

Localisation Vision & Strategy

Humanitarian Country Team, South Sudan

Rationale

People in South Sudan continue to experience multiple crises including conflict, intercommunal violence, food insecurity, mass displacement, economic turmoil and more. Communities lack access to basic services and dependency on humanitarian action remains high. Local and national actors¹ play a key role in the humanitarian response. However, there are challenges when these local and national actors form partnerships, including multiple due diligence, administrative, and reporting processes. They lack access to direct funding and lack capacity strengthening support to help them overcome these challenges.

Recognizing the critical role local actors play in humanitarian action, the Secretary-General at the World Humanitarian Summit of 2016 highlighted the need for humanitarian response to be “*as local as possible and as international as necessary*”. It is critical to shift towards a localisation approach which aligns with Grand Bargain’s commitments. This approach must embrace any opportunity to enable local communities to build their resilience and coping mechanisms to mitigate and prevent the impact of any crises.

In early 2022, the IASC undertook a Peer-to-Peer (P2P) review of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) in South Sudan and recommended a revised approach to localisation and partnership. They noted gaps in equitable partnerships, capacity strengthening, inclusion of local actors in decision-making, and a lack of common understanding of localisation which was often reduced only to funding. Whilst funding remains a significant factor, localisation is and must be understood more broadly if resilience and leadership of local actors is to be achieved.

The HCT agreed to *develop a South Sudan localisation vision, strategy and associated targets and timelines*. A small group of agencies drawn from UN and the NGO Forum - FAO, the NGO Forum, CHIDDO, CAFOD & Trocaire, and DCA –was tasked to develop the strategy on behalf of the HCT, through a process of consultation with numerous stakeholders from local actors, government, donors, UN system members and NGOs. Additionally, the HCT agreed to *establish a new framework for partnership between UN agencies, INGOs and NNGOs*, as recommended by the P2P. Combining these approaches, a framework for partnerships is a critical enabler to support meaningful localisation with sustained outcome.

The South Sudan HCT vision and strategy on the localisation of humanitarian response is accompanied by an action plan with targets and timelines² which can be updated, adapted, and revised as needed, reflecting the HCT commitments. These targets and timelines must be supported by measurable indicators that are agreed upon by all HCT members. Progress towards these targets should be kept track of periodically during HCT meetings and discussions should be held regarding reaching these targets in the allocated timeframe.

Vision

The HCT’s vision is that working in a collaborative manner, all HCT members – international NGOs, national and local NGOs, and UN system members - national and local humanitarian actors are enabled and capacitated to take on a greater role in leading humanitarian action in South Sudan, with a reduced need for international support, unless overwhelmed by crisis. The HCT seek a nexus approach engagement, including with authorities, development and peace actors to enable sustainable impact of localisation.

¹ For the purposes of this paper, the phrase local and national actors embraces the IASC definition, which includes both non state and state actors, although, for now, the focus of this paper is on local civil society organisations.

[hftt localisation marker definitions paper 24 january 2018.pdf \(interagencystandingcommittee.org\)](#)

² As per [IASC Guidance on Strengthening Participation, Representation and Leadership of Local and National Actors in IASC Humanitarian Coordination Mechanisms 2.pdf \(interagencystandingcommittee.org\)](#)

The strategy requires HCT collective action through a process of reform, behavioural change and action undertaken to enhance the capacity to address existing gaps in coordination, partnership, funding, knowledge management and programming in South Sudan grounded in four priorities: Equitable Partnerships, Capacity Sharing, Inclusion and Participation, and Resources and Funding³.

Definitions

- **Localisation** *“is the process through which a diverse range of humanitarian actors are attempting, each in their own way, to ensure local and national actors are better engaged in the planning, delivery and accountability of humanitarian action, while still ensuring humanitarian needs can be met swiftly, effectively and in a principled manner⁴”, according to ICVA. Although there is no IASC definition, they guide that “enabling a conducive environment for local and national actors to assume greater leadership and ownership in humanitarian preparedness and response. This includes their active and equitable representation and participation in humanitarian architecture’s leadership and governance structures⁵”.*

The HCT in South Sudan agree that a localisation approach empowers, enables and respects local responders to lead humanitarian action in an appropriate, timely, and effective manner remaining accountable to the affected population.

- **Local responders** are understood to be local and national NGOs, community-based organisations, community members, and authorities at all levels.
- **Local NGO (LNGO): South Sudan Civil society organisations** with presence at the county, payam or boma level. There is no legal distinction between a CBO, local or national NGO in South Sudan, however, for this strategy, LNGOs refer to registered agencies working on behalf of affected communities.
- **National NGO (NNGO):** South Sudan Civil society organisations registered with a presence at the national level with geographic presence across the country (i.e. operating in more than one state).
- **Community-based organisation (CBO):** CBOs refer to independent, self-managing grassroots organisations formed to address the common interests of their members. CBOs may be formal (registered with government authorities) or informal.
- **Humanitarian Action:** Action to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity carried out by civilian entities before, during and after any crisis that harms those affected.

