

# MEASURING HUMANITARIAN LOCALISATION IN YEMEN

**Baseline Report**  
November 2022



HUMANITARIAN  
ADVISORY GROUP



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK  
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE  
HUMANITARIAN ACTION



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# A BRIEF NOTE ON LANGUAGE

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This report was originally written in Arabic and translated to English to ensure that local actors are leading this process and to ensure a true participatory approach. One of the challenges discovered during the research is the lack of Arabic language tools and methodologies. This meant that all resources had to be translated from English to Arabic to allow for their utilisation. Additionally, the language used to discuss 'localisation' itself is contentious. The basic vocabulary used to discuss localisation is debated in the literature, including the word 'localisation' itself and the term 'local humanitarian actor'. Actors in the South and North of Yemen viewed the word 'localisation' in a different light, providing the grounds for rich discussion and important lessons in this work.

# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CCCM</b>	Camp Coordination and Management
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>HAG</b>	Humanitarian Advisory Group
<b>HCT</b>	Humanitarian Country Team
<b>ICVA</b>	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
<b>INGO</b>	International non-governmental organisation
<b>LHW</b>	Localisation of Humanitarian Work
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>PIANGO</b>	Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>SCMCHA</b>	Supreme Council for the Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNOCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation
<b>WHS</b>	World Humanitarian Summit
<b>YHF</b>	Yemen Humanitarian Fund



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**“The active participation of civil society organizations is essential for the peace process’s success. Civil society organizations can make valuable contributions to negotiations, including technical expertise, knowledge of hard-to-reach areas, and the local communities’ and marginalized groups’ perspectives whose voices are often not heard in negotiations.”**

Today, Yemen is considered one of the world’s largest humanitarian crisis and relief operation due to the ongoing armed conflict that has been raging for over seven years. The toll of this armed conflict is tens of thousands of civilians dead and wounded and millions of internally displaced persons. It has also caused the collapse of the economy, destruction of infrastructure, institutions and public services, the spread of epidemics and disasters, and left millions of Yemenis to suffer from poverty, hunger, and diseases. The economy shrunk to 50 per cent, resulting in keeping 80 per cent of Yemenis living under the poverty line due to their loss of income, the currency collapse against foreign currencies, the lack of government revenues, trade restrictions on imports, and the increasing prices of basic commodities. Additionally, 40 per cent of Yemeni households have lost their primary source of income in a time where the country witnesses scarce job opportunities. While the need is overwhelming, a reduction in funding has been seen year after year, causing humanitarian programs to diminish and leaving people in need.

While needs have been increasing substantially in Yemen, local civil society is actively seeking to fill these needs. Yemen’s civil society has joined together to address the root cause of the problem, the war. “As Yemen’s local civil society organizations, we call on everyone to engage in a comprehensive and lasting peace process and to work hard to stop a war that has torn Yemen apart,<sup>1</sup>” stated a civil society press release. Swedish diplomat and the current UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg said:

“The active participation of civil society organizations is essential for the peace process’s success. Civil society organizations can make valuable contributions to negotiations, including technical expertise, knowledge of hard-to-reach areas, and the local communities’ and marginalized groups’ perspectives whose voices are often not heard in negotiations.”

Over the years, the role of local civil society has been increasingly recognized as essential for an effective response. However, challenges to localisation and local leadership exist across Yemen, as do the makeup

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<sup>1</sup> Press release, November 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/calling-lasting-peace-and-demanding-localization-humanitarian-action-enar>



and the nature of national humanitarian actors. Levels of funding to national non-governmental organisations (NGO) impact the ability for meaningful coordination and advocacy.

This report considers progress on localisation in Yemen, measuring it across seven pillars: Partnerships, Funding, Capacity Strengthening, Coordination and Complementarity, Policy Influence, Leadership, and Participation. The Measurement Localisation - Framework and Tools<sup>2</sup> developed by Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) and Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO) was utilized and contextualised for the country and crisis in Yemen. Using a mixed-methodology approach including self-assessments, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions the report was able to capture both qualitative and quantitative information. Moreover, the report relies also on various documents and reports analysing the humanitarian situation and response in Yemen, including the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Yemen Crisis, The Yemen Humanitarian Forum Annual Report, The World Bank Report, Yemen Civil Society Organisations in Transition, Ministry of Planning Report, and many other publications collected in the desk research phase.

Across the pillars, minimal evidence exists that there has been adequate progress except for in Participation, where moderate evidence of progress was found. Challenges uncovered include a lack of equitable partnerships in practice, while principles of equitable partnership were well known on paper. Another finding shows that opportunities for involvement of local NGOs exist, but not at the level of decision-making. There is also evidence of insufficient know-how and inadequate investment in capacity-building of local NGOs. Lack of access to direct funding was critical across all the pillars.

Generally, the findings of this baseline report suggest that the progress of localisation in the current humanitarian response in Yemen is uneven. Although civil society is present, active, and strong, more work needs to be done to enhance the meaningful participation of local actors in the leadership and decision-making process while strongly engaging in collective advocacy and policy efforts. The research suggests that four steps should be taken to progress further the localisation agenda in Yemen:

1. Support a dedicated structure to facilitate and monitor the localisation process;
2. Promote localisation in existing response and coordination mechanisms;
3. Increase opportunities for local and national actors to respond more effectively
4. Ensure more adequate and relevant initiatives of capacity sharing

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2 [Measurement Localisation - Framework and Tools](#)

## About the report

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The deteriorating situation in Yemen and international donors' inability to fulfil financial commitments made to resolve the humanitarian crisis led a group of local civic organisations to take additional steps to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian action. One priority included influencing international actors to support the localisation of humanitarian action and reinforce the role of local actors. As a result, a network of Yemeni CSOs, led by Tamdeen Youth Foundation, introduced an initiative to localise humanitarian action in Yemen. ITAR for Social Development was chosen as the advisory agency to carry out localisation baseline research in Yemen. This report provides an in-depth analysis of localisation in the current humanitarian response in Yemen, and serves as a baseline for future responses, including adapting the localisation measurement approach used in some Pacific region countries as a joint measurement framework. The report consists of seven main pillars: Partnerships, Funding, Capacity Strengthening, Coordination and Complementarity, Policy Influence, Leadership, and Participation.

## Summary of Key Findings

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This research found evidence of progress in localising humanitarian action in the current humanitarian response in Yemen; that progress is limited, however. Following are the key findings using a localisation framework and indicators. Progress is defined here as either having no evidence, minimal evidence, moderate evidence, and strong evidence.

### Partnership

There is moderate evidence that partnerships are based on equitable and ethical partnership practices. There is minimal evidence of long-term strategic partnerships that aim to build systems and processes reflecting the ambitions and objectives of the local/national partner. Additionally, there is minimal evidence that local actors have equitable decision-making or equal leadership opportunities.

### Leadership

There is minimal evidence that international actors support and promote national leadership. There is also minimal evidence that local and national actors are taking the lead or effectively influencing the decision-making process. Lastly, there is minimal evidence that the existing coordination systems are accessible to local/national actors.

### Coordination and Integration

Minimal evidence was found of active and effective participation in coordination platforms by national actors, or that there is an established financing plan to support a national coordination mechanism. Additionally, there is minimal evidence of partnerships that are built based on complementary criteria, i.e. a comprehensive analysis of specific strengths, weaknesses and gaps.

### Participation

There is moderate evidence of increased opportunities for communities to support in program design, development, implementation, and a participatory approach to evaluation.

### Impact of Policy/Advocacy/Vision

There is minimal evidence of the availability of existing policy guidance that is inclusive of local/national voices, and there is minimal evidence of the influence of local and national actors on key donor programmes and strategic priorities.

### Capacity

There is minimal evidence of existing strategies to support the capacity of national and local actors. There is minimal evidence of the availability of contextualised tools, criteria, and policies in Arabic, the local language.

### Financing

There is minimal evidence that local/national organisations increasingly receive direct funding.

# BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

## Introduction to the Humanitarian Context of Yemen

An estimated 22.4 million people (73 per cent of the total population) in Yemen were in need of humanitarian aid in 2022, 12.9 million of them in acute need (extreme or catastrophic levels). This number includes 5.2 million women and 6.3 million girls. Moreover, 17.4 million people are experiencing food insecurity, including 7.1 million people in emergency conditions.<sup>3</sup> In 2021, UNICEF and other organisations warned that children were facing the highest levels of severe acute malnutrition recorded in Yemen since the escalation of the conflict in 2015, 2.3 million children acutely malnourished and 400,000 children under five were at imminent risk of death.<sup>4</sup>

Yemen currently ranks fourth in the world for the largest population of internally displaced persons (IDPs), with more than four million displaced persons. Most IDPs have been displaced for two or more years, which undermines their resilience and creates an additional strain for host communities. More than a million IDPs live in approximately 1,600 sites for displaced people, the majority of which are irregular settlements that lack essential services such as water, food, and healthcare.<sup>5</sup>

It is estimated that 73 per cent of IDPs in Yemen consist of women and children, while nearly 30 per cent of displaced families are currently headed by women, compared to nine per cent before the conflict escalated in 2015. As the number of displaced women and girls increases, the need for protection increases, especially with limited options for shelter and the breakdown of formal and informal protection mechanisms. Furthermore, increasingly women resort to negative coping mechanisms such as child marriage, human trafficking, begging, child labour, and so on.<sup>6</sup>

Conflict and economic breakdown have led to a significant deterioration in Yemen's quality, quantity, and accessibility of public services and basic infrastructure. Institutions and basic services are seriously impaired, as only half of all health facilities and two-thirds of schools are currently operating. Moreover, water infrastructure operates at an efficiency of less than five per cent. Most roads are either closed or damaged and no longer have the capacity to maintain the prompt transport of commodities to local markets. Today, nearly 90 per cent of the population lacks access to electricity provided by the government.<sup>7</sup>

3 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Yemen, Humanitarian Country Team, April 2022.

4 World Report 2022: Yemen, Human Rights Watch, hrw.org.

5 Humanitarian Response Plan, Yemen 2021, March 2021.

6 Humanitarian Response in Yemen, UNFPA, February 2021.

7 Humanitarian Needs Overview, February 2021.

However, in 2021, despite the deepening humanitarian crisis, the intense conflict, the catastrophic economic situation, and increasing concerns of starvation, humanitarian assistance to Yemen has declined. In the Yemen pledging conference that took place in 2022, 36 donors pledged nearly \$1.3 billion for the humanitarian response on Yemen<sup>8</sup> – half of the year before. In 2021, donors committed to pay only half of the amount needed to fund UN humanitarian assistance operations in the country for the coming year. Aid actors, despite stress and lack of funding, continue to provide life-saving assistance for the Yemenis and address food security, and urgent social protection concerns by providing food assistance, shelter, healthcare, and education.

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<sup>8</sup> Yemen Conference 2022: Financial announcements, last updated 16 March 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Sharing to Survive: Investigating the Role of Social Networks During Yemen's Humanitarian Crisis, USAID, January 2022.

## Localisation in Yemen

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Despite the devastating impacts of the ongoing war, famine, and economic insecurity, local/national CSOs continue to offer ongoing support to multiple crises, given their closeness to the community and affected groups, and their understanding of political, cultural, and social dynamics. Moreover, they continue to directly contribute to Yemen's need for humanitarian assistance and peace. They have adopted a set of vital principles to achieve lasting peace, such as defending human rights, equality, community welfare, and the rejection of violence and extremism.

