"We must be the pioneers"
Perspectives on localization in
the response to the 2018 Sulawesi
earthquake in Indonesia

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Acronyms

GoI Government of Indonesia

INGO International non-governmental organization

LNGO Local non-governmental organization

NGO Non-governmental organization

NNGO National non-governmental organization

PMI *Palang Merah Indonesia* (Indonesian Red Cross)

SCD Save the Children Denmark

UN United Nations

YSTC/SCI Yayasan Sayangi Tunas Cilik/Save the Children Indonesia

Executive Summary

On September 28, 2018, a magnitude 7.4 earthquake struck Central Sulawesi in Indonesia, triggering a tsunami and liquefaction of land, which resulted in significant loss of life and displacement. The response to this disaster was notable because of a policy shift by the Government of Indonesia (GoI), which prohibited direct intervention by international aid agencies. All interventions were required to be carried out through Indonesian institutions and in coordination with the relevant Indonesian authorities.

This response took place about two years after the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, which included significant commitments to the "localization" of humanitarian aid. The localization of humanitarian aid is a loosely defined agenda to shift more power and resources towards humanitarian responders from crisis-affected countries. The discourse around the localization agenda includes many broad-based assumptions about the relative strengths and weaknesses of international humanitarian actors and actors from crisis-affected countries, few of which have been rigorously tested or explored. These include assumptions that "local" humanitarian actors are not able to be as principled or technically, administratively, and operationally proficient as international responders. The highly localized nature of the response to the 2018 Sulawesi earthquake provides a case study to test and examine some of the assumptions underlying the localization discourse.

In order to contribute to the evolving discourse on localization by drawing from the experiences of local humanitarian actors in the field, Save the Children Indonesia, Save the Children Denmark, and Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University collaborated on a study of the response to the 2018 Sulawesi earthquake. The primary research question was: *How do the experiences of humanitarian responders and*

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affected communities in the aftermath of the earthquake in Sulawesi help us to affirm or counter some of the primary assumptions underpinning the discussion of the "localization" agenda? During August and September of 2019, the research team carried out 50 key informant interviews and focus group discussions with people who had firsthand experience of the response to the earthquake, all of whom were Indonesian and nearly all of whom worked for local and national entities.

The research found that the response to the 2018 earthquake in Sulawesi was, as all responses are, imperfect and challenged by resources, access, coordination, timing, favoritism, and communication. However, there was not sufficient evidence to indicate that this response was more prone to these challenges because of its "localized" nature. The study found a humanitarian ecosystem in transition, with internationals learning to play different roles, the emergence of a larger class of nationalized non-governmental organizations[1] (NGOs), and a diverse set of local and national humanitarian responders. However, the stories and insights provided by the study largely affirm the findings of other research

1 Nationalized NGOs are a term for when international NGOs establish an independent affiliate in an aid-recipient country with local governance structures.

into the Sulawesi earthquake: that the limits placed on international responders, while not perfect, were largely seen as a positive change across almost all categories of humanitarian responders. Significant work remains in ensuring that these localized humanitarian responses are more effective, inclusive, and equitable, but this response may indeed serve as a model for what future "localized" humanitarian responses may look like.

Recommendations from the research include the following:

- **For Indonesian NGOs:** develop partnerships and networks to facilitate mutual capacity strengthening and more rapidly deploy partnerships for future responses.

- **For nationalized Indonesian NGOs:** examine their institutional role to ensure a complementary (as opposed to competitive) approach to participating in localizing responses.

- **For international NGOs (INGOs) and agencies:** understand the nuances and distinctions between different types of "local" actors, and invest in identifying, vetting, and building trust with potential partners in disaster-prone areas before (or, rather, between) crises to ensure a timely and effective partner-mediated response.

- **For the Indonesian government:** ensure policies governing actors in humanitarian responses are communicated in a clear and timely manner and invest in decentralizing coordination systems.

- **For policy makers and researchers:** Move beyond the local/international binary to explore the nuanced identity of humanitarian responders. Question the assumptions/definitions around "local" humanitarian actors' ability to adhere to humanitarian principles.

I. Motivation

In recent years, there has been significant discussion about the localization of humanitarian assistance, yet there are also significant gaps in the empirical evidence. By its very nature, localization is an idiosyncratic discussion, with its benefits, drawbacks, potential, and challenges differing greatly in each context. Therefore, it is important to continue to add to the literature and the policy discussions by providing insight into how the dynamics of the localization agenda play out in different crises. This study, therefore, aims to offer insights and analysis into the 2018 Sulawesi earthquake response, which is seen by many as a harbinger of what localized humanitarian responses of the future could look like.

The overall goal of the study is to contribute to informed and empirically based discussions on localization in the humanitarian sector globally and in Indonesia. The primary question is: *How do the experiences of humanitarian responders and affected communities in the aftermath of the earthquake in Sulawesi help us to affirm or counter some of the primary assumptions underpinning the discussion of the "localization" agenda?*

The study has three main aims:
- Empirical research: Add knowledge to the current literature on localization, based on empirical data that is analytically comparable other empirically based studies.

- Empirically understand how localization unfolded in the Central Sulawesi response based on a granular understanding of different stakeholders' perspectives, with emphasis on national and local responders.

- Understand better the process of INGOs nationalizing, as is the case for Yayasan Sayangi Tunas Cilik (YSTC)-Save the Children Indonesia (YSTC/SCI) and provide analysis that contributes to discussing this kind of process, seen from a localization perspective.

The findings of this study are expected to complement findings of a similar study carried out in the Horn of Africa[2] and, combined with that study, drive forward the discussion of the localization agenda within the humanitarian sector in Indonesia and globally.

2 Howe, Kimberly, Jairo Munive, Katje Rosenstock: "Views from the Ground: perspectives on Localization in the Horn of Africa". Tufts University and Save the Children Denmark. October 2019.

II. Context

The "localization agenda"—which gained momentum following the World Humanitarian Summit of 2016 and widespread institutional commitment to the Grand Bargain—has become central to the humanitarian discourse worldwide. The following brief literature review outlines the rationale underpinning locally led humanitarian action, and the main benefits, drawbacks, and tensions outlined to date by practitioners, policy makers, and researchers. Findings from research studies are also presented, although it should be noted that there are very few empirical/academic publications on the topic. Most documents outline anecdotal evidence, describe lessons learned through the study of individual projects, or are aspirational and normative in tone. Many studies on effectiveness are focused on the experience of international actors over the experiences of local actors, and local actors are often not the primary subject of research themselves (Wall and Hedlund 2016; Svoboda, Barbelet, and Mosel 2018; Wake and Barbelet 2019). The section below is a summary of a literature review conducted for this study:.

