



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Meaning of Locally-Led Development: From Principle to Practice

Prepared by the Reversing the Flow hubs and GOPA MetaMeta in collaboration with the Netherlands Enterprise Agency

*>> Sustainable. Agricultural. Innovative.
International.*

The Meaning of Locally-Led Development: From Principle to Practice

Reflections and Lessons for Development Cooperation

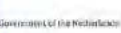


This document is both a reflection and an invitation to action. It explores what Locally-Led development really means in practice, and why this matters for financiers of development cooperation and in particular the Netherlands' renewed commitment to a Locally-Led approach in its 2025 development cooperation policy.

Drawing on insights from the Reversing the Flow programme, it not only distills lessons, challenges, and opportunities for moving from rhetoric to reality, but also extends an open call to co-create a better way of doing development. At its heart, it champions agency, trust, and equity. Calling on practitioners, policymakers, and donors to rethink systems, funding flows, and relationships so that local actors can lead, shape, and own change, rather than simply participate in it.

**Reversing the Flow Programme Think Piece No.1 -
September 2025**

Cover photo: Community walking on their self-implemented Sand Dam in Isiolo, Kenya (Photo: Femke van Woesik)



A time to recalibrate

Across the globe, there is a growing call for solidarity, fairness, respectful alliances, and genuine cooperation. At the same time aid funding in several corners is squeezed and is sometimes under vitriolic attack. In development cooperation, the old key question is re-emerging: *How do we deliver the greatest impact in ways that are not only efficient, but grounded in local reality and capable of making lasting positive change?*

The answer requires more than refining existing practices. It calls for a **paradigm shift**: moving from *doing development for* people to *doing development with and through* local actors. This shift demands approaches that are respectful, engaged, and relationship-building, where local leadership is the driving force and external actors play an enabling role. It also demands systemic reform within donor institutions themselves, including funding modalities, decision-making processes, and accountability systems, so that values of fairness, solidarity, and mutual respect are put into practice rather than remaining rhetorical commitments.

In this context, there is renewed attention to **Locally-Led development**. The idea is not new. For decades, practitioners and communities have argued that development is most effective when people and institutions closest to the challenges define priorities, shape strategies, and lead implementation. But moving from rhetoric to reality remains difficult. *What does it truly mean to enable Locally-Led development? What modalities and systems make this possible? And how can we ensure that local leadership is not reduced to tokenistic participation but becomes a central feature of how development cooperation operates?*

This read explores these questions by drawing on lessons from the [Reversing the Flow \(RtF\)](#) programme. RtF demonstrates how devolved funding, adaptive learning, and institutional strengthening can bring the principles of Locally-Led development to life. It offers insights for practitioners, policymakers, and donors on how to support development that is grounded, responsive, and enduring.

Sidenote: In this paper, the term “local actors” is used in line with the Locally-Led Adaptation principles, which emphasize devolving decision-making to the lowest appropriate level. Per situation and issue at stake this “lowest appropriate level” can differ. In the case of RtF, that level is the community itself and the variety of (informal) local institutions. Yet experiences show that many community members do not identify themselves as “local actors”, often pointing instead to community-based organizations, NGOs, or local government. This reflects both practical barriers (such as the need for formal registration to access funds) as well as deeper perceptions of where power resides. It also underscores that “local” is a political and relational construct, not just a geographic one. Within this framing, being Locally-Led must also mean being locally inclusive, ensuring that marginalized groups (women, Indigenous peoples, youth, and people with disabilities) are part of decision-making. Ultimately, the aim is not only to deliver project outputs but to build self-sufficiency: enabling communities to act as fully qualified partners, directing their own governance processes, and sharing knowledge with others, thereby leaving a lasting institutional legacy beyond project cycles.

Locally-Led: from principles to practice

Locally-Led development at its core means that local actors define priorities, shape strategies, manage delivery, and participate meaningfully in policy processes. It requires that local actors are not merely heard but are empowered to steer decisions about goals, budgets, partnerships, and course corrections: ensuring agency over defining, prioritizing, and evaluating adaptation actions in line with their own realities and aspirations ([Rahman et al., 2023](#)). Involvement and participation alone does not make a process Locally-Led. The crucial distinction lies in whether decision-making power truly rests with local actors, or whether they are consulted while external actors still retain control.