However, localisation and changing power dynamics in the Yemen humanitarian response remain a significant challenge, particularly as international actors – such as international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and the UN – are given access to significantly more resources than their local/national counterparts. In 2021, the Yemen Humanitarian Fund was able to allocate \$109 million for life-saving activities, out of which international NGOs received \$54.1 million (49 per cent), UN agencies received \$24 million (22 per cent), the Red Crescent received \$4.3 (5 per cent) million and local actors received \$26.7 million (24 per cent).<sup>10</sup> This imbalance of financial resources, and the preference of donors to work primarily with international actors has created a closed system for financial, strategic, and programmatic decision-making that excludes active engagement of local and national actors. Most collaborations between international and local/national actors tend to be top-down with international actors benefitting from the insights of local/national actors on local needs and feedback on project effectiveness.<sup>11</sup> This indicates that a more extractive relationship is in place, one that also limits mutual accountability and accountability to affected people. Many national NGOs in Yemen appear to be particularly vulnerable to threats, intimidation, and the predatory behaviour of authorities on both sides of the conflict. Yemeni civil society was reported to be relatively inexperienced at working with international partners and within humanitarian coordination structures.<sup>12</sup>

At the heart of the localisation agenda is the recognition of a power imbalance between national and international actors. NGOs regularly perceive themselves to be at a structural disadvantage, due primarily to the dependence of national actors on their international counterparts for resources and technical support. Frequent and often impactful interventions by international representatives, i.e. 'technical experts', was also reported as a factor that limited national engagement, confidence, and leadership. These dynamics were compounded in countries like Yemen where donors were not located in the country of operation. Local NGOs therefore had

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9 Sharing to Survive: Investigating the Role of Social Networks During Yemen's Humanitarian Crisis, USAID, January 2022.

10 YHF 2021 Annual Report.pdf ([unocha.org](https://www.unocha.org/yemen))

11 Alqatabry, H., & Butcher, C. (2020). Humanitarian Aid in Yemen: Collaboration or Co-Optation? *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, 15(2), 250–255

12 Véronique de Geoffroy, Ali Azaki, François Grünewald, and Audrey Chabrat, "SOHS 2018 Case Study: Yemen," Groupe URD, Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, and ALNAP, April 2018, 37.

no direct access to institutional donors and often relied instead on UN agencies and INGOs to pass along messages and advocate on their behalf, adding to their perceived dependency on international actors.<sup>13</sup>

While localisation is becoming even more integral to ensuring aid is effectively and efficiently provided to affected communities in a way that places them at the centre of planning and delivery, it is also seen as an important corrective measure to address power imbalances in the system. In Yemen, there is increasing recognition of a need to embrace and apply localisation more robustly, driven by the growing resolve by civil society to create a more locally-led response model. As other country contexts have shown, making progress on localisation remains a challenge that requires systematic change in attitudes, practices, and systems. Having an understanding of the status of the localisation in the country and opportunities for making progress can create much needed momentum for both targeted advocacy and collective action.

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<sup>13</sup> Localisation in Humanitarian Leadership: Profiling National NGO Engagement in International Humanitarian Coordination Structures in MENA Region, January 2021, [https://www.icvanetwork.org/uploads/2021/07/ICVA\\_MENA-Localisation-Report.pdf](https://www.icvanetwork.org/uploads/2021/07/ICVA_MENA-Localisation-Report.pdf)



## Research Objective and Methodology

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This baseline report will serve as a guide for local, national, and international actors in Yemen seeking to implement the localisation agenda. It aims to create an evidence base to support progress on a locally-led humanitarian response model in Yemen, enhancing knowledge and information about the current situation for local actors, and disseminating it widely among decisionmakers to inform their strategies and current efforts. It should contribute to the development of a well-articulated national localisation policy and an advocacy strategy for enhancing the role of local actors, and measuring progress achieved on the localisation commitment linked to the Grand Bargain.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, this report aims to identify opportunities and barriers for local actors and international actors seeking to foster principled and meaningful partnership in Yemen.

As a next step, local and international actors in Yemen aim to articulate a clear strategy and workplan to implement the baseline findings through comprehensive strategies and action plans, building on the evidence base, and partnering complementarily with key Yemen actors on influencing locally led action.

### Study Methodology

This localisation baseline process is based on the Measurement Localisation - Framework and Tools<sup>15</sup> developed by Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) and Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (PIANGO), which can be used to measure the current status and progress of localised humanitarian action within a particular context. Since the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), baseline research has been carried out in a number of countries using this methodology. The measuring localisation framework is structured around seven domains: Partnerships, Leadership, Coordination and complementarity, Participation, Policy Influence, Capacity, and Funding.

At the outset of this study, the research team went through a process of contextualising the framework to the country and crisis in Yemen. Through a series of workshops and consultations, the research team finalised the localisation domains and tools to be used during the research. The team determined that the seven domains and tools were all relevant to the country context but expanded the Policy Influence domain to include Advocacy and Visibility, and the Capacity domain to cover Institutional Efficiency. Within the report, each domain area comes with key findings and evidence of progress against localisation indicators – with each

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<sup>14</sup> For more information, see the Grand Bargain website (<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain>), managed by the IASC.

<sup>15</sup> [Measurement Localisation - Framework and Tools](#)

domain having a set of accompanying qualitative and quantitative indicators. The level of evidence in each of the domains was assessed as follows: no evidence, minimal evidence, moderate evidence, and strong evidence of progress.

The data collection process used a mixed methods approach, including a self-assessment survey, as well as key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussions (FGD) with community, national, and international actors. The survey captured quantitative data related to key indicators in the localisation framework. KIIs and FGDs were conducted to explore themes emerging from survey data and provide in-depth details of certain regions and context-specific examples. These primary data collection methods were supplemented by a literature review.

### Qualitative Data Collection – KIIs and FGDs

The table below shows the number of KIIs and FGDs organised with different actors in Yemen. The COVID-19 pandemic, flooding, and security concerns impacted the number of interviews and workshops that were completed, and virtual calls were conducted in certain areas due to the difficulties of connecting with people in person.

**Table 1. Interviews and Key Informants by Category**

Data collection method	Total	National/ NGO and local community	International organisations and the UN	Local authority
Self-Assessment Survey	65	44	21	
Key Informant Interviews	8		4	4
Focus Groups	6	6 (25 organisations)		

Eight KIIs were conducted, divided evenly between international agencies, and local NGOs and CSOs. The six FGDs were conducted among local and national NGOs, with the attendance of 25 organisations. The report includes direct quotes from the participants in the research. In certain cases, the quotes were slightly modified to make them easier to understand without revealing the identity of the sources. Any quotes that are attributed to specific people are done so with their consent.

## Literature Review

A desk review was conducted of reports, assessments, and peer-reviewed studies, as well as news articles produced by peer organisations and research institutions. The research focused on literature and documents discussing humanitarian assistance/action and localisation or local responses under the seven localisation domains. The literature review contributed to a Knowledge and Practices (KAP) evaluation using the localisation framework and indicators. It also helped to frame the report and support the self-assessment survey data, KIIs, and FGDs while providing comparable data from different periods and contexts.

## Self-Assessment Survey

In the Humanitarian Response Plan for Yemen 2021, 167 organisations were identified as implementing partners for approved activities, including UN agencies, international NGOs, and local/national NGOs. For this research, 120 questionnaires were distributed, and 65 completed questionnaires were received in return. The lack of response from the remainder of the organisations may be due several factors: lack of knowledge and experience in localisation, or a lack of time due to the length of the questionnaire. The self-assessment survey consisted of 72 close-ended questions and was estimated to take 45 minutes to complete.

**Table 2. Interviews and Key Informants by Category**

Self-assessment survey	UN Agency	International NGO	National NGO	Local NGO/ community
Organisation type	4	17	24	20
<b>Total</b>			<b>65</b>	

## Limitations

**Geographical limitations:** The initial stakeholder analysis performed during a planning workshop identified two major humanitarian regions in Yemen. These two regions, Sanaa and Aden, are central to the North and South of Yemen, respectively, and are also regional hubs for humanitarian groups and local/national NGOs. The stakeholder sample represents different actors, including national actors (e.g., government bodies, local authorities, and local/national NGOs), international actors (e.g., UN agencies, international NGOs and support networks, donor governments, and funds), and regional actors. The physical division of the local CSO community between North and South and related access issues resulting from conflict was a limitation for this study. Moreover, some regional and international

actors are not physically located in Yemen due to the conflict and thus were not able to engage in some of the processes.

**Language bias:** Data may be affected by different interpretations of key terms used in the survey and the political context of the sample related to regional divisions between parties to the conflict. It is important to note that the Measuring Localisation – Framework and Tools is available in English, which was translated to Arabic for use in the research. Data collection was undertaken in both English and Arabic. The report was initially compiled in Arabic and translated to English.

**Pandemic limitations:** The study also experienced specific challenges in its execution. The study was designed during the COVID-19 outbreak in Yemen, and then had to course correct according to the new realities. For example, nearly all interviews had to be conducted remotely via phone or Internet-based platforms, such as Zoom, which limited who could participate in the interviews and may have impacted interviewees' openness.

# FINDINGS

This section outlines key finds under each localisation domain. Preceding the discussion of each domain is the related level of evidence on localisation progress based on overall indicators and progress indicators. Each section then has a discussion on the findings related to the domain, combining findings from both quantitative and qualitative data.

## Partnership

**Key Finding:** While some examples exist of equitable partnerships, overall, there is **Minimal Evidence** of equitable and complementary partnerships among local/national and international actors.

Progress Indicators	Level of Evidence
1. Partnerships are based on equitable and ethical partnership practices.	Moderate Evidence
2. Longer-term strategic partnerships exist that aim to build systems and processes mirroring the ambition and goals of the local or national partner.	Minimal Evidence
3. There is increased power and decision-making of local and national actors within partnerships.	Minimal Evidence

During the ongoing conflict and since the start of the transitional period in Yemen in 2012, the need to build inclusive and sustainable partnerships between CSOs, the government, the private sector, and international humanitarian response actors has only grown. However, the study found only moderate evidence that local organisations had strategic partnerships, while there was minimal evidence of the national actors having increased authority and decision-making capacity within these partnerships. Additional findings demonstrate that national and local actors do not seem to effectively participate with international actors in project design, budget allocations, identification of needs and context, and risks assessments. The authority given to local partners to make changes to project activities is also minimal. The differentiation has deeply undermined cooperation between local NGOs, the government, and local authorities. According to respondents, only 34 per cent of local and national actors stated that they 'mostly' participate in project design and implementation in cooperation with national or international partners.

Before 2015, partnership agreements were infrequent. However, after 2015, many local and national organisations emerged in Yemen, and relief projects increased. During the war, local and national organisations

continued to submit suggestions in line with conditions and donor standards, seeking to enhance the partnership approach, with little success. When suggestions are not accepted, the reasons for their refusal were not clearly articulated, demonstrating a lack of transparency, highlighting the imbalance of power in the relationship between the donor and local/national organisations – who are seen more as service providers than partners. International organisations carry out most of the large-scale projects, while local organisations play a simplified role.<sup>16</sup> Project implementation relationships includes principles of partnerships in the contract phase that are oftentimes not reflected in practice. There are burdensome and unrealistic conditions imposed in procurement policy and processes.<sup>17</sup> The survey found that 36.4 per cent of local and national organisations experience review processes, collaboration, and cooperation as mostly mutual. Long-term investment in relationships is lacking because emergency projects run from six months to one year, at most. When asked, only 29.5 per cent of local organisations ‘often’ or ‘always’ consider the partnership agreement duration to be suitable, compared to 61.9 per cent of international actors (Figure 1). With shorter time periods, there is little obligation or focus on developing the long-term capacities of partners, and often the focus simply remains on the outputs of such contracts.

**Figure 1: Is the duration of partnership agreements suitable?**



<sup>16</sup> Focus Group 2

<sup>17</sup> Marta Colburn, 'A New Path Forward: Empowering a Leadership Role for Yemeni Civil Society', Sanaa Center website, <https://sanaacenter.org/publications/main-publications/13021>

## Ambitions of a country level partnership framework

At the donor conference held in September 2012, the “Mutual Responsibility Framework Between the Government and Donors” was signed, committing the Government of National Accord and donors to work with CSOs and the private sector as key partners. This resulted in the adoption of a Partnership Framework between the Government of Yemen and Civil Society Organisations in September 2013.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, a joint committee was formed between the public and private sectors to draft a law on their partnership and cooperation. The draft law was submitted to the House of Representatives in October 2014, only to be rejected and not enacted. At the same time, the private sector and the Yemeni government signed a memorandum of understanding at the conclusion of a conference on engaging the private sector in economic growth and sustainable development in 2014.<sup>19</sup>

### The adopted partnership framework had four specific objectives:

1. Provide the appropriate climate for the functioning of civil society organisations as an effective partner for the government and to build confidence and trust between both.
2. Improve and strengthen decision-making, implementation, and evaluation of policies, programs, and service delivery to respond to the needs of society and achieve sustainable development.
3. Bolster the culture of public participation and strengthen the principles of democracy.
4. Build the capacity of CSOs and raise their professional level to enable them in playing the role envisioned in the partnership framework.

