
Changing humanitarian practice on localisation and inclusion across the nexus

SITUATION REPORT



ALNAP is a global network of humanitarian organisations, including UN agencies, members of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, NGOs, donors, academics and consultants dedicated to learning how to improve the response to humanitarian crises.

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The views contained in this report do not necessarily reflect those of ALNAP Members.



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Executive summary

This study examines field-level practice related to localisation and inclusion when working across the humanitarian-development nexus in two contrasting country settings: Lebanon and Ethiopia. Analysing *localisation* means looking at processes that may contribute to (or obstruct) the empowerment of national and local state and civil society organisations and reliance on and respect for local institutional norms in the design and delivery of humanitarian assistance. Analysing *responses to vulnerability across the humanitarian-development nexus* means focusing on the extent to which the design and prioritisation of humanitarian assistance has reflected prevailing hazards and vulnerability, with a strong emphasis on protection. In both areas, this study considers the influence of the Grand Bargain (GB) and World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) commitments in relation to processes already underway in the two countries, but does not assume that such influence is paramount. The primary focus is rather on domestic political, cultural and governance factors, and how global commitments play out within these spheres.

The Ethiopia case draws attention to how efforts to respond across the humanitarian-development nexus (henceforth, ‘the nexus’) are anchored in frustration with the inability to overcome recurrent emergencies. The Ethiopian state and development donors made major

Summary findings from Ethiopia

Emerging outcomes

Scalable social protection systems have been created which are anchored in central and local government. These systems provide for local identification of vulnerable households and form a cornerstone for government ownership and leadership of humanitarian efforts, based on strong commitments to reduce the recurrence of emergencies.

Obstacles and path dependencies

Nexus efforts have been obstructed to some extent by turf wars within government. The scope of localisation efforts has been limited by restrictions on capacity development support to civil society and severe constraints on space for protection activities. Small, development-oriented local CSOs are striving, with limited success, to take on a more significant role in a large-scale humanitarian response. Overall, there is a lack of commitment to more granular focus on vulnerability and discrimination.

Pivotal factors

From the perspective of local CSOs, these challenges could be at least partly overcome by stronger international non-governmental organisation (INGO) commitment to ‘making localisation work’ despite restrictions. Long-standing and trusting relations between INGOs and local CSOs could be leveraged, partly through programming modalities that link local CSOs and local government in social protection. Despite progress, more work is needed to find ways to simultaneously address chronic and transient food security risk. Another recognised gap in ‘leaving no one behind’ is that of responding to urban risk.

Influence of the GB and WHS

The GB and WHS have contributed to a consensus on the need for government ownership and leadership, as well as providing an entry point for inclusion of the humanitarian sector in more developmental discussions regarding ‘leaving no one behind’.

investments in what they hoped would be scalable social protection measures long before the nexus came to be known as such. The Ethiopian developmental state is determined to lead the humanitarian response, and therefore sees the nexus as a matter of localisation to government institutions. At the same time, the government distrusts local civil society organisations (CSOs), shrinking the space for the sort of localisation agendas envisaged in the GB and WHS.

In Lebanon, localisation to civil society is well underway. In 2017, United Nations (UN) agencies began instructing their INGO partners that future support would be conditional on rapid ‘handovers’ to national CSOs. This was in response to GB targets and fuelled by stricter government requirements on work permits for expatriate staff. Local CSOs interviewed repeatedly asked why, six years into the refugee crisis and in light of the decades of experience among local CSOs in responding to displacement crises, this shift has ‘taken so long’ to get started. Compared to Ethiopia, the nexus looks very different in a middle-income country where there is relatively little internationally financed development programming to link to. As such, international donors are in a quandary regarding what the nexus implies if they have no intention of establishing longer-term aid programmes.

Summary findings from Lebanon

Emerging outcomes

There is an active debate on why it has taken so long to take localisation seriously, combined with strong CSO advocacy for inclusion. Lebanese civil society is highly committed and has strong knowledge about the nature of vulnerability and protection challenges. There has been uneven yet significant engagement of local government in basic services for both refugees and host communities.

Obstacles and path dependencies

The Lebanese Government has limited the livelihood space for refugees, with implications for the nexus and even the protection environment. Weaknesses in government are placing unrealistic responsibilities on civil society. Slow shifts to localisation have been due to the international community’s failures to recognise existing CSOs’ work and the value of local knowledge. A distrust of local institutions due to factional politics has also been a major factor. Even where localisation commitments have been in place, donor administrative procedures have not been aligned to the task. Furthermore, failures to pass on overheads to local CSO ‘partners’ may undermine their developing capacities.

Pivotal factors

Lebanon demonstrates the importance of accepting and responding to the protracted nature of the refugee crisis. Capacity gaps exist, due primarily to weak state institutions, which has created a need to find ways to move to scale on capacity development and ‘leaving no one behind’, including identifying entry points to apply lessons from social protection programming in a state where capacity and commitment to provide basic services are weak. Building trust between Lebanese and Syrian civil society is essential, and as localisation gets underway it will be important to ensure that large Lebanese CSOs do not fall into sub-contracting relationships when engaging with smaller and community-based organisations, including Syrian CSOs.

Influence of the GB and WHS

UN pressures for handovers to local CSOs are contributing to a belated shift away from ‘business as usual’, in relations between the international community and local CSOs. The GB and WHS have provided a platform for local CSO advocacy for changes in their roles and relationships and encouraged greater flexibility in defining space for refugee livelihoods and protection in reconstruction plans.

Most interviewees in both countries do not recognise the GB and WHS as primary drivers for change in relation to localisation and inclusion across the nexus. Rather, these are concerns that humanitarians in Ethiopia and Lebanon have shared and grappled with for many years. In both settings, international actors are recognising the need to take a backseat in locally driven processes to understand and respond to vulnerability in protracted or recurrent crises.

Working across the nexus is in the DNA of many local CSOs, as they have an ethical imperative to shift between development work and humanitarian needs, and have ‘seen it all before’ when dealing with the boom-bust cycle of recurrent humanitarian response. Capacity development needs notwithstanding, their priority is to find space to act in accordance with their normative goals. In both countries, localisation to civil society is also about these organisations being enabled to at least partially transform themselves from community development agencies into humanitarian service providers, capable of a shouldering a significant role. At the same time, their community development skills are central to what they bring to the table: a core strength in their nexus efforts usually lies in a future return to a primary focus on development.

In both countries, concerns with ‘leaving no big target group behind’ supersede granular vulnerability analysis. This means that despite some promising and innovative programmes, factors such as gender, disability and various forms of discrimination have little influence on overall priorities.

Scepticism and/or ignorance of WHS, GB and related commitments prevail at field-level. International agencies’ practice of skimming off most (or all) of the overheads provided by donors before transferring resources to local partners, has been an important contributing factor behind this scepticism. This practice undermines their local partners’ future capacity and runs the risk of locking them into narrow ‘implementing partner’ roles. Many partners see this as hypocrisy, eclipsing steps towards a new relationship.

Furthermore, in both countries there are ‘other bargains’ that overshadow the GB and WHS. In Lebanon these are the bargains related to migration and security. In Ethiopia, these refer to the use of development tools to deliver on long-standing commitments to establish safety nets that enhance food security and prevent future emergencies.

It is difficult to say whether the intended outcomes of the WHS and GB ‘have yet to be rolled out’ at country-level or if they are being ‘lost in the shuffle’ amid local historical and political trajectories. This is not surprising given that localisation is inevitably a locally driven (or hindered) process, and the nexus involves integration into diverse national structures, be they state or civil society. Global commitments are only likely to gain greater traction if they

are tailored to reflect nexus-related opportunities and obstacles – many of them profound, political and unyielding – in the local context. Changes are happening in incremental and heterogeneous ways. The protracted nature of most humanitarian crises suggests that humanitarians have a central role to play in many aspects of the response, but development actors, who already have the mandates and skill-sets for longer-term partnerships, are likely to take a more central role in ensuring more profound commitments to localisation and inclusion across the nexus. Given that development actors are largely ‘out of the loop’ on the GB and WHS, this reinforces conclusions that these agendas are not likely to be the main drivers in future change.

Introduction

Aims of the study

This pilot research component within *The State of the Humanitarian System* report seeks a deeper understanding of the nature of outcomes, particularly within field-level practice, related to some of the key areas for change identified by the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) and emphasised in resulting WHS and Grand Bargain (GB) commitments. The intention of this report is to generate learning from emerging and diverging outcomes in different country contexts. Objectives of the study have focused on understanding what can be learnt from field-level practice regarding the meaning of two inter-related thematic areas, localisation and inclusion across the nexus. *The aim is to understand what these objectives mean in two contrasting country settings, emphasising how longer-term trajectories and the role of the state and civil society frame efforts to change humanitarian practice.*

Scope

The study analyses outcomes of ongoing efforts to adapt humanitarian interventions related to selected interrelated themes *that reflect the priorities agreed upon in the WHS, the GB and other humanitarian reform initiatives.* The themes have been selected to emphasise how humanitarian efforts may be supporting national and sub-national governmental and civil society institutions, and also if humanitarian response is becoming better anchored in inclusive, endogenously led response to chronic crises. The emphasis is thus on localisation and efforts to bring humanitarian, development and risk-reduction efforts together in a way that reflects commitments to address vulnerability and thereby 'leave no one behind'. The outcomes analysed relate to changes in behaviour and norms among field-level humanitarian actors. The research was conducted at field level in the following two humanitarian intervention locations.

Lebanon: Syrian refugee response in Lebanon

The Lebanon analysis focuses on understanding whether and how humanitarian protection and livelihood-support efforts are being increasingly led by local civil society and government, as well as assessing nascent outcomes in overcoming the obstacles that exist in changing institutional relations. A key focus is the unique challenges to programming that promotes household resilience in a largely urban context in a middle-income country, as well as the extent to which efforts to ensure inclusion are maintained in an increasingly protracted migration crisis. Factors in determining what the nexus implies in a country that is not normally a recipient of significant levels of development assistance have been noted.

Ethiopia: Response to the recent droughts, taking into consideration the leading role of the Ethiopian Government in the response and the growing attention to nationally led safety-net programmes

Special attention has been given to assessing how humanitarian efforts and structures designed to address *acute* food insecurity are being adapted to operate alongside permanent national and local systems focused on *chronic* vulnerability and food insecurity. The study looks at outcomes within the humanitarian sector in maintaining focus on ‘leaving no one behind’ in a context where ‘graduation’ out of social protection efforts is being encouraged. The analysis focuses on the nature of localisation in a developmental state environment in which there are severe constraints on the extent to which local civil society can receive international support.

These two sites were selected to reflect contrasting emergencies dominated by migration and natural hazards, as well as different types of operation which illustrate varied perspectives on the respective roles of humanitarian agencies, central and local governments, national and local civil society, and donors. The selection of themes and research sites was discussed with participants at the February 2017 ALNAP Annual Meeting and broadly confirmed as constituting appropriate entry points for this analysis.

Approach

The focus areas for this study reflect overall trends and how they relate to the commitments made at the WHS for ‘proposed shifts/changes in direction’. In order to judge outcomes over time, the study looks at how stakeholders perceive trajectories in interventions that began or were designed before the WHS and GB. As such, the WHS and GB commitments have been a *touchstone* for the study, but the analysis has taken a ‘value-free’ approach, not being judgemental about the stories that informants told about what ‘localisation’, the ‘nexus’ or ‘inclusion’ have meant for them in their own work, based on their own ‘humanitarian imperatives’. There were no attempts to trace attribution from the WHS and GB unless this was explicitly raised by informants. The emphasis was on areas where relatively concrete institutional outcomes were expected to be emerging at operational levels, which could therefore be ‘harvested’ through structured dialogue with humanitarian practitioners.

