

Greater Transparency

More Support and funding for local and national responders

DRA'S CONTRIBUTIONS AND CHALLENGES

The DRA reports on its Joint Responses (JRs) to IATI, using key indicators based on ECHO's set of standardized indicators.

Over the years, DRA has seen an increase in funding of local partners, from 18% in 2017 (different methodology), 23.49% in 2018 and 25,7% (planned) in 2019.

DRA has taken multiple initiatives to set-up, test and learn from different partnership models. JRs are designed in the field, with local partners increasing power and voice. Examples: Sulawesi JR, Nigeria JR (potentially adding a local partner as a "full" JR-partner) and Syria JR.

Increasing percentage of the total JR budget are spent on capacity strengthening, with an estimated 2,6% in 2019. Some JR go beyond this, like the JRs in South Sudan, the total budget for capacity strengthening was raised from 2.28% in 2018, to 3.3% in 2019 and 4.38% in 2020, with a focus on institutional strengthening. Other examples include Ukraine with capacity strengthening on child protection at the heart of the JR.

In Yemen the Joint Response is working with Humanitarian Leadership Academy on a two-year programme to identify learning and capacity strengthening needs of local humanitarian organisations, then develop a tailored programme to fill those gaps.

To facilitate and support true localization of programs, a Local Advisory Group has been established. Also, INGOs increasingly use their weight to amplify local voices through getting local NGOs involved, such as Oxfam's partner Candlelight getting elected into the Somalia Humanitarian Country Team in 2019. Other examples include the support to the establishment of a national NGO forum of national actors in Sudan.

Risk-sharing: a challenge in including a local partner as a direct contracting partner (instead of a sub-contractual arrangement) are the DRA governance and MFA subsidy frameworks. Linked to this is the challenge of local partners not having the same ability to pay back potential ineligible costs or to pre-finance, which means there is an increased risk for the lead organisation.

Full DRA partners can include ICR in their budgets whereas there is no consensus on the exact allocation of ICR by local partners.

A challenge with amplifying local voices is the fact that there are multiple competing local partner networks in the countries where we intervene. When advocating with UNOCHA and INGO forum for increased participation of local partners in these coordination bodies, it is unclear who can represent the local NGOs.

Local partner participation in meetings and humanitarian fora is heavily restricted by the government, such as in Syria, which means that local partners are not able to attend most meetings or workshops. As such, engagement with local partners is the responsibility of DRA partners themselves, but this obviously severely limits their participation, input and learning.

IN 2020

Increasing transparency through:

1. Updating IATI reporting guidelines in line with the latest IATI guidance.
2. Verification of quarterly reporting to IATI.
3. Regular update of the IATI Dashboard in collaboration with Data4Development.
4. Joining the IATI/FTS pilot (if still relevant).

In 2020, DRA will explore more direct funding models in JRs. By the end of 2021, the DRA will aim for 35% funding to local actors.

DRA continues to increase funding to local partners.

Examples include:

- Nigeria JR: ~ 34%
- Syria JR: 27.4%

DRA continues to commit to minimizing transaction costs, support locally designed response and to ensure direct flow of funding through developing smart strategies. Activities planned include defining models for local leadership of JRs and possibilities for increased mandate for leads to lead a JR locally, based on understanding what models exist and what the role of the Netherlands is versus field. A concrete example is the direct allocation of funds to a local partner that will implement a program in the Nigeria JR in coordination with other DRA JR members.

In 2020, DRA will develop more appropriate strategies for capacity strengthening, more directed at organizational development. DRA understands there is no quick fix; we need to start re-assessing partnership models, in order to be more often at equal footage, contrary to the common practice of only sub-contracting local actors.

Amplifying local voices will get a greater focus in 2020. Activities include:

- A subgrant from the Somalia JR has been allocated to the Somalia NGO Consortium (SNC) to support the wider humanitarian system in Somalia with the development of a Somalia localization framework and the roll out of risk management tools for NGOs throughout the country.
- SNC will use this grant to conduct lobby tours for local organizations to the Global Conference on Localization of Aid in Brussels, and the Charter 4 Change annual meeting in Copenhagen, with stops in The Hague for additional discussions. The focus will lie on drought response and localization.

