A PATHWAY TO LOCALISATION IMPACT:
Testing and Learning in Pakistan

Introduction

The humanitarian sector has made significant progress in measuring the process of localisation, with various frameworks and tools supporting organisations on their journey towards more localised humanitarian action. Despite this progress, there is a gap in sector-wide understanding of, if and how, localised approaches are impacting affected communities. This learning paper contributes towards filling this gap by showcasing learning from work undertaken to define and test localisation outcomes in Pakistan, as outlined in *A Pathway to Localisation Impact: Laying the Foundations* (Box 1).

Box 1: The Foundations

A Pathway to Localisation Impact: Laying the Foundations explores to what extent localisation impact is being measured at the community level. The paper puts forward an evidence-based model (Figure 1) that illustrates domains for change, suggests causal pathways, and proposes a process to guide articulation of intended outcomes and subsequent measurement of localisation impact against those outcomes.
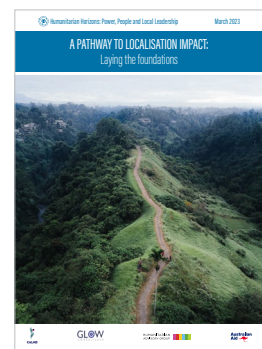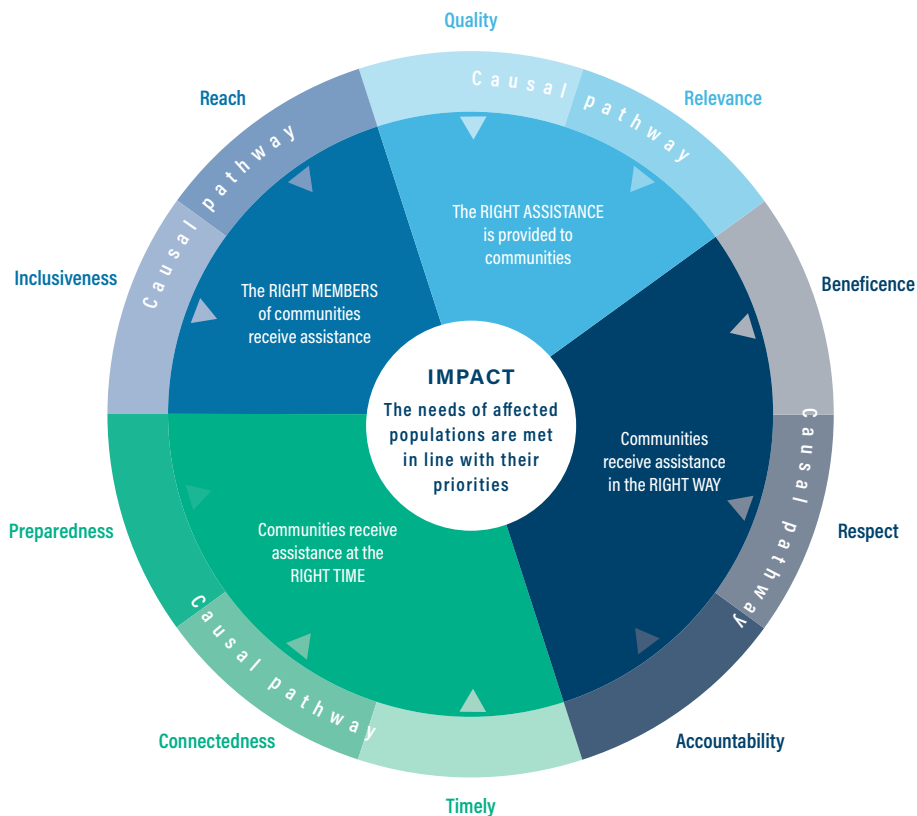
Figure 1: Potential domains of change as a result of localised practices
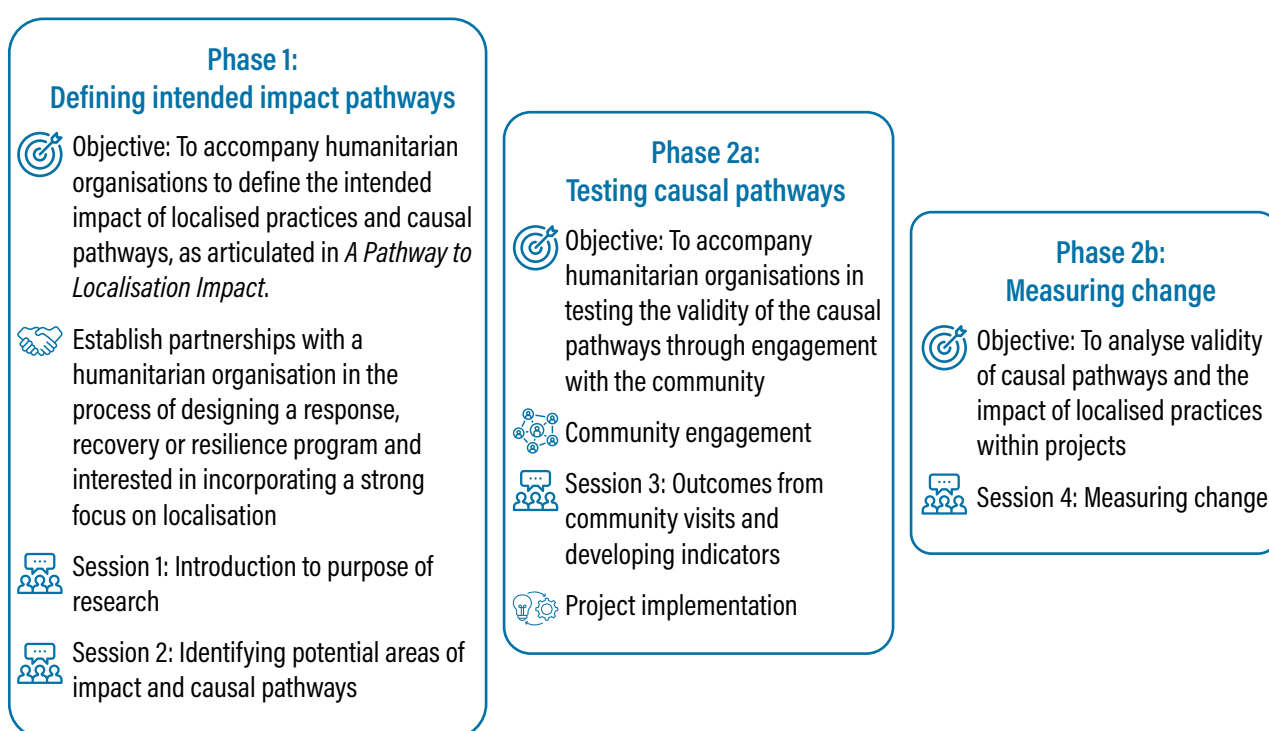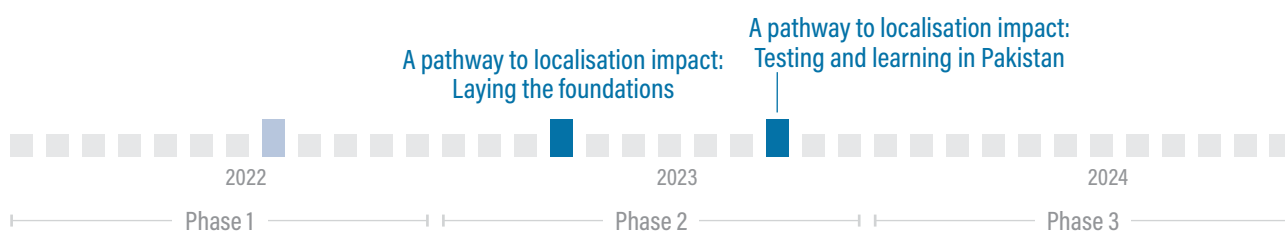
ABOUT THIS PAPER

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to share learning from a case study involving a test of the proposed model and approach for measuring localisation impact in Pakistan. This paper is the first in a series of case studies, which will be analysed collectively to inform the development of a final approach to support localisation impact measurement at the community level.