The framework document identified partnership areas to be: youth, women’s empowerment, reducing poverty, health and environmental development, human rights, vulnerable groups, humanitarian relief, refugees, displaced persons, and good governance. The document also identified partnership principles, as mutual partnership, transparency, accountability, joint monitoring, independence, objectivity, impartiality, and sustainability. The framework established the Supreme Council for Partnership, an independent body whose members are 40 per cent government representatives and 60 per cent CSOs representatives, all selected by established criteria. Since 2015, the armed conflict has resulted in shrinking Yemen’s civic space and the undermining of the role of local/national CSOs by local and national authorities. Work on the implementation of the Partnership Framework has stopped, and cooperation between local/national actors and international actors has deteriorated.

18 See [https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/Event/MNA/yemen\\_cso/english/Yemen\\_CSO\\_Partnership\\_Framework\\_GoY\\_CSO\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/Event/MNA/yemen_cso/english/Yemen_CSO_Partnership_Framework_GoY_CSO_ENG.pdf)

19 Abdulkarim Qassim al-Khatib, ‘Local Practices for Social Accountability in Yemen,’ Resonate! Yemen, 2019.



## **'Our organisation has experience in engaging local organisations via an emergency humanitarian response in Marib led by local partners. Also, we are developing a humanitarian response mechanism in the North and the South, led by local partners...'**

There is commitment among some of the international actors (particularly INGOs) to make progress on how they partner with local/national actors. A participant from an INGO shared that, *'Our organisation has experience in engaging local organisations via an emergency humanitarian response in Marib led by local partners. Also, we are developing a humanitarian response mechanism in the North and the South, led by local partners. The organisation has made sound progress in engaging local organisations, but we have not reached the required level [of cooperation]. When designing recommendations, the partner is given a specific budget or percentage, but then during implementation, the budget is reduced. Engagement here is a sort of formality.'*

Local organisations have expressed being negatively impacted by funding competition between small-scale organisations and large local and international organisations. Many international organisations rely on pre-established partnerships to deliver their work, and there are often few or no opportunities for local and national actors to form new partnerships. Equitable opportunities are not common and oftentimes when international organisations announce projects, the partners selected are those that have worked previously with the INGO. There is a lack of transparency, and project application procedures are stressful for local organisations.<sup>20</sup>

Interview and focus group participants expressed the notion that partnership between local/national actors and donors mainly means short-term partnerships based on project implementation. While some international organisations invest in building personnel capacity and strengthening institutional systems and capacity,<sup>21</sup> opportunities for capacity-building and institutional development are insufficient for many local/national partners organisations. Only 50 per cent of local and national respondents from the survey reported that they 'always' or 'often' have capacity-building opportunities under partnerships, compared to 66.7 per cent of international actors (Figure 2).<sup>22</sup> Only 25 per cent of local and national actors reported having limited or no capacity-building opportunities at all in their agreements.

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20 Focus Group 1

21 Interview with a UN representative

22 Focus Group

**Figure 2: Does your organisation have capacity-building opportunities under its partnership agreements?**



International actors often do not involve national/local actors in making decisions on project design, implementation, evaluation, budget allocations, especially with new partners. Only 34.1 per cent of local organisations felt that they ‘often’ or ‘always’ participated in designing and implementing projects with partners. Moreover, the influence and decision-making capacity of local and national actors is limited regarding project implementation. The donor or the international actors prepare a full project plan ahead of time, and the feedback allowed on project activities from the local partner is limited. Little flexibility is built-in to allow for project change based on the experience of local organisations.<sup>22</sup> An INGO representative reported that even at project start, INGOs lead in the process of preparing recommendations and designing interventions. This in part stems from a lack of leadership and other technical skills such as intervention planning and needs analysis, which enables international organisations to maintain complete control over project development. Language, too, forms a barrier between local and international organisations.<sup>24</sup>

Approximately two out of three respondents state that partnerships between local and international organisations in Yemen are equitable and ethical ‘mostly’ and ‘all the time’. However, nearly one-third of respondents feel that longer-term strategic partnerships and power and decision-making by local and national actors are non-existent in the context today.

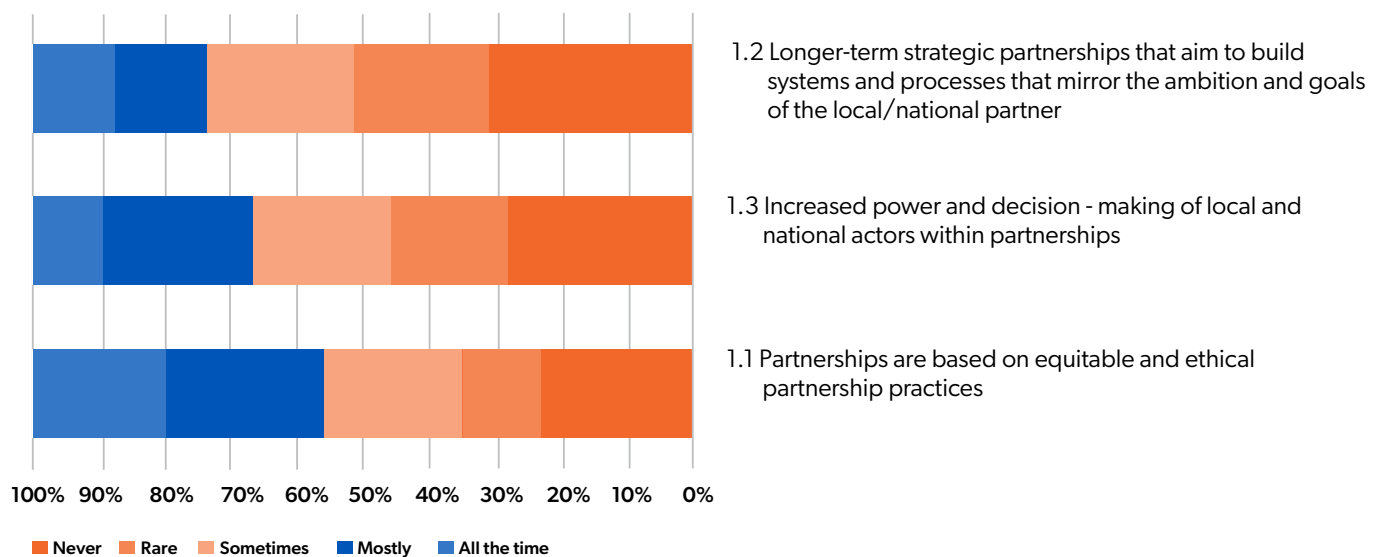
<sup>23</sup> Focal Group 3

<sup>24</sup> Interview

**'there is no parity in partnerships when the local partner is given a specific budget and pre-designed interventions. With regard to risks, there is little cooperation, as the risks are transferred fully to the local partner'.**

## Overview of Findings - 1. PARTNERSHIPS

1. PARTNERSHIPS: Equitable and complementary partnerships between local, national and international actors



Overall, it is evident that the basic elements of a structured and mutual partnership are lacking in many cases, with most interviewees and FGD attendees stating that memorandums of understanding and contracts often lack the basic elements of a needs assessment, context analysis, and risk assessment. As an INGO representative shared, *'there is no parity in partnerships when the local partner is given a specific budget and pre-designed interventions. With regard to risks, there is little cooperation, as the risks are transferred fully to the local partner'.*

## Leadership

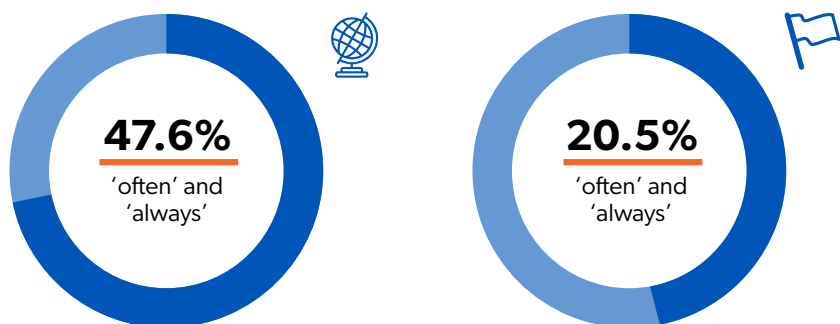
There is **Minimal Evidence** that national actors define and lead on humanitarian action.

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

The war and its intractability have undermined government institutions in Yemen. Not only is the internationally recognised government unstable, but it also lacks the capacity and authority to lead the country's humanitarian response. National actors reported that, as a result, international actors have taken the initiative in leading humanitarian action, guided by UN-moderated clusters. Local organisations indicate that the level of support provided to the national leadership by international actors is insufficient and more support is needed to create an accessible environment to enable local actors to take the lead and co-lead various opportunities, encourage meaningful participation, and actively participate in decision-making.<sup>26</sup> International actors, on the other hand, feel differently, with 72 per cent indicating that they are supporting stronger leadership among national and local actors. Local and national actors believe that their own leadership of the response and their decision-making power is moderate. When asked if international actors are targeting national/local actors in the leadership support process/program, 47.6 per cent of international actors believed they did 'always' or 'most of the time'. Only 20.5 per cent of national/local actors believed such leadership support happened at this frequency (Figure 3).

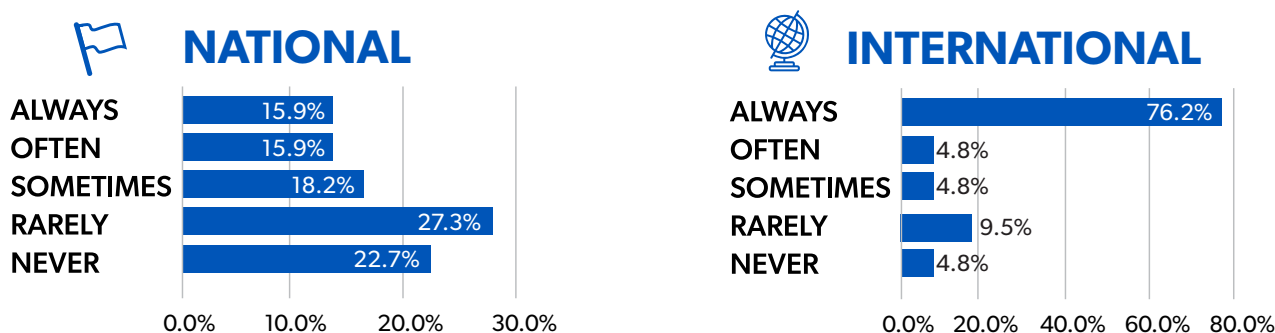
<sup>26</sup> "Localisation in Humanitarian Leadership: Profiling National NGO Engagement in International Humanitarian Coordination Structures in the MENA Region", ICVA, January 2021

**Figure 3: Are international actors targeting national/local actors in the leadership support process/program?**



Most of the decision-making power in Yemen’s relief efforts appear to be centralised in the hands of international actors, while the potential for strengthening initiatives for people affected by the crisis remains untapped. Practices such as survivor and community-led crisis response provide evidence-based guidance on how aid actors can work to assess informal initiatives effectively. Through community mobilisation and facilitation, small group projects, demand-led skills training, and locally relevant coordination mechanisms, survivor and community-led crisis response approaches promote and support collective self-help and independence. Practices such as survivor and community-led crisis response aim to complement standard external interventions and offer concrete opportunities to transform decision-making by people living in conflict.<sup>27</sup>

**Figure 4: Does your organisation meet with donors and participate directly with them during the program?**



Survey data indicates that only 31.8 per cent of national/local organisations ‘often’ or ‘always’ meet directly with donors and participate in their programs (Figure 4). The experience of international actors is quite strikingly different, with three out of four international actor respondents stating that

27 ‘Sharing to Survive: Investigating the Role of Social Networks during Yemen’s Humanitarian Crisis’, USAID, January 2022, p. 36

they ‘always’ meet with donors during programme implementation. This shows how significantly skewed the relationships between donors and humanitarian actors are in reality. Despite global commitments to support localisation and local actors, the data shows that few donors put this into practice on the ground. This significant difference is likely due to a couple of factors, including donor preference to only deal directly with intermediary actors (most often international organisations) and the screening role played by intermediaries themselves.

