

# **The Role of International Organizations in promoting the Localization Agenda in Fragile Contexts**

## **The Case of Cash Transfers in South Sudan**

### **Abstract**

Humanitarian organizations have been constantly aiming to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of response. Standards, codes and frameworks have evolved. Still, long lasting dichotomy has plagued international humanitarian architecture. In recent times, there have been growing realization for the need to empower local communities and local organizations as they are the first to respond, better positioned to respond and last to leave, perhaps never to leave. Despite this much articulated fact, power and funding remains severely lopsided with grassroots communities and organizations being on the receiving end and getting only a fraction of what should be rightfully theirs.

Since the 2016, several scholars and institutions have been advocating for the implementation of the commitments on localization agenda. The localization agenda is not new, but gained voice as a major area of focus for global humanitarian policy during the World Humanitarian Summit (2016) and more recently in the 2018 Global Compact for Refugees. Humanitarian sector is witnessing the localization agenda as one of the critical reform efforts. It comes in as part of the solution for the sustainability challenges faced by humanitarian systems due to funding gaps. The localization agenda calls for inclusion of local actors in humanitarian response. Local actors are known for their ability to make humanitarian action more efficient and tackle unequal power play in the humanitarian system. Nevertheless, the localization agenda should be cautious not to risk perpetuating the very issues it wants to redress.

This study seeks to explore the role played by international agencies in promoting localization in fragile contexts. Networked governance theory is used to illustrate how collaborations can make humanitarian response more effective by focusing on a common goal, interdependent and complimenting each other. A case study of BRACE II Project in

South will be used to illustrate how three dimensions of localization are implemented in Social protection and how international organizations support or limit this.

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## **Introduction**

Humanitarian crises are becoming more prolonged and complex, leaving a greater number of people affected by crises and disasters (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2012). Most Humanitarian Needs Overviews (HNOs) have also pointed out more needy people, beyond the capacity of succeeding humanitarian response plans to manage Bangladesh JRP 2018 in (Child Protection Global Protection Cluster, 2019). The needs, coupled with increasing rates of poverty in the crisis affected countries, are too great for the humanitarian sector alone. As a result, the role of wider humanitarian and development actors (government and national actors, international actors and donors) is increasingly important in addressing these underlying causes of crisis and lifting people out of poverty (GHAR, 2021).

These local and national NGOs are usually the first responders and also continue when the international attention and funding have shifted elsewhere. However, they still lack recognition, capacity and resources for effective and efficient humanitarian action (GMI, 2020; IFRC, 2019). These weak finances regularly create challenging situations and prevent the development of a more robust local and national organizations (GMI, 2020). Although the localization agenda identified the local actors as the key stakeholders for capacity building, HNOs and HRPs have also been criticized for failing to discuss the kinds of capacity development required by local actors (CP GPC, 2019).

Whereas the humanitarian system has been on the forefront to respond to disaster every time it strikes, the humanitarian system has also been criticized for being too centralized, with few agencies accessing huge funds, and the international humanitarian actors leads leaving local and national actors as secondary (GMI, 2020). In addition, the collaboration between international and local actors often generate a situation of structural subordination of the latter to the former (Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), 2020, GMI, 2020).

It is against these challenges facing local actors that the global discussions preceding May 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) resurfaced. Among the initiatives introduced to address these challenges is 'the localization agenda' (GMI, 2020). This call on the international humanitarian actors to complement local systems. Recently the concept of localization has gained more interest in the humanitarian sector, calling for a "local turn." (Barakat & Milton, 2020; p.147). With the COVID-19 pandemic, some international organizations pulled out or slowed their operations. Some resorted to working remotely. Local actors, being part of the community, became front line responders, delivering humanitarian assistance, distributing information, and assisting other public initiatives (Pincock et al, 2020).

The COVID-19 situation forced international actors to think outside the box, by exploring new initiatives that can facilitate managing projects remotely and supporting participatory humanitarian assistance. With all these evidences, donors are still reluctant to finance local actors directly. This may be partly due to limited capacity and accountability (Betts, Easton-Calabria, & Pincock, 2020). This shows the need for collaborative relationship between local and international actors in humanitarian response so that they can complement each other.

The localization agenda seeks to redefine humanitarian response by transforming the international humanitarian system, resulting into a locally led humanitarian response, and be given a significant higher share of the available humanitarian funds without being sub-granted by the international actors, as it is today (GMI, 2020). The localization agenda therefore brings in a paradigm shift not only in processes and actors but also access to more resources. Hence, giving the international humanitarian actors a secondary role.

This paper will discuss localization agenda in humanitarian action to gain a better understanding of the concept of localization, the drivers and challenges of localizing humanitarian action. In addition to reviewing related literature, the paper will use a case study to illustrate how an accountable networked governance system can enhance localization of humanitarian response in fragile contexts. The case study will also show how social protection can drive economic recovery in conflict-driven crises.

It is structured in four parts: introduction; a literature review introducing localizing humanitarian action, networked governance and accountability triangle; a case study of the Social Protection in South Sudan; an analysis of three dimensions of localization and application of accountable networked governance in social protection. While it does not discuss every dimension of localization, it focuses on three which have a significant impact on social protection in fragile context: funding, coordination and local capacity. The paper concludes that networked systems whether small or large, face similar challenges and the situation is complex in fragile context, especially where the social protection programme is not funded by the government yet the government is at the center of managing the network.

## **Literature Review**

Bearing in mind the magnitude and type of global conflicts, there is need to transform the localization agenda “from a policy choice to a necessary, default option” (Barakat & Milton, 2020; p.148). This justifies the need to interrogate the concept of localization, its meaning, significance and weaknesses in the context of humanitarian space. This section defines the concept of localization, the drivers of localization, and challenges of localization

- **Localizing Humanitarian Action**

Humanitarian response in fragile contexts has always cried for localization but it is in the recent years that failure to manage protracted and complex conflict leading to a blended pursuit of an efficient and effective local humanitarian response. This is the situation in South Sudan (Tanner & Moro, 2016) and the “Arab region, which is home to a disproportionate amount of contemporary conflicts and crises” (Barakat & Milton, 2020; p.147). These contexts are not only challenged in “translating global responses into local solutions” (Barakat & Milton, 2020; p.147) but also in pinpointing the local actors and their capacities for an effective humanitarian response (Barakat & Milton, 2020 and Tanner & Moro, 2016).

Due to these fragility local and national actors become vital in delivery of aid (Moro, Pendle, Robinson and Tanner, 2020). Localizing humanitarian action forms a significant foundation for understanding the localization agenda and locally led multi-sector humanitarian response that link emergency response to resilience building. “Local leadership and the development of national and local systems has been recognized to accountably provide essential social services offering the opportunity for more sustainable, appropriate and transformative responses” (Fanning & Fullwood-Thomas, 2019, p. 3). Research supports this view that “the local is also a natural place for working beyond silos as crisis affected populations tend not to operate with the same distinctions between sectors that structure the international aid apparatus.” (Barakat and Milton 2020; p.149). But what is localization?

A review of selected Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNOs) and Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) across the globe, only 8% of the HNOs and 43% of the HRPs explicitly referenced localization. 21% of the HNOs and 57% of HRPs referred to localization related terminologies such as the Grand Bargain, Principles of Partnership among others (CP Global Protection Cluster, 2019). This shows that the localization commitments are geared more to implementation than needs assessment. The Somalia HRP (2018, p.16) stated clearly that the humanitarian action needs to realign with the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain commitments. International organizations continued to take strides to better support local approaches in Somalia (Somali HRP, 2018).

The definition of localization is greatly challenged, and no single description has been settled on (Pincock et al, 2021). As a result, there is no universally accepted definition of localization within the humanitarian policy (Grand Bargain, 2016; Van Brabant & Patel, 2017). In the Grand Bargain, localization refers to “making principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary” while continuing to recognize the vital role of international actors, particularly in situations of armed conflict.”<sup>1</sup> The Grand Bargain focuses on both local and international actors. The Australian Red Cross defined

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<sup>1</sup> [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Grand\\_Bargain\\_final\\_22\\_May\\_FINAL-2.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Grand_Bargain_final_22_May_FINAL-2.pdf).

localization as “a process of recognizing, respecting and strengthening the independence of leadership and decision making by national actors in humanitarian action, in order to better address the needs of affected populations” (IFRC, 2018, pg.1). This definition focuses on local actors only. Most humanitarian analysts have informally understood localization to involve building capacity of the affected people (Pincock et al, 2021, p.721).