Methodology: The methodology for this paper was grounded in an accompaniment process (Figure 2), in which members of the research team worked alongside humanitarian partners at the outset of a new program. Over the course of several formal sessions and informal engagements, partners collectively defined and tested intended outcomes, causal pathways and indicators of localisation impact.

Figure 2: Accompaniment process

Phase 1:
Defining intended impact pathways

Objective: To accompany humanitarian organisations to define the intended impact of localised practices and causal pathways, as articulated in *A Pathway to Localisation Impact*.

Establish partnerships with a humanitarian organisation in the process of designing a response, recovery or resilience program and interested in incorporating a strong focus on localisation

Session 1: Introduction to purpose of research

Session 2: Identifying potential areas of impact and causal pathways

Phase 2a:
Testing causal pathways

Objective: To accompany humanitarian organisations in testing the validity of the causal pathways through engagement with the community

Community engagement

Session 3: Outcomes from community visits and developing indicators

Project implementation

Phase 2b:
Measuring change

Objective: To analyse validity of causal pathways and the impact of localised practices within projects

Session 4: Measuring change

Structure: This paper has three sections. This first section introduces the case study and the accompaniment approach, the second section provides an overview of the partners, program and process, and the third section highlights key learning that has emerged from the process to date.

A pathway to localisation impact:
Laying the foundations

A pathway to localisation impact:
Testing and learning in Pakistan

2022   2023   2024

Phase 1   Phase 2   Phase 3

Partner, Program and Process

From July to September 2023, GLOW Consultants and SHIFA Welfare Association (Box 2) worked together in the accompaniment process. The phases of the process and the outcomes/key actions from each phase are outlined in Figure 3.

