



SOCIAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

AND

MODELING STUDY

Final Report

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The Local Humanitarian Forum (LHF) is a locally-led coordination platform that emerged following the February 6, 2023 earthquakes in Türkiye, bringing together local and national civil society actors. With a network of 64 organizations, LHF aims to strengthen the participation of local actors in decision-making processes and support community-based humanitarian responses

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Above all, we honour the affected communities whose resilience, knowledge, and self-organizing capacity inspired the creation of LHF in the first place. This report is a testament to their agency and a reminder that effective humanitarian action begins with those closest to the crisis.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

3RP	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
3W	Who-What-Where
ABC	Area Based Coordination
AFAD	Disaster And Emergency Management Presidency
ARSA	Afgan Mülteciler Dayanışma ve Yardımlaşma Derneği
CDP	Center for Disaster Phylantrophy
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DSZ	International Giving Foundation
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
ESYAD	Engelsiz ve Sürdürülebilir Yaşam Derneği (Accessible and Sustainable Living Association)
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HR	Human Resources
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
KCOC	Korea NGO Council for Overseas Development Cooperation
KEGED	Kentsel Gelişim Derneği
KII	Key Informant Interview
LAG	Localization Advocacy Group
LHF	Local Humanitarian Forum
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NEAR	Network for Empowered Aid Response
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRG	National Reference Group
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
PRM	Population, Refugees, and Migration
SHUDER	Sosyal Hizmet Uzmanları Derneği
STL	Support to Life
TOR	Terms of Reference
TRY	Turkish Lira
UN	United Nations
UNCT+	UN Country Team Plus
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
VITOL	Vitol Foundation
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
YADER	Yerel Avukatlar Derneği
YSG	Yerelleşme Savunuculuk Grubu (Turkish for LAG)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Local Humanitarian Forum (LHF – Türkiye Yerel STK İnsani Forumu in Turkish) emerged in February 2023 as an unprecedented coordination platform for local civil society organizations responding to devastating earthquakes in Türkiye. Growing rapidly from an advocacy initiative to a 64-member network, LHF sought to transform humanitarian coordination by securing local NGO representation in decision-making forums traditionally dominated by international actors. This comprehensive evaluation, conducted after two years of earthquake recovery, assessed LHF's social impact, operational effectiveness, and potential for sustainable localization through mixed-methods research combining surveys (36 respondents), key informant interviews (22), focus group discussions, and extensive document review.

Key Finding

Coordination

Following the devastating 2023 earthquakes in southeastern Türkiye, LHF was established as an offshoot of the Localization Advocacy Group (LAG), which was established in the aftermath of the World Humanitarian Summit for Türkiye-based NGOs to follow up on the global localization commitments as laid out in the Grand Bargain. While LAG convened the National Reference Group as mandated by the Grand Bargain and carried out localization advocacy at the policy level, LHF was established to amplify the voice of local and grassroots organizations in the UN-led cluster coordination of the OCHA Earthquake Flash Appeal.

LHF achieved a groundbreaking milestone – for the first time in Türkiye's humanitarian history, local organizations gained seats in the UNCT+ alongside UN agencies and INGOs. LHF advocated and co-led for the piloting of Area Based Coordination, and strengthened the relationship of UN institutions and INGOs with the local organizations, who are often excluded from the traditional humanitarian coordination structures. Survey data shows 62.5% of respondents rated LHF as effective in enabling local participation in UN mechanisms. However, only 43.75% viewed LHF as effective overall as a coordination platform, reflecting fundamental disagreements about its role. While local actors celebrated expanded access, UN representatives questioned LHF's mandate and worried about “parallel structures.” These tensions illustrate the contested nature of coordination pluralism in humanitarian systems.

Resource Mobilization

LHF mobilized TRY 30,177,778.85 (approximately \$1,042,570) from philanthropic donors². Initially funds were raised to set up the governance of LHF and engage its membership in coordination efforts. With time, LHF managed to attract funds to be distributed among platform members for assessments, recovery interventions, and policy work. LHF ended up distributing TRY 12,014,953.50 in micro-grants to local organizations. These grants demonstrated remarkable thematic diversity – 35% supported social inclusion, including pioneering work with women with disability, youth, as well as Dom, Roma, and Abdal minority communities typically excluded from humanitarian aid. Recipients praised LHF's flexible, mentorship-based approach, with 50% agreeing micro-grants effectively supported grassroots organizations.

1. The Area Based Humanitarian Coordination Model has been advocated by the Center for Global Development as an alternative to the UN-led sector-based coordination model. Details can be found at: <https://www.cgdev.org/event/area-based-humanitarian-coordination-more-inclusive-model>

2. Vitol Foundation, Korea NGO Council for Overseas Development Cooperation, DSZ International Giving Foundation, Centre for Disaster Philanthropy, Global Giving.

Detailed cost analysis showed that 40% of LHF's total budget reached local actors directly. Remaining resources were dedicated to LHF coordination staff (including forum coordinator and field coordinators), as well as dedicated coordination activities, such as good practice workshops, meetings with private sector, and establishment of local Coordination and Development Centers at the hub level. Even though significant resource mobilization was achieved through the support of philanthropic donors, LHF has seen the absence of major bilateral and multilateral donor support, constraining its potential to be seen as a legitimate counterpart.

Capacity development

Although not an intended role, capacity development emerged as LHF's strongest area of impact, with 56.25% reporting high impact – surpassing coordination (50%) and funding access (50%). Success stemmed from innovative approaches replacing traditional trainings with models of peer learning and mentorship. LHF created “safe spaces for mistakes” where first-time grant recipients could learn without fear of retribution, while established national NGOs instilled humanitarian terminology in Turkish, breaking linguistic barriers that typically exclude grassroots actors.

The evaluation revealed geographic variations in impact. While Hatay, Adıyaman and Malatya saw vibrant coordination and innovative programming, Kahramanmaraş proved challenging due to limited awareness of human rights among civil society. These disparities underscore how pre-existing civil society ecosystems shape dynamics of localization.

Governance and Sustainability

A fundamental disconnect emerged between LHF's governance structures and field operations. As a key informant strikingly noted: “Which LHF is the Steering Committee in, and which LHF am I in?” While 37.5% viewed governance as transparent, 31.25% remained neutral, signalling to the need for more investment in the forum's governance. The Steering Committee struggled with power imbalances between established national NGOs focused on policy discussions and grassroots organizations needing operational support.

This, however, led to nuanced discussions on who is “local” and what “localization” means. While national NGOs initially saw themselves as the main actors at the “local level”, internal forum discussions brought out the layered nature and diversity among civil society, challenging the narrative and operationalization of locally-led action in Türkiye. Most concerning, only 25% of respondents viewed LHF's structures as sustainable without continued donor funding. When funding decreased at the end of two years, LHF field coordinator positions ended in all four provinces, effectively dismantling LHF's local presence³. This fragility was compounded by weak monitoring systems – as one informant admitted, there was “no formal impact measurement due to time constraints.”

3. Despite some efforts were made toward transferring local-coordination to organizations who are actively leading the response at hub levels, at the time of this evaluation, efforts for gradual handover were still in progress and therefore they were not reflected.

The Paradox of Disruptive Action

LHF embodied a fundamental tension: seeking to disrupt the humanitarian system while simultaneously seeking inclusion within it. LHF was up for a challenging mission. It was initially formed to take an active role with the sector-based coordination system of the UN. At the end of the 3-month Appeal period, LHF advocated for a shift towards an area-based coordination model, eventually taking the lead in setting up a locally-led coordination mechanism. While creating an alternative, LHF still had to find ways of interacting with the transitioning UN-led coordination. This paradox manifested in mixed results across advocacy efforts. While LHF successfully promoted an Area-Based Coordination approach and shifted some attitudes toward local actors, 43.75% reported low or no impact on policy influence. The disconnect from government structures and the National Reference Group on localization further limited systemic impact.

One key informant's metaphor captured LHF's pattern: "Think of LHF as a bag with apples, each with just one bite taken" – suggesting promising initiatives started but not sustained. The private sector engagement exemplified this, with an innovative matchmaking event between local NGOs and corporations yielding no lasting partnerships as "companies didn't keep their promises."

Critical Insights

The evaluation reveals LHF as embodying the promise and peril of humanitarian localization. It demonstrated that local actors could self-organize coordination at scale, strengthen capacity through peer learning and support, create alternative funding mechanisms, and claim seats at decision-making tables. These achievements validate core localization principles and offer concrete models for replication.

However, LHF also exposes why localization often remains aspirational rather than operational. Despite global rhetoric about humanitarian reform and localization, local civil society organizations perceive little substantive change in power dynamics or resource allocation. As one key informant noted, LHF has sustained faith in a shrinking humanitarian aid system in Türkiye, highlighting its critical role as a lifeline for local action. The key question now is how LHF will sustain its momentum and continue serving as pioneer of localization in Türkiye and what lessons it will take from the past 2 years.

Key Recommendations

- **Clarify Identity and Scope:** LHF was quick to mobilize in response to the need to have local organizations present in the OCHA-led coordination structures. Indeed, they succeeded in co-leading many clusters and technical working groups. However, two years into earthquake recovery, members have now to decide whether LHF will be turned into a permanent structure to continue institutionalizing its alternative coordination, capacity, advocacy, and funding mechanisms.
- **Formalize Legal Status:** Establish independent legal identity to address donor concerns and enable direct funding relationships.
- **Develop Sustainable Financing:** Establish a funding mechanism in which LHF members are a part of its design and oversight.
- **Reform Governance:** Institute clear decision-making processes with differentiated engagement mechanisms for organizations of varying sizes and capacities.

- **Invest in Evidence Systems:** Implement robust monitoring frameworks to demonstrate impact and capture learning systematically.
- **Bridge with Government:** Develop formal partnerships with Turkish disaster management authorities to ensure sustainability and scale.
- **Shift from Events to Accompaniment:** Replace one-off events (such as in the case of private sector and local CSO meeting) with sustained follow-up, action tracking and embedded support.

Conclusion

LHF represents both a historic achievement and a cautionary tale for humanitarian localization. Its successes – unprecedented local representation in coordination, innovative funding mechanisms, and demonstrable capacity development – prove that alternative models are possible. However, its struggles with sustainability, governance clarity, and systemic influence reveal the structural barriers that continue to privilege international over local leadership.

As Türkiye's humanitarian sector evolves, LHF's experience provides invaluable lessons. The evaluation found that localization requires more than creating spaces for local actors; it demands fundamental redistribution of power, resources, and decision-making authority. Whether LHF can evolve from an emergency response mechanism into a sustainable force for humanitarian transformation depends on all stakeholders – local, national, and international – committing to structural rather than cosmetic change.

The ultimate question is not whether LHF succeeded or failed, but whether the international humanitarian system can learn from its experience to enable genuine local leadership. In a world facing increasing humanitarian needs and decreasing resources, the imperative for effective localization has never been clearer. LHF showed it is possible – the challenge now is making such home-grown initiatives sustainable.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Local Humanitarian Forum (LHF) – known in Turkish as Türkiye Yerel STK İnsani Forumu (LHF) – was established in the immediate aftermath of the devastating February 2023 earthquakes in Türkiye. It emerged as an offshoot of the national Localization Advocacy Group (Yerelleşme Savunuculuk Grubu, YSG) to fill a critical gap: coordinating and amplifying the role of local civil society organizations (CSOs) in the humanitarian response. LHF's primary goal was to ensure local NGOs' inclusion in UN-led coordination mechanisms (such as the UNCT+ and cluster meetings). Backed initially by philanthropic funding, the Forum rapidly grew to 64 member organizations, including not only established NGOs but also grassroots groups, feminist collectives, disability organizations, and other non-traditional actors. It deliberately adopted the name “Local Humanitarian Forum” to emphasize local leadership and distinguish itself from existing international NGO forums.

Over the past two years, LHF has acted as a platform for local and national CSOs to engage in the earthquake response and advocate for localization – the shift of humanitarian decision-making and resources closer to affected communities. This report presents an evaluation of LHF's social impact and operations, structured around four key areas:

- 1. Impact Assessment:** Analysing LHF's contributions to advocacy, resource mobilization, coordination, and capacity development in the post-earthquake humanitarian ecosystem in Türkiye, including both tangible outcomes and intangible effects on stakeholders.
- 2. Organizational and Operational Analysis:** Examining the effectiveness of LHF's organizational structures (General Forum, Steering Committee, Secretariat) and its partnerships with local, national, and international actors, to assess how well the Forum functioned and where challenges arose.
- 3. Model Refinement and Development:** Drawing on the findings, proposing refinements to the LHF model – including governance improvements and new initiatives – to strengthen localization, capacity support, and advocacy for the future.
- 4. Knowledge Integration:** Situating LHF's approach and lessons learned within the broader context of localization in humanitarian action, ensuring consistency with global best practices and contributing LHF's experience to the wider localization literature.

2. METHODOLOGY

The social impact analysis and modelling study employed a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data collection to assess LHF's social impact and operational effectiveness comprehensively. The research design was guided by the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, adapted to the specific context of humanitarian localization in Türkiye. The evaluation framework centred on four interconnected analytical dimensions: (1) impact assessment of tangible and intangible contributions, (2) organizational and operational analysis, (3) model refinement for future sustainability, and (4) knowledge integration with global localization discourse.

The mixed-methods approach was selected to capture both the breadth of LHF's reach across diverse stakeholders and the depth of experiences within specific contexts. This methodological choice reflected the complexity of evaluating a coordination platform that operated simultaneously as a service provider, capacity investor, influencer, and network facilitator. By triangulating quantitative metrics with qualitative narratives, the evaluation sought to move beyond simple success/failure binaries to understand the nuanced realities of localization in practice.

2.1. Data Collection Method

A structured online survey was administered to capture systematic data on stakeholder perceptions of LHF's effectiveness across multiple dimensions. The survey instrument comprised 25 questions utilizing Likert scales, multiple-choice, and ranking formats to assess:

- Organizational relationships and engagement levels with LHF
- Effectiveness ratings across coordination, funding, capacity development, and advocacy functions
- Governance transparency and communication effectiveness
- Sustainability perceptions and future recommendations
- Demographic and organizational characteristics of respondents

The survey was distributed through LHF's membership network and broader humanitarian coordination channels, yielding **36 complete responses**. This response rate, while modest in absolute terms included representation from all four earthquake-affected provinces where LHF operated. All data collected through the survey are provided in this link in an interactive dashboard format. **22 semi-structured interviews** were conducted with strategically selected stakeholders representing diverse perspectives on LHF's work. The KII sample was purposively designed to include:

- LHF leadership and governance (6 interviews): Including the Forum Coordinator, Steering Committee members, and host organization representatives
- Field coordinators (4 interviews): Covering all four operational provinces (Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Malatya, Adiyaman)
- Member organizations (4 interviews): Balancing national NGOs, local CSOs, and micro-grant recipients
- External stakeholders (8 interviews): UN agency representatives, donor representatives and coordination counterparts

The Interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes and were conducted in Turkish or English according to participant preference. The semi-structured format allowed for systematic coverage of research questions while providing flexibility to explore emergent themes and unexpected insights.