A point of departure for interviews was perceptions of overarching outcomes related to localisation, particularly with regard to efforts to break down silos across the humanitarian, development (and in some cases, stabilisation) spectrum. The study has sought to understand the implications of these overarching outcome objectives for field-level humanitarian praxis and relations between international, national and local actors. Informants have been asked to describe how they have understood and adapted changing norms in relation to the contextual conditions that they face. These themes were selected in order to highlight

relatively tangible goals that have been on the humanitarian agenda for some years which are expected to have received new impetus from the WHS and GB commitments. The overarching outcomes are interpreted in the following terms:

Localisation: *Closer collaboration and greater empowerment of national and local state and civil society organisations, together with enhanced reliance on and respect for local institutional norms in the design and delivery of humanitarian assistance*

The study has not replicated the quantitative analysis of changes in financial flows mandated by the GB¹ but has rather focused on qualitative changes in ‘partnerships’ between international and domestic humanitarian actors.

Response to vulnerability across the humanitarian-development nexus: *Anchoring design and prioritisation of humanitarian assistance on analysis of hazards and vulnerability, together with actions to develop institutional and household capacities to reduce the likelihood that future conflicts and natural hazards lead to humanitarian emergencies.*

A key focus has been on understanding how changes in the humanitarian-development nexus are impacting on how diverse forms of vulnerability are being addressed. This has included looking at dangers that some sectors of the population may be ‘left behind’ amid pressure to achieve resilience goals and challenges in reaching ‘difficult’ target groups, including urban refugees and people with disabilities.

Methods

The study has applied a pilot adaptation of selected tools generally associated with the outcome harvesting methodology.² Outcome harvesting involves looking first at actors’ perceptions of what outcomes have occurred, in the sense of changes in attitudes, behaviours and institutional relations. This is then followed up with analyses of the underlying factors that have driven or hindered these changes over time. These tools were selected as they are well-suited for unpacking the ‘hows’ and whys’ that determine stakeholders’ incentives, motivation and space for pursuing these changes. Outcome harvesting methods are largely used for assessing individual projects, and as such the methods in this study are informed by this approach but do not follow the methodology as it is conventionally applied.

Methods were selected to contribute to systems-level learning on trends in the two selected themes. As noted above, the intention was to take an approach that does not measure changes against specific indicators, but instead seeks to explore how agencies and individuals themselves are rethinking their outcome goals in relation to changing global commitments when confronted with field-level realities. All informants were advised that their input would

be used for such learning, and that there would be no attempt to hold them to account for efforts to achieve GB and WHS targets. Instead, they were encouraged to reflect on the realities of trying to work towards and combine such targets with other prevailing goals, institutional pressures, regulatory structures, cultural norms and development trajectories in highly politicised environments.

Step One:

The study began with (largely Skype) interviews at headquarter-level with a limited number of senior staff with responsibilities directly or indirectly related to rolling out commitments in the two selected locations. These senior staff were identified through dialogue with ALNAP Members, starting at the Annual Meeting in February 2017.

Interviews were used to identify potential overarching intended outcomes related to the two thematic areas, including processes related to the GB and WHS. The key informants interviewed were asked about what changes they expected or would like to see in relation to these commitments. They were asked what they were doing differently as a result of these commitments and how their international, national and local operational partners were expected to change their attitudes, behaviours and/or institutional relations in order to meet them. The informants were asked to describe why these changes were important in addressing prevailing problems in humanitarian efforts today. Finally, they were asked to describe the opportunities and problems they were encountering (or expected to encounter) as these efforts were rolled out, and how these changes were expected to practically address prevailing challenges in the humanitarian sector.

Step Two:

The next step of the study, involved a preliminary review of major programming initiatives in the study sites to identify contextual and political economy factors that are likely to impinge on expected outcomes. Documentation, evaluations and research literature on factors relating to localisation, humanitarian-development nexus dynamics and resilience in the two selected crises and relevant interventions were analysed.

Step Three:

The study team (the lead researcher and one local researcher in each country) then undertook two-week missions in the two countries and carried out interviews with relevant stakeholders, starting with the partners that were identified at headquarter-level interviews for each of the two themes. Interviewees included local, national and international CSOs, UN representatives (mostly in Lebanon), donor representatives, think tanks and local and national government authorities (again, mostly in Lebanon). A total of 57 interviews were undertaken during the fieldwork, which was undertaken in June and July 2017. In Ethiopia,

the interviews were all undertaken in Addis Ababa and in Lebanon they were undertaken in Beirut, Tripoli, Saida and the Bekaa Valley. The informants were asked to describe processes impinging on intended and unintended outcomes, and were also asked to reflect on those identified in the headquarters interviews. Particular focus was given to how they perceived their spheres of influence, and how this impacted their opportunities or the obstacles to achieving the outcomes that they themselves were striving for, as well as those outcomes identified by headquarters-level informants. The prevailing institutional relationships and resulting 'messy partnerships' that may lead to path dependencies or facilitate innovation in achieving outcomes were also analysed.

A snowball approach was used wherein interviewees were asked to identify other informed stakeholders involved in driving systemic change at both research sites and international levels. Some actors were interviewed later by Skype to further contextualise the field-level findings and to obtain a deeper understanding of how agency headquarters' efforts are changing to support the outcomes identified in the field.

Field-level data collection findings were analysed to identify patterns related to the selected themes, as well as in relation to the contexts of the humanitarian intervention. Attention was given to understanding how identified categories of opportunities and obstacles have been addressed, including any common 'pivotal' outcomes that contribute to broader change in the sector.

Step Four:

A focus group discussion between key stakeholders was conducted in February 2018 to reflect on outcomes that emerged in the fieldwork and to obtain information about the changes that have occurred in the interim. A rough initial draft of this report was circulated before the interviews to verify initial findings and to stimulate reflection in the interviews.

The findings were also analysed and discussed with other members of the SOHS team to identify where the different datasets offer opportunity for triangulation and critical reflection. The resulting analysis has provided the basis for better understanding the 'why and how factors' behind other SOHS findings.

Limitations

The methods chosen were not intended to uncover outcomes that could be directly *attributed* to GB and WHS commitments. Some *contributions* have been found, but even these have proven rather ephemeral: although clues regarding causal relationships are noted, they cannot be verified.

The two countries selected have proven extremely appropriate for highlighting how state-civil society-donor relations and the historical trends that have shaped these relations frame the outcomes being analysed. They do not, however, constitute a ‘representative sample’. The extent to which conclusions can be generalised or extrapolated to other contexts will vary. The intention of looking at these two relatively ‘extreme’ examples is to stimulate reflection and debate, rather than indicating clearly applicable conclusions.

It should also be stressed that the focus has been on the analysis of the two countries. The review of the headquarters perspectives was deliberately ‘light-touch’ and primarily intended as a way to frame the analysis of outcomes at operational levels.

Structure of the report

This report starts with an introductory section describing the aims, scope and methods used. This is followed by a presentation of the findings from headquarter-level and other international informant interviews, emphasising their views about relevant actions taken thus far under the two themes and their understanding of the challenges and opportunities ahead, as well as their hopes for the future. The two country case study sections start with a contextual overview, followed by a discussion of localisation to civil society and government (central and local). Experience with inclusion across the nexus is described, followed by sections looking more specifically at outcomes and commitments in relation to ‘leaving no one behind’. The report then turns to an analysis of the converging and diverging points across the two case studies, which leads to overall conclusions and lessons from the research.

It should be stressed that a core finding, reflected in the structure of this report, is that the themes of localisation, working across the nexus and inclusion are tightly interwoven in practice. As such, even though the respective sections of the report focus on key findings in these areas, a significant degree of overlap in the analyses has been unavoidable.

Global perspectives

Overall progress from outputs to outcomes

Commitments and goals referred to in this study

Localisation and the Grand Bargain: There is an active debate on why it has taken so long to take localisation seriously, combined with strong CSO advocacy for inclusion. Lebanese civil society is highly committed and has strong knowledge about the nature of vulnerability and protection challenges. There has been uneven yet significant engagement of local government in basic services for both refugees and host communities.

Leaving no one behind: Within the Agenda for Humanity, commitments are summarised as follows: ‘The Agenda for Humanity calls on leaders to transform the lives of those most at risk of being left behind. This means reaching everyone and empowering all women, men, girls and boys to be agents of positive transformation. It means reducing displacement, supporting refugees and migrants, ending gaps in education and fighting to eradicate sexual and gender-based violence.’

New way of working: Commitments to a ‘new way of working’ emerged out of the WHS and are evolving to increasingly emphasise the role of host governments and the UN in defining ‘collective outcomes’ to strive towards in humanitarian response, with more explicit links to the Sustainable Development Goals. These commitments were originally summarised as: ‘...working over multiple years, based on the comparative advantage of a diverse range of actors, including those outside the UN system, towards collective outcomes. Wherever possible, those efforts should reinforce and strengthen the capacities that already exist at national and local levels.’

‘The Nexus’: In parallel with the specific commitments made in relation to the GB and WHS, a broad range of policies have emerged among a number of agencies with aims of finding new ways of bringing together humanitarian and development efforts, often also linked to policies for migration, stabilisation, peacebuilding, disaster risk reduction and other goals. There is no single widely agreed definition of ‘the nexus’, as different agencies approach it through the lens of their national or institutional policy objectives.

Initial interviews at headquarter-levels indicated largely upbeat views on the initial progress since the WHS. Comments emphasised high-level administrative and policy decisions which were expected to enable future achievement of outcomes. These findings were clearest among donors and larger INGOs, where activities were underway. Overall, however, these efforts were still at the output phase, focused on decisions (on how to respond to commitments) rather than actual implementation.

A notable feature of these processes is the recognition of governments in affected countries demonstrating leadership and exerting control. This is particularly exemplified by the emerging New Way of Working (NWoW) discussion within some UN agencies, where the focus is on the role of governments. By contrast, WHS and GB commitments primarily emphasise the role of civil society. This underlying tension between *localisation to government*, as part of many nexus and NWoW efforts, and *localisation to civil society*, is emphasised throughout this report; although some headquarter-level interviewees downplayed these concerns.

Interviews revealed that perhaps the most important process impinging outcome achievement is the recognition among some large NGOs that more profound attitudinal changes are needed to overcome paternalistic mind-sets, and practical obstacles to changing

institutional norms and frameworks. One informant described this as ‘a change in our role, culture, skills sets, view of risk – rather than compliance – and becoming less bureaucratic’. Such awareness is especially strong among faith-based agencies with a history of working through local partners; one stated that ‘Partnerships are for the long-term for both sides, even if a humanitarian project is short.’ References to the WHS and GB indicate that these agendas have endorsed and encouraged processes that were not themselves new.

While there was recognition of the importance of addressing values and ethical commitments, there was also acknowledgement that some agencies and individuals are demonstrating considerable *de facto* satisfaction with the status quo in their organisations. This failure to respond to new objectives may be coupled with well-honed staff skills in manipulating new objectives by adapting rhetoric rather than actual programming. Some agencies were seen as mostly engaging in a ‘numbers game’ around efforts to meet GB targets (adapting existing accounting to imply greater spend at local level). One informant described these targets as a ‘distraction’ from more genuine efforts to achieve localisation. An example given was where a large proportion of funding was going toward materials, and attention (in terms of GB indicators) was focused on who was buying them. For genuine localisation this information is secondary to who makes the decisions on what materials are purchased and for whom. Such number games are a reminder of the importance of focusing on power relations, rather than assuming that shifting spending patterns are a proxy for institutional change. A recurrent concern has been how to keep a focus on the quality of relationships – and how these may change across the nexus – rather than quantities of resources flowing through different accounts.

