



COORDINATION SUD

“
FORWARD-LOOKING
RESEARCH STUDIES
& ANALYSES

” OngleLAB



RESEARCH STUDY

LOCALISATION OF AID

LESSONS FROM PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN FRENCH NGOs AND LOCAL ACTORS

With the financial support of the French Development Agency and the Fondation de France and Forus.



The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the authors and the opinions expressed therein do not necessarily reflect those of Coordination SUD. Reproduction and translation is authorized, except for commercial purposes, subject to the source being mentioned and prior information being given to Coordination SUD's Communication Department.

Coordination SUD is the national coordinator for French NGOs who cooperate internationally.

Founded in 1994, it currently brings together more than 175 NGOs who cooperate internationally (organisations de solidarité internationale (OSI)), a hundred of whom are part of six collective associations (CLONG-Volontariat, Cnajep, Coordination Humanitaire et Développement, CRID, Forim, Groupe Initiatives). They carry out emergency humanitarian actions, provide development aid and environmental protection, defend the human rights of disadvantaged populations in France and abroad, and also carry out educational activities covering citizenship and international cooperation. They also act as advocates for those that have no voice. Coordination SUD carries out four key activities: defending and promoting OSIs, supporting and strengthening French OSIs, monitoring and analysing the international cooperation sector and, finally, representing common positions with public and private institutions, in France, in Europe and across the world.

This publication was prepared by Martin Vielajus and Jean Martial Charancle as part of Coordination SUD's NGO support team (ONGLAB)

The ONGLAB is Coordination SUD's section which tracks recent developments in the international cooperation sector. It aims to support NGOs to make any necessary changes and, more broadly, assists all those working in this sector through the production of analyses. To this end, the ONGLAB carries out general interest investigations, organises workshops and discussions where different points of view can be exchanged, and publishes analyses.

Contact:

Diane Vioujard, Activities Coordinator (Coordination SUD).

Email: vioujard@coordination.org

Website: www.coordinationsud.org

The Strategic Policy Committee:

With contributions from the steering committee coordinated by Diane Vioujard and in which the following individuals participated: Anne Le Naëlou, lecturer at Paris 1 University (IEDES); Benoît Xavier Loridon, director of international action and advocacy at Secours Catholique-Caritas France; Hélène Bonvalot, director of programmes at Asmae-Association Sœur Emmanuelle; Philippe Ryfman, professor and researcher - Cabinet Ryfman; Sébastien Radisson, coordinator for CLONG-Volontariat; Jean-Marc Boivin, institutional relations representative at Handicap International; Thomas Ribémont, honorary president of Action Contre la Faim and director of the Institute for European Studies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

5 • List of acronyms

6 • Introduction

3 • Study approach

1. page 8

Decoding Localisation
What are we talking about? Why are we talking about it?



© Annie Spratt on Unsplash

P. 8

1. Looking back: some chronological markers in the localisation debate

P. 12

2. The localisation debate: two sources for two visions

2. page 19

Conceptual Framework
Dimensions and key criteria of localisation



© Joshua Watson on Unsplash

P. 18

1. How to define localisation? What dimensions should be taken into consideration?

P. 23

2. What are the variables that define localisation?

P. 27

3. The localisation ecosystem

3. page 30

The “lived experience” of localisation perceptions, strategies, evolution of practices in the field



© Eduardo Prim on Unsplash

P. 30

1. Perceptions and strategies

P. 34

2. Localisation in practice: what is the lived experience at project level?

4. page 47

Pathways and recommendations for engaging in the localisation debate



© Alev Takli on Unsplash

P. 46

- 1. Assume the complementarity of aid actors

P. 47

- 2. Beyond the project approach with a more global take on the localisation ecosystem

P. 49

- 3. Seeing localisation as an opportunity

54 • Annexes

AFD	French Development Agency
CAD	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
CAFOD	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
CCFD	The Catholic Community against hunger and for development
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
ELSA	Ensemble luttons contre le sida en Afrique (plateforme) - Let's Fight Together Against AIDS in Africa (platform)
ELNHA	Empowering Local and National Humanitarian Actors (Oxfam)
FDF	Fondation de France
ICNL	International Center for Not-for-Profit Law
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IRIS	The French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs
MdM	Doctors of the World
NEAR	Network for Empowered Aid Response
NPN	Do no harm (concept)
OCADES	CARITAS Burkina (Catholic Organisation for Development and Solidarity)
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (United Nations)
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
ONG	Non-governmental organisation
ONG-I	International non-governmental organisation
ONG-L	Local non-governmental organisation
ONG-N	National non-governmental organisation
OSC	Civil Society Organisation
PF	Platform
PP	Public Authorities
PTF	Technical and Financial Partners
SCAC	The cooperation and cultural action network (French Embassy)
SHM	World Health Summit
Tdh	Terre des hommes (International Federation)
UE	European Union
URD	Emergency, Rehabilitation and Development
Whh	Welthungerhilfe (DE)

INTRODUCTION

The notion of aid “localisation” occupies an increasingly important place in the debate around international aid. It is in keeping with a more global way of thinking about the transformation in development finance, and in the spirit of thinking and acting on emergencies and development starting with actors who are “closest to the scene”. Aid “on the ground”, “unmediated”, and many other expressions reflect this aspiration for “localisation”, which is not only about putting forward civil society actors, but all of the local actors, including public actors.

Donors and NGOs are today asking, each in their own way, about the benefits and limitations of the localisation of aid, and about the possible consequences of such a dynamic on the practices and organisational methods of NGOs in the global north and south.

This study therefore seeks both to revisit the terms of this debate and to “test” localisation based on practices in the field. It queries the discrepancies that may exist between the debate on localisation and realities on the ground, and it questions the hypothesis that greater “proximity” of aid to the field of action increases the effectiveness of the projects carried out.

Study approach

Many successive periods of reflection, exchanges and production have taken place in conducting this study:

The framing phase

The first stage of this study (December 2018 - March 2019) consisted of “decoding” the challenge of localising aid, in order to draw up a landscape of positions and understandings in this debate. The framing was the subject of a specific note, which revisits the origins of the “localisation” debate, gives an overview of its various definitions and the way in which it is approached by different types of actors.

The framing note was constructed from:

- Existing literature on the challenges of localising aid, produced by NGOs, research centres (URD, IRIS, etc.) and donors (AFD, European Union, etc.)
- A dozen interviews carried out with international NGOs, donor representatives, and resource persons from the sector (see list of interviewees in Annex). Among the NGOs interviewed, we ensured that a variety of profiles were included, both in terms of size (small, medium and large NGOs), and in terms of mandate (emergency actors, development organisations, multi-mandate organisations).

The framing note was largely integrated into the first part of this report.

Field missions / Case studies

Following the framing phase, two case studies were carried out (March - May 2019) to document the “lived experience” of localisation through real cases. It was a case of observing, across various field projects, the type of localisation in operation and giving an overview of the perceptions of the different parties involved with the project.

The two countries visited for the study were Burkina Faso and Bangladesh. For each country, 3 projects were selected. Each of these projects involved a French NGO and local partners in the field. We were careful to target different sectors and situations (the selection criteria

included: the size of the NGOs involved; their relative position in the URD continuum; the type of partnership; whether the French NGO had a presence in the field, etc.)
The projects analysed in each country are listed in the following table.

TABLE 1: LIST OF PROJECTS REVIEWED IN BURKINA FASO AND BANGLADESH

Country	Objectives of project	Principal local partner	French NGO involved
Burkina Faso	Strengthen children’s pre-reading and reading skills	Association for Community Life Change Initiative (ICCV) Provincial management of Kadiago (DPEPPNF) pre-school, primary and non-formal education	Sister Emmanuelle Association (ASMAE)
Burkina Faso	Train the young people of Passoré province in the craft of Nubian Vault building, so that they can join this adapted housing sector.	Gompossom Kombi-naam Association of Sahel (AKNGS)	The Nubian Vault Association (AVN)
Burkina Faso	Contribute to the reduction of new infections among people with disabilities	Burkina Faso Federation of Associations supporting people with disabilities (FEBAH) National network for greater involvement of people infected with HIV/AIDS (REGIPV-BF)	Humanity & Inclusion (formerly Handicap International)
Bangladesh	Promote agroecological practices in the region of Chittagong Hill Tracks	Caritas Bangladesh	Secours Catholique-Caritas France
Bangladesh	Prevention and treatment of acute malnutrition in refugee camps (official and non-official)	Mukti Association SARPV Association (social assistance and rehabilitation for physically vulnerable)	Action Against Hunger (ACF)
Bangladesh	Aid to Rohingya refugees (managing high-risk pregnancies/general surgery)	Hope Foundation	HumaniTerra

National consultants were enlisted in every country to lead the interviews with the key actors in each of the projects, and with some resource persons of the sector. The country case studies were led according to the same analysis grid, using the localisation dimensions presented in the following pages.

Interviews and collective workshop in France:

Following the field missions, around a dozen additional interviews were arranged with the head offices of several French NGOs (May 2019). This was to complete the perspective on the dynamics of localisation within the framework of the projects analysed in Burkina Faso and Bangladesh with the management of the French NGOs involved in those projects, and to enrich our thinking about localisation with other NGOs of diverse profiles, positioning and experiences.

Additionally, a collective workshop was held on 28 May 2019 with around 30 French NGOs representatives, to discuss the decoding note and feedback from the field, and to give them the benefit of testimonials from the participants.

These successive periods of document review and exchanges led to the writing of this report, between June and August 2019.



© Annie Spratt on Unsplash

1.

DECODING LOCALISATION

**WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?
WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT IT?**

1. Looking back: some chronological markers in the localisation debate
2. The localisation debate: two sources for two visions



ocalisation is a term both technical and relatively vague, as it is not yet widespread among French NGOs and their partners (especially in the case of development actors). It is understood in varying ways according to context. The term seems new, but it covers in part quite an old debate in the international solidarity sector. So it is useful firstly to point out how the debate is emerging in the heart of the international community, but also why it is emerging in this way today. What are the sources and ambitions of the current debate on localisation?

1. LOOKING BACK: SOME CHRONOLOGICAL MARKERS IN THE LOCALISATION DEBAT

Localisation responds to the aspiration to think and act in emergencies and development in a way that puts first the actors “closest to the scene”. Aid “to the last kilometre”, “un-mediated aid”, and other expressions reflect this aspiration for greater direct proximity to the field.

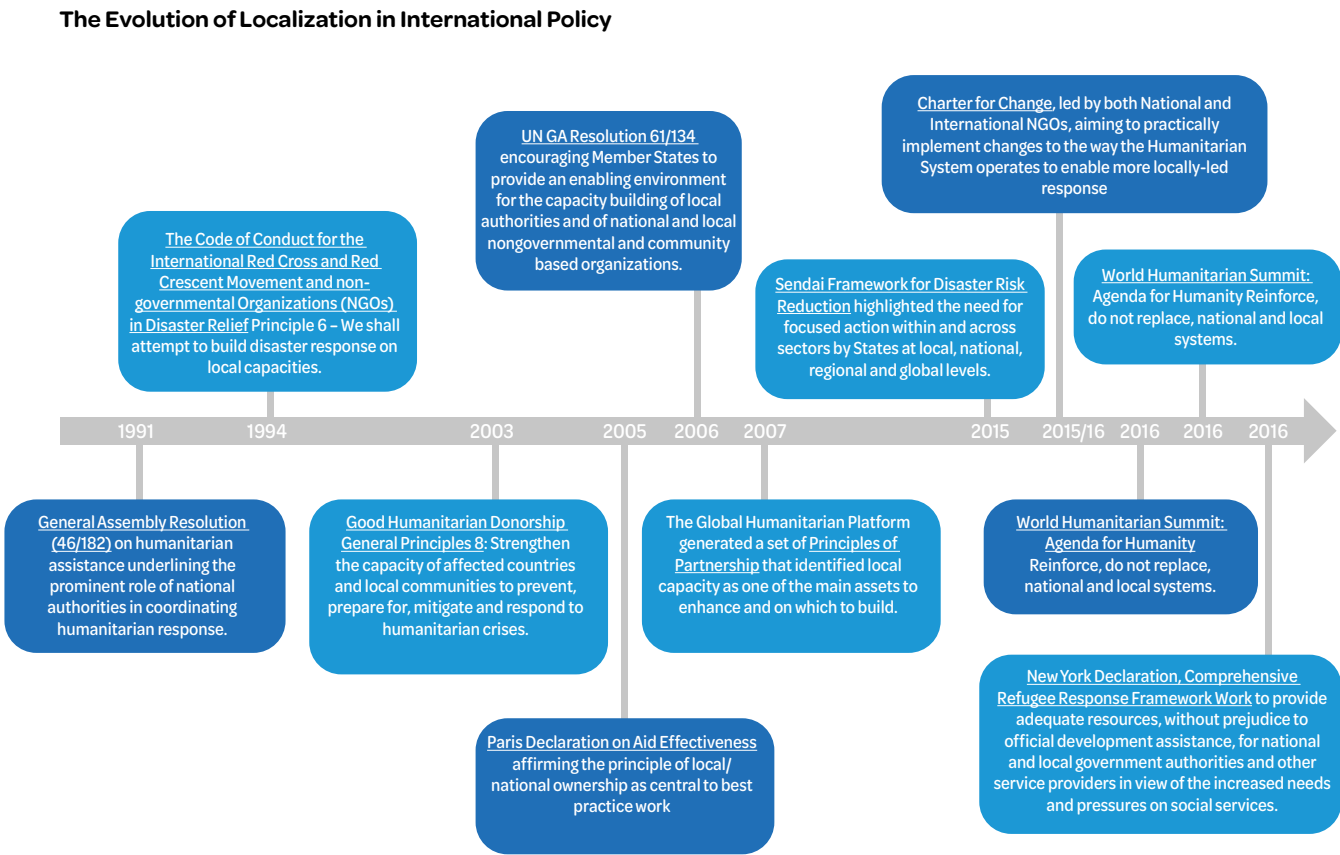
It should be noted that this wish for localisation is not limited to the international solidarity sector, but it falls more globally within the growing desire for a return to the “territory”, for more actions at local level by the public authorities and civil society, and promotion of local actors. It also echoes the logic of “disintermediation”¹ and “deinstitutionalisation”, which notably accompanies digital growth, and where the added value of intermediary institutions which might “shield” a direct links is questioned. It is through this dual logic that one can understand the emergence of different “citizen movements” which distance themselves from traditional volunteer settings, and promote informal organisations, closer to the ground. We will return in more detail to these aspirations, how they are expressed and their limitations.

For international NGOs, localisation is mainly perceived as the principle of direct financing of local civil society organisations (OSC). Nevertheless, the ambition of localisation is broader, it affects all local actors, be they public, private or from civil society. The promotion of localisation is intertwined more globally with ideas about the role of States, the principle of alignment to national priorities and the debates on aid effectiveness.