1 focus group discussion was convened on May 28, 2025, bringing together 11 participants from diverse humanitarian and civil society organizations. The FGD was designed to generate collective insights on:

- Shared experiences of coordination and collaboration through LHF
- Comparative perspectives on LHF's strengths and limitations
- Collective visioning for future localization mechanisms
- Interactive validation of preliminary findings from surveys and KIIs

The group composition deliberately mixed organizational types, geographic locations, and engagement levels with LHF to stimulate rich dialogue and surface areas of consensus and divergence.

Systematic review of LHF's documentary record provided contextual grounding and triangulation for primary data. Documents analyzed included:

- LHF governance documents (Terms of Reference, meeting minutes, membership lists)
- Financial records and donor reports detailing funding flows and allocations
- Micro-grant documentation (calls for proposals, selection criteria, project reports)
- Event reports and training materials from capacity development initiatives
- Internal assessments and coordination meeting records

The desk review phase was particularly valuable for reconstructing LHF's evolution over time and verifying factual claims about participation, funding amounts, and activity implementation.

A validation workshop was convened on June 24, 2025, bringing together 12 key LHF stakeholders including Steering Committee members, Secretariat staff, former provincial hub coordinators, and host organization representatives. This one-day participatory session served dual purposes: presenting preliminary evaluation findings for accuracy verification and generating collective reflection on the analysis. The workshop employed interactive methods including findings galleries, small group discussions on contested interpretations, and plenary debates on future recommendations. Participants provided critical feedback that refined the evaluation's conclusions, corrected factual errors, and added nuanced context to contentious findings – particularly around governance challenges and sustainability concerns. The validation process strengthened the evaluation's credibility while maintaining analytical independence, as participants could clarify facts and offer alternative interpretations without altering the evaluation team's core assessments. This participatory validation approach aligned with humanitarian evaluation best practices by ensuring those most invested in LHF's work could engage with findings before finalization, enhancing both accuracy and ownership of results.

2.2. Sampling Strategy and Participant Selection

The evaluation employed purposive sampling strategies tailored to each data collection method:

Survey sampling utilized maximum variation sampling to capture the full spectrum of LHF stakeholders. Distribution channels included LHF's WhatsApp groups, email lists, and partner networks. The achieved sample reflected this diversity: 56.25% national NGOs, 31.25% local NGOs, 6.25% international NGOs, and 6.25% other organizations. Geographic representation spanned all operational areas, with 37.5% of respondents having received LHF micro-grants.

KII selection followed a stakeholder mapping exercise identifying critical perspectives needed for comprehensive assessment. Selection criteria prioritized: (a) depth of engagement with LHF, (b) strategic positioning to observe LHF's broader impact, (c) diversity of viewpoints including critical perspectives, and (d) geographic and thematic coverage. The final sample achieved balance between internal participants who could speak to operational realities and external observers who could assess systemic impacts.

FGD session targeted mid-level practitioners with direct field experience of LHF's coordination mechanisms. This tactical choice aimed to capture operational insights beyond high-level strategic perspectives while avoiding the power dynamics that might inhibit frank discussion if senior executives dominated the conversation.

2.3. Analytical Framework and Process

Data analysis proceeded through iterative cycles of coding, categorization, and interpretation:

Survey data underwent descriptive statistical analysis to identify patterns in effectiveness ratings, organizational relationships, and impact perceptions. Cross-tabulation explored variations by organization type, geographic location, and funding recipient status. Percentage distributions were calculated for all scaled responses, with particular attention to the spread between positive, neutral, and negative assessments. Interview transcripts and FGD recordings underwent thematic analysis using a hybrid deductive-inductive approach. The initial coding framework derived from the evaluation's research questions and theoretical frameworks around humanitarian coordination and localization. However, the analysis remained open to emergent themes not anticipated in the evaluation design. Key analytical steps included:

- First cycle coding: Line-by-line coding of transcripts identifying discrete concepts and experiences
- Pattern recognition: Grouping codes into broader themes and identifying relationships
- Cross-case analysis: Comparing perspectives across stakeholder groups to identify convergence and divergence
- Narrative construction: Developing explanatory accounts that honoured complexity while identifying key findings

The mixed-methods integration occurred at multiple levels:

- Convergent triangulation: Identifying where quantitative metrics and qualitative narratives reinforced similar findings

- Complementary integration: Using qualitative data to explain quantitative patterns
- Divergent analysis: Exploring contradictions between data sources as windows into complexity

This integrative analysis was particularly valuable for understanding split effectiveness ratings, where quantitative data showed 43.75% rating LHF as effective while an equal percentage disagreed – qualitative data revealed this reflected fundamentally different visions of LHF's purpose.

2.4. Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

Several limitations shaped the evaluation's scope and findings:

- The evaluation occurred 18 months after LHF's peak operational period, potentially affecting recall accuracy and availability of key informants. This was mitigated through documentary review and triangulation across multiple respondents.
- Despite purposive sampling, the achieved sample may over-represent engaged stakeholders while missing disconnected or dissatisfied constituents. The inclusion of critical voices (particularly from UN agencies and donors) partially addressed this limitation.
- Isolating LHF's specific contributions within the complex post-earthquake response ecosystem proved challenging. The evaluation addressed this through careful probing for concrete examples and mechanisms of change rather than assuming direct causation.
- Conducting some interviews in English may have advantaged internationally-oriented respondents. The use of Turkish for most KIIs and the entire FGD helped balance this dynamic.
- LHF's lack of systematic monitoring meant the evaluation relied heavily on stakeholder perceptions rather than objective outcome metrics. This limitation is explicitly acknowledged in findings about the need for stronger evidence systems.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

The evaluation adhered to humanitarian evaluation ethical standards:

- Informed consent was obtained from all participants, with clear explanation of the evaluation's purpose and use
- Confidentiality was maintained through anonymization of sensitive critiques and careful attribution
- Do No Harm principles guided the approach, particularly in navigating organizational tensions and power dynamics
- Participatory validation through sharing preliminary findings with LHF leadership for factual correction while maintaining evaluative independence
- Cultural sensitivity in research conduct, recognizing the ongoing trauma context in earthquake-affected communities

3. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

LHF made significant strides in elevating local actors within the humanitarian coordination system in Türkiye, achieving both concrete outputs and more subtle shifts in the ecosystem. Below we evaluate these impacts, distinguishing between tangible contributions (e.g. services, funding, inclusion in coordination) and intangible impacts (e.g. empowerment, changes in norms), as well as noting the limitations of LHF's impact.

3.1. Tangible Contributions to Advocacy, Resource Mobilization, Coordination and Capacity Development

3.1.1. LHF as Coordination Actor

Perhaps LHF's most important achievement was securing local civil society's seat at the table in humanitarian coordination. Through LHF's advocacy, **local NGOs gained representation in high-level coordination bodies** – for the first time, Turkish local organizations sat in the UNCT+ alongside UN agencies and international NGOs. This was a groundbreaking step that demonstrated the potential of locally led initiatives in a major response. LHF members also joined UN-led working groups and planning forums, ensuring local information and perspectives were fed into decision-making processes. Key informants noted that “LHF's success in mobilizing local actors and securing seats in coordination mechanisms (e.g., UNCT+, clusters) demonstrates the potential of locally-led initiatives”. By bridging local groups with the formal humanitarian system, LHF made the response more inclusive. The survey findings validate these coordination achievements, with 43.75% of respondents rating LHF as an effective coordination platform. Moreover, 62.5% of respondents indicated that LHF effectively or very effectively enabled local civil society participation in UN-led mechanisms, demonstrating the Forum's success in bridging local actors with international coordination structures. Notably, 50% of respondents reported that LHF facilitated information sharing among actors, though 31.25% remained neutral, suggesting room for improvement in communication mechanisms.

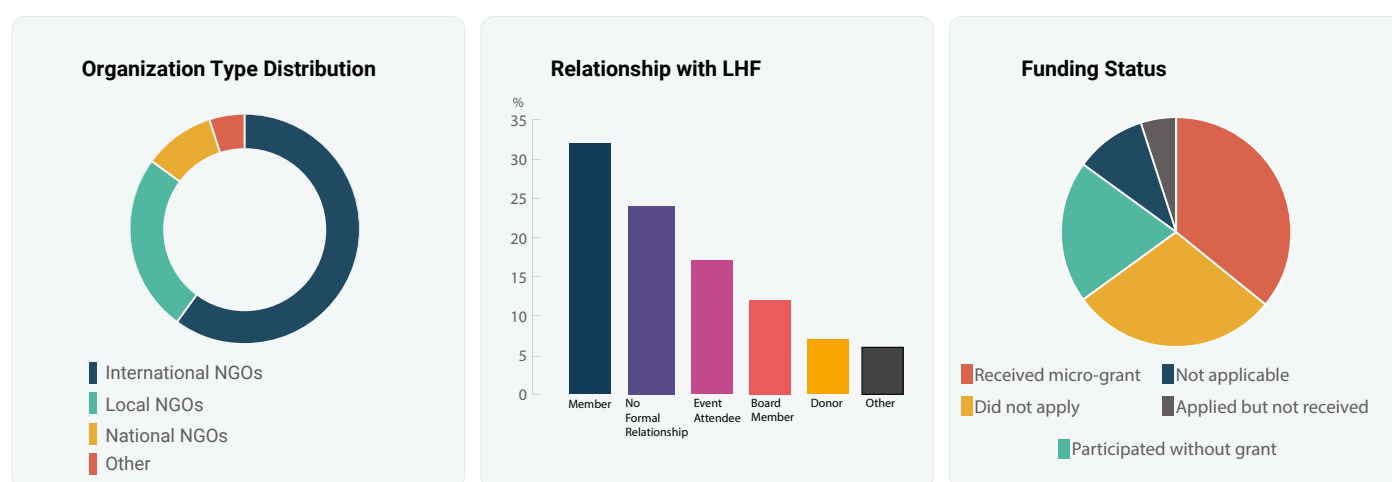


Chart 1 Survey/Respondent Profile and Engagement

On the ground, LHF acted as a **coordination hub** among diverse stakeholders – local NGOs, national NGOs, government bodies, and UN agencies. LHF field coordinators mapped local civil society groups and facilitated information flow between local actors and international responders. Though the mapping efforts were criticized by some key informants, due to the claim that it was the repetition of UN-led service mapping efforts, it was understood that the actors mapped by LHF and UN-led cluster mechanism were not exactly the same organizations, as LHF staff highlighted their target to “include non-traditional local actors who are not part of the humanitarian coordination architecture”. This helped **identify needs, avoid duplication, and validate information** during the chaotic emergency. For example, one key informant mentioned that they used LHF’s network to conduct joint needs assessments and ensure their services complemented others’, noting that through LHF they could verify information and ensure deduplication in aid delivery. In the absence of any parallel local coordination structure in certain provinces, LHF plugged into the existing UN cluster system – the Forum’s provincial coordinators became a bridge connecting community-based groups with sector coordination meetings led by international actors. Personal relationships developed via LHF improved trust and communication; in Malatya, for instance, the LHF coordinator’s rapport with OCHA staff smoothed local access to coordination forums. Overall, LHF’s coordination efforts facilitated a more coherent multi-stakeholder response at local levels, even if informal – interviewees described LHF as “acting as a bridge” between local and international actors in the field. However, sustainability of these coordination efforts was questioned.

In mid-2023, LHF established **Local Coordination and Development Centers** in Malatya and Hatay. These centers served as multi-purpose spaces for civil society – a physical hub where local NGOs could work, meet, and coordinate activities. They quickly became a venue for joint meetings, trainings, and even a drop-in space where “civil society could come have tea and network”, fostering collaboration in an informal way. The hubs also hosted coordination meetings and was used by UN agencies to interface with local groups, effectively localizing the coordination infrastructure. The impact of the centers was evidenced by the sense of community ownership it created – even after LHF’s initial project ended, local organizations **continued to utilize the space as their own**, indicating sustained value beyond the formal project period. This model of a local civil society hub addressed a critical need for **workspace, information-sharing, and networking** among local responders. However, it was noted that these centers were established somewhat late and faced sustainability challenges once short-term funding ran out.

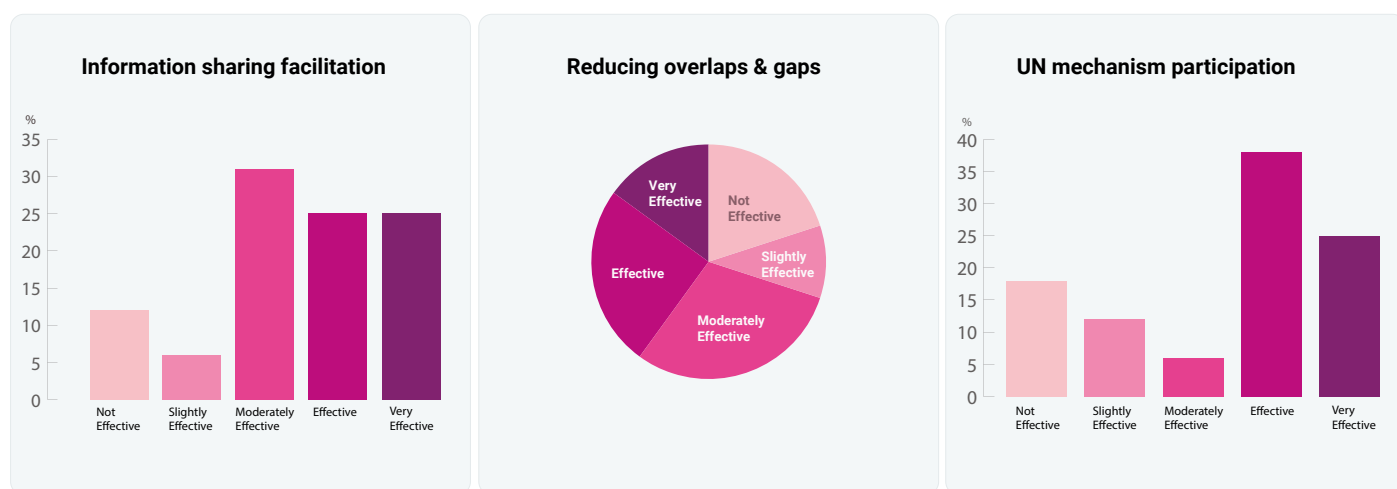


Chart 2 Survey/Coordination Effectiveness and Impact Stories

4. <https://yerelstkforumu.net/>

The evaluation revealed diverse stakeholder perspectives on LHF's coordination mechanisms, reflecting inherent complexities in multi-actor humanitarian responses. These varying assessments provide valuable insights into how organizational positioning and prior experience with coordination systems shape perceptions of effectiveness. Representatives from established coordination bodies raised legitimate concerns about mandate clarity, institutional alignment, and questions of representational authority. As one UN key informant observed: "A fundamental challenge we encountered was understanding LHF's coordination mandate and representational scope. Questions arose about whether they represented major national organizations involved in the earthquake response, and concerns emerged about potential duplication of existing coordination mechanisms." These observations reflect well-documented tensions in humanitarian coordination literature regarding legitimacy, which typically derives from three sources: legal mandate (often held by UN agencies), operational capacity (demonstrated by major implementing organizations), and community representation (claimed by civil society networks). Conversely, local and grassroots organizations emphasized LHF's contribution to expanding participation beyond traditional humanitarian actors. One respondent noted: "Through LHF's efforts, we observed increased inclusion of previously excluded groups in coordination spaces, including women's organizations and youth groups that had limited access to formal humanitarian mechanisms." This perspective aligns with recent scholarship on "coordination pluralism," which suggests that parallel or complementary coordination mechanisms may serve different constituencies and fill gaps in formal systems. The divergent views on LHF's coordination role thus illustrate a broader phenomenon documented in humanitarian studies: the ongoing negotiation between established coordination architectures and emerging models that prioritize local leadership and inclusive participation. Rather than representing a failure of coordination, these tensions may reflect the humanitarian system's gradual adaptation to calls for localization and more equitable partnership models, as articulated in current humanitarian reform agendas including the Grand Bargain 2.0 and ongoing discussions on Humanitarian Reset which calls for "more people-centred response led by local/national actors".

