

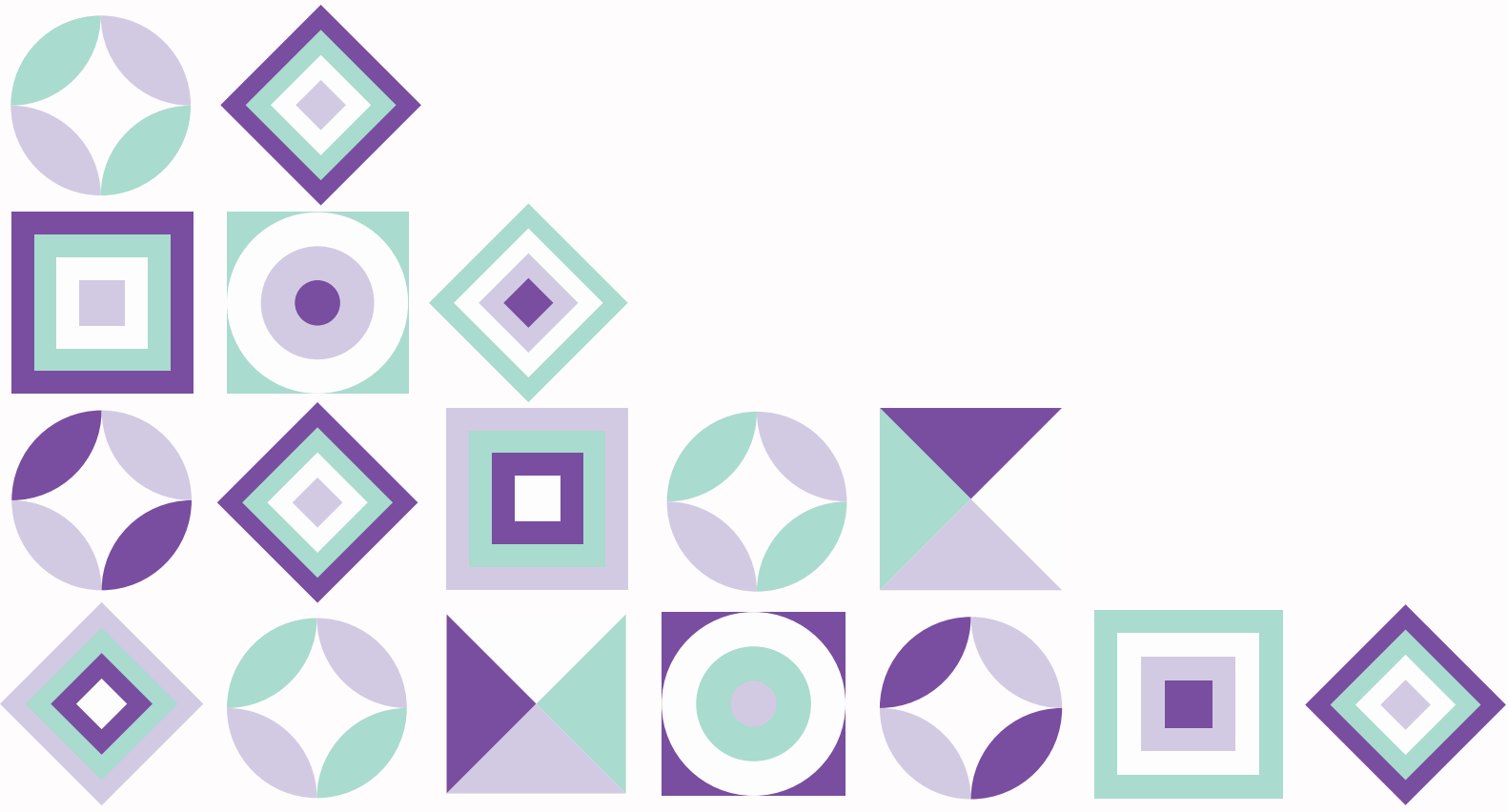


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From Global to the National: Moving Localisation Forward in Türkiye through the Launch of the National Reference Group

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Abbreviations

3RP	Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan
AAA	ACCRA Agenda for Action
ARSA	Afghan Refugees Solidarity Association
CLIP	Community-Based Local Initiatives Project
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EU	European Union
FRIT	EU Facility for Refugees in Türkiye
IGAM	Research Centre on Asylum and Migration
IKGV	Human Resource Development Foundation
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
KEDV	Foundation for the Support of Women's Work
LAG	Localization Advocacy Group
LPMF	Localization Performance Measurement Framework
NEAR	Network for Empowered Aid Response
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NRG	National Reference Group
RLO	Refugee-led Organization
STGM	Association of Civil Society Development Center
STL	Support to Life
TMK	Refugee Council of Türkiye
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Background and the Aim of the Event

The localization of humanitarian aid efforts came to the fore throughout a range of different processes over the past several decades. Most recently, the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 saw the acceptance of the “Grand Bargain” agreement by a range of local, national and international actors, which is framed around concrete targets and commitments for more effective and localized humanitarian response. Accountability towards people affected by crises, recognition of local capacities and the strengthening of local leadership are all commitments compiled in the initial Grand Bargain. Currently, 65 major donors and international organisations have made concrete commitments towards the Grand Bargain.

Despite these existing commitments, transformation towards a more effective, efficient, inclusive and accountable humanitarian system, including the localisation of aid is evolving very slowly. Meaningful inclusion and participation of the affected people and local actors in decision-making mechanisms of the international humanitarian and development systems, including decisions on the program priorities, strategies, design and ways of implementation is very limited. As such, the Grand Bargain 2.0 agreed in 2021 led to a renewed focus on supporting quality funding that allows for effective and efficient response, as well as greater support towards the local responders and the participation of affected communities in addressing humanitarian needs.¹ The Grand Bargain 2.0 framework also recommended methods for advancing the localization of aid at the country level to advance concrete changes in the existing ways of working of the humanitarian and development sectors, including through the development of National Reference Groups.

