

**CONTEXTUAL FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE
THE DEGREE OF LOCALISATION OR INTERNATIONALISATION, AND
– IN CASE OF SIGNIFICANT INTERNATIONALISATION-
THE SPEED AND TRAJECTORY OF LOCALISATION**

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1. Role of Government

Are we dealing with a government that is actively engaged in crisis management, or not? Does it have the willingness and the capacity to lead in challenging times? Examples would be most EU countries or India where government (assisted by auxiliaries like the Civil Defense and the national Red Cross or Red Crescent Society) leads the response and organises the delivery of assistance or compensation packages. A recent example was the Indonesian's government response to the 2018 earthquake-tsunami-liquefaction on its island of Sulawesi.

2. The Nature and Strengths of National and Local Civil Society

This in turn is shaped by different aspects

- a. *Legal and political space for local/ national and international actors:* For example, current Ethiopian legislation and procedures makes it difficult for Ethiopian CSOs to do much domestic fundraising and to receive international financing. It also forces international agencies to choose between being a 'donor agency' or an 'implementing agency', creating disincentives to take a supporting role to national or local ones. Other countries also put constraints on the amount of foreign funding that local/national NGOs can receive;
- b. *Relief experience in country:* In countries like the Philippines or Bangladesh, there is significant governmental and nongovernmental experience with relief and crisis management. In others, possibly Togo, Guyana or Paraguay, far less. The more relief experience there is, even when the country is confronted with an unprecedented crisis, the more we can rely on the left side of the localisation mantra '*as local as possible, as international as necessary*'. However, this is only possible if international agencies are willing to acknowledge that there are strong capacities to 'build on';
- c. *The collaboration within national and local civil society:* Major crisis situations will be responded to by a multitude of actors, each working at different scale. But the overall effectiveness of the crisis management will depend not just on the 'coordination' of these actions but on the willingness and ability of actors to collaborate. In a climate of competition, coordination will in any case not be effective.

3. Political Relations

This plays out at three levels

- a. *National government and international 'partners':* When a national government, for different possible reasons, wants to be a close ally of and/or is dependent on the assistance of other international players, it is more likely to invite 'aid and assistance' from those actors or accept it on the terms set by the international partners.
- b. *National government relations with national and local civil society actors:* When there is a difficult relationship between both, often caused by civil society criticisms about the quality of

governance, government may not see civil society as an important auxiliary, and restrict its operating space, through policy, legal and administrative measures.

- c. *National government relations with citizens/affected populations*: Giving at risk and affected populations a substantive say will be easier in more participatory or ‘democratic’ environments than in authoritarian ones. In the latter, people or citizen-voice may be selected and orchestrated. Governments may also consciously constrain much international presence in crises that are politically sensitive – de facto giving more space for local and national actors. That could be seen in the Marawi crisis in Mindanao for example, compared to the situation after Typhoon Haiyan;

4. Type of Crisis

In unprecedented, large-scale, sudden onset disasters, like the 2015 Nepal earthquakes, we may see a substantive role for international agencies, at least in the first period of response. For recurrent crises such as flooding in Pakistan or Bangladesh, typhoons in the Philippines and Japan, drought in northern Kenya, or internal displacement in Colombia, we should see local/national actors play an ever-increasing role over time. If not, alleged ‘capacity-building’ by international actors has obviously not been effective. We should expect local and national actors also over time to take on a leading role in protracted crises, such as the refugee situations in Lebanon and Jordan or the chronic instability in eastern DRC.

5. International Interest and Presence

This is influenced by different factors

- a. *Global media attention and funding levels*: Localised responses are more likely to happen in crises that receive less global media attention and therefore less overall funding i.e. ‘*forgotten crises*’. A crisis in the global headlines triggers public and political interest, which tends to be followed by funding. Top management of international agencies will consider that “*we need to be there-and be seen to be there*”, while also realising that very mediated crisis are also a great fundraising opportunity.
- b. *Strategic interest for other countries*: In several, though not all, donor countries, strategic interests (geo-political, security and/or economic) are an additional consideration that will influence how much they may invest in a crisis response somewhere. Although that should not be the case for humanitarian response, which should be based on need (in a comparative perspective then), in reality it is often not free from strategic considerations.
- c. *The prior presence of international agencies*: The more international agencies are already present in a country and oriented towards relief work, the greater the likelihood they will give themselves a central role in any crisis response.

6. Security

Where security concerns lead (most) international agencies to a ‘remote management’ approach, de facto there is more space for local/national actors. Iraq, parts of Syria and south-central Somalia are illustrative examples of this.

7. Relationship between National and Local CSOs and International Aid Agencies

This is influenced by several structural factors

- a. *The financial autonomy of local/national CSOs*: Many local/national CSOs are or have become heavily dependent on funding from international agencies. This related to their inability to raise financial resources domestically, either because there is no fundraising market, or they don’t have the fundraising experience. Financial dependency then makes them unwilling or unable to demand or negotiate a more equitable relationship as a decision-making partner. They are forced to accept a subordinate role and contracts on unfavourable terms, because they see no other option to survive. Some local/national agencies see this as an unhealthy situation that needs to be changed; others value their continuation more than their autonomy, and will not challenge it.

- b. *The non-monetary benefits of working with international agencies:* Many local and national organisations value the collaboration with international agencies, as a learning and development opportunity. This appreciation may change over time, as increased capacity does not lead to role changes: they are not allowed to become decision-making partners.

The reality on the ground will be shaped, not by one factor, but by the interplay of the different factors.