Shifts (or lack thereof) regarding ‘who is at the table’ to overcome the exclusion of local civil society are recognised as pivotal, but concerns were expressed by a few informants regarding the limited change thus far. One informant described her agency as having norms that meant that ‘information is shared on a need-to-know basis, and partners are left in the dark’. Some interviewees paint a picture of international agencies running to meetings to discuss these processes, but where local partners (CSOs, and even more so host governments) are out of the loop. Some criticism was mentioned that the ‘tables’ where these meetings were taking place have largely been in the North.

There is a recognition that some governments in affected countries are taking steps to demonstrate leadership (and perhaps take control) over the localisation and nexus agendas. This is an element in the evolving NWoW discussions currently underway. It is too early to judge where these discussions will lead, but it is clear that NWoW already means very different things in different countries. The extent to which NWoW will translate into sub-

national 'localisation', empowerment of civil society, and more profound subsidiarity to affected communities is uncertain.

A few interviewees noted that 'other bargains' (and nexuses), such as the OECD/DAC revisions and Charter for Migration,³ may undercut or otherwise modify their GB and WHS commitments, and that the rhetoric emerging from some donors is not coherent. The 'other bargains' that are emerging outside of the humanitarian sector have implications for theories of change and nexus priorities in particular, as these primarily derive from non-humanitarian concerns, especially securitisation and stopping migration. The latter is sometimes recognised as a very large elephant in the room due to the increasing shifts of resources and opaque anchoring in conventional humanitarian and development agendas.

Multi-year humanitarian funding (OCHA, 2017) is sometimes recognised as a precondition for achieving NWoW and nexus goals, and even for the investments in capacity development that are required to achieve sustainable localisation. This was described by some headquarter-level informants as 'moving beyond its long-standing "pipe-dream" status' and actually becoming a reality – though new policies have generally not yet received final approval. Donors are particularly happy that multi-year funding is finally being taken seriously, as it is seen to address some of the more fundamental obstacles to responding to a range of dysfunctions in the humanitarian system. Even if multi-year modalities are not possible to get approved, there is a related need to move away from temporally bound transactional relations that focus efforts on humanitarian response outputs and ignore the need to invest in capacities over time.⁴ One informant expressed hope that systems (and trust) will soon be in place for greater foresight regarding capacity development so that international and local actors can 'hit the ground together' in emergency response.

Localisation: outcome trends and hopes

There is a recognition that localisation is neither simple nor easy, particularly when it comes to ensuring that humanitarian principles of independence and neutrality are respected. Some discussions around 'complementarity' assume that an appropriate basis can be identified for encouraging this shift in power while safeguarding adherence to humanitarian principles. But others acknowledge that the search for complementarity (and 'common outcomes') with host governments may be a gloss for overlooking inappropriate processes that weaken local civil society capacities. This was noted by a few interviewees as particularly important when NWOV and related initiatives are pursued by what are coming to be referred to as 'assertive governments'.

Donor and UN pressures on INGOs to live up to localisation commitments were recognised by a few interviewees as essential. But interviews indicate that these efforts are still rather

piecemeal and sometimes driven by committed individuals who are dissatisfied with the status quo (or perhaps even blocked by those who are satisfied with the status quo) rather than broader institutional processes. It is generally too early to judge whether this reflects the slow process of obtaining political buy-in, or if it can be interpreted as putting into question the sustainability of commitments. An overall tendency is to see donor pressure as integral to change processes within INGOs.

Perhaps the most significant nascent outcome thus far is a growing awareness around the need to create a voice for those who are asking profound questions around localisation outcomes. For example, there is some recognition that, without core funding and ‘seats at the table’, the localisation agenda will not gain traction. It may seem a meagre achievement in relation to such fundamental changes, but it can also be seen that the growing *acknowledgement that confronting the basic power relations that impede localisation is a first step* towards transcending what one interviewee described as ‘nit-picking around inputs and outputs’. Some question how profound these changes are likely to become and point out that there will always be a degree of exclusion given structural bias at the international-level. The Missed Opportunities Group, starting in 2012, was mentioned by some as a major forerunner ahead of the Charter for Change and the GB and WHS commitments due to the light it shed on behavioural and attitudinal barriers to localisation. A policy brief summarises their findings as:

At present the system favours humanitarian actors in inverse order to their proximity to crises: international actors have the greatest access to funding and decision-making power which they pass on to national actors taking a percentage; national organisations, usually based in capitals come next as they have built up relations with donors in-country and with UN agencies and international NGOs; finally the local organisations, which are the first responders, present before during and after the crises, have the least access to humanitarian funding, the least opportunities to influence and determine humanitarian response, and the least opportunity to develop their capacities, knowledge and humanitarian practice and to prepare for and prevent disasters. (Christian Aid et al., 2015: 1)

Inclusion across the nexus: outcome trends and hopes

The above findings indicate how localisation and nexus goals are interrelated. However, whereas localisation is clearly ‘on the radar’, in headquarter-level interviews it was hard to discern an overall pattern regarding commitments to the nexus and inclusion, apart from a general recognition of the need to step out of old programming ‘habits’. Findings from the two countries suggest this may be related to the fact that interviews were conducted with those responsible for humanitarian programming, whereas the nexus and related resilience

efforts may be as much if not more the responsibility of development departments more concerned with ‘other bargains’.

Livelihoods are an area where there is growing recognition of the need to focus more on markets, legal norms governing access to jobs, etc., which in turn require agencies to break out of path dependencies in which traditional (humanitarian) mandates and norms lead to a narrow scope of programming that ignores development trajectories. Inclusion commitments in livelihoods programming were difficult to detect in interviews, but this may be related to a recognition that the link between livelihoods efforts and inclusion will vary in relation to the inevitably local determinants of vulnerability.

One interviewee highlighted the importance of seeing resilience as essentially a localisation challenge, especially in terms of how to ensure that partners are able to pivot across the

Summary

Emerging outcomes

- Recognition that these goals require profound shifts in attitudes and organisational cultures
- Processes initiated that may lead to policy and administrative changes and longer-term funding to allow agencies to act on commitments
- Recognition of the need for host governments and civil society to lead localisation efforts and define objectives in inclusion across the nexus

Obstacles and path dependencies

- Vested interests in the status quo
- Past experience with reform processes being allowed to be quietly forgotten
- Challenges in identifying how to approach localisation in ‘assertive states’
- Getting stuck in the ‘numbers game’ of localisation and missing the bigger picture
- Discussions being focused on ‘the wrong table’ to engage local actors
- Lack of a clear vision for ‘leaving no one behind’

Pivotal factors

- Recognition that working across the nexus requires localisation
- Broader stakeholder engagement to address nexus issues
- Finding ways to move the discussion from headquarters to country level, which requires contextualisation and an understanding of local dynamics
- Ensuring that local actors are ‘at the table’
- Donor pressures to live up to commitments

Influence of the GB and WHS

- Commitment to breaking out of ‘business as usual’
 - Increased visibility of WHS and GB goals as ‘signals’ within agencies and ministries
 - Stimulation of policy and administrative reform
 - Initiating and perhaps legitimising a dialogue on the need for more profound attitudinal changes
-

nexus between humanitarian and development work. One interviewee stressed that she would like to see a greater realism: that the needs are beyond everyone's capacities and we therefore need a broad perspective on respective roles in different aspects of response (rather than a focus on shifts towards one set of actors). Localisation and resilience could come together in efforts to find ways to move towards a more comprehensive perspective on capacity development, with the mix of roles being expected to vary according to the geographical context and the type of emergency.

Findings: Ethiopia

Context

Perhaps more than anywhere else, recent histories of Ethiopia and humanitarianism are intertwined. The search for a better way to manage the humanitarian-development nexus in Ethiopia long predates current discussions, and this reflects a well-established convergence of national and international decisions to reform food security responses and overcome the need for recurrent assistance.⁵ This history has highlighted the hopes and frustrations that frame these efforts. Most importantly, it has underscored the disappointments regarding recently heralded solutions and renewed efforts to overcome protracted crisis.

A major outcome of this has been the efforts to find innovative ways to support national social protection systems for chronically vulnerable populations. Over the past decade, these systems have been developed, wherein there was an implicit assumption – albeit effectively debunked by the experience of recent droughts – that this would overcome the need for recurrent response to acute vulnerability. The interplay between chronic and acute vulnerability to food insecurity, combined with a historical conflation of the two in approaches to preventing disasters, is central to the Ethiopian discourse on the role of national systems in managing the nexus.

Ethiopia exemplifies several salient issues that need to be considered in judging likely future outcomes in relation to localisation and humanitarian response to vulnerability across the nexus:

- Partly due to considerable levels of investment from the Government of Ethiopia and its stance as a developmental state, the international community has been relatively generous in providing matching support with appeals largely well-funded.
- There is visible frustration about the inability to overcome recurrent emergencies.
- The state and development donors were making major investments in what were hoped to be scalable social protection measures, long before the nexus came to be known as the ‘nexus’.
- The Ethiopian developmental state is anchored in determination to lead the humanitarian response to an emergency that is largely seen to have been triggered by natural hazards – for the Ethiopian state, the nexus is about localisation to government institutions.
- The government distrusts local civil society, resulting in shrinking space for the localisation agendas envisaged in the GB and WHS commitments.
- With the exception of one programme (described below), there is very little reference to the GB and WHS as instrumental in defining humanitarian goals and influencing modalities in Ethiopia.

These factors are not unique to Ethiopia, but as will be discussed below, may be more explicit and dominant than in less developmental states that are more accepting of humanitarian agencies leading the response.

Localisation and civil society

A stark overall finding of this research is that there has been limited localisation emerging in Ethiopia – at least insofar as localisation is related to civil society. Representatives of both INGOs and local CSOs acknowledge this. The general view is that conditions for civil society are deteriorating, largely due to Ethiopian legal and regulatory frameworks that constrain space for localisation – and also protection. One INGO representative summarised the prevalent view that ‘the government calls the shots here’. There are two technical directives issued by the Charities and Societies Agency (ChSA) and described below, the ‘70/30’ and the ‘90/10’ proclamations, which have had profound impact on this space.

The relative proportions of operational and administrative costs of ‘charities and societies’ (the term used for CSOs, including those engaging in humanitarian operations) are delineated under proclamation 621/2009 and the subsequent ‘70/30’ directive issued by the ChSA. The rationale to determine the 70/30 ratio for operations versus administrative costs emanates from the overall assumption that CSOs should spend most of their funds on the actual delivery of the services they plan to provide to their beneficiaries. The directive to determine the operational and administrative costs of CSOs was approved by the ChSA’s board in July 2011. This directive has had significant, and largely negative, impact on most Ethiopian CSOs. For example, of the 29 surveyed CSOs which received USAID funding in 2010, 27 stated that they were unable to comply with the directives (DAG, 2012, 2016). The directive has had particularly negative impact on smaller CSOs and a number of budding consortia located in emerging regions since a large proportion of their costs were classified as administrative. The directive had far less impact on the largely international agencies which manage considerable volumes of resources, particularly humanitarian assistance, as this volume can be used to offset their costs classified as ‘administration’.

