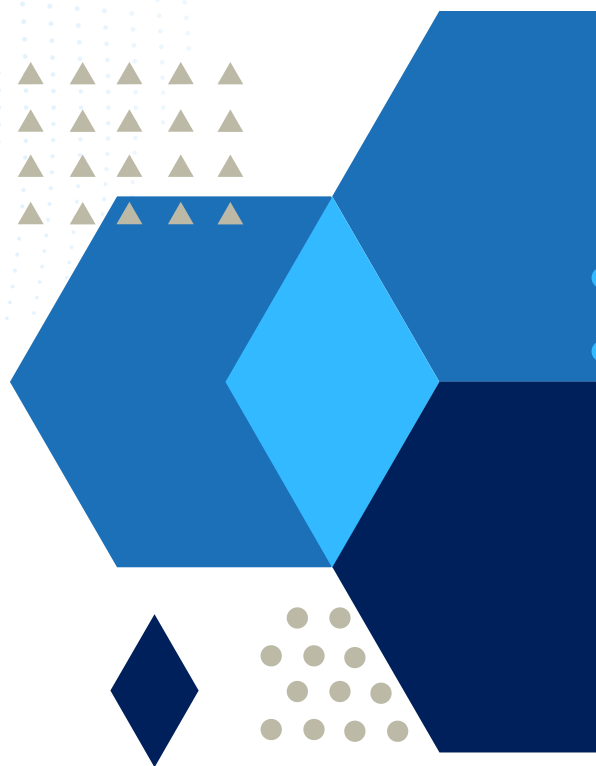


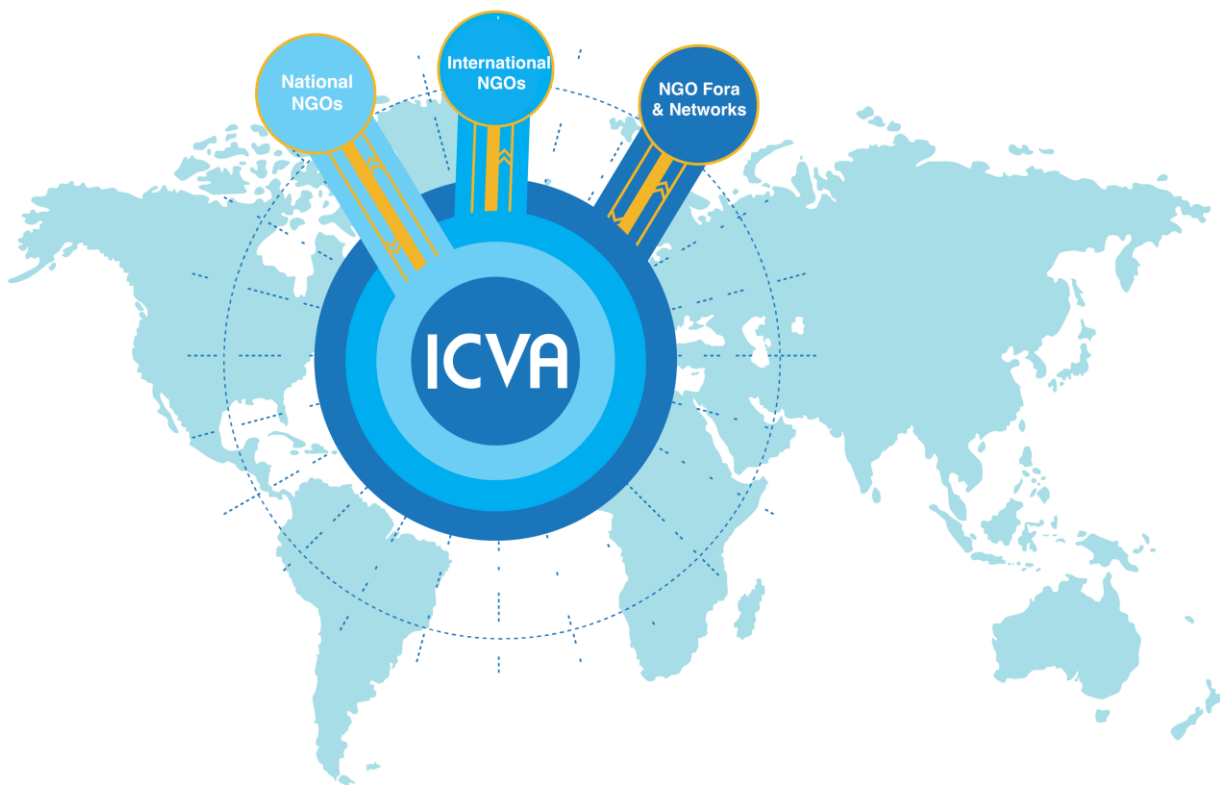


# MEASURING LOCALISATION IN IRAQ'S HUMANITARIAN & DEVELOPMENT LANDSCAPE

**Baseline Report**

May 2025





## About ICVA

ICVA is a global network of over 160 non-governmental organisations whose mission is to make humanitarian action more principled and effective by working collectively and independently to influence policy and practice.

## Acknowledgements

This study was conducted by Dr. Ismaeel Dawood, Lead Researcher with the support and guidance of the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) and the Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG). Dr. Dawood would like to thank those who contributed to this report, including Iraqi organisations and authorities, international organisations and United Nations (UN) agencies. Their invaluable cooperation in sharing data, insights, and firsthand experiences has been instrumental to this study. Their contributions have not only deepened understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the localisation process in Iraq but have also enabled the formulation of recommendations that are grounded in practical realities and aimed at making a tangible impact on local communities.

A special note of thanks goes to Public Aid Organisation (PAO), whose dedicated staff played a pivotal role in disseminating the study survey and organising the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), that were central to this research. Additionally, the report and methodology were guided and reviewed by PAO. Special thanks also go to the Iraqi civil society experts whose insights during the initial workshop were crucial in adapting and contextualising the research tools for the Iraqi context.

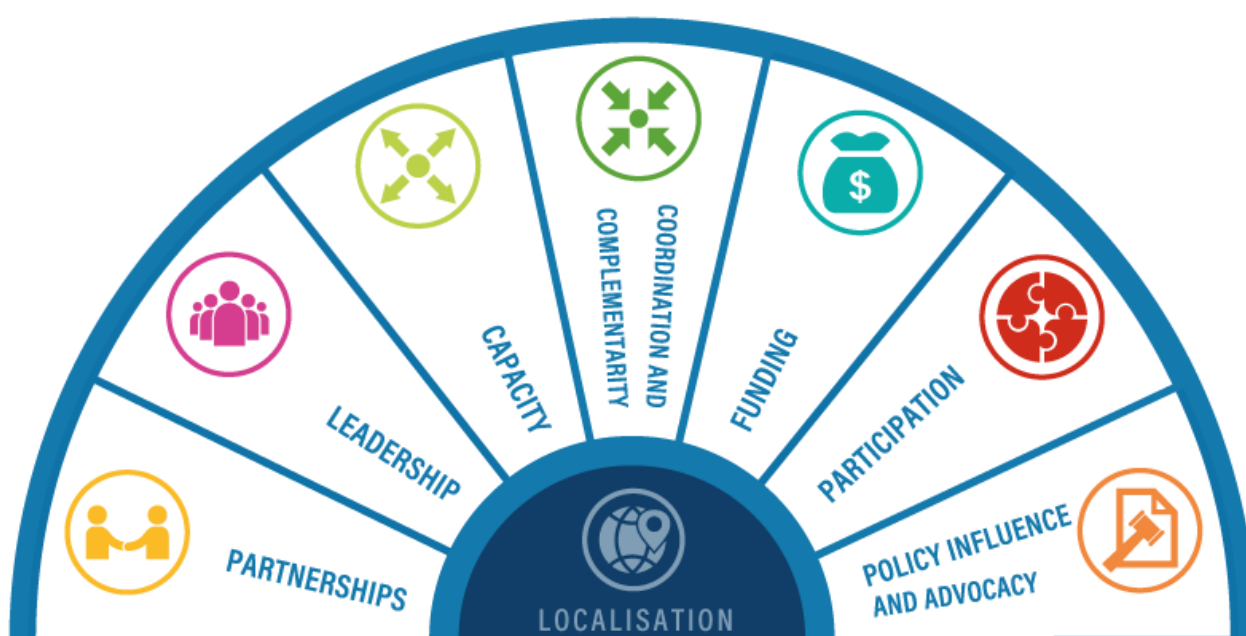
## Foreword

For years, humanitarian actors in Iraq have been at the forefront of efforts to help communities recover from the devastation of war, displacement and poverty. Their unwavering dedication to providing relief, restoring hope, and creating opportunities for a better future has left a profound and lasting impact. Today, both local and international actors continue this vital work, united in their commitment to rebuilding a stronger and more resilient Iraq.

Reflecting on these efforts and looking toward the future, it becomes clear that the key to sustainable progress lies in empowering local actors, particularly local governments and Iraqi civil society. The principle of ***‘as local as possible and as international as necessary’*** serves as a guiding approach for strengthening the role of local/national organisations while ensuring availability of contextualised international support when needed. By putting local voices at the centre of decision-making and fostering collaboration between civil society, government, and the private sector, creating a stable and prosperous Iraq can be done, where peace, development, and social cohesion are within reach.

This report is a testament to the promising work already being done by humanitarian actors in Iraq towards a locally-led response, and a call to action for continued collaboration. It is also an opportunity to learn from the challenges of the past and build a future where local actors are the driving force behind Iraq’s recovery and progress towards a lasting peace.

**Figure 1: The 7 Domains of Localisation**



# Executive Summary

For over forty years, Iraq has been a focal point for international humanitarian response, driven by recurring cycles of war, displacement, and political instability. From the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s to the US-led invasion in 2003 and the rise of Daesh in 2014, Iraq has endured continuous emergencies. These crises have triggered multiple waves of displacement, most notably between 2014 and 2017, when nearly six million Iraqis — around 16% of the population — were uprooted by the conflict with Daesh.

In response, the humanitarian infrastructure in Iraq has expanded significantly. International NGOs, UN agencies, and donors have poured into the country, often partnering with Iraqi actors but rarely placing them in positions of real leadership or decision-making. Despite decades of external aid and a vibrant local civil society — including a surge in local NGO activity post-2003 — progress toward localisation has been limited. The humanitarian system in Iraq remains largely internationally driven.

## Purpose of the report

This report shows the status of localisation in Iraq across the seven domains of localisation (pictured in Figure 1). It uses the [Localisation Measurement Framework and Tools](#) developed by HAG and PIANGO. The tools have been adapted to Iraq's unique context. The study provides benchmarks for tracking progress and identifies challenges and opportunities.

