

LOCALIZATION IN NORTHWEST SYRIA

SNGOs PERSPECTIVE
ON GRAND BARGAIN
COMMITMENTS



MAY, 2023



SYRIAN NGO ALLIANCE

تحالف المنظمات السورية غير الحكومية

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Syrian NGO Alliance (SNA)



SYRIAN NGO ALLIANCE
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The **SNA** is an **alliance of Syrian civil society organizations** mainly concerned with humanitarian affairs. It was established with the aim of promoting joint humanitarian response between Syrian NGOs that are active in the areas of support, relief, development, education, protection, health and other vital humanitarian fields that affect the lives of hundreds of thousands of Syrians inside and outside Syria. This is achieved through coordinating efforts, resources, and expertise to provide support for refugees and those who are displaced within Syria and in neighboring countries. What is also vital is advocating for humanitarian issues, seeking to change policies that affect those who are concerned, and amplifying a common voice that can reach relevant decision-makers. This narrative mainly focuses on the situation of Syrians and their main issues of concern. The alliance, based in Gaziantep, Turkey, was established on April 2nd, 2014, and currently includes 23 of the most prominent Syrian non-governmental organizations. Through coordination and close cooperation between its members, the SNA advocates for issues that concern civilians affected by the conflict in Syria.

✉ if you have any questions please Reach out to: coordinator@syrianna.org

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ABBREVIATIONS:

AFNS	Aid Fund for Northern Syria
BHA	USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Action
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
EU	European Union
FTS	Financial Tracking Service
FSL	Food Security and Livelihoods
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
ICS	Institutional Capacity Strengthening
INGO	International non-governmental organization
KII	Key Informant Interview
LNNGO	Local and National Non-governmental Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
SAG	Strategic Advisory Group
SCHF	Syria Cross-Border Humanitarian Fund
SNA	Syrian NGO Alliance
SNFI	Shelter and Non-Food Items
SNGOs	Syrian NGOs
UNOCHA	United Nation's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background.

Syria has been facing a protracted humanitarian crisis for over a decade, with 15.3 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. INGOs and donors have been responding to this crisis through cross-border and crossline operations, with a growing recognition of the need to shift towards a locally led response. As defined by the EU, localisation means to “empower local responders in affected countries to lead and deliver humanitarian aid” and seeks to “strengthening the capacity and resources of local organizations to respond to crises, while promoting long-term sustainability”.¹

Objective.

The objective of the research is to provide the SNA and its members with an overview of achieved or un-achieved localization commitments under the Grand Bargain in the Northwest Syria response and to build evidence for barriers experienced by SNGOs.

Methodology.

The research was designed to a) gather information on how localisation efforts from the international humanitarian community and Grand Bargain commitments have

1. European Union, [Localization Factsheet](#), 2023.

reached local and national organizations operating in Syria, and b) to bring visibility on specifically the perspectives and points of view of Syrian NGOs on the needed actions to progress on the localization agenda. Therefore, 20 SNGOs have been reached via a survey and followed up key informant interviews to contribute to the findings. The findings are outlined along the most localization-relevant workstreams of the Grand Bargain: Transparency, Access to Funding, Partnerships, Capacity Strengthening and Participation and Coordination.

Added Value.

Compared to other reports or assessments focusing on localization in Northwest Syria, this report is driven by SNGOs themselves. It reflects SNGOs' perceptions of the lack of progress made on localization in a country that is often used as a best practice example. Lastly, it shows barriers and shortcomings with the state of the humanitarian system experienced by the SNGOs, as well as bringing concrete suggestions for envisioned change.

Key Findings.

Localization has been a long-standing goal for the humanitarian response in Syria, but Syrian NGOs (SNGOs) are facing significant barriers to fully realize this vision. Limited access to funding, lack of capacity development, and reliance on international partnerships hinder their ability to implement their strategies effectively. SNGOs are

calling for concrete actions from donors and INGOs to fulfill the commitments made. The report describes the detailed findings, concluded in advocacy messages that address core concerns for SNGOs including a) the lack of transparency on the funding flow and allocation as well as missing indicators to measure localization, b) gap in capacity strengthening, which is rather focused on repetitive trainings, then independent flexible funding for SNGOs, c) unbalanced partnerships with limited overhead allocations, d) lack of accessing direct funding, and e) inability to advocate on global and national level as preferred.²

It is recommended to share this report among SNGOs, civil society, and other stakeholders to collectively develop a roadmap and pledge for implementing the recommendations outlined.

². Further details in the following desk review.

BACK- GROUND AND DESK REVIEW

Syria has been facing a protracted humanitarian crisis for over a decade, with over 15,3 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. International organizations and donors have been responding to this crisis through cross-border and crossline operations, but there has been a growing recognition of the need to shift towards a more localized approach to humanitarian response. Localization aims to empower and strengthen the capacity of local and national organizations to lead and coordinate humanitarian responses in their own countries, rather than relying on external actors. To understand the localization efforts made and on-going in Northwest Syria and to inform the design of the research, a brief desk review was conducted on literature, articles and reports. While the description of the desk review undertaken is not exhaustive but it focuses on the most important literature on localization in general and Syria in particular. Also it reflects the relevance of localization, and the needed efforts and steps to progress on the localization agenda.

Localization and recognizing its importance for the Syrian response has been a topic as early as 2016. For instance, Steve Dixon argues in the *Confluences Méditerranée* that localization should not be seen as a mere technical process, but rather as a political and strategic choice³. The article describes how localization has

3. Dixon, *Localisation of Humanitarian Response in the Syrian Crisis* in *Confluences Méditerranée* Volume 99, Issue 4, 2016, pages 109 to 121.

been implemented in Syria, with a focus on the challenges and opportunities presented by the conflict. It emphasizes the need for a more participatory and inclusive approach to localization, which takes into account the needs and aspirations of local communities.

A report from the Graduate Institute in Geneva⁴ highlights how to re-think existing systems to localize the humanitarian response. The report examines the challenges and opportunities for localizing humanitarian response in Syria. It finds that international actors tend to dominate the response, which undermines the capacity of local actors and perpetuates dependency on external aid. It recommends that local actors should be more involved in the decision-making process and that humanitarian organizations should focus on building the capacity of local actors to deliver aid. The report also stresses the need for coordination between humanitarian organizations and local actors to ensure effective delivery of aid. Additionally, it highlights the importance of understanding the local context and culture in order to design effective and appropriate humanitarian interventions. The report underscores the importance of localizing humanitarian response in Syria to ensure that aid is delivered sustainably and effectively.

Two years later, Building Markets published a detailed report with an assessment of local Syrian organizations' capacity to deliver aid.⁵

4. Graduate Institute in Geneva, *Localizing Humanitarian Response. Re-Thinking Avenues for Working in the Syrian Crisis*, 2016.

