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WHAT FUTURE FOR LOCALIZATION IN JORDAN?

Reflections and Strategic Directions (2019–2028)

June 2026

Towards a future of shared power, local leadership, and sustainable impact.

Government | Civil society | Partnership | Donors

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ACTIVATING LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN JORDAN

BY THE NUMBERS

> "Local governance is not a financing issue, it is a power and decision-making issue.
> The real challenge is to move from participation to leadership."

KEY INDICATORS (2019–2025)

48%
of organizations were actively involved in designing proposals and budgets

44%
did not receive funding directly from international donors

57%
believe funding does not cover the actual costs of programs and institutions

60%
are optimistic about the future of local governance

STRATEGIC READING

Progress is evident
There is progress in participation and recognition of local actors.

Structural change is limited
Power, resources, and decision-making remain highly centralized.

Funding alone is not enough
The quality of funding and partnerships matters more than the amount.

FUTURE SCENARIOS (2019–2028)

SCENARIO 1
Business as Usual

- Reduction in training support
- Limited progress in local governance
- Continued dependency on international actors

SCENARIO 2
Managed Transition

- More coordinated partnerships
- Increased direct funding
- Stronger local role in decision-making

SCENARIO 3
Necessity-Driven Local Governance

- Greater decline in international funding
- Higher reliance on national institutions
- Stronger local leadership for resilience and development

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Government
- Establish an enabling legal and regulatory framework.
- Empower local actors.
- Expand their participation in policy-making and budgeting.
- Ensure coordination and avoid policy fragmentation.

Donors
- Shift toward direct, flexible, and sustainable funding.
- Invest in multi-year funding and core support.
- Cover institutional costs adequately.

International Organizations & UN
- Move from direct implementation to partnership and capacity strengthening.
- Lead with and for local actors.

Local Actors
- Strengthen collaboration and social cohesion.
- Build strong networks.
- Increase influence on policies and national response processes.
- Enhance national ownership of development.

Source: Baseline Survey for Activating Local Governance in Jordan (2026)

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Note: Throughout the text, '*LNA*' is used to refer to Local and National Actor in an encompassing manner, i.e., governmental, not-for-profit, private sector, etc. '*Non-governmental LNA'* refers specifically to not-for-profit entities.

I. PURPOSE, NATURE, SOURCES

Overall purpose: The purpose of the overall exercise is forward-looking and focused on the question: *What future (if any) for localization in Jordan?* This document first looks back at various prominent efforts and examples to advance 'localization' in Jordan, in the period 2019-2025. It then invites reflection on possible scenarios for the medium-term future of aid in Jordan (2026-2028) and its implications for the government, for back-donors, Jordanian voluntary associations, and UN agencies and INGOs.

Nature: The retrospective look does not pretend to be an evaluation. With a tiny budget for the whole exercise and a primary emphasis on the forward-looking component, only a modest amount of time could be invested in the retrospection. Its main purpose is to identify learnings that are relevant for thinking about the future of localization in Jordan. It may contain some factual errors, and several relevant initiatives and practices may not have been identified. Agencies operating in Jordan are invited to fill these in, but then focus on the joint reflection on what can and must be learned from the efforts to advance localization in recent years.

For those who have not closely followed the conversations of the past 10 years about localization, decolonizing aid, and the humanitarian reset, it is recommended to read the background paper '*Localization. Its global trajectory till early 2026*.

There is no evidence-based story about the future. The forward-looking part is a think-piece, intended to stimulate individual and collective agency reflection and discussion.

Main sources: This think piece draws on four main sources: A review of documents specific to 'localization' in Jordan; the 50 responses to a survey that was sent out in January 2026 to over a 100 Jordanian voluntary associations; and interviews with 23 people from 18 agencies or interagency networks, plus one independent. The interviews were conducted between mid-December 2025 and mid-March 2026. The final source is GMI's broader, global knowledge on the topic, as shown, for example, in the references in the endnotes.

II. JORDAN. SOME CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

As pointed out already in 2020, the nature, pace, and trajectory of localization will differ in different contexts, depending on various factors.[i] For those less familiar with Jordan, some relevant factors are mentioned here. Add others you know to be important.

Contemporary history: Jordan became independent from Britain in 1946. A fuller understanding of the contemporary context requires understanding the lived realities of today's 'Jordan' within the Ottoman empire, the political maneuvers of the British during World War I, its experiences during the post-Ottoman period when Britain and France pursued their rivalry for colonial zones of control in the Middle East, the impacts of the creation of Israel in 1948 and of the 1967 and 1973 wars on Jordan, its experience during the 'Arab Spring' 2010-2012, the make-up of its resident population, its economic resources, its role as custodian of Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, as well as its more contemporary geo-political interest for Western countries in particular.

Long history of hosting refugees: Jordan has a long history of hosting large numbers of refugees, starting with Palestinians as early as 1948. It continues to have one of the largest refugee-per-capita ratios in the world. Since 2011, Syrians have made up the largest refugee numbers in Jordan, but a decade earlier, Jordan hosted many Iraqi refugees, who had fled the violence in post-Saddam Iraq. That led to a period of expanding presence of international aid agencies, which contracted again when most Iraqis returned. The influx of Syrians led to a renewed, now even larger, influx of international aid agencies, many of whom also made Jordan their regional base for work in parts of Syria, Iraq, Yemen, etc. That offered

jobs and service-provision opportunities for Jordanians, but also increased, e.g., certain costs such as rents for apartments in Amman.

Aid-per-capita: Jordan has a high public debt (almost 83% of GDP in late 2025), on which interests are due. After other public expenditures to maintain public services, there is only a limited amount left for capital investments. That economic pressure has been partially offset by Jordan having been among the world's top five recipients of international aid per capita. Much of that aid has been humanitarian, related to the large number of refugees in the country, which is also one of the highest per capita in the world. The humanitarian aid to Jordan is primarily provided within the wider framework of the Syria Regional Refugee Resilience and Response Plan (3RP). Jordan has also been hit by the cumulative ODA cuts in 2024-2025, particularly the brusque suspension and then termination of many USAID grants. But because of its geopolitical interest for various Western countries, it has not been affected as hard as many other aid-recipient countries. Still, the recent cuts impacted, e.g., the already underfunded health services, primary education, and women-led organizations. [ii]

The Jordan Compact: The 2016 signing of the Jordan Compact was heralded as a groundbreaking initiative aimed at integrating Syrian refugees into Jordan's economy. The Compact sought to transform refugees from being solely beneficiaries of aid into active contributors to economic growth. Through commitments such as access to low-skilled employment and trade incentives linked to relaxed rules of origin, the Compact aimed to enhance refugees 'economic agency and stimulate broader development. Sensibly, the Compact required that any programs oriented towards refugees also benefit a significant number of vulnerable and struggling Jordanians. However, as critics have noted, significant barriers have hindered its implementation, such as persistent high unemployment among Jordanians, administrative restrictions on work permits, and mismatches of skills with available jobs. Many of the (also donor-funded) initiatives did not intend or were unable to address more systemic limitations in Jordan's economy, and several did not translate into sustainable livelihoods.[iii]

A centralized State: Jordan has a functioning state and government. It functions in a very centralized manner, however, and not always as a 'whole-of-government'. That can be disempowering for local government institutions and their officials and complicate the collaboration between different local actors and stakeholders, as important decisions can only be taken at the central level. De facto, this contributes to a 'distance' which can become a 'disconnect' between 'Amman' and governorates further away from the capital. Somewhat different views exist as to whether the GoJ is primarily controlling or leading – there may be some variations in this depending on the issue, but overall, it is clearly leading.

Restrictions and limitations on Jordanian 'civil society': Civil society in Jordan operates within a very regulated and sometimes restrictive environment, which makes it difficult for it to grow. Refugee-led organizations have found it very hard to register. Jordanian local and national NGOs can experience the government as both a gatekeeper and a competitor, with a perceived preference for international NGOs (INGOs). There are bureaucratic obstacles and delays for project approvals (reportedly, the process has only been modestly sped up by its centralization under the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC). The Government of Jordan (GoJ) reportedly is not opposed to non-governmental action as complementary service providers but expects them to simply align with the government's national strategies, and is uneasy when they act autonomously, as a complementary source of intellectual capital and as rights-promoters and -defenders and policy-influencers. Others point more at the Parliament, with many parliamentarians seeing foreign funding for Jordanian CSOs as turning them into 'foreign agents'. In times of heightened political (and security) tension, restrictions on Jordanian CSOs tend to increase. The perception of non-governmental Jordanian actors is that government officials do not appreciate that civil society organizations can be a source of relevant knowledge and useful recommendations, and be part of the solutions to difficult challenges. 'Localization', from the perspective of the GoJ, then means support to the state institutions.

Nuancing 'civil society': References to 'civil society' in the context of the localization debate, also in Jordan, tend to concern NGO and CBO- type associations and organizations, and come with an implicit

image of a range of organizations that are connected to constituencies of people and that are aware of, and work towards, a shared overall purpose. A more accurate picture would be:

- Civil society = NGO- and CBO-type organizations: This is a reductionist view. Globally, 'civil society' includes other types of associations and organizations such as professional associations, trade unions, cooperatives, academia, and even faith-based institutions.
- Jordanian NGOs and CBOs are also not a unified 'civil society'. Some will see themselves primarily as service providers, others as societal actors promoting and defending the rights and perspectives of citizens. The so-called 'Royal NGOs' are seen as operating more from a 'charity' mindset.
- Competition for profile and scarce resources also exists among Jordanian non-governmental actors, just as it does among the international aid agencies.
- The aforementioned 'distance' between those who are part of the so-called 'Amman bubble' and those who are not also exists among non-governmental actors. There is a perception that those who are part of the 'Amman bubble' are just as disconnected from the realities, ideas, priorities, and capabilities of groups of 'ordinary' people as government officials and back-donor staff sitting in the capital city.
- Interviewees also point to a disconnect between more local CSOs in northern and southern Jordan, and generally a stronger sense of exclusion among those in the south.
- Finally, there is a small number of very large and very capable Jordanian NGO-/CSO-type organizations, with the many medium- and smaller-sized ones at times feeling they take too much space and too many resources.

The women's movement: The women's movement in Jordan is composed of many coalitions (among them the Jordanian National Commission for Women, Jordanian Women Union, General Federation of Jordanian Women, as well as more thematically focused ones like the Equal Pay Coalition and the Gender-Based Violence Coalition). They are active on many issues, related to work, political participation, protection from sexual harassment, etc., and were able to influence revisions of, e.g., the law on political parties, the election law, and labour law. While some see a shift in official discourse in Jordan towards more conservative views as a threat to more liberal values, others argue that it is incorrect to see a simple dichotomy between 'conservative' and 'liberal/progressive': there are areas of common ground between the diverse outlooks, where collaboration is possible. Though some in Jordan portray the women's movement as being driven by a 'Western agenda', activists for women's rights point to its long history in Jordan, and affirm the continued leadership of Jordanian women.

Government and localization: The Government of Jordan (GoJ) does not require that international agencies work with Jordanian partners. Nor does it actively seek to encourage the use of Jordanian experts and advisors over international or even regional ones. It does not co-lead many of the inter-agency task forces and working groups, and has not been engaged with the Localization Task Team. In other words, it leaves a very open environment for international agencies – perhaps from the assumption (and experience) that is the best approach to ensure the continuation of high levels of international aid. Its implicit or explicit understanding of 'localization' is that the government is the one to exercise 'leadership' and that foreign funding goes through the public sector.

Changes in Syria: The overthrow of the Assad regime in Syria in December 2024 has opened the prospects of a return of the large number of Syrian refugees in Jordan. Several hundred thousand have indeed done so, but more than 410.000 registered ones remain in Jordan at the end of January 2026, which is not counting the unregistered ones. The situation in Syria is not yet stable and secure across the whole territory, and Syria gets caught up directly (and indirectly, e.g., an influx of returnees and refugees from Lebanon) in the larger-scale waves of violence in the Middle East.

LOOKING BACK (2019-2025)

III. ASSESSING AND ADVANCING LOCALIZATION IN JORDAN. IMPORTANT INITIATIVES AND ACTIONS

Some of the more prominent initiatives and actions are listed here. Add others if needed.

2019: Localization Task Team (LTT) set up under the Humanitarian Partners Forum (HPF), to translate the Grand Bargain localization commitments into concrete actions in Jordan and in the implementation of the Jordan Response Plan for the Syria Crisis. The LTT was initially co-chaired by the Jordan INGO Forum (JIF) and UN Women, with the Jordan National NGO Forum (JONAF) joining as a third co-chair in 2021. A donor (Switzerland) subsequently joined as the fourth co-chair in 2024.

2020: ARDD-GMI: *Strengthening Localization in Jordan. Localization: Reinforce and support, do not replace or undermine. (published also in Arabic).*[iv] A first, comprehensive attempt to assess the understandings and practices of localization in the specific context of Jordan. It draws on a broad range of (English-language) resources, including a very few earlier ones that spoke directly to the issue of localization.[v] Several of its observations about factors hindering the translation of the policy commitment into practice remain relevant. Its different annexes include a framework highlighting key dimensions of localization practice; key reflections for the design and operational functioning of a localization task force; and practical advice to Jordanian non-governmental organizations to be more specific about what they want to see in practice.

2021a: The MEAL Framework for Localization of Humanitarian Action in Jordan was developed and officially endorsed by the Humanitarian Partners' Forum in June.[vi] Developing a MEAL framework before there was a broadly shared understanding of why to prioritize support to Jordanian, a shared vision of the desired future situation, and at least a broad strategy to move in that direction, was a strange move. It happened because the funding on offer was specifically for a MEAL framework, but that should not have led to neglect of the purpose and some idea of how to move in its direction.

2021b: Introduction of an annual Al Nahda Localization Award by JONAF and ARDD.[vii] The first recipient, in 2022, is Anders Pedersen, UN Resident Coordinator in Jordan. In 2023, the prize went to Dominic Bartsch, UNHCR representative in Jordan; in 2024, to the Spanish Development Cooperation (AECID) in Jordan; and in 2025 to UN Women.

2020-2022: COVID-19: In most countries around the world, local authorities and non-governmental actors really took the lead in the pandemic response, at great personal risk, as international agencies kept their staff in lockdown and at times repatriated their international staff. The Jordan government definitely took the lead in the COVID-19 response, invoking the 1992 Defense Law No. 13 to impose quick and stringent measures, including lockdowns. It took measures to mitigate the health, economic, and educational impacts of strict lockdowns.[viii] The National Center for Security and Crisis Management, and the Jordanian National Committee for Epidemics, among others, played key coordinating roles. The governmental response was complemented by initiatives of non-state actors, like the Irbid branch of the Jordanian Medical Association. Their initiative, in a hard-hit zone of the country, became known as Himmat Wattan. Over time, more than 500 members volunteered to provide complementary support and health care across a spectrum of needs, from raising funds to buy more Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), to training ambulance and Civil Defense staff on detecting and handling suspected COVID cases, ensuring that people with chronic diseases received their regular medication, and conducting a large-scale information campaign.[ix] Women-led Jordanian community-based organizations (CBOs) tried to scale up their response to the increase in gender-based violence (GBV) that the pandemic has brought about globally.[x] No English-language review has been identified that describes, more generally, if and how roles and responsibilities shifted between international and various Jordanian agencies during the COVID pandemic years.

Obviously, the publication of the MEAL framework took place during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Globally, notwithstanding a whole range of inter-agency guidelines with strong recommendations from within the international aid establishment to accelerate 'localization' in the pandemic response, the pandemic did not become the turning point that many had hoped for. Indeed, the evaluation of the overall humanitarian COVID response found that, globally, governments had played leading roles, but that local and national NGOs had largely been unable to take up a leadership role, which was retained by international agencies. Except for grants from Pooled Funds, LNNGOs received only very limited additional funding, even though they played a significant complementary role in the provision of assistance. And once COVID restrictions started to be lifted, the situation reversed to the pre-pandemic status quo.[xi]

2022: Closure of the Jordan Humanitarian Fund (JHF) (opened in 2014) as the UN reframed the situation in Jordan from a 'humanitarian' crisis to a 'refugee situation'. This also shifted the coordination structure from an OCHA-led to a UNHCR-led one. This terminated one source of international funding that had been more easily accessible for LNA– even though (reportedly) they had little say in its strategic direction and decision-making.

2022: Localization of Aid in Jordan and Lebanon. A longitudinal qualitative study.[xii] Commissioned by the Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP). The report is also intended as an internal learning tool. The report confirms that RDPP is aiming to advance localization in how it operates, and recommends it make that objective more explicit and monitor it.

2023a: Localization Baseline Report (UN Women, JONAF, JIF, RedR Australia) presented to the Jordan Strategic Humanitarian Committee (JoSH), which replaced the HPF.[xiii] The attempt to establish a baseline rested on two surveys, to different target groups, after a preparatory workshop that had been well attended. Subsequent feedback was critical of the too large number of indicators (each with questions), and the uneven number of responses from the different actor-groups, which made it difficult to consider the findings 'representative'.

2023b: The Swiss Cooperation Programme in the Middle East commissions a learning review on how it is translating its localization commitment into practice in several countries, including Jordan. The report is unpublished, but a workshop is held in every country, including Jordan, as part of the learning review, and attended by different agencies.

2025-2026: Localization in Practice: Strengthening Livelihoods and Empowering Communities in Jordan. Another, now thematically focused, study is to be published soon. It is part of an RDPP-funded project 'Future Forward: Unlocking Sustainable Local Opportunities' (2024 - 2026)'. It maps a large number of livelihood-focused projects and generates actionable recommendations. Identifying a variety of good cases, its analysis shows progress in terms of allocating funding to non-governmental local and national actors (LNA) and capacity-support, though less so where it comes to shared decision–making with or leadership by LNA, and to investment in their organizations to strengthen also their financial sustainability. Secondly, it confirms the persistent gap between the limited number of larger non-governmental LNA and the many smaller ones.

IV. A PRACTICE EXAMPLE. THE EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PROTECTION PROGRAMME (RDPP)

RDPP was launched in 2014 to support vulnerable refugees and host communities in Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan. Its current focus is on Jordan and Lebanon. RDPP is a multi-donor pooled fund, not managed by the UN. Current contributing donors are Denmark, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Ireland, the EU, the Czech Republic, and Austria. Phase III runs to the end of 2026. There is as yet no confirmation that there will be a new phase, and one strategic question being looked at is whether it should also include, or shift more, to Syria. Key will be, in such a scenario, to determine its added value, as there is likely to be significant external funding for recovery programming in Syria (and perhaps for a new influx of also Lebanese refugees?).

Within RDPP, the focus on localization has become more explicit and central in recent years. It was one of the key objectives in its call for proposals for a third round of funding in early 2023. Mention has been made of the two major external reviews (2022 & 2025) to clarify how different actors see and experience 'localization' in general, and to assess how RDPP itself is doing on localization. Similar localization reviews will now be undertaken towards the end of each funding cycle.

Next to 'protection', 'livelihoods' has been a key thematic area for RDPP. Therefore, in 2022 it also published a '*Livelihood Learning Study. Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq*', while more recently it funded the above-mentioned '*Localization in Practice. Strengthening livelihoods and empowering communities in Jordan: a* study by ARDD.

The 2022 review came to generally similar conclusions as the Baseline Report (conducted in 2022 and published in 2023): Non-governmental LNA described 'meaningful partnership' as one that includes: genuine co-creation of projects; shared decision-making; equitable access to an ICR fee; long-term collaboration; and two-way learning and exchange. But they reported that, in practice, their collaborations with INGOs and donors remain unequal, especially in budgeting, decision-making, and risk-*sharing*. Many capacity-building efforts still revolved around compliance, reporting, and donor-specific requirements, rather than holistic organizational strengthening.

RDPP itself tends to fund consortia of agencies. Some of these are still led by an international agency (UN or INGO), but many are now led by an LNA (about 13 out of the current 20). The fund also provides financial support to JONAF.

RDPP piloted a unique co-creation model involving joint development of project proposals through intensive workshops with partners. This process improved project design and logic; strengthened relationships and trust between partners and RDPP; served as a form of capacity development in its own right; and enabled partnerships with organizations that donors might otherwise consider too risky. (Proximity and relationship building are effective approaches to reducing perceived risks.)

Capacity development is the cornerstone of RDPP's localization strategy. The approach is needs-based: agencies self-evaluate and propose to RDPP; it is therefore partner-owned. It is open to capacity support to strengthen the organization as a whole, not just for project delivery. As RDPP grants tend to be multi-year, capacity support has the potential to achieve greater and more lasting impact. Recipients of RDPP funding can allocate up to 20% of project budgets to capacity development.

A bit surprisingly, many LNAs' partners at the time of that first review continued to ask for support to meet donor requirements or specific project-related capabilities, rather than focusing on deeper and more strategic organizational development. And in practice, most allocated around 10% due to fear that donors would perceive higher requests as "overhead."