Box 2: About SHIFA Welfare Association

SHIFA Welfare Association is a non-profit organisation in Pakistan that is currently implementing a shelter and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) project for flood-affected communities in Jacobabad and Qamber Shahdadkot districts in Sindh province and Usta Muhammad district in Balochistan.
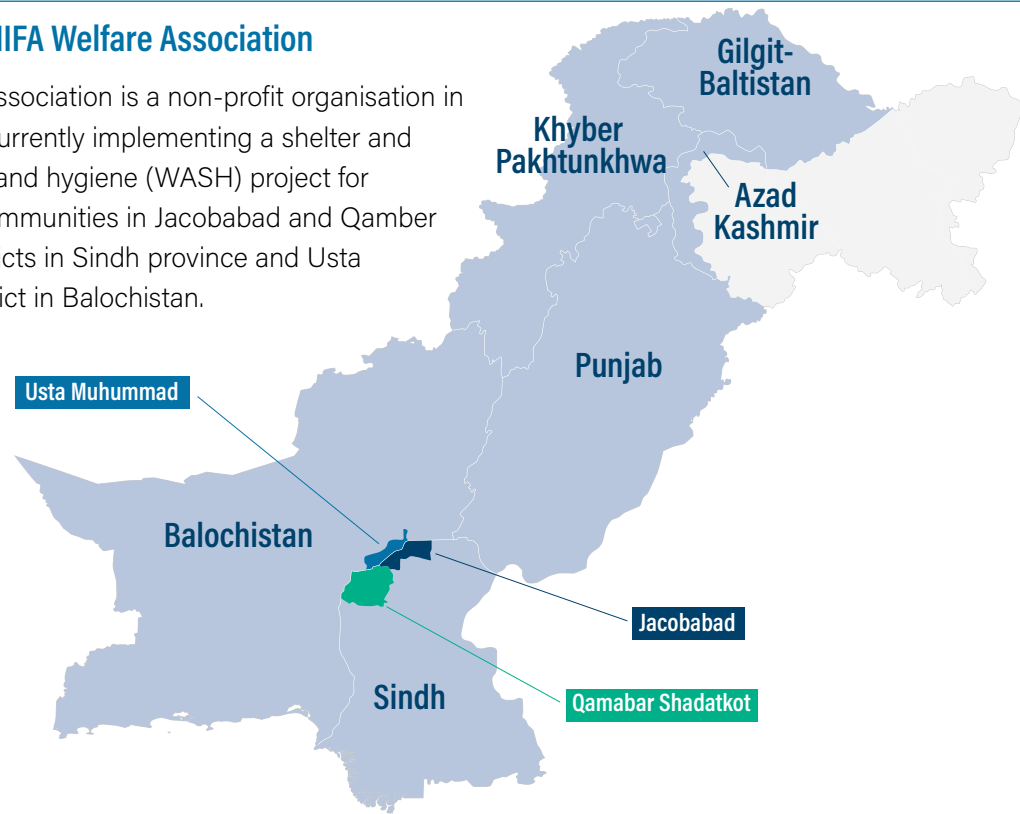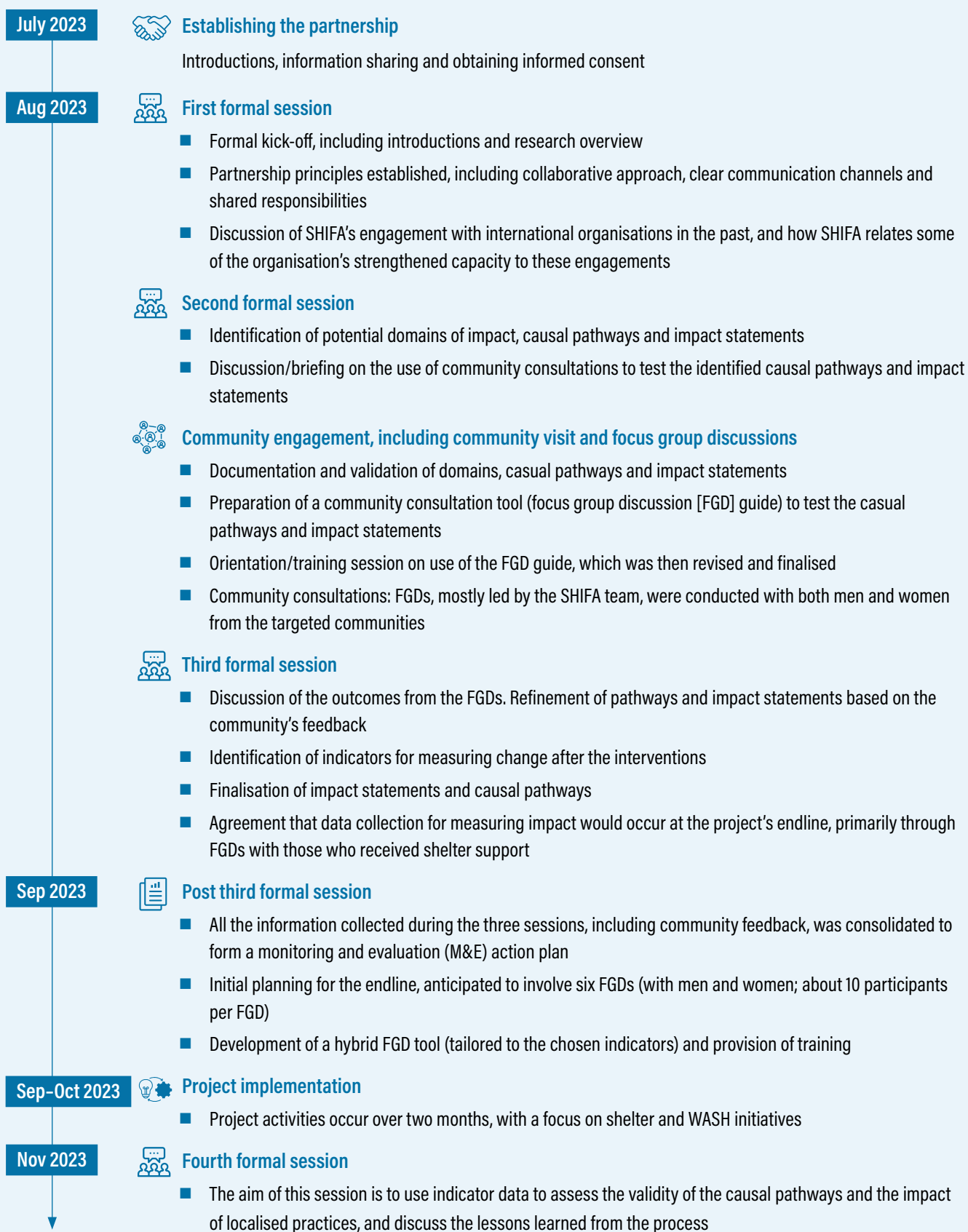