5. Building Markets, *Enabling a Localized Response in Syria – an Assessment of Syrian-led Organizations*, 2016.

The paper discusses the challenges and gaps in the localization process in Syria, particularly in the context of the ongoing conflict. The authors argue that while localization has become an increasingly important priority for the international aid community, there are still significant barriers that prevent local actors from taking a more active role in the humanitarian response. It highlights several key gaps in localization, including limited funding and resources for local actors, a lack of trust between international and local actors, and limited opportunities for local actors to engage in decision-making processes. The authors also note that the conflict in Syria has led to a fragmentation of local communities and civil society, further complicating efforts to promote localization. To address these challenges, the paper calls for a more comprehensive and integrated approach to localization that prioritizes the building of strong and sustainable partnerships between international and local actors. The authors also emphasize the importance of promoting greater participation and engagement of local communities in the decision-making processes of the humanitarian response. Overall, the paper provides a detailed analysis of the gaps and challenges in the localization process in Syria and makes a compelling case for the need to prioritize localization as a key strategy for delivering effective, sustainable response.

ICVA published a report on localization in humanitarian leadership in 2021,

also reflecting the status in the Turkey-based response in Syria.⁶ To address the shortcomings observed in leadership, the ICVA recommended to join and form coalitions and mobilize funds for participation in coordination. SNGOs have done so, however lack resources to succeed. Similarly, the ICVA report recommended to support capacity building for NGOs and to re-think the allocation to country-based pool funds by focusing on NGOs. The report at hand commissioned by the SNA explores how this was achieved for SNGOs and highlights potential outstanding gaps since the ICVA report was published. The survey commissioned by SNA also reflects how donor recommendations from ICVA were implemented in the Syria response and will highlight how the recommendations could be further implemented.

In 2022, the Syrian NGO Forum has published an overview of the challenges localization is facing in Northwest Syria and recommendations to overcome those.⁷ The SNGO Forum report highlighted in detail the challenges faced as well as brought concrete action plans for donors' and INGOs' consideration along the lines of participation, funding, capacity strengthening and decision making. The focus of the SNA's report at hand is concentrated along similar Grand Bargain commitments to see the progress made since the publication of the SNGO Forum's report. The SNGO forum recommended at heart a) to increase capacity strengthening measures, especially tailored to the

different organizations, b) provide direct funding to SNGOs and c) ensure that INGOs take the role as enabler for localization, while sharing risks and adopting the partnership principles. Twelve years into the crisis, years after local and national actors highlighted the need and urgency for a locally led humanitarian response in Syria, and after a devastating earthquake hit Syria and Türkiye in February 2023, PAX⁸ stressed the importance of developing earthquake response plans that are tailored to the specific needs and context of each local community. Further, the article calls for the need to invest in building the capacity of local actors to respond to earthquakes, including providing training and resources to local emergency responders, health workers, and other community members; as well as for a more localized approach to aid delivery, which prioritizes the use of local supply chains and engages local businesses and organizations in the procurement and distribution of relief items.

In retrospect, the desk review reflects closely the findings of the research – especially considering that similar recommendations have been made before. Over years, humanitarian actors are calling for a localized response, but without SNGOs experiencing a significant progress in their operations and humanitarian responses.

6. ICVA, *Localization in Leadership*, 2021.

7. SNGO Forum, *Overview of challenges localization is facing in NWS and recommendations to overcome these challenges*, 2022.

8. PAX via ReliefWeb, *Call for Localized and Conflict-Sensitive Earthquake Response Across Syria*, 2023.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted to provide the SNA and its members with an overview of the Grand Bargain's commitments on localization were achieved in the humanitarian response in Northwest Syria – and to build an evidence base for barriers or challenges experienced by local Syrian organizations regarding localization commitments.

The research methodology was designed to a) gather information on how localisation efforts from the international humanitarian community and Grand Bargain commitments have reached local and national organizations operating in Syria, and b) to bring visibility on specifically the perspectives and points of view of Syrian NGOs on the needed actions to progress on the localization agenda. The methodology comprised of four main stages:

Desk Review:

The desk review preceded the survey development and implementation to understand the localization efforts undertaken in Northwest Syria and prior recommendations made. The aim of this stage was to gain an understanding of the workstreams, and commitments made under the Grand Bargain, as well as other localisation initiatives and programs. The desk review involved an extensive search of relevant sources, including reports, academic articles, policy documents, and other relevant materials. The desk review provided the basis for the development of the survey questionnaire and the selection of key informants for the subsequent stages of the research.

Online Survey:

In consultation with SNA representatives, a survey was developed and tailored to gather unique perspectives of SNA members on localization. The survey also aimed to understand the institutional, policy, and political dynamics towards localisation in Syria. The methodology used included scored and unscored questions. The survey was disseminated through email and was completed by 20 Syrian NGOs.

Key Informant Interviews:

The third and final stage of the research involved selected key informant interviews with seven (7) SNGO representatives. The key informants were selected based on their expertise in localisation efforts, advocacy and presence or specialization in the humanitarian response in Syria. The key informants were asked

open-ended questions that were designed to elicit detailed information on the progress and challenges faced by local humanitarian actors in terms of localisation, suggested approaches, as well as the institutional, policy, and political dynamics.

Data Analysis:

All data collected from the desk review, online survey, and key informant interviews were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques. The data were coded and categorized based on key themes and patterns that emerged from the data. The analysis focused on identifying the solutions, best practices and advocacy messages. The findings were then documented in the report.

In conclusion, the methodology employed for this research was designed to gather perspectives and points of view on localisation efforts in Syria from Syrian NGOs.

RESPONDENTS PROFILE

The localization research is built on the participation of 20 Syrian organizations (SNGOs), who are all members of the Syrian NGO Alliance (SNA).

In response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria, organizations have been founded and registered legally in Türkiye to be able to operate emergency responses in partnership with the international humanitarian community. Only two of the responding organizations consider themselves as youth-led, four of them as women-led. Most organizations have registered in between 2012 and 2014 (65%), while further followed in 2015, 2016 and 2017 (20%). Only two of the responding organizations have registered recently in Türkiye (2021 and 2022).

While Syria is the place of operation for all organizations, some implement in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq as well as hold registration in other countries as shown below (light blue), with Türkiye being the main place of registration (dark blue). One SNGO holds an additional registration in Germany, one in Sudan, one in Jordan, one in France, two in the United Kingdom and two in the USA. The survey respondents are all working in Northwest Syria, additionally, a few organizations are working in Northeast Syria (4), Türkiye (13), Lebanon (1), Yemen (1) and Southern Syria (1). The growth of those organization and the relation to localization is described in the access to funding section.



