



A Call for Transformative Shift in Humanitarian Action

Joint LOCALliance statement

July 2025

Current geopolitical tensions, increasing attacks on international solidarity, and the shrinking civic space for humanitarian and development civil society organisations (CSOs) are severely undermining their ability to operate effectively. The reduction in USAID's funding was not an isolated incident - it marked a step in the wider unravelling of the current global humanitarian response system. Other major donors, including the UK, the Netherlands, France, and Germany, have also made significant cuts to their humanitarian budgets, which led to the suspension or closure of critical humanitarian programming, including life-saving protection services, increasing vulnerability across crisis-affected populations globally.

This is more than just a funding crisis - it is a pivotal turning point. The architecture of the humanitarian system, the legitimacy of its actors, and even its core narrative are being challenged. It is time to reaffirm our shared values - values rooted in humanity, dignity, solidarity, and the conviction that communities must be at the centre of humanitarian action. Civic diplomacy, as carried out by CSOs around the world, is a vital lever for building trust, shaping inclusive policies, and fostering peace. As platforms and networks, we are strategic actors capable of enabling long-term resilience and collective solutions in an increasingly crisis-prone and interconnected world.

We are at a unique moment to transform the humanitarian model - not only by building on what exists, but by creating space for new ways of working. This includes:

- Working with communities according to their needs in a community led response approach;
- Truly enabling locally led action by increasing direct, flexible, and multi-year funding to local and national NGOs and the committed investment in equitable partnerships;
- Developing innovative and sustainable diverse funding models that integrate local resource mobilisation (diaspora, faith-based, private sector) and development financing, reducing over-reliance on single-donor streams;

- Strengthening complementarity between actors, rather than reinforcing hierarchies when direct partnerships are feasible, and ensuring full cost recovery for local actors. [A4EP states](#) that risk aversion among intermediaries often reinforces hierarchies and contributes to the chronic underfunding of local organisations.

In this context, equitable partnerships are the true currency of change. Initiatives like LOCALiance embody what this new paradigm can look like. LOCALiance is a consortium of five national NGO networks: CCONAT (Democratic Republic of the Congo), the National Humanitarian Network (Pakistan), the Localization Initiative (Yemen), Coordination SUD (France), and VENRO (Germany). Together, these networks are laying the foundation for more sustainable, localised, and inclusive humanitarian action in their respective contexts.

This model demonstrates that effective cooperation can be built on mutual trust, shared learning, and collective capacity sharing. By facilitating peer exchanges, aligning advocacy efforts, and co-developing strategies, the consortium shows how actors from the Global South and Global North can collaborate on the basis of a common understanding of partnership. At a time when traditional humanitarian systems are being questioned, this kind of partnership shows a new way forward - one that reflects the commitments of the Grand Bargain, puts local actors in the lead of decision-making, and drives systemic change.

Rethinking the System: Key Questions for a New Humanitarian Model

To make this happen, we need to rethink the humanitarian system by asking key questions:

- **What kind of coordination will a new system require?**
 - Locally driven and led mechanisms supported by other humanitarian stakeholders, built on trust and long-term collaboration;
 - Strategic partnerships beyond the donor-recipient logic including South-South and South-North exchanges;
 - Local and national governments are included in coordination mechanisms where possible.
- **What do we expect from international humanitarian actors?**
 - Decisive and timely action to consistently implement local leadership structures in the humanitarian system;
 - A real commitment to long-term support for local leadership;
 - Robust evidence of effective localisation in practice - moving beyond commitments to demonstrate tangible outcomes and impact;

- A harmonised and simplified due diligence (assessment) and a transparent passporting system that respects the assessment results of other donors/intermediaries;
 - Increased access to direct, flexible, multi-year, and quality funding for NNGOs, integrating indirect costs to guarantee functions which are necessary to operate, oversee and manage the organisation as a whole, full cost recovery, and capacity building needs of NNGOs;
 - Partnerships based on a more mutual and comparative advantage framework.
- **How to mobilise alternative resources?**
 - By ensuring financial sustainability and reducing dependency on traditional donors;
 - By cooperating with diaspora networks, the local private sector, philanthropic foundations, religious charities and;
 - By supporting locally and community led pooled funds with diverse funding sources.
- **And finally, how can NGOs from the Global South and North collaborate more effectively?**
 - Through equitable partnerships - like LOCALliance - grounded in dialogue, shared ownership, and a collective vision;
 - International humanitarian actors have to reflect their own future role and change their structures and way of working adequately.

We are in a moment of disruption and opportunity. By embracing civic diplomacy, reinforcing local leadership, and fostering fair and equitable partnerships, we can do more than adapt to change - we can actively shape the future of humanitarian action.