Within this context, the Localization Advocacy Group (LAG) and the Refugee Council of Türkiye (TMK) are leading voices in Türkiye that advocate for the localization of aid. They have both conducted a range of research, documentation, and advocacy for advancing the localization of aid agenda in Türkiye, with the aim of supporting and amplifying the leadership of local actors in humanitarian and development responses in Türkiye.

On 24 May 2022, LAG organized the multi-stakeholder consultation meeting ‘Localization in Türkiye: From the World Humanitarian Summit to Today’ to shed light on the need for concerted efforts among all stakeholders within the humanitarian ecosystem in Türkiye to strengthen a localized response for supporting ongoing humanitarian needs. During this meeting, local/national organizations (including refugee-led and women’s organizations), donors, INGOs and UN agencies jointly identified the following areas as key priorities for advancing the localization of aid in Türkiye:

¹ <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2021-07/%28EN%29%20Grand%20Bargain%202.0%20Framework.pdf>

- 1. Quality/ equitable partnerships;**
- 2. Improved quality and quantity of funding;**
- 3. Stronger role of local organisations in coordination; and**
- 4. Capacity**

Participants at this consultation meeting also proposed the establishment of a 'National Reference Group' (NRG) under the framework of the Grand Bargain 2.0 as a vehicle for advancing the localization of aid agenda at the country level.

Aim of the January 2023 event

Given the high interest on the part of the humanitarian community in Türkiye to continue dialogue around localization, the LAG, TMK, UNDP and UNHCR (as focal points for the 3RP) agreed to work together and organise a follow-up meeting with the aim of launching a National Reference Group (NRG) for Türkiye. This event was considered as an opportunity to review and take stock of the progress on localization efforts in Türkiye and to discuss a vision for joint action for advancing the localization of aid in Türkiye.²

Participants

93 representatives from 52 stakeholders participated in the event in-person (63) or online (30), including representatives from 12 international stakeholders, 3 donors, 31 national and refugee-led CSOs in Türkiye, including but not limited to the members of TMK and LAG. The list of participants is available in Annex 1.

Program of the event

Following opening remarks, a panel brought together different stakeholders, including national and refugee-led organisations, a donor and a UN agency, to share their views on the state of localisation of aid in Türkiye and challenges in advancing this agenda. This session was followed by a briefing on the NRG. Afterwards, participants were divided into groups to discuss challenges and solutions on different aspects of localisation, which was expected to provide input for NRG's workplan in the short and long term.

² An online meeting was held on 4 January 2023, which brought together the TMK and LAG members, and provided an opportunity to share the aim of the NRG, together with a draft ToR. Comments collected during the meeting were used to finalize the ToR.

Session 1: Opening Remarks

The opening remarks were shared by Alvaro Rodriguez, UN Resident Coordinator in Türkiye; Muhtar Çokar, IKGV/ LAG; Perihan Uluğ Dalga, Oxfam-KEDV/ TMK; and Metin Çorabatır, IGAM/ TMK. During these remarks, the following points were emphasized:

- One of the decisions taken by the Grand Bargain 2.0 was the establishment of a national reference group. Localisation work gained momentum as of 2020.
- There have been important turning points for civil society over the last 30 years. We witnessed the imbalance of power between international and national organisations being talked about more openly and challenged, and steps taken to correct the power relations. After the Syria crisis, local/ national NGOs expanded their already extensive experiences in responding to the needs of affected populations and began developing more equitable relationships with international organisations. The launch of the National Reference Group is a critical step for further strengthening these relations.
- In recent years, the work carried out by TMK and LAG, including research and workshops have informed and deepened discussions on the steps needed for transforming the existing humanitarian and development system in Türkiye. Creating spaces for a variety of stakeholders to come together to have these discussions and establish equal relationships are crucial for moving the localisation agenda forward.

Session 2: Panel Discussion on the State of Localisation in Türkiye

A panel was organized on the state of localization in Türkiye today, which included representatives of the TMK, Afghan Refugee Solidarity Association, Mavi Kalem Association, GIZ and UNHCR. The following highlights were shared during this panel:

- Commitments on localization and inclusivity were first made in the development sector, with the Paris declaration in 2005 and ACCRA Agenda for Action (AAA). Effective and inclusive partnerships, mutual accountability, leadership of local agencies, harmonising development policies at local level, and joint responsibility were all mentioned in these documents.
- From a refugee-led organisations' perspective:
 - There are a variety of reasons for funding flows not reaching actors at the local level. As a refugee-led organisation that started working in 2009, it took 10 years to access funding. There seems to be a lack of trust from the donors' side towards local/ national (refugee) organisations, which amounts to subcontracting relationships between the two. Transparency in funding is very important.

- Recent research shows that the national/ refugee organisations are able to access to very small fraction of funding. Most of this funding have conditions; although some of the office expenses and wages of project staff are covered, some local/ national organisations are left paying other core costs like rent and utilities by their own means.
- There is a need to differentiate capacity and resources of organisations; build a trust-based relationship between local organisations and donors; eliminate discrimination; and target the whole society without creating a hierarchy amongst refugees.
- From a national organisation's perspective:
 - Work of local/ national organisations are meeting the minimum standards not because of donor requirements but due to the accumulated experience of working with affected people.
 - It is important to recognize and support the diversity amongst CSOs and their different areas of focus at their work – they need to be supported as they are, considering their uniqueness.
 - Local and international actors should create a common language, develop shared concepts, and invest more in understanding each other.
 - There is a need to discuss creative ways of funding, and what should be done to provide funding that ensures sustainability.
- From a donor's perspective:
 - There is a need to bridge humanitarian and development work in Türkiye.
 - Barriers perceived from the perspective of donors and views on the reasons why localization does not progress is the fact that the funding of donors comes from the respective taxpayers of donor countries. It was suggested that this reality makes it difficult to give funds to local organisations, especially smaller organisations with lower capacity not in terms of implementation and access to society, but because of their available resources, since donors must have strict compliance and regulations for how they give funds.
 - There is a tension between actors at the field and at the level of headquarters. Together with local organisations, we can work to convince actors at the headquarters level that are often making the decisions regarding funding.
- From a UN agency's perspective:
 - There is a lack of agreement between international and local actors on minimum standards, long term funding such as umbrella mechanisms, partnerships, multi-year investment, etc.
 - One of the good practices is the umbrella mechanism that supported local organisations through funding and establishment of a peer-to-peer platform and mentoring, which was carried out together with STL. These kinds of good practices should be shared widely.

