector, that best practices and policies for remote operations are refined, standardized as appropriate, and made easily available to humanitarian actors.

There are competing conceptions and semantics of remote operational modalities (Hansen, 2008; Pavanello, 2018): *remote control*, where managers make all decisions and little authority is left to field operators; *remote management*, where decision-making powers are partially and temporarily delegated to the field; and *remote partnership*, where ownership and responsibility are near-completely turned over to L/NPs (Hansen, 2008; Stoddard, 2010). While the threshold between control and management is quite salient – authority is centralized in the former and decentralized in the latter – the threshold between management and partnership is unclear. The 'temporary' stipulation of remote management implies an eventual 'return to normal', but in many cases remotely managed operations span years. In other words, given the protracted nature of access constraints in many cases, it is unclear when a temporary arrangement becomes functionally permanent. This report focuses specifically on remote management as, despite its unclear threshold, the ideal modality for humanitarian response remains in-person and in-country. Eventually and ideally, the use of remote modalities in Myanmar would end.

There are further competing definitions of remote management, ranging from general practice to operationally specific. Most broadly, Stoddard (2010) describes it as "an adaptation to insecurity… an aberration from normal programming practice." Hansen (2008) states it is a "temporary and partial delegation of authority and responsibility to national staff following the relocation of international staff to a safer environment." Similarly, Donini and Maxwell (2013) define it as "the withdrawal of agency international staff, and even senior national staff, from the area of operations and their replacement by a variety of remote control, telemonitoring, distance management, and/or subcontracting arrangements with local partners." In a 2011 report (Egeland et al.), OCHA defined remote management as "the withdrawal for security reasons of international staff and the transfer of program responsibilities to local staff or partner organizations. Importantly though, OCHA's 2011 definition does not reflect sector-wide developments over the last decade. OCHA Myanmar for example never withdrew staff – international staff were prevented by de facto authorities from entering the country in the first place. The evolution of remote management modalities, therefore, necessitates a new definition that incorporates most of the previously mentioned considerations – remote management as a less-than-ideal aberration

from normal programming, the physical dislocation of staff from programming locations, and the heightened reliance on and/or transfer of responsibility to L/NPs – but simultaneously adjusts for new realities. For this report, I define remote management as *the less-than-ideal decision to shift some or all humanitarian staff to a temporary remote posturing because of protracted access constraints, and the subsequent transfer of some responsibility and decision-making powers to national staff and partners.*

Box 1. Remote Management
The less-than-ideal decision to shift some or all humanitarian staff to a temporary remote posturing because of protracted access constraints, and the subsequent transfer of some responsibility and decision-making powers to national staff and partners.

Operational Context in Myanmar

OCHA Myanmar faces a highly adverse set of circumstances which make its continued delivery of aid programming increasingly difficult. A February 2021 military coup against the democratically elected government, ongoing internal conflict among and between multiple EAGs, a severe disruption of major socioeconomic sectors, and difficult weather and infrastructural conditions have all contributed to urgent humanitarian need (IFCR, 2022), while simultaneously making it harder to deliver. In 2022, OCHA Myanmar received just 42 percent of its requested 826 million USD to fund its humanitarian response, and it anticipates a similar sum of 764 million USD will be needed in 2023 (OCHA, 2023). The INFORM Severity Index – which rates the severity of a humanitarian emergency based on a composite measure of 31 core indicators – holds Myanmar at the maximum severity level (ACAPS, 2022). In short, humanitarian operations in Myanmar are chronically underfunded given the severity of the ongoing complex emergency.

The ability of humanitarian actors to deliver aid is anticipated to further decline in 2023. OCHA Myanmar anticipates worsening insecurity because of ongoing civil conflict and looming national elections, both major sources of political unrest, violence, and internal displacement (OCHA, 2023). Operational space for humanitarian actors will continue to constrict because of the de facto authorities' blockages on travel, banking, and visas. OCHA Myanmar expects a heavier reliance on and risk sharing with low-profile L/NPs as its access to affected populations diminishes. Additionally, a new law enacted by the de facto authorities in the fall of 2022 mandates that all NGOs, including both national and international organizations, must register their operations with authorities. This includes a declaration of their funding sources, a list of their areas of operations, and a ban on collaborating with or providing aid to blacklisted CSOs and populations targeted for state violence (Hutt, 2022; Root, 2023). While most IHAs are still evaluating the law's impacts on their operations, many national actors have either stated they will refuse to sign (Mandalay CSOs Network, 2022) or have privately told partners they will reduce operations to continue working 'under the radar' (Hutt, 2022; Root, 2023). The democratically elected but since deposed National Unity Government has requested that national organizations refuse to engage with the law and de facto authorities attempting to enforce it (Hutt, 2022). Collectively, these access constraints and legal barriers require innovative and context-specific policy solutions to ensure continuity of aid delivery despite hostile intervention.

INGOs and the UN in Myanmar, including OCHA, are also facing unique tensions around the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality. The de facto authorities have instrumentalized aid for their own political gains, only allowing it to reach areas under their control and populations supportive of their authority (Fishbein, 2021). While many humanitarian actors, including OCHA, are utilizing alternative modalities to ensure aid remains impartial, some INGOs

face the difficult choice of suspending their operations or breaking their impartial mandates. Internally, INGOs and the UN, including OCHA, also face significant pushback from Burmese staff angered by neutrality-related restrictions on their free expression and speech. Burmese staff report humanitarian actors are forbidding them from engaging in anti-military protests, criticizing the de facto authorities on social media, labeling the military's takeover a 'coup', and limiting their influence in decisions made by international managers and headquarter offices (Fishbein, 2021). As national staff are a crucial component of remote operations – carrying out programming in the absence of international staff – these tensions must be addressed to successfully optimize remote operations and ensure aid continuity.

This operational context – most directly, the restrictions on visa issuances instituted by the de facto authorities – has caused OCHA Myanmar to utilize an operational modality of remote management for international staff unable to enter the country. As will be discussed in the next section, the use of remote management in humanitarian responses globally has been associated with a reduction in accountability to affected people and local acceptance of humanitarian actors' presence, a deterioration in aid quality and effectiveness, and unethical risk transfer to L/NS and L/NPs. These humanitarian challenges are not the fault of OCHA Myanmar nor were they caused by the organization's decision to implement remote management. Rather, they are intrinsic to remote management as an operational modality in the humanitarian sector. They transcend any one actor or country context, and as such all actors must work collaboratively to combat them with innovative policies and operational strategies.

The use of remote management outside of the humanitarian sector – especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic – has been associated with several logistical challenges, including employee supervision and productivity, information asymmetry, and social isolation. These are important challenges that must also be addressed to optimize OCHA Myanmar's operations. However, because substantial research into these areas already exists, this report focuses more intently on the humanitarian challenges of remote management, where research and policy guidance are lacking. Potential solutions to address these logistical challenges are still incorporated into the final recommendation and its implementation strategy.

Figure 1. Humanitarian Causes & Consequences of Remote Management

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the existing literature on operational best practices, adaptive policy interventions, and new innovations for addressing the humanitarian challenges of remote management. Research primarily focused on humanitarian responses which have deployed remote management as an alternative operational modality: Afghanistan, Haiti, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Syria. Further research on navigating protracted insecurity and access constraints was conducted using cases from Chad, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, occupied Palestinian Territories, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Yemen. Findings are organized into four categories: 1) building organizational capacity, 2) strengthening operational capacity, 3) utilizing acceptance-based approaches and accountability mechanisms, and 4) enhancing duty of care. The section concludes with a synthesis across these four categories, noting how strategic localization is the common theme.

Building Organizational Capacity

Organizational capacity is defined as the "money, people, systems, policies, and technical resources" (Braun, 2004) which together build or enhance an organization's ability to function effectively. Building organizational capacity is a critical component of a successful adaptation to remote management, as empirical studies demonstrate the use of remote management often reduces existing organizational capacity. Martin (2018) and Kumar & Liu (2022) find that as the number of duty stations increases and the number of overlapping working hours decreases, a substantial decrease in overall productivity is observed. Martin (2018) further identifies that, counter to traditional wisdom, time-zone differences and resource variability have more significant effects on productivity than staff contractual typing (i.e., permanent versus temporary), task complexity, and geographic distance. In sum, empirical evidence confirms that the ideal operational modality for humanitarian actors is face-to-face.