All agencies in an RDPP programme receive some ICR: 7% for the consortium lead, irrespective of whether they are INGOs or non-governmental LNAs – though a UN agency as lead gets a higher percentage. Subgrantees get 2.5%.

Already in 2022, RDPP's localization practice was viewed by partners as a best-practice model and a meaningful departure from standard donor approaches. Partners describe the relationship with RDPP as rooted in trust, flexibility, contextual understanding, and mutual accountability. It shows that direct donor partnerships, also with (non-governmental) LNAs are feasible and impactful.

The 2022 review highlighted some attention points for RDPP:

- The whole co-creation and proactive partnership development process was long (up to 6 months and sometimes more) and therefore became very resource-intensive.
- RDPP lacked an institutionalized internal definition of localization and did not measure localization outcomes within its results framework, thus missing an opportunity for accountability and learning.
- Some partners felt RDPP imposed certain elements that affected implementation.

The 2025 review overall confirmed the positive aspects and impacts of RDPP's approach, such as

*Building trust approach***:** RDPP is credited with moving toward a "trust-based" model, where dialogue and field presence complement and can even prevail over formal reporting. Projects are designed jointly rather than imposed through rigid templates. This fosters trust and allows for rapid adaptation in Lebanon's and Jordan's volatile environments. Field visits and consistent in-country presence by the Program Management Unit (PMU) were cited as vital enablers of this relational model.

The Meso-Level 'Cascade Effect': The sources highlight the value of sub-partnerships, where lead national NGOs mentor smaller community-based organizations (CBOs). This model allows community actors to emerge as active counterparts, embedding localization within local service delivery. However, some sub-partners expressed concern that they are still excluded from high-level decision-making, meaning that national intermediaries can also replicate the hierarchical arrangements that localization seeks to overcome.

LNAs platforms and networks: Platforms like the Lebanese Humanitarian and Development NGO Forum (LHDF) and the Jordan National NGO Forum (JONAF) are deemed indispensable for collective action but face significant hurdles. They often remain underfunded and rely on volunteerism, which limits their ability to move from information-sharing to systematic advocacy. Here too, power imbalances among non-governmental LNA can occur, with the large, well-connected NGOs dominating the interactions with the international agencies, including donors, de facto sidelining smaller associations.

The 2025 review confirms that RDPP III now pursues localization not merely as an efficiency measure, but as a 'developmental strategy'. This requires shifting from a "deficiency lens"—which views local actors generically as technically weak or high-risk—to one that recognizes their inherent cultural knowledge, commitment, and legitimacy. RDPP's approach attempts to change this by positioning local actors in the "driver's seat" of program design.

But the review also identifies a critical systemic failure: Despite RDPP's progress, the broader aid architecture remains donor-driven and risk-averse. Strategic decisions—such as thematic focuses and funding cycles—remain mostly made in European capitals, with local actors largely consulted when important prioritization and sometimes also design decisions have already been made. Problematically, it sometimes appears as if the donor community has delegated localization to RDPP as a discrete project, rather than mainstreaming it across the wider aid architecture. The RDPP approach, so far, has not triggered a wider structural change in the international-national power hierarchies.

V. ADDITIONAL GOOD PRACTICE AND PROGRESS EXAMPLES

Lobby and advocacy for non-governmental LNAs

International agencies can also support non-governmental LNAs in indirect ways, notably by convincing national governments to reduce the restrictions and requirements that prevent them from operating at their best. That has and continues to be the case in Jordan.

Funding to LNAs

- One donor provides direct, government-to-government (project-based) development funding to several Jordanian line ministries, via the Central Bank, while another only supports government-run projects via an international intermediary (often a UN agency).
- A UN agency works mostly with governmental entities, and draws primarily on Jordanian expertise and service-providers. It can and does at times play a connector role between different actors that need not just to coordinate, but also to collaborate.
- A donor issues also has calls for proposals that only NGOs registered in its home country can apply for, but they must apply with local partners. Another donor has the same practice but is more explicit that its own national NGOs demonstrate they operate in equitable partnerships with national actors.
- A donor has a (global) program on Migration and Displacement that includes a specific objective to strengthen the capabilities of LNA. Jordan is included.

- The UN Women managed fund for Women, Peace and Security remains a relatively accessible source for non-governmental LNAs, though it was recommended that it offer more seed money for innovative approaches.
- Reportedly, the JIF convinced one back-donor to (re-) allocate part of a larger fund to 'civil society strengthening' in Jordan.
- A donor channeled funding to CBOs in Jordan, but needed an international intermediary who could meet its requirements. The donor made it clear that 65% of the total budget had to go to LNA. (Which still leaves 35% for the role of 'intermediary'). An 'advisory board' of the CBOs allows the monitoring of the behavior of the intermediary. The donor involved some relevant Ministries in the assessment of the CBO proposals (simple format, Arabic accepted) through an 'advisory board', and subsequently helped the CBOs to get all the papers ready to secure quick government approval. The donor also tries to introduce the CBOs to other back-donors and encourages them to also provide some core funding. This was possible because the money came from a donor fund with a higher-than-normal risk acceptance.
- A donor is now much more explicit in monitoring the behavior of its intermediaries towards its subgrantees (are the latter included in the design, is there a fair sharing of the budget etc.)
- An LNA confirms it receives some ICR on its subgrant from an international intermediary, but only 1% of the subgrant, and after sustained negotiation with the intermediary, even though the intermediary has an explicit organizational policy to provide ICR (and for more than 1%). So far, no back-donor has engaged on this.
- An LNA subgrantee who could not solve with a higher-level person in its intermediary organization what it felt was unfair behavior of its focal point in that intermediary, took up the matter with a donor staff member at the country level. They could do this because they knew and sufficiently trusted that person. The donor staff member assessed the situation and then diplomatically intervened.
- One donor offers multi-year funding but only up to 50% of the budget, to avoid overdependency on them. While the underlying motivation is appropriate, in practice LNAs (and international agencies) struggle to find one or more other donors willing and able to provide the 50% matching funds. As a result, they cannot take the multi-year funding, or for a lesser amount that they have more hope of finding complementary donors for.
- A donor can offer two- to three-year funding to non-governmental LNAs (but their annual turnover of the previous three years must have been at least three times the budget now requested. Hardly any qualify.).
- A donor discovered, after some time, that two of its international intermediaries were not passing on the donor's multiyear funding, but issuing shorter-term contracts to its LNAs subgrantees.

<u>Working with partners</u>

- One INGO for many years used to mostly implement directly, requiring a large number of staff in Jordan. Some years ago, it shifted to working with (mostly non-governmental) partners and as much as possible, tries to provide organizational management support over a longer period, with attention also to their financial sustainability. Quite a number of the partners are smaller CBOs, some of whom have already become more strategic partners. All get some ICR, even if it is not included or allowed in the grant of the back-donor. Its own staff today is about 15% of what it was when it was implemented directly.
- Supported by a UN agency, at least one larger Jordanian NGO ran a programme to support the organizational capabilities of several CBOs in southern Jordan.

<u>Intentional collaboration</u>

- Over the past years, networks and coalitions of Jordanian non-governmental organizations, such as HIMAM, the Jordanian National Commission for Women, JONAF, have grown stronger and – in the eyes of several interviewees- matured. (At the same time, many non-governmental LNA remain outside any such network.)
- Members of the Steering Committees of (some of) these Jordanian networks and of the Joint INGO Forum (JIF) in Jordan periodically brief each other, and collaborate on certain issues of

common interest. For example, JONAF mobilized its civil society network to gather grassroots-level data on the direct impact of U.S. aid cuts on service provision, staffing, and local programme continuity. This complements national-level data gathered through JIF channels.
- JONAF and JIF actively collaborated on *a m*ulti-sectoral needs assessment (MSNA) to compile an evidence-based brief that can inform future operational prioritization amidst further funding reductions. The MSNA draws on both qualitative and quantitative data provided by national and international partners.

Coordination structures

- More LNAs, particularly non-governmental ones, now participate in coordination structures and associated working groups, and more are co-led by an LNA.

Views and influence of affected communities

- Overall, affected communities, and particularly the refugee ones, appear to have little opportunity to directly share their analysis, ideas, and proposals in broader spaces than through (agency-specific) feedback and complaints mechanisms. Reportedly, the JIF in recent times conducted a series of dialogues with refugee groups, enabling its members to take the views of these communities to other actors at national level in Jordan and to international spaces and audiences. But that is not the same as refugees being able to speak for themselves in these national and international spaces.

VI. STATE OF LOCALIZATION IN JORDAN. SURVEY-BASED ASSESSMENTS

1. The 2022 Baseline Survey and a 2026 Short Survey among non-governmental LNA

Drawing on the MEAL framework, produced in 2021, the Localization Task Team in 2022 drove an effort to assess the state-of-localization in Jordan in a comprehensive manner and across the spectrum of agencies. It conducted two surveys to this effect, one to donors, the other to operational agencies after a prior explanatory workshop that was well attended. There is no indication that government entities were approached to also respond to the survey. Surprisingly, in communicating its findings, the report does not differentiate between the answers from donors, UN agencies, INGOs, and LNAs.

As mentioned before, the most common view heard in the interviews conducted for this rapid review is that the attempt to establish this Baseline was not 'that successful'. The MEAL framework had too many indicators. The Baseline report itself states that there was a less-than-expected and 'uneven' return of responses to the surveys, for various reasons, notably 1) data sharing concerns, 2) lengthiness and complexity of the baseline survey (requiring inputs from multiple departments within each organization, e.g., HR, finance, communications), and related staff capacity gaps. For the LNAs specifically, a major obstacle highlighted was the absence of institutional memory and records, as well as staff shortage, preventing them from being able to respond to several of the survey questions. It also proved difficult to obtain accurate figures about funding allocations from actors, particularly allocations for a specific task such as capacity building, as not all organizations had such budget breakdown. The results, therefore, could not be considered 'representative'.[xiv]

As part of this rapid review, a much shorter survey was also sent to over a bit over one hundred Jordanian non-governmental agencies via the JONAF network, but also, e.g. the Shamaa Network for Combating Violence against Women, asking for their experiences in the period 2024-2025. Fifty responded, of which 26 CBOs, 17 local NGOs, and 7 national NGOs, a pretty good response rate approaching 50%. There is a wide variation among respondents in terms of regular staff numbers and volunteers.

The questions in the second survey were not identical to those in the first, but touched on the same key dimensions that shape the structural relationship between international and national actors.

Baseline Survey 2022	Short non-governmental LNA Survey 2026
On partnerships • Both international and national-local agencies claimed to be committed to the Principles of Partnership and adhere to them. • When it comes to genuine collaboration throughout the program cycle (as elsewhere around the world) LNA are actively involved in the data collection (e.g., for needs assessments), but much less so in the analysis and interpretation and the subsequent program design and -planning. Nor do they play equal roles in interpreting, monitoring, and evaluation data. • Some 43% of LNAs confirmed they had a risk plan, but only 37% indicated they had active risk mitigation figures. (The survey did not inquire whether the identified risk related mostly or only to externally-generated ones, or also included risks that can emerge within the collaboration, because the behaviour of one or more of the collaborating agencies.)	On partnerships • 48% of respondents indicated that had substantive input into the development of a proposal and its budget; 50% very little input and 2% no input at all. • 32% of respondents indicated that there had been explicit discussions between them and the international partner on risk (financial, reputational, operational). 44% that risks were partially discussed. 12% said risks were not discussed at all – and another 12% did not know. • 54% of respondents indicated they had faced challenges in a partnership, e.g. related to conditions being imposed, or delays.
On funding • Much less direct funding is available to LNA than to international agencies. • None of the donors reported making any changes in their policies to enable more direct funding to LNA. • International agencies signaled a willingness to provide multi-year funding, though in practice their subgrant horizons were those of the project implementation period. • Only 1% of international agency budgets were dedicated to supporting LNAs develop their own fundraising capabilities.	On funding • 44% responded that, in 2024-2025, they did not receive any direct funding from an international donor. Of those who did, 30% received a grant of less than US$ 50'000, 18% a grant between US$ 50-100.000, and 8% a grant of more than US$ 100.000. • Of those who received direct funding, 57% indicated it was not sufficient to cover full programme and organizational costs. • With regard to international partners more generally (i.e. also funding via an international intermediary), 54% indicated that they received some flexible management fee (ICR), 40% that they did not receive any – 6% of the respondents did not know. As it turned out, of the 40% that did not receive any

	ICR, 76% stated they also did not ask for it. • A question was also asked whether the respondent, during 2024-2025, had received any grant from another Jordanian organization. 50% of respondents had – no further details were asked about this (the survey was deliberately kept short).
On capacity-support • While capacity assessments can be done jointly, in practice the focus is on the capabilities of the LNA. Lack of Arabic language skills and/or limited understanding of the context by of international staff, are not considered as capability-weaknesses. • Many capacity assessments are not followed by joint capacity-strengthening actions.	On capacity-support • 46% of respondents stated that the capacity-support they received was not at all adequate to meet their organization's needs; 48% found it 'somewhat adequate'; only 6% fully adequate. • Over time, we should expect the LNA to start taking over roles and responsibilities previously held by an international partner. 54% of respondents signaled that, even over the past three years, there had been no such shifts; 46% signaled there had been shifts. • 70% of respondents confirmed that, over the past two years, they had been able to keep most of their experienced staff. • Interestingly, 60% of respondents had a very positive outlook for their organization for the next two years (2026-2027), 32% felt neutral about the near future, and only 8% signaled a negative outlook.
On coordination • International agencies and coordination groups declare they make efforts to enhance the engagement of LNA in their (humanitarian) coordination mechanisms, but at the time of reporting, that engagement remains limited. The domination of English, sector-specific jargon and the tendency of internationals to see themselves as the decision-makers, are some of the obstacles. LNA participants from Amman may also not be best placed to adequately convey the	

views and ideas of Jordanians and refugees outside the capital city.	
On advocacy • International agencies who support the advocacy of LNAs mainly do this through 'training', without allocation a budget or specific staff to this. • Joint advocacy by international agencies and LNA happens, but is certainly not a systematic practice, and does not seem to amount to 'strategic dialogues' with the government, donors or other important national, regional and international stakeholders.	
	On participation in localization-focused initiatives (multiple answers possible) • 66% of respondents had participated in JONAF advocacy, 48% in activities by the Localization Task Team, 30% had replied to the 2023 Baseline study survey, and 22% had taken part in other localization-related initiatives such as activities under Agenda 1325, engagements with the Ministry of Agriculture etc.

The recent rapid survey indicates that the experiences of non-governmental LNA in Jordan remain mixed: Several responding LNAs had substantive input into the development of a proposal and its budget, had received some ICR, received some direct funding, had taken on roles and responsibilities previously held by international agencies, and were able to retain most of their key staff. Interestingly, a majority of respondents also seem to engage and collaborate more with other Jordanian entities than they do with international ones. Many, perhaps somewhat surprisingly given the cumulative cuts in 2024-5, also had a positive outlook for the near future.

All of that is encouraging– even if most received only modest amounts in direct funding, and discussions about risk do not necessarily imply that risks are indeed now shared. More specific information would also be required to properly appreciate the allocations of ICR between international intermediaries and LNA: as the one example in section V above indicates, an LNA did receive ICR, but only 1%, and that after much insistence.

At the same time, the responses to the recent survey also show that some of these known good practices are still not generally adopted. A substantial number of respondents had had no input into the proposal and budget development, did not get any direct funding, did not get any ICR (and did not ask for it), received funding that did not cover all their real costs, and did not experience any shifts in roles and responsibilities over the past 3 years. Worryingly, a majority indicated that the capacity support they had received was not or only partially adequate for their organization's needs.

Both surveys also confirm a central observation from the RDPP reports (2022, 2025), that is similar to recent assessments of localization in other countries: While there is some progress, the overall amount of funding to LNA remains modest compared to what goes to international agencies; the quality of funding remains often less than what is needed for quality work and to strengthen the financial health of the recipient organization; by and large the power dynamic has not changed as international entities remain the primary decision-makers. Progress also remains ad hoc: even though most international agencies, and certainly most Western donors, have all committed to 'localization'. Its fuller translation into practice varies a lot between individual international agencies, and can also disproportionately depend on key individuals within an agency.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADVANCE LOCALIZATION (2020-2025)

Recommendations to advance localization in Jordan are plentiful. A comparative review of those in the first RDPP study (2022), the Baseline Report (2023), the second RDPP study (2025), and the ARDD report on localization of livelihoods-related work shows much overlap and repetition.[xv] Annex 3 provides an overview. In summary:

The Government of Jordan is advised to create a more enabling environment for Jordanian non-governmental agencies, and to recognize that they can make useful and practical recommendations to policies and how they are implemented, and to inter-governmental coordination. Jordan faces significant challenges, both in terms of large numbers of refugees and for its development, which it cannot address alone: the Jordanian private sector, but also its non-governmental organizations, can make important contributions if allowed.

Back-donors must increase the overall quality of their funding: ICR for all, multi-year, more flexible, less risk-averse to enable innovation and experimentation, and more easily adaptable. More quality funding is to flow to LNA, with a stronger attention to financial sustainability. That implies going beyond a narrow and self-centered framing of 'capacity-support' as primarily focused on meeting international compliance and project-management requirements. Administrative requirements need to be simplified and streamlined. Back-donors also need to ensure their staff are well-briefed, willing, and able to translate the localization commitment into practice. When this is de facto done via

intermediaries, back-donors can and must specify what behaviors they expect to see from these intermediaries in their relationship with LNAs.

The default mode of operation of INGOs and UN agencies must be with LNA, with direct implementation only in exceptional and convincingly justified circumstances. They should not assess LNA only from a deficit, but also from a strengths perspective. They can and must strive to develop equitable partnerships, with power- and risk-sharing, and an intentional evolution to co-leadership and eventual Jordanian leadership. The capacity-development support they offer should contribute to stronger, sustainable Jordanian associations and organizations that collaborate well with each other.

Jordanian agencies must continue to build coalitions and a collective voice to challenge the structural power asymmetries with international agencies. This requires opting for collaboration and joint learning, reducing also the internal competition. It also means that they elaborate what localization means for them, in practice, as well as how they will handle the increased responsibility of more funds and leadership, with strong accountability, in the first place to their fellow citizens and the refugees in Jordan territory, not just the back-donors. Bigger Jordanian agencies have a role and responsibility to support the smaller ones and the CBOs, not just to meet international requirements but to be effective actors in Jordan.

VIII. THE LOCALIZATION TASK TEAM (LTT) (2023-early 2026)

According to its most recent Terms of Reference (January 2024), the LTT intends to be an open forum for promoting coordinated efforts between donors, civil society, INGOs, and the UN to advance the localization agenda in the implementation of the Jordan Response Plan (JRP). In practice, that means

- Communication, information sharing and exchange of best practices on localization amongst humanitarian and development actors supporting the implementation of the JRP;
- Development of common advocacy positions and messages on localization for the Jordan Strategic Humanitarian Committee (JoSH);
- Coordination of technical assistance to JRP partners on localization
- Advising practical steps to implement the recommendations from the 2023 Baseline report, and monitoring progress
- Supporting the JoSH in dialogues with government actors on localization.

The LTT in recent years has been co-chaired by 4 agencies, each from a core actor-group: Jordanian non-governmental agencies; INGOs, UN, and donors. Membership of the LTT and participation in its meetings are open to agencies from the four actor-groups. A mailing list from April 2024 contains addresses for 83 individuals from 50 Jordan-based agencies and networks. The large majority are international agencies. The GoJ is not a co-chair nor a member.

Documentation on the LTT's work in 2023 could not be reviewed, but it seems fair to assume that analyzing and publishing the results of the surveys to establish a 'baseline' remained one of its important activities in that year.

In 2024, the minutes indicated that the LTT co-chairs met twice among themselves while two other meetings were held with members (19 May; 25 November). Only a small number of 'members' were present at these meetings. According to the minutes, the November one was limited to 1.5 h. Two meetings per annum is unlikely to generate strong momentum.

Moreover, the minutes indicate that the content of the four meetings was focused primarily on internal matters related to the functioning of the LTT (co-chairing, meeting frequency, membership, location in agency architecture). With two exceptions, there was no focus on the substantive tasks the LTT, as per its ToR, is supposed to be doing. The two exceptions related to reviewing the too large and complicated set of indicators that were used for the Baseline survey, and the idea of establishing a new funding modality for (non-governmental) LNA.

A 'strategic workshop' to identify where to go with localization and the LTT in the next few years was originally planned for February 2025. As it happened, that is when the new administration in Washington D.C., suspended most of USAID-funded projects and started dismantling the agency. Not surprisingly, as everyone was dealing with the shock of the cumulative impact of Western donor ODA budgets, and particularly the scale and suddenness resulting from the dismantling of USAID, the LTT in 2025 was largely 'dormant'.

Other, more structural, factors also limit the potential effectiveness of the LTT:

- Also in Jordan, there appears to be a multitude of interagency working groups on a large range of topics. Agencies and people can only invest so much time and energy in this.
- The LTT did not have a dedicated coordinator, with or without an extra support person, which meant that the co-chairs also had to juggle this role and time investment with many others.
- Departure or change in position of some 'localization champions'.

