

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

ADVOCACY NOTE FOR LOCALIZATION OF HUMANITARIAN AID.

CALL FOR A QUALITY PARTNERSHIP FOR THE EFFECTIVE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EIGHT COMMITMENTS OF THE
CHARTER FOR CHANGE-C4C IN
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO.

C4C-DRC IN KINSHASA, 05-08 SEPTEMBER 2022.

1 National advocacy note to boost change in the humanitarian system and make humanitarian localization effective-C4C/DRC, September 2022 IN KINSHASA. Contact Focal Point of the C4C/RDC Network: +243998802284, +243814206071, Email: c4crdcongoreseau@gmail.com, upddheonaafrica@amail.com

I. CONTEXT OF HUMANITARIAN LOCALIZATION AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL-DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO.

The World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain have focused on the localisation agenda with the aspiration to make aid "as local as possible, as international as necessary". This summit focused on international investment in the capacity, response and leadership of national and local stakeholders with the involvement of national and local governments as well as civil society. Indeed, since the Grand Bargain and the commitments of the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, multiple stakeholders – donors, UN agencies, NGOs, civil society groups and others – have devoted efforts and resources to advancing the process of localizing humanitarian assistance. Despite these efforts, there is still work to be done. A 2019 Localisation Working Group stocktaking meeting acknowledged that while the localisation agenda has made a lot of progress, it "still needs to move from rhetoric to action, from policy to operations, and to build on (more) evidence of how localisation delivers better and stronger principles-based humanitarian assistance". ¹²

The localization program, a key point in the implementation of the Grand Bargain, and the scope of its scope gained clarity in 2017. Based on this, the IASC (Inter-Agency Standing Committee) shared, in early 2018, a common definition of what a local actor represents. For the target of "at least 25% of humanitarian funds go to local and national operators as directly as possible" by 2020, funds reported to OCHA's Financial Traceability Service that went directly to local and national non-governmental organizations, or provided through an intermediary, accounted for 3.6% of humanitarian assistance in 2017. This represented an increase of 2.3% in 2016 (GHA 2018 report).³

The Charter for Change (C4C) aims to empower and promote a locally led humanitarian response around the world initiated in 2015 and adopted in 2016 in Istanbul (Turkey) is one of the initiatives to materialize localization. It aims to transform the way the humanitarian system operates to enable local and national NGOs to play a leading and greater role in the humanitarian response as they live in communities before, during and after humanitarian crises.

Thanks to awareness-raising efforts and good practices in the materialization of humanitarian localization by signatories and endorsers of the Charter for Change and the commitments of the Grand Bargain, several international organizations are in the process of signing while organizations in the South are in the process of endorsing the Charter for Change.

¹ Charter for Change PPT for Endorsers Nov 2019

² Grand Bargain Localisation Workstream (2019): Outcome report from global meeting held 23-24 October 2019, Brussels.

³https://agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/resources/2018/Aug/Dossier%20Analytique_Renforcer%20les%20syst%C3%A8mes%20 locaux_Final_20%20July.pdf

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The Charter for Change has been endorsed by more than **510** national and local organizations from 57 countries around the world, including 89 in the Democratic Republic of Congo⁴, calling on their international partners to work towards signing the 8 commitments.

39 international NGOs signed the Charter and committed their organizations to change the way they work by implementing the 8 endorser commitments to strengthen the top-down accountability of the humanitarian system to affected communities.

The undersigned international NGOs commit to make the changes identified in the Charter for Change within their own organizational working methods so that national actors based in the South play an increased and more important role in the humanitarian response.

- 1. Increase direct funding to NGOs in the South to support humanitarian action
- 2. Reaffirming the Partnership Principles
- 3. Introduce more transparency in payments to local and national NGOs in the Global South
- 4. When recruiting, preserve the capacities of local actors
- 5. Focus on the role of local actors
- 6. Addressing subcontracting and equality in decision-making
- 7. Build operational capacity and improve organizational support
- 8. Communications on partnerships to the media and the public.