Whereas localization continues to be disputed, academic and practitioner definitions have presented a common theme on “the need to recognize, respect, strengthen, rebalance, recalibrate, reinforce or return some type of ownership or place to local and national actors” (Barbelet, 2018, p. 5). These common themes acknowledge the role of both international actors and local actors in ensuring an efficient, effective and successful humanitarian action. There is need to strike a balance on what needs to be relinquished to local actors and how well they (local actors) are equipped to take on the extra roles of managing humanitarian response.

These definitions give different interpretations of localization. Some definitions present a dualistic approach which is likely to sideline the local actors. From the Eurocentric vantage point of view, local actors appear to oppose the global, presenting localization as a continuum where we have local actors on one end and global actors on the other end. This can potentially be a point of contestation and power struggle (Autesserre, 2010; MacGinty & Richmond, 2013). “The risk is that such a dualistic approach may sideline the complex political economy that plays out at the local level.” (Pincock et al, 2021, p. 721). These underlying assumptions need to be challenged in order realize localization agenda. Otherwise, localization may cause exclusion of some sectors (Roepstorff, 2020).

Regardless of the interpretation from these definitions, the localization agenda should prioritize redefining humanitarian response by transforming the international humanitarian system, allowing locals to take the lead (GMI, 2020). This implies that the localization agenda brings in a paradigm shift on processes, decision making, actors and access to resources. Hence, giving the international humanitarian actors sub grantees.



- **Drivers of Localization**

The localization agenda was driven by several factors. Some from the donors and others from the local actors. First, there is disapproval of the international humanitarian structure as being too centralized and administrative (Spiegel, 2017), imposing actions and policies initiated at the highest level to the local actors without their participation and being Northern-driven (Gingerich & Cohen, 2015). As a result, local actors are reluctant to take risks and slow to make decisions (Healy & Tiller, 2014). Similarly, local knowledge is ignored (Macrae, 2008), and local actors deprived of participation and ownership of humanitarian response by international organizations (Telford & Cosgrave, 2007). This implies little or no involvement of local actors in humanitarian action, hence international actors doing everything from supply driven side.

The humanitarian system is internationally structured “with the big five INGOs possessing considerable power and resources.” (Barakat & Milton, 2020, p.150). Clarke and other researchers substantiated this in their claim that although the majority of employees in international organizations are local staff, they are disproportionately represented in senior management roles and paid less than their counterpart international staff (Clarke et al., 2019). This infers that while international staff may be few, they hold more power to make decisions that drive the entire organizations. Similarly, few international NGOs have access to more funding than the entire NGOs in a country, hence controlling resources. This presents a scenario of the powerful few versus the powerless multitude. Hence need for localization to balance the power and access to funding.

Richmond and Franks (2009) succinctly articulated that internationals often seek to ‘relinquish direct control and ownership of the peace-building process’ so as to avoid the stigma of colonialism (Richmond and Franks, 2009). Nevertheless, they still continue to use various means to ensure they sell their agenda to the same local actors. HPG (2018, p.5) observed that “local actors engaging with international actors in a humanitarian response could find themselves disempowered, even as the discourse of localization attempts to empower them.” This trend is also likely to occur with the localization agenda. Are the international actors willing to relinquish the decision making and financial control

powers to the local actors? And are the donors willing and ready to fund the local actors at the same magnitude as they do to the current INGOs?

The relationship between local and international humanitarian actors has been criticized to be subversive. The Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICV) observed a “state of structural subordination in the relationship between the international humanitarian system and local/national relief actors” (2020, p.1). The humanitarian system appears to be too dominant, with few people managing funds and local actors sidelined from taking primary role in response (GMI, 2020). This denies local actors the opportunity to take on leadership of humanitarian response. However, it is necessary to explore why the local actors receive little funding. Is it by their choice or have inadequate capacity to compete for and manage the resources?

Humanitarian space has also been on the decrease due to protracted and complex conflicts, some limiting access by international humanitarian actors due to insecurity. This limited access to conflict areas has made some international actors to work “at arm’s length through local NGOs or government authorities” (Healy & Tiller, 2014, p. 4), either to sub-contract or managing remotely (Collinson & Elhawary, 2012). This may be partially contributed to the increasing number of countries ignoring international assistance and instead build their capacity to lead humanitarian response. Hence, putting their local and national actors (local communities and national governments) to a more dominant position in humanitarian action (ALNAP, 2010). By 2020, humanitarian space in the Syria crisis was not dominated by the usual “big players” of Western NGOs as formerly. Instead, the local and national NGOs accounted for a substantial proportion of humanitarian aid delivery. The local and national NGOs have become more numerous than the ‘big players’ (Barakat and Milton, 2020, p.149).

Even with this recognition of local actors as first responders (McGoldrick, 2016), international actors are criticized for doing little in giving little attention to the local actors because the local actors still lack visibility, capacity and resources required for an efficient

and effective humanitarian response (GMI, 2020). In a study by Donini and other researchers, they acknowledged that most of what is “local and non-western in humanitarian action goes unrecognized” (Donini et al., 2008, p. 4). These breaches put the local actors on one end and the international actors on the other end, posing a serious challenge in realizing a seamless transition from humanitarian to development (Barakat & Milton, 2020 and Tanner & Moro, 2016). In addition, it builds conflict between the two parties by creating a gap in response that only the INGOs can solve due to capacity and resources. Yet, this should not be the case. They should complement each other in their work to ensure sustainability (De Wolf and Wilkinson, 2019).

- **Dimension of Localization**

There are seven dimensions of localization: policy, relationship quality, participation revolution, visibility, coordination, capacity and funding. This paper will focus on three dimensions to understand their commitment, current state and use a case study to assess how it measures against the three dimensions. Literature has revealed that funding, capacity and coordination are interlaced. Poor capacity affect access to funding as well as participation in coordination forums. Similarly, lack of funding limits recruiting quality staff hence affect active participation in coordination. In addition, active participation in coordination forums gives local actors voice and influence to attract more funding and hence recruit competent staff.

- Capacities:

National actors are instrumental to ensure effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and sustainability of humanitarian results, as they are in place before, during and after crises, and are usually the first to respond when crisis hits (Nigeria HRP, 2018. P. 30). Hence building their capacity is inevitable to ensure an effective and efficient humanitarian response.

South Sudanese NGOs perceive ‘capacity’. International agencies refer to capacity as the “ability to perform core functions of the humanitarian system” while the local NGOs focus on their “ability to overcome structural barriers to their autonomy” (Moro et all, p.

36). These varied perceptions may lead to wrong prescriptions by international organizations in addressing capacity gaps of local NGOs. This calls for a dialogue between the two to ensure an effective capacity building plan.

Some of the key issues are: a narrow understanding of capacities by international actors that results in lack of recognition of various capacities and competencies that local/national agencies have; an assumption that local/national actors lack capacities and that international agencies have them; uncoordinated and ineffective capacities that rely too much on generic and one-off training and is not tailored to the context or the agencies (the preference is for mentoring and on-the-job learning via accompaniment); too much emphasis on technical and compliance capacities which is a priority for international agencies but not necessarily so much for local/national ones; undermining capacities e.g. by hiring away the best staff of national actors, causing inflation when large numbers of international agencies come in, and maintaining financially fragile local/national organizations who cannot attract and keep experienced staff.

Local/national actors point out that even as they get stronger in many ways, the internationals shift the goal posts, so there is no finishing line. That then also means there are never significant role changes: they are not allowed to take on roles that the international agency kept to itself. In other words, there is never a 'graduation': they remain eternal students. Particular problems arise during general surge, when internationals rapidly hire large numbers of local for their own capacity, and then tell local agencies they do not have the capacity.

38% of the HNOs reference the institutional capacity of local actors in the overview of needs. 43% of the HRPs referenced the importance of institutional capacity strengthening of local actors but only 22% of the HRPs explicitly referenced at least one strategy or approach to institutional capacity strengthening of local actors (CP GPC, 2019. p. 37). This is an indication that capacity is recognized more during implementation than during assessment that is why more HRPs refer to institutional capacity than HNOs.