## Key Findings

Despite decades of humanitarian response in Iraq, the report finds that overall progress towards localisation is low, as summarised below:

### Partnerships



Some evidence

- Partnerships between international actors and local/national organisations have been crucial to Iraq's humanitarian response, especially during emergencies.
- International actors depended on local and national organisations for cultural insights and access to communities.
- Local and national organisations relied on international partners for resources, learning, and support to meet challenges.
- Partnerships usually reflect long-standing relationships and a track record of meeting donor requirements.
- While international actors are still the primary decision-makers, local perspectives are being acknowledged.

### Leadership



Limited evidence

- In emergencies, international actors are still viewed as the key decision-makers.
- Local and national organisations, along with governments, are seen to have a supporting role.
- While international organisations are increasingly appointing Iraqis to key positions, many local actors do not see this as genuine localisation.
- They argue that placing Iraqis within international structures often limits them to implementation roles rather than making decisions and setting the direction.

## Coordination



- The 2023 closure of key structures like the NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq (NCCI) and the deactivation of the cluster system have weakened these efforts.
- While local networks continue to function, they tend to involve only a limited number of NGOs, and coordination remains dominated by international actors.
- The dominance of English in coordination meetings also presents a barrier to full integration of local actors.

## Participation



- Organisations report relatively high levels of community involvement through consultations, needs assessments, and the formation of community committees.
- Study participants suggest that the engagement is often weak and ineffective, with many organisations more focused on meeting donor expectations than genuinely engaging with local communities.
- Smaller organisations tend to have stronger community ties, while larger organisations often rely on less effective, sporadic mechanisms for participation.

## Policy Influence



- Local actors are seen as key stakeholders. However, they still find it hard to influence donor agendas and national policies effectively.
- Some organisations raise important issues with the government, but turning this influence into real change is difficult.
- Most local and national organisations provide some inputs into policy development, but few significantly shape humanitarian and development strategies.

## Capacity



- Both international and local partners define capacity needs, but internationals mainly drive the process.
- Progress is limited to a small number of organisations.
- Ensuring long-term sustainability remains a key challenge.
- Local and national organisations often find it hard to keep services running when international support stops. This happens because they rely on project-based approaches for capacity building.
- While the legislation for NGOs remains stable, NGOs face access restrictions and a shrinking space to discuss key issues, particularly gender.

## Funding



- Local/national organisations struggle to directly access international funding. This restricts their ability to lead long-term recovery and development efforts.
- As Iraq transitions from emergency response to development, the reduction in humanitarian funding creates challenges.
- Recovery and peacebuilding initiatives need ongoing financial support. They are especially at risk as there are few other funding sources available.
- Study participants stressed the need for a legal framework for local funding and a National Peace & Recovery Fund.

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# Introduction

The primary objective of this report is to establish a baseline and benchmarks for localisation in Iraq. By tracking progress against key indicators, the study aims to create a solid evidence base that stakeholders can use to monitor advancements in humanitarian response and the transition towards development, stability, and recovery currently underway in Iraq.

The findings of this baseline study highlights the disconnect between localisation priorities and practice. After years of global discourse around localisation — and amid Iraq’s own transition from emergency to recovery and despite the long history of local humanitarian presence — so little structural change is evident in how aid is delivered in Iraq, and who is empowered to deliver it.

## From Local Humanitarian Leadership to an Internationally dominated response

Humanitarian work in Iraq has deep roots. The Iraqi Red Crescent Society was founded in 1932 and [recognised by the International Federation of the Red Cross in 1934](#). Over the years, numerous Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have emerged in Iraq, with significant growth seen after 1991 when the Kurdistan Region gained autonomous status, allowing more organisations to register and operate, particularly in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah. The biggest transformation, however, came post-2003, when a vast number of NGOs were established, covering a wide range of humanitarian and development sectors across Iraq, from the north to the south.

Alongside these local/national organisations, many international NGOs, UN agencies, and other international organisations have entered Iraq to play a significant role in humanitarian work. These organisations have often partnered with local actors to implement their programs and gain access to local communities. Today, NGOs in Iraq are registered either with the NGO Directorate in Baghdad or the NGO Directorate in Erbil.

## The Grand Bargain ignites localisation efforts

Following the [momentum created by the Grand Bargain in 2016](#), more formal discourse and efforts on localisation have taken root in Iraq. Several - mostly international - actors, including the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), REACH International, the Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR), and the NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq (NCCI) started to work on the topic, organising events and discussions that involved Iraqi local/national organisations.

NCCI organised several workshops in 2022 and 2023 in Baghdad and Erbil with representatives from local CSOs and NGOs, international actors and government representatives to discuss a draft guide on increasing collaboration between NGOs and government entities and update a localisation plan.

## Changes to humanitarian architecture & response in Iraq

Following many years of conflict and humanitarian crisis, there is a strong desire within the [Iraqi government to accelerate the shift from relief to development](#), with current priorities set on infrastructure and reconnecting Iraq to the global economy. This has had significant implications on the humanitarian response architecture and funding:



In 2022, the UN Cluster System was deactivated in Iraq with the expectation that the government takes the lead in providing essential services and protection to all people in Iraq, including displaced populations and returnees. In February 2023, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) launched the “[Humanitarian Transition Overview](#)” (HTO) to replace the main tool for assessing humanitarian needs and guiding the internationally led humanitarian responses – the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).

In May 2024 the UN Security Council [voted](#) to extend the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for a final 19 month-period until 31 December 2025, after which UNAMI will cease all work and operations. While UNAMI did not work on localisation as a priority, some Iraqi organisations have raised concerns that the deactivation could lead to increased restrictions on their work and hinder the ongoing localisation process.

## **A fragile recovery: local leadership at a crossroads**

Iraq’s recovery from conflict and displacement is ongoing. Many internally displaced people have returned home, and the state has regained control across much of the country. The government is now prioritising long-term development goals, particularly in infrastructure and economic growth.

Iraq remains heavily dependent on oil revenues, which fluctuate and create economic instability, affecting the country’s budget and development plans. Iraq is expected to lose its priority status among international donors, leading to a significant reduction in funding allocations compared to the past two years. There is currently no alternative funding source to address the needs that CSOs are tackling.

While the country is moving towards recovery and development, the reduction in international support and the potential narrowing of space for local/national organisations raise critical challenges as well as opportunities for the future of localisation efforts.

## **The road ahead**

Localisation in Iraq is not a new idea — it is a long-standing demand. The question now is whether it will finally move from principle to practice. The country is transitioning away from humanitarian crisis, and the international community is preparing to step back. Yet without a meaningful shift in how local actors are supported and included, the opportunity to build a more sustainable, locally led system could be lost.



# Methodology

This study used the [Localisation Measurement Framework and Tools](#) developed by HAG and PIANGO. These tools have been successfully applied in various humanitarian and development contexts. The framework facilitates a comprehensive assessment of localisation progress across seven key domains: Partnerships, Leadership, Coordination and Complementarity, Participation, Policy Influence, Capacity, and Funding.

Each of these areas was explored in detail in the study as if they were independent, though it is understood that they overlap and are interconnected. However, for the sake of clarity, the report focuses on examining them separately.

Iraq is the third country supported by ICVA in partnership with HAG to apply these tools, following previous baseline [research conducted in Yemen](#) in 2022 and [Ukraine](#) in 2023 as well as a [progress review for Ukraine](#) in 2024.

To ensure the tools were appropriate for the Iraqi context, the research followed a three-phase approach:

1. **Initial assessment and contextualisation:** The initial phase focused on adapting the framework to the specific circumstances of Iraq. This involved conducting an initial assessment to understand the current landscape of localisation in Iraq, including identifying knowledge gaps and setting priorities. A joint workshop was held with 11 local CSOs from across Iraq, alongside representatives from ICVA, HAG, and the Lead Researcher. The workshop included a presentation of the tools, followed by discussions on their relevance to Iraq. Ongoing engagement and input from PAO and other local/national organisations also helped to ensure the process was contextualised to the ground context.
2. **Field visits to Erbil and Baghdad:** Field visits were carried out to validate designed methodology, refine the tools based on recent contextual changes, and to conduct required consultations on the operational realities of Iraq.
3. **Review of existing material:** Comprehensive review of existing literature and data on localisation efforts in Iraq was conducted to ensure all required information was compiled and analysed to complement the other methodological components.

## Data Collection

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive view of localisation efforts in Iraq, as summarised in Table 1.

A **self-assessment questionnaire** was distributed in July and August 2024, yielding 43 responses, of which 38 were valid and relevant to the study. These responses included input from 25 Iraqi local/national organisations and 13 international organisations including UN Agencies, all actively working in Iraq.

**Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** were held in September 2024, targeting Iraqi organisations and covering three key regions:

- ❖ Southern Iraq and Basra Region: 10 organisations participated.
- ❖ Kurdistan Region and Erbil: 11 organisations participated.

- ❖ Baghdad: 18 organisations participated.

Ten **Key Informant Interview (KIIs)** were conducted in September 2024 to gather deeper insights and perspectives from critical stakeholders in the humanitarian and development sectors.

**Table 1: Summary of study data sources**

Type of organisation	Questionnaire	Focus Group Discussions	KII
Iraqi Local/national organisations	25	39	0
International Organisations	11	0	4
UN Agencies	2	0	2
Iraqi Institutions	0	0	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>10</b>

## Limitations

These limitations should be considered when interpreting the study's findings:

- ❖ **Study bias:** It is important to recognise that the study's methods may introduce an element of subjectivity, reflecting the perspectives and experiences of the participants. This subjectivity is taken into consideration when interpreting the findings of the study.
- ❖ **Level of evidence:** The evidence provided may reflect responses from a limited number of active organisations involved in humanitarian and development work. Although Iraq has thousands of registered organisations, only a relatively small subset of these actively engaged in research activities, narrowing the scope of the evidence collected.
- ❖ **Time period focus:** Some responses may have focused on different time periods, such as before Daesh occupied Mosul, post-liberation, or prior to the deactivation of the UN cluster system. This report aims to provide a snapshot of the current state of localisation.
- ❖ **Evidence rating:** In instances where indicators are rated as having limited evidence of action, this should not be interpreted as a complete absence of activity. Rather, it indicates that such actions were not highlighted or did not emerge during the baseline data collection process.
- ❖ **Scope of analysis:** The report offers a high-level analysis that focuses on specific themes related to localisation efforts in Iraq. It is not intended to provide a complete mapping of all challenges or issues facing humanitarian and development responses across the country.
- ❖ **Geographical representation:** While this study aimed to cover key regions — Kurdistan, the South, Baghdad, and other areas — there are limitations in fully representing all Iraqi provinces. Therefore, some regions may be underrepresented in the findings.
- ❖ **Impact of the transition phase:** Some responses may reflect expectations or perceptions of the ongoing transition from humanitarian response to recovery, stability, and development. The answers may emphasise what outcomes are anticipated due to this shift in priorities.