Gilgit-Baltistan

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Azad Kashmir

Punjab

Usta Muhummad

Balochistan

Jacobabad

Qamabar Shadatkot

Sindh

Figure 3: Partnership journey

July 2023 — **Establishing the partnership**

Introductions, information sharing and obtaining informed consent

Aug 2023 — **First formal session**

- Formal kick-off, including introductions and research overview
- Partnership principles established, including collaborative approach, clear communication channels and shared responsibilities
- Discussion of SHIFA's engagement with international organisations in the past, and how SHIFA relates some of the organisation's strengthened capacity to these engagements

Second formal session

- Identification of potential domains of impact, causal pathways and impact statements
- Discussion/briefing on the use of community consultations to test the identified causal pathways and impact statements

Community engagement, including community visit and focus group discussions

- Documentation and validation of domains, casual pathways and impact statements
- Preparation of a community consultation tool (focus group discussion [FGD] guide) to test the casual pathways and impact statements
- Orientation/training session on use of the FGD guide, which was then revised and finalised
- Community consultations: FGDs, mostly led by the SHIFA team, were conducted with both men and women from the targeted communities

Third formal session

- Discussion of the outcomes from the FGDs. Refinement of pathways and impact statements based on the community's feedback
- Identification of indicators for measuring change after the interventions
- Finalisation of impact statements and causal pathways
- Agreement that data collection for measuring impact would occur at the project's endline, primarily through FGDs with those who received shelter support

Sep 2023 — **Post third formal session**

- All the information collected during the three sessions, including community feedback, was consolidated to form a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) action plan
- Initial planning for the endline, anticipated to involve six FGDs (with men and women; about 10 participants per FGD)
- Development of a hybrid FGD tool (tailored to the chosen indicators) and provision of training

Sep–Oct 2023 — **Project implementation**

- Project activities occur over two months, with a focus on shelter and WASH initiatives

Nov 2023 — **Fourth formal session**

- The aim of this session is to use indicator data to assess the validity of the causal pathways and the impact of localised practices, and discuss the lessons learned from the process

OUTCOMES

The following domains, causal pathways and impact statements were developed, drawing on the approach outlined in _A Pathway to Localisation Impact_.

Relevance: The selection of the 'Relevance' domain stemmed from SHIFA's deep understanding of the local context, culture, and climate/environmental conditions. SHIFA's ability to integrate local practices into shelter design and meet community-specific needs (e.g. tribal culture, and the privacy needs of women) underscored the value of this domain. Moreover, SHIFA's technical expertise in shelter interventions, garnered through collaborations with international organisations, reinforced this domain's importance.[1]

Accountable: The 'Accountable' domain was substantiated by SHIFA's strong commitment to its community feedback mechanism, including the implementation of dedicated software. With support from an international actor, SHIFA developed a comprehensive feedback mechanism that allows community members to register positive and negative feedback. SHIFA believes that this new process and software will enable efficient consideration of community members' feedback and rapid resolution of complaints.

Figure 4 overleaf provides an overview of the intended impacts, domain areas and causal pathways SHIFA developed to test during its program.