In addition to the Charter for Change, other initiatives to materialize the localization of humanitarian aid are noted, including:

- a) Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: The use of national institutional structures and systems for aid management, where they provide reasonable assurance that aid will be effectively used to achieve agreed objectives, enhances aid effectiveness by sustainably strengthening the capacity of partner countries to develop and implement policies, and accountability to the public and to parliament.⁵
- b) The triple nexus: The World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 thus urges to transcend the gap between humanitarian and development and to integrate peace actors. This new way of working (*New Way Of Working*) thus defends a vision where humanitarian, development and peace actors work together towards collective results, based on their comparative advantages and according to the specificity of the context.⁶

⁴ https://drive.google.com/file/d/10gltvvXyxtL2gyya5-9d9qlmb_TC0YkH/view

⁵ https://www.oecd.org/fr/cad/efficacite/34579826.pdf

⁶ The Triple Nexus put to the test: humanitarian-development-peace. - Humanitarian challenges (defishumanitaires.com)

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- c) The Agenda for Humanity: The future of humanitarian action must include the experiences and perspectives of this range of actors in order to adapt to the challenges of the twenty-first century.⁷
- d) Local humanitarian leadership; "Local organisations have important knowledge about language, culture, history, politics and geography as well as valuable networks. They are the ones who should take the initiative in an emergency, rather than following orders. Carlos Mejía Executive Director of Oxfam in Colombia.⁸
- e) Need for a common understanding of localization by all actors, including government and international NGOs in order to avoid different interpretations of what localization is and what it should look like in the DRC and how to achieve it. The result is a collective commitment that is difficult to achieve unless a common position is confirmed at the end of this very important session.

II. POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMITMENTS OF THE CHARTER FOR CHANGE IN DR CONGO.

- 1. Reaffirm the principles of partnership: take up here the advances in the model of collaboration between actors, such as developing in the workshop.
- 2. Stop diminishing the capacity of local actors: Highlight here the elements of answers on the added value of localization, as emerged during the work of the groups, in the workshop.
- 3. Strengthen operational capacity and improve organisational support: Highlight here the different implementation models/strategies for skills transfer, such as workshop development (see Street Child, Diakonie and OXFAM GB).

III. PROBLEM AND CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMITMENTS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO.

While efforts to promote localization are being noted both at the level of signatories and endorsers of the Charter for Change, other signatory parties to Grand Bargain's commitments, some challenges remain, including:⁹

⁷ <u>Develop a Programme of Action for Humanity</u> <u>United Nations</u>

⁸ https://www.oxfam.org/fr/le-pouvoir-des-leaders-locaux-dans-les-situations-durgence

⁹ Workshop on humanitarian localization in DRC, from 3 to 5 March, 2021 in Goma

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- The maintenance of subcontracting instead of partnership: It is observed on the ground the application of subcontracting instead of partnership. Indeed, subcontracting is the most common modeof collaboration between INGOs and NGLOs/N who for the most part approach INGOs as donors, donors who can guide everything and with whom we must engage less discussion. The principles of partnerships are less known by several INGO staff members who either do not have partnership policies or communicate less about the partnership. "For reasons of organizational survival, NGO leaders accept any type of partnership, sometimes even knowing from the outset that they will not achieve the results to which they have committed. Not only does this undermine the image of all NGOs, but also opens the door to corruption and embezzlement." In most cases, it is the partners who are evaluated weakly on the partnership. This is due to a low level of knowledge, processing and understanding of partnership principles.
- The capacity building so much touted by the INGOs with the NGL-N remains more at the level of training than institutional support: It is true that several members of the staff of the NGL/N participate in trainings organized by their "partners" INGOs, nevertheless, the instability of the staff due to non-payment of adequate salary and deficits of multi-year projects mean that the NGL/N soie are less competitive with INGOs when it comes to competition in the search for funding. This is one of the consequences of low institutional support (the administrative costs involved are not, in most cases, equitably distributed between INGOs and NGLOs/N who have jointly mobilized funds for projects). Hence the inability of several NGL/N to cover even the operating costs of their organizations. Added to this is the weak support of the Congolese Government to the NGL/N. It also impacts their ability to coordinate and their influence in decision-making spaces.
- ➤ Direct access to funding remains wishful thinking: While the target in this regard was 25% direct funding to NGOs in the Global South, competition between local, national and international actors in resource mobilization, the low involvement of NGL/N in the development of project proposals and the low coaching by INGOs are among the factors that continue to undermine commitment. 25% of funds to be mobilized directly by national organizations. Even for local funding opportunities, NGLOs/N remain the last served ones. UN agencies come first, followed by INGOs.
- The non-transfer of skills to Congolese NGOs: The humanitarian professions are evolving, consisting in transferring skills to local actors. For INGO interventions to have a lasting benefit to local populations, they must be willing to transfer skills to NGOs. In case of direct intervention by INGOs, they should rely directly on local actors with local knowledge, use their know-how, and train them in techniques they do not master.

