

Center for Strategic and International Studies

TRANSCRIPT

Online Event

# **“Report Launch: Localizing Humanitarian Action in Africa”**

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FEATURING

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*Country Representative (Ethiopia), Catholic Relief Services*

**Nimo Hassan**

*Director, Somalia NGO Consortium*

**Chilande Kuloba-Warria**

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Jacob Kurtzer: Good morning and good afternoon to those of you watching. We're so grateful that you're able to join us here at the Center for Strategic and International Studies for today's discussion. My name is Jake Kurtzer. I'm the director and senior fellow of the Humanitarian Agenda.

And I'm really excited for this conversation about what is truly a critical and, in many ways the most critical issue, in the humanitarian sector today. How can we improve upon the efforts towards localizing humanitarian action in Africa? For this particular project, I've been really privileged to work with our colleagues in the Africa Program, the director of the Africa Program Mvemba Dizolele, my colleague Catherine Nzuki. I want to acknowledge the support of the team of the Humanitarian Agenda, Hareem Abdullah, and Jude Larnerd. And in particular the partnership with Humanity United, to dig into this question of why have the localization efforts not achieved the success that people have wanted so far?

In some ways, localization has been baked into the humanitarian initiatives since the sector became formalized in the middle of the 19th century. The Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, founded on the idea of national societies leading humanitarian response, was very much born of this idea that the first responders are the people in affected communities. And yet, at some point over time, as the sector formalized, that modality changed. And humanitarian action became dominated by Western donors, by actors based out of New York or Geneva, by international NGOs. And that piece of the puzzle, that share of the pie shrank, and shrank, and shrank to the place we are today, where humanitarian action is dominated by the ideas, the thinking, and the action of international NGOs not based in the context in which they're working.

And we know that over the past 20 years there have been multiple efforts to rectify this, both at the individual state level, with commitments from USAID administrators, at the World Humanitarian Summit with commitments towards an increasing percentage of the funding. And yet, those commitments haven't manifested at the scale and the speed of which we all believe is necessary. And there's a whole host of reasons why that may be. And Mvemba and I, and our colleagues, have put together a paper on some of those that have percolated up. But one of the things that we've identified as most important is that the voices of the affected population, the voices of those African CSOs at the local or national level, are not necessarily being heard and listened to in the way that they should be.

And so, we're really grateful today for our esteemed panel to join us to talk through this question of what is localization in reality? Why hasn't it

manifested? What are the challenges? And what are the opportunities going forward to improve the way that the humanitarian sector responds now and into the future to humanitarian challenges in Africa? So, once again, I'm extremely grateful for the partnership with Humanity United, for my partnership with my colleague, Mvemba. And I'd like to turn it over to you, Mvemba, director of the Africa Program, to lead the rest of our conversation. Thank you, again, for joining us.

Mvemba Phezo  
Dizolele:

Thank you very much, Jake. Welcome, everyone, to this discussion today, which we think is very important. We are excited to be able to discuss and dissect this work that put together. Humanitarian work is one that calls for teamwork. Humanitarian work, like Jake has highlighted, has various parts to it. Therefore, for it to be effective it calls for inclusion and diversity of thought and perspective, and particularly the representation of the recipient of that initiative, that action. We've seen in the past that good intentions do not always lead to good result, and sometimes can be quite counterproductive.

We salute all the activists, all the NGOs that are doing hard work there. But we've also had to learn the hard way, from certain experiences. One experience that we flag in the report is the conflict mineral initiative that brought a lot of NGOs, a lot of activists, but for the most part did not take into consideration the Congolese voices. In this case, I'm talking about a conflict in eastern Congo. So, it raised the profile, but it did not particularly go to the heart of the matter.

For those of us who are sitting in London, in Washington, and other capitals, we often have the privilege of interacting with policymakers in the ways that people in the south do not have. So, it's then incumbent on us to take that responsibility seriously, so that we are representing the challenge the right way. It's easy to dilute the narrative when the narrative is, in fact a key component to this action here. So, I think there are a lot of lesson that we pick from the conflict minerals campaign that was successful in many ways, but also fell short in other dimensions.

Today I'm really excited and delighted to engage our esteemed panel, which is made of: Nimo Hassan, who is joining us from Hargeisa; Chilande Kuloba-Warria who is joining us from Nairobi; Zemedu Zewdie, joining us from Addis Ababa; and Dr. Joseph Sany, joining us from Washington, D.C. So, without further ado, I will turn the time to our first discussant, the first panelist, which is Ms. Nimo Hassan. The floor is yours. Welcome.