# Findings

The following section presents the findings by domain.

## Domain 1: Partnership

### Partnerships



Some evidence

#### Key Finding:

There is **some evidence** of equitable and complementary partnerships among local/national and international actors. The existence of formal partnerships and collaboration between Iraqi local/national actors and their international counterparts, although decision-making still largely rests with international actors.

### Summary of evidence related to equitable & complementary partnerships

Progress Indicators	Level of Evidence
Partnerships are based on equitable and ethical partnership practices	Some evidence
Longer-term strategic partnerships exist that aim to build systems and processes mirroring the ambition and goals of the local or national partner	Some evidence
Increased power and decision-making of local/national actors within partnerships	Limited evidence

International actors working on humanitarian responses in Iraq heavily relied on local organisations to reach people in need, especially in remote and insecure areas. Local and national actors often lacked direct contact with donors and the structured systems necessary for operational efficiency to align with donor guidance.

As a result, international actors needed to invest in a diverse range of local partners to balance needs and constraints effectively. Partnerships with implementing partners emerged as the most effective form of collaboration, supporting the gradual shift towards more strategic partnerships over time.

“

“Partnerships were restricted to a select few local actors preferred by international organisations, who tend to work with a limited number of local partners”.

Local actor in FGD

”

## Key Participation Domain findings:

### 1.1. Partnership agreements rest with a limited pool of local/national actors

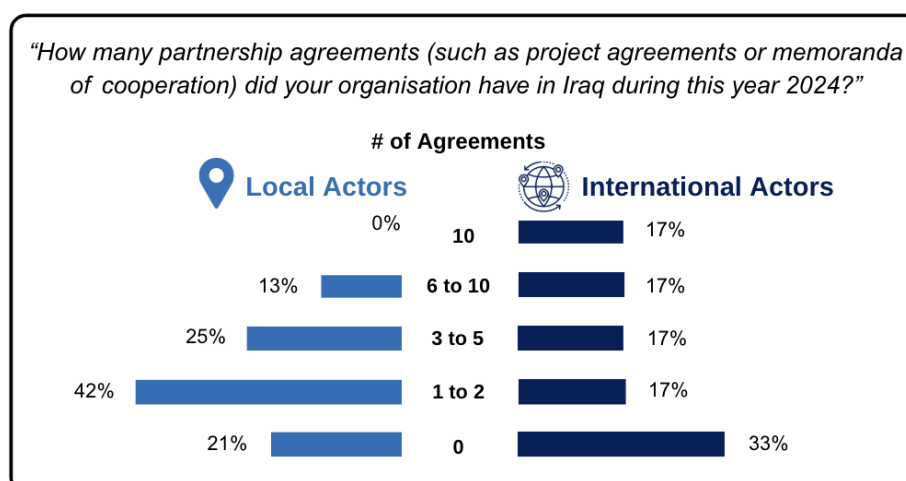
- ⇒ All local/national actors and 92% of international actors that took part in the study survey had concluded at least one **partnership agreement** between 2022 and 2024, the most common form of collaboration (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2 – Number of partnership agreements per organisation between 2022 and 2024**



- ⇒ For 2024, a shift was observed with study data pointing to a decrease in the number of actors with at least one formal partnership as the likely impact of a general reduction in humanitarian action.
- ⇒ Despite this reduction, the number of active partnerships remains noteworthy, with 79% of local actors and 68% of international actors surveyed still having partnership agreements in 2024 (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3 – Number of partnership agreements per organisation in 2024**



- ⇒ While the survey data shows that local/national actors accessed formal partnerships, testimonies come to nuance this evidence, highlighting a relatively small number of qualified local/national actors that accessed formal partnerships, though the partnerships became more strategic and long-term over time.

- ⇒ Several reasons for the limited number of local/national actors entering progressively more strategic and long-term partnerships over time have been identified, including personal relationships that international donors have developed in Iraq, and the high standards required for formal partnerships, which necessitate capacity-building and long-term investment in a small pool of local/national actors.
- ⇒ Over time, international partners have worked to identify local/national organisations and enhance their capacity and sector-specific skills to meet the needs for effective implementation.

“

“Strong partnerships emerged during the emergency phase as a logical response to the need for international actors to quickly reach people in need while overcoming significant cultural, political, and security challenges. At the same time, local organisations required resources to scale up their response to the growing humanitarian needs”.

International NGO in interview

”

## 1.2. Lack of Equity in Partnerships

- ⇒ **Partnership conditions** are largely unfavourable to local/national actors.
- ⇒ Study data shows that 13% of local/national actors did not receive any funding as part of their partnerships, likely referring to partnerships centred around information-sharing and other forms of collaboration rather than the implementation of specific projects.
- ⇒ Only **9% of funding arrangements** covered indirect costs.
- ⇒ The funding arrangements most mentioned target direct, itemised costs. However, capacity-building, such as training for local staff, and support for administrative costs linked to project activities, are also important elements of the funding arrangements (see Figure 4).

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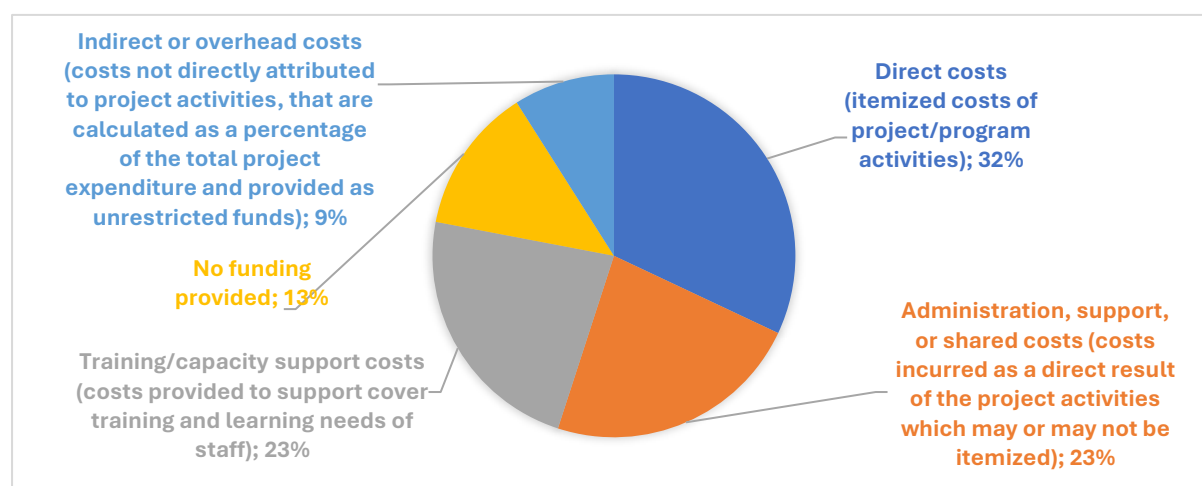
The majority of international actors have shifted towards strategic partnerships with local organisations, rather than a project-by-project approach. This typically involves building the capacity of the local partner first, followed by collaboration on specific projects. However, some international organisations continue to engage in direct implementation without forming strategic partnerships.

International NGO in interview

”

**Figure 4 - Local/national actors' funding arrangements within partnerships**

*“National actors: When partnering with international organisations, which of the following funding arrangements do your partnerships typically include? (Select all that apply)”*



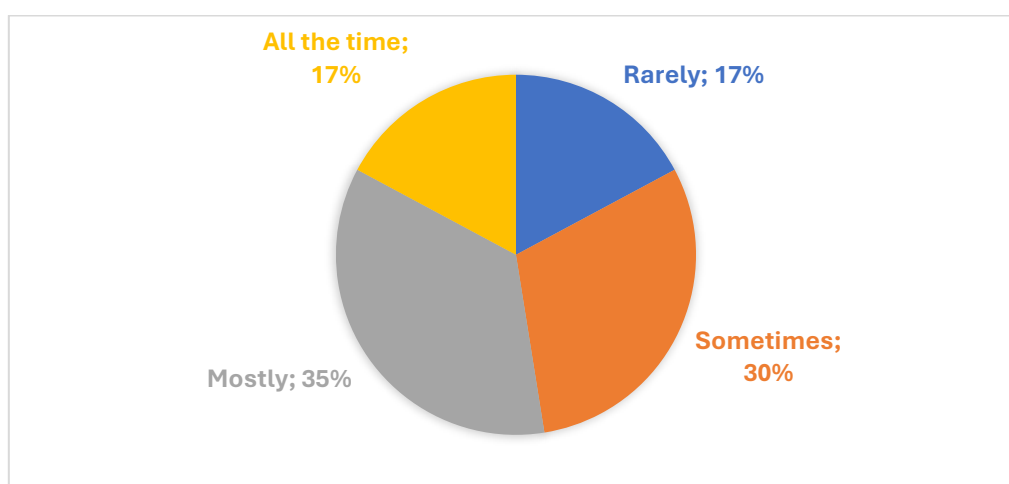
### 1.3. Limited Local Decision-Making Power in Partnerships Though Local Perspectives Are Being Acknowledged

The study assessed the extent to which partnerships are meaningful looking at **collaboration and decision-making practices**. Study data shows that although local/national and international actors regularly meet with their partners and the ideas and perspectives of local/national partners are taken into consideration, decision-making still largely rests with international actors.

The study survey found that 52% of local/national actors felt their ideas and views were considered mostly to all the time in their partnerships with international actors (see Figure 4). It also found that 35% of local/national actors felt they were sometimes involved in partnership decision-making while 26% indicated that they were rarely to never involved (see Figure 5).

