Charter4CHANGE

Working Group Uganda

C4C ANNUAL HIGH-LEVEL LOCALIZATION DIALOGUE REPORT 2025

Theme

Tracking Progress, Strengthening Partnerships: The Localization Agenda in Action

Venue: Silver Springs Hotel, Bugolobi – Kampala

Date: 16th December 2025

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With gratitude,

Ms. Joyce Julian Acoko
Chairperson, Charter for Change Working Group Uganda
16 December 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Annual High-Level Dialogue on Localization in Uganda 2025 convened national and international stakeholders under the theme:

"Tracking Progress, Strengthening Partnerships: The Localization Agenda in Action."

Hosted by the C4C Working Group Uganda, the Dialogue brought together representatives from the Government of Uganda, international NGOs, national and Local Civil Society organizations, refugee-led and women-led movements, Development partners, UN agencies, Private Sector actors, Academia and the media.

The Dialogue served as a national accountability and reflection platform to assess Uganda's progress in implementing the eight Charter for Change commitments, strengthen partnership frameworks and advance evidence-based localization reforms.

Key milestones presented during the Dialogue included;

- National tracking of progress against the eight Charter for Change commitments.
- Completion of a mapping exercise identifying over 587 local and national findable and fundable humanitarian actors across Uganda.
- Strengthened coordination between signatories and national actors.
- Increased engagement with government institutions on localization policy alignment.
- Structured reflection on accountability mechanisms and partnership equity.

Discussions during the Summit emphasized the need for strengthened financing flows to local actors, improved national-level reporting systems, formalized accountability mechanisms and institutional reform within signatory organizations.

The Dialogue reaffirmed Uganda's position as an active national context in operationalizing global commitments under the Charter for Change and the Grand Bargain. It also identified priority actions to enhance measurable progress, financing equity and policy coherence in the coming year.

This report provides a comprehensive account of proceedings, analysis of commitments and strategic recommendations to inform advocacy, institutional reform and donor engagement.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Uganda continues to navigate a complex humanitarian and development environment characterized by overlapping structural and emergency pressures. The country hosts more than 1.9 million refugees while addressing climate-related disasters, food insecurity, gender-based violence, youth unemployment, environmental degradation and localized conflict dynamics

These realities demand a coordinated response architecture grounded in national leadership, institutional resilience, and community-based knowledge systems.

Over the past decade, the global humanitarian system has acknowledged structural imbalances in financing, decision-making authority, and partnership frameworks. Local and national actors frequently serve as first responders and long-term implementers, yet they often face limited access to direct funding, reduced visibility in global reporting and constrained participation in strategic decision-making processes.

Localization has therefore emerged as a central reform priority in global humanitarian policy discussions, particularly following the World Humanitarian Summit of 2015–2016. Localization refers to the process of shifting leadership, decision-making authority and implementation capacity to local actors, including government institutions, civil society organizations, refugee-led organizations, and community-based structures.

Localization aims to ensure that humanitarian and development responses are effective, efficient, relevant, and sustainable by leveraging the knowledge, proximity, and institutional presence of national actors.

In Uganda, localization efforts have gained increasing momentum. National actors have organized through platforms such as the C4C Working Group Uganda, the Grand Bargain National Reference Group and the National Humanitarian Platform of National and local Actor in Uganda to strengthen accountability, improve coordination, and align global commitments with national realities.

The 2025 High-Level Dialogue was convened at a critical moment to

1. To present and review progress against the eight Charter for Change commitments in Uganda.
2. To strengthen accountability mechanisms for tracking and reporting localization commitments.
3. To unveil and disseminate findings from the national mapping of local and national humanitarian actors.
4. To facilitate dialogue between government, signatories, local actors, and development partners on partnership equity and financing flows.
5. To identify policy and institutional reforms necessary to accelerate measurable localization outcomes.

6. To align localization initiatives with Uganda's national development and humanitarian policy frameworks.

About Charter for Change

The Charter for Change(C4C) initiative, led by National and International NGOs, aims to practically implement changes to how the Humanitarian System operates to enable a more locally led response. The undersigned International NGOs committed themselves to deliver the changes (8 points) identified in the Charter for Change within their organisation's ways of working so that southern-based national actors play an increased and more prominent role in humanitarian response. Southern-based NGOs working in partnership with international NGOs endorsed and supported the Charter for Change. They committed to holding the international NGO partners who signed the Charter to account and asking those who are not signatories to this Charter to work towards signing up. **Learn more about Charter for Change: https://charter4change.org/**

About the Charter for Change Working Group

The Uganda Charter for Change Working Group provides a platform that brings together C4C endorsers, signatories and allies with the aim of promoting, advocating, and practically implementing the localization agenda. The Group identifies and implements ways of shifting power to local and national actors in humanitarian and development sectors, in alignment with the 8 Points of the Charter for Change. Signatories are expected to deliver and report on their commitments, and endorsers work to hold signatories to account while also signing and adhering to the Charter of Accountability. Together, signatories, endorsers, and allies engage in joint advocacy, continuous learning, and sharing of best practices to effectively advance localization in

HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE FORMAT AND STRUCTURE

The Summit was structured around thematic sessions aligned to the official program

The Dialogue included:

- Opening remarks and keynote addresses.
- Official government launch.
- Thematic Session 1: Accountability in Localization – Tracking and Reporting on Commitments.
- Thematic Session 2: Unveiling Mapped, Findable, and Fundable Local Actors.
- Panel discussions and Interactive question and answer sessions.
- Networking sessions to promote partnership dialogue.
- Exhibition spaces showcasing local innovation and best practices.

OPENING SESSION

Opening Remarks, Ms. Joyce Julian Acoko, Chairperson, C4C Working Group Uganda, Executive Director NUWOSO.

Distinguished government representatives, development partners, colleagues from UN agencies, country directors of signatory organizations, representatives of local and national organizations, women-led movements, refugee-led organizations, disability-led groups, youth leaders, members of the Grand Bargain National Reference Group, private sector actors, academia, and members of the media.

I warmly welcome you to the Annual High-Level Dialogue on Localization in Uganda 2025.

Your presence reflects commitment. It reflects shared responsibility. It reflects recognition that Uganda's humanitarian and development landscape requires collective leadership.

The Charter for Change emerged from the World Humanitarian Summit consultations in Geneva in 2015 and was formally launched in Istanbul in 2016. It carries eight commitments designed to rebalance power and resources within the humanitarian system. These commitments require international organizations to shift financing, influence, and decision-making closer to communities and national actors.

In Uganda, the C4C Working Group serves as a national coordination and accountability platform. Our mandate is to advocate, monitor, and promote practical implementation of the eight commitments.

Today's Dialogue convenes us around a central question: How far have we progressed in tracking commitments and strengthening partnerships?

This year, we have undertaken important steps:

- Assessment of progress against the eight commitments.
- Expansion of signatories.
- Completion of a national mapping of local and national humanitarian actors.
- Assessment of the impact of the USAID Stop-Work Order on local actors in Uganda.
- Assessment of local actors' capacity needs.
- Design of a new resource mobilization landscape to sustain localization efforts.
- Engagement of INGO partnership staff through sensitization and a localization exhibition.
- Strengthened engagement with government institutions.

We approach this Dialogue with transparency. The progress report reflects collaboration. It reflects areas of advancement. It reflects areas requiring acceleration. It reflects institutional responsibilities across all actors.

Localization requires courage. It requires institutional reform. It requires financing reform. It requires accountability reform.

I extend appreciation to the Government of Uganda for its leadership in refugee policy and localization of the HDP Nexus. I recognize the Uganda National NGO Bureau for its commitment to partnership and institutional strengthening. I thank signatories and allies for remaining engaged in this agenda. I recognize local and national actors whose daily work sustains communities across the country.

Today's conversations will address tracking mechanisms, accountability systems, equitable partnerships, mapping of actors, financing flows, and structural transformation within our humanitarian architecture.

I invite us to engage openly, responsibly, and constructively. Thank you.

Keynote Address: Mr. Francis Shanty Odokorach, Country Director, Oxfam Uganda, C4C Coordinating Signatory.

Honourable representatives of government, Chairperson of the C4C Working Group, colleagues from signatory and allied organizations, partners from local and national organizations, and distinguished guests.

I thank the organizers for convening this Dialogue under a theme that calls for measurable progress and strengthened partnerships.

Signatories of the Charter for Change accepted eight commitments that demand institutional reform. These commitments require redistribution of resources, adjustment of partnership frameworks, improvement of reporting systems, and alignment of recruitment practices.

Over recent years, signatories in Uganda have engaged in;

- Development of internal tracking systems.
- Review of partnership agreements.
- Support to institutional capacity strengthening.
- Participation in joint dialogues with government and national actors.

The journey has required internal reflection. It has required examination of risk frameworks. It has required recalibration of decision-making authority. It has required improved transparency in reporting.

There are areas where progress is visible. There are areas requiring accelerated effort.

Institutional change requires discipline. It requires documentation. It requires clarity on financial flows. It requires strengthened accountability mechanisms between signatories and national partners.

We recognize the expertise, proximity, and leadership of local and national actors. We recognize that sustainability is anchored in national systems. We recognize that equitable partnership enhances impact.

I commend the C4C Working Group for strengthening monitoring and evidence generation. I encourage signatories to enhance national-level reporting in alignment with global reporting obligations. I encourage donors to support systems strengthening alongside programmatic funding.

This Dialogue provides an opportunity for shared accountability. It provides space for constructive dialogue. It provides direction for the coming year. Thank you.

Official Opening: Dr. Steven Okello, Secretary, Uganda National NGO Bureau.

Distinguished participants, Chairperson of the C4C Working Group, representatives of international and national organizations, development partners, and colleagues.

I appreciate the invitation to officiate the Annual High-Level Dialogue on Localization.