The review of HNOs and HRPs noted that “local actors (national NGOs, CSOs and the Private sector) still require capacity enhancement to support localization of humanitarian response and contribute to resilience enhancement” (Yemen, HRP, 2018, P.50). Hence, recommended that a response strategy should be put in place with “specific focus on enhancing the response capacity of governmental and social protection institutions as well humanitarian organizations” (Haiti HRP, 2018, p.29).

One of the Nigerian Humanitarian Response Plan recommended that institutional capacity building approaches<sup>2</sup> need to be “promoted and international organizations are encouraged to invest in institutional capacity building of local actors as an integral part of any broader programme partnership” (Nigeria HRP, 2018. P. 30). In addition, emergency response services will continue to be complemented by efforts to build the capacity of government officials to address needs directly, at each of the federal, regional and local levels (Ethiopia HRDP 2018, p. 39). This calls for a robust capacity building strategy, involving coaching and mentoring of specialists, government institutions and local partners is required (Yemen HRP 2018, p.38).

- **Funding**

The Grand Bargain’s aspirations of driving greater efficiency and effectiveness in humanitarian response is gaining some progress. An efficient and effective humanitarian action requires adequate and stable funding sources with effective delivery mechanisms. The significance of adequate and stable funding to local and national actors to provide responsive assistance to the affected people in need has been reinforced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Five years after the Grant Bargains commitment to increase humanitarian funding for local and national actors to 25%, the funding given directly to local and national actors continues to drag. In 2020 only, small proportion (3.1%) of the total international

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<sup>2</sup> Particularly the capacity development approaches focused on coaching, mentoring and accompaniment.

humanitarian assistance was channeled directly to the local and national actors. Yet this was an increase compared to 2019 (GHAR, 2021). Does this mean donors still have limited confidence in the local and national actors or they lack capacity all together? In the midst of all these initiatives, is the humanitarian system willing and able to support the desired change? (Singh, 2016).

Humanitarian funding channeled through the UN-coordinated pooled funds gained stability since 2016 and was at its peak in 2019. This trend changed in 2020, reporting a drop-in funding by 18% to US\$1.5 billion due to the reduction of US\$449 million by UK. Correspondingly, this caused a reduction in the overall funding to country-based pooled funds in 2020. In the midst of this reductions, the use of pooled funds has been applauded for allowing for a collective and flexible humanitarian response. But for future sustainable funding to humanitarian action, the impact being realized from reduced funding by one donor should be an eye opener to humanitarian actors to diversify funding and explore other sources such as the private humanitarian funding (GHAR, 2021).

In addition to pooled funding, unassigned and multi-year funding channels are significant sources for the local actors in order to deliver flexibility and predictability to humanitarian actors. Between 2017 and 2020 the trend for un-earmarked funding has been increasing steadily, reaching to 17% (US\$3.3 billion) in 2020. Humanitarian funding delivered through multi-year funding by the eight leading donors has demonstrated a steady increase from 27% in 2016 to 41% in 2020, despite a fall between 2019 and 2020 (GHAR, 2021).

The use of cash and voucher assistance (CVA) has recorded a sustained growth since it was committed to date. Increased use of cash and voucher assistance gained impetus with the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic when the actors' scaled up and delivered humanitarian aid remotely using cash. There has been consistent use of CVA resulting into steady growth from US\$2.0 billion in 2015 to US\$ 6.3 billion in 2020. This gives an indication of the willingness by both the donor and humanitarian actors to use cash as well as its convenience in delivering humanitarian assistance (GHAR, 2021).

- **Coordination**

This dimension calls on international actors to support national actors to take lead in the coordination mechanisms defined by more presence, influential participation and (co-) leadership of “national governmental and non-governmental actors in ‘coordination’ mechanisms and forums such as clusters”. This call may not so easy, due to the complexity of the international coordination mechanisms which are also criticized as being “slow and very time consuming” (GMI, 2020, p.3). Some national actors consider leading coordination mechanisms as a burden, hence choose not to be “burdened” by the coordination responsibility (GMI, 2020). For the local and national actors interested in coordination are faced with the inability (and cost) to attend large numbers of meetings, most of which are held centrally in the capital city. The coordination meetings in “a European language only, not understanding the complex architecture, jargon and acronyms of the international humanitarian system etc.” (GMI, 2020, p.3)

Even with proposed reforms to the humanitarian architecture, such as the Humanitarian Reform process of 2005 and the Transformational Agenda beginning in 2011, aimed at creating more coordinated and effective humanitarian response (including through Humanitarian Coordinators, Humanitarian Country Teams and the clusters), yet these structures exclude a range of actors – often precisely those actors’ ‘localization’ is meant to promote (HPG, 2018). “Optimizing operational capacity in a complex and insecure operating environment require renewed efforts towards strengthened inter-sectoral and sectoral coordination at strategic and operational levels” (Libya HRP 2018, p.17).

- **Benefits of Localization**

The value of localization has also been magnified further by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic when most, if not all international organizations suspended or reduced operations (Betts, Easton-Calabria, & Pincock, 2020). This is the same situation for the local actors in non-refugee contexts.

The localization agenda empowers local actors, national governments and local communities enabling them to become central players in humanitarian action. Localization has also woken up some countries which are now ignoring international assistance and increasing their capacity to respond (ALNAP, 2020). The locally-led humanitarian engagement has been deemed to be more trustworthy and legitimate (HPG, 2015). Mozambique is cited as a positive case having successfully handled floods in 2007 (Twigg, 2015) and access to the Kachin IDP crisis in Myanmar in 2011 by local actors.

The private sector is also engaging more strategically in localized humanitarian operations. The Kenyans for Kenya initiative, involving a bank, a mobile network operator and the Kenya Red Cross Society, raised \$7.5 million which supported the cash transfer response during the 2011 drought and famine (Drummond and Crawford, 2014). Similarly, the private sector in Yemen was key in distributing localized humanitarian aid at a point when political polarization and conflict was threatening starvation (HPG, 2016). This brings in a new dimension of the private sector localization agenda. Donors are also supporting this dimension by supporting mobile money service providers who are able to deliver cash to the most remote areas.

Due to these benefits, most countries are now building local capacity and taking leadership in humanitarian response. Several studies have depicted more states leading response (ALNAP, 2007), such as India rejecting international assistance, Mozambique effectively managing a localized response (Twigg, 2015), Sudan backing localized response at the expense of international humanitarian response (HPG & ICVA, 2018). These trends foretaste that crisis-affected countries have interest in the locally led response, which is perceived to be more reliable and appropriate (HPG, 2015).

- **Challenges of Localization**

Whereas there is a growing consensus on the need for the localization of humanitarian action, the process faces a number of barriers and not everyone is so enthusiastic about the localization agenda.



HPG (2016) highlighted that international humanitarian system failed to connect meaningfully with national and local institutions. Implementation of the localization agenda has been challenged to be using a 'top-down' approach in translating organizational practices at a local level (MacGinty, 2015; Jayawickrama, 2018). This is affirmed by HPG that "the current humanitarian structure remains closed and centralized, and in a centralized humanitarian structure, localization is unlikely to result in the empowerment of local actors" (HPG, 2018, p. 5).

The localization agenda increases the presence and impact of 'emerging' (local and national) actors. This can be perceived to be "posing a threat to the status quo of this current architecture – specifically in relation to power, control and money" (HPG, 2018, p.5). The status quo of few actors controlling power and money is destabilized by having more (local) humanitarian actors with capacity, power and money. Such destabilization of the status quo is welcome in this study since it makes humanitarian response more effective and efficient, by ensuring the first and closer responders are empowered to respond in case of disaster, hence expanding the humanitarian space for local actors.

The centralized (top down) approach do not meet the localization agenda's perspective which focus on the bottom-up approach (World Bank, 2003). The top-down approach limits citizens voice and also promote domineering which works against the networked governance approach (MacGinty, 2015; World Bank, 2003). This is a simple call that if localization is for the local actors, then the international community have a role to engage them and promote their participation by involving them.

