



PUTTING LOCAL ACTORS AT THE HEART OF HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES

THE DUTCH RELIEF ALLIANCE GUIDANCE NOTE ON LOCALISATION

The Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA) finds great value in contributing to stronger roles and increased leadership of local actors in humanitarian aid – referred to as ‘localisation’.

The DRA believes enhanced localisation can contribute to improving the effectiveness of humanitarian responses. The past few years have seen the DRA increasingly collaborating with, and strengthening the capacity of, many local actors - and localisation is included in the 2017-2021 DRA strategic plan.

The DRA established a localisation working group to further promote and coordinate the localisation initiatives of member organisations. The DRA’s localisation efforts are aligned with, and inspired by, a number of international initiatives. In this paper, such efforts and initiatives are outlined here in order to promote a shared understanding of localisation among DRA members and their local partners.

INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES ON LOCALISATION

The role of local actors received renewed attention during the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, which saw international and national non-governmental organisations (I/NGOs) put localisation in humanitarian aid on the agenda. Several commitments were made during the summit and new initiatives launched to help foster increased localisation. Three of these initiatives are particularly significant: the Charter for Change; the Grand Bargain; and the START Network.

CHARTER FOR CHANGE

The Charter for Change (C4C), an initiative led by national and international NGOs, aims to change the way the humanitarian system operates in order to allow for a greater number of locally-led responses. The C4C commitments translate localisation into seven practical actions:

- Direct funding of local NGOs
- Increased transparency in funding
- Enhanced partnerships between local and international NGOs
- Less subcontracting of humanitarian work
- Improved capacity building of local NGOs
- Increased organisational support to local NGOs
- Increased more visibility and communication about the work of local NGOs.

Currently, 34 international NGOs - including seven DRA members - have signed up to the C4C commitments, while 200 local actors have endorsed them. See www.charter4change.org for further information.



GRAND BARGAIN

The Grand Bargain, established at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, is an agreement between more than 30 of the biggest global donors and aid providers. The agreement aims to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action and contains significant commitments on localisation.

Currently, 53 donor governments, UN agencies and networks of international NGOs have signed the Grand Bargain. The Government of The Netherlands is one of the Grand Bargain signatories, which supports and reports on localisation commitments. DRA results on localisation will also contribute to the Dutch government achieving its localisation commitments.



Localisation commitments in the Grand Bargain:

1. Increase and support multi-year investment in the institutional capacities of local and national responders, including preparedness, response and coordination capacities, particularly in fragile contexts and where communities are vulnerable to the effects of armed conflicts, natural disasters, recurrent outbreaks and climate change. We should achieve this through collaborating with development partners and incorporating capacity strengthening measures in partnership agreements.
2. Better understand and work to remove or reduce barriers that prevent organisations and donors from partnering with local and national responders in order to reduce their administrative burden.
3. 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 humanitarian principles.
4. Achieve a global, aggregated target of at least 25 per cent of humanitarian funding going to local and national responders as directly as possible by 2020. This will improve outcomes for affected people and reduce transactional costs.
5. Develop and apply, in partnership with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), a 'localisation' marker to measure direct and indirect funding to local and national responders.
6. Make greater use of funding tools which increase and improve assistance delivered by local and national responders, such as UN-led country-based pooled funds (CBPF), IFRC Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) and NGO-led and other pooled funds.

Work began in 2017 to define who exactly is a 'local actor' - and who is not. The IASC Localisation Marker Working Group uses this definition: 'Local and national non-state actors are "organizations engaged in relief that are headquartered and operating in their own aid recipient country and which are not affiliated to an international NGO"'.

START NETWORK

Another important driver of localisation is the Start Network - a body made up of 42 national and international NGOs across five continents, including several DRA members. By harnessing the network's power and knowledge to make faster and better decisions, the Start Network aims to deliver effective aid to support people affected by crises.

1. Start fund and start network and localisation, Smruti Patel and Koenraad van Brabant April 2017

The Start Network is currently in the process of establishing a decentralised network, starting with the Start Fund Bangladesh. The DRA may learn from the experiences of the network and from their views to consider the following seven key localisation dimensions¹

FUNDING	PARTNERSHIPS	CAPACITY	PARTICIPATION REVOLUTION	COORDINATION MECHANISMS	VISIBILITY	POLICY INFLUENCE
 25% As directly as possible Better quality	 Less sub contracting More equitable	 Institutional development Stop undermining	 Of crisis affected communities Gender, age, disabilities...	 National actors greater presence and influence	 Roles, results and innovations by national actors	 National actors greater presence and influence in international policy debates

The goal of the DRA's localisation efforts is to contribute to the more effective and efficient delivery of humanitarian aid. The DRA vision on localisation is characterised by the complementarity of different actors, new collaboration mechanisms, balanced leadership and increased access to finances for both international and local actors. This vision also implies that DRA members who are not currently partnering with local actors for the implementation of humanitarian activities may still contribute to localisation - for example by supporting advocacy work for a more prominent role for local actors in the international and local humanitarian system.

The specific context of each DRA joint response obviously varies - and this means that our overall localisation objectives and activities need to be translated into locally-specific ones. As a result, the DRA will work as a collective to achieve its localisation objectives.

Local actors and local partners - definitions

The DRA considers **local actors** to be nationally registered organisations with local governance, leadership and decision-making processes. These organisations include local government, local government service providers such as health clinics and schools, national NGOs and community-based organisations.