1. Briefly, disintermediation consists of “cutting out intermediary actors”. Thinking on disintermediation is today largely dominated by acknowledgement of the disruptive effects of companies in the digital sector on whole value chains (e.g. Uber; Airbnb, Amazon, etc.) The link between the emergence of digital technology and disintermediation is therefore strong in today's society. In the aid sector, disintermediation refers to the fact of cutting out actors operating between donors and persons who are targets of aid, among whom international NGOs are in the first line.

The diagram below, provided by ICVA (Localisation Examined. An ICVA Briefing Paper. 2018) shows the various filiations which feed the concept of localisation.

FIGURE 1: THE CONCEPT OF LOCALISATION, ORIGIN AND PROGRESS



Source: ICVA

The first direct references to the principle of localisation

In our literature review, the first mention of the term “localisation” appears in a 2012 report by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). Moreover, that report claims responsibility in developing the term.

The terminology of localisation goes on to make a real breakthrough as part of the preparation for the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in Istanbul. This term appears with notable frequency in the productions of the High Level Panel set up by the Secretary General of the United Nations (see below).

“ ‘Localising aid’ means channelling aid to recipient-country entities. These entities might be public (ministries, parliament, accountability bodies and local government) or private (civil society organisations, media, non-governmental organisations and the for-profit sector)

The preparation of the WHS in Istanbul

In 2012, Ban Ki Moon, then Secretary General of the United Nations, proposed the organisation of the first World Summit on humanitarian action after acknowledging “the growing number of people in crisis and the dramatic increase in funding requirements”².

The process leading to the WHS included, “three years of extensive consultations reaching more than 23,000 people in 153 countries” and the publication of a report: “Restoring humanity: global voices calling for action”.

If the term “localisation” is not present in this report, the spirit of localisation within it is strong. It includes the aim to develop “objectives to increase direct and foreseeable financing provided to national and local actors and to bring to the latter long-term support in order to develop the skill they need to find finance and to manage it.”³



The participants have underlined repeatedly the need to expand direct funding of local and national NGOs. One of the main recommendations on funding focused on establishing regional mechanisms appropriate to accelerating and rendering more

flexible the funding available for humanitarian preparation and intervention, so that, above all, local and national organisations receive funds allowing them to bring aid and strengthen their structural capacity.

Regional consultation for West and Central Africa .
Final report, June 2014.



Ahead of the WHS, the concept of “The Grand Bargain” emerged. In May 2015 a High-Level Panel was set up to respond to the challenge of the shortage of funding for humanitarian action and to define the objectives of the Istanbul WHS. The Grand Bargain seeks to negotiate an agreement between the five biggest donors and the six largest agencies of the United Nations.

The commitments of the Grand Bargain

The Grand Bargain drives forward the issue of localisation, and links it - among other things - to a financial commitment (see Grand Bargain quote).

The target of 25% should be considered in light of the finding that only a minuscule share of humanitarian assistance was provided in 2014 by local organisations. “Based on the limited data available, only 0.2 per cent of international humanitarian assistance was reported as channelled directly to local organisations in 2014”⁴



Achieve by 2020 a global, aggregated target of at least 25 per cent of humanitarian funding to local and national responders as directly as possible to improve outcomes for affected people and reduce transactional costs.

(The Grand Bargain – A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need, Istanbul, Turkey, 23 May 2016)



2. One humanity: shared responsibility, Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit , 2 Feb 2016, p.5 - <https://undocs.org/fr/A/70/709>
3. Ibid.
4. Too important to fail - addressing the humanitarian financing gap. High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing Report to the United Nations Secretary-General, January 2016, p.19 https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/resources/2017/Jul/Too_important_to_fail_addressing_the_humanitarian_financing_gap.pdf

Reactions following Istanbul

After the 2016 WHS, many organisations and institutions discussed the results obtained. International humanitarian organisations appeared generally satisfied, as shown in the Charter for Change quote.

The NEAR network, founded just before the WHS, by way of contrast quickly drew attention to the gaps in the commitments of the Grand Bargain, especially in regard to the definition of local actors. In an open letter to the Director of OCHA (9 Sept. 2016) NEAR says: “Our definition of “local and national” is those organisations that are locally rooted, founded, headquartered and who respond to crises in their own communities”⁵.

“

We the undersigned organisations, working in humanitarian action welcome the extensive consultations and discussions which have been generated during the World Humanitarian Summit process. We believe that now is the time for humanitarian actors to make good on some of the excellent

recommendations arising through the WHS process by committing themselves to deliver change within their own organisational ways of working so that national actors in countries in the global south can play an increased and more prominent role in humanitarian response.

(Charter for Change: Localisation of Humanitarian Aid)

”

5. http://www.near.ngo/imgtemp/downloadfile/near_letter_IASC_09_09_2016_1544521545.pdf

2. LOCALISATION DEBATE:
TWO SOURCES FOR TWO VISIONS

Different schools of thought about international aid influence the thinking about localisation. We notice in particular two outlooks for consideration, each of which will promote localisation according to very differently constructed arguments.

First vision:
Localisation as a way of shifting power relations

Localisation can be understood as a way of rebalancing relations between international and local actors by giving the latter a more central role in organising aid. It aims to bring about a transformation of power relations between actors, by shifting control over the financial resources and decision-making. This discourse is generally accompanied by strong critique of the power system which organises international aid. Some claim an “oligopolistic” position on the part of aid actors, with finance being concentrated around a small handful of actors, as highlighted, for example, by the British organisation ODI.⁶



“The major humanitarian players constitute a highly centralised and exclusive group. Indeed, the funding attracted by UN agencies and large INGOs is so disproportionately large compared with medium-sized and small international NGOs, as well as national and local organisations, that, when taken together with their donors, they can justifiably be called an oligopoly.” (ODI)

This critique is also accompanied, for some authors, by a broader statement on the values and the uniform model which govern international aid. For example, Pierre Micheletti (former president of Doctors of the World MdM) uses the provocative idea of “De-Westernisation of aid”.

The term «De-Westernisation» denounces this situation of oligopoly, and its consequences as a model of intervention.



“The idea of localisation is not part of a strictly operational logic.” It is also a desire to take the lead in the organisation of aid and strategic decisions.” (URD)

Therefore, models of intervention should be broadened (beyond the Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon NGO models that dominate international aid) by valuing more resources and skills in the partner countries.

6. *Time to let go, Remaking humanitarian action for the modern era*, ODI - April 2016



Non-governmental humanitarian aid is today dominated by a model of organisation, financing and operational visibility that identifies it clearly as coming out of countries in the West. It must therefore evolve and adapt.

(Tribune de P. Micheletti, Le Monde, August 2016)



The price to pay is a certain kind of “De-Westernisation” - in a political sense of the term, and not in reference to the culturalist theses of Samuel Huntington.

We also find, as part of this trend of questioning the current architecture of aid, suggestions of the risk of a “tyranny of aid”, particularly visible in emergency situations, which would result in the destruction of local intervention capacities and dialogue with local actors not being sufficiently factored in. “Oligopoly”, “tyranny”, “De-Westernisation” bring into question power relations and give to localisation the appearance of a project to reorganise aid with a strong political dimension.

→ Limitations and conditions put forward

Politically, it is difficult to be against localisation. Who could be against the principle that local actors should be in charge of responding to issues that affect them in the first instance? This claim appears guided by simple good sense. Donors and international NGOs, for the most part, are in favour of a form of aid localisation: the strongest support for local actors, especially civil society actors. Most international INGOs have integrated localisation in their discourse and collective advocacy. INGOs also put forward long-standing practices contributing to localisation. However, they also point to a series of limitations around the principle of localisation, and conditions for it to be approached in a relevant way.

The need to preserve a dynamic of global solidarity

INGOs tend firstly to call into question a notion of localisation that is too binary, which opposes NGOs in the global north and south, and which would not take into account the nature of the actors and the projects developed. To overcome this binarity, one of the proposals, notably by Coordination SUD, consists of defining NGOs based on their mission (local, national and international activities) rather than their administrative status (local, national or international organisation).



“(The idea of localisation) does not take into account the increasingly frequent internationalisation of salaried teams being mobilised on projects by French NGOs, of the decentralisation of decision making

in the countries of intervention (...) or of the internationalisation of governance of structures.”
(Coordination SUD, Position Paper)



With regard to Down's Syndrome, for example, our role has been to bring experience from elsewhere in order to shift cultural patterns. This allows us to change thinking on these matters, and the way in which the education system approaches them.

(French NGO)



Key donors often criticise our head offices as being burdensome. But we have 120 financial audits per year, we have to give repeated explanations of our procedures. The donors impose complex industrial procedures on us but question the burdens that come with them.

(French NGO)



INGOs also often point out the danger of seeking in excess to “localise” actions and issues, and thereby missing out on an aspiration to build global solidarity, based on collaboration between civil societies and on collective mobilisation. Again, we see this idea that an overly literal approach to aid localisation risks going hand in hand with a loss of mobilisation in civil society at a global level. In this way, localisation would risk weakening the desire for cooperation (already hard to establish nowadays) between civil societies.

The argument is therefore that the underlying logic, pushed to its limit, could come down to a vision of “each to their own home”, which is not in tune with the international solidarity sector. Localisation has the potential to play a transformative role in 21st century solidarity, however, the challenge is not to “burn bridges” but to find a new equilibrium. What shape will it take and what will be the role of INGOs?

The role of international civil society in innovation and mediation

INGOs also point to the limitations of the “political” localisation project, highlighting the importance of their position vis-à-vis local civil society organisations. They highlight in particular their wealth of international experience, which can be used to innovate with partners and to put local practices into perspective. This diversity of experience also allows the creation of a “cultural shift” which could be beneficial to issues that are closed off at the local level. What is being stressed here is the importance of international expertise, and the process of capitalising on knowledge and experience which the INGOs might leverage.

INGOs may also underline their greater neutrality, or at least a greater room for manoeuvre, in some contexts of local conflict or where the actors are heavily politicised. This neutrality may also be useful to play a role of watchdog, by guaranteeing a form of independence vis-à-vis public actors. It can also be useful in facilitating dialogue at local or national level, by preserving, in the role of a third party, a space for dialogue which is different from existing institutional spaces.

Second vision:

localisation as a response to the challenge of aid effectiveness and as a way of reducing “transaction costs”

Localisation can also be understood as part of a wider logic of disintermediation of aid. The key argument put forward questions the “added value” of INGOs, considering the transaction costs that accompany their position as intermediaries. The promotion of localisation becomes, for instance, a way of questioning the heavy operational costs of INGOs and goes hand in hand with the implicit idea that INGOs “get fat” on development, through their position as intermediaries.

This outlook can be read in parallel with the emphasis by a number of “international organisations of the global south” (ENDA, BRAC, etc.) on their solidity, and their capacity to manage funds and activities directly. It is accompanied by a demand for more openness around competitive calls for proposals, allowing for more organic approaches to project quality assurance. In this sense, the outlook is less focussed on strengthening local actors than it is on choosing the most effective or efficient actor according to projects and contexts. The approach put forward here is above all focussed on the reduction of costs, by creating competition between international actors and “cheaper” local actors.

This tendency is linked to the spread of the Anglo-Saxon New Public Management in the international solidarity sector, which aims to ensure an optimal cost-efficiency ratio. This approach today influences the humanitarian sector to a great extent, by giving centrality to the question of results and the added value of every actor in the results chain.

→ Limitations and conditions put forward

Localisation as a way of improving the cost-result relationship comes up against two main obstacles. On one hand, there is the question of whether local actors have the capabilities to provide this improved relationship between cost and results. On the other, there are potential risks for funders directly financing local actors (including fiduciary risk). We will look at these two points next.

Examining the capacity of local actors to be direct implementors, and means for strengthening them

Implementing localisation entails that the flow of funds going directly to local actors increases rapidly. Specifically, the commitment made by the key donors of international aid within the framework of the Grand Bargain to direct 25% of their funding to local actors by 2020 means that they will receive a very significant influx of funds in the short term. To some observers, it is possible that this could be “potentially problematic”. Numerous sources⁷ suggest that organisations’ institutional capacity must grow at the same rate as their capacity for action. In order for localisation to work, in many cases, local actors must grow their institutional apparatus (governance, management, training, human resources in both numbers and roles, etc.) at the same time as the volume of their activities. Failing to take this into consideration risks ultimately weakening local actors.

Therefore, localisation must face several challenges:

- ▴ It must come with an increase of institutional capacities of local actors (except in cases where the national civil society is already endowed with strong capabilities), including the ability to directly interface with donors.
- ▴ In many cases, it must also come with the transfer of expertise (methodology, technique) which may not necessarily have happened in cases where local actors acted as sub-contractors.

This leads to the question of the means allocated to local actors, which allow them to play a new role and have more power. It directly raises the question of institutional development of CSOs in the global south, and the existence of dedicated funding (*core funding / unrestricted support*).

The NEAR network (Network for Empowered Aid Response) is one of the collective actors that most clearly underlines the gap in modes of funding. The objective proposed by the network is to allow local NGOs to receive 10% of unrestricted funding (for the projects they carry out), as an indicator of the collective commitment to bolster their capacity. Other types of collective initiatives also focus on directly bolstering local actors. An example of this is the Shifting the Power project (supported by a Coalition of NGOs: ActionAid, Oxfam, Christian Aid, etc.), which seeks to trial new models for strengthening capacity among some 50 local partners.



UN agencies and Northern NGOs provide zero or limited and discretionary unrestricted funding to a local NGO, with no clear collective target, while receiving unrestricted funding to fund their operational costs. While the narrative is

that local and national actors don't have capacity and there is a risk but the ability to control and develop capacity is undermined by not paying unrestricted and overhead expenses to strengthen capacity. (NEAR- “Localization of Aid”)

We see this preoccupation with more direct accountability for strengthening the capacity of local actors in the commitments of the Grand Bargain: *« along with financing that is unearmarked (unrestricted), increased multi-year funding to ensure greater predictability and continuity in humanitarian response, to incorporate capacity strengthening in partnership agreements ».*

Growing demands from donors on risk management

Most donors today find themselves managing growing risks, with regards to both security and finance, when it comes to the selection and support to local actors. The risk is linked to the nature of the local actors supported, the diversity of their activities and the trustworthiness of their partners. In some crisis affected regions such as the Sahel, donors are



We’re seeing a move away from NGOs of the global north that find it hard to justify their intermediary status. Previously, in Africa, the technical ability was not there. But things have changed. We are audited by Deloitte and KPMG...

(Daouda Diouf, Director of ENDA Santé Senegal)



7. Among which figure prominently the preparatory work for the 2016 WHS, for example, the reports “Too important to fail—addressing the humanitarian financing gap. High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing Report to the United Nations Secretary-General, January 2016” and “World Humanitarian Summit secretariat, Restoring Humanity: Synthesis of the Consultation Process for the World Humanitarian Summit (New York, United Nations, 2015)”.

“

If the donors put in place direct partnerships with CSOs in the global south, they are going to have to do our job: they will have to evaluate their capacity, supervise their reporting, assist with their capitalisation, etc. There is a risk that this could be rather difficult for them.

