

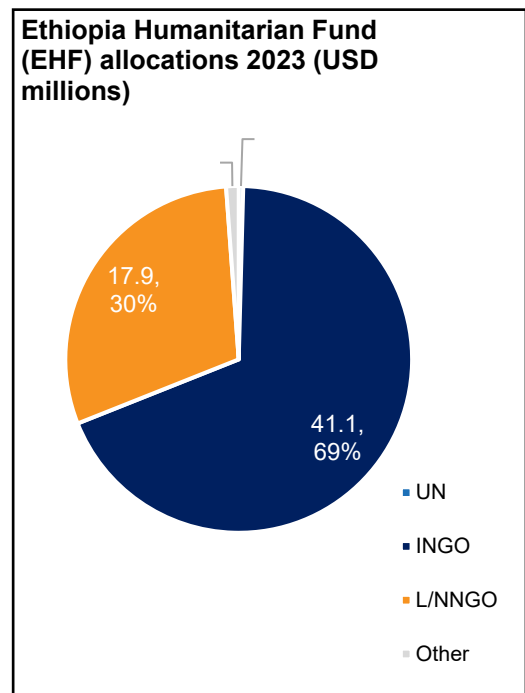
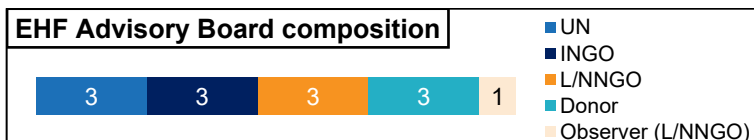
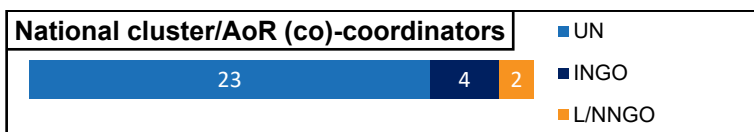
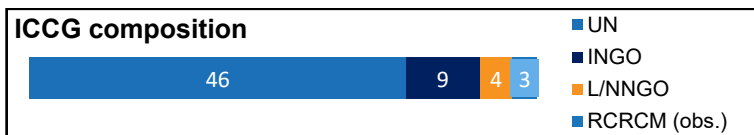
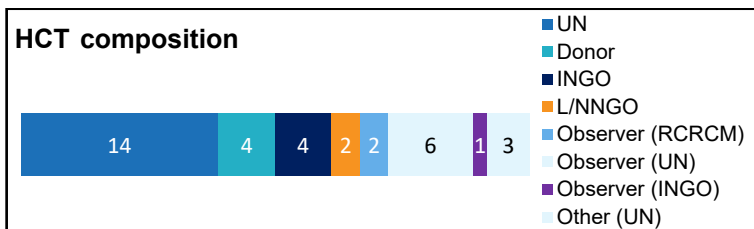
# Localisation in Humanitarian Leadership - Ethiopia

October 2024



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK  
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE  
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

# ETHIOPIA<sup>1</sup>



**NGO representation** is made through multiple bodies. Historical restrictions on civil society, including on foreign funding, have been eased in recent years. In 2019, the government established a body to represent civil society organisations (The Ethiopian Civil Society Organisations Council (ECSOC)), to which all NGOs are automatically members. ECSOC has established a group to coordinate humanitarian issues, although this has limited resourcing. Related, a couple of participants emphasised that sustained financing is needed for L/NNGO networks to have strong representative capacities.

International NGOs (INGOs) are represented by a Humanitarian INGO group (HINGO), and Local/national NGO (L/NNGO) by several other networks. These often cover development as well as the humanitarian sphere, and most are faith- or issue-based (for example, women’s rights organisation networks). The largest, Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA), established in 1973 and with national and international members, has long played a central role in representation. Representatives from the main networks have been assigned seats in humanitarian coordination bodies.

**Leadership in coordination:** While many NGOs are in NGO network memberships and delivering humanitarian response in Ethiopia, the humanitarian coordination system remains largely UN-led. Guaranteed L/NNGO representation is quite recent: the ToRs of the Humanitarian Coordination Team (HCT) and national and sub-national inter-cluster/sector coordination groups (ICCGs) were amended in 2023 to specify seats for L/NNGOs.

