



## **Charter for Change (C4C) 2025 Annual Meeting Report**

### **Overview**

As the Charter for Change (C4C) approaches its tenth anniversary, the 2025 Annual Meeting marked a pivotal moment for the movement. Convened at a time of deep strain on the humanitarian system, defined by shrinking resources, protracted crises, and growing demands on local responders, the meeting offered a rare space for honest stocktaking and collective recommitment.

Over two days, C4C signatories, endorsers, national networks, and allies engaged in substantive dialogue grounded in evidence, lived experience, and political realism. Discussions moved beyond reaffirming principles to confronting the structural barriers that continue to slow progress: power asymmetries, inconsistent accountability, rigid funding and compliance systems, and the marginalization of community-led and mutual aid models.

The Secretariat and Coordination Group view this report as more than a record of proceedings. It is a call to action. The recommendations articulated across sessions demand leadership, organizational courage, and sustained collaboration. As C4C enters its second decade, our collective credibility will be measured not by commitments restated, but by decisions made, resources shifted, and power shared with those closest to crisis.

We extend our deep appreciation to all participants who contributed with openness, rigor, and solidarity. The path ahead requires renewed ambition, but also practical discipline, to ensure that localization is delivered not as rhetoric, but as lived reality.

### **General Introduction**

The Charter for Change (C4C) Annual Meeting 2025 convened signatories, endorsers, national and local organizations, donors, researchers, and allies from across regions and time zones for two days of collective reflection, accountability, learning, and strategic dialogue. Taking place at a moment of profound strain and transformation within the humanitarian system, the meeting provided a critical space to assess progress against the Charter's eight commitment, particularly those related to localisation commitments, confront persistent structural barriers, and explore emerging alternatives to traditional aid models.



As C4C approaches its 10-year anniversary in 2026, the Annual Meeting was intentionally designed to balance stocktaking with forward-looking ambition. Sessions combined evidence from the 2025 INGO Spotlight Report, concrete country-level experiences, and candid debate on global reform processes such as the Grand Bargain and the UN-led Humanitarian Reset. Equally, participants were invited to turn the lens inward, questioning C4C's own processes vis-avis C4C 8 commitments, accountability mechanisms, and strategic focus for the coming decade.

This report captures the full breadth of discussions across all sessions. It preserves the detail, nuance, and narrative richness of participant contributions while clearly highlighting the main recommendations emerging from each session. It is intended both as an accountability record and as a living reference document to inform C4C strategy, advocacy, and collective action in 2026 and beyond.

## **Opening Session & Session 1: C4C Action and INGO Spotlight Report**

**Date: 2 December 2025**

**Time: 09:30–11:00 CET**

### **1. Opening of the Annual Meeting**

#### **Objectives of the Annual Meeting**

Smruti Patel, Director of Global Mentoring Initiative and long-time C4C leader, officially opened the meeting. She welcomed all signatories, endorsers, and partners, emphasizing the importance of this annual moment of reflection, collective learning, and movement building.

She introduced key logistical instructions.

Smruti outlined the 4 overarching objectives guiding the two-day programme:

- Review progress made by C4C signatories and endorsers in 2024–2025, including findings from the INGO Spotlight Report.
- Strengthen collaboration between global, regional, and country-level C4C groups.
- Advance localization efforts through practical country pathways and accountability mechanisms.
- Shape C4C priorities for the 10-year anniversary (2026) and beyond.

She reiterated that the meeting is a space for dialogue, exchange, and collective strategizing, reflecting C4C's identity as a movement driven by local and national actors.

## **2. Session 1: C4C Action and 2025 INGO Spotlight Report**

### **Introduction to Session 1**

Following the Opening Session, the first formal session of the day focused on reviewing the progress of the C4C movement over the past year and presenting the findings of the 2025 INGO Spotlight Report. The session was moderated by Sudhanshu Singh (HAI), Nok van de Langenberg (CARE Netherlands), and Stephanie Antoun (C4C Secretariat).

Sudhanshu welcomed participants to Session 1, noting that the Annual Meeting has become a respected and essential space for accountability and collective learning. He emphasized the diversity and growth of the C4C movement, now comprising 52 INGO signatories and over 1,300 endorsers, with 208 new endorsers joining in 2025 alone. He highlighted the expansion of C4C Country Working Groups in Kenya, Uganda, DRC, Nigeria, and South Sudan, with emerging groups forming in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Burkina Faso.

Sudhanshu stressed that the Annual Meeting is not only a time to report on progress but also to reflect on challenges and define priorities for the coming year.

### **2.1 Presentation of the 2025 INGO Spotlight Report**

#### **Presenter: Nok van de Langenberg (CARE Netherlands)**

Nok presented the key findings of the 2025 INGO Spotlight Report, which assesses signatory progress across the eight C4C commitments. He shared a comparative analysis of the 2024 and 2025 results, highlighting areas of growth, stagnation, and decline.

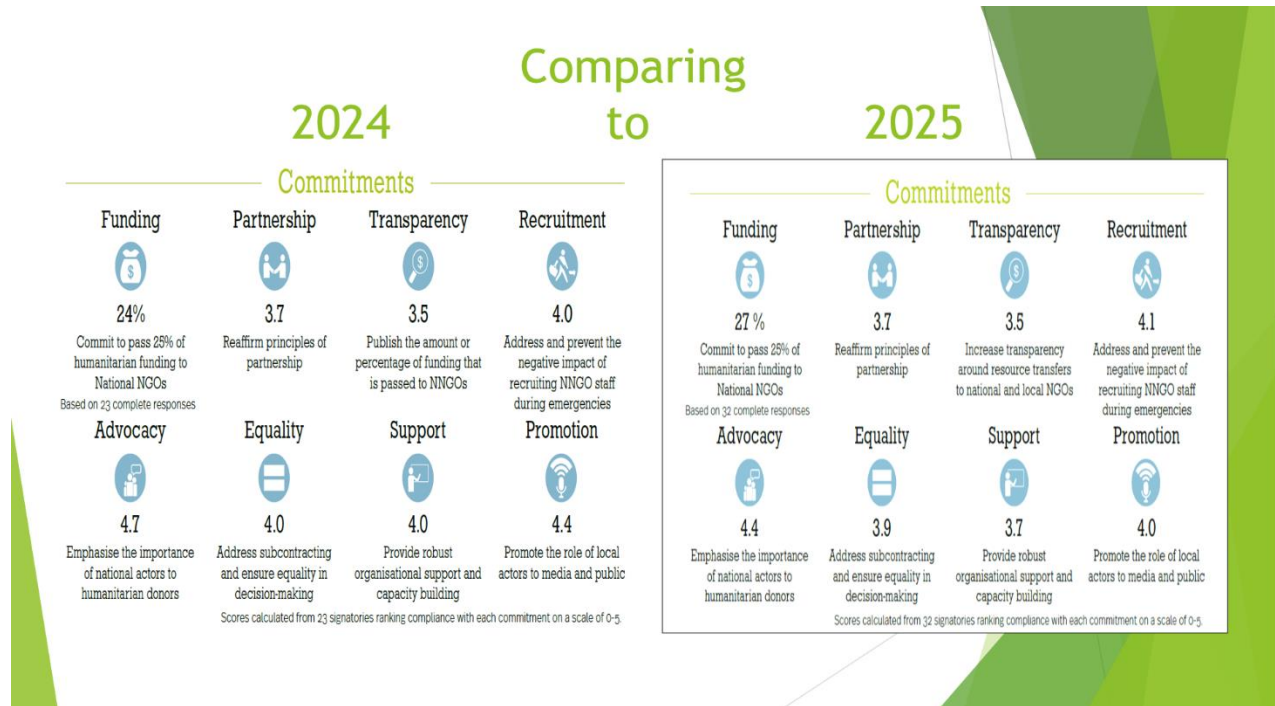
#### **Key Findings**

##### **Achievement of the 25% funding target:**

- For the first time since the launch of C4C, signatories collectively surpassed the target, reaching 27% of funding directed to national and local actors.

