

# Charter for Change: From Geneva to Goma

Preview of findings: Annual Progress Report 2019-2020

Charter for Change (C4C) signatories are required to report on progress towards meeting the commitments over the previous year. The progress report highlights organisational change processes against 8 commitments which supports accountability of C4C signatories to the local and national actors they collaborate with. It also enables C4C, as an initiative, to share progress and insights as a collective of organisations driving change within the sector<sup>i</sup>.

The reporting process was re-designed in response to a decision at the C4C 2019 annual meeting to increase focus on how the C4C commitments are being put into practise at country level – and not only monitored at global office levels. Thus, this year’s survey and report focus on collecting additional data on compliance with the C4C commitments from country-level offices and desks. This brief preview seeks to highlight a few of the main findings of the upcoming full annual report.

Overall, the C4C commitment most complied with (as per the self-rating by signatories’ global office representatives) is commitment #1: Increasing direct funding to local and national NGOs for humanitarian action. This was followed by the commitment to advocate to donors on the importance of national actors, and the commitment to uphold the Humanitarian Principles of Partnership. In comparison, the results of the country-level surveys indicate that staff there see the most complied with commitments was the commitment to communicate to the media and the public about partners (#8), signatories’ inclusion of partner organisations in needs assessments and decision-making processes (as a part of commitment #6 on Equality) and the commitment to support strengthening of partners’ organizational capacity (#7). These differences in global level vs country level perceptions are explored in more detail in the forthcoming full report. However, a few aspects are highlighted in more detail in the following sections of this summary.

## **On funding to local actors:**

Overall, the C4C signatories have increased the reported funding to national and local NGOs in 2019 compared to previous years’ reporting<sup>ii</sup>. Taken together, the total humanitarian expenditure of the 29 signatories that reported amounted to \$1.2 billion - an amount similar to what was reported in 2017 and 2018. **Of this \$1.2 billion, 22.8% (or \$277 million) was channelled from signatory INGOs to local and national NGOs.** This indicates an increase in the share of C4C’s signatories funding which was passed on to local humanitarian actors compared to the previous years (18.4% in 2016, 19.7% in 2017 and 21.2% in 2018). The increase from 2018 to 2019 in terms of actual funding flowing to local actors amounts to \$22 million. The most important factor influencing the calculations appears to be the increase in reporting, as the number of reporting organisations increased from 25 to 29.

While the overall % of funding transferred to local and national NGOs is progressively edging towards the Charter for Change goal of 25%, country level reports indicate that about a quarter of the of signatories have not yet, or do not as a matter of regular practice, introduce LNGO partners directly to donors. Among signatory offices that do, just over 40 per cent of respondents indicated that such introductions resulted in the partners receiving direct funding from a (back)donor. Nearly half of the respondents indicated this was not (yet) the case. Many examples of successful support to enabling direct funding are available in the full report.

However, the survey also highlights key barriers to direct funding mentioned by country level colleagues:

- several instances are mentioned where donors will only directly fund international organization registered in the donor country itself, with local partners taking the role of co-applicants.

- One respondent explains how: “...donors openly say they prefer to fund [us, the INGO], for [the INGO] to pass on funding to partners. Donors claim they don't have the capacity to fund 'smaller' LNGOs directly, which is strange in the [country] context as some LNGOs have larger operations than INGOs.”

### **Receiving and acting on feedback**

Another area brought into perspective by this year’s report, is the stated conviction among global-level offices of the importance of equitable partnerships and their reaffirmation of the Humanitarian Principles of Partnership at global levels, versus how the principles of partnership are realised in practice at country level. One of the most challenging areas in which to achieve real structural progress is around increasingly developing longer term, more strategic, transparent and equitable partnership arrangements – partnerships that go beyond short-term project agreements. To obtain more insight into this, C4C country offices were asked to report feedback from local partners on their relationship - and on how to improve on performance towards the C4C commitments. A few responses are listed below:

- desire for closer, more strategic cooperation and clearer partnership policies to govern the relationship
- more transparency in communication around partnership selection processes, improved communications on daily joint work and response time to information requests
- more institutionalized joint monitoring of projects
- better documentation of decisions that are made
- reduce overlap in capacity strengthening support in the form of trainings from international partners, as too much training takes place impeding partners’ work and becoming burdensome
- timely transfer of funds by enhancing systems for grant transfers as current lags in grants transfers delay timely implementation.

Overall, greater flexibility in contracting arrangements and reporting is a recurring suggestion from partners to enhance both the partnership relationship as well as local responders’ ability to effectively implement projects and programs. Requests for such contractual arrangement to include costs outside of project budgets to enable technical and organisational development are commonplace, is another frequent ask.

### **Needed: more active sharing and dialogue on the C4C commitments**

Perhaps the most disappointing finding from this year’s report is the finding that relatively few signatory country offices have shared the C4C commitments with all their local and national partner organisations. Of all the questions included in the country level survey, this question on average was answered the least positive.

At the C4C Annual Meeting, December 2019 in Denmark<sup>iii</sup>, there were a strong emphasis on moving the localization agenda as such – and C4C in particular - “from Geneva to Goma”. C4C signatories actively sharing the C4C commitments with all their local and national collaborators is a crucial step in that direction. Following on from that, in-country dialogue on the commitments and related day-to-day practices can be a crucial contribution from C4C signatories and endorsers to root and anchor the localization process and debate, where it belongs – in Goma, Gaza and Rhakine – rather than predominantly in Geneva, Brussels or New York.

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<sup>i</sup> Find the commitments at the [Charter4Change website](#). Since 2019, annual reporting is mandatory for C4C (INGO) signatories.

<sup>ii</sup> The number of C4C signatories that reported data on total humanitarian expenditure and subsequent funding flows to local and national NGOs increased from 25 in 2018 to 29 in 2019.

<sup>iii</sup> Click here for the [Communique of the 2019 Charter for Change Annual Meeting](#)