

LOCALIZATION BAROMETER

West & Central Africa – Analysis 2024-2025



REGIONAL ANALYSIS REPORT

Trends and priorities for action

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- > Cameroon
- > Central African Republic
- > Democratic Republic of Congo



<https://barometre.fonga.org/>

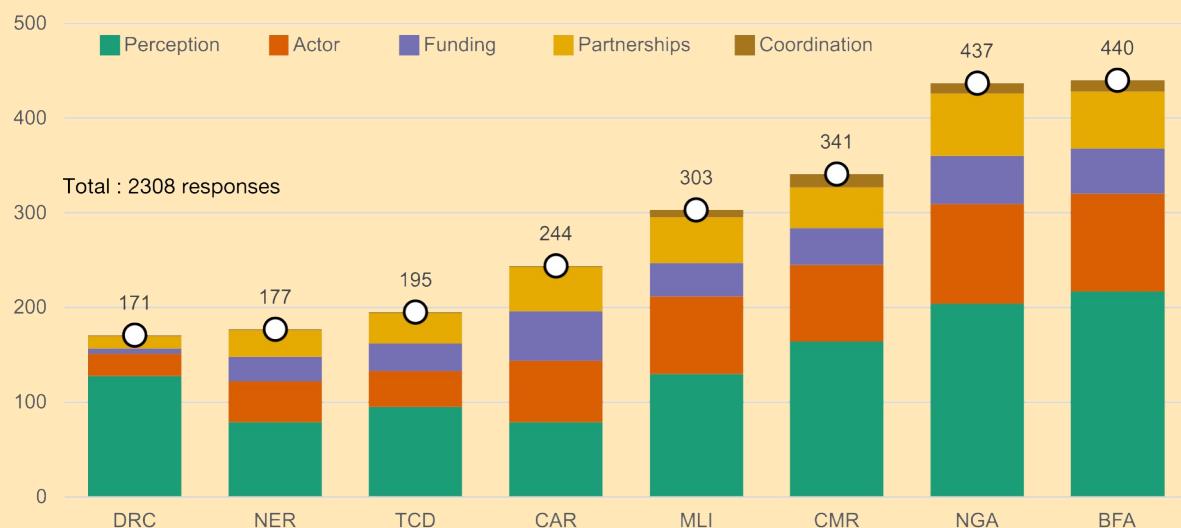
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Summary of participation in online surveys



FOREWORD

For more than a decade, localization has occupied a central place in humanitarian debates. It is embedded in strategic frameworks, echoed in institutional discourse, and regularly reaffirmed as a collective priority. Yet the expected transformations have been slow to materialize in line with the commitments made. At a time when crises are multiplying, resources are shrinking, and humanitarian needs remain immense; intentions are no longer sufficient. Localization now calls for a collective wake-up call, clear choices, and tangible progress.

The Localization Barometer speaks directly to this imperative. It is not intended to judge, nor to add another layer of reporting, nor to fuel abstract debates, but rather to provide a shared framework to observe, analyze, and understand the dynamics at play. By bringing greater clarity and objectivity to practices, power dynamics, and decision-making mechanisms, it helps identify the progress achieved, the persistent obstacles, and the available levers for action. It is thus a tool for dialogue, accountability, and, above all, transformation.

This approach is grounded in a strong conviction: localization cannot advance sustainably without the affirmed leadership of national and local actors, particularly their coordination platforms. The leadership of this Barometer by national and local NGO platforms demonstrates that these actors possess not only legitimacy, but also the technical, analytical, and political capacities required to drive structuring processes. Where space is open, trust is genuine, and responsibilities are acknowledged, localization ceases to be a distant ambition and becomes an operational reality.

The Barometer also highlights a major limitation of current approaches: observed progress too often remains fragmented, dependent on individual initiatives or specific contexts. But localization cannot be built on exceptions. It requires coordinated, coherent approaches that are collectively owned. No single actor—donor, agency, international NGO, national NGO, State, or platform—can, on its own, transform the rules of the game. The key to systemic change lies in the alignment of practices, the complementarity of roles, and mutual recognition of expertise.

As President of the Forum of NGOs in West and Central Africa (FONGA), I am convinced that this transformation depends on shared responsibility. Donors have a decisive role to play in translating their commitments into accessible, predictable, quality funding that enables national and local actors to strengthen themselves sustainably and plan for the long term. International agencies and NGOs have a responsibility to evolve governance, coordination, and partnership mechanisms towards a genuine sharing of power, resources, and visibility. National and local platforms and organizations must continue to strengthen their coordination, representativeness, and strategic leadership to advance strong and credible collective positions.

FONGA is proud to have supported the relaunch and consolidation of this Barometer at the regional level, in close alignment with national dynamics. The continuation of this initiative in a context marked by funding interruptions and institutional changes attests to its relevance and resilience. It also illustrates the collective determination not to let an essential tool for monitoring and driving the localization agenda in West and Central Africa fall by the wayside.

I would like to express particular appreciation to the partners who made this initiative possible. The support of NORCAP, the Sahel Regional Fund (SRF), and Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (DKH) has been instrumental in ensuring continuity of the process, its regional anchoring, and the production of this analysis. Their commitment to collective approaches led by national and local actors deserves recognition.

Beyond the findings, this Barometer is, above all, a call to action. On behalf of FONGA, I invite all donors, agencies, international NGOs, States, and national platforms to fully take ownership of this tool and translate its lessons into concrete reforms. Localization is not an option. It is one of the essential conditions for building, in West and Central Africa, a more just, more effective humanitarian system that is genuinely centered on the needs, priorities, and capacities of affected populations – those for whom, and with whom, we act.



Fanta TOURE DIOP

President of the Forum of NGOs in West and Central Africa (FONGA)

CONTEXT

The Localization Barometer initiative emerged from a shared observation, reinforced by requests expressed by eight countries in the region—Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Chad. Despite its central importance within humanitarian commitments, concrete progress on localization has remained difficult to assess objectively. In the absence of common frameworks, shared objectives, and consolidated indicators, initiatives have been rolled out without enabling the measurement of their real impacts, the monitoring of their evolution, or the structured identification of levers and constraints. In response to this situation, countries expressed the need for structured support to analyze localization, document practices, and ground advocacy in evidence, highlighting the need for a shared monitoring and evaluation tool.

In response, the Localization Barometer took shape through the development of a regional methodology designed to assess the conditions that enable or hinder localization within humanitarian systems, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and to track how these conditions evolve over time. Designed as a regional tool to foster harmonization of approaches and comparative analysis, it is anchored in and led at the national level, a key condition for ownership and sustainability. Accordingly, national NGO forums lead the Barometer in each country, with regional-level support.

The launch of the Barometer was situated within two complementary initiatives. On the one hand, in Burkina Faso, a process led by SPONG sought to develop localization guidelines and required a structured analytical basis. On the other hand, ICVA's regional representation, based in Dakar, was developing an analytical framework enabling both cross-country comparison and adaptation to national contexts.

On this basis, and thanks to initial funding from USAID-BHA and the Hilton Foundation, a team of consultants was mobilized to design a common methodology and initiate a first phase of implementation in Burkina Faso and Mali during the first half of 2024, with launch workshops held in May 2024. Additional funding from USAID-BHA and NORCAP subsequently

made it possible to envisage extending the approach to the Lake Chad Basin countries and to Central Africa from autumn 2024 onwards, based on a revised methodology.

In January 2025, the discontinuation of USAID-BHA funding led to the immediate suspension of the project, preventing the finalization of reports for Mali and Burkina Faso and halting ongoing work in the other countries. In parallel, internal restructuring within ICVA prevented the continuation of the initiative's institutional hosting.

The resumption of the initiative was only possible in June 2025, with the creation of FONGA in Dakar, which in turn enabled ICVA to propose transferring the Barometer's institutional hosting to FONGA. Funding from NORCAP, the SRF, and DKH made it possible, from August 2025 onward, to relaunch the project in a more centralized format, based on a pair of regional consultants and the mobilization of national forums, with the primary objective of finalizing and disseminating the country reports and the regional report.

This interruption had differentiated effects across countries. In Mali and Burkina Faso, data collection had been completed prior to the funding halt, with only the analysis phase delayed. In the Lake Chad Basin countries, quantitative data collection took place before the interruption, while qualitative data were collected after the project resumed, introducing a temporal bias that was partially mitigated through comparative questioning. In the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, quantitative data collection was interrupted at a very early stage, but the available data made it possible to rely on qualitative interviews to finalize the analyses.

Across the analysis, biases related to the duration of the process and to contextual changes were addressed through targeted mitigation measures. The reports therefore constitute a structured baseline on the state of localization in each country and at the regional level, intended to inform stakeholders' strategies and to enable the monitoring of key trends over time.

Final 2024-2025 project timeline by country



METHODOLOGY

The structure of the analysis is based on a “cascade” approach, organized around three complementary levels. The first level corresponds to the main dimensions of localization, understood as key areas of work that are broadly agreed upon within the humanitarian ecosystem. The second level breaks these dimensions down into specific challenges, reflecting the main issues associated with localization. The third level identifies, for each issue, a set of key questions designed to assess the degree of implementation of the localization agenda and to objectively capture both progress achieved and persistent obstacles. These key questions form the analytical backbone of the monitoring framework.

Each key question is operationalized through one or more SMART variables, linked to clearly identified data sources and defined methods of data collection. The dimensions and challenges are defined based on existing methodologies developed by recognized networks and initiatives, notably HAG, NEAR, START, and the IASC, thereby ensuring alignment with international standards and global debates. The key questions and corresponding variables, however, are defined at national level through multi-stakeholder workshops, to ensure their relevance to country-specific contexts, priorities, and dynamics.

National workshops also aim to identify the stakeholders to be involved in the monitoring process, as well as to map existing coordination mechanisms, including those within the UN system and those that operate independently of it.

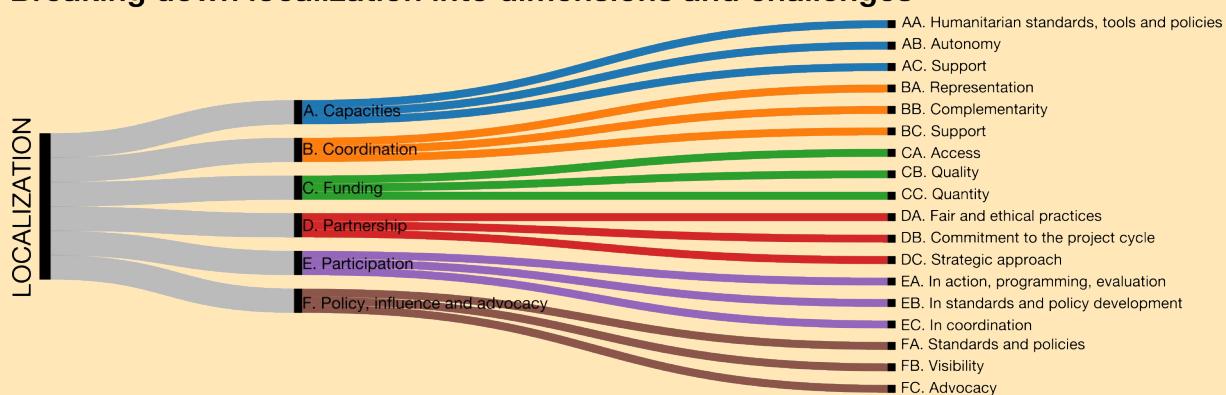
Data collection is organized into three successive and complementary phases. The first phase relies on standardized data-collection tools, primarily questionnaires, to gather factual, actor-level data on funding, partnerships, projects, and activities, as well as perception-based information from stakeholders regarding the level of implementation of the localization agenda. This phase also includes a desk review of key documents, such as policies, strategic frameworks, attendance lists, and coordination-related materials. The second phase consists of

a comparative analysis that triangulates all these sources to identify trends, convergences, and gaps. The third phase relies on bilateral interviews to further explore the hypotheses derived from the comparative analysis and to consolidate the analytical foundation of the country study.

The analysis focuses primarily on national and local NGOs (N/LNGOs), examining their level of recognition, integration, participation, and decision-making power within humanitarian systems. With the exception of Burkina Faso and Mali, the analysis also considers the level of integration of affected populations, particularly with regard to participation in humanitarian action, as well as the role of the State in relation to representation and coordination. The analytical framework is structured around six main “objects”: organizations, individuals, funding, partnerships, activities, and coordination structures. These objects form the basis for the design of data-collection tools and for analyzing relationships between stakeholders.

Governance of the process is built on a linkage between national and regional levels. The country level is responsible for defining indicators, conducting workshops, collecting data, and analyzing results. The regional level, in turn, supports national processes, helps extend their influence beyond the national space, and ensures the necessary conditions for comparability across time and across countries. At each level, the mechanism brings together a multi-stakeholder steering committee, a coordination structure responsible for implementation, and a technical focal point tasked with developing the tools and overseeing data collection, processing, and analysis, with strong engagement expected from all stakeholders.

Breaking down localization into dimensions and challenges



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1/2

The Localization Barometer establishes a shared framework for monitoring and analyzing the implementation of the Localization Agenda in eight countries in West and Central Africa for the 2024–2025 period: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Its objective is to support national and local NGO (N/LNGO) forums in defining a localization agenda tailored to each national context, while ensuring methodological coherence that allows results to be compared over time and across countries. Operational implementation is led at the national level, supported by regional accompaniment initially provided by ICVA West and Central Africa and subsequently by FONGA.

Analysis of the eight national contexts highlights a localization dynamic that is now well established in agendas, coordination bodies, and, to some extent, in practice. Across all countries studied, national and local organizations are now recognized as central actors in humanitarian response, both for their privileged access to communities and operational delivery of interventions, and for their ability to carry and amplify community voices and adapt responses to local realities. This recognition is reflected in greater visibility within coordination spaces, stronger ownership of humanitarian norms, and, in some contexts, dedicated mechanisms aimed at facilitating their access to resources or strengthening their institutional capacities.

