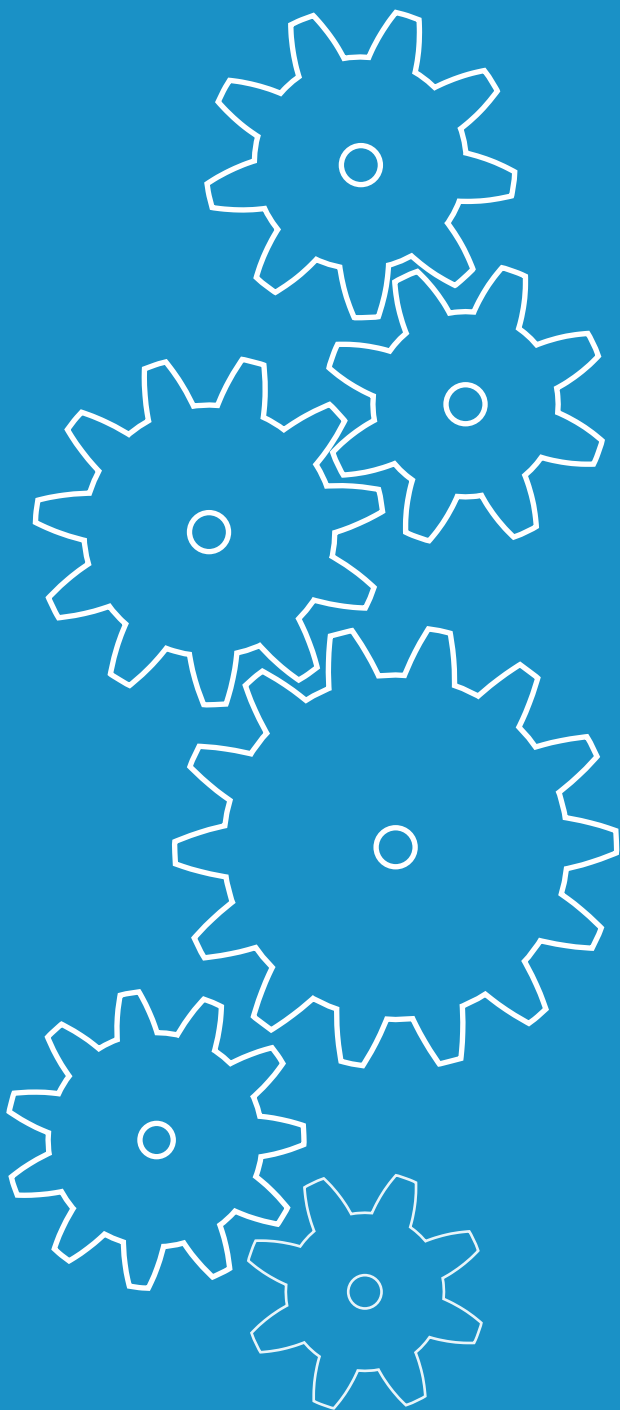


ENOUGH THEORY!

A Somali consortium putting
nexus programming into action

**Somali Nexus Platform – what
we have learned so far**



NEXUS
Stronger Together

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	5
The Learning Journey	6
Learning Questions	9
In what ways and under which conditions can humanitarian response be more effective in the Somali context when locally led?	10
How can the triple nexus approach be articulated in similar humanitarian circumstances?	17
So, what is the practice of the Nexus platform, when it comes to the triple nexus?	20
Women's leadership at the Triple Nexus	24
Humanitarian Principles	29
Additional Learning Questions	33
Conclusion	35
Acknowledgements	36

Executive Summary

Numerous theories and articulations guide the ways to approach the triple nexus but there are no clear indications on what its practical implications at field level are. We, the Nexus platform members - [a consortium of Somali NGOs](#) – through a literature review and a series of workshops have articulated our goals in terms of integrated programming and a locally-led humanitarian system and this is documenting our learning.

Our experience and knowledge sharing on lesson learned have shown us that the Somali humanitarian response system is often mismatched with the long-term community needs. The humanitarian system aims to support communities and to work with government and local actors, is inadvertently creating dependency and incentive structures which are skewing local resilience. Especially short-term poorly coordinated and stand-alone CASH programmes, infrastructure projects, which communities do not feel ownership over and do not contribute to with their own funds or work; or projects that primarily follow the funding cycle of humanitarian donors rather than being timely and responsive to community needs and asks; all tend to present aid dependency traps in our experience. These are the kind of programming Nexus members operating together want to avoid and advocate against within the sector more broadly.

In programmatic terms, what Nexus members found to be qualities of projects or modalities which contribute to self-reliance and agency for Somalis were the following:

- Continuous engagement with communities in need before a project and after it has finished, changing the way we think of exit strategies
- Conflict-sensitive planning and

engagement of relevant actors in the implementation and relying on local tacit knowledge

- Leveraging communities' strengths and assets and building on these, supporting their growth

The literature often identifies the mutual strengthening and interconnectedness of integrated nexus programming and localisation. Nexus platform's approach to localisation is one that seeks transformational system change of the humanitarian system, makes humanitarian responses more sustainable and transfers ownership of those responses to LNNGO's and communities, is more efficient, cost effective and tailored to the local context.

Being locally-led matters to us Nexus members as we envision a humanitarian system which is served and owned by Somalis. We recognize that for this to be the new normal, there needs to be a radical reinvention of what humanitarian programming means and Nexus members want to contribute to that radical reinvention and push for change at a system- level.

At the technical or programmatic level, local actors have a greater understanding of culture and clan dynamics; we can better manage security given clan dynamic comprehension; can respond faster and more appropriately as we have better lines of communication; can more easily and quickly navigate government authorities and are more efficient and cost-effective.

When it comes to sustainability and ownership of humanitarian projects, local NGOs have a fundamentally different relationship. We have follow-up and on-going conversations with affected communities and communities have

greater trust in local organizations. In Nexus members' experience, communities are more willing to contribute financially and with time to effective programming as we see local ownership.

For us, it is not about effectiveness alone, a locally led platform doing integrates Nexus humanitarian work is what is needed for building on the self-reliance of Somalis in need and for building a sector that centers around the rightful owners - Somali civil society and Somali government actors. Localisation as agreed within the Grand bargain is part of the road to that vision and crucially it has concrete deliverables (it 'has teeth'), but it insufficiently captures what the Nexus platform is striving for.

On the topic of locally led coalition building, the literature globally is characterized by at least one critical flaw. The overwhelming weight of the literature is written from the perspective of international actors including INGOs, donors, or UN Agencies. As a result, the analyses, policy recommendations and outcomes thereof are formulated as critical evaluations of international systems, institutions and approaches that does not understand and appreciate local dynamics and are not entirely useful for demonstrating a truly locally led and locally owned process of humanitarian assistance that exists outside of those structures.

In this paper, we also explore women's leadership and its role within nexus programming and in localisation. Additionally, we unpack humanitarian principles and the need for honest dialogue and mutual learning.

The theoretical work and reflections on localisation and the triple nexus approach we found in the literature, helped us to strengthen our own vision and mission and provoked our thinking on what we want to achieve with our humanitarian work. This process has both sharpened Nexus critique of the current humanitarian system and the ways in which it can and should be changed through programming differently, building local organisations capacity and advocating to the most powerful actors to join the shift in how responses are designed and implemented and who should be the rightful owners. We need more actors within the humanitarian system to understand localisation is not about efficiency it is about power, ownership, long-term sustainability-issues that the humanitarian system has long been grappling with.

Nexus members hope our learnings can be useful for others grappling with the practice of locally-led coalitions and integrated nexus programming. These workshops were supported by the Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA) and are part of DRA's reimagining of their joint responses.

Introduction

The Nexus Platform – a Somali locally-led consortium implementing triple Nexus programming – is still in its inception phase and has been learning greatly through its own experiences and from other like-minded consortiums. The lessons learned can provide valuable understanding and insight to others who are either advocating more locally-led humanitarian projects and those attempting to put Triple-Nexus projects into practice.

The Nexus platform is a consortium of eight Somali NGOs and two international actors founded in 2019, its members are – Centre for Peace and Democracy (CPD), Gargaar Relief and Development Organization (GREDO), Horn of Africa Voluntary Youth Committee (HAVOYOCO), KAALO, Save Somali Women and Children (SSWC), Social-Life and Agriculture

Development Organisation (SADO), Taakulo Somaliland Community (TASCO), and WASDA – and two INGOs – Oxfam and Save the Children International.

Nexus is a paradigm-shifting platform for civil society leadership that aims to shape the future in Somalia and Somaliland and breaks the silos of humanitarian aid, development and peacebuilding interventions.

Nexus is strategically investing in the institutions of civil society and government, advancing a new, community-driven framework that creates space for local organizations, our partners in government and the private sector to lead the way in identifying, scaling and integrating community owned and driven solutions to humanitarian, development and peacebuilding needs.

The Learning Journey

How it began

The initial idea for the Nexus Platform emerged as a response to a challenge donors posed to local actors during a post-World-Humanitarian-Summit localization workshop to develop other intermediary funding models, which would allow donors to fund local and national NGOs (LNNGOs). Institutional donors struggle to allocate humanitarian funding directly to local and national NGOs, which marked the importance of country-based pooled funding such as the Somalia Humanitarian Fund (SHF) which is an important tool for donors to make steps towards their localization commitments under the Grand Bargain Agreement. In 2019, whilst nearly half of SHF is allocated to LNNGOs, this only amounts to 2.6% of the overall humanitarian funding.

This challenge specific issue and is part of a broader struggle for local and national NGOs to access more secure and flexible funding and be decision-makers in the humanitarian system and generally to play a more substantial role in the decision making in when to respond to the Somali humanitarian crises. The status quo of UN and INGOs dominating the humanitarian system is something many Somali actors have been trying to shift over decades.

Informally, few local and national actors came together to envision a locally-led coalition or consortium that would be able to represent a new intermediary model, allow local NGOs to collaborate on localization advocacy and to show our implementation strength collectively.

These organisations also recognized we would need at least one international

NGO (INGO) to join the Nexus Platform, as the acquired funding would need to be allocated via the INGO and also assessed that an INGOs membership would give credibility to the Platform.

