

Report of meeting, workshop and conference in abroad

Dated: 14-22 March, 2023

1. Dutch MFA (14-15 March) localization session in The Hague.

In 2021, the Department of Stabilization and Humanitarian Affairs (DSH) of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to deepen its critical reflection on its stated goal of locally-led development and local resilience. DSH embarked on a journey to explore their unconscious biases towards response and localization.

The ministry invited Global Mentoring Initiative and COAST Foundation to create a series of learning sessions exploring how their unconscious and conscious biases impact their relationships with local and national actors as well as power relations at large in the international sector. The learning journey was co-created, designed to jointly explore, together with local actors and intermediaries, what localisation/ locally-led means for policy and programming; what the role of a (bilateral) donor is and should be; and how to improve the partnerships. More importantly: how a donor can improve listening to local and national partners and how to move towards a more inclusive way of working. These learning sessions on how to turn the localisation/ locally-led commitment into practice were mandatory for everyone within the Department to follow, from policy officers to management support and finance people.

A first substantive session series focused on trust/distrust and equity/inequity, power, prejudice and privilege in the international aid system. It also helped to understand how the DSH contributes to it. The second session focused on the intermediary organisations and how the DSH works with its international partners to improve the situation and build trust and equity. The third session focused on equitable partnerships and funding and financing for local and national organisations. Good examples were provided by Netherland's embassies in Jordan, Lebanon, Uganda and Ethiopia, who have written locally-led development objectives into their new multi-year country plans, and can draw on delegated funds to support this.

The concluding sessions on 14-15 March 2023, brought together teams from across DHS in The Hague and selected embassies online, facilitated by GMI and COAST Foundation.

The Department's staff made time to review, with an eye on promoting and enabling locally-led development, its requirements, procedures, and practices; its engagement with multilateral intermediaries; its engagement with non-governmental intermediaries; and its internal practices to develop relational competencies, also cross-cultural ones, and uphold standards of respectful behavior while various areas were identified where more must and can be done.

2. (a) ICVA Membership Day. Date 16 March in Geneva.

The ICVA Membership Day (16.03.2023) started with the welcome and sharing the global context in in humanitarian context. Mr. Ignacio Packer, the Executive Director welcomed the participants and David Lanz, Representative of the Dialogue promotion in the crisis group led the rest discussion— Principled Humanitarian Action, with link to Global Context. How are we doing our networks? This event is an opportunity to meet with members and for members to engage and find common threads in their work/challenges, etc. were the main discussion focusing the Syria context, Turkey context.



ICVA Membership Day, 16 March 2023, Geneva.

The participants gave emphasized understanding the local context and How to put Humanitarian Principals in action-- Humanity, Impartiality, Independence & Neutrality in humanitarian response. The ICVA members had to engage in 3 group works after that-

1. How do you see your organizations journey to addressing DEI, as members of ICVA, and how do you think ICVA can help facilitate the journey?
2. Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (Group work)—Risk sharing?
3. Working together/ collective capabilities—access (group work)

Later the Membership Day was ended with vote of thanks by the Executive Director.

2. (b) ICVA Conference Day. Date 17 March in Geneva.

The second (Conference) day started with the theme “The right time and the right place: improving access to humanitarian quality funding”. The opening session frames the Annual Conference discussions to establish a common understanding of the humanitarian financing gap, the challenges of efficiently and adequately resourcing humanitarian action, and reduce needs, and improve access to quality funding as part of equitable partnerships. Later, three separate sessions were held-



ICVA Conference Day, 17 March 2023, Geneva.

Session 1: The Future of the Grand Bargain ^{17-18 SEP}

Panel discussion focused on the ongoing dialogue on the future of the Grand Bargain and changes proposed for the process beyond June 2023. Grand Bargain should not be a “Talk Shop”, rather we need to make it forward-- Ms. Kelly Clements, Deputy High Commissioner, UNHCR said this in the discussion.

Session 2: Climate Financing and Humanitarian Action

Panel discussion on “Gaps in Climate Financing and implications for humanitarian action.” The session examined what climate financing was, what was the gap in climate financing in humanitarian contexts and the resulting implications for humanitarian action in such contexts.

Session 3: Partnerships

This session explored the modalities of meaningful and equitable partnerships, the simplification and harmonisation of donor conditions, and the role and responsibilities of intermediaries in addition to that of donors. The speakers said partnership is complex and we are doing better based on PoP. But my/COAST concern was, when we say equal partnership, do we feel equal? Enjoy equal facilities & accountabilities? Share risks? Evaluate our partnership? Listen to local actors at the ground? Only increasing things, like ICR, transparency, etc. cannot fulfil the equal, we desire.