Approach

The HCT commits to a localisation approach that aligns with the vision which includes:

- ✓ **Equitable Partnership:** Acknowledging the quality, effectiveness and timeliness of response of local actors in humanitarian response, international agencies should partner with local actors and engage them in all stages of the programme cycle such as assessments, planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of response. Efforts should be made to ensure these partnerships are mutually empowering and mutually accountable; focused on a common purpose, conscious of power dynamics and in line with the principle of complementarity. In South Sudan, the aid community is comprised of over 100 INGOs, over 200 L/NNGOs and UN system members who have humanitarian mandates, with a distinct opportunity to build strong equitable partnerships with existing and new partners. Barriers that prevent donors and the international humanitarian community from partnering directly with local and national responders to ensure that we provide aid that is as local as possible must be removed.

³ These are the priorities from consultations through the Charter for Change (C4C) process

⁴ ICVA, *Localization Examined*, 2018

⁵ <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/operational-response/iasc-guidance-strengthening-participation-representation-and-leadership-local-and-national-actors>

- ✓ **Capacity Sharing/ Capacity Strengthening:** The HCT seeks and respects where knowledge and capacity sit and recognises the reciprocal nature of relationships of a diverse group of stakeholders where information, expertise, experience and resources can flow in any direction. The HCT commit to enabling joint partnerships to focus on capacity-strengthening initiatives, benefiting from indigenous knowledge and practices, to inform approaches that focus on the explicit needs of communities, local/national actors, and authorities enabling them to identify their capacity 'gaps' to be addressed. Conversations between local actors should be facilitated to ensure that they participate and voice what capacity they would like to be strengthened and to promote peer-to-peer capacity sharing among local actors.
- ✓ **Protection against sexual abuse and exploitation:** All HCT members commit to promote and respect a zero-tolerance culture for all kinds of gender discrimination and/or sexual harassment.
- ✓ **Participation and representation:** Nothing about us without us. The HCT value, welcome and promote representation and meaningful participation and leadership of diverse actors in the coordination and undertaking of humanitarian action noting heretofore the specific cultural, administrative, political and financial barriers for local actors. The HCT commit to transforming the working culture and promoting respect for the voice, agency, rights and dignity of crisis-affected communities and their representatives in decision-making that affects them now and in the future. Promote an equitable system of representation of historically marginalized groups in international coordination structures with age, gender and diversity considerations in mind.
- ✓ **Leadership:** The HCT strive to ensure that humanitarian leadership is inclusive, representative, gender-balanced, accountable and supportive of the entire humanitarian community. The HCT promote the presence and meaningful participation of local women led/ women focused organisations in coordination bodies to sustain women's leadership. The HCT commit to affirmative action to make the humanitarian leadership to be inclusive at national and subnational levels in the humanitarian architecture.
- ✓ **Resources & Funding:** The HCT's approach seeks to promote and enable inclusive, meaningful participation and decision-making of diverse local actors including crisis-affected and vulnerable communities in humanitarian action. The HCT approach seeks flexible, predictable multi-year funding that reflects communities' priority needs taking into consideration risk-sharing and supports core costs and organisational development of local actors consistent with responsibility and ambitions for growth.
- ✓ **Visibility and communication:** Humanitarian actors have the right to be visible inter alia to raise awareness of their contributions to humanitarian response (including their challenges, opportunities and views), and mobilise funds and receive acknowledgement for their work.
- ✓ **Risk sharing⁶:** The HCT commit to a risk sharing approach that aligns with the Grand Bargain, and commit to explore in a partnership arrangement how risk can be analysis, managed and shared in a way that is fair and prudent. The importance of improving the quality and efficacy of humanitarian action was recognised in the 2016 Grand Bargain, when signatories agreed to act strategically and systematically to improve the conditions under which aid is delivered and, in so doing, enable appropriate assistance to those who need it along the full delivery and community engagement chain.
- ✓ **Knowledge and learning:** The localisation approach must be integrated into accountability mechanisms for HCT members, such as the HC performance appraisals, HCT compact and any HCT workplan. Performance reviews should include an assessment of HCT members performance against the localisation indicators established and the action plan commitments. Where needed, corrective measures should be identified to improve.

⁶ [Risk Sharing Framework.pdf \(interagencystandingcommittee.org\)](#)