Lessons learned for other LNNGOs seeking to replicate:

- Use problems and issues within the system to fuel innovation and action
- Find allies and form a coalition
- Create a structure that facilitates accountability and includes a trajectory for changing the structure as you evolve
- Define your vision and goals and the scope of work
- Seek external feedback on a continuous basis and find space to respond to that feedback

Eventually the Nexus Platform became a eight LNNGO-strong group, covering South-Central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland and bringing organisations with a wide range of expertise and decades of experience. The two INGOs that were approached by Nexus and showed interest to support are Oxfam and Save the Children – leading on the financial management and capacity strengthening respectively.

In the first year of the Nexus Platform's existence, members created a governance structure, a vision and goals, which developed into 05 pillars of work: Community Driven Development; Integrated and Anticipatory Humanitarian Response; Peacebuilding, Conflict Resolution and Social Cohesion;

Women's Empowerment; and Civil Society Strengthening, Leadership and Responsive Authorities.

Nexus secured some funding, which supported the initial small projects. The funding sources were varied – seed funding from Oxfam, small amounts from an institutional donor and financial contributions from each Nexus member.

One of the initial activities was to conduct capacity assessments of all 08 Nexus local members, thereafter, develop individual capacity strengthening plans based on the assessments. Another was self-financed huge [survey on the health and economic impact of COVID in Somalia and Somaliland informing](#) both debates within the Ministry of Health and on remittances advocacy.

Pilot funding from the [Dutch Relief Alliance](#) (DRA) provided Nexus members with the space to pilot and expand the integrated and anticipatory humanitarian programming pillar, to take the vision further, to articulate direction and details – to grow. Nexus was able to clearly express two main learning questions it wanted to address during this initial phase of the DRA pilot, which are explored in the next sections.

Institutional fundraising has been active and has been met by interest and inquiries from donors. Many essentially being about providing more details on the programming envisioned by the Nexus Platform and what makes it unique. The DRA pilot resulted in more substantial funding from the DRA for 09 months and Nexus is also receiving some funding from the [Swiss Development Cooperation](#) (SDC).

Looking elsewhere

Having two main learning questions – what makes a locally-led humanitarian response more effective? What does a Nexus approach mean in practice when focusing

on responding to humanitarian needs? – enabled a literature review and to seek information and insights from elsewhere to get help through receiving further guidance on lesson learned. Through workshops-intended to help a consortium of local humanitarian actors find effective ways of *doing* humanitarian response - the literature review within this paper has an equally pragmatic objective: synthesizing ways in which locally-led coalitions can be assembled, as well as a set of success factors for the common thread across each feature of that synthesis – namely women's empowerment outcomes.

An outline of the 'localization agenda' is sketched before exploring pathways for localization - identifying the parameters of a theoretical framework for locally led coalition building. We find the literature on this theoretical framework to be largely produced from the perspective of - and for - international actors, and lacking in the local, informal and non-traditional voices it purports to champion. Even so, a discernible framework for inclusive, locally led coalition building arises from the literature, suggesting that to be meaningfully locally led, coalitions should include organizations, actors, governments and movements that are women-led, non-traditional, and intersectional.

Local actors looking to blaze a path forward to truly locally led humanitarian responses should leverage the diversity of their coalition to form context-specific programming that both responds to immediate humanitarian needs, operating at the triple nexus of aid, development, and peacebuilding.

As we find women's empowerment to be a common core component of all interpretations of localization - we conclude by considering ways of enacting women's empowerment in our context, with a set of indicative success factors for women's leadership in localized humanitarian response.

Workshopping it further

The Covid-19 pandemic forced Nexus members to shift from the originally envisioned multiple day in person workshops, to virtual workshops for two full mornings a week over 10 weeks. The advantage of holding the workshops virtually was that not only the Executive Directors of each Nexus member attended, but also key senior humanitarian staff. We were thereby able to get the contribution of both to the workshops and also absorb more about the vision of the Nexus platform. Attendance was generally very strong and the workshops remained productive. Oxfam staff facilitated and prepared exercises for the workshops, which included group

work exercises, large group discussions and external presenters.

During the workshops, Nexus members reflected on the learnings from the literature review, shared experiences from our own or collective programming and advocacy track record along with a debate on way forward. Bringing the teams together, the workshops created the space and structure for members to share their points of view, argue and agree on a perspective of change and a modus operandi for the nexus platform humanitarian pillar.

There are several outputs from these workshops and the literature review, which can all be found on the [Nexus Platform's website](#).

Learning Questions

Throughout the workshop and literature review, the workshops were designed to generate practical answers to two main questions:

1. **In what ways and under which conditions can humanitarian response be more effective in the Somali context when locally led? In other words, what makes a locally-led humanitarian response more effective?**
2. **How can the triple nexus approach be articulated in similar humanitarian circumstances? In other words, what does a Nexus approach mean in practice when focusing on responding to humanitarian needs? And what can others learn from that?**

Elaborative questions were further debated that would enrich the desired outcome. These were:

3. What are the different risks for all actors? and how can these be taken into account in the implementation of a response?
4. What do quality partnerships look like in Nexus platform context?
5. How could leadership of national organizations in decision making and a locally-led collaborative model contribute to enhanced timeliness, efficiency and effectiveness in humanitarian response?
6. What is the value-add principles of decentralised decision-making processes (funding decisions) in relation to tackling challenges at hand in the current model?

In what ways and under which conditions can humanitarian response be more effective in the Somali context when locally led?

This learning question seeks to differentiate between locally led and conventional humanitarian response, in order to explore if local leadership can engender more rapid, responsive and far-reaching response by taking advantage of the local knowledge and sensitivity of local actors. Crucially, this question will consider the merits and evidence base of the protocols and operating procedures developed for collaboration between local partners – and the extent to which these facilitate local leadership. Analysis of this question will also consider effectiveness in terms of women’s empowerment outcomes through the literature review.

Localization

In the discourse of international development and aid, critiques have long noted a need to increase the inclusion of local actors. Increasingly, localisation has gained mainstream support in the sector, with the so-called “Localisation Agenda” elevated in the 2016 Grand Bargain Agreement.¹ However agreed upon in the macro sense, the literature describes/portrays? An understanding of localisation and the localisation agenda that is deeply contested.

The literature points to a number of structural and systemic barriers to localization that are imposed by the international aid architecture, including inflexible short-term funding that does not account for core costs or enable continuity between crises, LNNGO’s exclusion from agenda setting and decision making bodies within the UN-led cluster system and other points of international and national coordination, and a lack of direct communication and sub-contracting models between local organizations and donors or transnational organizations.² Structural barriers also persist at national, subnational, and community levels, and a number of qualitative studies have found that barriers to localization efforts are often erected by local authorities.

The Lexicon of Localization

Defining a so-called agenda for localization is difficult, and understandings of how and why localization is undertaken are widely scattered. For some, localization is a means of decentralizing decision-making power and resources to achieve effective and cost-efficient programming. Others see localization as a tool by which local actors are co-opted into an inherently flawed system.³ Conversely, the localization agenda is understood by some as an

¹ [World Humanitarian Summit 2016](#)

² [Dialogue for action on aid localization in Somalia](#)

³ Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Patricia Daley, “Introduction: Conceptualising the Global South and South–South Encounters,” in *Routledge Handbook of South-South Relations* (Routledge, 2018), 1–27; Janaka Jayawickrama and Bushra Rehman, “Before Defining What Is Local, Let’s Build the Capacities of Humanitarian Agencies,” *Refugee Hosts* (blog), April 10, 2018, <https://refugeehosts.org/2018/04/10/before-defining-what-is-local-lets-build-the-capacities-of-humanitarian-agencies/>.

intrinsically *transformative* effort, a process by which entrenched inequities between the Global North and the Global South can be remedied.⁴ Reviewing the literature, bits of truth can be seen in each of these understandings. Thus, what the localization agenda *is* principally defined by how it is pursued and by whom.

Towards an intentional pathway to localisation, the literature employs a useful exercise of definition – *who is a local actor?* Understandings of ‘local’ are debated in terms of relativity, dependent upon how proximate one is to crisis-affected people. Qualifications of ‘local’ can be understood in terms of geographical proximity, ethnic or religious proximity, spatial proximity, or national proximity. Any one of these understandings can be right to an extent and indicate a literature that understands ‘local’ in terms of complex relationships, or, as Kristin Roepstorff writes, in terms of “webs of power and politics.”⁵ The takeaway is that local humanitarian actors are not a homogenous group, and that vectors of identity, power, and politics are essential considerations for instances of truly localized aid.⁶

The Nexus Platform’s approach to localization

During the workshops, Nexus members discussed these three grouping of definitions of the localization agenda identified through the literature review:

- A) Localization is a source of decentralizing decision-making power and means to achieve effective and cost-efficient programming.
- B) Localization as a tool by which local actors are co-opted into an inherently flawed system.
- C) Localization agenda as an intrinsically *transformative* effort, a process by which entrenched inequities between the Global North and the Global South can be remedied.

Nexus members assigned to smaller groups and asked to discuss what truths we see in each of these definitions, and which one is closest to what we feel Nexus Platform’s approach should be. In the debate Nexus members held differing opinions and it led to great discussions in which members learned from each other and could find a common agreement. After the initial group work, here are some of the notes from those conversations:

⁴ Koenraad Van Brabant and Smruti Patel, “Localisation in Practice: Emerging Indicators and Practical Recommendations,” Disasters and Emergency Preparedness Programme (Global Mentoring Initiative, 2018), 8, <https://www.preventionweb.net/publications/view/59895>.

⁵ Page 8

⁶ Sabina Robillard et al., “Anchored in Local Reality - Case Studies on Local Humanitarian Action from Haiti, Colombia, and Iraq” (Boston, MA: Feinstein International Center, Tufts University, 2020), 5.

