



## Written Testimony

Locally led aid works if the international agencies and donors fundamentally change the way they act and think while adopting the idea of giving space to the local led initiatives, this means local communities set their own priorities and approaches hence the INGOs can provide technical back up on the know-how and technical expertise. It could be locally owned where INGOs starts an an outside but they hand over the implementation to local NGOs / groups to create a sense of ownership but unfortunately what we normally see is aid that is locally delivered where INGOs get the funds and then sub-contracts a national NGO to do part of the project which are called partnership agreement while actually it's a delivery contract approach which shouldn't be the case.

Locally led initiatives could be effective and cost efficient for instance in Somalia, Save the Children (SCI) through its member SC Norway had piloted a COVID-19 response project where SCI had sent a call for concept note for 3 national NGOs that it works with in Somalia and GREDO, the organization I work for happened to have won the call application and awarded the pilot project. This pilot project [“Promoting and Supporting Observance of Covid-19 preventive Protocols Among Community Members in Somalia’s Baidoa IDP Site in the Wake of Covid-19 Pandemic”](#) was implemented at two main IDP settlements (Hanno II and Salaamey Idaale) in Baidoa main town, SWS Somalia.

### **Achievement**

- ***A total number of 103,565 individuals had been benefitted this pilot project over a period of 3 months.***

### **Localized Response**

The project is **absolutely owned by GREDO** with the whole project concept design being developed by GREDO which has a strong understanding of the context and the people it serves too. This project is **designed to the best means that the community** can be sensitized with more localized awareness raising approaches is best works within the community, often other projects are partially or fully designed by partners and at times they design of those projects might not 100% work in Somalia context at some points which then forces GREDO as an implementing partner to readjust in delivering those projects

### **Added Value from This Project**

- It created pride within GREDO for the sense of delivering a solely developed project in Baidoa.
- Strengthens Aid localization and this is the best means to boost localization within Somalia.
- Contextualized approach in delivering project among the community.
- Created sense of owner within the community especially the engagement of various community groups from Youth, religious figures and community elders in Baidoa.
- Slightly contributed to partner capacity building which is helped in areas of GREDO capacity gaps that is been address through the partner support in this small grant.
- Gender empowerment through the youth group selection of 40 female and 40 male boosted the engagement of young girls in wider community awareness raising of COVID-19

## **Lessons Learnt**

- Local engagement is crucial in responding to such pandemic scenario like COVID-19 to local structures to disseminate systemic awareness raising among IDPs and host community.
- Local organizations are the first to respond to humanitarian crisis, emphasizing on the importance of strengthening capacity, position and leadership of local organizations is key of localized response
- Training the youth and engaging with the local elders and religious leader showed great impact on the people's acceptance and behavioral change.
- Engaging with the Communities at the implementation of the project show their commitment is fundamental to control the outbreak and at level of project ownership.
- Mobilize media players, including social media networks and radio station continued to be a successful way of disease spread control.
- Given the experience of responding to previous outbreaks in Somalia like cholera, it is imperative that communities must be engaged accountable to the response to COVID-19.
- Health actors and authorities must co-construct solutions to address COVID-19 with community leaders and communities.
- Each community is unique, and engagement must be contextualized to affected communities of each country. This engagement of cooperation with communities calls for an urgent change in the approach to health emergency response.

To be effective; locally led aid should be part of the bigger picture and to achieve this; you need context specific knowledge and local people on the ground willing to take leadership and risk and in this scenario what we really need is to rethink what partnership really means in the current content of aid structure. It shouldn't be only be or limited to outsourcing and subcontracting NNGOs for delivery of projects in their respective country and in this case Somalia. It should be basis of local knowledge, initiatives / new ideas and commitment to better future. Donors / INGOs should get smarter on how they help local NNGOs/groups to scale up.

True partnership should be based on respect, trust and humility, locally led aid and true partnership with INGOs will increase the appropriateness, establishing more connection to the locally communities at risk and eventually increase aid effectiveness.

- A true locally led development can happen and it needs the willingness to trust and experiment locally driven approaches and ideas. It's important that we reform the aid sector, putting local actors (NNGOs, Government institutions and local community) at the center and giving space to fully response locally.

## **Recommendations to USAID LLD.**

- Diversify USAID partnership approach (NNGOs, Government institutions, private sector and local community)
- Establish a suitable funding bracket for NNGOs to apply directly at country level. (Establishing pool of funding to increase the quantity and quality of funds channeled to the local actors)
- Invest more on National NNGOs capacity strengthening and systems
- Facilitate open and honest dialogue between all actors with regards to funding
- Promote greater NNGO sustainability through multi-annual funding, fundraising support & equitable overheads.