Group work on partnership approach

What changes in personal mindset, attitudes and behavior and structure should INGOs like DCA to be at our full potential to be better able to support localisation and local organisations better? It takes a transformational process within our own organisation to respect, recognize, and invest in local and national humanitarian capacity and leadership. The session will bring local-to-global inputs on how this can be done.

Before we start each group work: ask for permission to record and introduce note takers. We suggest two participants to feedback in plenary. If no one volunteers, the facilitators will share the 3 key points from each session in plenary in the end of the workshop.

Group work – Round 1: Personal level

Pitch: In this group work we will be exploring how our personal power plays out in our work and dialogue with partners and other local actors. With more emphasis on locally led development and leadership, we must also reflect on the personal power dynamics, and approach this with a more systematic mindset, attitudes and behaviour throughout the entire DCA.

Do we share expectations around respectful and mutually engaging attitudes, behaviors and mindset when recruiting and inducting new colleagues in DCA? This will ensure mutual trust, learning, reciprocity, flexibility and equality (as much as possible) and nurture the relation to be at our full potential as an equitable partner.

Are we always aware of our use of terminology and communication in our partnership relations? E.g. avoid top-down or a supplier-receiver or donor-recipient language, which signals an unequal relation.

Are we increasingly portraying partners as 'risky'. Our reliance on donor funding limits strategic non-earmarked support to partners, and gives precedence to compliance and control e.g. in 27 page cooperation agreements, and in some cases shift risks to partners. Ultimately these are disincentives to more equal partnerships.

Questions in group work – round 1:

1. What part of our identity in the organisation gives us power?

2. How do we use or abuse (positively or negatively) our power in our work/leadership style working with partners?

3. What responsibilities does that power give you?

End up with 3 good practices + 3 barriers/challenges + 3 next steps we should take going forward

Before we end: remind to copy the chat and save the recording.

Group work – Round 2: Structural level

Pitch: In this group work we will be exploring how power plays out in our structure and trickle down or reflect our work and dialogue with partners and other local actors. In the first group work, we explored the personal power dimensions. With more emphasis on locally led development and leadership, we must also reflect on the structural power dynamics, and approach this with a more systematic mindset throughout the entire DCA.

The structure of DCA has changed many times, mainly since DCA started the establishment of country offices and recruitment of many new colleagues, but also because DCA has grown tremendously in terms annual financial turn over. At the same time we have experience more hierarchy together with more decentralisation!

This 'growth' or 'structural development' of DCA has made it more hierarchical – both in the management structures and development of internal 'silos' – but also in increased distancing between (some) HQ colleagues in Copenhagen and the reality that partners and DCA country offices and partners live in. How does this structural change impact our engagement and approach with partners?

We have units that never are in direct contact with partners in our countries – or have ever visited our country programs. Other units that are frequently in contact with colleagues and partners, and many have worked abroad for a number of years. Is this healthy for our structure and culture?

Do the units gradually grow in different directions when it comes to DCA approach with partners?

Much of DCA's funding comes of course with strict compliance requirements, due diligence and control systems and this lead to directives and KPIs from HQ management, and units mainly working with compliance, control and reporting.

Questions in group work – round 2:

1. In what way does power show up in your organisation's culture –
reflect on relationship with partner organisations (this could include language we use, the structure and documentation)

2. How can the organisational culture enhance equitable partnership and localisation or excludes equitable partnership and blocks progress on localisation.

End up with 3 good practices + 3 barriers/challenges + 3 next steps we should take going forward.

Before we end: remind to copy the chat and save the recording.