CSOs and their international partners interviewed agree, in principle, that restricting administrative costs is a valid goal, and many international agencies impose their own rules regarding expenditure ratios as well. The challenge from these directives, in the case of the ChSA in Ethiopia, lies not on the rule *per se*, but on the definitions and the allocation of the cost categories which fall under each category. The directive lists different sorts of operational and administrative costs in detail, with staff salaries and benefits, staff training costs, consultancy fees, costs for monitoring and evaluation, vehicles and all expenditures which are by nature ‘soft’ generally categorised as administrative costs. Despite this detail, the directives cannot exhaustively reflect the complex operational circumstances of

individual CSOs, which creates risks where capacity development support is in danger of being prohibited since it is categorised as ‘administrative’. One informant from a local CSO exemplified prevailing exasperation, stating that ‘what they have included is so funny and bizarre that the auditors are saying it is crazy’.

The ‘90/10’ rule refers to articles 2 and 14/5 of Proclamation 621/2009. Organisations registered as Foreign Charities and Ethiopian Resident Charities and Societies are those that obtain more than 10% of their funding from foreign sources. They are prohibited from engaging in the following activities: the advancement of human and democratic rights; the promotion of equality of nations, nationalities and peoples and that of gender and religion; the promotion of the rights of the disabled and children’s rights; the promotion of conflict resolution or reconciliation; and the promotion of the efficiency of the justice and law enforcement services. Organisations registered as Ethiopian Charities and Societies are permitted to engage in these activities, but they cannot obtain more than 10% of their funding from foreign sources. Since 2010 and the implementation of the Proclamation, the number of organisations registered as Ethiopian has declined. With the introduction of the Proclamation, some organisations working on human rights and governance changed their mandate to work on different activities and others have drastically reduced the extent of their human rights activities, mainly due to shortage of funding. In short, the extent of human rights and governance work by local CSOs (and also INGOs) in Ethiopia is now extremely limited, and to a large extent those limits include protection. Areas of work which have been curtailed by the Proclamation include most protection fields: for example, legal advice and assistance for vulnerable populations, rights awareness raising, work on gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices, defence of children’s rights, projects to promote the rights of people with disabilities, and the prevention and resolution of conflict. Funds raised domestically cannot support a level of these activities commensurate with the needs. Nonetheless, some agencies are finding ways to undertake protection activities: ‘Everything depends on the wording. We want to continue with gender-based violence but instead refer to public health issues. So we can manage.’

These restrictions on CSO activities put into question the framing of WHS and GB goals and highlight broader lessons regarding the relationship between humanitarian localisation and the shrinking space for civil society in many countries more generally. As an increasing number of states are enacting such restrictions (Russia, Turkey, Tanzania, etc.), the basic premises of localisation as related to civil society come into question. The ‘70/30’ regulations exemplify limitations being enacted that affect the extent to which capacity development and support can even be provided to small organisations (with inevitably higher proportions of ‘administrative’ costs). The ‘90/10’ regulations exemplify the restrictions being placed on human rights activities, with major knock-on effects on protection.

Interviews (and conversely difficulties in obtaining responses to requests for interviews from some agencies) highlight examples of the impact of these restrictions on localisation outcomes. Government pressures are seen by some local actors to have made the international community in general, and the UN in particular, complicit in failures to promote localisation given their continued strong support for the government. For example, several larger local CSOs expressed great frustration regarding their failures to access the OCHA-managed pooled Ethiopia Humanitarian Fund, which requires foreign exchange bank accounts that only a very few Ethiopian CSOs are permitted to hold. An OCHA-led review acknowledged that local access to the Fund should be improved (STAIT, 2016), but no changes had been noted by interviewees at the time of the study. Local actors perceive this inflexibility to be indicative of weak commitments to localisation and acquiescence to state pressures. Several interviewees from local CSOs were of the opinion that the government prefers working with INGOs rather than local CSOs and that most INGOs were quietly satisfied with this due to their vested interests. One representative of a large INGO acknowledged that despite considerable discussions about localisation ‘nothing has been done’, and that it was ‘easy to hide behind the legal framework issues.’ Donors interviewed were slightly more optimistic, with one referring to their efforts to encourage the government to ease restrictions as leading to ‘baby steps’ and pointed to government acceptance, in principle at least, of a role for local CSOs in social protection in the future.

With regard to INGO vested interests, interviews generated some examples of disconcerting ‘old excuses’ for weak commitments from large INGOs who indicated that due to the large relief operations underway in the context of sensitive relations with the government, the localisation agenda had been deprioritised. One local organisation noted that, for INGOs, the ‘usual excuse is that we lack capacity’ – a self-fulfilling prophecy as capacities are shrinking due to lack of access to operational funding. Some local organisations remain frustrated with the ‘old obstacles’ of rigid and complicated INGO and UN procedures. One agency referred to the UN as a ‘threatening edifice’. In general, there was no impression from either the international or national agencies interviewed that localisation was seen to be high on the humanitarian agenda, although some sincerely hoped it would be.

Despite these profound constraints, some modest progress has been made among international and local faith-based international organisations, building on long-standing trust, relations and commitments. Indeed, the work of the faith-based INGOs was the main area where there was a perception that the WHS and GB commitments may be achieving some modest traction.

The major programme led by faith-based organisations in Ethiopia is Shifting the Power,⁶ which has focused on developing capacities among local CSOs that were primarily

development-oriented in the past to undertake humanitarian response and early recovery. Implementation has been extremely slow due to the obstacles described above. One informant said Ethiopia was the ‘worst possible place’ to implement the programme.

A central challenge that has faced Shifting the Power has been the fact that, even when the obstacles to investing in training and coaching are overcome, one central challenge remains – getting funding for actual humanitarian operations. The implicit assumption that the GB and WHS commitments would drive the major actors to provide these resources has not proved valid. Some very small grants have been mobilised for ‘learning by doing’, but these are recognised as insignificant. At the time of this study the programme was waiting for a decision about whether to shift more resources from training and coaching into larger operational grants for ‘learning by doing’ as a modest way to overcome obstacles local partners face in developing capacities.

These and other capacity building investments are constrained by the ‘70/30’ rule, which treats almost any support to local partners as part of the (30%) administrative costs. There is considerable pressure to put all available resources into materials for relief operations and minimise capacity development support. Shifting the Power has been a platform for dialogue with the government about how to interpret (and hopefully adapt) these rules. Local partners to Shifting the Power recognise that they need to take on much bigger humanitarian operations to meet these proportional targets. Indeed, one factor driving these organisations’ interests in shifting from development to humanitarian activities is that they see that this as an area where, in the future, they may be able to meet their ‘70/30’ targets, which are virtually impossible to meet when undertaking small development projects. At the time of the study, revisions to this regulation were being considered by the government, but there were no indications regarding whether they would be made more or less flexible. To a large extent, this system favours programmes channelled through large INGOs with major humanitarian distributions that they can use to offset ‘administration’ costs.

It would be wrong to assume that the ‘70/30’ regulations are the only obstacle. Apart from a few notable exceptions (described below), the overwhelming majority of Ethiopian CSOs lack the capacity and operating scale to make a significant shift from development to humanitarian response. This results in a ‘chicken or egg’ conundrum in that they lack the capacity to attract and use large-scale humanitarian funds, which means that they cannot obtain the support they need to begin growing. Shifting the Power may be well placed to help break this blockage, but it is not certain that it is enough.

There have also been stronger outcomes related to refugee response. One organisation with a long history of refugee support is apparently provided greater leeway by the government to

work with UNHCR and the government's Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs on response both in Addis Ababa and on the border with South Sudan. They report significant outcomes in terms of changes in relationships with their international partners, as there is growing respect for their local knowledge and greater devolution of responsibilities. However, they note that international partners take a major proportion of the overhead provided by donors, leaving funds primarily for operations, detracting from the resources they need to develop their own capacities. This finding regarding concerns about competition over limited overheads was verified by interviewees at global level and in Ethiopia.

The two other exceptions regarding restrictions on CSOs are the Ethiopian Red Cross, which has a different legal status to the CSOs, and the Relief Society of Tigray (REST), that has very close relations with the government. The Ethiopian Red Cross continues to operate within similar relationships with the Red Cross Movement, perhaps indicating that in the Red Cross localisation is not a new agenda. REST is a unique organisation that was originally created as the humanitarian wing of the Tigray People's Liberation Front and has since developed into what is probably Ethiopia's strongest local 'NGO', and is recently beginning to operate outside of Tigray. It is notable that, despite the close links with the government, some agencies referred to their work with REST as their main 'success story' in working with 'civil society'. REST receives considerable international support, and due to their sizeable operational capacity they are able to provide sufficient direct services to manage the '70/30' balance. They are engaged in quite complex programming, including sizeable irrigation programmes in the lowlands and an innovative Oxfam-supported weather-indexed insurance programme where they collaborate with both international research institutions and the international and Ethiopian private insurance sector. This impressive localisation outcome has emerged from several years of efforts to develop new responses to climate change, and is underpinned by government trust in REST. In interviews, there were no indications that this outcome is related to the WHS or GB commitments. One representative of a major INGO also stated that climate change adaptation was a central arena for localisation and more concerted efforts to rethink the nexus.

As described above, protection is an area where the space for local civil society is acutely constrained. One Ethiopian civil society institution stressed that the central issue, from their perspective, was a failure by government to understand and respect the human rights principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination and transparency. The boxing-in of local CSOs in protection programming was described as a symptom of this failure. One observer noted that due to the 'decimation' of civil society, the monitoring of human rights is now entirely in the hands of international actors.

In sum, the agenda for localisation to civil society in Ethiopia has been overshadowed by government restrictions. There are a few positive experiences with efforts to overcome these challenges, but overall local CSOs are sceptical about international agencies' commitment to doing so. One interviewee noted that if the international community really wants to support local CSOs, 'there are ways'. There are suspicions that government-imposed limitations may provide an excuse for complacency. The tone of discussions among both the local CSOs and most (but not all) international agencies indicate that no major movement away from 'business as usual' is underway. Old struggles remain regarding who decides what needs to be done, how to share overheads, administrative rigidity, unharmonised donor reporting requirements, and failures to find ways to reduce transaction costs for local partners.

Localisation to the Ethiopian Government

UN and donor documentation on the humanitarian response in Ethiopia tends to focus very strongly on government ownership and leadership, together with resultant 'pragmatic partnerships' (Government Offices of Sweden, MFA, 2016) between the government and the international community. For example, 'The humanitarian response in Ethiopia is defined by the government's strong ownership and hands-on engagement' (STAIT, 2016: 4). By contrast to the experience with civil society, there are very strong localisation outcomes if interpreted to include government-led social protection, i.e. the adaptation of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP). The PSNP is funded by the Ethiopian government, ten bilateral donors and the World Bank and has been the centrepiece of government-led efforts to create a safety net to address chronic vulnerability and food insecurity. It is designed to provide a predictable and ongoing safety net for highly vulnerable populations, with the expectation that some of them will be able to leverage this enhanced security to 'graduate' and no longer need this support. It is now in its fourth phase (2015–2020) and provides support for approximately eight million people. Since the start of the programme, the Ethiopian government has made large-scale investments in developing both central and local-level civil service capacities to make the system work. Civil society is notably excluded from a significant role in the PSNP. USAID has applied pressure to ensure that INGOs are involved in managing its support, but they are largely a channel to local government rather than to local civil society.

