



# Locally led and owned humanitarian action in fragile and forgotten contexts

Local perspectives on how to close the funding gap through equitable participation and innovative funding mechanisms as well as anticipatory action



# Introduction

On March 18, 2024, the humanitarian organisations ADRA Indonesia, Basmeh & Zeitnooneh, SAF/ FJKM, CONAFOHD and their international supporters Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, Help – Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe and ADRA Germany hosted a Humanitarian Talk at the European Humanitarian Forum 2024 in Brussels. All organisations agreed that the format should specifically allow speakers from national and local organisations in the Global South to share their expertise and voice their policy recommendations to a predominantly Western audience. Therefore, all speakers represented local and national humanitarian organisations, while intermediary organisations from the Global North assumed a facilitating and supporting role.

## Problem statement

In today's humanitarian system, donors and other actors with near-exclusive access to political, social and economic resources persist in deploying mechanisms of “othering” to stigmatise local and national actors and undermine their rightful leadership in humanitarian decision-making processes. Despite local actors being the first responders to virtually every humanitarian crisis and being deeply rooted in and accountable to the communities they serve, their work is often wrongly associated with a lack of professionalism and neutrality. Localisation efforts must, therefore, refocus on putting the empowerment of and by local actors at their centre and demanding the necessary changes this requires in the humanitarian system.

## Key recommendations

- Especially in neglected and fragile contexts, local and national actors require reliable and flexible core **funding** in order to properly assume a more empowered role. Locally led and managed pooled funds at the country level can contribute to a more accessible international funding system
- To avoid maintaining the status quo, but to empower those at the frontline, the international system needs to learn from positive experiences. Successful models of partnerships between local and international actors or networks of local and national humanitarian civil society organisations are based on an equitable **power balance and risk sharing**. Those solutions lead to a more contextualised, harmonised, anticipatory and effective response in benefit of the affected populations.
- The humanitarian system needs to stop working in silos and instead demand **systematic cooperation and capacity exchange** among various actors, including faith- and value-based organisations, sub-national governments – especially those in areas highly prone to disasters, (church) communities and community leaders.

# Speakers information



Chair: **Dr. Michael Köhler**, Grand Bargain Ambassador

Since 2023, Dr. Michael Köhler serves as Ambassador and co-lead of the Grand Bargain. From 1994 until 2024, he worked in the European Commission, lately as Acting Director-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, which is in charge of coordinating EU humanitarian aid worldwide. Previously he held various positions within the European Commission such as in DG NEAR and DG DEVCO. Since 1997, he is a professor for "Europe and the Mediterranean" at the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium; he also teaches in Paris and Bonn.



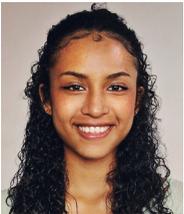
**De-Joseph Kakisingi**, President, CONAFOHD, Democratic Republic of Congo

Dr. De-Joseph Kakisingi, a humanitarian leader from the Democratic Republic of Congo, possesses over a decade of experience providing humanitarian aid to displaced populations, survivors of sexual violence, and victims of disasters caused by natural hazards. A pivotal figure in combating COVID-19 in his nation, he also serves as President of CONAFOHD, a network of over 400 local and national actors, with the strategic focus to accelerate the localisation of humanitarian action and the realisation of commitments outlined in the Grand Bargain.



**Fatima Khaddour**, Head of Programs, Basmeh & Zeitooneh, Lebanon

Fatima Khaddour is a humanitarian professional with nearly a decade of experience in program management, partnership and donor relations managing a wide range of projects and grants in the Middle East. She coordinated relief responses to the Syria crisis, COVID-19 in Syria and Lebanon, and the emergency response to the 2020 Beirut port explosion in Lebanon. Fatima works as Head of Programs, Lebanon at Basmeh & Zeitooneh for Relief and Development, a grass-root refugee led organisation, overseeing the partnership, program and grants teams.



**Haingombaliha Nofy Narindra Nahary**, Technical Expert, SAF/ FJKM, Madagascar

Nofy Haingombaliha, an environmentalist from Madagascar, holds a Master's degree in Geography, specialising in Earth Science, from the University of Antananarivo, as well as a Bachelor's degree in English Studies. As technical officer at Madagascan NGO SAF/ FJKM, she oversees the coordination between the central office and field operations and fulfils a critical function in fundraising matters and relationship management with national and international partners.



**D'Karlo Purba**, Program Director, ADRA Indonesia, Indonesia

D'Karlo Purba has been the Program Director of ADRA Indonesia since 2011. With over 15 years of experience in enhancing civil society organisations for development, advocacy and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)-related projects. He holds a master's degree in Philosophy. Presently, he serves as a Supervisory Board member of Humanitarian Forum Indonesia, a consortium of 24 national NGOs, and as an Advisory Board member of Suara Kita.