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"Expatriate staff must have this fiber of training, and pass on what they know before leaving," explains Laure Vivès.

➤ Brain drains or mobility of local staff: given the limited financial means of NGO-L, experienced staff in NGO-L are always recruited by INGOs and UN Agencies. This approach weakens the emergence of local actors called upon to take over the process of recruiting and training a new elite within their organizations.

IV. BARRIERS TO CHANGE

Despite a broad consensus on the need for reform, and public commitments to support it, there are a range of obstacles preventing it. These can be procedural, financial, regulatory and/or cultural: they range from INGO resistance to change, inertia, bureaucracy within the humanitarian structure, and inflexible funding mechanisms and compliance rules. These barriers "stand in the way of constructive and fruitful engagement with local and national humanitarian actors.

In fact, the entire worldview of the humanitarian sector is an obstacle to change. People affected by crises are often seen as passive victims and/or mere recipients of aid; international actors enjoy greater trust and are less scrutinized than local actors (see section 7 on LHL in conflict and fragile contexts); and 'Western' technical experience and management practices are valued more than local expertise and understanding of the context. The great power imbalance between actors comes largely from inequalities in funding, decision-making, and coordination. The humanitarian system is highly institutionalized; it focuses on UN humanitarian agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the major confederations of INGOs, which together account for the vast majority of humanitarian spending and have the most access to institutional humanitarian donors. Direct funding to local and national stakeholders remained below 3% in 2017, well below the Grand Bargain's overall target, which requires 25% of funding to go "as directly as possible" to local and national stakeholders.

This power imbalance reflects a lack of inclusivity and diversity in a self-regulating international humanitarian system, which is also gender-blind.

V. THE DESIRED CHANGE

In view of the above, the signatory and endorsing partners of the Charter for Change believe that it is possible to do better and hope for the following change:

A quality and effective partnership for more empowerment of NGL/N as well as the sharing of risks and gains: this change can only be possible if there is a clear willingness

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on both sides to uphold the principles of partnership. INGOs were encouraged to take a more inclusive approach to defining and assessing capacity needs — defining the capacities and contributions of all actors in the partnership rather than focusing on specific gaps, for example, technical gaps or compliance-related capacity.

- ➤ It is essential to wish to have a common interpretation, as an INGO, Congolese Government, NGO, United Nations Agency, of what localization is to avoid serving certain agendas and find ourselves in situations where the government and NGOs/L have sometimes unrealistic expectations from the various stakeholders in humanitarian localization in the DRC.
- Complementarity between humanitarian actors as a result of mutual capacity building:
 "Complementarity is a result where all capacities at all levels local, national, regional, international are harnessed and combined to support the best"¹⁰

VI. SOLUTIONS TO ACHIEVE THIS CHANGE

The recommended solutions are as follows:

- Define and regulate a national partnership and/or humanitarian action policy (By the Congolese State and its partners): this policy must ensure the representation and participation (presence and voice) of the local population and national actors in coordination mechanisms: including clusters, Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT), sectoral coordination meetings and strategic advisory groups. This policy should give priority to the inclusion of all in coordination systems and highlight the role of local and national actors in humanitarian action.
- > Regulate humanitarian action and define national policy taking into account the localization approach.
 - The role of the State in this process of humanitarian localization
 - Take ownership of the localization process by implementing binding policies and strategies in the spirit of Law 004 of July 2001, especially in its articles 34, 42 and 43;
 - Provide leadership and monitoring of interventions at all levels;
 - Define and monitor the materialization of the general policy of humanitarian action at the national level by including the approach to the localization of aid;
 - Improve the communication system between the DRC government and other humanitarian actors;