Despite the programme's focus on chronic vulnerability, there has long been a recognition that these same populations were also highly vulnerable to acute shocks. Some of the population goes through periods of transitory risk and also there are major climatic events that generate far more widespread and acute food security and health risks, beyond the eight million PSNP beneficiaries. The government has, since 2005, tried in different ways to adapt the PSNP to also be a channel for responding to these shocks. The main advantage of building on this foundation has been that the PSNP provides for a long-term programme

with predictable five-year phases and thereby removes some of the uncertainties around sudden demands on government coffers and humanitarian appeals. In the current phase, a 'contingency budget' was established for scalable humanitarian response (11% of the total PSNP budget – in earlier phases this component varied in size and structure). This has been seen by some as a potential first step towards a breakthrough in creating a mechanism to respond to the nexus of chronic and acute needs.

Within the PSNP structures, national and local government institutions are already in place in the highlands to identify vulnerable populations and target assistance for both the chronic response and the scalable mechanism. Some problems exist related to the local political realities, but these systems are largely seen as a success story. More problems exist in developing transparent targeting systems in the lowlands, where the majority of the humanitarian response to the most recent drought was underway during the data collection.⁷ This difference is primarily due to cultural and micro-political issues – especially the clan system, whose norms dictate that aid should be shared evenly rather than according to need – as well as more general distrust of local authorities by international agencies due to corruption risks. The weaker accountability of local authorities has also played a major role in the lack of progress towards developing PSNP structures in the lowlands (Lavers, 2018).

Even outside of the cultural and institutional issues facing the PSNP, interviews with researchers revealed concerns about how to design a system that can address heterogeneous food security risks in the many microclimates and differing rainfall patterns over time. One evaluation addressed the dilemma around using the PSNP as a platform for both social protection and humanitarian response in the following terms: 'Can PSNP be flexible as well as predictable? The PSNP is a great and beneficial innovation, but its very predictability makes responding flexibly to an evolving situation challenging' (Sida et al., 2012: 34).

Despite its limitations, the PSNP generally continues to receive strong donor support. During the period of field research for this study there were delays in funding approval due to failures to address what is perceived to be an inefficient and unclear division of responsibilities between the Ministry of Agriculture for chronic response and the National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) for responding to acute emergencies. In 2015–2016 these two agencies had programmes operating in parallel. The lack of a clear division of responsibilities irritated donors as it stood in the way of a structured approach to jointly address both chronic and acute risk through adapting the institutional systems already in place. This specific problem is not unique to the current crisis. When the current Social Protection Policy was introduced in 2012, related concerns were acknowledged at the outset (Disaster Risk Management and Food Security Sector, 2014: 18):

Looking more broadly at the policy context, Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and Social Protection all share a common goal – to manage risks to development from shocks while building resilient communities. However, significant overlaps exist in terms of conceptual understanding, policies, and programme implementation between these three conceptual frameworks. The risk is that separate processes and structures will be developed that will lead to duplication and the inefficient use of scarce resources.

Interviewees were largely convinced that if issues around scalability were addressed by merging these functions at higher levels, the resulting donor confidence might in the near future create a very different humanitarian landscape.

Inclusion across the nexus

Historical commitments to escape from the cycle of recurrent reliance on humanitarian assistance have kept a spotlight on the nexus. Most operational agencies in a 2016 survey said that early recovery was a focus, even if donors were less convinced that there was a common vision in this regard (STAIT, 2016). Nonetheless, the need to address the current crisis within a nexus perspective is widely acknowledged. An EU discussion paper (EU Delegation in Ethiopia, 2016: 5) summarises this:

There seems to be a wide agreement between the government and the international community on the fact that the current crisis in Ethiopia is solely the consequence of the drought induced by a particularly severe El Niño episode. This is indeed the immediate cause of the current crisis. However, blaming the failure of rains alone for the current humanitarian crisis is a very simplistic analysis. Further analysis is needed to examine ultimate causes beyond the weather to determine what must be done to bring lasting food security solutions to Ethiopia.

Considering the current situation, all the attention is focused on addressing the short-term symptoms and not sufficient attention is given to the long-term root causes of chronic food insecurity.

Central to this is an emergent but incomplete merging of social and humanitarian protection agendas in Ethiopia. The PSNP experience raises questions (and suggests potential solutions) regarding the continuum between social protection and humanitarian response. Clear outcomes have been achieved in creating systems for targeting the most vulnerable in the PSNP in highlands. As such, this can be seen to constitute an example of a 'NWoW', but with a very modest role for the UN. Indeed, apart from WFP engagement in food distribution, the UN is conspicuously absent in the PSNP, with one donor explaining that 'The UN talks a lot

but does its own thing', which was seen to be unfortunate. The government, with World Bank and donor support, is actively defining the NWoW-like 'common outcomes' that are intended to address the nexus and address both acute and chronic vulnerability, but with very limited UN voice.

The PSNP experience also clearly shows that inclusion across the nexus relies on local government. Despite the problems at higher levels, the PSNP's potential for success is particularly apparent in the rural areas, where the same local government infrastructure and institutional structures are used. There are discussions of creating a 'single registry' at local level to manage both acute and chronic beneficiaries (and those who shift from one category to another) in a more coordinated fashion. In the highlands, the role of local government in identifying vulnerable households, ensuring that they can access support and defining when they are ready to 'graduate' out of being PSNP recipients is at the core of these efforts. There is an ongoing debate about how they are managing these roles (particularly the challenges related to criteria for graduation), but there is widespread consensus that local government is ultimately the only institution that can manage these roles. It is acknowledged that local government must 'own the beneficiary lists' in order to move forward.

A central challenge to promoting inclusion is the 'graduation' debate. The theory of change of the PSNP has been that a safety net will enable some of the poorest of households to find paths out of dependence on social protection. It has become apparent though that the poorest of the poor in Ethiopia are rarely able to use this safety net as a safety ladder. Even though there is consensus on the need for having the PSNP, there is growing acknowledgement that it is unlikely to be able to combine being a safety net and also a targeted programme to actually alleviate Ethiopia's chronic food insecurity.

There are also other concerns about how to target vulnerability. Despite the success of the PSNP, there is some distrust regarding politicisation of macro data on drought impacts in the lowlands which, during the field work for this study, was creating some unease about overall vulnerability targeting. Donors spoke of their commitment to finding ways to support government leadership in response, but also some areas where distrust still exists. One donor representative lamented that UN advocacy was insufficiently anchored in a rigorous commitment to credible data.

The Ethiopian Government is committed to inclusion across the nexus at policy level, but constraints remain at the implementation level relating to protection in particular. Even more than with localisation, legal and regulatory constraints to directly addressing protection (along with advocacy and human rights based approaches) are severe, as this programming is subject to the '90/10' rules. Regulations thus effectively only permit service provision and,

in order to be permitted, issues such as addressing gender-based violence need to be framed more as ‘services’ than as protection per se. One donor noted that there has been somewhat more discussion recently about protection risks, but operational agencies painted a bleak picture regarding their space for acting on these goals.

As noted above, multi-year funding is a lynchpin to taking a strategic view across the nexus, but almost all actors interviewed were unaware that this might even be under consideration.⁸ Here again, the multi-year PSNP constitutes an exception. A few interviewees noted that the priority for multi-year funding is climate change adaptation, where, for example, climate information (perhaps building on past Famine Early Warning Systems) could only be meaningfully developed with a longer-term perspective. But even here, there was mention of attempts to develop such services within unrealistic timeframes, with pilots ending even before the basic equipment is fully installed. There is also a link between (lack of) access to longer-term funding and prospects for localisation. The largely development-oriented local CSOs are more interested and capable of implementing livelihoods and community programming, but this type of programming cannot be undertaken effectively within humanitarian timeframes. In general, the main emerging outcome thus far is that past divides as to who funds what are softening, creating a potential for finding more appropriate mixes of long-term and short-term development, humanitarian and climate funding in the future.

Given the long history of nexus and pre-nexus⁹ efforts in Ethiopia dating back to efforts to respond in a more long-term manner to the emergency in the mid-1980s (and even earlier soil conservation programmes in drought-prone areas), it would seem that there would be a strong basis for learning. Some – but surprisingly few – interviewees drew attention to their resilience programming as providing a vehicle for this learning, whereas others were sceptical of the added value of the resilience concept. There were also a very few references to systems for applying crisis modifiers. While the principles for more effective nexus efforts are in place, one interviewee noted that they were managing a scalable component in their resilience programming but that this was dwarfed by the huge humanitarian operations underway.

Leaving no one behind?

Inclusion is thus on the agenda, but with a narrowly defined scope. Apart from some mentions of discussions around vulnerability, humanitarian agencies reported little traction in promoting a ‘leave no one behind’ agenda outside of the PSNP. Within the humanitarian arena, vulnerability and exclusion are overwhelmingly seen to be about geographic targets, i.e., the struggle to provide large-scale assistance in the lowlands, where more granular targeting is not seen as feasible.

Strikingly little attention is given to factors such as gender, disability, etc., in determining vulnerability and prioritising humanitarian response. This is in noted contrast to the PSNP, which clearly targets based on these indicators. One representative of a large INGO mentioned that there was no genuine commitment to finding ways around government regulations so as to contribute to social justice. The gender imbalance in INGO staffing was described as appalling.

One informant noted that very few organisations are taking disability seriously and that reductions in humanitarian funding are diminishing interest even further as this is the first area cut 'when the envelope shrinks'. Knowledge of (and interest in) relevant disability standards and charters is said to be minimal. The only significant outcomes noted were the engagement of local government, where interest is said to be considerable.

The Ethiopian Government's ultimate strategy for reducing rural vulnerability to disasters is urban migration and industrialisation. It is assumed that rural risk will be reduced if rural population pressures are reduced and there is increased access to remittances from the cities. However, there is a creeping realisation that urbanisation is generating new forms of both chronic and acute vulnerability and that there is no clear framework in place for responding to future urban crises. Ethiopia's urbanisation process has been too rapid to ensure that infrastructural and social service systems are in place to manage risk. Industrial parks have been at the core of Ethiopian industrialisation policies, but these exemplify a narrow view in which a focus on job creation has superseded concerns with broader urban development issues.

There are a few nascent initiatives to address urban vulnerability. One internationally financed industrial park is planned in which 30% of the jobs will be reserved for refugees. At the time of the research, a baseline study was underway for a new pilot urban PSNP, distinguishing between chronic and acute vulnerability and with plans for thrice-yearly follow-up visits to households to monitor changes and the possible graduation ladder. Efforts to design that survey suggest the diversity of factors that need to be considered and the importance of including smaller urban areas where need is great.