Operationalizing this difference requires clear markers (such as typologies, checklists, or indicators) that donors and implementers can

use to assess the extent to which a project is genuinely Locally-Led. These could cover aspects like who sets the agenda, who controls resources, how accountability flows, and whether local priorities shape course corrections over time. Turning the principle of local leadership into a measurable and verifiable practice rather than an aspirational label. When design, budgeting, and implementation remain centralized, local actors are consulted and heard, but they are not empowered. Real ownership requires shifting power over not just design inputs, but also budgets, resource allocation, and the authority to make course corrections. This redistribution of decision-making power is central to transforming practice, ensuring that local actors can shape priorities, adjust strategies in real time, and sustain results beyond the life of a single project. Real ownership goes further, can bring more, and will last longer.

Critically, the capacity to act (to organize, decide, and implement at local levels) is one of the greatest assets a society holds. It is not a given, there is much difference from one place to the other. Development cooperation should amplify this capacity to act and get things done, not override it or undermine it. Supporting this means investing in the systems and leadership that already exist, rather than building parallel structures.

Equally important is reducing bureaucracy. Traditional aid systems often generate high transaction costs: several layers of approval, unwieldy frameworks, unneeded interference and exhaustive reporting demands. These do not just slow things down; they can actively undermine trust, take time away from delivery, and erode local initiative. When accountability is focused on compliance instead of results, it misses the point. What matters is not how neatly a process was followed, but what difference it made. Streamlined, trust-based systems not only lower costs but also reinforce local agency, enabling those closest to the work to make timely decisions, adapt strategies as conditions change, and sustain momentum without being bogged down in procedural constraints. By rooting

systems in local leadership and trust, donors can reduce overhead, speed up delivery, and get more resources to the front line. This is not just a moral case but also a financial and strategic one, making adaptation efforts more responsive, resilient, and effective.

The Reversing the Flow programme

This document distills lessons from the RtF programme to inspire practitioners, policymakers, and donors in operationalizing Locally-Led development in practice. RtF is a Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs initiative implemented by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO). RtF funds ten local organizations (hubs) in five countries (Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya, and Bangladesh) to facilitate Locally-Led landscape restoration, water security, and climate resilience interventions through a devolved local grants mechanism. The initiative arose from the observation that, within the Netherlands' development cooperation portfolio for water management between 2006 and 2016, less than 10% of funding reached the communities directly affected, while much of the remainder was absorbed by assessments, capacity building, system support, or overheads by intermediary organizations. The 2017 IOB evaluation of Dutch water management aid¹ highlighted three persistent challenges:

1. Limited funding at local levels constrained meaningful engagement.
2. Weak ownership meant projects often failed to empower local actors to sustain outcomes.
3. A disconnect persisted between high-level planning and practical implementation, with external frameworks overriding local systems.

¹ [Policy review of Dutch development aid policy for improved water management – Tackling major water challenges. | Report | Policy and Operations Evaluation Department \(IOB\)](#)

RtF inverts this model. Instead of channeling resources through multiple intermediary layers, decision-making authority and financial control are placed directly with local hubs. These hubs design and manage their own granting processes, select and fund community-led initiatives, and oversee delivery in ways that reinforce their governance capacity and long-term autonomy. The programme structure is displayed in Figure 1.

