



PYAN
Puntland Youth Association Network

POLICY BRIEF
EMPOWERING PUNTLAND'S LOCAL CIVIL
SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS: A POLICY
BRIEF ON LOCALIZATION **November 2024**

This Policy Brief summarizes a workshop on “**Development of a joint CSO-wide networking and policy brief writing**” hosted by the Puntland Youth Association Network in September 2024, Garowe, Puntland, Somalia. The workshop, facilitated by Dr Adam Abdulkadir, brought together different civil society organizations. The workshop was designed to engage key stakeholders in policy development and advocacy efforts. It aimed to enhance participants' capacity to write effective policy briefs and strengthen CSOs for advocacy and localizing humanitarian and development initiatives in Puntland. This brief does not necessarily reflect the views of all workshop participants. This paper discusses the Civil Society Organization's readiness towards localizing humanitarian and development action in Puntland. It examines the preparedness of local CSOs to take a leading role in humanitarian and development efforts, aligning with global localization trends.

1. BACKGROUND

Over the past two decades, Puntland has experienced significant challenges, including political instability, economic hardship, and social issues exacerbated by conflict and climate change. Despite these challenges, civil society organizations (CSOs) are crucial in promoting democracy, human rights, and regional development. Although the significance of local response in humanitarian action and the principle of local ownership as a best practice have been recognized for some time, the localization agenda has gained momentum since the World Humanitarian Summit of 2016, when several international humanitarian actors and donors signed the Grand Bargain and, subsequently, related initiatives such as the Charter for Change (C4C)¹. Through the WHS, many humanitarian actors, mainly local, national, and international NGOs, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) led the call for the global humanitarian system to commit to becoming more inclusive of local and national actors. The Grand Bargain commits donors and aid organizations to allocate global humanitarian funding by at least 25%

to local humanitarian responders by 2020, remove barriers to partnerships, and provide multi-year funding for institutional capacity to ensure continuity in humanitarian response.

Local Ownership: Letting countries and communities lead their development. Donors can foster local ownership by employing practices that empower citizens and their governments to identify development priorities, implement development projects, and provide local resources to sustain them. Locally led leadership means more than just a seat at the table, but a guiding voice. **Localization** is about transferring aid directly to locals rather than through international organizations. Localization is shifting power, funding, and decision-making to local organizations that best understand and serve their communities.

1.1. About Puntland Civil Society Organizations

Puntland's Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are essential to the region's humanitarian, social, and economic development. Rooted in local communities, these organizations comprise non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs),

¹ <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/about-the-grand-bargain>

women's groups, youth groups, professional associations, and other grassroots entities that work to address a wide range of issues impacting Puntland's society. Puntland's CSOs advocate for policy changes that improve governance, protect human rights, and advance gender equality. They are vocal in influencing social protection, security, and women's rights policies, particularly in rural and marginalized communities.

The existing CSOs in Puntland have a strong grassroots presence, enabling them to mobilize communities for collective action. They are critical in educating and empowering communities on health, sanitation, environmental protection, and women's and children's rights. Puntland's CSOs vary widely in structure and reach. Some are small, community-based entities that focus on specific local issues, while others operate at a regional level, implementing more extensive programs funded by national and international partners. Although diverse in size and focus, these organizations share a common goal: promoting sustainable development, peace, and security in Puntland. The CSOs in Puntland operate in a complex environment marked by recurring conflicts, climate shocks, limited resources, and restricted access to international funding. They often

face challenges related to capacity limitations, regulatory constraints, and dependency on international donors, which can hinder their effectiveness and sustainability.

Localization, or the process of empowering local actors to lead and implement humanitarian and development efforts, is a significant agenda in Puntland. With localization, CSOs can shift from merely implementing partners to leading entities that drive local solutions, increasing their initiatives' relevance, efficiency, and sustainability. CSOs have weak internal governance and administration systems, which often leads to a reliance on project-based funding instead of resource mobilization for long-term goals. Civil society groups have also led to fragmentation and a lack of a unified advocacy agenda and one voice to hold duty bearers to account. In addition to these challenges, local actors often struggle to access funding due to limited institutional capacities and certain donors' requirements and regulations.

2. Overall Principles of Localization

For localization interventions to be effective in Somalia, all actors must understand and

embrace several fundamental principles. These are:

- a. **Improved humanitarian assistance:** The overall purpose of the Grand Bargain commitments, including those on localization, is to improve the quality, efficiency, and accountability of humanitarian aid to affected populations.
- b. **Local ownership of the agenda:** If localization is about empowering local actors, local actors must have an influential voice in shaping and delivering that agenda.
- c. **Respect and trust:** Localization requires improved levels of trust and respect between actors and challenging the negative perceptions and generalizations, which are barriers to mutual understanding and accountability.
- d. **Mutual accountability:** All actors should be accountable for their actions and decisions, including to affected communities.
- e. **Complementarity:** Balance the work of local and international actors to maximize their comparative advantages and avoid duplication and undermining of either.