All sector clusters are led by UN agencies (see Table 3). As the representative of an INGO put it, *‘the operationalisation of sectoral clusters takes place [in Yemen] when the country is unable to create effective coordination, and thus the operationalisation of clusters answers the question of [who fills] the leadership role of local structures and organisation’*.<sup>28</sup> However, some local/national organisations have the capacity and competence to participate energetically in the humanitarian leadership. National NGOs hold a number of seats in clusters and have

**Table 3: Sectoral clusters and the organisations who manage them**

Sectoral clusters for coordination of humanitarian response	Leadership/organisations managing clusters
Agriculture and Food Security	The World Food Programme (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organisation
Nutrition	The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
Health	World Health Organisation
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene	UNICEF
Education	UNICEF
Safeguarding	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFI)	UNHCR
Camp Coordination and Management (CCCM)	UNHCR, International Organisation for Migration (IOM)
Refugees and Migrants	
Rapid Response Mechanism	IOM, UNFPA
Logistic Service	WFP
Communication/ Coordination	WFP

Source: HRP 2021 Monitoring Report

28 Interview

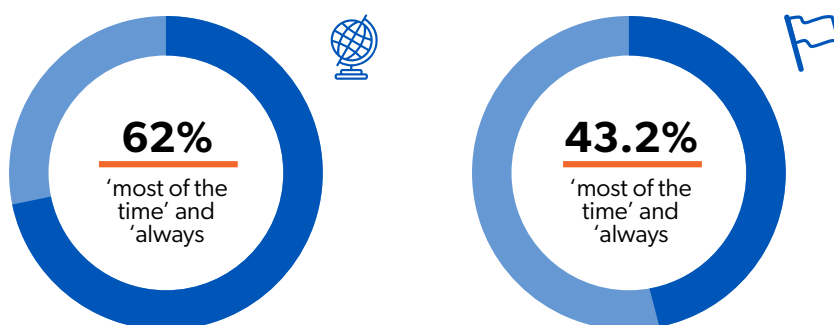
29 ‘Localisation in Humanitarian Leadership: Profiling National NGO Engagement in International Humanitarian Coordination Structures in the MENA Region’, ICVA, January 2021

been represented in both the cluster leadership (as the Gender-Based Violence cluster co-lead) and in the leadership of the Yemen Humanitarian Fund (YHF).<sup>29</sup> However, 54.5 per cent of local organisations reported never being mandated to lead the humanitarian response by international actors.

During the current crisis, international organisations' work to improve the organisational and technical capabilities of local organisations has decreased; capacity-building opportunities are not available and even non-existent in remote areas. Many local organisation leaders believe that international actors only support the national leadership marginally, and that they are only allowed to participate (informally or formally) in humanitarian response planning and needs assessments.<sup>30</sup> The survey found that only 29.6 per cent of local organisations usually or 'often' participated in the preparedness and response plan for risk reduction supported by international donors. Instead of addressing the perceived lack of institutional capacity among local/national organisations, some international organisations choose instead to provide directly to affected populations without any coordination with local intermediary organisations.<sup>31</sup>

Some research participants believe that international actors only work within the country's various leadership structures and mechanisms in the South and the North. However, there are significant interventions by de facto authorities in some regions, forcing international actors to engage with local NGOs through these authorities. For example, the Houthi Ansar Allah Group usually drafts a list of annual needs along with an emergency response plan (even though this list of needs is not the product of a needs analysis and there is no coordination in the humanitarian response).<sup>32</sup> Such complexities in working with different governance structures are covered further in the coordination section.

### Figure 5: Do you consider yourself in a leading position in Yemen's humanitarian response?



<sup>30</sup> Interview

<sup>31</sup> Maher Othman and Assam Al-Ashari, 'The Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen: Increasing Difficulties and Continuous Deterioration', Policy Paper, Raneen Alyemen Foundation, 2017

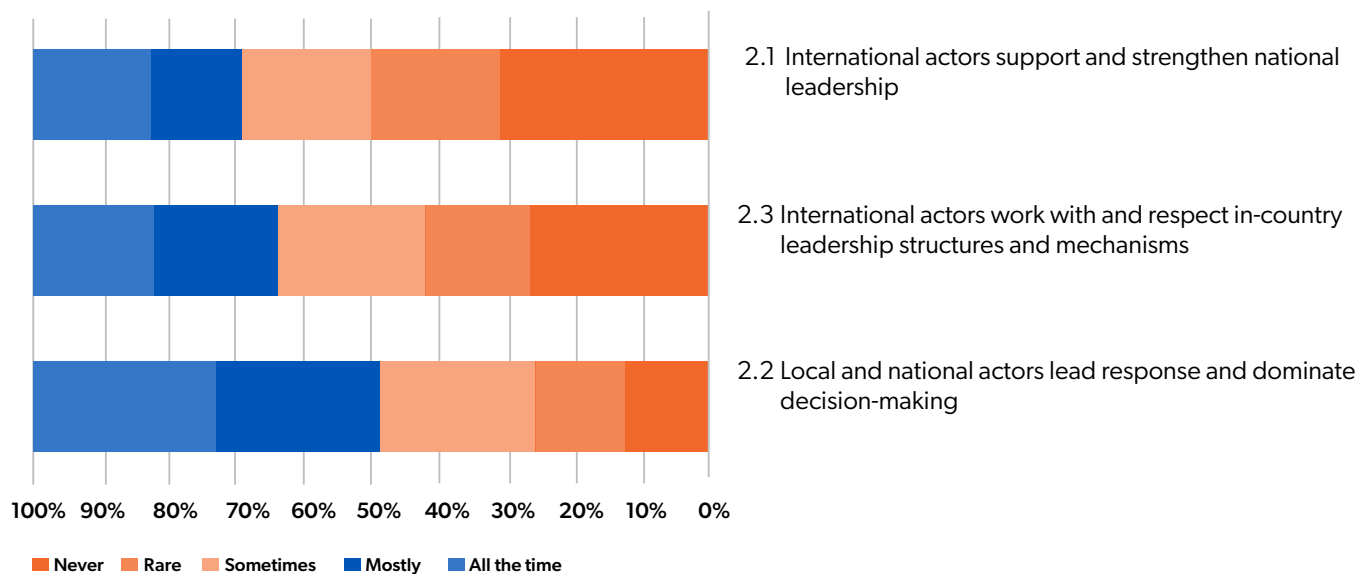
<sup>32</sup> Focus Groups



The study findings on Leadership are quite different between international respondents and local/national actors signalling a breakdown in communication and understanding between the two groups. International actors feel significantly more positive about the leadership opportunities afforded local/national groups in leading the humanitarian response and 62 per cent of international actors interviewed believed they are mostly or 'always' in a leading position in Yemen's humanitarian response. Conversely, only 43.2 per cent of national actors believed that. Overall, only about one out of four respondents felt that international actors support and strengthen national leadership 'mostly' and 'all of the time'. On the other hand, about half of respondents felt that local and national actors were leading the response and decision-making 'mostly' and 'all of the time'.

## Overview of Findings - 2. LEADERSHIP

### 2. LEADERSHIP: National actors define and lead on humanitarian action



## Coordination and Integration

**Key Finding:** There is **Minimal Evidence** on the application of, and respect for, commonly agreed approaches to ‘as local as possible and as international as necessary’.

Progress Indicators	Level of Evidence
1. There is national representation and engagement in coordination forums and meetings.	Minimal Evidence
2. Clearly-defined parameters exist for international actors complementing local and national actors in humanitarian response.	Minimal Evidence
3. National civil society coordination mechanisms are funded and have technical capacity to operate in humanitarian response.	Minimal Evidence
4. Humanitarian response is delivered in a way that is collaborative and complementary.	Minimal Evidence

There are several elements that act as barriers to effective coordination and integration between local/ national and international actors, including insufficient knowledge among local and national organisations on how to participate in internationally-led coordination mechanisms. The lack of internal resources and staff availability within local organisations to meaningfully engage in the plethora of coordination forums compounds this barrier. The predominance of the English language in communications, coordination meetings, and reports remains an obstacle for many.

The current humanitarian system is highly bureaucratic and complex, consisting of multiple coordination forums: emergency operations, the country humanitarian team, the cluster coordination mechanism, technical working groups, among others. Only 57 per cent of local organisations indicated that the humanitarian response is carried out with the coordination and integration of local and national actors – compared to 74% of international organisations that expressed that the humanitarian response is coordinated and integrated with local and national actors.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) mobilises and coordinates the humanitarian response in partnership with local and international actors, supporting the work of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), the national authorities of the cluster coordination mechanism (ICCM) and other humanitarian partners, including NGOs in Yemen. The Middle East and North Africa Civil Society Organisations Sustainability Index 2017 noted improved communication and coordination among CSOs providing relief services thanks to joint coordination groups established by the OCHA in 2016. Many networks and alliances (the Civil Strengthening Network, Civil Society Organisation and Yemeni Development Network) remain active but have been weakened by the conflict.<sup>33</sup>

From the point of view of international organisations, more effective coordination and integration should originate with local organisations, after which it is much easier to formulate a joint response. National/local organisations often fail to network between themselves and do not share information, complicating the coordination process. But the prevailing conflict makes it very challenging for networks and alliances to thrive due to an atmosphere of fear, competitiveness, and mistrust. Moreover, the current legal framework does not acknowledge the role of CSOs, undermining their coordination advocacy and influential role.<sup>34</sup> CSOs tend to lack confidence, while competing for support and resources, which weakens opportunities for collaboration, and connection and hinders networking. This adversely affects the possibilities for information exchange.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, international organisations say that real needs assessments and rapid response capacity by local organisations is vital to boosting overall integration and coordination. In this regard, local organisations should be keen to strengthen their capacities and focus on geographical scaling where they are present in order to boost the overall response.

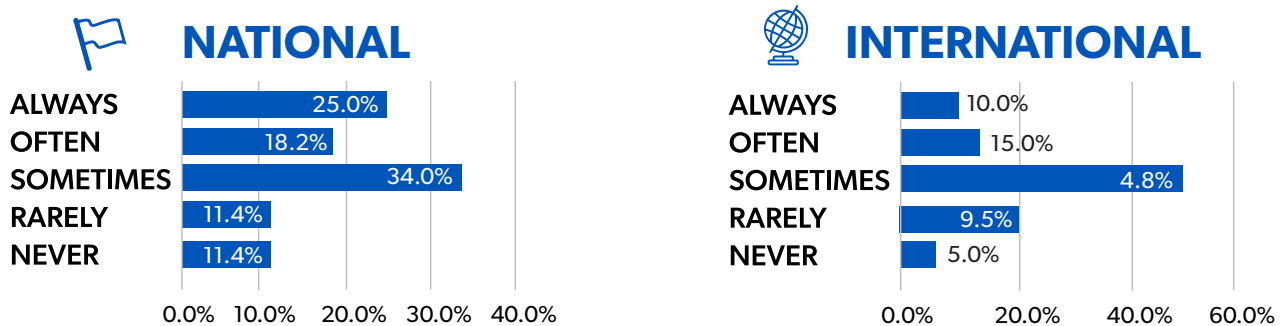
English remains the dominant language in coordination meetings, posing a barrier to many local organisations. While a considerable group (43.2 per cent) of local organisations say they 'often' or 'always' speak Arabic at coordination meetings only 25 per cent of international actors said they use Arabic (Figure 6). Among local and national actors, 24 per cent stated that coordination reports are 'often' or 'always' prepared in Arabic. These language differences form a barrier for some organisations (particularly smaller local organisations) to remain up-to-date on discussions, decisions, and key information.

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33 'Civil Society Organisation Sustainability Index in the Middle East and North Africa, 2017, USAID.

