

Somaha Impact Report with Tdh

Somaha Foundation understands impact as changes achieved through targeted measures in line with and to maximize the Foundation's purpose. It is guided by its Theories of Change, which provide a schematic description of the intended change. At the end of multi-year partnerships, the Foundation and its funding partners reflect on the goals achieved and lessons learned. The Foundation acknowledges the collaboration in the Somaha Impact Report.

Advancing Localization through Institutional Change

At the center of the partnership between Somaha Foundation and Terre des hommes (Tdh) was the institutional advancement of localization within Tdh. The partnership aimed to strengthen local organizations by developing new approaches, tools, and organizational practices that promote sustainability, equity, and shared responsibility between international and local actors. At the end of the funding phase, we look back with Martin Gallard and reflect on the partnership.

«Terre des hommes and Health Society Foundation have an important relationship. We see each other as equals. We help each other with the things we don't know: sometimes we help them and sometimes they help us.»

SOE WIN HTUN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR HEALTH SOCIETY FOUNDATION (MYANMAR)

Martin Gallard - Driving Institutional Change for Localization at Tdh

Martin Gallard works as Partnership and Localization Advisor at Tdh in Lausanne. Since 2022, he has led the project funded by Somaha Foundation and accompanied Tdh's institutional transformation process around localization. Before joining Tdh, he worked with both international and local NGOs in different countries.

For Gallard, the project represented an interesting opportunity to build on previous experiences while addressing localization from a new perspective. «It was one of the first projects that really considered localization at an institutional level, not in a project or in a country,» Gallard explains. «It meant understanding how an institution such as Tdh, a big Swiss NGO, can transform internally in order to support equitable and sustainable relationships with local actors.»



Project Outline and Frameworks

Project name

Strengthening local organizations' capacities and engagement through Tdh interventions

Project objective

Tdh strengthened localization by embedding a coherent, organization wide approach to quality partnerships and capacity building with local organizations

Funding period

4 years, 2022 – 2026

Funding amount/number of tranches

CHF 1'029'915/6

Time invested annually in the joint development of the project

Tdh: 20 hours, Somaha Foundation: 20 hours

Steering Committee Meetings held

14, quarterly

Project team at Tdh

Martin Gallard, Kamal Lama, Ilva Vjero, Tanvi Chattooraj, Enikő Vass

Throughout the project for Gallard one of the most important lessons was the need for humility when working with local NGOs. «We learned a lot from our partners – what they expect and how unfair the system can still be when it comes to funding, overheads, and decision-making power» he reflects. The project reinforced his conviction that sustainable change requires local organizations to be recognized not only as implementing partners, but as equal actors with valuable expertise and leadership of their own.

Initial Situation and Needs Analysis

Tdh recognized that localization was increasingly discussed across the humanitarian sector yet often remained insufficiently implemented in practice.

While localization was present at Tdh in different initiatives across teams and country offices, these efforts were not yet systematically aligned at an institutional level, and there was no fully coherent framework guiding practice across the organization.

This created a need to strengthen the organization's institutional positioning on localization and translate this commitment into concrete tools, approaches, and ways of working with local partners in order to promote more equitable and sustainable partnerships.

The Role of Somaha Foundation

The partnership with Somaha Foundation provided the opportunity to address the mentioned challenges. The support provided by Somaha Foundation went far beyond financial contributions. According to Gallard, one of the partnership's greatest strengths was the flexible and long-term funding approach, which enabled Tdh to dedicate staff time and institutional resources to a topic that otherwise would have been difficult to prioritize internally. «Meaningful localization requires dedicated people, institutional buy-in, and long-term work,» Gallard explains.

Somaha Foundation acted also as a strategic sparring partner. The partnership facilitated valuable networking opportunities and strategic discussions on localization within the Swiss humanitarian sector. Through these exchanges, Tdh strengthened its visibility and credibility on localization and took a more active role in shaping



Martin Gallard, Partnership and Localization Advisor, Terre des hommes Lausanne

discussions on the topic within Switzerland. Gallard particularly highlighted the two-year structured support and accompaniment by an external organizational development expert, which helped Tdh further advance its thinking and practice in this area.