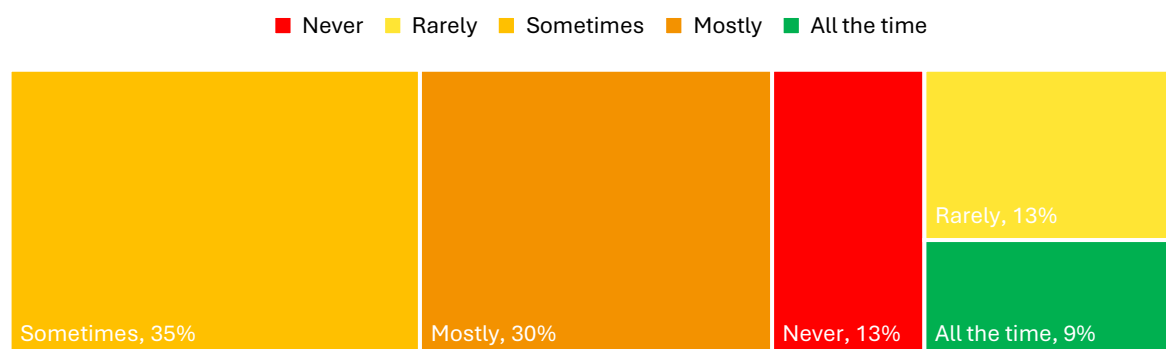
**Figure 5 - Local/national actors' ideas and views within partnerships**

*National actors: Are your organisations' ideas and views considered in the partnerships with international organisations?*



**Figure 6 - Local/national actors' decision-making within partnerships**

*Local actors: Is your organisation involved in decision making in partnerships with international organisations e.g. decisions on changing geographic focus of a project, target groups or decisions on budget reallocations?*



“

“Decisions generally remain in the hands of international actors, largely because they lead on requirements and compliance. This is a key factor influencing the dynamic”.

**INGO in interview**

”

### **Recommendations for strengthening partnership:**

- ⇒ Study findings show a need to promote flexible, long-term partnerships that prioritize local expertise. By shifting the focus to local leadership, development and humanitarian efforts will be more impactful and responsive to the needs of communities.
- ⇒ It is essential to provide the necessary resources to cultivate sustainable local leadership within these partnerships, fostering an environment of mutual respect and equity.
- ⇒ This approach not only enhances the effectiveness of collaborative initiatives but also empowers local actors to take an active role in shaping their own development, ultimately leading to more resilient and thriving communities.



## Domain 2: Leadership

### Leadership



#### Key Finding:

There is **limited evidence** that local/national actors define and lead humanitarian and development work. International actors are seen as the primary decision-makers in emergencies, with local/national organisations and governments playing more secondary roles.

### Summary of evidence related to local and national leadership

Progress Indicators	Level of Evidence
1. International actors support and strengthen national leadership	Limited evidence
2. Local/national actors lead response and dominate decision-making	Limited evidence
3. International actors work with and respect in-country leadership structures and mechanisms	Limited evidence

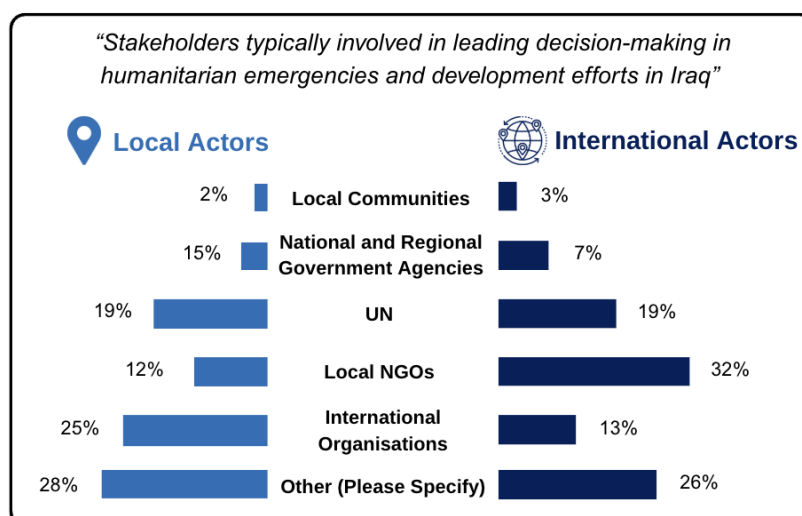
- ⇒ In the past 10 years, international actors have played the primary role in leading emergency responses in Iraq. This is because local and national actors typically lack direct connections to international donors, which restricts their involvement in strategic decision-making.
- ⇒ Local organisations have generally been engaged at the level of project leadership, focusing on implementation rather than having a seat at the strategic decision-making table.

### Key Participation Domain findings:

#### 2.1 International actors are seen as the primary decision-makers in emergencies, with local/national organisations and governments playing more secondary roles.

- ⇒ With regards to decision-making on humanitarian responses and development efforts, survey data shows differing perceptions of leadership between local/national and international actors.
- ⇒ While local/national actors see themselves in second place with regards to decision-making leadership (after international organisations), international actors only place them in fourth position (after the UN, international organisations and government agencies, see Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Leading the decision-making process**

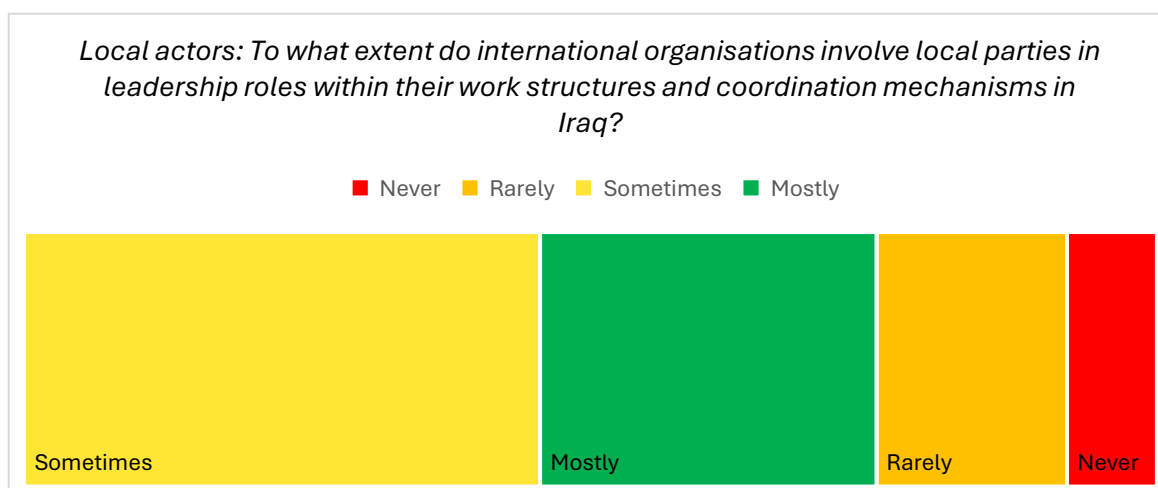


- ⇒ Local/national actors for the most part don't find the **work or coordination structures of international organisations** supportive of local/national actors' leadership.
- ⇒ The study survey found that 46% of local/national actors felt they were sometimes involved in leadership roles within these structures (see Figure 8).

“International actors tend to maintain leadership in their own hands, and when they do hand over responsibilities, they do not allow sufficient time or resources to sustain the activities afterward. This is a problem that we commonly encounter”.

**Local actor**

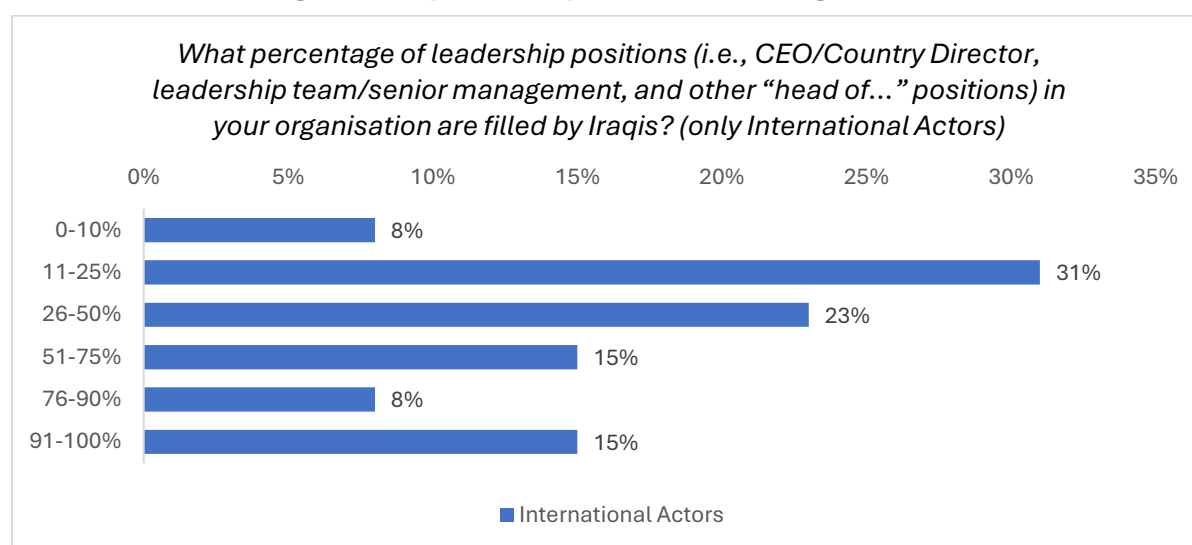
**Figure 8: International work structures and coordination mechanisms of supportive of local leadership**



## 2.2 Leadership Positions versus Locally-Led Responses

- ⇒ International actors involve Iraqi personnel in **leadership roles within their organisation**.
- ⇒ The study survey found that 31% of international actors surveyed had between 11 and 25% of Iraqis in leadership positions (see Figure 9).
- ⇒ However, local/national actors asked several times whether placing Iraqis in leadership positions is truly an alternative to locally-led responses.
- ⇒ Study participants noted that some international organisations consider localisation as achieved when Iraqi staff are appointed, but this is not a locally-led response, as these individuals often only fulfil implementation roles, and there is no shift in power to local actors as decision-making and financial control is retained among international actors.

**Figure 9: Iraqi leadership in international organisations**



## Recommendations for strengthening leadership

- ⇒ Strong leadership is pivotal in driving effective humanitarian, peace, and development initiatives. To enhance the role of local/national actors in these domains, it is essential to create policies that prioritise local expertise in leadership roles.
- ⇒ This approach involves investing in targeted leadership development within organisations, focusing on specialised sectors and leveraging lessons learned from past projects.
- ⇒ Supporting capacity strengthening efforts for government organisations is crucial to ensure a sustainable transition in community-led initiatives.
- ⇒ Furthermore, strategic technical assistance and capacity strengthening efforts should be directed towards empowering local/national actors in leadership roles.
- ⇒ Encouraging these roles through dedicated funding and support lays a foundation for sustainable leadership transitions.
- ⇒ By fostering long-term partnerships with qualified local/national actors and increasing funding for specialised sectors, leadership among local/national actors can be cultivated and sustained, allowing local/national leaders to spearhead transformative efforts in their communities effectively.

## Domain 3: Coordination and complementarity

### Coordination



#### Key Finding:

There is **limited evidence** for the application of and respect for commonly agreed approaches to 'as local as possible and as international as necessary'. Since the deactivation of the UN cluster system and the closure of NCCI, alternative coordination structures established have remained largely ineffective notably due to limited resources including to support coordination efforts.