The Uganda National NGO Bureau serves both regulatory and enabling functions. Our mandate includes ensuring compliance with legal frameworks, strengthening institutional capacity, and promoting coordination within the sector.

Uganda hosts over 1.9 million refugees. Our refugee policy framework integrates refugees into national systems of education, health, and livelihoods. This approach reflects national leadership in localization practice.

Government is currently finalizing a National Localization Policy Strategy. This framework will guide alignment between humanitarian and development actors. It will strengthen coordination mechanisms and accountability systems. It will support institutional sustainability.

Localization requires partnership between government institutions, international organizations, and national actors. It requires shared responsibility in financing, capacity development, and accountability.

I commend the C4C Working Group for convening this Dialogue. I encourage continued collaboration in translating commitments into measurable results.

I now declare the Annual High-Level Dialogue on Localization in Uganda 2025 officially open.

Thank you.

THEMATIC AREA 1: Accountability in Localization – Tracking and Reporting on Commitments.

Overview of Tracking Findings and Global Engagement by Mr. John Jal, C4C Co-Chair, Uganda, Director YSAT.

I bring you greetings from Geneva, Switzerland, where the Global Refugee Forum is currently taking place. Uganda continues to shine as an example of how localization of humanitarian, development, and peace efforts can be achieved. While many countries are still working to demonstrate measurable achievement, Uganda continues to lead.

At the Forum, Uganda's efforts in advancing participation of displaced people and strengthening refugee-led organizations were highlighted. The simplification of NGO processes by the NGO Bureau, district local governments, and settlement commandants has been recognized. The localization strategy co-designed by refugees, local actors, national actors, and international organizations under the leadership of the Office of the Prime Minister has been acknowledged as a key milestone. Uganda's commitments made in 2023 under the Global Refugee Forum continue to be monitored, and localization remains one of the core thematic priorities.

This demonstrates that our discussions today are connected to global accountability platforms and to commitments that Uganda has made before the international community.

Turning to the tracking of the Charter for Change commitments, today we share preliminary reported figures from signatories and allies. I want to excite your appetite before the consultant presents the full technical breakdown.

Among the signatories, the following percentages were reported: Dan Church Aid at 27 percent; Catholic Relief Services at 17 percent; Finn Church Aid at 25 percent; and Oxfam at 66 percent. On the ally side, Plan International reported 91 percent; Woord en Daad 75 percent;

We also have other partners, like CARE International in Uganda, they reported 66 percent, Street Child reported 75 percent, but could not be independently verified due to lack of accessible supporting documentation.

These figures reflect momentum. Government requires 25 percent. Several organizations are already beyond that threshold, and that deserves recognition.

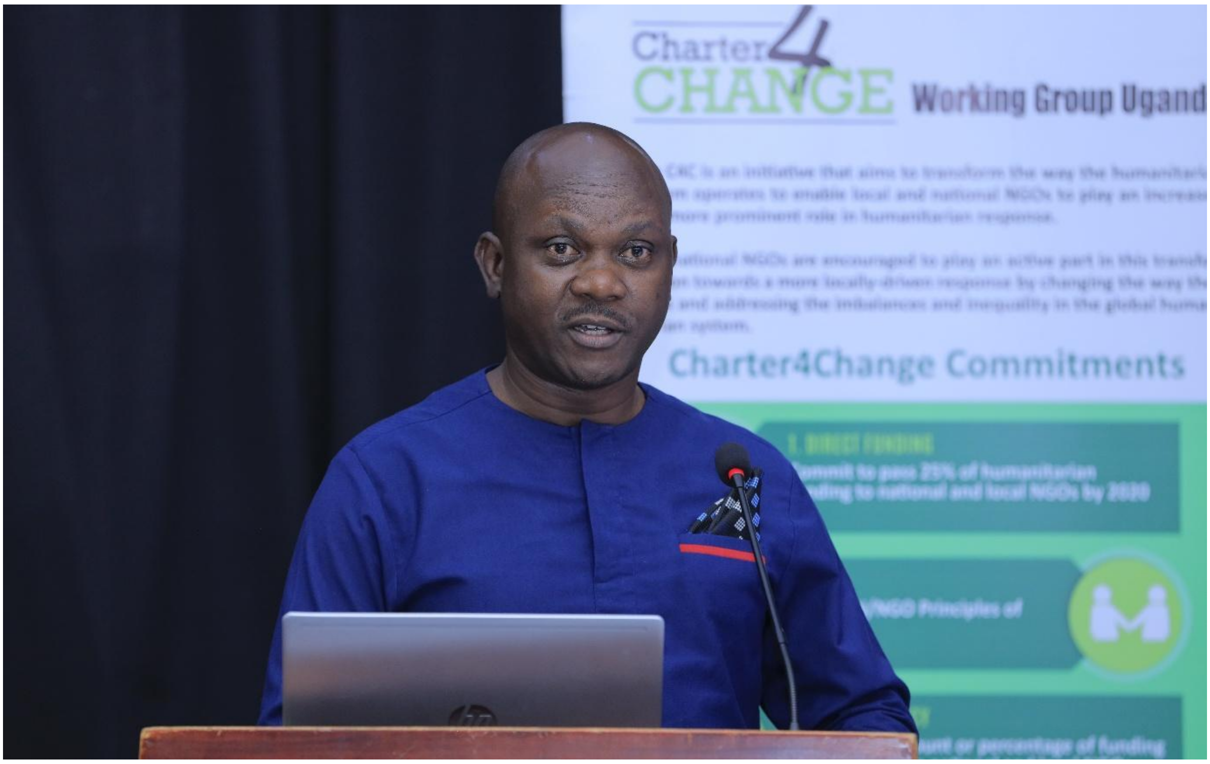
I wish to make a special acknowledgment to those exceeding the 25 percent threshold. At the same time, I extend an invitation to allies who are performing strongly outside the formal signatory structure. If you are achieving beyond the threshold while not yet a signatory, you are on the right track, and we invite you to formally join the Charter for Change next year.

Remember that when you are a signatory to the Charter, and you cannot achieve the commitments, then you are only here for attention and visibility. But if you are not yet a signatory and you are achieving beyond the 25 percent threshold, you are on the right track, and we invite you to join us officially.

Uganda remains the only country where the Charter for Change is co-chaired by a refugee. That reflects the spirit of localization that we are promoting and the leadership we are determined to uphold.

Today's session focuses on tracking progress against the eight commitments. We want to see clearly where we have reached. The independent consultant is present in the room to guide us through the verified findings. We shall examine the evidence and determine the areas that require strengthening as we move forward.

With those remarks, I now hand over to Dr. Ronald Matanda to present the detailed findings of the tracking exercise. Thank you.



Commitment 1: Direct Funding: Commit to pass 25% of humanitarian funding to National NGOs.

The High-Level Dialogue received and discussed findings from the official consultant report titled *"Tracking and Documenting the Attainment of Charter for Change Commitments – Uganda" (December 2025)*

The tracking exercise assessed progress against the minimum 25% commitment to direct funding for national and local actors. Based on verified submissions from four signatories and two allies, the average proportion of direct funding to local actors stood at 41%, representing a 16% increase above the minimum 25% target

However, this average applies only to 4 out of 18 signatories whose data could be verified, representing 22% of the total signatory base

The consultants emphasized that the 41% figure should therefore be interpreted cautiously, as it does not represent the full signatory landscape due to the low response rate.

Detailed financial analysis revealed variation among signatories. Dan Church Aid (DCA), between 2021 and 2025, received a cumulative budget of UGX 239,211,728.98 and disbursed UGX 65,755,377.86 directly to local actors, representing 27.49%, slightly above the 25% target

Catholic Relief Services (CRS), between 2021 and 2024, received USD 75,026,534.93 and transferred USD 12,508,894.61 to 44 partners, representing 17%, which falls 8%

below the agreed threshold additionally provided USD 869,369.57 in capacity strengthening support during the same period

Finn Church Aid (FCA) demonstrated mixed models of transfer. Under the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland funding framework, four local actors received 100% pass-through budgets amounting to UGX 7,293,000,000 between 2021 and 2025. Under the ECHO 2024–2025 humanitarian consortium, FCA transferred 25% of the total consortium budget to national partners. The consultant analysis calculated FCA's average direct transfer rate at 53%

Oxfam Uganda's desk review analysis confirmed that out of a total assessed budget of UGX 3,236,441,100, a sum of UGX 2,137,915,500 was transferred directly to local actors, representing 66% This percentage reflects verified documentation reviewed during the assessment and replaces any prior estimations.

Among allies, Plan International Uganda reported that in 2025 it received UGX 5,105,235,910 and disbursed UGX 4,645,918,161 directly to 45 local actors, representing 91% and Woord en Daad transferred UGX 9,218,699,100 to local actors between 2024 and 2025, representing 75% of its analyzed funding The combined average for allies therefore stood at 83%

The consultants further noted that CARE (66%) and Street Child (75%) submitted reported percentages that could not be independently verified due to lack of accessible supporting documentation Across the five-year period reviewed, a cumulative total of UGX 80,987,107,005 was disbursed directly to local actors by reporting entities, although trends indicate recent contraction in humanitarian financing flows

Commitment 2: Partnership: Reaffirm principles of partnership

The Consultant highlighted the assessment reviewed partnership agreements, Memoranda of Understanding, and implementation frameworks to determine alignment with the Charter for Change principles of equitable partnership. Several signatories demonstrated revised partnership templates incorporating joint planning, defined roles, and capacity strengthening components.

However, consultations with local actors revealed that participation during negotiation stages remains uneven, particularly regarding risk-sharing arrangements and budget flexibility. While formal documentation reflects progress in language and structure, local actors reported continued need for greater influence in decision-making processes during proposal development and resource allocation discussions. The Dialogue recognized that strengthening partnership equity requires procedural reforms beyond contractual language.