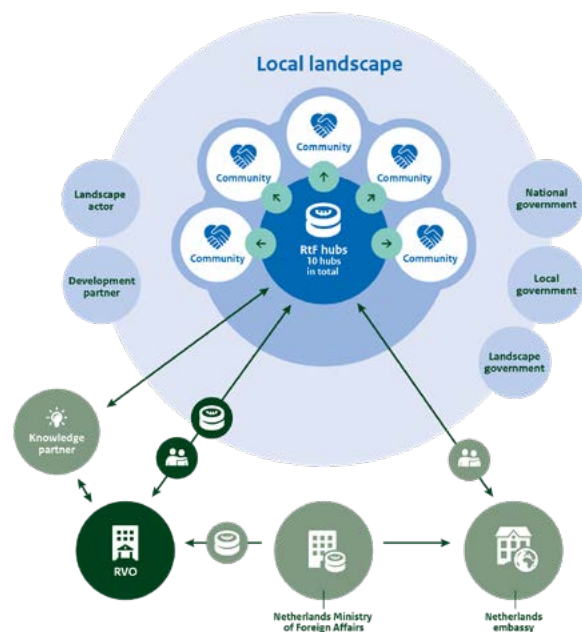


Figure 1 - Reversing the Flow programme structure. Each hub receives around 1 million euros. Through direct regranting the local communities have direct ownership of the funds. The general guideline followed by most hubs is that 70% of the budget goes directly to communities, of which at least 55% is regranting to local initiatives and around 15% is used for facilitation of inclusive and participatory planning and monitoring.

Policy Alignment

The RtF programme aligns with the Netherlands' increasing emphasis on local leadership in its development and climate policy frameworks. The 2025 Dutch policy letter on development cooperation highlights a *"lokaal-geleide aanpak"* ("Locally-Led approach") and states: *"We werken zoveel mogelijk met organisaties uit het land zelf"* ("We work as much as possible with organizations from the country itself"). It also adheres to the OECD-DAC definition of Locally-Led development,

which emphasizes enabling diverse local actors' agency over framing, design, delivery, and accountability of development programmes.

While these ideas have gained momentum in the climate and humanitarian domain, the Netherlands is also exploring their broader application across development cooperation, recognizing that empowerment of local actors is critical for achieving equitable, effective, and lasting change.

What RtF has learned about Locally-Led development

The RtF programme began as an initiative to support bottom-up development to bridge the disconnect between local realities versus top-down development interventions. Although the Eight Principles for Locally-Led Adaptation¹, developed through a highly consultative process involving multiple adaptation stakeholders, formed under the Global Commission on Adaptation and including IIED, WRI and ICCAD, and now endorsed by over 140 organizations, emerged after RtF was conceived, they resonate strongly with its approach. The RtF programme turns these principles of Locally-Led development into practice. Not just in rhetoric, but in the systems, funding flows, and relationships that make it real.

What RtF tries to do is systematically support Locally-Led development primarily through local granting, but also by carefully considering all other steps in the process. A defining feature of RtF is its adaptiveness. Embedded learning systems allow hubs to document experiences, analyze results, share insights, and adjust strategies in real time. This strengthens local leadership by enabling hubs to respond to changing conditions, refine approaches, and influence policy and practice.

RtF explicitly tries to understand and document the experiences with the mechanisms for Locally-

¹ <https://www.wri.org/initiatives/locally-led-adaptation/principles-locally-led-adaptation>

Led development in a dedicated knowledge component. It is part of an ongoing learning journey: open to new insights, inherently iterative, and responsive to the realities faced by local actors. The lessons documented below are not fixed answers but inputs to ongoing reflection and adaptation – both within the programme and across the wider development community.

1. Locally-Led is Locally-Led

Critically, Locally-Led development should not be mistaken for community-driven development alone. It involves a broader and more diverse ecosystem of actors: local governments, elected representatives, community organizations, and informal groups. These actors operate within highly varied governance and community contexts. While local governments often play a central role, their capacity cannot be assumed and may require support and reinforcement alongside civil society. The presence, financial capacity, and room to maneuver of local actors differ greatly from one place to another. Recognizing this diversity is essential. RtF responds to this by fostering coordination mechanisms that bring together local governments, civil society organizations, and informal actors around shared priorities, aligning resources, clarifying roles, and building mutual trust. Joint planning sessions, co-managed grants, and regular learning exchanges help bridge institutional silos so that diverse local actors work in concert, a precondition for truly holistic implementation.