Summary findings from Ethiopia

Emerging outcomes

- Creation of scalable social protection systems
- Establishment of relevant localised capacities at central and local government levels for managing safety nets that can operate across the nexus (in the highlands)
- Systems in place for local identification of vulnerable households (in the highlands)
- Government ownership and leadership (and donor acceptance and encouragement) of humanitarian efforts
- Government and international community commitments to reduce the recurrence of emergencies
- Effective localisation to NGOs affiliated with the government

Obstacles and path dependencies

- Restrictions on capacity development support to civil society
- Restrictions on protection space
- International community acquiescence to the status quo
- Major capacity gaps for small, development-oriented local CSOs striving to take on a significant role in a large-scale humanitarian response
- Continuing views that the large-scale relief response takes precedence ('old excuses')
- Lack of commitment to more granular focus on vulnerability and discrimination
- Pressures for 'graduation', based on unrealistic expectations that a safety net can also act as a safety ladder

Pivotal factors

- INGO commitment to 'making it work' despite restrictions
- Building on long-standing and trusting relations between INGOs and local CSOs
- Programming modalities that link local CSOs and local government
- Leveraging the development experience of local CSOs in humanitarian efforts linked to the nexus
- Finding ways to simultaneously address chronic and transient food security risk
- Unpacking urban risk and getting it on the agenda

Influence of the GB and WHS

- One of the drivers behind the consensus on the need for government ownership and leadership
 - Entry point for inclusion of the humanitarian sector in more developmental discussions regarding 'leaving no one behind'
 - Stimulating the initiation of 'Shifting the Power'
-

Findings: Lebanon

Context

Lebanon has a very long history of providing support to refugees, notably to Palestinian refugees who mostly arrived in the 1940s and whose status remains unresolved, and perceptions of the role of the state, civil society and the international community in the current migration crisis are inextricably tied to this experience. Fear of replicating a permanent (rather than just protracted) crisis frames policies and local socio-political praxis. Lebanon has a larger proportion of refugees in relation to the population than any other country, with a manifest burden for the economy, public services and the social fabric. This has created fertile ground for politicians from different factions to express disdain for the integration process that would inevitably accompany 'the nexus', even though no clear alternative is in sight. The result has become a confusing mix of policies wherein integration is strongly discouraged, but a refusal to accept the establishment of refugee camps has paradoxically led to settlement within (primarily urban) communities and a resulting de facto integration process.

These factors are also related to longstanding weakness in state capacities and commitments, which have created a social protection vacuum (for both citizens and refugees) that civil society has tended to fill. One report quotes an informant as stating that 'The Syrian crisis is accepted as highlighting and exacerbating the weaknesses and limits of Lebanon's public sector' (Saavedra, 2016: 22). Because of this, and due to recurrent violent crises and periods of recovery over the past thirty years, Lebanon has a long history of local civil society working within 'the nexus'. National CSOs particularly highlight how their experience of shifting from development work into humanitarian assistance after the 2006 war with Israel has been important for framing how they see their role in the nexus.

Various studies and our interviews have found that these histories have, until recently, been largely ignored by the international agencies that arrived to respond to the current influx of Syrian refugees. This has been compounded by weak commitments to use research and evaluation to monitor unintended outcomes and impacts of humanitarian assistance (DFAT, 2014: 21). This past ignorance is now being dissipated, perhaps partially due to the humanitarian change agendas, but anger and frustration at what is seen as patronisation by the international community are major features of the landscape of localised and protracted refugee response. One study summarises this experience (Saavedra, 2016: 29):

Frustration among the local and national organisations was not related to rejection, but rather reflected a sense of disappointment and frustration at a perceived resistance on behalf of internationals to recognise and use local

knowledge and experiences. The Syrian crisis has exacerbated this in terms of the perceived rigidity of the response system and the way emergency funding has influenced collective action in Lebanon.

Localisation to civil society

As the Syrian refugee crisis has become more protracted, the UN has increasingly structured its commitments around overcoming this frustration through investments in capacity development and efforts to ensure government management and ownership of the response (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2017: 17).

Compared to Ethiopia, in Lebanon the UN is taking a much stronger role in the move towards GB localisation targets. In 2017 UN agencies began instructing their INGO partners that future support would be conditional on rapid 'handovers' to national CSOs. This was further fuelled by stricter government requirements placed on work permits for expatriate staff (including Syrians and Palestinians), which has led to a search for a smaller INGO footprint. Nonetheless, some INGOs pushed back as they saw the handover timeframes to be unrealistic and as they questioned the capacities of their national partners to absorb and use large aid flows. They noted that demands for handovers were premised around GB targets and funding cycles rather than analyses of the actual processes involved and capacity bottlenecks. Some INGOs and UN agencies pointed out in interviews that they were shifting to seeing the role of the INGOs more as umbrellas for support to local CSOs, rather than expecting the INGOs to undertake complete handovers.

One informant who was focusing entirely on capacity development efforts emphasised the gaps that exist within their partner organisations around basic financial management skills and procedures. He emphasised that these weaknesses generated the risk of scandals leading to a reversal of localisation commitments. Concerns about the pace of change are also related to general distrust among various stakeholders and the risks of feeding endemic factional/confessional fragmentation across CSOs and the government (wherein assistance tends to be distributed on an identity rather than a needs basis) (Oxfam 2015: 34). In light of these concerns, UN timeframes for handovers have been adjusted from the original demands, but the direction of travel is clear.

Local CSOs interviewed repeatedly asked how the current phase could be described as 'too soon' for a handover, six years into the refugee crisis and in light of the decades of experience among local CSOs in responding to displacement crises. They asked why it has 'taken so long' to start getting ready for this and assume that the delays are largely attributable to the vested interests of the INGOs. Some highlight how their organisations were the first to respond to the arrival of refugees, but that they were subsequently marginalised by INGOs.

As in Ethiopia, there are acknowledged difficulties for small, development-oriented CSOs to scale-up and become significant humanitarian actors, but they do not face the same level of restrictions; as such, this cannot explain why the discussion around shifting power and resources has taken so long to get started.

A few had concerns that where INGOs are retaining an intermediary role between donors and local CSOs, they are failing to pass on the funds to cover overheads. National CSOs frequently complain that even where there has been a shift to INGOs acting as an ‘umbrella’, there is usually no change from past sub-contracting relationships wherein the local partner has very limited influence on the design of programmes and prioritisation. One report states (Saavedra, 2016: 25):

International actors are accused of ‘acting like in any previous crisis anywhere’ and thus often meet frustration and rejection. Programme standardisation, a one-size-fits-all approach and a tendency to apply formulas from other countries, is perceived as a lack of listening and willingness to engage in the dialogue and debate that are important to many local and national organisations.

Interviews and reports make clear that there are very high levels of frustration among national civil society organisations at INGO patronisation and the ‘sudden discovery’ of localisation goals. Lebanese civil society has a long history of seeing the international community come and go; each time, one interviewee noted, they assume that they are arriving to a clean slate or ‘tabula rasa’ wherein ‘local implementing partners’ need to be identified and assigned tasks. Some statements indicated a perception that there is no learning process within the international community due to the cycle of expatriates arriving and departing. Some local CSO interviewees stressed that they had initially hoped that the WHS and GB would be a critical juncture in transforming these relationships, but that this optimism has proven unfounded. The WHS is becoming associated with the hypocrisy of the international agencies, rather than an agenda for change. One CSO interviewed distrusted INGOs so much that they discouraged them from visiting, afraid they would poach staff to fill gaps where internationals were not having their work permits renewed.

Some agencies are responding to GB demands and UN requirements by fast-tracking training, whereas others are questioning the equation of capacity development with training. One informant referred to the assumptions about training constituting a quick fix as a ‘checklist strategy’ rather than a ‘capacity building strategy’. Critics emphasise the need for more comprehensive organisational development and trust-building, which require more profound and longer-term solutions than one-off training. One major INGO acknowledged that they have been better at technical training than organisational development. As with

Ethiopia, the faith-based agencies and the Red Cross Movement tend to be at the forefront in trying to adopt more comprehensive and longer-term approaches, investing in their partners' organisational development processes rather than just training. A particular challenge facing local faith-based organisations in Lebanon is the sectarianism that leads to them to support only their own identity groups. One programme is focusing on raising awareness about humanitarian standards as a way to overcome this.

Donor localisation goals are also in place, drawing on analyses of past experience (DFAT, 2014: 3). But some interviewees note that administrative structures have yet to be adapted to reflect the realities of operationalising these goals, especially the time and human resources needed for getting approval for directly funding local NGOs. This is not just a problem for donors themselves, as national CSOs are also strained by a need to invest scarce resources in complex certification processes. This is a risky investment when funding levels are shrinking and the outcomes of arduous efforts to get certified – just as the money runs out – may be disappointing.

Interviewees note that challenges also relate to handovers being concentrated among a few large (sometimes government-approved) NGOs at the expense of grassroots civil society. One interviewee described them as having 'emerged out of nowhere', driven by donors who are 'just ticking boxes'. Some interviewees noted that this tendency is fuelled by quantitative GB and WHS targets, together with general donor certification requirements, that overshadow attention to the quality that can be achieved by working with smaller organisations. The failure to focus on quality over quantity, and the desire to minimise fiduciary risk, are directly associated with overlooking the need to find ways for smaller local CSOs to access funding. Even some of those large Lebanese CSOs receiving of this support acknowledge this risk and the subsequent dangers that they may replicate sub-contracting relationships similar to those they have had with INGOs that fail to generate genuine subsidiarity and build on local community knowledge.

Another level of localisation is the extent to which Lebanese and Syrian civil society can 'partner' in a way that encourages Syrian ownership and (as much as possible) leadership. Restrictions on Syrian organisations and employment create a dependency relationship between Syrian organisations and their Lebanese patrons and hosts. Some avoid this by registering as Lebanese, using locals as a front (a strategy used by Palestinian CSOs for many years). Some Syrian CSOs use a Lebanese 'shelter organisation' and may pay an 'overhead' for this service. Despite this dependency, there generally appears to be relatively good relations. Interviewees highlight how their different histories, capacities and comparative added values can actually lead to constructive and complementary connections. Syrian organisations are recognised as having greater credibility with refugees (UNDP, 2017: 25), whereas Lebanese

CSOs have greater capacity to engage with government institutions. The trust generated by such collaboration also may help to allay concerns about how elements of Lebanese ‘uncivil’ society have been increasingly provoking discrimination against Syrians.

Localisation and the government

Central government roles in supporting refugees are, above all else, anchored in fear of replicating the permanent crisis of the Palestinian refugees. This ‘worst case scenario’ overshadows all political response. These fears are worsening as populist politicians and media increasingly stoke discrimination and xenophobia.

Despite this, after an initial period of reluctance to engage in the refugee response, over the past few years the government has boosted its efforts to assume leadership. This is cautiously applauded by international and some local actors interviewed who recognise that this is appropriate for any government – as duty bearer – while also fearing that the government’s lack of experience and understanding of humanitarian programming may lead to inappropriate decisions and actions. These fears are also underpinned by concerns that the long-standing byzantine factional struggles within the Lebanese Government are highly problematic. Despite these hesitations, international funding channelled through government institutions is slowly increasing, as is support to increase their staffing to enable a more effective response (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2017: 4).

Weak governance lies behind the strength of (and challenges facing) civil society as it has filled gaps created by absent duty bearers for many years. The government is ready to accept a major role for CSOs, but restrictions exist in terms of the wider policy environment that constrains efforts towards refugee integration or programming, reflecting the protracted nature of the crisis. Volatility within the Lebanese Government has also meant that the future trajectory of their strength and commitments to leadership are difficult to predict. Overall, interviewees recognise that the government should be the duty bearer, even if services inevitably continue to be contracted out. The government recently increased its demands that resources at least flow via ministries to operational agencies, but capacities and commitments within government institutions to engage directly in humanitarian fora are still seen as very limited.

