



The Charter for Change at Crossroads: 3rd Annual Charter for Change Annual Meeting, Oslo, December 4-5th 2018 Meeting Report

The first section of this meeting report outlines some of the main developments, progress and challenges discussed during the two days, both within the Charter for Change signatory organisations, from endorser perspectives and within the wider humanitarian ecosystem. The 2nd section outlines key action points and outcomes. Almost 50 representatives from 27 of the 32 Charter for Change signatory organisations and 15 representatives from national NGOs and endorser organisations met in Oslo for the 3rd C4C annual meeting in December 2018.

The Goal of the meeting was for signatories and endorsers to recommit to the Charter, address blockages to full implementation and identify ways to collectively promote and enable more locally-led response. The outcomes of the discussions aimed to assist in identifying a critical action plan for 2019, including identification of lead agencies to ensure progress, to further advance the Charter commitments. The event was hosted jointly by Norwegian Church Aid, Norwegian Peoples Aid, Caritas Norway and CARE Norway with support from the C4C coordination group. Caritas Norway undertook to lead the organisation of the meeting, Norwegian Church Aid generously provided meeting space and fed participants and Norwegian People's Aid hosted the Panel discussion. Signatory organisations sponsored partners to come to the meeting and paid for the costs of facilitation¹.

The two days were divided into plenary discussions to share and exchange learning and challenges, build shared understanding and trust, and smaller group discussions to deepen the conversations on pre-identified challenges and to identify concrete actions for 2019.

Section 1, Day 1:

The Charter's relevance within wider Localization efforts

An overview of sector-wide developments was shared by Anne Street of CAFOD and Michael Mosselmans of Christian Aid

There are several positive signs of progress, particularly in the context of commitments made under the Grand Bargain's (GB) Workstream 2 on more Support and Funding to Local and National Actors. This includes increased donor direct engagement with, and funding to, local actors (via increased use of pooled funds and of the partnership modality), increased reporting on funding flows to local actors, innovative ways to fund capacity strengthening, participation in reporting requirements, simplification pilots, funding the piloting of locally-led approaches (ECHO Syria pilot, Accelerating Localization through Partnerships project, amongst others). At UN level there is increased access to and participation in humanitarian coordination fora for local actors and efforts to include localization into humanitarian instruments (e.g. response plan in

¹ Those signatories which generously provided funded to ensure the participation of national NGO representatives include: CARE International, CARE Norway, Caritas Denmark, Caritas Norway, CAFOD, Christian Aid, CRS, DanChurch Aid, Norwegian People's Aid and Troicare.

Bangladesh). Global trends are increasingly pointing towards regionalization and decentralization, e.g. START Network, INGOs and UN decentralization processes.

However, GB and PACT reports² confirm that overall, progress is patchy and has been inconsistent and disappointingly slow, with many actors positioning to communicate their adherence to localisation rather than undertaking significant change.

On the flip side, more assertive and capable Southern governments and local actors force Localization forward (incl. strong advocacy by local actors e.g. Cox's Bazar NGO CSO Forum (CCNF), NEAR Network, new Alliance for Empowered Partnerships (A4EP)) but a worrying trend towards restrictive civil society space.

[for more details on sector-wide developments shared, see [here](#)]

**Findings from C4C signatory organisations 2018 annual progress reports:
Key findings of C4C annual progress report were shared by Nils Carstensen (DCA/Local2Global) and Saskia Harmsen (Oxfam)**

- Taken together, the total reported humanitarian expenditure of the 20 signatories that provided data to the 2018 C4C Annual Report amounted to \$1.2 billion, of which 19.7% (or \$240 million) was channeled to local and national NGOs (source: [Charter for Change, From Commitments to Action, 2017-2018](#)) Difficulty reporting on capacity strengthening flows (very few signatories are able to do this)
- Reporting against a specific response in the last Annual Report, in addition to overall organizational changes, was felt to provide added value
- C4C network is used increasingly as a platform for joint advocacy – influencing global policy dialogue; used as a convening banner for local organizations to come around and influence signatories.
- Doubling of C4C endorsers since 2017
- Context should drive what localization looks like
- Some commitments progressed more than others (top: transparency; bottom: recruiting from local/national NGOs)

Resources:

For progress on Funding and Transparency commitments, see the 2017-2018 C4C Annual Report ([link](#))

For the slides used during the meeting, see ([Annual Report progress update](#))

Endorsers' Survey – key findings

Key findings from the Endorsers' Survey were presented by Sudhanshu Singh from HAI, member of the C4C Coordination group and an endorser organisation.