Notable progress has therefore been observed in terms of formal participation. National and local NGOs (N/LNGOs) hold statutory seats in key forums, participate in clusters, and are often associated with the development of major strategic documents. Their operational role is widely acknowledged, and specific initiatives—particularly through pooled funds—have partially improved access to direct funding. In several countries, training, mentoring, and accompaniment initiatives have contributed to strengthening the technical and organizational capacities of some national actors.

However, these advances continue to be constrained by persistent structural imbalances between national and international actors. Across all contexts analyzed, a consistent finding emerges: access to coordination spaces has not translated into a genuine sharing of power, nor into effective strengthening of the

competencies associated with these responsibilities. The participation of N/LNGOs remains largely consultative, with limited influence over strategic agendas, priority-setting, and resource allocation. Leadership roles—particularly within clusters and funding mechanisms—remain overwhelmingly concentrated in the hands of international actors.

Funding consistently emerges as the principal barrier to localization. While some quantitative progress has been made, direct access to funding for N/LNGOs remains limited, short-term, and insufficiently predictable. Beyond the overall volume, the quality of funding constitutes a central challenge: incomplete coverage of indirect costs, the lack of multi-year funding, and limited support for costs related to security, coordination, advocacy, or institutional strengthening significantly constrain the ability of national actors to consolidate their structures and plan for the future. This situation perpetuates a structural dependence on indirect funding channeled through international partners.

Partnerships both reflect and reinforce these imbalances. Across all countries, they remain largely structured around a project-based, subcontracting logic. N/LNGOs are primarily mobilized for activity implementation, while project design, financial management, evaluation, and learning continue to be largely controlled by international actors. Although equity principles are formally affirmed, their application remains inconsistent and heavily dependent on individual practices rather than on a shared, systemic framework.

The analyses also underscore the limitations of localization approaches that are still largely fragmented, frequently shaped by organization-specific strategies rather than by collective, context-driven frameworks. Such fragmentation weakens the coherence of commitments, complicates their monitoring, and reduces their overall reach, whereas collective approaches rooted in national realities would offer more catalytic and readily understood levers for change.

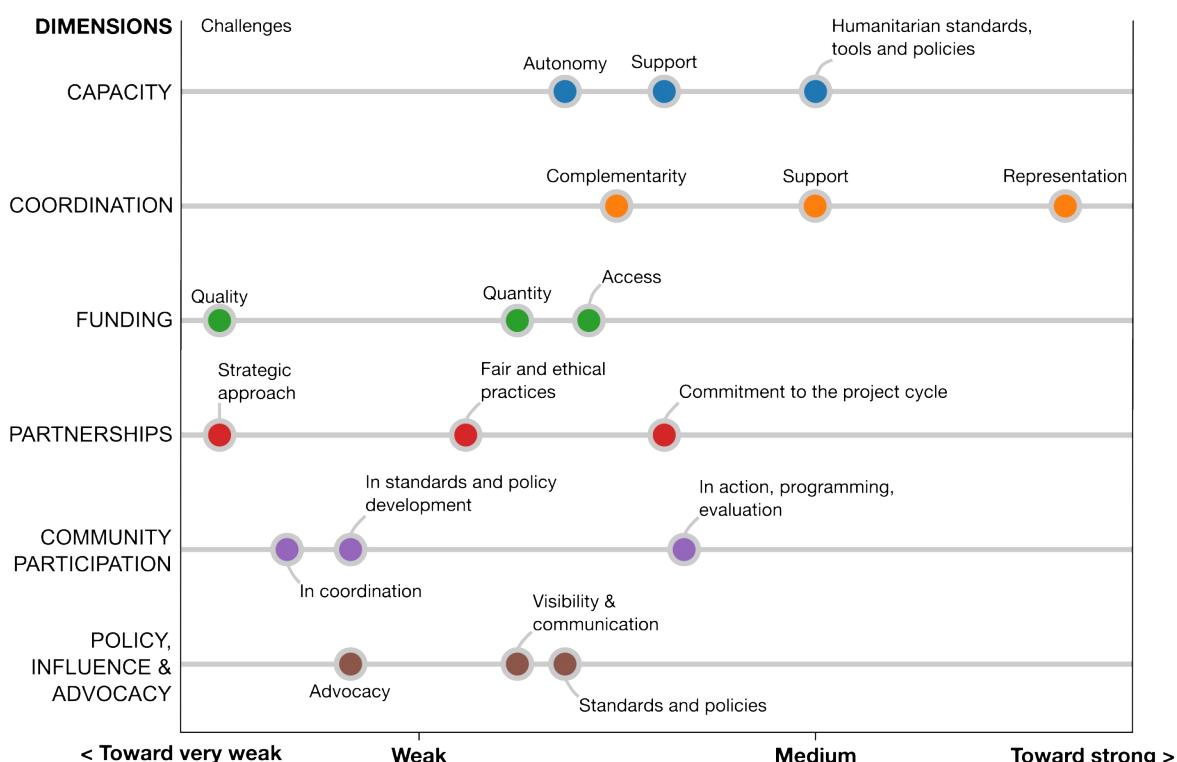
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2/2

The observed constraints are not attributable solely to international practices. In several contexts, N/LNGOs face genuine internal limitations, particularly in terms of governance, human resource stability, the legitimacy and representativeness of collective platforms, and advocacy capacity. Fragmentation within the civil society sector, competition for funding, and the limited production of data, analysis, and narrative evidence all undermine their collective influence and visibility at national and international levels.

Finally, community participation, although recognized as a pillar of localization, remains largely confined to the operational level. Communities are not represented within humanitarian governance spaces, and their influence over strategic decision-making remains marginal. This situation is rooted in broader systemic dynamics, where existing governance and coordination modalities continue to provide few meaningful avenues for structured community participation, including through N/LNGOs, whose strategic positioning within these systems often remains constrained.

Overall, the analyses converge on a shared diagnosis: localization is progressing but continues to be constrained by a humanitarian system still largely structured around asymmetries of power, resources, and recognition. The efforts undertaken reflect a genuine willingness on the part of both national and international actors, particularly within the context of the Humanitarian Reset. However, this momentum also carries a risk if it is not accompanied by the resources, structural adjustments, and support needed to enable effective and sustainable implementation. Achieving lasting transformation requires shared responsibility: international actors must undertake substantial reforms and adaptations of financing, partnership, and governance modalities, while national actors must continue strengthening their institutional capacities, collective coordination, and strategic leadership.

Progress on challenges (average of 8 countries)



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS 1/2

Donors

- > Significantly increase the share, duration, frequency, and volume of direct funding accessible to N/LNGOs through predictable, multi-year mechanisms. Such funding should systematically cover indirect costs, core operating expenses, and costs related to security, coordination, advocacy, and institutional strengthening, and should support the harmonization of salary policies between national and international actors.
- > Adapt and simplify procedures for accessing funding by harmonizing compliance requirements, establishing proportionate risk-management mechanisms, and aligning eligibility criteria with the diversity of profiles and capacities of national actors, to enable progressive, secure, and expanded access to direct funding.
- > Prioritize and strengthen financing mechanisms that facilitate N/LNGO access to humanitarian resources—particularly pooled funds, multi-donor funds, and similar instruments—especially where direct funding is not possible, while ensuring inclusive and representative governance of these mechanisms.

Humanitarian Leadership

- > Strengthen the meaningful participation of N/LNGOs and communities in the co-design of strategic frameworks and operational guidance, as well as in the development, adaptation, and contextualization of humanitarian norms and policies, moving beyond formal consultation. This participation should enable better alignment of frameworks with local actors' actual capacities, recognize and value their contributions, and strengthen coherence between international humanitarian mechanisms and state frameworks, thereby improving the legitimacy and sustainability of coordination.
- > Strengthen the meaningful access of N/LNGOs and communities to leadership and co-chairing roles within coordination mechanisms, by clarifying participation and responsibility modalities, allocating dedicated, predictable, and sustainable funding to support their engagement, and establishing tailored accompaniment and coaching measures, so as to ensure the continuity and quality of their participation.
- > Fully involve communities and N/LNGOs, through their platforms, in the governance of pooled humanitarian funding mechanisms, in priority-setting, and in dialogue with donors, to sustainably rebalance financial and decision-making power within the humanitarian system and strengthen accountability of funding processes.

United Nations Agencies

- > Facilitate and secure N/LNGO access to UN funding by establishing mechanisms that are adapted, transparent, and proportionate to national actors' capacities, supported by clear communication, realistic eligibility criteria, and reasonable and predictable timelines for submission, assessment, and contracting.
- > Support the co-chairing roles of N/LNGOs within clusters through structured induction training and long-term accompaniment/coaching provided by cluster lead agencies, as well as at regional and global levels. This support should strengthen both individual and institutional capacities and ease understanding and management of dynamics across national, regional, and global levels.

International NGOs and Forums

- > Establish collective advocacy and communication mechanisms grounded in equitable partnerships, with the aim of pooling resources, harmonizing messaging, and increasing impact, while rebalancing visibility practices to guarantee explicit and shared recognition of the contributions of N/LNGOs in humanitarian communication materials.
- > Create a joint consultation framework between international and national NGO forums to support the development of shared strategic positions, joint initiatives—especially in advocacy, humanitarian diplomacy, and communication—and the coordinated preparation of meetings, political dialogues, and decision-making processes at national, regional, and global levels, grounded in complementarity, transparency, and mutual accountability.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS 2/2

National and Local NGOs and Forums

- > Strengthen the structuring and legitimacy of national N/LNGO platforms, particularly through the consolidation or creation of inclusive national forums bringing together several umbrella bodies, supported by transparent and accountable governance systems, to improve their representativeness, credibility, and collective influence.
- > Reinforce N/LNGO platforms' roles in mapping, analysis, and visibility of national actors by documenting their geographic presence, areas of expertise, and institutional capacities, in order to broaden stakeholder understanding, facilitate identification of relevant partners, and promote more equitable and inclusive diversification of humanitarian partnerships.

Authorities

- > Establish or strengthen national coordination mechanisms for dialogue between authorities, humanitarian actors, and communities, fully integrating and formally recognizing N/LNGOs and their platforms as actors in their own right. These mechanisms should foster an enabling institutional environment for consultation, community participation, and alignment of humanitarian responses with national priorities.

Cross-cutting

- > Strengthen N/LNGO platforms by allocating dedicated and sustainable resources; supporting the development of robust governance frameworks and structured systems for internal and shared capacity-strengthening; and fully recognizing them as central actors in decision-making processes and in coordination, strategic consultation, and advocacy spaces.
- > Promote equitable and strategic partnerships based on shared collective standards, moving beyond subcontracting towards multi-year relationships aligned with N/LNGO strategies. These standards should define roles and responsibilities, resource-sharing, and mutual accountability, and be accompanied by systematic joint partnership assessment mechanisms that involve national platforms, to improve the quality of partnership relations and inform decisions on funding renewal or allocation.
- > Ensure meaningful and transformative community engagement throughout the humanitarian cycle by integrating flexibility from project design stages and institutionalizing not only participation but also community leadership and decision-making power within humanitarian actions, coordination and governance mechanisms. Supported by dedicated resources and a clear role for N/LNGOs as facilitators and accountability intermediaries, this engagement should enable genuine community influence over priorities, programmatic choices, and resource allocation, and ensure direct, legitimate, and inclusive representation of community voices.

CAPACITIES 1/4

Objectives definition

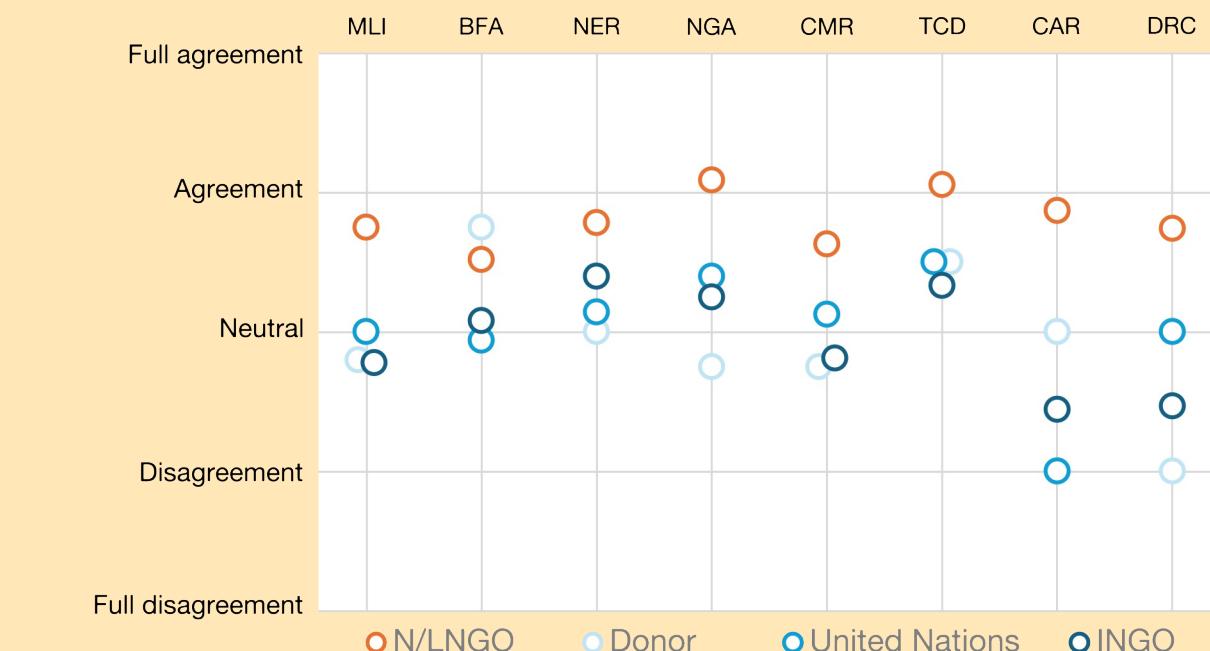
N/LNGOs are able to respond effectively and efficiently to humanitarian crises, and benefit from targeted and relevant support from INGOs/ UN agencies.