- The barriers to prioritising needs, mobilising funds, and increasing efficiency of humanitarian assistance include the procedures and complicated application processes for funding.

After the interventions from each panellist, the following discussion ensued amongst the panellists and participants:

- According to studies carried out in Türkiye that involved consultation with all stakeholders, direct funding to local institutions - including government agencies, national and refugee led organisations - is very low (around 14%). This funding mostly goes to the government institutions. Only 0.54% goes to refugee-led, 1% to national, and 0.12% to women's organisations. Compared to the 25% direct funding commitment made by Grand Bargain signatories, this shows that there is still a long way to go to establish equal partnerships, trust, etc. Findings from the recent research will direct the work of the NRG, and the way it will strategize the localisation agenda in Türkiye.
- The Grand Bargain framework should be promoted, participants of this meeting know exactly the challenges and opportunities, good practices, and evidence-based advocacy that is needed for making funds available and responses more efficient.
- Peer to peer learning and data and information sharing are important for advancing the localisation of aid and establishing trust and partnerships. Data sharing policies in Türkiye appear to be a barrier for this.
- It was raised that the funding focuses in Türkiye should not shift completely to development, as there are still ongoing humanitarian needs in Türkiye.
- Long term funding is crucial for the sustainability of refugee-led organisations, and other small-scale organisations, which need support in accessing funds.
- There is a need to jointly discuss and agree on ways to overcome the existing barriers to access funding, including a review of the existing policies and procedures for distribution of funds. There is a need to encourage continued dialogue between donors and local organisations.
- There is a need for refugee/ RLO representation in the NRG. It was also suggested that government institutions and local authorities, especially municipalities, should be included in the NRG.

Session 3: Launch of the National Reference Group

The ToR developed for the NRG was presented, containing information on its purpose, structure, and members. The work to date was also shared. Participants were provided with the opportunity to ask questions about the ToR and feed into this. (See Annex 2 for the final ToR).

Session 4: Action Planning for the NRG (Coordination, Partnerships, Financing & Capacity)

Participants were divided into groups based on the priority areas of the localisation of aid as identified during the May 2022 consultation meeting amongst stakeholders. These focus areas were determined as financing, partnerships, coordination, and capacity. Each group discussed the existing challenges to the localization of aid in these respective areas and possible solutions to inform the development of the work plan for the NRG.

Each group included equal representation of local organisations, UN agencies and donors. All participants were also encouraged to attend and contribute to more than one group.

Effectiveness of Coordination Mechanisms of the Humanitarian Aid System

Question for the group: What can be done to ensure that the humanitarian aid system's coordination mechanisms recognize existing mechanisms at local level, work with them in harmony and in a way that complements and increases the effectiveness of local mechanisms?

What does coordination mean for us?

It was discussed that there are different understandings of coordination amongst participants, including around the issues of:

- Local/ national/ international level
- Ways of defining coordination:
 - Based on the region
 - Based on shared goals/ thematic focus
- Coordination of those within (horizontal) and with each other (vertical)

Why is coordination important? (At the same time, these are the main problem areas)

It was agreed that coordination is important for the following reasons:

- Understanding/ assessing the needs of people most impacted
- Enhancing the impact of available assistance and activities/ access to a larger group of people
- Preventing duplication of work carried out by different actors
- Effectiveness/ efficient use of resources

The following discussion ensued regarding the existing challenges to strengthened coordination:

- It was noted that there is a general challenge in ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of coordination mechanisms.
- It was noted that for meaningful coordination to take place, there is a need to recognize that participation in the coordination mechanisms is a commitment in terms of time and resources, both of which are unavailable to many local/national actors due to the structure of the international humanitarian system in the ways that might be available to INGOs or UN agencies. As such, local organizations suggested the following for ensuring effective participation of local and national actors in coordination mechanisms:
 - Provision of funding for local and national actors in a way that ensures that they can meaningfully participate in coordination structures. This might include:
 - Hiring a person who is employed specifically for this purpose
 - Enabling the presence of program directors/ project managers, as they may take decisions on behalf of the organisation at the coordination mechanisms
 - Enabling the presence of a member of the programs team, as an outsider may not know the whole programmatic work of the organisation, thus her/his participation may not be meaningful or effective
 - Supporting volunteers to participate on behalf of local and national civil society, while recognizing that their engagement may require further discussion on legal employment of volunteers, their monetary/ other compensation, sustainability of the coordination, etc.
 - Accepting project proposals that include having a project/ team member who can allocate 20% of their time to participating in coordination structures
 - Supporting capacity sharing between larger and smaller local organisations through mentorship, peer to peer support networks, etc.
 - Advocating for local and national organizations to be co-leads in sector and working groups within coordination structures.
 - Advocating for and documenting best practices for encouraging meaningful participation of local and national organizations in coordination structures
 - Mapping and strengthening **existing local mechanisms** by activating them, connecting them with national/ international coordination structures, and exploring how these mechanisms can work efficiently. This might include community participation mechanisms and coordination with community-based actors and local government bodies such as mukhtars, city councils, neighbourhood meetings, youth and children's assemblies, provincial migration boards, and NGO network meetings.

