Charter for Change

Update on Progress since the World Humanitarian Summit

This paper was prepared by:[1]

Executive Summary:

The Charter for Change (C4C) is an initiative, launched at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in May 2016, signed by 29 international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) which commits them to change the way they work with and relate to national actors. C4C has been endorsed by over 130 national non-governmental organisations (NNGOs). Signatories made 8 commitments to be implemented by May 2018:

- Pass at least 20 per cent of their humanitarian funding to national NGOs
- Publish the amount/percentage of funding passed to NNGOs
- Reaffirm principles of partnership
- Address and prevent negative impact of recruiting NNGO staff during emergencies
- Address subcontracting and ensure equality in decision-making
- Emphasise the importance of national actors to donors
- Provide robust organisational support and capacity building
- Promote the role of local actors to media and the public

The Charter for Change (C4C) has firmly established its reputation in the post-WHS humanitarian eco-system as a clear commitment on the part of its signatories to change their practices. The initiative has also proved effective as an advocacy tool to encourage others to shift towards a greater focus on working with and through local actors. The fact that C4C links closely to other post-WHS processes has strengthened engagement and implementation of the C4C, for example by linking to the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) commitments on support to national actors, the Grand Bargain workstreams on localisation, transparency and harmonised and simplified reporting requirements, as well as the increased emphasis on the use of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) and the research work of the Missed Opportunities group.[2]

Within the 29 C4C signatory organisations the Charter has been a catalyst for some real improvements in the way these organisations

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[1] The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Secretariat.

[2] The Missed Opportunities group, ActionAid, CAFOD, Christian Aid, CARE, Oxfam and Tearfund, have been working together since 2012 to document the effectiveness of partnership approaches in humanitarian action. They have produced a series of evidence reports available on the individual organisational websites or http://reliefweb.int/report/world/missed-opportunities-case-strengthening-national-and-local-partnership-based

work with and relate to national actors. On the other hand, signatories also recognise the need to continue to drive internal changes in order to deliver on the 8 commitments by the pledged date of May 2018.

The C4C commitments can be grouped into five key areas, which are used as a framework for reporting in this paper: 1) tracking and increasing funding; 2) partnering; 3) representation of local actors in communications; 4) human resources; and 5) advocacy.[3]

The most significant progress made across reporting

General

Across most of the signatories, there is strong internal commitment and engagement with the Charter and the specific commitments, generating high-level buy-in among organisational leadership and relevant departments for the organisational change agenda. This widespread and high-level buy-in is allowing signatories to incorporate the C4C and localisation of humanitarian aid into new strategic plans, as well as in specific partnership, capacity strengthening, communications strategies, protocols and guidance tools.

This organisational attention for better and more conscious approaches to partnering appears to be a direct impact of the C4C, as it has ensured that partnership discussions move out of the sole terrain of programming, to joining up these discussions with actions within communications, fundraising, information systems and human resource departments. Adoption of the C4C has also reinforced interest, attention and support for innovative programming on strengthening local humanitarian leadership and survivor-led response approaches.
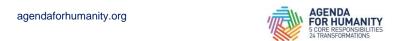
Tracking and increasing funding

The commitment to pass at least 20 per cent of signatories' own humanitarian funding to southern-based NGOs is probably the most widely known of the C4C commitments. In order to gauge actual progress in C4C signatories' abilities to meet this commitment, all were asked to submit this data to the C4C internal reporting mechanism. 16 out of 29 C4C signatories submitted their interim data, and analysis shows that the sums varied from 4 per cent to 88 per cent with the majority committing more than 20 per cent to local and national NGOs. Three of these signatories additionally reported the funding they pass through another INGO partner, representing significant additional funding to local and national actors (18 - 33 per cent of these signatories' respective humanitarian funding).