It is also a concern that "localization as decentralization turns into an incentive to accelerate the multi-nationalization of INGOs by creating more and more national offices and national affiliates, which have to compete in fundraising from the domestic market, causing resource competition." (Barakat and Milton, 2020, p.150). This increased resource competition in the domestic market cause humanitarian space to shrink further (Brabant and Patel, 2018). This perception limits the localization agenda.

The local and national actors are also challenged in their capacity to effectively manage humanitarian action. They are not well equipped to manage such a rapid “resource transfer, largely from the Global North to the South” (Barakat & Milton, 2020, p.150). Some scholars have differed with this and noted that even with these capacity gaps (GMI, 2020), “local actors are still instrumental in ensuring effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and sustainability of humanitarian action, since they are in place before, during and after crises” (Nigeria HRP, 2018. pg. 30). This is debatable.

In spite of the international humanitarian community collectively agreeing to a specific, time-bound target of transferring 25% of humanitarian aid directly to local actors by 2020 (WHS, 2016), it will not be business as usual for local NGOs to manage the 25% (Barakat and Milton, 2020). Sara Pantuliano<sup>3</sup>, cautioned that “it is arrogant to assume that national NGOs can handle 25% of funds” (Barakat and Milton, 2020, p.150). The international organizations further portray local and national actors as “a risk, of fraud and corruption, political or social group bias, unable to achieve international standards” (GMI, 2020, p.4). Having acknowledged this limitation, it is important that the transfer of 25% of humanitarian aid be preceded by building the capacity of local actors, particularly on financial management, to enable them manage effectively the new/additional funding. This may call for mentorship and coaching by the international actors until the local actors can stand on their own.

Another barrier to localization relates to weak community structures and capacity to prevent occurrence of disaster. Lack of sufficient capacities to handle with a communal crisis leads to the occurrence of disasters. Otherwise, disasters would have been prevented (Barakat and Milton, 2020). Occurrence of disaster results into “losses that exceed the community’s or society’s ability to cope using its own resources” (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2012, p. 9). This barrier reveals that focusing on humanitarian actors won’t meet the goals of localization, instead there is need to consider the affected population and other systems. In addressing this barrier, localization

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<sup>3</sup> Personal Communication, the former Director of the Humanitarian Policy Group at the Overseas Development Institute, Associate of the Center for Conflict and Humanitarian Studies

require to expand the network to include building the capacity of the affected communities.

These varied barriers are responsible for influencing the progress towards a localized humanitarian action in different contexts. It is therefore the mixture of these influencing factors, but not a single particular one, that will also influence the pathways and promptness of progress towards a localized solution. When these barriers are well addressed, localization will benefit the entire humanitarian system – the affected population, local actors, international actors and the donor community. The next section explores some of the benefits of localizing humanitarian action.

These challenges not only reduce meaningful engagement between international actors and the local and national actors, but they also suppress invention limiting constructive arrangements

## Theoretical Framework

Good governance and accountability are very important themes in humanitarian response. This section reviews evidence on the use of accountability mechanisms and networked governance in social protection programmes. In this paper, social protection will be limited to cash transfers.

- **Networked Theory of Governance**

Governance is the art of problem solving (Hassall, 2009). The concept of governance has been evolving in the effort to address emerging issues in the management of public service. The public services witnessed privatization and fragmentation due to the rise of New Public Management (NPM), characterized by market forces, contracts, competition and increasing reliance on non-government organizations (Rosenbloom and Kravchuk, 2002). This increased complexity and fragmentation is one of the possible factors that led to the rise of networks, due to the need for cooperation and negotiation among

organizations need to in order to provide services which are considered to be complex (Parker, 2007; Pierre, 2000; Rhodes, 2000).

This appears to be satirical, since the competitive nature of NPM principles are in contrast to the collaboration, teamwork and mutual involvement associated with networked governance. It is also certain that the changing role of the state implies that the government alone may not describe adequately how society is governed (Pierre, 2000). According to Rhodes (2000), governance is broader than government. It comprises of varied service providers from public, private and the non-governmental sector (Parker, 2007).

Networked governance has been in existence throughout the world. The multinational networks tackle significant global issues (Held, 2004). Other networks operate in a specific locality (De Rynck and Voets, 2006). The paper presents a case study centered on a fragile country-based network. Networked governance is described as being interdependent, sharing resources, negotiation and autonomy of the independent members (Rhodes, 2000). Other scholars like Benner et al (2004); Hudson et al (2007); Parker (2007) and Stoker (2006) unanimously agreed that networks are collective and mutual in decision-making, interdependent and include a range of participants. Conversely, Rhodes (2000, p.61) argued that networks were “autonomous and self-governing”. This brings up an area of difference. This notion is however opposed by Hudson et al (2007) who disagreed on the ground that there were exceptional cases which showed evidence that they were often strongly driven by the state. Indeed, as shall be seen in this paper, the case study presented here also demonstrates this: targets, outcomes and funding from central government mean that the network cannot be truly autonomous. Even where funding is not from the government, autonomy is still debatable because all the other operations of the network are governed by the government system.

Further than this definition of networked governance, Parker (2007) highlights that networked governance must serve a collective function which is more than just dialogue: the interdependence and shared resources described by Rhodes are necessary elements to demonstrate networked governance. For the purposes of this paper, networked

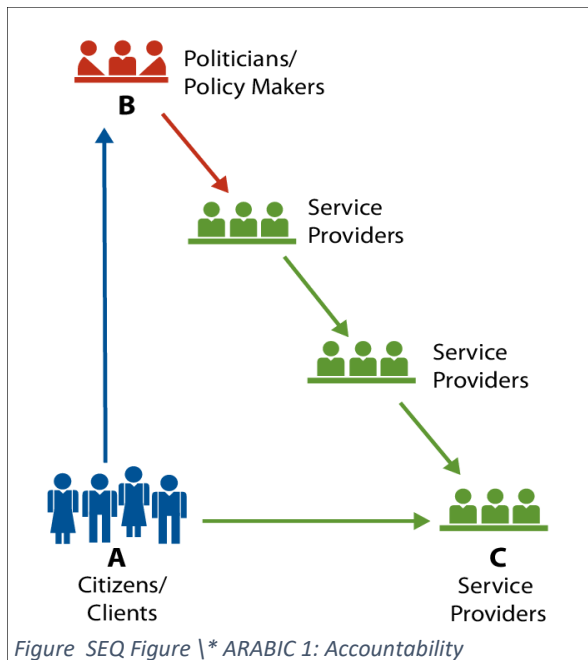
governance will be defined on the areas with broad convergence, that is, interdependence, mutual sharing of resources, collective decision-making and negotiation, but not autonomy.

In the light of increasing service fragmentation, networked governance can be an important part of the public service landscape (Rhode, 2000); can increase efficiency and capacity (Proven and Kenis, 2008) and is a useful mechanism for tackling cross-border and cross-organizational issues (Held, 2004; Kooiman, 2000; and Parker, 2007). These same benefits can be realized in the humanitarian sector.

Being a human innovation, networked governance also faces some limitations. While it promotes participation of different participants, Fischer (2006); Hale (2008) and Hudson and Lowe (2009) argue that the involvement of different actors in the networked governance poses a risk of diluting democracy. "This democratic deficit and lack of accountability are core challenges of networked governance and are discussed" Bogason and Musso (2006) and Henney (in Rhodes, 2000, p.69). In addition, some actors in the networked governance may manipulate circumstances for egocentric tendencies, while hiding behind the advantage that network interactions are not as transparent as individual organizations. From the case study and the reviewed literature, it is evident that similar challenges exist regardless of the size of the network and sector.

- **Accountability triangle**

Accountability triangle is an accountability paradigm comprised of three basic accountability sides/relationships: from the citizens/clients to the politicians/policy makers; from politicians/policy makers to the service providers; and from citizens/clients to the service providers (World Development Report 2004; World Bank, 2004). The Sides AB and BC make up the long route of accountability, while side AC is referred to as the short route of accountability (Healey & Crouch, 2012).



The long route (sides AB and BC) takes a top down approach to accountability and is used by central government to monitor the activities of public agencies. Policy makers allocate, providers produce the services and citizens access the services. In the long route method citizens influence policy makers who in turn influence service delivery through providers (Ringold, Holla, Koziol, Srinivasan & Santhosh, 2012). The long route is usually hierarchical and bureaucratic in nature with feedback often taking too long.