- f. **Quid Pro Quo:** The basis of the Grand Bargain is that each actor will play their part and make the necessary changes to achieve a more robust and more effective humanitarian system.

3. Why Localization

Humanitarian actors have widely agreed on the need for localization, yet the reasons why are not always clearly articulated. International and local organizations are now recognizing that locally-led responses have critical advantages. These include better access to and deeper connections with affected people and local structures, a greater understanding of the relevant geopolitical and cultural context, and a clearer view of what must be done in response to a crisis. It is essential to recognize the clear comparative advantage of local humanitarian actors.

- a. **Promoting diversity, local innovation, and contextual approaches:** Localization may promote the Puntland CSOs to bring contextual approaches to how humanitarian action is planned and delivered in Puntland, shaped by factors including local traditions, culture, and values alongside international principles, norms, and standards. These approaches may not always resemble the

humanitarian action understood by global actors. Still, these varying features may also make local humanitarian action effective and provide a fertile ground for innovation and new ways of addressing increasing needs.

- b. **Improving the efficiency and effectiveness and reducing the costs of humanitarian action:** With the humanitarian system facing increasing funding shortfalls yearly, the efficiency argument for localization remains central to its broader acceptance. Shifting power to local CSOs in Puntland can help reduce implementation, staffing, transaction, and management costs through all stages of humanitarian preparedness, response, and recovery. Aid effectiveness is also linked to localization, as humanitarian programming is likely to be more targeted, with less waste and duplication, when led by organizations where decision-makers understand crisis-affected communities, speak their language, and have a solid grasp of the local context.
- c. **Enhancing the speed, quality, and scale of humanitarian response:** Localization may help strengthen the ability of locally

based humanitarian actors such as the CSOs to respond more rapidly and to maintain adequate capacity, which will also increase the quality of the assistance they provide. A more localized approach to international support, particularly surge support, will allow international actors to reinforce local efforts and help scale these efforts effectively. Localization may also enable local and national actors to better prepare and respond to more significant numbers of small-scale crises, many of which do not trigger international attention. Localization helps ensure emergency preparedness, response, and recovery are locally relevant, ongoing, and embedded within local community life. Strengthening Puntland CSOs and other national actors may be particularly important in states facing regular or annual disasters and displacement like Puntland, leading to better crisis management over time and helping build more resilient communities.

- d. **Strengthening inclusion and acceptance by affected populations:** Localization helps ensure humanitarian actors make decisions closer to the communities they serve. This, in turn, may help humanitarian actors better

reflect the needs and goals of these communities. Furthermore, when organizations are established, led, and staffed by people close to, or part of, affected communities, they may also be more accountable to these communities and better able to support their protection.² With governments and non-state actors increasingly questioning the role of international actors, strengthening partnerships with local and national actors may be a way to increase acceptance of international support, particularly by communities themselves.

4. Support needed from donors and INGs to localize projects

International organizations are instrumental in empowering local CSOs to advance sustainable development, address urgent humanitarian needs, and promote resilient, community-led initiatives. By fostering equitable partnerships, international agencies can reinforce local capacity and enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of development and humanitarian efforts in Puntland.

Despite commitments to localization, global humanitarian and developmental funding

structures often favor international organizations, limiting local CSOs' capacity to impact sustainable development. To facilitate localization initiatives, donors and INGs must be able to accept the shift in power and work with existing civil society organizations. Although the Puntland government is flexible in localizing humanitarian and developmental aid, local CSOs still need authorization for funds from both the government and international communities. All barriers hampering shifting power to local CSOs, such as repressing the local CSOs that receive funding and restricting the CSOs' operations, should be relieved.

Strengthening local actors' capacity is crucial to localization, primarily through alternative modalities such as coaching and mentoring, ideally given priority as part of the preparedness strategy. The International organizations must support the local CSOs, which include: -

- Supporting solid and sustainable institutional capacities for local and national actors through increased funding.
- Increase local partners' and community voices in the decision-making forums, advocacy, and policy-making.

² Nils Carstensen.2016. Understanding and supporting community-led protection. Forced Migration Review. Issue 53. Pages 4-7.