Commitment 3: Transparency: Publish the amount or percentage of funding that is passed to NNGOs.

The tracking assessment examined the extent to which signatories demonstrate transparency in reporting financial allocations and partnership arrangements.

Findings indicate that while several signatories maintain internal reporting systems aligned to global headquarters requirements, national-level disclosure of financial flows remains inconsistent.

Reporting compliance at country level was limited, with only a portion of signatories submitting verifiable documentation for review. This gap constrains comprehensive analysis of overall funding trends and reduces the ability of local actors to independently track progress toward the 25% commitment. The consultants emphasized the need for structured national reporting templates and standardized disclosure mechanisms to strengthen accountability and comparability across institutions.

Commitment 4: Recruitment: Address and prevent the negative impact of recruiting NNGO staff during emergencies.

Under the recruitment commitment, the Charter for Change calls for fair recognition of local organizations that invest in building staff capacity. Consultations revealed continued concerns regarding staff transitions from local organizations to international NGOs during emergency responses

While no formal breaches of policy were documented within the tracking exercise, local actors expressed the need for structured dialogue on ethical recruitment, compensation acknowledgment, and collaborative workforce planning. The Dialogue recognized recruitment practices as a sensitive but necessary area for continued reform.

Commitment 4: Advocacy: Emphasise the importance of national actors to humanitarian donors.

The findings show that international NGOs have increasingly amplified the importance of local and national actors in humanitarian and development spaces. Several organizations, including Oxfam, Plan International Uganda, Dan Church Aid, CRS, Finn Church Aid, and CARE Uganda, have intentionally identified youth-led and women-led organizations, invested in their institutional development, linked them directly to donors, co-published reports under joint logos, engaged in joint proposal writing, formed consortia, and celebrated achievements collectively.

Oxfam's approach demonstrates structured facilitation of national actors into high-level international platforms. Refugee-led and local organizations were supported to present their own narratives at national, regional, and global forums. Participation was facilitated at AidEx and Grand Bargain meetings in Geneva in 2024, the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva, the European Humanitarian Forum in Brussels, the Humanitarian Network and Partnership Week in Geneva, the Rights in Crises Forum in Nairobi, Programme Learning in Addis Ababa, and the International Programme Learning in Gambella, Ethiopia. At national level, Oxfam supported the participation of more than 200 refugee-led and local organizations in Grand Bargain, Charter for Change, and cross-learning platforms. This demonstrates a deliberate shift toward positioning national actors as visible leaders rather than silent implementers.

Plan International Uganda, as a signatory to the Pledge for Change 2030, engages donors through overseas fundraising offices while embedding national actor engagement within its strategic policy "Pathways to Partnering with Youth-Led Groups and Organizations." This policy outlines structured processes for identifying partners, conducting mutual appraisals, developing capacity plans, ensuring joint oversight, and planning sustainability and exit strategies.

Dan Church Aid has profiled local actors directly to donors and supported successful advocacy to Denmark's Ministry of Foreign Affairs for stronger localization and local leadership recognition. CARE Uganda reported that its programming model is now fully implemented through national partners. All proposals are designed with the understanding that implementation must be conducted through national actors, and several projects originally implemented directly by CARE have transitioned to partner-led models.

Local testimonies reflect evolving dynamics. In West Nile, local leaders reported taking sectoral leadership roles within UNHCR working groups, with INGOs stepping back while supporting national leadership visibility. At the same time, other local actors observed that representation in high-level forums remains uneven and that consistent inclusion requires sustained effort. These mixed experiences illustrate both progress and the continued need for equitable power-sharing.

Commitment 6: Equality: Address subcontracting and ensure equality in decision-making.

Approximately 35 percent of local actors reported experiences of subcontracting arrangements in which activities and budget lines were predetermined, limiting flexibility and long-term institutional planning. Most sub-grants were structured as one-year contracts with quarterly disbursement cycles. Such short duration funding restricts sustainability, institutional growth, and long-term development strategy.

However, the findings also indicate emerging shifts in language and practice. Oxfam emphasizes sub-granting rather than subcontracting and frames its partnerships as collaborative and transformative. During proposal design and donor concept development, partners are engaged in joint ideation processes to ensure contextual relevance. Several projects including PALAM-led initiatives, Emergency Response Fund engagements, refugee leadership strengthening programs in the Horn of Africa, and the RISE-K initiative in Karamoja illustrate models where local partners serve as lead actors.

Plan International reported that more than 80 percent of its projects are designed jointly with partners, including ECW I, II and III, AGIC, and EMPOWHER projects. The shift from transactional contracting to co-designed partnership reflects structural progress. Nevertheless, the persistence of short-term grant cycles continues to constrain institutional sustainability for many local organizations.

Commitment 7: Support: Provide robust organizational support and capacity building.

The assessment shows that participating signatories have intentionally invested in strengthening the institutional capacity of local actors. Organizations including Oxfam, CRS, DCA, CARE, and Plan International Uganda have supported the transformation of community-based organizations into registered national NGOs through structured institutional accompaniment.

Capacity strengthening interventions have included organizational formation, strategic alignment, policy and systems development, governance training, financial management strengthening, compliance systems, safeguarding policies, monitoring and evaluation systems, and support supervision. Oxfam implemented two consultative capacity-sharing exercises in West Nile and Southwestern Uganda to identify priority capacity needs. Between 2022 and 2025, Oxfam invested UGX 1,026,367,107 in strengthening local partners.

Finn Church Aid allocates administrative and technical support within both humanitarian and development programming and promotes Quality Assurance Mechanism (QUAM) processes. CRS operates a formal policy on sub-recipient indirect cost recovery for non-US government funded projects. CARE Uganda applies its Integrated Business Services Model (IBSM), emphasizing fund management, compliance, risk, livelihoods, climate justice, and gender equality. CARE has also developed the QUAM Plus platform to support national partners in achieving donor readiness.

Plan International Uganda embeds capacity strengthening within its strategic framework and has supported youth-led and women-led leaders through international consultative forums and leadership trainings.

Testimonies from local actors illustrate tangible impact. “Train a Girl” in Adjumani described onboarding processes involving due diligence, consultant attachment for system development, policy formation, and governance strengthening. DREF in Kwania reported growth from sub-county registration to national NGO status, including board training, financial system establishment, and internal audit support. West Nile Card reported cost reductions through asset support such as vehicles and computers, crediting localization with reducing operational overheads. These testimonies demonstrate institutional transformation beyond project delivery.

Commitment 8: Promotion: Promote the role of local actors to media and public.

The consultant highlighted that findings indicate that signatories recognize and credit local actors in public communications, though the depth of recognition varies. Finn Church Aid consistently features partner logos and success stories in publications, online platforms, and joint statements. During ECHO project learning events and district engagements, partner representatives addressed media and government stakeholders directly.

Plan International Uganda practices joint branding across projects, ensuring that partner logos appear alongside organizational insignia. Dan Church Aid communications acknowledge consortium partners and include logos of all participating organizations, including donors and local implementers. Woord en Daad showcases partner visibility through newsletters, websites, social media platforms, and donor reporting channels.

Local actors reported structured feedback mechanisms in certain partnerships. Annual partnership review meetings, coordination forums, and project review sessions provide opportunities for dialogue. Some local actors noted that in coordination meetings, INGOs often take lead roles, though co-chairing arrangements exist in certain districts. Others expressed the need for more dedicated time for local actors to articulate pressing concerns within national platforms.

The evidence demonstrates growing visibility of national actors in communications and public engagement. Continued progress requires balanced representation in media narratives, donor reporting, and high-level policy platforms.

Strengthening Localization Accountability and Systems (Recommendations).

The consultants highlighted that localization in Uganda is progressing, but remains largely voluntary. They recommend that localization must move from goodwill commitments to enforceable systems where responsibility, risk, power, and accountability are shared deliberately between international and national actors.

Localization cannot be sustained through short-term, project-based transfers alone. The consultants recommend multi-year, flexible, and direct programmatic and institutional funding mechanisms that allow local actors to plan long-term, strengthen institutions, and manage risk responsibly. Shared resilience requires predictable financial flows, not quarterly disbursements that limit growth and sustainability.

It further recommends anchoring localization within a national legal and policy framework. Without a legal backbone, compliance depends on voluntary reporting with limited consequences. A formal framework would provide clarity on funding thresholds, accountability standards, and reporting obligations, strengthening transparency across the system.

To reduce administrative burdens and imbalance, the consultants recommend standardizing due diligence and reporting frameworks across signatories. When compliance tools differ across organizations, the strain shifts to local actors. Harmonized systems would improve efficiency, transparency, and trust.

Institutional capacity strengthening must remain central. The consultants emphasize long-term investment in governance, financial systems, procurement, safeguarding, and monitoring mechanisms. Capacity development should precede and accompany funding shifts to ensure accountability and institutional resilience.

To address structural imbalances in human resources. Recruitment practices should be aligned with localization commitments to avoid undermining local institutional capacity. Strengthening mentorship, accompaniment, and partnership-based growth is encouraged over extractive staffing practices.

Finally, the consultants recommend strengthening national-level accountability mechanisms. Progress on the 8 commitments should be tracked regularly, and structured mechanisms established to address non-compliance. Trust-building between INGOs and local actors must be intentional, rooted in transparency, shared decision-making, and co-creation from program design stage.

In summary, the consultants call for a shift from voluntary practice to structured responsibility where financing, accountability, capacity, and power are aligned to build a resilient, locally led humanitarian and Development and Peace (HDP) Nexus system.

Panel Discussion, Signatories' Reflections: Institutional Accountability, Systemic Barriers, and Collective Learning in Advancing Charter for Change Commitments.

Moderated by Gard Benda, World Voices Uganda

Plenary Dialogue with Country Directors from Dan Church Aid (DCA), Finn Church Aid, and CARE.