##### **Improved reporting rate:**

- Reporting increased from 59% (2024) to 73% (2025), strengthening the credibility and evidence base of the Spotlight Report.



### Commitment scores with no progress:

- Partnership (3.7)
- Transparency (3.5)

### Commitments showing slight decline:

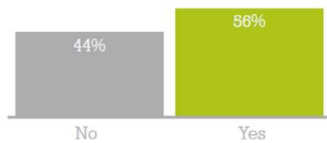
- Equality, direct support, advocacy, and recruitment of local NGO staff.<sup>1</sup>

### Commitments showing improvement:

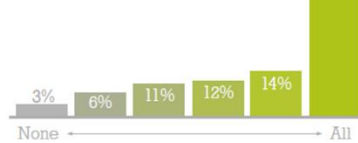
- Recruitment practices improved from 4.0 to 4.1, indicating a positive but modest shift in reducing harmful recruitment.

## Transparency & Quality of Funding

Organisational policy supports core/ admin funding for local partners:  
HQ: 32 responses

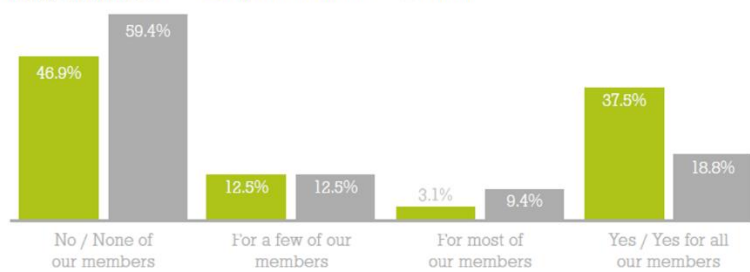


Core funding is provided to local and national partners:  
Country Level: 159 responses



More than half of the organisations continue to have an organisational policy supporting indirect cost recovery for partners, and most country offices provide such funding for all or most of their partners, with nearly 70 percent doing so. This is consistent with last year's reporting, however nearly a third still do not, despite commitments to do so. Transparency in funding also remains consistent, with only half of reporting signatories publishing their accounts publicly and/or through IATI.

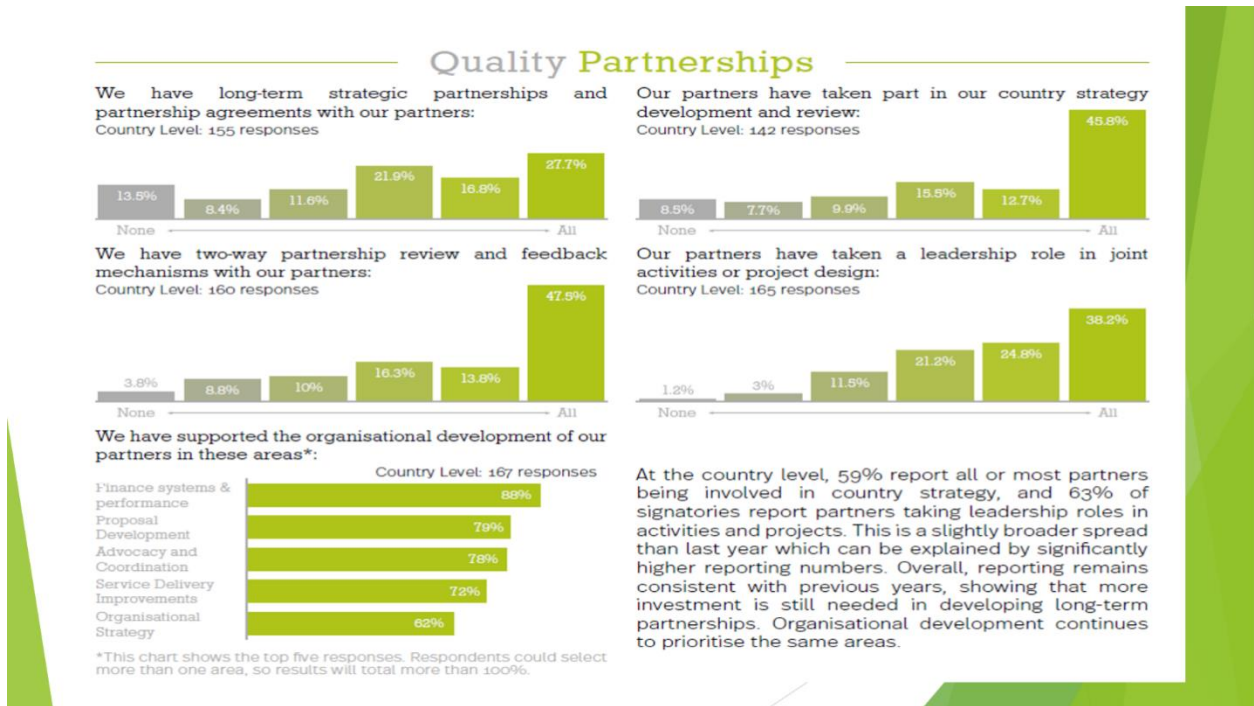
The amounts going to national and local partners are published:  
HQ: 32 responses



## Partnership and Organizational Support

Nok provided further details on partnership dynamics and organizational support:

- 45% of signatories report using long-term partnership agreements.
- 63% indicate that national partners take leadership roles in programme design.
- Most common support areas: financial management, proposal development, advocacy engagement.
- Least-supported area: organizational strategy development.
- Leadership accountability: Only 48% of INGOs assess country directors on localization performance.



*Note: The 155 responses reflected in this section represent country-level inputs submitted by signatories across multiple operational contexts. As such, the data captures partnership practices at country level rather than the number of global signatory organizations. C4C currently has 52 INGO signatories globally.*

Nok concluded by noting that while surpassing the 25% funding target is a major milestone, stagnation in other commitments signals the need for renewed leadership focus as C4C approaches its 10-year anniversary.

## 2.2 C4C Activities and Achievements in 2024–2025

### Presented by: Sudhanshu Singh

Sudhanshu presented a summary of key C4C initiatives and advocacy efforts undertaken over the past year.