Most clusters are co-led by the government with the UN Cluster Lead Agency, and coordination teams are mostly comprised of UN staff. Two national clusters have an L/NNGO co-coordinator. This national structure is largely replicated at the sub-national level. Some participants noted that increasing NGO positions in sub-national clusters had been limited by funding availability. Others

<sup>1</sup> Data on HCT, ICCG, and Cluster composition provided by OCHA Ethiopia in May and June 2024. Data on the Ethiopia Humanitarian Fund (EHF) from OCHA, [Ethiopia Humanitarian Fund Annual Report 2023](#), May 2024.

stated that introducing NGO co-coordination might result in ‘too many’ coordinators, given the government co-leadership. However, L/NNGO inclusion in other cluster mechanisms and governance was reported to sometimes also be limited. For example, some cluster Strategic Advisory Groups were reported to have multiple seats for L/NNGOs, and others one, or none.

While there are now designated L/NNGO seats in the HCT and ICCGs, some participants stated that there was sometimes low presence and low participation of L/NNGO representatives in coordination mechanisms. This was largely attributed to two factors. Firstly, to how some coordination fora functions such as, whether they are seen more as information-sharing than discussion spaces<sup>2</sup> with low inclusiveness. Secondly, to a lack of knowledge of some L/NNGO representatives on how the bodies should be functioning and their associated responsibilities. Some L/NNGO interviewees stated that, even though they did attend and try to raise issues in the meetings they sat in, the agendas often did not feel relevant to L/NNGOs.

Some efforts have been identified in the response to address inclusion issues, including the use of a small group to set HCT agendas, comprised of an INGO, L/NNGO, donor, and UN representative. Other simple potential measures were suggested by participants, such as more structured onboarding of new representatives.

One participant reflected that the leadership role of the government coupled with existing power dynamics between UN, INGO, and L/NNGO humanitarian actors, limits opportunities for L/NNGO influence.

**Coordination participation:** Participants described varying participation of L/NNGOs in the cluster and sub-national coordination meetings, mainly relating this to the relevance of the topic (whether of technical or operational interest), and if meeting modalities (online/in-person, size, and which entities were present) motivated both attendance and participation. Some noted language barriers and small staff numbers of many L/NNGOs limiting their ability to attend multiple meetings. One suggested a wider promotion of the benefits such forums can have for L/NNGOs, and how the decisions made might impact their activities.

More widely, some participants noted a potential important role of the L/NNGO networks, and larger L/NNGOs, in cascading knowledge about the humanitarian coordination system to their membership. One described this as providing ‘proof of concept’ of why engagement had been helpful for some L/NNGOs – hoping this would encourage others to both participate and to be better able to hold their representatives to account.

In a politicised context, some participants noted that, inevitably, risks and sensitivities arise around participation in coordination. This was noted to need good contextual analysis and understanding, and communication, to navigate to maximise coordination system inclusivity and functionality.

**Localisation strategy:** A Localisation Working Group was established in 2023. Chaired by OCHA and co-chaired by ECSOC, its initial focus has been on capacity-strengthening planning. Outside of its direct members, no participants mentioned the Working Group when discussing localisation issues, suggesting that its work may not yet be widely known.

**Complementarity:** Some L/NNGO participants, describing frustration with the existing international humanitarian coordination system, discussed the potential of strengthening the national NGO networks. Two outcomes were reflected: strengthening their role in the international coordination structures and enhancing their own separate representation and coordination functions.

---

<sup>2</sup> Issues also raised in an IASC Peer-2-Peer mission report in 2024.



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK  
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE  
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

## Regional Hubs

### **Africa**

Nairobi, Kenya  
Dakar, Senegal

### **Asia-Pacific**

Bangkok, Thailand  
Islamabad, Pakistan

### **MENA**

Amman, Jordan

### **Latin America**

Guadalajara, Mexico  
(Coordination)

## Geneva Office

Humanitarian Hub, La Voie-Creuse 16, 1202 Geneva  
[secretariat@icvanetwork.org](mailto:secretariat@icvanetwork.org)  
[www.icvanetwork.org](http://www.icvanetwork.org)