The **UN cluster system**, active until 2022, was typically led by UN agencies, with some clusters co-led by international NGOs with participation from local/national organisations. This structure primarily facilitated coordination between the UN and the Iraqi federal government. Meanwhile, NCCI managed **coordination among NGOs**, as well as between NGOs and local government actors.

Since the UN cluster system was deactivated at the end of 2022 and NCCI closed in 2023, the study found that **coordination efforts have significantly reduced**. The study found that coordination efforts are still ongoing, as alternatives to the UN cluster system were established on a thematic basis.

### Summary of evidence levels related to coordination and complementarity

Progress Indicators	Level of Evidence
1. National representation and engagement in coordination forums and meetings	Limited evidence
2. Clearly defined parameters for international actors complementing local/national actors in humanitarian response	Limited evidence
3. National civil society coordination mechanisms are funded and have technical capacity to operate in humanitarian response	Limited evidence
4. Humanitarian response is delivered in a way that is collaborative and complementary (i.e. based on an analysis of the specific strengths/weaknesses of different humanitarian actors)	Limited evidence

## Key Coordination & Complementarity Domain findings:



“There are now no resources, and donors are increasingly uninterested in funding coordination efforts. Only small, limited examples of donor support for coordination remains, making the future of coordination more difficult”.

**International Actor**



### 3.1 Learning from Humanitarian Coordination Structures

- ⇒ English was the dominant language in both the cluster system and NCCI, which presented a barrier to fully integrating local/national actors into coordination processes. Despite these challenges, coordination efforts were functioning, although they were not led by local/national actors.
- ⇒ Local networks also act as coordination platforms, but these are often limited to a small number of NGOs, typically members of such networks. For example, the Justice Network for Prisoners and the informal Alliance 188 (focused on women’s rights in Iraq’s civil law) continue to coordinate within their respective networks. Coordination efforts at the governorate level were also cited as potential models for local coordination, though these initiatives are still in their early stages.
- ⇒ However, resources to implement transition or development work are limited, and donors have deprioritised funding for coordination.
- ⇒ Despite the context, participation in current coordination structures still appears important to stakeholders in the humanitarian and development sectors.
- ⇒ Study data show that all international actors participate in coordination meetings, and only 16% of local/national actors indicated that they did not participate in coordination meetings (see Figure 10).

**Figure 10: Participation in coordination structures**



- ⇒ Most frequent responses point to organisations equally engaging national and international fora (44% of local/national actor and 39% of international actors, see Figure 10), while more

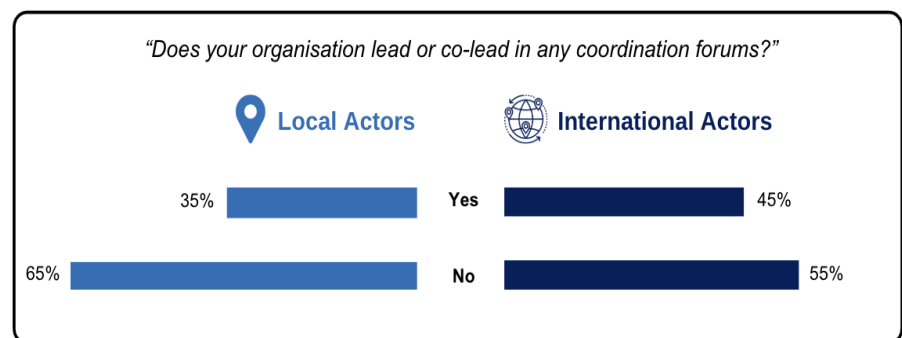
international organisations lead or co-lead coordination forums than local/national actors (45% versus 35%, see Figure 11).

- ⇒ The study found that while coordination alternatives to the UN cluster system and NCCI have been established on thematic areas such as protection and durable solutions, these mechanisms remain largely ineffective.
- ⇒ This is primarily due to a lack of sustainable funding and resources necessary for maintaining coordination efforts. Additionally, there has not been sufficient time to transition effectively and evaluate the effectiveness of these alternative mechanisms.

**Figure 11: Type of fora most engaged**



**Figure 12: Leadership in coordination**



## Recommendations for strengthening coordination

- ⇒ Findings show a need to strengthen local leadership by ensuring active participation from local and national actors to enhance the effectiveness of coordination mechanisms in Iraq.
- ⇒ Ensuring adequate funding for these coordination efforts, along with allowing time for local/national actors to participate meaningfully, will empower local organisations and authorities to take on leadership roles in these forums.
- ⇒ This approach will not only improve the relevance and responsiveness of humanitarian and development initiatives but will also promote a sense of ownership and accountability among local stakeholders, ultimately leading to more sustainable and effective outcomes.

## Domain 4: Participation

### Participation



#### Key Finding:

There is **limited evidence** that communities lead and participate in humanitarian response. However, community engagements in humanitarian program design and implementation are hampered by lack of effectiveness and systematic approach

### Summary of evidence levels related to community participation in humanitarian response

Progress Indicators	Level of Evidence
Community/contextualised standards exist for all actors working in that context	Limited evidence
Communities have increased opportunities to shape programming, including evaluating international actor programs	Limited evidence

- ⇒ Effective community engagement is a crucial aspect of humanitarian program design and implementation, particularly in Iraq, where local actors are often closely connected to the communities they serve.
- ⇒ Many local/national organisations employ community members, facilitating direct contact and enabling them to gather input and feedback more effectively.
- ⇒ In several cases, international actors have relied on these local/national actors to ensure meaningful community engagement. Furthermore, local/national organisations have adopted new tools and methodologies, such as FGDs and digital platforms through their collaboration with international partners.
- ⇒ Despite these advancements, challenges remain, highlighting the need for a more systematic approach to engagement in humanitarian efforts.

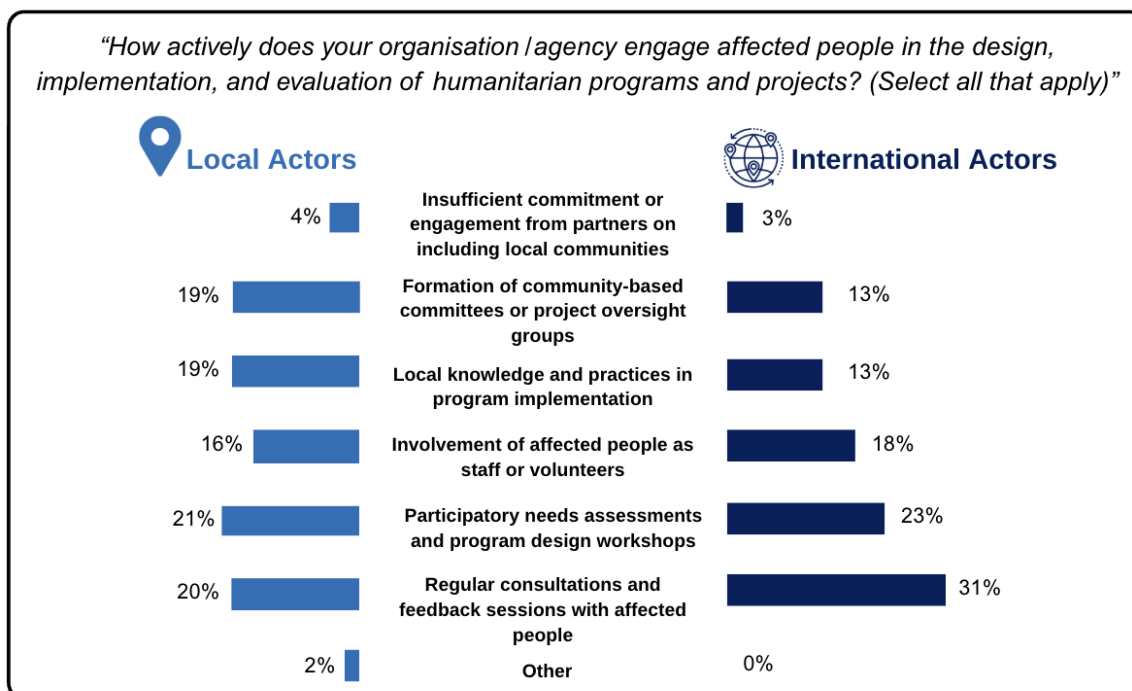
### Key Participation Domain findings:

#### 4.1. Community Engagements in Humanitarian Program Design and Implementation Hampered by Lack of Effectiveness and Systematic Approach

- ⇒ The study survey data shows high levels of **community engagement in the design, implementation and evaluation of humanitarian programs or projects**, with only 4% of local/national actors surveyed and 3% of international actors surveyed reporting insufficient commitment or engagement from partners towards the inclusion of local communities.
- ⇒ Methods of engagement include regular consultations and feedback sessions with affected people (31% of international actors and 20% of local/national actors surveyed) and participatory needs assessments and program design workshops (23% of international actors and 21% of local/national actors surveyed, see Figure 13).



**Figure 13: Engagement of people affected by crises in project cycle**



- ⇒ However, qualitative data suggests that the effectiveness of the engagements vary depending on factors such as the degree of connection of organisations to communities.
- ⇒ Efforts might also be hampered by a lack of accountability to communities for decisions made and actions taken, casting doubts over the effectiveness and systematic approach of these community engagement efforts.

“

“The involvement is weak and ineffective. Organisations are more focused on convincing donors rather than genuinely engaging the local community. The involvement tends to be formal and sporadic”.

**International Actor**

“There is very weak accountability, with no clear mechanisms in place. Even when mechanisms exist, they are not systematic”.

**International Actor**

“Smaller organisations tend to have a stronger connection with communities and are more effective in their engagement, while larger organisations often lose touch, relying on tools that are not applied systematically”.

**Local Authority**

”

- ⇒ Examples of successful community engagement include the collaboration between the Ministry of Education and an INGO in 2022 to develop a non-formal education project dedicated to children in southern Iraq. Field visits and meetings with local representatives and school managers raised understanding on how non-formal education could effectively engage children. This engagement supported the development of a non-formal education project for children aged 7 to 12 years.

## Recommendations to strengthen participation

The study shows that the necessary conditions, skills, and experience for effective community engagement in Iraq are present among both local/national and international actors, who have developed innovative tools to facilitate this engagement. However, there is a pressing need to solidify this experience and create a more robust framework for community involvement in decision-making processes.