Policies and programmes are, to a large extent, made and implemented locally. They shape development priorities and deliver essential services. Yet, policies can be high-level and disconnected, and programmes risk becoming

overly mechanistic. Locally-Led development improves implementation by building on existing systems, knowledge, and relationships. This is critical for navigating context-specific challenges and ensuring relevance. It also enables local actors to influence how decisions are made, not just carry them out.

For this to happen, local actors must be able to engage meaningfully with planning, budgeting, and regulatory frameworks. When they do, policies become more grounded, responsive, and actionable. RtF invests in this engagement: Local NGOs as RtF hubs support local actors to access public programmes, influence budget allocations, and improve delivery mechanisms. Policy dialogue is treated not as a technical exercise, but as an arena of empowerment, where local perspectives shape what development looks like in practice. The goal is not influence for its own sake, but ensuring local knowledge, priorities, and leadership are reflected in how development is designed, funded, and implemented.

A good example of this is the community-led structure developed by SOS Sahel Sudan in North Kordofan. There, community governance is coordinated through multiple locally defined bodies: Grassroots Organizations (GROs), a General Assembly, a Landscape Management Committee, and a Steering Committee. These structures work together to identify needs, design initiatives, coordinate implementation, and advocate at policy level. Critically, they ensure that communities themselves set the agenda, allocate resources, and engage government actors, making the system both locally legitimate and responsive to national frameworks (read more in [this](#) blog). This layered governance shows what it means in practice to build Locally-Led systems that are embedded, accountable, and able to act.

The lesson is clear: when development is anchored in diverse local systems, it reflects real priorities, mobilizes the actors who can act on them, and builds solutions that endure.

2. Less bureaucracy is often more impact

In an attempt to know more and limit risks, it is not uncommon for development programmes to have excessive reporting requirements, rigid indicators, and complex audits. These all come at a cost, not just in money, but in time, trust, and energy. These systems absorb resources that should be used for development. They burden local partners and create incentives to prioritize documentation over delivery. The result: fewer funds make it to the frontline, and the impact is diluted. A different approach is possible: Accountability that is built around proportionality, trust, learning, and responsiveness, using methods like showcasing results, peer review, narrative 'best story' monitoring, and real-time feedback. These tools are lighter, less 'expert'-dependent, internal rather than external, suited to the local communication context, and allows local actors to steer. An example comes from the baseline conducted by IMPACT in Kenya. Instead of producing a written report for donor use only, the team co-created [videos](#) with community members in their own language, capturing aspirations, challenges, and the landscape's status at the start of the programme. The result became a tool for learning, reflection, and connection (for more info, read [this](#) blog). Communities continue to watch, discuss, and share the videos, using them to guide new initiatives and track change over time.

This is what meaningful accountability can look like: an accessible, living resource that serves both communities and programme partners rather than a one-off report to check a box. Importantly, donors are beginning to adapt as well. Within RtF, the donor has explored more flexible and context-sensitive audit mechanisms, moving away from rigid, one-size-fits-all compliance models. Such shifts signal that donor institutions can evolve internal accountability frameworks to validate and integrate alternative forms of evidence (including visual and oral knowledge) alongside written reports.

However, there is a trade-off: individually tailored local accountability instruments can be harder to aggregate at the programme level, making it more challenging to demonstrate results across diverse contexts in a standardized way. This raises an important question: *should aggregation be a goal?* As [Rahman et al. \(2023\)](#) argue, conventional monitoring systems often prioritize donor-defined metrics over local perspectives, risking a disconnect between what is measured and what truly matters on the ground.

Locally-Led approaches therefore require a shift in monitoring practices, recognizing that results may look different in different places and that success is best defined in partnership with those closest to the challenges. Achieving this shift requires more than simplifying reporting requirements for local actors. It also demands unlearning and adaptation within NGO and financier institutions themselves. Many existing systems, from risk management frameworks to audit and compliance models, are designed for large international organizations and are ill-suited for smaller, locally embedded actors. Without changes at this level, funding will continue to be filtered through multiple intermediary layers, losing both efficiency and local ownership.