¹⁰ Localization in practice"Learning Report "IMPACTUS-June 2020

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- Improve the coordination of interventions between the services concerned/involved and the line ministries;
- Develop good leadership with a clear vision in supporting and accompanying humanitarian actors;
- Guarantee the safety and accessibility of actors in the intervention areas;
- Review the methodological approach for assessing stakeholders (humanitarian actors) in the process of signing and awarding framework agreements.
- Implement a skills transfer strategy, reassure technical and financial support from INGOs C4C signatories to NGL-N (by INGOs and UN system agencies): Capacity assessments should be reciprocal to identify capacity gaps of international and local actors, and be accompanied by investment and commitment to address identified gaps.
- Implement a skills transfer strategy, and provide technical and financial support from C4C Signatory INGOs (by INGOs and UN system agencies) to NGL-N. Capacity assessments need to be joint to identify gaps in national and local actors, accompanied by investment and commitment to fill these gaps.
 - ♣ What should the international actors involved in the process of effective implementation of the C4C commitments do?
 - Effective compliance and materialization of these C4C commitments,
 - Comprehensive information sharing by headquarters within their various country representations
 - Always work closely with the government (define guidelines for the implementation of their commitments
 - Involve the government in the implementation of humanitarian responses
 - Respecting their C4C commitments
 - Increase the budget of projects/programmes for NGOs/L to at least 25%
 - Reassure the transfer of competences from national and local NGOs in order to reduce the risks of embezzlement, corruption, failure, anti-values.
 - Work closely with the government in both planning and implementing humanitarian responses while defining guidelines.
 - Reassure the transfer of substantial skills to national and local NGOs in order to reduce the risks of embezzlement, corruption, failure, anti-values and violations of humanitarian principles.
 - ➤ Reform of the humanitarian system in the DRC so that it becomes as inclusive as possible (By the Congolese State and its partners): "The new humanitarian architecture should be quickly finalized and made effective. We recommend a reflection on the feasibility and necessity of a "decentralization" of inter-

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clusters/certain clusters. This would allow for more accurate and direct feedback from beneficiaries." Coordination of national NGOs with a Secretariat should be established and supported, as is the case for international organizations. ¹¹

- ♣ What is the added value of the localisation approach in the humanitarian aid system in the DRC?
- Local actors are available and have a better command of the context. This allows an adapted response because they know the environment, the language, the culture, the beneficiaries, and their real needs
- The fast and flexible response as national actors is always available
- The ownership of actions and the response in favor of the community as an actor and beneficiaries.
- Efficiency and effectiveness in emergency response
- A good transition from emergency to development
- A good transfer of skills to the local level implies a real ownership of the action
- Accountability at all levels and to stakeholders.

Promote predictable, flexible, multi-year funding (Donor):

Budget lines exist for the institutional strengthening of national and local partners on a multiannual basis. It is necessary to maintain or even increase contributions to pooled fund mechanisms as they provide leverage for national and local NGOs. As proof, the rate of access of national NGOs to the common fund for the DRC has increased from 7% to 30% in one year." In addition, "so-called recovery planning needs to be developed and not wait until you have reached the end of an intervention cycle to do so.¹²

Moreover, in situations where one part of the population is in a humanitarian crisis and another in a so-called recovery context, the two types of planning must go hand in hand and reinforce each other. In the DRC, NGOs regret that the so-called "transition or recovery funds" funding mechanisms are not activated. The problem of the lack of "symmetry of contractual conditions is also an obstacle to access to finance". Thus, for example, when an agency of the UN system signs with a donor and then contracts with an NGNO/L, the latter does not necessarily apply the same contractual conditions on the last contract and does not pass on the "advantages" of its initial contract (in terms of administrative costs, duration of the contract, reporting modality, etc.). ».¹³

It is therefore necessary to ensure that **longer-term strategic partnerships are explored** and /or in place, beyond projects and short-term funding, supporting the organizational

¹¹ Understanding the Great Bargain and its implementation on the ground: Perspective and experience of NGOs in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Report, 17-18 April 2019, INGO Forum in partnership with NGO Voice
¹² Ditto

¹³ Ditto

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capacities and interests of the national partner, beyond projects; integrating strategic collaborations into local humanitarian response and exit strategies.