<p>A) Decentralizing decision making power & resources to achieve cost-efficient programming 03 groups chose “A” as the most relevant definition.</p>	<p>B) Localization agenda as an instrument to co-opt local NGOs in an inherently flawed system None of the groups chose this definition as the most relevant definition.</p>	<p>C) localization agenda is an intrinsically transformative effort to shift power to the Global South. 1 group adopted this definition. But more as an ‘ideal picture’/the way localization should be seen rather than an actual definition in line with what is currently happening.</p>
<p>Because:</p>	<p>Because:</p>	<p>Because:</p>
<p>This definition is geared towards empowering local NGOs rather than INGOs. Decentralizing decision making to local actors can lead to - Timely response to emergencies. - Local actors are closer to the communities, have better access, and a better understanding of needs.</p>	<p>This is not a definition as such but a criticism on localization among local NGOs & Nexus. - INGO’s are not adhering to grand bargain commitments. - If INGOs do adhere to (financial) commitments they do this without truly shifting power to local organisations. - Resources are not equitably divided - Lots work performed under the umbrella of localization efforts by the INGO community is in parallel to/same as what local NGOs are doing, leading to increased competition between local NGOs and INGOs, - Definition reflects the current lack of trust between local actors, INGO’s and donors, the marginalization of local NGOs - Need for systems change: local actors are marginalized</p>	<p>- Local actors are marginalized and resources inequitably divided. - Adopting this definition advocates for systems change (do we merely need a seat at the table or do we need to change the table?) - Adopting this definition would lead to a more equitable relationship and mean local organisation can claim our just and rightful place in the aid supply chain (which is currently not the case).</p>

Most Nexus members initially chose A) as our definition, which is also the way the Nexus vision created in 2019 is written. However, as discussions progressed we all moved towards definition C). Locally-led approaches are or can be more efficient, cost-effective and more relevant and responsive to community needs, but that this definition alone did not reflect the only reason localization is needed. The discussions often brought up that the humanitarian system in Somalia/land is centered around international actors and that in the long-term the rightful owners of that system should be Somali government actors and Somali civil society – that is the transformation that is needed.

Following this discussion, Nexus members revised our vision to be more in line with a transformative approach rather than one that merely focuses on the “local-is-more-efficient-approach”.

So, why from Nexus member’s perspective, does locally-led matter?

Locally-led matter to Nexus members as we envision a humanitarian system which is served and owned by Somalis. We recognize that for this to be the new normal, there needs to be a radical reinvention of what humanitarian programming means and Nexus members want to contribute to that

radical reinvention and push for change at a system- level.

At the technical or programmatic level, local actors have a greater understanding of culture and clan dynamics; we can better manage security given clan dynamic comprehension; can respond faster and more appropriately as we have better lines of communication; can more easily and quickly navigate government authorities and are more efficient and cost-effective.

When it comes to sustainability and ownership of humanitarian projects, local NGOs have a fundamentally different relationship. We have follow-up and on-going conversations with affected communities and communities have greater trust in local organizations. In Nexus members experience, communities are more willing to contribute financially and with time to effective programming as we see local ownership.

In conclusion, the Nexus platform's approach to localization is one that seeks transformational system change of the humanitarian system, makes humanitarian responses more sustainable and transfers ownership of those responses to LNNGO's and communities, is more efficient, cost effective and tailored to the local context.

Lessons learned for other LNNGOs seeking to replicate:

- Seek insights from literature on localization
- Use the differences in the literature to work out what is true to their experience and views
- Define their approach based on these inputs and debates

Nexus Platform example of effective local response

In the early initial response to COVID-19 pandemic, many INGOs along with UN agencies were working on information sharing campaigns to explain the risks and precautions people should take to keep safe from the virus. Many of these were about translating WHO messaging, designing, printing and circulating flyers and posters with key WHO messages. For many local NGOs and also Somali staff of INGOs, we found ourselves in charge with expatriate staff leaving the country to head to their home countries.

The Nexus platform recognizing the important roles of imams and religious leaders to spread messages to their congregations and on social media, used our wide-ranging networks and connections to religious leaders to produce videos of those religious leaders explaining the dangers and strategies people should take towards the virus. These videos were not simple translations into the Somali language but included citations of relevant passages in the Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad – we were translated into a reference system that resonates with many of the viewers of the videos and the congregation. This is an example of how locally led humanitarian response can be more effective.

Pathways for Locally-Led Humanitarian Response

Coalition Building for Locally-Led Responses

The literature reviewed suggests that coalition-building among local actors in crisis-afflicted settings should be carried out under inclusive conditions that incorporate activists, actors and movements; and via approaches that are 1) primarily women-

led, 2) informal and nontraditional,⁷ and 3) intersectional. Building coalitions that are women-led requires the purposeful inclusion of women's rights actors⁸ and is undertaken with the acknowledgement that ambitious efforts of reform in the humanitarian sector have often failed to effectively reach grassroots women's rights organizations as well as women affected by crisis.⁹

Nontraditional actors,¹⁰ it has been acknowledged,¹¹ possess perspectives and insight that are lacking in traditional humanitarian responses, and are often better positioned to circumnavigate the complex political restrictions faced by more formal organizations.¹² Finally, coalitions should seek to include intersectional viewpoints that acknowledge the vectors of identity, sex, gender, ethnicity, skills and the like that create interconnected systems of discrimination and disadvantage.

The literature thus posits a theoretical framework for locally led humanitarian coalition building that is defined by gender mainstreaming, discourses and partnerships that purposefully involve nontraditional and informal voices.

Coalition building is undertaken, it seems, with the recognition that even within a

country, a number of community-specific factors demand context-specific approaches that fit political, social, economic, and environmental realities. For the localization of aid to be achieved, these factors must be accounted for in any locally led response; demanding nuanced partnerships, formal feedback mechanisms and discussion forums, and programs that design and undertake long-term change and advocacy at all levels of society.

Partnership, like 'localization,' is a contested term with divergent and sometimes conflicting definitions. Ideally, partnership models are seen as a method for building on the strengths of international and local actors, wherein programming is implemented by LNGOs with greater accessibility and contextual knowledge - and INGOs provide management and capacity building support.¹³ In reality, however, 'partnership' is often a hierarchical engagement that can be boiled down to "contractual arrangements with service providers, rather than a full partnership of equals in which risk and reward is shared."¹⁴ Even well-intentioned capacity building exercises provided as part of these partnerships can be ineffective, insufficient, or counterproductive.¹⁵

This is not to say that the INGO-driven

⁷ *Ibid*, 6.

⁸ Oxfam Canada defines women's rights actors as local and national organizations, activists and movements which are primarily women-led and have a rights-based transformative, and an intersectional approach.

⁹ Brittany Lambert, Francesca Rhodes, and Mayssam Zaaroura, "A Feminist Approach to Localisation" (Ottawa, Canada: Oxfam Canada, 2018); Kate Latimir and Howard Mollett, "Not What She Bargained for? Gender and the Grand Bargain" (Care International, ActionAid International, 2018); Helen Lindley-Jones, "Women Responders: Placing Local Action at the Centre of Humanitarian Protection Programming" (London, UK: Care International UK, 2018); Anna Parke et al., "Preliminary Research Summary: A Feminist Exploration of Women-Led Localisation in the Central Sulawesi Response" (London, UK: ActionAid International, 2019).

¹⁰ Non traditional actors include but are not limited to diaspora groups, ad hoc volunteer groups, local researchers and universities, professional associations and students groups, the private sector, the media, livelihoods associations and self-help groups. For more information see: Wall and Hedlund 2016 and Svoboda and Pantuliano 2015.

¹¹ See the following for example discussions about the consequences of failing to incorporate the perspectives of refugees and host communities into programming: Veronique Barbelet and Caitlin Wake, "Livelihoods in Displacement: From Refugee Perspectives to Aid Agency Response" (London, UK: Overseas Development Institute, 2017), iv; Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Patricia Daley, "Introduction: Conceptualising the Global South and South-South Encounters," in *Routledge Handbook of South-South Relations* (Routledge, 2018), 1-27.

¹² For example, see: Pantuliano and Svoboda 2015, in which Syrian faith-based non-traditional charities are observed as being monitored less acutely by the Syrian government than traditional and legally registered entities.

¹³ For more information on partnership models see:

¹⁴ Eva Svoboda and Sara Pantuliano, "International and Local/Diaspora Actors in the Syria Response" (London, UK: Overseas Development Institute, 2015), 16.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

model for localization is misguided or inherently flawed. In fact, a number of partnership models have been undertaken with success. Localization undertakings have been dominated by INGOs and transnational organizations, and thus their actions color both the successes and failures of the localization agenda thus far. It would be insufficient to argue the counterfactual - that localization is necessarily best undertaken by local actors - because in terms of partnership and power, the same pitfalls and dynamics persist between INGOs that 'partner' with other local actors.

Locally-led responses would do well (and may yet have the opportunity) to avoid the pitfalls of coalition building faced by the formal humanitarian aid sector - and such locally led initiatives may find guidance in several key case studies displaying successful partnerships with traditional and nontraditional humanitarian actors in crisis-afflicted settings.¹⁶ An evaluation of the Ebola Crisis Fund published in 2015 produced a positive assessment of a program that provided small grants directly to local organizations while employing an in-country mentorship approach to support recipients through a process of carrying out the work.¹⁷ Another model that garnered much attention in the literature is the Paung Ku response to cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, in which thousands of spontaneously organized self-help groups received small grants to provide life-saving assistance.¹⁸

On the topic of locally led coalition building, the literature is characterized by at least one critical flaw. The overwhelming weight of the literature is written from the perspective of international actors, be they INGOs, donors, or UN Agencies. As a result, the analyses, policy recommendations and outcomes thereof are formulated as critical evaluations

of international systems, institutions and approaches and are not entirely useful for modeling a truly locally led and locally owned process of humanitarian assistance that exists outside of those structures.

For example, the discourse on a feminist approach to localization is constructed with underlying assumptions that women's rights actors should be incorporated into existing architectures, including the design of programs and response coordination mechanisms; there is little if any discussion about how locally-led coalitions existing outside of these structures might incorporate feminist approaches into their own humanitarian action.

These circumstances invite the Nexus platform and parallel locally led consortia to formulate ways of enacting inclusive and feminist approaches to coalition building, giving substance to the theoretical framework sketched above.

Stop. Start. Strengthen. – What the Nexus platform takes on board

After reading and presenting on the literature review, Nexus members during the workshop were invited to reflect on what needs to change to improve our coalition. The reflections were categorized into what Nexus should STOP doing, what it should STRENGTHEN, and what should the coalition need to START doing. Below are some of the notes from that discussion. Nexus members have taken these forwards in articulating our Perspective on Change (see Perspective on Change document on [website](#)).

¹⁶ For a review of relevant models see: Imogen Wall and Kerren Hedlund, "Localisation and Locally-Led Crisis Response: A Literature Review" (Local to Global (L2GP), 2016).