(French NGO)

”

especially fearful of the links between local CSOs and armed actors or terrorist groups. This suspicion is often accompanied by a weak structural capacity to check the workings of these local actors and the nature of their partners⁸.

The risk is also tied to the solidity and reliability of these local actors: their capacity for management and reporting, their accounting certification, their governance, etc. International NGO appear, then, to be both “filters and guarantors” of local actors involved in projects supported by donors. This is one of the most “pragmatic” elements of the added value put forward by some INGOs. This arrangement allows many local CSOs, even small ones, to access international funding while limiting the associated risks (co-financing, administrative requirements, etc.)

The legitimacy of this position of guarantor is tied to the size and financial soundness of international NGOs and their ability to manage projects, but also to their knowledge of local actors and their capabilities.

The ambition of donors to support large-scale projects

Many donors would like at the same time to grow the absorption capacity of local actors, and to commit greater funds to fewer actors (for example, through consortiums). Experience shows that it is far from being a given that this race would be favourable to local actors.

In order to honour their commitments, donors risk having to work at several speeds, by committing on the one hand to growing funds for consortiums (most often led by INGOs), and on the other, by committing smaller funds, going directly to local actors, by way of localisation.

8. Localisation of aid: are INGOs walking the talk? - Shifting the power Project



© Joshua Watson on Unsplash

2.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK DIMENSIONS AND KEY CRITERIA OF LOCALISATION

1. How to define localisation? What dimensions should be taken into consideration?
2. What are the variables that define localisation?
3. The localisation ecosystem

Having analysed the debate on localisation, we will now define a conceptual framework for approaching it. As we have seen, localisation is a relatively vague term, as yet not very widely known, to which quite different (and often quite narrow) meanings are attached.

In the first instance, we will revisit the framework for defining localisation, seeking to approach the concept in all its dimensions.

Next, we will review the different criteria that, in the field, can be decisive to operationalise the ambition of localisation.

1. HOW TO DEFINE LOCALISATION?
WHAT DIMENSIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION?

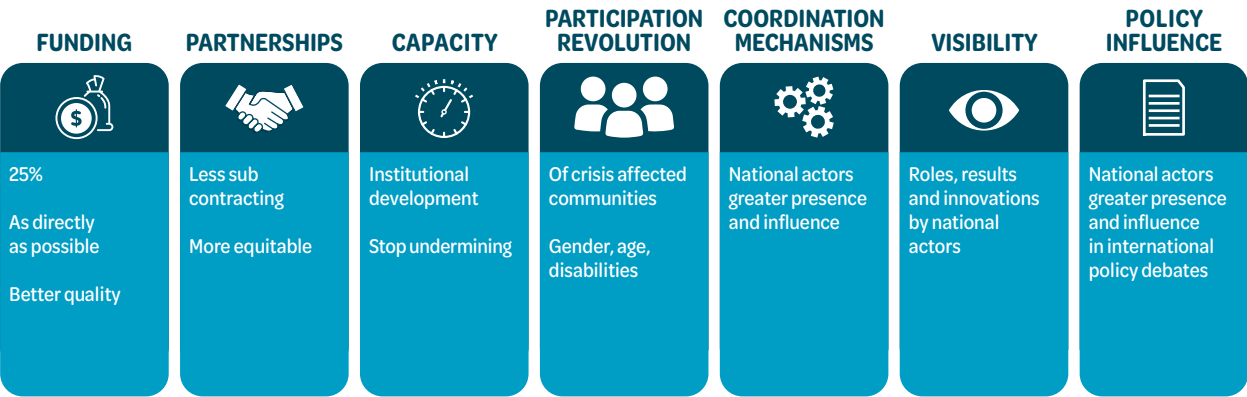
The Grand Bargain has shone the spotlight onto the concept of localisation, but it is not clearly defined. For some analysts, this explains in part why it remains to this day a unifying concept. At first sight, localisation central principle is often perceived to be project financing that is directly accessible to local actors. However, this definition quickly became seen as too narrow, which pushed different NGOs and NGO platforms to try to define the different aspects of localisation that should be taken into account.



- Seven different interpretations of the process of localisation:
- providing more direct funding to existing national and local actors;
 - empowering affected people as humanitarian actors themselves;
 - increasing decision-making power at operational levels;
 - better linking international action to national and local realities;
 - investing in partner capacities;
 - opening up space for participation in coordination mechanisms;
 - reducing administrative barriers to accessing international funds
- (Localisation examined:
An ICVA Briefing Paper. 2018)

Thus, for example, in a recent document ICVA listed no fewer than 7 main focus of localisation (different but certainly not contradictory). This desire to define the different aspects of localisation can be found in “Shifting the Power”. This project describes localisation as presented in figure 2.

FIGURE 2: ASPECTS OF LOCALISATION SUGGESTED BY SHIFTING THE POWER



“Aid localisation is a collective process involving the different stakeholders of the humanitarian system (...) which aims to return local actors (local authorities or civil society) to the centre of the system (...). “In addition to enabling a more effective and efficient humanitarian response, the

long-term aim of localisation is to build the resilience of crisis-affected communities by establishing links with development activities.”
(More than the money – Localisation in practice, URD)

Other organisations have sought to offer definitions. Among them, of particular note is that of URD:



« Localisation refers to a series of measures which different constituent parts of the international humanitarian system should adopt in order to rebalance the system more in favour of national actors, so that a recalibrated system works to the relevant strengths of its constituent parts and enhances partnership approaches to humanitarian action »

IN SUMMARY

By analysing these different definitions of localisation, and questioning our understanding of the concept, we notice that three very different “entry points” can be observed:

- Entry through the project, which remains the main instrument of aid, and the prism through which one sees everyone’s roles.
- Entry through the local actors, the question of their capacity to act, their autonomy and visibility.
- Entry through local demand, in other words, the expression of the local needs and priorities.

On the following pages we try to better distinguish these entry points, which could shape thinking and stimulate debate on localisation. While these entry points are largely complementary, each of them poses the question of localisation in different ways.

A consortium of INGO⁹ (ActionAid, CAFOD, CARE, Christian Aid, etc.) suggested the following definition in 2005:

Entry through the project

For better or worse, the project remains the dominant framework of aid interventions. Localisation raises questions about the respective positions of the different partners (INGO / local actors) within projects:

- Who receives the funding linked to the project? How does each partner in the project allocate their funding? (e.g. administrative costs, operating costs, carrying out activities)
- Who takes the decisions linked to the project? Including operational and strategic decisions?
- Who implements the project activities? Which activities are handled by which actors?



Entry through the project and especially the matter of direct access to funding by local actors is the focus of much of the current thinking around localisation.

Entry through the actors

Many testimonials have highlighted the need to analyse localisation beyond the “project” framework, by questioning first and foremost the evolution of local actors themselves, to understand their progression and the evolution of power relations.

The resulting questions might be:

- Do local actors have the possibility to strengthen their institutional capacities? Do they receive core funding support beyond the funding linked to the project activities?
- Do local actors have the possibility to strengthen their technical and operational skills (the skills to set up interventions, to take on the entire cycle of the project, to improve their governance, etc.)? Will they gain autonomy in building their strategies and their methods of intervention?
- Have these actors bolstered their visibility and influence vis-à-vis the local population, the partners in the sector, the public authorities, and international donors all at the same time?

“For us it is not a question of implementing projects but supporting the actors. We have a problem with the word ‘project’, it’s something we encounter time and again.”

(International NGO)

9. *Missed Opportunities No More: An Agenda for Change – localisation of aid and humanitarian partnerships*, quote in *Opportunity Knocks: Realising the potential of partnerships in the Nepal earthquake response* – November 2016 © ActionAid, CAFOD, CARE, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Tearfund - 2015

- ↘ Entry through local actors is quite widespread, particularly within development NGOs who build a large part of their intervention model on strengthening the skills of their partners. It should be noted that these organisations endeavour more and more to develop “actor-oriented” planning and monitoring tools (Action-Oriented Change, Outcome Mapping, etc.), indicating their willingness to go beyond the single logic of the “project”.
- ↘ Additionally, a series of initiatives linked to localisation, currently supported by INGOs or NGO consortia adopt this key focus of strengthening the capacities of local actors: such is the case of the Start initiative led mainly by ACF, the “Shifting the Power” initiative, led mainly by Christian Aid and the Elnha Initiative (Empowering Local and National Humanitarian Actors) led mainly by Oxfam.
- ↘ Entry through the capacities of local actors displaces the discussion about finance. It is less a question of who receives the money, than about the existence of dedicated support for capacity-strengthening and local partner operations. As we shall see, this is one of the main demands of the local partners who were interviewed.

Entry through the demand

Other testimonials seek for their part to place localisation beyond the “project” and “actor” logic, in order to examine first and foremost the local process for defining needs and building the “demand”; but also for placing the response to the local demand in a wider local/national strategy (public policy, etc.)

The resulting questions might be:

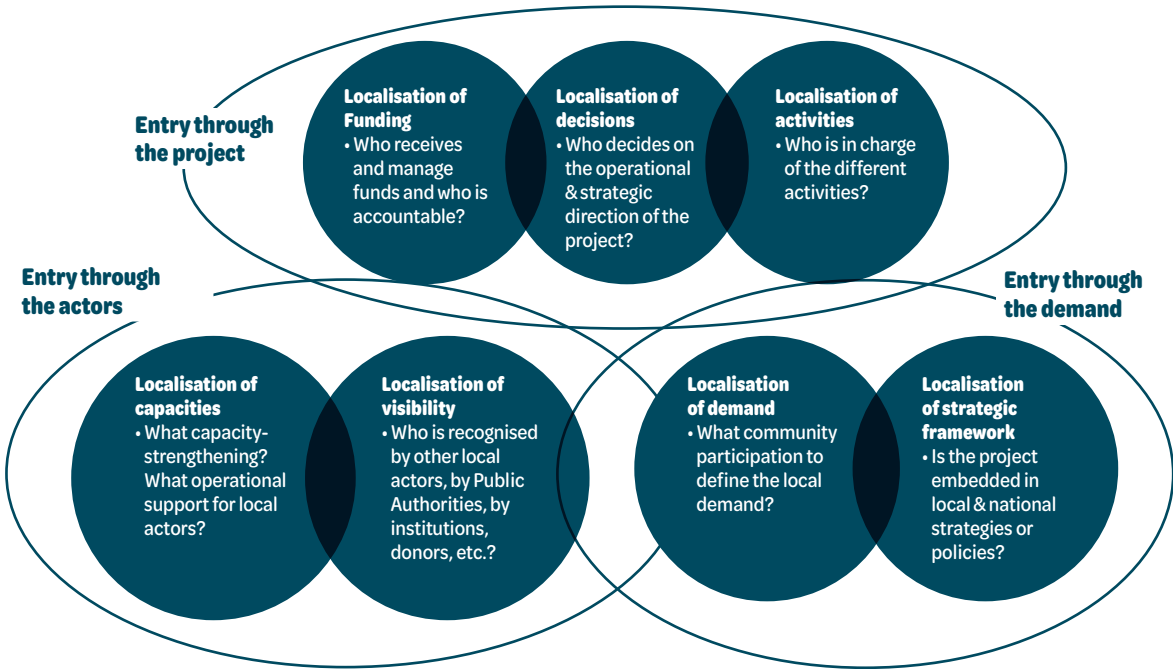
- Do local communities participate effectively in defining their needs and the activities in order to respond to those needs, are they involved in monitoring the activities, etc.?
- Is the action part of the framework of a larger strategy, defined and executed with public authorities (local or national)?

↘ This entry point of localisation “through the demand” is a strong tendency in the thinking on the strategies of the international solidarity sector, and it questions the very language used in the sector. For example, it challenges the use of the term “beneficiary”, someone who passively receives external aid, to rather make them an “actor” who responds to their own needs. It is based on the assumption that the populations in question have a knowledge of their needs and “experience-based expertise” which places them at the frontline for designing and implementing projects. In other words, it is based on the principle that “those who lack resources are not without resources”.

↘ This entry point of localisation “through the demand” can to a large extent join the challenge of strengthening local actors, but it could also distance itself from it. This depends in particular on the ability of the different local partners to build a collaborative approach, and of their knowledge of the territories in which the action is carried out, etc. Localisation “through the demand” broaden the local actors envisaged, by avoiding a focus on local civil society and authorities only, and to examine participation of the local communities themselves.

We will represent these different dimensions of localisation as follows.

FIGURE 3: DIMENSIONS OF LOCALISATION: PROJECT / ACTORS / DEMAND



2. WHAT ARE THE VARIABLES THAT DEFINE LOCALISATION?

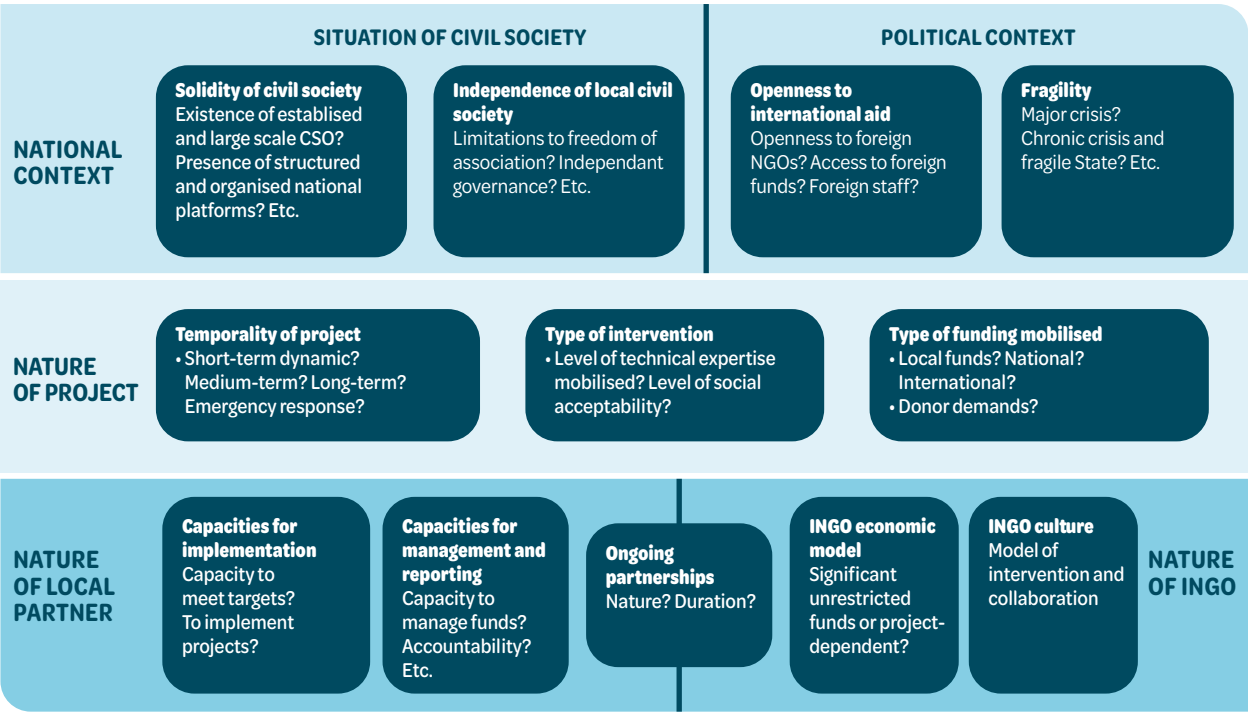
We now want to cast light on the key variables which influence what shape localisation takes in different contexts, to gain a deeper understanding of the situations in which it is possible and relevant.