Localization: Key definitions and concepts

While there is no internationally agreed-upon definition of "localization" or "locally led humanitarian action,"[3] there are several commonalities that cut across multiple interpretations. Wall and Hedlund (2016, 4), in their comprehensive literature review, define "'localization" as an "umbrella term referring to all approaches to working with local actors, and 'locally led' to refer specifically to work that originates with local actors, or is designed to support locally emerging initiatives." Another frequently used definition is: "Aid localization is a collective process by the different stakeholders of the humanitarian system (donors, UN [United Nations] agencies, NGOs) which aims to return local actors (local authorities or civil society) to the center of the

humanitarian system with a greater more, central role (de Geoffroy, Grunewald, and Chéilleachair 2018, 1). But just as the process of localization is definitionally unclear, so is meaning behind "local." Maxwell (2018, 3) reminds us that while local may mean "proximate," it is both complex and relative, as he describes: local can mean "proximity to crisis-affected people...It can be based on geographic proximity ('I live in the affected area'), proximity to the disaster ('I was directly affected by the disaster'), social proximity ('My family was directly affected by the disaster'), ethnic or religious proximity ('I speak the same language as the affected people'), or national proximity ('I have the same passport of the affected people')."

Embedded in the motivation towards supporting the localization agenda is the recognition that the architecture of aid—including its finances and decision making—has been driven and determined by those not directly affected by the crisis. To localize aid means to shift power from international organizations to crisis-affected communities in terms of financial resources and decision making. This process, in theory, should bring about greater transparency, complementarity, and coordination between those who have traditionally held the purse strings and those proximate to the crisis. Such a move will culminate in an improved humanitarian response in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and relevance (IFRC 2018; OECD 2019).

Based on their extensive review, Gingerich and Cohen (2015, 7) describe the necessary pathways to improving locally led humanitarian action. They include: "(1) locally led humanitarian action whenever possible, with a clear role for international actors; (2) adequate funding to state and non-state actors in affected countries; and (3) stronger partnerships between international and local actors, as well as greater emphasis on strengthening local capacity."

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3 Note this paper will use the terms "localization" and "locally led humanitarian action" interchangeably.

The benefits—either demonstrated or assumed—of a locally led humanitarian response include:

- There is also a growing recognition that a locally led response—regardless of the international context—is one that is **faster and more cost effective** (Gingerich and Cohen 2015; Wall and Hedlund 2016; Obrecht 2014; IFRC 2018).

- Local actors are also seen as providing more **relevant and appropriate aid** because of their understanding of the local context and ability to effectively communicate with crisis-affected populations (Gingerich and Cohen 2015; Ramalingam, Gray, and Cerruti 2013).

- Local actors are more likely to provide a **holistic response**, rather than dividing affected populations into sectors and clusters. They are also less likely to perceive emergency, transition, development, and recovery responses as distinct (Corbett 2015; Ramalingam, Gray, and Cerruti 2013). Local actors are thus more willing to work at the humanitarian-development "nexus." Not working at that nexus has been identified as a significant operational weakness in the international system.

The challenges and blockages—either demonstrated or assumed—of a locally led humanitarian response include:

- **Restrictions by donors**—including vetting, reporting systems, and branding—emanating largely from low tolerance for risk often preclude the meaningful participation of local actors (Gingerich and Cohen 2015). Donor requirements have been found to significantly burden local organizations, and directly diminish their operational and organizational capacities and thus their effectiveness in a variety of contexts, including remote management (Howe and Stites 2018; de Geoffroy, Grunewald, and Chéilleachair 2018).

- The lack of **direct funding to local organizations** is a continued blockage for supporting the local response. While signatories to the Grand Bargain committed to providing local actors with 25% of humanitarian funding "as directly as possible," the international community continues to fall short of its commitments (Svoboda, Barbelet, and Mosel 2018). Relatedly, time constraints and short funding cycles have been described by a variety of local actors as main barriers to humanitarian action.

- Trust and clear and effective communication have been identified as major contributors to humanitarian effectiveness in several contexts—with the lack of trust diminishing the quality and efficiency of the response (Howe and Stites 2018; Wall and Hedlund 2016; Hofman and Tiller 2015). In addition, many international organizations continue to see local organizations as sub-contractors or implementing partners, rather than regarding them as being on equal footing or as "equal partners" (Svoboda, Barbelet, and Mosel 2018).

- Challenges also arise from the limitations within local organizations. Concerns are plentiful and are often related to **capacity**—such as the ability of local organizations to scale up quickly, have adequate administrative and financial systems in place, and have the necessary logistical and technical capacities to be effective (ALTPC 2019; Barbelet et al. 2019, Wall and Hedlund 2016; Ramalingam, Gray, and Cerruti 2013; Maxwell 2018; de Geoffroy, Grunewald, and Chéilleachair 2018). However, the way in which "capacity building" is provided is often top down, ill matched, or inefficient (Wake and Barbelet 2019).

- Another major challenge related to a localized response is a local organization's ability to adhere to **humanitarian principles** of neutrality, impartiality, and local independence (Maxwell 2018). However, authors have documented that international organizations equally struggle with adhering to humanitarian principles in practice. For examples, see Howe (2016) and Haddad and Svoboda (2017) for Syria cases, and de Geoffroy, Grunewald, and Chéilleachair

(2018) for Myanmar and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) cases.

Major commitments were made to the localization agenda at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, primarily under the Grand Bargain agreement. The most widely discussed commitment was that 25% of all humanitarian funding should be going "as directly as possible" to local and national actors by 2020. A summary of progress in 2018 singles out that there is evidence that the localization commitments have had a tangible impact in certain countries and responses and that there is a crucial political momentum. And yet the promise of localization has a long way to go. The amount of funding channeled "as directly as possible" to local actors has increased but remains far below the 25% goal set out for 2020 (IFRC and Swiss Government 2019).

Indonesia and the Sulawesi earthquake response

The localization agenda is particularly strong in the disaster-prone region of Asia. Several governments have responded to humanitarian crises, such as those in Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, and Bangladesh, by limiting the access of INGOs while encouraging (or requiring) them to work with national and local organizations (Wake and Barbelet 2019). Given the restricted role for INGOs envisaged in the evolving national regulatory framework for disaster management, over the past years several INGOs have established national affiliates in Indonesia, including ActionAid, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Plan International, Save the Children, and World Vision (with CARE currently in the process of establishing a national affiliate). Possessing legal status as a local NGO makes it possible to implement directly in response activities. Though the localization agenda is at the core of current reform efforts in the humanitarian sector, the debate lacks a critical discussion of underlying assumptions about the very conceptualization of the term "local" itself. It is argued that the current discourse is dominated by a problematic conceptualization of the local in binary opposition to the international, leading to blind

spots in the analysis of exclusionary practices of the humanitarian sector, particularly in terms of the role of "nationalized" INGOs.

All of these dynamics were brought to the forefront during the response to a magnitude 7.4 earthquake that struck Central Sulawesi on September 28, 2018. Central Sulawesi is a province on Sulawesi Island, which has a history of both natural disasters and sectarian violence, and where there is a complex intersection between Islamism, politics, and aid (Karim 2016; Wright 2019). The earthquake led to a tsunami and liquefying earth, resulting in over 2,000 fatalities and approximately 80,000 displacements (AHA Centre 2018). About two weeks after the disaster, the Indonesian National Board for Disaster Management (BNPB) released regulations limiting the ability of international agencies and foreign individuals to engage in the disaster response. These limitations included an obligation to work through local partners as opposed to implementing directly in the field, to register and coordinate all assistance with relevant local authorities, and to remove all foreign personnel already deployed (AHA Centre 2018). This specific policy and regulatory decision attracted a significant amount of media attention and became something of an early test case for the localization agenda, sparking significant debate within and outside of Indonesia about the role of different groups in humanitarian response (HAG and Pujiono Centre 2019). The debate led to a number of studies and analyses of the Sulawesi humanitarian response. The findings are summarized below.