Embedding Localization within Tdh

A central objective of the project was to embed localization as a strategic and institutional priority within Tdh. Over the course of the partnership, Tdh developed a localization policy, a partnership toolkit, and [LocalLink Hub](#), an online platform designed to support local organizations through trainings, resources, and peer-learning opportunities. New indicators, management tools and organizational processes were also introduced to monitor progress related to localization. These developments changed how Tdh collaborates with local organizations. «We have mentoring structures now. We have an organizational development plan. We have more adapted contracts, due diligence processes, that can be shared, and trainings specifically designed for local organizations. None of this existed before the project», Gallard explains.

Understanding of Localization for Terre des hommes

Localization is a process that recognizes and strengthens the leaderships and capacities of local and national authorities and civil society in humanitarian and development action, with the aim of protecting and fulfilling the rights of people affected by crisis and improving the preparedness of local and national actors for future responses.

At the same time, Tdh recognized that localization cannot be approached uniformly across contexts. Through communities of practice established at regional level, exchanges about experiences and lessons learned related to collaboration with local organizations became an important mechanism for country offices.

Strengthening Local Organizations and Leadership

Through the LocalLink Hub platform, trainings, organizational development support, and knowledge-sharing opportunities, local organizations strengthened their capacities in different areas. For example, local organizations in Nigeria improved their financial management system and complaint and feedback response mechanisms. «A number of Nigerian NGOs learned how Tdh manages complaints, confidentiality and consent. Now they have a better understanding of how to respond to complaints. It was a strong empowerment of their internal procedures,» Gallard explains.

The project also increased the visibility and recognition of local organizations through webinars, podcasts, and collaborative exchanges. These platforms created opportunities for them to share their experiences, showcase their expertise, and engage more directly in discussions on localization and partnership approaches. Beyond capacity strengthening, the project contributed to greater local leadership. In Lebanon, Nigeria and Ukraine, local organizations assumed lead roles in projects supported by international donors, taking responsibility related to proposal writing, financial management, and reporting. «Before that, they were never put in this position,» says Gallard. «Now they know they can become lead actors themselves.» As a result, local organizations strengthened not only their capacities but their confidence and bargaining power vis-à-vis international actors.

Measuring Change in Localization Processes

One of the central challenges throughout the project concerned the measurement of impact. «How do you define success for localization?» remained one of the main questions. «I think we have defined localization internally, but how do you define success for it? Is it how many projects a local organization is managing? Is it the funding they secure? Is it the policies they have changed?» Gallard says. While indicators such as funding volume, leadership roles, or organizational capacities can provide useful information, they do not fully capture the complexity of localization processes.



Products funded by Somaha Foundation at Terre des hommes

LocalLink Hub – Terre des hommes’ Partnership and Localisation Online Platform

LocalLink Hub is part of Tdh’s partnership and localization efforts. Through this platform, Tdh aims to contribute to a power shift to make the humanitarian and development work more equal and sustainable for local actors. Tdh aims to support its local partners (local civil society organisation and local authorities) to become better prepared for potential future crises.

Terre des hommes Partnership and Localisation Policy and its toolkit

Terre des hommes developed an institutional policy with clear Localization objectives by 2028, along with a set of tools specifically dedicated to working with National and Local partners. These tools and the policy were designed in collaboration with Tdh’s National and local partners and were peer-reviewed. This work allowed institutional change and structured the work on localized practices internally.

«Terre des hommes has created an important tool to give the spotlight to local NGOs on the global stage. It is a part of the Power Shift we need in the sector.»

DEEP PURKAYASTA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PRAAJAK (INDIA)

To address this challenge, Tdh developed new indicators and management tools to monitor progress related to localization and partnership quality. At the same time, the Localization Assessment developed by Somaha Foundation provides an additional framework for reflecting on the progress of localization.

Learning as an Integral Part of the Project

Learning played a central role throughout the partnership. Many of the project's most important insights emerged progressively through reflection, experimentation, and exchange with local organizations.

One key lesson was that localization cannot be implemented through a one-size-fits-all approach. The project showed that effective localization depends heavily on context and therefore requires different approaches in different countries and partnerships.

The partnership fostered also learning beyond Tdh itself. Through webinars, reports, LocalLink Hub, and communities of practice experiences and tools developed during the project were shared with partners and other actors in the sector.

