

## CSPPS & NL MFA Learning Trajectory Notes from session II “Unboxing Localisation”

### Session context

After the launching pad session of the Unboxing Localisation learning trajectory at last October’s Knowledge Platform’s Annual Conference ([KPAC2021](#)) on “Asymmetric Power”, the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) co-organised the first follow-up session of 2022 on the 2nd of May 2022. During this second session, many original participants and ample new participants joined forces in unboxing the first aspects of localisation and deciding upon the future steps of the Unboxing Localisation learning trajectory. These outcomes included:

- Agreed to keep using ‘localisation’ as the concept to unpack: though imperfect, the term is widely known and serves its purpose.
- Participants have set priorities in the many subthemes: the next Unboxing session should revolve around sharing practical tools and practices of operationalizing localisation.
- Some first exchanges already took place, sharing such tools, resources and practices (see annex).

At KPAC2021, they had a first look at how we can give shape and form to the process of localisation. We had a diverse panel (and audience) of government actors, think tanks, INGOs and local organisations who discussed the challenges and hurdles when it comes to rolling out localisation in practice.

Among the topics that were put forward, the main localisation subthemes were (1) operationalisation of capacity sharing and equal partnerships, (2) long-term and flexible funding, (3) evidence exchange on how localisation contributes to impact, (4) localisation in practice: tools and practices, (5) culture and narrative.

On the basis of this discussion, the group decided to join forces again over the course of the Unboxing Localisation learning trajectory in order to unbox localisation with all its complexities for better informed Dutch-linked policy and programming in the realm of SDG16+

### Keynote

Co-organiser and keynote speaker Marriët Schuurman (director of the MFA’s Department for Stability and Humanitarian Aid) noted the challenges in her opening remarks: “we have to accept we won’t get it right from the start, but will do in time, as long as we force ourselves to be open to criticism and truly think outside the box”. Marriët noted Unboxing Localisation for SDG16+ is not only necessary, but also complex and highly sensitive. If we truly want equitable and effective partnerships we should address power asymmetry; the transfer of ownership. This requires a difficult change of the Global North’s mindset, moving from control to trust-based partnerships. We can only unbox localisation properly if we start learning from each other, and manage to remain self critical and self reflective.

## Main evolutions of the session

The session first explored whether the term “localisation” was the right one to use throughout this trajectory or not. There was a general consensus that the term might not be perfect, but that it is widely known and serves its purpose. How we understand, approach and roll out localisation is what matters: a process that should not be led by the Global North, but should stimulate local ownership and local leadership for action in the local context.

Hereafter, participants ranked the above-mentioned (non-exclusive) sub-themes that were identified in the launching session of KPAC2021, in order to prioritise what needs to jointly be unboxed further in next sessions of this learning trajectory. Session participants decided that “(4) localisation in practice: tools and practices” was to be unboxed first. In breakout groups, participants already explored this topic with practical examples (see annex) and agreed that many initiatives and potential tools and practices already exist, but that these need to be bundled/complementary in order to avoid overlap or gaps of knowledge.

An example of how this could be done was to organise sessions in which each institution or organisation working on localisation is invited to give an elaborate presentation on what tools or practices they are developing or working with. Because even though over 25 organisations and networks are working on the topic of localisation, effective coordination and collaboration is lacking. We need to be able to learn from successes in order to make this a success, and look closely at one another’s challenges to help solve the issues at hand.

## My priority subthemes



## Next steps

The leading question for the following session is therefore: How do we implement the successful practices and existing theories of localisation in our day-to-day practices?

An important sub-question to this entails: How do we establish the necessary interlinkages on localisation practices and initiatives within the Dutch development realm and their Southern partners, especially in the context of improved, future Dutch development policy and programs?

As the trajectory aims to be dynamic and organically given shape by its participants in an inclusive manner, Conducive Space for Peace agreed to be the next host, joined by some of their Southern partners. In their role as rotating host, participants are encouraged to bring forward their specific expertise and help steer the learning trajectory in close collaboration with UL organisers CSPPS and the NL MFA.

Also CARE Netherlands indicated willingness to host a subsequent meeting at a later point in the trajectory, however, all with keeping in mind that the trajectory would benefit from a more balanced representation across the participants in this trajectory. All present were therefore strongly encouraged to invite ample Southern counterparts to help make UL suitably Southern-led.

## Annex - Practices and resources shared in the break outs

- Platform for Dialogue and Peace in Liberia (P4PD) shared its initiatives to improve national ownership over the peacebuilding plan in Liberia. It wrote reports with ideas for better representation at the negotiating table and practical ways to advocate for local needs.
  - P4PD also warned for exclusionary tools, like a consultant's 'fragility assessment' in Liberia that did not include the voice of civil society.
- KPSRL shared reports with practical recommendations, like the GPPAC & RFF one on '[Effective Options for Financing Local Peacebuilding](#)' and the PeaceDirect one on '[Race, Power and Peacebuilding](#)'.
- Conducive Spaces for Peace shared some of its [reports](#) on realising locally led Peacebuilding, Particularly a study in Uganda on progress in implementing SDG16+, developing a localisation model that is now being piloted. It remains challenging to bring good practices from a local to a higher level.
- MFA showed interest in tools for how to inclusively capture representative 'local voices'.
  - In response, Rayon de Soleil shared its experience with mobilising Cameroon women for the joint Women, Peace & Security agenda. They gathered women's organisations from all over the country, sharing capacity and building alliances to raise their voice in the negotiations for peace.
- The humanitarian aid side of the MFA shared practices of inviting local NGOs at the table when setting criteria for (in this case pooled) funding - including the challenges to make this representative, with the specific example of a lack of women at the table.