The case studies and interviews have helped to identify a series of variables around 4 major axes.

- The national context (the situation around civil society, political context)
- The nature of the project or collaboration (the temporality of the project, the type of intervention, types of funding)
- The nature of the local partner (capacity to manage the entire project cycle, governance, solidity of the existing partner)
- The nature of the INGO (the INGO’s economic model, the INGO’s partnership culture)

The diagram below sets out these criteria in more detail.

FIGURE 4: KEY CRITERIA INFLUENCING LOCALISATION



IN SUMMARY

No single criterion can fully explain the dynamic of localisation. Each criterion is largely determined by the others (links between civil society, the political context

of the country, the capacities of the local partner, etc.) It is therefore the combination of criteria which determines the different forms and levels of localisation.

“

“We are 100% project-dependent. We do not depend on the generosity of the public. We have partnerships with local associations but essentially based on projects. Suddenly we go from long term support to these associations.”

(French NGO)

”

“

“We have applied the principle that after co-financing once, or at the most twice, the partners much be leading autonomously. And we then adopt a more strategic supporting role, especially with regard to the challenges of advocacy.”

(French NGO)

”

We will review each of the criteria in turn, to analyse how they affect the level of localisation in the field. In the following section, based on case studies, we will try to understand how combinations of criteria can favour specific aspects of localisation.

The nature and strategy of the international NGO (INGO)

Many NGOs have a long history of supporting local actors of different kinds (local NGOs, associations of producers, local collectives, etc.), whatever their size or the sector in which they operate. The policy of some INGOs is to not have a direct presence in the field, favouring partnership with local actors. However, many organisations also have a direct intervention strategy as core to their INGO identity, and work through teams composed of a very large majority of national employees.



Among the criteria that seems to be decisive, we mainly identified the partnership culture of the INGO and the organisational model of its teams.

It should be noted that many INGOs have also “localised” in the last 10 years, by opening branches under national law or by inviting local actors to join their networks. In many countries, this localisation of INGOs is viewed with caution by local actors who see that the finance available locally goes increasingly to local INGO branches. These INGOs strategies not only have different consequences for localisation, but they also open up the debate on the question of who is and who is not local. It was in order to influence this debate that NEAR proposed the following definition. “Our definition of “local and national” is those organisations that are locally rooted, founded, headquartered and who respond to crises in their own communities”.



The portion of non-affected funds which INGOs have at their disposal is also important.

Having a significant part of unrestricted funding allows INGOs to be less dependent on donors’ procedures. We find that this leads in particular to more flexibility in the reallocation of funds to their local partner, and sometimes fewer demands and micro-management. This can also ensure more continuous processes of capacity-strengthening (especially during transition phases between project financing periods), or allow for specific capacity-strengthening which is hardly or never covered by the donors. Organisations such FERT or SCCF, for example, whose operations are partly self-funded, can in this way be reallocate almost 100% of the funding to their partner, retaining a technical assistance role. More globally, having significant flexible funds can allow some INGOs to envisage more easily repositioning themselves, to assume more readily the idea of withdrawing from the role of principal recipient of donor funds, in favour of a role supporting and partnering with local organisations.

The nature of local actors

Localisation depends in part on the capacity of local actors to take direct responsibility for the different aspects described in the previous section: direct management of finances, carrying out the activities, etc. However, we find that this question of local capacities and their evaluation is one of the sources of tension.

Localisation also relies on the willingness of local partners to change their organisations in order to be capable of assuming this responsibility. We hear in the testimonials that some local partners prefer not to seek to set up large teams, believing that they will not be in a position to maintain some “support” positions over time (positions that can require quite a

10. It is to be noted that this debate is not at present being tackled head on by international NGOs. Therefore, it is one of the “elephants in the room” of localisation.

high level of competence - accounting, management, etc.); especially if the organisation is still fragile or if it is located in areas with significant security issues.

On the pages that follow we shall see how in Burkina Faso there are few NGOs with national scope. These national organisations have little autonomy, they struggle to mobilise their own funding, and they very often remain in the role of service-providers vis-à-vis the international NGOs acting in their country. Conversely, in Bangladesh, large organisations have been able to emerge since the 1970s (such as BRAC), and structure themselves within collective platforms. Nevertheless, these organisations still rely heavily on external aid, and they struggle to find their place in the national spaces of aid coordination.

However, if the nature of the local partner is an important criterion, it should be seen in combination with others. Robust national organisations cannot emerge without dedicated modes of funding or INGO partner strategies allowing them to move quickly towards localisation.

The project type



Localisation is also largely influenced by the type of project carried out in the field. In particular, the localisation question is perceived differently in humanitarian and development projects.

This schism persists despite the fact that many NGOs have become “multi-phase” in response to the multiplication of crises, despite the increasing level of participation by development NGOs in response to the crises, and despite the actors working closely together in reflective spaces (platforms, summits, etc.)

Nevertheless, the strong impression remains in many testimonials that humanitarian aid actors and development actors intervene with different frames of reference, and that this has important repercussions on the perspectives on localisation. They note in particular that the humanitarian frame of reference is first and foremost based on effectiveness in the initial stages (saving lives, providing essential services) and that it is less attentive to the local fabric (economic actors, local decision makers, etc.) This frame of reference assumes interventions of limited duration that don't marry well with the idea of strengthening local actors.

Furthermore, it is interesting to observe today that some actors involved at the start of the emergency call localisation into question, giving the example that it can be too risky to rely on local actors during the initial period where the objective is to save lives. They prefer to rely on teams from which they know exactly what to expect and when. This position is astonishing if one considers that it is the humanitarian sector, together with the Grand Bargain, that have given a new impetus to the question of localisation.

For its part, the development sector is more favourable to localisation, especially on account of the complex web of partnerships with which it is associated. The frame of reference of development actors is more oriented towards collaboration with local actors, the inclusion of local resources in projects, and it is more long-term, allowing for capacity-strengthening of local actors to be factored in.



Aside from the humanitarian / development distinction, other characteristics relevant to the types of projects can have an influence on localisation.

We note for example that advocacy projects can be more favourable to localisation owing to the fact that they need a visible local actor and a strong national voice. So it is in the interest of all partners in the project to encourage this visibility and local voice.

We also note that localisation can be affected by the technical nature of the project. For example, a project needing to develop new expertise, or a specific methodology can lead to an INGO being more involved (and leaving less space for local actors with fewer skills) during the period when expertise is being developed.

The political context

In Bangladesh, as in many other countries (Chad, Burundi, Egypt, India, etc.) there is currently a government push to tighten control on the activity of CSOs and especially their access to international funding. Politics prevents external NGOs from gaining direct access to beneficiaries and controls the nature of the partnerships that take place between local actors and international partners. In a more general way, the strategy of states vis-à-vis localisation stems from two points in particular: what kind of national civil society does the State want to face? What is the attitude of the State regarding national sovereignty? If the State has a policy of “nationalisation of aid”, it will seek to place restrictions on the presence and direct action of international NGOs, with the aim of having strong national actors without any external interference. In India, for example, the policy of nationalisation of aid obliges INGOs to work with Indian actors who maintain control over steering the projects. Even when these Indian organisations are externally motivated or integrated into the international network of the INGO, they remain autonomous in function, and the INGO takes the position primarily as a provider of support. The challenge of nationalising aid therefore has a direct impact on the level of localisation of projects and the space which international actors can occupy within projects.

Has the State placed restrictions on national fundraising initiatives? Does it facilitate tax exemption systems for organisations with public interest status? (Does the public interest status itself exist and is accessible?) Does it fund significantly national civil society actors? On this point, the analyses of the International Center for Non-for-Profit Law (ICNL) and its *CSO Sustainability Index*¹⁴ can be very useful. In particular, they make it possible to highlight low access to national resources in a large number of countries where INGOs intervene, as well as the even stronger dependence on international funds. The link to national resources plays a direct role both on the level of independence and the robustness of civil society actors, and it is therefore an important variable in localisation.

The situation of the national civil society

One of the key questions is the existence of a civil society which is relatively independent of the political powers, and in a position to express the needs of populations within the public space. This question is intimately linked to the civic space available and the situation of the country in terms of freedom of association and freedom of speech mentioned in the previous lines.

Another key variable is the extent to which localisation features in the discourse of civil society actors, and the existence of collective voices (coalitions, platforms, etc.) which bring strong claims to this area. In the case of Bangladesh, the persistence of the localisation debate, led by national collectives helps to keep localisation at the top of the agenda. NGO collectives have appealed to the self-esteem of organisations and of the sector (see the graphic opposite) as a mobilising strategy in favour of localisation.



Beyond the level of nationalisation of aid, the question of civil society actors of the country having more or less open access to national resources is equally crucial.

14. ICNL and their *CSO Sustainability Index*: <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/democracy-human-rights-and-governance/cso-sustainability-index-methodology>

3. THE LOCALISATION ECOSYSTEM

In the previous pages, we have suggested all of the following:

- framework which sets out in detail the different dimensions of localisation (around three “entry points”: through the project, through the actors, through the demand)
 - and a framework which sets out in detail the key variables which influence localisation (context, nature of the project, nature of the partners, etc.)
- ↘ The combination of these two frameworks allows us to define “the localisation ecosystem”. The term ecosystem aims to highlight both the diversity and the interdependence of the elements that make localisation possible.
- ↘ **It is through this frame of reference that we propose analysing the “story” of localisation**, and how it was translated in the field in the two countries chosen for this study. In the next section, we will use this ecosystem of localisation approach in order to re-establish the case studies and better understand the advances and the blockages observed in the field.



© Edgar do Prim on Unsplash

3.

THE “LIVED EXPERIENCE” OF LOCALISATION PERCEPTIONS, STRATEGIES, EVOLUTION OF PRACTICES IN THE FIELD

1. Perceptions and strategies

2. Localisation in practice: what is the lived experience at project level?

We are focusing this third part on localisation in the field, by triangulating views expressed by local partners and international NGOs mobilised on shared projects. As part of this study, the local partners we have met are essentially local NGOs (L-NGO), because they are the main partners of the six projects that make up the core analysis of this study. In reality, as we have mentioned, in the context of localisation, the circle of local actors is considerably bigger, including local public actors, local civil society organisations in all their diversity, and the local communities themselves. In this section, we try to understand the “reality” of localisation to date in projects in the field, by observing, for each actor, the possible levers and constraints to localisation. We also analyse what can influence the willingness / ability of donors, French NGOs and their local partners to move towards a logic of aid localisation.

PERCEPTIONS AND STRATEGIES

Aid localisation is still, for most of our interlocutors, a little-known concept. The term does not describe the concept clearly. When it is introduced in broad terms, many respondents connect it with the debate on partnerships between the global north and the global south. The level of understanding of the concept is directly linked to the environment of the actors. Thus, in countries like Bangladesh, in which there is an audible debate about localisation, the concept is more widely known and understood, while this is not the case in Burkina Faso. In France, humanitarian actors are abreast of the concept since the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, while those in charge of development NGOs have rarely heard it mentioned, and generally find it to be an opaque expression. As far as vocabulary is concerned, the irony is that the closer one gets to the local level, the less well-known the concept of localisation is. The directors of local NGOs are sometimes familiar with the concept but their employees and beneficiaries do not know the term. Therefore, the study has exposed them to a new word, but not necessarily new ideas.

The perception and strategy of local actors

National respondents like the concept of localisation and the attitudes of international actors on the subject, but they can’t help but suspect a “hidden agenda”. They use various examples to feed their doubts. Firstly, they mention a funding system which, globally, does not allow much support for institutional strengthening of local actors. Other examples rest on visibility and access to donors (can one trust the desire for localisation of an inter-

national organisation that ensures their own continued visibility in some countries to the detriment of local actors? Can one believe the desire for localisation of an international organisation that protects their access to donors?)

Among the local NGOs we met with in Burkina Faso, some have the perception that “localisation is a ploy, a slick way of masking the pre-eminence of INGOs in development cooperation”. They see localisation as the umpteenth manifestation of cooperation policy between the global north and the global south. Some interlocutors think that “donors and INGOs aren’t playing the game but comply to a greater or lesser extent with the contexts of the countries.”

In general, local partners do not place strong pressure on INGOs

In the two countries we are interested in, aid localisation is not a source of serious conflict, especially in the field. Within the scope of our sample, localisation was said to be more of a skirmish than an open conflict.

What was striking was the observation among local and international actors that they need each other:

- In Bangladesh, local actors we met with say that they recognise the specific skills of the INGOs (e.g. ACF and food in emergency situations; HumaniTerra and the operation of field hospitals in emergency situations. etc.).
- In Burkina Faso, several examples show this complementarity with regards to projects, which might sometimes translate as “a marriage of reason between the two parties, with each one trying to further their interests.” Thus, for example, AKNGS¹² knows that without the Nubian Vault Association (AVN) it would not have been able to gain direct access to funding from the French Embassy, even though eligible, because they don’t have all of the technical and organisational attributes. For its part, HI is aware that in order to access funding from the Global Fund it must cooperate with national organisations, and that those organisations are best placed when it comes to national advocacy. Similarly, ASMAE knows that its model will not be scaled up if the Ministry of Education is not convinced. Therefore it is the Ministry of Education who test the pilot programme.

The fight for localisation is rarely confrontational, however, some peaks of tension were noted in the two countries we visited. The Rohingya crisis led to much tension over localisation. United Nations had to calm the situation. These tensions were linked to the fact that there was a lot of money at stake. It should be noted that peaks in tension are systematically observed after great humanitarian crises that attract an influx of external aid (the 2007 tsunami in Indonesia; the 2010 earthquake in Haiti; the Rohingya crisis, etc.)

When it comes to aid localisation, local partners are more inclined to negotiate than to split. Thus, if the national organisations we met in Burkina Faso sometimes feel they are in a subordinate or service-provider role, and if they believe that project planning mechanisms have a tendency to marginalise them, they don’t push to break away, but rather they ask for more recognition, more resources and more equity in how they are treated (by the TFPs and the INGOs), in light of their performance in the field and the importance of the risks which are transferred to them.

The most disputed aspect of localisation is clearly “funding”. The INGOs in our sample were questioned on this topic (particularly about the administrative costs, core funding, the financing of institutional strengthening). Some stated that these financial “demands” don’t go very well, above all if they are premature, for example, if trust has not been built, if the partner lacks skills, etc.