- **Recognizing and valuing the existence of informal mechanisms and coordination structures** in supporting coordination, especially at the local and provincial level. Where relevant, it was also encouraged that these mechanisms could be formalised and become institutionalised over time for it to increase its effectiveness.
- In addition, local organizations in the group shared that existing coordination mechanisms of the humanitarian system were **ineffective** due to
 - Lack of designated agenda, amounting to these meetings becoming briefings rather than spaces where purposeful exchange takes place.
 - Language barrier, as interpretation is often lacking, which is crucial for participation of refugee-led organisations.
 - Number of organisations in the coordination that goes beyond a manageable level which blocks new participants. Investment in digital tools and better use of digital modalities were proposed by local organisations as solutions.
 - Lower level of one-to-one interaction among various actors during online meetings, which at times allow wider participation of the civil society across Türkiye.
 - Existing power imbalance between local/ national and international organisations, which results in local organisations not feeling like equals. It was noted that mere inclusion of local organisations in the coordination is not enough and that the mechanism should be co-designed and established together.
 - Diverging priorities of international actors from local actors when establishing a coordination mechanism, resulting in a mismatch and lack of joint agreement on priority areas. It was suggested that the priorities of local organisations should be reflected, for example, through coordination at the local level.
 - Existing need for establishing accountability/feedback mechanisms for designing and developing coordination structures.

Suggestions on the future work:

Based on the above discussion, the following suggestions were made regarding the NRG's focus as it relates to strengthening coordination:

Short-term:

- Mapping the existing coordination mechanisms and gathering examples and carrying out analysis to understand what works well and which areas can be improved. It was agreed that there is a need to include informal coordination mechanisms that mostly exist at local level. TMK and LAG may lead this mapping process.

- Engagement of volunteers in coordination. To explore this, it will be important to understand the existing international practices and how they can be adapted to Türkiye case. STGM may gather information on the existing practices.

Long-term:

- Establishing Peer Support Network among small- and large-scale organisations so that the latter can support the former, as mentors. Donors can finance this network (for instance GIZ and UN), whereas TMK can carry out advocacy.
- Advocating for the involvement of CSOs and local institutions as co-chairs of coordination mechanisms – such as in the UN cluster system (for example cash-based aid etc.)
- Supporting local/ national organisations' meaningful participation in the coordination structures by facilitating funding for personnel to engage in these structures. Inter-agency coordination and donors need to be responsible from this.
- Establishing a Communication Strategy to encourage participation in coordination structures (new or small-scale local initiatives and organisations may have reservations about participating in the coordination process and/ or they may not be participating due to insufficient physical and financial resources/ language barrier, limited interaction opportunities, etc.). Donors, UN agencies and local authorities (especially municipalities) may initiate this.

Effectiveness of Partnership Mechanisms of the Humanitarian Aid System

Question for the group:

- What can be done to ensure multi-year, predictable, equal, and equitable partnerships between international organisations, donors and local organisations?
- What are the opportunities and obstacles?
- What are the issues that the National Reference Group should prioritise for the first 6 months in terms of partnerships?
- What are possible solutions for prominent problem areas?
- Which stakeholders should be responsible for achieving these goals?

The following discussion ensued regarding existing challenges in creating meaningful and equitable partnerships:

- It was indicated that local actors are **not treated as equal partners**, but as sub-contractors and that there are challenges in ensuring their **meaningful participation** due to:

- Lack of **mutual trust, understanding and dialogue**: The need for donors and the NGOs to sit at the same table more frequently and regularly as equal partners, independent of hierarchical power relations.
- Top-down approaches: Local NGOs are not invited to take part in the planning processes of the programmatic work together with the donors, and thus the programmes are not designed in line with the actual needs of refugees, as donors are not as familiar with the changing needs of the target groups as local organisations in the field.
- Lack of **flexibility** of the programs to adapt to the changing needs. From a donor perspective on the other hand; a promising increase in the flexibility has been observed in the recent years in terms of duration of the funding, which previously used to be 12 months at most and has now increased to up to 2 years.
- The fact that donors are **looking for intermediary partner organisations** means that they do not establish dialogue directly with local NGOs. However, it was mentioned by a donor representative that this is totally depending on the general binding rules (e.g. EU rules) and that there is not much that could be done even with the best advocacy.
- Donors having difficulty in communicating and working with small scale organisations that do not have **well-established structures** and publicly shared policies.
- National and international organisations' limited knowledge on local actors: It was stated that the current system has a structure that hinders the development of small NGOs. Their work is **not visible** enough. National and international organisations do not know and recognize local actors. It was also added that if there is no acquaintance, new partnerships cannot be established and opportunities for building new partnerships are rare.
- It was further noted that there is a lack of **communication and coordination among local organisations**.
- The existing funding modalities and complex and challenging procedures of donors and intermediary organizations mean that there is a challenge in establishing **sustainable partnerships with a diversity of local and national NGOs**, where there is a disproportionate focus on the quantity of funds over the quality; a situation where many NGOs with the most project management capacities are monopolizing funds to the exclusion of other NGOs with the know-how and expertise; and a situation where local organizations without English proficiency are excluded from accessing funding.
- It was also noted that there is a lack of **mutual capacity building/ capacity sharing** partnerships and that there is a need for redefining the criteria of the “capacity” with a broader understanding, not only limited to the financial capacity but also appreciating the field experience.
- The general context we are operating in, including political and economic dynamics in Türkiye and other government policies and legal restrictions were also raised as potential barriers to the development of meaningful partnerships between local/ national and international actors.

Suggestions on the future work:

Short-term:

- Agreeing on the core principles, preparing the Standard Operational Procedures, budget and action plan for NRG for the first 6 months.
- Establishing a peer-to-peer support network under NRG with small and large-scale organisations, initiating a mentorship mechanism among the organisations, mapping the organisations within this network according to their capacity and motivation of contribution.
- Initiating a comprehensive research study to clarify what each actor understands from partnership, equality, and solidarity as different actors on the field.
- Including non-traditional NGOs within the NRG structure. There are communities and organisations less heard or not heard at all, and that are not represented. These organisations need some form of representation within the NRG. NRG can create a dialogue program with its polyphonic and civic identity.
- Using the capacity of local organisations as a resource.
- **Establishing sub-working groups under 4 main advocacy aspects (partnerships, coordination, capacity and finance) in the first 6 months.**

Long-term:

- Working on the quality and sustainability of the NRG.
- Supporting good partnership models and making them more visible.
- Abandoning inoperative partnerships. For an independent group as NRG to systematically evaluate/ analyse partnerships, including the impact of partnership models to performance of organisations; striving to constantly improve the quality of partnership.
- **The main purpose of NRG is participation and localization, therefore meaningful participation should never be symbolic, and it should strive to contribute to the development of meaningful and effective participation in the aid sector.**
- Conducting demonstrable data-based impact and efficiency analysis (e.g. to what extent local organisations are politically empowered in their use of finance, how well-equipped they are in terms of development, and whether they can continue to work when the fund is finished).
- Promoting fair and equitable partnerships. In this context, a structured advocacy plan should be prepared.