Locally-Led development thus requires reducing transaction costs and redirecting resources toward action. Simpler, context-driven systems strengthen accountability. When the focus is on outcomes rather than paperwork, people can apply their own familiar accountability practices and feel included, rather than reduced to subjects..

Equally, accountability in Locally-Led development must be mutual: with both upward responsibility to funders and downward responsibility to communities. This means donors sharing back results, decisions, and lessons, and being transparent about how local inputs influence funding and programme direction.

The experience from RtF shows that lighter, context-driven accountability not only reduces transaction costs, it also strengthens trust and keeps the focus on delivering results where they matter most.

3. Local control creates stronger local capacity

When local actors lead, from setting priorities to managing budgets and selecting contractors, development becomes more relevant, effective, and robust. Early observations from RtF suggest that when communities are actively involved in shaping decisions, there are stronger indications of ownership and a greater likelihood that interventions will align with local needs and priorities. This in turn may increase commitment and improve the chances that infrastructure and services are maintained over time.

But there is more. Local ownership has broader ripple effects: it strengthens self-reliance, stimulates local economies, and builds autonomy. In the RtF model, local NGOs function as hubs, supporting communities and existing institutions to realize their priorities. This role helps unlock significant local capabilities. Communities feel empowered not only to deliver RtF-funded initiatives but also to pursue their own projects with limited resources or to tap into additional funding opportunities.

For example, in a project through the IMPACT hub in Kenya, communities chose to invest in water schemes, design them, and hire local contractors. The result was improved service relations, local job creation, and a step-change in local technical and organizational capacity (read more in [this](#) blog).

In practice, giving local actors real control over priorities and resources does more than improve individual projects. It builds skills, strengthens institutions, and fosters the confidence and capacity to sustain and even multiply investments over time.

4. Capacity strengthening to support local practice

We emphasized the importance of local capacity to act and to deliver. It is good to pause and think what is meant by *capacity*, and how it can best be supported. Too often, ‘capacity building’ has been equated with formal training sessions or knowledge transfer delivered from the outside, often in settings disconnected from daily practice. While such efforts may have their place, they rarely stick when applied in isolation and often struggle to align with local realities. In the worst case they confuse and undermine the confidence to act.

What works better, and what we aim for, is strengthening capacity in ways that are rooted in local systems and daily practice. This means enabling institutions and individuals to grow by doing: learning through implementation, reflection, peer exchange, and problem-solving in their own contexts. Capacity grows when people work together to tackle real challenges, supported by tools and guidance that are relevant, timely, and grounded. Rather than treating learning as a

separate, one-off exercise, we see it as something that unfolds alongside action. In this approach, training is not an end, but a contribution to a larger process, one that builds confidence, sharpens local strategies, and reinforces existing strengths. Horizontal learning and peer-to-peer support are especially powerful here.

An example of this comes from the Afar Region of Ethiopia, where the Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA) is training women from within the community to become social workers and extension workers. These women build awareness on maternal and child health, hygiene, and reproductive health, but also play a much broader role. They are advocates, life-skill promoters, and trusted intermediaries between communities, clan leaders, and government systems. Their work is not based on imported training packages, it is grounded in the realities of Afar society, shaped by culturally sensitive methods, and driven by local needs. Training is not something done *to* them but something grown *with* them, reflecting APDA's deep roots in the region (read more in [this](#) blog).

This kind of embedded learning leads to deeper ownership of skills, stronger local institutions, and better long-term outcomes. It supports local confidence and reinforces the idea that people learn best not from being told what to do, but from doing it together.

5. Cherish and nurture local organizational capacity

The ability to plan, govern, and deliver at local level is one of the most valuable assets a society holds.

It means getting things done in development, but also in regulation and in programming. Development cooperation should strengthen this capacity, not bypass it with parallel systems or external delivery models.