Local organisation strategies to accelerate localisation

We noted first and foremost individual strategies (e.g. ICCV in Burkina Faso) by organisations seeking to improve their skills (mainly in management), the visibility of their activities (with their own websites, etc.), their autonomy, the credibility of their organisation. These individual strategies help to make localisation possible by growing the confidence of external partners towards the local civil society.

12. Gomposom Kombi-naam Association of Sahel (Burkina Faso)

We then noticed strategies for promoting localisation supported by civil society collectives. It is at the level of these collectives that claims around localisation seem to be strongest and most articulate. These collective strategies vary according to the level of development of the local civil society on the one hand, and on the density of the international presence on the other. They are more virulent when the national civil society is strong and the external actors numerous (such as humanitarian crises in countries with strong civil societies). Furthermore, these collective strategies are also international, as is shown by NEAR’s campaign for monitoring localisation (mentioned in previous pages).

- Bangladesh provides us with a concrete example of collective strategies. In this country, the commitments of the WHS and the Grand Bargain are being monitored by national organisations. In August 2017, the Bangladeshi platform, NGOs for WHS (World Humanitarian Summit) and the COAST platform organised a seminar entitled “*Strengthening Civil Society and Promoting Localization Agenda*”, in which they demanded in particular that INGOs:

- withdraw from direct interventions in favour of local organisations
- avoid creating new networks and instead join existing ones
- avoid “importing NGOs” in the field where organisations with the skills for intervention already exist; etc.¹³

- In Burkina, the national platform Spong (interlocutor for the State and the TFPs) is among the most active promoters of localisation. The platform has adopted the position that there is “no reason to offset tax and to roll out the red carpet for INGOs”. They demand the implementation of “*a control grid for INGOs. (What experiences do they have in other countries? What expertise do they bring? What sources of funding do they have? etc.)*” These examples show that, when tensions rise, they go largely beyond the relationships between partners, it is the whole sector which is concerned.

The perception and strategy of international NGOs

The French NGOs we met associate aid localisation with “a new vocabulary for old ideas”. Indeed, the idea of strong national civil societies, built with support from international actors didn’t start yesterday. Furthermore, we note the feeling, especially on the part of development actors, that the principle of localisation comes from the self-criticism of a small number of humanitarian actors, large in size, and somewhat late in their partnership practices.

This gives rise to a certain distance vis-à-vis the subject, which may come from the fact that many are the INGOs who think that they have already made great strides towards localisation, because of the development of their partnership practices or their international structure.

An old debate and new worries

We have not heard from the INGOs whom we met the feeling that aid localisation could be disruptive to their practices, this despite a theoretical agenda of aid localisation with very tight timescales (e.g. the objective of 25% by 2020) If these French NGOs are not experiencing any particular anxiety vis-à-vis localisation, especially with regard to the Grand Bargain commitment of 25% of funding going to local actors in 2020, they do by contrast bear witness to a serious sense of fatigue at the idea of having to constantly prove their added value. Indeed, it is one of the consequences of localisation that once again, the roles and practices of international NGOs are to be brought into question.

Beyond these initial reactions, the French NGOs we met spoke in positive terms about aid localisation and they considered that they have much experience to contribute (which this study confirms). Their experiences of partnerships in all their forms, of working in various contexts (closed countries, crises, etc.), their contact with a variety of donors are an important source of lessons to be valued.

The heads of international NGOs whom we interviewed underlined the risk of a gap between an idyllic – not to say naive – vision of localisation and the reality in the field. For

13. <http://bd-cso-ngo.net/2019/05/14/local-civil-society-demands-equitable-partnership-from-ingos-and-un-agencies/#prettyPhoto>

them, a localisation which is hasty and poorly prepared could be damaging to national civil societies in those countries where they are weak. In fact, several times over, some INGOs took on a protective position towards their local partners against a savage localisation process which would ultimately weaken them. This position seems to us, however, to involve a degree of ambiguity, given that INGOs may also have an interest in the status quo in their relationships with their local partners.

INGOs also stress the weight of procedures (mainly those imposed by the donors) on localisation being put into effect. Several examples confirm this contradiction on the part of some donors between the demand for more localisation and procedures that oblige international NGOs to micro-manage local actors and to limit them to sub-contractual positions.

Context-dependent engagement strategies

French NGOs that we met in Bangladesh and Burkina Faso engage in the localisation debate in different ways. In countries where aid localisation is more of a topic of discussion and tension, the INGOs take a more “bull by the horns” approach. In this way, in Bangladesh, the INGOs have launched initiatives to draw up a road map towards localisation. Such is the case of the Shifting the Power Project, Start, and E initiatives mentioned previously.

Conversely, one sees no similar programmes in the countries where aid localisation is not a source of tension. This leads to the idea that the strengthening of local actors is becoming more a subject of concern for INGOs when they are under pressure. This goes hand in hand with the observation that the relationship between civil societies can “purr” if there is no pressure. From this angle, aid localisation can be seen as a trigger.

The ambiguous position of donors

First and foremost, it is striking to observe that the commitment set by the Grand Bargain (*“Achieve by 2020 a global, aggregated target of at least 25% of humanitarian funding to local and national responders as directly as possible”*) has not been followed up to now by announcements from the signatories (including donors) to explain how they see their commitment being put into effect. It is even more striking that the time scale is short. One would expect to see the appearance of new instruments and procedures, followed by animated debates on accounting methods for tracking the 25%.

The donors met in the context of this study (AFD, Fondation de France) state their willingness to put aid localisation into effect but without it involving official decision making and detailed road maps.

- FDF pursues its ambition (formulated after the Indonesian tsunami) of assigning to local actors the funds collected to respond to crisis. In the case of Nepal, they have taken this approach further (it should be noted that the Nepal response marked a global advance in aid localisation during responses to crises).
- For AFD, the matter of aid localisation still remains relatively marginal in internal debates. It seems above all else to have arrived unbidden “from outside”, through international spaces for debate, notably the OECD DAC. The AFD has made the challenge of localisation part of their Strategic Intervention Framework, without seeking, for now, to associate it with any monetary objectives regarding the percentage of aid allocated to local actors.

We also note that some AFD tools already allow direct financing of CSOs in the global south, notably through calls for sector-based projects, but also through collective programmes like “Programmes Concertés Pluri-Acteurs” (a multi-actor joint programme), which combines support for local projects with strengthening the capacities and collective structuring of local organisations. Funding such as this, however, remains low and relatively marginal compared to the finance packages devoted to French NGOs.

The AFD Department for Partnerships with CSOs (*Division du Partenariat avec les OSC*) today wishes to run pilot actions offering direct support to local partners of

some French NGOs, which are long-established and sufficiently “solid” to take on this type of funding. For this Department, direct support to local partners enables revitalisation of global partnerships, sometimes judged to be too static.

- The European Union has established for all its call for projects two measures:
 - an obligation on international NGOs to submit a tender in partnership with one or two national organisations¹⁴;
 - and a “supporting third party” clause which obliges international NGOs to allot at least 10% of the action’s budget to a local organisation or regional authority for implementing direct actions contributing to the strengthening of their expertise or their operational skills in the field.

On balance, we find that aid localisation has progressed in the political discourse of donors, but they have been less clear about changing their procedures. They still largely do not favour local actors and have a tendency to endorse INGOs, either for implementation, or for supervision of local actors and risk management.

The discrepancy between the donors’ ambition for localisation and their willingness to manage the risks is especially visible for the INGOs whose economic model is based essentially on private aid which allows them more room for manoeuvre when it comes to supporting national organisations.

“

In the context of public finance, the impression is of Western rules being imposed on our partners, which changes the relationships, making them tougher.

(INGO)

”

14. The recent Archipelago programme requires that proposals be submitted by a partnership of two co-applicants, one from the global north, and one from the global south.

2. LOCALISATION IN PRACTICE:
WHAT IS THE LIVED EXPERIENCE AT PROJECT LEVEL?

To make an assessment of the dynamics of localisation in the field, it is first necessary to return briefly to the national contexts of the two countries studied: Burkina Faso and Bangladesh. These contexts determine the room for manoeuvre of national and international actors, and the type of collaboration that they are able to establish in the emergency and development sectors. The boxes below show the major characteristics of each country in relation to the key criteria of localisation. They can be read bearing in mind that Bangladesh is considered in some studies as a country with conditions that are favourable to localisation¹⁵.

BURKINA FASO

This country respects freedom of association but places constraints on the approval process in order to “avoid the amalgams regarding the activities of the voluntary sector”, and to favour the emergence of CSOs that are solid and capable of assuming a role as interlocutor of public actors and TFPs. The public authorities also reserve the right to pronounce nullity of office of an association according to its objectives. In this country there are few NGOs of national scale: some 820 NGOs¹⁶ were listed in 2016, among which around fifty national organisations held a valid establishment agreement. These national organisations have very little autonomy and most of the time play a role of implementing partner, service-provider or sub-contractor. They have difficulties in raising funding or by means of calls for projects, and public financing for these associations is small. They also struggle to meet the criteria and conditions of funding donors (co-funding; governance criteria). Beyond faith-based NGOs (Ocadés,

ODE, etc.), consulting firms who sell their expertise, and some other rare organisations which generate their own funding, most of them are almost entirely dependent on external funding. These organisations benefit from funding from international donors, but in relatively small proportions, at least as far as direct funding is concerned. International NGOs can have a direct presence in Burkina Faso. In order to carry out interventions in Burkina Faso, foreign associations must obtain from the Ministry in charge of public freedoms a decree giving prior authorisation to practise in Burkina Faso, renewable every 5 years. The INGO is required to name a representative and a deputy, at least one of whom is a Burkina Faso national residing in the country. INGOs in Burkina Faso operates in several ways: some work remotely on the basis of partnerships with national civil society organisations and others have national representation (ACF, CRS, Christian Aid, GRET, Help, HI, MDM, Oxfam, Plan, Save, Tdh, Whh, etc.)

We note, however, that for security reasons since 2016, international NGOs are increasingly forced to keep a low profile and to limit their travel to Burkina Faso. The recourse to local CSOs then becomes a necessary alternative. Increasingly, CSOs in Burkina Faso are demanding more recognition, more resources and more equity in their treatment (by the TFPs and by INGOs) in light of their performance in the field and the significance of the risks transferred to them. The legislative framework is favourable and open to developing synergies between national and international CSOs. We are seeing more frequent instances of consortiums being set up to manage projects. This being the case, it has become rare to see international NGOs acting alone in Burkina Faso, other than in fairly specialised domains (healthcare, energy, teaching/ professional development, etc.)

15. Debating the Grand Bargain in Bangladesh - 25 Feb. 2018 – K. Van Brabant & S. Patel
16. MINEFID, November 2017, Contribution des ONG de développement à la mise en œuvre des politiques publiques au Burkina Faso, Rapport 2016

BANGLADESH

Since its independence in 1971, Bangladesh has seen rapid growth and has managed to reduce the level of poverty considerably over the past decade. Civil society organisations are often called “intermediary institutions”. This term assembles NGO, community groups, syndicates, peer support groups and political movements. NGOs have emerged in large part since the war of independence. Often first set up in response to emergency and recovery, they have progressively turned towards development actions, especially in the sectors of education, water, health, food, micro-credit. In general, these organisations are met with quite an open space for initiatives between the needs of the population and the action of the State. One of the world’s largest NGOs, BRAC, emerged in this way, by seeking to respond to the diverse needs of populations. There currently exists a strong government desire to tighten control over the activities of NGOs,

particularly their access to international funding. The image of dependence and complicity of these NGOs with their external donors is giving rise to significant tensions with the government despite their major contribution to the different social sectors. Furthermore, Bangladesh is part of a larger movement of “associative counter-revolution” and reduction of civil spaces. Over the past few years, NGOs have therefore tended to adopt a strategy of “survival” consisting of being less vocal on the violation of rights and challenges to democratic values. NGOs have been able to flourish in Bangladesh thanks to the availability of funds from foreign donors and international NGOs (INGOs). Small organisations tend to receive funding from INGOs, while large organisations receive more funds directly from donors. Some rare NGOs have succeeded in mustering resources through commercial enterprises, but most NGOs at the national level are

supported to a great extent by foreign funding. According to some experts, the omnipresence of these foreign funds has contributed to the creation of a huge NGO sector in the country. The introduction of the 2016 law has brought about confusion. According to Amnesty International, this law will prevent civil society organisations from seeking and securing resources, but would also increase the government ability to illegally interfere in their work and to arbitrarily undo their activities. At the present time, in response to the Rohingya crisis, around 123 local and international NGOs of different sizes are working in camps. Civil society organisations operating in the Rohingya camps and the adjacent communities have formed a coalition of NGOs called CCNF (Cox’s Bazar CSO-NGO Forum). The Forum sought to help establish a shared action plan and national strategy for facing the crisis. However, most of the local NGOs were dissatisfied with the “joint action plan” that emerged.

To present the results of the “lived experience” of localisation in the two countries, we use as our starting point the 3 broad dimensions of localisation mentioned in earlier pages.

Therefore, we will look at the progress of localisation in the following ways:

- “Through projects”: by examining the localisation of project activity execution, the localisation of access to project funding, and the decision-making processes of these projects.
- “Through the actors”: by examining the capacity-strengthening and visibility of the local actors involved in the projects in question.
- “Through demand”: by examining the role of the beneficiaries in identifying the needs, defining the actions carried out, and monitoring the interventions aimed at them.

Entry through the project

LOCALISATION OF ACTIVITIES

In terms of taking charge of the activities, the dynamic of localisation is often fairly advanced. The recurrent pattern for delivering activities generally revolves around the following distribution:

- Local actors ensure the main execution of the project activities. They are in direct contact with the targeted populations, in charge of awareness raising, training and supporting the populations, service delivery, etc.
- The INGO partners ensure that the technical capacities of implementing partners are strengthened (and in general are in charge of the technical and financial coordination of the project).



At the start, when it was AVN who carried things out directly, people used to say, ‘a house without wood! It’s a plain white house, or it’s a grave; that isn’t going to work.’ But since it’s been promoted by a local who built it, who lives there with his wife and children, and you can visit and spend time there, and he will explain the advantages by comparison, the message gets around faster and trust is established.

Ouily Boubacar,
National
Coordinator of the
AVN (Nubian Vault
Association)



The need to entrust local actors with key project activities is a point of consensus. Most of the people asked are united on the notion that proximity of local actors through their integration in the communities, their mastery of the languages, the social recognition which they enjoy, predisposes them to better implementation of field activities and more sustainable impact.

Furthermore, beyond this consensus, several factors reinforce this tendency towards localisation of activities:

- The security challenges in some regions, which prevents the international NGOs from having a direct presence. In Burkina, the Soum Province and the northern part of the province of Oudalan are considered completely inaccessible by INGOs and the Sahel region is a “red” danger zone. Therefore, action in these zones relies mostly on national CSOs.
- The ambition for a change of scale: for some organisations, the localisation of activities is a strategic choice which responds to the ambition to pass on to the next stage. In this way, in the case of AVN (Nubian Vault Association), for example, the field partners are in the process of acquiring the “Nubian Vault” technique and will soon be spreading it. In this context, a technical partnership is preserved by making AVN move from a training to a supporting role according to demand.