This session brought together Signatory Country Directors to reflect on institutional experiences in advancing Charter for Change commitments. The dialogue explored practical lessons, internal accountability mechanisms, system reforms, monitoring and reporting frameworks, and the real challenges organizations face in documenting and tracking localization progress. It also surfaced tensions around bureaucracy, leadership transitions, compliance demands, and the operational realities of shifting power toward local actors.

The session opened with Gard Benda inviting the Country Directors to move beyond general commitments and speak from institutional practice. He framed the discussion as a moment of honest reflection, grounded in systems, leadership choices, and measurable progress.

Gard posed three guiding questions to anchor the dialogue.

Question 1

How has your organization strengthened its internal systems to track and report on the Charter for Change commitments, and what practical improvements have you observed over time?

Question 2

Beyond financial percentages, what best practices or institutional mechanisms have you put in place to deepen localization and strengthen equitable partnerships?

This question focused on strategic alignment, leadership commitment, capacity strengthening approaches, co-design processes, joint reporting practices, and internal reform decisions.

Question 3

What are two critical challenges both internal and external that are affecting the realization of localization, and how is your organization addressing them?

Augustine, Head of Programs – Dan Church Aid (DCA)

Augustine began by situating DCA's approach within its institutional history. Partnership, he noted, is not a recent adjustment. It is foundational.

DCA was established in 1922 as a collective response among faith-based institutions addressing global crisis. The partnership model was embedded from inception. When DCA entered Uganda in 1979, it did so through collaboration with the Lutheran World Federation. By 2002, that partnership transitioned toward direct engagement with national actors. Today, DCA works with twenty-five local partners across Uganda.

Localization, in this framing, is not an obligation introduced by external reform. It is consistent with DCA's identity.

Turning to the tracking question, Augustine outlined structured internal systems. Budget allocation begins with partnership commitments. Before internal costs are calculated, the minimum 25 percent threshold is set aside for local partners. The partner allocation is not an afterthought; it is prioritized during planning.

Performance against commitments is reviewed annually. The annual report includes a dedicated section assessing compliance with the Charter for Change commitments. Where percentages decline, even marginally, institutional scrutiny follows. Deviations require explanation. Variations prompt review and adjustment.

He noted that in one instance, allocation fell from 36 percent to 32 percent year-on-year. The decrease triggered internal inquiry and reflection. Institutional accountability, he emphasized, requires transparency not only externally but internally

In addition to financial monitoring, DCA conducts a partner satisfaction survey commissioned by headquarters. The survey includes a structured section dedicated specifically to Charter for Change commitments. Local partners are invited to assess the quality of partnership, participation, transparency, and shared decision-making. The findings are reviewed centrally and inform institutional learning.

Augustine's reflection underscored a central message of the panel: progress requires systemization. Commitment without monitoring weakens credibility. Institutional reform becomes sustainable when embedded in budgeting processes, reporting structures, and performance reviews.

Flora Tumwebaze – Finn Church Aid (FCA)

Flora reflected on Finn Church Aid's partnership approach as foundational rather than reactive. FCA began its regional operations from Nairobi and worked through partners in Uganda before establishing a country office approximately ten years ago. The establishment of a national office did not replace the partnership model. It strengthened it.

Partnership remains central to program implementation.

Financial allocations vary across funding streams. In several projects, FCA maintains the 25 percent minimum allocation to partners. In other cases, allocations rise to 35 percent. There are also funding arrangements where 100 percent of project resources are transferred directly to partners, with FCA maintaining a hands-off implementation role. In such cases, FCA's responsibility centers on ensuring that reporting aligns with donor requirements, while implementation remains fully partner-led.

Tracking progress under Charter for Change commitments is embedded within these budgeting decisions. Allocation patterns are deliberate and monitored.

Florah emphasized that capacity strengthening extends beyond individual project cycles. FCA has planned a strategic initiative targeting fifteen partners identified as requiring institutional strengthening. This engagement will focus on systems development rather than project implementation.

The planned support includes strengthening governance structures, financial reporting systems, project design capabilities, and compliance mechanisms. The objective is to enhance institutional resilience rather than short-term delivery outputs.

Capacity strengthening, in this framing, is long-term investment rather than a transactional add-on.

Partnership is reinforced through routine engagement. Quarterly review meetings are held with partners to assess progress, document lessons learned, and identify areas for improvement. These sessions function as shared learning platforms, allowing joint reflection on both technical delivery and relationship quality.

Documentation and shared reporting strengthen transparency and collective accountability.

Florah addressed the issue of visibility candidly. In some cases, partners prefer to minimize INGO presence within public communication materials. While such preferences arise, FCA's institutional position favors shared visibility. When partners achieve results, they are credited publicly. Joint branding and co-publication of stories reinforce partnership recognition.

Visibility is viewed as a tool for strengthening credibility and reinforcing collaborative identity.

FCA conducts structured partnership feedback assessments at least every two years. Following initial due diligence and partner assessment, periodic reviews are conducted to evaluate relationship quality, compliance standards, and mutual expectations.

Partners are invited to provide candid feedback on areas where FCA has performed well and areas requiring improvement. The findings are compiled into reports that inform institutional adjustments.

This cyclical feedback mechanism reinforces mutual accountability and strengthens partnership strategies over time.

Michael Opio, Program Director – CARE Uganda

Michael framed his reflections around institutional decision-making. CARE Uganda currently works with over sixty local partners, about seventy percent of whom are women-led and women's rights organizations. Yet the shift toward localization, he emphasized, requires more than partnership numbers, but deliberate strategic positioning.

The first lesson, he noted, is strategic alignment.

When leadership at both INGO and local partner level is committed to localization as a long-term direction, institutions become willing to make difficult decisions. The transition from being a direct implementer to transferring significant portions of programming to partners is not easy. It involves restructuring roles, adjusting systems, and accepting operational risks.

He spoke candidly about resistance. The greatest resistance to localization, he observed, is often internal. When CARE shifted its humanitarian programming toward localization, it required letting go of between twenty and thirty-five staff members to create space for partner-led implementation. Concerns were raised internally about partner capacity, accountability and trust.

Yet he challenged the narrative that capacity concerns are one-sided. Governance weaknesses, integrity issues, and operational challenges exist across institutions local and international alike. Strategic commitment, therefore, must be grounded in honesty. Localization requires risk-taking, institutional humility, and willingness to absorb short-term discomfort for long-term transformation.

CARE set incremental targets for LNA fund allocation, fFrom approximately twenty percent allocated to partners in 2023, the organization aimed to increase by ten percent annually. The overall allocation reached forty-five percent, with the humanitarian portfolio at sixty-six percent todate. Progress, he emphasized, must be measured and reported transparently.

A second lesson centered on leadership on both sides of the partnership. Successful localization requires leaders who are prepared to hold difficult conversations about accountability, trust, governance, and financial management.

Partnership quality improves when both INGOs and local organizations are prepared to confront weaknesses openly rather than defensively. Accountability strengthens when it is mutual.

Michael raised a sensitive issue, the conversation around capacity and mobility between institutions.

Staff in local and international organizations often hold similar qualifications from the same universities. Yet pay scales, benefits, and institutional prestige differ significantly. He suggested that part of strengthening local institutions involves encouraging leader mobility including national NGOs recruiting experienced staff from INGOs, even when compensation structures differ.

Equity does not require identical pay structures, but it does require recognition of expertise and deliberate talent development within local institutions.

Capacity, in this framing, is not a fixed attribute. It is shaped by opportunity, compensation structures, and institutional investment.

Responding to the question on critical challenges affecting localization, Michael identified accountability as both a strength and a strain.

INGO systems can be bureaucratic. Delays in processing agreements or disbursing funds create downstream pressure on local partners. Reporting timelines remain fixed even when funds arrive late. This compresses implementation periods and affects program quality.

At the same time, integrity concerns exist within parts of the local sector. Zero tolerance for fraud must apply consistently. Protecting the localization agenda requires firm accountability standards.

The second structural challenge lies in institutional bureaucracy at headquarters level. Many INGOs operate within systems developed over decades. Reforming these systems is gradual. Country offices must advocate upward while also navigating existing compliance structures.

Localization, therefore, requires reform at multiple levels country, regional, and global.

Thematic Area 2: Unveiling Mapped, Findable and Fundable Local and National Actors.

Opening Framing by Ms. Naomi Ayot Oyaro, Executive Director, CAPAIDS Uganda. **Advisor, C4C Working Group Uganda**

Naomi Ayot Oyaro opened the session by grounding it in a simple reality. Many local organizations remain unseen, unheard, and unfunded. She reflected on a recurring

frustration raised by donors over the years "We do not know where these local actors are. We do not know what they are doing. We do not know how to start."

That question became the motivation behind the mapping initiative.

She reminded the room that the C4C Working Group did not wait for perfect conditions. The group utilized its mobilization power. Regional coordinators moved district by district. Local actors shared their information, CRS provided logistical and technically support. The work required patience and persistence. It required trust.

Naomi emphasized that visibility begins internally. Organizations must understand their own theory of change, governance structures, and operational presence. At the same time, systems must exist to make them visible externally. Fundability starts with readiness, but it is sustained by recognition.

She acknowledged the signatories who supported the process and noted that what the room was about to witness was the result of a journey that began in 2023 and matured into a national repository. She then invited Catholic Relief Services to provide a preamble to the mapping exercise.

Remarks from Catholic Relief Services, Ms. Lainey Heyl, Acting Country Representative, CRS.

Speaking on behalf of CRS, Ms. Lainey Heyl expressed appreciation for the collaboration between CRS and the C4C Working Group. She described the mapping initiative as aligned with CRS's 2030 vision, where local leadership is embedded into how humanitarian and development work is designed and delivered.