When remote management is deployed, humanitarian actors must prioritize a minimization in the number of duty stations in use, a maximization of shared working hours, and a guarantee of adequate resource availability for staff (i.e., tech equipment and support, professional development). Internal UN evaluations of organizational capacity share similar reflections – rigid and heavy bureaucratic structures tend to slow crisis response and reduce effectiveness (Stoddard et al., 2010; Egeland et al., 2011). Strategies to ensure flexibility in resource availability, infrastructure investment, and logistical assets proved to be the most effective in maintaining operational continuity (Jackson & Zyck, 2017). Solutions on staff recruitment and retention, professional development and training, alignment between headquarters and field offices, and private sector innovations are thus explored.

The recruitment of national staff should be increased when a humanitarian actor implements remote management due to their knowledge of regional conditions and existing local or national networks (Egeland et al., 2011). Specific strategies for utilizing this expertise are discussed in a later section; this section focuses solely on hiring practices. Tearfund in South Sudan reports only hiring international staff when the skills and/or experience needed were not available in the local population and encourages peer actors to prepare for inevitable interrogation from authorities. The INGO argues humanitarian actors must be willing and able to justify their staff demographics (i.e., national and international, men and women, etc.) and geographic position when questioned, or risk decay of trust and further loss of access (Egeland et al., 2011). More extremely, an INGO in Iraq reports only hiring national staff from project areas, and not hiring any international staff to work in-country. The organization admits, however, that this hiring practice would be more difficult if not impossible in countries with underdeveloped or inaccessible education systems

(Egeland et al., 2011). While education gaps make the hiring of national staff more difficult in some cases, they can be remedied with sufficient training. UN-HMACCA, for example, reports (2011) success with its strategy of asking local communities to nominate reliable peers for jobs with the organization. It then provides two months of intensive, skills-based training to ensure proper capacity and safety knowledge before sending these staff members into the field. UN-HMACCA argues this strategy is highly generalizable to other humanitarian response missions, if the work needed is based on technical skills which staff can be trained in.

Other best practices for staff recruitment have been listed in UN reviews and INGO learnings reports. Humanitarian actors utilizing remote management should look to hire staff with previous remote management experience (Jackson & Zyck, 2017), knowledge of regional insecurity and access conditions, strong communication skills, sensitivity to local languages and customs, and development sector experience (Stoddard et al., 2010; Norman, 2012). As mentioned, affected populations are often able to fill these national staff positions. However, reports also indicate that hiring diaspora nationals, given their similar experience and knowledge, is beneficial (Egeland et al., 2011). Humanitarian actors should also promote longer-term contracts, especially for L/NS. Staff are an organizational investment, and the expertise they develop over time will prove crucial to the longer-term sustainability of remotely managed operations.

Training and professional development have also been identified as needed components of remote management (Egeland et al., 2011; Zyck, 2012; Howe et al., 2015). The L/NS who continue operations when international staff are relocated or withdrawn tend to lack the training, technical expertise, or knowledge of the humanitarian system required to maintain the same levels of quality and robustness (Elkahlout & Elgibali, 2020). In Syria for example, L/NS did not receive training on Sphere Standards, and as a result improperly built relief camps and did not respect local cultural norms on privacy (Elkahlout & Elgibali, 2020). Thus, it is imperative that organizations account for this gap by providing staff with training on organizational values, international standards, and local norms – ideally prior to a shift into remote management (Norman, 2012). If training has not or cannot be conducted before remote management is implemented, it should be a short-term top priority.

L/NS are similarly underserved when it comes to professional development. Their unique understanding of the contexts and needs of affected communities is left underutilized as they often lack the skills required to effectively communicate in the language and systems of the professionalized international humanitarian system (Elkahlout & Elgibali, 2020). Professional development for L/NS should include workshops and focus groups on leadership, management skills, assessment and proposal writing, financial documentation, trust building among peer staff and local populations, peer-to-peer mentoring, technical project components like engineering and community mobilization, independent decision-making, and mistake acknowledgement. If applicable, these professional development initiatives should be conducted in the primary languages of L/NAs to ensure maximum efficacy (Norman, 2012). As aid delivery to affected populations remains the internal imperative, organizations may need to outsource some of these development tasks to ensure they are completed in a timely manner and do not detract from aid delivery (Egeland et al., 2011).

As mentioned, UN reports have found the rigid bureaucracy of the international humanitarian system is unconducive to a flexible and effective response, especially in highly insecure and/or remotely managed environments (Stoddard et al., 2010; Egeland et al., 2011; Jackson & Zyck, 2017). A review of Haiti found the internal bureaucratic contradictions and competing hierarchies

of time did not allow for adequate adjustments to the complexity of the local response (Verlin, 2021). Put more plainly, most existing humanitarian funding mechanisms are based on short-term budgeting, whereas most protracted emergencies require long-term funding strategies. Similarly, a UNDP evaluation (2010) of its work in Somalia found the bureaucracy around humanitarian funding mechanisms hindered their response. These tensions between realities on the ground and the bureaucracy of headquarter offices can be resolved, Verlin (2021) and UNDP (2010) find, by developing more flexible planning tools, extending funding periods, and deploying adjustable emergency response project management tools. UNDP recommends region-specific, five-year operational work plans which include a system of participatory review to increase affected populations' ownership of aid programming and address issues of transparency.

Box 2. Organizational Capacity

1. Hiring emphasis and increased reliance on L/NS
2. Urgent training and professional development, some outsourced
3. Adaptable strategic planning and funding mechanisms

In sum, the three general themes which emerge from existing literature on the organizational capacity of humanitarian actors utilizing remote management are: 1) a hiring emphasis and increased reliance on L/NS, 2) an urgent need for training and professional development, and 3) adaptable strategic planning and funding mechanisms to reconcile headquarters' bureaucracy with realities on the ground.

Strengthening Operational Capacity

Closely related to organizational capacity, operational capacity is "the ability [of a humanitarian actor] to do something… to work with, and deliver on, its mandate" (People in Aid, 2007). Rooted in the humanitarian imperative, operational capacity is a central component of any humanitarian response as it is the ability of actors to deliver aid. As remote management has been shown to reduce capacity across the board, identifying strategies to strengthen operational capacity in such contexts is paramount.

The most general way to strengthen operational capacity is to reduce or eliminate non-essential functions and focus instead on aid delivery. In many contexts, this means deprioritizing capacity development for L/NPs and national government institutions (Egeland et al., 2011), though such a strategy carries multiple negative externalities. For example, the international humanitarian sector ought to seek capacity development for these actors so that, the next time a crisis strikes, they are not as reliant on international interventions. If this capacity-building programming is cut, affected populations are no more resilient than they were before.

Thankfully, there are other strategies which preserve or strengthen operational capacity without producing negative externalities. Multiple learnings reports (Egeland et al., 2011; Norman 2012) recommend the practice of 'soft' remote management, where staff live and work primarily in distant or more secure regions but conduct regular visits to programming sites to ensure access continuity and build trust with the community. The benefit of this 'soft' approach is its flexibility given the fluid nature of insecurity. While still less than ideal, it allows humanitarian actors to ensure aid is being delivered and basic commitments are being met. The drawback of the 'soft' approach is that it requires some or most staff to be in-country. In a case like Myanmar, remote staff in Bangkok awaiting visas would not be able to utilize a 'soft' approach.

