



## ECOSOC HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS SEGMENT

PALAIS DES NATIONS, GENEVA 24-26 June 2019

**Event Title:** *'Localisation under the looking glass: what we have learned and where we are headed'*

**Date, time and room:** 26<sup>th</sup> June, 8.30am-10am, Room XXI

**Sponsors:** International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) as co-conveners of the Grand Bargain Localisation Workstream; Department for International Development (DFID), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and Ground Truth Solutions; Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG), the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs, Australian Red Cross; the Charter4Change Network (C4C), ACT Alliance, Local2GlobalProtection (L2GP)

**Objective:** To demonstrate new ways of engaging and empowering local and national responders and progress evidence-based actions that ensure the safety, dignity and rights of the most vulnerable

**Panel Members: (names and titles)**

- Initial panel
  - Naomi Tolay-Solanke, Executive Director, Community Health Initiatives, Liberia / Representative of the Grand Bargain Localisation Workstream
  - Kate Sutton, Director, Humanitarian Advisory Group Australia
  - Elias Sagmeister, Deputy Director, Ground Truth Solutions
  - Michael Mosselmans, Humanitarian Policy Director, Christian Aid / Representative of the Charter4Change Coalition
- Repondents panel
  - Monique Pariat, Director General of ECHO
  - Dylan Winder, Humanitarian Counselor, UK Mission to the UN in Geneva
  - Sema Genel, Chair of NEAR Network Leadership Council and Executive Director of Support to Life, Turkey
- Co-chairs
  - Philippe Besson, Head, Multilateral Division, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
  - Jemilah Mahmood, Under-Secretary General for Partnerships, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

**Key messages of the side event:**

In addition to brief presentations, this side-event included small-group discussions to permit frank and informal discussion of challenges facing localisation efforts, and recommendations to address these going forward. Based on the write-up of discussions in those small-groups as well as the panelists' remarks, the following key messages emerge:

- It is important to recognize the level of "mindset change" that has already occurred in the humanitarian sector around localisation and that is gradually reshaping how partnerships work between international and local actors. However, perceptions still vary about some important aspects of the agenda. For instance, there

is a perception that local actors are unable to undertake protection tasks, though recent research has come to the opposite conclusion.

- The most challenging part of the localisation agenda has been around direct funding to local actors. Donor due diligence requirements continue to be very difficult for local actors to satisfy, while donors lack the capacity to separately negotiate and oversee large numbers of contracts.
- There is a need for context-specific dialogues between donors, intermediary agencies and local actors to enable a more honest, effective and equitable approach to risk-sharing as a mutual responsibility; and invest in efforts to facilitate alignment between different donor requirements and alternative approaches in donor compliance and due diligence requirements.
- There is also a need for increased donor and international agency support for multi-year capacity-strengthening of local organisations to deliver on sustainable growth and empowerment, not just short-term response project deliverables.
- However, local actors have made clear that the issue is not only about funding, it is also about the quality of partnership and about their representation in key decision-making forums.

#### **Main points raised during the discussion with participants:**

##### Sharing risks in a more equitable and strategic way

Participants observed that local NGOs frequently take on the highest level of risk in their work on the ground, whilst donor and international agency risk management approaches prioritise managing risks ‘upwards’ in terms of meeting financial and counter-terror compliance priorities of donors. Dialogue to identify contextual risks and optimal approaches to risk-sharing should happen in each context. Donors could make use of risk management checklists to encourage implementing agencies to undertake this dialogue with relevant stakeholders and factor this into project assessments. Steps to address some of the obstacles might include:

- Investing in initiatives to promote equivalence across their national approaches to due diligence and compliance, potentially with reference to the Core Humanitarian Standard.
- Taking inspiration from the Start Fund’s approach to ‘tiered approaches’ to due diligence.
- Invest in proactive awareness-raising and messaging to donor country parliaments and media to educate them on benefits of localisation and a less risk averse humanitarian response financing
- Exploring whether our Grand Bargain workstreams (for instance, on quality funding and on harmonized funding) might also contribute to resolving issues around due diligence and compliance.
- Learning from the more flexible donor approach to stabilisation funding and adapt for humanitarian funding.

##### Finding additional options to address the dilemmas of direct funding

Where donors cannot provide direct funding to local actors, they should support intermediary agencies to adopt an empowering, equitable and sustainable approach to capacity-strengthening of local partners, which can link to indicators in the Charter4Change and Grand Bargain workstream. INGOs and UN agencies could develop a ‘buddy model’ to invest in and accompany local partners in growing their capacity, including with regard to meeting compliance and due diligence demands. This involves linking to development investment over longer-term timeframes (10 to 20 years).

Additionally, it was recommended that additional steps be taken to expand the potential of country-based pooled funds (CBPFs) to promote localisation goals. Many donors are turning to these as the best way to more directly fund local actors. During the side event itself, ECHO announced that it is piloting funding to pooled funds as a mechanism to support local NGOs. However, the UN's CBPFs are present in only 18 contexts, they do not necessarily privilege support for local responders as a policy matter, and they do not address longer-term capacity issues. Participants recommended that CBPFs:

- Expand grant periods, ideally to multi-year periods.
- Open-up space for NNGOs on the pooled fund advisory boards.
- Increase support to NNGOs in navigating the application process, including through OCHA providing feedback workshops and 'buddy' support by other agencies.

### Localisation and participation

While there has been progress, local actors are still not adequately represented in decision-making and policy forums (like ECOSOC and the Grand Bargain). The Grand Bargain could learn from the Charter4Change by adopting the 'national NGO endorser' model for engaging a wider range of NNGOs across all workstreams.

Stronger links should also be made between accountability to affected populations and localisation efforts, both within the Grand Bargain and in operations.

*Presentations and related background reading can be found on [Grand Bargain Localisation Workstream website](#)*