3.1.2. LHF as Mobilizing Funds for Localization:

While coordination created the platform for local voice, LHF's micro-grant program provided the resources to amplify that voice. Over its operational period, LHF mobilized TRY 30,177,778.85 (approximately \$1,042,570) from five international donors – VITOL, KCOC, DSZ, CDP, and Global Giving. This funding mix reflected a strategic evolution from emergency response to sustainable capacity development. Vitol Foundation provided the initial catalyst with \$337,757 for immediate micro-grant distribution, enabling LHF to establish credibility through rapid, tangible support to local actors. Subsequent donors brought thematic priorities aligned with their institutional missions: CDP's focus on disability inclusion, DSZ's emphasis on women's empowerment, and KCOC's investment in coordination infrastructure. Global Giving's \$231,937 contribution in 2024 marked a vote of confidence in LHF's model, introducing innovative mobility grants that enabled local organizations to participate in national and international forums.

A surface-level analysis reveals that TRY 12,014,954.07 (39.8%) of LHF's total budget reached local organizations directly through 87 micro-grants, averaging TRY 138,103 each. The remaining 60.2% covered staff salaries and consultancies (27.3%), operational costs (10.4%), direct project activities (15.5%), and overhead (5.9%). This distribution might initially appear inefficient compared to traditional pooled funding mechanisms. However, such simplistic percentage-based analysis fundamentally misunderstands LHF's transformative approach to localization.

The presence of four field coordinators stationed permanently in earthquake-affected provinces created value far exceeding their salary costs. These coordinators did not merely distribute funds – they actively mapped and engaged non-traditional actors including grassroots collectives, volunteer networks, and informal community groups typically invisible to the formal humanitarian system. Their continuous presence in Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Malatya, and Adıyaman enabled relationship-building with organizations that lacked the capacity or confidence to engage with international mechanisms. As one coordinator noted, “We were always there, always reachable, speaking their language and understanding their context.” This sustained presence transformed LHF from a distant funding mechanism into a trusted local partner.

Moreover, LHF staff served as critical knowledge brokers, presenting localized needs and insights to the constant stream of international actors visiting earthquake-affected areas. When UN agencies, donors, or INGOs arrived for assessments, LHF coordinators provided nuanced understanding of community dynamics, identified appropriate local partners, and translated between international humanitarian language and local realities. This intermediary function – impossible to capture in financial metrics – prevented countless coordination failures and ensured international resources addressed actual community priorities rather than assumed needs.

The micro-grant program’s true cost-effectiveness emerges when considering its multiplier effects. LHF’s grants, ranging from TRY 99,000 to TRY 424,800, filled a critical gap between tiny solidarity funds and major project funding that excludes nascent organizations. The intensive accompaniment model – where staff provided hands-on support in proposal writing, budgeting, and reporting – transformed first-time grant recipients into capable humanitarian actors. Organizations like Adıyaman Dayanışma İnsanları Derneği leveraged their ₺165,000 youth assessment grant to influence municipal policy and secure additional funding. The Hatay and Malatya coordination centers, while consuming TRY 2.5 million, became community assets providing workspace, networking opportunities, and legitimacy to over 40 local organizations.

When benchmarked against the humanitarian system’s historical record in Türkiye, LHF’s 39.8% direct transfer rate represents a radical shift. More importantly, the 60.2% invested in coordination, capacity development, and accompaniment challenged the sector’s traditional dichotomy between “programming” and “overhead.” In LHF’s model, these support costs were the program – creating an ecosystem where local organizations could thrive rather than merely implementing predetermined activities.

The absence of major institutional donors (ECHO, USAID, UN agencies) from LHF’s funding portfolio underscores persistent challenges in financing locally-led coordination. This reliance on philanthropic funding, while enabling flexibility and innovation, ultimately constrained LHF’s scale and sustainability. The model’s high per-grant cost of TRY 346,798 (including all support) raises legitimate questions about scalability, yet also reflects the true cost of meaningful localization – not just transferring funds but transforming power relationships and building local humanitarian leadership. The cost-effectiveness debate thus illustrates a fundamental question: is localization about efficiently moving money to local actors, or investing in the systemic changes that enable local actors to lead?

Funding Source	Start Date	End Date	Project Budget (USD)	Project Budget (in TRY)	Micro Grant Amount (in TRY)	Number of micro grants	Staff Salary and Consultancies	Operational Costs (Travel, transportation,	Direct Project Costs
VITOL	Feb 2023	Sep 2023	200,000	3,965,056	3,024,200	25	523,904	149,888	267,064
VITOL	Jan 2023	April 2024	137,757	2,589,628			2,100,000	248,000	241,628
KCOC	Nov 2023	Oct 2024	82,100	2,216,700	1,080,000	8		405,000	731,700
DSZ	Jan 2024	Jan 2025	95,001	2,954,725	813,739	4	1,036,356	480,864	430,466
CDP	Oct 2023	June 2025	295,775	9,248,004	3,490,665	20	2,510,239	1,164,867	1,241,505
Global Giving	Aug 2024	Dec 2025	231,937	9,203,667	3,606,350	30	2,156,831	342,786	2,494,820

Table 1 Cost Analysis of Funding received by LHF

3.1.3. LHF as Micro Grant Provider

A signature LHF initiative was its **micro-grant program** which distributed TRY 12,014,954.07 to 25 grassroots organizations across four earthquake-affected provinces between August 2023 and November 2024. These grants, averaging ₺179,967 (€5,500) but ranging from ₺99,000 to ₺424,800, filled critical gaps by enabling local groups to launch projects addressing community-specific needs. The largest grant of ₺424,800 went to Köy Okulları Değişim Ağı (Village Schools Exchange Network) to investigate post-earthquake rural conditions and migration patterns in Hatay and Adıyaman⁵ – a crucial yet overlooked dimension of the disaster's impact. Similarly, the Adıyaman-based *Dayanışma İnsanları Derneği* received a ₺165,000 micro-grant to research post-earthquake youth needs⁶. With LHF's support, they did not only produce a comprehensive assessment report but also organized a public launch event that brought local authorities and the national Union of Municipalities into conversation around the findings. This illustrates how LHF's micro-grants amplified local voices – in this case influencing higher-level policy discussions on youth and disaster recovery. More broadly, “micro-grants provided learning opportunities for local organizations and helped build trust” between local NGOs and the Forum. Many smaller CSOs, previously excluded from international funding, gained experience in proposal writing, budgeting, and project implementation through LHF's micro-grants. This has **created opportunities for local CSOs to apply for other grants, even though LHF was unable to track such multiplier effects through a structured mechanism.**

The **flexibility and mentorship** LHF offered to micro-grant recipients was widely praised. Applicants received extensive outreach and support (e.g. explaining criteria, adjusting budgets based on dynamic needs), unlike the rigid bureaucracy of typical donors. Such accessible funding empowered grassroots groups to contribute to the response and build capacity for future efforts. These micro-grants, totalling TRY 12,014,954.07, represent the core of the 39% of LHF's total budget that reached local actors directly – a figure that created disproportionate impact through strategic targeting and responsive support mechanisms.

The micro-grant program's thematic diversity reflected LHF's commitment to addressing intersectional vulnerabilities often overlooked in mainstream humanitarian response. **Disability inclusion emerged as a major focus**, with CDP investing TRY 1,548,700 across nine projects serving various disability communities. The Turkish National Federation of the Deaf's TRY 199,300 projects exemplified this approach, using creative drama methods to deliver reproductive health education to deaf women in Hatay – addressing a critical gap where sign language interpretation was absent from health services. Similarly, the ESYAD (Accessible and Sustainable Living Association) received TRY 169,900 for institutional capacity development, while Maya Education and Culture Association secured TRY 193,000 to make the Zeytin children's area accessible to children with disabilities. These investments established new standards for inclusive humanitarian programming in the region, ensuring that approximately 35% of all micro-grant funding directly addressed disability rights and inclusion.

Women's rights and gender-based initiatives constituted another strategic priority, with DSZ alone channelling TRY 813,739 into four projects strengthening women's organizations. These ranged from psychological support training for female lawyers affected by the earthquake (TRY 300,000 to Yerel Avukatlar) to revitalizing dormant women's associations through capacity development (TRY 234,500 to YADER). The Çember Civil Initiative received ₺149,000 to document women's organizations' earthquake response effectiveness, creating crucial evidence for future gender-responsive programming⁷. Child protection also featured prominently, with Adıyaman SHUDER receiving TRY 120,000 to raise awareness

5. <https://kodegisim.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Deprem-Sonrasi-Nufus-Hareketliliginin-Kirsalda-Egitim-Uzerindeki-Etkileri-1.pdf>

6. <https://dayanismainsanlari.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/adiyaman-gencleri-deprem-sonrasi- ihtiyaclari-EN.pdf>

7. https://www.cemberdernek.org/files/ugd/820e24_443b4db384b442a69eeaa28e1e85c6dd.pdf?index=true

about sexual exploitation risks in container cities through their “My Body Belongs to Me” campaign – an intervention addressing taboo but urgent protection concerns in temporary settlements.

The program’s evolution over three distinct phases revealed LHF’s adaptive approach to post-disaster recovery. The first wave (August-October 2023) focused on immediate assessments, including ARSA’s TRY 99,900 study on refugee needs and Köy Okulları’s rural impact research. The second phase (March-June 2024) emphasized coordination and network building, with eight KCOC-funded projects totalling TRY 1,080,000 creating lasting infrastructure for civil society collaboration. Notable examples included Göçmen Dayanışma Derneği’s health NGO mapping platform across four provinces (TRY 167,200) and KEGED’s Youth Coordination Network in Malatya (TRY 165,000). The final phase (July-November 2024) concentrated on specialized interventions and institutional strengthening, with 13 projects addressing long-term recovery needs. This temporal progression demonstrated LHF’s strategic vision – moving from reactive grant-making to proactive ecosystem strengthening, ensuring that local civil society emerged from the disaster not just recovered but transformed with enhanced capacities and networks.

The survey data reinforces the significance of the micro-grant program, with 37.5% of respondent organizations having received micro-grants from LHF. Among all respondents, 50% agreed or strongly agreed that these micro-grants effectively supported grassroots organizations, while only 6.25% disagreed. Recipients particularly valued how the grants enabled first-time project implementation for organizations lacking prior donor relationships. However, 25% remained neutral and 18.75% were unsure about the program’s effectiveness, indicating that clearer communication about grant impacts may be needed.

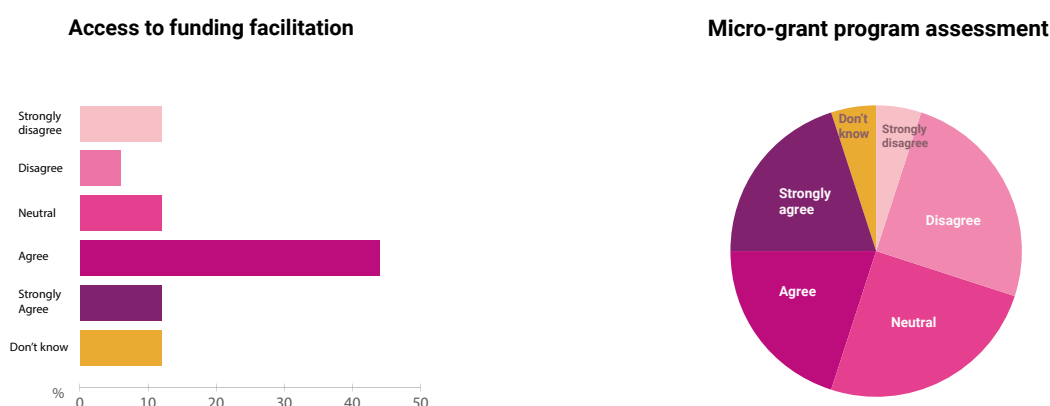


Chart 3 Survey/Resource Mobilization and Project Outcomes

3.1.4. LHF as Capacity Builder

Beyond financial support, LHF recognized that sustainable local leadership required systematic capacity strengthening. This was in the form of capacity development for local NGOs through trainings and by promoting standards in humanitarian practice. For example, LHF facilitated training sessions on proposal writing, project management, and technical topics (sometimes by matching local needs with available trainings offered by other organizations). Local participants generally appreciated LHF’s *peer-level* approach – trainers and coordinators worked alongside local organizations rather than imposing from above, which was empowering and built confidence. The results were mixed in some cases – standardized trainings had to be tailored to local contexts for full effectiveness – but they seeded new skills in the local NGO community. Importantly, LHF became a vehicle to **introduce ethical norms and quality standards** to many

emergent community groups. One informant highlighted that “LHF played an important role in establishing ethical standards, especially for local NGOs” around issues like child protection in temporary shelters and proper aid distribution practices. Larger NGOs in the Forum shared their expertise to help smaller groups set up safe spaces for children and adhere to minimum standards. In this way, LHF acted as a conduit for best practices, raising the professionalism of the overall local response.

The survey data strongly validates this capacity development impacts, showing it as LHF’s most successful area with 56.25% of respondents reporting high or very high impact. The multi-dimensional impact analysis reveals that capacity development outperformed all other impact areas, surpassing coordination (50% positive impact), funding access (50%), and policy influence (43.75%). Respondents particularly valued the ‘Good Practices Workshop’ and ‘Joint Solutions, Common Future’ events, as well as the peer learning opportunities and safe spaces for experimentation that LHF provided.

Beyond formal training sessions, LHF developed innovative capacity development approaches that embedded learning within operational support. The “Good Practices Workshop”⁸ organized in January 2024 brought together local organizations to share earthquake response experiences. LHF’s most strategic capacity development emerged through accompaniment models. In Hatay, ESYAD (Accessible and Sustainable Living Association) received ₺217,000 to map local organizations and maintain the www.yerelstkforumu.net platform, with LHF providing ongoing supervision to develop their coordination skills. This was not a typical grant – ESYAD staff received on-the-job training in stakeholder mapping and inter-organizational communication, while Eksi25 (a LHF board member organization) contributed one staff day per week to support coordination efforts. Similarly, when Hatay Social Workers Association – receiving their first-ever grant – proposed a ₺225,000 arts-based wellbeing retreat for field workers, LHF provided intensive one-on-one supervision in grant management, financial reporting, and organizational governance. This accompaniment approach transformed capacity development from discrete training events into embedded learning processes. As one informant noted, these initiatives aimed to “support permanent actors in the field, increasing local capacity” for the long term.