### Due Diligence Passporting

One of the most significant achievements in 2025 was the rollout of the C4C Due Diligence Passporting Tool, now available in English, French, and Spanish. Several INGOs, including DanChurch Aid, CAFOD, CRS, Trocaire, and Tearfund are piloting the tool. Early results indicate strong potential for harmonizing compliance requirements and improving partner experience. Expansion is planned for 2026, including increased country-level uptake.

## **Key Publications and Sector Influence**

C4C launched several influential publications in 2025, including:

- Donor Recommendations for Locally Led Humanitarian Action
- C4C Intermediary Agencies Local Humanitarian Good Practices 2025
- The Nairobi Communiqué (Networks Peer Learning Event), developed by 37 local networks from 16 countries<sup>2</sup>

These documents provide concrete guidance to donors, intermediaries, and INGOs on power-shifting, flexible funding, and ethical risk-sharing.

## **Advocacy Travel Fund**

The C4C Advocacy Travel Fund supported national actors to participate in global forums such as the European Humanitarian Forum, HNPW Geneva, Networks Peer Learning Meeting, the Grand Bargain Annual Meeting, the Aidex Event and the Regional Humanitarian Partnership Week (RHPW). This fund addresses a major barrier for NNGOs access to unrestricted funding for strategic travel and influence.

## **Engagement With Donors**

Sudhanshu noted increased engagement with donors, including structured dialogues that allowed national NGOs to interact directly with institutional donors. These exchanges have shaped donor thinking on risk-sharing, leadership models, and equitable partnerships.

## **2.3 High-Level Panel Discussion: Progress on Localization**

Moderator: Nok

Stephanie introduced a panel of leaders representing INGOs, NNGOs, and research organizations:

- **Jonas Nøddekær**, Secretary General, DanChurchAid
- **Patrick Watt**, CEO, Christian Aid
- **Nicholas Noe**, Senior Fellow, Refugees International
- **Joyce Julian Akoko**, Executive Director, NUOSO & Chair of C4C Uganda
- **Jack Owuor**, Executive Director, Transformus Organization



The panel focused on the question:

“What concrete progress has your organization made on localization in the past 12 months?”

Key Highlights from the Panel

### **DanChurch Aid — Jonas Nøddekær**

Jonas offered an honest and forward-looking reflection on both DCA’s progress and sector-wide challenges.

#### Additional highlights:

- Emphasized that local leadership is no longer optional, especially in protracted crises such as Sudan and Gaza where INGOs face severe access and security constraints.
- Highlighted that Southern leadership within country teams is increasing, with more national staff taking on senior management roles.
- Stressed that donors are beginning to request Localization Leadership Plans, which DCA sees as a promising trend for systemic change.
- Acknowledged that progress is uneven across contexts and that internal cultural shifts take time, particularly when moving from partner-led implementation to partner-led strategy.

### **Christian Aid — Patrick Watt**

Patrick balanced realism with optimism about Christian Aid’s role in shifting humanitarian practice.

#### Additional highlights:

- Noted that localization is not simply an operational shift but a political and ethical commitment, requiring changes in power, narrative, and funding flows.

- Described new multi-year accompaniment models that prioritize local organizations' own agendas rather than project-driven capacity building.
- Highlighted Christian Aid's work in Ukraine, Syria, and Lebanon, where locally led models are being tested through joint decision-making arrangements.
- Underscored the importance of equitable risk-sharing and noted that risk tends to be outsourced to local partners unless INGOs actively counter this trend.

### **Refugees International — Nicholas Noe**

Nicholas provided a unique advocacy- and research-focused perspective as RI recently joined C4C.

#### Additional highlights:

- Stated that research organizations must interrogate their own practices, especially around extractive data collection, report ownership, and the reproduction of Global North narratives.
- Shared that RI is piloting new models of co-authored analysis with national NGOs, ensuring that their voices shape advocacy positions at global levels.
- Emphasized that locally led advocacy is as critical as locally led response, and that donor governments are increasingly receptive to hearing from frontline actors directly.
- Noted that RI aims to challenge the "expertise imbalance" that privileges Northern research institutions in policy spaces.

### **C4C Uganda — Joyce Julian Akoko**

Joyce brought a strong national NGO and country-level localization lens, grounding the conversation in lived experience.

#### Additional highlights:

- Stated that localization is progressing in Uganda due to collective organizing through the C4C Country Working Group, which has grown in membership and influence.
- Highlighted the importance of national NGO leadership in coordination spaces, especially in refugee-hosting regions.
- Noted that donor expectations and compliance demands remain a challenge, creating a need for harmonized due diligence tools like the passporting model.
- Emphasized that localization must include fair resourcing, not only decision-making space.

### **Transformers Organization — Jack Owuor**

Jack provided a candid reflection from the perspective of a local organization navigating daily operational realities.

#### Additional highlights:

- Called for greater consistency between INGOs' global commitments and their country-level practices, noting a persistent gap in some contexts.
- Highlighted barriers related to indirect cost coverage, which often forces local organizations to subsidize projects from their own scarce resources.
- Stressed the importance of investing in organizational strengthening, not just project delivery, especially in areas such as digital systems, HR, audits, and safeguarding.
- Emphasized that localization must empower local organizations to set their own priorities, not only implement donor-defined projects.

The panel raised several common themes that cut across organizations:

- Localization is happening, but not fast enough and not equally across all contexts.
- There is growing recognition that power, not capacity, is the core issue.
- Compliance and due diligence remain major barriers for local actors; passporting is seen as a practical solution.
- Donors are beginning to shift but require continued pressure, evidence, and direct dialogue with NNGOs.
- Locally led action must include fair funding, leadership roles, and equitable partnerships, not only downstream implementation.
- INGOs have an ongoing responsibility to change internal systems, incentives, and mindsets to truly support partner leadership.

### **2.4 Closing of Session 1**

Sudhanshu closed the session by thanking panelists and participants, emphasizing the importance of candid self-reflection to drive improvement. He encouraged participants to continue contributing through the Mural board and upcoming sessions, noting that 2026 represents a critical milestone as C4C marks its ten-year anniversary.

## **Session 2 – Boosting C4C and Country-Level Localisation Efforts**

**Date: 2 December 2025**

**Time: 13:30–15:15 CET**

### **Session Objective**

Session 2 explored how Charter for Change (C4C) country-level groups and national networks can effectively reinforce wider localisation efforts. The session focused on strengthening collaboration between INGO signatories and NNGO endorsers, sharing practical examples from country contexts, and identifying persistent challenges and promising solutions. Case examples and reflections were shared from Kenya, Syria, Ethiopia, and South Sudan.

### **Participation and Atmosphere**

The session brought together a diverse group of national and international actors, with strong representation from South Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Pakistan, Colombia, DRC, Sierra Leone, India, Mali, Burkina Faso, Lebanon, and the Philippines. Many participants joined for the first time, expressing strong interest in learning from peers and contributing to a growing global movement.