- > Humanitarian standards, tools and policies : **Humanitarian standards, tools and policies are accessible and adapted to the context.**
- > Autonomy : **N/LNGOs operate autonomously.**
- > Support : **NNGOs benefit from the support of other actors as they develop their skills.**

Level of progress on the localization agenda per challenge



Perception : "N/LNGOs have a reliable governance system"



Comparative analysis

Analysis across all countries highlights a gradual improvement in the capacities of N/LNGOs, particularly in their knowledge of humanitarian standards, management tools, and organizational development. In Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the CAR, and the DRC, participants emphasize the existence of internal frameworks and policies aligned with humanitarian standards.

A major point of convergence lies in the gap between the availability of standards and their actual uptake. In Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and the DRC, standards are often disseminated and sometimes contextualized, but their organizational integration remains only partial. Moreover, N/LNGO participation in the development of normative frameworks remains limited, often confined to formal or ex-post consultations.

The analysis reveals that capacities are still largely assessed through the lens of N/LNGOs' ability to comply with international norms and requirements, rather than in terms of their programmatic impact and their effective contribution to changes observed among affected populations.

The fragility of organizational autonomy is another common finding. In every country, reliance on indirect, short-term, project-based funding limits the ability of N/LNGOs to invest in governance, human resources, and strategic planning.

These differences in treatment are therefore a key factor contributing to imbalance in all the countries analyzed, with direct effects on their organizational stability. The wage gaps with international actors, observed in all countries, encourage high turnover and a continuous loss of skills. They fuel constant competition for skilled human resources and transform NGOs/NGOs into "training pools" whose skills are quickly snapped up by actors offering higher levels of remuneration and stability. The absence or inadequacy of harmonized salary scales, combined with limited access to funding that covers core costs and social benefits, is further compounded by funding approaches to N/LNGOs often driven by a "lowest cost" logic.

This perception legitimizes lower remuneration levels for N/LNGOs, undermines staff retention and organizational stability, and ultimately reinforces their structural dependence.

Finally, international support appears overall fragmented and insufficiently aligned with priorities expressed by national actors. Support remains largely focused on compliance and project needs, with limited consideration of core costs, long-term institutional strengthening, and co-design of partnerships. Capacity-strengthening initiatives also often follow an opportunistic and fragmented logic, repeatedly benefiting a small number of organizations within the framework of specific projects or partnerships, without expanding to a broader range of actors or being deployed on the basis of a structured analysis of organizations' actual needs.

Contrasts and specificities

Marked differences emerge in the degree of institutional recognition of N/LNGOs by international actors. Chad stands out for a recent and particularly strong focus by international actors on the participation of N/LNGOs in coordination bodies, notably in Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) meetings, even though such participation remains limited in practice. Conversely, in Mali, Niger, and the CAR, the presence of national actors in these spaces is more embedded in routine practice, and the issue of equal participation is less explicitly questioned—whether or not it has truly been achieved. In Nigeria, the reduction of international presence during 2025, with international NGOs (INGOs) withdrawing from certain areas, accelerated the transfer of responsibilities to N/LNGOs, strengthening their operational role more rapidly than in other contexts.

Perceptions diverge significantly between national and international actors in some countries. In Cameroon and Chad, N/LNGOs perceive themselves as structured and compliant, while international actors express greater reservations regarding governance and accountability. In the DRC, the analysis places greater emphasis on ecosystem and partnership constraints than on internal capacity weaknesses.

CAPACITIES 3/4

Examples of good practices

Experiences observed in several contexts demonstrate that localization is grounded in real capacities of national and local organizations, rather than being a purely theoretical objective. Recognizing these capacities and “changing the narrative” is therefore a key step.

In Cameroon, the first-responder logic clearly illustrates these capacities. N/LNGOs are often the first—and sometimes the only—actors to intervene in hard-to-reach areas. Their local anchoring and accumulated experience in managing multiple crises enable them to act rapidly and operate autonomously, both operationally and programmatically.

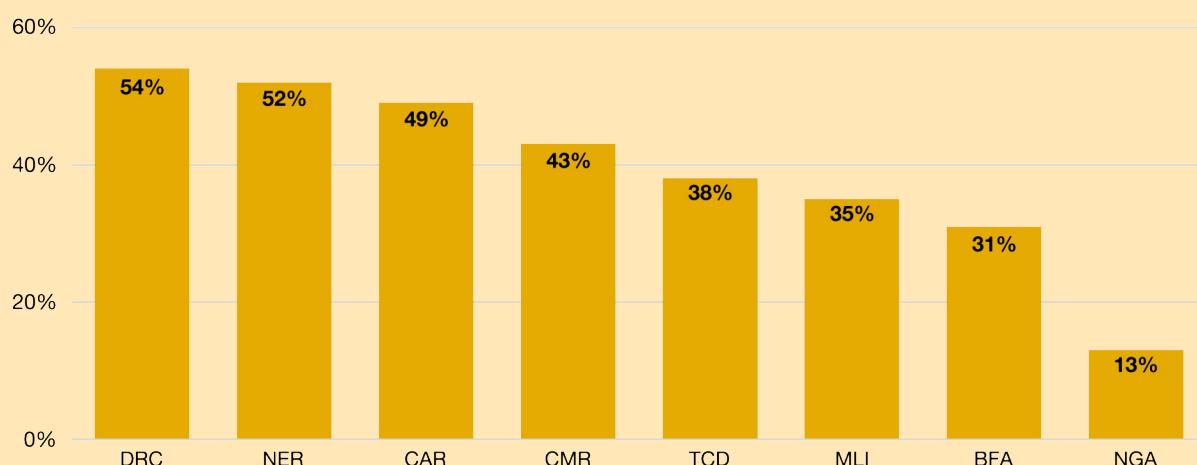
Examples from Mali and Burkina Faso confirm this reality. In these contexts, some N/LNGOs sustainably assume leadership roles within consortia and clusters, demonstrating that localization is already a reality when local actors are given the necessary space and trust.

In Chad, one INGO has adopted a new operational posture that represents a significant structuring practice: funding is now primarily channeled to N/LNGOs, while the international organization refocuses its role on advisory functions, intermediation, and resource mobilization, rather than direct implementation. A more equitable sharing of overhead costs also contributes to creating an environment more conducive to the sustainable strengthening of N/LNGO capacities.

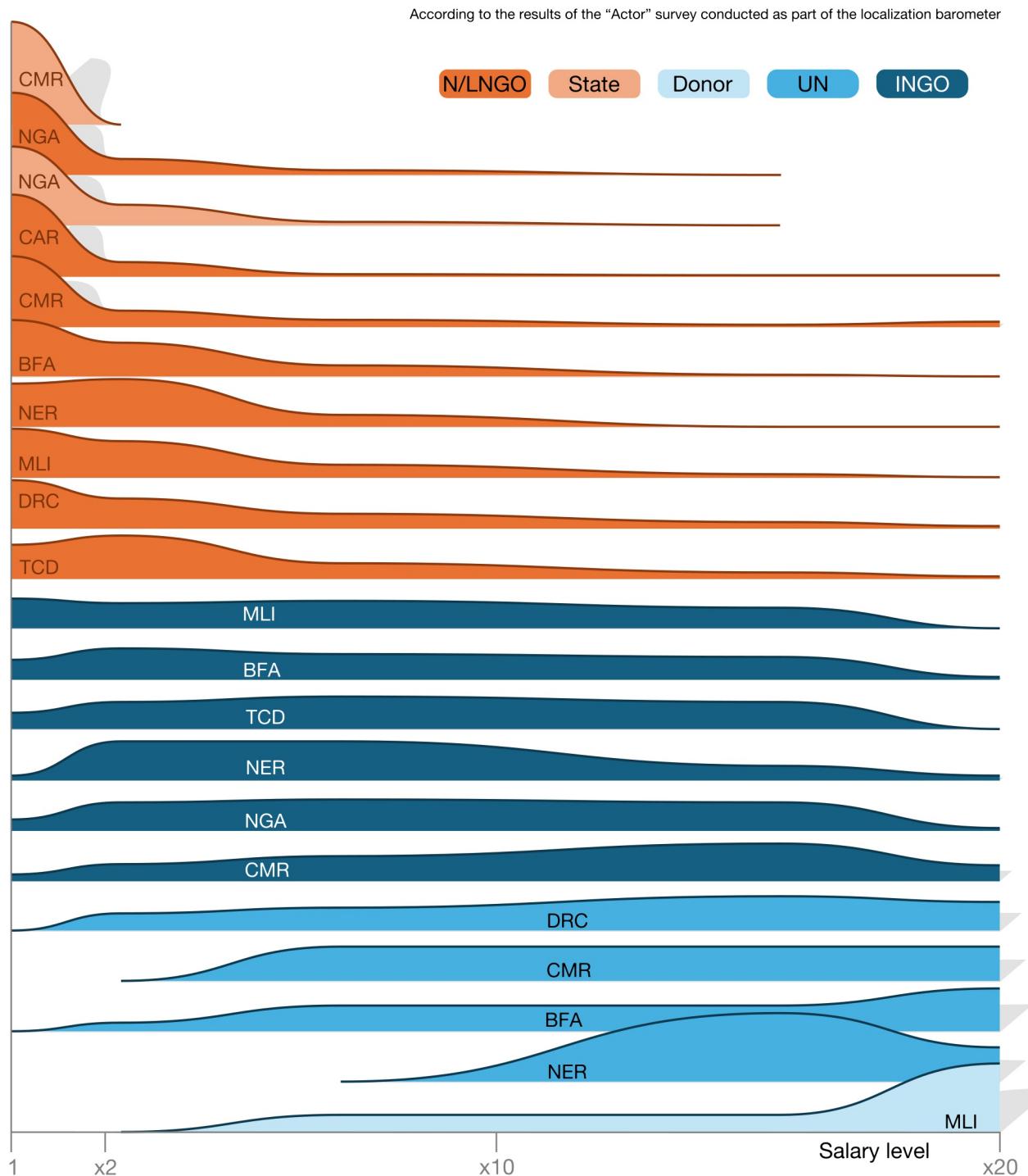
Summary of recommendations

- > Establish more predictable, multi-year funding mechanisms that fully cover core operating and indirect costs, and that support the harmonization of salary policies between national and international actors.
- > Increase the meaningful participation of N/LNGOs in the co-design of strategic frameworks and operational guidance, moving beyond consultation-based approaches, so that these frameworks are designed and adapted to the actual capacities of local actors and enable their contributions to be recognized, valued, and strengthened within national contexts.
- > Strengthen and recognize N/LNGO platforms as central actors in driving localization, by supporting the development of internal capacity-strengthening systems based on sustainable mechanisms for skills-sharing, mentoring, and coaching, with a primary focus on strengthening institutional and organizational capacities—particularly in governance, financial management, human resources, and security—in order to benefit all member organizations.

Percentage of N/LNGOs whose staff were approached by international actors for recruitment in 2024



The average distribution of salaries between organizations consistently follows a gradual pattern: N/LNGOs < INGOs < UN < Donors, regardless of the country.



Across all positions, salaries are distributed progressively among the different types of actors, impacting individual career development strategies, with the majority of national employees of INGOs, UN agencies, and donors having been initially employed by a N/LNGO.

Apart from cases of forced displacement, the only instances of reverse movement described by respondents were motivated by a desire to return to the country of nationality for family reasons and/or to start a personal project.

COORDINATION 1/4

Objectives definition

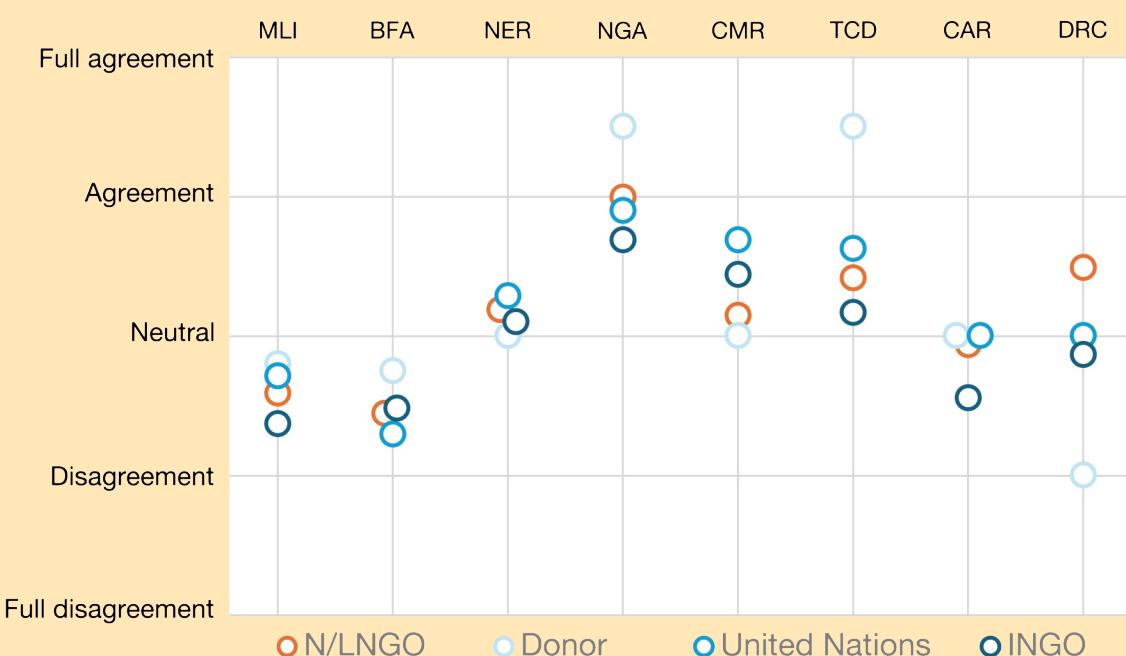
N/LNGOs participate in international coordination mechanisms as equal partners and in accordance with humanitarian principles, while national coordination mechanisms exist and are strong.