- **Developing alternative funding models in a participatory way on how to directly fund local organisations, refugee-led organisations, public institutions and even initiatives.**
- Establishing databases where local NGOs can introduce themselves, increase their visibility, or promoting the existing partner platforms for the local actors to register (e.g. UN Partner portal).
- Regarding the language barrier;
 - Advocating for making existing donors' agreements bilingual.
 - Sharing the responsibility, encouraging donors to take more responsibility for overcoming the language barrier so that they can become more inclusive.
 - Organisations that are more experienced and equipped in terms of language can support the organisations in need in this regard, the important thing is to establish the connection between these organisations and to establish the system. (peer support mechanism)
- Encouraging donors to establish direct relations with local organisations without intermediaries, planning lobbying and advocacy activities for this.
- Türkiye is a country with political and economic risks. Donors must share responsibility for the impacts of such risks. For example, the exchange rate may decrease with inflation, what will happen if it does, this responsibility is only on the partner institution. State pressure on NGOs is high. Equal partnership means sharing the risks and responsibilities. Articles that will protect the beneficiary organisations should be added to the contracts.
- Strongly advocating for the commitment to transfer 25% of the funds to local organisations.
- For the relationship between donors and NGOs to be balanced, mutual expectations should be shared honestly, all actors should sit at the same table and talk periodically. With this meeting, it becomes clear that NRG has a convenor role. Even here, the UN, donors, and NGOs are trying to better understand each other.
- Establishing a consultation mechanism between NGOs and donors.
- Being accountable to both the donor and the affected communities.

Effectiveness of the Financing Structure of the Humanitarian Aid System and Access to Funding for Local Actors

Questions for the group: How can the direct access to funds of local organizations working in the fields of humanitarian and development assistance in Türkiye and in turn the amount of funds they have at their disposal be increased? Who needs to do what to increase the diversity of funds and the degree to which local organizations can directly benefit from the existing budgets?

The following discussion ensued regarding challenges in the financing environment:

- Although local and national NGOs have been playing a significant role in humanitarian and development response contexts in Türkiye for decades as possibly the most active actors in the field thanks to their more direct contact with persons in need, the resources they are able to access have been chronically insufficient. No matter how experienced or specialised field knowledge they have, local organisations still experience greater hardships in accessing funds compared to international organisations, despite all the localisation efforts undertaken during the recent years.
- Funds are still mostly channelled to international organisations and public institutions at the national level in Türkiye. In this regard, the specific group discussions focused on the possible pathways for transforming the funding structures and making them more egalitarian. There is a vast array of obstacles to local and national NGOs' direct access to funds, most saliently the administrative and bureaucratic requirements, practically obliging them to partner with intermediary organisations (UN and/ or INGOs) to indirectly access funds due to complicated procedures. For example:
 - Local/ national organisations experience greater hardships in navigating these procedures due to the already limited and short-term funding they receive that results in shortage of and/ or high turnover of human resources. In addition, there is a lack of mechanism to compensate shortage in human resources through a shared capacity that could be tapped into by several organisations to support them navigate the procedures. This results in their practical exclusion from most of these processes, stunting their possibility for further growth and specialisation.
 - In addition, according to donor participants themselves, donor organisations without much field experience may be biased with regards to smaller local actors' proposals, focusing mostly on bureaucratic aspects (e.g. the specific jargon used in project concept notes etc.) rather than the actual content and response plans.
 - Usually, intermediary organisations that may not even have a presence in Türkiye receive significant amounts of financial resources merely for their oversight role.
 - Local/ national organisations perceive their position in this system as more like sub-contractors. They undertake the greater part of the field work but do not receive commensurate amounts of financial resources.
 - Local/ national organisations observe that donors generally do not seek out new local partners in the field to work with and rather choose to continue their already established relationships with bigger NGOs, maintaining and reproducing the same sub-contracting relationships.

- Audits conducted by international organisations concerning the use of indirect funds can constrict the scope of action of local and national NGOs as international auditors generally conduct their assessments as per their own standards and irrespective of legal rules and regulations in Türkiye. Such exercises put at risk the already limited funding received in Türkiye by local actors since sometimes they lead to the necessity to return funds.
- In this context, local/ national organisations have some common challenges such as lack of project management experience, language barriers, etc. exacerbated by the inadequate support provided through effective capacity sharing. In addition to these general problems, different local actors may experience intersectional hardships resulting from their specific vulnerabilities and needs as well, further hindering their ability to receive funds. For instance, for refugee-led organisations, the lack of Turkish language knowledge is an extra challenge on top of the difficulty of navigating the fact that most funding-related documents and guidelines are in English.
- Local/ national organisations are the actors with the ability to respond most expeditiously to the needs in the field thanks to their proximity to affected populations contributing to their potential to effectively assess their needs and deploy resources accordingly in the most efficient way. If these funding challenges are not addressed, the benefits that can result from this potential can never be realised. To circumvent such obstacles, collaboratively seeking out solutions by adopting a whole of society approach with all relevant stakeholders included has the utmost significance for the localisation endeavours in the country.

Suggestions on the future work:

To address these challenges, several possible solutions and pathways were suggested during the discussions. Participants recommended that the processes of selected solutions should be led by local/ national organisations, including refugee-led organisations, and they should be provided with the relevant support to be able to actively partake in all processes. It was also highlighted that the participation of public institutions and donors would be greatly beneficial for the success of the localisation efforts in Türkiye.