Partnering

All C4C signatories mentioned that their strategies, partnership principles and partnership tools were in line with the Principles of Partnership (PoPs) endorsed by the Global Humanitarian Platform in 2007 or that adaptations to such organisational guidance documents are currently being made. Committing to the C4C has triggered signatories to be more explicit and deliberate about incorporating the PoPs in guidance documents and organisational tools, such as

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[3] 10 Charter for Change (C4C) signatories reported to PACT against their commitments, as did 2 of the national NGO endorsers, 4 member states, and 2 NGO networks. Supplementary information for this analysis was taken from the Charter for Change progress reports which 23 of 29 signatories submitted. These progress reports include more detailed information on progress and challenges per C4C commitment than asked for in the PACT reporting system. The C4C Annual Progress Report is available at www.charter4change.org

Diakonia's integration of the PoPs in ongoing quality and accountability checks and balances within the organisation.

On the C4C commitment to provide adequate administrative support to assist local actors to increase their role and share in humanitarian responses, the Catholic Agency For Overseas Development (CAFOD) reported that 50 per cent of earmarked administrative costs are shared with partners. Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) reported that it has continuous and close dialogue with its partners on both human resources and capacity development, as these are objectives of its projects as well as areas where it has requirements and standards. Despite this explicit focus on capacity building support to partners, NCA has not been able to track funds spent on this specifically without going into every specific project and manually pull out the numbers.

Representation of local actors in INGO communications

On the commitment to promote the role of southern-based NGOs in communications and media, out of the 20 signatories that reported, five have already developed guidance materials for their communications and media staff to be able to do so, either in overall organisational guidance materials or for specific responses like Syria. Another two have adapted or developed their communications policy and two have incorporated the commitment in newly developed communications strategies.

Five other signatories indicate that such promotion of local partners' role in the response is already standard practice whilst another five signatories indicate the need to further advance on this commitment, offering real potential for exchanging and learning from peers on what has been done already by others.

Human Resources

On the commitment that discourages recruiting NNGO staff in emergencies, four signatories undertook research in 2016 in the Philippines to assess the extent of the issue and seek NNGO's views on how to address it. They are now working with the START Network's Transforming Surge Project to promote sector-wide changes within NGOs' human resources and recruitment practices to address this. One of the four, CAFOD, has introduced an ethical recruitment policy and the others - Islamic Relief, Tearfund and Christian Aid - are investigating how to take such a policy forward in 2017.

Other signatories are supporting partners to strengthen their human resource systems and processes, including on staff development and retention, staff care and well-being, and terms and conditions of service. Several are developing approaches which will ensure that resources are first provided directly to partners in order to help them respond at scale, rather than opening up new vacancies.

Advocacy

A number of C4C signatories reported that they have actively advocated to donors to promote the localisation agenda, including through national platforms of the governments of Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The work with the German government appears to be particularly well advanced, with C4C signatories involved in developing advisory guidance on funding approaches to humanitarian programmes for the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Others are participating in NGO network activities such as the Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies (VOICE) Grand Bargain

taskforce which is focusing on three priority areas, one of which is localisation. Five of the C4C signatories - CAFOD, CARE, Christian Aid, Catholic Relief Services, and Oxfam – are signatories of the Grand Bargain and are active in work stream 2 on more tools and resources to national and local actors.

Several of the C4C signatories have advocated to donors to make passing money to national actors a funding criteria indicator. Others have advocated to Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) to change the regulation to allow direct funding to those NGOs not registered in the European Union.

> *"We have consistently advocated for greater inclusion of Syrian NGOs in the United Kingdom's Syria response through NGO roundtables and closed door discussions. Islamic Relief helped to facilitate a discussion on what can be learnt from Syrian NGOs/CSOs in accessing besieged and hard-to-reach areas, including measures of success, what activity can be scaled up, and what role humanitarian actors play in supporting this work."*
>
> **Islamic Relief**

The main barriers/ challenges to progress

General

Despite widespread commitment within the C4C signatory organisations to drive change that results in ways of working which place local actors more firmly at the centre of humanitarian action, implementation has been patchy. For some of the traditionally partnership-focused organisations, C4C was initially viewed as an affirmation of their partnership approach and as such a continuation of business as usual. It was only when signatories came together in October 2016 to discuss implementing their commitments, that many realised the extent of changes required to be compliant. On the other hand, some of the signatories which have more recently adopted a partnership-focused approach have arguably put more resources and energy into their change processes and are more clearly on the path towards full implementation of their commitments by May 2018.