In remote management contexts where remote staff are not in-country – such as Myanmar – humanitarian actors should instead seek to work with and through L/NPs to increase operational

capacity. L/NPs are uniquely positioned in this context, as they are usually perceived by local populations as being more neutral and impartial – or trusted sources of information who are independent of international political agendas (Gingerich & Cohen, 2015). INGOs in Syria, for example, relied heavily on L/NPs to gain access into ISIS-controlled regions and conduct programming otherwise deemed impossible due to security risks and local rejection of international staff (Elkahlout & Elgibali, 2020). Review of this practice identified the importance of promoting long-term and sustainable local partnerships, including locally sourcing goods and services, facilitating long-term projects, forming alliances with CSOs, and co-developing contingency plans (Howe et al., 2015). Tearfund recommends the arrangement of pre-agreed exit plans for all activities in all locations, plans for capacity building of L/NPs, clear benchmarks and performance indicators, and preparation for project handovers (Egeland et al., 2011). However, reviews also noted new challenges which arise from heavier reliance on L/NPs, including unethical risk transfer and dereliction of the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality (Abdulkadir, 2017; Fishbein, 2021), both discussed in later sections.

The second area for the strengthening of operational capacity is M&E, or the ability of an organization to determine which programming to provide, measure its impacts, and adjust as necessary. M&E is a fundamental component of humanitarian response because it helps ensure commitments are met and mandates are respected. However, completing the 'full package' of M&E is difficult if not outright impossible in remote management contexts as the presence of international M&E experts tends to be limited, access to project areas is constrained, and L/NS or L/NPs tend to lack the knowledge or materials to ensure continuity (Oxfam, 2009; Elkahlout & Elgibali, 2020). A 'good enough' approach is instead favorable; humanitarian actors should adapt key indicators to measure basic – not necessarily ideal – quality, inform donors and other stakeholders of the changes to their M&E systems, and deploy clear and simply worded collection mechanisms that L/NS and L/NPs can use without substantial training (Oxfam, 2009). Nontraditional multimodal M&E systems, discussed later in this section, have also been shown to be highly effective (UNDP, 2010; Zyck, 2012; Norman, 2012).

Dedicated quality assurance teams and web-based M&E approaches are increasingly utilized in areas where insecurity and/or access constraints preclude traditional approaches. Dedicated teams usually include several L/NS or L/NP representatives with diverse technical skills and more navigable access abilities (Egeland et al., 2011). Some senior staff may be included to oversee programming but are not generally required. Tearfund in Afghanistan, for example, convened a quality assurance unit of one local representative for each Afghan province. These local representatives then received intensive skills-based M&E training over the course of two months before being dispatched back to their local communities to conduct M&E for the organization. Tearfund similarly created two new local staff positions – non-recipient community mobilizers who served as monitors, and community facilitators from insecure districts who provided photographic proof of aid delivery (Norman, 2012). As mentioned, this mirrors the trend of web-based approaches becoming increasingly utilized. UNHCR in Iraq created its 'Project Tracking Database,' a computer software where staff and partners from across the area of operations could upload images of aid delivery with GPS metadata attached to confirm to remote managers that aid was being delivered in-line the organization's mandate and commitments (Jackson & Zyck, 2017). Generally, the devolution of M&E and increased utilization of new technologies strengthened operational capacity for these actors.

In contexts with more severe access constraints, humanitarian actors turned to triangulated or third-party M&E. Triangulated M&E involves an organization relying entirely on L/NPs such as

local vendors, government ministries, universities, or the public to conduct the work (Egeland et al., 2011). This included complaint mechanisms (e.g., hotlines), 'reverse call centers' where staff called aid recipients en masse to check on performance, broad networks of community contacts to report on aid in their area, and, as mentioned, robust web-based programs like KoBo Toolbox or UNHCR's Project Tracking Database (Egeland et al., 2011; Jackson & Zyck, 2017). However, reviews of triangulated M&E found that the focus tends to be on organizational output while neglecting broader insights into the relevance of assistance, adherence to the humanitarian principles, and observation of intended outcomes (Jackson & Zyck, 2017). Third-party M&E, where M&E programming is contracted out to private firms, is utilized when all other channels fail or are otherwise unavailable. WFP, UNHCR, and UNICEF have utilized this practice in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Somalia, and Yemen. WFP specifically uses three firms to provide Program Assistance Teams of non-UN personnel, who tend to have an easier time gaining access given their lack of UN affiliation and are less often targets for attacks (Stoddard et al., 2010; Egeland et al., 2011). However, third-party M&E is considered the 'last resort' in many cases due to its detraction from the humanitarian imperative. The practice tends to siphon funds away from aid delivery – a study on education funding in Syria found up to 20 percent was lost to subcontractors (Jackson & Zyck, 2017) – and produce mixed results in terms of quality (Elkahlout & Elgibali, 2020).

Box 3. Operational Capacity

1. Reduce non-essential functions
2. Devolve work to L/NS and L/NPs
3. Co-create simple and effective M&E strategies

In sum, the three general themes which emerge from reviews of operational capacity in remotely managed humanitarian responses are: 1) cautiously reducing non-essential functions, 2) devolving some functions to L/NS and L/NPs, and 3) with L/NPs, co-creating simple and effective M&E strategies.

Utilizing Acceptance-Based Approaches & Accountability Mechanisms

Acceptance-based approaches are efforts by humanitarian actors to cultivate good relationships with and obtain the consent of affected populations as part of a security and access strategy. If local communities feel valued and heard by humanitarian actors, the thinking goes, then they will be more likely to collaborate on aid programming, ensure adequate security, and advocate for authorities to grant access. Humanitarian actors pursuing acceptance-based approaches tend to engage affected populations, national governments, parties to conflict including NSAs or EAGs, and other relevant stakeholders (Egeland et al., 2011). This type of approach tends to work best when humanitarian actors appeal to their history of providing aid to communities, utilize their networks to build local partnerships, devolve some programming ownership to L/NPs, and facilitate negotiations among and between stakeholders (Souness, 2011; Egeland et al., 2011; Norman 2012; Howe et al., 2015). While acceptance-based approaches do not 'solve' the humanitarian challenges of remote management on their own, they do function as accountability mechanisms for remote contexts. In other words, engaging affected communities in these ways allows for aid continuity and the preservation of accountability despite physical dislocation of staff. A series of policies and best practices for generating acceptances and preserving accountability, synthesized from relevant literature (Egeland et al., 2011; Norman, 2012; Zyck, 2012), is included in Box 4.

Enhancing Duty of Care

Duty of care is the responsibility of a humanitarian actor to protect its staff's physical and psychological health, safety, and wellbeing. It is a critical component of remote management due to the unique operational risks and personal challenges that arise under such an operational modality. It is also a relatively new concept, only appearing as a policy area within the humanitarian sector in the last five to ten years. In its first sector-wide evaluation of duty of care, published in 2018, OCHA identified the lack of a UN-wide duty of care framework as a growing policy gap (OCHA, 2018). It went on to say that given the rise in insecurity within humanitarian responses, and the increasing frequency of remote modalities, addressing the gap should be of top importance. Duty of care primarily concerns two areas: ensuring all staff – not just those in remote contexts – access to accommodations and psychosocial support and mitigating the risk transfer that occurs when remote management is implemented (Stoddard et al., 2010; Jackson & Zyck, 2017; Okhowat & Clarinval, 2022). Risk transfer is a nebulous policy area, and substantial research on mitigating risk already exists. In short, the 'transfer' occurs between international staff and L/NS during a transition into remote management. Figure 2 on the next page details this transfer. In a pre-remote context, risk is shared between all in-country staff, national and international. However, when international staff go remote, the risk becomes increasingly concentrated on L/NS. As L/NS can hold up to 90 percent of field jobs in a given humanitarian response (Jackson & Zyck, 2017), they face especially unique risks, and ensuring their protection is imperative.

