LOCALISATION CASE STUDIES

Case studies prepared by national and international organisations to share their experiences of consciously promoting locally led humanitarian action through equitable partnerships. These case studies were prepared as part of efforts to raise awareness of DG ECHO's localisation guidance note published in March 2023. The examples shared in these case studies are funded by a range of different donors.

Community-led capacity strengthening for fragile contexts

This case study presents the capacity-strengthening focus of this community-led programme implemented in Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan in which local partners took the lead in tailoring capacity strengthening activities to the local context and adopting a range of methodologies including mentoring, peer to peer learning, secondments, institutional twinning and many more.

Introduction

The Community-led Capacity Strengthening for Fragile Contexts (C4FC) project is a two-and-half-year long programme that seeks to strengthen the organisational, operational and leadership capacity[2] of local partners in Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. The project was implemented through a consortium of partners: Care Somalia, World Vision Sudan, World Vision South Sudan, Sadar Institute and World Vision Somalia (SomRep)[3] as the lead implementing partner and funded by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.

Somalia, Somaliland, Sudan, and South Sudan are affected by protracted crises. Sustainable solutions to addressing humanitarian needs must be led by local partners with strong engagement of communities. C4FC equipped 31 local partners with skills and knowledge to build systems that prepare them to respond to disaster and crises through a community engagement approach. The process used by C4FC involved local partners in defining their own capacity journey through interactive, participatory methodologies. This ensured the capacity strengthening process was responsive to partner needs, tailored to each partners' context, and resulted in ownership of future responses.

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[1] DG ECHO's guidance note Promoting Equitable Partnerships with Local Responders in Humanitarian Settings, March 2023
[2] Draft BHA Localization Policy
[3] Somalia Resilience Programme (SomRep) is a consortium of 8 partner agencies (7 INGOs, and 1 local NGO-Shaqadoon) and the consortium hosted the C4FC project. This project was led by the Innovation lab, RIL, that sits in SomReP.

# C4FC has learnt several lessons from this experience:

1. Continually find innovative ways for local partners to own the capacity strengthening process

In a traditional capacity building process, donors often approach the capacity journey based on their funding priorities, which do not always respond to the needs of the local partners. Even when projects aim to involve local partners, the methods used are often prescriptive and lack innovation. This approach leads to minimal gains because local partners have not truly owned the process of growth.

Through the C4FC project, local partners demonstrated ownership of their capacity improvement journey through participation in co-creation of their own capacity improvement plans.

Since data is also an important factor of ownership, C4FC customised PACT's Partner Capacity Solutions Platform (WVI Sub-space) to allow all 31 local partners access to their capacity assessment scores and track their own capacity improvement journey.

Finally, C4FC's capstone e-Learning tool was informed by local partners' experiences leading in-person CDR trainings in the three countries. This CDR legacy tool is now publicly available on SomReP's Kaya Page (a free humanitarian learning platform).
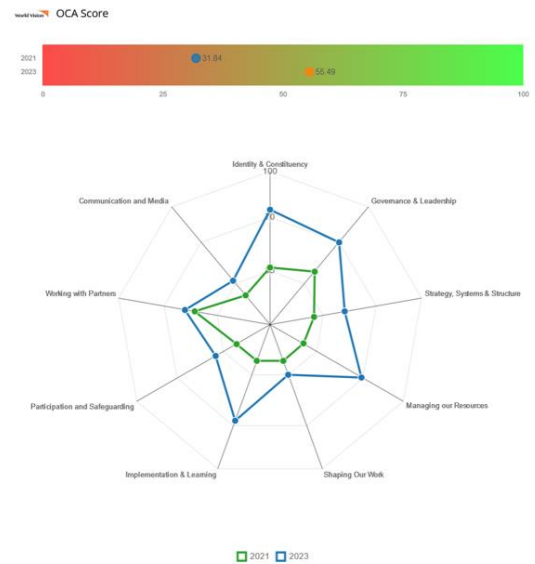
Local partner capacity change dashboard from PCS

2. Tailor capacity strengthening activities to the local context, and keep adapting as you go

When designing a capacity strengthening intervention, it's tempting to reach for training workshops as the solution. However, sustained capacity strengthening rarely happens through training alone but by accompanying with ongoing mentors, peer to peer learning, secondments, hiring staff, institutional twinning, financial assistance, etc.

