

Complementarities for a Culture Change on Localization and Meaningful Participation
11 October 2023 – Geneva, Switzerland

Localization and Meaningful Participation – Need for a Culture Change

Both the humanitarian localization agenda and the “participation revolution” are at the center of major humanitarian reform processes, yet there is consensus that the culture change necessary for progress on both is yet to occur. Although the commitment to the humanitarian localization agenda is now normalized within the sector, changes and headway in practice remain slow. Likewise, despite the increased investment system-wide in efforts to include crisis-affected communities and align with their needs, the affected people do not feel they have a say in the assistance they receive.

Future natural hazards, climate change, new crises, conflicts, and public health emergencies will likely further exacerbate humanitarian needs and strain the already stretched resources. Thanks to their knowledge of the context and proximity to the people, local actors and affected communities are often much better placed to identify ways to ensure the most efficient and effective use of resources and capacities to reduce the needs and deliver the best outcomes for the affected populations.

Complementarity-Based Partnerships for a Culture Change

As an operational UN agency with a large humanitarian footprint, IOM can quickly scale up responses and raise and mobilize resources to rapidly respond to new and emerging crises. IOM brings its humanitarian leadership and coordination roles, convening power, and technical and administrative capacity – a distinctive value also associated with IOM’s different cost reality than that of NGOs. Meanwhile, NGOs provide IOM with invaluable contextual and technical knowledge and information, essential operational capacity, and key advocacy functions. Principled and complementarity-based partnerships with Local and National NGOs are key for greater community acceptance, trust, accountability, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. IOM seeks to build on complementarities with INGO and N/LNGO partners – including through a joint reflection on circumstances that call for IOM’s distinctive value added and those where, in contrast, partners are better placed to respond – in order to leverage these mutual capabilities and accelerate the culture change necessary to deliver on localization and meaningful participation.

IOM-NGO Humanitarian Consultations – Catalysing Localization and AAP at IOM

IOM-NGO complementarities to further localization and AAP have been a consistent focus of discussions at the annual IOM-NGO Humanitarian Consultations. For example, in 2019 in Istanbul, discussions on principled humanitarian access in the MENA region emphasized the importance of leveraging complementarities between IOM and N/LNGOs and ensuring meaningful participation of the affected people throughout the project cycle, for gaining and maintaining principled access in challenging environments.

Building on this consistent input from NGO partners over the years, in 2023, IOM is operationalizing its commitment to localization at the field level and is finalizing its internal Localization Framework and Guidance Note in Humanitarian Response and Preparedness. In line with this, IOM has adopted a comprehensive Accountability to Affected Populations Framework to guide and integrate the principles of AAP across its crisis-related operations and partnerships. This framework aims to uphold the dignity and capabilities of individuals impacted by crises, empowering them to actively participate in matters that are important to them. These and other IOM institutional humanitarian commitments entail accountability to its frontline NGO partners who – notwithstanding IOM’s large local workforce and frontline responder status in many contexts – are often closer to the affected populations.

2023 IOM-NGO Humanitarian Consultation

The consultation will discuss IOM-NGO joint approaches to localization and AAP as well as IOM-NGO complementarities to jointly fulfil the related commitments, drive progress on operationalizing localization at the field level, and respond to the current gaps in putting people, their needs and capacities at the center of response. By gathering a diverse pool of IOM’s NGO partners in one forum, the event will be an opportunity to exchange on the different and varied progress, perspectives and experiences with advancing localization and AAP, engage in mutual and peer learning, and ultimately identify scalable good practice and actionable recommendations in key aspects through leveraging IOM and NGOs’ respective strengths, and in line with the respective mandates.

a. Date and Venue

The consultation will be held on 11 October 2023, in Geneva, Switzerland in-person and online.

b. Objectives of the Consultation

The overall objective of the consultation is to contribute to unlocking progress on localization and meaningful participation on the ground and improve the effectiveness and impact of the joint IOM-NGO response. The consultation seeks to foster open dialogue and encourage frank and constructive discussion on the realities of IOM-NGO partnerships, comparative advantages, and value added. These exchanges will inform IOM’s efforts to transform the way it devolves power, including financial power, as well as information and knowledge, to its local partners.

c. Outcome

The expected outcome is a set of concrete recommendations and action points that leverage IOM-NGO complementarities in advancing progress on localization and AAP. The main recommendations and action points will be reflected in a consolidated report. This report will be made available on IOM [web page](#) devoted to the consultation process.

d. Participants

The event will provide a space for meaningful dialogue with IOM’s humanitarian NGO partners. Participants should be [ICVA members](#), [SCHR members](#), other IOM NGO partners, or NGOs with experience relevant to the theme of the consultation. The expectation is that NGOs participate by bringing concrete experience on the consultation theme and/or partnership with IOM. In order to ensure a result-oriented consultation, the number of in-person participants is limited to a maximum of 65. Participants are encouraged to register [here](#) at the soonest and by Monday, 2 October 2023.