¹⁷ Wall, Imogen, and Kerren Hedlund (2016), Citing Gratier, M. (2015) Ebola Crisis Fund: Final Evaluation, Geneva Global

¹⁸ Justin Corbett, "ALNAP Innovations Case Study No. 4 PKNR - Supporting community-based emergency response at scale: innovations in the wake of cyclone Nargis" (ALNAP, 2010).

 <p>What the Nexus coalition needs to STOP doing</p> <p>Stop implementing activities without the in-depth understanding of people's motivations, barriers they face and what drives their behaviour.</p> <p>Stop going for every call for proposal, be more strategic in engagement with donors /partnerships.</p> <p>Continuously changing governance structure/stop iterations of governance structure</p> <p>The lack of meaningful contribution to proposal development and documentation Absenteeism from meetings and late coming</p>	 <p>What the Nexus coalition needs to STRENGTHEN</p> <p>Common vision/common voice. Seek out what that identity of Nexus is.</p> <p>Create collective understanding of the direction Nexus is taking.</p> <p>Capitalize more on our knowledge of local context, conflict dynamics, and access to affected populations. Investigate more thoroughly how change happens at the local level.</p> <p>Strengthen Inter-agency collaboration and cross learning and building evidence-based collaboration across organizations within Nexus.</p> <p>More participation and consultation with local communities, more community engagement, more engagement with local authorities.</p> <p>Governance systems as a coalition.</p> <p>Strengthen communications and coordination between Nexus members more, information sharing to avoid duplication</p>	 <p>What the Nexus coalition needs to START doing</p> <p>Define what we as Nexus stand for and what our unique Nexus model is.</p> <p>Generate common understanding what Localization means to us.</p> <p>Nexus platform should be positioned as leader of localization and can build the evidence base as a 'role model' for localization</p> <p>Define what sort of humanitarian infrastructure we need to see in Somalia (inclusive)</p> <p>Define women's empowerment and the minimum we can achieve.</p> <p>Aggressively and systematically approach bilateral donors to expand our funding base.</p> <p>Hold donors and humanitarian actors to account for Grand Bargain commitments</p> <p>Power sharing, sharing values, same commitment among all Nexus members</p> <p>Strengthen internal policies and standards, adopt international practices as LNGOs.</p> <p>Organize joint events annually. Adopt Joint monitoring practices. Data sharing. Devise common/shared exit strategies. Learning events for information sharing</p>
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What followed these exercises in the workshop, were discussions about how the Nexus platform wants to transform the humanitarian system and strengthen its own platform to achieve its tweaked vision.

There were stakeholder and power mapping sessions and a clear set of outcomes set. These can be found in the Perspective on Change document.

How can the triple nexus approach be articulated in similar humanitarian circumstances?

This question will explore the wider application of the locally led consortium triple nexus approach and its utility to the DRA network in parallel contexts. The question was approached by understanding the literature on this topic but looking at past Nexus Platform programming and by workshopping the approaches Nexus members would like to strengthen or start.

Humanitarian Assistance at the Triple Nexus

Increasingly international and local actors alike have come to recognize the interdependent and overlapping features of humanitarian aid, development assistance and peace building. Upon taking his oath of office in 2016, UN Secretary General António Guterres emphasized the need to bring “the humanitarian and development spheres closer together” at the outset of crises, opining that “humanitarian response, sustainable development, and sustaining peace are three sides of the same triangle.”¹⁹ Earlier in the same year, the development-humanitarian nexus held center stage at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul.²⁰

The literature on several occasions demonstrated the significant overlap between principles of localization and the triple nexus. It is observed, for instance, that local initiatives undertaken by women’s rights actors are more likely to consider humanitarian responses within a broader lens that is invested in long-term transformative programming that might be more aptly described as development assistance.²¹ Indeed, the literature notes that shifting the power to local actors, such as women’s rights associations, is closely linked to the objectives of the triple nexus.²² For local actors affected by crisis, there is no distinction or silos between aid, development and peacebuilding,²³ as crises are either direct consequences of or are worsened by underlying insecurities that must be addressed through actions that traverse the triple nexus.

At the outset, a ‘nexus approach’ aims to strengthen the collaboration, coherence and complementarity of humanitarian, development, and peace programming.²⁴ This is by no means a novel concept. The literature describes an international aid and development architecture that has broadly

¹⁹ António Guterres, “Secretary-General-Designate António Guterres’ Remarks to the General Assembly on Taking the Oath of Office,” United Nations Secretary-General, December 21, 2016, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2016-12-12/secretary-general-designate-ant%C3%B3nio-guterres-oath-office-speech>.

²⁰ UNOCHA, “AGENDA FOR HUMANITY,” AGENDA FOR HUMANITY, accessed April 21, 2020, <https://agendaforhumanity.org/summit>.

²¹ Lambert, Rhodes, and Zaaroura, “A Feminist Approach to Localisation.”

²² “Localization Examined: An ICVA Briefing Paper” (Geneva, Switzerland: International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA), 2018), 11, https://www.icvanetwork.org/system/files/versions/ICVA_Localization%20Examined_Briefing_Paper_Sept2018.pdf.

²³ Monica de Castellarnau and Velina Stoianova, “Bridging the Emergency Gap: Reflections and a Call for Action after a Two-Year Exploration of Emergency Response in Acute Conflicts,” Emergency Gap Project (Barcelona, Spain: Medecins Sans Frontieres, 2018), 2.

²⁴ Sarah Dalrymple and Sophia Swithern, “Key Questions and Considerations for Donors at the Triple Nexus: Lessons from UK and Sweden” (Development Initiatives, 2019), 4.

recognized the “interlinkages between humanitarian, development and peace actors”²⁵ for decades²⁶ but has also long struggled to reach consensus on to what the triple nexus practically translates at both policy²⁷ and field levels.^{28 29}

UK-based think tank, Development Initiatives, in a review of approaches to the triple nexus as articulated by the governmental agencies of Sweden and the UK notes that - though humanitarian, peace, and development sectors are considered separately within the policies of both countries - each policy “demands complementarity and interplay between them as a minimum and aim to promote the role of development actors in building resilience and responding to risk.”³⁰ Development Initiatives also observes that a lack of coherent, practical guidelines for the triple nexus undermines the viability of effective translation. This analysis reflects the literature more generally, despite a number of transnational organizations and bilateral donors adopting strategies to bridge the humanitarian-development-peace divide - including the UN’s New Way of Working,³¹ DFID’s 2015 Aid Strategy,³² and Sweden’s 2016 Policy Framework.³³

Research conducted by Save the Children analyzing the impact of the UN’s New Way of Working framework has reinforced such conclusions. UN’s New Way of Working’s successes in Somalia, while notable, were limited by “UN-centric” character that had “limited” engagement with NGOs, private sector and other actors.³⁴ Not only were UN’s New Way of Working’ impact and design less fully understood by NGOs and implementing actors, but UN officials were far more likely to anticipate positive outcomes (73%) from UN’s New Way of Working compared to their NGO counterparts (27%).³⁵

Recommendations from Save the Children’s research in Somalia and Ethiopia describe significant overlap with localization agendas in terms of reforming funding mechanisms for flexibility and multi-year programming, conducting joint analysis with a multitude of stakeholders, streamlining programming with national and subnational policies, and making more inclusive coordination mechanisms. Moreover, the research suggests that the success of an approach to strengthening the nexus is in part dependent upon the strengths of local actors previously identified in the literature - namely access, stakeholder engagement, and contextual knowledge.

²⁵ “Learning Stream: Navigating the Nexus” (International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), 2018), https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ICVA_Nexus_briefing_paper%20%28Low%20Res%29.pdf.

²⁶ Martina Rama, “Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD): Examples and Lessons Learned for the WASH Sector” (Loughborough, UK: HYDROCONSEIL, 2017), https://www.pseau.org/outils/ouvrages/hydroconseil_wedc_linking_relief_rehabilitation_and_development_lrrd_examples_and_lessons_learned_for_the_wash_sector_2017.pdf.

²⁷ “Key Questions and Considerations for Donors at the Triple Nexus: Lessons from UK and Sweden” (Development Initiatives, 2019), 7.

²⁸ Louise Redvers, “Searching for the Triple Nexus: The View from the Ground,” *The New Humanitarian*, 2019, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/special-report/2019/09/24/triple-nexus-humanitarian-development-peacebuilding-views>.

²⁹ Nana Ndeda and Dianah Birungi, “Addressing the Humanitarian-Development Nexus in the Horn of Africa: Perceptions and Attitudes on the New Way of Working (NWoW) and the Education Sector in the Horn of Africa” (Nairobi, Kenya: Save the Children International, 2018).

³⁰ Dalrymple and Swithern, “Key Questions and Considerations for Donors at the Triple Nexus: Lessons from UK and Sweden,” 6.

³¹ United Nations, “The New Way of Working | Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration,” accessed April 21, 2020, <https://www.un.org/jsc/content/new-way-working>.

³² “UK Aid: Tackling Global Challenges in the National Interest” (United Kingdom: Department for International Development (DFID)/Country of Origin Information (COI), 2015), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478834/ODA_strategy_final_web_0905.pdf.

³³ “Policy Framework for Swedish Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance” (Stockholm, Sweden: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government in Sweden, 2017), <https://www.government.se/legal-documents/2017/05/policy-framework-for-swedish-development-cooperation-and-humanitarian-assistance/>.

³⁴ Ndeda and Birungi, “Addressing the Humanitarian-Development Nexus in the Horn of Africa: Perceptions and Attitudes on the New Way of Working (NWoW) and the Education Sector in the Horn of Africa,” 20.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 15

The literature does not universally find the triple nexus to be a worthwhile goal in itself. In a sweeping critique of approaches to the triple nexus, Monica de Castellarnau and Velina Soianova (2018) leveled heavy accusation that the political and structural shifts towards integrated action have “undervalued emergency response” and “jeopardize the ability to deliver impartial assistance,” particularly in conflict settings.³⁶ Moreover, they argue that the centralization of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding policy in UN-led approaches only magnifies the underlying structural deficiencies and design flaws therein by attempting to define the humanitarian community as “a system of tightly fitting elements that all contribute to one purpose, rather than an ecosystem where independent and often diverging missions, goals, ambitions, and operational and organizational models can interact with and complement each other through their added values and strengths.”³⁷ The implication is again that local actors are invited to do better, as ways of enacting locally-led consortia are developed.