Reflections, Advice, and Anecdotes

Gallard emphasizes the importance of creating a shared understanding of localization from the outset. While significant progress has been achieved, building institutional ownership across a large organization requires time, continuous dialogue and the willingness to adapt approaches as contexts and partnerships evolve. He also highlights the importance of securing

broad institutional buy-in early in the process, as engaging different teams and levels of the organization from the beginning helps create momentum and facilitates the implementation of new ways of working.

For Gallard, one particularly memorable moment came through exchanges with a partner organization in Myanmar. Despite operating in extremely dangerous conditions, the organization used tools and trainings developed through the project to strengthen its financial management and continue delivering child protection support across conflict lines. «It reminded me that national organizations can absolutely do life-saving work on their own,» Gallard reflects. «We are only contributing to making this possible.»

Future Outlook

Although the first funding phase is ending, Tdh intends to continue and deepen its work on localization and organizational development. Building on the foundations established, a second phase is expected to continue supporting local organizations in becoming increasingly independent and sustainable. A particular focus will be placed on accompanying transition processes in selected countries. Another key priority is the future of LocalLink Hub. Ensuring its long-term sustainability and accessibility for local organizations globally will be an important next step.

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The Swiss Funding Partner: Terre des hommes

As the leading Swiss organisation for children's rights, created in 1960, the Terre des hommes foundation is committed to protecting children's lives and their rights, and improving their wellbeing. It aims to do so through innovative programmes focused on health, migration and access to justice, specially designed to have both short- and long-term impacts.

In order to protect children and their future, Terre des hommes is committed to fostering sustainable change to protect their rights and wellbeing. It's protection mission is articulated in three concrete commitments.

- Defending children's rights: We advocate for the rights of children worldwide and ensure their well-being and the effective implementation of their rights as defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other human rights instruments.
- Listening to and involving children: We support children in expressing their needs and interests and encourage them to participate actively in their communities to promote their empowerment.
- Vital protection with its core programmes: We focus our efforts on protecting the lives of children in fragile contexts as well as in more stable environments. We are developing three flagship programmes that have a strong impact on their lives: for children's health, for migrating children and for children's access to justice.

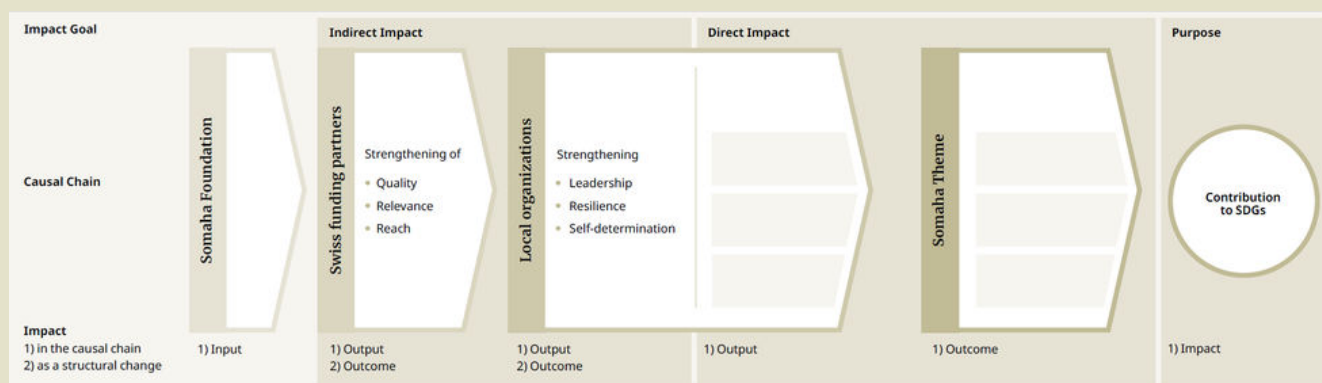
Impact orientation and Learning at Somaha Foundation

Somaha Foundation defines an **impact-oriented approach** as aligning its strategy, organization and processes with organizational purposes. For Somaha Foundation these purposes are specifically to support *people in need*, to promote an *open and diverse society* and to *protect nature from exploitation and destruction*.