She spoke about subsidiarity, the principle that decisions should be made closest to the people most affected. In her words, local actors are leaders, decision-makers, and partners shaping sustainable solutions in their own communities.

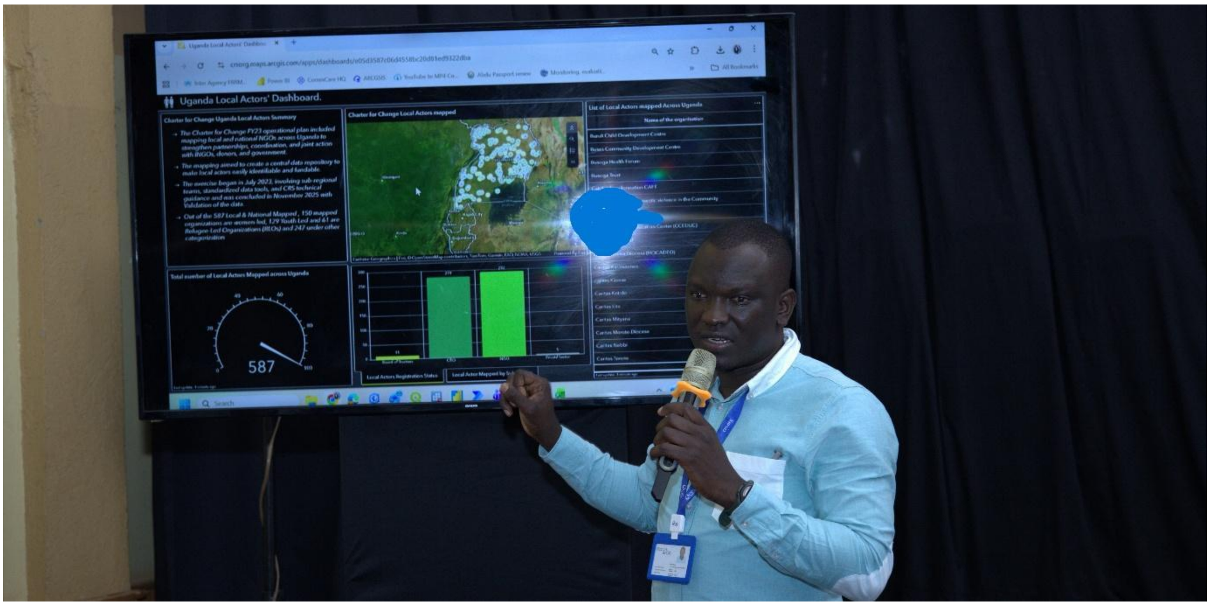
The mapping exercise, she explained, has been ongoing for nearly two years. It now houses a comprehensive repository of over 500 local and national actors across Uganda. The database strengthens visibility. It positions organizations as discoverable and credible. It supports informed partnership decisions by international NGOs, donors, and government institutions.

CRS contributed technical support, GIS expertise, coordination support, and capacity strengthening throughout the process. She emphasized that the database is not symbolic. It is practical. It can inform program design, partner selection, and long-term institutional collaboration.

She encouraged donors, INGOs, and government actors to actively use the database when designing interventions. She reaffirmed CRS's commitment to partnerships that elevate local leadership and strengthen Uganda's humanitarian architecture.

At the conclusion of her remarks, she invited her colleague, Abdul Oloya, to present the technical findings and demonstrate how the system functions.

Presentation of the Interactive Dashboard. Mr. Abdu Oloya, CRS – Technical Technical Advisor I.



Abdul Oloya began by acknowledging the regional C4C coordinators who contributed to building the centralized repository. He recognized that the strength of the system rests on the credibility of the data collected from districts across the country.

He explained that the database is geo-bound to Uganda's national boundaries. It captures organizations operating within recognized districts and settlements. Each profile contains operational details, thematic sectors, contact information, and registration status whether as a community-based organization or nationally registered NGO.

The dashboard allows users to search by district, sector, registration category, and operational focus. It shows how many districts an organization works in and what specific programs are implemented in each location. Information can be updated to reflect institutional changes. The system recognizes that organizations evolve. Offices open and close. Sectors shift. Capacity grows.

Abdul reflected on a past experience during the Kisoro emergency in 2022, when the question arose: "Which local actors can we pre-position with immediately?" At that time, there was no centralized system. The mapping initiative responds to that gap. It allows rapid identification of capable local actors during emergencies.

He demonstrated how the platform enables real-time queries, downloading of filtered data, and identification of sectoral presence down to sub-county level. He described it as a living tool one that reduces uncertainty and improves coordination.

He concluded by inviting feedback and encouraging stakeholders to view the database as a shared national asset.

Regional Leadership Panel: Reflections from the Ground-UP, Deep dive into regional and refugees' perspectives with an Inclusion Lense.

The panelists are; Mr. John Baptist Byaruhanga, coordinator the Western Uganda Humanitarian Platform, **Mr. Payira Bonny** Acholi Humanitarian Platform Coordinator, **Mr. Laget Jeremiah** Chairperson of the Karamoja Humanitarian Platform, **Myleen Kyomuhendo**, representing disability, **Mr. Matte Jockas** concluded the introductions-Coordinator of C4C Eastern Region.

Naomi asked

"What are some of the key systemic barriers local actors still face at the sub-national level, and how can national partners and signatories better support regional leadership in humanitarian and development work?"

Matte Jockas, Coordinator, Eastern Region – Uganda

"I come from the Eastern Region. When we talk about systemic barriers, sometimes we look outside first. We point at donors. We point at international partners. But we rarely pause and ask ourselves what structures we have put in place.

One of the key things we need to focus on as local actors is how findable we are. Are our internal systems strong? Are our governance structures clear? When someone wants to partner with us, are we ready for due diligence? Do we understand what donors require before we align ourselves?

We keep saying there is no money. Yet sometimes the money is there. The question is whether we have positioned ourselves correctly.

Localization is not only about demanding space. It is also about preparing ourselves to take that space."

Laget Jeremiah, Chairperson of the Karamoja Humanitarian Alliance.

I come from Karamoja, in our region, local actors are always the first responders. We are on the ground before anyone else. But sustainability is our biggest challenge. We build capacity over three years. Then funding ends. Staff leave. We start again."

If we want regional leadership to grow, we must think beyond short-term funding cycles. Institutions cannot mature when funding comes for one year and disappears the next. We need continuity so that what we build is not lost."

"How do you sustain capacity that you have constructed over time? That is the real issue."

Payira Bonny, Coordinator Acholi Humanitarian Platform – Uganda

I come from Acholi. Our region is still recovering from conflict. The war affected institutions, communities, leadership structures. Even today, recovery is not complete.

When we talk about systemic barriers at sub-national level, we must understand that some regions are rebuilding from deep historical disruption. Institutions were weakened. Trust was broken. Human capital was lost.

There is another issue we must confront. Local actors are often described as lacking capacity. But we need to ask what that means. In many cases, what is called 'lack of capacity' is linked to inequitable resource flows and long periods of systemic neglect. It is not about ability. It is about access.

Local actors are frequently excluded from direct access to international funding. They are required to operate through international intermediaries. They face complex application processes, heavy reporting demands, and compliance systems that were never designed with them in mind.

These structures reduce independence. They slow growth. They affect agency.

In Acholi, we are rebuilding governance, financial systems, and coordination platforms. Recovery takes time. You cannot compare institutions that are emerging from post-conflict contexts with those that have had decades of uninterrupted growth.

Support from national partners must recognize this history. Capacity strengthening must be long-term. Financing models must allow direct engagement. Coordination spaces must allow regional voices to lead without feeling overshadowed.

Localization in Acholi is tied to recovery. It is about rebuilding confidence, rebuilding systems, and rebuilding leadership

Myleen Kyomuhendo, C4C Disability and Inclusion Representative – Uganda

"I represent disability inclusion. Localization must include everyone. Disability-led organizations are active in communities, but access to funding and decision-making spaces is still limited.

Inclusion should not end at inviting someone to sit in the room. It must mean influence. It must mean that our perspectives shape the decisions being made.

Regional leadership becomes stronger when it reflects diversity, women, youth, persons with disabilities, refugee-led organizations. Localization must reflect all of us."

Mr. John Baptist Byaruhanga, coordinator the Western Uganda Humanitarian Platform

"In Western Uganda, many local organizations are doing good work. They are trusted in their communities. But trust at community level must connect to strong institutional systems.

If you are mapped and someone finds you, are you ready? Do you have proper financial systems? Do you have governance structures that are active? Can you account for funds clearly?

One barrier we face is that some organizations are strong in implementation but weak in documentation and systems. Regional leadership grows when institutions invest in their own discipline."

Thematic Area 3: Partnership and Financing, Strengthening Collaborations and Unlocking Resources.

Moderator: Ryan Duly, Director – Uganda Humanitarian INGO Forum (HINGO)

This session brought together representatives from the UN, the HINGO, and government to examine how financing structures and partnership models can evolve to support meaningful localization. The discussion acknowledged progress while confronting the structural realities shaping resource flows in Uganda's humanitarian and development landscape.

Financing Under Pressure, Localization Under Scrutiny.

Across the panel, one fact remained central: the financing environment is tightening. Humanitarian funding is declining, and institutions across the system are being asked to consolidate, reduce overheads, and demonstrate measurable efficiency.

Within this context, localization cannot be framed as an additional demand on shrinking resources. It must be positioned as part of the solution a pathway toward efficiency, proximity, and sustained impact.

Ryan opened the session by acknowledging the shift in moderation, noting that Dr. Isooba Moses was originally scheduled but could not attend. He introduced himself as Director of the Uganda Humanitarian INGO Forum, a network of 63 NGOs operating in the humanitarian space in Uganda, several of whom are also Charter for Change signatories.