To improve partnering and risk-sharing in conflict settings innovative practices should be identified and consultations with key actors and country leads will be conducted. As an example, in Somalia, we will introduce a flexible crisis modifier/emergency response mechanism pilot (33.000 EUR per local partner, in total 6 partners), which will be integrated in local partner budgets and will follow a quick and flexible application and reporting process. If the crisis modifier is well-received, the SOMJR will look into ways to scale up this modality in future programming. The crisis modifier is also being introduced upon partners' requests who, unlike their INGO counterparts, do not have flexible funding and contingency amounts/ICR in their budgets to rapidly respond to emergencies.

GRAND BARGAIN COMMITMENT

Increase the use and coordination of cash-based programming

DRA'S CONTRIBUTIONS AND CHALLENGES

DRA seeks new financing models for localizing support:

- In the Ukraine JR cash transfers using blockchain technology to increase efficiency were piloted.
- In the Afghanistan JR cash was provided to beneficiaries in four installments for the construction of the shelters.
- The South Sudan JR piloted a mobile and e-technology system for distributing cash vouchers.
- The Nigeria JR involves various cash-programs.

Cash can be very sensitive. In Syria, the government publicly states its worry that cash might reach opposition groups, that it would negatively impact markets, and that people prefer in-kind over cash. As such, obtaining approvals for cash activities is very challenging. A DRA study is meant to provide evidence to show how cash can work within these boundaries in Syria, increasing operational space for cash in the wider humanitarian response.

Reduce duplication and management costs with periodic functional reviews

To achieve greater impact for beneficiaries with limited funds, DRA invested in the innovative SCAN-tool (systematic cost analysis), which quickly and precisely estimates the cost-efficiency of programs and compares it to other programs in different context, based on grants expense data. Five NGOs have piloted the SCAN tool.

Undertaking joint responses allows the DRA partners to save costs:

- Organization of joint community entry meetings and staff training helps to reduce logistical costs.
- Involving the same community volunteers helps to reduce recruitment and training costs.
- Sharing the same resources such as office and storage space, stationary, internet connection and transportation allows to save costs.
- Using partner networks, for example finding a suitable vendor, helps to save costs and time.

Enhance quality funding through reduced earmarking and multi-year planning and funding

The MFA has a multi-annual subsidy framework for humanitarian aid tailored to the DRA. MFA provides DRA with a 4-year Block grant for Acute and Innovation grants. There is limited (almost no) earmarking from MFA. Within JRs the funding is and can be used flexibly; often quite quick response from MFA on budget amendment requests (beyond the (0%/25%) flexibility rules.

The multi-year financing is not fully predictable

- We still need to submit annual combi-reports for approval to MFA
- We have an internal mechanism aimed at ensuring funding flows to the highest needs and gaps annually

There could also be more flexibility on the side of MFA in shifts in budgets based on needs/gaps/contextual changes, as there are quite some administrative hurdles in accommodating this currently.

The approval process for acute crisis at MFAs side is not always as quick as the mechanism is designed for (within 48hrs), as approval can take more time when the 'On Hold' option is being used.

IN 2020

In 2020, a DRA sub-group on cash will be established to focus on improved cash interventions within the DRA innovation portfolio, as well as the JRs.

DRA continues to explore innovative approaches. Innovation Project B-Ready is combining two innovations: one, digital weather forecasting and risk modelling technologies early warning systems, and two, financial technologies that enable pre-disaster Cash Transfer Programming. The 121 Personal Cash Aid project aims to make Cash Based Aid safe, fast & fair, to help people affected by disasters meet their own needs. 121 involves People Affected by disasters, Aid Workers and People Donating in the design process, and use robust and available technology to create the solutions that are needed

Within JRs local partners are trained and coached to deliver cash programs. An example is the one-year, two-phased mentorship model for implementing cash programs in South Sudan. The project scales up existing cash-based interventions. The initial six months will focus on training and the international and national partners doing the cash transfers together; the second six months will focus on the international partners mentoring and providing support to the local partner, who will be doing the cash transfers themselves.