While these external circumstances undoubtedly affected the LTT, this rapid review identified some more intrinsic sources of concern:

- Several of those interviewed for this rapid review, even though they had been in Jordan for some years, were not at all aware of the LTT, the MEAL framework, and the Baseline report.
- Non-governmental LNAs that are not members of JONAF could not connect with the LTT. The LTT did not organize meetings or reach out otherwise, outside Amman.
- No indications were found that the LTT is aware of and actively uses the extensive body of inter-agency guidance that has been produced over the years, or is tuned in to the ongoing discussions outside Jordan, in the Grand Bargain, in the C4C or NEAR global networks etc.
- No indications were found or heard that the LTT would have taken up some of the recommendations already generated in 2020 and in 2022, to push their acceptance and translation into agency practices.
- Also concerning is its functioning in the last year of regular activity, 2024: Only four meetings a year, of which only two with a few of the member agencies present, and then mostly focused on its internal business rather than the substantive purpose it was set up for.

Several interviewees for this review, including those from non-governmental Jordanian LNAs, described it as '*a talk shop that moved nothing in practice*'.

IX. SOME CURRENT CHALLENGES AND QUESTIONS (early 2026)

By early 2026, there remains a high degree of uncertainty about what the operating environment in and around Jordan will be in the next few years, and how the international aid system will continue after already significant (and possibly further) ODA cuts.

Contextually

- Might the GoJ impose further legal restrictions or administrative burdens on Jordanian non-governmental LNA?
- Will there be a further, significant return of Syrians home, or not? If so, should aid agencies (especially international ones) also shift to Syria? When is the right time to do this, so as not to compromise the voluntary nature of any return? How many will want to stay, not least those born or grown up in Jordan?
- The GoJ wants to refocus the priorities on development (Economic Modernization Vision; National Employment Strategy; National Social Protection Strategy, etc.) What might this mean in terms of aid allocations in Jordan, and for the roles and competencies, particularly of non-governmental Jordanian agencies?
- Will there be further aid cuts also to Jordan? How much, how fast?
- What impact would a wider and prolonged war in the Middle East have on the economic performance of Jordan and on its poverty/humanitarian needs and development opportunities?

Aid-supported agencies

- The ODA cuts redirected the priority attention to life-saving support and organizational survival: certainly, in 2025 localization was not a priority.
- The ODA cuts have increased the competition rather than the collaboration between aid-dependent agencies.
- Complaints have been heard that too much of the (humanitarian funding) is concentrated in a very few UN, INGO, and large non-governmental Jordanian agencies. To the detriment of the many mid-sized and smaller ones.
- What will result from the UN reform discussions, e.g. will UN Women and UNFPA merge, and may that undermine the struggle for gender equality? [xvi]
- Should there be one joint INGO-Jordanian NGO/CSO forum, like in Syria?
- Should a fund be created for Jordan that is exclusively for NGOs – and managed by NGOs? Would this be for Jordanian NGOs and CSOs only, or also for international ones?
- Notwithstanding all the talk, also by donors, about accelerating 'localization' to increase the cost-efficiency of the remaining ODA, it is conceivable that donors become even more risk-averse and top-down controlling (more paper and less aid, instead of 'Less paper and more aid' [xvii] making it even harder for most non-governmental LNA to access their funding directly and in larger grants.
- How will Jordanian civil society fund itself in the long term?

Localization

- The 'lack of a common understanding' is an obstacle to it being translated into practice, faster and more structurally
- 'Localization' is actually just another top-down, internationally imposed policy
- How to assess the state-of-localization in Jordan in a 'good enough' manner?
- Where with the LTT: are its ToR from 2024 still valid; should it not be co-chaired by LNA only; should the UN be a co-chair and if so, which UN agency; where is it best located in the aid architecture, from a future-facing perspective; how can it be more effective?

There may be other important questions. Add them.

X. OBSERVATIONS AND EMERGING LEARNINGS

This section offers some observations and learnings from the rapid retrospective review.[xviii] Nuance them further or add others where needed.

1. On a task force to advance localization in practice

- Where there are many thematic task forces and working groups, inevitably, the ability of most organizations, including international ones, to seriously engage with all or most of them will be limited. That also holds for the many different topics, e.g., the JIF agenda, and the various working groups of donors.
- To be effective, task forces and working groups must be resourced with at least one person who is part-time or full-time dedicated to doing the practical work of communicating, preparing, enabling, documenting, etc. They cannot operate only on voluntary time from people with other responsibilities and already full workloads.
- When task forces or working groups spend more and more time on their purpose and internal functioning, this should be a signal that they are off-track and that a fundamental rethink is required.
- A 'lack of shared understanding' was already flagged up in the 2020 report on 'Strengthening Localization in Jordan'. With all the global research, a decade of discussions at global and country-levels, and a sizeable amount of practical guidance, and quite some focused work in

Jordan over the past 5 years, there is little excuse for a continued 'lack of shared understanding' among Western donors, UN agencies, INGOs, and non-governmental Jordanian organizations, particularly given the existence of an LTT. The only major difference of opinion that should be acknowledged is that the GoJ interprets it as international aid flowing to and through government institutions.

- A country-based 'localization task force' or 'working group' has the advantage of understanding the contextual factors that affect the potential for localization. At the same time, it must also be up-to-date with the international policy discussions and refer to the general practical guidance that is available. And it needs to determine what approaches have the potential to influence some real changes in organizational behaviors, and which, by themselves, do not have much influence. Surveys and reports with recommendations seem to belong to that latter category.
- Many exclusively survey-based attempts have been conducted to establish the 'state of localization' in a country (e.g., in Myanmar, Ukraine, Afghanistan, D R Congo, Burkina Faso, the Pacific, etc.). Most are less complicated than the one used for the Baseline Report. Yet surveys have limitations.
  - Most respondents have heavy workloads and do not see much direct benefit in responding to survey questionnaires. They may still do so, if the survey is not too long and complex.
  - Government officials are not always invited to also respond to the survey, leaving out a critical actor.
  - Donors, although they are the other critical actor, do not always respond to such surveys (e.g. the Baromètre de la localisation in the D.R.Congo).
  - Some survey results will be 'factual' (e.g. average size of grant received by LNA), others will reflect 'perceptions' (e.g. is the partnership experienced as equitable). Perception-based results are not invalid. Much of human (and organizational) behavior is shaped by perceptions.
  - Most surveys, globally, focus on the key dimensions of operational practice (variations on the original Seven Dimensions of Localization, developed by GMI in 2017 and 2018). That is appropriate. But they do not capture the contextual conditions that influence the space, speed, and trajectory of localization in a given context. That requires a broader framework for an 'assessment' (as used in the 2020 study on Strengthening Localization in Jordan). Nor do they pay attention to the structural factors that affect the behaviors of back-donors (e.g., insufficient staff, mandatory staff rotations, lack of understanding about the realities of humanitarian aid and development, or peace or governance work by the Minister overseeing and directing the donor administration and/or the parliament this administration is accountable to).
  - Overarching 'state of localization' surveys cannot capture the multiple good practices from individual agencies. Statistical survey responses should be complemented by concrete (anonymized) practice examples that show how it can -and is already- done.
- Reports with recommendations also have limitations. As this review shows, various assessments, reviews, and evaluations related to localization in Jordan all come up with similar or convergent recommendations. These are no different from the recommendations resulting from similar exercises in other countries. Which should not be surprising, given that the international aid sector works in very similar ways everywhere. Yet, notwithstanding the repetition of recommendations, nothing seems to change structurally. So commissioning more diagnostic assessments, reviews, and evaluations then is a waste of time and money. The question is: What approaches can be more influential?

2. On donor practices

- Positive is the much greater attention (at discourse level) to 'equitable partnership', after years in which, also globally, the localization question was primarily and almost exclusively focused on funding. Overall, however, the percentage of funding going to LNA remains a primary measure of success (globally), even though LNA can still be much harmed by a lot of funding of poor quality.
- The positive examples of back-donor practices in Section V must be complemented by critical observations

- It is not obvious that the European donors who contribute to the RDPP use its localization-enabling approaches for many more of their funding practices in Jordan.
- Overall, though virtually all Western bilateral and multilateral (EU) donors have committed to the Grand Bargain and talk about 'localization', over the past decade, not all of them have internal policies, time-bound objectives and/or practical guidance for their own staff. Nor have they been very accountable on whether and how effectively they translate this commitment into practice.
- According to the interviews, multi-year funding opportunities remain a minority; many projects still come with a 6-12 month time horizon, which then can be held up for some months while awaiting GoJ approval. Continued short-term funding impedes strategic thinking and action, both in relation to improving the conditions of the intended beneficiaries and of the organization's future roles and necessary competencies.
- Donors do not systematically use their leverage over UN agencies and INGOs to make them translate the localization commitment into practice. When donors actively invite consortium applications with an LNA lead, that proposals are co-created, that LNA subgrantees also receive a fair IRC, are present at meetings and copied into communications of the intermediary with donors, etc., it tends to happen. When donors do not, such good practices are much less likely.
- Donors can (and at times do) use their influence with the GoJ to be more enabling for non-governmental LNA, and give them the autonomy they need to best play their role. At the same time, donors are seen as not necessarily respecting the autonomy of non-governmental LNA, for example, when they made or wanted to make public statements about other situations in the Middle East. Some non-governmental LNA reportedly stopped relations with a certain back-donor over this perceived political interference in what they believe their mission demands of them.

3. On capacity-strengthening

International aid agencies have been present in Jordan in great numbers and with significant amounts of aid money for over a decade. Undoubtedly, all of them have claimed to use some of the aid they received to strengthen the capacities of Jordanian agencies. If, currently, 'lack of capacity' of Jordanian (non-governmental) LNA is still regularly used as an argument, what does this say about the effectiveness of all that 'capacity-strengthening'? Both surveys (2022-early 2026) signal serious problems with how the international aid sector approaches 'capacities' and 'capacity-strengthening', notably of LNA. These problems are global and have been known for a long time. [xix] The fragmented, short-term, supply-driven nature of too much 'capacity-support' is one part of this. The heavy focus on the capacity to meet ever-growing international agency requirements, with little attention to the capacity to be an effective operational actor in a particular context, another part. There are two deeper structural failures in how the international agencies have been doing this:

- The disconnect of 'capacity-strengthening' from the question of the financial health of the recipient organization. LNA around the world, for years already, have pointed at two contradictions: a. The 'capacity trap': An organization is not able to meet all the compliance requirements (yet), therefore receives no funding, therefore cannot develop these organizational policies and systems; b. When they can access international funding, the problem is not to 'develop' individual capacities and organizational capabilities but, faced with irregular and poor quality funding, to 'maintain' them;
- The disregard for collaborative capabilities: Not only the willingness but also the capability to collaborate, not just between non-governmental LNA but also with (and within) government and the private sector (cross-sectoral collaboration). Most challenges cannot be addressed properly without intentional collaboration for collective impact.

4. Structural impasse?

There has been some progress over the past five years. For example, there is more presence of (a subset of mostly Amman-based) non-governmental LNA in various interagency spaces; they have become more organized, more visible, and more vocal, and there is more direct interaction between them and

back-donors. Those are positive changes. But they tend to be ad hoc and very variable between agencies. This review confirms a more global finding: Ten years after the World Humanitarian Summit and the commitments made by international actors to better support and reinforce local actors, no real structural changes have taken place, also not in Jordan. Overall, priority-setting and decision-making remain in the hands of international actors, and most of the funding continues to go to or through them. So-called 'capacity-strengthening' is overall ineffective, as it remains disconnected from the core issue: the financial health of the recipient organization.

All actors contribute to this very slow pace of change:

The GoJ does not demand that international aid be used to more structurally strengthen the collective capabilities of the various Jordanian actors (and of refugee associations on Jordan's territory).

The donors

- Created and maintained an international aid system with more incentives for competition than cooperation, resulting in a multiplication of organizational infrastructures, significant (but never calculated) cost-inefficiencies, and reduced effectiveness. Fragmented ways of working are further increased by packaging everything in discrete and successive projects, without active effort to ensure that projects, also from different donors, reinforce and complement each other, and achieve a collective impact, greater than the individual parts. Reportedly, the MoPIC does not have a database to at least ensure non-duplication, or is not able to proactively use it for that purpose.
- Most Western donor agencies have been part of and contributed to the development of multiple 'inter-agency' guidance notes. Yet do not, themselves, systematically apply them in who and how they fund. Is the effort invested in the working groups that developed all that guidance then wasted money? Some donors do have internal policies (including e.g. on IRC for subgrantees), but not all of their staff seem aware of it, and/or have received adequate briefing about their role in translating the donor commitment to localization into practice.

UN agencies and INGOs

- Several UN agencies have been financially gutted in 2025, and now face the same problem as donor administrations themselves: Not enough staff to handle a large number of relationships and contracts with LNA. They too therefore must rely on larger organizations who can do this for them, in practice mostly INGOs. The result is two intermediaries – and a growing cost of intermediation.
- INGOs (and UN agencies) tend to blame the limitations on their ability to more intensively support and reinforce LNAs on the restrictions of the GoJ and on continued heavy donor requirements and risk aversion. This is partially true, but it negates the fact that even when they receive quality funding from a back-donor, they do not always pass this on to LNA subgrantees, and sometimes add requirements. Arguing that they can only ICR to their subgrantees if the back-donor allows it, is partially true, but it avoids the question of why they do not use some of their flexible income to do so. Implicitly, these arguments signal that INGOs have given up a lot of independence in order to grow themselves as contractor-implementers for back-donors. The arguments also do not apply generally: there is a subsection of INGO who for many years already work (almost) exclusively in often strategic and fairly equitable partnerships, and still receive back-donor funding.
- The interviews confirm that several INGOs still speak (and think) about their relationship with LNAs as '*their* partners', which they select and change if they want to. INGOs hesitate to acknowledge that their organizational (financial) interest can clash with localization objectives. LNAs around the world, but also several staff members of Western INGOs suggest that it is time for INGOs to review their role and value-add in a world that is not only divided along North-South lines, but also along elite-majority of populations lines, and with increasing polarization also in Northern/Western societies.

Who determines practice in international agencies? In all types of international agencies, much latitude is given to the personal views and preferences of key individuals. If an organization has formally

committed to support localization, it cannot be that one individual really tries to practice this, yet their successor may show disinterest or even come up with a general negative narrative about LNAs.

Jordanian non-governmental LNAs: If they find that localization is or has become a 'top-down, internationally driven' agenda, the question is why they have still not articulated a collective vision of how they see its purpose and how they want it translated in practice? The invitation to be propositional about this was already part of the 2020 Localization in Jordan report (Annex 6).

This modest progress, but structural stuckness, is the common situation around the world, not just in Jordan. And yet, over the past two years, international agencies have been showcasing more and more examples of real leadership from Ukraine. The contextual conditions in Ukraine are enabling: local government functions with a degree of decentralized authority (albeit with limited resources), and there is space for civil society to operate and receive international funding. Ukrainian CSOs also came together in strong and assertive networks. They know the international commitments and hold them up to donors and international agencies. On the other hand, large-scale international aid in Ukraine is something of the past 4 years, and the country is at war.

Jordan has had a fairly stable situation for over a decade and secure operating conditions: Could and should it not have advanced further already?

LOOKING FORWARD (2026-2028)

A. GLOBALLY

I. LOCALIZATION IN THE FACE OF DECLINING WESTERN AID

The background paper '*Localization: Its Global Trajectory till Early 2026*' wondered how the localization commitment would fare in the face of the cumulative budget cuts by Western donors:

- Will the localization commitment, which ultimately seeks to structurally change the nature of international cooperation, gain in influence?
- Will it be sidelined as national interests and organizational self-interests fuel competition among international actors, among national actors, and between international and national actors?
- Will it continue with a similar modest practical influence, with a few agencies really changing how they operate, but many others not?

Listening to global conversations in early 2026, three observations often come up:

- There is increased competition among operational agencies for the smaller pot of funds;
- Back-donors in particular see localization as a structural manner to increase cost-efficiency, presumably because most LNAs are cheaper. [xx]
- Back-donor funding is (even) more tightly controlled and earmarked.

Each reaction is understandable, the last two, however, are contradictory: more tightly controlled grant-making may lead to apparent cost-efficiencies and superficial short-term 'results' – they are not enabling for medium- to longer-term effectiveness, understood as deeper and more meaningful impact.[xxi]

II. INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES - WE KNOW WHAT IS NEEDED

Assuming that the overall reduction in Western ODA is an argument to accelerate localization, then how do we do that? The 'Looking Back' review of efforts to advance localization in Jordan in recent years (2020-2025) shows there are many recommendations on how this can happen faster and deeper. Very similar recommendations have been made multiple times, from other research, reviews, and

evaluations related to localization elsewhere. They have also been taken up in interagency guidance developed over the years, mostly by international agencies.

1. Back-Donors

Back-donors, together with national governments, are the primary actors who determine the nature, trajectory, and speed of de-internationalization / localization in a given context. This section talks about (Western) back-donor practices in general, but it is also directly applicable to Jordan, as any donor administration largely works in the same way in any given country.

Many (Western) back–donor administrations face several structural challenges that influence their practices globally:

Periodic budget reviews: Several Western aid administrations continue to operate with global budgets, particularly but not only for humanitarian aid, that need to be confirmed (or reconfirmed after review) by parliament on an annual basis. This contributes to the large number of short-term contracts, even in protracted situations.

Limited staff numbers in donor administrations lead to a tendency to hand out 'larger envelopes' of funding, as they cannot themselves handle a multitude of smaller contracts. It is mostly international agencies (UN, larger INGOs, Western Red Cross Societies) who can handle these larger grants, and then, as intermediaries, issue a larger number of smaller subgrants. International agencies are furthermore favored by the demanding due diligence tests and compliance requirements, as over the past several decades they have been able to invest in their organizational development, and have enough staff and experience with these back-donors, to meet them.

Staff rotations: Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff with 'diplomat' status are made to regularly rotate, not only between countries but also between roles and functions. Someone may find themselves handling international cooperation matters without much experience in the matter. These staff rotations are also difficult for the aid recipients, as every time they need to re-establish relationships and perhaps overcome wrong assumptions and incorrect understandings.

Parliamentary oversight: Back-donor aid administrations are under parliamentary oversight. Few Western parliaments have a 'development' or 'aid' subcommittee with parliamentarians who actually understand the realities and complexities of aid-supported actions. International cooperation, particularly when it is not designed to serve the donor's 'national interests', is questioned by sections of Western populations and their political representatives. Donor administrations, therefore, are under pressure to demonstrate that taxpayers' money has been correctly used without fraud or corruption (nor gone into politically undesirable hands) and has produced measured 'results'. This can become an incentive to favour countries and sectoral/thematic priorities that are easier to report results on (e.g. health, education, water and sanitation) than others (e.g., stronger social cohesion), to select mostly international 'first receivers' that can provide the results-reports needed, and to tighten top-down control and reduce 'risk' with evermore requirements.

Centrally-managed and delegated budgets: There may be greater reluctance to provide more and more direct funding to LNA when the funds are managed from the back-donor's headquarters. Decision-makers at headquarters may be less knowledgeable about the context, have never met anyone from the LNAs and therefore imagine all sorts of risks. Some work closely with their country-based colleagues, but country-based staff is not always in the know about what shapes HQ decisions. Generally speaking, funds, the management of which is delegated to colleagues at country level, can be managed with more understanding of the context and of the LNA. Their proximity is a significant risk-mitigating factor. At HQ the 'proximity factor' favours their own Western NGOs.

Notwithstanding this, if back-donors have publicly committed to advance localization, they must consider whether they have done what is needed, to translate that commitment into practice. Part of

this relates to creating or reinforcing their internal ways of working, part of it to being more explicit about what they demand of intermediaries.

a. Internal ways of working

Policy: Is there a general policy statement for the aid administration and are there further specifications regarding e.g. ICR for LNA subgrantees, multi-year funding, risk sharing etc. Inputs for more specific points can be found in the available inter-agency guidance, that donor representatives typically have helped to develop. (See the textbox on the next page. They are available for download at https://www.gmentor.org/equitable-partnership)

Questions to back-donors: Do you have an internal policy or instruction that directs you to advance localization? Are there more specific internal references related to this e.g. on ICR, multi-year funding; investing in organizational development? Are you aware of these guidelines and acting in accordance?