The HAG and Pujiono Centre report (2019), "Charting the new norm," explores how local leadership affected the response to the Sulawesi earthquake. The report identifies a number of characteristics that set a precedent for how international disaster response can be delivered in the region: strong leadership from government; radical shifts in partnership management—limiting international actors to technical and time-bound tasks; cluster meetings led by local actors in the local language; use of social media to provide daily updates and collect data; and raising income in-country by tapping into national and regional sources.

The Charter for Change Progress report (2019) has a dedicated section about the Sulawesi crisis response. This study finds that key lessons emerged: a) there is a need to reframe international agencies' models for humanitarian support given the Indonesian government's strong emphasis on national coordination and implementation; b) pre-crisis contingency planning with local actors was decisive for effective partnerships; c) the kind of funding available was short term and was a considerable barrier for longer-term organizational support and capacity building for local partners; d) innovative partnership models enabled joint decision making and phased handover to local actors; e) donor approaches to compliance and due diligence obstruct localization; and f) raising the profile of local partners was instrumental in increasing program quality and fundraising (C4C 2019, 23–24).

The Real-time response review of the 2018 Indonesia Tsunami Appeals Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC) and Swiss Solidarity (SwS) report discusses issues pertaining to partnerships and localization. The main conclusion from the review is that there is a strong commitment to advance localization, mainly for pragmatic reasons: INGOs need a strong affiliate to deliver services (Lawry-White, Langdon, and Hanik 2019, 18). In "principle," localization is a "good thing," states the report. However, project spending was limited by the relatively low absorption capacity of local partners.

A study by the Australian Red Cross (2019) focuses on the localization agenda in Sulawesi and how it can be used to strengthen disaster response and preparedness activities within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and among humanitarian actors. The report findings are positive overall: the Indonesian Red Cross, known as Palang Merah Indonesia, or PMI, responded at scale and mobilized its networks in a timely fashion. PMI, according to this report, also coordinated across various humanitarian actors and cooperated with the Indonesian government to launch an international appeal through the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC). However, the additional responsibilities posed by the Indonesian government "were challenging for PMI and imposed a significant burden on the organization and the IFRC" (Australian Red Cross 2019, 3).

Davies (2019) focuses on the challenges and opportunities facing international humanitarian organizations in Indonesia in the aftermath of the earthquake, with emphasis on "collective accountability" between the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), a group of UN agencies, national and international NGO networks, the Red Cross and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre), and the affected population in the Sulawesi response. He analyzes how the HCT supported the national response with international "good practice" on accountability to affected people; how it supported the provision of information to communities; and how humanitarian agencies' decisions were informed by the views of communities.

In partnership with local women and women-led organizations in Sulawesi, ActionAid (2019) undertook a qualitative feminist research study to understand the challenges and opportunities for localization initiatives led by women. This study refers to the concept of "women-led localization," which refers to leadership roles that diverse groups of women and women-led organizations play in responding to disaster and crisis in humanitarian settings. The preliminary findings are that existing gender inequalities have been exacerbated and disrupted following the earthquake. This inequality has created new risks but also opportunities for advancing women's rights. According to the study, a diverse group of local women and women-led organizations were some of the first actors to mobilize and respond on the ground.

Summary

The discussions of the "localization" agenda over the past five years have largely been centered on a core set of assumptions about the benefits of, limitations of, and challenges to locally led humanitarian action. Most of the literature refers to a binary distinction between international and local actors (the latter meaning from the affected country). The benefits typically attributed to local humanitarian actors are that they are faster, more cost effective, and provide more appropriate and holistic aid given their contextual knowledge and capacity to engage with affected populations. The limitations typically

attributed to local actors are doubts concerning their administrative, financial, and technical capacities, as well as their ability to adhere to humanitarian principles. The primary barriers identified in the literature are policies and practices that reduce direct funding to local actors, as well as a lack of trust and clear communication between local and international actors.

The response to the Sulawesi earthquake has been shaped greatly by the policies of the Indonesian government that limit direct intervention by international actors and require them to work through Indonesian partners. These policies have also shaped the ecosystem of local actors in Indonesia due to several international organizations having gone through the process of nationalization prior to the earthquake. Because of these requirements, the response to the Sulawesi earthquake has been seen as an important "test" of many of the assumptions underlying the localization agenda. There has been a handful of studies on the response. These studies have shown that the Sulawesi earthquake response looked substantially different from a "typical" sudden-onset humanitarian environment with international actors. There was strong leadership from the Indonesian government and many examples of innovative new practices regarding coordination, communication with affected communities, and resource mobilization. There were new partnership structures that provided opportunities for a number of local organizations, including women's organizations, to be more visible in the response. However, there were still a number of constraints in terms of funding, partnership, and coordination arrangements that created significant barriers to what some would call a "successful" locally led response.

III. Methods

The project was led by YSTC/SCI, with institutional support from Save the Children Denmark (SCD) and technical support from the Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University. All actors collaborated on a literature review and inception report. The study was based on a global review of localization carried out by Feinstein and SCD in March of 2019, which also was the basis of a sister study on localization in the Horn of Africa. The Horn of Africa study was finished in mid-2019, and the experience and findings of that research project informed this study of the Sulawesi response.

The global review found the following assumptions in the literature on localization, for which there is inadequate empirical evidence:

- National and local responders cannot be principled in their response in terms of neutrality and impartiality.
- National and local responders provide a lower-quality response than international responders.
- National and local actors have less operational and organizational capacity than international actors.
- A localized response is more cost effective than an international response.

The primary research question was: *How do the experiences of humanitarian responders and affected communities in the aftermath of the earthquake in Sulawesi help us to affirm or counter some of the primary assumptions underpinning the discussion of the "localization" agenda?*

The project aimed to interview humanitarian responders from a variety of types of organizations. An actor mapping exercise carried out with YSTC/SCI and SCD identified seven categories of humanitarian responders who were relevant to the purposes of the study (see Table 1). The research team aimed for 70% of the respondents representing affected communities and Indonesian organizations

and 30% of respondents representing international organizations, ultimately including actors from all seven categories. There were no limitations on what sector the actors could work in or whether they were currently still active in Sulawesi. The actor mapping provided an initial set of organizational representatives who were interviewed; those representatives in turn identified other stakeholders who were relevant to the interests of the research team.

Field work was carried out by YTSC/SCI with support from SCD; researchers from Feinstein provided training to the field agents and technical support during the process. One of the lead field researchers from a university located on the island of Sulawesi ensured that the questionnaire was adapted to the local context. Interview protocols

Table 1. Numbers of interviews/focus groups by type of humanitarian actor

Actor type	Number of interviews/ focus groups
UN/multilateral organizations	3
International NGOs	5
Nationalized NGOs	5
National NGOs/civil society organizations (CSOs)	10
Local NGOs/CSOs	9
Local and national state actors (including village heads and government representatives)	8
Affected communities, beneficiaries, and community volunteers	10

were adapted for each category of respondents, and a universal verbal consent protocol was established. Field research took place in August and September of 2019. In total, 46 interviews and 4 focus group discussions were carried out on both Sulawesi Island and in Jakarta.