Figure 1: Countries of Registration

Within Syria, all SNGOs are active in at least two sectors, ranging from two up to ten sectors. Most are active in six to seven sectors, showing their ability to work in multisectoral projects:

- FSL (17)
- Early Recovery (13)
- CCCM (9)
- Protection (15)
- Education (13)
- Civil Society Strengthening (6)
- SNFI (14)
- Health (12)
- Nutrition (14)
- WASH (11)

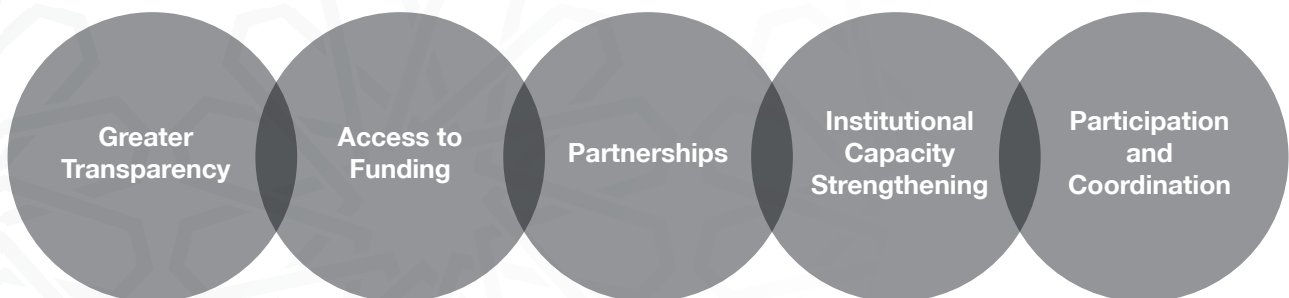
Funding for the responses differ significantly between the organizations (details can be found in the key findings), so does the number of staff for each organization. However, SNGOs employ many both permanent and project staff. The number can reach over 1.000 staff inside Syria and up to 100 employees in Turkey.

KEY FINDINGS

To highlight the SNGOs and SNAs experience with localization, this research is structured around commitments made in the Grand Bargain and their relevancy to the localization progress. The Grand Bargain is a unique agreement between major donors and aid providers aimed at improving the efficiency and

effectiveness of humanitarian assistance. It was launched during the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul and consists of a set of commitments that focus on increasing the amount of funding that goes directly to those in need, reducing overhead costs, and improving collaboration between humanitarian organizations. The Grand Bargain has the potential to transform the way the humanitarian system operates and ensure that aid is delivered more efficiently and effectively to those who need it most. After closely reviewing all of the Grand Bargain's commitments and workstreams together with SNA representatives, four work streams were selected as a base for this research (see Annex A for detailed reflection) and to reflect key commitments relevant for localization progress: a) Workstream 1: Greater Transparency, b) Workstream 2: Support and Funding Tools to National and Local Actors, c) Workstream 6: Participation Revolution and d) Workstream 9: Harmonized Reporting Requirements.

Based on the selected workstreams, the research was structured around five core topics due to their relevancy for SNGOs and localization:



GREATER TRANSPARENCY

Localization refers to the process of shifting more decision-making power and resources to local actors, including governments, civil society organizations, and affected communities. Greater transparency in humanitarian financing and the donor landscape can support both SNGOs and the SNA in their localization advocacy efforts. Greater transparency (and relevant initiatives) provides local actors with more information on a) what funding is available, b) how is it allocated, and c) who to connect to for potential direct funding. It can help donors and humanitarian organizations to better target their resources to areas where they are most needed, including to local actors. Vice versa, it allows SNGOs to directly seek support from those financing humanitarian responses in their context.

Flow of Funding

While transparency is a key pillar to localization, SNGOs have mixed opinions on how transparently the funding from donors to affected populations as final respondents flows.⁹

SNGOs “do not have accessible information about donor funding” (survey respondent) and mention the lack of transparency with regards to what funding is available and how much.¹⁰

SNGOs do not have transparency on the original budget and admin costs that was made available from donors to the international organization. SNGOs are only informed about their share of the budget. They are looking for more

clarity on the distribution of admin cost between prime contractors and implementing partners to ensure fair shares have been allocated. Implementors face a lack of clarity on the selection process of partners, especially highlighting missing clarifications why some have been selected over others. In some cases, implementing partners are selected directly without a call for proposal, which leads to a significant gap in the transparency of available funding and its allocation.

In the Syria cross-border response, the last step of the funding’s journey is often between the SNGOs and the affected population. Respondents emphasize the availability of policies and procedures to be transparent of the funding received and implemented on the ground: “(Donors) know all procedures related to the fund from receiving it until we deliver the aid for affected people” (survey respondent). Transparency of SNGOs is needed to live up to audit and due diligence requirements of international organizations and institutional donors.

Transparency Initiatives

Available transparency initiatives such as the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)¹¹ or Financial Tracking Service (FTS) is hardly known or used by the respondents and thus not seen an added value for the response, without further advocacy on the importance of transparency from all actors.

9. 35% rate the transparency as high between 5 and 4, while 35% kept a neutral answer (3) and 30% rated funding flows as little or not transparent at all.

10. 55% (11 out of 20) are only sometimes aware of the back donor to their projects funded in partnership with international organizations or UN agencies.

11. 17 out of 20 respondents to the survey launched by SNA have never heard about the IATI initiative before.

ACCESS TO FUNDING

Syrian organizations have a large annual budget (reaching up to 80 million USD for the largest organization in 2022), in some cases their budget is significantly larger than total NWS response budget of international organizations. Several Syrian organizations (14 out of 20) have a budget between 1 and 30 million USD. INGOs, UN agencies and the SCHF are significant sources of income. Commercial partners, direct funding or other sources of income are not relevant for most respondents, reducing diversity of funding and increasing dependency. The main source of income is through partnerships with international organizations and thus capacity strengthening, and trainings offered under those partnerships are key to their development. It's important to mention that the largest SNGO with a budget of over 80 million USD in 2022 receives most of its funding from private donations.

Country-Based Pool Funds

Most SNGOs are not considering pooled funds such as SCHF or AFNS as direct funding, but also as intermediary between the donor and the recipients. Even for such pool funds, that can play a significant role in localization as organizations manage to uphold the compliance requirements, SNGOs must compete with other local actors, INGOs and UN agencies.

Now we have even for-profit companies that hold funds, so we feel like our support costs should decrease more – but probably they will still not consider us at the least risk. Humanitarian aid should not be done at the lowest offer.” SNGO representative during KII.

or AFNS are an important source of funding.¹²

Frustration with Pool Funds
During a KII, a SNGO representative highlighted their frustration and challenges with pooled funds. In his opinion, pooled funds such as SCHF and AFNS should be dedicated to local NGOs to support both financial and programmatic stability and planning of the SNGOs. INGOs have often direct funding channels from the same donors; it is also not cost efficient to send funds from the donor to SCHF or AFNS and then to INGOs (or even UN agencies). It further adds another layer of overhead and administrative costs. Funding should be channeled to SNGOs, who benefit from AFNS and SCHF as a rare opportunity for direct funding and stable projects.