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1   Due to SHIFA's recent capacity strengthening in relation to shelter interventions, it was agreed that relevance would be considered specifically in terms of those initiatives. Note that shelter is also the main sectoral focus of the program

Photo: Shazib Ali on Unsplash

Figure 4: Domains of change as a result of localised practices

Domain: Accountable

Causal pathway — Local communities feel engaged in project related decision-making because SHIFA is conducting regular community meetings and capacity building trainings

Causal pathway — Local communities receive responses from SHIFA about their feedback because SHIFA uses dedicated software to monitor feedback

Causal pathway — Local communities feel empowered by influencing the intervention design because SHIFA uses community feedback to adapt interventions

Communities receive assistance in the RIGHT WAY

IMPACT: As a result of SHIFA's ability to be accessible and accountable to the community, we expect the community will have better access to feedback mechanisms that will ensure necessary adaptations to the interventions as per community requirements.

Domain: Relevance

Causal pathway — Local communities receive shelter customised to the specific demographic needs of the community (e.g. sufficient space in the shelter to appropriately accommodate all family members) because SHIFA understands the local demographic context (e.g. large families) and uses this knowledge in the intervention design

Causal pathway — Local communities receive shelter suited to local climate conditions because SHIFA understands the local climate context and uses this knowledge in the intervention design

The RIGHT ASSISTANCE is provided to communities

IMPACT: As a result of SHIFA's ability to understand the local environment/ climate and community needs, we expect the community will receive relevant shelter suited to the local environment/ climate and community needs.

Indicators:

Accountable:

% of people engaged in shelter design intervention

% of people engaged in shelter construction intervention

% of people who provided feedback that have received a response from SHIFA

% of people engaging with other stakeholders to influence the intervention design

# of community-led initiatives or projects that have been implemented as a result of community input

Community inputs are reflected in key adaptations to shelter design

Relevance:

% of people who received shelter with sufficient space for all family members

% of people who received shelter suited to local climate conditions

LEARNING

This section outlines the lessons that emerged from testing the model and from the accompaniment process.

MODEL

Learning 1: The approach can be linked to other levels of localisation measurement initiatives to ensure that it aligns with the broader localisation context. This is important to avoid approaches being siloed.

The current impact approach does not currently link community-level impact measurement with other levels of localisation further upstream (e.g. organisational capacity strengthening from intermediary partners) and how that has influenced approaches at the community level. GLOW Consultants and SHIFA highlighted that this should be integrated into the research. Connecting assessments of the impact of localisation at the organisation level and the community level should ensure a comprehensive understanding of the entire localisation lifecycle (see Figure 5 below).

Although capacity strengthening is not formally included in the research approach, the two domains chosen in this case study reflect the capacity strengthening that occurred within SHIFA through collaborations with international organisations as part of broader localisation efforts. SHIFA further developed its shelter expertise and strengthened its community feedback and complaints mechanism via customised software for recording and managing feedback. The benefits from this support should flow on to the community in the form of improved locally led humanitarian action.

Figure 5: Connecting measurement across levels
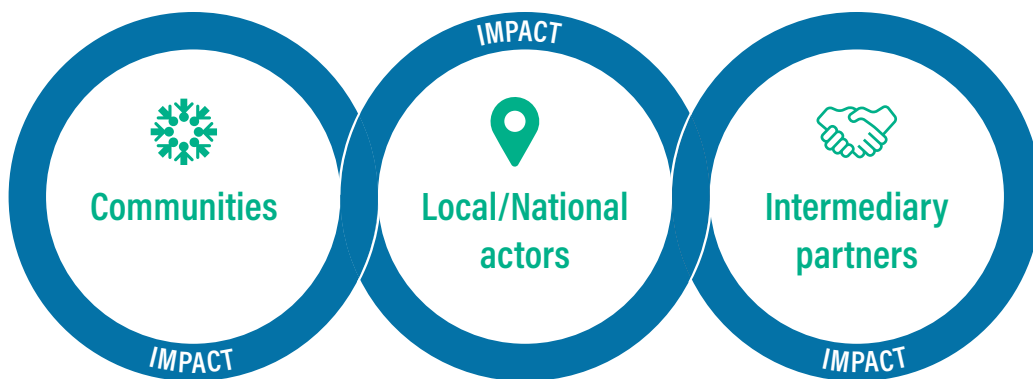
Learning 2: There is a need to consider the scale implications and considerations of the framework

The existing domains in the model were helpful in guiding initial discussions and assessments. They provided a structured framework for the research team's consideration of potential areas of impact and influence. Whilst other domains could have been explored in this research, the team chose to maintain focus on two domains ('accountable' and 'relevance'). This focus reflected both the purpose of this research – learning through testing the approach – and efficient utilisation of available resources. Selecting multiple domains would amplify the time and resources needed to incorporate the full framework into existing M&E processes.