Short-term:

- Firstly, the **commitment to transfer 25% of the funds to local actors** needs to be underlined more strongly for all actors in the immediate period by the NRG's advocacy.
- Since the diversity of possible funding channels has been decreasing, it is expected that **alternative funding tools and sources** such as those of private sector actors will become more and more salient in the near future.
 - In line with this, the focus on how local actors can contribute to and benefit from these **newly emerging funding solutions** could increase in the context of localisation endeavours in Türkiye.

- NRG may review and evaluate in relation to their accessibility for local organisations the existing funding channels and tools. The findings of such an exercise can be compiled in a guidance document to be shared with NGOs in the country.
- The NRG, especially the NGO networks such as TMK and LAG, who are the founding members of the NRG, may help local/ national organisations by capacity sharing in funding issues and they can also advocate for these.
- As a short-term solution, intermediaries such as INGOs and UN agencies should be more willing to **share greater proportions of the funds with their local/ national organisation partners in the period of transition** to more equal and direct funding to local actors.
 - Most importantly, intermediaries should work towards sharing overhead costs in a more equitable manner.
- To make the processes of application for funding clearer and more accessible for local/ national organisations, donors may prepare **guidance documents regarding their standards and procedures in Turkish and Arabic**, for instance, so that local organisations and refugee-led organisations can have a better access to funds.
 - The NRG is also expected to be a suitable platform for larger NGOs with greater access to funding to **share good practices with and mentor smaller NGOs**.
- The NRG can also participate in the **Brussels VII** events and platforms to advocate for increased access of local actors to international funding, especially with regards to development funding which has been an area where public institutions are at the forefront and civil society is not much included. Similarly, although local NGOs are not currently involved in the **FRIT III** discussions, necessary advocacy efforts may be undertaken so that they can be actively involved and present their needs. In this regard, inclusion of civil society actors in the processes of preparing the **12th National Development Plan** was highlighted and advocacy efforts for this may be needed as well.

Long-term:

- In terms of the relations between donors and local/ national organisations,
 - As suggested by a donor participant, **donor organisations should work more in the field** to better understand local actors' existing capacities and activity areas, which would help them to focus on the wider background and content of the proposals rather than semantics.
 - In turn, it is important for **local actors to explain more comprehensively the problems encountered in the field** when communicating with donors.
- Local actors' access to funds can be improved through **increased collaboration with public institutions**.

- The **needs in the field must be clearly assessed**, especially those of local/ small organisations so that a more tailored support can be provided instead of always supporting well-known and large NGOs.
 - Local organisations should be included in all phases of such **needs assessments** as they have a more in-depth grasp of the field needs and they can benefit by gaining experience that would improve their self-reliance in the future.
- **Capacity sharing efforts** should not only target the well-established NGOs that can already receive funds but must particularly strive to include local/ national organisations whose capacity should be supported by ongoing sharing of specialised knowledge, good practices and lessons learnt in the areas of conducting needs assessments and utilising the resulting findings in preparing more solid and thorough project proposals.
- **Audit processes** need to be made more consistent with local/ national rules/ regulations and conditions.
- In line with the suggestion of learning more about **alternative funding tools** and the fact that localisation requires a whole of society approach, private sector engagement need to be focused on more especially considering the need to diversify funding channels.
- Also, the possibility of a **pooled fund** as in the example of Lebanon can be considered to provide the smaller local organisations with greater access to direct funds without going through intermediaries. Local/ national organisations should be a part of the coordination processes related to such a pooled fund for inclusivity and accountability. Likewise, other rather new funding tools such as **crowdsourcing** can be assessed for localisation efforts as well.

Effectiveness of Capacity Mechanisms of the Humanitarian Aid System

Question for the group: What can be done to ensure the humanitarian aid systems recognize the existing capacity of local organisations? How can we establish trust and equal relations and build a mutual capacity sharing between local and international organisations? What can stakeholders of the localization agenda do to achieve this? When should they start and when should they end?

To facilitate discussions, the discussion began with a presentation of the localisation targets, which were prepared by the LAG in May 2022 in reference to the Localization Performance Measurement Framework (LPMF) of the NEAR network. The aim of these targets was to ensure more effective support for strong and sustainable institutional capacities of local/ national organisations, and less undermining of those capacities by international organisations/ UN Agencies. These indicators include: contextual technical expertise, organizational development and internal systems, quality standards, staff retention and sustainability and local leadership development.

Following this presentation, the following discussion ensued regarding challenges to creating effective capacity mechanisms:

- In general, it was noted that there is an overall challenge in defining “capacity” considering that there are **different understandings of the term amongst all stakeholders that are often used as the basis for including or excluding certain actors** from the international humanitarian system. As such, it was suggested that there is a need to better contextualize what “capacity” might mean in the context of effectively responding to the needs of affected populations in the context of Türkiye.
- Participants raised that ensuring the **continued sustainable resources of organizations** in the form of staffing, for example, are critical for ensuring the capacities of local and national organizations.
- The challenges in tracking and monitoring the work of local and national organizations was also identified as a challenge in making visible the existing capacity of local and national organizations. As such, there is a need to design results-based monitoring and evaluation standards to make visible existing capacities.
- At the same time, it was noted that there is a need for reflection and to focus on the existing capacities of donors and other international actors to meaningfully respond to the needs of refugees and other affected populations.
- It was noted that the existing modalities of funding and funding mechanisms are a barrier to strengthening the capacities of local and national organizations. Even though the local/national organisations have their own expertise and specific work areas, they are pushed to change their areas of work according to the funding available to them. It was also noted that the short-term funding modalities in the humanitarian system creates another barrier in investing in the existing capacities of local organizations.

Suggestions on the future work:

- Establishing peer to peer support and mentorship among small and large-scale local/national organisations: This would allow large-scale organisations to support smaller organisations, as mentors, as well as mutual learning.
 - Donors’ exemplary programs include GIZ Mentorship (Clip-3), UNHCR mentorship programme, and EU capacity-sharing network.
 - Advocacy on needs assessment can be carried out by some of the NRG members (LAG, TMK), and target donors. This may include mapping of the local/ national and international organisation’s existing technical and strategic capabilities according to their field of work.
- Certification on humanitarian standards should be formalised/become institutionalised in order to be effective.
- Arranging meetings with local authorities and grassroots organisations at the provincial level to better understand the dynamics of local actors.