Those who are not accessing SCHF – especially smaller SNGOs – are often not aware of the reasons and emphasize the lack of transparency.

Funding pools are a tragedy.
It seems that we entered a monopoly situation for the 5-6 big organizations, who receive the whole fund every year. The barrier to enter the field is too high and excludes professional small NGOs.” survey respondent of a small SNGO.

Internal Barriers to Accessing Funding

Most of the respondents did not perceive internal barriers as significant as external ones. Internally, the lack of sufficient compliance with donor regulations as well as high management costs to access funding directly (that are not covered) are the main barriers

12. In 2022, eight of the respondents accessed between 1 to 5 million USD from the SCHF, and three respondents received 5 to 10 million USD during the last fiscal year.

for SNGOs to apply for and receive funding directly from donors without an intermediary.

“If an INGO is submitting to SCHF and a small organization is too, it is obviously not the same quality of the proposal or experience. It is an unfair competition, if they are evaluated on equal grounds.” SNGO representative during KII.

Accessing Quality Funding

Quality funding in the context of humanitarian action refers to funding that is provided in a timely, flexible, and predictable manner, and is aligned with humanitarian principles and priorities. Multi-year funding is an important aspect of quality funding, as it allows for longer-term planning and better utilization of resources. It is essential for enabling humanitarian actors to respond quickly and effectively to crises and to maximize the impact of humanitarian assistance.

Syrian NGOs' Access to Quality Funding

80% of the responding SNA members do not have access to multi-year funding. Even if the funding partner has secured multi-year funding, 50% of respondents do not have a partnership agreement that aligns with the timeline. Further, funding is neither seen as collaborative for more than half of the respondents (55%) nor as flexible (10%).¹³

Allocation of Overhead Costs

When signing project agreements, SNGOs receive an allocated overhead percentage, however not in all projects

or partnerships. If overhead percentages are received, those ranged between a minimum of 2% and a maximum of 10%. Half of the respondents stated the limit at 7% of overhead percentage.

If overhead costs are received, a lot of INGOs and donors are asking SNGOs to cover all kinds of costs from the overhead. A SNGO representative explains that the overhead should be dedicated to specific costs only, it is not feasible that INGOs or donors ask organizations to cover audits, advocacy staff, capacity building, office rent, program managers and whatever else under it. Having allocated overhead costs thus also can become a burden for SNGOs, as they will not be allowed or limited in what other costs they can add in the budgets.

External Barriers to Accessing Funding

The external barriers to funding access are perceived as significantly higher. One of the leading barriers is the competition with INGOs for funding – this may be directly from donors but also to pooled country funds as mentioned before. Despite some organization having a registration in a donor country, they are not able to compete on the same level of experience and staff capacity with INGOs for funding. This puts them in a significant disadvantage. Some SNGOs decided to take the step to register in the donor country to increase access to funding, however, also see themselves as not perceived equal to INGOs.

13. Eleven respondents (55%) have less than 5% of flexible funding available. Only 25% (5 organizations) have more than 15% flexible funding for their response.

The only way of receiving direct funding from ECHO or FCDO is by becoming an INGO. Donor government conditions are our biggest challenge to access funding, the logistical barrier to open offices abroad is too high for us.” SNGO representative during KII.

During a key informant interview, a CEO of a large SNGO shared that his organization is already indirectly funded from numerous donors (through INGO partnerships), but only in direct contact with very few donors. SNGOs are concerned that accessing donor funds directly (or even trying to do so) might affect partnerships – a transition period is needed.

With our registration and staff abroad, we have sufficient capacity in our international HQ and country offices. However, it remains the biggest challenge to open the door to institutional donors directly – even for a small pilot project. We should not be facing such challenges to access direct funding as experienced organization with capacity. The idea of localization is missed out.” SNGO (registered abroad) representative during KII.

Additionally, the significant presence of UN agencies (especially due to the cross-border mechanism) does not enable SNGOs to be direct recipients of funding.

Registration Abroad

One step to accessing funding directly is registering abroad; a big step away from localization and the Grand Bargain commitments made. A few SNGOs are registered abroad, others are planning to do so. One SNGO rep-

resentative shares the organizations intent to register in Europe within 2023 to network, fundraise and have an alternative plan in case of challenges experienced in Türkiye. They fear that it might create challenges with existing partners. A SNGO representative shared his frustration with having to think about becoming an INGO.

Registering abroad is an on-going debate among SNGOs. Some of the donor’s and INGOs’ behavior forces you to go international to play your role in the response in a sustainable way. Localization should not wait for NGOs to become INGOs to receive a good status in the response.” SNGO representative during KII.

Some SNGOs took the financial risk to register abroad but do not benefit from it as expected. Being registered abroad is also posing challenges, such as being in-between SNGOs or INGOS.

We are registered abroad, but now donors and INGOs see us both as national and international actors – however it fits best. Actually, this stopped us from growing. We are not considered as international due to our perceived capacity, but we are not considered local as we operate outside Türkiye too. What exactly are we? We feel stuck in the middle.” SNGO representative during KII.

Based on the interviews, the definition and criteria of being a local actor seems to be uncertain and even a registration abroad does not seem appear fully as INGO. It is important to define

who is a local actor – also to include the diaspora in the highly needed localization conversations – and thus define the ways of channeling funds.

They feel stuck within old structures and INGO partnerships as this is only option to access funding. The SNGO is taking own steps to implement their priorities through community donations. This way, they can follow their strategy without interference.

“We do not have the chance to implement our strategy as we'd like. We cannot do for the Syrian people what we'd like to do.” SNGO (registered abroad) representative during KI.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships between SNGOs and INGOs have a crucial role to play in the localization of humanitarian responses in Syria. The local knowledge and expertise possessed by national NGOs is invaluable in ensuring that the response is effective, efficient and appropriate to the needs of the affected communities. International NGOs, on the other hand, often bring significant financial and technical resources, as well as experience in coordinating complex emergency responses. By working in partnership, national and international NGOs can leverage each other's strengths and mitigate each other's weaknesses, resulting in a more effective response overall. Such partnerships also help to build the institutional capacity of national NGOs, which is essential for the sustainable development of the local humanitarian sector.

Partnerships of SNGOs

In 2022, the 20 SNGOs had a total of 163 partnership (median of 8 partnerships per organization) that were accompanied in 16% with capacity strengthening trainings and in 8% with funding for capacity strengthening. SNGOs may have up to 20 partners at the same time.