Principles of Partnership 2007 English / French / Arabic / Spanish / Bahasa Indonesian
Doing Development Differently 2015
Grand Bargain 2016
IASC 2020 Guidance on Localisation and the COVID-19 Response
ICVA 2020 Reinforce, reinforce, reinforce. Localisation in the COVID 19 global humanitarian response
Localisation Workstream 2020: Guidance Note on Humanitarian Financing for Local Actors
IASC 2022: Guidance on the Provision of Overheads to Local and National Partners. English / French / Arabic / Spanish
Localisation Workstream 2020: Guidance Note on Partnership Practices for Localisation
Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness 2010: Istanbul CSO Development Effectiveness Principles
Donor Statement on Supporting Locally Led Development 2022
Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation 2011 English / French / Arabic / Spanish
Charter4Change (C4C) 2015/2019: English / French / Spanish / Arabic
Localisation Workstream 2020: Guidance Note on the Participation of Local Actors in Humanitarian Coordination Groups
IASC 2021: Strengthening Participation, Representation and Leadership of Local and National Actors in Humanitarian Coordination Mechanisms
Localisation Workstream 2020: Guidance Note on Capacity Strengthening for Localisation
Localisation Workstream 2020: Guidance Note on Arrangements Between Donors and Intermediaries
OECD DAC 2021: Recommendation on Enabling Civil Society in Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance
Global Commission on Adaptation 2021: Principles for Locally Led Adaptation Action
Grand Bargain Caucus on Intermediaries 2022: The Role of Intermediaries in Supporting Locally Led Humanitarian Action
Interagency Standing Committee 2022: Guidance on the Provision of Overheads to Local and National Partners.
LPI, DHF & GPACC 2022: Principles for Quality Financing for Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention
Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation 2022: Geneva Summit Declaration / Donor Statement on Supporting Locally-led Development
OCHA 2022: Country Based Pooled Funds. Global guidance. English / Arabic
Grand Bargain Secretariat 2023: How to Implement the Grand Bargain Commitments at the Country Level. Guidance
ECHO 2023: Guidance Note. Promoting Equitable Partnerships with Local Responders in Humanitarian Settings
OECD DAC 2023: Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus
Grand Bargain Beyond 2023: The framework. And the visualisation of the set up
IASC 2023 Risk Sharing Framework & its Documentation Template

Staff guidance and performance accountability

- *Practical guidance:* The interviews confirmed that staff in donor administrations can be very interested and willing to translate the donor's commitment to localization into practice, but are not always clear why this is important or how to do this. Even if there is an internal policy, donor staff too may need guidance. Some of this may be in written form, but a video-based, self-paced learning journey can avoid this being yet more paper.
- *Performance accountability*: In Jordan, as elsewhere, the personal views and preferences of key individuals can significantly affect whether their organization treats its subgrantees fairly and tries to work in equitable partnerships, or not. Localization therefore seems to be left to the discretion of individual staff, even if the organization formally expresses its commitment to it. That does not seem correct: Other organizational commitments, e.g. to gender equality, the prevention of sexual abuse and harassment, the participation of children in matters that concern them, the need to get at least three quotes from suppliers etc., are not left to individual discretion. Why are staff not held accountable on this?

Question to back-donors: What does your organization do, what should it do (more), to ensure that all staff (national and international) know how to make localization work, and that this is (also) considered in their performance reviews?

More enabling conditions, particularly for LNA, can be created, through e.g.

- *Calls-for-proposals that invite applications from consortia*, not single agencies, and with local and national consortia members, and even as consortium lead. This can also be an incentive to collaborate instead of compete, if the consortia are not just rapidly and artificially put together to respond to the donor demand, or – as is the case in the RDPP practice, time is then taken to develop the willingness and ability to work as partners.
- *Tiered funding systems with dedicated support*: Some LNAs do very good work with integrity but do not, at a given moment, meet all donor requirements. Denying them, therefore any access to funding keeps them in the 'capacity-trap'. There is enough experience with tiered-framework approaches (e.g. from UN-managed pooled funds and the Start Network): Even if you can meet only some requirements, you can still qualify for a smaller size grant; if you meet more requirements, you can access medium-sized grants, etc. This opens the door. Where this has been combined with focused support, several LNAs around the world have moved into higher tiers and qualified for larger grants.
- *Additional cash-for-purpose*: Cash-programming to households has expanded significantly in the past decade. It can be multi-purpose (the recipient can use it for anything of their choosing) or cash-for-purpose (it must be used for an agreed purpose, e.g., education, accessing health services). ICR to an organization should be the equivalent of multipurpose cash: They use it as they see fit. This can be complemented by an agreed cash-for-purpose that helps the organization develop: E.g. the organization wants to invest in new financial software; it wants to expand its ability to connect better with members of its society via social media; it wants to learn how to read national accounts and how to conduct public expenditure reviews, so it can engage with its government from a citizen perspective; it wants to learn about and set up a platform for crowdfunding. Perhaps even better: such cash-for-purpose is offered to LNA who want to do this in a collaborative and complementary manner, potentially increasing its cost-efficiency.

Question to back-donors: Where are you on this, and what other approaches do you practice or can you imagine?

***Cost-saving*:** Costs can be saved by back-donors adopting practices like

- *Due diligence passporting*: Due diligence passporting has been promoted for some years now by the Start Network [xxii], and is becoming adopted in several INGO groupings (Alliance 15; Terre des Hommes Lausanne and a number of French NGOs).[xxiii] It means that different organizations, typically international ones, accept as valid the due diligence and/or capacity-assessments conducted by another one that agreed to the 'passporting' system, instead of

repeating their own – if this is approved by the organization that has been assessed. This reduces the burden of endless repeat assessments on LNAs, and overall saves time and costs. It would be helpful if back-donors explicitly support this, and confirm their acceptance of the practice (after verification of its solidity).

- *Harmonise and simplify reporting requirements*: All organizations, also the international ones, are burdened by having to report similar things in different individual donor formats. Harmonising and simplifying reporting requirements were one of the ten commitments of the 2016 Grand Bargain outcome document. Since then, a shared 8+3 template has been promoted.[xxiv] Do apply it if not already doing so.
- *Pooled funds:* There are good examples of pooled funds which are very enabling for non-governmental LNA. RDPP in Jordan and Lebanon is one, the Aid Fund for Syria and the Livelihoods and Food Security Fund in Myanmar are other examples. These should not be managed by the UN: Most UN agencies are too bureaucratic and rigid, and the UN is always vulnerable to political dynamics (as experienced, for example, by the Syria Humanitarian Fund in Turkey).
- *Maximum one intermediary*: This is part of the Grand Bargain commitment on localization but also makes straightforward financial sense. Intermediation costs money. In practice, that means that a UN agency or an INGO (which are first receivers) subcontracting another INGO, who then in turn subcontracts LNA, should not be acceptable.

Question to back-donors: Where are you on this? What other cost-saving approaches do you practice or can you imagine?

b. Externally Be Demanding of Intermediaries and Engage with LNA Directly

Back-donors may have committed to advance localization, but for the above-mentioned reasons will often rely on 'first receivers' that sometimes implement directly but increasingly also act as 'intermediaries' towards further (LNA) subgrantees. In practice, then, it is such intermediaries that must translate the back-donor policy into practice. Moreover, many intermediaries themselves have publicly committed to localization (e.g., via the Charter4Change, the Pledge for Change, subscribing to a Manifesto for Locally-Led Action, and/or receiving grant funding to develop their partnering capabilities). It is then legitimate that back-donors express and formalize their expectations from intermediaries in this regard – and monitor and review that they act accordingly. More detailed practical guidance on this is available.

Some of the immediately relevant and practical measures donors can insist on are e.g.

- *Transparent budgets:* The budgets of project proposals from an agency that would (also) act as intermediary must clearly indicate what will be spent by the intermediary and what will go to and be spent by LNA subgrantees. This easily allows a check on whether subgrantees also receive ICR, whether their operational infrastructure costs are covered, whether there appears to be enough staff for their part of the work, and whether some insurance for them is included, etc. This will also make it much easier to track how much money reaches LNA – something that remains elusive sector-wide, after more than 10 years of commitment to channel a larger proportion of funds to them.
- *No additional requirements*: An intermediary cannot add requirements on top of those from the back-donor, without a solid argument. It cannot insert a clause in the subgrant contract, forbidding the subgrantee from having direct contact with the back-donor.
- *Presence*: As a matter of principle, subgrantees are present when the intermediary meets with the donor (at the country level) and are copied in on any communications that also relate to them.
- *Capacity-support*: Promises of 'capacity-support' to LNA must be questioned: What capacities, precisely, will be developed? Who determined this? How will you know if it is developed enough? How do you ensure new individual competencies are institutionalized, so that they do not get lost when the trained or mentored individual leaves? What changes do you expect in your roles and responsibilities, and those of the LNA subgrantee, when the latter's capacity has been strengthened? Do you actually have the capacity (staff, competencies, budget) to develop another organization's capabilities? [xxv]

- *Behaviors evaluated*: Project and program reviews and evaluations can include explicit attention to the quality of partnerships. Write it in the ToR and select consultants with the relevant experience.

Move to national intermediaries: There is no intrinsic reason why national (non-governmental) organizations cannot act as intermediaries. There are examples of very effective national intermediaries, like the Manusher Jono Foundation in Bangladesh, which receives substantial direct funding from international donors and passes it on via smaller grants to Bangladeshi NGOs and CBOs, providing them also with longer-term organizational development accompaniment. It does not implement programs itself, so there is no conflict of interest. In Myanmar, there is a long tradition of larger Myanmar NGOs sharing resources with smaller frontline aid providers and equally supporting them with their organizational functioning.[xxvi] One interviewee for this review made mention of working with a larger Jordanian NGO to do precisely that. Of course, national intermediaries can be as transactional and/or abuse their power in the same way international ones can. They, too, must demonstrate a serious effort to develop a respectful collaboration with, and support and reinforcement of their subgrantees.

Create or maintain a direct, structural, dialogue with LNA only: The Jordan International Cooperation Forum (JICOF), initiated in 2022 by JONAF, JIF, USAID and the embassy of the Netherlands in Jordan is a multi-stakeholder platform that brings together over 50 members from local civil society organizations, INGOs, and the donor community. Civic space in Jordan and localization are important topics of conversation. The question is whether the presence of INGOs inhibits the readiness of non-governmental LNA to speak freely?

Question to back-donors: Where are you on the above issues? What are you already doing well, and what can you do better?

c. Reduce Structural Excessive Costs and Wastage in the International Aid System

If cost-effectiveness is genuinely a concern, as it should be, some general practices in international cooperation, and certainly in the humanitarian sector, must be questioned:

- *The cost of fragmentation:* (Western) Back-donors overall have taken a market-approach to grant-making. The assumption is that competitive calls-for-proposals, together with stringent due diligence and quality assurance requirements, will surface the best contractors/first recipients and hence offer the best value-for-money. There is truth in this. But there are also costly downsides that are not factored in: It encourages fragmentation, which then must be mitigated with complex, time-consuming and expensive 'coordination' efforts.[xxvii] Over time, it also reinforces inequalities, with big (and international ones) applicants regularly out-competing smaller (and national/local) ones. That may not matter from the perspective of spending taxpayers' money, but it is not always a desirable result at country-level.

In the Words of a Very Experienced Reflective Practitioner

"*People don't experience funds, NGOs, mechanisms or localisation frameworks. What is tangible is whether support arrives on time, whether it reflects their reality, whether it continues when needed and whether it builds something that lasts or simply passes through.*

That gap between how the system is designed and how it is actually experienced is where most of the current conversation on reforms, resets and reimagining struggles to confront. If you start from the point of experience, delayed funding means interrupted services and livelihoods. Fragmented actors overlap, duplicate and demonstrate waste. Centralised decision-making creates interventions that do not fit the context. Short funding cycles make continuity and accumulation impossible. At that level, what the system produces is experienced as inconsistency, misalignment and engineered dependency.

Most reform efforts do not deny these outcomes. Instead, they attempt to correct them through better coordination, improved metrics, new language and commitments to do better.

What common limitation do these share? They operate within the same structural logic. They assume that better management of the system will produce better outcomes. We know it will not. (…) A system that centralises resources while attempting to decentralise execution will consistently produce distance between decision and reality. Fragmented actors with duplicated infrastructure will consistently produce inefficiencies. Compound that by segmenting funding into rigid categories with incompatible time horizons and we arrive at this reality where we consistently struggle to support anything that requires continuity." 17 March 2026)

- *The cost of controlling:* If you have a 100 Euros or dollars of aid money, when does the percentage spent on controlling that the remainder is well spent, become disproportionate? Is spending 40 Euros on ensuring that the remaining 60 is correctly spent a fair ratio?
- *The cost of wastage*: There is legitimate concern about fraud and corruption in aid-receiving organizations. But at the same time much tolerance for wastage. As mentioned in the Looking Back discussion document, localization has been massively researched, diagnosed and discussed. We know what we need to do. Yet funds continue to be spent on more research, working groups and conferences, to produce the same recommendations. This is not specific to localization. It is similar with other thematic areas of interest.
- *Bias-inducing risk management*: Risk matrices, used by back-donors (and by operational agencies) are generally incomplete and somewhat misleading.
  - One core issue is that they are ego-centric: Most look at risks for the individual agency. This does not reflect reality. Back-donors can only fulfil their mission because of an eco-system around them, with operational agencies, their suppliers, research- and training outfits etc. If things do not go well with many others in that eco-system, back-donors will struggle to be effective and impactful.
  - If this holds true, then back-donors, who exercise much influence over the allocation of aid, cannot just transfer risk to their first-receivers. The risk is held by the network of organizations (networks that are not solely determined by connecting money flows). Back-donors are part of that network, and need to share some of the risks.
  - The appreciation of risk may also vary depending on the time horizon. Deeper impact typically requires longer-term engagement and investment. How would we behave if we

included in our matrix the risk that much of what we fund in the short term is fundamentally unsustainable and will degrade if not collapse after the funding stops?
- Only considering risk and not opportunity encourages a climate of fear and suspicion. The ultimate risk avoidance strategy is to do nothing. Then we also achieve nothing. We must try to manage risk but also weigh risk against opportunities. What would it look like if we worked with risk-opportunity matrices that are not just ego-centric but also include opportunities for others, enabled by us?

Question to back-donors: Do you acknowledge that the international aid sector, particularly humanitarian aid, operates with expensive structural inefficiencies? Are these addressed by a 'humanitarian reset' with stronger priorities and further efforts to be more cost-efficient? Are they addressed in the dialogue already underway on '*Donors in a Post-Aid World*'? [xxviii]

d. What is the Purpose of Humanitarian Aid?

An argument has been heard during the interviews that the primary objective of humanitarian aid is to save lives and after that to maximize the self-reliance of the intended beneficiaries. Keeping a lot of LNA in business, let alone investing in their organizational development, comes way down the line. In times of shrinking resources, keeping the focus on the primary purposes is even more justified.

That argument has a point. In the absence of other types, humanitarian aid over the past 15-20 years has been asked to do way more than save lives. The 'humanitarian reset' agenda of 2025 pulls it back to its primary, life-saving, focus. But there are also some weaknesses in the argument:

- People in dire need for a prolonged period of time have expressed their appreciation for the 'life-saving' assistance, yet also consistently demand that the conditions that keep them in such a precarious situation be addressed.[xxix]
- Households alone can only do so much. More mutual aid is often required – and practiced. Yet 'community' or 'social group funding e.g., via a CBO or through 'survivor-and community-led responses' (SCLR) is not a mainstream approach.[xxx] This is worrying given that evidence is emerging that community/voluntary social groups are increasingly stepping in and stepping up, or forced to do so, as international aid dwindles.[xxxi]
- Households, and even a set of households, still need all sorts of surrounding organizational infrastructure to get out of the poverty or dire humanitarian-need trap. They need roads, transport, telecommunications, access to medical services, education, finance, markets, a guarantor of contracts, etc. All of that needs to come from the public and private sectors, with not-for-profits typically filling in the gaps and encouraging the public and private sectors to invest, expand, and improve their services. No household can survive, let alone thrive, without that enabling, supporting, and protecting infrastructure. This has been recognized in Jordan: aid has been used to support and expand such infrastructure.
- Over the past decades, back-donors have invested in the development of a largely international infrastructure to reach households and communities around the world. That international infrastructure is very expensive. Surely, investing more in national and local infrastructure and encouraging the different entities to actively work together is sensible?

Question to back-donors: Do you acknowledge that to survive and thrive, households need an environment with goods and services that can only be created and maintained by a range of functional organizations, working together?

2. UN and INGO[xxxii]

The profound disruptions that started in 2025 also affect UN agencies and INGOs.

Many UN agencies have been forced to drastically downsize. Discussions are underway about closing some and merging others. More problematically, multi-lateral diplomacy and international 'standards', however imperfect they were, have been actively pushed aside, at least by some powerful players. There is a more fundamental question about revising the Charter of the UN to make it more fit for the

contemporary world. Simultaneously, we may see more mini-lateralism, where ad hoc coalitions of the willing governments work together on specific issues.[xxxiii]

Understandably, UN agencies now look for ways to maintain some income, and in doing so may be competing with INGOs and, at times, with LNAs. This resurfaces a point that has been made already several years ago, for example by CSOs in Bangladesh: The greatest added value of the UN is its normative foundation, followed by its ability to mobilize technical and thematic expertise. It should not generally be itself operational (e.g. when directly related to its normative authority e.g. ensuring that potentially returning refugees can really do this voluntarily). (The reason why many UN agencies have become ever more operational relates to their financing: assessed contributions are not enough and often come very late – so project-related income has been a practical means of generating more income and having cash-at-hand.)

Many INGOs are also facing serious challenges: The many that received quite a substantial amount of income from Western donors (especially but not only USAID), have had to downsize. Some have been forced to close. In general terms, the initial reaction has been to quickly search for alternative sources of income, such as from foundations, local authorities and private sector companies. Building these relationships and finding the right communication style takes time however, and these same 'alternative' donors may suddenly be approached by many. A second response strategy, more modest still, is to consider how cost-efficiencies can be achieved by e.g. sharing office infrastructure in a country; sharing experts or specializing in different areas of expertise and complementing each other when needed. Some are actively exploring mergers. A very few have already developed the connections and capabilities to access funding (mostly in partnerships with others) from International Financial Institutions, like the World Bank and various regional development banks or tap into the rather complex sources of climate finance.

Some, partially out of necessity, are more radically re-inventing themselves: Mercy Corps, for example, has been heavily affected by the closure of USAID. It is renaming itself as 'Prosper Global' in recognition of the 'white savior' and/or religious connotations of its old name. The change is intended to be deeper: working with partners rather than direct implementation but also moving more towards impact investing. Its investment arm has already backed many early start-ups aligned with its mission – and helped mobilize many millions in follow-up finance.[xxxiv]

Overall, then, two tendencies currently shape the behavior of UN agencies and INGOs:

- Preserving the old mode of operation as much as possible, even in a leaner version, through getting a still decent share of the remaining ODA and complementing it with income from some other grant-making entities. If that is not enough, a greater sharing of resources and even a merger can also help to achieve this type of survival.
- Drastically reimagining the role and value-add of a (Western) INGO in tomorrow's world and that of the next decades to come. Is the mission still relevant, in light of what the world most needs today? If so, is how and where we pursue that mission still the most influential and effective in the medium-term future? Should we not also work in our Western home societies, who are also suffering from increasing polarization, social inequality, and economic and technological shocks that leave a growing number of people behind? Should we see ourselves more as part of a global movement of civil society organizations working on planetary threats and increasing inequality and exclusion, rather than as, inevitably somewhat paternalistic, actors from the 'global North' in a 'global South' that we see as lacking in capacities? What then, in any given context, is our real-added value – from the perspective of LNA, not just that of back-donors. In this perspective, registering in Jordan or elsewhere as a 'national NGO', to compete with the home-grown ones, is a profoundly neo-colonial move.

Question to UN agencies and INGOs: Do you know whether your organization has formally expressed its support for the Grand Bargain and with that, localization? Does your organization have an internal policy and practical guidance, known and referred to by you and all your colleagues? To what degree are personal opinions and preferences about LNA able to shape the actual behaviours?

Question to UN agencies and INGOs: What is the dominant tendency in how your organization tries to adjust to the profound disruptions that came to a climax in 2025?

Intermediary organizations like the UN and INGOs, can be valuable to LNA in non-monetary ways: They can offer knowledge and insight about international policy and practice discussions and/or political dynamics; they can provide information about comparative experiences and make connections across borders:; they can open doors to international actors with influence; more practically, they can sometimes help with a registration, or speeding up an administrative process. They can create opportunities for different agencies to meet and get to know each other. For example, a UN agency elsewhere in the region organized a 'Localization and Partnership Fair' which was well attended by donors, national and local voluntary organizations, private sector companies and some government officials.

Questions to UN agencies and INGOs:

- If you are a UN agency or an INGO in Jordan, what would you say is the greatest added value you bring to the people and organizations in Jordan, not to the back-donors?
- How confident are you that they would identify the same value if they were asked independently?
- How has your added value in Jordan evolved over the past 5-10 years? If it has not evolved substantially, then how impactful has your 'capacity-strengthening' been?
- If international aid to Jordan reduces further, creating greater financial stress on the GoJ and on its voluntary organizations, what is the best possible contribution you can make to them?