Upon review, the literature suggests anecdotal evidence of successful programming at the triple nexus, and also strong critiques of the foundational elements of the triple nexus and of an international aid architecture that may be over-adjusting to a newly popularized approach that is hard to effectively translate into the field. The takeaway is that triple **nexus programming should not be engaged in at the expense of humanitarian actions.**

Lessons learned for other LNNGOs seeking to replicate:

- The literature provides prompts to think approaches through, but in this case it had few concrete practical suggestions
- It's easier to start by articulating what is wrong
- Look back at projects you have done which you see as examples of good practice
- Define what these examples have in common and how they can form the basis of your approach

³⁶ Ibid, 6.

³⁷ Ibid, 7.

So, what is the practice of the Nexus platform, when it comes to the triple nexus?

This was a complex discussion, in which workshop participants and facilitators turned in circles, were often confused, but eventually emerged with a stronger sense both of what is already happening and what the Nexus members understand as important to integrate moving forward.

As with the first Learning Question, it was often easier to look at what is wrong with the way the majority of humanitarian responses in Somalia and Somaliland, than to extrapolate commonalities of good practice. However, the literature review showed Nexus members, that while there are theories and articulations for how to approach the triple nexus – there is no clear guide for what this looks like in practice at the field level.

Throughout the workshop, discussions were peppered with examples of a humanitarian response system that is mismatched with the long-term community needs. There were examples shared of IDPs who are registered with multiple NGOs at the same time for unconditional Cash transfers, women who were living from NGO cash transfers uninterested in finding alternate sources of income and local government agencies unable to deliver on strategies they developed in NGO or UN-led workshops. The picture Nexus members painted through these shared experiences was of a system which while its aim is to support

communities and to work with government and local actors, is inadvertently creating dependency and incentive structures which are skewing local resilience. For the full problem analysis please read the Perspective on Change document.

In programmatic terms, what Nexus members found to be qualities of projects or modalities which did not contribute to self-reliance and agency for Somalis were the following:

- Short-term CASH programmes, which are not accompanied with any other activities and are not well-coordinated with other humanitarian actors or the local government on the ground.
- Infrastructure projects, which communities do not feel ownership over and communities do not contribute to with their own funds or work – these tend to present aid dependency traps
- Projects that only follow the funding cycle of humanitarian donors rather than a timely and responsive project which is matched with community needs and asks

Prompted by the literature review and by reaching a shared understanding of what is wrong with taking a classic humanitarian approach to the multiple and protracted

crisis in Somalia, Nexus members began to articulate what the Nexus platforms approach to integrating a triple nexus in humanitarian programming, should look like. One source for that was to look at the track record of Nexus members to understand which projects we have delivered in the past, which we consider good humanitarian projects with an integration of the triple nexus approach.

Here are a few of those examples shared during the workshops:

Leveraging local knowledge and trust

CPD, supported by the SSF, worked in a few locations in Galkayo, which had similar characteristics: territorial lines by clan had been superseded by official administrative boundaries and investments in community infrastructure were unbalanced, fueling resentments and conflicts between neighbouring communities. A conflict dynamic, which was being exploited by Al Shabab, to whom many young people were turning for income, and causing a cycle of revenge killings. This was causing displacement and threatening people's security and disrupting livelihoods – causing humanitarian needs. Peace funds are viewed by many as a large pot of money, which become an additional resource to complete over, causing more conflict in some cases. CPD, which was already working with the communities involved, was able to dispel this assumption and do a full conflict analysis to understand the drivers of conflict in detail. We brought warring communities together and discussed what infrastructure was needed. Often the first priority was security and a police office, however, CPD staff members were able to convince communities to rather than invest in security, to invest in infrastructure that would bring people together, support other needs and facilitate dialogue – such as health clinics and youth centers. These projects were more cost-effective as CPD

did not need additional security budgets to travel and work with communities, we already had strong ties with them. These projects also tackled humanitarian needs by understanding and tackling the root causes of the conflict. The levels of consultation and contributions from communities translated into communities feeling ownership over the infrastructure we built together – these structures still exist and are operational today, many years later.

Building on communities' own fundraising abilities

Several Nexus members have leveraged communities experiencing humanitarian crises' ability to access funds such as remittances. HAVOYOCO, for example, trained many community members in fundraising strategies, which they can use to increase funds from the diaspora – these included discussing as groups which activities needed to be prioritized, costing them, sharing these priorities and costing with family abroad and continuously engaging with them to share how much money has been raised collectively and throughout the implementation of the activities, to update donors on progress. CPD managed to build an airfield by leveraging communities' connections with authorities and diaspora and matching the funds raised with donor funds.

Standardized Cash Transfers and Social Safety Nets

Nexus members have considerable experience implementing social safety nets and harmonizing cash standards in consortia. The Somalia Resilience Action consortium (STREAM) was comprised of Nexus member SADO, and a LINGO African Development Solutions, as well as the INGO ACTED. From December 2015 to June 2019, STREAM implemented a multisector, layered program based on the graduation model, directing over EUR 11 million in

Juba State and reaching 5,000 households across Kismayo (2,000), Afmadow (1,500), and Dhobley (1,500). By the conclusion of STREAM, the number of cash beneficiaries engaged in additional livelihoods enterprises had risen by 300%, there was a significant increase in the retention of livestock (80% retention), and there was a substantial increase in income diversity, with a total of 65% of cash beneficiaries having two or more income sources (as compared to only 15% of non-beneficiaries).

What are some cross-cutting elements from these, and other examples shared by Nexus members?

- Continuous engagement with communities in need before a project and after it has finished, changing the way we think of exit strategies
- Conflict-sensitive planning and engagement of relevant actors in the implementation and relying on local tacit knowledge
- Leveraging communities' strengths and assets and building on these, supporting their growth

“There is considerable tension between the concept of accountability to beneficiaries and its practice in humanitarian aid. The beneficiaries live in a relationship that is asymmetric; upward or horizontal accountability within the aid system alone even with the best of intentions might be short-sighted. Could beneficiaries be effectively involved in programing, priority setting or allocation of resources? Is there space for a right-based approach in aid delivery and operations? The mindset, governance and structure of operations in aid agencies may need significant institutional reform to share the process of decision-making, and to transform the current dynamic from connecting resources to brokering better governance, true collaboration and cooperation among all stakeholders.³⁸”

These discussions on both the localization and coalition as well as what a triple nexus meant in practice, led to Nexus re-working our mission and vision. For a full understanding of how Nexus Platform envisions humanitarian programmes which integrate the triple nexus and contribute to self-reliance and agency, read the Perspective of Change documents.

³⁸ Asgarya, R. Waldmand, R.J. (2017) The Elephant in the room: toward a more ethical approach with accountability toward intended beneficiaries in humanitarian aid, Int Health 2017; 9: 343–348, Accessed 10/1/2020

OLD Vision	New vision
<p>Contribute to the development of an economically vibrant and politically accountable Somalia and Somaliland that is peaceful, resilient and adaptive to current and future contexts.</p>	<p>Support a peaceful, socially and economically self-reliant Somali society</p>
OLD objective	New objective
<p>Ensure Somali-led humanitarian responses that are more efficient, effective and community-driven</p>	<p>Deliver a Somali-led humanitarian system that increases agency of communities, promoting self-reliance through the triple nexus.</p>
Remarks/summary of discussion	
<p>Very much in line common mainstream visions of 'localization', is overused.</p> <p>This vision and objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does focus on leadership of local NGO's in the hum. Aid system. - is not very action oriented - does not tackle the issue that the current system generates dependency (both of affected people as well as local national ngo's) - does not take a transformative approach to localization, - does (fully) acknowledge the power and agency of (local) communities - Leaves out the connection between hum. aid development and peace building. - focus on efficiency leads to quick and dirty responses, not to thorough programmes that address peace, aid, and development - does not make clear what is unique (added value) of Nexus <p>A new vision can be bolder, more geared towards transforming power relations in the current humanitarian system.</p>	<p>This new vision and objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focuses on Somali leadership through Somali-led <i>delivery</i> (as opposed to <i>ensure</i>) of hum. Responses, implies (increased) independence of Somali-actors/ a system that can react to crises independently. - -Is more transformative by focusing on self-reliance, as opposed to dependency. - -Explicitly acknowledges agency of (local) communities. - -Leaves out the old and more mainstream adage of efficiency of aid delivery, which hampers transferring power to Somali NGO's. - -Clarifies Nexus unique (added) value, that is, possible through programmes integrating hum aid, development, and peace programming.

Women's leadership at the Triple Nexus

The various perspectives on localization explored in this literature review reflect differing, sometimes intersecting paradigms and approaches, with different sets of priorities. However, women's empowerment is a unifying, common thread across these and feminist approaches have been found to be quintessential to localization. This section of our synthesis seeks to move from theory to practice by focusing on women's empowerment - asking how women's empowerment outcomes (and women's leadership in turn) are factors in the effectiveness of locally-led humanitarian response, before organizing some metrics of success in women's leadership that are relevant to the Somali context.

Women's leadership could be expressed through many traditional and nontraditional forms in humanitarian contexts from "organizing and delivering basic needs for families and communities to women taking up economic and political leadership roles."³⁹ Oxfam Canada has accounted for this diversity through its definition of women's rights actors.⁴⁰ Across the literature, women's leadership is a precursor to women's empowerment outcomes.

However, women's leadership takes form, women's empowerment in humanitarian response matters. Arguments for empowering women before, during and within humanitarian interventions can be grouped into (at least) three clusters on the following grounds:

1. **As an intrinsic or fundamental manifestation of women's rights.**

Perhaps reflecting the indisputable commonality of women's empowerment amongst the paradigms explored in our synthesis. Women hold fundamental rights to be involved in the decision making that affects their lives. These rights are articulated in a number of international legal frameworks, and the mainstreaming of gender into the practices of the humanitarian sector has been undertaken partly in recognition of these rights.