Local partners are national and local NGOs with which DRA members **collaborate based on a contract** and which receive a portion of the available funding to deliver humanitarian assistance in joint responses.

Note: The definitions of 'local actors' and 'local partners' are in accordance with the 'Definitions Paper of IASC Humanitarian Financing Task Team, Localisation Marker Working Group'.

LOCALISATION AS A KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Localisation is one of the four key priorities in the DRA's 2017-2021 strategic plan. Within the plan localisation is defined as 'more effectively supporting locally-led responses' and is made up of five practical objectives.

DRA localisation objectives to 2021:

1. **Increased funding to local actors:** At least 25 per cent of DRA funding will flow as directly as possible to local actors by the end of 2019. The coalition aims to increase this sum to 35 per cent by the year 2021 - the end of the strategic period.
2. **More efficient funding:** The DRA will focus on minimising transaction costs and ensuring funds flow as directly as possible to local actors in line with Grand Bargain commitments, whilst maintaining quality, strong risk management structures and robust accountability mechanisms.
3. **Enhanced capacity strengthening:** Local actors will be more strongly supported through capacity strengthening mechanisms allowing for effective and accountable humanitarian action. The DRA will aim for 5-8 per cent of joint response budgets to be related to strengthening the capacity of local actors by 2021, as needs dictate.
4. **Amplifying local voices:** The DRA will work to amplify the voices and capacities of local actors in international fora, coordination systems and with other donors.
5. **Improved partnerships with local actors in conflict contexts:** The DRA will continue to innovate new methods to support partners in conflicts through remote management, monitoring and negotiating, and maintaining access.

LOCALISATION WORKING GROUP

The Localisation Working Group supports joint response leads in developing activities that contribute to localisation. The group also monitors progress and facilitates knowledge exchange and learning on localisation within joint responses and among local actors. Together with KUNO (the platform for Humanitarian Knowledge Exchange in The Netherlands), the Localisation Working Group conducted an initial analysis of key 2018 joint response proposals and budgets on planned contributions to localisation. The results will serve as a starting point for discussion and allow for focused support to joint responses. This will serve to strengthen efforts that contribute to localisation.

Analysis of localisation within the DRA joint responses - preliminary findings:

- Localisation is incorporated into the narrative proposal of each joint response. However, localisation efforts could benefit from deeper **analysis** of the local humanitarian context



with regard to challenges and opportunities for more locally-led responses as well as clear localisation targets that can be monitored.

- DRA joint responses have so far mainly contributed to two localisation priorities: **capacity strengthening and funding**.
- 2018 joint response plans have seen an **average of 23 per cent** of total budgets **allocated to local partners**. This represents an increase compared to the percentage in the period 2015 to 2017, which saw 15 per cent of joint response funds allocated to local partners. Between individual joint responses a wide variety in percentage is observed, which reflects the different context of each joint response.
- An average of **1.8 per cent is planned to be spent on capacity strengthening of local actors**, primarily on technical training programmes. There are quite some differences between expenditure on capacity strengthening between individual joint responses. Context-specific analyses of joint responses are needed to help reduce these disparities.



DUTCH RELIEF ALLIANCE

The Dutch Relief Alliance is a collaboration between sixteen Dutch humanitarian non-governmental organisations, funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Their joint work aims to alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable people in need of humanitarian assistance around the world. For more information visit www.dutchrelief.org.

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THE WAY FORWARD - OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The DRA will work together with local partners and other actors in our humanitarian network to achieve our localisation goals. The Localisation Working Group will assist DRA members in this and coordinate the realisation of the following activities:

1. Local partners participate in DRA joint responses and the Localisation Working Group

- Ensure that joint responses **transparently share information** with local partners and that local partners are involved in decision-making throughout the programme cycle and in the coordination of joint responses.
- Explore ways to ensure **local partners are more involved in the leadership of joint responses**, such as having local partners co-lead a joint response with a DRA member.
- Propose a mechanism to **involve local actors** to hold the DRA accountable for achieving its localisation objectives.

2. Activities are developed and rolled out across the various dimensions of localisation

- Promote the use of the seven dimensions of localisation outlined by the Start Network: these dimensions will inspire the DRA to develop activities **beyond achieving funding targets**.
- Ensure **capacity strengthening** is not merely limited to technical training but also includes activities such as encouraging joint work and learning; organisational development; mentoring and coaching; and technical support.
- **A shift in partnership models is required**. Promote partnerships based on the principles of equality, transparency, results-oriented approaches, responsibility and complementarity. Simple actions to help improve partnerships should be developed, particularly in complex contexts.
- Work to promote **systems for direct access to quality funding** for local actors, such as funds for organisational development.
- **Prioritisation of joint advocacy** is identified as an important area to explore. DRA members are part of different international networks and can advocate for change in the local humanitarian systems together with local partners. Collaboration with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs may offer further opportunities to leverage influence.

3. Learning, monitoring and evaluation

- **Dialogue with and between joint response leads, members, local partners** on baseline results, plans and challenges related to localisation.
- **Promote learning and sharing across joint responses**. Collect and share achievements and lessons learned between joint responses.
- **Align DRA localisation efforts with wider humanitarian initiatives** and draw on available expertise. These initiatives include the Charter for Change, the Start Network and the international networks of DRA members
- **Monitor progress**, develop key indicators and propose measurement and evaluation methods for the localisation contributions of the DRA.
- Support **communication and reporting** on localisation initiatives by the DRA to ensure greater accountability to local partners and actors.