- Give spaces and increase engagement with strategic partners, including Disabled People's Organizations (DPO), Women-led organizations, Government, private sectors, and academic and child rights organizations beyond the project level.
- To address the influence imbalance, it is recommended that the localization agenda be better institutionalized into global, regional, and country office strategies for all organizations.

5. Multiple Dimensions of Localization

The World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain commitments emphasized providing more support and funding tools for local and national responders and making humanitarian action as local as possible and international as necessary. Respecting, supporting, and strengthening local leadership and capacity in humanitarian action by reinforcing rather than replacing national and local systems are key priorities for all humanitarian organizations.

Partnerships	Participation	Funding	Capacity strengthening	Coordination	Visibility	Policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectful and equitable • Reciprocal transparency and accountability • Decision-making and not just 'implementing partners' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deeper participation of at-risk and affected populations in what relief is provided to them and how (accountability to affected population) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality: flexible, long-term, covering core costs, maintaining cash flows • Quantity: at least 25% of funding reaching local actors as directly as possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable organisations and collaborative capacities: more effective support for strong and sustainable institutional capacities • Stop undermining capacities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National governmental and non-governmental actors have greater presence and influence in coordination mechanisms such as clusters and leading such structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater public recognition and visibility for the role, effort, contribution, innovation and achievements of local actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local and national actors greater presence and influence in international policy debates; greater accounting of their views and proposals

Figure 1: UNICEF localization framework

Humanitarian action is more timely, cost-effective, and efficient when locally driven, as local actors possess the knowledge, networks, and political and cultural awareness to deliver results. In addition, local actors typically have greater access to affected populations by geographic proximity and in cases where conflict dynamics may restrict access for international actors. Local actors are often first to respond to crises, remaining in the communities they serve before, during, and after emergencies. Locally-led and localized response programs can increase the project's sustainability.