- > Representation : **N/LNGOs are represented at national level and participate in forums and coordination meetings.**
- > Complementarity : **Humanitarian response is collaborative and complementary.**
- > Support : **National coordination mechanisms are supported and have the technical capacity to intervene as part of the humanitarian response.**

Level of progress on the localization agenda per challenge



Perception : "N/LNGOs lead the response and shape decision-making"



Comparative analysis

Across all countries analyzed, the participation of N/LNGOs in humanitarian coordination mechanisms is now more firmly established at a formal level. N/LNGOs are present in the majority of coordination bodies, including clusters, sectoral working groups, and Humanitarian Country Teams. This presence reflects growing recognition of their operational role and their legitimacy as key actors in humanitarian response.

However, a cross-cutting finding is the persistent gap between formal presence and real influence. In all contexts, N/LNGO participation rarely translates into actual access to leadership, strategic steering, or decision-making functions. Their involvement remains mostly limited to basic participation, whereas priority-setting, planning, and the facilitation of coordination mechanisms continue to be dominated by international actors.

Another shared finding concerns the structural constraints that limit the continuity and quality of N/LNGOs' participation. Limited financial and human resources, dependence on project cycles, and the absence of dedicated funding for coordination make their engagement unstable over time, as observed in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, the CAR, and the DRC. This situation is compounded by the frequent disconnection of national actors from regional and global coordination spaces—linked in particular to their physical absence or to language barriers—even though substantive participation requires regular engagement and a solid understanding of the humanitarian architecture as a whole. The lack of targeted investment in training and accompanying dedicated human resources within N/LNGO platforms therefore limits their ability to remain sustainably engaged in these spaces and to play a role in collective influence and strategic leadership.

Finally, complementarity between actors remains largely insufficient. In most countries, coordination relies more on an implicit division of roles than on genuine co-design of the humanitarian response, due to the absence of a structured approach to sharing roles and responsibilities based on respective capacities and expertise. While N/LNGOs bring strong community anchoring and access to affected areas, these assets remain insufficiently recognized and valued in decision-making spaces, limiting the effectiveness, relevance, and contextualization of humanitarian

response. State structures are generally only minimally involved—often through isolated individual engagements—while government established coordination mechanisms, such as CROCSAD in Mali, are rarely or only weakly integrated into existing coordination architectures.

Contrasts and specificities

Notable differences nevertheless emerge across contexts. Burkina Faso and Mali stand out for the relatively advanced institutional integration of N/LNGOs, with statutory seats in numerous forums, including in leadership positions. The existence of long-standing N/LNGO or mixed forums, led by N/LNGOs in strong positions, reinforces the role they play in coordination. However, in some countries, the proliferation of networks and platforms of N/LNGOs tends to complicate issues of representativeness, while internal governance weaknesses and perceived opacity in decision-making mechanisms raise questions about legitimacy, making it more difficult to assert a clear and recognized strategic role within coordination spaces.

In Nigeria, the situation is characterized by a strong quantitative presence of N/LNGOs in coordination meetings—often exceeding that of international actors—but with extremely limited leadership. The federal structure of the country and sectoral compartmentalization accentuate this fragmentation, while simultaneously fostering the emergence of dynamic local networks at state level that remain insufficiently recognized at national level.

In Cameroon, the coordination architecture varies significantly by region, with a hybrid governance system that offers varying spaces for participation by N/LNGOs. While this configuration generates opportunities, it also risks reproducing existing imbalances if influence capacities are not reinforced.

In Chad, international actors consider that they have made significant recent efforts to include N/LNGOs and their associated forum, yet these efforts have not yet translated into genuine recognition of their added value. This situation underscores a range of issues associated with the expectations created by localization—on the side of N/LNGOs as well as international actors—and the risk of tensions when these processes are not conducted transparently, collaboratively, and under a shared strategic approach.

COORDINATION 3/4

Examples of good practices

Recent developments in several contexts point to progress in localizing humanitarian coordination, particularly through increased recognition of the role of national and local actors.

The Humanitarian Reset in the CAR, Niger, and Nigeria is perceived as an opportunity to move toward more balanced forms of coordination. This shift supports collaboration that is increasingly grounded in recognizing the skills and local embeddedness of N/LNGOs, even though concerns remain about the system's ability to question existing power dynamics and mobilize the dedicated resources and support needed to make these changes real and sustainable.

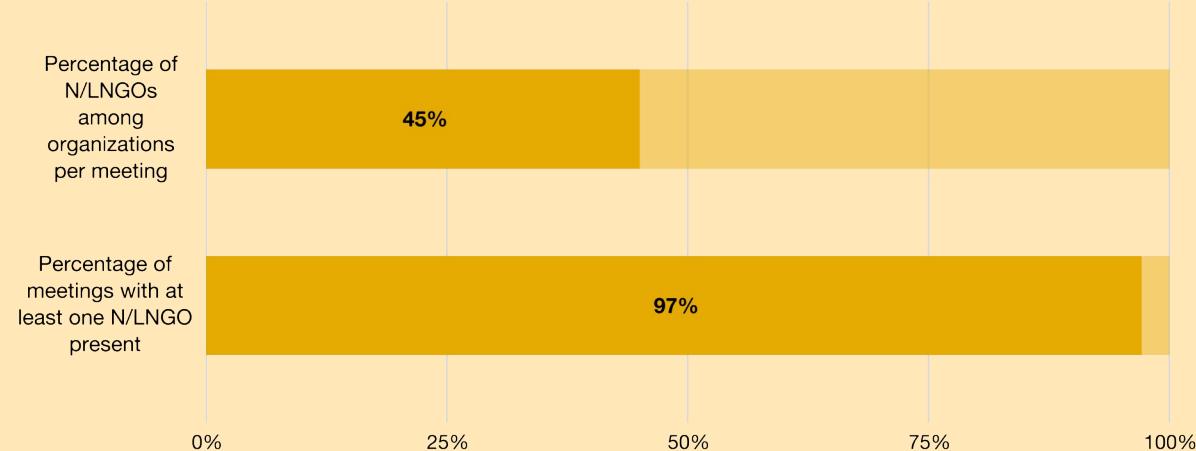
Growing recognition of NGO forums (N/LNGO, INGO, or mixed) constitutes another key good practice. Support from humanitarian leadership is critical to their effectiveness. In the DRC, financial and partnership support to CONAFOHD illustrates this importance. In Mali, national NGO coordination mechanisms benefit from dedicated financial and human resources support, strengthening their role within coordination frameworks.

Finally, some INGOs are adopting approaches that support localization in relation to coordination challenges. In the CAR, the creation of a dedicated localization task force within the CCO illustrates this, and in Burkina Faso, one INGO is helping to strengthen the representation and meaningful participation of N/LNGOs in humanitarian coordination spaces.

Summary of recommendations

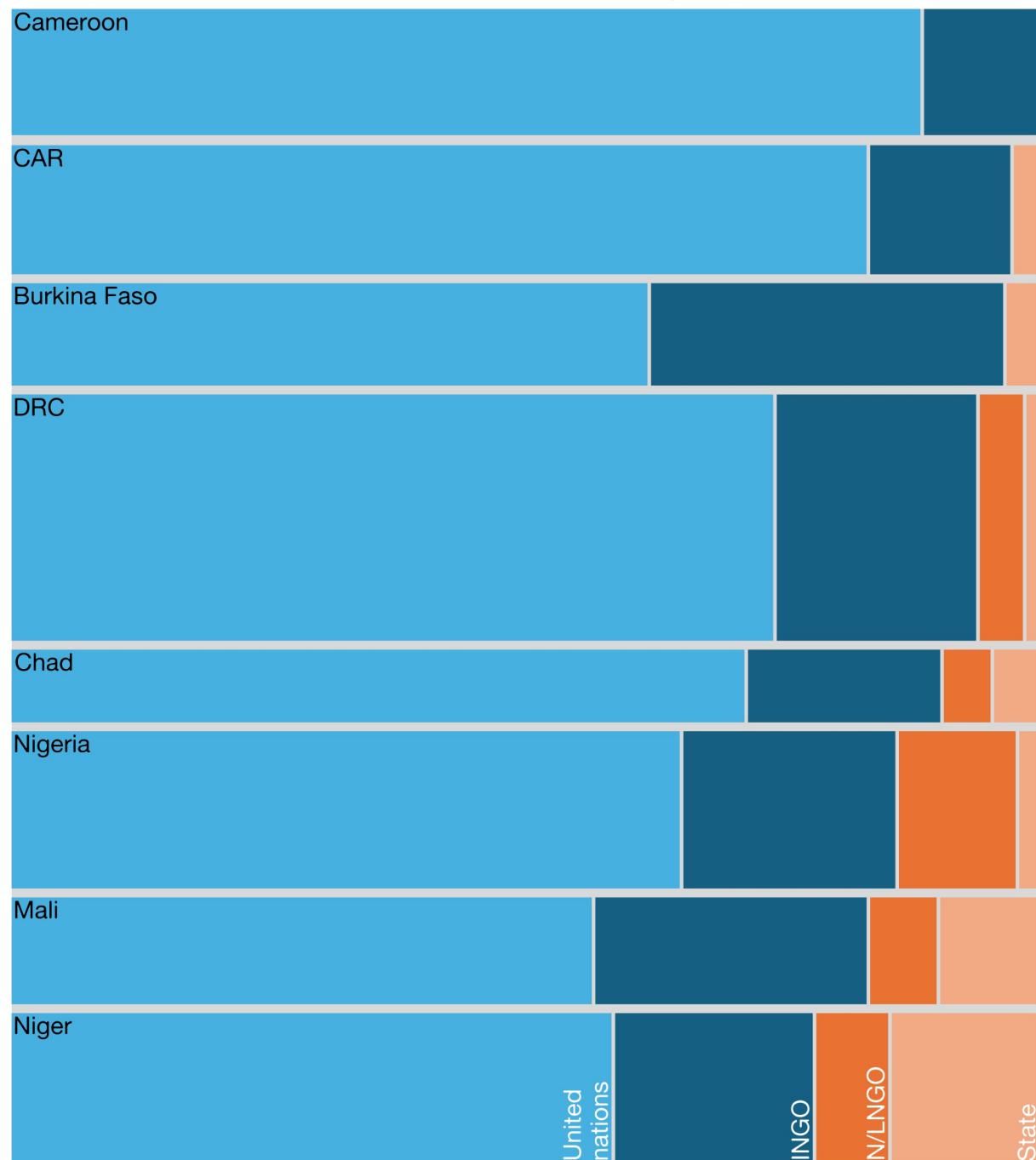
- > Support the development or strengthening of humanitarian N/LNGO humanitarian platforms as legitimate spaces for coordination, strategic dialogue, advocacy, and pooling of resources, by allocating dedicated strategic-level resources and providing training and accompaniment. This should enable effective and lasting participation in coordination mechanisms and promote the emergence of a coordination culture based on codesign, real complementarity, and shared decision-making power between national and international actors.
- > Strengthen the substantive access of N/LNGOs to leadership and co-chairing roles within coordination mechanisms by clarifying modalities for participation and responsibility-sharing; allocating dedicated, predictable, and sustained funding—including beyond project cycles—to designated national organizations for their engagement in coordination; and providing appropriate accompaniment and coaching to ensure continuity and quality of participation.
- > Improve the linkage between international humanitarian mechanisms and existing state frameworks in order to strengthen the coherence, legitimacy, and sustainability of coordination.

N/LNGOs participation rates in humanitarian coordination architecture meetings



Of the 301 lead or co-lead individuals identified, 9% are from national/local actors (government or N/LNGOs), particularly when looking at regional coordination entities.

While there appears to be an ongoing process to transfer leadership to local actors, the associated communication tools are not yet up to date.



According to the contacts listed on the <https://response.reliefweb.int> pages for each country

With the exception of the DRC, which has almost twice that number, there are on average 36 people in charge of leadership in the coordinating entities resulting from the United Nations reform per country.

Among these, 1 to 2 people come from N/LNGOs and 1 to 2 people come from state structures.