Tracking and increasing funding

A subset of the 29 C4C signatories have begun tracking their onward funding to NNGOs to monitor progress, however a significant number of signatories have not yet amended their reporting systems to do so. Many cited the fact that they have been waiting for the finalisation of the work of Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Humanitarian Financing Task Team, which has been tasked by the Grand Bargain to elaborate proposals on how to track funding flows, including advising on the elaboration of a localisation marker and developing a set of definitions of what constitutes national actors. In addition to tracking the overall percentage of humanitarian funding being passed to NNGOs, signatories note the difficulty of identifying and verifying spending on capacity building support to local and national partners, and only 10 out of 29 signatories have thus far been able to set up internal systems to track this.

Overall, signatories indicated that adaptations of finance information systems are being addressed internally, indicating that more and better data on this is likely to become available by May 2018.

Partnering

Whereas the majority of C4C signatories already work through a partnership model, largely relying on partners to deliver the response, a subset of signatories have more operational ways of working and organisational expertise, with associated organisational business models that disincentivize equitable partnering. These organisations are engaging in more fundamental rethinking of their business models and accompanying partnership strategies, as well as supporting change in staff skills sets, organisational culture and perceptions of their agency's role in humanitarian action.

Being able to support partner organisations with "adequate" administrative support is reported as an area of significant challenge. In some agencies, there is no written guidance on how many administrative costs should be allocated to partners, with allocations being determined on a project by project basis. Such practice does not contribute to higher levels of transparency between INGOs and their partners. Christian Aid's sentiment appears representative for most C4C signatories: "We need strong partners, not strong projects. If we are able to develop the capacity of local partners, we will have to commit resources over a long period of time and beyond the immediate needs to implement the project effectively. In the current funding climate, this poses an enormous challenge."

Trocaire noted that "there are enormous gaps, and much heavier discussion is needed on how INGOs move from subcontracting to investing in the long term structure of a local/national NGOs. Donors and UN agencies especially also need to be on board with the cost of moving beyond subcontracting to equal partnership, using accompaniment to strengthen capacity, and establishing clear exit strategies for the INGO."

Representation of local actors in communications

On the commitment to promote the role of local actors, although significant progress is being made in developing or amending organisational strategy, policy and guidance materials, a number of challenges have been highlighted that complicate putting this guidance into practice. For example, there are demands for simple messages and native language spokespersons by media outlets, pressuring INGOs to deliver German/Swedish/French/English speakers commenting on an emergency or risk losing media profile to competitor INGOs.

Local partner capacity to provide timely and appropriate quality content to media outlets, as well as INGO restrictions on which staff are authorized to interact with the media are also barriers which signatories are struggling to address. A number of C4C signatories pointed to the need to include skills building support to enable local partners to effectively represent their role and work to the media.

> "Preparedness activities between CARE and local partners should include the development of media protocols for gathering survival stories for fundraising, communication or advocacy purposes. Importantly, both partners should invest in supporting their domestic team to engage and interact with local and international media, providing staff training and advice."
>
> **CARE International**[4]

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[4] In 2016, as part of the response to Cyclone Winston, CARE worked with a Fijian partner to source local stories for a funding appeal launched in Australia. The experience shows that pre-establishing joint and clear communication protocols among INGO and partner organisations would have been helpful in order to capitalising on the small window of media attention and meet the fast pace for communications work this requires.

Advocacy

Many donors have signed up to the Grand Bargain which commits them to increase support to local and national actors. Nevertheless, many are constrained by legislation or are reluctant to fund local and national NGOs directly and prefer indirect funding through pooled funding mechanisms and/or INGOs and UN agencies. A major reason seems to be a lack of resources or ability to administer partnership agreements with local actors, as well as institutional or political risk aversion. Thus, C4C signatories have had difficulties progressing in this area. An additional challenge reported by signatories is the donor preference to work with local partners who are already capable of meeting all of their administrative requirements. This approach risks undermining the intent of the C4C as only large local organisations will be able to increase their role and share in humanitarian action, countering the efforts at increasing the diversity and overall capacity of national and local civil society organisations to engage in this space.

C4C signatories are considering different ways to counter the challenges presented in this section.