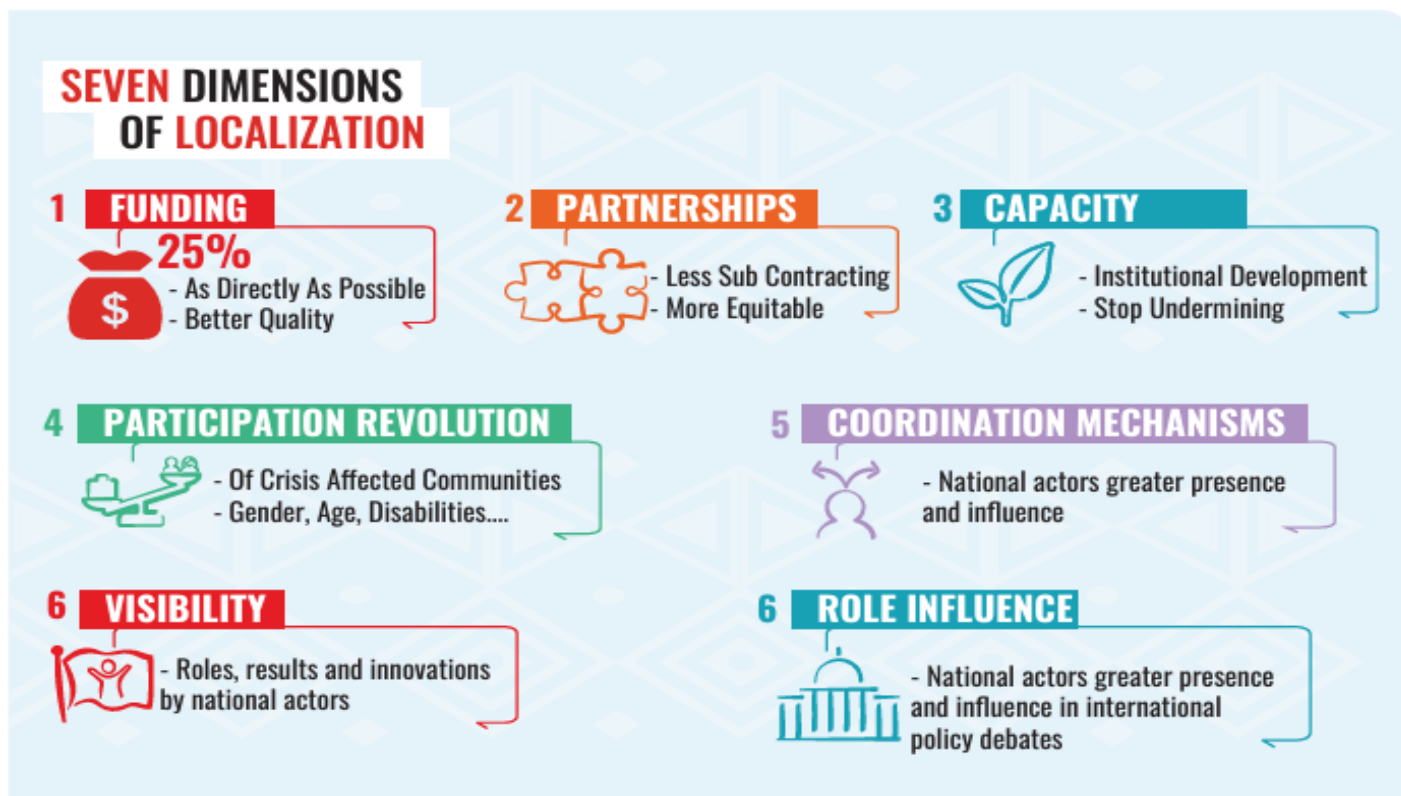


Figure 2: Save the Children's Dimensions of Localization.

6. Barriers and Facilitators to Aid Localization in Puntland

In many countries, local humanitarian actors still find barriers to locally-led humanitarian response, such as access to secure and predictable funding, local actors being regarded as service delivery providers, and the reluctance of some international agencies to invest in capacity strengthening and long-term partnerships. Local CSOs in Puntland often rely heavily on international organizations for funding, limiting their autonomy and responsiveness to immediate local needs. This dependency can lead to a mismatch between donor priorities and local realities, reducing the impact of interventions and restricting local CSOs' ability to address emerging needs independently and sustain their programs without international support. Many CSOs face limitations in technical, managerial, and operational capacity, affecting their ability to manage projects, report outcomes, and implement large-scale interventions effectively, which hinders trust from donors and international partners, who may perceive local organizations as lacking the skills necessary for sustainable project implementation. Local actors and government agencies in

Puntland have a lot of advantages that can facilitate the full implementation of humanitarian and developmental projects.

First, local actors in Puntland, like CSOs, are fast because they are close to the humanitarian crisis or situations. When the strongest hazards like the flooding in Qardho or Cyclones in Bandarbeyla, the local Puntland CSOs located in and around the affected communities began responding just minutes afterward, with search and rescue, first aid, psycho-social support and other types of assistance. Local CSOs bring contextual understanding and trusted community networks and are often more adaptable in crisis response and post-crisis recovery.

Secondly, local actors, especially the CSOs, often have access that no international actor can achieve. This is true in situations of insecurity as well as in remote areas with physical access challenges. While humanitarian access has been extremely constrained for most of the actors in Southern Somalia, the local humanitarian actors have unrestricted access to any communities across the country. This community connection also facilitates far greater accountability to affected populations, facilitates better community-level preparedness, and enables the community to have a greater voice in articulating their needs in humanitarian response. Furthermore, local actors in Puntland are more readily accepted.

Lastly, local actors are in a strong position to link preparedness, response, and long-term recovery. They are well-placed to make resilience real. Yet local actors, while playing a significant role currently, are not receiving the support they need to meet their full potential and maximize effective humanitarian response. Long-term partnerships need to be pursued to help rebuild trust and deliver better services through consortium-based approaches and multi-year funding, with elements of capacity development.

7. Next Steps for CSO's Localization Agenda in Puntland

- a) International organizations should start mapping out strategic local actors, including CSOs and media in Puntland, to collaborate on advocacy-related activities. They need to support the local CSOs to be part of the existing consortiums that can implement projects together with international organizations.

- b) Puntland Civil Society Organizations should learn from and accelerate existing localization models, especially those available in the sub-Saharan context.
- c) Puntland CSO should integrate the localization agenda and its approaches into its strategies and policies.
- d) Both donors and international organizations should plan to transfer greater resources, including tackling the root causes of risk aversion and redesigning funding flows.
- e) Both Donors and International organizations should reduce the encroachment of local actors' agencies and respect their ways of being by rethinking organizational roles, stepping back if appropriate, and shifting mindsets.
- f) Provide more authority and capacities to INGOs and UN agency field offices to engage in partnership processes with local actors and strengthen field monitoring, supervision, and coaching of local actors in their respective geographical areas. Donors and INGOs working in Puntland must allow local actors to lead the campaign to promote localization and locally-led development initiatives.
- g) Shift INGO capacity strengthening models to focus more on coaching, mentoring, and secondment of key staff to local actors instead of focusing on stand-alone training.
- h) Prioritize and scale up institutional capacity-building components to enable local actors to move from a short-term project-based approach to long-term sustainability by building capacities in finance, logistics, administration, fundraising, and reporting.