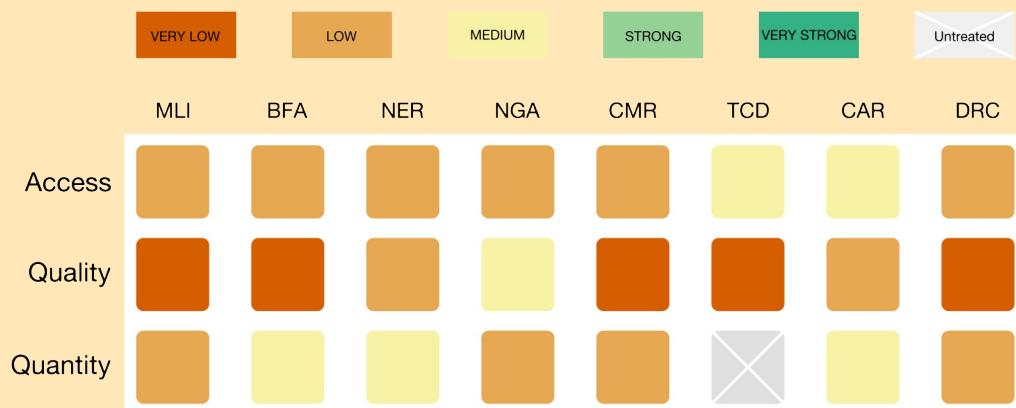
FUNDING 1/4

Objectives definition

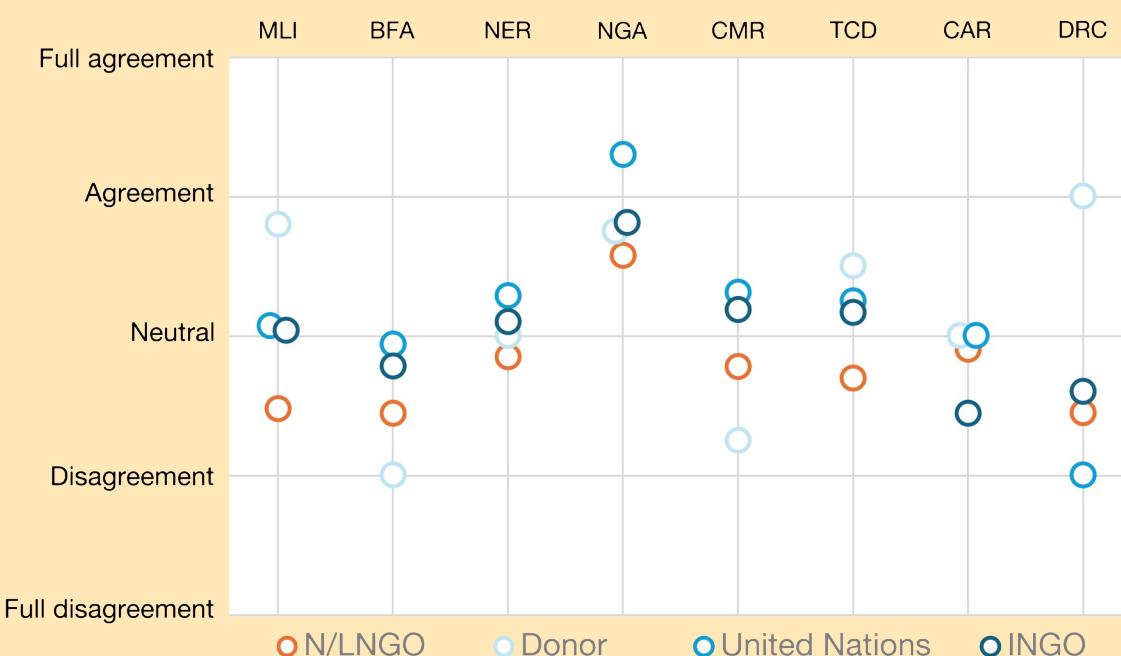
A funding environment that promotes, encourages and supports localization to enable a more relevant, rapid and effective humanitarian response.

- > Access : N/LNGOs have access to the most direct funding possible.
- > Quality : The quality of the funding available to N/LNGOs is equivalent to that of the funding available to INGOs.
- > Quantity : The amount of funding available to N/LNGOs is proportionate to their engagement in implementing activities.

Level of progress on the localization agenda per challenge



Perception : "N/LNGOs have direct access to funding"



Comparative analysis

Across all countries analyzed, access by N/LNGOs to humanitarian funding remains structurally limited and highly dependent on intermediaries, mainly INGOs and United Nations agencies. While opportunities for direct funding—particularly through pooled funds (CBPFs, SRF, etc.)—have increased in recent years, they still represent only a small portion of the funding received by N/LNGOs. This situation perpetuates a lasting imbalance in the distribution of financial and decision-making power, while also generating significant financial losses due to multiple layers of intermediation that ultimately reduce the share of resources reaching affected populations.

A cross-cutting finding concerns the inadequate quality of funding accessible to N/LNGOs. In all contexts, funding remains predominantly project-based and provides uneven coverage of support costs, operating expenses, security, or institutional strengthening. Even when good practices for funding national actors appear to be under discussion, their application remains inconsistent and rarely monitored, reinforcing the sense of inequity between national and international actors.

The amount of funding allocated to N/LNGOs appears everywhere disproportionate to their level of operational engagement. This limited volume compels national organizations to multiply opportunistic partnerships, fragment their funding sources, and restrict their ability to plan over the medium and long term. In all countries, this pattern hampers the autonomy, organizational stability, and strategic strengthening of N/LNGOs.

The persistent limits to direct funding are also explained by a largely asymmetric approach to risk management. In many contexts, donors favor the use of intermediaries—primarily INGOs and UN agencies—to transfer to them the risk associated with ineligible costs, financial compliance, and accountability requirements. In turn, these intermediaries tend to limit their own exposure to risk by prioritizing funding for a small number of already well-structured N/LNGOs capable of meeting due-diligence requirements, often to the detriment of smaller, community based, or emerging organizations. This inequitable sharing of risk is further reinforced by persistent narratives about the lack of capacity among

local actors—often equated with their level of compliance with international standards—and contributes to concentrating direct funding within a small circle of actors, hindering the expansion and diversification of access to local financing.

Finally, the lack of consolidated data and systematic mechanisms to track direct and indirect financial flows is a major common issue. This lack of transparency also affects financial information at each level of intermediaries and the final cost of aid, which limits accountability for localization commitments and prevents strategic decision making based on reliable data.

Contrasts and specificities

Notable differences nevertheless emerge across contexts. In Burkina Faso, the CAR, and Nigeria, the existence of national humanitarian pooled funds is highlighted by stakeholders as a major lever for localization. These mechanisms offer more direct access and better coverage of costs for N/LNGOs, even though their overall reach remains limited.

In Mali and Niger, the gap between localization-friendly discourse and actual practice is particularly pronounced. Direct funding mechanisms exist but remain small in scale and concentrated on a limited number of large N/LNGOs, with rules that are ill-adapted and risk levels poorly calibrated to the context, keeping N/LNGOs in an unfavorable competitive position.

Cameroon and Chad illustrate contrasting situations. In Cameroon, procedural barriers, information gaps, and limited understanding of budget rules exacerbate inequalities in access overall. In Chad, although some indirect funding volumes are significant, dependence on INGOs and administrative complexity limit the real autonomy of N/LNGOs.

In the DRC, observed progress is largely linked to the willingness of international partners and to specific associated funding mechanisms. These gains remain fragile, dependent on risk perceptions and bilateral arrangements, and have not yet translated into a systemic transformation of access to, and governance of, funding.

FUNDING 3/4

Examples of good practices

Practices observed in several contexts show that the localization of funding advances when mechanisms are adapted and when the capacities of national and local organizations are recognized.

Pooled funds play a central role in N/LNGO access to funding. Mechanisms such as the FHRAOC or the SRF are acknowledged as key enablers, seen as more accessible and inclusive, with a substantial portion of resources channeled directly or indirectly to national and local actors and with their meaningful participation in fund governance. Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) are likewise regarded as important instruments for improving equity and increasing the share of budgets allocated to N/LNGOs.

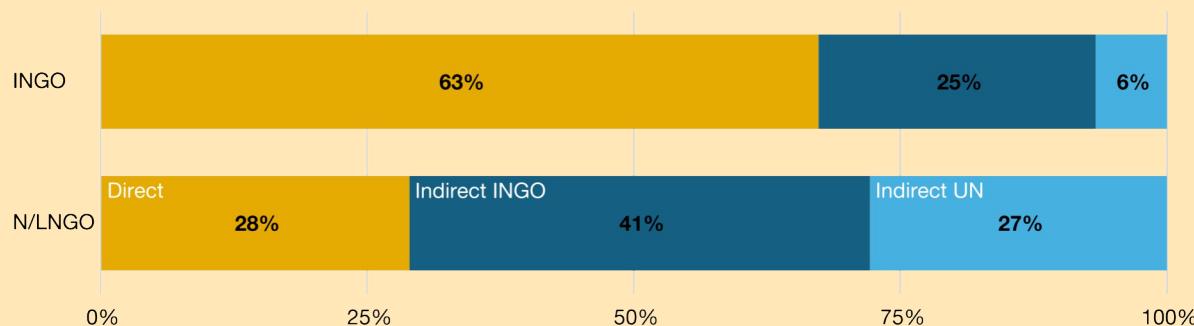
The positioning of certain INGOs as quality intermediaries represents another good practice. Increasingly, INGOs set transfer-rate targets and take on a support role. In some contexts, INGOs have even chosen to withdraw entirely from direct implementation in order to focus on strategic support, governance, and institutional strengthening functions. In Niger, some actors have incorporated budget rules specifically dedicated to capacity strengthening and governance.

Traditional donors also play a shaping role. In the CAR, one donor requires partnerships with national NGOs that include minimum budget transfer thresholds. In some cases, this emphasis on elevating N/LNGOs has led to a reversal of roles within consortia, with N/LNGOs taking the lead, as seen in Mali and Burkina Faso.

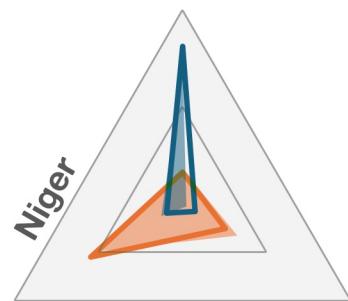
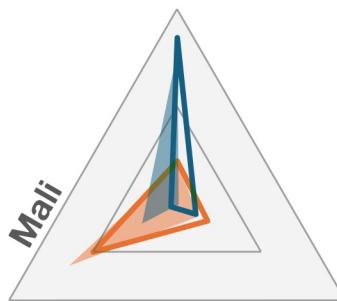
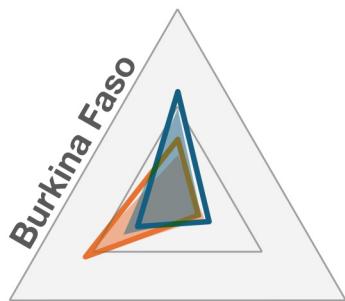
Summary of recommendations

- > Adapt and simplify funding-access procedures by harmonizing compliance requirements, introducing risk-management mechanisms, and significantly increase the share, frequency, duration, and volumes of direct funding accessible to N/LNGOs—particularly through dedicated multi-donor funds and specific funding facilities—while systematically integrating indirect costs, operating expenses, and costs related to security, coordination, advocacy, and institutional strengthening. These shifts should be paired with transparent, systematic mechanisms for collecting, monitoring, and publishing data on both direct and indirect funding, including clear allocation criteria—particularly regarding the percentage reserved for national actors—to strengthen accountability and enable strategic steering of localization.
- > Strengthen N/LNGOs/ actual access to funding mechanisms, notably humanitarian pooled funds, by ensuring inclusive and representative governance of these mechanisms. This requires fully engaging N/LNGOs, through their platforms, in priority setting, decision-making processes, monitoring mechanisms, and dialogue with donors, to sustainably rebalance financial and decision-making power within the humanitarian system.

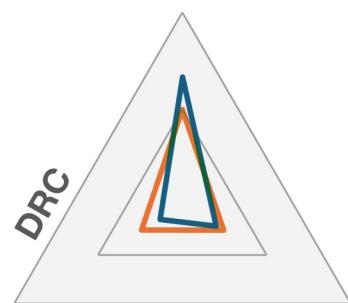
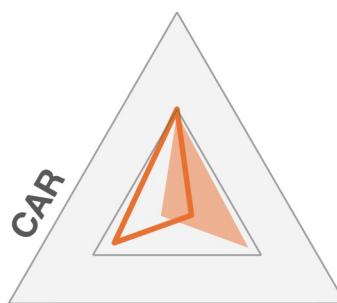
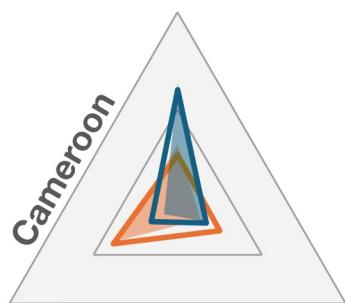
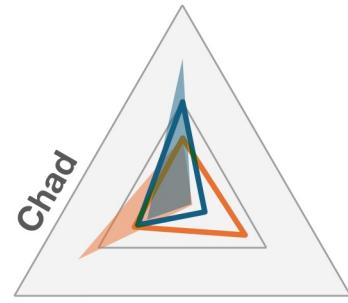
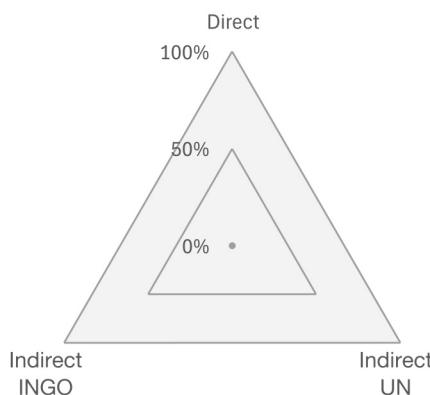
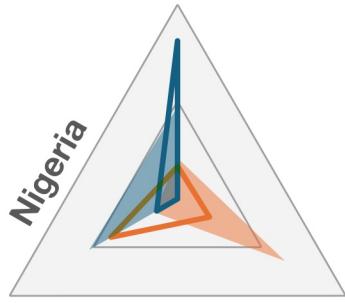
Average funding volume by source and type of organization



In 2024, N/LNGOs are mainly funded indirectly, primarily by INGOs, except in the Central African Republic and Nigeria, where humanitarian funds deployed by the United Nations play a predominant role.



as a ratio of the number of grants obtained, by source, N/LNGOs and INGOs
as a ratio of financing volumes obtained, by source, N/LNGOs and INGOs



According to the results of the "Funding" survey conducted as part of the localization barometer.

Comparison between funding volume ratios and contract number ratios reveals an overall balance, except for Nigeria, Chad, and the Central African Republic.

In Nigeria and the Central African Republic, indirect funding ratios from the United Nations are more favorable (fewer contracts, higher volume), particularly due to the operation of the humanitarian pooled fund.

Conversely, in Chad, the indirect funding ratio is more favorable with INGOs, which, according to interview findings, favor partnerships with substantial budgets in order to reduce the time spent on administrative management procedures.

In Congo and Central Africa Republic, development funds enable N/LNGOs to access direct funding of up to 50%.