ZOOMING IN ON JORDAN

I. JORDAN - POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

Nobody can predict with reasonable confidence what the situation in Jordan, in the region, and globally will be like in 3 years from now. There is no other option than trying to imagine different possible scenarios. Some possible scenarios are:

Status Quo Yet Slow Reduction in Aid: There is only a modest decline in the refugee population still in Jordan. But further reductions in Western ODA now also affect Jordan more. This would harm government services (where sometimes even some running costs like maintenance and repairs are paid for by international aid) as well as the services provided by non-governmental LNAs. More Jordanian LNAs, quite dependent on foreign aid, may struggle to survive. Jordanians would be affected, not only refugees.

The scenario is not unlikely: The UK government, for example, has just announced further reductions in its international cooperation budget by 2027. The current regional war in the Middle East, and its global impact on energy supplies, will put more pressure on Western donors to re-allocate part of their ODA to defense and moderating the rising cost-of-living at home. Donors from the Gulf will be spending more money on rebuilding their energy infrastructures.

Larger and Faster Reductions in Aid: For example, if significant numbers of especially Syrian refugees in Jordan continue to return voluntarily, part of the international aid currently spent for them in Jordan is reallocated to Syria. This creates new opportunities for some Jordanian non-governmental agencies, banks, and private sector companies: They can open up or expand their services and programming in Syria, and continue to access the available Western aid. Certain Jordanian players, such as the Ministry of Trade and Industry and Chambers of Commerce, will become more prominent. However, many Jordanian agencies from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors may not follow the returnees to Syria.

It is also possible that a significant portion of the funding for refugees in Jordan is shifted to Lebanon, whose IDPs and refugees today find themselves in more life-threatening circumstances. This does not offer similar prospects for Jordanian agencies.

Increased pressures on the Security and Stability of Jordan: This can happen directly but also indirectly.

- Directly: Jordan is dragged into the regional war, e.g., by a targeting of the US embassy in Jordan.
- Indirectly: There is a build-up of significant numbers of people on the borders with the West Bank and/or with Syria, looking (again) for refuge in Jordan.

This can lead to an increase or a decrease in the volume of aid to Jordan. But even if the volume remains the same or increases, its spending is likely to be strongly influenced by political, not just humanitarian or development, considerations and priorities.

The interviews conducted for this exercise (and the short survey among non-governmental LNA) showed overall a fair show of confidence that Jordan will continue to receive a decent amount of international aid, particularly from the US and the EU who, each for their own reasons, sees a strategic interest in a stable Jordan. At least in the first months of the year, the prospects for 2026 were that most basic services would continue to be financed. The prospects for and after 2027 were less clear.

Question: How confident can one be, by April 2026, that Jordan will continue to receive a decent amount of international aid, also in 2027 and 2028? Is it likely that, if Western governmental aid declines, this can be partially replaced by aid from other sources e.g. philanthropic foundations and private sector CRS (corporate social responsibility-grants)?

Question: Would it be wise to hope for the best, but plan for the worst?

Question: Would a more robust foresighting exercise be appropriate now?

These scenarios were not generated with a methodologically robust approach. There are no methods to confidently predict the future. But there are methodologically stronger approaches to identifying types of different 'possible futures', which is called foresighting. Annex X, Y and Z provide examples of attempt to look into the future, some with more, others with less methodological discipline.

IARAN's foresighting exercises on the future of aid by 2030 (in 2017) and the more recent one on the future of aid by 2040 (in 2024-25), stand out: We can see how the global situation in 2025 resonates with the 'overflow' scenario of the 2017 exercise, and how the current situation begins to resemble the 'empires of aid' scenario of the 2024-25 exercise. (see Annex 4) Similarly, a foresighting exercise by the International Civil Society Center on the possible futures of global civil society by 2026 identified four type-scenarios: At the moment scenarios 1 (desert), 2 (scarce horizon) and 3 (community capital) seem much more likely than scenario 4 (resourced transformation). (see Annex 5) [xxxv]

II. REFOCUSING ON DEVELOPMENT?

According to the interviewees, after more than a decade of focus on refugees the Government of Jordan (GoJ) wants to refocus the attention, energies and funding to national development. The Economic Modernisation Vision is one central framework for this.

Such a shift to 'development' opens opportunities: Jordanians can more fully concentrate on their challenges, such as water, energy, climate adaptation, agricultural expansion, digital economy, poverty reduction, job creation, professional competencies development, protection for those in the informal economy, regional disparities etc. And it creates conditions for (even stronger) national ownership and leadership.

Positively, development work is more appreciative of the importance of strong organizations and institutions and more willing to invest in them. It also typically requires and supports cross-sectoral collaboration between the public, private and not-for-profit sectors (which here includes cooperatives, professional associations, etc.).

But a transition from 'humanitarian/refugee' mode to 'development' mode may not be that easy:

- Jordan, as a middle-income country, may receive less grant-based 'development aid' than the 'humanitarian/refugee aid' it (rightly) benefited from for many years.

- Developmental approaches are different from humanitarian work. Some Jordanian non-governmental LNAs have practical experience of it, but others have never had it or lost it in a decade of humanitarian/refugee approaches. Reportedly, there is currently no network or platform of non-governmental LNAs focused on development.
- Development aid is increasingly evolving towards blended finance (i.e., using public funds to draw in private capital), in which International Financial Institutions and national banks are important actors. Refreshingly, this tends to be somewhat less risk-averse than much classical grant-funding, and puts more emphasis on outcomes, not primarily on compliance. But most LNA and most INGOs (as well as many government officials) may not be familiar with this, and would need to develop new mindsets, new competencies, and new networks. (Those currently working on livelihoods in Jordan are already better prepared and engaging with the private sector in Jordan, but this 'innovative' type of big development financing is still of another order.)
- Having said this:
  - A larger share of development aid tends to flow through the public sector.
  - Development programs tend to rely more on bigger private sector contractors than on NGO/CSOs. Quality of partnerships tends to be less of a central concern in their often more transactional ways of working, and civil society strengthening is not always a priority or a competency.

III. GREATER FINANCIAL SELF-RELIANCE?

Jordan finds itself in an very complex regional and international political position. This requires a constant careful balancing act. Its government is to be appreciated for having been able to maintain stability and security in the country, when large scale violence has affected most of its immediate and regional neighbours. Jordan is also a country with limited natural resources, yet qualifies as a middle-income country (a qualification that indeed ignores inequalities within the population). There are also persistent regional disparities within the country, with a generally poorer south. International aid, very likely, has been a major contributing factor to achieving this stability and overall growth.

The previous sections paint a picture in which it is possible that Jordan in the medium-term receives less international aid in grant form. Even if there is significant 'development aid', part of that will be as loans which have to be repaid and/or as private sector investment, with the investor wanting a return. Jordan may have to become financially (even) more self-reliant. That holds for the public sector and the voluntary sector.

Questions to the Government:

- Is a scenario of a significant reduction in international grant-type aid over the next five years or so actively considered in the Government? Is there clarity on which sectors, services, and functions are most dependent on international aid, and where this aid goes through the public or through the voluntary sector?
- Are initiatives underway to make service delivery more cost-efficient? (One interviewee mentioned a government-to-government project to advance digitalization in the medical sector.
- Are plans being developed to increase government income, without overburdening economically weaker households and reducing the ability of private sector companies to invest, innovate, and be regionally and internationally competitive?

Question to international agencies: Are back-donors and UN agencies, and not just the International Monetary Fund, able to provide relevant advice and assistance to prepare Jordan for such future scenario? Are the intellectual resources and expertise on this matter, that certainly exists in Jordan, fully drawn upon?

What is going well, what must be done better, what is missing?

IV. JORDANIAN VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Jordanian non-governmental organizations face three structural challenges: More autonomy and appreciation from the national authorities for how they contribute to inclusion and well-being of people living in Jordan; much more effective support from international actors, based on the recognition that they are part of the long-term capabilities of Jordanians; and further strengthening and developing their collective capabilities. Most localization conversations would start with, and perhaps only focus on, the second challenge: what they want to see differently from international actors. However, just as with the request from the national authorities for greater autonomy, this leaves the main 'agency' with others.

1. Taking Charge of the Sector's Development

Starting from the agency that Jordanian non-governmental organizations can exercise, what can they do to strengthen their position and prepare for the future? Here is a set of ideas:

- Strengthen and deepen the collaboration among voluntary associations: Just as for INGOs today, this can imply more joint programs but, given the growing financial pressure, also more sharing of resources (offices, transport, thematic expertise etc.) and even merging. This may be hard to envisage for some directors and/or Boards of Trustees, but many organizations will struggle to survive and do impactful work if they go it alone.

- Network of networks: Can the concentration of influence around those based in Amman be reduced by evolving existing networks into a network of networks? In practice, that would mean building or strengthening local networks, and then connecting them, on a basis of equality, not as a hierarchy with Amman-based ones at the top.[xxxvi] Thought will have to be given to the reality that certain voluntary associations see themselves as charitable service-providers and others (also) as defenders and promoters of rights. In addition, some will be comfortable with their dependency on international/Western funding, while others are aligned with those around the world who want to see a profound transformation.

- Broader leadership and collaborative capabilities: As elsewhere, there are also some outstanding leaders from the voluntary sector. They deserve recognition for their contributions so far. But a healthy voluntary sector that seeks to collaborate more than compete, must encourage a broadening of leadership and the emergence of a next generation of leaders.[xxxvii] This is also about (big) egos, leadership style, and the willingness and skill to work in a collaborative manner. Networks and movements can stagnate and collapse because of individual rivalries, factional power struggles, and too much tolerance for destructive behaviors.[xxxviii]

- Define and communicate own standards and commitments to transparency and accountability: As a civil society actor, a voluntary association is in the first place accountable to its constituency and target beneficiaries, as well as wider society in Jordan, and of course to the authorities. How do Jordanian (and refugee-led) voluntary associations in Jordan communicate the responsibility they assume and how they are accountable to these stakeholders? So that a wider public in Jordan understands what they do, how they act with responsibility (not only for the money given to them in trust), and what results they achieve?[xxxix]

  Ensuring that non-voluntary organizations act with integrity and are accountable is also a task of the government. Different line ministries can exercise oversight, but they do not necessarily have all the competencies, and there is a risk that this leads to inconsistent approaches. Governmental oversight can be concentrated in a specialized body, like the Charity Commission for England and Wales in the UK. In addition, voluntary associations in Jordan can also develop their own standards of integrity and good practice. Swiss NGOs, for example, have set up such self-regulatory practice, known as the ZEWO-label.[xl] If they meet these standards, they

are 'ZEWO certified', until the next review three years later. The ZEWO label is used as a quality mark towards potential (individual, but also corporate and public entity) donors in Switzerland. Smaller NGOs in Switzerland are not always able to meet these standards, not for lack of willingness but lack of enough resources. A similar situation is likely to arise in Jordan. That will require some creative thinking, but does not necessarily invalidate the idea.

- Stronger connections with other 'civil society' actors? There are variations between the different Western European countries, but in many, there are active connections between the INGOs and universities. This can focus on technological developments, but also on thematic areas such as law, health, WATSAN, etc. Several universities also offer advanced-level courses and research on humanitarian action, refugee studies, development practices, civil society studies, etc. This strengthens the intellectual capital in the voluntary sector, but can also support innovation (e.g. digitalization, AI for NGOs, blockchain use[xli], renewable energy, land conservation and restoration etc.). With its long history of hosting large refugee populations, Jordan could be a regional center of Jordanian-Middle Eastern expertise on refugees (on a par with the Oxford Refugee Studies Cener).[xlii] Water being a major challenge for the country, it can be or may already be also a major center of expertise in this domain – expertise that voluntary associations can contribute to but also benefit from. As Jordan refocuses again more on 'development', its voluntary associations may also want to strengthen their relationships with, e.g. chambers of commerce, farmer associations, tourism development bodies, etc. Some of this is already happening through the programming on 'livelihoods'. Should this be done with a stronger strategic intention?

- Collectively address the question of financial health: More and better quality funding from international donors may provide some respite in the short- to medium-term. An idea being talked about is to create a 'Jordan Aid Fund', along the lines of the Syria Aid Fund, particularly oriented towards Jordanian voluntary associations. Such a fund would be helpful, certainly given the closure of the Jordan Humanitarian Fund a few years ago. Efforts can also be made to access alternative sources of international funding, such as foundations. However, INGOs, UN agencies, and members of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement are all approaching these as well. It is unlikely to be an option for the majority of Jordanian voluntary associations – it might at best be an option for a national grant-making and capacity-supporting entity, along the lines of the Manusher Jono Foundation (Bangladesh) mentioned above. But such does not yet exist, and the space may also already be taken by one or more of the Royal NGOs?[xliii]

  Relevant as they are, neither of these approaches reduces the dependency on international funding. The time to focus on that is while there is still some such funding available, not when it drastically reduces. A recent review of the challenges to Rwandan NGOs in a rapidly changing context has a clear message: "*For NGOs to remain significant actors in this transformative journey, they must redefine their roles, strengthen their internal capacities, embrace innovation, and seek financial and ideological self-reliance. Simply continuing business as usual is no longer sufficient; relevance, impact, and sustainability must become the defining characteristics of civil society Organizations. (…) the choice is stark: change and thrive, or remain stagnant and disappear.*"[xliv]

  One Jordanian voluntary organization has already progressed on this: it receives some income from shares it has in a finance institution, and is actively exploring generating more via consultancy services. The very active West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI, based in Ghana) has pointed out that turning a grant-based voluntary association into a social enterprise requires a major mindset shift and is a very different business model. Many more non-governmental LNA in countries where ODA cuts have bitten harder are now urgently exploring this, together. WACSI also organizes webinars for and with its members on, e.g. crowdfunding and having a strategy and policy to build up reserves and how they can be invested. Ghana has

also set up a Philanthropy Forum and has started organizing philanthropy conferences.[xlv] There are undoubtedly many other examples.

There is one notable exception, however: Not all important work can be financed from a social enterprise model. That applies e.g., to human rights, protection, social cohesion, local conflict resolution, etc. For this important work, grant funding will remain critically important.

- Strategic learning: Many over the past decade and more have learned about different aspects of humanitarian and refugee response. A refocusing on development will require new knowledge and new skills.

  - For example, humanitarian responses rely heavily on needs assessments. Development work is more grounded in the analysis of problems and the systemic factors that create and maintain the problem. That is a different skill.

  - Secondly, if voluntary organizations want to engage with the development policies of their government, the roles international actors assume and the conditions they impose, they need to learn e.g. to understand national accounts and review public expenditure choices; learn about tax policies in the country and whether and how they contribute to tax justice; learn about trade policies and trade agreements and how they affect Jordan; public debt, international debt markets and negotiations to reduce or restructure public debt; the economics of renewable energy; the positive and negative impacts of AI, on productivity, on jobs, on education, on the ability to think critically and independently etc. None of this is impossible: Years ago already, a Puntland (north Somalia) NGO made an effective evidence-based argument to the local government to allocate a larger part of the public budget to health and education; national chapters of the Action Aid Alliance have brought up similar issues e.g. in Nigeria and Ghana; Vietnamese NGO staff who in the early 90s knew nothing about international development cooperation, many years later were part of their government's delegation negotiating Vietnam's accession to the World Trade Organization; and the Global Alliance for Tax Justice is a global southern-led coalition in the global tax justice movement.[xlvi]

  - There are opportunities for Jordanian voluntary associations to access some of the finance for development. For most of them, this may require a lot of learning: about how these financial instrument work, how decisions are made by whom and where, and how e.g. blended finance operates in practice. This goes beyond new knowledge. It requires a different mindset and way of operating, not just of individuals but of the organization.

- A Jordanian resource center on organizational and network development? Instead of the many fragmented 'capacity-strengthening' activities, why not one or a few centers that can offer this across the voluntary sector, in Jordan and perhaps in future, also more regionally? Such centers exist in several European countries, as independent entities e.g. RedR in the UK, Bioforce in France, or within universities. With the right staff and associates, such center can offer training, but also mentorship and tailored accompaniment, conduct perhaps some topical review or research. It can be connected with others in the region and beyond. Alternatively, a regional center exists or is created elsewhere in the region, but also serves Jordanian organizations.

An Example: New Financing Approaches also for Refugee Situations

The Near East Foundation's Refugee Impact Bond was launched in Jordan in October 2021. It funds a micro-enterprise creation program delivered by Near East Foundation (NEF) to help vulnerable Jordanians and Syrian refugees recover their livelihoods and build their resilience.

The US International Development Finance Corporation, through its Portfolio for Impact and Innovation (PI2) Initiative, and Ferd provided a four-year results-based upfront investment to fund a vocational, entrepreneurship and resilience-building project. This supports at least 4,380 refugee and host population trainees and provides 3,400 business start-up grants in Jordan. Communities with large refugee populations are selected based on higher than national average rates of food insecurity, poverty, indebtedness, and unemployment. Women and youth, who are disproportionately impacted by crises, take priority.

These outcomes are assessed by the DIB's independent evaluator, Mathematica. Maximum success will generate a 5.1% annualized return for investors. NEF is also incentivized through outcome payments tied to the level of success achieved.

The impact bond approach addresses three key issues affecting livelihood programs in humanitarian settings. It offers a multi-year funding commitment, which frees the program from annual grant cycles. It enables the Delivery Partner to innovate and adapt delivery to a changing context when needed. Finally, donor risk is reduced by tying payments to the results of a rigorous and independent evaluation of outcomes.

Source: https://neareast.org/near-east-foundations-13-5m-development-impact-bond-exceeds-expectations/

Doing all this as individual organizations is not cost-effective, and most do not have the resources to invest in it anyway. Peer-learning, where there is already some experience to share, and a collective approach to acquiring new knowledge and new skills, seems a better way to go. Not all voluntary organizations need to learn everything: Groups of them can specialize in specific topics. They will be at the forefront in cross-sectoral interactions, including on draft legislation and policy development, but can also be a source of peer-learning for other voluntary associations.[xlvii]

Questions to Jordanian voluntary associations

- ✓ What are you doing in this regard? Is it going fast enough?
- ✓ How will you, or are you, dealing with a situation in which a number of voluntary organizations do not have an interest in preparing for the future?

International donors, and some international organizations in Jordan, can play a very supportive role here by ensuring that the voluntary sector has the resources to further strengthen and evolve its internal collaboration, cross-sectoral networking and learning. They can also connect them to external sources of learning and, if needed, help them access these.

Questions to international actors in Jordan:

- ✓ What are you doing to help Jordanian voluntary organizations prepare for a future that will also require greater financial self-reliance? Are you doing enough?
- ✓ Do you have relevant expertise in-house – are you combining your respective expertise, time, and budgets to provide this type of support?

2. Demonstrating Value To Government and Other Citizens and Residents

Non-governmental LNA in Jordan must make the case that they provide value for the people residing in the country, and for the government and the public sector. If not already done so, they may want to strengthen that case. Here are some ideas:

- Show responsibility for service with integrity. The abovementioned ideas of a voluntary sector itself articulating its standards of integrity and accountability send a positive signal, and contribute to its credibility with the wider public.

- Make the case concretely: Document how, for example, in three governorates of the country, the services provided by voluntary associations. Make it clear how they complement those provided by the public sector, or are even services that should be run by the public sector. Show, specifically, how administrative delays and complications affect the cost-effectiveness of the work. Then show what would happen to those services if reductions in funding led to a (further) downsizing of the association, or even is closure. What will be the consequences if the government cannot then take over these services? Given that local CBOs, reportedly, work fairly well with local authorities, these can contribute to the assessment, so that it cannot be portrayed as 'self-serving'. Take this not just to the Ministries of Social Development and of Planning and International Cooperation, but also to the Ministry of Finance and/or, as has already been done, to the Ministry for Entrepreneurship and Digitalization. Demonstrating financial value-for-money, Jordanian voluntary associations are also in a better position not ask for some (additional) enabling conditions, e.g., making donations to them tax-deductible.

- Be propositional and demonstrate intellectual capital: Complaints can be valid. Critique can be necessary. But at the same time offering thoughtful proposals for how something can be done differently, and better, is always a stronger – and more easily accepted- position. Voluntary associations have a better chance of being invited and accepted at the table of advisors, legislators, and decision-makers when they show they have expertise on the topic under discussion. And the skill to advance certain perspectives and proposals, ideally in a non-confrontational manner.

- Receiving funding from or through the GoJ? Reportedly, the GoJ, perhaps via certain line ministries, already provides some small annual grant to several CBOs. As development funding often flows more to governments (and the private sector) than humanitarian aid, the question of whether Jordanian voluntary associations should (also) accept and rely on some funding from their government, or not, is on the horizon. The interviews suggest that some might be open to it or see it as inevitable, while others argue that this would compromise their autonomy. The reality might be that a very few can say 'no thank you', while others need it as extra income, or simply because they provide services on behalf of the GoJ.