- Advocacy or developing communications regarding refugee-led and grassroots organisations so that their experience and expertise are recognised.
- Developing partnerships with intermediaries to jointly advocate for more direct funding to local and community-based organizations.
- Resource mapping activities to match needs with existing capacities

Next Steps

The following next steps for the development of the NRG were agreed upon:

- TMK, LAG and UNHCR will form the Secretariat of the NRG.
- Notes from this meeting will be shared with the participants, and a draft work plan for the NRG will be prepared based on the discussions and suggestions made during the group work on the priority areas of the localisation of aid.
- Following a transparent and inclusive process, the ways of working and work plan of the NRG will be shared with all stakeholders involved.

Annex 1: List of Organisations Participating in the NRG Launch Event

- Afganistan Hazaralari Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği
- Afghan Refugees Solidarity Association (ARSA)
- Association of Civil Society Development Center (STGM)
- Beynelmillel İnsani Göçmenler Derneği
- Blue Pen
- Bonyan Organization
- Concern Worldwide
- Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
- Development Foundation of Türkiye
- Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
- Dünya Doktorları Derneği (DDD)
- EL-BİR Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği
- Fikir ve Sanat Atölyesi Derneği
- Foundation for the Support of Women's Work (KEDV)
- GIZ
- Hand in Hand for Syria (HIHFAD)
- Hazara Öğrenciler Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği
- Her Yerde Sanat Derneği
- Human Appeal
- Human Resource Development Foundation (IKGV)
- IHH
- Impact Hub
- Innovation for Development (I4D)
- International Blue Crescent Foundation
- İzmir Suriyeli Mültecilerle Dayanışma Derneği
- KAOS GL
- Localization Advocacy Group (LAG)
- Mardin Ortak Kadın İşbirliği Derneği (MOKİD)
- MUDEM
- NEAR
- Orange Organization
- OXFAM
- Refugee Council of Türkiye (TMK)
- Research Centre on Asylum and Migration (IGAM)
- SENED
- SGDD-ASAM
- Support to Life (STL)
- Tuana Projects
- Turkish Red Crescent (TRC)
- Uluslararası Çocuk Hakları Elçileri Derneği (ICHILD)
- UN RCO
- UN WOMEN
- UNDP
- UNFPA
- UNHCR
- UNICEF
- US Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM)
- Violet Organization
- Watan Foundation
- Welthungerhilfe (WHH)
- Women's Solidarity Foundation (KADAV)
- World Bank

Annex 2: Terms of Reference of the NRG

Background

The Grand Bargain was launched during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016 and its commitments have started a movement towards transforming the humanitarian system and improving its efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. However, comparing the efforts of the last 6 years for achieving the commitments, it is evident that progress has been slow.

Consequently, in 2021 the Grand Bargain 2.0 was launched with the second phase of the commitments. Among other measures and mechanisms, establishment of National Reference Groups (NRGs) was recommended in order to accelerate progress on localisation at country levels. It is envisioned that under the leadership of local and national actors, NRGs will enable removing barriers to quality funding, and will ensure greater support to the leadership, delivery and capability of local responders. The work of the NRGs will lead to greater participation of affected communities in addressing humanitarian and development needs.

All these aim to ensure that local and national actors are visible in the humanitarian system, effectively manage operations, and lead humanitarian actions at the national level. National Reference Groups are also planned to ensure that local actors, together with other key stakeholders, define the localisation needs and identify steps to address those needs at the country level.

The National Reference Group Initiative in Türkiye

Localisation Advocacy Group (LAG) and the Refugee Council of Türkiye (TMK) have put localisation at the center of their work in order to support humanitarian aid and human rights efforts in Turkey to come to the fore through localisation. These two local platforms have stepped up to initiate and lead a National Reference Group in Türkiye.

The main mission of these two local networks is to follow up on the global level commitments of the Grand Bargain on localization and move them forward at the country level. Network members deliver humanitarian aid and advocate for the rights of crisis affected populations. Channeling more quality funding to local organisations, and removing the obstacles for equal and fair partnerships has been the strategic priorities of both networks. To this aim, establishing a National Reference Group in Türkiye has become a key objective.

Despite some progress made on localisation, Türkiye-based organizations are still marginalized within the humanitarian system and are unable to access adequate funding, space or power. Therefore, members of the LAG and TMK see the National Reference Group as an opportunity to discuss issues encountered in their partnerships with international stakeholders within the current humanitarian and development systems.

Terms of Reference

The National Reference Group (NRG) is established to ensure that humanitarian and development programs in Türkiye are grounded on local realities and are programmed and implemented in a way that strengthens local structures and actions.

Within the NRG, it is expected that the shortfalls in the localisation agenda will be discussed in a spirit of common goals and trust. Constructive criticisms and demands will be presented in areas where expected changes are not seen. Ideas and suggestions for the advancement of the localisation agenda will be discussed and joint actions will be developed. Thus, the NRG provides an opportunity and safe environment for local organizations to engage in an open dialogue with international humanitarian and development actors.

More specifically, the NRG will:

- discuss the barriers and priorities of localisation in Türkiye
- assess progress on localisation at the country level, share demands for change, and set common goals
- identify joint actions for ensuring progress on localisation
- initiate joint action

Ways of Working

The National Reference Group in Türkiye convenes under the leadership of local actors and comprises members from donors, UN agencies, international NGOs and other stakeholders active in the humanitarian and development spheres.

In the first 6 months of its establishment, the National Reference Group will, together with its members, define its vision and priorities, concrete steps to be taken, and agree on signs of success. Convening in Ankara, preferably through in-person meetings, the Group will also define its ways of working and meeting frequency.

The National Reference Group will share its achievements with all other signatories and humanitarian actors at the Grand Bargain Annual Meeting in June 2023, and at subsequent meetings.

Based on the outcomes of the first 6 month period, the National Reference Group will decide on the continuation of its operations on an annual basis.