A SNGO representative shared that partnerships are only the key to open the door to funding, but not for sustainability. SNGOs are required to uphold strong performance and implementation to maintain partnerships and manage the competition. A SNGO representative shared his thoughts on sustainability in the Syrian context:

“Most of the SNGOs and INGOs think of sustainability related to funding, but we are here to sustain people and improve their lives. It is not our goal to sustain operations, we should think of our exit. We always submit exit strategies, but those sections are a cliché. We will just ask another partner to fill that gap. It is not an exit; it is a circle. How are those phrases accepted by donors?” SNGO representative during KI.

Equality in Partnerships

One of the core partnership principles is equality. Therefore, SNGOs were asked to state, if they consider themselves an equal partner in various aspects:

- Budget Development: 60% disagreed.

- Risk Sharing: 60% disagreed.
- Proposal design: 45% disagreed.
- Overhead Cost Share: 75% disagreed.
- Donor Comms: 65% disagreed.

Donors or INGOs can abandon SNGOs immediately in case of any concern. We have seen SNGOs that never managed to recover some of relationships and still are not aware of the reasons for abandonment. This is no equal risk sharing. If INGOs would share the risk equality, they would be willing to understand risks we take when operating in Syria and prioritize finding solutions over abandonment.” SNGO representative during KII.

Financial Dependence and Consequences

While SNGOs are completing numerous projects in across a multitude of partnerships every year since the crisis, they are restricted by the provided budget and face limited flexibility to re-negotiate or adapt budgets before or during the project implementation.¹⁵

The direct implementation and competition in pooled funds from INGOs and SNGOs make the operations more difficult. Local NGOs are pushed to compete with each other and international actors, even if they do not want to. Between SNGOs, we end up reducing support costs to compete and win projects. If there would be a clear rule on overhead and support costs allocated to SNGOs, we would not have to do that.” SNGO representative during KII.

15. 60% of respondents stated that they can implement projects in their preferred quality, however staff cannot be paid competitive salaries or additional benefits.

Due to financial limitations, 65% of respondents experience instability within their organization due to staff movements, mostly caused by national or international organizations offering higher salaries or additional benefits. 70% are not able to offer competitive salaries to their staff as well as 85% are not able to sign multi-year contracts. Instability and fluctuation in human resources trigger loss of knowledge and resources within organizations that are already operating with limited budgets and overloaded staff.

The struggle between INGOs and UN agencies is now having added another layer of challenges. UN agencies struggle to stay in the response depending on the cross-border solution. Alternative solutions are on the table, it is the same for INGOs. The uncertainty is pushing everyone to find ways to sustain their operations, not how to hand over or transition to funding SNGOs.” KII with Syrian NGO representative.

Only three out of 20 respondents (15%) are able to cover all administrative costs, with staff competitive salaries.

Reporting Requirements

SNGOs have a significant amount of partners and donors, often more than INGOs and with less staff to manage the different reporting requirements. 75% of respondents said they are preparing reports in various templates for each of their partners, while 35% state the budget available to allocate staff for reporting is not sufficient. Respondent shared that all their staff attended reporting trainings – however

it appears to be the same training level since 2014 without advancing the levels.¹⁶

Opinions on Independence and Stability
17

During budget negotiations with a donor or international organization, **we experience high flexibility from the INGO or donor when negotiating project cost.**



The amount allocated in budgets for support staff and operational costs is sufficient.



The amount allocated in budgets for organizational development is sufficient.



During budget negotiations with a donor or international organization, we experience high flexibility from the INGO or donor when negotiating management cost.



16. 45% of respondent stated that they did not receive report from funding partners to increase (quality of) learning.
17. Color Coding. Brown: Disagree; Green: Neutral; Blue: Agree.

The amount allocated in budgets for administrative costs is sufficient.



INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

The Grand Bargain contributes to localization by enhancing partnerships between local and international NGOs including strengthen local capacities through knowledge sharing, trainings, and funding. SNGOs emphasized their preference for (but also lack of) dedicated funding to strengthen their capacities independently and flexibly.

INGOs played a big role for us to build capacity, they contributed but we did not achieve everything because of them. There were harmonized initiatives, but they failed. Now ICS initiatives are not harmonized, it is the biggest issue. There are no harmonized OCAs, and no harmonized trainings.” KII with SNGO.

Not all SNGOs have had the opportunity to access capacity strengthening.¹⁸ Especially smaller SNGOs are looking still for access to trainings and grants to grow their capacities. However, often calls for trainings or grants are restricted to existing partners, who are frustrated with the level of training provided, while others would be interested to join but are not invited.

18. 10 out of 20 respondents reported that they have not had access to funding dedicated to their own capacity strengthening. Those who had access received funding for a period of three months (4 respondents), six months (5 respondents) or less than a year (1 respondent).

“INGOs send invitation for “Introduction to MEAL”, but we need advanced MEAL – our staff has six to seven years of experience. Two organizations send you the invitation for the same course, and you have to attend as it is in the budget of the INGO and it’s mandatory for partners to join.” KII with Syrian NGO representative.

Only a few SNGOs received funding for their institutional capacity strengthening, mostly were granted funds between 5.000 USD to 10.000 USD from international organizations. In some few cases, SNGOs received 25.000 USD or more from international organizations or donors. SNGOs highlighted that they are often only able to improve their own capacity from their own general funds or the admin cost allocated in projects.

“We need unrestricted funds to develop our own organization. For example, we have the plan to develop a comprehensive ERP system, but just do not have the funds to do it.” KII with SNGO representative.

Designing and Satisfaction with ICS

When it comes to the implementation of capacity development initiatives, SNGOs do not feel they are able to independently design what kind of support they would prefer.¹⁹

“Capacity building should not be a training, it should be learning how to grow an organization. It is not about how to submit a report with an English accent.” SNGO representative during KII.

Only 20% of respondents (4 out of 20 organizations) felt independent in deciding on their organization’s capacity development. That came across strongly in the key informant interviews as well.

“We are ready to move into the next phase of localization, away from repeating trainings and non-specific capacity building. Our operations grew bigger over the past twelve years that should be considered in localization e.g., by making larger direct funds available. Isn’t growing part of localization? However, we stick to the same training for the past years.” SNGO representative during KII.

Growth can contribute to job security. However, partners often focus on capacity-building that intersects with the requirements of the project, rather than focusing on the sustainability of the local organization and enhancing its capabilities. Moreover, INGOs can contribute negatively to job security because they compete with SNGOs and attract employees with capabilities because of their high salaries. This is not only relevant in Türkiye, but also for INGOs that work directly in Syria.

“If you work in a Syrian organization, you receive the training. If you (the same person) work with an international organization, you deliver the training.” KII with Syrian NGO representative.

Once completed, only 30% are (fully) satisfied with the trainings they receive – 35% are neutral, 35% not satisfied.

