

## **DRC Position Paper**

### **Perspectives on the Current Efforts for a more Efficient, Inclusive, and Accountable Humanitarian System**

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#### **Background**

Following the sudden reduction in foreign aid announced by the United States in early 2025, and with many other key donors following suit, the humanitarian sector has faced not only a significant scaling back of activities during a time of rising global humanitarian needs, but also a broader reassessment of the humanitarian system and calls for a “humanitarian reset”<sup>1</sup>. This development has added new urgency to the ongoing debate, highlighting the need for more efficient, effective, and accountable delivery of humanitarian aid. It is within this context that the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) has prepared this Position Paper to contribute to the ongoing discussions. DRC is an international non-governmental organisation working in over 30 countries, with decades of experience addressing forced displacement implementing a holistic approach to forced displacement from the onset of a crisis to until durable solutions are achieved, promoting protection of the rights and dignity of affected communities.

#### **DRC welcomes principled proposals to improve humanitarian action**

With a long-standing history of leadership in humanitarian coordination, the organization actively participates in HCTs, clusters, and global SAGs for CCCM and Protection. It also plays a key role in country-level inter-agency coordination through INGO Forum steering committees and other collaborative platforms. Witnessing the current coordination challenges faced by frontline responders at the field level, DRC supports the recommendations articulated in the “Msuya-Egeland” paper to streamline HCTs, ensuring that they remain trusted forums for deliberation and decision-making that drive humanitarian action in emergency settings. DRC is open to the reprioritisation of existing structures that uphold the humanitarian imperative and provide space for context- and sector-specific criteria, developed in consultation with national and international NGOs, to best serve affected populations.

DRC welcomes OCHA’s recent reaffirmation of protection as a lifesaving sector, which must continue to be recognized by all actors as a core pillar of humanitarian response. Because protection risks (e.g. violence, coercion, deliberate deprivation) drive other humanitarian needs, neglecting protection in lifesaving emergency interventions is detrimental to the entire humanitarian response and exposes affected populations to rights violations and systemic injustice. For example, in Gaza and Sudan, civilians endure not only severe material deprivation but also ongoing threats to their safety, dignity, and fundamental rights. The absence of robust protection interventions in these crises has had devastating consequences, including forced displacement, family separation, gender-based violence, and repeated violations of international humanitarian law.

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<sup>1</sup> [Message from Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher to the humanitarian community](#), February 2025

## **DRC proposes three key elements which should be considered in the future humanitarian discourse**

### **1. Preserve diversity in humanitarian action**

To ensure the most effective humanitarian response system and to truly prioritise the needs, aspirations, and capacities of people affected by crises and displacement, DRC recognises the importance of a diverse range of actors engaged in humanitarian and recovery efforts. National and local NGOs contribute indispensable contextual knowledge and cultural competence, both in the delivery of assistance and in shaping appropriate and effective responses. International NGOs often play a critical role in advancing the localisation agenda and delivering humanitarian aid, drawing on decades of experience and global best practices, particularly in conflict-affected, fragile and politically sensitive environments. The UN system, alongside bilateral and multilateral donors and international financial institutions, remain instrumental in establishing normative frameworks and mobilizing essential financial resources to support the most vulnerable populations worldwide.

Consequently, an inclusive and diverse humanitarian ecosystem, consisting of actors at the local, national, and international level, needs to be preserved to ensure the humanitarian community is equipped with adaptable and responsive aid instruments and mechanisms. In an increasingly fragmented and complex global landscape, an inclusive ecosystem is required that accommodates local, national, international, and global actors, each bringing unique capacities and perspectives.

We advocate for cooperative engagement and mutual exchange among all actors. DRC firmly upholds the principle of a diverse and inclusive humanitarian ecosystem to ensure effectiveness and quality of response

### **2. Refrain from “one-size-fits-all” and cost-reduction approaches towards localization**

DRC is a strong advocate for localisation.<sup>2</sup> We have reoriented our strategic and operational approaches toward more localised models of response, grounded in the conviction that local actors are closest to affected populations. We support efforts to direct more aid funding to Local and National Actors (LNAs) and welcome the growing consensus across the humanitarian sector that localisation must form a central pillar of the future humanitarian architecture.

DRC, however, cautions against “one-size-fits-all” approaches, such as recent proposals to significantly and uniformly increase the proportion of Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) funding channelled through Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) primarily to LNAs. Such proposals, while well-intentioned, may lead to unintended and inequitable consequences if applied without sufficient contextual analysis.

It seems prudent to conduct more thorough and deeper analysis of national contexts with still-developing civil society, related risks, and needs for support—for instance, in the Central African Republic, where funding to LNAs is low—while in other contexts, such as cross-border responses in Syria or Ukraine, correctly funding to LNAs is much higher.

Moreover, there are recurrent direct and indirect references suggesting that the primary driver for this shift is, above all, the lower cost associated with LNAs. This, however, contradicts the fundamental premise of localization. Localization is intended to represent a systemic shift—one that transitions power and accountability to affected populations. Advancing

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<sup>2</sup> [DRC Strategy 2025](#), p. 16

partnerships with local actors should not, therefore, be pursued through a cost-saving lens, but rather as a commitment to genuine empowerment and inclusive decision-making.

### **3. Thinking of solutions from the start**

DRC advocates for a thoughtful and inclusive reprioritisation of humanitarian aid, one that is forward-looking and firmly grounded in both past achievements and future opportunities, to drive a powerful shift in humanitarian response from reactive to proactive, forecast-informed interventions that contribute to the reduction, and in some cases prevention, of crises before they escalate.

The current situation provides an opportunity to change the way we have been responding to emergency situations. This will require donors to prioritize flexible support for nexus approaches to avoid prolonged humanitarian assistance and quickly transition affected populations out of a state of aid dependency and towards self-reliance. All actors should support a “Solutions from the Start” future-oriented approach that integrates not only protection and basic humanitarian needs, but also proven and cost-effective modalities such as cash-based programming, anticipatory action, innovative financing, and nexus implementation. These elements provide clear pathways from emergency to solutions by contributing not only to the effectiveness of humanitarian response, but also to the prevention of displacement