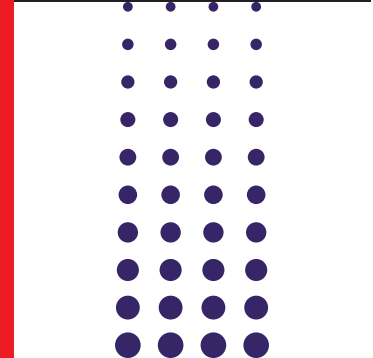
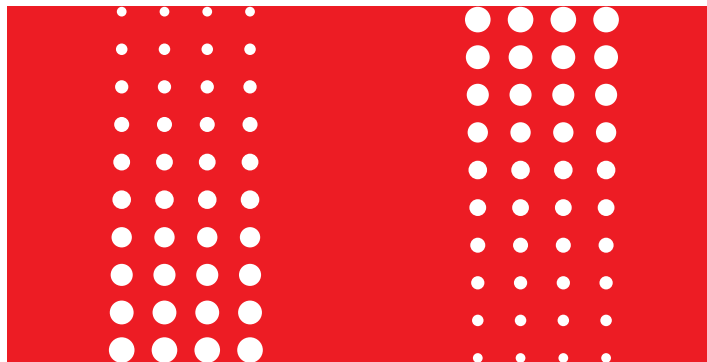
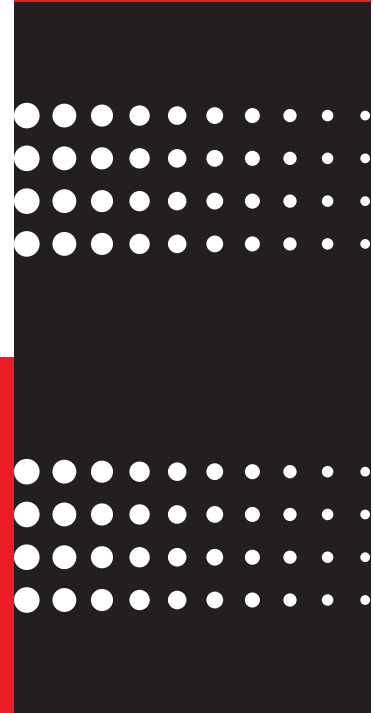


# Advancing **Localization** in Humanitarian Resource Development

---

Policy Brief



Authors: Dr. Brian Ikala, Catherine Kariuki  
Date: March 10, 2025

[www.icha.net](http://www.icha.net)

## Executive Summary

Significant reductions in Official Development Assistance (ODA) and donor aid have disrupted humanitarian aid efforts, leaving local organizations to fill critical gaps. In Kenya, crucial sectors such as food security, health services, and refugee support have been severely affected. Localization is essential for delivering faster, culturally relevant, and more sustainable humanitarian interventions. Local organizations are often the first responders in crises due to their strong community ties, ability to mobilize quickly, and expertise in local contexts. To strengthen their role, it is important to provide targeted support to emergency responses interventions, social protection programs, and development initiatives. Key Recommendations include:- Capacity building and institutional support, Policy and regulatory reforms, Strengthening localization through National Government support for County action, Innovative partnership models, Strengthening local action through consortiums, and Strengthening accountability and transparency. These measures might support local actors take full ownership of external support and development efforts, ensuring that actions are more effective, sustainable, and aligned with community needs.

## Introduction

Local organizations are often the first responders in humanitarian crises due to their strong connections and immediate presence in the communities they serve. Their proximity enables them to mobilize quickly, providing essential aid and culturally appropriate solutions long before other regional and International Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs) agencies can respond. This swift response is facilitated by their on-the-ground knowledge, established networks, and understanding of local needs. It saves lives immediately after a crisis and helps build long-term community resilience.