Unfortunately, women remain largely excluded from the discourses and operationalization of humanitarian aid and development, and gender disparities remain throughout more mainstream reforms. Take the localization of humanitarian aid: It has been observed that the bulk of 'localized' aid has been received by male-dominated organizations and networks,⁴¹ likely a consequence of women's underrepresentation within the decision-making structures and coordination mechanisms of humanitarian aid writ large.⁴²

2. **Because gender equality outcomes enhance broader humanitarian outcomes, particularly in terms of efficiency and sustainability.⁴³**

³⁹ Lambert, Rhodes, and Zaaroura, "A Feminist Approach to Localisation," 3.

⁴⁰ See previous citation, in which women's rights actors are defined as local and national organizations, activists and movements which are primarily women-led and have a rights-based transformative, and an intersectional approach.

⁴¹ Latimir and Mollett, "Not What She Bargained for? Gender and the Grand Bargain."

⁴² Parke et al., "Preliminary Research Summary: A Feminist Exploration of Women-Led Localisation in the Central Sulawesi Response," 1.

⁴³ Alison Barclay, Michelle Higelin, and Melissa Bungcaras, "On the Frontline: Catalysing Women's Leadership in Humanitarian Action" (ActionAid International, 2016), 11.

Whether through grassroots nontraditional political and economic action or traditional humanitarian action, evidence indicates that women's leadership leads to more effective humanitarian responses.⁴⁴ Local women are well positioned to "mobilize change, identify solutions, and spontaneously respond to crises."⁴⁵ Moreover, publications have shown that women leaders and women's rights organizations can better spot early warning signs of a crisis,⁴⁶ can access areas where international actors have not been able to reach or remain,⁴⁷ avoid one-size fits all approaches that are far more common in international organizations working across the globe,⁴⁸ and are more likely to pursue more innovative programming that risk-averse international organizations are unwilling to engage with.⁴⁹

Upon review of the literature, it has been argued that the incorporation of women and women's rights actors at the local level is essential for achieving the objectives of both the localization agenda and the triple nexus approach. Women's leadership is a necessary component of successful locally-led humanitarian coalition building, and women's rights actors are more likely to consider humanitarian issues in a more inclusive and nuanced lens that traverses the triple nexus of humanitarian

aid, development assistance, and peacebuilding.⁵⁰

3. In response to gender-specific experiences of women in humanitarian settings

Underlying societal gender-based inequities persist even in the best of times, and in times of crisis these inequities are only exacerbated. Crises "tend to reinforce traditional gender roles, with women as primary caretakers,"⁵¹ and studies have found that instances of both domestic and sexual violence increase in the aftermath of crisis.⁵² Other studies detail the ways in which protracted and recurrent droughts can lead to an increase in instances of practices that are harmful to women.⁵³ In short, women experience a particular class of vulnerability before, during and after crisis, and this must be accounted for in humanitarian response.

To account for the gender-specific for women in humanitarian settings, Sector best practices emphasize the importance of gender mainstreaming.⁵⁴ The process of mainstreaming gender, according to the UN, entails integrating and "assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action... in all areas and at all levels" and making gender analysis an "integral dimension of the design, implementation,

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ "Promoting the Rights, Needs and Agency of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action" (New York City, USA: UN Women, 2015).

⁴⁶ Lambert, Rhodes, and Zaaroura, "A Feminist Approach to Localisation," 6.

⁴⁷ Lindley-Jones, "Women Responders: Placing Local Action at the Centre of Humanitarian Protection Programming."

⁴⁸ Lambert, Rhodes, and Zaaroura, "A Feminist Approach to Localisation," 14.

⁴⁹ Janaka Jayawickrama and Bushra Rehman, "Before Defining What Is Local, Let's Build the Capacities of Humanitarian Agencies," *Refugee Hosts* (blog), April 10, 2018, 18; <https://refugeehosts.org/2018/04/10/before-defining-what-is-local-lets-build-the-capacities-of-humanitarian-agencies/>.

⁵⁰ Barclay, Higelin, and Bungcaras, "On the Frontline: Catalysing Women's Leadership in Humanitarian Action."

⁵¹ Tara R. Gingerich, "Turning the Humanitarian System on Its Head," Oxfam Research Reports (Oxford, UK: Oxfam America and Oxfam GB, 2015), 19.

⁵² Elizabeth G. Ferris, "Unseen, Unheard: Gender-Based Violence in Disasters Global Study" (Geneva, Switzerland: © International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2015).

⁵³ Opondo, Maggia, Ubah Abdi, and Patricia Nangiro, "Assessing gender in resilience programming: Uganda," (2016) BRACED

⁵⁴ "World Food Programme Gender Policy 2015-2020" (Rome, Italy: World Food Programme, 2015), https://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/communications/wfp276754.pdf?_ga=2.163746815.1971635147.1587409453-768536263.1579676855.

monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes.”⁵⁵ Gender integration is not, however, meant to replace gender-targeted programming, which entails programming specifically to address the issues of women and girls. Gender mainstreaming, therefore, consists of a dual-track system within which gender integration and gender targeting are equally important.⁵⁶

Enabling and Doing Women’s Leadership at the Triple Nexus

Gender inequality in Somalia is particularly deep-rooted. Important reforms, such as the creation of the Ministry of Women and Human Rights in 2013, have been undermined by stalling of other important and substantive changes to the function of government. For instance, the National Gender Policy Plan, approved by the Council of Ministers in 2016, has failed to be ratified, and has even faced opposition from important cultural forces, including the Somali Religious Council, which has denounced the policy and a gender quota for parliament as unislamic.⁵⁷

Thus, as the Nexus platform undertakes deliberation on a locally-led approach to humanitarian response at the triple nexus the platform must look to enable women’s leadership at all levels. Programmatic adjustments will be required. Such adjustments should seek to streamline gender into all programming. Programs should include specific gender-targeted features implemented under do-no harm guidelines, and protection should be a prominent feature of all humanitarian programming.

Moreover, programmatic objectives should take a broader scope to include social reform and rights-based approaches that inculcate social changes at all levels of society. Such programming is transformative in nature and is geared to affect fundamental, lasting and structural change that challenges inequality.⁵⁸ Oxfam’s Transformative Gender Leadership programming is an important example of programming that develops women leaders, builds alliances with women’s rights actors, and pursues structural change at multiple levels of society. These objectives embody gender-informed programming that operates at the triple nexus by pursuing long-term reform and support local women’s rights organizations.

Reviewing a range of gender audits for programs in Somalia and parallel circumstances - appealing to a broad range of qualitative and quantitative indicators - and related literature, we find the following definitions of success to be useful metrics of the parameters of women’s leadership at the triple nexus. These are not exhaustive and deal - somewhat superficially - with the delivery of programming, rather than the deeper cultural or organisational shifts that may be required to substantiate these changes (see below):

- Gender equality is a stated goal or outcome (a loose estimate of 2% of humanitarian interventions can make this claim work)⁵⁹
- Specific activities to empower women are incorporated in project logics.
- Women hold key decision-making positions within disaster responses and disaster preparedness efforts,⁶⁰

⁵⁵ “GENDER MAINSTREAMING: A GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY & THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS” (New York City, NY: UN Women, 2020).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ “Country Policy and Information Note Somalia: Women Fearing Gender- Based Violence” (London, UK: Department for International Development (DFID)/Country of Origin Information (COI), 2018), 10.

⁵⁸ Jeanette Kloosterman, “Transformative Leadership for Women’s Rights” (Oxford, UK: Oxfam GB, 2014), 5.

⁵⁹ ref

⁶⁰ See especially United Nations, Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, A/CONF.206/6 (Jan. 2005), Section III (B), <http://www.refworld.org/docid/42b98a704.html>,

including in both NGOs and the community structures they work with and through.

- The proportionally higher effects the crisis has on women's lives, gender-specific experiences of women in humanitarian settings (see 3 above) are demonstrably taken into account in humanitarian and emergency response planning - for example in risk and context analyses.

Inclusive coalition building, as covered in the literature review, is a closely related and similarly critical point of analysis in any process to enable women's leadership at the triple nexus. As per the framework for inclusive coalition building, we outlined above, the first step may be to prominently feature women-led and women's rights organizations. Coalitions should also consider avenues to partner with and leverage the knowledge and networks of women's rights actors, such as local activists, movements, and nonformal grassroots organizers. Engaging with women's rights actors should adhere to basic principles that include respecting the priorities of women's rights actors, providing compensation and support for the time that women's rights actors provide, and seeing women's rights actors as experts in their situation.⁶¹

Moreover, inclusive coalition building must consider informal and nontraditional women's rights actors.⁶² In times of crisis, women often collectively organize responses to different issues or around specific identities.⁶³ These informal actors must be taken into account during humanitarian responses and could further serve as important focal points for programming

that effectively positions women in leadership roles at the triple nexus.

Thus, inclusive coalition building in pursuance of realizing women's leadership at the triple nexus could be characterized by long-term and mutually beneficial partnerships with women's rights actors that keep in mind the pitfalls of the partnerships that local actors experience with internationals to prevent exploitative arrangements. Partnership models can review best-practices of the international sector to minimize the deficiencies of the partnership model, provide effective capacity building for women's rights actors where needed, and seek to build up one another through an iterative process of south-to-south learning. As suggested above, ensuring gender sensitivity in programs is not a substitute for the organizational realization of women's leadership. This calls for longer term and deeper organizational reform.

Enabling women's leadership at the triple nexus requires increased emphasis on gender issues in humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actions - and these are deep-seeded cultural and organizational shifts. Raising the prominence of women's voices begins, therefore, in the organizational structures and the membership of the Nexus platform. A starting point may be to consider the percentage of women in leadership positions for the platform's planned humanitarian activities. From this vantage point, the broader women's empowerment circumstances could be interrogated.

Throughout the workshops Nexus members made clear **that understanding gender**

UN HFA priorities for action. For assessments of how countries are performing in these areas, see UNISDR, —Annex 3: Progress in Implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action in Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2013: From Shared Risk to Shared Value: The Business Case for Disaster Risk Reduction (Geneva: 2013); UNISDR, Implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action: Summary of Reports 2007-2013 (Geneva, ISDR, 2013), http://www.preventionweb.net/files/32916_implementationofthehyogoframeworkfo.pdf; PreventionWeb, —HFA National Progress Reports, <http://www.preventionweb.net/english/hyogo/progress/reports/?pid:223&pil:1>. In TURNING SYSTEM ON HEAD

⁶¹ Care International has provided insight into principles for humanitarian response leaders that Nexus would do well to note. CARE_Women-responders-report, 6-7

⁶² Oxfam, Feminist Approach to Localization

⁶³ CARE Women Responders Report 2018, 18.

dynamics and inequalities and how to change these was work that required a culturally and religious grounding and could not simply be about transposing outside feminist thinking into Somali programming of humanitarian systems.