LHF pioneered an unprecedented approach to private sector engagement in Turkish humanitarian response through its “Joint Solutions, Common Future: Local Civil Society-Private Sector Meeting” organized in October 2024⁹. Recognizing that post-earthquake corporate mobilization had channelled substantial resources primarily through large national NGOs, LHF designed a matchmaking mechanism pairing individual private sector companies with local organizations for structured 3-4 session engagements. This initiative aimed to diversify corporate partnerships beyond the usual suspects, creating direct pathways between local CSOs and business resources. While the event itself was praised as groundbreaking – “an activity never before implemented in Türkiye” according to one participant – its impact was severely limited by lack of follow-through. Multiple informants reported that private sector partners failed to honour commitments made during the meetings, with communication ceasing shortly after the event. One key informant’s metaphor aptly captured this pattern across LHF initiatives: “You can think of LHF as apples in a bag, each with just one bite taken” – suggesting promising initiatives started but not sustained. This private sector engagement exemplified both LHF’s innovative vision for expanding local actors’ resource networks and its persistent challenge in translating one-time events into lasting partnerships that could fundamentally alter funding flows.

8. <https://www.hayatadestek.org/duyurular/tif-yerelde-iyi-ornekler-calistayi-oturum-ozetleri-ve-podcast-serisi-yayinda/>

9. <https://www.hayatadestek.org/basin-bultenleri/birlikte-cozumler-ortak-gelecek-yerel-sivil-toplum-ve-ozel-sektor-bulusmasi/>

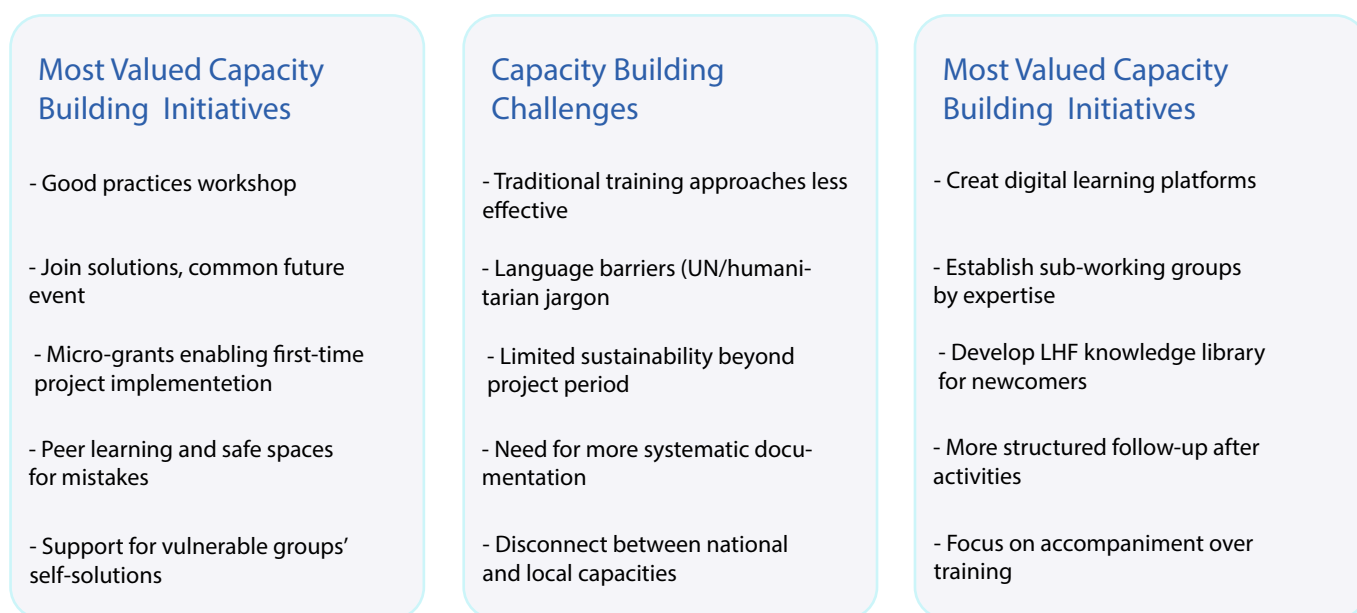


Chart 4 Survey/Capacity development and Institutional Strengthening

3.1.5. LHF as Advocate for Localization

Beyond coordination, LHF served as a collective advocacy voice for local civil society in the broader humanitarian arena. Through position papers and active participation in national-level discussions, LHF advocated for more equitable partnership approaches and funding for local actors. While much of this advocacy was informal, there were wins – for instance, **local NGO perspectives were reflected in the humanitarian strategic plans** and funding allocations after the earthquake, in part due to LHF members voicing local needs in coordination meetings. One concrete example of advocacy impact was LHF's push for **Area-Based Coordination** models (focusing on locality-specific needs rather than a purely sectoral approach). This advocacy challenged traditional sector-based coordination and encouraged the UN to consider more locally led strategies. It also opened dialogue about developing Türkiye-specific models for disaster response that integrate government, local NGOs, and international actors.

Intangibly, LHF's very existence *shifted power dynamics* in Türkiye's humanitarian landscape: local organizations were no longer seen merely as implementing subcontractors, but as **key stakeholders shaping the response**. Several informants noted that international actors came to “*recognize the value of local organizations*” in this earthquake response, arguably more than in any previous crisis. This is a subtle but important social impact – an attitudinal change toward localization within the humanitarian community in Türkiye.

3.2. Intangible Impacts on the Humanitarian Ecosystem

In addition to the quantifiable outputs above, LHF generated **intangible benefits** that, while harder to measure, were repeatedly emphasized by stakeholders:

LHF created a sense of empowerment among local civil society actors by uniting them under a common forum. Smaller community-based organizations that had felt isolated were suddenly part of a larger movement, boosting their confidence to engage with powerful actors. One local activist described LHF’s role as “*path-opening*” – it gave local groups a pathway to make their voices heard in policy discussions that would normally be inaccessible. The forum fostered solidarity and peer support: organizations shared experiences and mentored each other, creating a community of practice. This **peer network** is an enduring social asset; even outside formal meetings, LHF members continue to collaborate informally, having built trust through the forum. Such strengthening of civil society relationships is an intangible legacy that can enhance resilience in future emergencies.

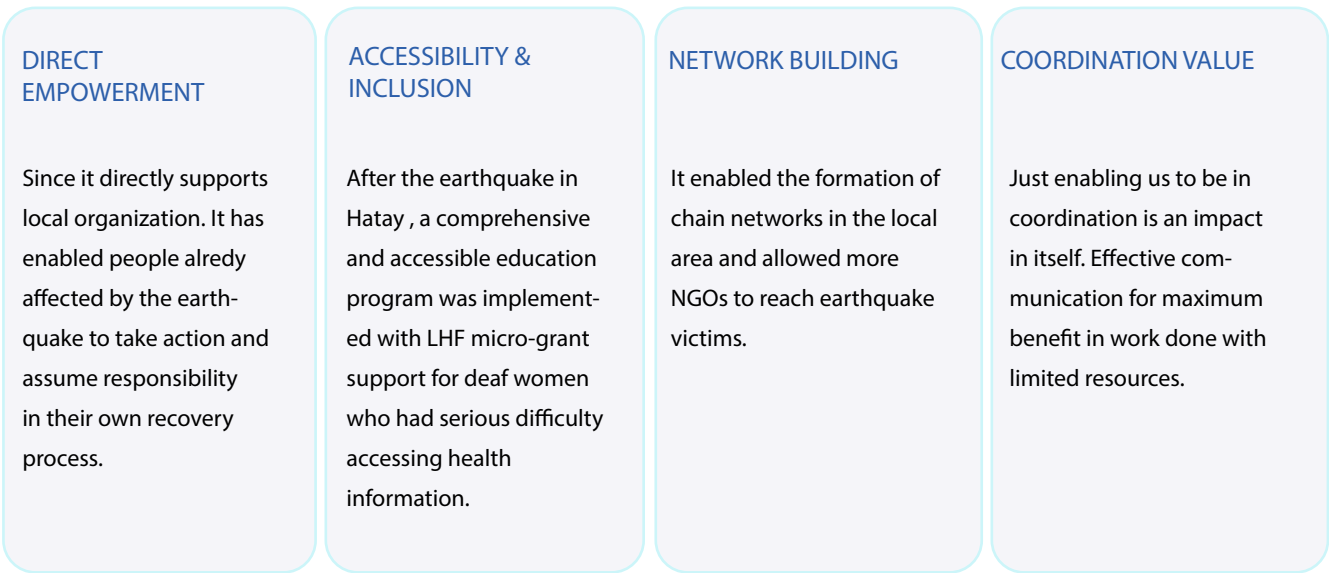


Chart 5 Survey/Impact of LHF Activities

Through LHF’s initiatives, local actors began to claim greater ownership of humanitarian projects. For example, after LHF set up the Local Coordination and Development Center in Hatay and involved local NGOs in managing it, those organizations treated it as their space, taking initiative to keep it running for community meetings even without external support. This sense of local ownership extended to programs funded by LHF micro-grants – grantees felt the projects truly belonged to their communities, not to an external donor agenda. Such ownership is an important ingredient for sustainability and was a marked change from typical top-down aid projects.

LHF raised the profile of local NGOs, many of whom had been **previously overlooked or underestimated** by international donors and authorities. By bringing local organizations into coordination platforms, LHF shone a spotlight on their capabilities. A UN agency staff noted that “*LHF has increased visibility and participation of previously overlooked groups in coordination mechanisms*”. For instance, women-led and disability-focused groups gained attention for their specialized knowledge of community needs. This recognition of local

actors' value is influencing donor and UN policies – there is growing acknowledgement that partnering with local NGOs is not only a political nicety but improves program quality (e.g. more culturally appropriate aid).

The presence of LHF introduced a modest **power shift** in the humanitarian ecosystem. Local actors, through collective strength, could challenge decisions and demand greater accountability from larger agencies. An example cited was when funding allocations were being discussed: LHF representatives in meetings advocated for fair distribution and were able to question any bias toward international NGOs. While power imbalances remain (international actors still controlled most funding), the dynamic was altered – international agencies had to engage with organized local voices, which is a foundational change. In the long run, this can lead to more accountable and locally responsive humanitarian practices in Türkiye.

Local communities generally exhibited **higher trust** in humanitarian initiatives that were coordinated or communicated via local organizations in LHF. Because LHF members included community-based groups with established relationships (e.g. local family education centers, neighbourhood associations, volunteer networks), messages about aid and coordination were conveyed by familiar, trusted figures. This improved community uptake of services and feedback loops. Additionally, LHF members often acted as cultural brokers, helping international agencies adapt their approach to be more sensitive to local norms (for example, advising on how to appropriately design services in conservative communities or how to include women's community networks in outreach). Although hard to quantify, these contributions enhanced the **cultural appropriateness** of the overall response and likely mitigated potential friction between affected populations and aid providers.

3.3. Limitations and Challenges in LHF's Impact

While LHF achieved notable impacts, the assessment also reveals constraints and shortcomings that limited the Forum's overall social impact:

Several stakeholders observed that LHF's influence, though real, was time-bound and localized. The Forum was most active and visible in the first six months after the earthquake, especially during the period of the "Area-Based Coordination (ABC)" pilot when UN OCHA was experimenting with new approaches. During that window, LHF became an integral part of coordination in some areas. However, as coordination reverted to more traditional mechanisms (the existing 3RP/cluster system co-led by UNHCR and UNDP) later in 2023, LHF's role in those formal structures diminished. A donor representative frankly noted that from their perspective, "the LHF over time became part of the ABC coordination mechanism for a few months. The rest I cannot comment – I don't have a feeling there was so much impact". In other words, beyond certain provinces and a certain timeframe, LHF's concrete impact on the broader humanitarian operation was limited. By 2024, LHF was less visible at national coordination forums, raising questions about continuity.

These limitations are reflected in the mixed perceptions captured in the survey. While 43.75% rated LHF as effective overall, an equal percentage (43.75%) reported low or no impact in policy influence. The sustainability concerns are particularly stark: only 25% of respondents viewed LHF's structures as sustainable without donor funding, while 31.25% rated sustainability as moderate and 25% explicitly viewed the current model as unsustainable. This quantitative data underscores the fragility of LHF's impact without secured long-term funding.

Multi-dimensional impact analysis

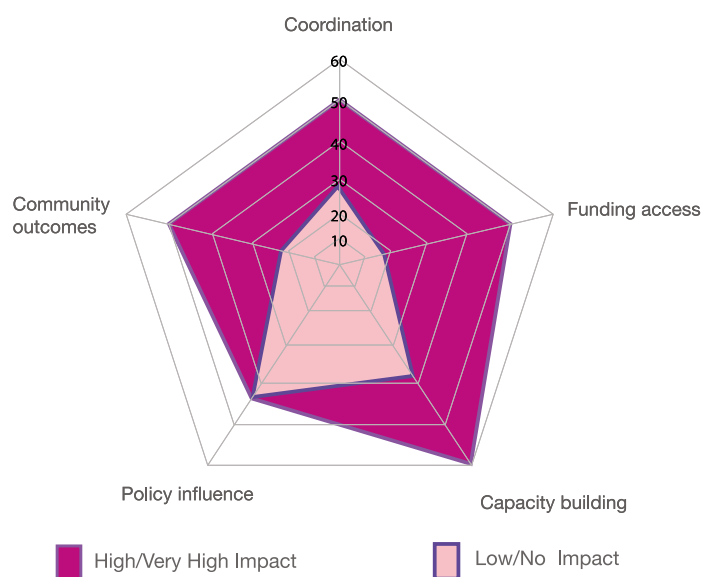


Chart 6 Survey/Comprehensive Impact Assessment

LHF focused on NGO coordination and did not substantially interface with Turkish government-led structures. Some interviewees felt this was a missed opportunity, given that sustaining impact requires buy-in from government authorities who lead disaster management in Türkiye. Additionally, LHF did not closely integrate with the **National Reference Group (NRG)** on localization – a parallel national-level platform that included donors and policy-makers. The lack of systematic outreach to NRG members and government stakeholders meant LHF’s advocacy messages (e.g. on funding to locals) did not strongly influence national policy or the official “lessons learned” processes. In effect, LHF “*was not seen as a natural extension of national localization efforts like the Localization Advocacy Group or NRG*” and operated somewhat in isolation. This siloed approach potentially limited its impact on higher-level reforms.

Another challenge was the **perception of duplication** or parallel structures. Some international actors viewed LHF’s emergent coordination forums with suspicion, unsure if it was meant to replace or compete with existing coordination bodies. Early on, UN officials welcomed LHF in the chaotic flash appeal phase, but as things settled, there was pushback – one UN coordinator questioned if LHF was creating a “forum” that would conflict with cluster coordination. This perception was exacerbated by **communication gaps**: LHF struggled to clearly articulate its role and how it complemented (rather than duplicated) other mechanisms. For example, some donors in Ankara had only a vague idea of what LHF was doing in Gaziantep and field locations. As a result, institutional donors remained unconvinced; from their vantage, LHF appeared to be “*creating parallel coordination structures*” and “*the disruptive change narrative*” around LHF alienated those who might have supported it. This ultimately limited LHF’s impact, as it failed to fully integrate into – or positively influence – the established humanitarian coordination system at scale.

Measuring LHF’s impact was an afterthought, hampering the ability to demonstrate success. The Forum did not set up robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks during implementation. One key informant admitted there was “*no formal impact measurement, due to time constraints and workload*”, so they relied on anecdotal evidence of success. While plenty of success stories exist (as described above), LHF did not collect systematic data (e.g. number of local orgs joining clusters, amount of funding shifted to locals, community satisfaction levels) that could have showcased its value. This lack of documented evidence made it harder

to make the case to skeptical stakeholders about LHF's effectiveness. It also means some positive impacts may remain invisible or underappreciated outside the immediate network. The lesson is that without demonstrable metrics or written outputs, an initiative's impact can fade quickly from institutional memory.