19. Question: From 1 to 5 (5 being the highest), how independent are you in designing the capacity development you receive?

Capacity building as it is happening now was relevant 8 or 9 years ago. We do not need that anymore; we need to access funds to develop ourselves. All ICS initiatives should be moved to granting due to the level of our organization's maturity." SNGO representative during KII.

Local organizations have a clear direction in their organizational development – to improve their organizations and respond to the needs of their communities. Challenges experience related to governance, coordination mechanisms, and resource mobilization. The support provided to strengthen capacities could be stronger, and if available, it is directed according to donors' directions on accessing funding.

After eight years, it's enough with trainings. If an NGO needs ten years of training, they are not advancing. The first few years it was important and good, and we cannot deny that. We needed PMD, intro to MEAL, finance for NGOs. Now we don't, but we are not asked about the trainings, and we still have to send staff." KII with Syrian NGO representative.

Usage of Technology

In the Grand Bargain, technology has been identified as means to increase effective aid delivery, while reducing costs. While SNGOs are interested and able to use technology, 90% of them stated that it is not possible within the available funding for existing projects.²⁰

Funding is lacking to both develop

20. 50% also consider it not as priority for donors or INGOs, which contributes to the lack of available funding

needed technologies, as well as to operate and maintain them. This starts with simple items such as developing a website, up to lack of funding to set up an organization-wide ERP system. While funding from donors or INGOs is limited, SNGOs rely on their general funds or grants or reduced prices from the technology firms directly.

For instance, SNGOs have developed in-house software and technologies to conduct their warehouse management for more effective aid delivery. Others automatized procurements and recruitment or manage projects on all organizational levels to reduce paper and time of staff.

It is not about the aid we deliver; technology is needed to save time and cover the shortage of staff." survey respondent.

PARTICIPATION AND COORDINATION

Response priorities, actions for localization and the majority of advocacy work are done in global and/or regional conferences and coordination mechanisms dedicated to the Syrian cause. One prominent example is the reoccurring Brussels conference, which highlights key topics and funding gaps for the humanitarian and long-term response.

When being asked about the SNGOs participation in such global and/or regional conferences, events and platforms, the majority (55%; 11 out of 20) states that they are not participating sufficiently. Only 10% (2

organizations) rate their participation as high.²¹

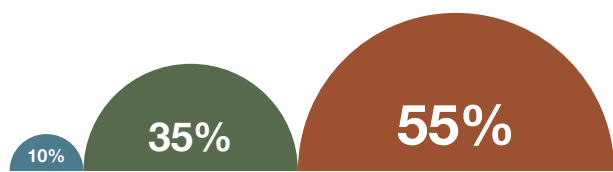


Figure 9: Participation in global/regional platforms

SNGOs involvement is essential, but in the same time we do not have the capacity to allocate time or staff, who's really aware of the topics. We only do that as country directors but have no time to follow up. There is no specific funding for advocacy, so we cannot follow up on many points and cannot properly participate in the decision making. An advocacy manager or officer do not exist in my organization, it is a luxury that will not be funded. Sometimes direct staff will not be funded in projects, why would I add more?" SNGO representative during KII.

Reasons for not participating varied, but most respondents agreed on:

- No relevance to participate as decisions are taken mostly by donors and host countries (45%).
- No relevance to participate as decisions are taken mostly by INGOs (55%).
- No ability to cover travel costs to participate (55%).
- Not being invited to meetings (35%).

Other reasons may include being overburdened (30%), meetings are held only in English (20%) and inefficient

21. Question: From 1 to 5 (5 being the highest), rate your participation in global and regional coordination and decision making for the Syrian cause (e.g., conferences in Brussels, events regarding political solutions, etc.)

meetings (10%). SNGOs mention further the limited knowledge about where and when such meetings take place, short notice may lead to no ability to receive a visa (not all locations are selected keeping in mind the Syrian passport restrictions) or observed that in every meeting the same persons have been invited.

We are pushing for overhead costs, as this gives us the luxury to participate, act and coordinate. We will not only attend high-level meetings, but actively participate and be able to follow up." SNGO representative during KII.

On the national level, SNGOs rate their participation as significantly higher.²² Only 30% rate their participation as low.²³

Participation in Clusters and Leadership

Responding SNGOs rate their participation in cluster mechanisms and their leadership as highest, with only 10% (2 organizations) rating the participation as low.²⁴ As reasons for limited participation, respondents mention that decisions are taken mostly by INGOs (25%), no ability to influence in the meetings (20%) and also overburden with other responsibilities. One respondent highlight that there are limited national co-leads to the clusters or in working groups. The majority of sectors are led by INGOs. The limited ability to take leadership in clusters is (according to most respondents) due to the lack of the financial ability to host a co-coordinator position (70%).

22. Question: From 1 to 5 (5 being the highest), rate your participation in national coordination and decision making for the Syrian cause (e.g., HLG)

23. Reasons for a lower participation may include (as above) that decisions are taken by donors or host countries (45%) or INGOs (35%) inability to cover travel costs (35%), overburdened staff (30%), inefficient meetings (20%) or not being invited (20%).

24. Question: From 1 to 5 (5 being the highest), rate your overall participation rate cluster/sector mechanisms and their leadership.

Coordination Mechanisms

Coordination mechanisms, such as clusters, working groups and strategic advisory groups, play a key role for local organizations to voice concerns and influence the response as well as strategic direction. Thus, cluster attendance is necessary, and the clusters are an important platform for local organizations. Compared to international or regional platforms, 50% (10 SNGOs) rated their participation as high or very high in leadership and coordination mechanisms and 30% as moderate.

With regards to taking leading responsibilities in such mechanisms, 75% of respondents described it as limited or moderate leadership on national platforms. Four (larger) organizations stated influential or very high leadership, which can be connected to their size and relationship with key stakeholders. Respondents described lack of funding to allocate staff for coordination (and also advocacy) as the highest barrier to holding leadership positions.

There are no or limited funding resources dedicated to support LNNGOs in financing coordination positions and participating in leadership is thus a financial investment from the organizations themselves. Other respondents describe that the UN structure is not in all cases welcoming for LNNGO leadership, especially at a high level; similarly, the trust from donors seems to be lacking for SNGOs to take the leadership. Lastly, language barriers were mentioned as donors and INGOs prefer English, which can be a barrier for effective coordination.

Challenges to take leadership in coordination mechanisms? The lack of desire of the INGOs to give this role to the Syrian NGOs, which destroys localization efforts.” survey respondent.

8 out of 20 respondents hold a leadership positions, e.g., as lead or co-lead in working groups, membership in strategic advisory groups (SAG) or co-chair for dedicated task force. Out of those 8 respondents, only three received funding specifically to cover this role. Only one those is able to cover the position fully from the received funding. Others cover the positions through projects, or the organizations' general fund.