All representatives spoken to were Indonesian in nationality. Women made up 35% of focus group discussion participants, and 56% of the interview participants were women. Focus group discussions were not gender-segregated as the local research team did not believe that not doing so would affect the narratives shared in the discussions. Notes from the fieldwork were transcribed and translated into English by the field team and sent to Feinstein, which performed the preliminary qualitative analysis. This analysis was in turn relayed back to YTSC/SCI and SCD for confirmation.

Limitations

The study has several limitations that are important to mention. First, the field study occurred over 18 days in the field, which limited the number of stakeholders who could be interviewed. Second, while having YTSC/SCI lead the field work ensured there were experienced Indonesian staff leading the research, the fact that they were associated with past and ongoing aid efforts may have biased both the participation and responses of various stakeholders. For instance, because of challenges in accessing other organizations' beneficiaries, all focus group participants were beneficiaries of Save the Children; they may have therefore been reluctant to criticize the actions of YTSC/SCI, SCD, or other international actors. Third, because the team conducting the preliminary analysis was not Indonesian and was relying on translated scripts of the interviews, there are elements of the discussion that could have been lost in literal and cultural translation. Fourth, the qualitative nature of inquiry and purposeful sampling for this study mean the findings are not necessarily generalizable. It also means that while the report disaggregates the different types of Indonesian actors in order to avoid homogenizing local actors and to identify interesting trends, the opinions expressed by respondents in this study are not statistically representative of all actors in their group.

The scope of the study is limited to the Sulawesi response. It does not claim to represent the whole country, and it does not explicitly seek new information or data from former responses, beyond what has already been captured in existing reports and literature.

Finally, because of the unique nature of the response to the Sulawesi earthquake, in which there were no international organizations directly implementing humanitarian aid programs, this study was not able to directly compare the performances of local actors to that of international ones. Instead, the entire response to the Sulawesi earthquake provides a counterfactual to the predominant global models of humanitarian response. As it is widely seen as a localized humanitarian response, lessons learned from Sulawesi can indirectly address the assumptions that this study aimed to examine, as well as provide even broader insight into the eventual realization of the localization agenda.

IV. Findings

Below is a discussion of the perspectives on the GoI's policy regarding international humanitarian actors.

Overall, there was broad approval of the importance and necessity of the GoI's policy limiting direct intervention by international humanitarian actors, across all types of respondents. Most actors, including international ones, acknowledged that there was both a normative value and a practical value of the policy. The normative value was often that giving affected populations a stronger voice in humanitarian response was simply the right thing to do. According to a representative of a UN agency: "I think [the policy] should be that way. Because [it is] local people who know to determine what is best for them in the future."[4] The practical value of the policy was that it helped to create more consistency in aid delivery, improved coordination, and leveraged and built the skills of both international and local actors. "The regulation was good, as it helped increase the capacity of local actors…International support was channeled through sectoral programs, which made coordination easier."[5]

There were many respondents who, while they agreed with the policy in principle, noted several limitations to how it was implemented and ways it could be improved. The primary critique was that there needed to be clearer and more transparent policies and technical standards for responders. The lack of clarity and transparency led to some confusion and inconsistency in the implementation. "The regulation was not enforced very strongly, and in the beginning there was a lot of confusion on the process of the regulation and who could actually access or join the response. The SOPs [standard operating procedures] for the regulation was very unclear from the government, and that needs to be improved."[6] These critiques and suggestions for

improvement could be found across all categories of formal humanitarian responders (NGOs and government actors), implying that it was not just one group who felt the policies were unclear.

A smaller group of respondents felt that the policy was not even a good idea in principle. The main argument was that, after a disaster, the needs are so great that it justifies letting all aid come in freely. Others felt that Indonesia simply did not yet have the capacity to fully manage disasters on their own. A quote that captures both of these sentiments comes from a member of a nationalized NGO: "When there is not any disaster happening, the policy is legitimate. However, if there's one, then the policy must be softened. Because our capacity to handle national responses is inadequate, including the government, especially with NGOs… So I think, when a disaster comes in a category where the international [organizations] must be there, then please let them come."[7] One community leader's comments implied that the policy creates extra levels of coordination that could complicate the response: "Personally, I do not agree [with the policy]. It is not that I do not believe in local capabilities, but it is best if the owners of funds go directly. Besides, they are also more disciplined."[8] Interestingly, none of the comments disagreeing with the principle of the policy came from international actors. This finding could be a result of positive experiences in this response or could stem from a sense of political correctness.

> "INGOs should step back and allow local organizations to learn. Of course some of the national and local organizations will fail—and then they will learn from the failure."
> - Representative of NNGO

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4 Interview with representative of a UN agency working in Indonesia, September 2019.

5 Interview with representative of a national network of Indonesian NGOs.

6 Interview with representative of a nationalized NGO.

7 Interview with representative of a nationalized NGO.

8 Interview with village head in Sulawesi.

In conclusion, the consensus among study participants seems to be that the GoI's policy of disallowing direct intervention by international actors has broad approval from local, national, and international responders, despite there being areas for improvement in its implementation. However, it is worth noting that reservations about the policy remain among some local and national actors. This debate itself echoes a broader debate about whether the principle of "humanity," i.e., the obligation to address suffering wherever it is found, should take precedence over other considerations, particularly normative arguments favoring local and national responders.

Dynamics between local and national actors

Even though all internationals have to partner with a "local" organization, "local" in this context means Indonesian. But given the unique socio-geography of Indonesia, not all Indonesian organizations may have the cultural and language capacity to intervene with equal competence on every island. Consequently, national and nationalized organizations were often required to partner with people and organizations from the island of Sulawesi. There were examples of Indonesian consortia in which national non-governmental organizations (NNGOs) played a supportive and capacity-building role towards smaller local non-governmental organization (LNGOs) from the island, who did most of the direct implementation.[9] One nationalized NGO based in Jakarta mentioned needing to hire people from the island of Sulawesi because they had knowledge of the local tribes, language, and culture. Not only was it important for external organizations to partner with organizations or hire people from the island of Sulawesi, but there were also hyper-local dynamics between different parts of the island that required consideration. One INGO had two different local implementing partners in Sulawesi, each covering their own specific area of the island.[10] A representative of a UN agency described how most of their partnerships are based in Jakarta; when they wanted to provide post-earthquake services

in East Sulawesi, they were unable to find any local disaster response groups, so they responded through a foundation from West Sulawesi with whom they had a previous relationship. These examples point towards the different dimensions of "local" that were visible in this response.

One issue that seemed to represent the power dynamics among Indonesian organizations was the controversial role of nationalized NGOs. Several international actors (and one national organization) criticized nationalized NGOs as competing with local and national NGOs without doing the real groundwork of local network building and accountability to affected communities. A representative of a national NGO described nationalized NGOs as "lazy" and attached to their former headquarters through an "umbilical cord." A representative of a UN agency said: "The motivation for the nationalized NGOs is wrong, when they nationalize they are 'adding salt to the sea,'" implying that the process of nationalizing was somewhat pointless. However, with the exception of one NNGO representative, no member of a local or national organization criticized nationalized NGOs, perhaps because researchers were seen as representatives of a nationalized NGO or because nationalized NGOs are not broadly seen as competitors in the way the aforementioned quote indicated.