### **Key Framing by the Facilitator – Silethemba Mathe (DCA)**

The session was introduced and moderated by **Silethemba Mathe (DanChurchAid)**, who framed the discussion around the role of C4C country-level organizing as an enabling mechanism rather than a parallel structure. She invited speakers and participants to reflect on three guiding questions:

- *How can C4C organising best reinforce wider localisation efforts at country level, rather than duplicating existing coordination?*
- *What good practices have demonstrably catalysed meaningful and more equitable INGO–NNGO collaboration?*
- *What persistent challenges continue to undermine localisation, and what practical measures are needed to overcome them?*

This framing anchored the session in practice-oriented country experiences, encouraging speakers to move beyond abstract commitments and focus on governance models, financing mechanisms, accountability, and power dynamics.

## **Country Experience – South Sudan**

### **Anna Tazita Samuel, Women for Change (WFC), South Sudan (C4C Working Group)**

Anna Tazita Samuel presented South Sudan as one of the strongest examples of operationalising localisation through C4C country-level organising, particularly in relation to capacity strengthening and pooled approaches.

### **Capacity Strengthening Pooled Fund Model**

- Anna highlighted the establishment of a Capacity Strengthening Pooled Fund, collectively financed by participating organisations and administered by CHIDDO South Sudan.
- Governance of the fund is led by a steering committee composed of C4C endorsers, ensuring national leadership and collective oversight.
- Capacity-building priorities are jointly identified by national actors, enabling:
  - Needs-based support
  - Peer learning among organisations
  - Reduced duplication of training and assessments

### **Impact on Trust and Collaboration**

- The pooled mechanism has:
  - Strengthened trust between INGOs and national NGOs
  - Improved transparency around capacity investments
  - Shifted decision-making closer to national actors
- Former DCA South Sudan staff reinforced that this model allowed capacity strengthening to be locally driven and coordinated through the C4C country group, rather than fragmented across bilateral partnerships.

### **Accountability Concerns**

- Participants from several South Sudanese organisations emphasized that:
  - INGO commitment to localisation remains inconsistent
  - Progress depends heavily on a small number of committed actors
- Anna and others called for stronger accountability mechanisms for C4C signatories, noting that pooled and coordinated models require sustained participation to be effective.

**Country / Institutional Case Study: CARE  
Monzer Koukhou, CARE – Syria (Türkiye hub)**

Operationalising Localisation Through Coordination, Shared Tools, and Leadership Engagement

**Context:**

CARE operates in one of the most politically fragmented and operationally constrained humanitarian environments, supporting programming in Northwest Syria from Türkiye. In this context, CARE has focused on embedding localisation commitments within existing coordination mechanisms, rather than establishing parallel structures.

**Approach:**

CARE has advanced localisation through a deliberate strategy centered on coordination, standardisation, and shared responsibility, including:

- Integrating localisation and partnership reform into existing NGO fora and coordination platforms, rather than standalone C4C structures.
- Supporting a Partnership Working Group within the NGO Forum, where INGOs and national NGOs jointly discuss partnership challenges and expectations.
- Developing and promoting shared tools, including:
  - A consolidated partner performance evaluation template (two-way assessment)
  - A shared risk assessment template
  - An Organisational Capacity Assessment (OCA) tool (under development)
- Leading structured capacity strengthening initiatives focused on international standards and partnership eligibility, while encouraging other INGOs to complement rather than duplicate efforts.

**Results and Added Value:**

- Improved transparency and dialogue between INGOs and national NGOs
- Reduced duplication of assessments and trainings
- Increased participation of national NGOs in needs identification and decision-making
- Strengthened collective understanding of partnership quality as a localisation issue, not merely a compliance requirement

CARE's experience also demonstrated the added value of informal INGO coordination, where organisations:

- Share OCAs
- Divide responsibility for partner support
- Rely on each other's assessments to reduce burden on national NGOs

#### **Key Challenges Identified:**

- Limited uptake of shared tools due to:
  - Donor compliance requirements
  - Rigid INGO HQ systems
- Persistent risk transfer to national NGOs rather than genuine risk sharing
- Presence of non-signatory INGOs, which weakens collective accountability and coherence
- Funding constraints affecting the sustainability of coordination platforms themselves

#### **Relevance for C4C:**

CARE's experience underscores that in highly complex contexts:

- Localisation advances most effectively when C4C principles are embedded in existing coordination ecosystems
- Collective approaches to risk, due diligence, and capacity strengthening are essential
- Strong leadership engagement, particularly at senior level, is critical to shifting organisational models, not just partnership practices

### **Country Experience – Ethiopia**

#### **Tsehay Admassu, Ethiopia (C4C Working Group Co-Chair)**

Tsehay Admassu reflected on the foundational phase of C4C organising in Ethiopia, highlighting both enabling factors and structural constraints.

#### **Value of Peer Exchange**

- Tsehay emphasized the importance of cross-country peer learning, particularly drawing on:
  - Lessons from the Uganda C4C experience when establishing the Ethiopian Charter

- Peer exchange was described as critical for:
  - Avoiding duplication
  - Accelerating learning
  - Building confidence among national actors

### **Role of National Coordination Platforms**

- She stressed the importance of structured national coordination platforms to:
  - Anchor localisation in practice
  - Link country-level implementation with policy and advocacy efforts
- Without such platforms, localisation risks remaining fragmented and project-based.

### **Persistent Challenges**

- Tsehay highlighted ongoing constraints, including:
  - Limited donor flexibility
  - Restricted access to direct funding for national actors
- These constraints continue to undermine national leadership, even where coordination structures exist.

### **Country Experience – Kenya**

#### **Annette Mumbi, DCA (Co-Chair, Kenya C4C Capacity Strengthening Sub-Working Group)**

Annette Mumbi shared insights from Kenya, positioning it as a strong example of linking country-level C4C practice with national and global policy processes.

#### **Embedding C4C in National Policy Dialogues**

- Kenya has actively integrated C4C principles into national localisation policy discussions, ensuring alignment with:
  - Government processes
  - Civil society coordination platforms
- This has helped prevent C4C from operating in isolation.

### **Linking Country Practice to Global Initiatives**

- Annette highlighted Kenya's engagement in global Due Diligence (DD) Passporting initiatives, with:
  - National-level participation in global steering groups
- This connection has enabled Kenya to influence global policy development based on grounded country experience.

### **Alignment and Coordination**

- Efforts have focused on strengthening alignment between:
  - C4C country work
  - Existing national civil society coordination structures
- This approach was presented as essential for sustainability and legitimacy.

### **Reflections from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**

Participants from DRC offered a contrasting perspective:

- Despite early momentum since 2018, C4C implementation remains uneven
- Key challenges include:
  - Lack of sustained technical and financial support for the country working group
  - Weak follow-through by some signatories
- Ongoing support from Oxfam was acknowledged as critical in maintaining basic operational capacity, highlighting the risks of over-reliance on a small number of committed INGOs.

### **Synthesis Summary – Session 2: Country-Level Organising for Localisation**

Across all country examples, Session 2 reinforced that C4C country-level organising is most effective when it reinforces and is embedded within existing national coordination ecosystems rather than functioning as a standalone mechanism.

Key cross-cutting insights included:

- **Pooled and jointly governed mechanisms** (South Sudan) can significantly improve trust, reduce duplication, and enable locally driven capacity strengthening.