- ⇒ To achieve this, there is a need for policies that mandate systematic and effective community assessments, ensuring the inclusive participation of local communities.
- ⇒ Establishing accountability mechanisms will hold organisations responsible for engaging communities and acting upon their input.
- ⇒ Improving consultation tools by consolidating lessons learned can enhance their effectiveness and contribute to a systematic approach to community engagement.
- ⇒ Additionally, it is crucial to dedicate funds specifically for community inclusion and accountability efforts, ensuring that communities are actively involved in shaping responses and holding stakeholders accountable.
- ⇒ Valuing and integrating input from local actors based on systematic community assessments will help enhance accountability structures and ensure community voices are prioritised.
- ⇒ Supporting local organisations in their fundraising efforts dedicated to community engagement will improve coordination and effectiveness.
- ⇒ Providing capacity-building support for local/national actors will further bolster their ability to conduct systematic consultations with communities, making community involvement a central aspect of decision-making.
- ⇒ Finally, embedding accountability mechanisms at all levels of participation will strengthen humanitarian, peacebuilding, and development efforts, ensuring that community feedback is systematically integrated into decision-making processes.

## Domain 5: Policy influence



- Local actors are seen as key stakeholders. However, they still find it hard to influence donor agendas and national policies effectively.
- Some organisations raise important issues with the government, but turning this influence into real change is difficult.
- Most local and national organisations provide some inputs into policy development, but few significantly shape humanitarian and development strategies.

Summary of evidence levels related to communities and local/national actors' influence on policy

Progress Indicators	Level of Evidence
1. Policies are informed by local/national voice including communities	Limited evidence
2. National actors are recognised as key stakeholders in national debates about policies and standards that may have significant impact on them	Limited evidence
3. Local/national actors have influence on donor priorities in-country, including program design and implementation	Limited evidence

### Key Policy Influence Domain findings:

#### 5.1 Local actors are recognised as key stakeholders but continue to struggle to shape donor agendas and national policies effectively

- ⇒ The study found that while local/national actors are **recognised as key stakeholders**, their **influence on donor agendas and policy formulation** remains limited.
- ⇒ This, in turn, affects the degree to which humanitarian action truly reflects the priorities of affected communities and local/national actors.
- ⇒ The study survey found that only 23% of local/national actors and 30% of international actors do not provide inputs on national or sub-national humanitarian and development policies and planning processes, making the proportion of organisations that do significant (see Figure 14).
- ⇒ However, translating this involvement into effective policy influencing remains a challenge. The role of local/national actors in shifting government attitudes, particularly during the emergency phase, was nonetheless underscored.

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“Local organisations are often successful in raising important issues on the government’s agenda, but they struggle to translate this into effective change. For example, one of our partners in Mosul organised an event involving an Iraqi minister to address the challenges of returnees. While this created direct contact and provided valuable, in-depth information, turning this into real action remains a challenge”.

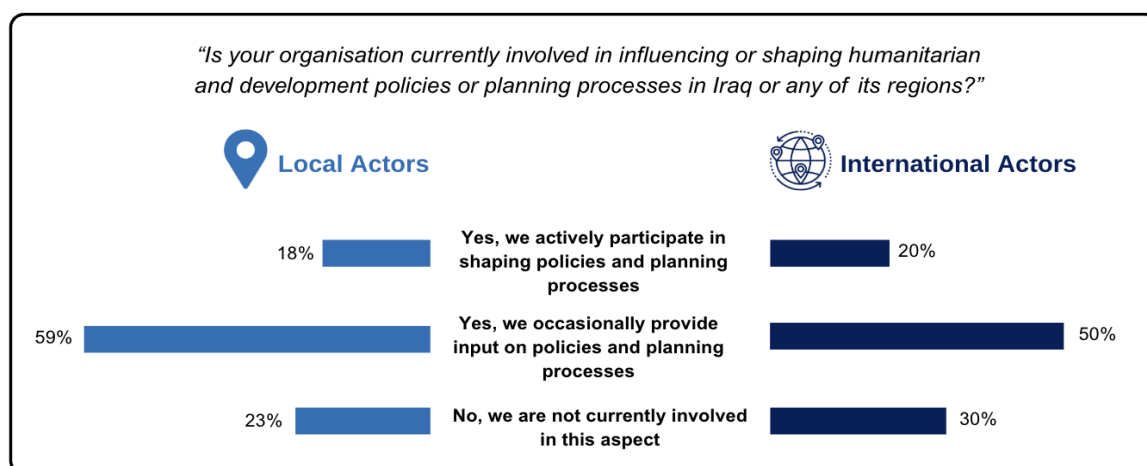
International Actor

“Local actors, including local organisations, played a crucial role in changing the mentality of the government, which had previously excluded communities stigmatised as supporters of Daesh. Thanks to their influence, the government is now providing support to many of those who were once marginalised”.

International Actor

”

**Figure 14: Involvement in policy development or planning processes**



## Recommendations for strengthening policy influence

- ⇒ As local/national actors continue to navigate the challenges of having their voices heard in the policy-making process, it is essential to implement targeted strategies that strengthen their influence and participation in legislative dialogues.
- ⇒ By fostering collaboration, establishing constructive dialogue mechanisms, and providing the necessary resources, local/national actors can be empowered to contribute effectively to decision-making.
- ⇒ Ensuring that their insights are integrated into policy formulation will ultimately lead to more responsive and locally relevant outcomes that address the needs of the communities they serve.

## Domain 6: Capacity

### Capacity



#### Key Finding:

There is **limited evidence** that local/national organisations can respond effectively and efficiently and have targeted and relevant support from international actors. While some local/national actors can deliver effective responses in humanitarian contexts, tailored capacity strengthening will still be essential to help a diversity of local/national actors effectively address

### Summary of evidence levels related to local/national actors' capacity

Progress Indicators	Level of Evidence
1. Use of local, national and regional surge capacity over international expertise	Limited evidence
2. Actors do not undermine the capacity of national actors in emergency response	Limited evidence
3. Contextualised humanitarian standards, tools and policies are available	Limited evidence
4. Legislation and plans are in place to support national response capacity	Limited evidence

- ⇒ Local/national organisations in Iraq demonstrate **varying levels of capacity**, with some organisations showing strong operational capabilities, while others still face significant challenges in fully addressing capacity gaps.
- ⇒ Nonetheless, there is a clear need for additional, targeted capacity strengthening and learning opportunities to support a wider range of local/national actors, ensuring they can effectively contribute to sustainable development and address emerging challenges in Iraq.
- ⇒ Research on capacity was also influenced by the ongoing transition from a humanitarian to a development-focused approach.
- ⇒ Many organisations still require further capacity strengthening, particularly as the number of new organisations grows.

## Key Capacity Domain findings:

### 6.1 Varying capacities of local/national actors and the need for transition work preparedness

- ⇒ Study survey data show that local/national actors are preparing themselves for the transition from humanitarian to development work.
- ⇒ However, 28% of local/national actors and 23% of international actors surveyed acknowledged that they still need additional resources and funding to respond effectively to the transition.
- ⇒ Local/national actors also acknowledged that they are facing significant challenges in adapting to the transition (13% of local/national actors surveyed versus 3% of international actor surveyed, see Figure 15).
- ⇒ The survey found an ongoing need for more capacity strengthening, particularly for newer local/national actors, and the importance of focusing on sustainability, proposal development, and securing funding.

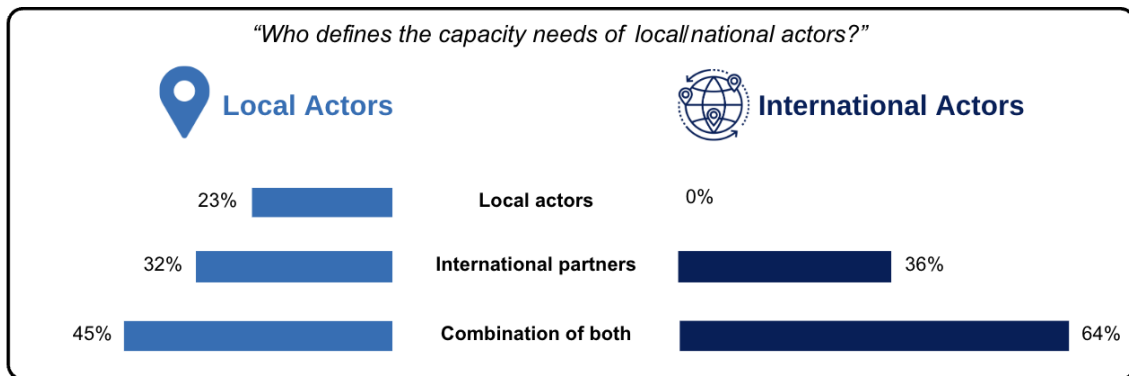
**Figure 15: Transition work preparedness**



### 6.2 Defining Capacity Needs of Local/National Actors

Survey data provided further insights into responsibilities for defining capacity strengthening needs. Of the local/national actors surveyed, 45% believed that both international partners and local actors were responsible for defining the capacity needs of local/national actors, as compared with 64% of international actors surveyed (see Figure 16).

**Figure 16: Defining capacity needs of local/national actors**



The situation in Iraq is complex. Several key elements need to be considered whenever assessing local/national actors' capacity and what is required to strengthen it:

- ⇒ Responding to persistent needs: Although some local/national actors can respond to emergencies effectively, few have the capacity to respond to persistent vulnerabilities and needs.
- ⇒ Diversity Among Local/National Actors: "Local/national actors" includes a wide range of entities, such as government agencies and NGOs. It is important to address the capacity-strengthening needs of this diversity of local stakeholders.
- ⇒ Evolving Challenges: When local/national actors request additional capacity strengthening, they often refer to the need to develop skills to address emerging challenges. For example, the shift from humanitarian aid to development work may require new skills to meet changing needs.

The survey found that some local/national organisations have made significant strides in building their capacity and developing essential tools over the past few years. However, these advancements are still

limited to a small number of organisations. Currently, international NGOs, UN agencies, and donor organisations are the primary entities that offer the option of working through local/national actors. While this collaboration presents a viable opportunity for engagement, it remains accessible to only a limited selection of organisations, although this number is gradually increasing.

“

“The capacity of local organisations is now well recognised, and they have developed rapidly, though this progress is limited to a few organisations”.

International Actor

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Furthermore, the study found that government institutions lack efficiency but have the advantage of a secured mandate. Examples provided to illustrate this point referred to service centres that were handed over to local authorities only to close after a short period. On the other hand, local/national organisations are perceived to be more efficient, but their sustainability is under threat.




## Recommendations for strengthening capacity

Legislation governing NGOs is generally considered stable, allowing local/national organisations to operate relatively freely. However, there are increasing limitations, often imposed by government entities seeking greater control over the sector. Additionally, influential non-state actors impose restrictions on specific topics or actions, particularly related to gender issues and gender-based violence. These actors often justify such restrictions by claiming to “protect traditional family values”.