The short route (AC) to public accountability takes a bottom up approach and involves ordinary people and civil society organizations. There is direct communication between the grassroots and the public entities or officials. This ensures that responses are received on time. The ordinary citizens and civil society are empowered to demand direct accountability from public officials and bodies. For the short route to be effective, citizens need to have unhindered access to accurate information (Healey & Crouch, 2012). When parties in the accountability triangle are made “accountable for their actions, they are effectively taught to value their work. When done right, accountability can increase your team members' skills and confidence” (Madhovi, 2020).

However, the long route can weaken the important role of the citizens and civil society in demanding greater accountability from public entities and officials. Likewise, the short route also tends to overlook the role of independent central government bodies charged with bringing public entities and officials to account (Madhovi, 2020). These notwithstanding, both the short route and long route approaches are complimentary. They have distinct roles for demanding public accountability (Devarajan, Khemani & Walton, 2014).

## **Case Study**

This section provides an overview of the case study. The background to the case is provided as a foundation for the subsequent analysis of the BRACE II Project as an example of an accountable networked structure for Social Protection.

### **The case study approach**

The case study methodology includes triangulation of data through review of the BRACE II project drawn from the key BRACE II project documents such as reports, proposals, and evaluations. The case study will be assessed against three dimension of localization (funding, capacity building and coordination) and against the three main characteristics of network structures (a common mission, interdependence and a unique structural arrangement).

- **Building Resilience through Asset Creation and Enhancement - Phase Two (BRACE II)**
  - **Background—BRACE II Project**

Building Resilience through Asset Creation and Enhancement (BRACE II) is the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) South Sudan's flagship resilience and international climate finance project, aiming to increase the capacity of vulnerable households to cope with climate shocks and stresses, improve their food security and build better community relationships. It is part of DFID's balanced approach between life-saving and resilience-building interventions. The programme, originally due to end in March 2021, was extended until 2023 to maintain delivery of resilience building work during a period of global uncertainty, and to bridge the transition to a standalone multi-year humanitarian and resilience programme.

BRACE II builds on lessons learned in a two-year BRACE I pilot project phase which ended in July 2015. BRACE II is an approved five-year programme that intends to leverage long-term positive change in community food security and livelihoods by making these more resilient to climate variability and extremes and localized resource conflicts. The approach adopted in this programme was food and cash for assets.

It will do this through creation and enhancement of shared community assets. The project is funded through the UK Government's Climate Fund. This covers various components of the programme. The programme has a geographical focus of 5 states: Western Bahr el Ghazal, Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Warrap, Lakes and Eastern Equatorial states.

Through this project, communities adopt practices that improve management of their natural resources which results in more secure livelihoods and less communal conflict. Up to 400 000 people work together to improve and maintain their shared agricultural and natural resource assets; and effective community participation in asset and skills building.

This programme addresses immediate food insecurity which has been increased by the protracted crisis. This contributes to averting hunger and famine. Communities receive a variety of support that improves their resilience against climate damage to agricultural assets. This has also improved protection and management of the environment so that food production is better able to withstand disasters. Indirectly, collective community work also increases social cohesion.

- **Objectives of the BRACE Programme**

The programme has four main objectives:

- Address immediate (hunger) food insecurity and basic needs through provision of conditional cash/food assistance (Cash/Food for Asset/Work)
- Improve longer-term food security through supporting the creation of community assets (i.e. support for agro-pastoral production).
- Increase capacity to absorb, anticipate and adapt to climate variability and extremes through improving skills and knowledge (by supporting climate change adaptation).
- Improve community relationships and social cohesions

The project is delivered through cash transfers because even in a protracted crisis where shocks and stresses are recurrent, temporary cash transfers can provide protective benefits that promote certain types of economic recovery by preventing poverty backsliding and promoting resilience. Second, augmenting cash transfers with



appropriate behavior change interventions can amplify impacts on economic and psychosocial well-being.

- **Components of the BRACE Programme**

BRACE II has three components: two delivery components and an independent monitoring and evaluation component.

1. First component led by UN partners (WFP and FAO), in Northern Bahr El Ghazal and Warrap. Component I began in 2015 and is delivered by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in partnership in all counties of Northern Bahr el Ghazal (NBeG) and Twic County of Warrap state<sup>4</sup>. FAO and WFP work with five cooperating partners: Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Warrap and Concern Worldwide (CWW), Joint Aid Management (JAM), Action Against Hunger (ACF), World Vision (WV) in NBEG,
2. The second component is led by NGO partner(s) in any areas classified as severely food insecure. Component II began in 2018 and is delivered by an NGO consortium led by World Vision (WV) and implemented in Aweil North (NBeG); Gogrial West in Warrap state and Magwi in Eastern Equatoria State. World Vision-led consortium consists of two national NGOs: Smile Again Africa Development Organization (SAADO) and Support for Peace and Education Development Programme (SPDP).
3. Third component is an independent monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) element delivered by a contractor (iMC & Forcier). The programme will be evaluated by an independent service provider who will provide real time feedback to suppliers. This is intended to ensure that the programme levers positive impact and is responsive and accountable to community voices. The MEL component supports all BRACE II partners on M&E in order to produce robust evidence and

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<sup>4</sup> FAO and WFP work with five cooperating partners: Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Warrap and Concern Worldwide (CWW), Joint Aid Management (JAM), Action Against Hunger (ACF), World Vision (WV) in NBEG, while World Vision-led consortium consists of two national NGOs: Smile Again Africa Development Organisation (SAADO) and Support for Peace and Education Development Programme (SPDP).

learning, to establish a feedback mechanism that gives communities a voice and enables two-way communication and accountability to beneficiaries, and to communicate with each other effectively in order to share experiences and knowledge and improve delivery.

In summary, BRACE II was designed to target areas of South Sudan that are highly food insecure but more stable than other parts of the country. This allows the programme to provide longer term support to help people shift away from reliance on humanitarian assistance to achieve more sustainable food security. BRACE II builds on a successful three-year pilot project, BRACE I, and was set up with two delivery modalities, one through the UN and one through an NGO-led consortium to enable FCDO South Sudan to compare approaches (DFI, 2017).

### **Analytical Discussion**

The section will analyse the case study against three dimensions of localization (funding, capacity building and coordination) and against the three main characteristics of network structures (a common mission, interdependence and a unique structural arrangement) and against accountability triangle.

- **BRACE II as an accountable networked governance structure**

BRACE II presents an outstanding example of the establishment of an accountable networked governance system. As the literature on network structures suggests that a crisis is often the trigger to move toward the development of a network structure (Cigler 1999; Gray 1989).

It is comprised of 2 UN agencies (FAO and WFP), 5 international agencies (Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Warrap and Concern Worldwide (CWW), Joint Aid Management (JAM), Action Against Hunger (ACF), World Vision (WV)) and 2 national

NGOS (Smile Again Africa Development Organization (SAADO) and Support for Peace and Education Development Programme (SPDP)).

- **A common mission**

Kreast et al (2004) noted that members in a networked governance should see the whole picture. In this case, the ultimate goal of BRACE II. Even though every organizations had their own individual perspectives, they were collapsed into one overarching goal of BRACE II project. Affiliates are now seeing themselves as one small piece of the larger whole. Each organization has a different background (both geographical and thematic focus). But by focusing on the common need in South Sudan, they formed the consortium to address these needs by working cooperatively and in complementarity though focused on different geographical areas of operation, the organizations in BRACE II have gained a more 'holistic' picture of each other, gaining a better understanding of each other's needs and limitations. This has really helped to break down the barriers of the silos. What is being done is not business as usual. Rather, organizations are engaged in systemic change. WFP focused on cash for Assets; FAO focused on Agricultural and Natural Resource Management training and farming inputs and World Vision (in consortium with two NGOs) on Cash for assets and livelihoods assistance. All these contributing to resilience building (FCDO, 2021). This is referred to as "service integration" (Boorman and Woolcock, 2002, p. 60).