- **Peer exchange between country groups** (Ethiopia–Uganda) accelerates learning and strengthens emerging localisation structures.
- **Linking country practice to global policy processes** (Kenya) enhances both relevance and influence, particularly on issues such as due diligence and risk management.
- **Sustainability remains a major concern**, with uneven INGO commitment, limited donor flexibility, and insufficient long-term resourcing undermining progress (South Sudan, DRC).

Overall, the session underscored that localisation advances most meaningfully where accountability, resourcing, and coordination are collective responsibilities, and where C4C signatories are held to consistent standards of engagement over time.

Participants from Pakistan, Colombia, India, Sierra Leone, and Lebanon shared complementary experiences:

**Colombia:** Strong emphasis on donor advocacy and strengthening community-level capacities, with links to the NEAR network.

**India:** Establishment of the Frontline NGOs Knowledge Network (FNKN), focused on peer learning, local resource mobilisation, and reduced dependency on external actors.

**Sierra Leone and Pakistan:** Early-stage engagement in C4C country-level coordination and strong interest in learning from more established country groups.

### **Tools and Initiatives Highlighted**

- Several global and country-level tools were discussed:
- The C4C Due Diligence (DD) Passporting Initiative, involving multiple signatories including Christian Aid, Trócaire, Tearfund, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, CAFOD, CRS, and DCA.
- Growing interest in expanding national NGO participation in DD passporting steering structures.
- Recognition of the need to align C4C tools with other initiatives such as the Start Network and other due diligence frameworks to reduce duplication.

### **Key Challenges Identified**

Participants openly discussed persistent barriers to localisation:

- Continued power imbalances between INGOs and national actors.
- Limited direct access to funding for national organisations.

- Weak accountability mechanisms for signatories that have formally committed to C4C principles.
- Inconsistent technical and financial support to country working groups.
- Language and interpretation gaps (notably lack of Spanish interpretation for Latin American participants).

**Key recommendations synthesised from participant contributions included:**

- Establish more pooled, jointly governed funding mechanisms at country level, managed by national actors.
- Formalise performance accountability for C4C commitments within INGO country directors' performance frameworks.
- Strengthen alignment and coordination between C4C country groups and other localisation initiatives to avoid parallel systems.
- Document and share country-level good practices (such as South Sudan's pooled fund model) across the C4C global network.
- Expand interpretation and language access to ensure genuinely inclusive participation.
- Interactive Reflections and Collective Inputs
- Participants were invited to contribute written reflections through a shared collaborative board, reinforcing C4C's participatory and movement-building ethos. This method enabled quieter voices to be captured and documented alongside spoken contributions.

**C4C Annual Meeting 2025 – Session 3**

**The Future of Aid, the Grand Bargain, the UN-led Humanitarian Reset & Radical Alternatives: What Next for Charter for Change?**

**Date: 3 December 2025**

**Time: 09:30–11:00 CET**

**Co-Facilitators: Nadine Saba (C4C Secretariat), Howard Mollet (CAFOD)**

**1. Introduction**

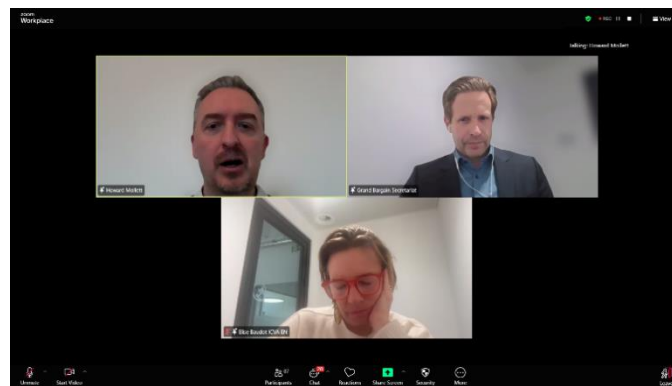
Session 3 shifted the Annual Meeting's focus from inward reflection (Day 1) to forward-looking strategic engagement with global humanitarian reforms and emerging alternatives to the traditional aid architecture.

## The session explored:

- The future of the Grand Bargain (GB) as it approaches its 10-year mark
- The UN-led Humanitarian Reset and opportunities/risks for locally led action
- Radical and community-led models, including mutual aid structures operating outside formal systems
- The role of C4C networks, working groups, and NRGs in shaping reform agendas

## Panel speakers included:

- **Bjorn Hofmann**, Senior Advisor, Grand Bargain Secretariat
- **Elise Baudot**, Head of Humanitarian Financing, ICVA
- Representative from Sudan Emergency Response Rooms (ERRs) – name withheld for safety



## 2. Key Thematic Interventions from Panelists

### 2.1. Grand Bargain – Status, Opportunities, and Risks

**Speaker:** Bjorn Hofmann

#### a. Current Status (towards 2026)

- Grand Bargain 3.0 continues until end-2026; all commitments remain valid.
- Signatories are still requested to:
  - Increase funding “as directly as possible” to L/NAs
  - Improve equitable partnerships
  - Implement localization policies that many have developed but struggle to operationalize

## **b. Priorities for the Next 12 Months**

- Fix the data gap
  - After nine years, the system still lacks credible data on funding to L/NAs, especially WLAs.
- The COP on Localization will prioritize a data reset.
  - Implement the Intermediaries Caucus
  - Advance equitable partnership practices
  - Improve transparency and accountability for INGOs as intermediaries
  - Scale institutional support for local actors
- Local actors cannot absorb increased roles unless donors invest in core institutional development.
- Need long-term, predictable, and flexible investments.
  - Strengthen National Reference Groups (NRGs)
    - Recognized as a core accountability mechanism
    - Must become inclusive, representative, and more resourced

## **c. Evolving the Grand Bargain Beyond 2026**

Two dominant proposals emerged from signatories:

- Accountability platform for tracking reform progress at country level
- Accelerator function for systemic change (local funding, intermediaries, gender, risk sharing)

## **2.2. Humanitarian Reset – Financing Gaps & Complementarity**

**Speaker:** Elise Baudot, ICVA

### **a. A Shrinking Humanitarian Funding Ecosystem**

- Current appeals face a USD 35 billion shortfall, with no strategy to expand the financing “pie.”
- Reset discussions risk placing more responsibility on local actors without accompanying resources.