> "We're stuck with this national hybrid, it's a bit like a bad mother–in-law, it's there and you have to make it work. The system is a half-way adopted cluster, with task forces as part of the structure. "
> - Representative of NNGO

Finally, there were some tensions in how Indonesian disaster response systems worked at the national, regional, and local levels. Several national and local responders described gaps between national standards on coordination and information sharing and how those standards were being implemented at the local level. A network of LNGOs described that

9 Interview with representative of a UN organization.

10 Interview with program manager of an INGO.

there was a breakdown in translating the national cluster system and response standards to the local level that resulted in some significant coordination gaps. "A task force for humanitarian response was set up, but at the local level the government had differing systems…it was difficult for many local organizations to join the many sector clusters. The idea with national clusters are good, because it can give verification at local levels. But the clusters didn't reach the local levels."[11]

In summary, while the Indonesian government's policy of local implementation was largely seen as successful, it is important to disaggregate the different levels of "local" to understand where systems, capacity, and equity need to be reinforced. The localization discourse is often guilty of homogenizing the people and institutions of crisis-affected countries under the banner of "local." This research showed that national actors, who generally have stronger contextual knowledge than international actors, often still need their own local partners in order to effectively navigate the social, cultural, linguistic, and geographic dynamics of the affected area. It also showed that strong national systems do not always translate into strong local systems (and that the inverse is also possible). When discussing how to build more effective humanitarian infrastructure, therefore, it is important to disaggregate the concept of "local" beyond a nationality and directly address dynamics at local, regional, and national levels, with a particular focus on actors closest to the affected communities.

Partnerships

The respective roles of international and Indonesian partners largely reflected what exists in the literature. International partners (and, at times, the national partners of local NGOs) were seen as providing capacity building, monitoring functions, and funding, as well as other services such as security and advocacy. The Indonesian partners (and, at times, the local partners of national NGOs) were seen as providing local context, implementation capacity, and networks (Wall and Hedlund 2016; Howe, Stites, and Chudacoff 2015).

"In my opinion, [each actor has] different functions and roles. Local as implementor, national as network builders and capacity building as well as the international donor as funding, monitoring, and evaluating."

- Representative of INGO

Respondents described the advantages and disadvantages of international-Indonesian partnerships in the context of the Sulawesi response. The vast majority of comments about partnerships from national, nationalized, and international NGOs were positive. The main advantage was that local partners' knowledge of the context facilitated more rapid and appropriate responses, as this representative of an INGO described: "[The local partners] understand the general condition of their own geographical area, social culture and are very familiar with the state of the community when a disaster occurs. Thus, when the earthquake happened, [the local partners] helped [us] to penetrate immediately…It is very helpful in reaching and distributing aid [in a] timely [way]." A representative of an INGO felt that having local partners was so important operationally that: "we should build a network of partnership in Indonesia— two on each island, at least two partners as that will allow us to respond faster and more effectively. [Another INGO] had no partners in central Sulawesi, so it took long time for them to respond."

The local NGOs had more mixed feelings on the benefits and drawbacks of the partnerships. While there was appreciation for the financial and technical support of bigger and more experienced organizations, many local NGOs still felt as if they were being treated as sub-contractors as opposed to equal partners. A representative of an LNGO described this frustration as follows: "One of the challenges when an international institution acts as a partner is that international institutions perceive us as workers rather than partners." Referring to the relationships between Indonesian and international actors, a representative of an NNGO said, simply,

11 Interview with representative of the LNGO network.

"Now, it's a love-hate relationship." Of course, not all INGOs and Indonesian NGOs are the same, and so the experience varied depending on the partner organization (see text box below).

> "Sometimes when we work together with partners there is always a relationship of authorities, and locals is considered as their representation so we are more like workers rather than equal partners. So we feel a lot of inconvenience in partnering. However, there are several NGOs who partner with us, given enough space to implement the concepts we offer because it is actually the local NGOs who understand and have emotional relationship with the community."
>
> - Representative of LNGO

Opinions about the adequacy of funding from international partners were also varied. Several LNGOs were happy with their funding arrangements, saying that they participated in preparing the work programs and had their funding allocations explained in detail. Others were frustrated, saying they were only given operational funds or that the funds were released far too slowly for a sudden-onset disaster context. Two INGOs acknowledged that their funding mechanisms could be slow and complicated, while others shared no concerns about their processes.

Overall, there was a more favorable view of partnerships from national, nationalized, and international organizations than there was from local organizations. This difference in views could be from a sense of political correctness and/or because it is possible that the benefits of partnerships tend to accrue upwards, while frustrations accrue downwards.

Almost all of the comments about improving the partnerships came from local and national NGOs. The largest consensus was that international partners should be putting more emphasis on facilitating opportunities for learning for their local and national partners. The reason the word "learn" is being used in this analysis as opposed to "capacity building" is that while there were many calls for technical trainings and accompaniment, there were also calls for space in which local actors could take the lead and learn from their experience, including their mistakes. This sentiment was best expressed by a representative of a local NGO: "The international systems should be recalibrated to fit to the national systems. INGOs should step back and allow local organizations to learn. Of course, some of the national and local organizations will fail—and then they will learn from the failure." Other issues brought up included increasing trust, transparency, and communication between partners, as well as improving the speed and simplicity of funding mechanisms. These echo themes commonly brought up in the literature on how to improve the dynamics between international and national/local partners (Gingerich and Cohen 2015; Howe and Stites 2018; Wall and Hedlund 2016; Hofman and Tiller 2015).

> "The local organization must first take the role. We must be the pioneers ahead. The task of international organization is to support us from behind. In short, just give us the fund, and we will manage it."
>
> - Representative of LNGO

Capacities

The perceived capacities of international and Indonesian organizations differed, as well as what were seen as important capacities for delivering principled and effective humanitarian response.

A diverse set of Indonesian actors[12] commented on what they perceived were the important capacities for a humanitarian organization to have. Interestingly, the most important capacity that was cited by Indonesian respondents at all levels was an *emotional* capacity to respond to disaster: a sense of empathy, solidarity, or motivation to respond. A village leader, when asked what the most important capacity for a humanitarian responder was, said the following: "First, the actor must have

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12 In this study, when "Indonesian actors" are mentioned, it refers to all types of respondents who were not representatives of international organizations.

a sense of caring and caring for the affected people, a high sense of empathy, and have the capability and the courage to seek help." The next-most commonly cited capacity was local knowledge and relationships, followed by the ability to communicate with and engage the affected community, the ability to meet international standards, management and administrative capacity, coordination skills, and data collection skills. Soft skills, such as emotional response capacity and communication skills, were mostly emphasized by affected communities, volunteers, and local government. More technical skills, such as the capacity for meeting international standards, management, and data collection, were primarily emphasized by local, national, and nationalized NGOs.