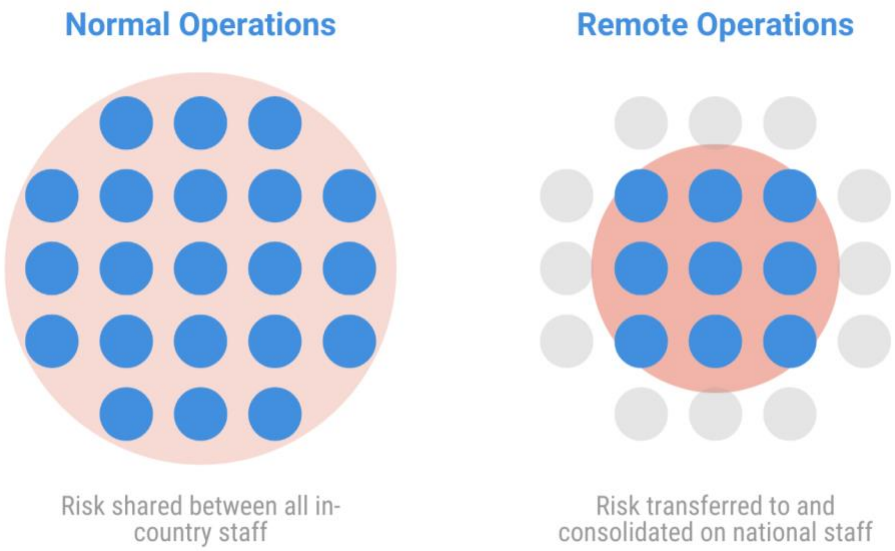
Box 4. Acceptance-Based Approaches & Remote Accountability Strategies (Egeland et al., 2011; Norman, 2012; Zyck, 2012)

- *Stress positive associations over negative ones.* Instead of saying 'We are not working with X,' emphasize that 'We are collaborating with Y.'
- *Sign MOUs with the local community.* An INGO in Afghanistan reports success in securing access by sending outreach teams to lay the foundations for MOUs as a precondition to programming. Among other commitments, these MOUs state the INGO will "program well and behave."
- *Form outreach and liaison teams of specialized staff.* Each has a mandate devoted to a single stakeholder: national governments, military leaders, school officials, doctors, religious leaders, community elders, CSOs, EAGs, etc.
- *Build co-ownership.* There are multiple methods of achieving this, though a well-documented example is an UN agency in Afghanistan negotiating a formula where the local community, national government, and UN each contributed one-third to projects.
- *Hold frequent bilateral meetings and consultations with stakeholders.* Tearfund reports success in Afghanistan and South Sudan by using committee-like structures of organization staff, local representatives, and government officials. ICRC similarly reports reaching over 10,000 Afghans in one year by holding over 5000 local meetings.

There is a widely documented inequity among IHAs in terms of the allocation of security resources to different types of staff. Generally, international staff receive the bulk of security resources and training (Stoddard et al., 2010; Okhowat & Clarinval, 2022), and L/NS receive less. These security resources include traditional elements like guards and equipment, but also

matters of internal policy such as hazard pay, R&R leave, and quality psychosocial support (Jackson & Zyck, 2017). When remote management is implemented, this problem is exacerbated as international staff – and their security measures – are relocated. To ensure duty of care is maintained despite the implementation of remote management, humanitarian actors must ensure security equity between international and national staff. While an organization's duty of care imperative does not traditionally extend to cover L/NPs, the ethical considerations raised by the combination of risk transfer and increased reliance on L/NPs merits consideration. In other words, if a humanitarian actor can extend its duty of care programming to cover L/NPs, it should.

Figure 2. Risk Transfer Visualized



The remainder of this section reviews policies and best practices for duty of care from remotely managed humanitarian responses. A particular attention is paid to duty of care for national staff because, as mentioned, they are at higher risk and often experience security inequity.

A lower-profile posturing should be adopted for the duration of remote management, as affiliation with major INGOs and the UN is the primary driver of safety risks to L/NS (Egeland et al., 2011). Simple low-profile stances involve de-branding the organization and its operations – removing all logos, signs, flags, other markings removed from orgs vehicles, offices, residences, staff clothing, and program materials. More comprehensive approaches usually involve changes to infrastructure and transportation methods – using local cars and taxis versus UN vehicles, hiding or eliminating radio antennas and satellite dishes, and leasing residential space in local neighborhoods for increased obscuration. In the most extreme cases, a low-profile stance may take the form of work-from-home, no staff gatherings in-person, and the removal of locational information from websites and publications. While providing the most protection for staff, this method tends to rouse suspicions about organizational activities and means affected populations do not know their aid providers. Best practices for low-profile stances include co-location with accepted L/NPs – for example, co-leasing a space with a local NGO or CSO – and providing staff with the technological equipment (e.g., phones, laptops, internet hardware) to ensure they can work from home (Egeland et al., 2011).

Case studies of duty of care approaches in Afghanistan and Yemen offer additional potential policy interventions. In Afghanistan, L/NS began a project support group where they could meet and candidly discuss their experiences with risk as a form of psychosocial support (Andersson & Weigand, 2015). They also regularly referred to the public 'Kabul Security Now' Facebook group – where a wider range of actors exchanged real-time security and risk information – as an essential tool (Andersson & Weigand, 2015). Interviews with multiple INGOs in Afghanistan also detailed the availability of specialized emergency grants for L/NS who may need to urgently relocate depending on evolving security conditions (Jackson & Zyck, 2017). Similarly, in Yemen, Oxfam and Save the Children opened their expatriate safe houses to L/NS who needed protection from deteriorating security conditions (Jackson & Zyck, 2017). UNHCR went a step further in allocating funds to help L/NS permanently relocate to safer areas. The agency also provided UNSMS training on building at-home safe rooms, and then offered L/NS access to the building materials and emergency supplies needed to construct the rooms.

Box 5. Duty of Care

1. Adopt a lower-profile stance to help reduce risk to L/NS
2. Enhance security and psychosocial support for L/NS

In sum, the three general themes which emerge from reviews of duty of care in remotely managed humanitarian responses are: 1) adopting a lower-profile stance to help reduce overall risk, and 2) enhancing security and psychosocial support resources for L/NS.

The Common Theme: Localization

The common theme across all four categories reviewed – organizational capacity, operational capacity, acceptance-based approaches and accountability, and duty of care – is robust localization of humanitarian action. When faced with reduced access and/or protracted insecurity, all the humanitarian actors reviewed simultaneously implemented remote management and localized their aid programming. This is the paradox of remote management; it is an imperfect solution to access constraints that poses unique challenges for humanitarian actors, *while also presenting them with an opportunity to make progress on localization*. Not only is it an opportunity, but localization directly addresses many of the humanitarian challenges of remote management. As such, the remainder of this literature review considers the different definitions of remote management, previous sector-wide localization commitments and progress on them, and the seven dimensions of localization as a policy agenda.

Box 6. Localization

Making principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary.

At its most basic level, localization is "making principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary" (WHS Secretariat, 2016). More intricate definitions of localization conceive of it as a collective process involving civil society and requiring leadership from the affected population (Fabre & Gupta, 2017; de Geoffroy & Grunewald, 2017; Australian Red Cross, 2017). Importantly, localization is context-dependent; its operationalization depends significantly on the type of humanitarian emergency occurring, the overall stage of response, and the different stakeholders involved and their relationship to one another. For the purposes of this

report, localization strategies – discussed in later sections – are tailored for OCHA Myanmar. However, with slight adjustments, they could be widely applicable to other contexts.

While localization as a strategic goal has been a decades-long conversation in the humanitarian sector, its first major appearance was in the 2016 Grand Bargain, a landmark agreement between doors and humanitarian actors seeking to jointly improve the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action (IASC, 2023). Although initially signed by just the five biggest donors and six largest UN agencies, it now has over 65 signatories – including UN Member States and INGOs. In 2019, these signatories represent 84 percent of all donors' contributions to the humanitarian sector, and 69 percent of all aid received by agencies (IASC, 2023). In other words, the Grand Bargain is a major initiative and investment of the global humanitarian sector. While the Grand Bargain has about half a dozen active workstreams – some come on or go offline as needed – its second workstream on "more support and funding tools for local and national responders" (IASC, 2023) most directly works on operationalizing localization. Its core commitments generally involve capacity-building, partnerships, and more direct funding streams. A full list of commitments is available to the right.