- Advocate more complementarity, collaboration instead of competition, between NGO/L on the one hand and INGOs and UN agencies on the other, by supporting national and local leadership in responding to humanitarian crises. Ensure that international actors do not invest in parallel response and coordination mechanisms that are a major step towards involving national and local representation in the decision-making process. In 2017, around 10 stakeholders showed promising examples of good practice in a limited number of countries, while developing training modules and guidelines to consolidate and expand them.¹⁴
 - ➤ Develop a consultative and participatory framework for humanitarian response involving a wide range of stakeholders. These include state actors, national and local NGOs, international NGOs, and donors and donors. It must be developed through a highly participatory and consultative process, involving a wide range of stakeholders at various stages of its development. These stakeholders include national and local humanitarian response actors, government officials, international non-governmental organizations and donors/resource providers for the national humanitarian response and members of the National Steering Committee.
 - ♣ What should national and local actors do?
 - Always work closely with government
 - Exchange between national actors and mutual capacity building
 - Organize in a Forum for better coordination
 - Improve governance within their organizations
 - Implement programmatic tools clearly defining the vision, mission, objectives and intervention channels
 - Define their roles and responsibilities of its contribution to the local community?
 - Establish self-financing mechanisms and other policies of good governance and progressive empowerment (not only relying on donor funding), wait-and-see.
 - Playing a leading role in humanitarian response at the community level
 - Safeguard its credibility and integrity within the community
 - Become aware and engage local actors in the empowerment process (learning)
 - Be open, supportive of the system of networking and coordination between actors at all levels.

¹⁴https://agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/resources/2018/Aug/Dossier%20Analytique_Renforcer%20les%20syst%C3%A8mes% 20locaux_Final_20%20July.pdf

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VII. COMMITMENTS OF THE CONGOLESE STATE, NGO-LS, INGOS AND UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES PARTICIPATING IN THE WORKSHOP.

1. Capacity transfers:

The Government, NGL-N, INGOs and UN System Agencies are putting in place joint skills transfer plans (based on the organizational development needs expressed by the various stakeholders). These plans should help strengthen local humanitarian leadership, with a view to fostering good governance practices (administrative and programmatic, material and financial management), in accordance with the principles of partnership (equality, accountability, complementarity, transparency, results-oriented approach) and accountability.

2. Participation:

The Government and international humanitarian partners agree to promote the participation of local and national actors in the debate on funding and decision-making policies in the humanitarian sector. To do this, a strategy for the effective materialization of humanitarian and development localisation will be developed by the various stakeholders of the humanitarian ecosystem in DR Congo.

3. Complementarity:

International actors commit to work in a coordinated manner with state actors as supporting and reinforcing partners, not as substitute partners.

The agencies of the United Nations system and international organizations undertake to work jointly with national and local organizations to strengthen their capacities in a logic of skills transfer and exit strategies (a new complementarity that leaves the implementation of projects to local actors). They are also committed to evolving good practices so that their actions support the humanitarian response and leadership of local actors.

4. Quality:

Local and national non-governmental organizations are committed to working in accordance with international humanitarian norms and standards in collaboration with actors present in the humanitarian ecosystem of the DRC to achieve the expected objectives.

They also undertake to report on the results of their work in a transparent manner to all stakeholders.

5. Funding:

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- Under the facilitation of the INGOs, the NGL-N create a space for coordination in order to establish regular contact with donors and donors, but also toensure that activities and budget are discussed around a table and that conclusions are consensual. (International actors promote this interlocution, possibly by sharing their contacts and know-how).
- Ensure that the management of the partnership becomes more horizontal and not vertical, activities and budget are discussed around a table and that the conclusions of the discussions are consensual.
- Donors and donors should specifically define calls for tender by category of actors (ONGL, NGO, INGO, agencies of the United Nations system) for better coordination.

6. Follow-up of commitments:

To ensure better monitoring of the level of achievement of commitments, a platform of signatory and endorsing organizations of the Charter for Change working in the DRC is set up bringing together the various stakeholders of the Grand Bargain, the Charter for Change and NEAR.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This collective process towards locally-led humanitarian responses, which ensure that local actors (at community, district and country level) and people in affected communities play a strong leadership role, is inextricably linked to that of realigning, sharing and/or abandoning established forms of power of international humanitarian actors (donors, INGO and UN). Globally, this has taken the form of a set of diverse (yet overlapping) commitments, such as The Charter for Change and The Grand Bargain.

The humanitarian discourse on 'transfer of power' has traditionally been associated with financial, decision-making, and technical capacities to design and implement aid projects. These are usually in the hands of a few INGOs and UN agencies, and have to 'move' from 'here' (global) to 'there' (local, closer to those affected). 5 However, the conversation about power needs to take a much broader and more diverse perspective: one that recognizes that there are different forms of power interacting with each other in the humanitarian system. These go beyond the financial, decision-making and technical power that goes from the 'donor' to the 'affected person' (with many 'intermediaries' in between). They include: the power of local knowledge, the power of the own experience of those affected, the power of local networks, and the power of local and community actors to be able to pursue their goals despite lack of funding and other resources.

