

This paper shares discussion points highlighted during the pre-event, attended by over 60 colleagues from about 47 INGOs and national NGOs from countries as diverse as Yemen, Nigeria, Indonesia, Lebanon, and Uganda, recognising that more time will be required to consult more deeply to develop a formal position paper with recommendations.

Further dialogues will continue after the Forum to contribute to a much welcomed and meaningful consultation with international and national NGOs regarding the new DG ECHO guidance on their approach towards localisation

“We feel at the moment as national NGOs that we get occasional windows into the decision-making by ECHO and other European donors. We would like to see the door opened, and for us to be engaged as true equal partners in discussing the challenges and finding ways forward.”
 Crespo Mubbalya, AWYAD Uganda, national NGO participant

Elaborated discussions by key point:

Discussion points:

How to:

- **scale up country level funds which directly resource national NGOs?**
- **to organise regular dialogues between donors and local, national, and international NGOs and NGO networks as equal partners?**
- **support INGOs working with L/NNGOs in relation to risk management and capacity sharing?**
- **implement a change of language to reflect an equitable and meaningful partnership approach?**
- **identify and further improve good partnership practices and support for local leadership in humanitarian response?**
- **develop a proportionate approach to due diligence which is feasible for partnerships while responsive to donor accountability?**

How to scale up country level funds which directly resource national NGOs?

Learning from examples from the development side of EU institutional funding, such as funding from an EU Trust Fund to refugee led organisations via local municipal authorities in Uganda, the LIFT Funds in Turkey and Myanmar, and from European governments, can be synthesised and good practices scaled up in more contexts by more European donors.

How to organise regular dialogues between donors and local, national, and international NGOs and NGO networks as equal partners to collectively address challenges and weaknesses?

When DG ECHO and other European donors assess needs, design funding opportunities, and frame and evaluate partnerships (for example in DG ECHO HIP processes). In some contexts, there are examples of DG ECHO and other European donors engaging directly with local NGOs to hear and address their priorities. Civil Society Roadmaps have been a key tool for DG INPTA in this regard.

“ECHO should consult national actors on the HIP as a participatory process could foster ownership and improved capacity.”
 Michael Ibe, Caritas Nigeria, Charter4Change participant

How to support INGOs working with L/NNGOs in relation to risk management and capacity sharing at all stages of partnership and programme design and implementation? Learning from the piloting of new tools to promote risk-sharing, such as the GISF Joint Action Guide on Security Risk Management in Partnerships, can be gathered and systematised at all stages of EU-funded partnerships. Paying attention to the parameters of mutual capacity building support by ECHO could be given higher priority both at the outset of programme and partnership design, and at mid-term review and end of programme exit strategies.

How to implement a change of language to reflect an equitable and meaningful partnership approach?

Examples shared included shifting away from terminology like ‘sub-granting’ to concepts that promote mutual two-way partnerships and involvement of local NGOs as equal partners.

How to identify and further improve good partnership practices and support for local leadership in humanitarian response?

In discussions of what has worked well for effective partnerships, participants shared examples of donor strategies for partnership and funding modalities which adopted flexibility and enabled cohesion across humanitarian and development funding to provide space for organisational strengthening and changes to INGO partnership practices. This also looked at increased support in contexts in which civil society capacity is high: taking Lebanon as an example where UN OCHA has provided benchmarks for onboarding of local NGOs and communities.

How to develop a proportionate approach to due diligence which is feasible for partnerships while responsive to donor accountability?

Current approaches to due diligence are often duplicative and burdensome for local NGOs and their international partners. The discussions looked at various ideas for addressing such challenges including looking at due diligence ‘passporting’ standards, mechanisms for recognition of L/NNGOS that already meet or exceed quality and accountability standards. Many agreed that there is a wider need for awareness raising in relation to the respective dangers faced by local, national, and international humanitarian agencies.

“European donors and international agencies need to invest in translation capacity to engage with local actors in their language. It is exclusionary that only English-speaking individuals are engaged in dialogue on partnerships and programming.”

Sari Timur, YAKKUM Emergency Unit, Indonesia, national NGO participant