- **Members are interdependent**

In a networked governance system, members are not only interconnected, but they are also interdependent Kreast et al (2004). After collapsing individual perspectives, each organization begins to see itself as a part of a larger picture. When participants in the BRACE II project first came together, they did not necessarily see themselves as a whole. In most cases there is no trust and no relationships in the first place. Through the pre-teaming process led by World Vision, different perceptions likely to have a detrimental effect on the consortium were addressed (WVSS, 2018), hence strengthening collaboration and integration (Kreast et al, 2004). Through the pre-teaming and later teaming agreements, participants went through step by "step into each other's shoes" (Kreast et al, 2004. P 349) building relationships, first in the ideation and design meetings

through proposal development and thereafter in implementation. The relationship building process allowed for and continues to encourage each organization appreciating each other as resources as alluded to by Kreast (2004). Though relationship building is very worthwhile, Kreast et al (2004) noted that it can also be a time-consuming process. This notwithstanding, relationship building among the participants in a networked governance is critical.

The BRACE II participants acknowledge that organizations have something to offer and can benefit from the other. With WFP focused on food/cash for asset, FAO on Agricultural and Natural Resource Management training and farming inputs and World Vision on Cash for assets and livelihoods assistance (training, inputs etc.), all geared towards building resilience. This presents a perfect complimentary relationship (FCDO, 2021). Through this symbiotic relationship, governance skills are enhanced across the parties, and entities learn from each, enabling them to avoid errors they would have done if they operated individually. Lim (2009, pg. 5) argues that, “The formation of a network structure means that at least some of the members recognize they are not able to achieve their purposes on their own, and that all action is thus interdependent.”

- **A unique structural arrangement**

Networked governance structure is composed of representatives of many diverse entities. Implementing partners for BRACE II include the World Food Programme (WFP), Food Agricultural Organization (FAO), international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), local and national non-governmental organizations (L/NNGOs) and the private sector who work directly with beneficiary communities. International organizations further work through local actors.

Organizations in BRACE II have been able to build fruitful coalitions, mobilize support, and make mutual adjustments as needed. Though Kreast et al (20014) argue that hierarchical control does not lead to results, the participants in component comprised of World Vision and two NGOs, hierarchical control has contributed to having a single representative of the consortium and enhanced accountability in the consortium. While WV related horizontally with the two NGOs in terms of geographical target, the consortium lead being the prime gives direction to the sub recipients. In addition, working through

a mix of implementing partners in different counties has helped World Vision to spread risks in the highly volatile and uncertain environment like South Sudan (Kreast et al, 2004).

The principle of partnership should not be interpreted to automatically mean parity between divergent stakeholders. International institutions (donors and INGOs) should be honest. As noted in one study, “There is a snobbery – a false hierarchy within the humanitarian industry in which UN agencies are seen as the top and the best, INGOs next and ‘local’ NGOs at the bottom. This leads to some INGO staff patronizing or being rude to ‘local’ staff”.” (Al-Abde, M. & Patel, 2009: pg. 249).

Network governance helps in achieving long term impact and tracking affective indicators. Though managing expectations of participants in the network governance may be tricky, this can be addressed by setting the objectives clear at the formation of the networks.

- **BRACE II as an accountable Structure**

Accountability and good governance are strong themes in humanitarian action (Bassett et al., 2012). From the accountability triangle, accountability is strongest when both the long and short route to accountability work. Also presented in the World Bank report (2003) is the growing body of research which demonstrates that “getting these accountability relationships right” is the key to improving public services for the poor. Meaning that that accountability relationships and routes are all working properly, reinforcing each other as a public service delivery system. In particular in fragile states, there is a need to strengthen the relationship. Where states have failed, global governance acts. It is inter-national. Between nations. In other words, networked governance can serve as the globalization of local governance. This implies international organizations and state government are complimentary and when one fails the other can stand on behalf. Hence, international institutions can stand in for South Sudan state and support establishment of relevant policy that will not only advance social protection as

they build the capacity of the state<sup>5</sup>, but also offer conducive atmosphere for the implementation of the localization agenda commitments for sustainable humanitarian and development actions.

Evidence from research by Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in 2012 indicates that “social protection in fragile and conflict-affected situations is delivered predominantly by non-state actors, specifically international non-governmental organizations or UN agencies” (Carpenter, Slater and Mallett 2012: pg. 7). Government of South Sudan (2016) confirmed that Social Protection programmes in South Sudan are financed through various funding channels and are exclusively funded by development partners. In the absence of the Governments both will and capacity to deliver services, a heavy burden is placed on international humanitarian mechanisms (Darcy 2004).

Norad (2016) identified four main weaknesses in the international donor engagement in South Sudan; that donors lacked an overall strategic and prioritized plan and efforts post-independence was not adequately adapted, the donor community’s vision for South Sudan differs from the objectives of the government. These are partly the reason why some donors bypass the government. Some “donors often by-passed government authorities to deliver services more effectively” (NORAD 2016: 30). BRACE II as an accountable network governance structure promote accountability both lateral and horizontal accountability. It is accountable to the authority (the project aligns to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security), accountability among the entities and accountability to communities and the rule of the land.

Such interaction between the government, international community, local actors and citizens depict an ideal accountability triangle where no party is overburdened at the expense of the other. However, in South Sudan where social protection is funded by donors, the longer path is affected and the attention shifts from the government to humanitarian workers as the primary service providers. This in a way is not sustainable and humanitarian assistance is mostly supply driven. But when localization is fully

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<sup>5</sup> [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

embraced and network structures enhanced, this accountability triangle will be normalized.

At the same time, the partners governing the programme need to be working towards the same goal, speaking the same language. Both partners speak same language. This will then promote.

Network governance, according to Turnbull (2003) provides “mechanism for reducing conflict of interest by increasing transparency and accountability of board directors and their dealings; simplifies corporate governance guidelines and protects minority shareholders’ interests and builds partnerships with regulators through a process of integrated co-regulation. BRACE II promotes social cohesion and reduce the likelihood of communal conflict through community-based planning and governance structures, shared work and management of natural resources and infrastructure. The project continued working to understand: i) the context; ii) the interactions between this programme and the context; and iii) how the programme can address causes of conflict and avoid negative impacts. WFP has an ongoing partnership with the Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (CSRF) to document existing good practice in conflict sensitivity, work on an action plan and produce assessment frameworks (e.g. for conflict sensitivity in development of feeder roads and other infrastructural development) (FCDO, 2021). SPEDP leads implementation in Eastern Equatoria, providing technical support in peacebuilding to other consortium partners operating in Warrap (WV) and NBeG (SAADO) (WVI, 2018)

BRACE II project also established a range of Beneficiary Communication and Accountability mechanisms to strengthen community engagement and feedback throughout the life of the project. The accountability mechanisms are implemented by project management committees with support from staff. A core component of the Beneficiary Communication and Accountability Plan (BCAP) is regular dissemination of project-related information and updates to community member (beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries). Communities are empowered and are now able to identify multiple information dissemination channels that leverage, where relevant and appropriate,

multimedia platforms including radio and SMS.<sup>6</sup> Low literacy options were considered, and women specifically consulted to identify gender-responsive content and channels.

The BCAP has strategies for soliciting regular feedback from communities (beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries) through monthly community consultation meetings facilitated by PMCs. Information is fed back to Project Management Teams (PMTs) who are responsible for adapting and iterating implementation strategies and work plans accordingly. Information relating to the project's response to feedback is also fed back to communities by the PMC via scheduled consultation meetings, ensuring ongoing two-way communication.

These initiatives give the community a voice and promote their participation in the project by giving them views and opinions as well as sharing openly their grievances which are then discussed and resolved, hence improve service delivery by making humanitarian response more efficient and effective as needed by the localization agenda.

- **BRACE II as a Localized Structure**

The paper will assess BRACE II project against three dimensions of the localization agenda: funding, capacity and coordination.

- **Funding (global policy of use of cash as aid-grant bargain, global policy)**

Approximately 99.7% of social protection in South Sudan is financed by donors. While the Government of South Sudan has committed to allocating 1% of its annual budget to finance the NSPPF, in FY2018/19 it allocated just 0.06% of the national budget to social protection. Some of the donors financing South Sudan Safety Social Protection Programme (SSSPP) include the World Bank, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development

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<sup>6</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2011, Beneficiary Communication and Accountability: A responsibility not a choice – Lessons Learnt and Recommendations, viewed 15 November 2017, <[http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/94411/IFRC%20BCA%20Lesson%20Learned%20doc\\_final.pdf](http://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/94411/IFRC%20BCA%20Lesson%20Learned%20doc_final.pdf)>, p.19.