> "[The internationals] focus only on goods, we [the locals] want to focus on resilience of people."
> - Representative of LNGO

The perception of the performance of international and Indonesian actors across different dimensions of capacity is summarized in the Table 2. These are,

by default, broad generalizations as they do not distinguish between different types of Indonesian and international actors. They are listed in descending order of how often that factor was cited; any factor cited less than three times has been left off of the list.

> "I strongly believe that our people are hardworking. Local organizations also understand the context. The disadvantage may lie in our slow work, but it only happened at the beginning. That's natural as a process of learning and transition, but going forward I believe that our people can work according to international standards."
> - Representative of LNGO

There was relative consensus about the strong points and weak points of these two broad categories of actors. For instance, all types of respondents agreed that Indonesian actors had a stronger knowledge of local context and culture and that international actors generally lacked that local knowledge. There was only one point of disagreement: while a mix of Indonesian and international actors felt that

Table 2. Strengths and weaknesses of actors by actor type		
Actor Type	**Strengths**	**Weaknesses**
Indonesian	1. Knowledge of local context and culture 2. Relationships, trust, and accountability with affected community 3. Strong institutional capacity 4. Ability to collaborate and leverage networks	1. Lack of knowledge of humanitarian standards 2. Lack of sufficient and qualified human resources 3. Poor coordination skills 4. Lack of adequate funding 5. Lack of experience in humanitarian disasters 6. Weaker management and governance 7. Weaker logistical capacity 8. Slower response
International	1. Strong management structure and governance 2. Better access to funding 3. Better technical knowledge	1. Lack of local knowledge 2. Lack of sustainability 3. Poor communication skills

Indonesian actors had weaker management and governance structures, a group of local, national, and nationalized NGOs argued that Indonesian actors had strong institutional capacity. Some critiques were quite specific: the criticism of international actors' communication skills came primarily from two community volunteers, who may have had specific experiences due to their position as intermediaries between their communities and different humanitarian actors.

Overall, the findings resonate with many of the assumptions outlined in the literature (Wall and Hedlund 2016; Ramalingam, Gray, and Cerruti 2013; Maxwell 2018; de Geoffroy, Grunewald, and Chéilleachair 2018). Internationals are seen as having greater administrative, financial, and technical capacity, whereas national and local actors have a stronger grasp of local context and relationships. However, it is important to note that these are very broad generalizations. Any nuance between sub-types of actors, years of experience in the affected area, etc. will not be apparent. Because generalizations of this kind tend to produce observations about the "lowest common denominator" among a class of organizations, perhaps it is not surprising that these findings reinforce similar generalized analyses of international and local/national organizations in other crises.

Capacity building

The topic of capacity building and its importance was brought up by almost all types of respondents. There were several examples brought up of Indonesian organizations carrying out capacity-building activities, so it is important not to assume that "capacity-building" is exclusively the domain of international organizations. The topics of capacity building mentioned by local, national, and nationalized NGOs were management and administration, humanitarian standards, and safeguarding. Many respondents appreciated current and past capacity-building efforts, but there were calls for more capacity building in the future. There were recommendations that those future efforts should be field based, include necessary material supports (such as guidebooks and computers), and be carried out over a long period of time (although an international actor said that at some point,

capacity building needs to stop and action must begin). Again, these recommendations resonate with the broader literature, in which local and national humanitarian actors are interested in capacity-building activities but may not be satisfied by the manner in which those activities are carried out (Ali et al. 2018; Fast 2017; Gingerich and Cohen 2015; Howe and Stites 2018).

Response quality

In the discussion of localization, there are many assumptions about how more "localized" humanitarian responses might affect different dimensions of response quality. During this study, participants provided insight into the appropriateness and timeliness of the response, as well as into whether the response adhered to humanitarian principles. It is important to note that this study was not designed as a formal impact evaluation of the response, and the study engaged more with people delivering humanitarian assistance and less with those receiving it (recognizing that those are not mutually exclusive categories). So, the responses below should not be read as a definitive assessment of overall response quality.

Appropriateness

Overall, there were many positive views of the appropriateness of the response across all actor types. This response was primarily the perspective from humanitarian actors, who may be more inclined to see their responses as appropriate. Community volunteers and affected communities were also largely positive about the appropriateness of the aid, but this reaction could also have been influenced by the fact that researchers were associated with an aid provider. There were also cultural factors that may have inclined participants to express gratitude for the aid they did receive, as one focus group participant indicated: "We think that every type of assistance should be grateful. Hence, whatever form we have to thank, because there are still people who care in such a crisis. Indeed, sometimes there are things that are not appropriate; however, since everyone comes to help, it is impossible for us to refuse."

With those caveats in mind, there were many examples of responders adjusting to community

priorities, changes in context, and operational limitations in order to provide appropriate assistance. For example: one LNGO allowed people to trade in one form of assistance (e.g., a hygiene kit) for another if the first type wasn't needed;[13] several organizations purchased local rice for distribution;[14] there was evidence of age-appropriate items for babies and the elderly;[15] there were examples of communities having significant input into the design of post-earthquake shelters and housing;[16] and there was a case of persons with disabilities being consulted on what was the most appropriate aid for those with disabilities.[17] While these are anecdotes and not a definitive evaluation, the fact that a diverse set of examples exists of processes designed to be inclusive and participatory indicates there may have been an enabling environment for a more appropriate response.

In contrast, a variety of respondents provided examples of inappropriate responses, primarily in terms of shelter. There was some frustration expressed by focus group participants about certain aid being tied to residing in tents, even when most people had moved out of tents. A nationalized NGO commented on the technical and practical inappropriateness of post-disaster shelter designs,[18] while an LNGO described that post-disaster shelter and bathrooms were not designed for the needs of vulnerable people.[19] These were largely specific technical issues; we did not hear widespread dissatisfaction or frustration with the response as a whole.

Of course, humanitarian responses are complex and varied. It is challenging to categorize a response as entirely appropriate or inappropriate. A representative of an LNGO described the understandable reality that the response quality was mixed: "Some assistance was in accordance with what was needed but some were not in accordance with what was desired by the community during the disaster. According to the informants, there was a lot of overlapping assistance from NGOs, such as tents…There are those that are on target and some that are not."

Timeliness

As for timeliness, the picture was more mixed. Access in the earlier phases of the response was a challenge, as described by a representative of an LNGO: "[The response] was still on time, however there were also those who were not on time due to difficult accessibility because from the air they had to wait for the plane and from the ground were obstructed by landslides." The policy on international-Indonesian NGO relationships could also have introduced some delays, as described by a representative of an LNGO network: "In the Central Sulawesi response, there was also missed golden opportunities to save lives. There were not many pre-partnership agreements with international counterparts, so they didn't have to go through due diligence—they had to now and that took time."

It is interesting to note that the more "local" an actor was, the more unfavorably they viewed the timeliness of the response. All three focus groups of affected communities seemed to agree that the response was not timely, whereas the two INGOs and nationalized NGOs that commented on the issue felt the response was timely; the LNGOs were split largely against the timeliness of the response while the NNGOs were split largely in favor. While there are not enough data points to prove a correlation, this finding could point to important relativism in the concept of timeliness, as there is no universal standard of what qualifies as a "timely response." What may seem rapid to an external aid provider may seem impossibly long to the person who is forced to contend without basics such as food, water, and shelter, even for a day or two.