Therefore, Nexus members will be working on developing a gender approach rooted in Islam and Somali culture. Please read more on this in the Perspective on Change and the Implementation Plan.

Humanitarian Principles

One of the critiques of a triple nexus approach identified in the literature is whether and how humanitarian principles would be adhered to. During the workshops, Nexus members discussed this based on our own experience of upholding these principles and sought more insights from the literature.

“Humanity and impartiality in particular are principles that give humanitarian assistance meaning and purpose. Neutrality and independence are derived principles, instrumental in realizing the first two. These latter two principles should therefore perhaps be seen in a different light for local actors compared to their international colleagues.”⁶⁴

Humanity and Impartiality: issues of access in ‘hard to reach areas’

“Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings.”⁶⁵

Seen through the intersection of ethics and humanitarian principles, the obligation to involve local communities in humanitarian response relates to fundamental ethical obligations of justice that involve fairness in decision-making, may help facilitate respect for local community norms, and could improve an organizations’ ability

to deliver aid to communities in need, thereby meeting humanitarian obligations of *humanity*⁶⁶.

A systematic literature review⁶⁷ exploring the ethical application of humanitarian principles in conflict, identified the following chain-effect that impacts the ability of humanitarian actors to provide assistance in line with the humanitarian principles: “Societal breakdowns, the loss of normal order, and punitive actions against humanitarian organizations severely limit their ability to fulfill their duty of *humanity*. Violent threats, abduction, torture, and murder of humanitarian workers; blockade and theft of materials and supplies; and the elimination of access to or destruction of facilities also drastically impede humanitarian missions. Efforts to avoid violence, such as concentrating operations in safe or comparatively secure areas, preclude access or attention to the *most vulnerable and in need*.”

In line with the Core Humanitarian Standards (2014) *impartiality* requires humanitarian actors to target the ‘most in need’. Meanwhile, in many countries, a number of areas have been labelled as ‘hard to reach.’ This is a disturbing trend as it is precisely in these areas where humanitarian capacity should be prioritised. The needs of people are likely to be the highest and most urgent in such areas with high levels of violence and insecurity. The ‘hard to reach’ label has become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

⁶⁴ Schenkenberg van Mierop, Ed (2019) Local humanitarian actors and the principle of impartiality, Accessed 1/10/2020 https://www.chaberlin.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/humhilfe-studie-unparteilichkeit_2018_Mierop_EN.pdf

⁶⁵ UNOCHA (2012) On Message: Humanitarian https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples_eng_June12.pdf

⁶⁶ Broussard, G., Rubenstein, L.S., Robinson, C. et al. (2019) Challenges to ethical obligations and humanitarian principles in conflict settings: a systematic review. *Int J Humanitarian Action* 4, 15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-019-0063> Accessed 1/10/2020

⁶⁷ Broussard, G., Rubenstein, L.S., Robinson, C. et al. (2019) Challenges to ethical obligations and humanitarian principles in conflict settings: a systematic review. *Int J Humanitarian Action* 4, 15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-019-0063> Accessed 1/10/2020

Many humanitarian organizations find it too risky to visit these areas to deliver assistance and have instead prioritised other less volatile areas for which funding is also relatively easy to obtain⁶⁸. As a result, ‘most in need’ is one aspect of *impartiality* that has been neglected.

A culture of remote management and ‘risk transfer’ practices for hard-to-reach areas, with many international organizations basing their headquarters in regional hubs, often outside of the country (Gazientep, Beirut, Amman, Nairobi). This unethical culture of ‘risk transfer’ has become endemic and accepted in insecure, protracted conflicts, with international or non-local actors transferring dangerous assignments to individuals outside their organization - usually to local actors - to protect its own workers at the expense of others’ safety⁶⁹. The very fact that local organizations are working in hard-to-reach areas, is demonstrative of how central impartiality is in guiding our work.

Operational independence & Neutrality:

Humanitarians, together with the private sector and clan networks, have long been the primary providers of basic services and social protection in Somalia⁷⁰. Most Somali NGOs are identified with a particular clan or sub-clan and tend to work in the areas where this clan or sub-clan is dominant. Tensions can exist within the dominant clan in a particular area or between dominant and marginalised/minority clans. Understanding clan and other local dynamics, including the role of an agency’s own staff in the political

economy of aid, is important for all agencies. A primary challenge to *neutrality* relates to perceptions that humanitarian assistance is innately political and that the very act of working in conflict settings implied some type of political affiliation⁷¹.

Lessons learned for other LNNGOs seeking to replicate:

- The literature provides prompts to think approaches through
- Own experiences can offer additional prompts
- Have open, honest dialogue around these challenges, cultivating a spirit of mutual learning, rather than maintaining a hypocritical pretext that overburdens local and national NGOs with the challenges in fully implementing and operationalizing the humanitarian principles

The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief notes concerns for *operational independence* and requires that the signatories “shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy”. The ICRC recognizes the risk in accepting donor funds, which may make NGOs complicit in the political objectives of the donor governments. With the localization agenda encouraging direct financing from donors to local NGOs, this is a potential reality. In contested areas, or areas controlled by specific non-state actors, it may pose a serious security risk for

⁶⁸ Schenkenberg van Mierop, Ed (2019) Local humanitarian actors and the principle of impartiality, Accessed 1/10/2020 https://www.chaberlin.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/humhilfe-studie-unparteilichkeit_2018_Mierop_EN.pdf

⁶⁹ Broussard, G., Rubenstein, L.S., Robinson, C. et al. (2019) Challenges to ethical obligations and humanitarian principles in conflict settings: a systematic review. *Int J Humanitarian Action* 4, 15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-019-0063> Accessed 1/10/2020

⁷⁰ Alfonso Medinilla, Lidet Tadesse Shiferaw and Pauline Veron (2019) Think local. Governance, humanitarian aid, development and peacebuilding in Somalia, ECDPM Discussion paper 246, <https://ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/DP246-march-2019-think-local-Governance-humanitarian-aid-development-peacebuilding-Somalia-ECDPM.pdf>

⁷¹ Broussard, G., Rubenstein, L.S., Robinson, C. et al. (2019) Challenges to ethical obligations and humanitarian principles in conflict settings: a systematic review. *Int J Humanitarian Action* 4, 15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-019-0063> Accessed 1/10/2020

Local and National NGOs, to be perceived as receiving funding from particular donors and implementing 'foreign agendas'. A 2011 study commissioned by the UN Integration Steering Group highlighted that "being perceived as part of the UN's political or peacekeeping agenda was of particular concern to UN and non-UN humanitarian actors in Afghanistan, DRC and Somalia because the UN missions in these contexts ... [were] deemed to be supporting a particular actor in the conflict."⁷² However, donors do not hesitate to support the UN in Somalia, despite this perceived bias and lack of neutrality, as the UN in working on the alongside the actor donors wish to see succeed.

Moreover, a 2017 report by UNOCHA and NRC condemns a practice by some donor countries, to push humanitarian actors to operate in areas controlled by proscribed groups, while, paradoxically, these same donor governments impose restrictions on or otherwise discourage the sorts of 'acceptance-oriented' engagement with those groups that is necessary to gain access to these locations⁷³. The report suggests that counterterrorism restrictions may lead some humanitarian actors to self-censor, neglecting areas under the influence of proscribed groups – in direct contravention of the principles of Humanity and Impartiality. According to OCHA, this became evident during the 2011 famine in Somalia, as some humanitarian actors faced an impossible choice: between engaging with Al-Shabaab for access to starving populations at the cost of violating counterterrorism restrictions or doing nothing in the face of catastrophic famine. Many engaged in 'ad hoc' private negotiations, and Al-Shabaab was able to use humanitarian

actors against one another due to the lack of openness and coordination among humanitarian aid agencies. OCHA states that important lessons must be learned: "humanitarian actors that succeeded in providing aid in areas under Al-Shabaab's control, without paying taxes or ceding control of their programming, pursued rigorous, structured engagement with the group at all levels, from the senior leadership shura to ground-level fighters. This required significant resources and time devoted to understanding the group, developing relationships, and pursuing dialogue."⁷⁴

In addition, operational independence requires local and national NGOs to maintain autonomy vis-à-vis national or local authorities. For L/NGOs maintaining operational independence, both from national and international interference is critical to ensuring our legitimacy and maintaining trust with communities, crucial to facilitating access to deliver humanitarian assistance, particularly in 'hard to reach' areas. However, ultimately the responsibility for responding to, and protecting citizens from humanitarian crises should rest with government actors; the humanitarian system, as it currently operates in Somalia, creates parallel systems that undermines and circumvents citizen-state relations. In protracted crises, humanitarian interventions must work to strengthen local capacities, in order to build resilience against future crises. In working to strengthen local capacities, both government, civil society and private sector, the humanitarian system must work to redefine operational independence, to support the implementation of policies of the legitimate duty bearers.

⁷² UNOCHA, NRC, JSIA (2017) Presence & Proximity: To stay and deliver – five years on, Ashley Jackson and Steven A. Zych Accessed 1/10/2020 <https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Presence%20and%20Proximity.pdf>

⁷³ UNOCHA, NRC, JSIA (2017) Presence & Proximity: To stay and deliver – five years on, Ashley Jackson and Steven A. Zych Accessed 1/10/2020 <https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Presence%20and%20Proximity.pdf>

⁷⁴ See Mackintosh and Duplat, Study of the Impact of Donor Counterterrorism Measures. Also Counterterrorism and Humanitarian Engagement Project, Counterterrorism and Humanitarian Engagement in Somalia and Mali; Maxwell and Majid, Another Humanitarian Crisis in Somalia? Learning from the 2011 Famine; Jackson and Aynte, Talking to the Other Side: Humanitarian Negotiations with al-Shabaab in Somalia.