Interviews revealed mixed views on the roles of local government, which can be a vehicle for inclusive service provision and protection but can also be at the forefront of promoting xenophobia and demanding forced evictions of refugees. There is broad recognition of the importance of local government engagement to maximise their ownership of programming while mitigating the risks of local politicians undermining programming for political gain. This is a serious and unavoidable challenge. The weaknesses at central level have, in

some respects, shifted a degree of the burden for dealing with the refugee crisis to local government, but these entities are, by their own acknowledgement in interviews, woefully under-equipped and under-resourced. Their primary concerns regarding the refugee influx relate to how to cover the increased costs of basic public services, and mayors are torn between a desire to leverage humanitarian resources to invest in more permanent water and sanitation services and fears of creating permanent structures that could be construed as contributing to integration. In urban areas, the concerns about the extra costs of solid waste disposal are in particular focus due a crisis in this area since 2015 and the extent to which this has come to symbolise Lebanon's governance deficit. As such, the legitimacy of local government is part of the stabilisation agenda. A UNDP report (2017: 2) states:

Municipalities, particularly given the large size of the villages and the relative experience of their members, are at the forefront of the relationship with refugees and key in mitigating local conflicts... Municipalities are caught in between political divisions and pressure to address growing needs and demands for services, which affect their ability to mitigate local divisions and, at times, feeds antagonistic relations.

But at the same time (ibid: 9):

The region's municipalities vary from one village to the other, in terms of capacities, sectarian composition, dynamics, and political affiliations, as witnessed during the latest elections. Thus, they have a different impact on conflicts and tension with Syrian refugees. Their role has become increasingly important, as they control different facets of refugees' livelihoods, security, mobility, shelter and economic activity and are aid recipients. At the same me, they are facing a significant burden in most villages due to density of population and overstretched capacity. Despite external donors' funding for development projects, they are struggling to manage public services such as waste management, electricity and sewage and do not coordinate much their management of refugee issues but replicate each other's interventions.

Drawing on the Lebanese experience, some INGOs (notably Oxfam Italia) are critically reflecting on how they can (and must) do a better job at engaging with local government, 'warts and all' (Ciacci and Paoli, 2017). This is partly driven by a recognition of the essential nature of partnerships with local government in urban response. There is a realisation that some UN agencies, such as UNICEF, HABITAT and UNDP, have a more natural mandate to provide support to local government, and programming reflects this, as does the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2017: 152). The injection

of humanitarian funding has enabled agencies to scale-up these engagements considerably. But these efforts remain largely focused on adapting development programmes to take into account the refugee influx, rather than finding direct links between local government partners and humanitarian efforts. One interviewee noted that she had never seen a local government representative at a cluster meeting, indicating the gulf that exists.

Perhaps the greatest reason for continued hesitancy towards engaging more with local government in Lebanon is the fear of becoming part of extremely factionalised local political struggles. One interviewee noted intense debate within her organisation over whether this would constitute providing support to human rights violators. This relates to both real dangers and issues around perceptions. Any appearance that an INGO has partnered itself with local Hezbollah authorities, for example, could put access to funding at risk. The growing strength of Hezbollah in the national government after the recent elections is likely to increase these fears. These anxieties about localising to non-neutral actors are also a major aspect of the concerns that international agencies have with supporting local CSOs more generally.

Inclusion across the nexus

The nexus looks very different in a middle-income country where, apart from some UN programmes, there is little internationally financed development programming to link to. As such, international donors are in somewhat of a quandary regarding what the nexus implies if they have no intentions of establishing longer-term aid programmes. The Lebanese government has, in some respects, tried to leverage the 'global public good' it provides in opening its borders to a massive flow of refugees, to access development investments. Nexus objectives are clearly apparent in the Dead Sea Resilience Agenda, but in Lebanon it is difficult to discern how they are being put into practice.¹⁰

The nexus is largely stalled due to Lebanese Government restrictions on any efforts that overtly contribute to the integration of refugees. As noted above, the government has a sometimes paradoxical desire 'not to have a nexus' so as to prevent integration and any normalisation of the refugee presence. This is most apparent in the massive and wasteful expenditure on trucking water and de-sludging of latrines in the informal tented settlements where many refugees are encamped, when a more modest investment in permanent water and sanitation infrastructure would provide long-term and much needed benefits to both refugees and host communities. There is some degree of flexibility emerging in these areas, but interviews presented a very mixed picture regarding willingness to recognise (though not overtly) that the crisis has become protracted. The nitty-gritty decisions related to if and how to invest in such water and sanitation infrastructure, including how to share the benefits between refugees and the landlords who will reap long-term gains from these installations,

illustrate both the opportunities (where pragmatism prevails) and the obstacles to finding synergies across the nexus between humanitarian and developmental modalities.

Registration and access to the labour market are the lynchpins of allowing refugees to 'get on with their own nexus', but this has been constantly stymied. The Lebanese government pledged to loosen restrictions on refugee registration and employment in 2016, but implementation of these commitments has been weak (Danish Refugee Council et al., 2016). Rules tying registration to commitments not to seek employment mean that refugees are forced to choose between accessing inadequate humanitarian assistance or pursuing erratic employment. Refugees are only allowed to work in certain sectors (agriculture, waste collection and construction), and whereas INGOs are struggling to move into more livelihoods programming, the opportunities for meaningful investments are limited. This is particularly acute for refugees with disabilities, who are prevented from accessing appropriate employment. Restrictions primarily relate to jobs, but there are also limitations to access to health and education services. Refugees' abilities to 'get on with their own nexus' are especially affected by limited freedom of movement and curfews. Unpredictable and increasing numbers of evictions create major risks for programming involving fixed infrastructure that is expected to stretch across the nexus.

A major feature of nexus thinking in Lebanon is intentions that programmes should implicitly or explicitly contribute to greater social cohesion, especially in the North where conflicts have been concentrated in recent years. Even if larger peacebuilding programmes are rare, the fears that violence could engulf Lebanese society have led humanitarian agencies and donors to characterise their longer-term visions within the desire to maintain and enhance social cohesion. As such, the nexus is perceived as not just being about humanitarian and development efforts, but also social cohesion and security. In the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan this is associated with efforts to enhance government legitimacy as part of stabilisation and many planned initiatives are framed more in relation to maintaining security through community crisis management, than humanitarian support per se (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2017; Inter-Agency Coordination Lebanon, 2017).

As with Ethiopia, agencies do not see much progress towards more flexible, multi-year funding commitments from donors. One major UN agency reported that earmarking was far worse than ever. Pre-set donor categories about who can receive aid and for what are seen as problematic, particularly as there are also great needs among non-Syrian refugee populations and given the inevitable grey areas in the nexus in a middle-income country that does not receive significant levels of development assistance. The NWoW concept is largely unknown, even among the major UN agencies. For example, there is no reference to NWoW in the Lebanese Crisis Response Plan 2017–2020. There is a healthy discussion around what

could be referred to as ‘common outcomes’ among the government, international agencies and donors, but in interviews there was no reflection of this being a focus of discussions under the aegis of the UN.

Leaving no one behind?

Protection is on the agenda in the UN and among CSOs, but space is limited due to factors described above. Lebanese and Syrian CSOs relate quality with their capacity to understand and respond to vulnerability to their local knowledge. They see lack of inclusion as related to weak respect for that knowledge and general lack of localisation (and INGO/UN patronisation). One Lebanese CSO stated that ‘Our needs assessments are not compatible with what they want... They just want to know the number of beneficiaries and box ticking, rather than quality.’ Most interviews with local CSOs highlighted their concerns with different factors related to protecting the dignity of the refugees.

One agency highlighted that the securitisation agenda has in some respects overshadowed protection. Donors are more willing to fund support for social cohesion or youth as a way of discouraging violence than as a means to protect vulnerable populations per se.

Social protection measures are being subtly introduced that increasingly mirror (hoped for) welfare state norms (e.g. UNHCR health insurance for refugees, cash-based modalities). The Lebanese Crisis Response Plan includes plans for identification of vulnerable individuals, referral and other protection mechanisms. But agencies cannot raise this openly for fear of sending a controversial message that refugees are being integrated into national social service systems and (more profoundly) that they have rights. There is also a questionable implicit theory of change in the assumption that the government is likely to be influenced by examples from humanitarian agencies in their decisions about whether to shoulder these social protection duties.

There are strong civil society voices for inclusion, but the outcomes of such advocacy are uncertain. UN support is being provided for local government to lead ‘mapping of risks and resources’ focused on diverse vulnerabilities (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2017: 150). Some organisations are showing strong ownership of the need to define the nature of vulnerability and inclusion, including both refugees and host communities: e.g. Red Cross vulnerability and capacity assessment methods, strong and outspoken disabled peoples’ organisations, and health service providers drawing attention to gaps. One disabled people’s organisation noted that they had successfully pressured UN agencies to include relevant criteria in their assessments. They noted that there were some disability-inclusive water and sanitation projects, but that these were a small minority of the many initiatives underway. An evaluation of Australian support noted little attention being paid to gender or disability (DFAT, 2014).

Several interviewees highlighted the very constructive discussion underway regarding the vulnerability of working-age refugee men who are exposed to detention and arrest and some note a link between these psychosocial pressures and gender-based violence. This innovative thinking about protection is a notable feature of Lebanese civil society.

However, it is not easy to identify visible support for this in nexus-related aid priorities. A few examples were noted where, for example, UNICEF could use higher levels of support from humanitarian budgets to field enough staff to fine-tune their focus on children with disabilities. For the most part though, this granularity is missing. There is a focus on employment for refugees in general, but not about which refugees are most vulnerable. Strikingly high-quality vulnerability analyses are being undertaken by Lebanese CSOs,¹¹ but there are few signs of uptake of this research within the humanitarian community. Protection and inclusion knowledge thus exists, but the space to apply such knowledge is limited.

Many acknowledge that targeting of the most vulnerable is constrained by the blunt categorisation of whether or not a person is a Syrian refugee and the struggle to adapt programming to ensure that agreed proportions of support are provided to vulnerable Lebanese. Some agencies state that they are being consistent in providing support according to need rather than nationality. Others find problematic the increasing pressure from government to divide aid according to set percentages between Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese.¹² Some donors have earmarked aid for Syrian refugees, which has sparked irritation within the Lebanese government and has excluded other refugee groups. Impending reductions of funding to UNRWA may aggravate this exclusion.

Significant gaps exist in efforts to define how to respond to differing rural and urban vulnerability across the nexus. There is some recognition that the large majority of refugees are in urban areas, but programming remains skewed towards rural/informal tented settlement interventions – a replication of standardised humanitarian programming (camps being more the ‘humanitarian comfort zone’). One interviewee noted that the WHS did not send a sufficiently clear signal with regard to how to engage with urban humanitarian risk. There is some good practice emerging though. UN-Habitat is focusing efforts on analysing vulnerability in heavily refugee-impacted urban areas and working with both CSOs and local government to develop action plans that benefit all residents in a given neighbourhood. By focusing efforts on empirically documented analyses with a spatial focus, these initiatives have so far sidestepped the sensitive issues around whether or not to invest in infrastructure that benefits refugees in the informal tented settlements.