In 2020, DRA will report on the DRA-funded SCAN pilots to the cash workstream to help other actors understand how SCAN might work for them.

In 2020, DRA will explore longer term activities in multi-year JRs.

Participation revolution: include people receiving aid in making the decisions which affect their lives

Improve joint and impartial needs assessments

Harmonize and simplify reporting requirements

DRA'S CONTRIBUTIONS AND CHALLENGES

Within each JR, partners always aim for an open, transparent and inclusive project implementation, whereby beneficiaries and local stakeholders are continuously involved. This is reflected in vulnerability criteria, equal gender representation in committees and seeking to address the systematic exclusion of marginalized people and minorities.

Through feedback mechanisms the affected population is given the opportunity to raise concerns, provide feedback, report unmet needs as well as seek information related to project activities. In each JR a minimum set of activities are included to enhance participation and accountability. These include (depending on the JR & partners involved):

- Consultations with local leaders.
- Informing the community about the program.
- Receiving and addressing feedback from the affected population through different ways such as usage of dedicated toll-free hotlines, regular face-to-face meetings and focus group discussions, suggestion boxes, community help desks and help desks at distribution points.
- MEAL and accountability trainings with focus on Core Humanitarian Standard, Responsible Data, gender and power, digitalization of feedback, MEAL tools.
- Use of mobile devices for data collection, feedback collection, monitoring and to ensure better storage of data and easier ways for follow-up.

In South Sudan, DRA partners designed a decentralized joint JR AAP system, for which the ownership rests with national partners. The joint JR AAP system links into and supports the accountability components in place by the DRA Partners in handling 'regular' feedback while assuring partners 'ownership' in handling sensitive matters such as child safeguarding concerns. In July 2019, the SSJR received additional funding to implement this joint AAP system, which covers three main components of accountability, including information sharing, participation, and feedback and complaints mechanisms). A key component of the system design are the JR AAP officers, which are hosted by the national partner in each location and who serve as the focal person to coordinate and link the community structures and organizations in the area to effectively share information, participate and ensure feedback and complaints are addressed.

Within each JR, partners aim for joint cross-sectoral need assessment. Examples include responses implemented in 2019 in Afghanistan and Central African Republic. For the program design in Nigeria in 2020, partners conducted a joint needs assessment led by local partners.

The JR reporting is based on 8+3, tailored for DRA.

Internal planning and reporting requirements for DRA participating organizations and partners could be simplified further:

IN 2020

In 2020, DRA aims to strengthen mechanisms for accountability to affected people and to ensure participation of the elderly, children, youth, differently abled people and marginalized groups. Activities include: Mapping current practices (successful and less successful) on (joint) accountability to affected people and define needs for learning and improvements.

Define plans for improved mechanisms and consistency across JRs and role of the Netherlands versus field.

In Nigeria, a pilot will be implemented to increase accountability towards disaster affected people by using voice recorders. The voice recorders allow beneficiaries to provide feedback at their own time and convenience. The recorders could also be used by illiterate people, thereby ensuring inclusivity of the feedback channel. The recording of interviews in audio format will also make collection of feedback more accurate as it will help to avoid omission during collation, hence obtaining clear and unaltered information (feedback) from beneficiaries. Learning from this pilot will be disseminated within the humanitarian sector.

In Somalia, partners were supported in 'smart' budgeting at proposal stage: for MEAL/M&E staff and own capacity strengthening support. 2020 activities will build on MEAL and accountability work so far: plans to do a joint SOMJR 'Photovoice' project involving staff and beneficiaries, joint monitoring visits, digitalising feedback systems.

In 2020, DRA will learn from best practices in Afghanistan, CAR and Nigeria to further explore this for other Joint Responses.