Over the past year, significant budget cuts and changes in priorities regarding Official Development Assistance (ODA) and donor aid have greatly affected programs and initiatives related to health services, humanitarian coordination, food security, and refugee support. Despite ongoing resource shortages, recent developments in ODA across various donors have compelled local organizations to shoulder most of the humanitarian response (AP News, 2025; Reuters, 2025). These funding challenges, bureaucratic delays and a traditional dependence on international intermediaries, have re-evaluated how humanitarian aid is provided. Localization is emerging as a strategic alternative that enhances efficiency and responsiveness, fostering local ownership and promoting long-term resilience.

## Why Localization Matters

For the Kenyan government, localization is not just an operational strategy but a means to strengthen mechanisms to support national development and resilience. By directing resources and decision-making power to county governance structures, Kenya through respective Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) can improve its coordination efforts in humanitarian assistance, community development initiatives and reduce reliance on external donors. For example, county governments have strengthened partnerships with various stakeholders including governmental and non-governmental to strengthen key aspects that touch on their local development agendas. Such partnerships have enabled them to: -

1. Improve service delivery as initiatives under these partnerships align with National and County development goals and complement community needs and cultural norms. For example, the various County-led health outreach programmes have significantly increased vaccination coverage in rural areas or areas where such programmes were not provided.
2. Enhance efficiency and responsiveness due to the proximity to the communities in need/at risk and presence of established networks enabling rapid deployment of resources during emergencies and crisis. The 2024 March, April, May rains demonstrated how strengthened partnerships with County governments could save lives and livelihoods especially in counties that were hit hard by the floods as resources were mobilized in a relatively shorter duration and management of response exercise done in coordinated manner.
3. Strengthen accountability and ownership by assuming a leading role in ensuring programmes implemented at local levels are evaluated locally or using local structures and mechanisms thus increasing accountability. Various community-led systems, frameworks and mechanisms that champion for transparency and accountability such as social audit initiatives, community-based monitoring and evaluation committees among others have allowed different stakeholders to track program outcomes and adjust strategies in real time.
4. Build long-term resilience by strengthening localized approaches/solutions that are sustainable overtime. Incorporating Early Action Protocols (EAPs) in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands has strengthened prepared and response capacities, empowered local authorities and communities to take proactive measures, enhanced livelihoods and food security and strengthened social protection systems. Critiques of traditional donor-driven aid as articulated by Moyo (2009), Sachs (2005), Easterly (2006) underscore that conventional models often fail to deliver sustainable change, thereby reinforcing the need for locally led, community-based approaches.

## Expanding Funding Models for Localization

As traditional humanitarian funding experiences significant reductions due to declining Official Development Assistance (ODA) and changing donor priorities, exploring alternative and sustainable funding models that empower local organizations is crucial. Strengthening localization requires innovative financial mechanisms that provide direct, long-term, and flexible support to local actors. Below are key funding models that can drive localization efforts

| <b>Model</b>  | <b>Key features</b>  | <b>Expected benefits</b>  |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Direct donor-to-donor local channels</b>           | Direct funding to local organizations; simplified reporting; eliminates bureaucracies  | Improved response times, minimized administrative delays, and increased accountability              |
| <b>Private sector-led humanitarian investments</b>    | Leverage public-private partnerships and tax incentives; engage corporate resources  | Expanded funding sources, increased innovation, and expanded resource mobilization avenues/channels |
| <b>Multilateral funding channels</b>                  | Pooled funds that combine contributions from donors, remittances from the diaspora, and support from multilateral organizations    | Shared risks, flexible resource allocation, provision of scalable responses.                        |
| <b>Crowdsourced and Innovative Finance Mechanisms</b> | Uses digital platforms and blockchain technology to ensure transparency while facilitating micro-donations from a global audience. | Improved public engagement, greater transparency, and a variety of revenue sources.                 |

# Policy Recommendations and Strategic Actions

## Capacity Building and Institutional Support

- Targeted training and mentorship aimed at enhancing local organisations' technical, financial and managerial skills. These programs should include mentorship initiatives coordinated between County governments and established partners to strengthen systems as foundations for strengthened funding streams. This will enable local actors become more independent, efficient and capable while donor countries see better returns on their investment this reducing dependency and promote sustainable development.
- Develop/strengthen existing community-led monitoring systems to empower communities to track project outcomes and inform policy adjustments/reforms.