Box 7. Grand Bargain Localization Commitments (IASC, 2016)

- Increase and support multi-year investment in the institutional capacities of local and national responders, including preparedness, response, and coordination capacities.
- Understand better and work to remove or reduce barriers that prevent organizations and donors from partnering with local and national responders to lessen their administrative burden.
- Support and complement national coordination mechanisms where they exist and include local and national responders in international coordination mechanisms as appropriate and in keeping with the humanitarian principles.
- Achieve by 2020 a global, aggregated target of at least 25 percent of humanitarian funding to local and national responders as directly as possible to improve outcomes for affected people and reduce transaction costs.
- Develop and apply a 'localization marker' to measure direct and indirect funding to local and national responders.
- Make greater use of funding tools which increase and improve assistance delivered by local and national responders, such as the UN's CBPFs and IFRC's DREF.

Despite sustained commitments and ongoing work from all workstreams, progress on the Grand Bargain remains slow. Three key metrics are used to measure progress. First is the percentage of internationally raised funding that is reaching L/NPs – the stated goal for which was at least 25 percent by 2020 (IASC, 2016). In 2021, estimates put the number at around 3 percent, far below the stated goal (Robillard et al., 2021). Second is the number of INGOs and UN agencies which have reached this 25 percent target. In 2021, a review of 53 of these humanitarian actors found just 13 had met the 25 percent threshold (Robillard et al., 2021). The third and final key metric is the percentage of cluster system leadership roles held by local NGOs. Data on this metric is conflicting; at least one report (Robillard et al., 2021) claims this is around 8 percent, though it was unable to be independently verified at the time of writing. OCHA, conversely, reports the number of cluster leadership roles held by local NGOs varied slightly between 36 and 38 percent between 2019 and 2021. In short,

while progress is being made, the bold commitments of the Grand Bargain have yet to be fully realized.

Seeing this slow progress, Grand Bargain stakeholders gathered in 2021 to develop the "Grand Bargain 2.0 Framework" (IASC, 2021). Building on the commitments made in its first iteration, the 2.0 framework makes specific note of localization as a top priority and expands such efforts into most operational areas. The four updated outcome pillars – the 'ideal' localized aid system per se – are: 1) flexibility, predictability, transparency, and tracking, 2) equitable and principled partnerships, 3) accountability and inclusion, and 4) prioritization and coordination (IASC, 2021). As sample policies to achieve these outcomes, the 2.0 framework lists, among others, the development and implementation of flexible multi-year funding mechanisms and robust capacity development for L/NPs. The most recent independent review of the Grand Bargain (Metcalfe-Hough et al., 2022) has echoed these outcomes and identified top priorities for signatories should they wish to reach targets on time. They include, among others, enhancing the institutional capacity of L/NPs, enhancing coordination strategies, and simplifying monitoring and reporting/evaluation mechanisms. These may sound familiar – they are nearly identical to the remote management policies and best practices identified from case study research. Again, we see remote management present an opportunity to make progress on the localization agenda.

Localization Progress in Myanmar

Progress on humanitarian localization in Myanmar has been immense in the last 10 to 15 years. This was prompted by previous localization failures – particularly international-national coordination failures in the response to Cyclone Nargis in 2008 (Barter & Sumlut, 2023) and competing coordination structures in Kachin State in the mid-2010s (Barter & Sumlut, 2023). In the latter case, for example, nine local organizations together formed the Joint Strategy Team in 2013 to ensure "an efficient, impactful, and quality humanitarian response" with the intent to "minimize donor-drive policy and maximize the use of international cooperation opportunities using locally owned common strategy" (Barter & Sumlut, 2023). Around the same time, IHAs were establishing their own coordination structures – clusters, working groups, etc. – to respond to civil conflict in Kachin State. The two were, in effect, competing with one another. The JST used local languages to maximize accessibility for L/NPs and utilized an egalitarian approach to its programming strategy (Barter & Sumlut, 2023). Conversely, the international coordination systems were operating in English, and used a traditional model of top-down decision making and bottom-up reporting (Barter & Sumlut, 2023). As a result, L/NPs were disempowered, and their expertise was left on the table.

Importantly though, the competing coordination structures of the JST and international humanitarian system did lead to some positive outcomes. A symbiosis between JST members and IHAs allowed for shared learning and renewed commitments to local leadership and international advisement. For example, the JST began preparing its own situation updates, policy and strategy positions, statements, and briefings for donors and IHAs (Barter & Sumlut, 2023). As a result, the JST increased its reputation and trust with donor governments and bypassed some of the traditional entry barriers into the international humanitarian system faced by L/NPs. Today, the JST is a major leader of the humanitarian response in the region. Most funding is still sourced from IHAs, though the JST is charged with allocating it (Barter & Sumlut, 2023). JST members also run a selection panel for OCHA Myanmar's MHF and have been known to refuse to fund IHAs' direct-implementation plans, instead prioritizing plans with partnership at the core (Barter & Sumlut, 2023). OCHA Myanmar's more recent localization progress and future goals are included in Boxes 8 and 9 on the next page.

Box 8. OCHA Myanmar's Localization Progress in 2022 (OCHA, 2023)

- HCT representation of six L/NPs, including women-led organizations, has been added, with representation expected to expand in 2023.
- A national observer representative has been added to the ICCG.
- The MHF has supported the creation of an inter-cluster language support project, hosted by IOM, and supported by OCHA, which allows for simultaneous translation of cluster meetings and formal translation of key cluster documents.
- All HRP consultations utilized simultaneous translation, and consultations with disability organizations were conducted with sign language.
- The MHF has new direct local funding targets with flexible eligibility requirements.
- More local, sub-national cluster coordinators were recruited and trained to support coordination in local languages.

Box 9. OCHA Myanmar's Localization Goals in 2023 & Beyond (OCHA, 2023)

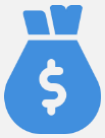
- INGOs and the UN should strengthen their coordination with local mechanisms and informal networks as intermediaries.
- More direct funding should be offered to L/NPs, with greater space to determine allocations and with necessary technical support provided by IHAs.
- Flexible, multi-year funding systems should be explored, accompanied by flexible reporting systems and procedures.
- Donor governments should fund the administrative costs, not just direct costs, of L/NPs. This includes strengthening institutional management and operational systems and hiring more staff.
- Donor governments should fund the human resources of L/NPs to ensure they can have a presence at coordination meetings.
- Donor governments and IHAs should cover the security-related expenses of L/NPs.
- L/NPs should have access to capacity-building trainings, including on the humanitarian principles, gender equality and empowerment, and navigating humanitarian funding.

EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

This section defines the criteria that will be used to evaluate potential strategies OCHA Myanmar could employ to address the humanitarian challenges of remote management while also making substantial progress on the localization agenda. The identified criteria are based on OCHA's strategic goals (OCHA, 2023), the humanitarian imperative and principles, and the operational context specific to Myanmar. Table 2, on the next page, contains the full scoring matrix for all four criteria. Table 3, also on the next page, contains the seven dimensions of localization as defined by the START Network; these are used to score equity. The actual evaluation of potential strategies takes place in the next section.

Administrative Burden

This criterion measures the ease of which each potential localization strategy can be implemented. It considers the staff and skills necessary, overall time commitment, and long-term independent sustainability.



Donor Interest

This criterion measures the interest of donor governments in funding each potential localization strategy. It considers the general strategic goals of donor governments, their historical support or lack thereof for localization efforts, and their capacity to handle localized funding.

Effectiveness

This criterion measures how well each potential localization strategy addresses the three identified challenges of remote management: reduced accountability and local acceptance, deterioration in aid quality and effectiveness, and risk transfer.

Equity

This criterion measures how equitable each potential localization strategy is for local and national communities, partners, and staff. It scores equity based on the seven dimensions of localization.