He framed the discussion clearly

Localization is advancing. The divide between international and national actors is shrinking. Yet the journey toward financing equity is ongoing. The purpose of this panel was to hear directly from the UN, government, and sector leadership on how partnerships and funding mechanisms can become more predictable, equitable, and accessible.

He emphasized that local actors have been demonstrating readiness. The question now was how financing structures respond.

Question 1 to UNHCR Uganda

"We talked about predictable and equitable financing is critical for sustainability. What steps is UNHCR taking to increase predictable funding for local and national organizations and how can collaboration be strengthened to ensure more equitable financing in the refugee response?"

Jason Hebbs, Deputy Representative – UNHCR Uganda

Jason began by situating UNHCR within the broader financing reality. UNHCR depends almost entirely on voluntary contributions. Ninety-eight percent of its funding is raised through donor engagement. Financing constraints are real and increasing.

He noted that Uganda is often referenced globally as a positive example of partnership practice.

Of 47 partnership agreements this year, 30 are with local actors including both government institutions and national NGOs. In addition, Uganda has had the highest number globally of partnerships with refugee-led and community-based organizations for two consecutive years.

He acknowledged, however, that reduced funding next year will result in consolidation. UNHCR will reduce from sixteen NGO partners to six. Two of those six will be national partners.

The central tension, he explained, is this; Donor governments provide voluntary funding. Many encourage increased engagement with national partners. Yet partnership decisions are often influenced by complementary funding. International

NGOs frequently arrive with co-financing already secured. That strengthens their funding proposals.

He identified a structural barrier;

Donor governments still face difficulty in providing direct funding to national partners. Advocacy at global level continues to push for more direct financing or stronger incentives for partnerships with national actors.

He emphasized that compliance, transparency, and demonstrated accountability are essential to shifting donor perceptions of risk. When national organizations address compliance issues openly and decisively, it strengthens advocacy for direct funding.

He concluded by recognizing that reduced funding pressures require consolidation across the system including within UN agencies and INGOs. The focus must remain on efficiency, transparency, and demonstrable delivery value.

Ryan acknowledged UNHCR's commitment and noted that accountability and demonstrated efficiency are central to unlocking more equitable financing.

Question to the HINGO

"Leadership and funding remain central to advancing localization. How are HINGO members reshaping the conversation on leadership and financing for local action? And what strategies are being adopted to move the localization agenda forward in Uganda?"

Andrew Agassi, Executive Director - Brass for Africa, Localization and Partnership Liaison, HINGO Steering Committee | Uganda.

Andrew acknowledged the long day and the weight of the conversations that had unfolded. Being among the final speakers, he noted, carries responsibility the last words should count.

Speaking both as Executive Director of Brass for Africa and as Localization and Partnership Liaison, HINGO Steering Committee | Uganda, he reflected on what he had heard throughout the Dialogue.

He emphasized that across the NGO sector there is broad recognition of the role local actors play in humanitarian response. The issue is no longer whether local actors matter. The issue is how leadership and representation are shaped within financing systems.

He distinguished between signatories to the Charter for Change, who have made explicit commitments, and the broader HINGO, where partnership engagement may be active but not always formally tracked under C4C metrics. He suggested that much collaboration is taking place that may not yet be fully captured or appreciated in national reporting conversations.

On leadership, he framed it as collective positioning.

Leadership, he noted, is about how actors represent themselves, how they learn from one another, and how they organize their voice. INGOs, through networks such as HINGO, invest significantly in information sharing, coordination, and collective advocacy. When engaging donors and UN agencies, they often carry the message of localization and promote the importance of national actors.

He encouraged local actors to draw lessons from this collective approach.

Sometimes it is difficult to speak alone. Collective voice strengthens influence. When organizations come together around clear issues and articulate shared priorities, funding actors respond more seriously. This, he argued, is part of what leadership means in the financing space.

He addressed a perception that occasionally surfaces that local actors wait for INGOs to secure funding and then pass it down.

He challenged that framing. The more sustainable approach, he suggested, is co-development. Organizations should develop initiatives together, design proposals together, and speak the same language in terms of strategic priorities.

In his view, reshaping financing for localization requires;

- Coordinated advocacy with donors
- Joint positioning between NGOs and local actors
- Shared initiative development
- Stronger collective engagement in national policy and humanitarian forums

He emphasized that advocacy is ongoing with donors, UN agencies, and government institutions. The goal is to normalize partnership models where collaboration is planned from the outset rather than added as a downstream mechanism.

He concluded by encouraging continued dialogue and collective organization. Leadership, he implied, is less about hierarchy and more about alignment.

Ryan thanked Andrew for addressing common misconceptions and for reinforcing the importance of mentorship, collective advocacy, and shared responsibility in strengthening localization financing pathways.

Question to Government

"In practical terms, how does the Ministry intend to enhance district level leadership to ensure accountability and promote the active participation of local actors in government led response mechanisms?"

Willy Magambo, Ministry of Local Government

Willy Magambo, representing the Ministry of Local Government, focused on strengthening district-level leadership as a foundation for sustainable localization.

He began by acknowledging one of the long-standing fears surrounding localization the perception that local actors lack capacity. He stated clearly that government's role is not to reinforce that perception, but to address it through structured support.

The Ministry intends to strengthen district-level leadership through capacity building. This includes equipping district staff and local actors with the skills and mandate required to deliver services effectively. Localization, in this framing, requires investment in institutional competence at sub-national level.

He emphasized support supervision and joint monitoring. Rather than fragmented oversight, the Ministry envisions collaborative monitoring involving multiple stakeholders. When challenges arise, they can be identified early and addressed collectively.

Compliance inspection remains central. The Ministry is mandated to ensure that interventions align with existing laws and policy frameworks. Localization must operate within regulatory systems. Accountability to public standards strengthens legitimacy.

Citizen participation is another pillar. He referenced community barazas, public forums where actors present what they have implemented, account for the resources received, and receive feedback directly from communities. Accountability, in this sense, is not only upward to donors and ministries, but downward to citizens.

He also highlighted district-level accountability structures such as Public Accounts Committees. These bodies verify whether resources are spent according to approved work plans and budgets. Strengthening these structures reinforces financial discipline at district level.

On coordination, he pointed to existing district partner coordination meetings and refugee response coordination platforms. These mechanisms bring together district officials, UN agencies, refugee representatives, and implementing partners on a quarterly basis to deliberate on response priorities.

He emphasized that policy dialogue remains open. Government is prepared to engage stakeholders in clarifying roles, responsibilities, and implementation modalities within the localization strategy.

He concluded by affirming government's openness to continued collaboration and structured dialogue.

Ryan thanked the panelists and opened the floor briefly for plenary questions,

Floor Discussion

Participant Questions and Open Dialogue

Following the panel discussion under Thematic Area 3, the moderator opened the floor to participants. What followed was one of the most candid and grounded exchanges of the Dialogue local actors raising structural concerns, financing inequities, coordination barriers, and governance gaps directly with UN, HINGO, and Government representative.

Gladys Logeo – Karamoja

Gladys spoke on behalf of local actors present in the room and those unable to attend.

Her question addressed perceived regional funding concentration.

"Whenever we receive calls for proposals, I see most donors concentrating in regions like West Nile and Karamoja. Other regions like Jinja sub-region, where I come from, it is very quiet. Are there things being done differently in those regions that inform donor strategies? Our communities face similar challenges poverty, teenage pregnancy, child marriage, reproductive health gaps. Why are some regions prioritized over others?"

Her intervention called for transparency in regional funding criteria and requested a roadmap to ensure more equitable geographic distribution.

Another participant raised a leadership concern, Teopista

"When we talk about meaningful participation of local actors in leadership, why are coordination roles often locked to UNHCR, IOM, local government, and implementing partners? In some settlements, local actors are doing significant work. What is the position of UNHCR and government in promoting local actors to co-lead or coordinate sectors?"

Jason Hebbs – UNHCR

Jason responded directly to the few concerns and questions

He emphasized that coordination requires resources time, funding, and neutrality. A sector lead must represent the collective, not individual organizational interests.

He encouraged collective advocacy

When invitations or requests come from a single organization, they may be overlooked. When they come from a recognized collective such as Charter for Change or a network, they carry institutional weight and cannot easily be ignored.

Local actors can co-lead sectors. Leadership is not restricted. However, it requires commitment, capacity, and resources. Coordination is work, not a title.

He affirmed UNHCR's openness to supporting such transitions, including providing letters of support where appropriate.

Alvin – Regional Advisor

Alvin reflected on proposal competitiveness and systems strength.

He observed that some organizations override their own systems when funding opportunities arise. Financial management weaknesses then surface during audits.

How can organizations strengthen internal systems and avoid compromising accountability under funding pressure?

Paul from Karamoja

Paul raised concern about shrinking traditional funding sources.

"Are there mechanisms being put in place to source funding from non-traditional donors? The funding landscape is changing. What strategies exist beyond traditional UN and bilateral channels?"

He also reflected that donor geographic focus may be informed by scoping studies and strategic alignment. Organizations may need to align missions and proposals to emerging funding priorities.

Another participant posed a direct question to HINGO

How can compliance and due diligence requirements be simplified without compromising accountability?

Sheila Nadilo – Nwoya District

Sheila raised four core issues

1. District governments lack funding to coordinate and monitor civil society work.
2. Monitoring often depends on NGOs providing transport or allowances.
3. She also raised oil and gas local content concerns, urging government to ensure benefits reach producing districts and
4. The Gov't to address spillover refugee impacts in districts such as Gulu and Nwoya.

Gody Dricilie – Youth-Led Organization

- Fees charged by district NGO monitoring committees is affecting the local actors.
- Delays in signing MOUs
- Variability in registration fees across districts
- Lack of uniform compliance standards

He described how these delays can cause organizations to lose funding opportunities.