Nimo Hassan:

Thank you so much. And thank you for the introduction and thank you for having us here for this very important and timely discussion. I'd like to start with giving a little bit of background to participants of what the

Somali NGO Consortium does. It a coordination forum of NGOs working in Somalia, in Somaliland. The platform brings together all NGOs for the purpose of coordination, information sharing, advocacy and humanitarian development and peacebuilding, representation to governments, U.N. agencies and development groups, as well as multilateral organizations at the national – international and local level.

It's a membership organization. Currently we have over 100 NGOs. At least 43 percent of our membership are local and national actors. SNC is driving the localization agenda in the country through our localization and partnership working group, chaired by a local actor. We have a localization framework endorsed by the HCT with a focus on increasing funding to national actors, increasing the quality of partnerships, increasing capacity strengthening to local actors, and genuine participation of local voices.

I would like to start with congratulating you on an excellent and candid report, which has clearly outlined the current localization trajectory as agreed in the Grand Bargain commitments in 2016. I would like to read a quote that essentially speaks to the obstacles of advancing localization agenda, in my opinion, and which I have voiced previously in other spaces, whether in-country or global spaces.

So, the report says, and I'm quoting this directly, "Bureaucratic and regulatory hurdles, as well as geostrategic calculations, pose a challenge to localization efforts. African voices are excluded from the decision-making landscape, in donor discussions, and localization efforts themselves, resulting in a gap in cultural competency. The conversation on localization in Africa cannot be limited to the African continent. It must occur in donor capitals with African voices leading the dialogue." And it also gives a recommendation which actually says, "To achieve sustainable localization, the U.S. and African policy landscapes should resolve bureaucratic obstacles and shift an exclusionary aid paradigm to one that is inclusive and builds on existing successes."

This is a great way of you pointing out one of the biggest barriers to localization and advancing the localization agenda and giving a concrete example to take away from. Localization requires a shift, as you said, in power relations between international and local organizations, both in terms of a strategic decision-making and control of resources. With the international system – sorry – while the international system is recognizing the critical role played by local people and organizations in humanitarian response, it seems to be moving extremely slow in materializing on the ground.

Local organizations are often the first to respond in early stages of an emergency. In some insecure areas or regions they are the only entities that are able to deliver humanitarian assistance to save lives. They are part and parcel of the communities they serve and are there before crisis strikes, during the crisis, and continue to work on long-term development objectives after international organizations possibly exit the crisis-affected areas. Local and – local and national cultural knowledge and connections to communities are major assets in delivering effective and efficient supports to people inflicted with poverty, emergencies, and inequality.

This knowledge and expertise is often – isn't credited or valued as much as it should. The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of strong local and national organizations. The localization agenda therefore should be the heart of the humanitarian action, development, and peacebuilding, with more equitable partnerships, sustainable resources, and inclusion of local voices in the humanitarian architecture at the local, national, and global spaces. Over to you. And thank you very much.

Mr. Dizolele

Thank you very much, Nimo. What we take from your intervention is that localization needs to remain really at the center of everything that we do on the humanitarian space. We retain that those voices should be amplified. There's no such thing as voiceless. We all have voices. It's just some voices are being heard in some places and some voices may not be heard. And then that there is a lot of work to be done still in this space.

So, with that, we will move to Zemedu Zewdie, who is joining us from Addis. Zemedu, please. We cannot hear you. Is your mic on, Zemedu? It looks like it's on, but. We still not hear you. OK, so in the interest of time, let us change the order. We'll go to Sany, and then we'll come back to you. Hopefully, you might – the connection will be better. Thank you very much.

Sany, please.

Joseph Sany:

Thank you, Mvemba, and thank you, Jake, for inviting us and for CSIS for organizing this conversation. It's a timely and a relevant conversation, as Nimo mentioned for me. I also want to thank all the co-panelists for making the effort really to be part of this conversation. I think, as you mentioned in the report – and by the way, bravo for the report. You really highlight some of the key issues. And so, I will not repeat. And Nimo also brought forward some of the key issues.

So, I will – I will just raise some points in terms of additional challenges and maybe how some of the suggestions, I think. And then I hope in the discussion we will flesh out these ideas. I think the localization agenda

has faced several hurdles. And one of them is conceptual. I mean, is it a process or an outcome? I think we – while localization will suggest a process, we tend to focus sometimes on the outcome. And if we focus on the outcome, we have a very narrow conceptualization of that outcome. We focus too much on the financial aspect.