However, the localisation of activities still faces several limitations:

- The desire, on the part of some international NGOs, to retain pockets of direct involvement in activities, in some fields or some very specific types of work. As previously mentioned, this desire generally comes from the need to stay connected to “the field”: to maintain skills that come from the field, to not lose a legitimacy that was born from field work, to maintain a direct dialogue with the beneficiaries of the actions carried out, etc. This desire to stay actively involved can be seen as something which contradicts or competes against the dynamic of localising activities to local partners.
- The risk that this localisation of activities could be out of step with the localisation of project funding and localisation of decision-making. As we shall see, local organisations are often positioned as the key implementor, without necessarily being in a position to steer projects. This gives rise to the frequently heard impression of being confined to a simple role of implementing activities.

LOCALISATION OF PROJECT FUNDING

The question asked here is about local actors having direct access to donor funds, for delivery of projects. Evidently, this question crystallises the most controversy, and reveals the most varied opinions between the different types of actors interviewed. The first observation, for the majority of the projects observed, is that international NGOs remain the primary recipients, transferring a portion of the funds to local partners. We found this situation in both Burkina Faso and Bangladesh, despite the difference in contexts of intervention and the actors who are present in the field. In Bangladesh, during the response to the Rohingya crisis, “the first recipients, by a large majority, were a few United Nations agencies and INGOs. Direct funding towards the Bangladeshi CSOs seemed to have been very limited, with the exception of BRAC and the Red Cross.”¹⁷

17. Debating the Grand Bargain in Bangladesh - 25 Feb. 2018 – K. Van Brabant & S. Patel



In Burkina Faso, the situation is even more contrasted. The partnership with INGOs most often remains, for the local NGOs, the only way for them to benefit from external funding. Funding going directly to national actors often consist of small amounts. A significant example: in Burkina Faso, among the projects we analysed, only one local NGO, AKNGS, had received a small

amount of funding directly from the French Embassy. Of interest is that part of this “localised” funding was used to pay for the services that were provided to it by its INGO partner, the Nubian Vault Association. The funds from the French Embassy were transferred to the account of AKNGS, who take care of its management and issue payments to AVN on receipt of reports and invoices.

Here one can see the risk of a logic of two-tier funding: finance for large strategic projects with the INGO / finance in small envelopes for local actions with local organisations. This strategy does not seem aligned with the principle of localisation, in its desire to shift the power.

We observe that the availability of funds aimed specifically at national actors or giving them certain advantages (for example less co-financing being demanded, fewer bank guarantees) contribute to localisation. Some United Nations agencies, the World Bank, or the European Union are more inclined to develop this type of mechanism for funding local actors directly. The large majority of direct funding for local NGOs comes from envelopes managed by the donors’ local offices (EU delegations in the countries concerned, national offices of bilateral cooperations, etc.) showing that localisation makes more progress when financial instruments themselves are localised.

It is interesting to note that among donors, the differences are significant with regard to the portion of funding destined for CSOs and managed directly by local offices. This remains fairly low in France, while it is particularly high in the case of DFID, for example: 62% of bilateral finance from DFID allotted to CSOs was spent via the national offices of the DFID; and 15% of these funds were allotted directly to CSOs from the partner countries.

Several stumbling blocks seem to be slowing down localisation of funding. Financial risk management on the part of donors and INGOs. The challenge of directly financing local actors is first and foremost linked to the level of trust accorded to those local actors, by the donors and by the INGOs. The paucity of management skills, accountability and governance of many local partners seems to be the main argument for the current limitations on localisation of funding.

The argument reflects both:

- the risk taken by donors, in the face of this paucity of management (risk of the lack of traceability of funds, risk of corruption, etc.) in the context of growing demand for accountability and greater management of security and fiduciary risk.
- the risk taken by local actors themselves: the scale of the funding and the activities linked to it can endanger the stability of the organisation; the scale of the management and reporting demands can weaken the organisation, etc.)

The financial solidity of local organisations, and the existence of sufficient funds to withstand delays in funding payments and take on financial risks is therefore a key challenge. For example, in Bangladesh, organisations are confronted with quite long authorizations delays from the NGO Bureau, a regulatory body reporting to the Prime Minister. These delays oblige organisations to pre-finance activities themselves, before they can receive the external funds and reimburse themselves. These financial risks create a threshold for directly accessing external funding, which cannot be reached other than by a few national organisations who are able to raise sufficient funding, or run their operations in part with their own funds (micro-credit actors, etc.)



I have observed several times local organisations who have grasped funding opportunities (often European) and have then sunk due to the amount of the funds to be managed, and to the procedures to be followed.” The problem often surfaces when there is an external audit.

(French NGO)



Several donors shift towards “cascade” funding (which can mean up to 80% of funds going to local partners). The French NGO then simply takes on the role of intermediary donor, and not that of a service provider that would strengthen local capacities.

(French NGO)



“

The main modes of funding to which national CSOs are subjected are not favourable. The funds still pass through screening structures which allow some resources to be filtered off.

(Local Association, Burkina Faso)

”



However, the positioning of INGOs as mere “fund managers” may create frustrations, by confining them to a role of “insurer”, intermediary guarantor in the management of funds. The questioning of the added value of international NGOs may lead some of them to protect their access to funding in quite a defensive way.

This situation gives rise to tension between local organisations and INGOs. For some of the local organisations whom we met, INGOs are akin to “screens” in their access to funding from donors. They denounce a form of unfair competition owing to the privileged access which INGOs have to international funds. “Screens”, “Competitors”, “Mandatory Partners”, these terms used by local actors to describe the place of INGOs in the funding cycle are often unflattering, owing to the exclusive access they have to some donors or certain funds.

LOCALISATION OF THE DECISION-MAKING AND STEERING



Localisation of the decision-making implies that the local partner would be in a central position when it comes to making project decisions both operational and strategic. This situation demands in advance that the local actor should have precise knowledge of the project orientations and of the different budget items which it comprises.

In most project analysed, there are mechanisms for dialogue and shared management between the local actors and the INGO (Steering Committees, consultation times, etc). Indeed, these mechanisms are often put forward by INGOs to evidence shared decision-making, and in effect they are tools for dialogue recognised by local partners. More broadly, a large proportion of local partners recognise in INGOs an increasingly open attitude towards dialogue, and a growing consideration of the questions posed by local organisations. To give an example, the sharing of an office between ACF and its local partner, SARPV, in Bangladesh, has enabled a better understanding of the constraints that each is facing and a strengthening of transparency around the project. However, a large number of testimonials from local partners come back to the lack of overall information about the project, and especially the lack of transparency around the allocation of the different budget lines. In this regard, the only information shared in many projects is the part of the budget allotted to the local partner. We often encounter this demand from local partners for greater budgetary transparency as a prerequisite to a larger role in the management of the project.

In other respects, the testimonials also underline the tendency towards role sharing around steering:

- with on the one hand, a central role by the local partner in steering operationally the activities and in the decisions linked to carrying out these activities in the field;
- and on the other, a central role of the international partner in the strategic steering and in more political decisions linked to the direction of the project (types of activities to carry out, budget share, institutional set-up of the project, etc.).

“

I am not a ‘partner’ because we don’t make decisions together with the INGO, who leads the project and holds the power. I am a puppet.

(Local NGO, Burkina Faso)

”

The fact that they are put in the “second place” within the channels of funding and decision-making can often translate into local organisations feeling “relegated” as service-providers and subordinates. This position creates, in some projects, a kind of disengagement on the part of local partners, even more so when they have low visibility on the budget and no direct link to the donor.

- ⌵ When it comes to project localisation, the main assessment is therefore the discrepancy that often persists between the significant level of localisation of activities (local partners taking direct charge of a large part of the activities) and the continuing low level of localisation regarding project funding and strategic management. This discrepancy can give rise to frustration among local partners, especially the more robust and structured organisations, which may feel they are being placed in a subordinate position, when they consider that they have something to bring to the direction of the project.
- ⌵ This assessment is not the full picture of the “lived experience” of localisation. It tends on the contrary to lock it inside its own contradictions, by making the project the departure and arrival point of localisation. Limited to the “project” approach, each actor has a tendency to place the responsibility for the situation onto others. This assessment encourages us to put into perspective the other aspects of localisation, the entry “through the actors” and “through the demand”, which will allow us to add weight to the analysis of localisation in operation in the field.

Entry through the actors

Localisation aims to place local actors at the centre of the dynamics of development. In this section, beyond the projects carried out, we are interested in the improvements to the capacities and visibility of local partners. This is one of the greatest challenges of localisation from the political angle since it is aimed at the emergence of highly skilled and enduring local actors.

LOCALISATION OF CAPACITIES

An organisation needs a combination of technical, organisational and institutional capacities. Any discrepancies that might exist between these 3 levels will not facilitate the emergence of high-performing and enduring organisations. Yet one of the observations of these case studies points to the existence of these discrepancies.



The first question that arises is about the approach to capacity-strengthening of local NGOs.

Support generally enables growth in the expertise of local actors in terms of technical skills (group learning, library management and illustrated materials with ASMAE; Nubian Vault construction skills with AVN; advocacy skills with HI) but this can be insufficient on the more organisational level. In fact, we see some projects in which activities to strengthen the organisational skills of local actors are secondary to the intervention strategy. Some respondents in Burkina Faso feel that this is part of the INGO strategy to “limit themselves to strengthening the capacities which are useful to the project and to take a drip-feed approach to improving organisational capacities.” This allows them to “keep managing the project”, and in this way, justify their usefulness to the donors. Such a strategy (blocking the localisation of capacities) would, they believe, allow them indirectly to prove that localising the management of projects is impossible. Numerous local organisations put forward the point that having their governance and management capacities strengthened would allow them to break the dynamic in which they are caught and make them eligible for direct funding and move away from their sub-contractor role. Conversely, in some projects we see approaches showing that the development of partners is a strategic choice. For example, in Burkina Faso, ASMAE farms out the capacity-strengthen-



It is demoralising not to be taken into account. People have left the activities. This has had consequences on the efficiency of the project because the actors refuse to participate. For example, the Federation we work with can't muster more than 1/3 of its members. The INGO running the project "dines alone". We take part when we can, and we can't be put under pressure.

(CSO Platform, Burkina Faso)





The announcement of the project budget has caused friction within the federation; members don't understand how, with this level of funding, the federation would not be quite capable of paying their staff and helping all of the members to shine.

(CSO Platform, Burkina Faso)



The second question that arises concerns the financing of local partner capacity-building costs.

When local NGOs are not cosignatories of contracts with donors (as is most often the case) they benefit hardly - if at all - from any funding of their overhead costs (unlike the signatories). This challenge is found widely in Bangladesh, where obtaining the equivalent of administration costs is a contentious point in the localisation debate: some organisations denounce a “double standard” on the part of the donors when it comes to the allocation of funds.

A difficult burden to manage: staff rotation in local organisations

Localisation of organisational capacities faces a recurrent burden that happens with local organisations, to retain the skills they have acquired (INGOs also face this challenge, but to a lesser extent). In carrying out this study, this point arose particularly in Bangladesh. It is widely known that in crisis situations, the game of musical chairs is in full swing, often to the detriment of local organisations¹⁸. This leads to the idea that investment in developing capacities should be included in the broader strategies to help local actors to retain their qualified and experienced staff. This recommendation applies to all contexts (not only crisis situations), owing to the loss of staff (especially those who are well-trained) attracted by organisations offering better salaries and career prospects. One of the commitments of “Charter for Change” deals specifically with this point.

LOCALISATION OF VISIBILITY

This is one of the main stumbling blocks of localisation. It is difficult for INGOs to abandon all ambitions of visibility, as this is necessary for exerting influence and attracting funding. The tensions between local and international actors can be quite strong on this subject and some local actors are quick to suspect a “hidden agenda” behind the visibility efforts of international actors.

In Burkina Faso, the case study shows that several local actors feel eclipsed by the glow around INGOs, above all when they appear as indirect beneficiaries, subordinates or service-providers. Aware of this, they protect themselves from it by creating their own visibility through websites where they try to showcase their assets. In Bangladesh, a national organisation whom we met was offended, for example, by not seeing their name mentioned on reports which they had helped to write. In both countries, local actors also notice a neighbourhood effect. If the international NGO is physically present in the same country (for example, through national or regional coordination), the competition for visibility will be tougher, the national/regional office seeks to develop its own visibility.

21. “As usual several Bangladeshis NGOs active in the response lost many staff and were often heavily affected, diminishing their capacity which led to impact on their response. INGOs also lost staff to the UN, while even between UN agencies, movements continued to agencies paying higher. Notice periods were not respected, ‘release certificates’ not obtained, references not taken, no ‘compensation’ discussed – even by INGOs signatory to the Charter-for-Change. No efforts were undertaken to somewhat harmonise salary scales. Many NGOs experienced inflationary salary pressures also on those who stayed. While internationals quickly assert that national agencies are ‘overstretched’, there is an unfounded assumption that their own, rapid quantitative scaling up goes without quality losses”. K. Van Brabant & S. Patel, Debating the Grand Bargain in Bangladesh, 25 février 2018.

In reality, the question of the visibility of local NGOs operates on several levels:

- The challenge of visibility first and foremost affects participation in exchanges between civil society, public authorities and technical and financial partners, in spaces for public policy building or aid coordination. In the case of the response to crises, the challenge of visibility is greater, and it determines the participation of local NGOs in the established clusters. We note, nevertheless, that behind this participation can be language barriers, difficulties accessing the meeting places, etc. In Bangladesh, for example, organisations operating in the Rohingya Camps have formed the CCNF coalition seeking to define a national strategy for facing the crisis. However, most local NGOs do not see themselves reflected in the “joint action plan” that emerged, and which is still perceived as the creation of the INGOs.
- The challenge of visibility also concerns the question of direct access to the donors. The better a local NGO is acquainted with donors present in the country, the better their chances of accessing funding from these donors, entering their meeting spaces with civil society, and being taken into consideration more directly (and not as a service provider to international actors). The challenge in particular is to establish a relationship of trust with the donors and to obtain more favourable financial conditions (particularly to cover overhead costs and capacity-strengthening).

These examples show the potential tension between local and international actors around the question of visibility. Localisation requires a repositioning of international actors, based on a search for complementarity and a supporting role that allows local actors to assume their place fully.

There are, however, some contexts and certain types of project for which the question of visibility is approached differently in the relationship between the local organisation and the INGO. We note in particular that in some situations there is a common interest in local actors being visible. This is the case especially in projects with a strong national advocacy dimension. Advocacy at a national level often requires national actors to be in a central position. Few countries accept direct pressure from international NGOs. Thus, in approaching advocacy there is a common interest in local actors being visible (and in their advocacy skills being strengthened). This is the case, for example, with the Humanity & Inclusion project in Burkina Faso, which entails a strong advocacy dimension supported by FEBAH (Burkina Faso Federation of Associations supporting people with disabilities) and REGIPV-BF (National network for greater involvement of people infected with HIV/AIDS).