Somaha Foundation views **learning** as an aim that enables a goal-oriented learning process. Experience and knowledge gained from funded projects are to be used strategically to improve future decisions and actions in order to maximize impact in the medium and long term.

Somaha impact orientation

As a foundation for the impact-oriented approach serves the Somaha Impact Model. It illustrates how change occurs throughout a funding partnership – from *Somaha Foundation's* allocation of funds, through collaboration with the (Swiss) *funding partner*, to the strengthening of *local organizations* and their commitment to the *Somaha themes*, and ultimately to a contribution to the *SDGs* (Sustainable Development Goals).



^ Somaha Impact Model

In this context, Somaha Foundation distinguishes between **1) impact in the causal chain** (concrete changes resulting from projects) and **2) impact as an independent, structural change** (changes in the funding partner's strategies and processes).

Impact through the project

The following illustrations depict the impact as well as the learning process within the project and the funding partnership between Terre des hommes (Tdh) and Somaha Foundation.

Impact in the casual chain (within the project)



^ Changes within the funding partners form the basis of their work and operate within the **causal chain** between the Foundation's input to its contribution to the SDGs. In the Somaha Impact Model, these changes are therefore considered an output.

Impact as structural change (at the funding partner organization)

Somaha Foundation <i>Expertise:</i> Strengthened focus on learning and reflection regarding localization <i>Relationship:</i> Trust-based partnership, strategic exchange, and peer learning <i>Financial means:</i> Total CHF 1'029'915	Tdh (Swiss funding partner) <i>Quality:</i> Localization embedded in Terre des hommes' policies, tools, and partnership approaches <i>Relevance:</i> Deeper understanding of localization and organizational development <i>Reach:</i> Recognition as a leading actor on localization within the Swiss humanitarian sector	Local organizations <i>Leadership:</i> Recognized as equal partners and lead actors <i>Resilience:</i> Stronger and more sustainable organizations capable of managing their own development processes <i>Self-determination:</i> Greater autonomy in decision-making and action	People in need (Somaha Theme) More sustainable child protection services through more independent and self-determined local organizations Transferable approaches to localization
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^ Changes within the funding partners can also have an **independent, structural impact**. In this respect, these changes are considered an outcome in the Somaha Impact Model.

Learning within the project

The reflection on **impact in the causal chain** and on **impact as independent, structural** changes during the funding partnership between Tdh and Somaha Foundation has made mechanisms visible which will help Somaha Foundation shape future partnerships, processes, and funding approaches.

- The partnership with Tdh demonstrated the value of supporting **institutional transformation processes** – such as the development of policies, tools, and organizational approaches. Somaha Foundation has been affirmed in its funding approach and will even strengthen its support for the development of foundations (independent, structural impact).
- The partnership demonstrated that a **shared commitment** between a funder and an INGO to a strategic topic such as localization can create a strong basis for joint learning, exchange and advocacy within the sector. Somaha Foundation will continue to explore opportunities for collaborative engagement on topics of strategic relevance.
- A key success factor in this project was having the right direct contact persons, such as **project manager and C-level commitment** within the partner organisation. Going forward, Somaha Foundation will therefore place greater emphasis on having subject-matter experts as project lead and direct contact persons from the beginning of a project.
- The project highlighted the challenges of **measuring progress** in localization and reinforced the need for practical tools, indicators, and frameworks, such as the Localization Assessment, to support reflection and learning.

Learning at Terre des hommes (funding partner)

In the spirit of mutual learning, we also provide the funding partner with space to reflect on and document insights for their own organization, for projects, and for collaboration with partners.

- Tdh's regional **Communities of practice** and the **mutualization of due diligence processes** proved valuable mechanisms for peer learning and efficiency across country offices. Tdh's and their partners involved in the due diligence agreement were able to share experiences and strengthen partnership management in several countries (particularly in Bangladesh, Ukraine or Lebanon for instance, where the due diligence initiative was piloted with success).
- The Tdh project experience highlighted that digital learning and knowledge-sharing platforms (such as LocalLink Hub) require **active facilitation** and **blended engagement approaches**: providing content is not enough, it needs to be actively promoted on several platforms. Combining online resources with regular communication, partner-led sessions and in-person exchanges is expected to increase uptake and long-term relevance of LocalLink Hub.