So, I went – before coming here, I went through myself a thought experiment. And I was asking myself, can we discuss localization without financing, just to unleash the potential for imagination and creativity? And it's important to have finance, and to have financial metrics. Like the Grand Bargain went to 25 percent of funding going to local actors. OK. But what about decision-making? What about the power asymmetry that we observe? What about accountability? Can we find a way to define success around some of those critical concepts that are needed for localization to become a reality?

So why it is important to focus on the finance? It's equally important, I would argue, to focus on other components that would make localization the reality. And we don't. We don't even have metrics for those to hold ourselves accountable. Maybe it is time to start thinking about process indicators. Like, how do we make sure that the voices of Africans are heard? What indicates that? How do we make sure that we – the recipients are part of the decision-making process? Do we have indicators for that? How do we ensure that the accountability is not just one way? That is, recipients, NGOs held accountable to the donor. Not even to the beneficiaries, but the donors, right? So how do we make sure that the donors as well, and implementors, are also accountable to the African implementors, right? So, do we have indicators?

Those are the things that are left out when we only focus on the finance. That's the conceptualization problem. There's another conceptualization problem. By focusing upon the finance, we create an antagonizing discourse. When we say, for example – I remember when USAID came up with USAID Forward, right? Where we had to give 30 percent funding to locals, et cetera. It seems that conversation took an antagonistic tone, opposing global implementor to locals towards, oh, we have to remove the middleman, or the middle agents, as reducing the important role, in my opinion, of global implementors, contractors to just transaction agents. As if they don't bring – they don't add value in the development or humanitarian case.

So, and that, by focusing only on that percentage numbers, we create a very destructive conversation and discourse. We reduce our thinking. And so that conceptualization of localization needs to shift. We have to shift that conceptualization of localization to move more towards other

components – decision-making power, voices, accountability, mutual accountability, and things like that.

Number two, I think you alluded to that challenge in your report, I think the geopolitics. There is a challenge now. With all the talk about global power competition, middle power competition, there is a risk that localization lost into the search for influence by this middle power who happens – middle or global, who happens to be also donors, rather than focusing on real development, humanitarian needs, right? So, there is also that risk and that challenge.

I will also – there are also operational issues. I mean, Nimo discussed, and your report also highlighted, the bureaucratic hurdles and all the requirements and procedures. But behind that, there is a lack of trust. There is a problem that, OK, countries experiencing a humanitarian challenge, they face corruption and things like that. So, we have to increase the accountability. But behind those operational issues there are issues of colonial legacies, right, of they are not sophisticated enough or developed enough to manage huge amount of money. And so, we have that mistrust and that legacy of, oh, they are not yet mature enough to handle that. So, we have to overcome that through some conversation.

But there is also one thing that I wanted to highlight. It's not just the West or the donor countries. Local context matters. And understanding the local political dynamics is important. Understanding the difference between the periphery and the center. Because sometimes in the name of efficiency we engage with the wrong local actors. We engage with actors – I would say we facilitate elite manipulation and elite confiscations of the humanitarian resources. And so – and sometimes we do that because we lack the critical understanding of the political economy of humanitarian action. It is important to make sure that we really understand what is going on locally.

Enough with the challenges. How do we get out of this quickly? Couple of things. Defining success beyond financing. We have together work with recipient countries and donors looking at what's a successful localization model? How do we measure it? What are the indicators beyond financing? That conversation needs to happen. The Grand Bargain was great, but when I look at the 64 signatories, I didn't see African voices there. But that's a different conversation. But it is important, wherever we discuss localization, to make sure that we articulate clearly what success means beyond financing.

It's important to base our intervention on political economy analysis, understanding the political economy of humanitarian intervention and development is critical to inform our role. And I also think what I call the

three Cs, focusing on capacity, local contribution. Nimo mentioned it. Under COVID we saw the strategic and operational contribution of local actors. And that we have not yet – we have not found a way to monetize it, value it. So, understanding local contribution and valuing local contribution is critical. And also local commitment. We need to find metrics. We need to find strategies to facilitate those three Cs – capacity, contribution, and commitment.

I will stop there. Thank you.

Mr. Dizolele: Thank you very much, Sany. We retain from your intervention here that we really need to develop indicators and a set of metrics or matrices to measure success. And we need to get away from just focusing on the finance. We need to focus on decision-making, accountability on both sides of the divide, both the donor and the recipient, and accountability towards the population that actually is supposed to benefit from the humanitarian action. We need to reconsider the way we conceptualize the problem. And also that local context matters. And then things have to be built around those pillars.

We will go back to Zemedede Zewdie in Addis. Please, the floor is yours.

Zemedede Zewdie: Thank you. I hope you can hear me now.

Mr. Dizolele: We can. Thank you.