Table 2. Evaluative Criteria Scoring Methodology

Criterion	Low Score	Medium Score	High Score
Admin. Burden	A light lift. Required staff and skills are already present in OCHA's capacity. Oversight does not pose a challenge. Long-term sustainability is high.	A moderate lift. Required staff and skills may be present in existing capacity, but hiring or contracting may be necessary, particularly for oversight. Long-term sustainability requires consistent intervention.	A heavy lift. Required staff and skills are not present in OCHA's capacity; hiring or contracting needed, particularly for oversight. Long-term sustainability requires constant support.
Donor Interest	Donor governments are disinterested. Does not align with their stated goals, lacks historical precedent, or not within existing capacity.	Donor governments are skeptical but could be persuaded. Algins with their aspirational goals, but unclear historical precedent and capacity.	Donor governments are supportive. Aligns with their strategic goals, has clear historical precedent, and is within existing capacity.
Effectiveness	No humanitarian challenge area is addressed.	One or two humanitarian challenge areas are addressed, but not all.	All three humanitarian challenge areas are addressed.
Equity	Zero to two dimensions of localization are fulfilled.	Three to five dimensions of localization are fulfilled.	Six to seven dimensions of localization are fulfilled.

Table 3. Seven Dimensions of Localization (Patel & van Brabant, 2017)

Dimension	Definition
Capacity	More effective support for stronger and sustainable institutional capacities of L/NPs, and less undermining of those capacities by international actors.
Coordination	More presence and influence of national governmental and non-governmental actors in coordination mechanisms.
Funding	A commitment to ensure 25 percent of internationally raised funding reaches L/NPs as directly as possible, and that it is high quality.
Participation	Fuller and more influential involvement of crisis-affected people in what relief is provided to them and how.
Partnerships	More genuine and equitable partnerships, and less subcontracting.
Policy	Increased presence of L/NPs in international policy discussions and a great accounting of their views and proposals.
Visibility	Greater public recognition and visibility for the role, effort, contribution, innovation, and achievements of L/NPs.

EVALUATION OF POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

This section reviews four potential strategies for OCHA Myanmar to address the humanitarian challenges of remote management and optimize its use. The first strategy is more symbolic than realistic, meant to represent a regression of the localization agenda. The latter three are more seriously considered, and each details a different degree of localization. Figure 3 below briefly summarizes each strategy and identifies where it falls on the *localization spectrum*. After being more formally introduced, each strategy is scored based on the criteria formulated in the prior section. The strategy or strategies with the best scoring will be recommended to OCHA Myanmar for implementation.

Figure 3. Localization Spectrum

Strategy 0: Reversion

As discussed, existing literature and case study learnings strongly illustrate how localization strategies are key for effectively adapting to remote management in humanitarian contexts. However, the counterfactual must be explored for due diligence. In other words, *what happens if we do not localize?* This strategy represents a reversion from the localization agenda to a more traditional structure of humanitarian response where international actors hold most of the cards and the input of affected populations is not given due consideration. While this strategy is more symbolic than legitimate – no humanitarian actor is seriously considering reverting localization progress – it is presented as a contrast to the next three potential strategies.

Administrative Burden

The administrative burden of reverting localization is high, if not extreme. As of this writing, OCHA Myanmar has around 219 operational partners across Myanmar, each working to help it deliver aid programming to even the most access-constrained areas (OCHA, 2023). This number is aligned with a yearslong trend; OCHA Myanmar's operational partners have more than doubled since 2017 (OCHA, 2023). Abandoning this localization effort and "de-partnering" with these organizations would be catastrophic for basic aid delivery, especially in the context of remote management. Without its partners, OCHA Myanmar would not have the immediate capacity to continue the same levels of aid programming. In the short-term, it would have to roll back much of its programming until it could hire new staff or contractors. In the long-term, it may be able to renew some of its lost programming, but not nearly to the extent it operates at today.

Donor Interest

Donor governments' interest in funding a reversion of localization efforts is low. As mentioned, dozens of donors are signatories of the Grand Bargain and its localization agenda. While their

progress has been imperfect, they *are* making progress. As these donor signatories represent around 84 percent of all contributions to the humanitarian sector (IASC, 2023), it is highly unlikely they would financially support humanitarian actors moving in the opposite direction. At best, donors would be unhappy that this strategy was being implemented. At worst, this strategy would disrupt or end their support.

Effectiveness
The effectiveness of a reversion is low. None of the three humanitarian challenges are addressed. Challenges associated with accountability and local acceptance, aid quality and effectiveness, and risk transfer all require collaboration with and the input of L/NPs. If OCHA Myanmar were to maintain its remote management operational modality while reversing its partnership progress, these challenges would undoubtedly worsen.

Equity
The equity of a reversion is low. Of the seven dimensions listed in Table 4, none are fulfilled by this strategy. Reverting localization would disempower affected populations and communities.

Strategy 0 Outcomes Matrix

Strategy	Admin. Burden	Donor Interest	Effectiveness	Equity
Reversion	**High**	**Low**	**Low**	**Low**

Strategy 1: Instrumental Localization

The first legitimate strategy available to OCHA Myanmar is instrumental localization, or localization which directs more conditional funding to L/NPs while maintaining donors' and international actors' decision-making and programming authority (Baguios, 2022). On the 'lighter' end of the localization spectrum, it aims to shift the power balance in the humanitarian sector by ensuring L/NPs receive funding proportional to that allocated to major INGOs and UN agencies. Instrumental localization in practice is best exemplified by the Grand Bargain's 25 percent commitment mentioned in previous sections.

For OCHA Myanmar, instrumental localization would primarily entail a continuity and strengthening of current practices, particularly concerning conditional grants to and/or subcontracting agreements with L/NPs. In one example of instrumental localization in practice, OCHA Myanmar could award a conditional grant for medical supplies to a local healthcare NGO. In another, OCHA Myanmar could subcontract a regional educational institution to conduct M&E on its behalf for a set period in a given area. In both cases, the L/NPs have slight autonomy – they can decide which medical supplies to purchase or how best to implement M&E – but are constrained by the conditional or subcontract nature of their work. They cannot use funding for other purposes, and likely must adhere to set of rules or regulations (e.g., the M&E subcontractor must use a specific method).

Administrative Burden
The administrative burden of instrumental localization is high. OCHA Myanmar would increase its role as an intermediary on two fronts: first, it must have capacity to create and manage the multitudes of conditional grants allocated to L/NPs, and second, it must have capacity to enter and supervise its subcontracting agreements. While OCHA Myanmar already has experience with both administrative tasks (OCHA, 2023), this strategy requires an expansion which may be outside of OCHA's immediate ability, especially considering funding shortfalls.

Donor Interest
The interest of donor governments in funding instrumental localization is high. As signatories to the Grand Bargain and its 25 percent funding commitment, this strategy aligns with the strategic goals of many major donors. It also has clear historical precedent – conditional grants and subcontracting arrangements are well within these donors' areas of expertise. The only potential barrier is capacity; donors would likely be managing higher volumes of grants and contracts, though this can be remedied by hiring staff or reallocating existing resources.

Effectiveness
The effectiveness of instrumental localization is medium. This strategy only addresses the remote management challenges related to aid quality and effectiveness. By expanding local and national partnerships, OCHA Myanmar can ensure a continuity of aid programming at similar levels of quality and effectiveness despite the remote status of some of its staff. However, the other two areas – accountability and local acceptance, and risk transfer – are not addressed. L/NPs and affected populations have few accountability mechanisms in legally binding subcontracting agreements, even if the terms are unfavorable to them. Additionally, as L/NPs are now carrying out more programming on OCHA Myanmar's behalf, risk transferred to them is a major ethical concern.

Equity
The equity of instrumental localization is low. This strategy only really fulfills the capacity and funding dimensions of localization – see Table 4 in the previous section – and the exact 'level of fulfillment' is left ambiguous. In other words, does increasing the use of conditional grants and subcontracting *really* improve the organizational and operational capacity of L/NPs? If it does, what capacity level is considered a 'successful' improvement? These questions are highly contestable and require further research. The other dimensions of localization are not fulfilled, especially partnership's stipulation of less subcontracting.