Office (FCDO), Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and World Food Programme (WFP) providing access to income opportunities for the needy people.

The constraints to financing social protection and assistance in poorer countries are significant. In low-income countries like South Sudan, poor revenue mobilization is an important barrier to the extension of social assistance (UNESCA0, 2016). This could be reason for reducing the social and humanitarian sector budget share (where MGCSW allocations are made) from 2% to 1%. This can give a hint on the South Sudan government's commitment in supporting Social Protection. UNESCAO (2016) recommended that one innovative way of funding social protection is through private or civil society-led initiatives. For example, the Kenyans for Kenya initiative (Drummond and Crawford, 2014) and the private sector in Yemen during polarized politics and conflict that was threatening starvation (HPG, 2016).

Through the BRACE II project, FCDO has invested £54,599,700 in Social Protection to reduce hunger gaps, improve long-term food security and mitigate conflict among rural poor of South Sudan. By working together, beneficiaries earn cash in return for identifying and building community assets (such as irrigation ponds). This has enabled communities to develop and manage their resources against extreme climate damage and shocks. This has contributed to Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2, 13, 15 and 16 to end poverty and hunger; act on climate; protect life on land and; promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and build capacity to prevent occurrence of shocks and respond well to shocks (FCDO, 2018).

The UK - Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) funded Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience in South Sudan (HARISS) 2015 - 2021 at a cost of £ 786,999,977 to help approximately three million South Sudanese by providing critical life-saving support and helping people to better cope with shocks from conflict, drought and flooding. This programme saved the lives of an estimated two million people who receive at least one form of humanitarian assistance; and build the capacity of an estimated one million people to recover and cope better with shocks. Over six years this programme

continue to provide food, shelter and access to water and health services to millions of vulnerable people, including women and children.

In addition to funding BRACE II and HARISS projects, FCDO is the main contributor to Health Pooled Fund 3 (HPF3), a £445,900,264 programme in South Sudan. HPF is a multi-donor programme with donors such as the United States of America, Canada and Sweden contributing to the kitty. The HPF has ensured access to multi-year funding by national NGOs working in health and gender. Several national NGOs are in consortium with INGOs, in which they have been mentored through capacity building and exposed to longer term funding. This has helped to address the challenge of short-term project-based funding experienced earlier by the SS NGOs, hence contribute to localization. In 2017, one concrete achievement in support of the localization agenda was the prioritization of local actors, where and when possible, by the pooled funds. (Somali HRP, 2018)

World Bank is known for supporting social protection interventions across the world. In South Sudan, World Bank is delivering the South Sudan Safety Net Project” (SSSNP) providing income support to nearly 430,000 people in some of South Sudan’s most vulnerable communities. The project ensured that low-income and vulnerable people are provided with reliable access to income opportunities and temporary employment. The project will primarily focus on the most vulnerable households such as people living with disabilities, the elderly, pregnant women and those living with HIV/AIDS.<sup>7</sup>

WB has also helped to establish the building blocks of a national social protection system for effective and accountable delivery of social protection while mitigating high operational, fiduciary and safeguards risks in the country (World Bank, 2020). This social protection system is anchored upon which every social protection intervention is planned, implemented and evaluated. In 2020, a \$40 million grant was approved by the International Development Association (IDA) aimed at expanding access to safety net and provide income security for low income South Sudanese, while strengthening delivery tools and local level capacities (World Bank, 2020). This is a boost to the Social Protection

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.unops.org/news-and-stories/news/unops-south-sudan-and-world-bank-to-deliver-40-million-social-safety-net-project>

in South Sudan and an indication of the growing local capacity of the social protection system being able to manage more funds and reach more affected populations.

Through the Local Governance and Service Delivery Project (LOGOSEED) focused on Institutional Strengthening of Local Governments, World Bank delivered services for institutional strengthening of local governments. This included provision of practical and targeted classroom and on-the-job training to county and state government officials across seven states and over 20 counties between 2014 and 2018. Training focused on three primary themes: local government planning, budgeting and financial management; public procurement of goods and services; and local infrastructure project (e.g. boreholes, latrines, classroom blocks, primary health units, gravel roads, markets, bridges, and cattle dips) design, appraisal, procurement, management and closure<sup>8</sup>.

As the project evolved, the focus transitioned to supporting the delivery of block grants to Counties for Payam Development. The team provided technical assistance and support to LOGOSEED's Project Management Unit with the delivery of community infrastructure projects through Payam Development Grants funded by LOGOSEED. This assistance included the preparation of additional or lower-cost infrastructure designs, assessing project proposals against technical, financial and environmental priorities; supporting the costing and procurement of over 800 community infrastructure projects, including tendering and contract award; supervision of project construction; preparation of contract extensions and review of cost variations for ongoing projects; preparation of payment certificates; and inspection of works for completed projects.<sup>9</sup>

The role of International community in social protection cannot be underestimated. FCDO as donor channel funds through INGOs and the World Bank channel funds through the government. These gives a glimpse of a networked structure working in complementarity for a common goal of ensuring effective delivery of social protection focused on system strengthening while FCDO and WB provides the necessary funding through INGOs and

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<sup>8</sup> [www.cowater.com](http://www.cowater.com)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.cowater.com/en/project/local-governance-and-service-delivery-project-logoseed-institutional-strengthening-of-local-governments/>

government respectively. Where governments are not in a position, WB channels money to UN agencies and some INGOs.

In South Sudan, NGOs are influenced by the donor priorities and funding. As a result, the organizational sustainability, capacity, mandate and activities implemented by NGOs are subjective to the donors' international funding modalities (Moro, et al, 2020). The South Sudanese NGOs are limited in securing quality and long-term funding, hence unable to meet essential costs and providing for organizational development (Moro, et al. 2020). This justifies why some studies advocate for government led social protection programmes.

Devereux (2010) preferred government led social protection programmes, arguing that very few donor-led programmes transform themselves into institutionalized national social protection systems. This is not true for all donor led programmes. Some countries have witnessed smooth transition of donor-led social protection programmes to the state. This however requires well defined and agreed upon objectives of the programme from the beginning. In such case international institutions including donors can provide multi-year funding to humanitarian actors and/or state on plummeting basis as the government takes up other roles until they are fully stable. Upon stabilizing, donors can continue channeling the multi-year funding to fund another need such as governance to ensure sustainability of response. This best practice can be adopted and bear the same fruit in South Sudan.

The short-term and project-based funding for South Sudanese NGOs also limit their ability to maintain services beyond the project lifetime. The local NGOs experience frequent gaps between projects causing them more harm and lack of visibility. In particular, "South Sudanese NGOs struggle to hire and retain experienced staff as funding is too small or intermittent, encouraging staff to move to international organizations." (Moro et al, 2020, p. 36). South Sudanese NGOs are not able to sustainably budget for the high wages like the UN and INGOs. This leaves local NGOs unable to effectively carry out capacity-building activities. The ability to support "core organizational functions, such as finance, logistics and human resources, and to hire and retain experienced staff" requires reliable funding (Moro et all, 2020, p. 36). Consequently, this affects their (South Sudanese

NGOs) participation in coordination forum, ability to plan well, and further hinders investment in organizational development processes and systems (Moro et al, 2020; Alcayna and Al-Murani, 2017; Tanner and Moro, 2016).

- **Capacity building**

Capacity developments is key for effective response. Localization prioritizes capacity development for local actors (government and NGOs) to ensure sustainability. Various initiative of local capacity building has been established in South Sudan such as the NGO Forum, online learning platforms (such as Humanitarian Leadership Academy, Disaster Ready etc), mentorship by international organizations through partnerships, opportunity to lead in coordination and cluster forums, training as well provision of adequate funding.