## Policy and Regulatory Reforms

- Ensuring that at least 25% of aid is directed as direct funding aligning with commitments made under the under global frameworks like the Grand Bargain (Fine, 2024).
- Simplify funding processes to facilitate quicker disbursement of funds by streamlining among others reporting and administrative procedures to reduce the burden on local organizations.

## Strengthening Localization Through National Government Support for County Action

- The National government plays a crucial role in strengthening localization by empowering county governments to lead local initiatives. This involves decentralizing fiscal authority and enhancing the ability of counties to allocate and manage resources that meet local humanitarian and development needs. When county governments gain more autonomy over budgetary decisions, they can directly fund emergency responses, community developmental programs, and social protection initiatives informed by local context.

## Innovative Partnership Models

- Pilot new models and upscale existing ones to test hybrid funds (diaspora bonds, resilience funds and regional pooling risk mechanisms) and upscale private-public partnerships to ensure that resources are efficiently utilized, contextually relevant and development goals are met sustainably. Some of these successful projects launched under innovative partnership models in Kenya include the Community Health Promoters (CHPs) initiatives launched in 2023, Inua Jamii Cash Transfer Program, Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

pilot 2018-2019 and the Digital Agriculture Innovation which allows farmers access government subsidiaries digitally.

- Engage with the private sector to establish incentive structures to encourage corporate involvement in humanitarian aid, ensuring that partnerships are based on transparency and mutual accountability. Notable successful initiatives in Kenya where the corporate sector have invested in for humanitarian good include: M-KOPA Solar which has provided off-grid electricity to over 2 million households, Amref and Philips enhance maternal healthcare through mobile clinics, Safaricom Foundation funds community projects, and Equity Bank's Wings to Fly has awarded scholarships to over 47,000 students.

### **Strengthening Local Action Through Consortiums**

- Forming consortiums among local organizations can be a powerful strategy for improving community action. By collaborating, local NGOs and community groups can combine their resources, share expertise, and work together on large-scale projects that would be difficult to execute independently. This collective approach enhances their bargaining power with donors, facilitates knowledge sharing, and encourages innovative solutions tailored to local needs.

### **Strengthen Accountability and Transparency**

- Strengthen existing monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning systems to continuously assess localised programs' impact, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability.
- Invest in technology solutions to enhance real-time data collection and reporting, ensuring funds are directed to the intended beneficiaries.

## Conclusion

In an era characterized by significant funding cuts and changing donor priorities, advancing localization in humanitarian resource development has become both a strategic necessity and a transformative opportunity. Notable shortcomings such as disrupted food security, compromised health services, and reduced international aid highlight the urgent need to rethink localization in resource development and fostering community-led solutions. Drawing on successful initiatives in Kenya that champion localization demonstrates that when local governments and grassroots organizations are empowered through innovative funding approaches, targeted capacity building, and supportive policy reforms, they can provide quicker, sustained and culturally aware sustained development cognizant of humanitarian need.

By embracing direct donor-to-local channels, fostering public-private partnerships, and testing scalable hybrid financing mechanisms, the international community can alleviate the negative impacts of external funding reductions and develop a more resilient, accountable, and self-reliant aid ecosystem. Ultimately, this localization strategy redefines the future of humanitarian assistance by prioritizing local ownership, strengthening national governance, and ensuring that aid effectively addresses the needs of vulnerable communities.

Email:

[info@icha.net](mailto:info@icha.net)

Tel:

**0703 037 050 | 0703 037 051**

Office Location

**Red Cross Road, Off Popo road, South C,**

**Nairobi, Kenya**