Mr. Zewdie: Good. So thank you for the invitation and also for the report. You have done really a great job. So as the previous speakers, I also appreciate, you know, the great work. I will start with a brief introduction of, you know, CFS, the Catholic Relief Services, working in over 100 countries in the world. In Ethiopia, there is no real experience and the operation and model is through partners. There is – you know, there is Catholic Relief Service working through partners globally, over 2,000 partners – local partners. Really, the local partners, partly they are faith-based organizations. In Ethiopia, we work with over 20 partners, both faith-based and secular partners.

I want to reflect on three things a little bit. You know, the other speakers have already highlighted a lot of information. The first is that, you know, the definition itself. You know, the definition of local or localization. I think that I don't think there is a common understanding on that, you know? And local actor or localization, I think that is an area which defines the – you know, the – either the capacity building plan or the resource funds, as Joseph mentioned, intervention services are really crucial. The donor and international NGOs and regional bodies – you know, subregional and continental bodies – to have a common understanding on



the definitions of the local in the localization, that's one point which I want to emphasize.

The more we have that common understanding, as you know, it's contributed to our effort of directing the either capacity building intervention, as was mentioned earlier, or to the financial transfer intervention. The Catholic Relief Service(s) is making – you know, believe in localization as a means of ensuring sustainability. I have seen this also in your report, the sustainability depends on building the capacity of local actors, who are closer to the – you know, the community, who are part of the community. So that, you know, intervention is really very important. When it comes to the – you know, CRS has made remarkable progress, as I've said. Normally our model of operation is through local partners. There is remarkable progress in terms of engaging the local partners in the localization and the building longstanding relationship and trust, and the commitment, and expanding our work with local partners.

As an agency, there is a Strategic Vision 2030, which prioritizes working with the local partners and gradually transitioning responsibility to the local actors. With that, you know, there is already a strategy and the tools, which are really very important in, you know, building both an institutional and technical capacity of partner. CRS also established a partnership and capacity strengthening institute at central level who guides this – as I said, this process. As when it comes to, you know, the challenge which was earlier, you know, mentioned, the big challenge is, one, the capacity of the local actors itself. You know, that is one.

The other is – for me, the second challenge is the commitment of, you know, international partners or donors in ensuring, you know, the resources reach the local – the real local actors. That's very important. And also, there is the responsibility of the local government. And you know, the continental bodies. So, I think that's very important for – you know, for addressing the challenges. In some countries, as we know, there is restrictive policies, there's a strategy which, you know, requires a dialogue in addressing those issues.

So as a way forward I see increasing investment in holistic capacity strengthening is really critical. It's not only, you know, financial transfer to do project activities, but to have – you know, invest holistic capacity strengthening and support, also increase the multiyear flexible direct funding. Normally, there are local partners – there is a lot of partners receiving, small, you know, funding, which is for the direct project implementation. But, you know, it requires – some of the capacity strengthening element require multiyear engagement with the local partners.

Then the other – the other thing – which, by the way, I worked for 30 years in the local partners and my reflection is also part of, you know, my practical engagement with partners. And the core funding, partners may save small, you know, funding on project implementation, but they don't have any core funding as to keep key staff/key personnel after the project finishes. So there's a project – the capacity comes with project, and then, you know, where there is a project. So, it's really important, if you think of a sustainable local capacity, to contribute to that holistic capacity strengthening and also consider the core funding of parts similar to the project.

And I mean, the other point which I would make is the donor due-diligence requirements. As you well know, there is a very strict, you know, due-diligence requirement, which is really very important. But there has to be proper awareness creation and also some sort of arrangement to meet the – you know, the capacity of the local – the local partners.

Then the other point – this is my last, from – is probably the risk sharing. You know, I can mention the example of CRS, where in different, you know, areas we share the commitment with – or, the risk with our partners for really, you know, any intervention which affect the partners. Normally, we – there is an effort to share that risk responsibility.

So, finally, I think the other very important area is government engagement, and also creating more awareness in the local – the regional and the local government in their understanding of localization agenda so that the required support can be provided to the local – the local actors.

So let me stop there and we can get back on the Q&A. Thank you.

Mr. Dizolele:

Thank you very much, Zemedu. From your intervention, we retain a few things. One is the challenge of defining localization. You know, it's often said that the devil is in the details, but I always submit to people that maybe the devil is in the definition. What exactly we're looking at? What are we seeing? Because the prism – the way we define things – determines what we see. Then you talked about the challenge of capacity building, but also localization is key to sustainability, which I think is very important in the humanitarian space.