Questions to Jordanian voluntary associations

- What are you doing in this regard? Are you doing it well and fast enough?
- How will you, or are you, dealing with a situation in which several voluntary organizations does not have an interest in clarifying and communicating collective standards of integrity, quality and accountability?
- The interviews suggest that doubts about the voluntary sector in Jordan may exist not only in the executive branch of government, but also in Parliament. Are the current approaches to parliament and MPs enough? What must be learned from them, can their potential influence be strengthened
- Under what conditions can Jordanian voluntary associations accept funding from or via the GoJ, and how can they protect their autonomy where needed?

e. Demand Better Support from International Actors

Frustration among non-governmental LNA with the slow pace of change in Jordan (Looking Back) is understandable. So too, the view that 'localization' is a top-down, donor- or international agency imposed agenda. However, if that is the feeling after five years of regular localization discussions in the country, it is time for Jordanian voluntary organizations to take the initiative. Here some practical ideas:

- Hold up to international agencies the commitments made and guidance agreed e.g.
  - Find out who has signed up to the Grand Bargain, and who is involved in its ongoing work on localization and intermediaries.[xlviii] Also find out which INGOs have signed up to e.g. the Charter4Change and the Pledge for Change (weblinks) and connect with the global movement of Shift the Power and the RINGO Project (Reimagining INGOs).[xlix]
  - Use all the available inter-agency guidance, typically developed with back-donors and INGOs involvement, to demand it is practiced.
  - Find out the position of donors on important issues, such as the provision of ICR also to LNA and use it to strengthen your argument for this.[l] The importance for some flexible money, for any and all organizations, not just for LNA, has been repeatedly documented and argued, also by international organizations.[li] Use that also to confidently make your case to those who continue to question it.

- Connect with the global discussions and developments in other countries
  - Jordanian voluntary associations are hardly or not at all present in, and from the rapid retrospective review, do not seem very familiar with the ongoing policy discussions and with relevant initiatives and developments in other countries. These are missed opportunities to find inspiration and develop further strong arguments. This can partially be addressed easily: For example, a localization working group in Myanmar regularly invites guest speakers from elsewhere around the corner, to bring them such information and insights. Being present in international meetings provides the additional opportunity to develop relationships with people in the HQs of back-donors, UN agencies and INGOs, some of whom are able and willing to engage their country-based colleagues if they appear to approach LNA with a negative attitude. Typically, it are the international 'partners' of non-governmental LNA who open that door and sponsor their travel. Have they done so for voluntary associations in Jordan?

- Articulate your understanding of localization, why it is strategically important and what its strategic objective must be, and what you practically expect from international agencies. This is what voluntary associations in Colombia have started doing. Their new platform, the National Humanitarian Action Platform (PAHNAL in Spanish acronym) is the institutional evolution of a Localization Working Group in the country.[lii] It now has 331 members. Their objective is very clear: transform '*localization from a theoretical discourse into a daily practice of power transfer*.'

- Take the lead on assessments: NGOs in West and Central Africa have created and circulated their own survey-based assessments of the state of localization in various countries. They call it 'Barometer'.[liii] Not surprisingly, they sometimes get many responses from local and national voluntary associations, but only a few from international donors, UN agencies, and INGOs. When they come to international events, they do criticize the fact that they need to provide all sorts of information to international actors, yet the same international actors appear unwilling to provide information in return. In Myanmar, voluntary associations (with support from people at the University of Melbourne) developed their own Local Perceptions on Partner Index. The first step is to enable them to express how they experience the quality of the partnerships with international agencies. This subsequently becomes the basis for discussion with these international agencies. Following a review of existing, similar partnership review

examples, these Myanmar CSOs came up with 12 questions. The quantitative scores are complemented with qualitative explanations and examples. It was tested in March 2026 with a few participating organizations. It will be revised and then expanded to more agencies.

The above-mentioned proactive articulation by Jordanian voluntary associations of how they exercise their responsibility, strive for quality, and want to be accountable, in the first place to their fellow citizens and national authorities, is another way of signaling that they are credible agencies and must be treated as such.

Very few Jordanian voluntary associations can do this alone. Nor should they. Doing this collectively is not only more practical, but also demonstrates that they can act as a 'sector'.

Questions for Jordanian voluntary organizations

- What are you already doing in this regard? What can you do more, better, faster?
- What support do you need from international agencies to do this more effectively?

V. A JOINT NGO FORUM?

One of the questions in the air at the moment is whether it would be desirable to have one NGO forum, with international and Jordanian actors together, instead of the separate ones that exist now. There are a few such examples, e.g., the Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies in Sri Lanka many years ago, the still existing Somalia NGO Consortium, and the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development.

Arguments in favour are that it can help to develop relationships and appreciation of each other and that each brings something valuable to the table. It can strengthen a collective 'NGO' voice towards back-donors and UN agencies and, where appropriate, towards the GoJ. It can become a showcase for co-leadership and even Jordanian leadership.

Arguments against are that, sometimes INGOs will be better placed to publicly speak up about a sensitive issue, sometimes Jordanian agencies will be better placed. A joint forum may lead to greater silence. Also, while both have shared interests as NGOs/voluntary associations, they also have divergent interests and different futures. The primary objective of Jordanian voluntary organizations should be to strengthen their collective capabilities, and their legitimacy and value in the eyes of those residing in Jordan, and its national authorities (government and parliament). The reality that international agencies have 'their' partners, and demand much time and attention from them, works against this. More practically, a joint forum can still be dominated by (rapidly rotating) foreigners, communicating in English, with their own jargon and external references.

Question: What is your view on this? Do not just express your preference: support it with arguments that weigh the pros and cons.

VI. A LOCALIZATION TASK TEAM?

The future of the Localization Task Team (LTT) is actively being discussed. Most questions and conversations turn around its leadership set-up, location, and membership:

- Leadership: Should there be four co-chairs (one from the UN family, one from INGOs via JIF, one from Jordanian agencies via JONAF, and a donor) or does that complicate leadership? Should it not be led by (one or more) Jordanian actors? Should it be co-led or led by the Government? Would that work if the GoJ shows little active interest in seeing international aid more strongly and intentionally support and reinforce Jordan's capabilities? If the UN is still in a co-leadership role, which UN agency should it be?

- Location: For the past few years, it has been located under the Jordan Strategic Humanitarian Committee (JoSH). Should there be a significant further reduction in refugees, perhaps JoSH may not continue in the future? From a future-oriented perspective, would it be better to connect it with the office of the UN Resident Coordinator and the UN Country Team? Would that have drawbacks, given the specific ways of functioning of the UN and how it relates and must relate to member states? Might it not get the benefits it could expect from this high-level if the UN is in the midst of difficult reform discussions? Should it operate under the umbrella of the government? Where then? And is there a risk that Jordan's voluntary organizations would be sidelined?

- Membership: Its current location in the 'humanitarian architecture' means that the LTT does not connect with the development agencies (or the development side of an agency).

However, the 'Looking Back' review draws attention to more fundamental challenges, notably:

- Knowledge gap: Lack of connection with and knowledge about the ongoing global discussions on localization, the relevant interagency guidance available, and interesting approaches and initiatives in other countries.

- Stuckness: On the 'indicators' after the not-that-successful effort to get a fairly good picture of the state-of-localization in Jordan with surveys (the Baseline Report of 2023). A failure to capture, if only in a somewhat ad hoc manner, the positive practices that are there. Not doing anything with the (very overlapping) recommendations that have already been made.

- Very limited effective influence (or certainly no testimony or other 'evidence' of such) on the behaviors of the agencies in Jordan. Wider momentum cannot be generated with four meetings a year, two of which are of the co-chairs only.

The absence of one or more human resources to dedicate time to the LTT is a real constraint, but no full reason why these more fundamental questions are not already center-stage. It would make no sense to reorganize the leadership of the LTT, its membership, and its location on the agencies' map, to then continue with the same fundamental challenges.

The primary question needs to approach the future from a different angle: *What set-up and approaches can more effectively advance localization in Jordan?*

Not all of this can or has to come from a 'task force', as this think-piece document shows:

- One important impetus must come from one or more coalitions of Jordanian voluntary agencies. They need to do further work among themselves first. Perhaps not all are interested, or able to devote attention and energy to this. Maybe an additional source of learning and strength can come from more active interaction, exchange and possibly joint work, with engaged voluntary associations in the region, in Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq?

- The many other technical-thematic working groups and coordination meetings, discussing a common or at least aligned approach, can and must systematically ask: How does this (also) strengthen the capabilities of individual Jordanian (or refugee-led) actors, and how does it strengthen their collaborative capabilities?

- Another important impetus must come from the back-donors. This paper points to many bigger but also smaller steps that are already taken here and there, but can be taken more systematically, by more back-donors. Some of these must be done in close coordination and alignment, e.g. due diligence passporting, harmonizing reporting requirements, eco-system funding; supporting LNA networks and coalitions, supporting LNA learning on future-relevant topics etc.

- Back-donors could also provide value to voluntary associations in Jordan by supporting the creation or development of a resource center for their organizational and collaborative development. Or if such already exists in the region, to enable Jordanian agencies to more intensively connect with it. There is always the question of sustainable finance: It might usefully be located within a university department, and gain income from fee-paying services, to demand also in the wider region. It might even have service offerings of interest to the private sector. There would also be a saving by no longer paying for a multitude of ad hoc and often not very impactful 'capacity-strengthening' initiatives

- When Jordan shifts from a predominantly humanitarian-refugee orientation to development, its voluntary sector but also many in its public sector, may need to go on a steep learning curve about different ways of working and of financing. Where does that knowledge already sit and how can it be made more accessible to a wider range of interested stakeholders? How can back-donors help prepare for this transition?

- The rapidly deteriorating state-of-the-world is way beyond the ability of UN agencies, INGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to slow this down, let alone be a counter-force. Efforts to adapt (e.g. to global warming impacts) and to alleviate the resulting suffering are relevant. But Western countries are no longer able or willing to be the primary financiers of a global safety net. More importantly, combined effort is required to turn around the destructive paths certain political and economic power-holders have set us and our planet upon. In this context, international agencies like the UN and especially INGOs must fundamentally rethink their role. If they see themselves as part of a wider global movement for a livable future, then the question is not how LNA can help them implement 'their' programs, but how they can be together with LNA around the world, as supporters, enablers, partners, and yes, also as followers.

The 'Looking Back' review points out that ambitious surveys nor evidence-based reports with thoughtful recommendations by themselves have little influence, certainly not beyond the agency that commissioned it. Reports can clarify choices and provide information and insights useful to develop arguments. But that has to be brought alive in -often sustained- engagement with people of influence in different agencies. That means: going out, listening to, speaking with, arguing with people, but also appreciating what they are doing well and documenting it, spreading awareness and insights in good practices more widely and showing that they can work, or under which conditions they can be made to work.

So it seems that advancing localization in Jordan better and deeper will require, beyond the actions already mentioned

- A few people with the knowledge (also of the global discussions and wider experiences), time and relational skill to engage at least key players in the range of agencies (Jordanian and international) in a supporting and encouraging manner. They have conversations to identify, appreciate, document and help share more widely positive practices and what enabled them; they can also refer to inter-agency- and sometimes internal agency commitments, policies and guidelines. They reflect together with the agency staff how constraints and obstacles can be mitigated or overcome. They also remain in touch with global discussions and developments, and with those in the region, and find ways to more directly connect other Jordanians to these. This requires substantial time investment. A full-time or four days/week for perhaps two people (one Jordanian, one international?) may be required, at least in the first year.

- Periodically, not every six months but perhaps every 2.5 to 3 months, a group of interested stakeholders is brought together to hear what is coming out of these interactions, and to discuss and decide where more focused engagement can usefully be concentrated, perhaps on one or a few key agencies, or on a key issue that stands in the way of localization. Having a large list of 'members', most of whom would not show up, may not be the right approach. More effective

can be the regular meeting of some 20-25 'localization champions' from the spectrum of agencies, who are willing to promote this further in their own agency, and in the inter-agency interactions they are part of. Being future-focused, this would include people from the 'development' sector. Participation of selected government officials would be relevant.

- Those meetings need a convenor with enough convening power across the range of actors who, ideally, can also provide the modest administrative-logistical support for these meetings. Who would be well placed to play that role?

Question: Given that effective influencing must be the key objective, what are your thoughts on these ideas? Do you see other ways that can complement this, or that are likely to be more effective?

ANNEX 1: INTERVIEWS

BILATERAL DONORS: Spain (1); Netherlands (2); France (1); Switzerland (1); UK (1); European Union (1)

POOLED FUNDS: European Regional Development and Protection Programme RDPP (1)

UN AGENCIES: UNDP (1); UN WOMEN (1); UNHCR (1)

Jordanian CSOs: Partners for Good (1); Tamkeen (1); Jordan National Forum (1); Durrat Almanal for Development and Training (1); independent expert (1)

INGOs : CARE (2); Oxfam (2)

Jordan INGO Forum (2)

International Council of Voluntary Agencies ICVA: 1

Total: 19 interviews with 23 people, from 18 agencies/interagency networks plus one independent expert.

ANNEX 2: UNDERSTANDING LOCALIZATION – IN BRIEF

Reportedly, there are still different understandings and misunderstandings in Jordan about 'localization'. After a decade of extensive and ongoing conversations about localization at the policy level, and volumes of research and interagency guidance, this is surprising. Here is a summary.

'Localization' as a policy commitment did not originate at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit with its Grand Bargain outcome document. The 1994 Code of Conduct for the Red Cross and Red Crescent and NGOs in Disaster Relief already committed international agencies to building on local capacities. In 2006, a major evaluation was published of the (overall quite negative) impacts of the huge international response to the Indian Ocean tsunami. The 2007 Principles of Partnership remain largely relevant and applicable.

- 'Localization' as a policy commitment is not limited to or specific for the humanitarian sector. 'Local capacities for peace' have been put central in the peacebuilding field since the mid-90s, and the series of High -Level Panel Meetings on Aid Effectiveness, in the early 2000s, strongly emphasized the same idea under the label of 'national ownership'.

- The conversation about 'localization' in the humanitarian sector has undergone some significant evolution over the past 10 years. It was initially (roughly 2016-2020) very much framed, at least by international agencies, as a technical issue, with a focus on funding. Funding should be direct or through no more than one intermediary. Attention is paid not only to the quantity of funding but also to its quality (all real costs covered, a flexible management fee, multi-year, light earmarking, etc.). The emphasis was on the economy of the aid sector.
- Around 2020, the spotlight turned to the political economy of the international aid sector, notably the structural inequality between international and national-local actors, and the prejudice and privilege associated with it. Equitable partnerships were now demanded and promised. This should manifest in practices such as co-creation, joint decision-making, sharing risks and benefits, capacity-sharing, mutual accountability, etc. Localization became a matter also of justice, particularly for a sector that claims to act out of 'solidarity'.
- Still, for the past decade, localization has mostly been understood, certainly by international actors, as giving LNA their 'rightful place' within the international aid system – on condition they could meet that international system's terms and requirements. Today, the demand is for a fundamental transformation of that international system so that it supports and reinforces the LNAs system(s) in a given context, rather than subordinating, weakening, and even replacing them. Localization today has become understood to be a decolonized development strategy. In the words of a CSO leader from Niger: "*Localization is not about African charity; it is about African agency. It is the difference between aid that visits and aid that belongs.*"[liv]
- The cumulative ODA cuts by Western donors, especially in 2024-2025, and with more cuts likely, mean that the international aid system is now at a clear crossroads: Some will seek to preserve its fundamental structure while trying to increase 'cost-effectiveness'. In this frame of mind, LNAs become attractive again as 'cheap labor'. Others insist that this is the moment for the predominantly Western international aid to radically re-imagine and transform itself, so that its strategic goal is to reinforce an 'eco-system' of local and national actors (which includes the target groups of intended beneficiaries).

- 'Localization', also in this transformative perspective, is not an agenda against international agencies. But it reminds us that 'localization' only becomes an issue after there has been intense 'internationalization'. It is a call to 'de-internationalize' the decision-making in a given context. National 'leadership' does not need to be *restored* in places where international actors are not or are only modestly present. Such internationalization may have been justified and value-adding in the shorter term, but generally no longer does so in the medium- to longer term. Even if, initially, international actors had to virtually take over when the collective of LNAs was indeed overwhelmed, it cannot be that this continues to be the structural situation in what today are mostly protracted and recurrent crises. At best, that is a grand failure of 'capacity-development support' (and hence bad use of taxpayers' money), in the worst case, it shows an unwillingness to share and eventually shift the power of decision-making.

- When international agencies speak about the goal of 'localization', this is often framed as being able to 'hand over'. This may put the bar too high: A more achievable milestone would be clearly visible evolutions in roles and responsibilities, with LNA taking over what was previously done or led by international agencies. International agencies can still add value, but that value should change and evolve as local and national actors rebound to their normal role of 'leadership'. The 'hand over' aim also does not always fit with the realities of 'hand over', which are often more driven by a drop in funding for international agencies than the result of an intention-driven process. Infrastructures and services are then hastily 'handed over' to LNAs who may not have the resources and expertise to take them over.

- Money is the primary source of decision-making power for international actors. If they do not offer money, they have far less leverage over national and local actors. International actors can also exercise legitimate influence for other reasons than money, for example, their comparative global experience (which is not automatically fit-for-context) and/or their inter-governmentally recognized mandates (especially for the UN and the ICRC; non-governmental organizations only have self-ascribed missions, not 'mandates'), their thematic expertise, and their comparative experience. This, too, can add value in certain contexts and justify their presence and certain roles.

- There tends to be some ambiguity about which counts as a 'local/national actor': that ambiguity exists only at the margins.
  - First and foremost, it is the social groups engaging in collective action and organizations and institutions (governmental and non-governmental) that have originated in the country, are led by people rooted in the country, and whose primary focus is on people residing in that country. LNA is not limited to non-governmental, NGO, or CSO-type organizations. It is not another frame for 'civil society strengthening'. National and local governmental authorities are important LNAs.
  - Local or national organizations that are part of a global network qualify if they have a long-standing, *autonomous* history in the country.
  - An international organization staffed with nationals, or subsequently registered as a 'national entity', will not be considered a 'local/national' one by those who have developed or joined a collective action entirely from within the society.
  - Diaspora organizations tend to be accepted as local/national, although sometimes those who have stayed in the country (particularly throughout crises and hardship) can question their legitimacy.
  - People who reside in a country without having the nationality (such as refugees or guest workers) can be considered local/national, since they are direct stakeholders and take initiatives for their own well-being. Refugee-led organizations for example, can be included under 'LNA.'
- Whether and how much 'internationalization' takes place depends on the national government: It decides what roles it wants to play itself, what space and roles it allows international actors, and what space and roles it allows for non-governmental LNA. Some governments play an active role themselves and tightly control what international and non-governmental actors do (e.g. India, Ethiopia); others encourage a strong international presence to avoid shouldering too much of a burden (e.g. Bangladesh with regard to the Rohingya refugees).
- The other key actor-group that determines the degree and nature of localization in a given context are the institutional 'back-donors': Bilateral donors, multi-lateral donors and lenders, foundations, and, to a much lesser degree, of course, private sector companies through their CSR programming.

Debating *definitions* of 'localization' generally turns into a fruitless exercise. It leads to arguments about the choice of words and commas. And can be an excuse to continue old practices because of the 'absence of an agreed definition'. A solid *description* of the why, what and how is more than good enough to ensure a common understanding. Global work has also clarified what localization-in-practice implies.[lv] Opting for a description rather than a definition should also resolve the 'problem' that there is no straightforward translation of 'localization' into Arabic that would adequately convey its meaning.