*"We are calling for 3 Cs: More and better **Capacity strengthening**, stronger **Communications** about C4C at country level, and greater **Coherence** between INGO head office and country office, between organisational policies and practice on the ground".*

74 respondents from 22 countries, 75% of which were C4C endorsers, participated in the survey.

- C4C has potential, but not fully realized and it is insufficiently known at country level.
- Endorsers consistently rate signatories' achievement of commitments lower than signatory self-reports.
- Sub-contracting and direct implementation by signatories, particularly during sudden on-set disasters, continues to be widespread.
- Endorsers want to be more engaged in the process and decision-making.
- Local actors' visibility is a significant issue for endorsers.

² Grand Bargain Annual Independent Report, 2018, ([link](#)); Agenda for Humanity (PACT) report 'Reinforce Local Systems and Invest in Local Capacities, 2018 ([link](#))

Resources:

Slides used in meeting on C4C Endorsers' Survey ([link](#))

C4C Endorsers' Survey report, November 2018 ([link](#))

The Network for Empowered Aid Response, NEAR: critical reflection on C4C Progress

Sema Genel, Director of Support to Life, Turkey, Chair of the Board of NEAR

Impressed by determination and drive for change within C4C. The new Alliance for Empowering Partnership A4EP focusing on advocacy is also a positive development. NEAR has devised a Localization Performance Measurement Framework with 6 components which identifies an impact indicator, (what will the change be when this component is in place) and a performance indicator (what is the organisational change needed):

- (1) Partnerships
- (2) Funding
- (3) Capacity
- (4) Coordination & complementarity
- (5) Policy, influence and visibility
- (6) Participation

Resources:

Slides used in the meeting by NEAR ([link](#))

Discussions following the presentations of the C4C Annual Report, the Endorsers Survey and the NEAR presentation:

Variation between signatories' self-reporting and endorsers' perceptions of progress: there were no real surprises, as much of the variation is to be expected, especially in issues like transparency. It is difficult to drill down into the specifics of different country contexts where progress can vary a lot, and this might be a useful analysis for future learning and progress. There is a need for a more incentive-based system, rather than a complex cumbersome reporting system (against C4C commitments)

Suggestions, recommendations triggered by the morning's discussions

- in partnership agreement, add that signatories have made commitments to the C4C and as part of partnership, review where we are against the commitments. It can also be used as a tool to influence others who want to enter in partnership – that C4C is a basic standard that needs to be met. All signatories could have the same format so easier to compile and compare.
- C4C should be part and parcel of all project phases (eg, project design) – you need to do well in all phases, not just one commitment.
- integrate C4C commitments into partnership agreements,
- more transparency in our reporting (C4C reports should be public),
- formalize the endorsers' survey as an annual exercise,
- instate more formal feedback mechanisms to seek more formalized feedback.
- INGOs to share rules for Partnering upfront so they can be agreed and negotiated, providing transparent info on budget (incl. core costs and CB lines) to have conversation and negotiation around sharing of budget;
- HQs sign commitments but often they don't have oversight of what Country Offices are doing (quite independent, self-driven); standardize more of the C4C regulations across countries with a signatory organisation; standards applied differently in different contexts as increasingly INGOs are recruiting private sector leaders as CDs and CMT members who don't have same civil society strengthening mentality and thinking.

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Local Perspectives: 13 local NGO endorsers reported on Localization in their own country context:

"C4C is not so much at cross-roads, it is taking roots, getting momentum in Bangladesh, especially in the Rohingya response. Although we have a long way to go, we all need to change, including our local organizations" (Bangladeshi endorser). Localization is first and foremost about affected people "their agency, centrality, dignity, needs, rights, and role in crisis response," and to "not let reflections on INGO/NNGO dynamics distract us from empowering and respecting the people we serve" (East Jerusalem endorser). In the Philippines, where Localization has progressed significantly, endorsers identified enabling conditions as "*participatory, people-led governance, a vibrant civil society, strong local networks and alliances, collective advocacy, committed C4C signatories, and locally-led response delivering real gains on the ground.*" Local actors are increasingly asserting their role and influence in various fora or sectors: in the DRC, SGBV is an effective entry point for local women's rights organizations "*where we participate and make our voice heard in SGBV coordination and decision-making spaces from Goma, to Kinshasa and Geneva*" (DRC endorser). South Sudan endorsers spoke about the critical role of the NGO Forum "*in representing the interests and facilitating the collective voice of local NGOs*". Nigerian endorsers spoke about mentorship schemes that help local actors meet due diligence requirements and access pooled funding. Leading Localization activists noted that "*positive engagement and dialogue*" and "*moving beyond the excessive focus on relief to include peace and development*" are critical. "*We should avoid the blame game, be proactive, not reactive, look beyond Northern processes to find our own solutions (with innovations in governance, resource mobilization and approaches such as survivor-led response).*" "*We can no longer be spoon-fed.*" (India, Bangladeshi and Turkish endorsers).