Trust, the challenge of building longstanding relations, and then capacity of local actors, the responsibility of local government in furthering or supporting localization, which is very difficult to do if the government is putting in place restrictive policies that actually undermine that process. And you also – you called for a holistic approach, which would include

multiyear direct funding to the local. And donor due diligence, which I think would join some of the points that your colleagues made earlier. And finally, risk sharing responsibility on both side of that process. So thank you very much.

And Ms. Chilande Kuloba-Warria, the floor is yours. Welcome.

Chilande Kuloba-Warria: Thank you so much. There's a beauty and also a danger of coming last, especially with such an able-bodied panel such as this. Thank you so much for including my voice and adding me to this very esteemed panel. You know, CSIS, I thank you very much for this opportunity and the research that you're doing, and just what you put out there as a collection of all our thoughts, and yours as well. And I thank the panelists for sharing this podium with me. I do not take it for granted.

And you know, my colleagues, I cannot underscore everything that has been said. You know, starting right from the definition, because it's something I'm constantly battling, almost on a daily basis, in my everyday work. We are always unpacking, why are we even talking about localization? Just before I came onto this call, and I will – I'm working from home today, which is why I've tried to blur, you know, and save you from – save your eyes from the pain of what's going on behind me.

But my daughter, you know, she asked me, she's in her early 20s. She asked me, what are you going to talk about tonight? I give her what I thought was just the gist of what we're talking about. And she said, look, what's – they're not giving power and giving you money because it's the right thing to do? (Laughs.) And I said, oh, sweetie. You know, I wish it was that simple. You know, it is, indeed, the right thing to do. And I think a lot has been said about the why.

But I want to illustrate, you know, the only thing I can add onto what my colleagues have said, you know, reading from, you know, what has been said explicitly and also silently in the report. I want to illustrate where all our passion comes from with an account from my personal experience in Kenya. In 2007-2008, you know, when we faced one of the greatest and widespread humanitarian crisis in our country – widespread, when we had the violent political, economic, and humanitarian crisis that erupted after the formerly president Kibaki was declared the winner. And this was contested, of course, very strongly.

And at the time, I was working with one of, you know, the earliest and largest capacity strengthening program in the country. I had been working on it for about three years. Forging friendships with more than 40 organizations spread across the country. Local and national organizations with some sprinklings of international NGOs. We had gone

on a journey, on a quest to build their resilience and sustainability. Essentially, we were preparing them to anchor communities for this very same situation that we were now faced with.

Folks, it was a painful time. Now, that is not even the most dire of situations that a lot of African communities, and other communities, find themselves in. Let me paint for you a picture. In that moment, I observed talks with my international colleagues as they planned their exits from this hostile environment that Kenya had now become, with indefinite retirement dates, if at all, pending the government directives for when it would be safe again, if at all, to send money or to take action in this country.

I joined my countrymen, women and children, as we feared for what was going to happen next. This was unprecedented, as it always is in a lot of these situations. At the time, you know, I was a single mother of one living by myself. Believe it or not, money, you know, and your income becomes secondary as you think about your safety, essentials, basics. Will I stay alive and are my family alive? We lived close to a slum area, so we were hearing all the gunshots happening and seeing people running up and down, the police battles that were happening.

At that time, my priority was to keep my lines open. I need to know where my friends are, what's happening. But more importantly, I had a direct responsibility to the various visionaries that had – you know, I had worked with for several years across the board, knowing that if I call this one person they are talking on behalf of their community of 200-plus that they were supporting at the time.

At the time, the issue was how can – you know, so-and-so is still hiding. They cannot get out. How do we get them out? How can we get medicine for this one has diabetes, this one has HIV, the medicine has run out – practical things. For this organization, forming a consortium to apply for funding was not a priority. For this organization, writing a proposal that would pass through was not a priority. For these local organizations, that – you know, the list goes on and on.

Now, we've had many emergencies since, and there are many across the world that happen. And this is what we're talking about and debating about, why it is important and what are the challenges of localizing this thing. Folks, as a – if I bring myself to the microlevel as a Kenyan, what made me rise up was when the entertainment industry decided enough was enough. Enough sad and gloom. Folks, we shall entertain you for free. We shall sing and dance. Let's go back. Let's restore our home.

It was when Kenyans, you know, stood up and said: Get up. Go to work. Rise up. You know, local officials said, look, there's internally displaced persons, we've got this land, what can we do? You know, in some of the hardest hit areas. It was when our brothers and sisters, you know, leaned into technology to send money to rescue those that needed money at that point in time.