LHF succeeded in convening a wide range of actors, but keeping them **consistently engaged** was challenging. Larger, well-resourced NGOs occasionally felt over-burdened by LHF's frequent meetings and communications, while some smaller organizations lacked the capacity to attend all discussions. This led to an effect one interviewee called "social loafing" – a few active members carried the weight of participation while others became passive. Over time, some big NGOs (that initially supported LHF's formation) started pulling back. **The lack of tailored engagement mechanisms** (e.g. separate tracks for small vs. large organizations) meant LHF's platform was not equally valuable to all members. This imbalance likely diluted collective impact – if only a core group is driving things, the reach of the forum is naturally limited.

Finally, LHF's impact was constrained by its tenuous **funding and support structure**. The Forum received roughly €1 million in philanthropic funding to cover its first year of operations. However, **no major institutional donor** directly financed LHF. Donors cited concerns about duplication and unclear governance as reasons for not funding. This lack of multi-year support meant that many of LHF's activities (provincial coordination hubs, field coordinator positions, micro-grants) were limited to short project cycles. When funding ran out by late 2024, LHF had to significantly scale down field operations – for example, the field coordinator positions ended in four most affected provinces, leaving these provinces without a local forum presence. Such drops in capacity inevitably stalled momentum and curtailed impact. Moreover, because LHF did not secure a role in managing any mainstream funding, its ability to influence **resource allocation** toward local actors was limited. In summary, without institutional backing, LHF's impact remained fragile and at risk of petering out as emergency grants expired.

In summary, the LHF made a **meaningful impact** by inserting local civil society into the heart of the earthquake response – improving coordination, building capacity, and championing localization ideals. Local NGOs and communities benefited through greater voice, resources, and networking. The humanitarian ecosystem saw a glimpse of how locally-led action can function at scale. However, LHF's impact was **not as deep or sustained** as it could have been, due to internal and external challenges: short-term engagement, partial integration with existing systems, insufficient evidence gathering, and lack of long-term support. These mixed outcomes provide valuable lessons for strengthening such initiatives going forward. The next sections delve into those lessons by analyzing LHF's organizational effectiveness and how the model can be refined to achieve more durable impact.

3.4. Overall Effectiveness Assessment

LHF's effectiveness varied dramatically across its different functions, with no single domain achieving majority endorsement. **As a coordination platform**, 43.75% of stakeholders rated LHF as effective or very effective, while an equal percentage found it only moderately effective or less. This split perception reflects a fundamental tension captured by one key informant: *"Everyone imagined something different... If you ask many people now, many can say many different things."*

As a **micro-grant provider**, 37.5% deemed it effective, while a similar proportion expressed uncertainty or neutral views. While 37.5% deemed the micro-grant program effective, a financial data analysis revealed that approximately 16% of LHF's total funding (approximately 1 million EUR) reached local actors directly

– compared to 45.3% in OCHA’s Country Based Pool Funds¹⁰. While LHF leadership argued this figure understates their localization impact – noting that staff salaries, consultancy fees, capacity development activities, and coordination centers all directly served local organizations – the statistic nonetheless raises questions about cost-effectiveness. Even accounting for these indirect support mechanisms, the high overhead ratio suggests that LHF may have inadvertently created another intermediary layer in the humanitarian ecosystem, albeit one staffed by national rather than international personnel. This tension between operational necessity and localization principles reflects the broader challenge of achieving genuine resource transfer while maintaining coordination quality.

As a capacity development tool, 37.5% rated LHF as effective, with particularly strong appreciation for peer learning approaches and first-time implementer support. The qualitative data reveals why certain approaches resonated: LHF created what one key informant called “safe spaces for mistakes,” where organizations receiving their first grants could learn without fear of losing future funding. This contrasted sharply with traditional capacity development – as another key informant acknowledged, “Standard corporate capacity development trainings were written into projects... I don’t think this was very functional, there wasn’t much participation anyway.” Instead, LHF’s effectiveness emerged through responsive, relationship-based support. The Defne Disabled Volunteers Association exemplified this approach – knowing they could call LHF staff for help with anything from accessing email to avoiding regulatory fines. Similarly, participants valued peer-to-peer learning, where established local NGOs taught newcomers humanitarian terminology (“what WASH meant, what protection meant”) in Turkish, breaking down the linguistic barriers that typically exclude grassroots actors. However, the focus group discussions revealed persistent gaps in systematic capacity development, with participants calling for more structured programs addressing organizational development and humanitarian standards beyond ad-hoc support.

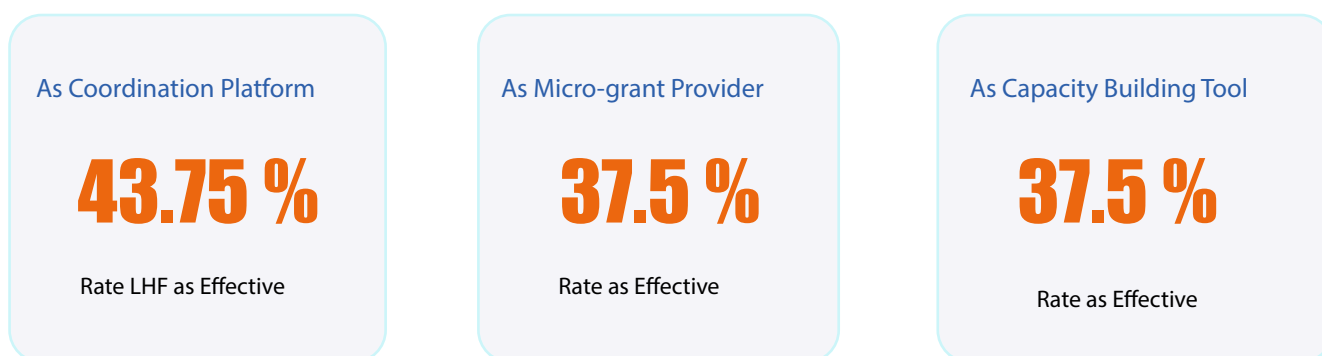


Chart 7 Survey/Overall Effectiveness Assessment

Perhaps most tellingly, when asked about sustainability – arguably the ultimate measure of effectiveness – only 25% of respondents viewed LHF’s structures as viable without continued donor funding. This sobering assessment, combined with the 43.75% who reported low or no impact on policy influence, indicates that while LHF succeeded in creating immediate coordination value and learning opportunities, it struggled to achieve the systemic transformation envisioned by its founders. As multiple stakeholders noted, LHF demonstrated that local coordination at scale was possible, but whether this possibility could translate into sustainable, system-wide change remains an open question.

10. <https://cbpf.data.unocha.org/>

Sustainability beyond current donor funding

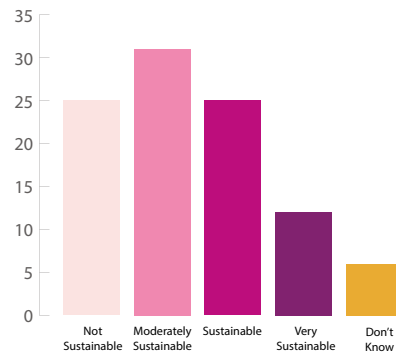


Chart 8 Survey/Sustainability and Future Directions

4. ORGANIZATIONAL and OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS OF LHF

This section examines **how LHF was organized and operated**, evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of its structures and partnerships. LHF was essentially a network forum, and its impact (as seen above) was closely tied to how it managed its internal governance and external relationships. We analyze LHF's **governance structure** (the General Forum and Executive Board, and their relationship with the Secretariat), its **partnership dynamics** with local, national, and international stakeholders, and key operational processes. Several themes emerge: **inclusive but imbalanced governance**, **adaptive yet strained operations**, and **partnership successes tempered by coordination frictions**.

4.1. Governance Structure and Internal Management

LHF's governance had multiple layers intended to balance broad participation with effective decision-making:

General Forum (General Assembly): This included *all member organizations* of LHF (eventually 64 groups). The General Forum met periodically to share updates and was meant to be the highest decision-making body (e.g. approving major directions, electing board members). In practice, however, the general membership's engagement was limited. Meetings were **large and often informational** rather than decision-oriented. Many members, especially smaller local NGOs, participated irregularly due to capacity constraints or distance. As the emergency phase waned, general meetings became infrequent – LHF planned a general assembly in late 2024 to discuss future direction, indicating a gap in regular whole-of-forum governance. Some interviewees suggested creating more **tailored participation mechanisms** to keep all members involved (such as separate discussion groups for community-based orgs, or virtual consultation processes), as one

size did not fit all. The lack of such mechanisms led to uneven participation and meant the General Forum did not fully live up to its potential in guiding LHF’s course.

Executive Board: To provide strategic oversight, LHF had a smaller Executive Board composed of representatives from a selection of member NGOs. The Board was intended to meet more frequently and make operational decisions. LHF’s board was **diverse by design**, including both well-established national NGOs and newer local organizations (and reportedly a mix of genders and thematic areas) to reflect the forum’s membership. While this diversity was positive, it also introduced challenges. Several respondents noted a disconnect between some Board members and the operational realities on the ground. Representatives from big national NGOs or those based in Ankara/Istanbul tended to focus on *conceptual discussions* about localization and policy, whereas urgent practical decisions (e.g. approving micro-grant criteria, hiring field staff) were often deferred. Conversely, truly local grassroots reps on the Board sometimes lacked the confidence or experience to contribute in high-level discussions, leading to an unintended dynamic where a few voices (often from larger NGOs) dominated. This **power imbalance on the Board** – with more experienced NGOs versus newer community groups – was identified as a problem. Moreover, **roles and responsibilities were not clearly defined**. Despite the existence of formal Terms of Reference document, the practical implementation of what decisions the Board should take versus what the Secretariat or general members should handle were often contradictory. The result was that Board engagement was sporadic and ad-hoc. One staff member observed that the “*executive board [was] disconnected from operational realities... the secretariat often made decisions independently due to lack of board input*”. This indicates that the Board did not function as effectively as intended, sometimes leaving the coordinating staff without timely guidance or support.

Survey responses reveal divergent views on LHF’s governance effectiveness. While 37.5% strongly agreed that LHF’s governance structure is transparent and inclusive, a significant 31.25% remained neutral, suggesting uncertainty about governance processes. Only 12.5% actively disagreed with governance transparency claims. Communication effectiveness showed similar patterns, with 62.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing that LHF communicates effectively, but several respondents specifically noted needs for ‘more frequent and higher quality communication’ and ‘better information about how the process works with the new board’.

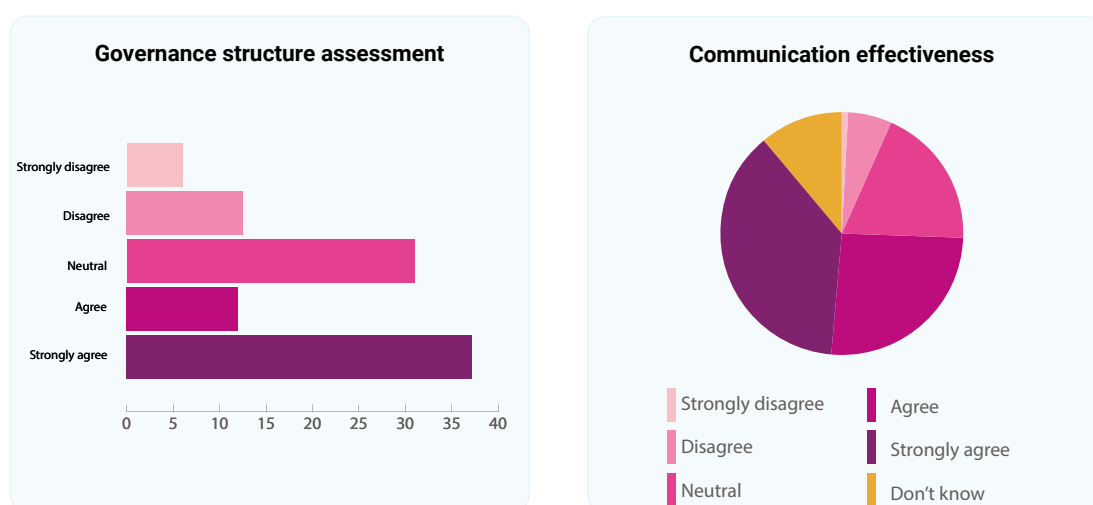


Chart 9 Survey/Governance and Transparency Analysis

Secretariat and Field Coordination Team: The daily work of LHF was carried out by a small **Secretariat**, which initially was hosted by the NGO Support to Life. The Secretariat comprised the Forum Coordinator and a handful of field coordinators stationed in different provinces (Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Malatya, Adiyaman), plus support staff for communications and grant management. In the early phase, because things had to move quickly, the Secretariat (many of whom were essentially seconded from Support to Life or hired on short contracts) took on **most operational tasks** – organizing meetings, mapping NGOs, drafting proposals, running the grant process, etc. While this was efficient for rapid rollout, it meant a concentration of knowledge and responsibilities in the Secretariat. When LHF later tried to involve Board members or general members in taking up responsibilities, it proved difficult: *“the secretariat initially handled most tasks, making it hard to later distribute responsibilities and explain roles to others”*. This highlights a **capacity and continuity issue** – LHF relied heavily on a few key staff and consultants, which is a vulnerability if those individuals leave (as happened when field coordinators’ contracts ended in late 2024). Indeed, turnover and burnout affected the team; one provincial coordinator described the work as extremely tiring (**“LHF had a tiring nature”**) especially as they themselves were earthquake-affected, and eventually resigned when her project ended.

Relationship with Host Institution: At its inception, LHF was **incubated under Support to Life** which managed the grants and administration. This was a practical choice to get started quickly, but it created a perception issue – externally, some assumed LHF was simply a STL project or platform, rather than an independent forum. Internally, STL had to navigate giving LHF autonomy while still being legally responsible for funds. Over time, **steps were taken to separate LHF’s governance** from STL: for example, LHF hired its own staff who, though on STL payroll, reported to the Forum’s Board; and discussions were held about moving LHF under a neutral organization (such as a local NGO support center) or establishing it as a standalone association. By mid-2025, LHF had its own Executive Board and identity, but the full legal independence was still in progress. STL’s support was invaluable (providing financial systems, mentorship, and credibility), yet the arrangement also underscored how **LHF lacked its own institutional infrastructure**. Finding the right balance between being hosted (for operational ease) and being autonomous (for legitimacy) was an ongoing organizational challenge.

In summary, LHF’s internal governance **succeeded in bringing diverse actors together**, but it struggled with clarity and balance. The General Forum was inclusive but not very active in governance; the Executive Board had the right idea of diversity but needed more structure and engagement to be effective; and the Secretariat was hardworking and adaptive but became a bottleneck due to limited distribution of roles. **Governance shortcomings – unclear decision-making processes and uneven participation – were identified by nearly all informants as areas needing improvement**. These issues likely hampered LHF’s effectiveness and are addressed in the recommendations.