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13 Interview with representative of an LGNO.

14 Interview with representatives of an LNGO and a nationalized NGO.

15 Interview with local government.

16 Interview with a nationalized NGO.

17 Representative of an LNGO focused on disabilities.

18 Representative of an INGO.

19 Representative of an LNGO.

Factors for and against high-quality response

Respondents also commented on which factors worked in favor of an appropriate timely response to the Sulawesi earthquake and which worked against one. Table 3 provides a summary of these points. It is ordered in terms of the frequency with which each factor was brought up. All factors that were described have been listed.

In terms of timeliness, factors relating to conditions on the ground (the effect of the disaster on local responders, community conflicts, lack of electricity and phone communication) were brought up by local government, affected community, volunteers, and LNGOs, whereas more administrative issues (such as financial and human resources) were brought up almost exclusively by local and national NGOs. The importance of existing networks was brought up by international and national NGOs and

the government; they may see existing networks as being more important because it is something that they may not automatically have, as opposed to more community-based responders.

"A day after the disaster, no one provided any assistance…Everyone was busy with personal matters. Not to mention that the house was damaged by the earthquake. I was also still busy looking for my missing child. I also at that time, if I could not find my child, I would not do any response. I am also affected. Gratefully, after my child was found, then on the second day I participated in providing a response. We built tents and evacuated victims."

- Representative of local government

Table 3. Factors for and against appropriateness and timeliness of the response		
	Factors for	**Factors against**
Appropriateness	1. High-quality assessments and strong data sharing 2. Local knowledge and relationships 3. Accountability to/engagement with the affected population 4. Understanding humanitarian standards 5. Good coordination	1. Conflicts of interest at the local level 2. Language and cultural barriers (even among Indonesian responders not from Sulawesi) 3. Inadequate funding to meet local needs
Timeliness	1. Physical access and transportation resources 2. Existing networks, relationships, and programs that can be leveraged in the event of a disaster 3. Ability to do assessments and obtain data quickly 4. Local knowledge and relationships 5. Good coordination 6. Financial resources (especially some kind of reserve funding that can be quickly mobilized) 7. Human resources (both paid staff and ability to mobilize volunteers) 8. Having a sense of urgency and solidarity	1. Lack of electricity and phone communication post-disaster 2. Responders also being victims 3. Lack of clear standards and policies guiding the response 4. Community conflicts

Humanitarian principles

Another metric of the quality of humanitarian response is how well the humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality, and impartiality are respected. This question of adherence to humanitarian principles is of particular relevance in the discussion of local humanitarian actors, as there are widespread assumptions that local actors are less willing or able to adhere to humanitarian principles. Several actors acknowledged that Indonesian responders needed more training on humanitarian principles and standards; however, the picture on the ground shows a more complex and positive picture of humanitarian principles in action. This report was not designed to be a formal assessment of the proper application of humanitarian principles, but some insights can be drawn from the way that different actors discussed their experience with these principles.

Many local, national, nationalized, and international NGOs emphasized that they did not take sides in terms of politics or religion, emphasizing their ability to be independent and neutral. One local NGO had a recruitment policy that emphasized that staff "should not take sides such as religious, ethnic groups, political views." Another local NGO emphasized that it "does not cooperate with any political party," while another local NGO has a rule that they "will not collaborate with cigarette companies, political parties, motorcycle companies, and mining companies." One INGO emphasized that all of its partnership agreements require declarations on neutrality and conflicts of interest. Despite these assurances of neutrality and independence, some questioned if this always translated into a reality on the ground. For instance, two groups mentioned there was some uneasiness about the role of the military and the Vice President in the disaster response.

The most frequently discussed humanitarian principle in the research was impartiality.[20] There were differing opinions on the overall "fairness" of distribution that calls into question the very definition of impartiality. Technically, an impartial response is one in which aid is distributed according to need and only according to need; in reality, this practice tends to mean that aid is not distributed equally among an affected population in order to prioritize certain vulnerable individuals and groups. Indeed, several national, nationalized, and international NGOs consulted for this study did discuss how they targeted vulnerable groups in order to provide impartial, needs-based aid. However, more local actors (such as the affected community, community volunteers, local NGOs, and local government) emphasized time and again the importance of "equal" distribution of aid. In response to a question about whether there were vulnerable groups in their area, a community volunteer responded: "Yes, elder, pregnant women, and disabilities. But we did not really treat them in [a] specific [way] because we distributed everything we have equally." There were several examples brought up of tensions between a community wanting to distribute aid "equally" and an NGO wanting to distribute aid according to vulnerability and need.

Irrespective of the definition of "impartiality," there were many examples of aid being distributed in a way that was seen as fair. While there is risk of favorable bias because the majority of research participants were aid providers, there was relatively strong consensus across the different categories of respondents. We did not identify a specific trend of affected communities or community volunteers being more critical of the fairness of distributions than government or NGO workers were. A UN agency commented on the aid distributions it observed: "I believe the aid provided by these partners was impartial. As I know, they provided aid for disabled people, also they have not included religious background when distributing aid. Even when it was election year for Indonesia, there was no affiliation to any particular parties."

However, there was almost an equal number of examples of distributions of aid that were not fair or impartial. These examples were given by local NGOs, community volunteers, and government, sometimes describing the behavior of people in

20 Note: in the actual interviews, most respondents actually used the word "neutrality" when discussing whether aid was distributed strictly according to need. The research team classified these as comments on "impartiality" even when that specific term wasn't used.

their own organizations and sometimes describing a general trend. Most of these instances were attributed to conflicts of interest in which someone with aid prioritized his or her own family. This practice was often described as putting the "ego" first in humanitarian aid. Even a member of the local government described that, after not succeeding in securing a tent for his family, he happened to run into a relative who is in the family of a Regent[21], who gave him a tent. To this day, he is still unsure whether the tent belonged to his relative or was diverted from a distribution. Other groups attributed unfair aid distribution to more operational issues, such as communications challenges, issues with getting accurate data, and a more general lack of capacity to handle distributions well.

> "People who work in humanitarian matters have actually tried to work in a neutral way. But in practice, at the local level, we often cannot deny that there are some persons who still find it difficult to escape from ego interest. They still put their family first. For examples in cases concerning temporary shelter. There are beneficiaries whose houses are actually not heavily damaged, but there are those who make it easier for them to get temporary shelter, and that is their families."
>
> - Representative of local government

There is sufficient documentation indicating that targeting and distributing aid in an accurate and impartial manner is a struggle in every response, whether spearheaded by local or international organizations (Haddad and Svoboda 2017; de Geoffroy, Grunewald, and Chéilleachair 2018); it would be unusual to hear of no issues of favoritism or data issues. Overall, however, it does not seem as if there were systematic violations of humanitarian principles attributable to the "localized" nature of this response.

Recommendations from humanitarian responders

There was significant interest from Indonesian and international actors in discussing how experiences in Sulawesi could better inform future humanitarian responses. This section will discuss the recommendations for future action as described by the research participants. Recommendations will be presented in order of how often they were discussed in the interviews.