PARTNERSHIPS 1/4

Objectives definition

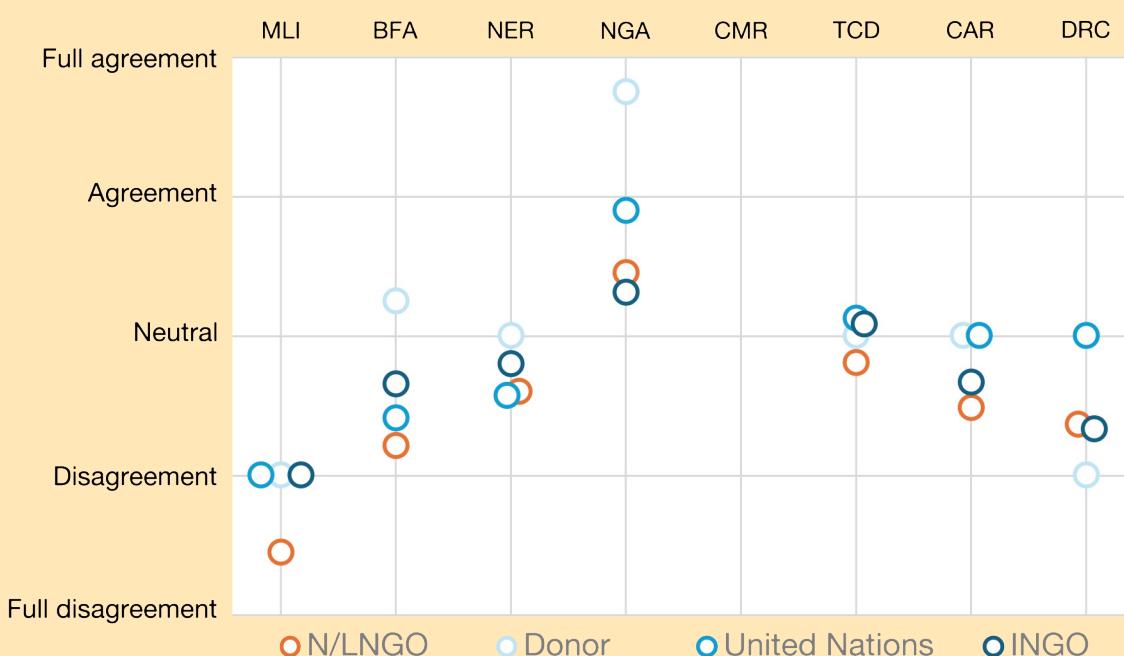
Equitable and complementary partnerships between N/LNGOs and INGOs/ UN agencies facilitate the delivery of a relevant, rapid and effective humanitarian response.

- > Fair and ethical practices : **Partnerships between N/LNGOs and INGOs/UN are based on fair and ethical practices.**
- > Commitment to the project cycle : **N/LNGO partnerships enable them to be involved and assume responsibilities in all stages of the project cycle, including in design, evaluation, and financial management processes.**
- > Strategic approach : **N/LNGOs are involved in longer-term strategic partnerships aimed at putting in place systems and processes that reflect their ambitions and objectives.**

Level of progress on the localization agenda per challenge



Perception : "The distribution of funding from partnerships is equitable"



Comparative analysis

Partnerships between N/LNGOs and international actors remain largely shaped by structural imbalances, despite the existence of formal frameworks promoting equity, ethics, and localization. While N/LNGOs are generally involved at all stages of the project cycle, their participation remains primarily confined to operational implementation. Strategic design, budgetary decisions, risk management, and overall evaluation continue to be largely controlled by INGOs and United Nations agencies. This configuration limits national actors' ability to influence the direction and modalities of interventions and results in a low proportion of truly strategic, long-term partnerships that include the gradual sharing of responsibilities, the co-design of sustainable trajectories, or the jointly planned preparation of international actors' exit strategies. In most contexts, partnerships thus remain focused on short-term projects and opportunities; where longer-term approaches exist, they are most often one-off initiatives—frequently driven by funding reductions—rather than a planned and deliberately pursued localization strategy.

These imbalances are reinforced by the persistence of subcontracting approaches. Across all contexts, partnerships are most often tied to short term funding opportunities and structured around predefined activities. This setup limits N/LNGOs' ability to negotiate their roles, advance their strategic priorities, and use partnerships as vehicles for institutional strengthening. Limited coverage of indirect costs and administrative and management costs further reinforces this dependence and reduces national actors' organizational autonomy.

The analyses also highlight recurring perception gaps between N/LNGOs and INGOs. INGOs tend to view partnerships as broadly balanced and aligned with stated principles, whereas N/LNGOs point to persistent power asymmetries, unequal access to information, and late involvement in decision-making processes. This divergence is repeatedly observed in Mali, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and the DRC.

The analyses also highlight the fragmented nature of partnership frameworks, due to the absence of common, shared, and formalized criteria to which all actors would commit. Although guidance, reference frameworks, or guidelines exist at the international level, their non-binding nature leads to varied interpretations and uneven implementation across organizations, projects, donors, and contexts. Each actor therefore defines its own requirements, modalities, and partnership standards, complicating partnership relationships and increasing the compliance

burden for N/LNGOs. This fragmentation is accompanied by limited diversification of partnerships: in most countries, opportunities remain concentrated among a small number of national organizations already known or identified by international actors, restricting access for smaller, community based, or emerging organizations and slowing the expansion of the partnership landscape.

This lack of coherence is further compounded by the fact that, although donors are increasingly attentive to partnership quality in their support to INGOs and UN agencies, this dimension is rarely subject to systematic and independent assessment from the perspective of N/LNGOs. The absence of mechanisms that allow national and local organizations to assess partnerships safely and without risk to future relationships also limits effective accountability.

Contrasts and specificities

In Burkina Faso and Nigeria, structured discussions around common partnership standards and initiatives aimed at formalizing more equitable practices point to a more enabling environment for evolving relationships, even if tangible effects remain partial.

In Niger and the DRC, the gap between stated principles and actual practices is particularly pronounced. According to testimonies, partnerships are heavily constrained by financial dependence, short funding cycles, and competition among local actors, limiting the emergence of trust-based relationships and mutual learning.

In Cameroon and the CAR, some progress towards more collaborative partnerships is observed, but these gains remain fragile due to persistent power dynamics and the concentration of support on a limited number of already established organizations.

Chad presents a specific situation, characterized by a strong dependence of N/LNGOs on partnerships with INGOs and a very sharp divergence in perceptions of the strategic value of these relationships. Partnerships are largely perceived by N/LNGOs as vital for survival, while INGOs rarely consider them strategic.

In Mali, the situation is reversed, with INGOs reporting higher rates of strategic partnerships than N/LNGOs. This may be explained by the existence of certain "reverse" partnerships, where N/LNGOs hold leadership roles—particularly as lead recipients within consortia—and act as intermediaries for INGOs' access to funding.

PARTNERSHIPS 3/4

Examples of good practices

Observed evolutions point to a gradual transformation of partnerships between international actors and N/LNGOs, within a context still marked by financial risk constraints and impact requirements.

Some good practices nevertheless illustrate more balanced partnerships. In Niger, within long-term, trust-based relationships, certain N/LNGOs have been able to revise their salary scales to levels comparable to those of INGOs, helping to reduce structural imbalances. In Mali, direct funding to N/LNGOs has enabled the development of partnerships led by N/LNGO actors, helping to elevate their role while supporting the strengthening of their organizational structures.

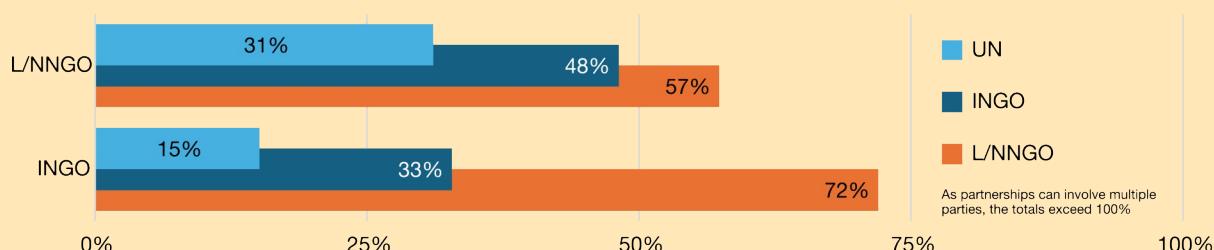
Targeted initiatives also support more equitable partnership approaches. In Nigeria, the PLRCAP project is developing a partnership framework aimed at promoting fairer and more ethical practices. In Niger, some INGOs support their national partners across multiple dimensions—particularly governance—within a multi-year perspective. Local initiatives, such as the work of OIREN's Humanitarian Working Group on partnerships integrating localization challenges, are helping to shift INGO-led partnerships toward co-design rather than outsourcing models.

In the CAR, extensive mapping of local actors facilitates dialogue by improving international actors' understanding of the stakeholder landscape, while also encouraging partnership diversification beyond the most commonly engaged organizations.

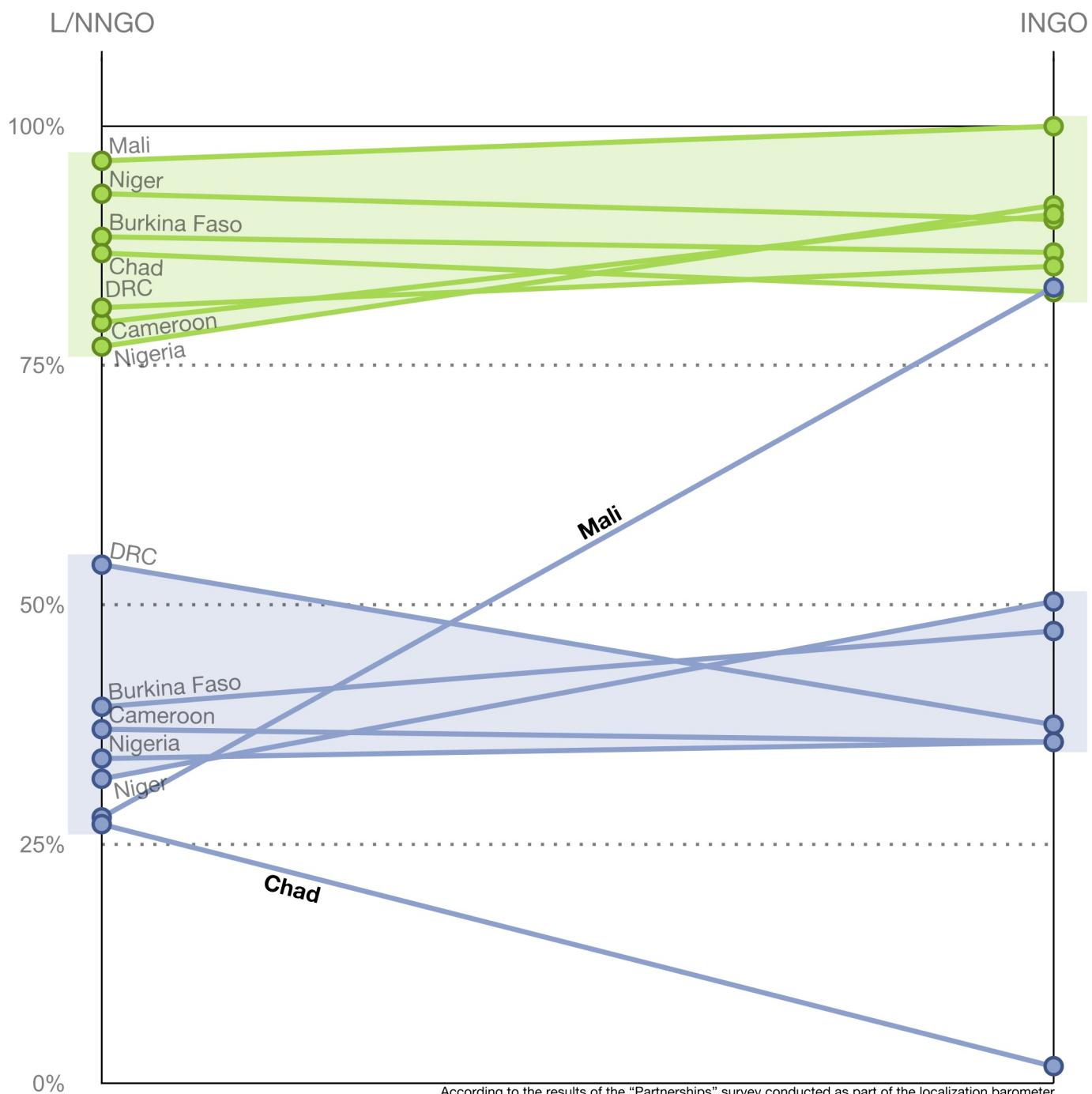
Summary of recommendations

- > Promote equitable, ethical, and strategically complementary partnerships, moving beyond subcontracting approaches towards long-term, multi-year relationships aligned with N/LNGOs' own strategies. These partnerships should involve N/LNGOs early and systematically in project design, budgetary decisions, risk management, and evaluation processes, and be embedded in explicit pathways for the progressive sharing of responsibilities. This is essential to shift international relations towards models based on trust, transparency, and shared accountability, fully recognizing N/LNGOs as strategic actors within the humanitarian system.
- > Formalize and adopt national, regional, or global partnership charters or standards that clearly define roles and responsibilities, decision-making mechanisms, resource sharing, and mutual accountability, and ensure greater transparency in partnership practices—particularly regarding budgets, sharing of indirect costs, contractual rules, and mid-project adjustment mechanisms. These frameworks should be accompanied by systematic partnership evaluation mechanisms involving all stakeholders, with strong participation of national platforms in governance, regulation, and qualitative monitoring of humanitarian partnerships. The results could be used to inform, or even condition, the granting, renewal, or replication of funding.
- > Strengthen N/LNGO platforms in their role of mapping, analyzing, and increasing the visibility of national and local actors—including their geographic presence, areas of expertise, and institutional capacities—in order to broaden stakeholder knowledge, facilitate identification of relevant partners, and promote a more equitable and inclusive diversification of humanitarian partnerships beyond the actors most commonly engaged.