The RtF hubs network of locally rooted civil society organizations are not just delivery partners; they are sources of local knowledge, initiative, and leadership. They understand their environments deeply, have long-standing relationships with communities, and continuously adapt to shifting conditions. RtF hubs are highly diverse. Each has its own history, areas of expertise, and way of working, shaped by years of engagement in their specific context. For RVO, supporting hubs means more than funding short-term activities. It means investing in their institutional strength, creating space for leadership, and trusting their judgment. They are part of the continuous social infrastructure of the places they serve, not temporary project vehicles.

Importantly, the hubs regrant funding to local actors. Who these actors are varies by context: in Kenya, they may be interest-based community organizations; in Ethiopia, watershed committees take the lead. The forms differ, but the principle is the same: channeling resources through structures that are embedded in the local system and carry social legitimacy. When development is anchored in such structures, it is more likely to stick because it builds on what is already trusted, functional, and familiar.

A strong example is the RECOCS project (part of RtF) led by APIL in Burkina Faso. Here, funds flow through existing local governance mechanisms, specifically the municipal development plans (PCPs) and village development councils (CVDs). Communities themselves determine priorities and manage implementation, supported by a project award committee (CVAM) that oversees fund distribution. This model reinforces accountability, trust, and ownership by working with structures that already exist and already matter (read more in [this](#) blog).

Another example comes from Bangladesh's southwest coastal region under the LANDWATER Project of Uttaran (part of RtF), where multi-actor local platforms have been revitalized. Previously dormant or tokenistic, these bodies are now actively influencing public fund flows and coordinating with local government on climate adaptation priorities. This shift has been possible because RtF and its partners provided flexible support and facilitation, enabling local actors to lead processes, set agendas, and leverage formal governance mechanisms to advance community priorities.

The lesson is simple but often overlooked: if you want development that lasts, start by strengthening the wells: the local organizations that hold capacity, context, and community trust.

Conclusion: a clear opportunity

Together, these lessons point to a broader insight: **development should reinforce the systems and people that enable local actors to plan, govern, and adapt on their own terms.** 3 action points are:

1. More to Locally-Led: Locally-Led development must not be treated as another delivery model. It is a foundational component of resilient governance, stronger societies and sustainable development, and one that national governments should actively support. The RtF experience shows that Locally-Led does not mean isolated or fragmented. It means working with what already exists, strengthening the local capacity to make decisions, regulate

services, deliver results, and shape their own programmes, not just implement someone else's. The ability to act, to govern, and to get things done at the local level is a vital asset and strengthening that ability should be at the heart of how we work.

2. Review and change internal bureaucracy:

This requires removing the barriers that hold local systems back: excessive compliance demands, short project cycles, registration obstacles, and rigid funding rules. These are not technicalities, they actively undermine local development entrepreneurship and effectiveness and erode the very capacities development cooperation should be building. Simplifying systems does not mean reducing oversight. It means realigning accountability with local mechanisms of trust, transparency, and peer review, so that monitoring strengthens rather than constrains local initiative.

3. More open calls, more flexibility:

Locally-Led development cannot thrive if award processes continue to be framed around donor-defined assignments. This limits relevance, weakens ownership, and sidelines the innovation that comes from local experience. To change this, the content of tenders must shift, from delivering externally set tasks to enabling locally defined programmes. Open calls that invite locally rooted organizations to propose their own priorities, partnerships, and pathways allow for more adaptive, grounded, and sustainable development. Equally important is improving accessibility to these calls for local actors, many of whom are excluded by complex application requirements, language barriers, or lack of formal registration. Streamlined procedures, capacity support where needed, and active outreach are essential to level the playing field. Beyond accessibility, local decision-making in allocating funds is critical: devolving authority to trusted local institutions or committees to evaluate proposals and grant resources ensures

funding flows align with local priorities and realities. Flexible tendering within programmes enables local leadership, fosters continuity, and strengthens institutional ecosystems already embedded in the context. We also need to move to stronger local finance: devolved funds and local taxation.

Invitation to co-create a better way of doing development

This approach aligns with the 2025 policy letter's ambitions, but meeting those ambitions will require changes: in financing mechanisms, accountability systems, and how partnerships are structured and in temporal commitments.