# Context-specific challenges for local and national humanitarian actors

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, a main barrier for local and national actors is a lack of participation in political decision-making. There is not enough long-term core funding in order to support national and local NGO networks and their action plans to boost localisation. Without such networks, there is not enough consultation between small, local and sub-national actors and certain international actors and UN agencies; local and national voices are thereby disregarded, despite the commitments to the Grand Bargain. The United Nations Humanitarian Fund is the only mechanism directly accessible to L/ NNGOs, with high demanding due diligence processes, but it accounts for only 7 to 10% of all humanitarian and development funding arriving in the DRC.

The response to the **Syrian crisis** and **Lebanon's socio-economic crisis** has been challenged with donor fatigue, shifting donor interests due to newly emerging crises as well as political and strategic priorities of the international community. Under the salvation mind-set, funding continues to carry colonial notions where the term “local” is associated with a lack of professionalism, lack of knowledge, and lack of accountability. Although the localisation agenda has emerged as a corrective movement, it was unfortunately reduced to nothing more than capacity building rather than meaningful partnership that includes a risk sharing approach. While localisation strategies have been adopted, they continue to be context-ignorant, enforcing irrelevant systems and views on local context and lived

realities of local actors. The impact of the funding gap is serious on local actors as they witness the devastating impact of aid shortage on people relying on it with no way out.

**Madagascar** is facing challenges in disaster preparedness initiatives. One of the main barriers is the lack of accessible local funding hindering the establishment of sustainable disaster risk financing mechanisms. Moreover, insufficient involvement of local populations in decision-making results in funds not addressing community needs adequately, while challenges in comprehending complex forecasting data underscore the necessity for simplified information, communication and improved understanding for effective local decisionmaking. Additionally, difficulties in local coordination mechanisms further compound the challenges in implementing anticipatory actions.

The province Papua in **Indonesia** has been forgotten by the international humanitarian system. Aside from a lack of international funding, the national humanitarian architecture faces obstacles in overcoming these constraints. The armed conflict and its increased intensity over the last 5 years have resulted in thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) lacking access to food, sanitation, medical treatment, and education. At the same time, Indonesia is the second most at risk country from disasters caused by natural hazards in the world, forcing local humanitarian actors to stretch their capacity while facing funding gaps.

# Key learnings and approaches

## **CONAFOHD: Creating a network of local and national organisations**

The main learning in the DRC is that local and national actors should organise an ongoing dialogue with key actors, donor groups and coordination mechanisms to influence policy change at the national and international level. Creating a national network has allowed CONAFOHD to speak with one voice to the government, to the UN and to international NGOs, providing local actors greater influence and negotiating power. In 2023, CONAFOHD held the first national symposium on the localisation of aid in the DRC, which defined “localisation” in the context of the DRC with five main pillars: (1) Coordination and balance of power, (2) equitable partnership, (3) transfer of skills (capacities), (4) direct, high-quality funding and (5) setting up a humanitarian fund for local actors.

## **Basmeh & Zeitooneh: Building equitable partnerships with international partners**

A key learning for Basmeh & Zeitooneh is that successful models of partnerships are based on a power balance, where local and international actors share risks and experience, in an exchange that is based on trust and acknowledgement of the added value of each partner. Partnering with intermediaries who share this vision of localisation provides us with the power of action through steady and consistent funding that allows us to allocate these resources as needed. This funding covers organisational development including systems development, consultancies and training that are identified by the local actor, in addition to programs that an-

swer to the actual needs instead of pre-set frameworks and training. Only then, localisation can be achieved.

## **SAF/ FJKM: Promoting community-led anticipatory action**

Through the involvement in the Local Leadership for Global Impact (LLGI) initiative, SAF/ FJKM underscores the significance of inclusive coordination within existing networks between all agencies and actors engaged in anticipatory action. Furthermore, it highlights and advocates for local actors’ involvement in decision-making processes to maximise the utilisation of local capacities and knowledge. This approach aims to better align funding priorities with the specific context of Madagascar.

## **ADRA Indonesia: Cooperating with sub-national governments for early action systems**

ADRA Indonesia strengthens the capacity of value- and faith-based organisations for a locally led humanitarian response that meets the humanitarian principles and standards. The development of an early warning system for early action and the establishment of an agency supported by faith-based organisations are key steps. This agency will serve as an alternative coordination system and explore local funding sources from faith-based organisations and communities in Indonesia. As Indonesia is the second most at-risk country from disasters caused by natural hazards, it is important to work with sub-national governments to develop the system and SOPs, enabling the activation of anticipatory actions and integrating social protection data for forecast-based financing.