34 'Yemen Civil Society Organisations in Transition: A Mapping and Capacity Assessment of a Development-Oriented Civil Society Organisations in Five Governorates', World Bank, 2013, p. 25

35 Partnership Framework Between the Government of Yemen and Civil Society Organisations

**Figure 6: Do you speak Arabic at coordination meetings?**

According to the YHF, national NGOs are represented on the Yemen Humanitarian Finance Fund Advisory Board, the Strategic Review Committee, the Technical Review Committee, and the Allocation Review Committees, as well as in the sub-cluster leadership. Project review committees are similarly inclusive, with sector cluster coordinators appointing representatives from each humanitarian implementing partner's community to participate.<sup>36</sup> However, national women's organisations point to the exclusion of national agencies from coordination meetings and that assessments overlook national experience, knowledge, and connections with the community that can play critical roles in an effective response.<sup>37</sup>

National and international organisations face considerable difficulties coordinating and integrating with the government sector due to the multiple authorities in the region. There are two national mechanisms for coordinating the humanitarian response, the first run by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation along with the High Relief Committee in the internationally recognised government, while the second falls under the Houthis Ansar Allah. The ministry works to facilitate the work of international organisations implementing on the ground with the execution of needs assessments and surveys. In an interview with the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, he called for a comprehensive correction of humanitarian and relief work in Yemen. He said that the government seeks to restore donor confidence so that they deal with the government directly rather than international agencies. The government prefers that direct funding is channelled to local and national actors as this contributes to the empowerment of local actors, strengthens their capabilities, and reduces administrative costs typically required by international actors.

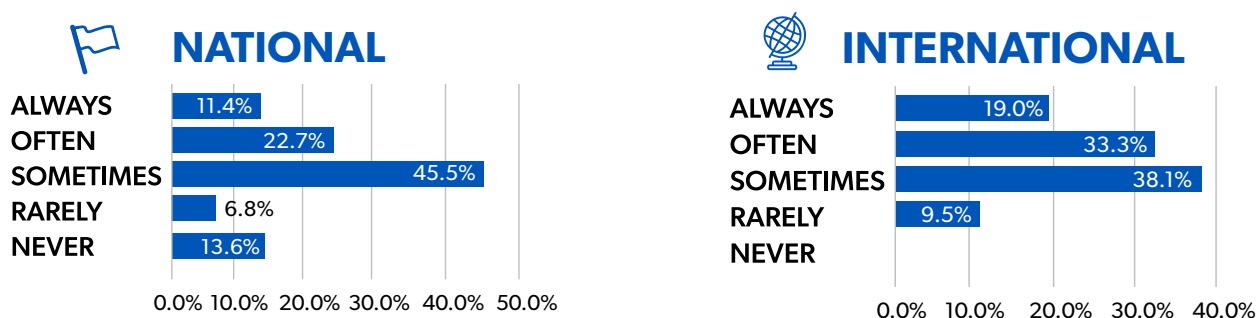
<sup>36</sup> YHF, UNOCHA in Yemen, <https://www.unocha.org>

<sup>37</sup> Women Organisation's Paper, presented in civil society consultations to develop the humanitarian localisation initiative.

**'[some international organisations ] do not regularly share with the government their activity reports and implementation progress despite having that asked of them many times. The Ministry of Planning has repeatedly asked for cash transfers and bank operations connected to aid and donations to be handled through the Central Bank.'**

During interviews, various government officials claimed that some international organisations 'do not regularly share with the government their activity reports and implementation progress despite having that asked of them many times. The Ministry of Planning has repeatedly asked for cash transfers and bank operations connected to aid and donations to be handled through the Central Bank.' In a newspaper interview in 2021, the Minister of Planning explained that 'inadequate and remote monitoring and direct evaluation mechanisms from donors residing outside of Yemen have led to poor programme effectiveness, fewer beneficiaries, corruption, and high management fees.' Most projects were not audited, nor was their final evaluation shared with the government, despite corruption reported by many UN organisations in recent years.<sup>38</sup>

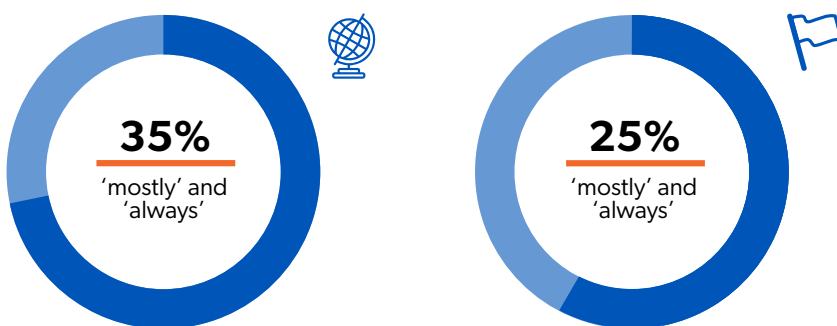
**Figure 7: Do you think international actors support government coordination mechanisms instead of undermining them?**



<sup>38</sup> Minister of Planning: One-third of donors' funds to corruption and organization administrative costs,' Al-Ayyam newspaper published on 4 August 2021, available at <https://www.alayyam.info/news/8p0u2xba-hbfemq-6796>

The internationally recognised government established the High Relief Committee, with one of its tasks to develop government coordination strategies between relief agencies. The committee consists of representatives of relevant government agencies and relief and humanitarian organisations. At the request of donors, the committee was reformed more than once. However, the former chairman of the High Relief Committee believes that mismanagement persists. “Many of the funds raised on behalf of Yemen go to the UN and its organisations and never go to the government and the Central Bank. We have therefore established a straightforward mechanism for central relief action so that five centres give allocations and authority for decision-making and implementation.”<sup>39</sup>

**Figure 8: Does your organisation lead cluster management and agenda-setting?**



Ansar Allah created a different coordination mechanism, the Supreme Council for the Management and Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (SCMCHA), which has the same authority as the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, as well as the powers to register and authorise the functioning of CSOs (which previously fell under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour). They require CSOs to obtain SCMCHA approval before submitting any project funding proposals to external donors, while approving all assessment activities in advance. Humanitarian partners report that authorities in areas under the control of Ansar Allah and elsewhere are directly interfering in the activities of local CSOs and international organisations. Such interference has occurred in program preparation, events, the selection of participants and beneficiaries, and the refusal to grant permits for organisation work.

Coordination with the private sector in these areas is restricted, and potential employers have reported numerous challenges in engaging with international humanitarian actors, particularly liaising with UN agencies and international organisations. These difficulties relate mainly to the bidding process and its follow-up. Common complaints have prevailed over the connection points of international organisations and the standards and

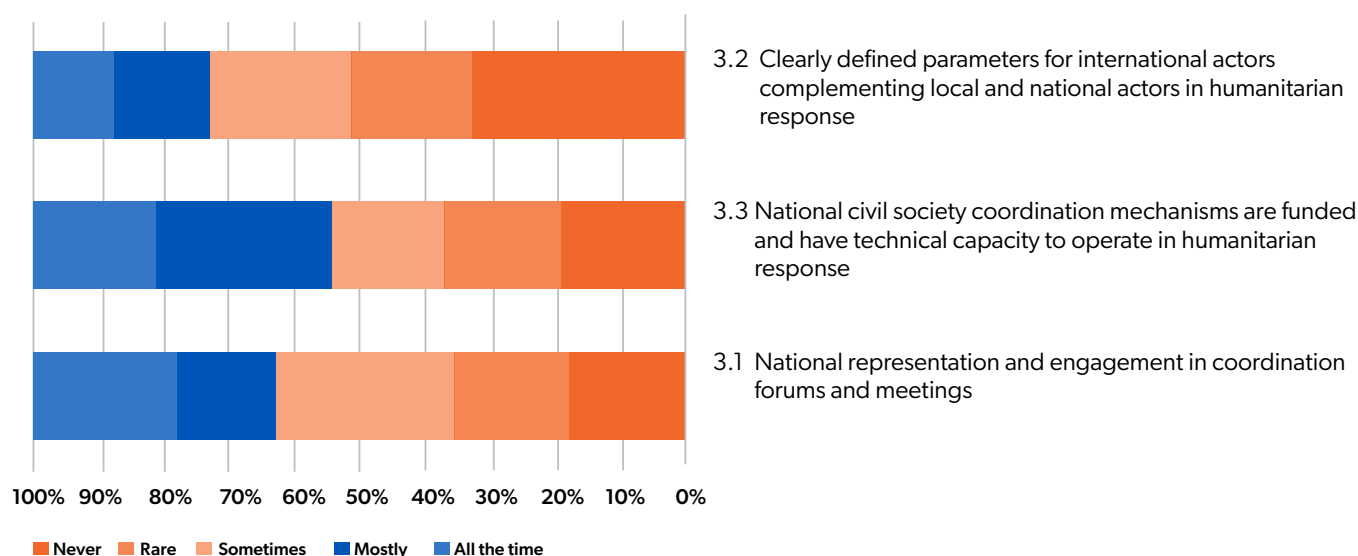
39 'Former Chairman of the High Relief Committee: 'There is Mismanagement of the Relief Process by United Nations Organisations'. <https://almahriah.net/>, 11 April 2022

requirements of international organisations. Consultations with the private sector regarding targeted communities are also missing most of the time. A survey conducted by UNDP in August 2017 indicated some confusion regarding whether or not the coordination mechanism continues to exist: 52 per cent of employees answered no to the question, 'Is there a dedicated coordination platform for humanitarian aid and recovery efforts in the private sector in Yemen?'.<sup>40</sup>

In summary, the situation for coordination and complementarity is deeply hindered by the military conflict, but also competition and distrust between local actors. On the bright side, nearly half of national respondents said that local organisations are funded and have the capacity to participate in the humanitarian response. In addition, 54 per cent of national actors believe they have accessibility to current coordination mechanisms. However, a very small proportion (25 per cent of respondents) believed that there are clearly defined parameters for international actors complementing local and national actors in the humanitarian response. Additionally, only 31.8 per cent of national actors felt that international actors have assessed the strengths of the local organisations for coordination and complementarity purposes. Overall, while increasing access to coordination mechanisms and availability of funding is positive, more work needs to be done between local, national, and international organisations to ensure coordination and complementarity, common planning, deeper knowledge and meaningful participation.

## Overview of Findings - 3. COORDINATION AND COMPLEMENTARITY

3. COORDINATION AND COMPLEMENTARITY: Application and respect for commonly agreed approaches to 'as local as possible and as international as necessary'



40 Ali al-Azki, 'International Aid Organisations and the Yemeni Private Sector: The need to improve coordination in humanitarian crises response', Policy Brief, 16 March 2018, *Yemeni Economic Forum*

# Participation

**Key Finding:** There is **Moderate Evidence** that communities lead and participate in humanitarian response

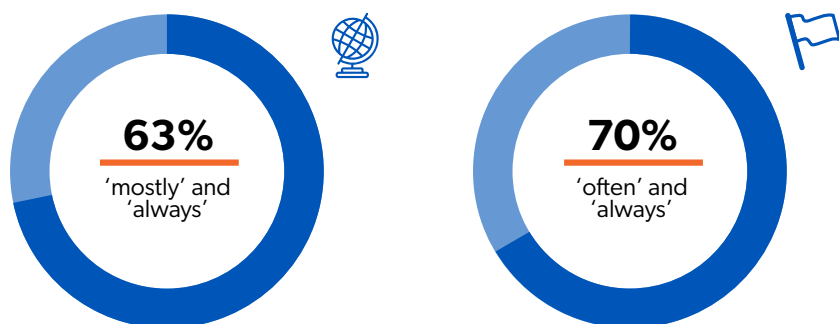
Progress Indicators	Level of Evidence
1. Community/contextualised standards exist for all actors working in that context.	Moderate Evidence
2. Communities have increased opportunities to shape programming, including evaluating international actor programs.	Moderate Evidence

Localisation in Yemen is mostly pursued through the participation of official authorities. However, these discussions largely miss the civil society and informal systems on which crisis-affected communities depend to gain support. Currently, actors in the humanitarian response in Yemen rely on community committees to support selected aspects of the humanitarian response, but these committees are informal and have limited authority to structure the programming and assess the work of international organisations.