- ⇒ While some local/national actors can deliver effective responses in humanitarian contexts, tailored capacity strengthening will still be essential to help a diversity of local/national actors effectively address emerging challenges.
- ⇒ Strengthening local capacity remains essential for enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of humanitarian and development efforts in Iraq.
- ⇒ As a primary condition, it is crucial to ensure that civic space is respected, encouraging local actors to solidify their capacity.
- ⇒ Regular communication within existing coordination structures is necessary for mutual understanding of priorities and challenges.
- ⇒ Enhancing internal learning practices will facilitate the sharing of knowledge among staff and other organisations.

## Domain 7: Funding

Funding



Limited evidence

**Key Finding:**

There is **limited evidence** of an increased number of local/national organisations describing financial independence that allows them to respond more efficiently to humanitarian and development needs.

### Summary of evidence levels related to local/national actors' financial independence

Progress Indicators	Level of Evidence
Local/national actors have access to direct funding with limited or no barriers	Limited evidence
Increase in the amount of humanitarian funding to local/national actors	Limited evidence
Local/national actors have increased decision-making over financial matters	Limited evidence

- ⇒ Despite their crucial role in humanitarian efforts, local and national organisations in Iraq face significant barriers in accessing international funding.
- ⇒ While these organisations are increasingly recognised for their contributions and are beginning to secure more funding, they still encounter challenges that hinder their ability to operate effectively.

### Key Participation Domain findings:

#### 7.1. Limited Direct Access to International Funding

Limited direct access to international funding remains a dominant issue for local/national organisations. Of the local/national actors surveyed, 68% reported that local/national organisations rarely or never have direct access to donors without the need for an international partner, as compared with 31% of international actors surveyed (see Figure 17).

**Figure 17: Local/national actors' access to donors**



Data on **humanitarian funding distribution** for Iraq in the year 2023 shows significant funding disparities between humanitarian actors.

- ⇒ Local/national NGOs received 0.2% of total humanitarian funding in 2023, while UN agencies dominated the funding landscape, receiving 59% of total funding.
- ⇒ International NGOs received 33% of total funding, while the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement received 7% (see table 10).
- ⇒ Finally, national governments received 0.03% of total funding.

**Table 10: Distribution of humanitarian funding in Iraq in 2023**

Actors	Amount
UN and other multilateral organisations	151,241,900 USD
INGOs	83,790,855 USD
ICRC	18,416,825 USD
International Private Organisations	698,713 USD
Local and national NGOs	511,113 USD
Country-based UN Pooled Funds	214,133 USD
Not specified	158,226 USD
National Governments	72,059 USD
Other	22,000 USD
<b>Total incoming funding</b>	<b>255,125,824 USD</b>

See <https://fts.unocha.org> (visited in October 2024).

Furthermore, international actors often do not share sufficient overhead costs with local organisations, typically allocating only a minor portion of these funds. This lack of adequate support for overhead and structural expenses restricts the capacity of local actors to grow and sustain their operations, ultimately impacting their ability to respond effectively to community needs.

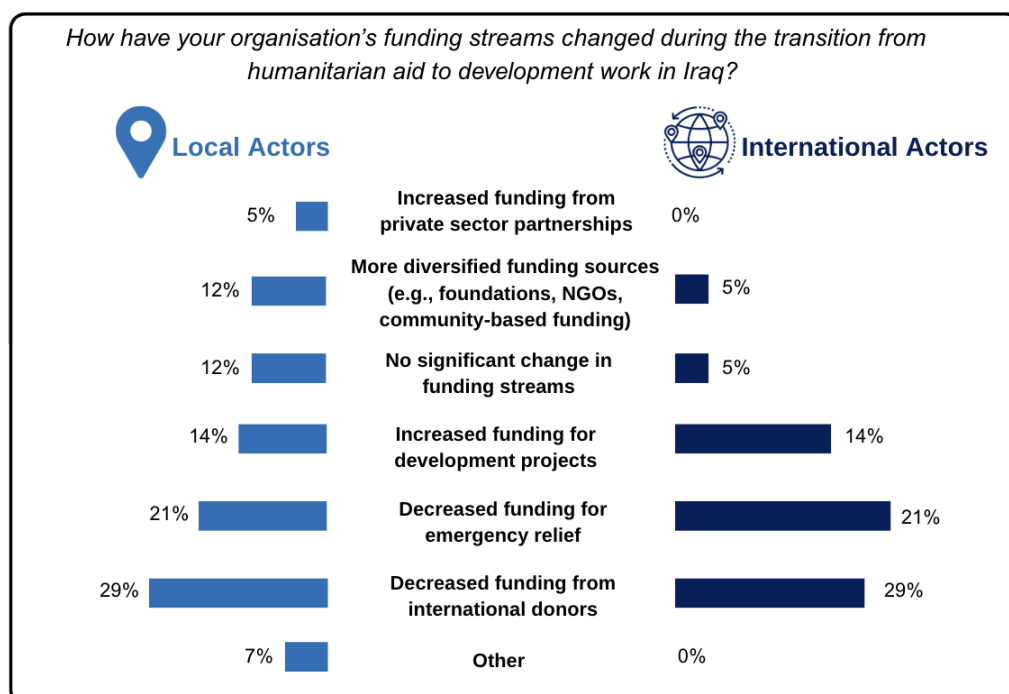
## **7.2. Change in Needs Require a Funding Rethink**

Iraq is undergoing a significant shift from emergency response to development, a positive indication that the humanitarian crisis is subsiding. However, this **transition brings major challenges**. With less funding available to address the remaining humanitarian needs, there is also no alternative financial support to sustain the progress made in previous years.

The change in funding streams during the transition most cited by survey respondents included decreased funding for emergency relief (21% of local/national actors and 35% of international actors surveyed), decreased funding from international donors (29% of local/national actors surveyed and 30% of international actors surveyed) and increased funding for development

projects (14% of local/national actors surveyed and 25% of international actors surveyed, see Figure 18).

**Figure 17: Change in funding streams during the transition phase**



## Recommendations for strengthening funding

Peacebuilding and recovery efforts, while continuing to move forward, remain at risk due to a lack of funding alternatives. The Iraqi government has yet to develop plans to finance these critical areas, and existing institutions lack the resources or capacity to address these needs. The private sector, despite its significant potential to contribute, remains minimally involved in funding these efforts.

- ⇒ The study found an urgent need for a clear legal framework for local funding, with recommendations focused on establishing a national fund for peace and recovery, supported by contributions from the private sector and the Iraqi government, and managed with transparency and professionalism. A dedicated “Iraqi Fund for Peace and Recovery” was a widely endorsed suggestion.
- ⇒ Direct access to international funding remains a dominant issue for local/national actors in the context of reduced international funding availability and lack of alternative plans.
- ⇒ As the funding landscape evolves, particularly due to the recent US funding freeze and the review of funding priorities, policies, and procedures, there is an urgent need for collaboration between international and local/national actors to identify alternative response plans and adjust their strategies accordingly.
- ⇒ This collaboration should also emphasise innovative approaches to delivering activities that maximize impact. Such a shift requires a collective effort to enhance access to financial resources while ensuring that the unique capacities of local actors are recognised and effectively leveraged.

## Conclusion and recommendations

This study does not aim to document successes or failures nor to pass judgment on the efforts made or gaps in the localisation of humanitarian and development work in Iraq. Instead, the primary objective of this study is to provide a customised measurement tool tailored to the specific Iraqi context. While general measurement tools and methods used in other contexts, such as Yemen and Ukraine, have demonstrated their significance, this study seeks to establish a baseline for localisation in Iraq, focusing on specific domains relevant to the Iraqi context.

The study analysed progress in seven key areas: **Partnerships, Leadership, Coordination and Complementarity, Participation, Policy Influence, Capacity, and Funding**. Each of these areas was explored in detail as if they were independent, though it is understood that they overlap and are interconnected. However, for the sake of clarity, the report focused on examining them separately.

This baseline study serves as a starting point for national and international stakeholders involved in Iraq's humanitarian and development sectors, offering a strategic framework to guide a necessary and thoughtful transition toward local leadership in response efforts. This path toward greater localisation must be marked by dialogue, the setting of interim goals, and careful attention to the indicators highlighted by this study, which will enable stakeholders to track progress over time.

The study includes concise recommendations that are summarised within this report. For those seeking a more in-depth understanding, detailed recommendations are provided in the Recommendations Matrix for Localising Humanitarian and Development Responses in Iraq. It is essential for each stakeholder to review these recommendations thoroughly, adapt them to their specific strategies, and identify opportunities for implementing change, whether at an organisational level or across the sector as a whole.

### Recommendations

The key recommendations are presented below by domain and stakeholder. Improving locally led response will require actions from multiple stakeholder groups to achieve.

## 1. Recommendations for strengthening **partnerships** by stakeholder:

Government authorities	Local/national organisations	International Organisations	UN Agencies	Donor Community
<p>Facilitate partnerships between local authorities and qualified local/national actors to lead planning and implementing of humanitarian, peace, and development initiatives.</p> <p>Promote collaboration with local CSOs by creating an enabling environment that encourages strategic partnerships in line with local development priorities.</p>	<p>Leverage local expertise and lessons learned to establish equitable, strategic partnerships with international and government actors.</p> <p><b>Strengthen collaboration efforts</b> by fostering relationships with other local/national actors and <b>local authorities</b>, ensuring that partnerships are <b>long-term, flexible, and focused on shared objectives</b> for sustainable development and peacebuilding.</p>	<p><b>Promote equitable partnerships</b> by prioritising <b>local leadership</b> in planning and implementation of programs.</p> <p><b>Expand partnerships to include a wider range of local/national actors</b> by establishing inclusive criteria and a flexible approach to ensure equitable partnerships.</p> <p>Shift towards <b>long-term partnerships</b> with <b>local/national organisations</b> that have demonstrated capacity and expertise in relevant areas.</p>	<p>Foster partnerships that prioritise local expertise, ensuring qualified local actors lead in implementing humanitarian, peace, and development initiatives.</p> <p><b>Strengthen long-term collaborations with local partners</b> by providing <b>flexible funding</b> and technical support, allowing local/national actors to build capacity and sustainably lead projects.</p>	<p><b>Increase long-term and flexible funding for qualified local/national actors</b>, focusing on <b>strategic partnerships</b> that enable local/national organisations to lead implementation of humanitarian, peace, and development initiatives.</p> <p><b>Support equitable partnerships</b> by designing funding mechanisms that encourage <b>local leadership</b> and ensure <b>collaborative planning and implementation</b> based on local needs and expertise.</p>