Hosting and Coordination

The Localisation Advocacy Group (LAG) and the Refugee Council of Türkiye (TMK) host the National Reference Group and handle all coordinate issues with members.

Annex 3: Launch Event Program

09.00 – 09.30 Registration

09.30 – 09.45 Opening, Introductions and Presentation of the Program

09.45 – 10.00 Opening Remarks

Alvaro Rodriguez, UN RCO

Muhtar Çokar, İKGV / LAG

Perihan Uluğ Dalga, OXFAM-KEDV / TMK

Metin Çorabatır, İGAM / TMK

10.00 – 11.30 Panel Discussion on the State of Localisation in Türkiye

The state of localisation discussed with reference to recent research findings along with reflections.

Arzu Karacanlar, Mavi Kalem

Zakira Hekmat, ARSA

Wolfgang Jessen, GIZ

Monica Ferrari, UNHCR

11.30 – 12.00 Introducing the National Reference Group (NRG)

Background to the Grand Bargain 2.0 and the idea of the NRG shared along with the drafted Terms of Reference.

Sema Genel, STL

12.00 – 13.00 Lunch

13.00 – 14.30 Station (Group) Work

Participants identified the priority actions of the NRG in the four areas of financing, partnerships, coordination, and capacity.

14.30 – 14.45 Coffee Break

14.45 – 16.15 Station (Group) Work

Second round of group work

16.15 – 17.00 Presentation of Outputs

Workshop outputs reported back to plenary

17.00 – 17.15 Community Wall

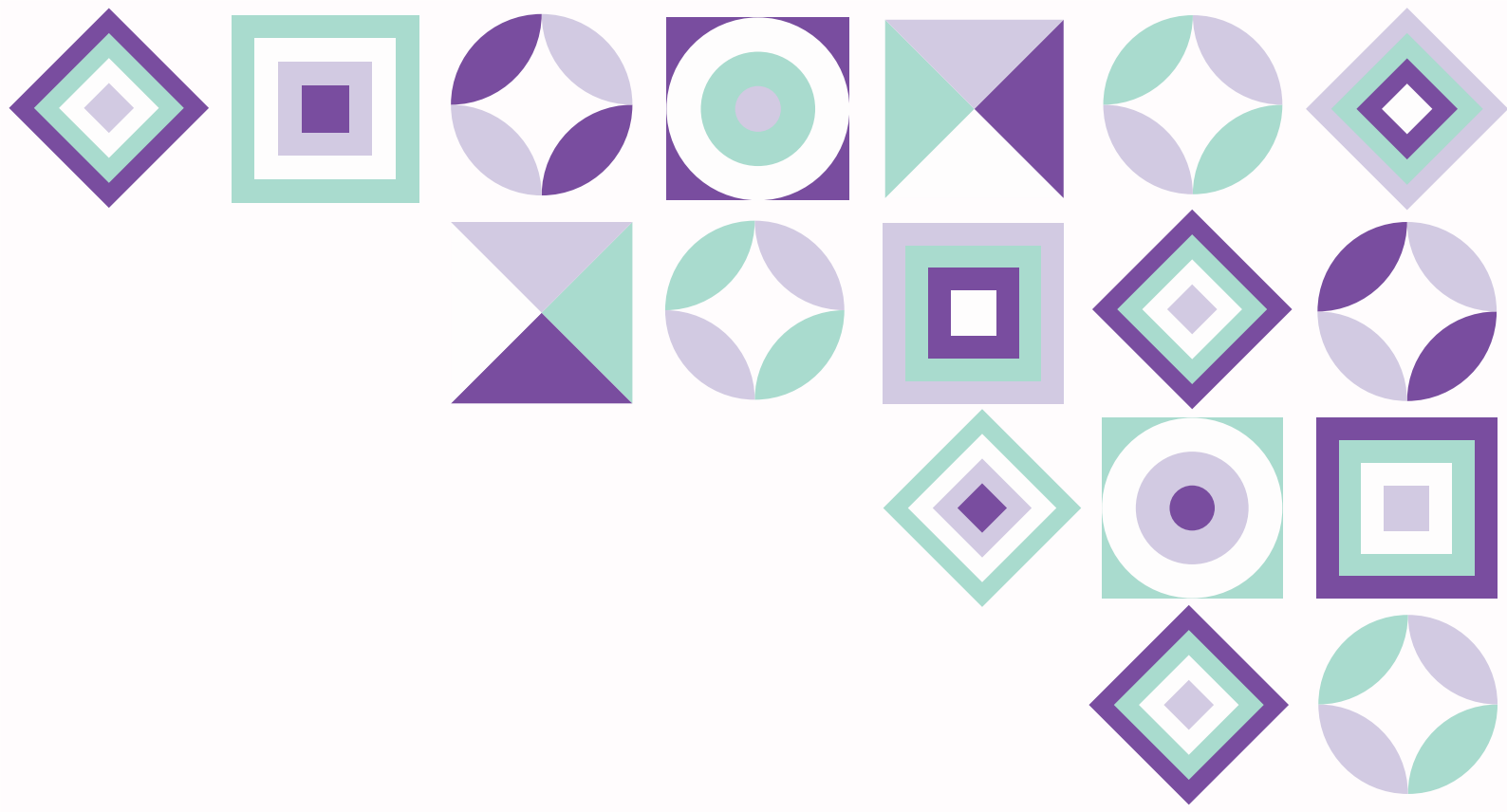
Addressing questions and suggestions to the NRG Terms of Reference

17.15 – 17.30 Closing Remarks and Group Photo

Annex 4: Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the efforts and contributions of all our partners and thank all the colleagues who honoured us by participating in the NRG launch event and sharing their valuable suggestions and opinions which is and will shape the way-forward of the NRG localisation efforts.





From Global to the National: Moving Localisation Forward in Türkiye through the launch of the National Reference Group

Launch Event Report

25 January 2023, Ankara



YERELLESME | LOCALIZATION
SAVUNUCULUK | ADVOCACY
GRUBU | GROUP