It was when the civil society, in its entirety – the organizations, the movements – came together to support us at the micro level, before our African leaders then came and said: Kenya cannot burn. We must come in and rescue, and they arbitrated and got into peacebuilding talks that helped us to reconcile. Fifteen years later, we still remember. We still learn the lesson. We still try – hopefully, we still learn the lesson. Sometimes with Kenyans you don't know whether we forget.

Now, I give this account to underscore the need to honor and build on the local systems. The need for us to expand our definition of community, because quite often we talk about communities of refugees that are situated somewhere. It was not only them that were ailing in that situation. It was not only them that action should have been taken over. Too often when we wait for international folks to define the vision and actions that need to happen, they have that one lens. As a community, we must look at how do we strengthen the local systems to ensure that everybody is doing what they need to do within their rights and within their expertise to anchor the community.

Now, we must do whatever it takes, therefore. And what I want to really focus on, because my colleagues are focused on a lot of other areas, is to create this enabling environment for locally led humanitarian action. All the various people that I have mentioned in my account – some are within formal systems, some are not within formal systems. It is important that the systems for humanitarian action recognize all of this, and therefore do what needs to be done to ensure that the right resources – whether it's people, whether it's time, whether it's money – reaches the people that are required to actually help to anchor communities.

So, folks, I think what I want to do is really just, like, give an illustration that underscores the need for us to rethink how, yes, funding is not the only thing, but it is critical. We do need some of those resources. But that only remaining – you know, focusing only on money retains or continues to perpetuate the narrative that we are still very much a dependent, you know, continent. We really are not that dependent anymore. We are independent. And it is time to recognize that. And do all the shifts that we need to do.

Not just for systems that flow money, but also in our mindsets that for a long time perpetuate those – you know, my colleague here mentioned – Joseph, you mentioned some of the colonial, the remnants of colonial – they're not even remnants. There's neocolonialism now that happens. You know, the mind shifts that need to happen so that we can attack the patriarchy that still remains, that still continues to perpetuate the gender inequalities that still persist, and then affect how effective humanitarian actions are.

And, you know, we must tackle some of those injustices in that holistic way so that we can get to where we need to get to. So, we are talking about, what are some of those challenges. Those still persist. Is it an end process? No. It is a journey that we are all on. And I think that was very well illustrated in your report. It's not – we don't know when this situation is going to end, but I think we must keep on trudging on. And I apologize. I think my dog has decided it is time for me to be quiet. I apologize for the noise in the background. But it is a very passionate topic for all of us. And I just wanted to add my voice to what my colleagues have said in that – with that illustration. So, thank you so much, once again. Over, back to you.

Mr. Dizolele: Thank you, Chilande. Thank you. So just as a reminder, today we have a great panel of esteemed leaders in this space. Ms. Nimo Hassan, director of the Somalia NGO Consortium. Mr. Zemedu Zewdie, country representative for Ethiopia for Catholic Relief Services. Dr. Sany Joseph, vice president, Africa Center, U.S. Institute of Peace. And Ms. Chilande Kuloba-Warria, who's managing director of Warande Advisory Center partner, a local coalition accelerator, who's joining us from Nairobi.

So, from your comments, your intervention, Chilande, we retain that there is an issue of commitment of international actors, sometime, especially in a time of crisis, when they follow the directive of their embassies and evacuate when, in fact, they're needed the most. That's probably what I got from that. So then people have to question – the locals have to ask, are you really committed to us? This is the time where we should be seeing your action, not your departure.

You talked about in some cases it's about survival – it really comes down to that. And then local actors, in the case of Kenya, that you described, have also shown tremendous agency and, of course, resilience – which is a word I don't personally like that much because it carries all kinds of baggage into itself. And the vision that need to be shifted when it comes to defining what exactly is a crisis and who's in need. And then creating an enabling environment for the local, because the process is a journey. This localization is a journey.

So, with that, we have a few minutes left to take some questions from you, our panelists, that we think you can help us with. So, starting with Nimo, are there certain perception held by international actors about local actors and the decolonization movement more broadly that may be harmful to local actors?

Ms. Hassan: Thank you so much for the question. And I really want to appreciate my panelists as well for passionately speaking about this subject. It's absolutely important for all, for all members, to recognize but also acknowledge that localization has been on the agenda for seven years now, and not a lot has been done. And the world – I remember when I was doing my master's, I remember reading about the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and thinking, OK, so they've moved from one year to year to year. So, it looks like the world is very well comfortable globally setting goals, but yet just moving the goalposts again. And localization is by no means any different on that.