ANNEX 3: EXISTING RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to advance localization in Jordan are plentiful. A comparative review of those in the first RDDP study (2022), the Baseline Report (2023), the second RDPP study (2025) and the ARDD report on localization of livelihoods-related work shows much overlap and repetition.[lvi]

The key recommendations are:

To the GoJ

- Create or adjust legal and regulatory environments to recognize and protect the role of civil society actors in addressing humanitarian and development challenges (RDPP 2)
- Reduce barriers to foreign funding and streamline regulations for project approvals (Livelihoods)
- Facilitate access of non-governmental LNA to national coordination and policy spaces, so they can contribute their knowledge of local realities and constructive ideas based on learning from practice (RDPP 2; Livelihoods)
- Partner with non-governmental LNA coalitions and networks to coordinate responses to the refugee crisis and to advance on national development strategies (RDPP2; Livelihoods)
- Incentivise corporate social responsibility practices, also in support of small enterprises (Livelihoods)
- Support better geographical coverage, notably in southern Jordan, and sectoral diversification (e.g. ICT and renewable energy) (Livelihoods)

To donors (and UN)

- Integrate and mainstream the localization objective within the overall way of working, and work on internal barriers to translate this into practice (RDPP 2)
- Simplify procedures and requirements (RDPP 1)
- Provide more and more direct funding to non-governmental LNAs. (RDPP 1; Baseline; RDPP2)
- Find ways of also funding smaller and grassroots non-governmental LNA, instead of mostly the larger ones (RDPP 2)
- Avoid cost-sharing requirements with non-governmental LNA (RDPP 1)
- Provide more quality funding, in general and to non-governmental LNAs: ICR for all, multi-year, more flexibility (Baseline; RDPP 2: Livelihoods)
- Better balance accountability for implementing a project exactly as per the plan, with learning, adaptation and risk tolerance, as sometimes the reality does not follow the plan, or the original plan turns out not good enough in the complexity of a situation (Livelihoods)
- Use also more risk-tolerant funds, to enable innovation and experimentation, without acute fear of failure (Livelihoods)
- Support LNA on innovative financing mechanisms such as social impacts bonds and blended finance, e.g. for livelihoods programs and projects (Livelihoods)
- Where needed, support LNAs to strengthen their financial management, to enable them to obtain more and better quality funding (Baseline)
- Outline long-term sustainability strategies, relying on Jordanian actors (Baseline)
- Increase staff pool with relevant expertise in-country (RDPP 1)
- Build relationships with LNA, as trust emerges from relationships, not from documents (Livelihoods)
- Demand that (international) intermediaries strive for equitable partnerships with LNA subgrantees, passing on the quality of funding they themselves receive, and aiming for co-creation and for joint decision-making. Ensure this is reflected in contextualized partnership agreements. (RDPP 1; Baseline: RDPP 2)
- Move beyond a narrow focus for 'capacity-support' (meeting compliance and project management requirements) (RDPP 1; RDPP 2)

- Resource coalitions and networks as strategic instruments to improve policies and practices, not just as 'coordination platforms' (RDPP 2)

To non-governmental LNA (*some of these were already mentioned in Annex 6 of the 2020 GMI-ARDD report on the state of localization in Jordan)*

- Address internal competition when developing collaborative approaches, networks and coalitions, and ensure inclusion of smaller and grassroots agencies and others in underserved areas of the country (RDPP 2; Livelihoods)
- Articulate a jointly developed understanding and position on what localization means and implies in practical detail, from their perspective. (RDPP 1; RDPP 2)
- Build coalitions and a collective voice to challenge the structural power asymmetries (RDPP1; RDPP 2)
- Develop strategic visions for the role of civil society in addressing the overall humanitarian and development challenges of the country (RDPP 2)
- Redefine 'accountability', in relation to the people they intend to serve and the wider society they are part of (RDPP 2)
- Where needed, improve organizational governance, accountability and transparency (RDPP1)
- Utilise capacity-support on offer to develop organizations and collective strategic visions (RDPP 2)
- Practice a 'Lift-and-Lead' approach to support smaller NGOs and especially grassroots organizations. This cannot be limited to proposal writing but, within a development context, can and must include competencies such as market research, digital marketing, cooperative enterprise, climate-resilient livelihoods etc. And increase their visibility to donors, and in national and international fora and events (Livelihoods)
- Establish effective peer-learning mechanisms and platforms (Livelihoods)

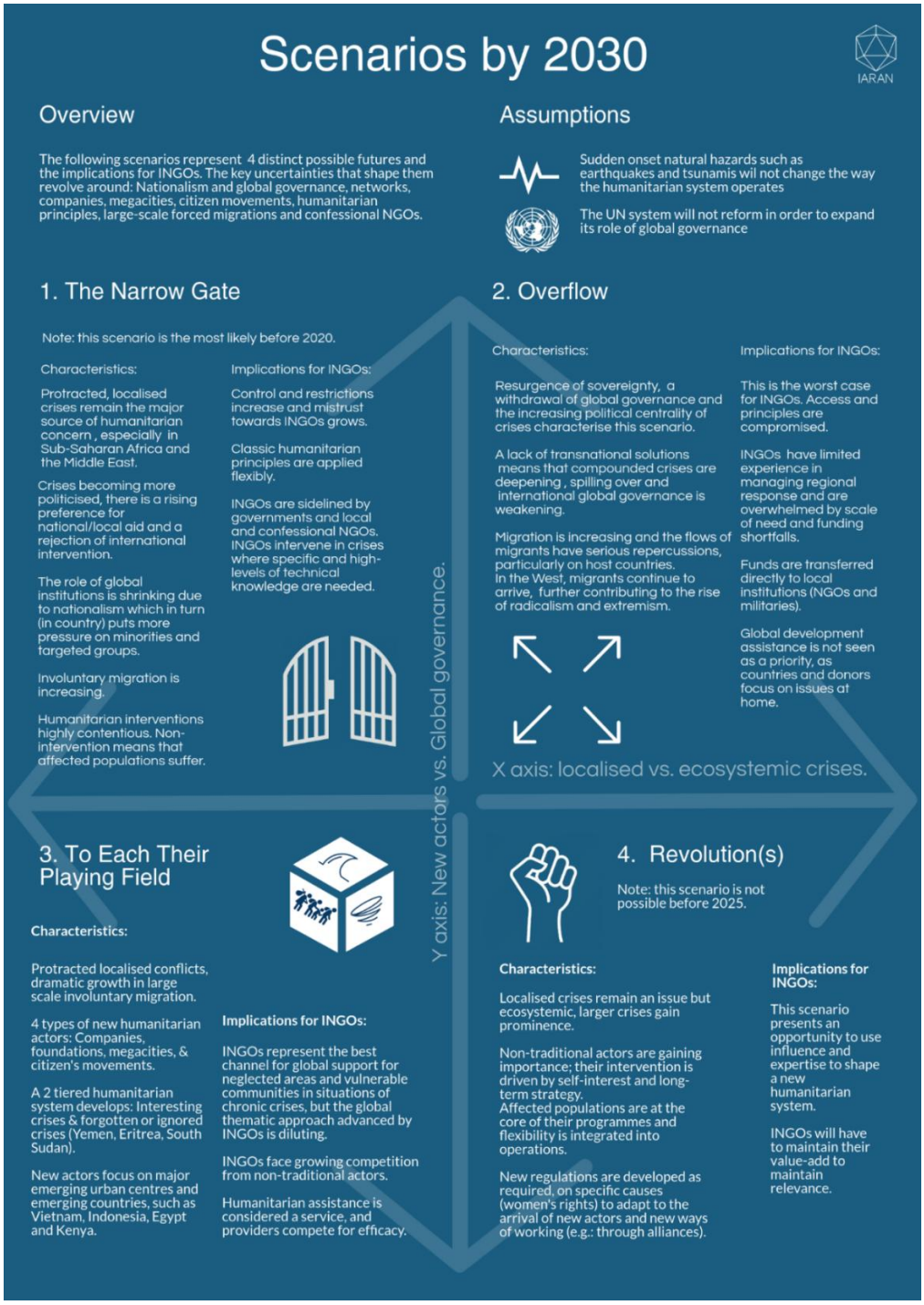
To INGOs (and UN agencies):

- Adopt a strengths-based approach when appreciating Jordanian agencies and, where needed, in supporting their further development. (Baseline)
- Practice equitable partnerships, with power- and risk sharing, and an intentional move towards co-leadership and eventual Jordanian leadership (RDPP 1; Livelihoods)
- Move away from direct implementation and subcontracting and shift to a role of coaching and mentoring (RDPP 1)
- Offer long-term capacity support on developmental and future-oriented competencies for LNAs such as working with revolving funds for SMEs and cooperatives; climate-smart agriculture, green jobs, digital transformation, digital marketing, e-commerce etc. (Livelihoods)
- Enable and support LNA to contribute to regional and global discussions on jobs and livelihoods (Livelihoods)
- Streamline reporting requirements to reduce the administrative burden on LNAs (Livelihoods)

ANNEX 4: FORESIGHTING THE FUTURE OF AID and/or OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

I. Foresight and Forecasting

Foresight is not forecasting. Forecasting is more of an extrapolation of identifiable trends, with an assumption that the broader environment within which the trend takes place will remain relatively stable. Foresight is a methodologically robust approach to identify different possible futures, or archetypes of possible futures. It becomes increasingly relevant when the broader environment is more volatile and turbulent, leading to significant uncertainty about the medium-term future. Medium-term can be 5 years to 15 years – but even shorter in case of a major disruption (like the fast dismantling of USAID in the first months of 2025).



The main purposes are twofold: It invites organizations to consider what possible futures they may be prepared for, and to take steps to try and prepare for more than one or at best two. Secondly, to consider what the organization itself can and must do, to contribute to the most desirable future materializing.

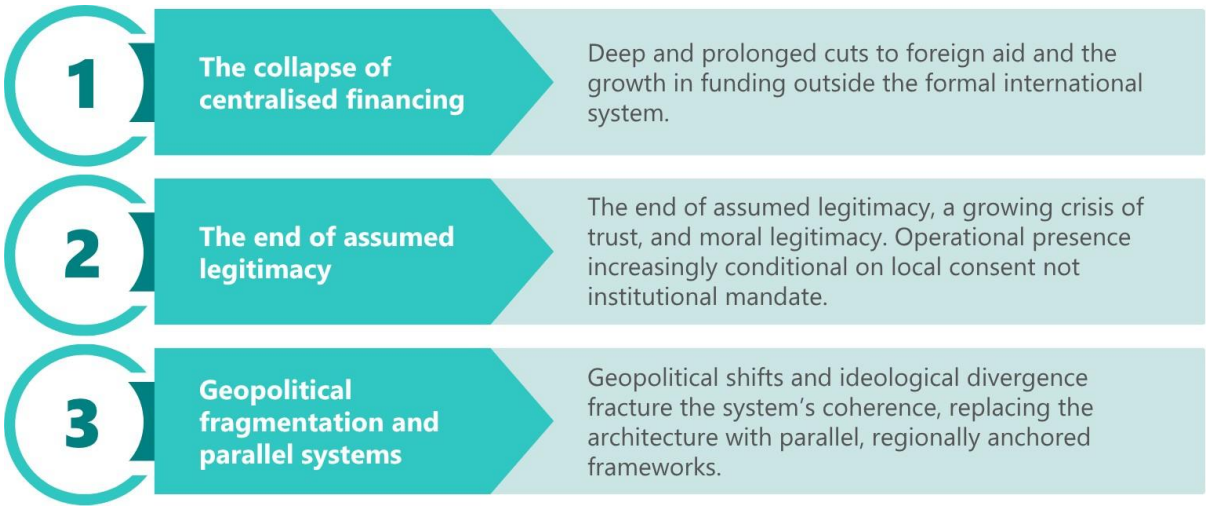
One network contributing to foresighting for the aid sector is IARAN (Interagency Research and Analysis Network). Its 2017 report examined the future of aid by 2030. It identified four possible (archetype) futures or scenarios, visualized in this diagram. The current situation corresponds well to the 'overflow' scenario. Yet, most aid agencies 'did not see it coming'? This shows that foresighting, when well done, is not an idle exercise. [lvii]

II. Recent Visioning and Foresighting Exercises

In recent months, several entities have tried to envisage or foresight the future of humanitarian aid/action, some with more methodological robustness than others.

1. The Grand Bargain ambassadors

One attempt at future visioning, less underpinned by a robust methodology, and without scenario building, was commissioned by the Grand Bargain ambassadors.[lviii] It identifies three possible major threats to the current humanitarian system.



There is recognition that stresses on the system may occur across all three threat areas.

Table 5: Systemic stressors across the three trajectories

Systemic Stressor	Trajectory 1: Collapse of centralised financing	Trajectory 2: End of assumed legitimacy	Trajectory 3: Fragmented multilateralism
Donor dominance weakens	Formal appeals shrink; alternative funding models emerge	Traditional donors lose influence as local funding sources gain traction	Funding becomes bilateral, regional, or ideologically fragmented
Multilateralism in flux	UN-led pooled funding declines; fiscal reliance undermines influence	UN sidelined by regional blocs and bilateral aid	Regional blocs and non-aligned actors develop parallel systems
Power decentralisation	New capital sources (diaspora, philanthropy)	Faith networks, regional bodies step up	Local actors assert governance roles
From assumed access to negotiated consent	Less funding = less leverage	Negotiation becomes more fragmented	Access dependent on trust, not mandates
Rise of informal architecture	Community platforms take on delivery functions	Non-state actors fill institutional gaps	Local networks become primary responders
From mandate to earned legitimacy	Community platforms take on delivery functions	Global mandates challenged by new players	Consent and trust become basis for legitimacy

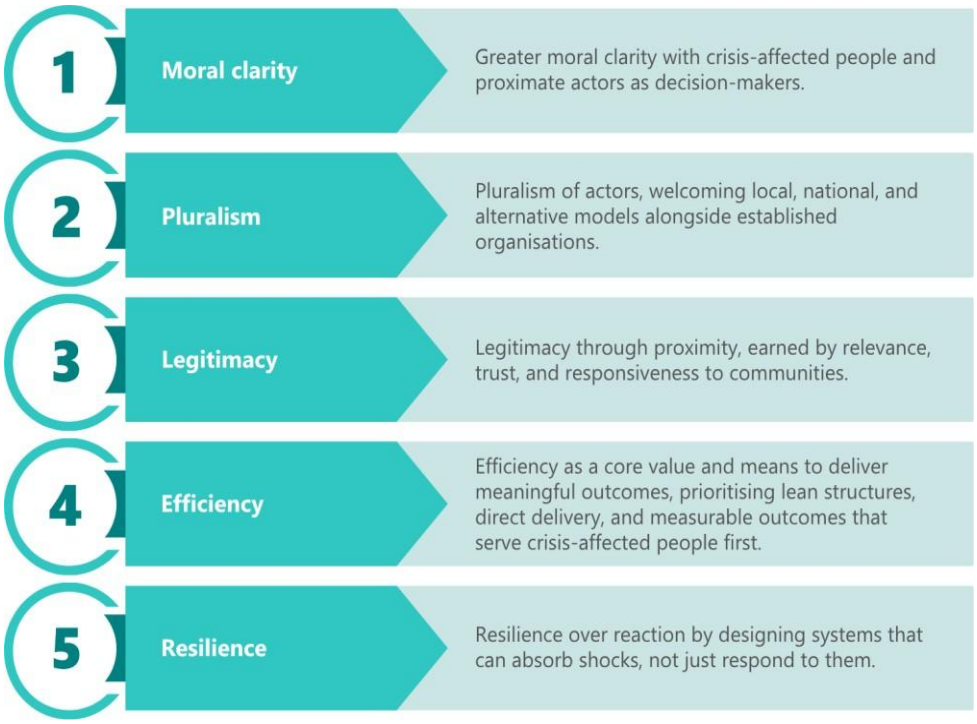
The report acknowledges that the 'humanitarian system' as we have known it, is not fit-for-the-future.

"The humanitarian system was designed for a different era; a world of greater geopolitical stability, linear crises, and steady, discretionary funding. That world no longer exists. Crises today

are overlapping, protracted, and political. Decades of growth in the international humanitarian system have also seen a loss of clarity of purpose. The system's legitimacy is also eroding, among the people it is intended to serve, those working within the system itself, and among wider citizenries and governments. A return to a situation of plentiful humanitarian funding should not be expected. Massively reduced funding will put extreme strain on the system and if a major new system-level crisis occurred tomorrow, it is unlikely that the current system would be able to respond.

Reform efforts have focused on technical adjustments without addressing the underlying political structures or economic incentives, assuming the system's core logic was sound. It is not. The system has become supply-driven, over-complex, slow and bureaucratic and often disconnected from the needs of the people it serves. During this period of structural reckoning, there is an opportunity for a fundamental redesign of purpose, structure, and legitimacy that allows the system to meet the realities of a changing world. The Humanitarian Reset and Grand Bargain commitments, however, are insufficient for addressing the scale of the reform that needs to take place." (p.32)

The report boldly states that fundamental change is needed: "The humanitarian system faces a choice: adapt to the realities of today's crises or risk becoming irrelevant. The question is not whether humanitarianism will continue, but how it will be defined, who will lead it, and whether it will serve the people it exists to support. This vision demands a new architecture that is more plural, more accountable, more demand-driven, more resilient, and more aligned with the realities of today's crises." (p. 33) And that a renewed system must be built on clear, shared principles:



2. <u>German Institutions</u>

Another exercise was conducted by the Leibniz Information Centre for Economics and the German Institute for Development and Sustainability in Bonn.[lix] It differentiates between four possible future scenarios, based on only two variables: The level of commitment of the 'global North' to the development of the 'global South', and the level of coordination between (mostly northern) development actors. This is not very convincing, as each of these variables themselves is influenced by other driving factors, which should be at the center of the analysis and scenario-building.

		Level of cooperation	
		Coordinated	Fragmented
Political commitment of Global North to development of Global South	High commitment	**Option 1:** **Global solidarity 2.0** Reinvigorated multilateralism; renewed donor alignment around SDG acceleration, climate finance, and pandemic preparedness. DAC adapts to a rising Southern voice and legitimacy concerns. Grants and concessional finance increase.	**Option 3:** **Pluralist development cooperation** Commitment to development remains high but cooperation becomes decentralised. South–South, triangular, and regional cooperation expand. DAC donors pursue divergent approaches; hybrid normative frameworks emerge.
	Low commitment (or even against a multilateral consensus)	**Option 2:** **Strategic multilateralism** Multilateral institutions persist but shift toward narrow priorities (climate, health, migration). Development cooperation in support of national partner country priorities is redirected towards global public goods. SDGs fade in importance.	**Option 4:** **Aid retrenchment and nationalist conditionality** ODA becomes inward-looking. Aid is used for donor-centric goals – migration deterrence, strategic alignment, economic return. Multilateralism weakens; the SDG agenda is marginalised. The "New Washington Dissensus" becomes the default norm.

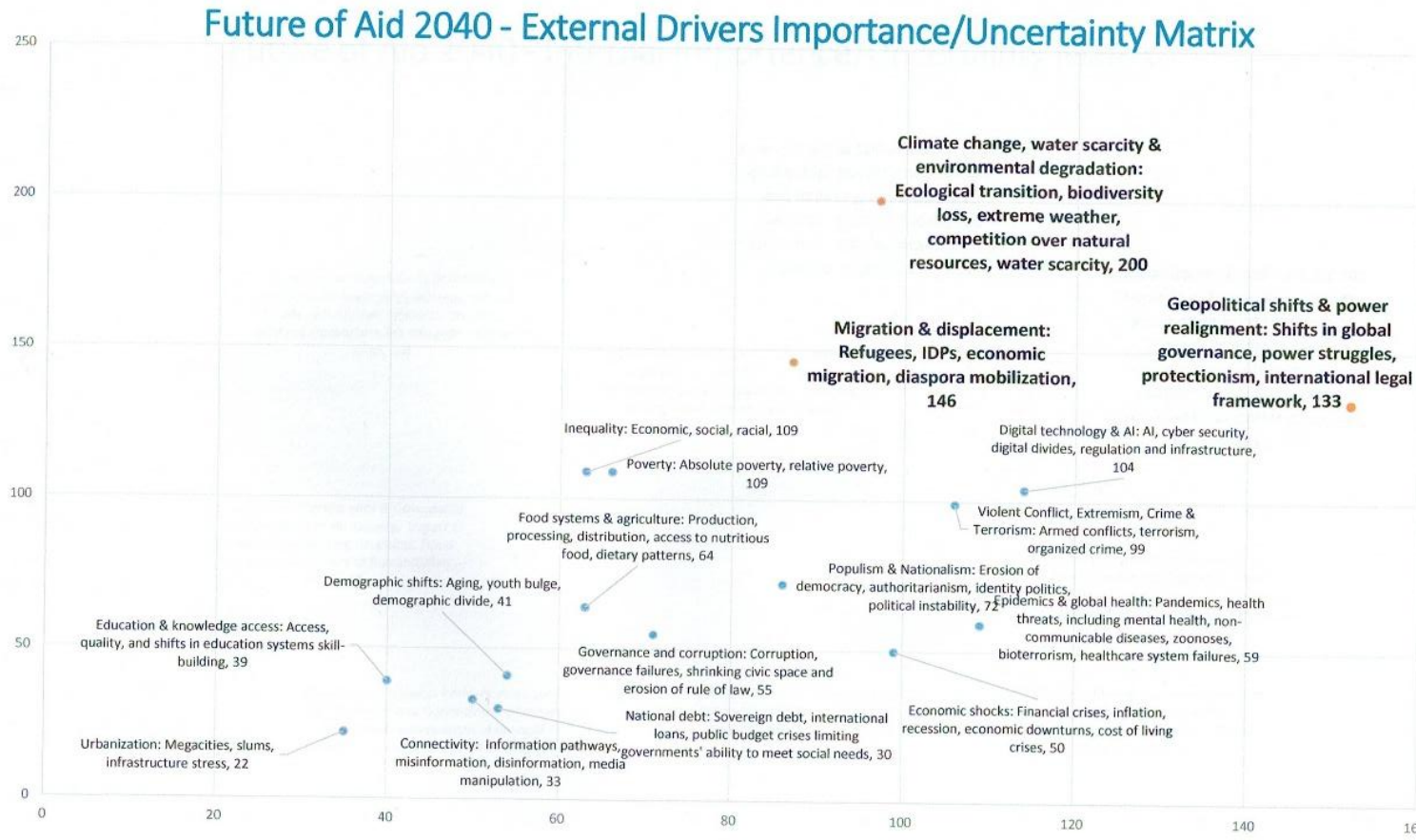
3. IARAN with a new time horizon

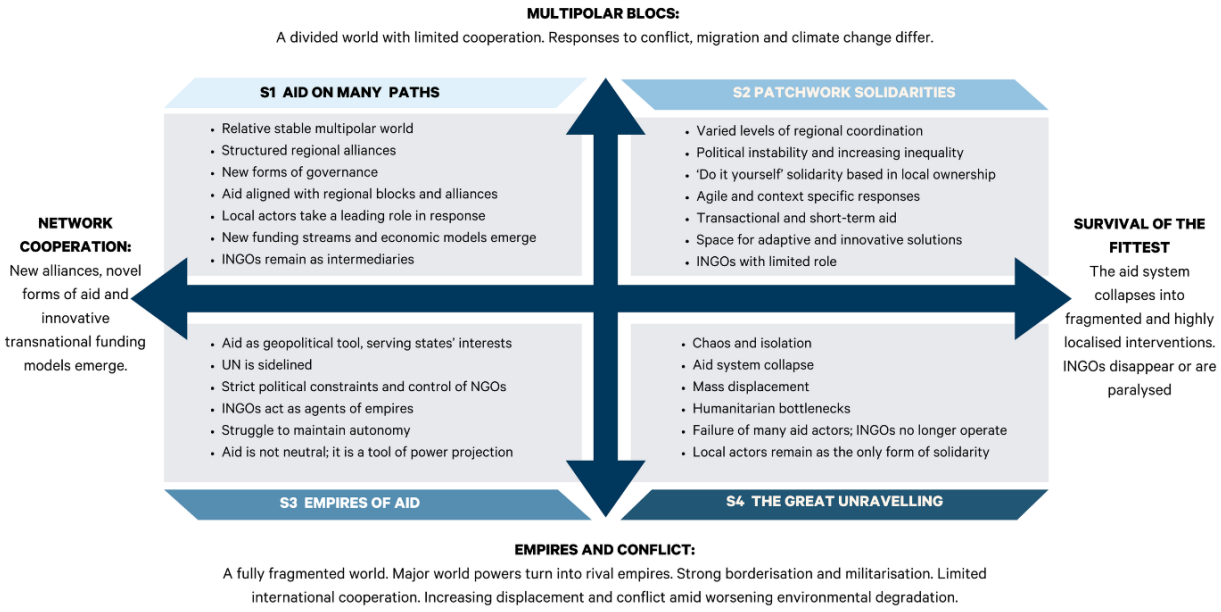
Also recently, IARAN published its renewed analysis of 'the future of aid', now with a time horizon to 2040.[lx]

As the visualization on the next page shows, more effort was invested in identifying key drivers.