Advocacy Initiatives

SNGOs individually as well as through the SNA are advocating towards donors or international partners for a changing situation. Not all organizations are able to join advocacy meetings (or not invited to), but some have attended regional and international events to advocate for localization. While a lot of them have constructive and strong discussions, the majority end without clear action points.

Besides cluster coordination and the SNA, SNGOs attend numerous other forums to coordinate and advocate for their humanitarian response. A large number of responding organizations attend the Syrian NGO League and the Northwest Syria NGO Forum. Other platforms mentioned by respondents include VDSF, NEAR Network, DEMAC, HPass, AFNS Steering Board, Turkish NGO Council, Watan Network, PSEA Network, Orphan Care Federation, and the Civil Society Platform.



CONCLUSION AND RECOM- MENDATIONS

Localization has been an idea introduced to the cross-border response in Northwest Syria years ago, and Syria is often mentioned as best practice for localization; however, SNGOs cannot mirror that experience. In conversations leading up to this report, one question was raised frequently: **“what is the plan for localization?”**

SNGOs have clear ideas of what they can and would like to accomplish for their response and the affected communities they serve, however limited access to funding and lack of budgets to develop their own capacities restrict them in doing so. SNGOs are aware that localization should enable them to put their ideas into reality. Every participant agreed that localization with all of its elements is a concept only, and the activities offered to promote localization are something that should be more than just workshops or meetings without actions. So far, they did not see an actionable plan to transition funding and responsibility largely to SNGOs.

We need a clear process and achievements for the Grand Bargain. For example, they should say: in the coming months we will build the capacity of X organization, afterwards we will grant them a pilot fund – so they can practice responsibilities as prime. We need a graduation approach for SNGOs.” *Kil with Syrian NGO representative.*

SNGOs are looking for donors and INGOs to proceed with localization commitments with actions. There should not be a resistance to enable localization, e.g., due to competition or the aim to sustain funding. SNGOs see that there might be a gap between commitments made in the HQ on localization and what the country teams are implementing to sustain the operations. SNGOs are afraid that using new modalities, such as cash, will be used as an argument to put localization efforts on hold due to the anticipated risks. During the surveys and KIIs, SNGOs welcomed donors to send monitors and upscale third-party monitoring as they are convinced about their ability to deliver high-quality projects with direct funds.

”

Main donors must have a real intention to award projects directly to local organizations. This sincere intention should motivate them to raise the capacity of local NGOs in different aspects, such as proposal writing, and will help them in understanding the mechanisms of working directly with local partners.” survey respondent.

In concluding words, a quote from a SNGO representative during one of the interviews summarizes what numerous SNGOs expressed during the research:

”

You have been a good student, but never graduated. For SNGOs, graduation should include direct funding from the donors. INGOs should plan to leave the Syria response in the long run, there are other crises to work on. The goal should be to connect local organizations with donors, build them up and leave. This would save us likely a large percentage of funding in the long run.” SNGO representative during KII.



ADVOCACY MESSAGES

Under the umbrella of localization and the commitments made, SNGOs expect donors and INGOs to step up and support them in growing and graduating their organizations to achieve real localization. They emphasize to strengthen capabilities of NGOs and the responder community and networks, as individual capacities are vanishing. As shifting the power is challenging and will take time, SNGOs are looking to see a start by share power and risk equally, as they are sure the transformational, cultural and incremental change will come.

Greater Transparency

- Provide SNGOs with the full project package, including the original budget and proposal, to help understand the cost allocation and serve as learning experience.
- Collaborate to set indicators ensuring proposals are being localized. SNGOs recommend creating localization indicator guidance and all to pledge the implementation.

Institutional Capacity Strengthening

- Provide dedicated funding for strengthening the capacities of Syrian NGOs independently and flexibly and allowing them to develop their organizations.
- Expand access to trainings and grants for smaller Syrian NGOs to support their capacity growth, ensuring opportunities are not restricted to existing partners only.

- Shift the focus of capacity strengthening initiatives from repetitive trainings to more comprehensive and organization-oriented support, including unrestricted funds for development and the utilization of technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

Partnerships

- Encourage partnerships between national and international NGOs in Syria that prioritize the transfer of knowledge and expertise to build the institutional capacity of SNGOs.
- Ensure to progress on harmonizing partnership assessments and requirements.
- Provide adequate and fair funding to SNGOs to allow them to implement projects in preferred quality, pay competitive salaries, and cover administrative costs.
- Harmonize overhead and support costs to end financial competition among SNGOs.
- Identify ways to avoid INGOs competing with SNGOs for qualified staff.

Access to Funding

- Prioritize providing direct funding to Syrian NGOs, rather than channeling funds through intermediaries such as INGOs and UN agencies to reduce (admin) costs.
- Re-thinking the main recipients of pool funds such as AFNS and SCHF and focus on SNGOs rather than INGOs to reduce costs and increase efficiency.
- Actively commit to and promote localization by providing sustainable support in form of direct funding to SNGOs without requiring them to register abroad as INGOs.
- Provide flexible, multi-year funding for SNGOs to adapt to the changing situation.

Participation and Coordination

- Increase support and resources to participate effectively in global and regional conferences, events, and platforms as well as for advocacy staff and resources.
- Invest in overhead and dedicated costs that enable SNGOs to actively participate, coordinate, and lead in humanitarian response efforts, e.g., for co-coordinator positions.

Lastly, the SNA recommends sharing this report among Syrian NGOs, civil society actors and other stakeholders on the ground to jointly develop a roadmap and pledge for implementing the recommendations made.

CONNECTING LOCALIZATION AND THE EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE

SNGOs are the first responders, as those who have staff, presence and access in Northwest Syria. They are equipped to start and scale up their response immediately and have proved so over the past years during bombardments and displacements. When the earthquakes struck Syria and Türkiye on February 6, 2023, the expertise and ability to lead a first line emergency response for both Syrian and international organizations was tested under the hardest circumstances.²⁵

We responded directly. We contacted our staff, checked in on them and they started to respond to the people in need from their phones. From their cars, from mosques, the street or wherever they were.” SNGO representative during KII.

SNGO representatives took the chance to reflect on challenges and shortcomings during the earthquake response. While some are grateful for the swift funding, they received from INGO partners hours after the earthquake hit, others are frustrated with the delayed response and the slow release of funding. They released large contingency stocks that were available due to preparation for a non-renewal of the cross-border resolution. A SNGO representative highlighted that this was by

25. Whenever referring to the earthquake response throughout the report, it stands not only for a devastating crisis SNGOs have experienced but also representative of all small and big crisis that are faced in Syria where SNGOs struggled with coordination, resource mobilization and access to funding. However, the earthquake is a pressing example why localization and locally led responses are needed in the response. SNGOs were present in the crisis situation before, during and after a crisis and remain accountable to their local communities throughout.

chance, it was not planned. Despite twelve years of crisis, there is no sufficient framework how to respond rapidly in an emergency. They ended up having to develop proposals in the earthquake response, waiting for feedback from HQs and regional offices. The response leadership appeared overwhelmed without contingency. As part of this research, SNGOs suggest having open agreements that can directly release funding in crisis.