IN BRIEF

This example shows that localisation is becoming a matter for everyone when the success of interventions relies on the complementarity between the actors. These arrangements should be fostered in order to accelerate the pace of localisation.



During the first phase we received hordes of journalists and we spoke to almost all of the French newspapers. But that was to raise visibility which the international NGO benefited from to organise their fundraising.

(Local NGO, Burkina Faso)



Entry through the demand

Ideas about localisation place the emphasis on local demand and on the need for a “participation revolution”. Coming out of the WHS, these ideas have their origin in crisis situations and the need for affected communities to be more involved in the response to crises.



We need to include the people affected by humanitarian crises and their communities in our decisions to be certain that the humanitarian response is relevant, timely, effective and efficient.

We need to provide accessible information, ensure that an effective process for participation and feedback is in place and that design and management decisions are responsive to the views of affected communities and people.

Participation revolution: (Grand Bargain commitment 6)



This issue is not new in the development sector. Questions about the participation of beneficiaries have been asked for a long time (for example, the spread of the accelerated participatory research method (MARP), also known as Participatory Learning and Action (PLA), in the 1990s, or more recently, the reflection framework on the principle of “do no harm”, the approaches to inclusive diagnostics, co-construction, etc.). Likewise, the notion of “relevance” put forward by the OECD DAC (OECD Development Assistance Committee), as one of the central criteria in evaluations focuses on alignment to local demand and to national and local policies. However, despite these efforts, the impression remains of projects that are very standardised (“box-ticking”, scale, etc.) aligned with a global north vision that is also highly standardised, and leaves little room for the needs of citizens.

The field study was not able to look in depth at this question of the place that local need occupies in projects, but testimonials did allow us to highlight how this approach “through needs” helps to shed light on a series of risks linked to localisation:

- The risk of believing that local NGOs are by nature more receptive to local needs. Capacity-strengthening of local NGOs and the place they occupy in the project does not necessarily lead to localisation of needs. That depends on the nature of these local NGOs, on their approach to project building, etc.
- The risk that external funding might be too restrictive and put local NGOs at odds with local needs. Funding from donors can frame projects, “regulate” expectations and leave little room for a local definition of needs. Some INGOs who provide long-term support to their partners may even feel a protective role towards them in regard to the somewhat prescriptive nature of donors’ funding. Funding can lead the local partner to drift in their actions, distance themselves from their initial strategy, and so, for some INGOs, it is a matter of supporting their partners to stay on track.
- The risk of confusing localisation with disintermediation; to assume that localisation will only be achieved with a direct relationship between the donor and the aid recipient. “There will always be someone more local “. In this way, in the case of Bangladesh, the Rohingyas contested that the national CSOs could speak for their needs and they put forward actors they considered more local: “Bangladeshi CSOs don’t constitute ‘local capacities’ from a Rohingya perspective. More effort can be made to find or enable social groups among the FDMs, that aid agencies can ‘partner’ with”¹⁹.

¹⁹. Debating the Grand Bargain in Bangladesh. 2018. K. Van Brabant & S. Patel

Faced with these different risks, the example of the Global Fund is very useful. The Global Fund determines the funding envelopes by country, and imposes local processes for formulating needs that allow for priority actions to be defined and to ensure that these priorities are supported by national actors. There follows a process of selection of a chain of recipients, who might be local, national or international actors. The question of the profile

of the recipient organisation is therefore secondary within the process, the main challenge being the added value of the organisation, its capacity to respond to local needs, and its connection with other actors in the sector (in a logic of cascade funding).



To move forward with localisation of the demand, it would therefore be a question of supporting local formulation of needs and opening the selection of organisations to all the actors (national and international) most likely to respond to the demand.

This process pushes international NGOs to look to be connected to local actors in the sector, and to be recognised by public authorities; in other words, to strengthen their local integration.

“

Even for local NGOs, gaining awareness of local needs requires capacities. One of the French organisations we met with stated that “it is quite rare for partners to include beneficiaries in the construction of projects. We have a suggested method but these tools still need some development. Partners’ decision-making frameworks are still quite hierarchical, even though some are showing signs of change.

(French NGO)

”



© Alex Toki on Unsplash

4.

PATHWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENGAGING IN THE LOCALISATION DEBATE

1. Assume the complementarity of aid actors
2. Beyond the project approach with a more global take on the localisation ecosystem
3. Seeing localisation as an opportunity



Localisation is a breakthrough recognised by everyone, but its progress in the field remains slow.



One merit of the localisation debate is to boost awareness of local actors, as a salutary reminder. The term offers a complete and complex agenda, highlighting local actors. Localisation is globally perceived as a step forward by all actors in international solidarity. It gives a new name to a relatively old series of preoccupations. In fact, if the term still figures infrequently in the discourse of INGOs and their partners, the principle of a more central place for local actors is very often present, and rarely challenged. For all that, in the field, one often sees a blockage in the progress of some aspects of localisation, especially the question of direct access to funding for local actors, and access to financial support for their capacity-building.

Faced with this blockage, each actor tends to “shift the blame”, and place on other actors many of the holds and blocks to implementing localisation in a more driven way:

- donors are challenged, especially with regards to their procedural requirements and risk management policies, which are perceived as unfavourable elements to the progress of localisation;
- international NGOs are perceived as protective of their “position” vis-à-vis the donors;
- local partners are challenged, on their real willingness to place themselves in the front line of projects, or on their lack of management and governance capacities which would threaten the effectiveness of interventions.

Thus, each one tends to challenge the gap that persists among other actors, between their discourse on localisation on the one hand, and their practices, internal governance and project management methods on the other. Each of these actors, therefore, has a hand on a lever that is holding back the progress of localisation.

The question is therefore, how to move out of this impasse? How to set up the debate around localisation in way that avoids wishful thinking and doublespeak?

We suggest the following pathways.

1. ASSUME THE COMPLEMENTARITY OF AID ACTORS

The large majority of testimonials insist upon the strong interdependence that exists between international NGOs and local actors, and the complementarity of their contributions. They underline the importance of “international experience” in conceiving and putting into action projects in the field. It is also worth remembering that, in most of the testimonials, the desire of local actors is not to break away from international actors but to transform their relationships. The challenge, then, is to think about localisation in the context of this interdependence and recognition of complementarity.

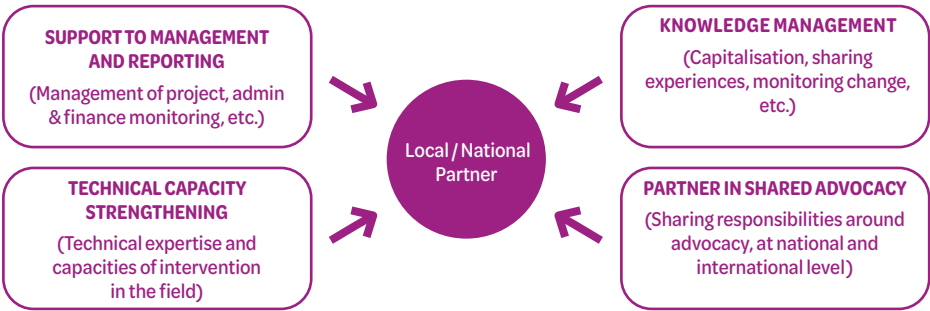
To achieve this, three major traps must be avoided:

- The trap consistent with thinking about the ambition of localisation as simply a form of disintermediation.
Disintermediation assumes the hypothesis that some actors in the solidarity chain are of no use, or that their added value can be quickly transferred to local actors for better effectiveness. (This logic is also reaching a current broader conversation around removing intermediaries, brought about in particular by digital advances.) Yet responses from the field bear witness to the added value of these different “intermediary” actors, both local and international, in the effectiveness of projects.
- The trap consistent with thinking about localisation in the context of a binary notion of aid, introducing opposition between international actors and local actors, global north and global south actors. This binary logic does not take into account the organisational diversity of aid actors. It also omits the importance of relationships between and within civil society at the global level.
- The trap consistent with making localisation part of a policy of nationalisation of aid, adopted by a growing number of governments, appearing most often as the doppleganger for a desire for stronger control over their civil society, and for restricting the civic space in which it acts (“counter-associative revolution”). The nationalisation of aid can have the effect of recreating a “game of two” at national level between the State and its civil society. In situations where civil society is weak or the State is authoritarian, this situation can lead to an even greater weakening of that civil society.

It is therefore a question of approaching the localisation debate by avoiding these three traps which, in their own way, all polarise and isolate international solidarity actors and pitches them against one another. In the words of an INGO interviewee, “our role is to create convergences. You won’t do that with binary positions. Otherwise, it’s divide and rule.”

In order to avoid these traps, it is necessary to think about localisation by exploring the complementarities between local and international actors.

Today, when INGOs place themselves in the mindset of their local partners being more active in the delivery of the project, they often define their own position as one of providing support and partnership to these local actors around the following four dimensions (see diagram on below).



Placing the emphasis on complementarity can impel INGOs and NNGOs to innovate the way they provide support, and to inscribe this support within “chains of social value” which are less top-down and more enduring.

Re-examining the funding instruments of donors challenges thinking around how they might move more in the direction of localisation “through the actors”, and localisation “through needs”. First and foremost, it would be a matter of exploring the development of tools “outside projects”, centred around a logic of providing support to local actors in becoming more autonomous in their capacities and visibility; on a logic of constructing the demand locally; and on the principle of complementarity between global north and global south actors.

This type of funding instrument remains quite marginal (compared to “project-type” instruments).

It is often through quite large funding instruments that donors manage to take on board these aspects.

- In this way, the EU, in the framework of its thematic programme entitled “Civil society organisations and Local authorities”, has put in place “strategic partner” instruments that are in charge of capacity-strengthening of partner countries actors (mostly through national collectives).
- GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH) has a collective approach to strengthening the capacities of national CSOs. They develop projects which make available a “synergy” (network) of multidisciplinary human resources. One example is the PADRE project in Mali, and the “synergy” of CSOs around citizen participation.
- Some instruments of the French cooperation, such as the “Programmes Concertés Pluri-Acteurs” (a multi-actor joint programme), make it possible to place the emphasis on strengthening local actors within a collective dynamic that is based on the complementarity between actors.

2. BEYOND THE PROJECT APPROACH WITH A MORE GLOBAL TAKE ON THE LOCALISATION ECOSYSTEM

Locked within the framework of projects, the localisation debate goes around in circles between four assertions, all of which are pertinent but in part contradictory. It is this “squaring of the circle” that gives rise to doublespeak and the growing gaps between the visions of some INGOs and their practices in the field:



In order to exit the circle (or rather resolve it), it is necessary to broaden localisation beyond the approach of the project.

We have seen (see diagram on p23), that localisation can be understood in the following ways:

- through the prism of the project (Who receives the project funding? Who leads the activities? Who decides ?)
- through the prism of the actors (Are the local actors strengthened in their capacities? And their visibility and influence?)
- and through the prism of demand (Do local communities participate in defining their needs? Are the actions part of a wider public strategy?)



Studies in the field highlight this need to think about these three dimensions at the same time in order to approach the localisation debate in a relevant way. Each

dimension appears to be a prerequisite to the possibility of localising the others. Each one appears to be conditional to the success of the other two.

Some examples:

- ❗ The focus on the project (localisation of funding and management of projects) without parallel investment in the capacities and autonomy of local actors, risks endangering said actors (who will be faced with a sudden growth in funds and the associated management demands) and of endangering their projects.
- ❗ Conversely, an actor-based approach (capacity-strengthening, autonomy) which doesn't seek over time to invert roles within the projects carried out (localisation of funding and management of projects) risks perpetuating the top-down partnership model, and reinforcing the frustrations of local partners aspiring to a leading role. As we have seen, the question of who receives the funding is not a mere technicality. Thus, no localisation of funding without supporting the capacities of local actors.
- ❗ Finally, an approach based on the project and the actors puts to one side the localisation of demand (community participation, being in keeping with of public strategies) and risks being cut-off from the effectiveness and social acceptability of the actions carried on in the field. The risk would be to think that the transfer of a part of the power and responsibilities to local partners automatically resolves this challenge of local "demand".

Of these three dimensions, entry to localisation "through the demand" without doubt poses the most challenges to aid representations and projects tools. It can push aid actors towards a paradigm shift on who chooses whom: going from the current situation where the service provider chooses the beneficiaries, to a situation where citizens choose the service providers (the ultimate stage of localisation of demand). This change in thinking shines a spotlight on the biggest challenge for INGOs: to be prepared to be chosen by citizens/users rather than by donors.

The localisation of demand interconnects across the board with thinking on the position of beneficiaries as central "actors" in interventions ("people need help, but they are not helpless"). This leads to methodologies that combine participatory needs assessment and co-construction of projects, in order to avoid integrating local communities "after the fact", once the objectives and activities of projects have been largely defined.

Furthermore, as we have observed, localisation depends directly on a series of variables linked to the context of the country of intervention, the type of action carried out and the nature of the INGO itself. It is difficult to approach the localisation debate without considering the influence of these key variables on the way in which localisation might progress (see pp 22-27).

❗ **It is therefore a matter of thinking about localisation as an ecosystem, which combines the different dimensions and the different key variables at the same**

time. It is this ecosystem-based way of thinking that can add substance to the localisation debate and avoid its impasses. The dialogue between donors and NGOs around the development of support tools to increase localisation could use this ecosystem as a guide

✎ **To guarantee a global approach to localisation, and to be able to follow the evolution of this ecosystem of localisation, it would be useful to associate each dimension with specific indicators.** These indicators would allow us to analyse the development of financial instruments set up by donors, or the development of INGO intervention strategies, in the light of fairly precise criteria about the progress of localisation. It would seem to us useful to elaborate this grid of indicators taking inspiration in particular from the diagram on p 23 and from questions associated with each dimension on the diagram.

3. SEEING LOCALISATION AS AN OPPORTUNITY

“Localisation” could become the umpteenth manifestation of thinking around improvements to aid, and could happen without instigating real change, but it could also be a vehicle for profound transformation in the collaborative relationships of actors in international solidarity.

In order for it to be a vector for profound change, we identify three major challenges for INGOs today:

- Factoring in the evolution of the context of aid.
- Rethinking the role and position of INGOs.
- Engaging in the debate and approaching it globally.

We shall now look in detail at these three challenges:

Factoring in the evolution of the context of aid

It is interesting to note that at the start, the localisation debate was born less from an observation of a new context than from the observation of the recurrent participation difficulties of local actors responding to crises. However today, it is clearly a new context that gives localisation its potential.