Interviewees report that they believe that communities have increased opportunities to shape programs than previously. The research found that 60 per cent of local and national organisations felt that communities have the opportunity to inform and shape humanitarian programming and interventions, whereas 70 per cent of international actors felt the same way. Overall, this is a high percentage of responses that indicate community input is taken into consideration (Figure 9). However, the level of influence this input has in shaping major shifts in programming and policy is limited and uneven. The responses of interview and focus groups participants concerning community leadership and participation in humanitarian response vary by region. Government officials and local leaders in the southern regions, for example in the city of Aden, agree that there are societal/contextual standards for all actors involved in the humanitarian response.



**Figure 9: Does your organisation have formal mechanisms to provide information to affected populations and ensure their participation (including feedback mechanisms)?**



**'In most workshops attended to change or develop the project machinery or evaluations, our opinion is not taken into account, so [we are] only in attendance'**

Opportunities include evaluating the work of INGOs, flexibility in project adjustment, and discussions through community committees in each directorate (these were established by the governorate to engage communities and identify the most critical needs for their implementation). Conversely, interviews with local NGOs highlight that their participation is restricted in development, planning, identification, and prioritisation stages. Sometimes local organisations embark on fieldwork and analyses at their own expense to develop proposals for large projects. With this said, lack of data prevails. One interviewee from a national organisation says, *'In most workshops attended to change or develop the project machinery or evaluations, our opinion is not taken into account, so [we are] only in attendance'*.

Local organisations operating in areas under the control of Ansar Allah viewed community participation as traditional and ineffective, typically carried out via community committees drafted by SCMCHA. This structure forestalls genuine participation from local organisations, prevents project flexibility and accountability, and precludes participatory evaluation. The targeted community requires more control in local decision-making structures. This can mean the authority to determine preferred project criteria, fill recipient lists, and manage community-level communication around the assistance. According to one study, external assistance has sometimes inadvertently facilitated the elite's takeover of those resources and the exclusion of families from informal support

networks. While these committees help ensure community accountability and representation of society's viewpoints during program implementation, they may also unintentionally facilitate exclusion and prevent some groups from receiving assistance.<sup>41</sup>

In the opinion of a representative of a UN organisation, roles and responsibilities exist for all partners, whether they be local authorities, a beneficiary community, or an intervener. Various local partners contribute to risk reduction and provide beneficiary information but are not allowed to interfere with set standards. Such rapid response projects have a direct impact on the community's needs; therefore, the community reflects its needs and responds accordingly, which is a kind of active participation.<sup>42</sup>

As a result of the conflict, donors have reduced their presence in the country, gone into a remote management model, and significantly adapted their program priorities by restricting participation with local actors. This has in turn affected local actors' ability to meet their localisation commitments, engage in advocacy efforts, seek financial support, and participate in training, conferences, and workshops abroad. Travel outside Yemen, which is challenging, is a significant factor restricting direct interactions between donors and Yemeni CSOs and the latter's ability to share ideas and challenges with donors. In addition, the short amount of time dedicated to developing project proposals is problematic and does not allow a proper participatory approach.

The findings on Participation reflect a positive trajectory with 60 per cent of respondents saying that they believe communities have 'mostly' and 'all the time' increased opportunities to shape programming, including evaluating INGO work. However, the development of community standards for all actors continues to lag, with less than 40 per cent of respondents reporting them 'mostly' and 'all of the time'. The separate authorities involved makes true participation spotty and uneven, with different requirements in different geographical regions.

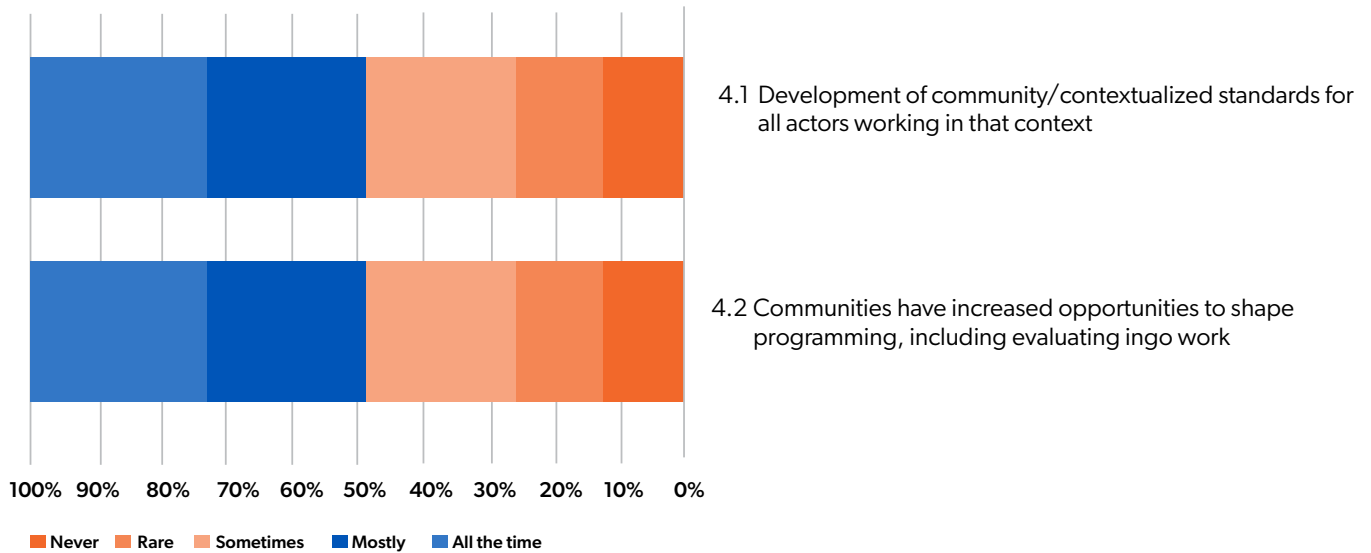
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41 Ali al-Azki, 'International Aid Organisations and the Yemeni Private Sector: The need to improve coordination in humanitarian crises response', Policy Brief, 16 March 2018, *Yemeni Economic Forum*, p. 28

42 Interview

## Overview of Findings - 4. PARTICIPATION

### 3. PARTICIPATION: Communities lead and participate in humanitarian response



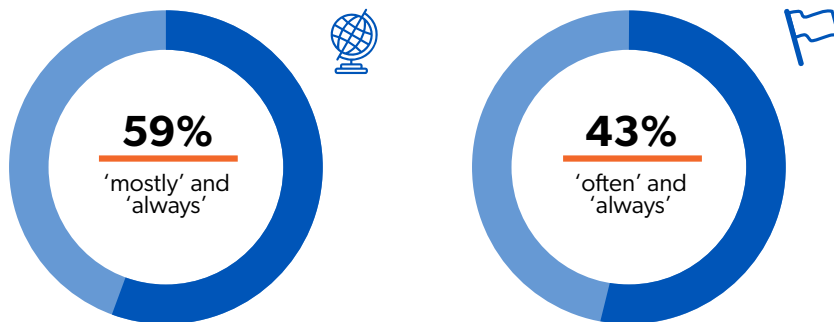
# Policy Influence, Advocacy and Visibility

**Key Finding:** There is **Minimal Evidence** that humanitarian action reflects the priorities of affected communities and national actors.

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

CSOs in Yemen have very limited space to participate in advocacy and policymaking. There are increased restrictions imposed on the activities of such organisations and their freedom of expression. In some regions, such as Hadhramaut and Aden, CSOs have comparatively greater access to policymaking and cooperation with government bodies. On the other hand, the advocacy space and opportunities given to CSOs in regions controlled by Ansar Allah have decreased. The majority (60 per cent) of local organisations reported participating in preparing both the Humanitarian Needs Overview and the Humanitarian Response Plan (Figure 10), as did international actors (71 per cent and 74 per cent respectively). This is an encouraging sign indicating progress on inclusion of local and national actors in policy and advocacy work.

**Figure 10: Does your organisation participate in preparing the Humanitarian Needs Overview and Humanitarian Response Plan documents?**



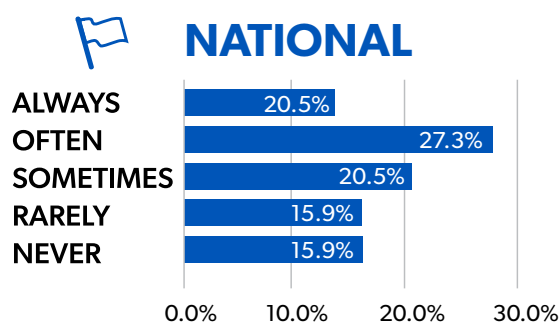
More than half (52 per cent) of local and national actors reported that they are identified as key stakeholders in national discussions on policies and standards and have significant influence, while 64 per cent of international organisations expressed that local and national actors have influence and are involved in the policy discussions. The study found that few local organisations specialise in advocacy. This is likely a contributing factor to local and national actors diminished influence on donor priorities, including programme design and implementation. However, given the challenges noted in the leadership and partnerships sections above on how international actors (particularly donors) don't engage sufficiently with local/national actors, it may also reduce impetus for local/national actors to focus their attention on advocacy with donors. This lack of engagement and consideration of local expertise is noted in how respondents frequently stated that local organisations submit proposals based on donor requirements and criteria rather than needs established by the community and local respondents.

The existence of several authorities has further restricted CSO advocacy and freedom of expression. However, neither government in Sanaa nor Aden has attempted to engage the CSO sector in decision-making processes, even in matters where CSOs play a substantial role, such as the humanitarian response. Cooperation between the two sectors is limited to execution. In some areas, such as Hadramawt and Aden, CSOs have greater access to policymaking processes and cooperation with government agencies. By comparison, the space and opportunities for advocacy for CSOs in areas controlled by Ansar Allah have shrunk.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> 'CSO Sustainability Index 2018 for MENA', USAID.

## **'Donors ignore the role of local CSOs, in both their international and donor reports, and take the lead even at the local level'.**

**Figure 11: Is your organisation's role as a national/local partner recognised in the reports of international partners?**



Most FGD participants complained about poor recognition of local and national actors as key stakeholders in national policy and standards. Participants emphasised that local organisations' visibility in response processes is limited. Some international organisations do not mention the name of the national/local partner in their public and international reports, only in the technical report (Figure 11). If the local partner does not have a compelling media presence, it will not appear on social media channels. *'Donors ignore the role of local CSOs, in both their international and donor reports, and take the lead even at the local level'*.<sup>44</sup>

Some believe there should be networks and alliances of CSOs to improve their visibility, which will in turn strengthen their participation and increase their funding. One network of local organisations within the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation for Development Projects gradually faded due to war conditions. CSOs see the need to develop a legal framework for civil society networks in order to demonstrate that they are viable partners.<sup>45</sup> There were some differences by region; government actors in Aden said that national actors are recognised as key stakeholders while others saw that recognition as limited.<sup>46</sup>

Some international organisations acknowledged that they need to do more to recognise the important role of local actors, although others said that they do involve local organisations in global conferences and support their capacity-building.