4.2. Partnerships and External Coordination

LHF’s operational effectiveness was deeply influenced by how it interfaced with other actors in the humanitarian ecosystem. We evaluate LHF’s partnerships and relationships with local CSOs, national NGOs, international organizations (UN agencies and INGOs), and donors:

Engagement of Local and Community-Based Organizations: By design, LHF was rooted in **local CSOs**, and this was one of its strongest aspects. The Forum managed to rally a large number of local organizations across affected provinces – including many that were grassroots or volunteer-led – under a common platform. **Local CSO partnerships** were generally collaborative and mutually reinforcing. LHF’s field coordinators

spent considerable effort building trust with community groups: they visited small associations, listened to their needs, and invited them into the coordination fold. As a result, local partners saw LHF as “one of us” – a forum working with them rather than an outside initiative. This peer relationship was very different from the typical top-down partnerships local NGOs have with international NGOs or UN agencies. One local coordinator noted that LHF’s approach of treating local organizations as equals (peer learning, flexible support) was “*appreciated and empowering*” for those groups. It made them more receptive to capacity development and coordination, since they felt respected. **However**, not all local groups were equally reached. In more conservative or remote districts, some community organizations (especially faith-based or informal groups) did not engage deeply with LHF, either due to lack of awareness or differing priorities. For instance, in Malatya, it was challenging to involve certain local networks that were not accustomed to the humanitarian coordination or civil society culture. Additionally, there was an inherent tension in defining “local”: some national NGOs have local branches – should those count as local? LHF grappled with whether to include local branches of large NGOs or only independent local NGOs. This was never fully resolved and sometimes caused friction among members (with truly grassroots groups arguing they should have more voice than local offices of big national NGOs). Despite these nuances, LHF’s partnership with local CSOs was a **high point**, effectively mobilizing community-level knowledge and volunteers. It also built bridges among local groups themselves – for example, LHF connected newer volunteer initiatives with more established local NGOs for mentorship, creating “clusters” of local-local partnerships for capacity support. Such horizontal connections are rarely achieved in traditional operations and stand out as an operational success for LHF.

The survey demographics underscore LHF’s diverse membership base, with 56.25% national NGOs, 31.25% local NGOs, 6.25% international NGOs, and 6.25% other organizations. Among respondents, 31.25% were formal members, while 25% had no formal relationship but still engaged with LHF activities. This distribution reflects both LHF’s success in attracting diverse stakeholders and the challenge of formalizing relationships with all engaged parties.

Collaboration with National NGOs and Networks: LHF included **national NGOs** (based in Ankara/Istanbul) as key members, which brought both benefits and challenges. Established organizations played a crucial role in **founding and guiding LHF**. They contributed experienced staff to help run the Forum (e.g. seconding personnel, serving on the Board) and provided technical expertise that benefited smaller members. National NGOs also had resources (vehicles, offices, trainers) that they sometimes shared in LHF joint activities. This **resource pooling** improved efficiency – e.g., LHF’s trainings often involved national NGO trainers traveling to the field, something local groups alone could not have organized. On the flip side, national NGOs’ engagement waned over time. As the emergency response transitioned to recovery, large NGOs had to focus on their own programs and donor deliverables, leaving less time for voluntary coordination work in LHF. Some became frustrated with the *process-heavy nature* of the forum – for example, an NGO manager noted “*over-communication and inefficient meetings burdening larger organizations*”, where they felt too much time was spent in discussions with little actionable outcome. There was also a sense that a few national NGOs were carrying much of LHF’s weight (especially STL as host, and others on the Board), and this led to burnout. By mid-2024, a few prominent national NGOs had scaled back active involvement, which affected LHF’s operational capacity (fewer expert hands-on deck). Additionally, **linkages to broader national civil society networks** were not strongly developed. LHF remained a relatively self-contained forum and did not formally affiliate with existing Turkish NGO networks. Stronger partnership with such networks could potentially have expanded its reach and institutional support, but this was not pursued, partly because LHF was so focused on the earthquake-affected regions. In sum, national NGO partnerships were **critical in launching LHF and providing backbone support**, but maintaining their engagement required demonstrating clear value and efficient use of time – an area where LHF could have done better.

Relationship with UN Agencies and International NGOs: LHF's formation directly intersected with the international humanitarian apparatus, and thus its partnerships (or interactions) with **UN agencies and INGOs** were pivotal. Initially, in the chaotic first months of the disaster, **UN OCHA and other agencies welcomed LHF's input** because local coordination and information were weak. LHF representatives were invited to the UNCT+ and cluster meetings, marking an unprecedented inclusion of local NGOs in those spaces. LHF was also involved in OCHA's area-based coordination—local forum members co-led some working group sessions, demonstrating a cooperative partnership at field level. **However**, as the response moved from OCHA's emergency coordination to the UNHCR-led refugee coordination (3RP) structure, **tensions emerged**. International agencies had differing views on LHF: some saw it as an innovative partner bringing grassroots reach, while others saw it as an upstart forum complicating the coordination lines. A change in coordination leadership led to reduced tolerance for parallel initiatives, and certain UN officials reportedly pushed back on LHF's involvement, preferring to streamline coordination under established mechanisms. This created friction; one example was debate over funding allocations – LHF advocated for direct funding to local NGOs, which challenged traditional UN-controlled pooled funding, causing discomfort. From LHF's perspective, there were also **integration challenges**: it was difficult to secure consistent representation at every cluster and working group meeting (LHF did not always have a person available for each sector, and information flow was sometimes spotty). These incidents highlight a **mismatch in institutional cultures**: LHF's informal, adaptive style clashed at times with the UN system's formal, bureaucratic nature. Nonetheless, **pragmatic collaboration continued on the ground**. UNFPA, for instance, worked with LHF in Hatay to ensure local NGOs were involved in health outreach; UN OCHA shared 3W (Who-What-Where) data with LHF to improve local mapping. Many cluster coordinators appreciated LHF field staff who could bring local NGOs to cluster meetings and translate contexts. In summary, the partnership with international actors was **mixed**: LHF certainly made headway in inserting local voices into the international response, but it did not become a fully integrated or institutionally recognized coordination counterpart. Some INGOs and UN agencies remained lukewarm, collaborating in practice but not formally supporting the Forum's continuity. This ambivalent partnership limited LHF's influence and points to a need for clearer definition of how a local forum interfaces with the international system.

Interface with Government Authorities: Notably, LHF's model was **civil society-centric** and had limited direct engagement with Turkish government disaster management bodies (like AFAD or local governorates) during its operations. The Turkish government's approach to the earthquake response was somewhat centralized, and while authorities did coordinate with NGOs via provincial coordination meetings, LHF as such was not an official counterpart. Some LHF members individually liaised with local officials (for example, to get permission for activities or invite them to events), but there was no structured partnership between LHF and government. The one area of intersection was municipalities: through advocacy events, LHF-linked groups connected with municipal authorities and the national Union of Municipalities. This indicates potential for partnership in disaster preparedness and recovery planning at the local governance level. Overall, however, **lack of government linkage** was a gap – without government endorsement or involvement, LHF's coordination remained in the NGO realm and could be sidelined when government-led coordination (which is dominant in Türkiye) asserted itself. This is important to address in any future model, ensuring complementarity with official systems.

Donor Relations: One of the most critical partnership areas was with **donors and funding agencies**, and here LHF faced major challenges. Institutional donors (ECHO, USAID/PRM, UN funding mechanisms) were hesitant about LHF. As noted, ECHO did not fund LHF and had reservations about it operating separately from the national localization agenda. Donors observed what they perceived as **governance weaknesses** (a new, unproven entity with unclear decision-making) and **duplication risks** (parallel coordination) and thus

stayed at arm's length. There was also an element of *missed communication*: LHF leaders did not proactively engage donors early on to explain the Forum's purpose and structure. One donor representative mentioned "*at no point... was there a clear effort to make the image of the LHF clearer to us*", suggesting that outreach to donors was insufficient. The consequence was that LHF relied on short-term humanitarian grants (from private donors or specific NGO appeals) and did not gain any long-term donor "champion." This strained LHF's operations (with funding uncertainty) and also deprived it of strategic guidance donors could have provided. On a positive note, some **philanthropic and intermediary donors** did support LHF's concept financially, showing that there is willingness in the donor community to invest in localization pilots. But mainstream donors in Türkiye remained cautious. Interestingly, by late 2024 some donors did acknowledge LHF in localization discussions, but framed it as a one-off emergency mechanism. In summary, LHF's partnership with donors was **weak**, marked by mutual lack of engagement. Donors did not participate in LHF's governance (even though ECHO sat in the NRG, it had little interaction with LHF), and LHF did not succeed in aligning itself with donor localization initiatives (like the NRG or bilateral localization programs). This was a significant operational shortcoming – without strong donor partnerships, LHF lacked influence in high-level policy and a secure resource base.

Knowledge and Information Management: Though not a partnership per se, a final operational aspect worth noting is how LHF managed knowledge internally and externally. Here, LHF's performance was **less than ideal**. There was "*limited formal documentation of activities and learnings*" – for instance, meetings often went undocumented beyond brief notes, and an attempt to produce a coordination strategy document remained incomplete. The valuable insights gained by LHF field teams (e.g. local needs analysis, mapping data) were not systematically captured in reports or databases that could be shared widely. This hampered potential partnerships as well – other agencies or research initiatives could have benefited from LHF's local knowledge, but there was no clear mechanism to disseminate it. LHF did start a Malatya-specific needs assessment and local NGO mapping report, which was still in progress by mid-2025. A more robust **knowledge management** process (e.g. regular situation reports from LHF, an online platform for resources, etc.) could have raised LHF's profile and usefulness to partners, but it was not in place, likely due to limited staff capacity.

In conclusion, LHF's external relationships were a **mixed landscape**: it excelled in bonding local civil society and had constructive (if informal) collaboration with many international actors on the ground. Its birth within a national NGO also provided initial strength. However, it struggled to secure formal recognition and enduring support from major stakeholders like UN leadership, government, and donors – in part because of perceived competition or lack of clarity about its role. These partnership frictions and missed connections reduced LHF's effectiveness in the larger humanitarian system. They underscore the importance of strategic outreach and clarity of role for such a forum. Many of these issues are addressable with adjustments, as the next section on model refinement will discuss.

5. MODEL

Based on the above findings on impact and organizational performance, this section proposes a refined model for the Local Humanitarian Forum (LHF). The aim is to strengthen LHF's role in advancing localization, supporting capacity development, and enhancing advocacy, drawing on lessons learned. The recommendations below address governance reforms, operational improvements, and new initiatives. They seek to ensure LHF can be more effective, inclusive, and sustainable in the future, truly embodying best practices of localization. The focus is on practical steps, many of which were suggested by the stakeholders interviewed.

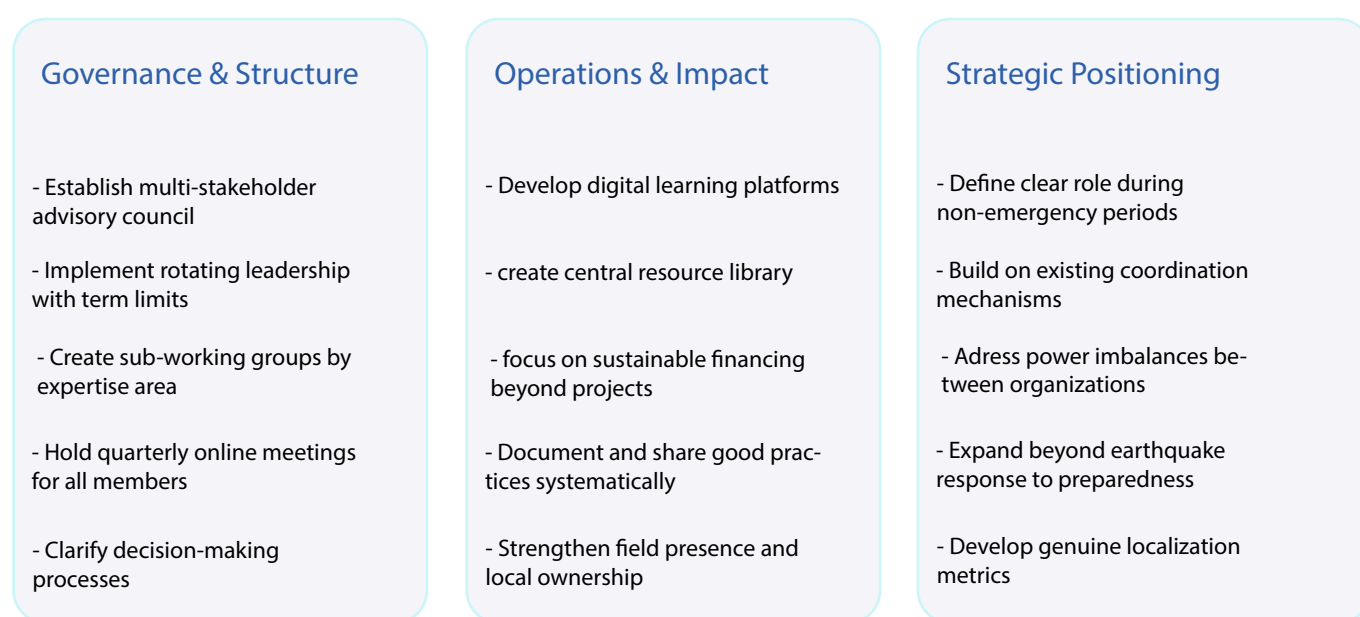


Chart 10 Survey/Synthesized Recommendations from Stakeholders

5.1. Strengthening Governance and Accountability

A clearer and more inclusive governance setup is crucial for LHF's next phase. **Recommended refinements include:**

Clarify Roles and Decision-Making: LHF should establish or strengthen the existing formal **Terms of Reference or bylaws** that clearly delineate the roles of the General Forum, Executive Board, and Secretariat. Decisions on strategic directions, budgets, partnerships, etc., should have a defined pathway of approval. For example, the Executive Board could be mandated to make operational decisions within an approved annual plan, while the General Forum convenes quarterly or semi-annually to set broad strategy and hold the Board accountable. This clarity will prevent the ad-hoc decision-making of the past. As one interviewee advised, LHF must “reassess [its] governance structure and decision-making processes” and “clarify roles between board and secretariat” to eliminate confusion. Documenting these processes will also improve transparency for outsiders (e.g. donors).

Revitalize the General Forum: The broad membership should be more than a mailing list – it can be leveraged for legitimacy and collective intelligence. LHF should implement **engagement mechanisms to activate all members**. One idea is to create thematic or regional working groups that members can join according to interest (e.g. a working group on shelter, or one for each province) – these groups can feed into Forum meetings with specific inputs, making participation more meaningful for members of different sizes and focus areas. Another idea is a two-tier membership: active core members with voting rights and a wider affiliate network that receives information and can opt in when relevant. Importantly, *tailored participation for different sized organizations* is needed. Larger NGOs could have a different track (focusing on strategic advocacy), while smaller NGOs have a track focusing on operational capacity-building – their contributions then come together in General Forum decisions. The goal is to avoid both the overburdening of big NGOs and the sidelining of small ones. Ensuring **active participation from all members, not just a few key organizations**, is a priority. LHF might consider setting minimum participation expectations (e.g. attend X meetings or contribute to Y activities to maintain voting status) to reduce social loafing. At the same time, celebrate and showcase contributions of members to incentivize engagement (e.g. a monthly spotlight on a member's work shared with the network).