What the visualization does not show so clearly, is how several key drivers reinforce each other in a vicious circle.

Based on the analysis, IARAN then describes four possible distinctive futures. These must be taken as archetypes, some combinations may be possible – their main purpose is to sharpen the thinking and the proactive steps that organizations can, and are advised to, take.


Future of Aid 2040 - External Drivers Importance/Uncertainty Matrix
250
200
150
100
50
0
0
20
40
60
80
100
120
140
Climate change, water scarcity & environmental degradation: Ecological transition, biodiversity loss, extreme weather, competition over natural resources, water scarcity, 200
Migration & displacement: Refugees, IDPs, economic migration, diaspora mobilization, 146
Geopolitical shifts & power realignment: Shifts in global governance, power struggles, protectionism, international legal framework, 133
Inequality: Economic, social, racial, 109
Poverty: Absolute poverty, relative poverty, 109
Digital technology & AI: AI, cyber security, digital divides, regulation and infrastructure, 104
Violent Conflict, Extremism, Crime & Terrorism: Armed conflicts, terrorism, organized crime, 99
Food systems & agriculture: Production, processing, distribution, access to nutritious food, dietary patterns, 64
Populism & Nationalism: Erosion of democracy, authoritarianism, identity politics, political instability, 72
Epidemics & global health: Pandemics, health threats, including mental health, non-communicable diseases, zoonoses, bioterrorism, healthcare system failures, 59
Demographic shifts: Aging, youth bulge, demographic divide, 41
Education & knowledge access: Access, quality, and shifts in education systems skill-building, 39
Governance and corruption: Corruption, governance failures, shrinking civic space and erosion of rule of law, 55
Economic shocks: Financial crises, inflation, recession, economic downturns, cost of living crises, 50
National debt: Sovereign debt, international loans, public budget crises limiting governments' ability to meet social needs, 30
Urbanization: Megacities, slums, infrastructure stress, 22
Connectivity: Information pathways, misinformation, disinformation, media manipulation, 33



1. Aid on many paths
In a relatively stable world of structured regional alliances, diverse aid approaches and new forms of governance are accepted and effective. Aid aligns with the culture of the regional block and is built from the context of regional political and economic dynamics (e.g., Chinese, U.S., European, Islamic). Local actors take a leading role in response, while intermediary actors provide financing, technical support and advocacy. New funding streams and economic models emerge, blending religious networks, private foundations, income, and regional alliances.

2. Patchwork solidarities
A world of varied levels of regional coordination, political stability and increasing inequality. Aid is defined by 'do it yourself' solidarity, driven by self help networks, members of the diaspora, local faith based organizations, and episodes of mutual aid. Responses are agile, context-specific, and rooted in local ownership. Aid will largely be transactional and short-term, it enables adaptive and innovative solutions tailored to each crisis. Aid is more improvisational, shaped by shifting alliances rather than global governance. Intermediary actors have limited and inconsistent levels of influence.

3. Empires of aid
Aid becomes a core instrument of geopolitical competition, fully serving state interests. Major powers, like the U.S. and China, use aid as a tool of influence, shaping global narratives and strategic alliances (e.g., Chinese aid in Africa, U.S. aid in Latin America). The UN is sidelined. Local NGOs operate within strict political constraints, some fully aligned with state agendas, while INGOs act as agents of empires and others struggle to maintain even limited autonomy. Aid is not neutral; it is a tool of power projection.

4. The great unravelling
A world of chaos and closed borders, where states prioritise isolation and self-preservation. Aid declines sharply. Massive displacement leads to ungoverned spaces and survival strategies among abandoned populations. Refugees accumulate in the few areas where aid is accessible, creating chronic bottlenecks and humanitarian flashpoints. Many intermediary actors have collapsed as crises are ignored. Only local actors continue to engage directly in support of communities but due to resource constraints, this is largely voluntary.

ANNEX 5. POSSIBLE FUTURES OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN 2046

Civil society stands at a crossroads. Traditional, donor-driven models of international cooperation are under unprecedented pressure, while demands for localization, power shift, and wider systemic transformation are growing louder. This report examines the potential futures of civil society through a strategic foresight-driven approach, combining horizon mapping, scenario analysis, community and stakeholder engagement, and strategic stress testing. The aim is not to predict a single trajectory but to illuminate plausible pathways, identify uncertainties, and equip international civil society organizations (ICSOs), local actors, and donors with tools for action for the next twenty years. Scenario development is not about predicting the future but about preparing organizations for uncertainty.

By exploring contrasting but plausible futures, civil society actors can stress-test strategies, anticipate risks, and identify opportunities that might otherwise be overlooked. For international and local CSOs, but also for stakeholders such as donors, governments, and multilateral institutions, scenarios provide a structured way to reflect on their roles and choices, ensuring they remain proactive rather than reactive in a rapidly changing landscape.

These scenarios are not predictions but tools for exploration. By mapping them, we can better understand the range of possibilities ahead and the strategic implications for different actors navigating this uncertain landscape. Scenario mapping generates four divergent futures:

- **The Desert:** Centralized power and scarce resources leave civil society restricted and survivalist.
- **Scarce Horizon:** Civic space is open with limited funding by major donors, with fragile innovation constrained by donor legacies.
- **Community Capital:** Local actors lead under conditions of financial scarcity, driving legitimacy but lacking scale.
- **Resourced Revolution:** A transformative, decentralized, well-resourced ecosystem redefines civil society as just, resilient, and equitable.

These scenarios highlight the risk of inertia but also the opportunity of bold re-imagination.

Using two key uncertainties: how power is distributed (centralized or decentralized) and how resources are mobilized (scarce or abundant), four distinct but realistic futures for civil society were mapped. Together, these form a simple 2×2 scenario matrix. The matrix shows that the future of international civil society will be shaped by the interaction between who holds power and how resources are accessed and shared. Each scenario presents a different mix of risks and opportunities, meaning international and local civil society organizations will need to respond with strategies tailored to each possible future.

Scenario 1:

The Desert

Civic space shrinks. ICSOs dominate what's left. Local actors are silenced.

- **Power:** Centralised
- **Funding:** Scarce
- **Features:** Restrictive political environments, collapsing donor support, civic repression
- **Role of ICSOs:** Gatekeepers and survivalists
- **Future Outlook:** Civil society is present in form but not in function

Scenario 2:

Scarce Horizon

Communities mobilise, but financial drought limits impact.

- **Power:** Centralised
- **Funding:** Scarce, but civic space is open
- **Features:** Community initiatives emerge, but lack financial independence
- **Role of ICSOs:** Some shift toward support roles, but constrained by old systems
- **Future Outlook:** Fragile innovation; risk of burnout and stagnation

Scenario 3:

Community Capital

Local actors lead, but funding remains uncertain.

- **Power:** Decentralised
- **Funding:** Limited, piecemeal, and unsustainable
- **Features:** Locally driven agendas, participatory models, lack of scale
- **Role of ICSOs:** Facilitators and allies
- **Future Outlook:** Powerful examples of change, but vulnerable to collapse

Scenario 4:

Resourced Revolution

A decolonised, regenerative civil society ecosystem emerges.

- **Power:** Decentralised
- **Funding:** Abundant and diverse
- **Features:** Local philanthropy, South–South flows, horizontal partnerships
- **Role of ICSOs:** Knowledge brokers, co-learners, conveners, ecosystems builders and solidarity actors
- **Future Outlook:** Transformational and resilient

For a fuller elaboration of these possible futures, see the original report.[lxi]

[i] GMI 2020: *Contextual Factors that Influence Localisation or Internationalisation.* https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58256bc615d5db852592fe40/t/5efb56ee4aabcf689a8574b1/1593530094546/GMI+-+Contextual+factors+influencing+localisation.pdf

[ii] E.g. Health Sector Working Group Jordan March 2025: *Lives at Risk. The collapse of refugee health services in Jordan amid funding cuts*; Jordan International Cooperation Forum March 2025: *On the Edge: Urgent Action Needed to Safeguard Jordan's Humanitarian and Development Workforce and Services*

[iii] ARDD 2025: *Localisation in Practice. Strengthening livelihoods and empowering communities in Jordan.*

[iv] Strengthening-Localization-in-Jordan.pdf (English)

[v] Danish Refugee Council. (2017). *Managing Partnerships. With community-based organisations in southern Jordan*; Bruschini-Chaumet, C. et alii. (2019). *The Localisation of Aid in Jordan and Lebanon. Barriers and opportunities for women-led organisations*. ActionAid & London School of Economics

[vi] Meal Framework for Localisation of Humanitarian Action in Jordan | UN Women – Jordan

[vii] Al Nahda Localization Award - Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development

[viii] Alshoubaki, W. & M. Harris 2021: *Jordan's Public Policy Response to COVID-19 Pandemic. Insight and policy analysis*. Public Organisation Review (21): 687-706

[ix] Khassawneh, Alrabadi et alii 2020: *The Role of Non-State Actors in Combatting COVID-19 Spread in Northern Jordan*. Annuals of Medicine and Surgery (60):484-486

[x] Toukan, D. 2023: *Localising Response to Gender-Based Violence. The case of women-led community based organisations in Jordan*. Daedalus 152 (2): 167–178.

[xi] KonTerra & ITAD 2022: *Interagency Humanitarian Evaluation of the COVID-19 Humanitarian Response:* 75

[xii] Press Regional Development and Protection Programme

[xiii] Localisation Baseline Report | Publications | UN Women – Jordan

[xiv] UN Women, JONAF, JIF, RedR Australia 2023: *Localisation Baseline Report* p.7-8

[xv] Note that the first RDPP report directs its recommendations towards donors and UN together. This is incorrect: the UN is an intermediary. In the Livelihoods report, the recommendations more correctly put the UN with INGOs. While generally appropriate when considering their practical relationships with LNA, we must recognise that UN agencies have inter-governmental mandates, which INGOs do not.

[xvi] See e.g. https://www.theallianceformdiplomacyandjustice.org/merging-unfpa-and-un-women-would-undermine-gender-equality-globally

[xvii] ICVA 2016. *Less Paper more Aid. Reporting, partner capacity assessment and audit*.

[xviii] Here we draw also on GMI's work on localisation for the past decade, around the globe and across all layers of the international aid system (donor administrations, UN agencies, some Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, INGOs, non-governmental LNA). We also have a feel for how 'communities' experience 'aid' from our own operational practice in different countries, our involvement in the CDA Inc. 'Listening Project', and from the Ground Truth Solutions reports.

[xix] E.g. GMI 2016: *Most Training does not Develop Organisational Capacity. What we need to do differently*; GMI 2017: *Capacity-development in International Cooperation. Time to get serious*. Equitable Partnership — Global Mentoring Initiative

[xx] Some (well-paid) back-donor staff reportedly still question LNA staff level salaries. This feels unethical. Some also argue that ICR should not be left flexible but be used to support the project. Which contravenes the purpose of ICR.

[xxi] Indeed, one back-donor staff interviewed confirmed that the medium-term objective is to channel more funding to LNA, yet are now harder pressed to keep their costs down. How then are these LNA supposed to become capable recipients of larger grants, if they continue to kept on a financial shoestring (as they generally have been for the past 20-25 years)?

[xxii] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dL-KGWcmh14

[xxiii] E.g. Alliance15 2025: Passporting Procedure. https://www.alliance2015.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Passporting-Procedure-Final-Aug-2025.pdf; Charter for Change 2024: Due Diligence Passporting Initiative. https://charter4change.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/due-diligence-passporting-c4c-initiative-2025-overview.pdf

[xxiv] German Humanitarian Assistance, ICVA, Global Public Policy Institute 2019: The 8+3 Template. A new way of standardizing, simplifying and harmonizing humanitarian reporting 83_template_final.pdf 2019: The 8+3 Template. Essential guidance on using the new harmonized template. 83_template_essential_guidance_final.pdf; see also the Interagency Standing Committee on this: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/harmonise-and-simplify-reporting-requirements

[xxv] See the interagency guidance. For a fuller conversation guide, see GMI 2024: *Donors and Intermediaries. Critical self-awareness and a conversation guide.*

[xxvi] Bangladesh: https://www.manusherjonno.org/ Myanmar: https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2023/08/03/help-tackle-aid-inequality-support-myanmars-local-intermediaries

[xxvii] The quote in the textbox is from Suleiman A. in a LinkedIn post (3) Post | Feed | LinkedIn

[xxviii] https://odi.org/en/about/our-work/donors-in-a-post-aid-world/

[xxix] Ground Truth Solutions 2025: "I ask you to involve us, because without us, it will not succeed." What communities have taught us about effective and accountable humanitarian aid.

https://www.groundtruthsolutions.org/library/what-communities-have-taught-us-about-effective-and-accountable-humanitarian-aid

[xxx] Corbett, J. et alii 2021: Survivor- and Community-Led Crisis Response. Practical experience and learning. ODI Global, Humanitarian Practice Network paper https://odihpn.org/en/publication/survivor-and-community-led-crisis-response-practical-experience-and-learning/

[xxxi] Ground Truth Solutions 2026: Whose Priorities Count? A make or break moment for global solidarity in crises. https://www.groundtruthsolutions.org/library/whose-priorities-count-a-make-or-break-moment-for-global-solidarity-in-crises

[xxxii] This also applies, to a degree, to the so-called 'donor societies' of the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement. Unless mistaken, our understanding is that some years ago the movement made a firm decision to work fully and (almost?) exclusively to support and reinforce the national society in each context. That is an example of intentional, strong, localisation.

[xxxiii] Such mini-lateral coalitions do not necessarily coincide with existing regional set-ups, like the OAS, ASEAN, the African Union etc. There are at times strong internal divisions in these blocs, and many of today and tomorrow's big challenges are driven by global factors, and require broader geographical collaboration.

[xxxiv] Mercy Corps to become Prosper Global | Devex

[xxxv] The International Civil Society Centre also developed practical guidance for futures-thinking or foresighting for civil society organisations: 2024: Toolkit for Tomorrow. Anticipating civil society futures.

[xxxvi] The Start Network, with a large number of INGO and national and local NGO members from around the world, is intentionally evolving away from its London-centric history, to a network of networks.

[xxxvii] Several interviewees expressed deep appreciation for how ARDD has incubated and been nurturing the JONAF network, and encourage the further maturing of JONAF which must become less reliant on and more independent from ARDD.

[xxxviii] See GMI 2024: Multistakeholder Steering-and Governance Groups. Render fundamental expectations of behaviour explicit. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58256bc615d5db852592fe40/t/66e297cbf226820f18b2c041/1726126028096/Multistakeholder%2Bsteering%2Bgroups.pdf

[xxxix] CSOs in Ghana are playing with the idea of (also) organising an Annual Accountability Forum. They are also thinking whether some 'influencers' in the country can help with this.

[xl] See https://zewo.ch/en/

[xli] See e.g. the Blockchain for Good Alliance https://chainforgood.org/

[xlii] Because of its vulnerability to 'natural' disasters, for years already several universities in Bangladesh offered advanced studies on disaster-management. They very rapid influx of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees in 2017-2018 exposed the lack of knowledge about the Refugee Convention and of experience in dealing with a large refugee population. Very quickly, several universities started adding this to their curriculum.

[xliii] One such reportedly receives funding from the IKEA Foundation, which would illustrate the point.

[xliv] Turatsinze, J. 2025: NGOs in Africa – Change, Adapt and Thrive, or Remain and Disappear! Rwanda case study p. 5 1774270895263

[xlv] https://ghanaphilanthropy.org/about-us/

[xlvi] Global Network - Tax Justice Network

[xlvii] Following the Guatemala peace agreements in the late 1990s, security sector reform became a major requirement. Groupings of Guatemalan NGOs learned and specialised in specific components of this e.g. the role of an army for national defense and not for counter-insurgency; training in the military and the police; private security companies; the right of individuals to posses arms, etc. They developed relations with various parliamentary commissions working on these issues, often brought the expertise to the members of these commissions and also ensured that their legislative proposals reflected the concerns and rights of the citizens.

[xlviii] https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain

[xlix] https://www.shiftthepowersummit.org/shiftthepower-manifesto-for-change; https://ringoproject.org/

[l] See the recent overview compiled by Hassanien, N. & Pearson, M. 2026: Indirect Costs for Local and National Partners. Policy mapping. https://media.odi.org/documents/Annex_Overheads.pdf

[li] See e.g. the research by LINC, Peace Direct and the Foundation Center 2018: Facilitating Financial Sustainability. Synthesis report. See also the IASC 2022 Guidance on the Provision of Overheads to Local and National Partners; and the recent ODI Global HPG 2026: How Underfunding Local Organisations' Overheads Undermines Humanitarian Action. https://odi.org/en/publications/how-underfunding-local-organisations-overheads-undermines-humanitarian-action/;

[lii] https://pahnal.org/

[liii] FONGA - Baromètre de la localisation

[liv] Eberechukwu Owuamanam 2025: Decolonising Aid: Why Local Voices Must Shape West Africa's Humanitarian Future https://wacsi.org/decolonising-aid-why-local-voices-must-shape-west-africas-humanitarian-future/

[lv] See https://www.gmentor.org/equitable-partnership, for much detailed GMI guidance but also a posting of much of the international guidance (scroll down to 'Current Interagency Guidance)

[lvi] Note that the first RDPP report directs its recommendations towards donors and UN together. This is incorrect: the UN is an intermediary. In the Livelihoods report, the recommendations more correctly put the UN with INGOs. While generally appropriate when considering their practical relationships with LNA, we must recognise that UN agencies have inter-governmental mandates, which INGOs do not.

[lvii] IARAN 2017: *The Future of Aid: INGOs in 2030*. Future of Aid 2030 — IARAN Other foresighting exercises focused on e.g. *The future of financial assistance. An outlook to 2030* (2019) and the drivers that will shape the future of hunger. Again with an outlook to 2030 (2017).
[lviii] S. Abdullahi, D. Lilly and L. Poole 2025: *Reckoning and Renewal. A future-ready humanitarian system. An independent think piece.*
[lix] S. Klingebield & A. Sumner 2025: *Four Futures for a Global Development Cooperation System in Flux. Policy at the intersection of geopolitics, norm contestation and institutional shift.*
[lx] Future of Aid — IARAN
[lxi]https://icscentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/2026-01-The-Futures-of-Localisation_Scenarios-for-Civil-Society-in-2046.pdf