# Advocacy messages



"In the fragile context of Madagascar, on the one hand, donors should establish flexible financing arrangements for anticipatory action with defined localised funding targets. On the other hand, national governments need to establish clear legal frameworks and funding mechanisms, which strengthen collaboration between national and international actors for harmonised anticipatory action initiatives. Furthermore, prioritising the enhancement of national platforms which ensure meaningful local actor representation is essential for ensuring the effective operationalisation of these frameworks."



"We must dismantle the otherness in the funding system, where donors and those with access to resources (the us), stigmatise and undermine local actors as an outer group (the Other) viewing them as being unskilled, not being ready for leadership and decision making. We need to perceive and revise the localisation agenda for what it was originally established for, an agenda of empowerment that should be led by local actors. For this power of action, steady and consistent core funding for operations, systems development, decision making, and training are essential."



"Networks of local and national actors in the DRC and beyond need to be strengthened by the international humanitarian system, to be able to shape political decision making. Furthermore, financing pooled-funds specifically for local actors would allow direct, flexible, multi-year, high-quality funding for national NGOs, taking into account overheads, full cost recovery and the capacity strengthening of local and national NGOs. Additionally, a harmonised and simplified due diligence system with pass porting as well as a framework for regular exchanges between donors and national and local NGOs would strengthen the accountability loop and transparency between NGOs (national and international), communities and donors."



"In the context of Asia, particularly Indonesia, value- and faith-based organisations play a crucial role in locally led humanitarian responses and are an important actor in creating a conducive environment, including the provision of funding sources, for anticipatory action. The localisation agenda should engage with these organisations and communicate donor commitments systematically. Investment in capacity strengthening for these organisations and communities as well as for sub-national government actors is essential."

# Local & national actors

## **Basmeh & Zeitooneh**

Basmeh & Zeitooneh is a refugee-led, grassroots organisation working in Lebanon, Türkiye, and Iraq. Its main focus is the affected community's wellbeing and advancement, believing in the local expertise and power and supporting the community through programs derived from the needs. B&Z supports non-formal education for refugees and IDPs children, protection targeting children at risk, and girls and women from refugee and host communities at risk of gender based violence, food security and livelihoods, advocacy, and empowers other local civil society organisations and refugee-led initiatives. B&Z has been one of the main actors in the Middle East, especially Lebanon, Türkiye, and Iraq, in response to crises including COVID-19, the Beirut Port explosion of 2020, and more recently, the earthquakes in Syria-Türkiye.

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## **CONAFOHD**

CONAFOHD, the national council of humanitarian and development NGO forums in the DRC, brings together five main platforms of national NGOs in the DRC, with more than 400 member organisations. Its main objective is to work towards speeding up the effective localisation of humanitarian aid and the fulfilment of commitments made as part of the Grand Bargain. CONAFOHD is the interface between national NGOs and all stakeholders in humanitarian action in the DRC, such as government, donors, humanitarian coordination, INGO forums as well as international localisation networks. It contributes significantly to the localisation agenda, notably by facilitating exchanges between national NGOs and the national humanitarian coordination, donors and other networks focussed on localisation.

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## **ADRA Indonesia**

ADRA Indonesia has been operating in Indonesia since 1981 and registered as a foundation (Yayasan ADRA Indonesia) under the Ministry of Law and Human Rights in 1991. Over the last 5 years, the organisation has managed 55 projects focused on emergency response, covering areas such as Shelter, WASH and CVA. ADRA Indonesia has built a commendable portfolio in Disaster Risk Reduction, encompassing activities like retrofitting damaged houses in earthquake-prone areas, anticipatory action, climate-smart agriculture, food security, and livelihood initiatives. ADRA Indonesia maintains a strong partnership with the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) for disaster management projects and is a member of the Humanitarian Forum Indonesia (HFI), which consists of 24 national NGOs.

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## **Sampan'asa Momba Ny Fampandrosoana (SAF/ FJKM)**

SAF/ FJKM is the Department for Development of the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar. Created in 1972 and operational since 1974, it targets local communities and grassroots initiatives. SAF/ FJKM is a Non-Governmental Organisation, working through 21 regions of Madagascar within 59 units: 37 health centres and 22 units of development. Its main humanitarian focus areas are food security and nutrition, WASH, health care, environment and climate change as well as disaster risk management. SAF/ FJKM is a member of Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR) and part of the "Local Leadership for Global Impact" project.

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