



A Charter4Change Communique -2023

The Charter4Change (C4C) Network convened its 2022 Global Annual Meeting virtually on January 24th-26th 2023. Over the past year, we have seen increased momentum on conversations about decolonization of aid within the network and beyond. This was showcased in the Meeting's quality of discussions, where representatives from smaller, grassroots NGOs alongside national NGOs and international NGOs & Allies exchanged ideas on the barriers to transformative change, and practical steps required to address them.

From the various discussions it was agreed that the dialogue should not be restricted to international and national NGOs but should be brought down to the grassroots/community level. A critical mass of engagement is needed to catalyze interest in collaboration of C4C and wider localization efforts from signatory HQ offices to country offices, other INGOs, UN Agencies & donors.

As one endorser from Myanmar stated "We Are Just Being Equipped with The Capacity to Comply. But We Are Not Equipped to Grow and Take the Lead". This calls for collective efforts at all levels if we are to realize change within the Humanitarian system.

This Communique highlights Five key priorities for 2023:

1. Shifting conversation and engagement from HQ offices to country level offices to compel C4C collaboration beyond convening meetings to action.

The C4C country-level working groups (like in South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya) and other country-level networks and national NGO platforms like the Lebanon Humanitarian and Development Forum are starting to gain real momentum convening significant numbers of INGOs and national and local NGOs to identify context specific challenges and opportunities. These groups are also engaging donors, UN and other INGOs who are not C4C signatories on this. C4C collaboration has been linked to inspire but also is inspired by wider localization processes such as the nascent HCT and cluster localization processes. For C4C country-level collaboration to gain this kind of momentum, it requires those leading the effort to get others on board and strategically engage with the UN, donors and other INGOs in the specific context. The process could be started off by one INGO and one national NGO - as recently in the case of Sierra Leone supported by Trocaire - but it then needs to shift to engaging a wider spectrum of like-minded actors.

C4C INGO signatories' lead focal points need to follow up with their senior management at the global and country level to proactively scope and promote opportunities to participate in and support C4C country-level collaboration. But the responsibility also resides with any INGO signatory or national NGO endorser that wants to initiate a C4C country-level process (as opposed to an individual NGO advocacy project) to secure ownership and steering from more than one INGO signatory and endorser while organizing themselves and kick-starting the process.

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2. A call for a more harmonized, proportionate and simplified international compliance and due diligence architecture to make it more feasible for smaller community-based, grassroots and people-centered LNGOs to navigate and thrive in the international humanitarian system.

Several signatories shared inspiring examples of how they were innovating implementation of the C4C commitments and other relevant frameworks (e.g. Grand Bargain Caucus on the Role of Intermediaries outcomes). One concept and practical innovation which several INGO signatories referred to was "Prime Swapping": having a clear plan established in partnerships with local partners for the INGO to transition from being the 'prime' on grant applications and programmes to becoming the 'sub' with the local partner becoming the 'prime'. Another area of innovation is the piloting underway on Due Diligence Passporting. There is scope for all C4C signatories to consider these and other options to innovate on C4C and Grand Bargain Intermediaries Caucus implementation, and to publish this in the run-up to the Grand Bargain Annual Review Meeting in June, 2023.

As highlighted by the C4C Charter of Accountability for Endorsers, national NGOs need to engage with INGO signatories and others to address quality and accountability barriers to localization.

3. A strong agreement on advocacy for flexible and multi-year funding that facilitates best practices in terms of equal partnership and solidarity. Collectively, we need to advocate more for this type of funding initiatives that make local actors' part of decision making.

National NGO endorsers shared encouraging examples of how they are organizing themselves to lead advocacy at the country level linking up to global level. In Myanmar, national NGOs have organized to promote the concept of national NGOs becoming the prime on institutional grants; involving national NGOs that have passed donor compliance and due diligence engaging with donors and INGOs to open up the discussion about this. In Kenya, national NGOs have organized themselves to negotiate ('collectively bargain') with their INGO donor partners, which has resulted in some nascent progress on due diligence passporting. Looking forward to issues of climate change and the environment, especially in the context of the global hunger crisis, and other issues, there is scope to build on these experiences.

Despite the positive examples and momentum in some contexts, there are also persistent challenges and barriers in INGO signatories' contribution to locally-led humanitarian action. Too much of the good experience shared in the meeting came from a relatively small subset of C4C INGO signatories. All C4C signatories should consider using the current call under the Grand Bargain process for INGOs to publish detailed plans on implementing the Caucus on the Role of Intermediaries as an opportunity to identify and publish specific actions they will take over the coming year and beyond to inject fresh energy into their efforts on the C4C Charter.

4. Charter4Change should catalyze on some joint position with the biggest food security focused humanitarian agencies such as WFP, FAO & UNICEF among others on approaches to partnership and localization.



The Charter4Change Coalition has in the past one year tackled the interest of facilitating peer learning and advocacy opportunities among C4C members along with relevant external stakeholders, on embedding and promoting local leadership in climate- and environment related humanitarian programming and actions. There is a growing eagerness to link the localization agenda with the evolving climate agenda in favour of locally-led climate solutions.

At the Annual Meeting, C4C Members called for the need to cascade topics such as Anticipatory Action and Disaster Risk Financing to country level. The needs for national stakeholder coordination and the importance of developing models to predict hazards involving local actors that are context specific.

Since C4C's main mandate is to catalyze collaboration on localization, there is a need to explore approaches about locally-led food security and nutrition work which the network could help shine a light on for learning.

5. Strengthening C4C's collaboration with like-minded initiatives on localization to maximize efforts for transformative change

Updates about two relevant initiatives in the wider sector were shared: the Grand Bargain Caucus on Funding for Localization, and the Pledge for Change. C4C signatories and endorsers shared various perspectives on these, and a C4C policy statement with recommendations to the Caucus on Funding for Localization is being developed. Whereas some C4C members queried the wisdom of establishing parallel NGO networks addressing INGO accountability for quality partnership with local actors, the Pledge for Change was cautiously welcomed; especially in terms of having brought several larger INGOs that are mainly directly implementing programmes on board to commitments and a process of reporting that is very similar to those in the C4C Charter.

C4C members look forward to seeing IRC, Save the Children, Plan and other INGOs that have signed the Pledge for Change transform their approach to partnership and local leadership. C4C country level working groups hope to see these INGOs engage with them and act as allies in support of locally-led efforts to advocate for change in their contexts. Centering the leadership of local NGOs in their efforts, rather than centering INGOs leadership will be key to real change. As such, the C4C coalition is ready to sign up as a 'Pledge for Change supporter' in 24 months' time, once we see tangible evidence of that change from the P4C signatories.