### **b. Need for a New Funding Architecture**

ICVA’s Complementarity Paper frames this around:

- Locally led humanitarian action as the organizing principle

- Best-placed actor models, determined at community level—not Geneva
- Reducing harmful competition between INGOs and L/NAs
- Reforming donor practices to move away from procurement/tendering models

Expanding diverse pooled funds, not only CBPFs but also:

- Women-led pooled funds
- Refugee-led funds
- Mutual aid funds
- Local coalition funds
- Start Network, Van Leer, NEAR funds

### **c. Barriers Identified**

- Rigid due diligence systems that reflect donor risk, not local risk
- Excessive compliance burdens
- Limited trust, flexibility, and dialogue
- Donor and INGO economic incentives reinforcing competition
- Absence of meaningful country-level decision-making for L/NAs

## **2.3. Mutual Aid and Radical Alternatives – Lessons from Sudan ERRs**

**Speaker:** Representative from Sudan ERRs

### **Key Features of Mutual Aid Structures**

- Community-rooted, volunteer-based, cost-efficient
- Horizontal, decentralized decision-making
- Real-time needs assessment and rapid delivery
- No office overheads, staff costs, or heavy compliance
- Accountability is to communities; not donors
- Contrasts with Traditional Aid
- INGOs bring bureaucratic layers that slow response
- Compliance requirements create artificial barriers
- INGOs often design solutions before consulting communities
- Communities possess capacity and legitimacy but remain under-recognized

### **Recommendations for International Actors**

- Invest directly in community-led structures

- Provide protection and risk-sharing for volunteers
- Reduce bureaucratic overheads
- Merge emergency and development functions (e.g., water systems that serve immediate and long-term needs)

### **3. Plenary Discussion – Cross-Cutting Challenges**

Key issues raised by participants:

#### **1. Risk Sharing**

- Remains a missing element in the Humanitarian Reset
- Current pilots must be scaled and mainstreamed
- Due diligence must be redesigned to support local risk management

#### **2. Accountability of Grand Bargain Signatories**

- Need for public transparency of donor and INGO localization commitments
- Clear mechanisms for local actors to monitor compliance
- Local actors must not be “token participants” but equal stakeholders

#### **3. Competition and Inequality in a Shrinking Funding Landscape**

- Aid cuts increase competition between INGOs and L/NAs
- INGOs sometimes adapt their business models in response to funding constraints by **retaining greater control over resources, implementation, and decision-making**, which can reduce the space for local actors to lead and influence programming
- GB should address competition explicitly as a structural issue

#### **4. Geographic Accessibility**

- Local actors struggle to access GB meetings in Geneva

Proposal: move some processes and oversight to the Global South

### **4. Breakout Group Findings**

Three breakout groups plus French/Arabic groups provided actionable insights.

#### **4.1. Breakout A – Grand Bargain & GB–C4C Engagement**

**Key Action Areas:**

- Hold GB signatories accountable
- Strengthen independent monitoring
- Public disclosure of donor policies
- Track “real” direct funding and quality of partnerships
- Clarify the relationship between C4C & GB
- C4C’s influence in GB must be strategically defined
- NRGs play a central accountability role
- Expand Local Pooled Funds
- Locally led pooled funds should be a GB priority
- Promote diverse pooled funds, not only CBPFs

#### **4.2. Breakout B – UN-led Humanitarian Reset**

##### **Top Priorities:**

- Increase equitable partnerships between INGOs and local actors
- Expand use of prepositioned funds to enable rapid local response
- Establish more pooled funds led by local actors (and NRGs)
- Invest in local institutional capacity
- Strengthen accountability systems, including local scorecards

#### **4.3. Breakout C – Radical Alternatives & Mutual Aid**

##### **Key Insights:**

Shift the mindset:

- Focus on what already works (mutual aid), not what is missing.
- Mutual aid networks demonstrate agility, access, and legitimacy.
  - Recognize community-led humanitarian action as essential
- These actors are permanent local systems—not temporary responders.
  - Support radical accountability to communities
- Move away from donor-driven compliance frameworks.
  - Promote hybrid emergency→development solutions
- Community infrastructure (e.g., water systems) serving both immediate and long-term needs.

#### **4.4. French- & Arabic-Speaking Breakouts**

##### **Grand Bargain**

- Clarify roles of NRGs and avoid duplication with existing country platforms
- Ensure GB signatories honour commitments, especially equitable partnership
- Increase accessibility of GB processes for Global South stakeholders

##### **Humanitarian Reset**

- Revisit barriers to LNGO access:
  - Burdensome due diligence
  - Unequal competition
  - Inadequate recognition of local capacities
  - Simplify administrative systems
  - Establish governance structures enabling L/NAs to influence decision-making

#### **5. Advocacy Priorities for 2026**

- Recognition & Legitimacy of Mutual Aid Networks
- Formal engagement by donors, UN, INGOs
- Ensure participation in decision-making bodies
- Flexible & Trust-Based Funding Mechanisms
- Small, rapid, unrestricted grassroots funding
- Community-centered accountability systems
- Risk Sharing & Protection Frameworks
- Joint responsibility between INGOs, donors, and L/NAs
- Avoid imposing heavy bureaucracy on mutual aid groups
- Evidence & Storytelling for Policy Influence
- Document cases (Sudan, Gaza, Afghanistan, Ukraine)
- Use these to advocate for global reform

#### **6. Synthesis of Common Themes Across All Groups**

Across panelists, chat, and breakout groups, the following five themes consistently emerged:

##### **1. Accountability Is the Central Missing Piece**

- Need stronger tracking of financial flows, partnerships, and GB commitments

- Local actors demand mechanisms to hold donors & INGOs accountable

## **2. A New Funding Ecosystem Is Needed**

- Expand local and thematic pooled funds
- Prioritize flexible, rapid, and trust-based funding
- Reduce reliance on procurement-style models

## **3. Local Leadership Must Be Defined Locally**

- Reject top-down definitions of “capacity” and “best-placed actors”
- Local actors require decision-making power, not just participation

## **4. Mutual Aid Networks Are Transformative Models**

- They offer legitimacy, access, low cost, agility, and community accountability
- Donors must learn from—not try to formalize—these systems

## **5. Governance Reform Is Urgent**

- Move GB and UN processes closer to affected regions
- Increase representation of diverse local actors, WLAs, CBOs, social enterprises
- Simplify due diligence and risk processes

## **7. Recommendations for C4C’s 2026 Strategy**

- Institutionalize C4C engagement with the Grand Bargain and Reset
- Advocate for locally led pooled funds and multi-donor funds
- Strengthen NRGs as country-level accountability anchors
- Launch a C4C evidence initiative on mutual aid effectiveness
- Develop a C4C position paper on risk sharing & due diligence reform
- Create joint INGO–LNGO advocacy coalitions at national level
- Support domestic resource mobilization efforts

## **8. Conclusion**

Session 3 demonstrated broad consensus that:

- The humanitarian system must move from commitments to action,
- Funding must shift from international intermediaries to local leaders,
- Mutual aid networks must be seen as legitimate humanitarian actors,
- And C4C must play a proactive role in shaping the next decade of humanitarian reform.



The insights from this session will directly inform C4C's 2026 Advocacy Agenda, upcoming working group plans, and the global follow-up actions to the Grand Bargain and Humanitarian Reset.

## **Session 4: Ways Forward for C4C in 2026**

**Date & Time: Wednesday, 3 December 2025 | 11:30–13:00 CET**

**Co-Facilitators: Matthew Tebbit (Christian Aid) & Mai Jarrar (EJYMCA)**

### **1. Purpose and Framing of the Session**

Session 4 was designed as a participatory, reflective, and forward-looking space, distinct from earlier sessions that focused on external context and thematic priorities. The session invited participants to critically assess C4C's internal processes, structures, and ways of working, while also identifying strategic priorities for 2026 and imagining what a redesigned Charter for Change could look like as it enters its second decade.