Groupwork on the following topics:

PSEA/donor blockages: We were concerned that in some quarters PSEA is being used as an argument against localization, because it is difficult for donors to track and enforce NNGO/LNGO compliance with safeguarding expectations, and because some reports assert that a significant share of safeguarding incidents involve NNGO/LNGO personnel. Endorsers felt that these reports are inaccurate and unfair. There is a case for more evidence-gathering to increase donor confidence in NNGO/LNGO safeguarding policy and practice (for more detail, see [here](#)).

HQ-country office divide: In many cases national INGO staff are less aware of their organisation's localisation commitments that HQ. There are too many demands on partners for compliance with standards and too short time-lines for implementation before other demands are made. This needs to change (for more detail, see [here](#)).

Capacity support: Much capacity strengthening is too supply side determined, whereas it should start with a self-assessment process and be linked to preparedness and undertaken ahead of not during an emergency. INGOs need to negotiate with their donors and ask for flexibility in funding and policy approaches to ensure capacity support is funded (for more detail, see [here](#)).

Plenary reflections on feedback from breakout groups:

- C4C as a journey... highs and lows.
- C4C is about changing how we are doing things so 'no one will be left behind'
- Too much focus on GB and C4C – what about Sendai framework (risk reduction)? And refugee compact; migration, climate change. Next stage of maturity of C4C?
- Lack of awareness around C4C, GB – knowledge is power, ammunition for local organisations to move things forward.
- Better synergies between C4C, NEAR, A4EP
- Usefulness of listening [to a discussion among local actors only]

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- As a new signatory, lots of new learning gained from existing signatories
- We need each other as endorsers and signatories – part of the same eco-system; symbiotic relationship – part of an interdependent food chain ‘We can’t do this without one another’
- As an endorser, learning from other contexts was useful and what works in my country does not work outside – context matters! But: PSEA should not be contextualized – it is a human rights issue
- PSEA requirements experienced as a blocker to advancing localisation internally – did not resonate with others? Education is key – universal declaration of Human Rights should drive everything – it is the glue that holds us together. Human beings/humanity.
- “If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, go together”
- Fear of unknown keeping us away from each other – donors are human beings, not machines. Collective action towards our joint advocacy targets vs. going at it alone
- Inspired by survivor-led response, EJ-YMCA Palestine approach ([learning brief](#))
- Importance of national NGO forums – for coordination, for capacity strengthening, for advocacy and influencing (South Sudan example)
- Role of local government? Government as duty bearer (at times, we NGOs think we are responsible to deliver services); local actors negotiating access and navigating minefields to gain access to populations – maintaining neutrality. Nigeria: Disaster management agency & line ministries – sustainability “charity begins at home”; Mosul – govt helps us identify problems (line ministry ‘water quality’ example) – we work together.
- Does gender matter to the C4C? Is the C4C gender blind? Dignity vs. effectiveness – transformation of power
- How of localization in conflict settings - we need to do more on this

Nanette Antequisa of ECOWEB in the Philippines provided a closing summation of the day ([link](#))

Section 1, Day 2:

Panel with Norwegian government, Reidun Otteroy, Policy Director, Humanitarian affairs & Sherpa to Grand Bargain; **Norwegian Church Aid:** Arne Naess-Holms, Director of International Programs; **COAST Bangladesh** Reza Chowdhury, Executive Director & **CARITAS Nigeria** Nkese Udongwo, Senior Advisor, Institutional Capacity Strengthening facilitated by Nils Carstensen from DCA/ Local to Global.

The session underlined the importance of being able to directly speak to donors and explain some of the challenges and suggest solutions. The de-facto limited access that most national NGOs have to the OCHA-managed country-based pooled funds was underscored, as well as the need for progressive donors like Norway to influence their peers in policy forums such as the GHD (Good Humanitarian Donorship) to move forward to deliver concrete progress on localisation. The importance of specificity of context was emphasized and Norway is focusing more on qualitative issues of localisation such as quality of partnerships, and inclusiveness as well as quantitative aspects. National actors emphasized the fact that even donors with in-country staff often do not see and understand what a key role many local and national organisations play in the delivery of humanitarian aid.