The South Sudan NGO Forum has membership of over 100 International NGOs and 400 National NGOs. Most of these NGOs deliver humanitarian and development assistance in some of the hardest to reach and most insecure environments. The NGO Forum has expanded its work in recent years to support the capacity development of member NGOs, ultimately working towards stronger localization of assistance in line with Grand Bargain Commitments. Its Capacity Development component works closely with the localization working group and other relevant working groups of the NGO Forum and Civil Society strengthening initiatives. This strengthens the capacity of member organizations and staff to deliver effective, principled and accountable humanitarian and development assistance.

In partnership with the Humanitarian Leadership Academy, the NGO Forum's work stream facilitates the roll-out of a tailored programme that supports the National NGOs to build on the initial phase of the Strengthening Effective Humanitarian Partnerships (SEHP) Programme. The NGO forum has also initiated and devised new approaches to competency based-training in different spheres of competencies that enhances effective humanitarian and development assistance delivery. The NGO Forum has localization working group which also supports capacity development initiatives intended to improve localization.

Just like in the Kenyan example where UNICEF, DFID, SIDA, and the World Bank were also investing in developing the technical and human capacity of the Kenyan government to support Social Protection (Bryant, 2009), it is possible for these international institutions to do the same in South Sudan. Infact UNICEF has continued to support The Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare (MoGCSW), which is coordinating the major social protection initiatives, as well as the National Social Protection Working Group (NSPWG). UNICEF will continue to support the MoGCSW in its role as chair of the NSPWG to strengthen the national and interagency social protection coordination mechanisms

Whilst BRACE II already has climate adaptation as a core objective, there is an opportunity to consolidate and scale effective practices to meet the ambition set out under the climate and natural resources shift of the strategic approach to Africa. For example, severe flooding in 2019 has demonstrated the need to further help communities anticipate weather related shocks, as well adapt to them (FCDO, 2021). This empowers community for effective response during disasters as well as disaster mitigation, hence contribute to addressing one of the barriers to localization related to weak community structures and capacity to prevent occurrence of disaster or to cope with a societal crisis after occurrence of disasters (Barakat and Milton, 2020).

The BRACE II project included a gender equality statement and has made a deliberate effort to target women and adapt the programme to their needs, for example by starting activities later in the day so women are able to attend after household work, as well as promoting gender equality in programme structures. We will continue to look for ways to gender inform programme activities, conducting more disaggregated analysis of the results and reviewing how gender sensitivity can be incorporated within every aspect of the programme (FCDO, 2021). This entail women empowerment through capacity building and opportunity to take up leadership roles in management committees. This promote participation of local in humanitarian response. Women led organizations were also empowered and its members are ToTs. This enhance sustainability of local capacities within the community.

BRACE II as a consortium, the members are complementarities to each other. Such complementarity is in the form of support and facilitation: international NGOs strengthening the capacity of national NGOs. This collaboration between the local and international NGOs increases the visibility, credibility and prestige of local actors in the domestic NGO circles or government circles (van Wessel et al, 2021). This is a clear indication that when NGOs collaborate with international NGOs, they appear to expand their mandate to stakeholders in their local settings, including the state as well as the international fraternity.

Literature analyzed has revealed a Chicken-Egg Game in capacity development. Local NGOs lack enough resources to hire and retain staff. And when they build capacity of their staff, the UN and INGOs hire them due to higher salaries that cannot be sustained by the local actors. As a result, the local NGOs become incapacitated again. The international NGOs are also blamed by local actors for claiming that local NGOs don't have capacity but the budget they (INGOs) give to the local NGOs is not enough to get the competent persons. This presents a contradiction that need to be addressed. Low budgets to local NGOs result into hiring staff with low competence. This forms a vicious cycle that maintains the status quo of the local NGOs low capacity (Moro et al, 2020). The question to be answered is "If you say you need a local partner to perform well, have you given them the necessary support to really do this work?" (Moro et al, 2020, p. 36). And if you give them the resources to build their capacity and poach the trained one, are you solving the problem the problem or creating a vicious cycle? This is affirmed by Alcayna and Al-Murani (2016) in South Sudan and by Featherstone (2017) in Philippines. These trends show that there is direct correlation between funding capacity and the ability to recruit qualified personnel.

Capacity development determines access to funding and participation in coordination, hence need to be prioritized.

- **Coordination**

Coordination of humanitarian work in South Sudan is visible. The South Sudan NGO Forum and its associated clusters are important localized forums for advocacy and civic discussion. However, the Juba based clusters and the NGO Forum are criticized for predominantly making important decisions and forcing them on the lower level clusters. This contradicts the call for networked governance which advocates against centralized and bureaucratic styles of governance. While it was assumed that increasing presence and voice of the local actors in clusters will influence decision making, little has been gained.

BRACE II project envisaged a steering committee and technical committee to ensure that the project aligns with local plans, other programmes and includes learning and feedback. State level representation and regular meetings have been a challenge however, and so coordination has been focused at the project level. But the creation of the Partnership for Recovery and Resilience in 2018 has provided a platform for UN agencies, NGOs, donors, Government representatives and civil society to work together, supporting a shift away from humanitarian response to locally owned recovery and resilience building in key areas. Other than shaping PfRR, the activities under BRACE II are well aligned to the pillars and principles of the PfRR, with the UN component providing a practical demonstration of partnership working. National and area-based coordination frameworks are being developed and this extension provides for existing BRACE II partners to be more actively involved in these structures. This is expected to deliver better coordination of programmes at local level, stronger monitoring and learning processes across all agencies and better alignment to local plans and household priorities (FCDO, 2021).

Although there is power imbalance among the organizations forming the Social Protection systems (some having more formal power in terms of resources), studies have recommended that in order for the networked system to be effective, “this power cannot be used unilaterally” since each member is an independent entity” (Keast et al 2004, p. 365). For instance, the BRACE II project implemented by UN agencies (WFP and FAO), International organization (World Vision South Sudan) and national non-government organizations (Support for Peace and Education Programme-SPEDP and Smile Again Africa Development Organization-SAADO). Though Keast et al (2004) argue that



network structures depend rely interpersonal relations, the arrangement in BRACE II contravenes this. In BRACE II, contractual arrangements are part of the collaboration among organizations. In the consortium, NGOs sign agreements with World Vision and each part adheres to the agreement.

These network structures are now completely integrated structures with organizations seeing themselves as interdependent— working toward systemic change—and see that, although they represent individual organizations, their perspective is a holistic one. The BRACE II consortium comprised of the UN agencies, International organization and the national organizations have recognized the need to work together differently (Kreast et al, 2004) because traditional methods, including cooperation and coordination, have not been sufficient. Though network structures are established when all other options have failed (Kreast et al, 2004), most networks for Social Protection networks in South Sudan are open to other options, but they are drive by the common goal of delivering an efficient and effective humanitarian aid to alleviate poverty. For instance, transiting of BRACE project to phase II by the same membership was optional yet all the organizations still remained in the consortium willingly.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout this study was possible to confirm a general consensus on the need to localizing humanitarian response to the rapidly changing humanitarian context. Though driven with many factors and offer significant benefits, localization still faces challenges that require to be addressed in order to ensure an effective and efficient humanitarian response. When the localization agenda debate took off in 2016 the main commitments presented by the proponents of localization agenda were around the shift from the highly centralized, bureaucratic and supply driven humanitarian response to a demand driven, participatory and community led response.

These proposals were part of a broader position that favored a reduction in the role of the international NGOs, grounded on the belief that local actors lacked relevant capacity to

manage humanitarian response effectively yet these local actors are first responders when disaster strikes and the last to leave the scene. The local actors are also part and parcel of those affected by the disaster hence poses relevant local knowledge that is critical in ensuring effective humanitarian response. However, the local actors are denied opportunity to take up this role partly due to inadequate capacity and resources and partly due to unwillingness by the international organizations to relinquish power. Similarly, some donors still don't trust local actors with certain levels of their funding.

The networked governance theory demonstrated that different stakeholders can join hands and implement an action that is vested on the government. Hence global governance can stand in for ineffective state governance

Even though the significance of local and national actors in South Sudan is acknowledged, many a times they are neglected as key providers of social protection, yet they come in handy to fill the gaps not addressed by the formal humanitarian and development actors. However, they are faced with a cyclic problem of inadequate funding, lack of recognition to build capacity and also inadequate capacity to acquire funding or recognition. In the midst of these structural constraints, some local and national organizations still make it.

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