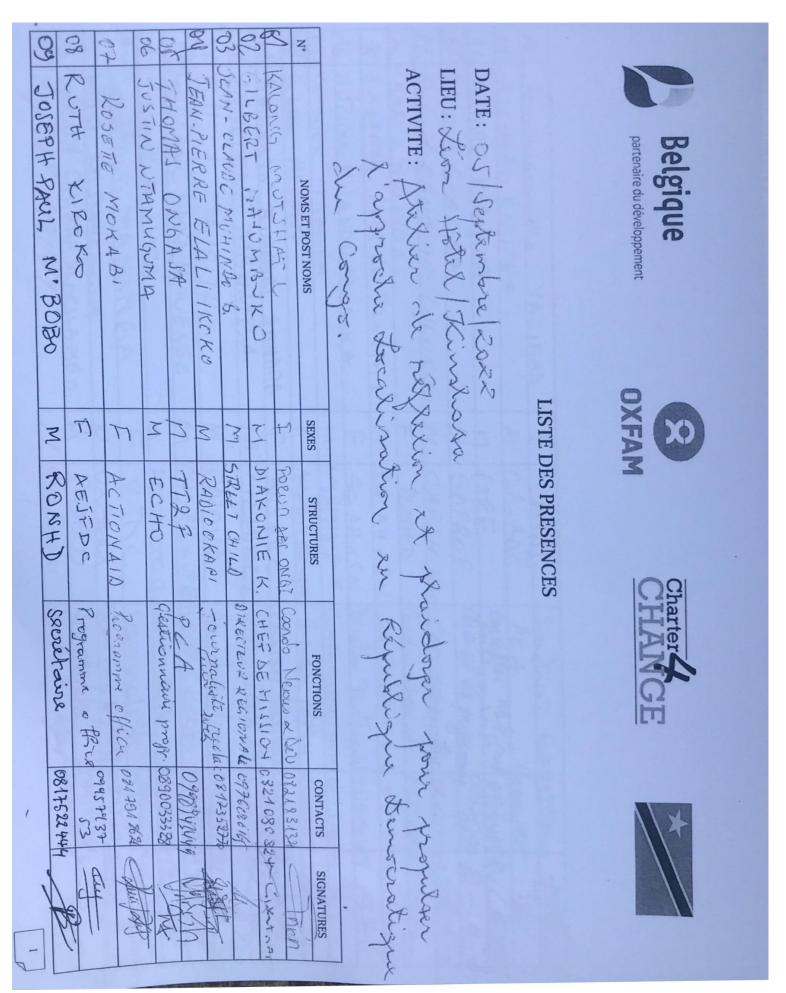
A call to action

The humanitarian system, which is currently dominated by international actors, needs to change. It must deliberately evolve towards increased local capacity, recognizing the power of the many and diverse local and national actors working to promote and share **strength**, **voice and space**, and placing people affected by crises at the centre of humanitarian response. This is urgently needed to correct an unbalanced, patriarchal and overburdened humanitarian system. Humanitarian action must be 'as local as possible, and as international as necessary' so that people affected by crises receive better assistance.