44 Focus Group 1

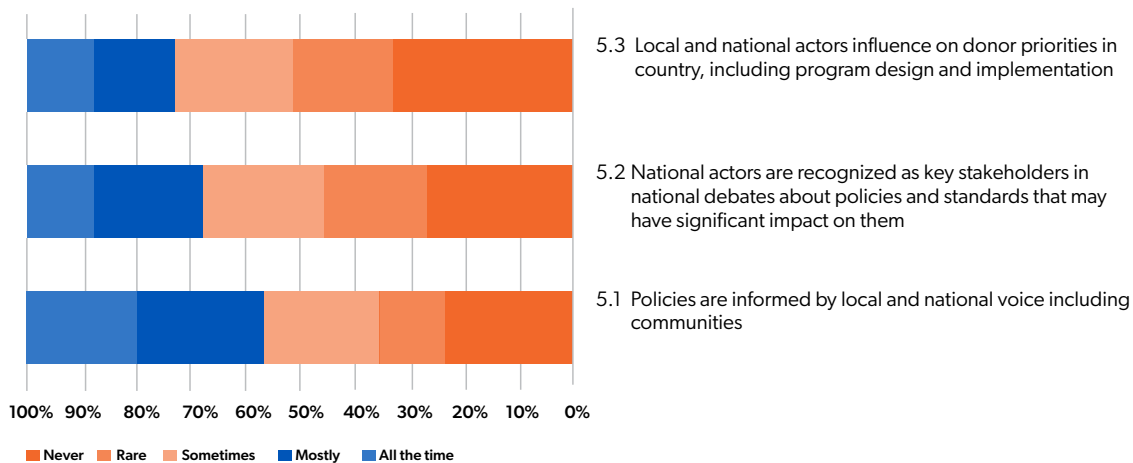
45 Focus Group 2

46 Interviews 1, 2, 3, 4

In summary, international organisations indicate that local organisations' lack of capacity in advocacy work creates a large gap. National/ local actors' ability to influence policies and donor priorities guiding the humanitarian response remains fragile. The study's findings on Policy Influence, Advocacy, and Visibility indicate that the vast majority of respondents found that national actors are given insufficient space to influence donor priorities. However, it was expressed by more than half of respondents that policies are formed reflecting local and national voices. In order to sustain an equitable and inclusive response, a strong enabling environment and both national and international actors acknowledged the need for increased focus on advocacy by the local actors and which will require greater collaboration among themselves to overcome persistent barriers, including language, resourcing, access, and capacity.

## Overview of Findings - 5. POLICY INFLUENCE/ADVOCACY/VISIBILITY

5. POLICY INFLUENCE/ADVOCACY/VISIBILITY: Humanitarian action reflects the priorities of affected communities and national actors



## Institutional Efficiency and Capacity

**Key Finding:** There is **Minimal Evidence** that Local and national organisations are able to respond effectively and efficiently, and have targeted and relevant support from international actors

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

While the study found that the capacity of local organisations to respond efficiently and adequately improves over time, this capacity growth remains limited, as most of these improvements have been achieved through local efforts rather than the support of long-term support international organisations. Usually, international actors do not take a structured approach to capacity-building or have a consolidated approach among themselves to build on each other's work supporting the same local/national actors. Instead most international actors use an ad-hoc approach to capacity building that is more focused on stop-gap approaches to meet donor requirements.

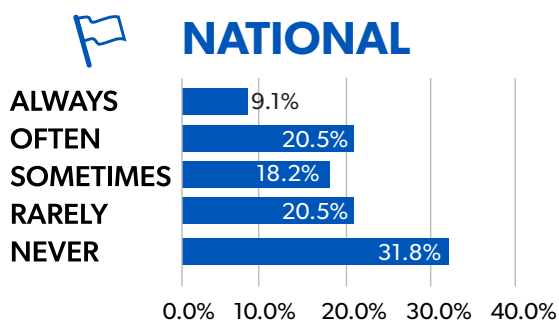
*'Since 2015, we have not heard about the institutional capacity building of local organisations',* said one research participant. Even the existing opportunities often benefit a limited group of organisations, a sector, or a specific region. In addition, such opportunities are very limited in scope and budget. International organisations focus on building local capacities for project implementation. Sometimes there is no alignment between the training opportunities offered to local organisations and the gaps and needs identified by the latter. On the other hand, international organisations often build capacity for specific projects, not as part of the organisation's strategic development. Local organisations likewise are concerned with obtaining donor support, so internal development is minimal.



Many local organisations have made considerable efforts to increase institutional capacities in the areas of program management, finance, logistics, monitoring, evaluation, and others. This has, for the most part, been achieved through self-awareness and self-learning rather than through the contribution of international organisations. Nevertheless, this self-development process is not sufficient to meet the requirements of donors, who have much higher expectations, and demands more systematic international support.<sup>47</sup> Due to capacity-building training for CSOs on basic standards of humanitarian assistance, more CSOs qualified to receive funding from Yemen's Humanitarian Finance Fund – increasing from 11 organisations in 2015 to 19 in 2016.<sup>48</sup>

Learning and development of local staff has improved and has made them competitive to enter international organisations.<sup>49</sup> One of the ongoing challenges remains the poaching of experienced and skilled staff from local and national actors by international actors who are able to offer better benefits. Often this happens without any consultation with the local and national organisations, or adequate compensation for the subsequent impact. In instances of staff poaching, international actors benefit from the investment made by local and national actors in building staff capacities, skills and knowledge using their limited resources.

**Figure 12: Does your organisation receive proper support from international organisations/partners before and during the humanitarian response?**



47 Focus Group

48 Civil Society Organisations Sustainability Index in MENA for 2016, USAID

49 Interview with the partnership officer of a UN organisation

Only 29.6 per cent of local and national actors reported receiving proper support from international organisations and partners before and during the humanitarian response (Figure 12) – which indicates poor engagement and support from the international actors to their local/national counterparts. However, there were also some positive examples of international actors providing capacity-building opportunities to their local and national partners. These actors found that capacity-building focused on the project implementation level is no longer necessary, and argued for an entity emerging from local organisations that focuses on capacity-building at a higher level to ensure continuous learning with support and partnership with international organisations.

Some international organisations have a mandatory annex in each capacity-building agreement assessing the partner’s capacity so that a clear capacity-building plan can be developed throughout the project. However, other international organisations indicated that building capacity in an organized way was challenging if not impossible, demonstrating a lack of coordination on the subject and lower prioritisation. Only 11.3 per cent of national organisations expressed that they ‘always’ or ‘mostly’ have targeted funding for building capacity (Figure 13). Some international organisations have led participatory discussions to map interventions towards unifying and coordinating capacity-building. This requires coordination between international and local organisations and the design of well-structured evidence-based institutional policies and procedures.

**Figure 13: Does your organisation receive targeted funding for building its capacity?**

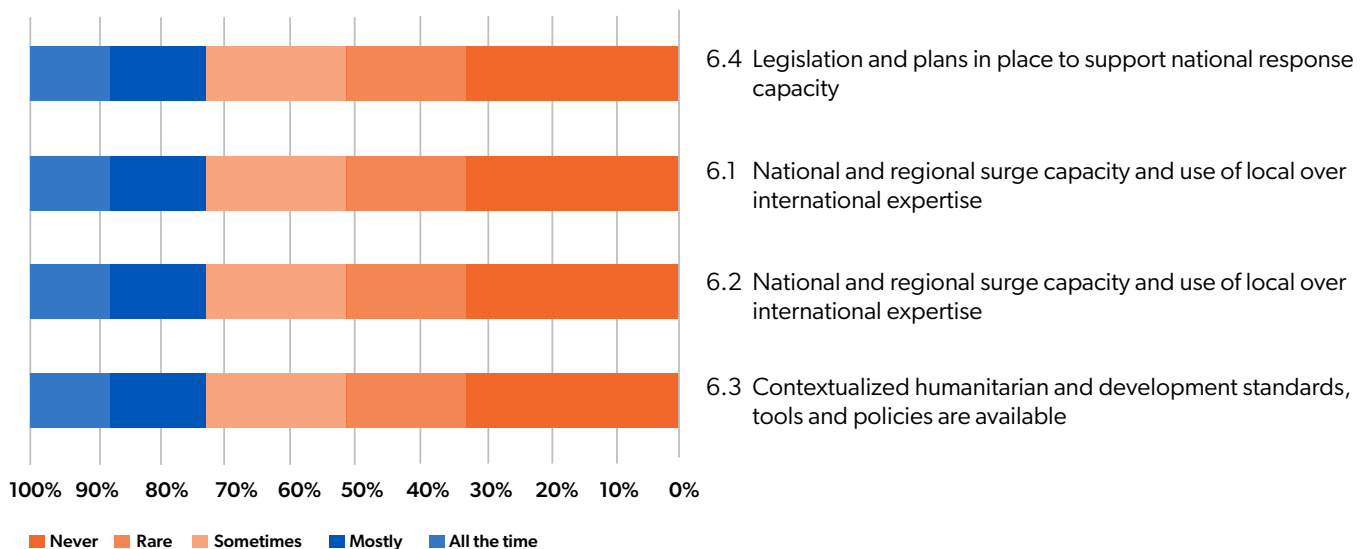


Local capacity to respond quickly to conflict, emergency, and natural disasters using local expertise is inadequate. There are no structured plans to support a national emergency response capacity. Before the current conflict, the Yemeni government was overwhelmed by emergencies and disasters, with practically no early preparedness response strategy. This made strengthening capacities in a specific field a secondary concern.<sup>50</sup>

While the study found that 65 per cent of international actors and 60 per cent of national actors had high confidence that national and local organisations have the ability to respond efficiently and effectively, it is evident that there is poor planning and resourcing from international actors to provide targeted and structured capacity strengthening support to local and national actors to meet international standards. The majority of actors believe the national actors have the ability/capacity to deal with immediate needs and that local expertise plays a key role in identification of needs and adequate inclusive response. Progress on legislation is the weakest link and laws are not properly in place to support the national response capacity.

## Overview of Findings - 6. CAPACITY

6. CAPACITY: Local and national organisations are able to respond effectively and efficiently, and have targeted and relevant support from international actors



<sup>50</sup> Yemen: National Progress Report on the Implementation of the HYOGO Framework for Action (2011-2013), <https://www.preventionweb.net>

## Funding

**Key Finding:** There is **Minimal Evidence** that an increased number of national and local organisations describing financial independence that allows them to respond more efficiently

Progress Indicators	Level of Evidence
1. Local and national actors have access to direct funding with limited or no barriers.	Minimal Evidence
2. There is an increase in the amount of humanitarian funding to local and national actors.	Minimal Evidence
3. Local and national actors have increased decision-making over financial matters.	Minimal Evidence
4. Legislation and plans are in place to support national response capacity.	Minimal Evidence

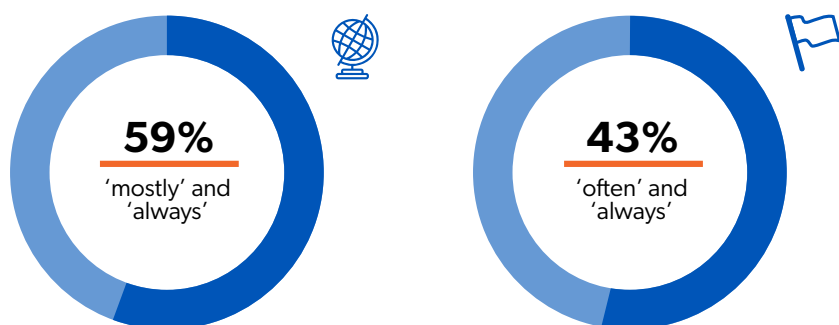
The conflict and economic deterioration have reduced funding sources and weakened local organisations' financial sustainability and independence. The conflict has restricted funding sources and destroyed financial sustainability initiatives, just as it has destroyed family income, civil servants' salaries, and the private sector. Likewise, it has also adversely affected charitable and income-earning opportunities, creating a context in which local organisations have few sources of funding except for international donations.<sup>51</sup>

Direct funding from donors to local and national organisations remains quite low, with any direct funding from donors going to a handful of national organisations concentrated in the capital and major cities. Furthermore, opportunities available for local organisations to access direct funding are still very minimal, especially since donors have complex regulations and requirements for due diligence, eligibility criteria, and registration. These pose particular challenges to younger organisations and often lead to the submission of proposals from only a few organisations. As shown in Figure 14, only 32 per cent of local and national partners stated that they can access funding without the support of an intermediary, compared to 63 per cent (almost double the amount) of international actors.

<sup>51</sup> Marta Colburn.

The YHF is considered one of the largest sources of direct funding for local and national NGOs in Yemen. The number of projects implemented by national organisations in this period was 38 per cent. However, the support provided by YHF to local organisations dropped since 2018, reaching its lowest level in 2020 when local organisations received only 12.8 per cent of the total allocations provided from the humanitarian fund. In contrast, international NGOs received 50.5 per cent and UN agencies received 31.6 per cent of the fund. In 2019, the YHF allocated approximately US \$240 million to 154 humanitarian projects implemented by 54 humanitarian partners, including \$145 million to NGOs and Red Crescent societies (60 per cent of the total). Half of this went to national NGOs (\$59.3 million). This amount excludes funding received by sub-implementing humanitarian partners and received from projects of UN agencies and international NGOs funded by the YHF.<sup>52</sup> For example, in the strategy of Save the Children, eight per cent was allocated to local organisations.<sup>53</sup> In 2020, 12 national organisations received \$12.7 million – accounting for 12.8 per cent of the total allocation from the YHF – while INGOs received \$49.8 million (50.5 per cent), and UN agencies \$31.2 (31.6 per cent) (Table 4).<sup>54</sup> The reduction in 2020 was mainly due to lower contributions from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, and Britain.