PROCESS

Learning 3: The accompaniment process was a useful approach, not only to define outcomes, but to support strengthened capacity and shared understanding of critical monitoring and evaluation approaches.

SHIFA viewed the partnership as an opportunity to not only achieve the immediate project objectives, but to also build the capacity of the team in M&E to support the organisation in the longer term. Committing to formal sessions undertaken as part of the research, as well as building in additional informal engagement and advice, was possible as a result of the collaborative partnership established between GLOW Consultants and SHIFA. This facilitated capacity-building initiatives, including training sessions and regular guidance, as part of the accompaniment process. Through regular discussions facilitated by GLOW Consultants, SHIFA staff refined and articulated their goals, aligning them within the context of their shelter project. These discussions enabled SHIFA to map out causal links between their activities in the shelter project and the desired impact, as well as to pinpoint the most appropriate indicators for tracking their progress in localisation. SHIFA also decided to collect baseline data. Initially, the plan was to gather data only at the endline, but their strong interest in this project led them to collect data at baseline too, underlining their commitment to a comprehensive understanding of the project's impact.

> "We are delighted to be part of this engagement, conducted in a systematic manner, where we are assessing localisation impact at the community level. The entire process is fascinating, as the project not only focuses on providing shelter and WASH to the community but also emphasises empowering them." (SHIFA)

Learning 4: A structured process and timelines do not factor in the ongoing relationship building and engagement needed to make progress, especially in a new area such as this.

The accompaniment manual that was developed to guide the process and support the research team to test the approach outlined in *A Pathway to Localisation Impact* does not necessarily place enough emphasis on the ongoing relationship building and engagement required when using an accompaniment model. In practice, the engagement extends beyond the four formal sessions that were designed for this project, and requires frequent, ongoing communication between the research partners. The informal engagement that takes place between sessions is important in supporting the partner organisation to gain a thorough understanding of research expectations, and helps to strengthen M&E capacity (as outlined above). These informal sessions form part of the collaborative approach that contributes to more effective and comprehensive engagement.

Learning 5: Incorporate learning from other localisation initiatives in impact measurement

Insights from this case study can be shared with participants in other localisation initiatives and forums in Pakistan to ensure mutual learning and reinforcing of best practice approaches to localisation measurement. Leveraging various communication networks, such as the National Humanitarian Network (NHN) Pakistan and the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF), will amplify the reach of these findings. Additionally, organising remote sessions to present key findings to interested individuals and community members will facilitate knowledge dissemination. This can contribute to a more comprehensive and effective approach to measuring localisation impacts at the community level.

What's next?

This case study is the first in a series across different contexts in the Asia-Pacific region. The case studies will be launched individually between November 2023 and March 2024. Upon the conclusion of the final stages in the accompaniment process in each context, the research team will reflect on what has been learned across both the model and process, and prepare an approach to guide localisation impact measurement across the sector.

If you'd like to learn more about our localisation impact measurement work, or to get involved, please contact Sara Phillips – sphillips@hag.org.au, Pamela Combinido – pcombinido@hag.org.au, or
Jess Lees – jlees@hag.org.au

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Acknowledgements

About Humanitarian Horizons 2021–2024

About the project team

GLOW Consultants based in Pakistan, is a leading national entity providing practice solutions and field implementation support to donors, their implementing partners and research institutions. GLOW has successfully completed more than 100 third-party monitoring and evaluation assignments.

Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) was founded in 2012 to elevate the profile of humanitarian action in Asia and the Pacific. Set up as a social enterprise, HAG provides a unique space for thinking, research, technical advice and training that contributes to excellence in humanitarian practice.