## 2. Recommendations for strengthening leadership by stakeholder:

Government authorities	Local/national organisations	International Organisations	UN Agencies	Donor Community
<p>Prioritise leadership of qualified local/national actors in humanitarian, peace, and development initiatives by creating policies that <b>prioritise local expertise in leadership roles</b>.</p>	<p><b>Invest in leadership development</b> within the organisation by focusing on specialised sectors based on the strengths of the organisation and lessons learned from previous projects.</p> <p><b>Support capacity-building efforts for government organisations</b> to ensure a sustainable transition in community-led initiatives.</p>	<p><b>Support the leadership of local/national actors</b>, offering strategic technical assistance and capacity strengthening in leadership roles.</p>	<p><b>Encourage leadership roles for local actors</b> in humanitarian, peace, and development initiatives by offering dedicated funding and capacity-building support.</p> <p><b>Focus on sustainable leadership</b> transitions by allocating resources for long-term partnerships with qualified local/national actors, especially in specialised sectors where local capacity has been established.</p>	<p><b>Increase dedicated and long-term funding</b> for qualified and specialised local actors, particularly for CSOs working in humanitarian, peace, and development sectors.</p> <p><b>Foster leadership among local/national actors</b> by supporting initiatives that focus on leadership capacity development, ensuring that funding structures allow for the growth of local leadership.</p>



### 3. Recommendations for strengthening coordination & complementarity by stakeholder:

Government authorities	Local/national organisations	International Organisations	UN Agencies	Donor Community
<p><b>Activate the role of local/national actors and their coordination mechanism in the governorate-level coordination fora involving a diverse range of actors, including civil society, to ensure open information-sharing and collaboration.</b></p>	<p><b>Increase participation</b> in coordination fora, especially <b>local networks</b> and those involving government actors, to enhance collaboration and collective impact.</p> <p><b>Dedicate time and resources</b> to ensure active participation and leadership in coordination mechanisms.</p> <p>Work to <b>shift leadership</b> of existing coordination mechanisms to <b>local/national actors</b>.</p>	<p><b>Prioritise locally-led coordination</b>, taking active part in fora led by <b>local/national actors</b> and offering input to strengthen these initiatives.</p> <p><b>Provide funding</b> and technical support to ensure that <b>local/national organisations</b> have the capacity and resources to effectively lead and coordinate responses at the governorate and national levels.</p>	<p><b>Support local actors</b> in taking leadership of <b>existing coordination mechanisms</b>, providing encouragement, capacity-building, and funding where needed.</p> <p>Actively engage in <b>locally-led coordination</b> efforts and support these platforms by offering technical expertise and ensuring that <b>local leadership</b> is recognised and prioritised in all coordination efforts.</p>	<p><b>Dedicate funding for locally-led coordination mechanisms</b>, ensuring these efforts are sustained and included in grants for humanitarian, peace, and development projects.</p> <p>Encourage the <b>active participation</b> of donors in local coordination fora and <b>prioritise local/national actors</b> when supporting coordination platforms, providing input and funding to enhance their effectiveness.</p>

#### 4. Recommendations for strengthening participation by stakeholder:

Government authorities	Local/national organisations	International Organisations	UN Agencies	Donor Community
<p>Encourage policies that require systematic and effective community assessments to ensure inclusive participation of local communities in decision-making.</p> <p>Facilitate the creation of accountability mechanisms to hold organisations responsible for involving communities and acting on their input.</p>	<p><b>Improve consultation tools</b> by consolidating lessons learned and enhancing their effectiveness, ensuring a <b>systematic approach</b> to engaging communities.</p> <p><b>Raise funds</b> specifically for <b>community inclusion and accountability efforts</b>, ensuring that communities are actively involved in shaping responses and holding stakeholders accountable.</p>	<p><b>Value and integrate input</b> from local actors that is based on <b>systematic community assessments</b> and work to improve <b>accountability structures</b> within the organisation to ensure community voices are prioritised.</p> <p>Support <b>local/national organisations</b> in raising funds dedicated to <b>community engagement and inclusivity</b>, and ensure these efforts are well-coordinated.</p>	<p>Provide support and capacity-building to local/national organisations to improve their ability to conduct <b>systematic and effective consultations</b> with communities, ensuring <b>community involvement</b> is a core component of decision-making.</p> <p>Ensure <b>accountability mechanisms</b> are built into all levels of participation, particularly in humanitarian, peacebuilding, and development efforts.</p>	<p>Allocate <b>funding for community inclusion</b> as part of humanitarian, peacebuilding, and development interventions.</p> <p>Provide <b>dedicated funding</b> streams for local/national organisations to enhance their capacity for <b>community accountability</b> and ensure <b>community feedback</b> is systematically incorporated into decision-making processes.</p>

## 5. Recommendations for strengthening policy influence by stakeholder:

Government authorities	Local/national organisations	International Organisations	UN Agencies	Donor Community
<p>Ensure that local actors and civil society are <b>systematically involved in legislation dialogues and planning processes</b>.</p> <p>Establish mechanisms for constructive dialogue with local/national organisations to incorporate their input in the policy-making process.</p>	<p>Strengthen <b>strategic advocacy efforts</b> by investing in <b>stakeholder analysis</b> and developing a <b>clear plan</b> for policy influence.</p> <p>Collaborate with other local actors to increase <b>solidarity</b> and <b>amplify voices</b> around shared priorities, ensuring better influence on policy decisions through joint advocacy mechanisms.</p>	<p>Provide <b>solidarity and support</b> to local actors in their efforts to influence policies, particularly around <b>local priorities</b>.</p> <p><b>As an intermediary, work</b> to ensure that government, other NGO actors, UN and donors have a consistent focus on <b>consulting civil society</b> and incorporating their input.</p>	<p>Strengthen <b>policy influence efforts</b> of local actors by ensuring that UN agencies <b>facilitate dialogue</b> between government and civil society.</p> <p>Advocate for policies that prioritise <b>inclusive governance</b> by ensuring that <b>civil society's agenda</b> is reflected in decision-making processes.</p>	<p>Provide <b>funding for advocacy and policy influence</b> as an integral part of humanitarian, peacebuilding, and development activities.</p> <p>Support <b>local advocacy</b> efforts and ensure that <b>policy influence</b> becomes a more prominent focus in funded projects.</p>

## 6. Recommendations for strengthening **capacity** by stakeholder:

Government authorities	Local/national organisations	International Organisations	UN Agencies	Donor Community
<p><b>Ensure civic space is respected</b> by improving the application of the local NGO law.</p> <p>Ensure <b>regular communication to the existing coordination structures</b> to ensure a mutual understanding of priorities, existing capacities, and challenges.</p>	<p><b>Enhance internal learning</b> practices to ensure the accumulated capacity is transferred to a wider pool of staff and shared with other local/national organisations.</p> <p>Respond to the <b>capacity needs identified by local communities</b>, emphasising <b>peer learning</b> from other successful local/national actors.</p>	<p>Ensure that appropriate <b>advanced levels of capacity strengthening</b> are incorporated in the partnership contracts to ensure sustainability.</p> <p>Include budget provisions for <b>internal capacity-strengthening</b> and the use of <b>local experts</b> in funding proposals.</p>	<p>Support <b>capacity-strengthening programs</b> that focus on <b>peer-to-peer learning</b> among local/national actors who have demonstrated expertise.</p> <p>Advocate for donor funding to include provisions for <b>internal capacity strengthening</b> and ensure local experts are engaged in these programs.</p>	<p><b>Provide funding</b> that includes <b>costs for capacity-strengthening</b> within local/national organisations, prioritising the use of <b>local experts</b> and peer-to-peer capacity transfer.</p> <p>Recognise local expertise and encourage <b>direct partnerships</b> with local/national organisations for project implementation.</p>

## 7. Recommendations for strengthening funding by stakeholder:

Government authorities	Local/national organisations	International Organisations	UN Agencies	Donor Community
<p>Develop a <b>national peace and recovery fund</b> dedicated to peacebuilding, recovery, and humanitarian needs. Ensure this fund supports CSOs through transparent, fair regulations and reporting mechanisms.</p> <p>Allocate a <b>portion of the Iraqi national budget to fund local civil society efforts</b>, setting quotas for each Iraqi governorate, with a focus on marginalised areas.</p> <p>Encourage partnerships with the private sector to contribute to this fund.</p>	<p><b>Diversify funding</b> sources through local fundraising efforts and encourage volunteer contributions and involvement to increase financial sustainability. Advocate for <b>funding of structural costs</b> and overheads, ensuring operational sustainability.</p> <p><b>Work towards receiving direct, long-term, and flexible funding</b> from both national and international donors, while demonstrating accountability and transparent reporting practices.</p>	<p><b>Provide direct funding to local/national organisations</b>, including civil society actors, to support their operational and programmatic needs.</p> <p>Ensure funding agreements include <b>provisions for overheads</b> and structural costs, allowing for the institutional growth of local/national organisations.</p> <p>Establish mechanisms that encourage <b>long-term partnerships and flexible funding</b>, empowering local actors to design and lead their own initiatives.</p>	<p><b>Collaborate with Iraqi authorities</b> to develop a <b>national peace and recovery fund</b>, involving the UN as a technical advisor for fund management, transparency, and accountability.</p> <p><b>Advocate for sustainable and long-term funding models</b> that prioritise local capacity-building and ensure that CSOs can access direct funding streams.</p>	<p><b>Establish dedicated, long-term, and flexible funding streams for local actors</b>, with an emphasis on supporting CSOs working on peace, recovery, and humanitarian efforts.</p> <p>Ensure overheads and indirect costs are fully supported in grant mechanisms to enhance the sustainability of local/national organisations.</p> <p><b>Increase direct funding opportunities</b> for local/national organisations and ensure open, transparent, and fair processes for accessing such funding.</p>

## Acronyms and abbreviations

CSO	Civil Society Organisation
Daesh	Daesh (an Arabic acronym for “Al-Dawla Al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham,” meaning the “Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant”)
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HAG	Humanitarian Advisory Group
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
HTO	Humanitarian Transition Overview
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
KII	Key Informant Interview
NCCI	The Non-Governmental Organisation Coordination Committee for Iraq
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCHA	The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PAO	Public Aid Organisation
PIANGO	Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
UN	United Nations
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
US	United States



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK  
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE  
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

## Regional Hubs

### **Africa**

Nairobi, Kenya  
Dakar, Senegal

### **Asia-Pacific**

Bangkok, Thailand  
Islamabad, Pakistan

### **MENA**

Amman, Jordan

### **Latin America**

Guadalajara, Mexico  
(Coordination)

## Geneva Office

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