C4FC used training in its arsenal of capacity strengthening methods. But, the team began with the assumption that one size does not fit all. The existing CDR training materials were modified to effectively meet the diverse needs found across contexts in Somalia, Somaliland, South Sudan, and Sudan through a contextual training needs analysis of available and needed skills among the 31 participating local partners. The team leveraged World Vision/SomReP's experience with human centred design and expanded that approach to develop contextualised resources for Sudan and South Sudan based on their specific experience and capacity.

C4FC decided to create a tiered training approach (basic, intermediate and advanced) to allow staff to enter the CDR capacity strengthening journey at the level that most met their need. C4FC paired an instructional design expert with the content experts so that training resources could be

transformed into a learner-led approach. The simulations, a particularly feature of the trainings, provided opportunities for participants from all levels to share capacity, building on the participants' existing knowledge while providing ample opportunity to practice new skills in a safe environment.

C4FC also involved academic institutions and different arms of the government throughout the training development to encourage uptake, local adaptation, and alignment with government policies and training strategies.

The C4FC team used simulation as a participatory approach in the ToT sessions. Local partners were introduced to a simulation scenario and after conducting/running the simulation, participants were given the opportunity to modify the scenario and run their own simulation. This scaffolding of learning allowed local partners to practice teaching techniques with support from the C4FC team.

3. Capacity strengthening should allow for learning by doing

Capacity strengthening is more than just information sharing. Sustained outcomes and performance improvement happen when individuals apply their new knowledge and skills. During the design of the project in 2020, the budget was reduced which led to removing small grants that would allow local partners to implement the new skills in their programmes. This posed a challenge to meeting the donor's expectation of lasting change for the local partner.

Despite the funding challenge, C4FC was able to re-allocate some of the resources to pilot select CDR tools with communities. Eight CDR modules were co-developed with their accompanying tools and resources. The partners were able to support local partners to apply at least two modules and/or tools at the community level. The learning by doing, despite the fact that it was applied on a small scale, allowed the partners to support their communities to develop the community action plans, adaptable to their own context and challenges. As described above, the team also invested in a training approach that prioritised application of the learning. These methods were adopted by the partners based on needs, available resources and capacity levels during the practicum sessions.

4. Specific feedback from the Local NGOs

The C4FC initiative offered specialised training like the Gateways to Grants (G2G): Foundations course designed to strengthen LNGO capacity in grant acquisition and management. The course evaluation report (Workshop Summary Report, January 2023) noted the following key recommendations from the participants representing the 31 LNGOs:

- Offer Ongoing Coaching and Support;

- Establish Refresher Training Cycles;
- Enhance Language Accessibility.

Local partners appreciated most C4FC's use of participatory, adult learning methodologies in the in-person workshops, like game boards/cards, simulation exercises, and role plays. Adult learning methodologies engage the participant in the learning and promote application of the content.

These perspectives from the LNGOs will enable practitioners to create a more inclusive impactful, and effective capacity strengthening process for local organizations, and fostering sustainable growth within the local humanitarian ecosystem.

Conclusion

Capacity strengthening is a process rather than a one-time event. The process requires time and resources which are limited in emergency response settings. Recognising the pivotal role of earmarked funds, it becomes evident that their strategic allocation is essential to propel the localisation agenda articulated in Grand Bargain 2.0. By designating specific resources to support local actors and institutions, we can catalyse the empowerment of communities on the front lines of humanitarian response. This approach not only fosters greater ownership and sustainability but also aligns with the overarching goal of enabling local responders to lead humanitarian efforts effectively. Earmarked funds serve as a tangible commitment to realising the principles of Grand Bargain 2.0 and ushering in a more collaborative, efficient and impactful humanitarian landscape.

The capacity strengthening process implemented through this grant benefited from the flexibility allowed by the donor to tailor activities to the local context and adapt implementation plans to respond to partner needs. This allowed World Vision and our implementing partners to learn, change, and adapt during the implementation period.

Case study prepared by World Vision
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