Alum Launa – Caritas Moroto Diocese

Alum echoed concerns regarding allowance expectations by district monitoring committees. She emphasized the strain on organizations operating with limited funding while being asked to finance government oversight.

She called for a standardized national approach to allowances to avoid disparities and distortions.

Andrew Agassi – Brass for Africa, Response to the Questions from the floor.

Andrew responded by distinguishing two realities, Compliance must be met. That is non-negotiable.

However, dialogue is possible at partner level. Unrealistic or excessive requirements can be challenged through conversation and collective advocacy.

He emphasized the power of speaking with one voice. Fragmented complaints weaken influence. Coordinated advocacy has historically led to policy adjustments including heavy compliance burdens being reconsidered.

He also highlighted ongoing UN-CSO capacity strengthening initiatives across districts such as Gulu, with upcoming sessions planned in Arua, Moroto, Mbarara, Kampala, and others. Documentation and knowledge retention were stressed to reduce loss of institutional memory.

Government Response: Willy Magambo – Ministry of Local Government.

Willy addressed the concerns systematically.

On knowledge retention, he referenced government salary reform prioritizing scientists to prevent talent loss. He encouraged organizations to consider non-financial motivation and recognition to retain skilled staff.

On district coordination funding, he pointed to National Planning Authority guidelines requiring CSOs to declare work plans and budgets for integration into district plans. Integration enables joint monitoring and cost-sharing.

He acknowledged the issue of district NGO monitoring committees charging fees and demanding allowances. He committed to escalate the matter within the Ministry, emphasizing that district activities should be integrated into annual budgets rather than funded by CSOs.

On oil and gas benefits, he recommended benchmarking other districts and escalating wildlife and related issues to appropriate authorities.

On CBO registration fees, he clarified that districts must operate under approved charging policies. Any arbitrary variation should be challenged through district Chief Finance Officers.

He closed by reiterating government's openness to continued dialogue and structured capacity strengthening.

Florence Anobe, CARE International in Uganda | Knowledge Management Technical Manager responded to Capacity and Self-Regulation, QUAM Plus issues raised.

A clarification was provided on the upgraded QUAM Plus platform.

QUAM Plus was presented as a self-regulation tool with sixteen standards enabling organizations to assess and strengthen internal systems. It is not a policing mechanism but a readiness tool to strengthen fundability and accountability.

Closing Reflection

Joyce Julian Acoko, Chairperson, Charter for Change Uganda, Executive Director, NUWOSO.

We are proud of what we have built together.

As I stand before you at the close of this Dialogue, I do so with gratitude, humility, and conviction. I thank each one of you for committing your time, your energy, and your insight throughout this day. I appreciate the Government of Uganda and the Office of the Prime Minister for walking this journey with us. I recognize the HINGOs who, in 2022, opened their coordination spaces to Charter for Change as observers. That gesture signaled inclusion. It signaled trust. It signaled that localization was moving from rhetoric to practice.

I thank our regional leadership. What we have presented today, the tracking, the mapping, the evidence, did not happen only at national. It happened because representatives across districts and settlements put in the work. I appreciate our moderators, our advisors, the Secretariat, the media team, my Co-Chair John Jal Dak, and I give special recognition to the women leaders in this room. Your presence reflects the leadership we are building.

Today we unveiled the tracking of our progress. Let me be clear. This tracking is not for fault-finding. It is for collaboration. When donors tell us they understand that local actors are closest to communities, that we are cost-effective, that we make interventions sustainable, we ask ourselves: where has that understanding reached? Tracking is about strengthening practice. It is about shaping behavior. It is about preparing for the next phase with evidence rather than assumption.

There have been recommendations about institutionalizing Charter for Change. I welcome the intention behind that idea. However, Charter for Change is part of a global movement designed to promote local leadership. Leadership rotates every two years intentionally. The organization grows. The individual grows. New leaders emerge. Permanent structures sometimes become stagnant. They frustrate members. They weaken energy. Charter for Change belongs to all of us. Leadership here is positional and shared.

Tomorrow, we elect a new Chair and Vice Chair. For many of us who lead local organizations, we are Executive Directors, resource mobilizers, and program managers at the same time. If you give us coordination for too long, our own institutions suffer. Coordination drains energy, time, and resources. Rotation protects both leaders and institutions.

We must also address the narrative around capacity. When skilled people move from local organizations to international ones, suddenly capacity is recognized. We studied in the same schools. We have the same qualifications. Capacity is not a geographical location. Capacity is embedded in people, in systems, in opportunity and access to resources. We must dismantle assumptions that limit us.

The funding landscape has changed. You submit proposals and receive no feedback. Competition has intensified. Preparation is now more important than pursuit. I say it again: resources are victims of a calculated trap. If you want resources, you prepare your systems, your governance, your positioning. You do not chase resources. You design your trap well. Institutional readiness determines opportunity.

To our donors and international partners, we now have a mapped database of local actors that will be published on the global Charter for Change platform. If you are looking for partners in Acholi, Karamoja, West Nile, Western Uganda, and other parts of Uganda, they are there. Our regional leaders will continue updating this data. I appeal to the Ministry of Local Government and OPM to support full validation so that actors within settlements are fully captured and directly connected.

Localization is delayed when local actors are absent from decision-making spaces. You cannot speak about my needs better than me. I acknowledge the HINGOs who have shared space, including engagements with country donors where local voices were represented. Inclusion must move from exception to norm.

We must also look at ourselves. Too often, local organizations operate in the same districts, in the same thematic areas, with overlapping mandates, yet remain small and under-resourced. Some list five thematic areas but function effectively in only one. Let us not remain small organizations. Let us build strong institutions. Let us form alliances. Let us merge where necessary. Unity strengthens negotiation power. Shared systems increase credibility. Consolidation improves sustainability. If resources are victims of a calculated trap, then unity is part of that design.

I extend gratitude to our signatories and allies who supported this event, including CARE International in Uganda, Dan Church Aid, Oxfam in Uganda, Woord en Daad, Finn Church Aid, CRS, World Vision, Caritas Uganda, Caritas Moroto, Plan International in Uganda, AYWAD, NUWOSO, ICS and several contributing local organizations. Both international and local actors contributed financially. That demonstrates shared ownership of this movement.

Before I invite the Coordinating Signatory to speak, allow me to share this.

Leadership can be lonely. In my first year as Chair, there were moments when I felt misunderstood, downplayed, and quietly undermined. In systems still adjusting to local leadership, misunderstandings can quickly translate into being labeled less capable. Those pressures were real.

However, when we transitioned during this second year, something shifted. When we started co-leading with Oxfam, that is when I felt understood. The partnership demonstrated what genuine localization looks like, not token inclusion, but shared influence and respect.

Thank you for your support, your advice, and your presence. I wish you a Merry Christmas. Thank you.

Francis, thank you very much. Thank you for standing with us. Thank you for doing good to local actors. Your support has shown that Oxfam is truly committed to localization.

With that, I invite you to take the floor as Coordinating Signatory.

Distinguished government representatives, colleagues from the UN, fellow country directors, leaders of local and national organizations, partners, and friends,

When we talk about shared leadership, it is not something very common in our context. Let me speak honestly. In many places across Africa, peaceful handover of leadership is not something we see often. So when I see a platform like this, where leadership rotates intentionally, where power is shared, where responsibility is passed on peacefully that is something worth celebrating.

I want to take a moment to appreciate Joyce.

Leadership is not easy. Coordination is not easy. And stepping into a national platform as a local leader, with international organizations watching, government watching, donors watching that requires courage. You can do work quietly. But to do it with passion, and to do it publicly, and to do it consistently that is different.

Joyce has given it her all.

And whoever is going to take over next, please take this seriously. Do not use this platform for personal positioning. Build on what has been started. Protect it. Strengthen it. Because if you break it, you break our hearts.

Let me also explain something honestly.

When the technical working group approached Oxfam to become the coordinating signatory again, I hesitated. Once you release leadership, and then you are asked to take it back, it feels like when your child has graduated and left home and then comes back asking for school fees again. It is painful. But you cannot chase your own child away.

We accepted because localization is not a project for Oxfam. It is not a branding exercise. It is a transformation agenda.

And transformation is uncomfortable.

Let us be honest with ourselves. The biggest resistance to localization is not outside. It is inside our institutions. It is within our systems. It is within our fears.

When we decide to localize, it sometimes means sending staff home. It sometimes means restructuring portfolios. It sometimes means losing control. And those decisions are not easy.

We also operate in a shrinking funding environment. Funding is reducing. Donors are consolidating. Organizations are being forced to reduce overheads. We are making decisions that affect staff who support families, who pay school fees, who carry responsibilities beyond themselves. Leadership carries that weight quietly.

But when I sit in rooms like this and listen to the depth of reflection from local actors, I regain energy. I am reminded why this agenda matters.

The documentation and tracking you have started today is important. This is your baby. You have begun documenting progress, identifying gaps, and measuring movement. That is powerful. It moves localization from advocacy to accountability.

The next step will be critical. The report must be completed. It must be disseminated widely. It must not remain in this room. Others must read it. Others must hold us accountable.

Localization is not about percentages alone. It is about institutional reform. It is about shifting mindsets. It is about trust. It is about demonstrating integrity when challenges arise.

We must also look inward. Some of our systems are 70, 80, even 100 years old. They were designed for a different era. Reforming them takes time. But that does not mean we do nothing. It means we push intelligently. We advocate strategically. We adjust progressively.

To the local actors, continue strengthening your systems. Continue documenting your work. Continue speaking with one voice. Unity gives you leverage.

To fellow INGOs, let us move beyond comfort. Let us share space genuinely. Let us mentor without controlling. Let us support leadership transitions.

And to government your role in strengthening district coordination, accountability structures, and policy alignment is essential. Localization cannot succeed without national ownership.

Joyce, thank you for your passion. Thank you for your resilience. And to the incoming leadership, we are here to support you but you must also carry the responsibility with seriousness.