“It took us maybe five hours to recover on the ground, then we started responding. The first week in Gaziantep was tough on everyone, but we gave instructions to the field team and managed well.” SNGO representative during KII.

While efforts from all actors were appreciated, some SNGO representatives asked themselves why there was a lack of agility in responding to the earthquakes. They were expecting deployments or regional structures to step in, but that did not appear to have happened. Despite being delayed in the response, international actors asked for concept notes and proposals. Those moments it should be about humanity, not paperwork.

“We are always told that local actors need capacity building, but now we showed that we had the capacity to respond much faster. We deployed a team from Iraq immediately. Other INGOs deployed regional staff that did not have enough skills or did not know the context. Where are the sufficient backup plans.” SNGO representative during KII.

Other funds did not even open up emergency response allocation in a swift manner. Funding was available, but on hold stuck in bureaucratic processes. Channeling funds directly to SNGOs would have reduced the timeline of responding. Having had better access and communication channels, SNGOs could have informed donors directly and raise priorities. Without a direct contact, local organizations are voiceless and are restricted to the existing channels they have, which are often limited. Some SNGOs prioritized funding from community donations, rather than opting to go for more partnerships or funds that burden them.

“In the end, it appeared to be our sole responsibility to respond, even though we lost a lot of people.” SNGO representative during KII.

Additionally, SNGOs experienced frustration while trying to cover the duty of care for their earthquake-affected staff due to limited clarity and harmony on payments. Numerous SNGOs ended up paying duty of care from their own pockets to provide equal payments to staff.

Sustainability and Cost Efficiency of Localization

To close out the survey on localization, SNGOs were asked to respond to two statements that should be reflected closely any INGO and donor office. Is it cost-effective that INGOs directly implement projects in NWS? And is it sustainable? The majority disagreed. A SNGO representative shared his concerns about future plans and early recovery:



It has been twelve years of response, without long-term planning. We made people reliant on humanitarian aid. Since 2020, the context allowed us to do a lot of early recovery. We had limited movements of IDPs, and the security situation was stable. The context allowed us to do something, but we did nothing. Before the earthquake, already there were no funds for early recovery, now Syria is on the trends again and funding is coming. We will do the same and create reliance and dependency by only responding to emergencies. We as humanitarian community made this ourselves with our own hands. ” SNGO representative during KII

experienced staff and contributing to staff fluctuation due to higher salaries.



When it comes to localization, we as NGO somehow hold the stick in the middle. I want to see a clear pathway and process how localization will be implemented positively and while maintaining our values. We do not want to be considered as having a competition with INGOs – everyone has their value in the response, but how this is perceived needs to change.” KII with Syrian NGO representative.

It is cost-efficient that international organizations directly implement projects in Northwest Syria.²⁶



It is sustainable that international organizations directly implement projects in Northwest Syria.



Direct implementation by INGOs in NWS undermines any efforts taken on localization. Given the status and capacity of SNGOs there is no need for INGOs to implement their projects without an SNGO partner and potentially harm SNGOs by hiring their

26. Color Coding. Brown: Disagree; Green: Neutral; Blue: Agree.

ANNEXES

A: Workstreams and their Localization Relevance

- **Workstream 1: Greater Transparency:** Localization commitments and transparency of funding flows, e.g., through information shared by international partners or through initiatives like IATI or FTS, are closely connected. Localization refers to the process of shifting more decision-making power and resources to local actors, including governments, civil society organizations, and affected communities. Greater transparency in humanitarian financing and the donor landscape can support both SNGOs and the SNA in their localization advocacy efforts. Greater transparency (and relevant initiatives) provides local actors with more information on a) what funding is available, b) how is it allocated, and c) who to connect to for potential direct funding. IATI or FTS, as tools for tracking and reporting on humanitarian (or development) financing can also support localization by providing more information on local funding needs and gaps. It can help donors and humanitarian organizations to better target their resources to areas where they are most needed, including to local actors. Vice versa, it allows LNNGOs to directly seek support from those financing humanitarian responses in their context. Keeping key information such as sources of funding confidential or undisclosed hinders LNNGOs to communicate and reach out proactively to donors. It does not contribute to the shifting power agenda of the localization commitments made and promoted by all actors.

- **Workstream 2: Support and Funding Tools to National and Local Actors:** Workstream 2 is highly relevant to localization for Syrian NGOs because it focuses on strengthening the capacity of local and national responders to lead and coordinate humanitarian responses. This includes increasing the proportion of humanitarian funding going directly to them, which is a key component of localization efforts. By ensuring that local and national responders have the resources and support they need to effectively respond to humanitarian crises in their own countries, they can take a more active role in decision-making and contribute to more effective and sustainable humanitarian interventions. This is particularly important in the context of Syria, where local and national actors have been at the forefront of humanitarian response for many years. The workstream's emphasis on building the capacity of local and national responders aligns with the goals of localization and can contribute to a more inclusive and effective humanitarian response in Syria.
- **Workstream 6: Participation Revolution:** Workstream 6, which focuses on participation, is highly relevant to localization efforts for Syrian NGOs. Localization aims to shift the power and decision-making authority from international actors to local actors, including national and local NGOs, communities, and governments. By promoting the meaningful participation of people receiving aid in decision-making processes, workstream 6 aligns with the principles of localization and reinforces the importance of local actors' expertise, knowledge, and agency. Involving Syrian NGOs in decision-making processes and advocating for their perspectives and points of view can lead to more relevant, effective, and sustainable humanitarian interventions that reflect the needs and priorities of affected communities. This participatory approach also fosters trust, accountability, and ownership among local actors and helps build their capacity to lead and manage humanitarian responses. Therefore, workstream 6 can support and strengthen localization efforts in Syria by empowering local actors and enhancing their participation and engagement in the humanitarian sector.
- **Workstream 9: Harmonized Reporting:** Workstream 9 is particularly important for the SNA and their localization efforts because it can help to reduce the burden of reporting for local organizations and improve the quality of the information that is reported. In many cases, local organizations may lack the capacity and resources to meet the reporting requirements of international donors, which can limit their ability to access funding and support. By standardizing reporting requirements and streamlining reporting processes, Workstream 9 can help to level the playing field and ensure that local organizations are not disadvantaged by complex reporting requirements. This can, in turn, support the localization of aid efforts by enabling local organizations to build their own reporting systems rather than feeding into various reporting requirements that do not necessarily allow to adopt own systems with different rules and regulations required.

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