In the face of rising inequality, accelerating climate disruption, and growing social fragmentation, the limitations of traditional top-down development have become increasingly clear. Locally-Led development is no longer just a moral ideal, it is a practical and strategic necessity. It delivers operational efficiency, greater resilience, legitimacy, and long-term ownership of outcomes. Qualities that are indispensable in the volatile contexts where development operates. Moreover, it enables faster, more adaptive responses, strengthens legitimacy, and builds solutions that are more relevant, more durable, and more just.

This is the opportunity. The Dutch government's renewed commitment to a Locally-Led approach offers a strong foundation. The next step is to further define what this means in practice and to align financing, accountability structures, and institutional mindsets accordingly.

There is no fixed blueprint to replicate, only a set of grounded living practices. These show how to build trust, remove unnecessary barriers, strengthen leadership, and deliver results, all while staying aligned with global goals. This is all very much about what works, not an ideology. And

what works best is development that is defined, led, and delivered by those close to the challenge, with the resources and the ability and authority to act.



Read more in our Knowledge Portal '[Locally-Led Adaptation in Practice](#)'



Key questions for Locally-Led Development in practice

These questions are an invitation to practitioners, policymakers, and donors to pause and reflect. They help explore what Locally-Led development could mean in your context and what changes might be needed to make it real.

1. What does ‘local’ really mean in your work? And who decides?

Whose voices and knowledge shape your understanding of “local”?

Are you engaging those closest to the challenge, or those who are closest to existing systems?

How do you ensure that being Locally-Led also means being locally inclusive?

2. Where does power sit in your work, and where could it sit?

Who frames the priorities, sets the budgets, defines success?

What would it take to share that power in ways that feel safe, effective, and fair?

3. How do you address structural inequalities in your work?

How does your work engage with the root causes of exclusion (gender, age, disability, displacement, religion, profession, class, ethnicity)?

Are you creating space for those marginalized to lead and define change?

4. How open and accessible are the systems you use?

If a small local organization wanted to work with you tomorrow, how easy would it be for them?

What processes would need to be changed to make that possible?

5. Are you strengthening local capacity, or substituting for it?

Do you leave behind stronger systems, skills, and confidence, or new forms of dependency?

What would it mean to invest in people’s ability to act on their own terms?

6. Whose knowledge drives your interventions and informs decisions?

Are traditional, Indigenous, and local knowledges equally valued alongside scientific expertise?

How might you combine different ways of knowing to build better solutions?

7. How adaptable is your work to changing realities?

When local priorities shift, can you shift too?

What would it take to embed flexibility in your systems?

8. Who are you accountable to and how?

Do local actors see how decisions are made, and funds are spent?

What would accountability look like if it flowed downward as well as upward?

9. How well do you collaborate across sectors, levels, and initiatives?

Are you helping to weave stronger networks?

What opportunities exist to align efforts and amplify what local actors are already doing?

Reversing the Flow hubs



APDA & ORDA (Ethiopia)



APIL & Tiipaalgaa (Burkina Faso)



Friendship & Uttaran (Bangladesh)



IMPACT, MID-P, & TUPADO (Kenya)



SOS Sahel Sudan (Sudan)

Supported by:



Government of the Netherlands

Through:



Netherlands Enterprise Agency

Knowledge Partner



This is a publication of

Netherlands Enterprise Agency

Prinses Beatrixlaan 2

PO Box 93144 | 2509 AC The Hague

T +31 (0) 88 042 42 42

Contact

www.rvo.nl

The Reversing the Flow hubs and GOPA MetaMeta, in collaboration with the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), have produced this publication. RVO coordinates the RtF programme on behalf of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

© Netherlands Enterprise Agency | October 2025
Publication number: RVO-224-2025/RP-INT

NL Enterprise Agency is a department of the Dutch ministry of Economic Affairs that implements government policy for Agricultural, sustainability, innovation, and international business and cooperation. NL Enterprise Agency is the contact point for businesses, educational institutions and government bodies for information and advice, financing, networking and regulatory matters.

Netherlands Enterprise Agency is part of the ministry of Economic Affairs .