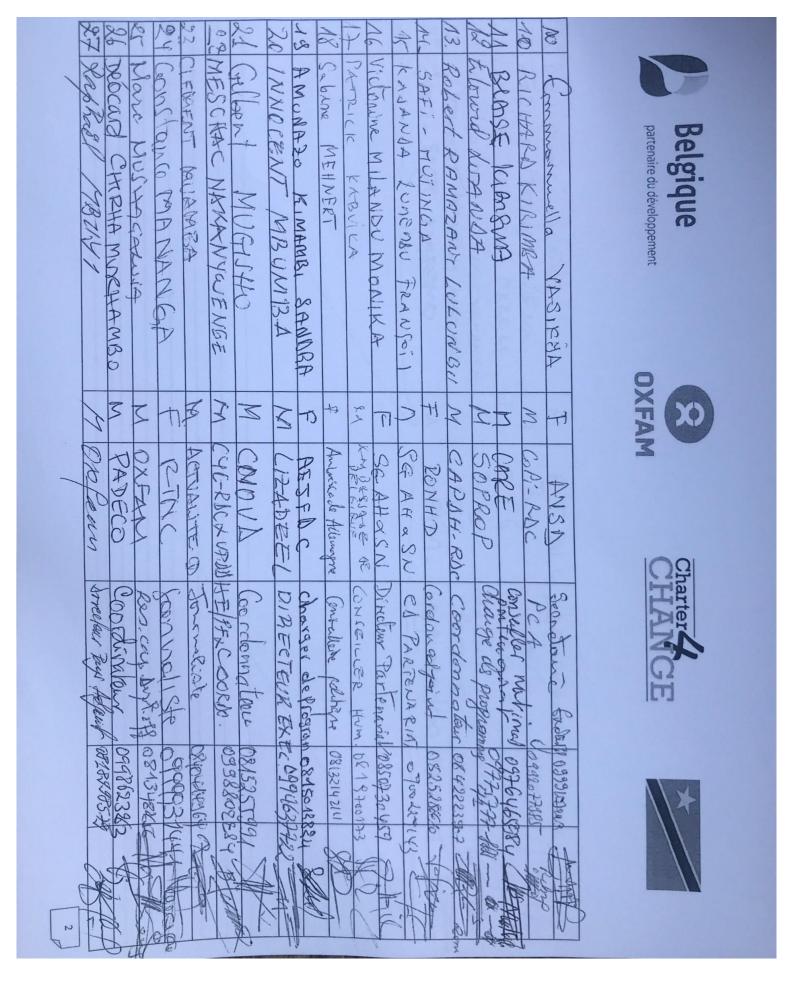
Thus, a **change in mindset as well as within the organization** could help everyone play a role in bringing stakeholders together and facilitating dialogue instead of implementing projects.



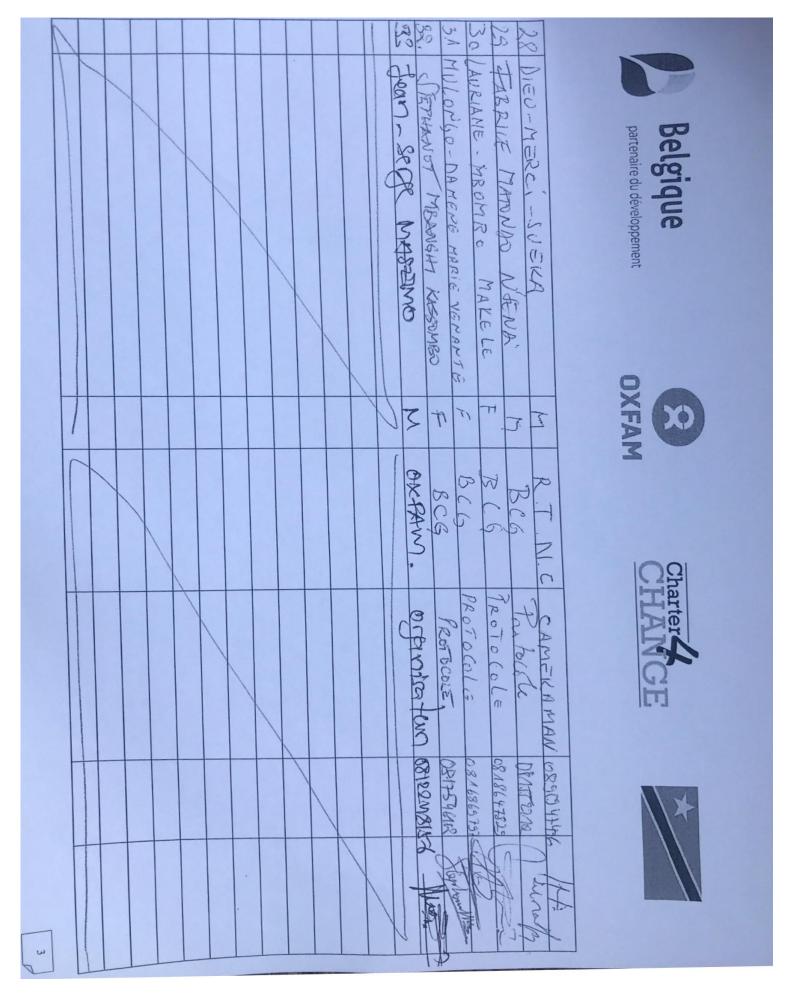
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