3. European Humanitarian Forum. 20-22 March, 2023 in Brussels.

The European Commission and the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union co-hosted the second edition of the European Humanitarian Forum on 20-21 March 2023, in Brussels. The event took place in synergy with the International Donors' Conference “Together for the people in Turkey and Syria”. The EU and its Member States, international, national and local organisations and partners, countries affected by humanitarian crises and donors, looked at ways of further enhancing the impact of humanitarian response. The forum dealt with the following key topics:

- ***The increasing gap between humanitarian needs and resources:*** Participants appreciated the commitment by the EU and its Member States to work towards securing additional humanitarian funding and to ensure a more sustainable and balanced sharing of financing within the EU. The Forum identified the expansion of the donor base as a priority – with a focus on “non–traditional” donors (international financing institutions, private sector, emerging donors).
- ***Ensuring effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian response:*** The Forum highlighted the importance of ensuring effectiveness and efficiency in aid delivery, including through better prioritisation with limited resources, increasing the share of multiannual and flexible funding, and enhancing the participation of local and national actors and women-led organisations. To this end, the European Commission launched its own guidance on localisation on how to achieve equitable partnerships between international and local responders.
- ***Anticipating and responding to climate related crises.*** The Forum discussed ways to mitigate climate-driven disasters, the importance of anticipatory action and of combining approaches to tackle root drivers of crisis while addressing immediate needs and strengthen resilience, and highlighted that climate change and environmental degradation are top drivers of humanitarian needs. The European Commission committed to scaling up anticipatory action and will continue convening the signatories of the Donor Declaration on Climate and Environment twice a year.
- ***Enabling safe and efficient humanitarian action in conflict areas:*** Participants stressed the need for a more systematic approach to intensifying humanitarian diplomacy and investing in capacities for humanitarian negotiations and community-based initiatives to improve respect for international humanitarian law by armed actors; secure and sustain access to people in need; and unblock administrative obstacles to effective and principled humanitarian action.

4. C4C side-line event during the European Humanitarian Forum. 21.03.2023.

A C4C sideline meeting was held at the eve of EU Humanitarian Forum. The members review the discussions and outcomes of the forum that strengthen local organizations and quality partnership in crisis response. The reflections on experience at the European Humanitarian Forum were:

1. Many C4C members who advocated on the ECHO Localisation Guidance are impressed by what it includes. For example, its attention to holding 'intermediary' agencies (INGOs & UN agencies) accountable for quality partnership.
2. Key challenge is now to ensure practical action by ECHO, other parts of the EU institutions responsible for longer term development funding (e.g. DG INTAP), and their implementing partners to monitor its rollout. How to track?
3. As C4C, we need to follow up both at European level and at country level, e.g. through engaging with ECHO staff based around the world (there can be varying levels of buy-in of these staff).
4. Need for C4C members to share more analysis of the new ECHO Localisation Guidance. Will it help to address major challenges for local NGOs so far with EU funding, such as the very complex reporting formats, and ECHO demanding up to 15% contribution from local partner? Also questions raised over the 60,000 Euro ceiling on sub-grants versus the fact that some European INGOs can and do channel much larger amounts to national NGOs as their main implementing partner. Flexibility provided by the EU to its international partners is often not cascaded to their local actors.

5. Need to follow up both with EU institutions and European donor governments to promote more direct dialogue between local NGOs and donors. Great that this can happen at events like EHF, but such opportunities are too infrequent and available to too few national NGOs. The EU delegations in each country in crisis and other European donor governments embassies should establish a clear and basic minimum level of structured regular dialogue with national NGO forums and networks, such as C4C country level working groups. This should be linked to timely input into country level donor coordination group discussions. Survey on direct dialogue with donors.
6. Big discussion about how ECHO should hold its INGO partners accountable. Especially the bigger INGO ECHO 'framework partners' are often not transparent. Some of these big INGOs increasingly claim they are localization allies (e.g. P4C signatories) and are positioning to access ECHO funding for their localisation efforts, but we are not seeing this yet in their practices. Examples shared by national NGOs on panels and in fringes of EHF of how European INGOs (e.g. SAVE and IRC) market their programmes as about funding local humanitarian response or supporting capacity strengthening of local actors, but the vast majority of the funding goes to the INGO who remain in the lead and the local actors only receive short term grants with little space for leadership by the local actors. This feels just like old fashioned sub-granting and power dynamics rebranded as 'localization'.
7. During opening plenary statements, ECHO didn't mention localisation in opening speech. Only 4 of 20 member states mentioned it in their opening speeches (Dutch, Finland, Germany, Czech). Need to follow up with them. During subsequent sessions, localisation was often raised. Good that the EHF also had a dedicated session on localisation.

The meeting ended agreeing with the follow up of the commitments of the EU Forum in next C4C Advocacy Working Group meeting on the next steps for advocacy.

Report prepared by-

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