The facilitators emphasized that this session was not about presentations or expert panels, but about collective ownership of the Charter's future. Participants were encouraged to speak candidly, challenge assumptions, and propose both incremental improvements and more radical shifts.

Four guiding questions framed the discussions:

- *What should C4C stop doing or change in its processes or deliverables?*
- *What should C4C continue doing and invest more in?*
- *What are the top three priorities for C4C in 2026?*
- *If C4C were redesigned from 2026 onward, what would it look like?*

Participants contributed through breakout room discussions, plenary report-backs, open reflections, and a shared Mural board.

### **2. Breakout Discussions and Key Findings**

#### **2.1 Question 1 – What Should C4C Stop Doing or Change?**

Discussions in this group focused on accountability, relevance, and effectiveness, highlighting several areas where current approaches risk undermining C4C's credibility or impact.

### **a) Mandatory Reporting and Accountability**

Participants strongly emphasized that reporting against C4C commitments must move from being largely voluntary to mandatory. While the increase to 72% of reporting signatories was recognized as progress, it was widely seen as insufficient. Key concerns included:

- Lack of clarity on consequences for non-reporting signatories.
- The risk that non-compliance diminishes the overall credibility of the Charter.
- Calls for a defined process (e.g. time-bound grace periods, support mechanisms, and ultimately consequences for persistent non-reporting).

### **b) From Meetings to Delivery**

While participants appreciated the frequency and quality of C4C meetings, many felt that implementation lags behind discussion. Commitments made in meetings are not always translated into concrete action, which weakens confidence in collective processes.

### **c) Donor-Driven Priorities vs Local Needs**

Participants, particularly local and national actors, stressed that C4C should actively counterbalance donor-driven agendas by amplifying community-defined priorities. Localization was described not as something “done to” communities, but as something communities own and define.

### **d) Intermediary Roles and Power Dynamics**

There was strong appetite for honest, and sometimes uncomfortable, conversations about:

- When intermediaries genuinely add value.
- When they should step back or “get out of the way.”
- How INGOs can better support radically different, agile, and hyper-local actors without imposing standardization that undermines local strengths.

### **e) Due Diligence and Passporting**

- Participants questioned whether due diligence passporting has been genuinely simplified. Concerns included:
  - Persistent fragmentation due to donor-specific requirements.
  - Limited clarity on how C4C reconciles differing national legal and regulatory frameworks.
  - The burden this places on small grassroots and mutual aid organizations.

#### **f) Communication and Information Systems**

Internal communication was repeatedly described as confusing and fragmented. Participants highlighted:

- Difficulty tracking what different working groups are doing.
- Duplication of emails and information overload.
- The need for a centralized, easily accessible information hub or database.

#### **g) Grand Bargain Uncertainty**

Participants raised strategic questions about C4C's positioning if the Grand Bargain is discontinued or weakened, and how momentum can be sustained beyond that framework.

### **2.2 Question 2 – What Should C4C Continue and Invest More In?**

This discussion highlighted areas where C4C is already adding value and where further investment could significantly strengthen impact.

#### **a) Advocacy for Quality, Locally-Led and Pooled Funding**

Participants strongly supported continuing C4C's advocacy on quality funding, including multi-year and pooled funding mechanisms, and linking these to equitable partnership practices.

#### **b) Knowledge Sharing and Induction**

There was strong appreciation for explainer webinars, induction sessions, and refresher briefings, particularly for new signatories and endorsers. Participants recommended:

- Regular induction packs and biannual briefings.
- Clear overviews of working groups, country groups, and entry points for engagement.

#### **c) Transparency on Funding Flows and Partnerships**

Participants encouraged C4C to continue promoting transparency around funding flows, partnership modalities, and risk-sharing practices, including public reporting where possible.

#### **d) Equitable Partnerships and Co-Creation**

C4C was encouraged to deepen its work on co-creation, co-planning, and co-implementation, moving beyond principles toward demonstrable practice across the project cycle.

#### **e) Capacity Strengthening Beyond Projects**

- There was strong support for continued and expanded investment in:

- Governance and leadership capacities of local and national organizations.
- Preparedness for climate and crisis shocks.
- Institutional systems that enhance long-term sustainability and autonomy.

### **2.3 Question 3 – Top Three Priorities for 2026**

Discussions converged around three interlinked priority areas:

#### **a) Data, Tracking, and Evidence of Progress**

Participants stressed that without stronger data systems, C4C cannot convincingly demonstrate progress or hold itself accountable. Priorities included:

- Strengthening signatory-level and collective data tracking.
- Combining quantitative and qualitative evidence, including lived experience.
- Building local capacity for data ownership and analysis.

#### **b) Updating and Re-energizing the Charter**

Rather than changing the vision, participants called for:

- Updating the Charter and related guidance to reflect evolving realities.
- Integrating lessons from ten years of practice.
- Clarifying expectations around power, accountability, and partnership.

#### **c) Decentralization and Local Momentum**

Participants emphasized the importance of enabling country and sub-national initiatives to shape C4C's future, including:

- Stronger links among country chapters.
- Support for mutual aid networks and radical alternatives.
- Flexibility for context-specific approaches rather than one-size-fits-all models.

### **2.4 Question 4 – If C4C Were Redesigned from 2026 Onward**

The dominant message from this discussion was clear: the vision of C4C remains valid. The challenge lies in operationalization.

Key elements of a redesigned C4C included:

#### **a) From Vision to Action**

Participants emphasized moving from commitments on paper to tangible, visible change at community level.

#### **b) Localized and Operational Models**

Suggestions included:

- Localizing commitments at national or provincial levels.
- Developing operational plans that guide implementation, monitoring, and participation.
- Exploring legal or structural options (national or thematic) to strengthen accountability, while recognizing this as optional, not prescriptive.

#### **c) Strengthening Local Organizations' Autonomy**

Redesign discussions highlighted:

- Governance, management, and leadership development.
- Domestic resource mobilization.
- Long-term sustainability beyond project funding.

#### **d) Shifting Power and Visibility**

Participants called for:

- Greater visibility and leadership of LNGOs, women-led organizations, and mutual aid networks.
- Intermediaries positioned as optional, value-adding actors rather than default gatekeepers.
- Storytelling as a strategic tool for legitimacy, advocacy, and donor engagement.

### **3. Cross-Cutting Themes and Emerging Consensus**

Across all groups and plenary reflections, several common threads emerged:

- Accountability and transparency are foundational to C4C's credibility.
- Localization must be defined by communities, not compliance frameworks.
- Support should be enabling, not controlling, especially for grassroots and mutual aid actors.
- Data and storytelling are both essential to demonstrate impact.
- The affected population must remain at the center of all C4C efforts.
- Participants repeatedly stressed that the next phase of C4C must prioritize intentional action over rhetoric, and collective delivery over individual commitments.



#### **4. Concluding Reflections**

Session 4 provided a candid and constructive space for reflection as C4C approaches its 10-year anniversary. Participants affirmed the continued relevance of the Charter’s vision while clearly signaling the need for stronger operational models, clearer accountability, and deeper alignment with community-led realities.