Gaps between the actions and fully advancing the initiative

A number of signatories reported a gap between the rhetoric of increasing localisation and the reality with many in the donor, UN and NGO community not yet "walking the talk." Although we can report encouraging progress on putting in place or adapting policies and guidelines at an institutional level, actual conduct at country level is challenging to enforce, especially given time constraints and urgency to deliver.

More fundamentally perhaps, many policy-level discussions do not reflect the truly transformative agenda that the localisation of humanitarian aid is, or should be. As C4C endorser organisation, Humanitarian Aid International, points out: "There is still a mindset that the power lies in the North which should be transferred at the national level. The approach is still top-down, where everyone is expected to participate in the systems created in the North. Looking at the cluster mechanism as an example, there appears to be scant desire to make it bottom up, and use the existing local coordination mechanism which will be much more empowering. You participate in what we do, instead of we participating in what is already being done at national level."[5]

A clear gap that is surfacing through this first year reporting process is C4C signatories' individual and collective ability to measure the impact of change on signatories' operational practice and on the wider humanitarian system. As the C4C is not an externally-funded, separate project, it is challenging to identify exact measures of progress and change occurring within and across individual signatories. Such more detailed monitoring of change goes beyond the voluntary coordination mechanism that now exists in the C4C initiative.

Examples of good practice that could help to advance the initiative

- With respect to the provision of increased direct funding to partners, ACT Alliance (9 members of the alliance are C4C signatories) has revised the rules of its Rapid Response Fund so that only national members are eligible to access funding, and has

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[5] Sudhanshu S. Singh, CEO, Humanitarian Aid International

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also taken a decision not to ask local partners to report in any more detail than donors ask of ACT Alliance members.

- On improving partnerships, a number of signatories, including Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, DanChurchAid and Kindernothilfe, have established partner platforms, sought feedback on their partnership implementation, and invited partners onto internal governance groups to advise, challenge and support change, whilst others have developed two-way partner assessment tools.

- Achieving meaningful localisation requires providing resources to drive it forward at an organisational level and learning from those experiences in order to improve practice. CARE International has developed several learning papers on localising aid, including a meta-analysis of lessons learned on partnership from CARE's disaster response evaluations over the past seven years.

- Oxfam has recruited a change manager to support implementation of the C4C commitments and has set up global mechanisms across the confederation, to define and monitor Oxfam progress on C4C as an essential pillar of its strategy next to program and campaigns work on supporting local humanitarian leadership.

Recommendations to strengthen progress on the initiative

1. Whilst making notable progress as outlined above, C4C signatories still have a lot to achieve before May 2018 in order to be fully compliant with the 8 commitments they have made. In order to do this signatories need to focus on improving their tracking and measurement of change, identify areas where they individually need to concentrate, and better articulate their achievements and the possibilities and benefits of the localisation agenda to the wider humanitarian eco-system.

2. National and local actors engaged in humanitarian response need to lead the way in shaping the humanitarian eco-systems they want to see. Local and national NGOs need to hold international partners they work with to account for fulfilling the commitments they have signed up to through WHS transformations (especially 4A: Reinforce, do not replace, national and local systems, 5A: Invest in local capacities, and 5E: Diversify the resource base and increase cost-efficiency), as well as Grand Bargain work stream two (localisation), and the Charter for Change initiative.

3. Donors need to address two key areas: identifying their own funding restrictions which hamper achieving meaningful localisation of humanitarian aid (which many are signed up to through their commitments in the Grand Bargain) and take steps to address them; and secondly, through their funding, provide incentives to grant recipients to work in partnership with and through local actors.

About this paper

All stakeholders who made commitments at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in support of advancing the Agenda for Humanity were invited to self-report on their progress in 2016 through the Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformation (PACT) (www.agendaforhumanity.org). The information provided through the self-reporting is publicly available and forms the basis, along with other relevant analysis, of the annual synthesis report. The annual synthesis report will be prepared by OCHA and will highlight trends in progress, achievements and gaps that need more attention as stakeholders collectively work toward advancing the 24 transformations in the Agenda for Humanity. In keeping with the multi-stakeholder spirit of the WHS, OCHA invited partners to prepare short analytical papers that analyze and assess self-reporting in the PACT, or provide an update on progress on initiatives launched at the World Humanitarian Summit. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Secretariat.

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