Diversify and Empower the Executive Board: To address the disconnect issues, the Executive Board's composition and functioning should be adjusted. The Board should continue to include a mix of national and local representatives, but with **measures to balance power dynamics**. For instance, a quota or minimum number of seats could be reserved for truly local (community-based) organizations so they are not outnumbered by larger NGOs. Mentorship can be provided to those local reps to build their confidence in governance roles. Rotating board seats more frequently (e.g. annually) can also give more members a chance to serve and contribute perspectives. The Board should receive **induction training** on governance, localization principles, and their own role, so that all members (regardless of background) have a shared understanding of the mission. Emphasis must be on moving beyond conceptual debates to actionable guidance for the Secretariat. As one national NGO staff recommended, establishing **clearer governance and responsibility structures will avoid overburdening key individuals** and ensure the Board actually shares the load. A practical tip from interviewees was to create a small Executive Committee within the Board (e.g. Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer) that meets more regularly with the Secretariat to make timely decisions, while the full Board convenes less often for oversight – this keeps things nimble but accountable.

Accountability and Feedback Loops: LHF should institute stronger **accountability mechanisms internally**. This could include: requiring the Executive Board to report to the General Forum regularly (e.g. presenting progress and financial updates at each assembly); conducting annual surveys of member satisfaction and incorporating the feedback; and even having independent reviews or observers for key decisions (for instance, if a contentious issue arises, an agreed neutral party could facilitate). Several informants stressed that active participation and buy-in comes when members feel their input matters and see follow-up. Therefore, creating formal channels for members to raise concerns or suggestions to the Board (and receive responses) is important – e.g. a simple online forum or suggestion box system. Additionally, accountability to affected communities – while indirect since LHF is a coordination body – can be enhanced by having members share community feedback within LHF meetings, ensuring the forum stays grounded in actual needs on the ground.

By implementing these governance refinements, LHF's internal management will become **more democratic, transparent, and effective**, positioning it as a credible vehicle for localization that stakeholders can trust.

5.2. Enhancing Operational Effectiveness and Sustainability

To make LHF's operations more efficient and enduring, several improvements are proposed:

Strategic Focus and Scope: LHF needs to clarify its core **purpose and scope of work** going forward. Is it primarily a disaster response forum or a permanent national localization platform (or both)? Initially, LHF was very much an earthquake response mechanism, but as things normalize, it faces the choice of winding down versus transforming into a long-term forum for humanitarian localization in Türkiye. Many interviewees suggested that LHF consider focusing its mandate. One option: **focus on disaster preparedness and response**, leveraging the network built (for example, be ready to activate local coordination in future emergencies such as a potential Istanbul earthquake). This would entail maintaining light coordination infrastructure in key regions, mapping local actors in high-risk areas, and developing contingency plans with local stakeholders. Another option (not mutually exclusive) is to broaden into a **national civil society humanitarian forum** that works on policy advocacy, localization monitoring, and capacity development even outside of active disasters. This would align LHF with the ongoing localization movement and fill a gap in Türkiye's humanitarian architecture. However, trying to do everything could overstretch the forum. During the evaluation, a former coordinator noted the ambiguity and advised to "consider focus: disaster response vs. national-level work" and plan accordingly. In refining the model, LHF should define a **clear mission statement** – whether it is "to strengthen local preparedness and response in emergencies" or "to serve as the collective voice of local humanitarian actors in Türkiye year-round," etc., and then align its activities to that focus. This clarity will also help in communicating with partners and donors (e.g. ECHO indicated they weren't clear if LHF was a short-term quake initiative or part of the national localization agenda).

Institutionalization and Legal Status: To ensure continuity, LHF should move toward a more **institutionalized structure**. This could mean formally registering as an association or foundation under Turkish law, or finding a stable host arrangement with a local institution that gives it a distinct identity (some suggested perhaps under a university or municipal body for neutrality). Institutionalization will address donor concerns about who is accountable. It also allows LHF to set up enduring administrative systems (its own bank account, HR policies, etc.) rather than ad-hoc solutions. One UN informant recommended "strengthening [LHF's] institutionalization and clearly defining scope and boundaries", noting that much confusion came from it being a loosely defined project. By having a clear legal form and governance, LHF can present itself as a professional entity to external stakeholders. Care should be taken to maintain the flexibility and local character even as it formalizes – e.g., **keeping the leadership local** (the majority of board members should always be local NGO reps) and possibly writing into the statutes principles of localization and power-sharing to guide future leaders.

Strengthen the Secretariat/Team Capacity: LHF's Secretariat will need bolstering in both size and skillset for the refined model. A **small core team of experienced staff** should be in place to manage day-to-day operations and support members. This might include: a Forum Director/Coordinator, a Communications & Outreach Officer, a Capacity-Building/Training Coordinator, and a Monitoring & Evaluation Officer – supported by administrative staff. In addition, **field focal points** in key regions (like the earthquake-affected provinces or major refugee-hosting areas) should be maintained as long as needed. Several stakeholders emphasized that LHF needs to "*build a stronger, more experienced team capable of effectively engaging with established coordination systems*". Recruitment should consider individuals who have a foot in both worlds – understanding local civil society AND the international humanitarian system – to act as translators and bridge-builders. Continued secondments from supportive NGOs or co-hosting staff with UN agencies (if possible) could be a way to infuse expertise. Importantly, team members should include those from diverse

local backgrounds (not all Ankara/Gaziantep-based) to ensure regional contexts are understood. Investing in the team's skills (**through training**) – especially in coordination, advocacy, and donor liaison – will pay off in LHF's effectiveness. A more robust secretariat can also take on tasks like systematic data collection and analysis, which were lacking before.

Improved Communication and Outreach: As learned, one of LHF's pitfalls was insufficient or unclear communication externally. The refined model should incorporate a **proactive communications strategy**. This means: regularly disseminating brief updates or situation reports about LHF activities and local response progress to all stakeholders (members, government, UN, donors); developing concise info packages explaining LHF's mission, structure, and achievements to date (to hand to any interested agency or donor); and using online platforms (website, social media) to raise visibility. Internally, too, communication tools can be improved – e.g., establishing an email newsletter or WhatsApp groups segmented by topic to reduce noise and target information better to members. One UN partner pointed out LHF *“struggled to effectively communicate its purpose and establish clear boundaries for involvement”* – to fix this, LHF should articulate its value-add in complementary terms (e.g. “LHF is the forum that brings local solutions to complement the national system”) and **consistently message that to partners**. A dedicated communications focal point in the team (or a member committee) could manage these tasks. Clarity in communication will also help shed the “disruptive” label and instead brand LHF as a **constructive, solutions-oriented player**.

Formalize Partnerships with Key Stakeholders: The new model should aim for formal **partnership agreements or Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)** with important actors: for example, an MoU with the national Red Crescent or AFAD (to cooperate on local capacity development), or a standing invitation for LHF to have a seat in national coordination forums (UNCT+ or NRG). LHF should also proactively engage the Government of Türkiye on localization – perhaps offering itself as a liaison that can mobilize local NGOs in support of government-led efforts (which would allay any suspicions of parallelism). On the international side, LHF can seek to sign on to consortium projects with UN/INGOs as an implementing partner for localization components. Many informants recommended moving *“beyond a defensive posture and proactively engaging in system change”* – in practice, this means rather than seeing UN/INGOs as competitors, LHF should partner with them to pilot innovative approaches (like co-leading clusters with local NGOs, managing a small grant window in a UN program, etc.). To do so, the refined LHF should present concrete collaboration proposals. For instance, approach OCHA or UNDP to jointly develop a **localization action plan for Türkiye**, where LHF coordinates local input. Or partner with donors like ECHO/GIZ in their localization projects as a local network implementing arm. Essentially, **institutionalize LHF's role in existing structures** so it is not ad-hoc. This will both secure resources and embed LHF in the ecosystem's fabric.

Sustainable Financing Mechanisms: A critical component of the refined model is ensuring sustainable funding to carry out LHF's mission and to fund local actors. Several stakeholders – including LHF's founders – envision establishing **locally-led funding mechanisms** as part of LHF's evolution. One idea is developing a **pooled fund managed by local actors**, distinct from (but perhaps complementing) the UN's Country-Based Pooled Fund. This could take the shape of a Turkish Localization Fund where international donors, private sector, and government can contribute, and an LHF-led committee allocates grants to local NGOs. The inception report notes exploring *“innovative approaches to simplify due diligence processes and encourage risk-taking in local funding”*, which suggests using tailored, trust-based grantmaking that large donors struggle with. In the interim, LHF should broaden its donor base: engage non-traditional donors like Turkish philanthropies, local businesses, and impact investors. In fact, LHF's leadership has considered tapping into *“impact investment”* approaches for long-term local funding. Having private-sector partners could create multi-year funding streams for capacity development or preparedness projects led by LHF. The refined model must include a **fundraising strategy** that highlights LHF's unique value (supporting local

first responders) and seeks at least 3-year commitments. Diversification is key – combining international aid funds, domestic sources, and member contributions (if viable). A more secure financial base will allow LHF to maintain continuity of staff and programs, directly addressing the sustainability weakness identified earlier.

Programmatic Improvements – Training, Mentorship, Documentation: On the program side, LHF can refine how it supports capacity and captures knowledge. First, institute a **continuous capacity development program** for members: for example, a structured mentorship program pairing established NGOs with smaller local ones (a suggestion was to create “clusters” of national-local NGO pairs for capacity development); and a training calendar developed based on a needs assessment of members (covering topics like humanitarian standards, proposal writing, financial management, etc.). This responds to the ongoing need for localization to be accompanied by capability strengthening. Second, plan for **handover and localization of leadership**. If LHF’s initial phase was externally funded and staffed, the next phase should consciously groom local leaders to take over. An **exit strategy** can be formulated: e.g., over the next 2 years, transition field coordinator roles to local NGO networks or government counterparts, so LHF becomes more of a facilitator than an implementer by end of that period. This ensures sustainability – the forum can continue even if specific project funding ends, because local institutions will carry elements forward. Finally, greatly improve **documentation and knowledge management**. The refined LHF should produce periodic “*Lessons Learned*” reports, case studies of local response, and perhaps an annual localization progress report for Türkiye. One immediate action from the evaluation is to “*document and share LHF’s experiences and learnings as a case study for localization efforts*” – this should be an ongoing practice, not a one-time output. By capturing knowledge, LHF contributes to global learning and also legitimizes its work through evidence and published results. It might be worthwhile to partner with academic institutions to help with monitoring and documentation (e.g. a university could analyze the social impact of LHF’s model over time).

5.3. Reinforcing Advocacy and Localization Agenda

Advocacy is a core pillar for LHF given its mandate to promote localization. To refine this aspect:

Develop a Clear Localization Advocacy Strategy: LHF should articulate what specific changes it wants to see in the system (nationally and internationally) and strategize how to achieve them. This could include objectives like: increasing direct funding to local NGOs (by X% by year Y), mandating local co-leads in all cluster sectors, or getting government policy recognition of local NGOs in disaster law. An advocacy working group within LHF can map stakeholders and craft messages. For example, one recommendation from members is to “*advocate for civil society’s role beyond just service delivery – to include decision-making and oversight*” in humanitarian action. This can translate into advocacy talking points that LHF representatives push in meetings with UN and government. LHF can also join forces with international localization campaigns (e.g. Charter for Change, Grand Bargain Localization Workstream) to amplify its voice.

Communicate Localization in Practical Terms: The evaluation found that the **concept of “localization” was often poorly understood or variously interpreted** by different actors – some reduced it to just cost-efficiency or having local staff, missing the empowerment aspect. LHF should therefore champion a clear, contextually relevant definition of localization in Türkiye. Through workshops and materials, it can explain what genuine localization entails (e.g. local leadership in decision-making, equitable partnerships, addressing power imbalances) and how LHF’s model exemplifies it. By educating its own members and partners on this, LHF ensures everyone is on the same page and prevents dilution of the concept. As one former coordinator noted, “*localization remains a poorly understood concept in the sector... often reduced to cost-saving rather than*

true local empowerment”, so LHF must guard against that. Consistently **articulating the vision of localization** – and backing it with stories of success from LHF’s work – will strengthen the Forum’s thought leadership role.

Focus Advocacy on Systemic Change: Beyond immediate response issues, LHF should use its platform to advocate for longer-term **system changes that enable localization**. This includes lobbying for **funding reforms** (e.g. simpler grant processes for local NGOs, more overhead cost coverage for them, multi-year support) and **coordination policy changes** (e.g. official inclusion of local NGO reps in national disaster management committees, or changes in the UN coordination guidelines to mandate local seats). LHF can prepare policy briefs or recommendations and seek meetings with key decision-makers (government ministries, UNCT+, donor embassies) to present them. Already, members have flagged issues like the need for *tailored engagement for different sized organizations* and not overburdening a few individuals – these operational lessons can be turned into policy advocacy points, such as recommending that all consortium projects in Türkiye include a capacity-sharing plan for smaller actors. Also, pushing for **local NGO-led pooled funds** or co-management of funds can be a big advocacy item – aligning with global Grand Bargain localization commitments.

Elevate Local Voices in Global Arenas: A refined LHF model could aim to connect local Turkish CSOs to **global humanitarian forums**. For instance, facilitating the participation of local members in international conferences (like the Humanitarian Networks and Partnerships Week, or ICVA meetings) to share their experiences. This not only empowers local actors but also builds LHF’s credibility externally. By documenting and sharing its model, LHF contributes knowledge globally. As one next step, LHF considered preparing a case study for the Global Localization Conference – this should be done and widely circulated. LHF can seek out alliances with similar local forums in other countries (South-to-South exchange), creating a network of local humanitarian forums that support each other. Being outward-looking in this way strengthens LHF’s own capacity (through learning) and positions it as part of a larger movement, which can attract support.

Embed Localization in National Disaster Planning: Finally, LHF should work to institutionalize localization in **Türkiye’s domestic disaster management structures**. For example, advocating that local NGO forums be included in provincial disaster coordination councils, or that the national disaster response plan explicitly references coordination with civil society forums. If LHF can pilot successful collaboration with a few provincial authorities in preparedness drills or small responses (floods, etc.), it can showcase the value of local actor integration to the government. The refined model thus should include outreach to government emergency bodies, offering LHF’s network as an asset. Over time, this could lead to formal roles for LHF or its member networks in official response mechanisms, which is the ultimate goal of localization (not parallel, but embedded local leadership).

In summary, the refined LHF model centres on **robust governance, sustainable operations, and a forward-looking advocacy and capacity-building agenda**. Table 1 summarizes key recommendations:

- Governance: Clear TORs; active member engagement structures; balanced, accountable Board; feedback mechanisms.
- Operations: Defined focus (emergency vs. permanent forum); legal institutionalization; stronger skilled Secretariat; improved communications; formal MoUs with UN/government; sustainable financing (localization fund).
- Programs: Ongoing training & mentorship for members; documentation & M&E framework; local leadership transition plan.

- **Advocacy:** Explicit localization strategy; educate stakeholders on true localization; push for funding/coordination policy changes; link local actors to global forums; integrate with government systems.

These refinements directly address the weaknesses identified and build on the strengths. Several interviewees expressed optimism that with such changes, *“LHF’s future could benefit from clearer focus... better documentation, and gradual handover to local partners”*, enabling it to fulfill its role as a vanguard of localization. The next section will situate these proposed developments in the broader literature and practice of localization, to ensure coherence with global lessons.