The session concluded with a strong call for the Secretariat and governance bodies to synthesize these reflections into a focused set of priorities and actions, ensuring that the next phase of C4C translates shared ambition into measurable, people-centered change.

#### **Closing Session**

The Annual Meeting concluded with a reflective and participatory closing session that invited participants to pause, reconnect, and collectively reflect on the insights, challenges, and commitments emerging over the two days. Facilitators emphasized the importance of moving beyond localisation as rhetoric or funding flows, calling instead for intentional action grounded in the principles of partnership, accountability, and quality response. A recurring theme was the need to re-centre affected populations as the ultimate purpose of localisation efforts, recognising that failures in coordination, power-sharing, or follow-through disproportionately impact people living through crisis.

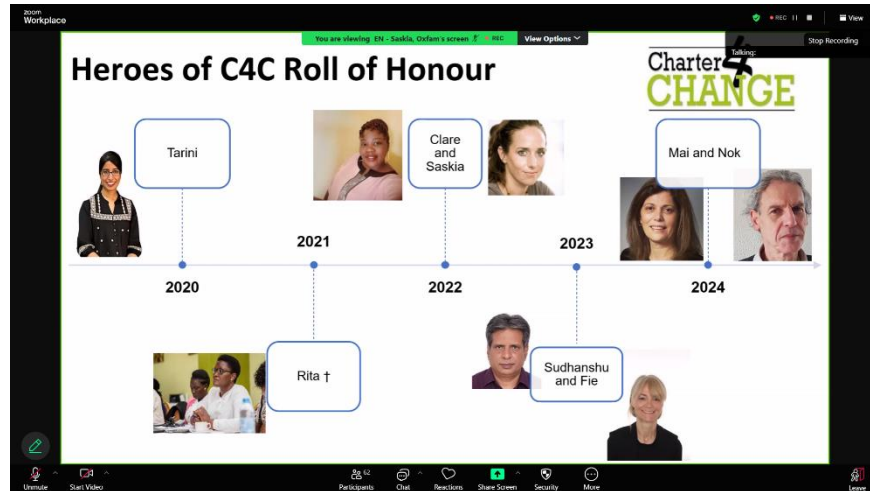
Participants shared brief personal takeaways, highlighting solidarity over competition, the importance of stepping aside to allow local leadership to step forward, and the value of silence, reflection, and listening within collective processes. Several interventions underscored the need for local and national actors to strengthen their own institutions, systems, and integrity, while also calling on international actors to internalise and consistently apply their commitments. The session closed with a forward-looking reflection on the Charter for Change’s upcoming 10th anniversary, acknowledging both the growth of the movement and the continued urgency of translating commitments into sustained, country-level practice.

#### **C4C Localisation Heroes Awards 2025**

##### **Recognising Outstanding Contributions to Advancing Localisation**

As part of the closing of the Annual Meeting, the Secretariat announced the **2025 C4C Localisation Heroes Awards**, recognising individuals whose leadership and commitment have

made an exceptional contribution to advancing the Charter for Change and the localisation agenda over the past year.



**Stephanie Antoun (C4C Secretariat)** was recognised for her leadership in stewarding the Charter for Change Secretariat, strengthening coordination across signatories, endorsers, working groups, and country platforms, and supporting national actors’ engagement in global policy and advocacy spaces. Her work throughout the year was highlighted as instrumental in sustaining momentum, strengthening collaboration, and reinforcing the Charter’s values in practice.

**Matthew Tebbut (Christian Aid)** was recognised for his sustained commitment to the Charter for Change, his leadership within the Coordination Group, and his dedicated support to the Secretariat. His contributions were noted for combining principled advocacy for locally led humanitarian action with consistent behind-the-scenes engagement that strengthened accountability, resourcing, and collective action within the C4C community.





The awards served both as a moment of appreciation and as a reminder that advancing localisation depends on long-term commitment, collaboration, and leadership at all levels of the Charter for Change movement.

## **Overall Conclusion and Way Forward**

The 2025 C4C Annual Meeting reaffirmed the Charter’s enduring relevance while underscoring the urgency of moving from commitments to consistently measurable change. Across all sessions, participants emphasized that localization is no longer a question of intent, but of power, accountability, and delivery. While important progress has been made, most notably in funding flows and country-level organizing, systemic barriers continue to limit the leadership, resourcing, and recognition of local and national actors.

The discussions highlighted a shared expectation that C4C’s next phase must be more operational, more decentralized, and more accountable. Strengthening country-level mechanisms, institutionalizing accountability for signatories, embracing diverse and radical models such as mutual aid, and reshaping funding and risk practices emerged as non-negotiable priorities.

As C4C enters its second decade, the Annual Meeting sent a clear signal: the vision of the Charter remains widely supported, but its credibility will depend on tangible shifts in behavior, resources, and decision-making power. The recommendations captured in this report provide a robust foundation for translating collective ambition into action, anchored in community leadership, ethical partnership, and solidarity with those most affected by crisis.

## **Key Recommendations – Session 1: C4C Action & INGO Spotlight**

### **Priority Recommendations:**

- Institutionalize mandatory reporting against C4C commitments with clear consequences for non-compliance.
- Strengthen leadership accountability by linking country director performance to localization outcomes.
- Scale due diligence passporting as a sector-wide solution to reduce compliance burdens on local partners.
- Invest beyond funding targets in equitable partnerships, leadership roles, and organizational support.



## **Key Recommendations – Session 2: Country-Level Localisation**

### **Priority Recommendations:**

- Establish jointly governed pooled funds led by national actors at country level.
- Provide sustained technical and financial support to C4C country working groups.
- Align C4C country initiatives with existing national coordination and localization platforms.
- Expand language access and interpretation to ensure inclusive participation.

## **Key Recommendations – Session 3: Future of Aid & Global Reform**

### **Priority Recommendations:**

- Advocate for locally led pooled funds and alternative financing mechanisms beyond CBPFs.
- Recognize and resource mutual aid networks as legitimate humanitarian actors.
- Reform due diligence and risk-sharing frameworks to reflect local realities.
- Strengthen National Reference Groups as accountability anchors within the Grand Bargain.

## **Key Recommendations – Session 4: Ways Forward for C4C**

### **Priority Recommendations:**

- Move from voluntary to enforceable accountability mechanisms for signatories.
- Update and re-energize the Charter to reflect ten years of learning.
- Decentralize C4C governance and prioritize country-level leadership.
- Invest in data systems, storytelling, and evidence owned by local actors.

<sup>1</sup> This decline reflects marginal changes in self-reported scores between 2024 and 2025 and should be interpreted with caution. In some cases, it may indicate more rigorous or critical self-assessment by signatories rather than a substantive reduction in efforts. These trends also coexist with improvements in other areas, such as funding flows and recruitment practices, highlighting an uneven but evolving localisation landscape.



<sup>2</sup> [https://charter4change.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/communique-\\_-peer-learning-meeting-for-localisation-networks-nairobi-8-11-september-2025-final.pdf](https://charter4change.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/communique-_-peer-learning-meeting-for-localisation-networks-nairobi-8-11-september-2025-final.pdf)