The Level 3 Rohingya response demonstrated mixed results for localisation, for example UNICEF is working more with local partners and 2 large INGOs are now working mainly with partners, however funding has mainly gone direct to UN, Red Cross, and to a lesser extent INGOs, not to local actors; response is supply-driven not demand-driven, and there is a pressing need for donors to be localisation champions and demand change in some of these practices. this.

Take-aways: Norwegian government

- Issue of difficult access to pooled funds

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- Localization in adolescent stage – growing pains
- Representation of local actors in coordination structures
- Less earmarking + piloting 8+3
- Norway’s involvement in GHD as a point of leverage
- “INGOs, UN agencies, you have to take a new role, not commanding, but facilitating”

Reactions and reflections of meeting participants to what they heard in the Panel discussion are here ([link](#))

DRA: Moving localization forward in the Dutch Relief Alliance

Inge Leuverink of CORDAID and Laurens den Dulk of ICCO shared an example of Dutch NGOs coming together and jointly supporting progress on localization. The Dutch Relief Alliance has formed a ‘localisation working group’ which shares good practice and learning, coordinates together when they work with the same local partners, and engages in more strategic collaboration with the Dutch government in advocacy on localisation.

Key learnings are that working together, rather than individually has improved their good practice and the effectiveness of their advocacy. Strong leadership is required as is staff attention, and budget for localisation activities as part of DRA, e.g. for conducting baseline & analysis activities. Such a grouping can also positively influence other INGOs which do not prioritize working with local actors.

Resource:

Slides used by Cordaid and ICCO on DRA presentation ([link](#))

Section 2: Outcomes and Action Points

Governance & Administration

- Adjust Charter language; change the date to 2020; increase funding passed to national actors to 25% (in line with Grand Bargain); reword Commitment 4 on recruitment/compensation
- Move the secretariat for C4C to a new organisation, potentially HAI in India
- Make submitting an annual report a requirement for all signatories.
- Establish a protocol for aspiring signatories in order to decide who is admitted as a signatory
- Review Coordination group membership and add new members.

Research & Advocacy

- Survey of endorsers to ask for their priorities for advocacy and for policy change
- Map key events/advocacy opportunities to influence during 2019
- Use findings from C4C annual report to draft an advocacy paper
- Repeat the Grand Bargain 2-pager on how GB signatories are progressing on their localization commitments
- Develop some pieces of evidence-based research (CBPF; humanitarian principles; Indonesia Sulawesi)

Indicators

- Match (more closely align) indicators for the 8 C4C commitments with NEAR and GB indicators + develop guidance
- Undertake an annual endorsers’ survey as part of the annual reporting process
- Establish a group to design the next annual report survey (for March 2019) and write up the report

Strengthening engagement between signatories & endorsers

- Signatories to actively explain and raise awareness of C4C with their partners (and explain benefits)
- Signatories to encourage their partners to endorse C4C

- Encourage partners at country level to dialogue with other NGOS – use existing networks or platforms at country level (eg, South Sudan NGO Forum)

Section 3: Post-Event Survey

A post-event survey was issued to signatory and endorser participants to gain additional feedback on key insights generated from participating in the meeting, next steps and potential for building on participants thematic experience.

See below for a few of the engagement and thematic interests moving forward, or here for the [full post-event survey results](#) on key insights from the meeting.

Responses C4C endorser 10 (59%)
C4C signatory 7 (41%)

Which of the C4C groups would you like to more actively participate in?

1. C4C advocacy group
5 (31%)
2. a joint signatories & endorsers space around operationalising the Principles of Partnership
5 (31%)
3. C4C endorsers group
4 (25%)
4. C4C coordination group
(13%) 2
5. the workgroup for analysing and authoring the collective C4C Annual Report
0 (0%)
6. the workgroup on defining indicators for measuring progress on specific C4C commitments
0 (0%)

Please indicate in which areas you feel your organization would have particularly interesting/relevant experiences to share.

1. Localisation & Cash Transfer Programming 5 (31%)
2. Localisation & Food Security 4 (25%)
3. Localisation & Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) 3 (19%)
4. Localisation & Gender 1 (6%)
5. Localisation & Health 1 (6%)
6. Localisation & Protection 1 (6%)
7. Localisation & Water, Sanitation and Hygiene 1 (6%)
8. Localisation & Camp Management 0 (0%)
9. Localisation & Education 0 (0%)