Let us build on what has been started. Let us not break it.

With that, I thank all of you for your commitment, for sitting through two full days, and for engaging honestly.

May we continue deepening partnerships. Thank you

Closing Remarks: Solomon Sonko, CRRF Secretariat – Office of the Prime Minister.

Distinguished participants, colleagues from government, UN agencies, development partners, leaders of local and national organizations, and members of the Charter for Change community,

Allow me first to thank the organizers for inviting me to close this important gathering. I have listened carefully throughout the day, and I want to acknowledge the seriousness, honesty, and depth of the conversations that have taken place here.

Localization is no longer a slogan. It is no longer a side discussion. It is now at the center of how Uganda manages displacement, development, and humanitarian response.

As CRRF, we recognize that Uganda's refugee response model is built on partnership. It is built on integration. It is built on the understanding that refugees and host communities must benefit together. But partnership cannot be meaningful if local actors are not visible, resourced, and trusted.

Today, you have presented tracking results. That is important. Because what is not measured is not improved. What is not documented is not defended. The work you are doing to track progress against the Charter for Change commitments is a contribution not only to Uganda, but to the global discourse on localization.

Let me also acknowledge something very clearly, the funding environment is tightening. We all feel it. Government feels it. UN agencies feel it. INGOs feel it. Local actors feel it even more. In this environment, efficiency, coordination, and accountability become even more critical.

From a government perspective, localization must align with national systems. We cannot build parallel systems. We must strengthen district coordination structures. We must integrate work plans. We must promote joint monitoring. And we must ensure that resources reaching communities are used transparently and effectively.

At the same time, we must also create space.

Local actors must not only implement projects; they must participate in decision-making. They must co-lead where capacity exists. And where capacity gaps exist, we must address them through structured support, not exclusion.

The conversation today around fragmentation among local organizations is also important. Unity strengthens voice. When local actors speak collectively, they are heard differently. That applies to funding advocacy, policy reform, and coordination structures.

Let me emphasize another point: accountability is not punishment. Accountability is protection. It protects the credibility of local actors. It protects partnerships. It protects the refugee response model that Uganda is known for globally.

As CRRF, we remain committed to working with Charter for Change, with signatories, and with local leadership to strengthen coordination at settlement and district levels. Where there are structural bottlenecks, we are open to dialogue. Where there are gaps in representation, we are ready to listen.

Uganda's model has often been cited internationally as progressive. But progress is not automatic. It requires continuous reform. It requires trust-building. It requires courage from all sides, government, international partners, and local actors alike.

I leave you with this thought.

Localization is not about replacing one actor with another. It is about rebalancing power so that decisions are made closer to the people affected. It is about ensuring sustainability beyond project cycles. It is about dignity.

I congratulate the outgoing Chair for her leadership. I congratulate the Charter for Change Working Group for the transparency demonstrated today. And I encourage the incoming leadership to continue pushing this agenda forward constructively, strategically, and collaboratively.

On behalf of CRRF, I thank you for your commitment.

Let us continue working together. Thank you.

Outcomes, Commitments, and Way Forward

As the proceedings concluded, the Dialogue moved from reflection to responsibility. What had been shared across the thematic sessions now required consolidation. What had been debated now required direction. What had been measured now required momentum.

The Annual High-Level Dialogue did not end with speeches. It ended with clarity.

1. Key Achievements of the 2025 Dialogue

The Dialogue marked several concrete milestones in Uganda's localization journey.

First, Uganda now has verified national tracking data against the eight Charter for Change commitments. While response rates remain uneven, the process itself represents a structural shift from advocacy to measurable accountability. For the first time, financial flows were analyzed against documented evidence rather than institutional estimates

Second, the national mapping initiative identified over 587 local and national actors across districts and settlements. These actors are now findable and increasingly fundable. Visibility has shifted from informal networks to a structured, geo-bound digital repository

Third, signatories demonstrated tangible increases in direct funding to local actors, with a verified average of 41% among reporting entities surpassing the 25% minimum threshold, though limited by reporting compliance

Fourth, partnership reforms are no longer rhetorical. Revised MoUs, joint proposal development, co-branding, joint monitoring visits, structured partner feedback mechanisms, and institutional capacity strengthening investments were documented across multiple signatories

Fifth, the Dialogue strengthened alignment between localization efforts and national policy direction, including engagement with the Uganda National NGO Bureau, Ministry of Local Government, and CRRF Secretariat

Localization in Uganda has moved from aspiration toward institutionalization of practice.

2. Good Practices Emerging from Uganda

The Dialogue surfaced practices that can inform both national and global learning.

- ✓ **Deliberate Internal Tracking Systems.** Some signatories now embed the 25% commitment directly into budgeting processes before internal cost allocations are calculated.
- ✓ **Structured Partner Feedback Reviews.** Two-year partnership assessments allow local actors to evaluate INGOs openly.
- ✓ **100% Pass-Through Models.** Certain funding streams are fully partner-led, with INGOs assuming compliance oversight only.
- ✓ **Joint Proposal Development.** Increasing co-design of interventions rather than subcontracted implementation.
- ✓ **Institutional Capacity Investments Beyond Projects.** Governance strengthening, safeguarding systems, financial systems, and compliance support.
- ✓ **Collective Advocacy Platforms.** National networks such as C4C and HINGO demonstrating the power of coordinated voice.

- ✓ **Mapping for Preparedness.** The dashboard enables rapid identification of local actors during emergencies.
- ✓ **Evidence-Based Response to Funding Shocks.** The assessment of the impact of the USAID Stop-Work Order on local actors in Uganda is generating evidence to guide advocacy and adaptation strategies.
- ✓ **Capacity Needs Identification.** The assessment of local actors' capacity needs is helping inform targeted institutional strengthening and partnership approaches.
- ✓ **Localization Awareness and Engagement.** Sensitization of INGO partnership staff, complemented by a localization exhibition, is fostering deeper understanding and commitment to equitable partnerships.
- ✓ **Exploring Sustainable Financing Pathways.** The design of a new resource mobilization landscape is supporting efforts to sustain localization initiatives and diversify funding opportunities for local actors.
- ✓ **Growing Government Engagement.** Increased dialogue with government institutions is helping anchor localization within national systems and policy discussions.

These practices demonstrate that localization reform is operational, not theoretical.

3. Lessons Learnt

Localization remains largely voluntary. Without structured national reporting obligations, compliance varies significantly across institutions

Short-term funding cycles undermine sustainability. One-year grants with quarterly disbursements limit institutional planning, staff retention, and systems strengthening

Capacity narratives are often structural, not technical. What is labeled as "lack of capacity" is frequently linked to unequal access to financing and long-term investment.

Internal resistance exists within institutions. Localization reform requires organizational restructuring, risk recalibration, and sometimes workforce adjustments.

Fragmentation among local actors weakens negotiation power. Operating in isolation reduces influence in financing and policy spaces.

Accountability must be mutual. Integrity concerns and compliance gaps must be addressed consistently across both international and national actors.

Localization is not only about shifting money. It is about reforming systems, behaviors, and trust.

4. Pledges and Institutional Commitments

Several forward-looking commitments were expressed during the Dialogue.

- Signatories committed to improving national-level reporting transparency.

- Government reaffirmed commitment to strengthening district-level coordination, joint monitoring, and compliance systems.
- CRRF emphasized continued integration of localization within refugee response architecture.
- UN partners acknowledged the need for stronger advocacy toward donor flexibility and direct funding access.
- The C4C Working Group committed to publishing and regularly updating the national mapped database.
- INGOs reaffirmed willingness to support co-leadership models and structured mentorship.
- Local actors committed to strengthening internal systems, documentation, and collective advocacy.

The tone was not defensive. It was forward-looking.

5. Strategic Recommendations

1. Move from Voluntary Compliance to Structured Accountability. Establish national reporting templates and standardized disclosure mechanisms for tracking C4C commitments.
2. Anchor Localization Within a National Policy Framework. Formalize localization standards within Uganda's regulatory and humanitarian policy structures.
3. Promote Multi-Year, Flexible Financing. Encourage donors to support institutional strengthening and not only short-term project delivery.
4. Harmonize Due Diligence and Reporting Systems. Reduce administrative burdens by standardizing compliance tools across signatories.
5. Strengthen District-Level Coordination Financing. Integrate monitoring and coordination budgets into district development plans to reduce dependency on CSO allowances.
6. Invest in Governance and Institutional Systems. Prioritize safeguarding, procurement, financial controls, and board strengthening before and alongside funding shifts.
7. Address Recruitment Ethics Transparently. Promote structured dialogue on staff mobility and institutional capacity protection.
8. Strengthen Collective Advocacy Platforms. Encourage local actors to organize strategically, merge where appropriate, and present unified positions in national forums.

6. Way Forward, 2026 Priorities

The Dialogue concluded with a clear direction for the coming year:

- Finalize and disseminate the 2025 Tracking Report nationally and globally.
- Expand reporting participation among all signatories.
- Launch the public version of the national mapped dashboard.
- Deepen collaboration with Ministry of Local Government and OPM to integrate settlement-level actors fully.
- Strengthen engagement with the Grand Bargain National Reference Group.
- Develop a structured national localization accountability scorecard.
- Promote alliances and consolidation among local actors to build stronger institutions.
- Continue rotating leadership to protect institutional sustainability while nurturing emerging leaders.

Localization in Uganda is entering a new phase.

The foundation has been laid.
The systems are emerging. The evidence is now visible.
The next phase requires discipline.
As echoed repeatedly during the Dialogue.
Localization is not about replacing actors. It is about rebalancing power.
It is not about percentages alone. It is about sustainability.
It is not about access alone. It is about accountability.
The 2025 Annual High-Level Dialogue closed not with applause alone, but with shared responsibility.

The work continues.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