Type of partner structures according to the type of organization



Partnerships between N/LNGOs and INGOs are mainly considered to be project-related and, to a much lesser extent, linked to a strategic approach.



Responses are generally consistent between N/LNGOs and INGOs concerning the distribution of partnership types, with the exception of Mali and Chad regarding strategic partnerships.

In Chad, information gathered from INGO actors point to significant mistrust in the capacities of their N/LNGOs partners, which may explain this result.

In Mali, the presence of long-standing, reputable, and large-scale N/LNGOs has created a reversal in perception, with INGOs considering their partnerships to be both strategic (83%) and project-based (100%).

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION 1/4

Objectives definition

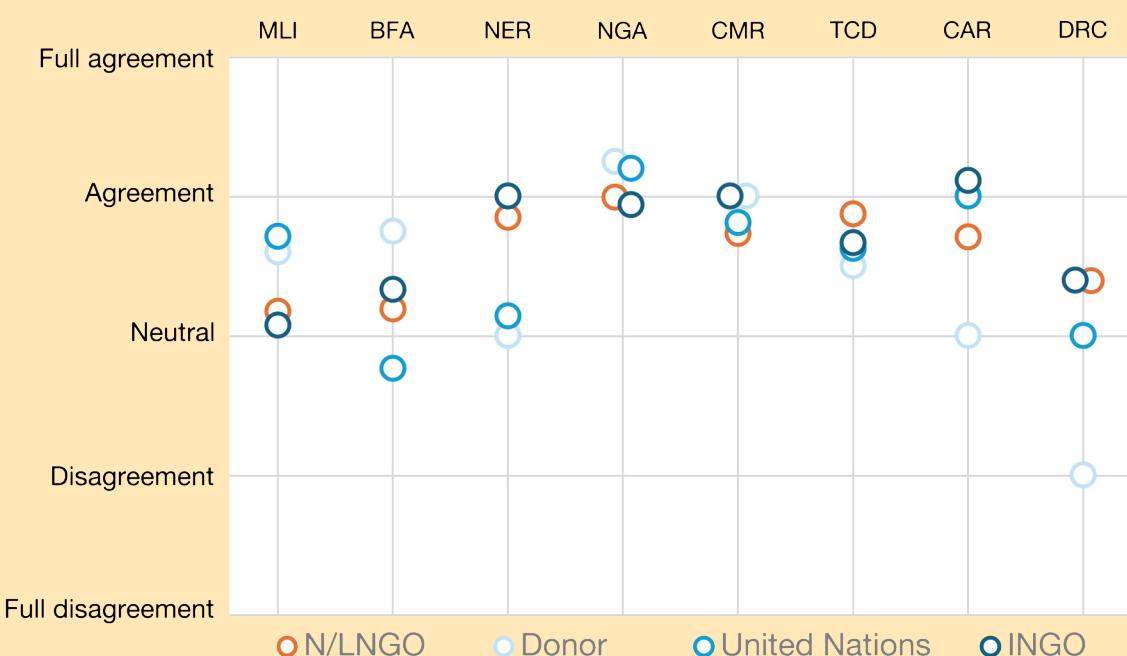
Affected populations fully shape and participate in humanitarian action.

- > In action, programming, evaluation : **Communities participate in shaping programming, including evaluating the work of INGOs.**
- > In standards and policy development : **Communities participate in the development of community/contextualized standards for all actors working in this context.**
- > In coordination : **Communities play a key role in coordinating aid.**

Level of progress on the localization agenda per challenge



Perception : "Mechanisms for community involvement are being implemented"



Comparative analysis

Across all the countries analysed, community participation is widely recognised as a core element of humanitarian action, but its operationalization remains predominantly consultative and implementation-focused. Communities are primarily involved in activity implementation, targeting processes, and certain accountability mechanisms, and to a lesser extent in project evaluation.

A cross-cutting finding concerns the persistent gap between declared participation and perceived real influence. In all contexts, participation often responds to donor-driven procedural requirements and tends to take the form of compliance exercises or “box-ticking,” without any meaningful redistribution of decision-making power. Communities are informed, consulted, or invited to validate choices that have already been defined, but are rarely involved in strategic design, budget setting, or critical decision-making processes.

Community marginalisation is particularly pronounced in the development of norms, policies, and reference frameworks. In all countries, community participation in these spaces remains indirect, sporadic, or entirely absent, often mediated by N/LNGOs. This situation limits the adaptation of humanitarian standards to local realities and perpetuates a top-down, standardised approach.

Finally, in all contexts, humanitarian coordination mechanisms remain largely closed to communities. Their participation is either absent or indirect, through feedback mechanisms or via the intermediation of N/LNGOs. This exclusion from coordination and governance spaces sustains unequal power dynamics, limits local ownership of responses, and reinforces the perception of humanitarian aid as “assistance” that drives dependency. In some contexts, it also contributes to a disconnect between responses and the real needs, priorities, and capacities of affected populations.

Contrasts and specificities

The limited effectiveness of community participation is a common feature across all contexts studied, and is the only dimension displaying such strong homogeneity, despite some isolated differences.

In Nigeria, data indicate higher levels of community participation through N/LNGOs than through INGOs, reflecting the closer proximity of national actors to communities. However, this proximity also entails a risk of substitution, with some international actors conflating N/LNGOs with the communities themselves.

In Cameroon and Chad, participation is widely acknowledged and highlighted in discourse, but qualitative analyses underscore its superficial nature. The greater an actor's distance from operational implementation, the more critical their assessment of participation tends to be.

In Niger, community participation appears to be in a transitional phase. More inclusive initiatives are emerging, notably through territorial or “area-based” approaches, but they remain fragile and heavily constrained by rigid funding, standardized frameworks, and institutional resistance.

In the CAR, community participation is extensively leveraged for operational effectiveness and acceptance, but it remains mostly symbolic in influencing strategic, normative, or coordination decisions, within a context shaped by pronounced power asymmetries.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION 3/4

Examples of good practices

Some initiatives, notably led by specialized actors, have developed dedicated approaches to participation, but these remain largely isolated. Broader reflections on community mutual-aid dynamics contribute to the debate but have yet to produce large-scale operational effects.

Overall, few good practices were identified through exchanges with countries, with the general assessment being rather negative regarding efforts undertaken. Community participation appears to be the least considered dimension within the localization agenda as a whole.

In Niger, community consultations integrated into the humanitarian planning cycle—particularly through focus groups—have enabled the direct collection of population priorities prior to the definition of action plans. These approaches have fostered more balanced dialogue, allowing communities to challenge projects perceived as non-priorities.

Also in Niger, area-based coordination models and dialogue spaces linked to the humanitarian–development nexus were cited during interviews as relevant examples, although it was not possible to identify specific associated practices.

Summary of recommendations

- > Build in sufficient flexibility, time, and room for adjustment from the outset of project design to enable the genuine inclusion of communities and align approaches and activities with the actual needs, priorities, and capacities of affected populations. This shift requires embedding community participation across the entire project cycle, beyond one-off consultation, and evolving donor and international-actor practices toward power-sensitive frameworks that promote community decision-making, local ownership, accountability, and the sustainability of interventions.
- > Institutionalize community participation within coordination, planning, and governance mechanisms by defining clear modalities for representation, feedback, and decision tracking, and by allocating dedicated resources—including specific funding, logistical support, translation services, and tools that facilitate access for marginalized groups. This approach should be accompanied by an explicit framing of the role of N/LNGOs as facilitators of community participation—without substituting for it—to ensure direct, diverse, and legitimate representation of community voices.

Word cloud of feedback on community participation



COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION 4/4

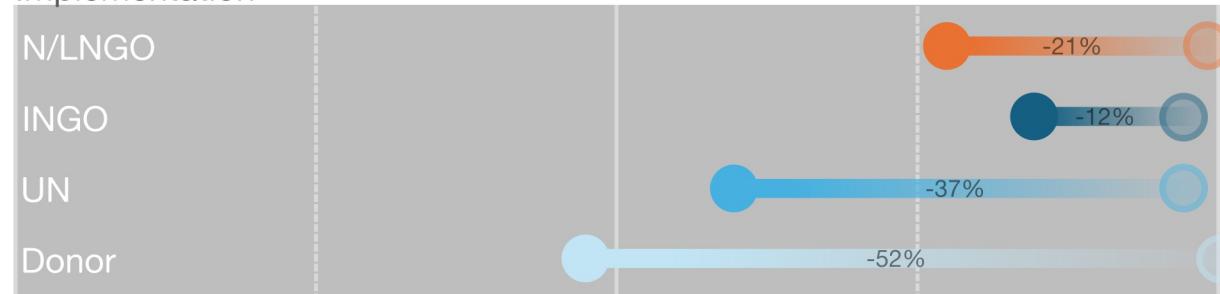
Perceived levels of meaningful community participation are consistently rated lower than reported practices, particularly when it comes to the scoping and design of interventions

Design

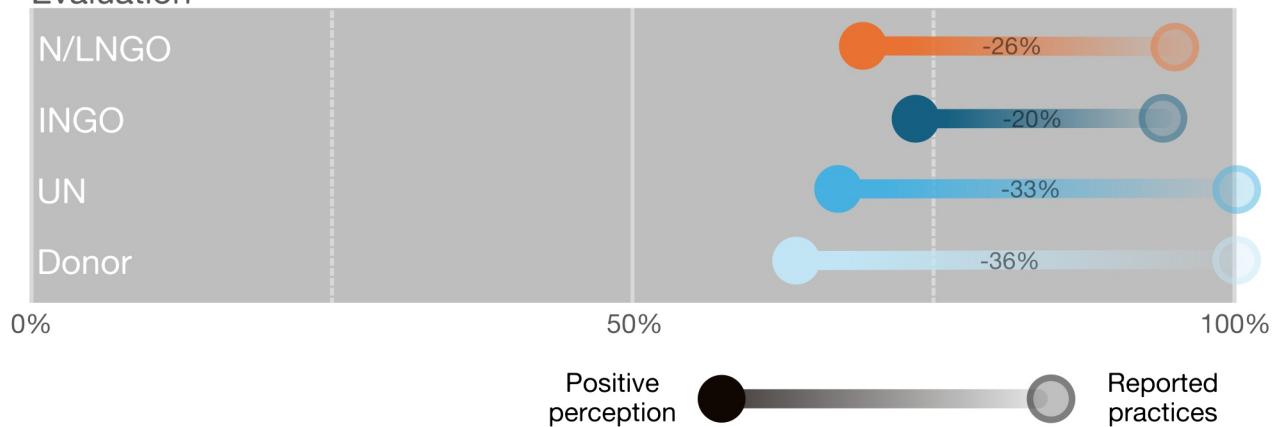


According to the results of the "Actor" and "Perception" surveys conducted as part of the localization barometer

Implementation



Evaluation



While ad hoc community consultation practices appear to be widespread and implemented by all organizations, they are perceived as not aligning with the objectives set, whether these involve securing meaningful community involvement or even shifting decision-making dynamics.

Thus, 60% of respondents are dissatisfied with actual practices for community involvement in design, and 31% and 32% respectively are dissatisfied with implementation and evaluation.

POLICY, INFLUENCE & ADVOCACY 1/4

Objectives definition

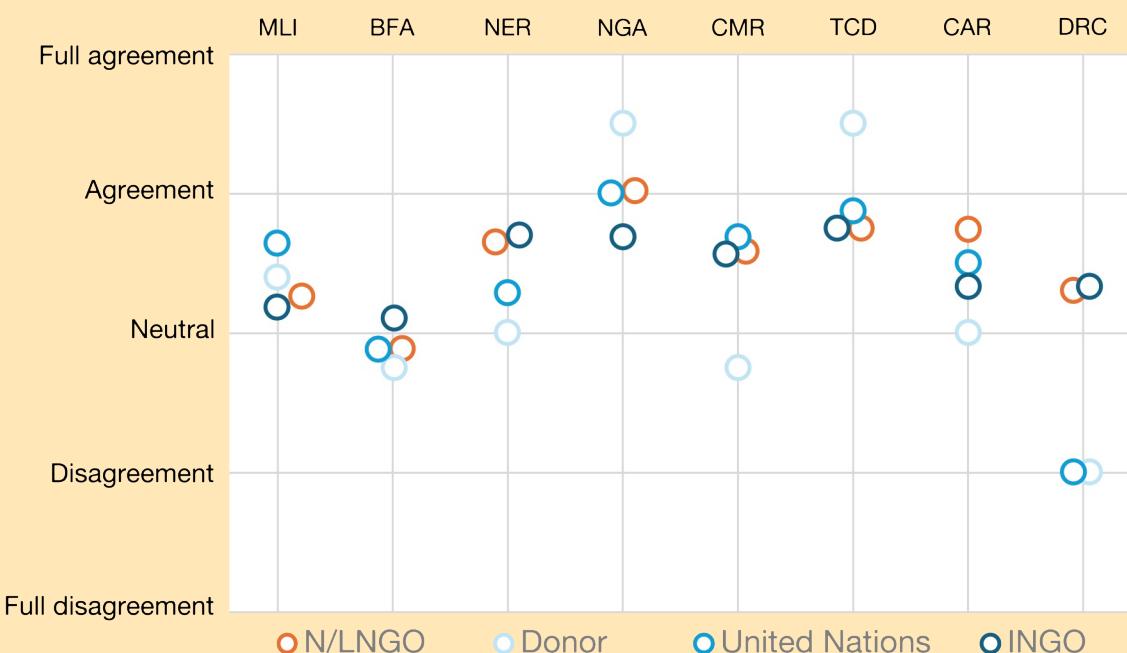
N/LNGOs define humanitarian priorities and are recognized as such by international players.