6. KNOWLEDGE INTEGRATION

The experience of the Local Humanitarian Forum in Türkiye offers rich insights that resonate with – and add to – the global and national conversations on localization in humanitarian aid. In this section, we integrate LHF’s working methods and achievements with the wider body of knowledge on localization, highlighting consistencies with best practices and noting where LHF’s model provides novel lessons. This analysis is important for situating LHF as not just a one-off initiative, but as part of a continuum of efforts worldwide to reform humanitarian action through the leadership of local actors.

6.1. Alignment with Global Localization Principles and Best Practices

LHF’s approach and challenges closely mirror many themes in global localization initiatives (such as the Grand Bargain commitments, Charter for Change, and other country-level localization pilots):

Local Leadership in Coordination: A core principle in the localization discourse is that local organizations should have a seat at decision-making tables in humanitarian response. LHF achieved exactly that by securing local NGO representation in coordination forums (UNCT+, clusters). This is in line with best practices observed elsewhere – for example, in some contexts local NGO networks have co-led clusters or had permanent seats in national coordination bodies. Türkiye’s case prior to LHF had been behind on this aspect; as one donor noted, *“we had advocated for co-leadership of clusters by locals from the very beginning”*. LHF operationalized that advocacy, thereby setting a precedent consistent with global goals. Local organizations were already active in the 3RP coordination prior to the earthquake response, but LHF managed to further build on this by institutionalizing a more structured approach to local actors co-leading in cluster coordination mechanisms.

Pooling and Mapping Local Capacity: LHF’s quick mapping and convening of 60-80 diverse local organizations aligns with the widely recommended practice of **mapping local responders before or during a crisis** to mobilize their capacities. Humanitarian literature often cites the importance of knowing who the local actors are and what they bring; LHF did this systematically in each province (creating local CSO databases, service maps, etc.). Additionally, LHF acted as a **coordination forum of local NGOs**, which is comparable to other national NGO forums globally. The value of such forums – as seen in places like Bangladesh, Indonesia, or Nepal – is well documented: they serve as collective platforms for advocacy and

capacity exchange. LHF's experience reinforced that value in the Turkish context, demonstrating that local NGOs, when organized, can substantially contribute to and even manage coordination. This affirms best practice and adds evidence that investing in local coalitions yields dividends in response quality.

Micro-Grants and Flexible Funding: One of LHF's innovations was providing accessible, flexible micro-grants to local groups with minimal bureaucracy. This approach is a concrete example of the localization of funding, echoing calls in global fora for more direct funding to local actors and simpler grant processes. The positive feedback from local NGOs about LHF's micro-grants – citing ease of use and responsiveness – provides a **practical model** that could inform global funding mechanisms. It shows that **trust-based small grantmaking** can empower local actors quickly in crises, a point often made in localization advocacy but seldom implemented by large donors. LHF essentially piloted a mini “pooled fund” on a very local level. The knowledge gained (e.g. how to set criteria with local context in mind, how to support applicants through the process) can be valuable for others designing localized funding streams.

Capacity Exchange and Mentorship: LHF's capacity development efforts reflect the common best practice that localization must come with **investment in local capacities**. The mixed results (some trainings effective, others less so) underscore lessons known in literature: trainings work best when **tailored to local context and needs**, and when coupled with follow-up mentoring. LHF's plan to pair national and local NGOs in clusters for mutual learning resonates with approaches like “twinning” used in other countries' localization programs. Thus, LHF's experiences can reinforce to the global community that building local capacity is not one-size-fits-all – it requires understanding local contexts (as LHF coordinators did by adjusting trainings per province) and ongoing mentorship support rather than one-off workshops.

Local Hubs and Networks: The establishment of a local coordination hub in Hatay is reminiscent of the “local humanitarian hubs” concept discussed in some international circles for improving local access to coordination infrastructure. It illustrated that providing **physical space and resources for local civil society** can greatly enhance their collaboration and engagement. Global best practice highlights the importance of such enabling environments – in essence, LHF created a prototype. The fact that the Hatay hub became self-sustaining to an extent (local NGOs kept using it) is a promising practice: it suggests that when locals are given a resource that meets their needs (space, connectivity, convening venue), they will take ownership. This finding could inform future humanitarian responses – e.g., donors or cluster leads might prioritize setting up local NGO centers in response areas as part of localization commitments.

Bridging Humanitarian and Civil Society Sectors: LHF found itself navigating between the formal international humanitarian system and the domestic civil society sphere. One key insight was the **tension between humanitarian and civil society approaches** – a tension that also appears in localization dialogues globally (humanitarian actors sometimes operate in silo from broader civil society, which can limit community engagement). LHF tried to bridge this by involving non-traditional actors (like development NGOs, advocacy groups) in the humanitarian response. This aligns with the nexus approach (connecting humanitarian, development, and civil society efforts) in best practice. LHF's struggle to reconcile different “languages” and approaches (some board members were more civil society-minded vs. field staff more humanitarian-minded) exemplifies a known challenge: localization is not just operational but also cultural. The global literature suggests sensitizing international humanitarians to local civil society perspectives and vice versa – LHF's experience underscores this need. It shows that local actors often wear multiple hats (humanitarian, development, rights advocacy), and a successful localization model should integrate those facets. This lesson can be generalized to encourage humanitarian coordination structures worldwide to be more flexible and inclusive of various civil society actors, not only traditional emergency responders.

Challenges Echo Global Issues: Many challenges LHF faced echo those documented in other contexts: reluctance of donors to channel funds to a new local entity due to fiduciary risk concerns (as seen in many countries); international actors fearing duplication or losing control (a common political dynamic); and the difficulty of measuring localization progress. The **lack of a clear value proposition for institutional donors** that LHF encountered is a point often raised in global discussions – local initiatives must articulate their impact to convince donors. LHF's outcome that donors stayed away is a cautionary tale consistent with global experiences where localization platforms remain under-funded. It reinforces the lesson that **early and transparent engagement with donors** is vital (something LHF did not do well). Additionally, the concept of LHF being viewed as “disruptive” highlights a broader knowledge point: localization efforts can be perceived as threatening by established actors, which must be managed through careful change management and demonstrating complementarity.

In all, LHF's model largely conforms to what one would expect if global localization principles are applied in a crisis: **local actors organized, included in coordination, given some funding and capacity support, and gradually asserting influence**. The positive outcomes and stumbling blocks from LHF therefore serve as a microcosm of the localization journey – offering evidence that supports many advocacy points (e.g., inclusion works and improves response) and providing learning on how to navigate typical obstacles.

6.2. Contributions to Localization Literature and Future Research

LHF's experience also adds **unique contributions to the localization literature**, particularly given Türkiye's specific context (an upper-middle-income country with strong government but complex civil society dynamics). Some notable contributions and areas for further reflection include:

Localization in a Middle-Income, Government-Led Context: Much localization discourse has centered on low-income or fragile states. Türkiye presents a scenario with a capable government that historically was cautious about external aid. LHF had to localize within a context of strong state oversight and national pride. This adds nuance: localization efforts in such contexts might need a different approach (focusing on civil society's complementary role rather than replacing state functions). LHF's collaboration (or lack thereof) with government provides a case to examine how local NGO forums can interface with state systems. The fact that Türkiye accepted a UN Flash Appeal for this disaster was unusual; LHF's emergence alongside that is a case study in how localization initiatives can spring up when international aid suddenly scales in a context that normally limits it. This is valuable knowledge – it shows that even in middle-income countries, there may be latent demand for local coordination structures when a major crisis hits.

LHF vs. National Localization Structures (LAG, NRG): The relationship (or gap) between LHF and the pre-existing national localization structures (the Localization Advocacy Group and National Reference Group) is instructive. LHF was not a direct continuation of those, which led to some duplication and missed synergy. This scenario can teach future practitioners that **connecting new local response initiatives with ongoing localization policy groups is critical**. If another crisis occurs elsewhere, ensuring that any local NGO forum that forms is tied into national policy dialogues could yield better coherence. LHF's case, as noted by a key informant, was a “missed opportunity to use [the] NRG as a bridge between LHF and global initiatives”. Publishing this finding can warn others to avoid siloing emergency localization efforts from long-term localization reforms. It highlights the importance of **multi-level linkages**: localization needs to happen at local, national, and global levels in concert.

The “Disruptive Change” Narrative: LHF was characterized by some as a disruptive force in the humanitarian system. This raises an interesting debate: should localization be pursued as an incremental change working within existing structures, or as a disruptive overhaul driven by impatience with the status quo? LHF leaned toward the latter initially (being formed by activists frustrated with exclusion). The outcome suggests that a balance is needed – too much framing as “radical change” may alienate potential allies, yet a bold push is sometimes necessary to jolt the system. This is a fine line that localization literature grapples with. LHF’s experience can contribute to this debate by illustrating consequences: its disruptive stance gave it energy and moral clarity, but it also isolated it from some power holders early on. The lesson for localization advocates globally might be to **frame localization initiatives in a way that challenges the system but also invites collaboration** rather than confrontation. LHF’s trajectory—starting outside and later seeking to integrate—could be examined in academic case studies on change management in humanitarian institutions.

Need for Evidence and Measurement: LHF underscores a common gap in localization efforts: robust **monitoring and evaluation of localization outcomes**. Globally, there is still a lack of quantitative data on how localization improves effectiveness. LHF unfortunately did not break this pattern – it relied on anecdotal evidence and did not set up a monitoring system. The literature calls for better metrics (e.g. % of funding to locals, # of decisions influenced by locals, etc.). LHF’s post-hoc impact analysis (this very study) will hopefully produce some data to share. Going forward, including LHF as a case in comparative research could enrich the evidence base. For example, comparing LHF’s outcomes with those of other localized response mechanisms (like those in Bangladesh or the Pacific) could yield insights on what factors lead to greater success. LHF’s mixed results—strong on inclusion, weak on funding shift—provide a nuanced case that can deepen understanding beyond binary success/failure views of localization.

Context-Specific Localization Models: One of LHF’s forward-looking aims is to create a *“Turkish context-specific model of locally-led humanitarian coordination”*. This highlights that localization is not one-size-fits-all; it must adapt to each context’s realities. The knowledge from LHF will directly inform what a Türkiye-specific model might look like: perhaps a hybrid that involves government, utilizes Türkiye’s relatively strong local government units, and ties into its disaster management system while still empowering NGOs. If LHF refines this model, it could become a reference for other middle-income countries or those with similar governance setups. Documenting this model development process will contribute to global literature by expanding the typology of localization models. It’s a reminder that **localization must be localized** – a point increasingly acknowledged in global discussions. LHF can serve as a detailed case of how one country crafted its own version of a local humanitarian forum.

Sharing LHF’s Story: Lastly, integrating LHF’s experience into global knowledge means active knowledge sharing. There is an expressed intent to *“better document and share LHF’s experiences as a case study for localization efforts”*. Doing so will let others learn from Türkiye’s journey. Already, interest has been shown by global networks; for instance, LHF could be presented in webinars or conferences on localization, and its key informants could engage with peers from other countries. Such exchange would enrich both sides. LHF’s evaluation report (this report) is itself a knowledge product that should be disseminated widely, closing the feedback loop between practice and theory.

In conclusion, the Local Humanitarian Forum’s story is a **valuable piece of the larger localization puzzle**. It confirms many known best practices (e.g. the importance of local inclusion and flexible funding) and also highlights ongoing challenges (governance, donor engagement) that the humanitarian sector must continue to address. By situating LHF in the broader literature, we see that it was not an isolated experiment but part of a global movement striving to **shift power to local hands**. The lessons from LHF – both its accomplishments and its difficulties – will be instrumental for humanitarian policymakers, donors, and civil society leaders in Türkiye and beyond who aim to push the localization agenda from rhetoric to reality.

7. CONCLUSION

The Local Humanitarian Forum in Türkiye represents a bold and instructive attempt at reimagining humanitarian coordination and impact through localization. **From the rubble of the 2023 earthquakes, LHF emerged as a catalyst for local empowerment**, enabling scores of Turkish civil society groups to organize, collaborate, and influence a large-scale humanitarian response in unprecedented ways. This evaluation has shown that LHF's contributions – greater local participation in decision-making, direct support to grassroots initiatives, improved information-sharing, and advocacy for equitable partnerships – have left a tangible mark on the humanitarian ecosystem in Türkiye. Equally, it has illuminated the growing pains and hurdles of this journey: internal growing pains of defining governance and sustaining engagement, and external friction in aligning with established systems and securing long-term support.

Yet, rather than viewing these challenges as setbacks, they are **valuable lessons feeding a process of growth and refinement**. LHF stands today at a crossroads familiar to many pioneering localization efforts – the point where it must evolve from an emergency-born coalition into a durable, institutionalized forum that continues to champion localization in the long run. The recommendations outlined in this report chart a path forward: one that fortifies LHF's structure, deepens its partnerships (especially with government and donors), and sharpens its focus and strategy to ensure it can deliver on its promise. Implementing these changes will position LHF to be an even stronger driver of **localization, capacity development, and advocacy** in the coming years.

For the humanitarian and local civil society community globally, the experience of LHF reinforces a fundamental message: **local actors are not only first responders, but can also be architects of the response**. With appropriate support and inclusion, forums like LHF can transform the way aid is coordinated – making it more locally informed, culturally competent, and sustainable. It also reminds us that localization is a continuous process of negotiation and adaptation; it challenges power dynamics and thus requires persistence and innovation to overcome resistance. The Türkiye case adds to the evidence that localization yields benefits (greater access, trust, and relevance), while also cautioning that success depends on clarity of roles and genuine commitment from all sides – local, national, and international.

As Türkiye's Local Humanitarian Forum moves into its next phase, it does so not in isolation but as part of a worldwide movement. Its progress will undoubtedly contribute to and draw from the broader localization literature and practice. **The target audience of humanitarian and civil society organizations in Türkiye and around the globe can draw several key takeaways from LHF's story:**

- Building local coalitions like LHF is feasible and fruitful, even amid a major crisis, but they must be anchored in strong governance and clear value propositions to endure.
- True localization goes beyond token inclusion – it involves rethinking systems and investing in local capacities and leadership, which LHF began to do and plans to expand.
- Challenges encountered (e.g. hesitance of donors, coordination complexities) are not indictments of localization, but issues to proactively address through better design and communication, as this report has recommended.
- Perhaps most importantly, **localization is a shared responsibility**. The LHF experience calls on international actors to support and trust local initiatives, on national actors to open space for collective

local voice, and on local organizations to organize and uphold accountability – only with all sides working in concert can the paradigm truly shift.

In closing, the Local Humanitarian Forum has been both a product of and a contributor to the localization movement. Its **social impact** – in empowering local civil society and influencing the humanitarian response in Türkiye – is evident, and with the refinements proposed, its future impact can be even greater. As it integrates its knowledge into the global body of practice, LHF stands as a case study of “localization in action” – one that will inform ongoing efforts to make humanitarian aid more effective, inclusive, and just. The journey of LHF confirms that when crises strike, those closest to the impacted communities are not only vital responders but can lead and shape the aid that flows to their people. Supporting that leadership is not just an altruistic ideal; as we have seen, it is a practical path to better outcomes for all. The humanitarian sector would do well to heed these lessons and continue to invest in forums like LHF that bring local actors to the forefront.



Local Humanitarian Forum



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