This new context is characterised in particular by:

- *The constant and objective progress of civil society actors in the global south* makes localisation possible (or inevitable?) Even if this study notes a significant gap still existing between INGOs and NNGOs, that does not put into question the widespread observation of the progress of civil societies in the global south over time. The desire for localisation could rest, in many countries, on actors being more numerous and more high-performing. It is this development which gives rise to the slogan “the end of the North-South paradigm” that must be understood as the end of a state of affairs in which the global north had the financial means and the solutions and the global south had neither one nor the other of these. We have moved on from that today.
- *The emergence of global challenges* (recognised in the SDG process) drives forward the notion of complementarity of actions between different territories, supported by interconnected actors “here and there”.
- *The weight of new aid donors and funders* acts as an accelerator of localisation. In addition to traditional bilateral and multilateral donors, there have also appeared a growing number of foundations from private fortunes (Gates, Soros, Buffet, Zuckerberg, Bloomberg, etc.) as well as “social” enterprises and development “investors” (Development Impact Bonds, etc.). These new types of funds have in common that they are generally more interested in results and the efficiency of actions taken than in the actors who carry out those actions. They can therefore contribute to breaking down the “oligopolies” of aid and redistributing the cards, but based primarily on

economic considerations, reducing transaction costs (see Section I-2: “The localisation debate: two sources for two visions”).

- Digitalisation plays a fundamental role in the perspectives of localisation and does so at several levels.
 - New tools will allow localisation of demand to be supported. In particular, data collection tools, ever more accessible, allow us to act with more precision and to involve users/citizens directly in “real time” evaluation of the actions.
 - Digital tools contribute to the development of ways to directly connect individual donors with local actors receiving their donations. A wide array of direct aid initiatives, including digital ones, are in development today. In this way, “Global Giving” is currently the largest crowdfunding platform. It connects 750,000 citizens directly with projects implemented by NGOs with a total amount collected of 330 million USD. Several large NGOs have also set up their own crowdfunding platforms²⁰.
 - Digitisation allows through social media the emergence of citizen movements expressing local needs, without them going through traditional intermediary actors - at least in the first instance.
- The dynamics of international networks. Well before humanitarian actors put the concept of localisation under the spotlight, many international actors wondered how to be global and local at the same time. This gave rise to multiple strategies for building international networks:
 - Development of NGO “families” (e.g.: ActionAid, Oxfam; Save the Children), incorporating organisations from countries in the global south or intermediaries, and defining collective strategies within those “families”.
 - Registration of NGOs under national law (where the global north NGO was operating with an accreditation) to make up an international network (e.g.: Aide et Action, Eau Vive, GRDR, GRET).
 - Etc.

This new context influences thinking on localisation. To not take this on board (for example thinking of localisation simply as a challenge of the transfer of responsibilities in the context of managing projects), is to risk missing the transformative developments which determine how we think about the future of international solidarity.

Rethinking the role and position of INGOs

Localisation challenges the basic model of INGOs based on control over three connected dimensions:

- Being in control of accessing funding.
- Being in control of expertise.
- Being in control of visibility and influence.

Localisation poses the question to INGOs of what they wish to “preserve” in the process of role redistribution that it provokes. These INGOs may seek:

- to retain access to the field, the place where their expertise is developed and expressed;
- to preserve some visibility as this is necessary to their influence and funding;
- to keep direct access to funding while a significant portion will be passed to the partners, etc.

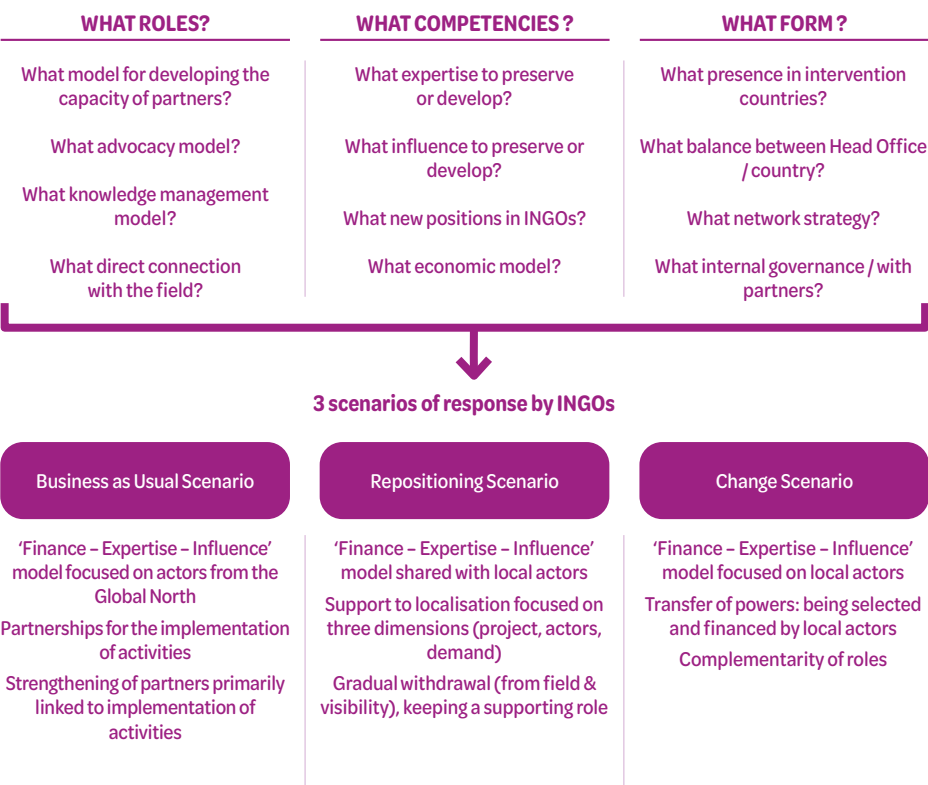
Faced with this questioning, INGOs should not passively consider localisation. They are in a position of strength regarding how it is put into effect. (“*You need INGOs to make localisation happen.*”) Furthermore, local actors do not want a split. Therefore, there are opportunities for INGOs on the one hand to shape localisation, and on the other to have a degree of control over the agenda and the timing of it.

This time should be used to reflect on the new ways of being useful and showing solidarity, to discuss the evolution of the cooperation model with donors (rather than being subjected to it), and to imagine new global network models. INGOs should therefore see localisation as an opportunity to prepare themselves for change. Below we set out in detail 3 stances that INGOs might adopt:

20. The business of changing the world, How billionaires, tech disrupters, and social entrepreneurs are transforming the global aid industry, Raj Kumar, Beacon Press, Boston, 2019

- a stance of the status quo, or “business as usual”, based more on the idea that localisation does not require a profound change in role (“it is a fad that will pass”),
- a stance of repositioning which accepts localisation by seeing it as a development of relationships in the context of interventions,
- a stance of change which sees localisation as a departure, that will involve profound transformation of their model of intervention and funding.

These three stances are characterised by different responses to a series of questions on the roles, competences and shape of INGOs:



Making changes to one’s positioning may seem easier for organisations with a freer economic model (more unrestricted funds over which such organisations have complete leeway), however we note that it remains an institutional decision to pursue a policy of localisation. In this way:

- Some organisations which depend on significant fundraising from the general public have long since “localised” their approach (CCFD: The Catholic Committee against hunger and for development, for example) while others keep their approach very focused on international resources (especially in the response to crises).
- Some organisations which depend greatly on public funds, whose procedures we have seen can often constrain localisation, “localise” nevertheless as much as possible (Acting for Life, for example) while others have models that are less inclusive of local actors.

Organisations which are engaged in networking strategies with partners (by creating branches in different countries, by inviting local organisations to join their international networks, etc.) may have a tendency to feel that they have done their bit. However, the central question of localisation is about the evolution of power relationships. It is with this criterion in mind that the different arrangements we have observed must be viewed: do they respect the spirit of localisation? Do they allow progress to be made on the three dimensions of the localisation ecosystem (projects, actors, demand)?

Engaging in the debate and approaching it globally

Lastly, one of the decisive factors in the direction that the localisation debate will take is the stance of INGOs in the dialogue.



From a French perspective, it would be entirely in the interest of INGOs to initiate a wider debate around this challenge; and to seek to ensure that the debate is approached from a shared vision of what is meant by the “ecosystem of localisation”.

Approached in this way, the debate on localisation could be a major opportunity for INGOs to strengthen the legitimacy of their role and bring to light the complementary of local and international actors in aid. It emphasises “international experience” in strengthening local actors and in local innovation; it stresses the importance of international partnerships in advocacy and the defence of rights, etc. It also allows awareness to be raised about existing programmes supporting civil society in the global south and their usefulness. The inverse stance on the part of INGOs would mean to let the debate run on and to let it be confined first and foremost, to being a technical challenge to the goal of receiving funds. This situation would risk a heightening of the questions around of INGOs’ added value and push them towards strategies of resistance and survival rather than of change. We need a debate that links closely with current thinking around the slogan: “Stop undermining”. Several documents listed in the bibliography use this slogan to describe in particular the practices of “siphoning off” the employees of local organisations when responding to crises. It seems to us that this slogan could have a wider reach and might apply to all of the practices of international actors who weaken local CSOs.

They include the following:

- nancing activities without giving to local actors the means to strengthen themselves institutionally.
- Competing for local visibility and controlling access to funding donors.
- Etc.

Under the banner of the principle “Stop undermining”, NGOs could in this way develop guidelines for evolving their practices in a way that makes them a better fit within the dynamic of localisation²¹.



Another way to bring localisation into the referential framework of INGOs is to take it on board through the “Do no harm” principle.

In its broad definition, it is about “mitigating the potential negative effects on the social fabric, the economy and the environment”. The focus of the “Do no harm” (DNH) principle is in general on projects beneficiaries, particularly to ensure that projects are not the cause of conflicts, exploitation, psychological suffering, etc. But projects are equally susceptible to having negative impacts on local actors (for example, when large scale projects ignore local actors who are working on the same themes; when local CSO participation in projects carried out by INGOs weakens them institutionally, etc.) In this sense, it is useful to take on board the DNH principle in our thinking about localisation.

21. That was the spirit of the charter for change launched ahead of the WHS. INGO’s “Stop undermining” guidelines could take inspiration from it.

Internationally, as we have seen, the debate is more at the forefront in countries with a higher concentration of aid, beset by humanitarian emergency situations, and in which the civil society sector is strong and structured (as is the case in Bangladesh). In these countries, the localisation debate tends to accelerate the evolution of partnerships, and to bring about interesting initiatives for strengthening local actors.



NGOs would have an interest in promoting the localisation debate more actively in countries where it still has a low profile, by seeking to mobilise civil society platforms, public authorities, and national/regional representations of international donors.

The objective of these debates is to bring about collective thinking around an environment favourable to a formula of localisation that would accept interdependencies and complementarities, in order to avoid one that isolates and fosters competition.

ANNEXES

ANNEXE 1 - Interviews

Annexe 1: International NGOs and foundations

Organisation	Name	Date of interview	Type, main expertise
ACF	T. Ribemont	21 Feb.2019	Multi-mandate NGO
ACTED	M.-P. Caley	27 May 2019	Multi-mandate NGO
Acting for Life	C. Touquet ; J. Castaño	21 May 2019	Development NGO
Asmae	H. Bonvalot	17 May 2019	Development NGO
AVN	T. Granier	16 May 2019	Development NGO
EquiPop	A. Gal Regniez	19 Feb. 2019.	Development NGO
FERT	A. Panel	22 May 2019	Development NGO
Fondation Apprentis d’Auteuil	G. Jeu	04 June 2019	Foundation
HI	J.-M. Boivin	1 Feb. 2019.	Multi-mandate NGO
HI	M. Pepin	17 May 2019	Multi-mandate NGO
SCCF	C. Bonnemains	18 April 2019	Multi-mandate NGO

Public and private donors

Organisation	Name	Date of interview	Type, main expertise
Fondation de France	M. Spitz	15 Feb. 2019.	Donor
AFD	P. Salignon	18 Feb. 2019.	Donor

Resource persons

Organisation	Name	Date of interview	Type, main expertise
Cabinet Ryfman avocat-Université Paris I Sorbonne	P. Ryfman	8 Feb. 2019.	Expert
ETD / Forus	K. Abitor	18 Feb. 2019.	Development NGO
Groupe URD	V. de Geoffroy	25 Feb. 2019.	Expert
ODI	A. Prizzon	05 March 2019	Think Tank international

ANNEXE 2 - DOCUMENTATION

V. Metcalfe-Hough, W. Fenton and L. Poole (2019), *Grand Bargain annual independent report 2019*, ODI - HPG Commissioned Report.

Groupe URD (2018), *Le nexus humanitaire-développement au regard du Grand Bargain*, analyse documentaire.

IARAN Team (2018), *From Voices to Choices. Expanding crisis-affected people's influence over aid decisions: An outlook to 2040*.

ICVA (2018), *Localization examined: An ICVA Briefing Paper*.

A. Manis (2018), *Cost-effectiveness in humanitarian aid: Localisation programming*, K4D Helpdesk, Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

K. Van Brabant & S. Patel (2018), *Debating the Grand Bargain in Bangladesh, How are the Grand Bargain commitments shaping the response to the FDM/rohingya influx?*

K. Van Brabant & S. Patel (2018), *Localisation in Practice*, Global Mentoring Initiative.

V. de Geoffroy V. & F. Grunewald (2017), *Plus que de l'argent – La localisation en pratique*, groupe URD et Trócaire.

T. Mowjee, L. Poole & B. Willitts-King (2017), *From Grand Bargain to beneficiary. An analysis of funding flows through the humanitarian system*, ODI - HPG.

NEAR (2017), *Localization of Aid – Towards Realising Commitments to Local/National NGO (LNNGO) Capacity strengthening*.

OCDE (2017), *Localising the response*, World Humanitarian Summit putting policy into practice, The Commitments into Action Series.

START network (2017), *Localisation of aid: are INGOs walking the talk? Shifting the power Project*.

Ch. Bennett (2016), *Time to let go. Remaking humanitarian action for the modern era*, ODI – HPG.

NEAR (2016), *Representation of local voices in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC): NEAR Inclusion*, Lettre ouverte au Directeur de OCHA.

S. S. Singh (2016), « As local as possible, as international as necessary : humanitarian aid international's position on localisation », Charter For Change.

UN (2016), *Une seule humanité, des responsabilités partagées*, Rapport du Secrétaire général pour le Sommet mondial sur l'action humanitaire.

WHS (2016), *Too important to fail—addressing the humanitarian financing gap*. High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing Report to the United Nations Secretary-General.

ActionAid, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Tearfund (2015), *Missed Opportunities No More: An Agenda for Change – localization of aid and humanitarian partnerships*.

Charter for Change (2015), *Charter for Change: Localisation of Humanitarian Aid*.

Global Finance Strategies (2015), *Going local: the promise & challenge of aid localization*.

S. A. Zyck (2015), *Localising humanitarianism: improving effectiveness through inclusive action*, ODI-HPG.

J. Glennie (2012), *Localising aid: can using local actors strengthen them?* Working Paper 352, ODI.



Gathering and taking action for global solidarity

Cover photo credit: © Patrick Hendry/Unsplash

Graphic design and layout: Benjamin Madelainne

Printed by: Chaumeil

14, passage Dubail 75010 Paris

Tel.: +33 1 44 72 93 72

www.coordinationsud.org

March 2020