There was widespread interest across all actors (with the exception of members of the affected community) in better coordination. The vast majority of comments on this topic were not specific or actionable; they were just calls for stronger local coordination systems. One practical recommendation on this topic was for better education about the cluster system for Indonesian NGOs that would not typically consider themselves "humanitarian." An NNGO advised: "[We should be] promoting a 'culture of clusters' at national and local coordination levels. Many local organizations struggle with the cluster system as they are development organizations, which means they often don't have the basic knowledge and skills to take advantage of the cluster system." Other recommendations focused on concentrating on investing more time and resources in building the coordination capacity of local government actors.

> "The earthquake made people aware that we live on slabs and ring of fire. People need to be made more aware and be better prepared for disasters."
>
> - Village leader

There were also widespread calls for more community education and disaster risk reduction, including creating village alert committees. The need for more system-wide disaster-risk reduction was articulated by a UN agency as follows: "Get preparedness done before the disaster. Train and

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21 A regency in Indonesia is an administrative level. A regent is the head of the regency.

experience coordination systems and how to work in them. Preparedness is the rehearsal, the response is the stage. You need to rehearse before you go on stage."

Community volunteers and members of the affected community, along with a few LNGOs and an NNGO, commented on changing the types and modalities of future responses to natural disasters. The primary interest was in better shelter and hygiene interventions, more psycho-social interventions, and more cash-based interventions (although one NNGO disagreed with the appropriateness of cash).

NGOs at all levels (local, national, nationalized, and international) expressed interest in further capacity building of local actors. While many of these calls were general, there were several more actionable recommendations. One LNGO whose mandate is supporting persons with disabilities referenced the importance of educating responders on the autonomy of disabled people in disasters. A nationalized NGO specifically cited the importance of improving understanding of humanitarian principles and standards. An INGO discussed the importance of training on disaster risk reduction. Other recommendations related to capacity-building modalities can be found in the section discussing capacity above.

NGOs at all levels also called for various changes related to the Indonesian government's policies and regulations of humanitarian action. There were calls to make the government policies regulating NGOs (particularly international NGOs) clearer. One example of a specific policy reform came from an LNGO: "The government must have a legal basis governing NGOs in general. For instance, the case of coordination with the [provincial board] BPBD had not been integrated with the Indonesian National Board for Disaster Management (BNPB)." Several local and international NGOs mentioned the need for the disaster response policies to be more flexible and less "rigid." There was also mention by an INGO of reforming customs policies to facilitate the acquisition of materials after a disaster: "On supplies—it takes time to get supplies in and get the chartered planes…We should develop a framework

agreement around goods, also on custom clearance, so we can also get international goods in."

NGOs at all levels described the importance of investing more in partnerships and networking between and among local, national, and international actors in order to improve both response speed and quality. One LNGO recommended creating a local NGO forum to facilitate better collaboration and more consistent work, while another LNGO described the importance of strengthening networks between institutions to reduce a sense of "competition" among humanitarian actors.

It is interesting to note that, when asked for recommendations for future humanitarian responses, no actor brought up reforms or recommendations related to funding or donor policies. While there were some complaints and frustrations with funding systems expressed during the interviews, addressing them was either not seen as a priority or seen as somehow inappropriate to highlight at this point in the discussion. In direct contrast, in many other analyses of localization, including the companion report that focuses on the Horn of Africa, funding systems and donor policy are often seen as major priorities for reform.

V. Summary and Recommendations

In conclusion, the study met its primary aims: to contribute to the empirical research on localization to provide additional understanding of the response to the Sulawesi earthquake, primarily by national and local actors, with specific insights into the role of nationalized NGOs. The study's ability to "test" some of the common assumptions in the literature was limited by the fact that there were no direct comparisons between the quality of implementation of international actors and Indonesian actors given the policies preventing direct implementation by internationals. However, looking at the Sulawesi response as a counterfactual to other humanitarian responses where internationals play a more direct role, the study can provide some additional insight. While our study found some examples of favoritism and partiality in study responses, there did not seem to be sufficiently significant or systemic violations of humanitarian principles to lend credence to the assumption that local and national responders are inherently less able to be principled in their responses. And while the study did find that certain local and national actors had lower operational and organizational capacity than their international counterparts, in large part because they did not typically or primarily engage in humanitarian response, the study did not find sufficiently significant quality issues with the response to indicate that local and national responders inherently provide a lower-quality response.

Overall, the study found a humanitarian response that was, as all responses are, imperfect and challenged by resources, access, coordination, timing, favoritism, and communication. It found a humanitarian ecosystem in transition, with internationals learning to play different roles, the emergence of a larger class of nationalized NGOs, and a diverse set of local and national humanitarian responders. However, the stories and insights provided by the study participants largely affirm the findings of other research into the Sulawesi earthquake: that in this case, the limits placed on international responders were, while not perfect, largely seen as a positive change. Significant work remains in ensuring that these "localized" aid systems are more effective, inclusive, and equitable, but this response may indeed serve as a model for what future "localized" humanitarian responses may look like.

Based on the general findings and the recommendations of the research participants themselves, this report concludes with general recommendations for different groups of stakeholders in the Sulawesi response.

Recommendations for Indonesian NGOs:

- Expand efforts for community education, disaster risk reduction, and emergency preparedness.

- In future responses, place greater emphasis on improving/expanding shelter, hygiene, mental health, and cash-based interventions.

- Further develop networks and partnerships among Indonesian organizations, particularly between local and national actors, to facilitate mutual capacity strengthening. More rapidly deploy partnerships in future responses.

- Specifically for nationalized organizations: examine the institutional role to ensure a more complementary and less competitive approach to participation in localizing responses, including capacity strengthening for other Indonesian organizations.

Recommendations for international NGOs/ agencies:

- Understanding that there is a trend of increasing regulation of international NGOs, invest more in identifying, vetting, and

building trust with potential partners in disaster-prone areas before/between crises to ensure a timelier and more effective partner-mediated response.

- Understand the nuance of "local" actors and distinguish between national, nationalized, regional, local, and other relevant dimensions of organizations in decisions regarding partnership, coordination, and collaboration.

- Continue to invest in capacity strengthening and learning activities for a diverse cross-set of Indonesian actors, ideally field based and longer term.

- Work towards longer funding cycles for partnerships.

Recommendations for Indonesian government:

- Work with international and Indonesian organizations who participated in the response to identify where relevant policies could be clarified or modified for future responses.

- Invest more in strengthening local coordination systems, building more awareness of the role of coordination systems among local groups, and reducing barriers for the participation and inclusion of local groups in coordination mechanisms.

- Continue to invest in capacity strengthening and learning activities for a diverse cross-set of Indonesian actors, with a particular focus on local authorities.

Recommendations for researchers and policy makers:

- Encourage more comparative research of the effect of partnership policies on other disaster responses in Indonesia and in other countries that have implemented similar policies.

- Investigate the conditions that favor/disfavor a similar partnership policy (in terms of crisis type, civil society strength, government strength and legitimacy, etc.) in other countries.

- Interrogate the assumption that localized responses are, on the whole, less able to adhere to humanitarian principles than non-localized ones.

- Analyze local perceptions of humanitarian principles and standards in application (e.g., how does one measure timeliness, the perception of tension between impartiality and equity).

- Always analyze and respect the nuances of identity of humanitarian responders beyond a local/international binary.

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