There's a lot of perceptions that are held about local agencies in the various contexts. Even within Somalia, for example, the context and capacities – local NGOs who have – who are – or, local or national NGOs who are implementing portfolios of 5 million, 10 million (dollars), or have presence and have bigger portfolios than some international organizations. Yet, when we talk about them in literature or in spaces like this, we talk about them as if they are one entity, one thing. And that's actually sometimes exactly the problem, that we cannot say the global south is in the same development level, it's in the same humanitarian crisis, in the same context, therefore our response should be the same. We need to differentiate.

We need to acknowledge where there is capacity available. And as you hate the word "resilience," I actually hate the word "capacity building," because it means nothing. For 30 years, I mean, I've worked in Somalia for over 12 years, and I remember my first meeting was talking about capacity building, and we still talk about capacity building in this day in age. We need to talk about the right capacities. It has to be institutional capacity building. We need to ensure that the institutions have – those who don't – I mean, there are – like I said, there are agencies who do function as well as any international agency, and have all the right capacities, as well as the ability to engage and deliver humanitarian response in a timely manner.

But I think we need to differentiate. We cannot paint everybody with the same brush. The other one that I usually highlight – emphasize, is the risk – appetite for risk. If we build the institutional capacity, I mean, in this day in age, where we have technology, where you can remotely look into organized – I mean, I'm talking to the donors here. You can remotely look

and check online systems or financial systems. Then citing the risk is actually not – it shouldn't be – it shouldn't be an excuse.

There has to be ways to move forward and away from the risk transfer to risk sharing capacity – not capacity building, but capacity transfer because, like I said earlier, local knowledge is actually very important. And the way we deliver our assistance and, the way we look at the interconnectedness of the various different communities, that is hugely important and at the forefront of early intervention and delivery. So that needs to be brought out and valued a lot more. And also, when we talk about expertise, the White savior, all of that comes with the colonization that we talked about, the history of that as well.

So, there's a lot of perceptions that are there which are barriers that need to be unpacked. And where you've demonstrated – you have organizations that have demonstrated a response, then provide them this space. Provide them the support. And a lot of time the local partners are actually given a lot more work without the proper resources as well. And I honestly think donors have a huge – or, donor countries have a huge role to play. Whether we advance localization or whether we do not is based on their legislation, their policies.

If you're granting then there has to be some criteria of how much of that is supposed to go to, you know, a coalition of agencies who are applying for a particular donor – or, a particular funding to a particular donor. They also talk about the fact that they don't have a lot of staff capacities to ensure that they are keeping up with multiple grants. But I think also one option, it's the pool fund, which is always seen as an area where local area where local actors are getting directly financed. But that is a very small slice of the pie when it comes to humanitarian response.

Increase that. Use that as a stepping stone for national actors who have been – who have gone through due diligence or have access to the pool fund for several years. That should be – that should be also – provide them with a way of accessing the direct relationship with a direct donor funding as well. So there's a lot of – there's a lot of things that we can do. There's big things and small things that we can do, definitely. Back to you.

Mr. Dizolele: Thank you very much, Nimo.

We'll go to Zemedu. Are you still with us? Great. Local actors in Africa receive minimal funding from African and international donors, compared to their international counterparts, further impeding their efforts to deliver an effective response. Why are donors more likely to provide direct funding to international actors rather than local actors,



who are often the first responders in the aftermath of a crisis? How can donors honor the commitment made – they made during the 2016 world humanitarian summit, including providing at least a quarter of their funding to local actors? Why is direct funding critical to the work of local actors? One minute, please. (Laughter.)

Mr. Zewdie: OK. Thank you very much, Mvemba, on the question. I know I have addressed a few of the points in there earlier.

There is three points which I would highlight. One is the donor commitment for, you know, a fair, I know, process which allows the local actors to access resources. The second is the local actors themselves, the capacity of local actors. You know, there is not much work in building that local capacity, so without that capacity it's difficult to manage, you know, the required response. The other point is also from the policy side. The government, you know, support – the local government and the continental actors', you know, support for this building the local processes.

I want to highlight two points with regard – (inaudible). One is, earlier as was mentioned, you know, valuing the local capacity, knowledge, skill. There are, you know, registered or unregistered local actors with a lot of knowledge, a lot of, you know, local resource mobilization capacity. So it's very important, really, to build on that when you talk about localization agenda. Then there is – there is also a lot of experience, whether it is, you know, international NGOs or local NGOs or with – in relation to the donor. There are a lot of areas which we can learn from. So that is really very, very important.

And also, there are resources – local resources which can be mobilized. It's not always expecting a resource from, you know, a different place. Important, also, to make use of that available resource – financial and the human resource. But the main – the main point is the capacity, building the local capacity of local actors with, you know, multiyear commitment.

