

Unboxing Localisation V

From Consultation Towards Local Leadership: Inclusive Programming in Practice

6 September 2023

Executive Summary

- This fifth Unboxing Localisation session unpacked ways to include those affected into development programming, moving from consultation to leadership.
- WIPC shared experiences in the realm of Transitional Justice, a logical entry point as those affected play a key role in finding solutions. WIPC provided them access (to other victims, to juridical knowledge and processes etc.), while these organizations shaped the content.
- The Dutch MFA shared its struggles given its own positionality with identifying and accessing legitimate rightsholders. It does put efforts into e.g. translating documents, strengthening feedback loops, improving cultural sensitivity and building trust in longer term commitments.
- In the discussion, various ideas came up such as: permanent dialogue frameworks with CSOs and victims organizations (or a cross-donor assembled pool of representatives), rethinking the role of overhead costs in participatory processes or taking livelihoods more into account if you want to enable local leadership.
- For the follow-up to this trajectory, there will be a last Unboxing Localisation session co-organized by GPPAC in the coming months and a final document that distills key recommendations from the six sessions and pathways for follow-up.

Meeting summary

Goals

On 6 September 2023, the fifth edition of the Unboxing Localisation trajectory¹ was hosted by the Women's International Peace Center (WIPC). This session focused on **how to give those affected a leading role into development programming.**

Examples WIPC

WIPC kicked off the session by sharing two practical examples of including those affected into their programming. Both are in the area of 'transitional justice' (TJ). **TJ is a logical entry point for these discussions, as it is quite straightforward that it is key to involve those affected into policies and programming on transitional justice to provide relevant solutions.**

The first example concerned justice work regarding atrocities that happened in the DRC throughout the conflict past decades, with special attention to rape and gender based violence. WIPC started by connecting with victim associations. This was a challenge in itself as they are widespread and disorganized in rural areas with lacking access to information. These organizations were generally demoralized in their search for justice, also given the ongoing violence. WIPC and Cordaid collaborated to assess the justice needs of these victims and supported them in their capacities to achieve them, which could come down to something as practical as French or English language support, writing advocacy strategies or meeting the Human Rights Commission. **So, in general, it was about providing access,**

¹ 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](#)), priorities within the wide scope of localisation ([session II](#)), financing and influencing ([session III](#)) and lastly measuring localization ([session IV](#)).

while letting the organizations do the talking and shaping content. It also concerned more traditional aspects such as a commemoration ceremony with a priest, depending on the needs expressed.

The second example from WIPC's local partner concerned the involvement of women's networks in transitional justice in South Sudan. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) were initially not welcome for the Technical Committee on Transitional Justice of the (all male) national truth commission. They've organized 280 women to jointly claim involvement in designing the - long due - bill. Women have been a victim in this conflict and therefore demanded compensation and recognition, more broadly adding a 'gender lens' to the new bill.

Donor experiences

The Civil Society team of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) shared experiences in stimulating local leadership in programming from a donor perspective. The MFA shared a few of the challenges that WIPC shared, such as the difficulty to access rightsholders, or to find legitimate representation. What does not help, is the limited capacity for donors to reach beyond the capitals. Moreover, there are of course many diverging perspectives to navigate and rightsholders do not always feel safe to speak out - trust is only built over time.

Taking such challenges into account, the MFA made efforts to make their processes more inclusive. An example is **translating documents** to local languages, or investing in stronger **feedback loops** and allocating resources to learning with rightsholders, to constantly monitor if programming fits the needs of those affected. More **longer term commitments** should play a role in building trust and relationships. More broadly, trainings in **cultural sensitivity** help to move beyond a Eurocentric perspective.

Group discussions

In the plenary Q&As and break-out groups, the following points were mentioned:

- A participant from the Wageningen University wrote a book called '[Reimagining Civil Society Collaborations in Development](#)' and a related research [article](#). It describes ways to support the smaller, innovative CSOs and putting them in a leading role, instead of fitting them into the international system.
- Answering that, Peace Direct shared its [Local Action Fund](#): a flexible way to reach grassroots organizations to directly support "frontline peacebuilding efforts".
- Participants noted that local knowledge is only consulted after the funding comes in. They vouch for donors to jointly already assemble '**representative pools**' to consult in way earlier stages. Those will still be gatekeepers, but it does provide more diverse input than current practice.
 - A similar suggestion was to set up **permanent meeting frameworks** with victims associations and/or CSOs.
- It should be possible to **involve more informal organizations** and movements in your project proposal - something that is difficult at least under Dutch funding.
- Just like the MFA, other participants underlined the **importance of language** (and possible solutions for that in the realm of AI in the future).
- Participants emphasized the necessity to always **take livelihoods into account**, for programming and for participatory design.
- Being more **participatory logically leads to more overhead funding**. This should be taken into account for budgeting.
- As mentioned in previous Unboxing Localisation meetings, the call is again to **invest in 'bureaucratic' capacities of partners** - if these demands can't be simplified.
- Including women's organizations can be difficult due to local norms and dynamics. To be effective, it can **in some contexts be best to engage women through less 'in your face' avenues**.
- The rights of persons with disabilities have been ratified in 2006, but there is still consistently too little attention to **involving persons with disabilities** in programming.



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- There will be a last (6th) Unboxing Localisation session this year, co-organized by GPPAC. It will dive deeper into the financing aspects of localization.
- As mentioned before, the trajectory will be finalized by developing a product that bundles the different sessions and identifies opportunities to share harvested recommendations or implement them.²

² Those willing to co-write these products can indicate their interest with Christian Kuitert (c.kuitert@kpsrl.org).