Summary findings from Lebanon

Emerging outcomes

- An active debate on why it has taken so long to take localisation seriously
- Strong CSO voices for inclusion
- Ownership and conviction among Lebanese civil society
- Strong knowledge, underpinned by research, on the nature of the vulnerability and protection challenges
- Uneven but significant engagement of local government in basic services for both refugees and host communities
- Inclusion of social cohesion and conflict management in the humanitarian-development nexus

Obstacles and path dependencies

- Limited livelihood space for refugees
- Weak duty bearers leaving unrealistic responsibilities on civil society
- Factional and identity-based priorities in government and some CSOs
- ‘Tabula rasa’ assumptions among the international community and failures to recognise the value of local knowledge
- Path dependencies in sub-contracting relationships
- One-size-fits-all programming paired with tendencies to reward quantity over quality in targeting vulnerable populations
- Extended delays in generating commitments to enable local CSOs to reconfigure their capacities from small-scale development work to larger-scale humanitarian response
- Failures to align donor administrative procedures to the task of localisation given limited embassy resources
- Failures to pass on overheads to local CSO ‘partners’ that may undermine their developing capacities
- Uncertainty about what the nexus implies in a middle-income country where international support for development programming is limited

Pivotal factors

- Accepting and responding to the protracted nature of the refugee crisis
- Transforming frustration into action on prevailing weak commitments to localisation
- Moving from training to organisational development
- Finding ways to move to scale on capacity development and ‘leaving no one behind’
- Finding entry points to apply lessons from quasi-social protection programming in a state where capacity and commitment to provide basic services are weak
- Rethinking priorities to ensure that urban vulnerable populations receive relevant and sufficient support
- Building trust between Lebanese and Syrian civil society
- Finding ways to ensure that large Lebanese CSOs do not fall into the same sub-contracting relationships that INGOs applied in engaging smaller and community-based organisations, including Syrian CSOs

Influence of the GB and WHS

- UN pressures for handovers to local CSOs
 - Contributing to a (belated) shift to breaking out of ‘business as usual’ in relations between the international community and local CSOs
 - Providing a platform for local CSO advocacy for changes in their roles and relationships
 - Strengthening the voice of local CSOs working to promote inclusion of vulnerable populations
 - Providing supporting arguments for greater flexibility in defining space for refugee livelihoods and protection in reconstruction plans’
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Conclusions

Areas of convergence in the two country settings

Agencies in both countries deny that the GB and WHS are major drivers for change in relation to localisation and inclusion across the nexus. These are themes and commitments that they have shared and struggled with for many years; as a result, any effort to trace contributions from the roll out of these 'new' commitments to ongoing trajectories is prone to spurious claims. They may be an important 'signal' at headquarters, but they have yet to become meaningful at the operational-level.

In both Ethiopia and Lebanon there are strong links between commitments to localisation and inclusion across the nexus. International actors are increasingly (but not universally) recognising the need to be in the backseat in locally driven processes in order to understand and respond to vulnerability in protracted/recurrent crises.

This research has, importantly, highlighted how this is ultimately not just the responsibility of international actors. The nexus is in the DNA of local CSOs, as they have an ethical imperative to shift their development foci to humanitarian needs and they have 'seen it all before' when dealing with the boom-bust cycle of recurrent humanitarian response. Capacity development needs notwithstanding, the priority is to create space for them to act (or at least get out of their way).

In both countries, localisation to local civil society is also about enabling these organisations to at least partially transform themselves from community development agencies into humanitarian service providers, capable of a shouldering a significant role. At the same time, community development skills are what they bring to the table and their future is usually in returning to community development, so a humanitarian sub-contracting relationship, implementing projects designed by INGOs, is at odds with the spirit of localisation. Localisation will never become meaningful if local CSOs are not allowed to assume leading roles in programme design.

Small pilot efforts to 'shift', 'listen' and 'empower' provide potentially revealing de facto 'action research' into localisation processes and obstacles, but the lack of evidence of wider outcomes indicates that scaling up is highly uncertain. Furthermore, given significant evidence of strong path dependencies, it should not be assumed that international agencies are equipped or genuinely committed to really learn from these pilots at field level. If such learning is to be facilitated, this will require both a new mind-set and administrative changes within international agencies, including donors. Advocacy would need to replace

acquiescence regarding government regulations (e.g. concerning the need for and ability to open bank accounts) that constrain local CSOs in general in Ethiopia, and Syrian CSOs in Lebanon. Above all it is about changing power relations.

The need to address power relations between international agencies and local civil society is only beginning to be addressed and, given vested interests and possibly shrinking humanitarian efforts, even this could be reversed. Findings from the two countries suggest that GB and WHS commitments have had little influence on breaking out of existing path dependencies at country level, and in the case of Lebanon may even be seen as exemplifying hypocrisy in the international community. 'Old excuses' are still being used to justify weak commitments from large INGOs. The need to run large relief operations without disrupting sensitive relations with the government is seen as more important than localisation. Long-standing complaints that local organisations 'lack capacity' are recognised by local CSOs as a self-fulfilling prophecy, since capacities cannot be developed without access to operational funding.

Concerns with 'leaving no big target group behind' supersede granular vulnerability analysis in both countries. Despite token references to 'vulnerable groups' and some promising and innovative programmes, factors such as gender, disability and various forms of discrimination have little influence on overall spending priorities. In some respects, this is related to long-standing norms within large INGOs that see localisation to local CSOs specialised in addressing these forms of exclusion as something to worry about after the big relief operations are over.

Another contributing factor to scepticism about the depth of international agencies' commitment to localisation is their continued practice of skimming off most (or all) of the overheads provided by donors before transferring resources to local partners. GB commitments may be met in relation to the operational budgets transferred, but without access to overheads, taking on operations may actually undermine local agencies' capacities to develop into stronger organisations. One observer stressed that this failure is justified by the real fiduciary risks that the INGOs must bear when sub-contracting, in addition to other administrative and monitoring costs. Nonetheless, if real localisation is to be achieved, it must be based on investment in basic organisational capacities, which cannot be brought about by 'capacity building' training inputs alone. An interviewee noted that 'the donors must recognise and share the risk themselves, but that is not happening'.

Areas of divergence in the two country settings and lessons

In strong states there needs to be a focus on defending whatever space there is for civil society in humanitarian action. In weak states this may need to be tempered with advocating for duty bearers to shoulder responsibilities. The meaning of NWoW therefore differs vastly between different settings.

The two cases reveal a contrast between the real coordination role of government in Ethiopia and the Lebanese Government's desire to exert control without sufficient engagement or knowledge to enable them to coordinate. The implications of this are apparent in open discussions around merging social and humanitarian protection happening in Ethiopia, versus the quiet mirroring of social protection modalities amid fears that overt social protection would acknowledge refugee rights in Lebanon. Links to social protection may be a sentinel indicator of whether or not the nexus reflects commitments to 'leave no one behind'.

There is frustration, scepticism and anger among civil society over the failures to act on WHS and other commitments in Lebanon. People are tired of being invited to speak on high-level panels only to return to the status quo back home. By contrast, in Ethiopia these frustrations may exist but are overshadowed by immediate existential risks related to government restrictions.

In both countries there are 'other bargains' that overshadow the GB and WHS. In Lebanon, these are the bargains related to migration and security. In Ethiopia, they are more about using development tools to deliver on long-standing commitments to establishing safety nets to prevent future emergencies – though these commitments may ultimately be underpinned by security and migration concerns as well.

Overall conclusions and lessons about how change happens

Localisation is inevitably a locally driven (or hindered) process, and the nexus involves integration into diverse national structures, be they state or civil society. Efforts to implement global commitments are only likely to gain traction if they are tailored to reflect nexus-related opportunities and obstacles – many of them profound and unyielding – in the local context.

Changes are happening in incremental and heterogeneous ways. If one looks at the contextually anchored nature of these change processes, a somewhat paradoxical question arises. Is humanitarian change just for humanitarians, or is it also about a change in the mindsets of development actors, both international and local? The protracted nature of most humanitarian crises suggests that humanitarians have a central role to play, but it may be that development actors, who already have the mandates and skill-sets for longer-term partnerships, should be in the lead. If project contracts remain short, and rapid staff turnover chronic, why bother to ‘pretend’ to invest in capacity development when others are better equipped? There are some profound obstacles to change within international structures. Maybe change is better served by instead considering radically different entry points. One interviewee suggested that local CSOs with humanitarian experience should be part of the high-level discussions among development actors around budget support. Local actors driving localisation may have a far better understanding of where they can make a difference in humanitarian protection by delving into the social protection sphere, rather than discussing INGO pilot projects. Overall, a broader perspective is needed. As one informant mentioned, she would ‘like to see an acceptance that the needs are beyond everybody’s capacity’.

This may not mean engaging with traditional development cooperation either. Some of the findings in this report point to a merging with national policy agendas; others relate to the dissonance between different policy agendas, and the ‘other bargains’ that are predominant in donor capitals. One informant noted that the EU Country Roadmaps for Engagement with Civil Society constitute an appropriate entry point, but that humanitarian actors are generally not engaged. Findings suggest that this dissonance is, if anything, likely to increase as non-humanitarian bargains surrounding migration and security are increasingly prominent. The new aid and migration architecture (European Parliament, 2019) is likely to be a major factor and probably the main source of funding in many future crises. Here again, a concerted effort to find entry points for local CSO voice and commitments to inclusion may be a more effective lever for change than the GB, even though these mechanisms are complicated and sometimes opaque.

These findings highlight the need to recognise the international, national and – not least – local political dimensions of the changes being ‘rolled out’ in the humanitarian agenda. The latter are often overlooked, but the findings of this study strongly indicate a need to focus on the local dimension of localisation, ‘warts and all’. Local government represents an important set of partners in cases where local political agendas overlap with humanitarian aims – particularly across the nexus – but also where humanitarian influence over problematic norms and incentives is limited. But for the most part the humanitarian system has yet to determine if and how to engage with these actors, especially in urban areas.

Lessons

- The process of moving towards promoting outcomes from international commitments can best be encouraged by developing a savvy understanding of how, when and why change might happen, amid a range of ongoing national and sub-national agendas.
- Localisation efforts need to both reflect and confront prevailing parameters for institutional change and development. It is essential to engage with local actors, including those who are being excluded from mainstream programming, to unpack where opportunities exist and to recognise where there are plausible pathways to change.
- This needs to be combined with deeper ‘soul searching’ among international actors (both operational agencies and donors) regarding how their attitudes and modus operandi may stand in the way of change.
- With both localisation and working within the nexus, development actors are generally better placed than humanitarians to recognise potential windows of opportunity. The development community is largely oblivious to the WHS and GB, however. This demonstrates the importance of combining contextual knowledge with awareness of the ‘other bargains’ that are driving various forms of assistance amid chronic conflict and vulnerability.
- Commitments to leave no one behind are not being given sufficient attention. This highlights the importance of ensuring the merging of social and humanitarian protection efforts when nexus programming brings these two together.

Endnotes

1. Agenda for Humanity, Grand Bargain (www.agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/3861)
2. See <http://outcomeharvesting.net>
3. UN, Global Compact for Migration (<http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/migration-compact>)
4. Add reference to RDPP evaluation when released
5. Ethiopia was the focus of a range of international debates, starting with Hagman et al. (1984).
6. See Start Network, Shifting the Power (startnetwork.org/start-engage/shifting-the-power).
7. One evaluation states: 'The predictable systems of safety net and localised health and nutrition care work best in the densely populated agricultural areas, typically in the highlands. In the dry lands of southern Ethiopia where people are mostly livestock herders, 'pastoralist', these systems have been less uniformly successful. The safety net programme is harder to administer and often less predictable, whilst health services suffer from needing to cover large, sparsely populated areas' (Sida et al., 2012: 11).
8. This includes local representatives of agencies that stressed the importance of multiyear funding in headquarters interviews.
9. Linking relief, rehabilitation and development, developmental relief, etc.
10. 'Five resilience-based programming principles were reaffirmed by the DRSA: increase synergies between humanitarian and development investments and approaches; prioritize the dignity and self-sufficiency of affected populations; reinforce, don't replace, local capacities; generate new and inclusive partnerships; and safeguard social cohesion' (UNDP and UNHCR, 2016: 16).
11. See, for example, the work of Lebanon Support (lebanon-support.org).
12. These percentages have changed over time and in different policy documents but with a majority of support targeted to Syrian refugees (approximately 80/20).

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