- > Standards and policies : **Standards and policies defining humanitarian intervention frameworks are defined with N/LNGOs.**
- > Visibility : **N/LNGOs are visible and recognized as key aid actors.**
- > Advocacy : **N/LNGOs develop influence and advocacy strategies at all levels.**

Level of progress on the localization agenda per challenge



Perception : "N/LNGO visibility is proportionate to their involvement in delivering the humanitarian response."



Comparative analysis

In all countries examined, N/LNGOs are regarded as essential actors within the humanitarian system, particularly because of their frontline engagement in response, their proximity to populations, and their nuanced understanding of local contexts and realities. They are accordingly involved—though to varying degrees—in coordination forums, discussions on norms and policies, and advocacy efforts.

As with the Coordination dimension, a similar gap emerges between formal recognition and real influence. N/LNGO participation remains largely consultative, occasional, or symbolic, without translating into strategic leadership or decision-making power. In all contexts, humanitarian frameworks and narratives are still predominantly shaped by international actors, limiting local ownership and the incorporation of N/LNGOs' contextual expertise.

The low public visibility of N/LNGOs is another cross-cutting challenge. Across contexts, their under-representation in the media, on international platforms such as ReliefWeb, and within humanitarian communication spaces weakens their legitimacy in the eyes of donors and reduces their political and strategic influence. This situation is explained by a combination of limited communication capacities, a communication culture that remains underdeveloped and often deprioritized, and, in some cases, the predominance of international actors in overseeing communication and external visibility efforts.

This marginalization extends to regional and global levels, where N/LNGOs are very weakly represented—or absent—from the bodies where humanitarian norms and policies are shaped. In most cases, they lack both formal offices and the capacity for representation in international capitals, which limits not only their access to spaces of influence but also their understanding of the dynamics, power relations, and decision-making processes that guide international decision-makers. This, in turn, diminishes their ability to identify appropriate advocacy targets, anticipate shifts in humanitarian agendas and standards, and build strategic partnerships with donors and international organizations—ultimately reinforcing power asymmetries between national and global levels.

Finally, advocacy capacities remain constrained by common structural factors: limited access to funding, scarce dedicated human resources, a lack of collective strategies, concerns about political risk, and power asymmetries with international actors. Advocacy efforts also remain largely fragmented, often siloed by type of actor or carried out independently by individual organizations. In this context, advocacy led by international actors frequently centers on their own projects or priorities, without systematically involving their national and local partners. This limits the development of shared positions, weakens the overall impact of messages, and reduces the collective influence of N/LNGOs. These constraints keep N/LNGOs in an implementing role rather than one of co-designing humanitarian agendas.

Contrasts and specificities

In Mali, formal recognition of N/LNGOs is particularly strong, with regular participation in dialogue spaces and an overall positive perception of their role, notably among donors. However, insufficient external visibility still limits their ability to influence policy directions over the long term.

In Nigeria, there is a stark contrast between the central operational role of N/LNGOs and their strong organization across the different states, and their absence from national-level policy and advocacy spaces.

In Chad, the issue is characterized by the almost total absence of N/LNGOs in producing documentation and disseminating strategic information, resulting in significant invisibility and minimal advocacy influence.

In Niger, participation is progressing in consultation spaces but remains largely symbolic. Public visibility is constrained both by the context and by a cautious approach to public expression, with advocacy most often carried out indirectly through alliances and informal networks.

In the CAR, persistent structural constraints related to human, technical, and financial resources, combined with a sensitive political environment, lead to participation that is often peripheral and cautious, with limited visibility and restricted advocacy space.

POLICY, INFLUENCE & ADVOCACY 3/4

Examples of good practices

Coordination among actors is a key lever to strengthen collective advocacy. In Cameroon, the establishment of joint working groups between N/LNGOs and INGOs, and in Niger, the development of cross-cutting approaches between OIREN and SONAH, illustrate a shift towards more coordinated advocacy efforts led by national platforms.

In Mali, several joint advocacy initiatives led by INGO and N/LNGO platforms have repeatedly influenced norms, policies, and institutional actors' positions, illustrating the potential of coordinated advocacy that includes N/LNGOs.

In Burkina Faso, the integration of N/LNGOs into most coordination and advocacy structures provides a solid basis for strengthening their leadership and direct representation. SPONG, as a platform bringing together both N/LNGOs and INGOs, creates a natural bridge for enhancing the visibility of N/LNGOs.

In Cameroon, the creation of joint working groups and innovative multi-actor platforms represents a good practice to strengthen advocacy capacity and collective legitimacy for N/LNGOs.

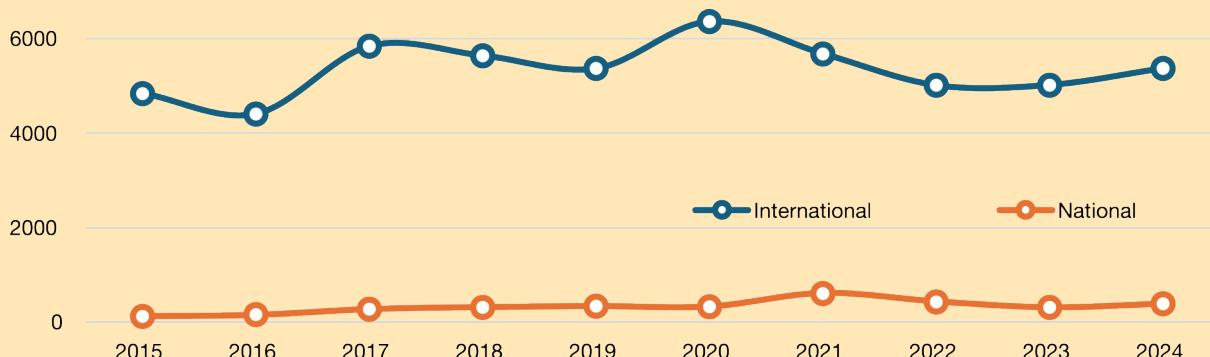
In the DRC, the recognized potential of N/LNGO forums, along with their cascading organization between provincial forums and the national forum, supports the development of collective initiatives that serve as levers for coordination and representation.

Finally, support from certain partners and donors supports these emergency trends. In Burkina Faso, the FHRAOC and the SRF stand out for integrating N/LNGOs into their governance. In Chad, the creation of a national coalition for humanitarian advocacy, and in the CAR, targeted support for visibility, communication, and advocacy—particularly through the Humanitarian Fund—contribute to gradually strengthening the role and influence of N/LNGOs.

Summary of recommendations

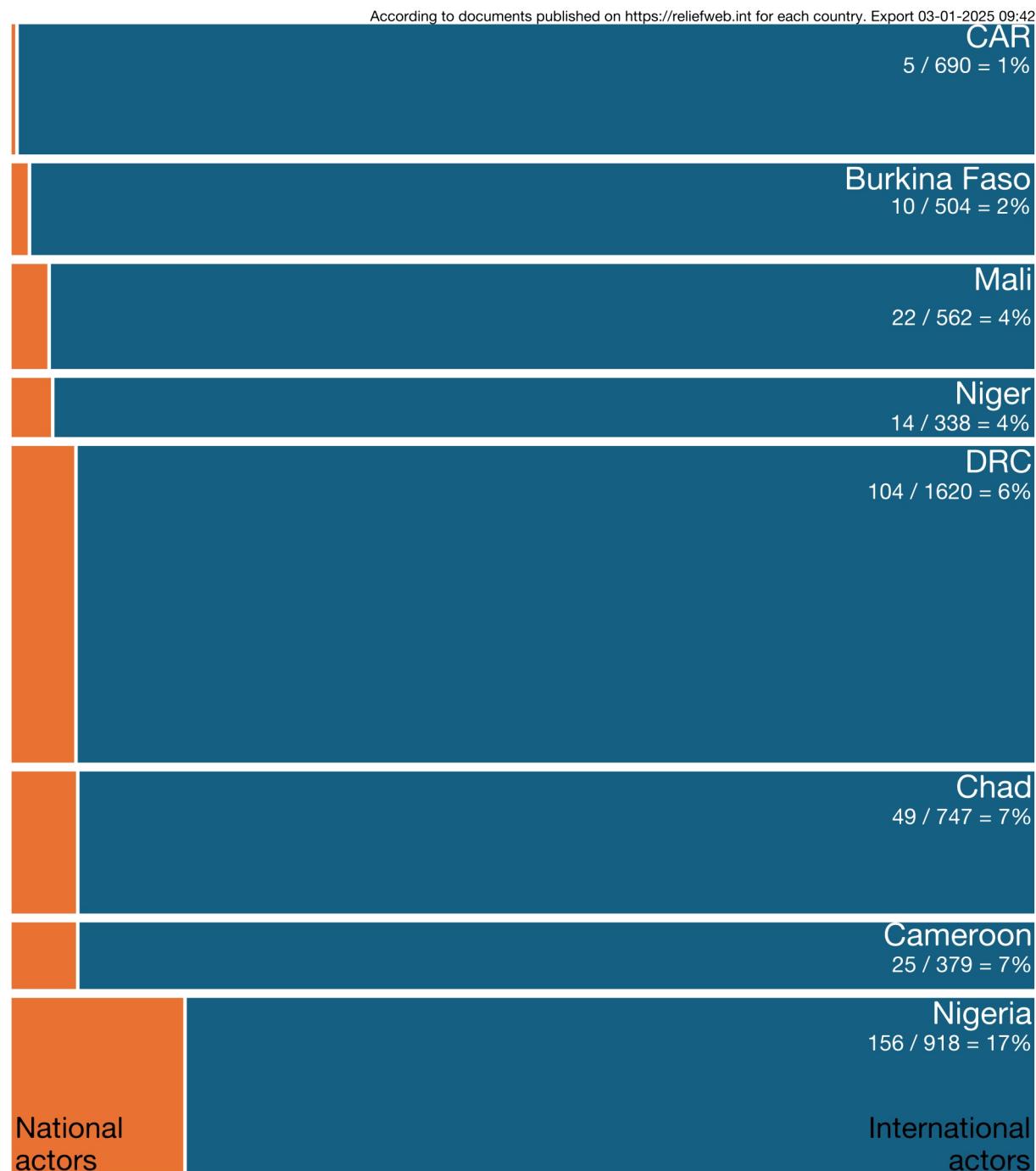
- > Ensure genuine participation of N/LNGOs in the development, adaptation, and contextualization of humanitarian norms and policies, as well as in advocacy and communication efforts, by moving beyond formal consultation and facilitating their direct access to national and international spaces of influence, in order to strengthen the reach, legitimacy, and impact of their advocacy positions.
- > Develop collective advocacy and communication mechanisms led by coordination bodies or inter-NGO coordination platforms and grounded in equitable partnerships, to pool resources, align messaging, and strengthen overall impact, while also rebalancing visibility practices to ensure explicit and jointly acknowledged recognition of N/LNGO contributions in humanitarian communication outputs
- > Support the development of capacities in advocacy, communication, and influence, by providing dedicated human and financial resources, along with accompaniment and coaching mechanisms that strengthen understanding of the dynamics, power relations, and decision-making processes that shape international actors' decisions.

Total number of ReliefWeb publications per year by type of actor (8 countries)



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Of the 5,758 publications listed on ReliefWeb in 2024, 7% were produced by national/local actors. Of these, N/LNGOs produced only 21 documents, while government agencies accounted for 324.



While ReliefWeb is one of the most widely used information-sharing platforms internationally by INGOs, the UN, and donors, this site is generally little known among L/NNGOs, which mainly focus on country-level tools and platforms.

With 156 publications, Nigeria is an exception. 57% of publications by a national actor come from the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

GLOSSARY

CACO	Community of Adamawa civil organization (Nigeria)
CAR	Centralafrican Republic
CBPF	Country Based Pooled Funds
CCO	Comité de coordination des ONGI (Coordinating Committee of INGOs - CAR)
CHOI	Cameroonian Humanitarian Organizations Initiative
CONAFOHD	Conseil national des fora des ONG humanitaires et de développement (National Council of Humanitarian and Development NGO Forums - DRC)
CONA-T	Coordination des ONG nationales du Tchad (Coordination of national NGOs in Chad)
CROCSAD	Comité régional d'orientation, de coordination et de suivi des actions de développement (Regional Committee for Guidance, Coordination, and Monitoring of Development Actions - Mali)
DKH	Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FHRAOC	Fonds humanitaire régional pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest et du centre (Regional Humanitarian Fund for West and Central Africa)
FONGA	Forum des organisations non gouvernementales en Afrique de l'Ouest et centrale (Forum of Non-Governmental Organizations in West and Central Africa)
FONGIM	Forum des ONG internationale au Mali (International NGO Forum in Mali)
HAG	Humanitarian advisory group (Groupe de conseil humanitaire)
HC/RC	Humanitarian Coordinator/ Resident Coordinator (Coordinateur humanitaire/ Coordinateur résident)
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
IASC	Inter-agency steering committee (Comité permanent inter-agences)
ICVA	International council of voluntary agencies (Conseil international des agences bénévoles)
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
MdS	Maison des services (RCA)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
N/LNGO	National/ Local Non-Governmental Organization
NORCAP	Norwegian Capacity (Capacité norvégienne)
OCHA	Office de coordination des affaires humanitaires
OI	Organisations internationales
OIREN	Organisations internationales représentées au Niger
UN	United nations
PLRCAP	Promoting Local Response Capacity and Partnership
PONAH	Plateforme des ONG nationales actives dans l'humanitaire (Platform of national NGOs active in humanitarian aid - Mali)
SONAH	Synergie des ONG nationales pour les actions humanitaires (Niger)
SPONG	Secrétariat permanent des organisations non gouvernementales (Burkina Faso)
SRF	Sahel Regional Fund
USAID-BHA	United States Agency for International Development, Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs

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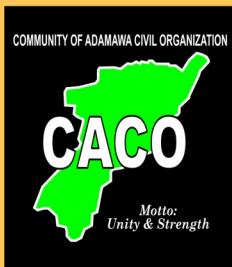
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