

# Unboxing Localisation - An Inclusive Dialogue Trajectory

## Session Four: Measuring Localisation

20 March 2023

### Executive Summary

- This fourth Unboxing Localisation session unpacked ways to measure progress on localization.
- NEAR shared its measurement framework and partners reflected on its use.
  - For donors and INGOs, such frameworks can help to guide the conversation internally and with partners on localization, in communicating your ambitions and to make your plans concrete.
  - For in-country NGOs, such frameworks help to identify your gaps in finance and capacity together with your international partners - and thereby in more effectively lobbying for support on those gaps. It also provides access to management information.
  - One should make sure the conversation is in the end not about the numbers of the indicators, but about the needs, power relations and progress.
  - It takes a (joint) investment to contextualize such broad frameworks to your partnerships and projects.
- In-country NGOs expressed progress on localisation is slow. INGOs are still in the lead, while LINGOs need time to understand the scope of localisation and pro-actively express their needs.
  - Additionally, they expressed the existential urgency for localisation. Too often, donors change priorities and leave civil society with the heavy task to follow up on their own.
- From a policy perspective, thinking in terms of social contracts helps in being critical of its own positionality; support in-country agency of local partners to strengthen their social contract.
- For the follow-up to this trajectory, the organizers will reach out about (1) the next sessions on identified 'gaps' in this trajectory, (2) developing a product that bundles the different sessions and (3) identifying opportunities to share harvested recommendations or implement them.

### Meeting summary

#### Goals

On 20 March 2023, the fourth edition of the Unboxing Localisation trajectory<sup>1</sup> was hosted by the Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR). This session focused on measuring localization: **how do we capture progress on our ambitions to work more localized** and do we indeed assess that such ways of working lead to better results?

#### The Localisation Performance Measurement Framework (LPMF)

NEAR introduced their [LPMF](#), a method to measure an organization's progress on its localisation goals, covering the wide variety of theme involved; (1) capacity sharing, (2) coordination and complementarity, (3) policy, influence and visibility, (4) partnerships, (5) participation and (6) funding.

It is also **complemented with supporting material on how to contextualize it** to your work and organization, by guiding you through phases of (1) understanding the framework, (2) defining what

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<sup>1</sup> The trajectory is an initiative by the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS), the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and supported by the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law (KPSRL). Earlier sessions were a kick-off event ([session I](#)), one on priorities within the wide scope of localisation ([session II](#)) and another on financing and influence ([session III](#)).

localisation looks like in your context, (3) benchmarking current performances and (4) planning for action.

This framework can be used by different actors within the development sector, of which two shared their experiences. Save the Children Norway (International NGO) shared how working with this framework **contributed to a more concrete commitment to its localisation goals**, which beforehand remained more open-ended. The different steps and set goals **helped in communicating about what they jointly wanted to achieve** and raise awareness, **with a well worked through baseline** as a starting point.

NAHAB (Local NGO) emphasized that for an in-country actor, this framework **helps to prioritize and monitor what actions on funding or capacities are needed** to enable them to be more ‘in control’. This for example concerned local level decision making, accountability towards local communities and pooled funding. The framework **helps in having difficult (advocacy) conversations with international partners** in a ‘neutral’ way, but also in **accessing (e.g. financial) information** that is relevant, but not always shared by default. They translated the framework to their context, in terms of language and specifics of e.g. indicators. All and all, it must be said that it is still a long way for them to realize true localisation.

### Group discussions

In break-outs, the participants reflected on this framework and its use, but also shared their own initiatives to measure progress on their localisation efforts. Some interesting and recurring comments:

- Such a framework **can help to identify ‘gaps’ in finance and capacity, to subsequently lobby for**. Additionally, it helped participants in mapping which actors (communities, INGOs, institutions) to involve in which phases.
- **In-country NGOs expressed progress on localisation is slow**. On the one hand, INGOs are still in the lead. On the other, it takes time for INGOs to understand the scope of localisation and to pro-actively express their needs for support to do their work better.
  - Additionally, in-country NGOs expressed the existential **urgency for localisation. Too often, donors change priorities** and leave civil society with the heavy task to follow up on their own.
- Some MFA’s made it obligatory to include localization indicators, which can also have the **negative effect of only focusing on out-of-context indicator numbers**. Always accompany it with a narrative.
- **Translation of tools and frameworks into local languages is key**.
- HQ levels often depend on secondary data, without direct involvement of in-country partners. **Having a few strategic partners at a local level is important** for in-depth, direct conversations about barriers to localization and the design of programs and policy is key to foster (mutual) understanding.
- **Applying the LPMF requires a lot of effort** to gain a shared understanding of definitions and re-adapt the tools to the local context.
  - **Donors and HQs of INGOs should be involved when applying this framework** to your work, as such conversations about power, funding and capacities cannot be effectively had without them.

### Policy maker perspective

The Dutch MFA updated the participants on its localization efforts. It started off by highlighting its Security & Rule of Law (SRoL) [Theory of Change](#), where the concept of a social contract plays a key role. This concept helps framing international support as **facilitating agency for in-country actors to strengthen or (re)negotiate their own social contract**, instead of implementing the donor’s ideas. The concept can also help when looking at the SRoL sector as a whole; **power relations in the sector are shifting** for more sustainable international relations.

The MFA shared a few concrete initiatives:

- A recent [donor statement](#) signed by 15 donors, emphasizing commitment on localisation.
  - o In June the OECD-DAC will release a **localisation toolkit** in context of the [DAC Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance](#).
  - o The NL cooperates with NORDIC+ on localisation pilots.
- In the process of **renewing its SRoL MEL framework**, there will be attention to the ‘how’ question for sustainable implementation, instead of just focusing on the results. The ambition is that there will also be more room for tacit and indigenous knowledge.
- External evaluators give advice on the quality of partnerships.
- There are cases of **‘sustainability plans’ with partners**, describing how to develop the relationship over time.

### Follow-up

While registering for this meeting, some participants indicated interest in contributing to this Unboxing Localisation trajectory. **The organizers will reach out** about:

1. **Identifying topics for next sessions** on ‘gaps’ (e.g. SRoL specific aspects, the political case for handing over power or mapping evidence that localisation leads to better results).
2. **Developing a product** that bundles outcomes and recommendations emanating from the different sessions.
3. **Identifying opportunities to share** those recommendations (conferences, roundtables etc.) **or implement** them (projects, pilots).