Strategy 1 Outcomes Matrix

Strategy	Admin. Burden	Donor Interest	Effectiveness	Equity
Instrumental	**High**	**High**	**Medium**	**Low**

Strategy 2: Decentralized Localization

The second strategy available to OCHA Myanmar is decentralized localization, or localization which splits funding and programming authority between international actors and L/NPs and facilitates collaborative decision-making (Baguios, 2022). Towards the middle of the localization spectrum, it aims to shift the balance of power in the humanitarian sector by devolving power to L/NS and L/NPs. Decentralized localization in practice is commonly exemplified by staffing country offices and sub-offices almost entirely with national staff, or by less stringent grants to L/NPs.

For OCHA Myanmar, decentralized localization would primarily entail increasing the presence and power of L/NS and L/NPs in coordination mechanisms, funding discussions and budgeting, and policymaking. In one example, the organization could focus efforts onto increasing the percentage of cluster leadership roles held by Burmese partners. In another, it could form or strengthen budgetary review panels where affected populations, L/NPs, L/NS, and international staff could convene to co-create funding plans and allocations. In both cases, L/NPs are sharing power and authority with international counterparts. However, they are still generally constrained

by the regulations and processes of the global humanitarian sector (e.g., funding timelines) and communities are not in full control over their aid programming.

Administrative Burden
The administrative burden of decentralized localization is medium. While the increased presence of L/NPs in coordination, funding, and policymaking spaces does alleviate some of OCHA Myanmar's administrative tasks, the organization still must facilitate their inclusion into existing sector structures. Again, this is something OCHA Myanmar already has experience with, though the expansion required until this strategy may require additional hiring and more substantial time commitments.

Donor Interest
Donor governments' interest in funding decentralized localization is high. Decentralization of coordination, funding, and policymaking are well-aligned with donors' stated strategic goals and Grand Bargain commitments. There is clear historical precedent; many country offices of major INGOs and the UN have incorporated more L/NS and L/NPs, as discussed in the literature review.

Effectiveness
The effectiveness of decentralized localization is medium. This strategy addresses both accountability and local acceptance, and aid quality and effectiveness. The former is addressed as new accountability channels are opened for L/NPs as they become included in coordination, funding, and policymaking spaces. Local communities are also more likely to accept the presence of IHAs if they know their local or national counterparts also have an empowered seat at the decision-making table. The latter is addressed in a similar manner to the first strategy – L/NPs are still receiving conditional grant funding to carry out aid programming.

Equity
The equity of decentralized localization is medium. This strategy addresses five of the seven dimensions of localization. Stipulations of capacity, coordination, funding, partnerships, and policy are all fulfilled in one manner or another because of L/NPs; inclusion and empowerment in decision-making spaces. The remaining two dimensions – participation and visibility – may be partially fulfilled but cannot be considered complete as local communities do not have full control over which forms of aid are provided to them and how, and the visibility of L/NPs may be diluted by the presence of IHAs.

Strategy 2 Outcomes Matrix

Strategy	Admin. Burden	Donor Interest	Effectiveness	Equity
Decentralized	**Medium**	**High**	**Medium**	**Medium**

Strategy 3: Progressive Localization

The third strategy available to OCHA Myanmar is progressive localization, or localization which directs more *un*conditional funding to L/NPs while transferring most or all decision-making and programming authority to them (Baguios, 2022). On the 'heavier' end of the localization spectrum, it aims to shift the balance of power in the humanitarian sector by turning over most or all operations to local communities and their own NGOs and CSOs. In other words, it truly makes humanitarian aid 'as local as possible and as international as necessary'. Because it is a comparatively radical change for the humanitarian sector – totally reorganizing the role of international actors – there are few real-world examples to point to for analysis. The closest and

most recent analog is the response to Cyclone Harold in the Pacific Islands in April 2020. IHAs were unable to send staff to assist in the response because of newly imposed travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Still needing to respond, these actors instead utilized a strategy akin to progressive localization: they sent unconditional funding to L/NPs across the affected islands. ICRC, for example, reports that 80 percent of its DREF went directly to national societies, up from its usual 60 percent requirement (Baguios, 2022). These L/NPs then decided which programming to offer, where, and for how long. While only a temporary instance of progressive localization, a strategy like this offers to revolutionize the way humanitarian aid is delivered.

For OCHA Myanmar, progressive localization would primarily entail unconditional grants to L/NPs and a substantial devolution of decision-making and programming authority to them. The organization, still conducting some of its traditional work (e.g., coordination, access negotiations) then assumes a dual donor-advisor role. It becomes a donor in the sense that it channels unconditional grants to L/NPs, and it becomes an advisory in the sense that it utilizes its broad functional expertise to focus on long-term capacity growth for L/NPs. In other words, it acquires the new operational imperative of ensuring L/NPs can respond to humanitarian crises on their own terms, with their own resources, only deferring to the international humanitarian sector for advising or supplemental assistance. This strategy would require a bit of trailblazing on the part of OCHA Myanmar, but simultaneously presents an opportunity for the organization to innovate in a way which has sector-wide implications.

Administrative Burden
The administrative burden of progressive localization is low. While the initial transition from the current operational arrangement to progressive localization would likely strain capacity, the overall burden for OCHA Myanmar is low as most administrative tasks become the responsibility of L/NPs. The remaining administrative tasks – surrounding OCHA Myanmar's advisory role and administration of unconditional grants – are within existing capacity.

Donor Interest
Donor governments' interest in funding progressive localization is medium. Despite aligning with their aspirational goals, the lack of historical precedent and unclear capacity needs are likely to make donors skeptical of such a radical change. They may, for example, be wary of unconditional funding to unfamiliar L/NPs or may require convincing that this form of localization is the best option for the response in Myanmar. Conversations between OCHA Myanmar, peer international actors, and donors could resolve these concerns.

Effectiveness
The effectiveness of progressive localization is high. All three of the identified humanitarian challenge areas – accountability and local acceptance, aid quality and effectiveness, and risk transfer – are addressed. L/NPs, while not exempt from access constraints, are physically present throughout the country. They can work more directly with local communities to ensure accountability mechanisms, continue aid delivery at similar levels despite access challenges for IHAs, and have the power to determine their own acceptable levels of risk (i.e., there is no 'transfer').

Equity
The equity of progressive localization is high. At least six of the seven dimensions are fulfilled via unconditional funding and a devolution of decision-making and programming authority to L/NPs.

The seventh – funding – is technically only fulfilled once the 25 percent threshold is crossed, though it is likely this would be met once the strategy was implemented. In short, progressive localization puts the power of humanitarian action into the hands of those most affected my humanitarian emergencies.

Strategy 3 Outcomes Matrix

Strategy	Admin. Burden	Donor Interest	Effectiveness	Equity
Progressive	**Low**	**Medium**	**High**	**High**

Full Outcomes Matrix & Discussion

All four potential strategies are grouped together in Table 4 below with their respective scores. The counterfactual strategy – considered only for sake of argument – can quickly be eliminated as it scores poorly across all four criteria. The humanitarian sector is clearly moving in the direction of localization, and reversing course now makes little sense. Instrumental localization, despite having positive scores for donor interest and effectiveness, can also be eliminated given its high administrative burden and low equity score. It does not make sense for OCHA Myanmar as it is outside present capacity and does little to improve equity for affected populations.

The remaining two strategies – decentralized localization and progressive localization – are functionally tied. While progressive localization scores better overall, the absence of clear donor support is a major tradeoff. If donors are not willing to fund progressive localization, it will struggle to be implemented regardless of its other scores. Conversely, despite high donor interest in decentralized localization, it is unclear if it fully addresses the challenges of remote management or best-promotes equity for affected populations. The next section makes a recommendation to OCHA Myanmar considering these tradeoffs.