**Figure 14: Can your organisation access funding without an intermediate partner?**



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<sup>52</sup> About the Yemen Humanitarian Fund, UN OCHA, <https://www.unocha.org>

<sup>53</sup> Interview with the partnership official.

<sup>54</sup> Yemen Humanitarian Fund 2020 Final report, <https://www.unocha.org/>

Crescent societies (60 per cent of the total). Half of this went to national NGOs (\$59.3 million). This amount excludes funding received by sub-implementing humanitarian partners and received from projects of UN agencies and international NGOs funded by the YHF. For example, in the strategy of Save the Children, eight per cent was allocated to local organisations. In 2020, 12 national organisations received \$12.7 million – accounting for 12.8 per cent of the total allocation from the YHF – while INGOs received \$49.8 million (50.5 per cent), and UN agencies \$31.2 (31.6 per cent) (Table 4). The reduction in 2020 was mainly due to lower contributions from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, and Britain.

**Table 4: Distribution of financial allocations to the Humanitarian Fund in Yemen in 2020**

Percentage of funding	Amount/million dollars	Number	Type of beneficiary organisation
31.6	31.2	6	UN Agency
50.5	49.8	16	International NGO
12.8	12.7	12	National NGO
5	4.9	1	Qatar Red Crescent Society

Source: Yemen Humanitarian Fund 2020 Final Report, <https://www.unocha.org/>

According to the MENA CSO Sustainability Index,<sup>55</sup> Yemeni CSOs that received funds from the YHF in 2016, are, with one exception, located in Sana'a. Hadhramaut is the only region where CSOs rely on domestic private sector funding more than foreign funding. Older organisations that have been established for six to ten years are prioritised for funding. Many local organisations, especially start-up organisations, find it hard to access funds as a result of inadequate proposal development and communications capacities.

55 CSO Sustainability Index 2016 in MENA, USAID, p. 55

**Figure 15: Have you received funding from the country based pool fund?**



Approximately 60 per cent of local and national organisations have reported rarely or never receiving country-based pool funds. On the other hand, approximately only 30 per cent of international actors had not had access to the pool funds. Opportunities for local organisations to directly access bilateral or multilateral funding are very limited. Direct access to donor funding requires complex due diligence systems and conditions, eligibility criteria, and registration processes. This poses particular challenges for organisations, often limiting funding to specific organisations. In addition, some donors withhold a percentage of the project's funding until the organisations' final reports are approved, and most local organisations do not have sufficient resources to sustain cash flows.

There is no adequate, stable funding for local organisations to pursue. Many international organisations do not fund operating expenses or overhead for local organisations. There is an international trend towards granting more funds to local organisations, but they have imposed their own role as intermediaries, arguing that local organisations are ineffective in governance, financial capacity, and financial management. This adopted role as mediator becomes a deterrent in building the capacities of local organisations to access donor funding directly.<sup>56</sup> The capacity of local organisations must therefore be built and developed to increase their access to donations.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Interview with INGO representative

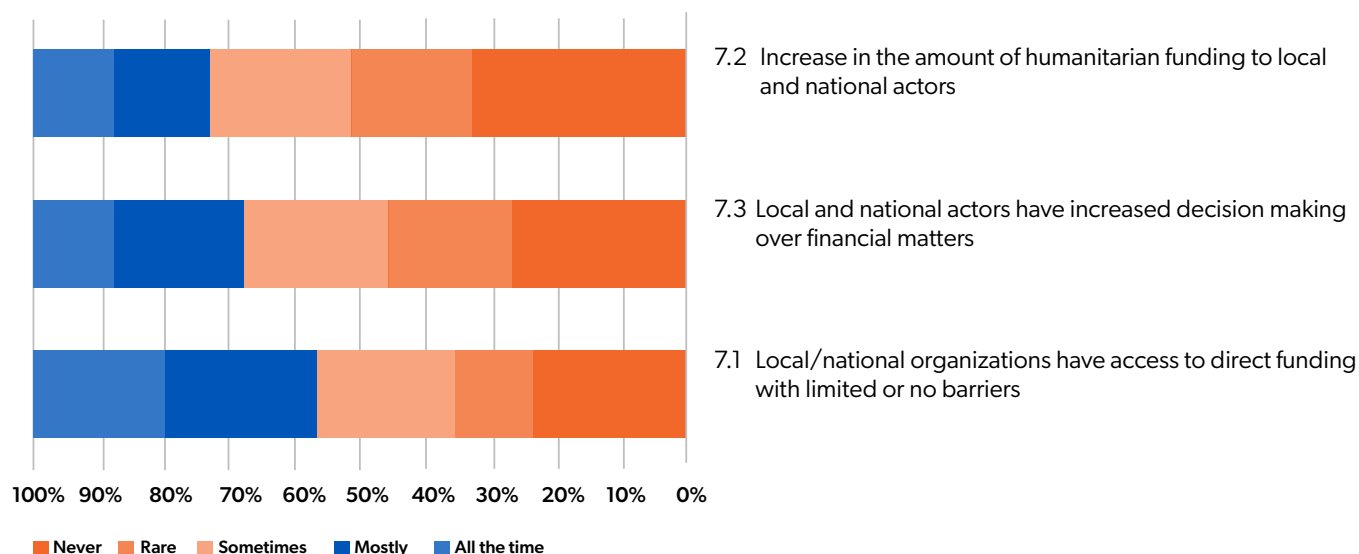
<sup>57</sup> Focus Group

According to some research participants, this type of engagement with local organisations indicates the lack of a genuine strategic partnership. *'Participation controls the mechanism of financing and access. Local organisations are not engaged in receiving direct funding with international organisations, as they are not involved in the project design process but are partners in project execution'*.<sup>58</sup>

The study's findings on funding were particularly disheartening, with just over 20 per cent of respondents stating that humanitarian funding for local and national actors is 'mostly' or 'all the time' increasing. Instead, it appears that numerous barriers remain, as indicated by only one in four respondents stating that local/national organisations 'mostly' or 'all the time' have access to direct funding. According to the YHF Annual Report for 2021, out of \$109.1 million in allocations, 72 per cent of the funding went directly to INGOs or UN agencies. Approximately, 25 per cent went to national NGOs<sup>59</sup>, which meets the Grand Bargain Commitments, but raises the question: is this enough? Some barriers in access to direct funding include not having strong financial systems in place, language barriers, a methodology of viewing national actors as implementing actors, amongst many others. While there is some progress on increasing national decision-making, ultimately the funds drive the power of influence.

## Overview of Findings - 7. FUNDING

7. FUNDING: Increased number of national/local organizations describing financial independence that allows them to respond more efficiently to humanitarian response



58 Interview with INGO official

59 Yemen Humanitarian Fund 2021, <https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/YHF%202021%20Annual%20Report.pdf>



## Looking Ahead – Key Steps

The findings of this baseline report suggest that the progress of localisation in the current humanitarian response in Yemen is lagging. However, there are some opportunities to capitalise on the meaningful participation of local actors in the leadership and decision-making process while strongly engaging in collective advocacy and policy efforts. Based on the findings of the response baseline assessment in Yemen, it is recommended to take actions in the following four areas to move forward with work on localisation

1. Support a dedicated structure to facilitate and monitor the localisation process;
2. Promote localisation in existing response and coordination mechanisms;
3. Increase opportunities for local and national actors to respond more effectively
4. Ensure more adequate and relevant initiatives of capacity sharing

The table highlights the opportunities available for progress in locally led humanitarian responses.<sup>60</sup> These actions aim for long-term and system-level change to create a more comprehensive and locally led humanitarian model.<sup>61</sup>

60 'Elevating Evidence: Localisation in the 2019 Bangladesh Flood Response', April 2020, available online at [https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Elevating-Evidence\\_Localisation-in-the-2019-Bangladesh-flood-response\\_Final\\_electronic.pdf](https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Elevating-Evidence_Localisation-in-the-2019-Bangladesh-flood-response_Final_electronic.pdf)

61 'Measuring Localisation: Framework and Tools', Humanitarian Advisory Group, <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/insight/measuring-localisation-framework-and-tools/>

1. Support a dedicated structure to facilitate and monitor the localisation process	Timeframe
1. Create a locally-led (with allocated resources) localisation working group within the humanitarian coordination structure and enable it to coordinate activities and monitor and report on the progress while the HCT and other teams remain liable for their obligations.	short-term
2. Monitor and report regularly on progress in localisation obligations using the localisation framework in this baseline study. Integrate localisation reports into regular humanitarian updates.	short to medium-term
3. Agree on a common means of reporting on and analysing financing for all international responses, in order to track progress on localisation and disseminating in a transparent process.	short-term
4. Jointly establish a standard method for local and national organisations to evaluate international partners' responses.	short-term
2. Promote localisation in the existing response and coordination mechanisms	Timeframe
1. Support local and national partners that are willing and have the legitimacy to co-lead coordination structures at national level (working groups/clusters (supported with sufficient resourcing to engage in coordination)).	short to medium-term
2. International actors should continue to support the leadership, administration, and coordination of the humanitarian response of the Yemeni government to achieve localisation, especially for national coordination structures.	short-term
3. Enhance access to information by ensuring that notes of national coordination meetings are shared in all coordination bodies.	short-term
4. Support local and national organisations in gaining access to and participating in coordination forums through resource allocation, simplified and comprehensive processes, and capacity-building for these organisations, and preparing them to integrate into coordination processes.	medium-term
5. Make coordination meetings more inclusive and locally-driven (e.g., simultaneous translation) as well as translating coordination reports and instructions into Arabic.	medium-term

<b>3. Increase opportunities for local and national actors to respond more effectively to humanitarian needs</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
1. Encourage private sector funding to local NGOs. In addition, support local and national NGO platforms to explore other funding sources, including funding from member organisations.	medium to long-term
2. Local and national organisations should consider establishing formal cooperation mechanisms such as networks/associations if needed (especially in the site or the sector) to increase access to funding and improve coordination and joint action, which would increase their also efficiency.	short to medium-term
3. Financially support initiatives, social protection efforts, and informal systems which provide support through social mobilisation and facilitation. Direct small grants to grassroots and local organisations while strengthening locally led capacity in the medium term.	medium-term
4. Donors should increase contribution to the country-based pool fund, and a percentage should be set for direct funding to local actors.	short to medium-term
5. Funding bodies should coordinate due diligence and compliance requirements and agree to provide rapid access to humanitarian funding by simplifying the procedures.	short to medium-term
<b>4. Increase opportunities for local and national actors to respond more effectively to humanitarian needs</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
1. Local, national, and international actors should strengthen capacity building and sharing initiatives based on existing and ongoing investment in evidence and aiming at positive change in the lives of affected people	short to medium-term
2. International humanitarian actors should develop and provide institutional development and capacity-building/sharing programmes and allocate adequate budgets for to this purpose, building upon local and national priorities.	short term
3. In consultation with local partners, international actors should develop long-term partnership agreements with local and national actors as part of strategic financial and non-financial relations. However, such agreements should define the terms and conditions of the partnership in a clear and negotiable manner in addition to short-term sub-agreements related to projects.	medium to long-term
4. International actors should acknowledge the contribution of their local and national partners and ensure their visibility with the media, donors and other partners . They also should highlight this role through humanitarian responses collaboratively and jointly.	short-term
5. International actors should engage local and national actors through the programme cycle, including the designing, planning, decision-making, monitoring, evaluation, and accountability to crisis-affected people regarding decision-making with integrated roles and responsibilities.	short-term

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# MEASURING HUMANITARIAN LOCALISATION IN YEMEN

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**Baseline Report**  
November 2022



HUMANITARIAN  
ADVISORY GROUP



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK  
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE  
HUMANITARIAN ACTION