This is a delicate balance to negotiate in practice, however, as throughout south-central Somalia, armed actors such as clan militias as well as local authorities impose restrictions, threats and conditions on the delivery of humanitarian aid. In the areas it controls, Al Shabaab continues to make it difficult – but not impossible – for aid organizations to work. This is done by banning or obstructing their work or otherwise imposing conditions, such as requests for payments or demands to hire particular staff. In all areas, aid organizations have to consider how to resist such pressures, withdraw, and/or decide what type of programmes to deliver and what level of compromise might be acceptable⁷⁵.

The OCHA Presence & Proximity report also recommends that “strategic hiring practices are important, particularly employing individuals with broad social networks, geographically relevant connections, and strong negotiation abilities... [who] have pre-existing connections to parties to the conflict... [and] emphasized the importance of having connections to community leaders, and of hiring field staff who could engage effectively with the community because of not only their skills but also their ethnicity, local ties, age, and/or gender⁷⁶.”

Such recommendations highlight the tension between humanity and impartiality when confronted with hiring practices that clearly violate *neutrality*, but recognize the operational imperative to ‘work politically’ in order to ensure assistance is provided impartially on the basis of need and to preserve human life and dignity.

This discussion highlights the importance of open, honest dialogue around these challenges, cultivating a spirit of mutual learning, rather than maintaining a hypocritical pretext that overburdens local and national NGOs with the challenges in fully implementing and operationalizing the humanitarian principles. It will be important for L/NNGOs to articulate clear criteria around receiving funding from international donors, as well as engagement strategies with state and non-state actors (e.g. reviewing the applicability of the ‘Ground Rules in Somalia’) and ‘red lines’ in hard to access areas, guided by the principles of Humanity and Impartiality, whilst recognizing the challenges in achieving full operational independence and neutrality for all actors on the ground.

⁷⁵ Secure Access in Volatile Environments: Somalia Access and Aid Quality Background Brief 2015 Accessed 1/10/2020 https://www.gppi.net/media/SAVE_2015_Somalia_access_and_aid_quality_Background_Brief.pdf

⁷⁶ UNOCHA, NRC, JSIA (2017) Presence & Proximity: To stay and deliver – five years on, Ashley Jackson and Steven A. Zych Accessed 1/10/2020 <https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Presence%20and%20Proximity.pdf>

Additional Learning Questions

As mentioned above, additionally to the main two learning questions, there are a few additional one explored below.

What are the different risks for all actors, and how can we take these into account in the implementation of a response?

It is widely documented that often the security risks in Somalia are higher for local and national partners as we are often subcontracted for the very reason that we are able to access areas which are under the control of armed groups or where tensions are higher. For the implementation, the security risks will be carried by the Nexus implementing partners and will require active management and support from Oxfam and the DRA. In the Implementation Plan, there is more detail on the risk mitigation strategies.

The industry's current risk management approach is often focused overwhelmingly on fiduciary risk and combined with the lack of sustained investment in capacity-strengthening or core organizational costs, this leads to local NGOs not being provided with the support required to address either safeguarding or wider risk management priorities. The Nexus platform has a strong focus on institutional capacity strengthening and sharing of ICR will support nexus members to build up this area of work.

The financial risks, such as mismanagement of funds, fraud, corruption, diversion exist for all partners managing part of the budget. This risk is also a reputational risk for Oxfam as the fund manager, but as well as Nexus in general, impacting other Nexus members if there is fraud or mismanagement in one partner.

What do quality partnerships look like in our context?

With Nexus vision of localisation clarified through this process and articulated in detail in the Perspective on Change, what partnerships look like also becomes clearer. Not only should partnerships be equal, but transformational with the vision in mind that the Somali humanitarian system should be centered around the Somali government and Somali civil society, not international actors. The fund management structure and the sharing of indirect cost recovery (ICR) as outlined in the Implementation Plan speaks to this. Nexus members' partnerships with each other are strengthened by governance structures and decision-making processes and by a shared vision and goals.

Donors can support through raising the visibility of local partners. Recognizing and promoting the role and work of local actors in emergencies contributes to local actors' visibility, brand, and capacity for fundraising, communications, and advocacy. It helps debunk negative stereotypes about local humanitarian actors and end the systematic ways in which we are denied funding, visibility, power, and a strong voice in decision-making

Donors can also broker direct contact between local partners and other donors. Funding is a key element in partnership dynamics and in enabling local humanitarian leadership. The direct contact between local actors and donors can include participation at funding meetings. This is also in line with the Grand Bargain Agreement.

Transforming the humanitarian system to allow for more local humanitarian actions means creating space for Local Humanitarian Leadership. This requires local to global efforts to develop strong policy and advocacy strategies to influence

the policies and practices of donors, UN, governments and INGOs that currently limit the roles of national and local actors. This could include supporting local actors' engagement and participation in debates and relevant political processes, both as individual actors and collectively or support women's leadership by creating spaces and support opportunities for women leaders' effective participation and involvement in humanitarian responses and localization processes. Donors could also advocate more strongly with UN, other donor governments and INGOs to challenge assumptions, practices, and policies which limit progress on local humanitarian leadership.

How could leadership of national organizations in decision making and a locally-led collaborative model contribute to enhanced timeliness, efficiency and effectiveness in humanitarian response? What is the value add of decentralised decision making processes (funding decisions) in relation to tackling challenges at hand in the current model?

As identified within the first learning question, access, stakeholder engagement, and contextual knowledge contribute to enhanced timeliness, efficiency and effectiveness in humanitarian response.

While LNGOs are usually not associated with the more traditional forms of power, including financial and technical power, they possess a wealth of power in terms of local, context-specific knowledge and access to local networks. They know how to navigate within their societies. These forms of power should be valued much more than is currently the case within the humanitarian system, and should guide who leads on decision-making with regard to humanitarian responses.

But beyond that the sustainability and ownership of any response and subsequent response or development work, is strengthened when the leaders of the response are embedded within Somali society, whether this is at the community level or at the organizational level. This is further elaborated in the Perspective on Change and the Implementation Plan.

Reducing layers and taking decisions closest to where they need to be implemented allows for greater timelines: a critical aspect in many cases, but even more so in humanitarian response when life-saving activities are being implemented. Making decisions as locally as possible prevents delays due to existing bureaucratic hurdles. More context appropriate decisions, taken by local actors, will also lead to more effective humanitarian responses. While international actors can provide valuable input in terms of sharing of examples from other responses, local actors are best placed to assess what would work in their specific context and what would be appreciated by the community, addressing effectively people's needs.

Localized decision-making also increases the power and the feeling of empowerment of the local actors. This has many positive effects, including greater ownership, creativity and innovation. This applies both to local humanitarian actors, but also to the affected communities themselves.

For Nexus, localized decision-making and responses are not only about efficiency, but they are profoundly political and have the potential to transform the humanitarian system and the effects on affected communities.

Conclusion

The theoretical work and reflections on localization and the triple nexus approach we found in the literature, helped us to strengthen our own vision and mission and prompted our thinking on what we want to achieve with our humanitarian work.

This process has both sharpened Nexus critique of the current humanitarian system and the ways in which it can and should be changed through programming differently, building local organizations capacity and advocating to the most powerful actors to join the shift in how responses are designed and implemented and who should be the rightful owners. We need more actors within the humanitarian system to understand localization is not about efficiency it is about power, ownership, long-term sustainability-issues the humanitarian system has long been grappling with.

For us, it is not about effectiveness alone, a locally-led platform doing integrates

Nexus humanitarian work is what is needed for building on the self-reliance of Somalis in need and for building a sector that centers around the rightful owners - Somali civil society and Somali government actors. Localization as agreed within the Grand bargain is part of the road to that vision and crucially it has concrete deliverables (it 'has teeth'), but it insufficiently captures what the Nexus platform is striving for.

The humanitarian system in Somalia and humanitarian responses as designed by most humanitarian donors and delivered by NGOs is designed for acute crisis - but insufficiently identified and categorized and analysis and prioritizes in a protracted crisis and in fact creates systems of dependence that undermine longer-term development. This is not an abstract critique but one that is grounded in experience and one which has real impact on vulnerable people's lives now.

Acknowledgements

DRA 2.0.

The [Dutch Relief Alliance \(DRA\)](#) is a coalition of 15 Dutch aid organizations in partnership with the [Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) (MoFA). The structure of the DRA enables participating NGOs to respond to major international crises in a timely and effective manner. The DRA responds to humanitarian crises by designing Joint Responses (JR) drawn up and implemented by the members best placed to respond to a crisis. DRA Joint Responses are underway in, amongst others, Nigeria, the Central African Republic (CAR), South Sudan, Yemen, Sudan, the Syria region, and Somalia.

In 2019, the DRA initiated a pilot project, which “should stretch us in our thinking and imagination around collaboration, building on what we have achieved already”⁷⁷. In the initial phase, the successful applicant to the DRA Pilot programme is tasked to develop a process, which will lead to the implementation of a pilot that will test ways to take DRAJR experiences to a next level and further improve collaboration for increased effectiveness of emergency interventions. The ultimate goal of the pilot is to test if/whether putting in practice the Future DRA principles in a JR allows the DRA collective to improve cooperation between members to increase the effectiveness of emergency aid interventions.

In this context, DRA means the following by ‘Improvement’:

- Local ownership/leadership for the sustainability of results
- Allow for long-term focus beyond emergency response
- Improved/ increased impact
- Create possibilities for attracting additional funding

This pilot project was an opportunity for the Nexus platform to more clearly articulate and plan its humanitarian pillar of work. In doing so, the pilot developed intervention strategies that traverse the (traditional) boundaries of development, humanitarian and peace programming that have a more long-term perspective and bring continuity in responding to the many recurrent crises Somalia currently faces. Moreover, to overcome the structural inequities present in the Somali humanitarian system, the pilot mapped out pathways to shift power towards Somali humanitarian actors. Thus, moving from a predominantly internationally led humanitarian system in Somalia towards a humanitarian system where local organizations are in the driver’s seat.

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This paper is the result of a series of workshops attended by all Nexus members. Executive and Deputy Directors and Humanitarian staff included:

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⁷⁷ From the Call for Proposals DRA 2.0. document

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The herein included literature review completed by Alexander Fenwick and Rowan Harrity.



ABOUT NEXUS:

Nexus is a paradigm-shifting platform of Somali civil society, strategically investing in the institutions of civil society and government to lead the way in identifying, scaling and integrating community-owned and driven solutions to humanitarian, development and peacebuilding needs.



KAALO
Aid and Development Org.