Table 4. Outcomes Matrix

Strategy	Admin. Burden	Donor Interest	Effectiveness	Equity
Reversion	**High**	**Low**	**Low**	**Low**
Instrumental	**High**	**High**	**Medium**	**Low**
Decentralized	**Medium**	**High**	**Medium**	**Medium**
Progressive	**Low**	**Medium**	**High**	**High**

RECOMMENDATION

This report recommends a two-stage approach for OCHA Myanmar in its efforts to address the humanitarian challenges of remote management. The first stage – the short term – is decentralized localization. While imperfect in its outcomes, its high donor support ensures it can be implemented. Additionally, as OCHA Myanmar is already adopting some policies and best practices affiliated with decentralized localization (e.g., increasing operational reliance on L/NS and L/NPs while also increasing their power in decision-making spaces), this strategy is highly viable given current capacity and operational arrangements.

In the second stage – the long term – it is recommended that OCHA Myanmar adopt a progressive localization agenda. The commitments outlined in the Grand Bargain and seven dimensions of localization most directly align with this strategy – meaning the sector at-large is

heading in this direction – and it scores the best on administrative burden, effectiveness, and equity. Its positioning as a long-term strategy is benefit; it allows OCHA Myanmar time to converse with L/NPs and donor governments to determine feasibility and more specific outcomes. The opportunity presented to OCHA Myanmar should also not be understated. While implemented progressive localization would be challenging due to lack of historical precedent, the potential implications for the global humanitarian sector are enormous. If successfully implemented in the long-term, OCHA Myanmar could set the standard for how to empower affected populations and meet localization commitments.

IMPLEMENTATION

This section begins with a review of the tensions surrounding humanitarian neutrality and their impacts on international-national partnership, particularly in remote management settings. It then offers a plan for *how to stay* despite persistent access constraints and remote management; in other words, it offers a plan for localizing response. It considers the impressive progress already made by OCHA Myanmar, its current localization practices and aspirational goals, and policies and best practices gleaned from case study research. It then provides a similar set of policies and best practices focusing instead on the logistical and managerial challenges of remote management.

Navigating Neutrality

The largest barrier to the implementation of localization as a response to remote management is, by far, the tensions of humanitarian neutrality arising between IHAs and L/NPs. While IHAs have a legal and ethical mandate to maintain their political neutrality, L/NPs are inherently enmeshed in the politics of the emergency and its response. In Myanmar, it was *their* democratically elected government that was overthrown, it is *their* human rights that are being targeted, and, to many of them, it is *their* responsibility fight this injustice. When IHAs prevent or restrict L/NPs from acting, tensions enflame, and aid delivery suffers. This phenomenon has been observed in many localized humanitarian responses, but most acutely in Syria. When IHAs withdrew international staff for security reasons or were unable to send in new staff, L/NPs began to deny aid to groups they believed had harmed their communities and discontinued programming in areas held by political opposition (Elkahlout & Elgibali, 2020). While the situation eventually was resolved –L/NPs saw they could not receive funding if they were not remaining neutral – it was a major disruption to aid programming.

Norman (2012) strongly encourages IHAs using remote management to train their local and national counterparts on the importance of neutrality and how to observe it in practice in case a situation akin to Syria were to arise. However, expecting all local and national staff and partners to abide by neutrality – preventing them from protesting etc. (Fishbein, 2021) – is unrealistic. It is their country, and the ethics of IHAs stymying their civil rights are ambiguous at best. Further research into this intrinsic tension is needed and should be accompanied by consultations with L/NPs to obtain their perspectives.

How to Stay

Table 5 details the immediate, short-term, and long-term steps OCHA Myanmar can take to implement decentralized and progressive localization strategies in response to its use of remote management. **Bold** indicates this step is a direct recommendation of L/NPs (OCHA, 2023). Table 6 details the steps OCHA Myanmar can take to mitigate the managerial challenges arising from its use of remote management.

Table 5. Implementing Localization as a Response to Remote Management

Right Now

- **Continue consultations with L/NS and L/NPs, utilizing new simultaneous translation abilities. Ideally, devolve some decision-making and programming authority to them.**
- Continue hiring staff with previous experience with remote modalities.
- Continue providing staff with necessary work-from-home equipment.
- Continue and strengthen the use of digital support groups where L/NS and L/NPs can discuss security conditions and personal experiences.
- Prioritize long-term contracts over temporary contracts.
- Ensure procurement is done through local providers when possible.
- Stress positive associations instead of negative ones.

Short-Term (6 months – 1 year)

- **Strengthen the coordination representation and power of L/NPs.**
- **Provide intensive, skills-based, and native-language training on professional development, aid delivery standards, humanitarian principles, and cultural norms. Consider inviting L/NPs to attend.**
- **With L/NPs, lobby donors to fund the administrative costs of L/NPs, including administrative and human resources costs.**
- **Increase security resources and equipment for staff, particularly L/NS. This includes emergency relocation grants, safe houses, hazard pay, R&R leave, and psychosocial support. Ideally extend these to L/NPs.**
- **Consider hosting UNSMS security trainings for L/NS and L/NPs.**
- Prioritize grants over subcontracts, and ensure all agreements have co-developed and pre-agreed methods, outcomes, and exit plans.
- Strengthen teams for community outreach and quality assurance.
- Simplify existing M&E mechanisms by removing jargon and using easy collecting, measurement, and feedback tools. Implement alternative M&E approaches, including grants to L/NPs, web-based approaches, and triangulated approaches.
- Adopt a lower profile posturing to help reduce risk to L/NS and L/NPs. This can include debranding, using local transportation instead of UN vehicles, hiding or removing obvious infrastructure at offices (e.g., large radio antennas), co-leasing with L/NPs, promoting telework, and reducing digital footprints.

Long-Term (More than 1 year)

- **With L/NPs, lobby UNHQ and donors to develop and deploy flexible multi-year funding and reporting mechanisms.**
- **With L/NPs, design and adopt region- and time-specific work plans, including a system of regular participatory review.**
- **Develop a strategic plan for implementing progressive localization as a new and innovative operational modality. This includes a heavier use of unconditional grants and transferring most decision-making power and programming authority to L/NPs.**

Table 6. Optimizing Remote Management

Managerial Challenge	**Solutions** (Lombardo & Mierzwa, 2012; Larson et al., 2020; Gleeson, 2020; Treas & Farrer, 2023)
Lack of Supervision	• Mentor more than manage; coach staff to focus on long-term efficiencies over short-term task elimination. • Establish 'rules of engagement' for checking in on staff. For example, use video calls for team check-ins but phone calls for one-on-ones. Or ask staff to email biweekly progress reports. • Prioritize onboarding and set hard dates for its completion.
Information asymmetry	• Establish regular team and one-on-one check-ins with structured agendas; cancel unnecessary meetings. • Offer staff several channels via which to contact you: Teams, texts, video calls, phone calls, social media, etc. • Approach mistakes with compassion and offer to hold a call for clarification and repair. • Schedule voluntary 'Ask Me Anything' (AMA) meetings, especially during periods of drastic change.
Social isolation	• Intentionally make space for informal communication, such as virtual social events or pre-meeting casual chats. • Say 'thank you' often, offer your encouragement, and promote collaborative team projects. • Implement a 'buddy system' to pair newer staff with more seasoned staff working in the same area (e.g., cash transfer programming, gender empowerment programming). • Do not celebrate long hours or working on weekends. These may be necessary but should be a last resort. • Offer to connect struggling employees with organizational resources for mental health support.
At-home distractions	• Clearly define ideal outcomes and their purpose for the organization and affected populations. • Prioritize results over hours worked. Show flexibility with response times and schedules.

CONCLUSION

This report has reviewed the humanitarian challenges associated with remote management and has argued localization is key to effectively addressing them. Thus, remote management offers a unique opportunity for innovation. If OCHA Myanmar can successfully implement decentralized and progressive localization to a degree not before seen, the effects will reverberate throughout the global humanitarian sector. The organization will not only optimize its remote management modality but will empower affected populations and create new and exciting ways to navigate changing access and security landscapes. It will have finally cracked the age-old humanitarian question of *how to stay*.

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Submitted April 2023