Thank you, Mvemba.

Mr. Dizolele: Thank you very much Zemedede. Thank you very much.

Sany, to you. There are growing concerns over authoritarian actors and terrorist groups in Africa, and elsewhere in the world, co-opting foreign aid for their own illicit purposes. Does this deter donors from funding local actors? Are local actors more heavily scrutinized by donors and/or financial institutions? One minute, please. Thank you.

Mr. Sany: Yeah. The second part of your question, the answer is yes. I mean, local actors – that's what – are more scrutinized. That's why I talked of one-way accountability. That's something that should change, because as we know, Mvemba, you've been in this business for long, the biggest scandals – financial scandals do not come from the south. They come from the north, where \$50 million are embezzled and things like that. These are not local NGOs. These are northern NGOs. But we still have – local NGOs still have to go through horrendous procedures.

But now the issue of autocrats and spoilers, et cetera, that's – I mentioned – is the elite capture. Sometimes these are people with guns, or power, or access. And so there is a need to really base our intervention – humanitarian interventions – on the good political economy analysis, understanding how power is used, who are the winners and losers, understanding the dynamics, the relationship you mentioned in your report, between states, civil society, business community. So that knowledge is critical. It's important. The politics are very important when we have to intervene. We cannot shortcut it.

So, yes, local NGOs are more scrutinized. I hope we will see the same level of accountability on donors and global implementors from the north. Yes, we have to ground our call, our intervention on good political economy analysis of the context, because context matters.

Mr. Dizolele: Thank you very much, Sany.

Chilande, you mentioned there is a lack of strategic conversations in Africa about the localization agenda, and how this may be a lost opportunity for African civil society organizations. Can you expand on the importance of this dialogue? One minute, please.

Ms. Kuloba-Warria: All right. I'll keep it one minute. Even just the fact that we're using the term localization. I am not so sure if that came from Africa. I was in – with some colleagues in northeast Nigeria the other day who said, but, why local? You know? It almost makes me feel like back in the day when we were called primitive, you know? It's almost, like, a derogatory word. Just to say that we are missing an opportunity to craft the narrative that is our story. It is our story. We have lived this problem. We can lead the solution. I cannot underscore that enough.

So, we must redefine our destiny for ourselves. If we are not having this conversation here, and meeting our folks in the international community halfway, otherwise it will be more of the same of them crafting the vision, crafting the definition, the concepts, the frameworks, the approaches, and then we just act on them. We should actually begin to draw the lines

ourselves. I cannot underscore that enough. So you give me one minute, I hope that's enough.

Mr. Dizolele: You did fantastic. (Laughter.) So thank you very much. I would like personally to thank our esteemed panelists – Nimo Hassan, Zemedu Zewdie, Joseph Sany, and Chilande. I'll turn the remaining of our time to – the remainder of our time to Jake, my colleague.

Jake, back to you.

Mr. Kurtzer: And thank you, Mvemba. It's been a real delight and privilege to work on this and learn with you. I was just struck by the number of C words that we got in this conversation. We started with the legacy of colonialism, we talk about the challenges, we talk about the benefits of changing the way we work because of the context, to understanding the context, the lesson from the COVID-19 experience.

You know, Mvemba is literally right above me in the building and we're having a conversation from our offices with people across the ocean. And it's not just the lessons of what local CSOs or CSOs in Africa were able to do to respond, but it's also we now have the capacity to have a different conversation. The challenges of integrating different voices, they don't exist in the same way anymore. There shouldn't be any conversations, you know, about you without you.

We've talked about the need for recognition of the contributions and the need for new commitments on the part of donors, and to meet those commitments to generate a better community. And we sort of finished with Chilande's point about crafting a new narrative and getting to a new place.

I am so grateful for you four taking the time to speak with us today. Obviously, an hour is not a sufficient amount of time to unpack this topic, but I think it's a sufficient amount of time to continue to raise these questions and reinforce the need for us here to continue to do the work, to learn from you, and to really build upon this partnership that Mvemba talked about at the beginning. Partnerships that are one-way – you know, the one-way accountability, like, one-way power dynamics, they're not true partnerships.

So, if the humanitarian community wants to use the word "partner," we really do have to change the way we work. And I hope that today can be one step forward to a far better humanitarian future. So, with that, thank you to our panelists and thank you to our guests for joining us. We look forward to continuing to work with you on this issue and other key issues. And just to note that this conversation will be on the CSIS website

in full with a transcript shortly after its conclusion. We wish everyone a great afternoon, a great evening, and all the best. Thank you.

(END)