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Localizing Humanitarian Response

**Can the Rhetoric Translate into Concrete Action? South
Sudan Case Study.**

Submitted by
Henri Nzeyimana

Examining Board:

Supervisor: Dr. Edith Favoreu
President: Prof. Gilles Carbonnier
Expert: Dr. Nathalie Herlemont

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Dedication

To my late mother for her selfless love and self-reliance which gave me great inspiration

To my dearest wife, Fabiola and our lovely children, Chelsea Prunelle, Shirley Shanice, Perle Brise and Elton Bright for their limitless patience and unconditional support

To all those who live in the shadows of humanity with ultimate hope for their dignity and recovery

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Abstract

This research focuses on the long standing question of capacity development/strengthening for local and national actors so as to assume leadership and management of humanitarian response. Research findings prove that this localization process remains a rhetoric owing to multiple factors including humanitarian funding that is short-term, inaccessible in most parts to local actors and often serves to advance donor priorities.

Other challenges include humanitarian coordination which prioritizes UN agencies and international NGOs and sideline local actors; a narrow focus of capacity development aimed at INGO performance and accountability for continued donor funding and asymmetrical power relationship between local actors and international agencies.

South Sudan case study reveals that in addition to the above-mentioned challenges, the rhetoric and reality gap is founded mainly on the fact that the humanitarian question in South Sudan is much more developmental and embedded in poor local governance and ill-targeted international assistance.

Using evidence from literature and data from interviews, the research concludes with an analytical framework of fundamental changes needed to achieve devolution of humanitarian response in South Sudan. This fundamental change passes by an inward-looking perspective to build on existing indigenous capacities and resources so as to shift from supply to demand-driven humanitarian response.

Key words: Localization, humanitarian response, rhetoric vs. reality, capacity development/strengthening, equal partnership, coordination paradox, devolution, emergency-development contiguum, supply vs. demand-driven

Acronyms

CAS	Certificate of Advanced Studies
CBOs	Community-based Organizations
CERAH	Centre d'Etudes et de Recherche en Action Humanitaire
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CHF	Common Humanitarian Fund
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
ERF	Emergency Response Fund
GHA	Global Humanitarian Assistance
GHD	Good Humanitarian Donorship
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
INGOs	International non-governmental Organizations
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Network
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
NNGOs	National non-governmental Organizations
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
RRC	Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
RRT	Rapid Response Team
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SPLA/IO	Sudanese People's Liberation Army in Opposition
SPLM/A	Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
WFP	World Food Programme
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

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Introduction

The post-world war II era and later the end of cold war saw an increase in international humanitarian assistance especially from western organizations towards countries in the South to respond to the needs of people affected by armed conflicts, natural disasters and social exclusion.

Mary B. Anderson et al (2012) note that increased media awareness on the needs of people caught in humanitarian emergencies has led to tremendous growth of humanitarian system both in terms of multiplicity of actors and the volume of humanitarian aid. This system has grown into what might be termed a humanitarian marketplace and a “complex enterprise of multilateral organizations, bilateral aid agencies, international and local NGOs, community-based organizations, foundations, diplomats, banks, consultants, contractors, companies, academics, development ‘experts’ and more.” (2012, p.43)

In this complex humanitarian system, there has been over time preeminence of “western-based international organizations that seek funding from western governments and engage directly in project implementation to deliver humanitarian assistance to people affected by emergencies and humanitarian crises in the South.” (Francois Audet, 2011, p.268)

NGOs humanitarian portfolio has been growing at tremendous proportions. However the growing involvement of INGOs in humanitarian action does not go in parallel with their national NGOs counterparts. For example in South Sudan, it is claimed that “NGOs deliver approximately 85% of basic services, which makes them an important partner for both the government of South Sudan and the United Nations” (Paul Currian, 2010, p.5).

Systematic involvement of INGOs in South Sudan as vehicle for complex emergency response and development aid can be traced back as early as in the 1970s. (Volker Riehl, 2001) However, large-scale coordinated humanitarian action in conflict situation dates back in 1989 during the civil war in the Greater Sudan between Khartoum government and Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army which had been raging on at intervals since independence in 1972.

Following decades of armed conflicts and deteriorating humanitarian situation especially devastating famine caused by war-induced displacement coupled with long spells of drought and destruction of livelihoods mainly in the south western parts of Sudan, a UN-coordinated Operation Lifeline Sudan-OLS (with an annual budget of about \$100 million) was mounted to

exert diplomatic leverage and provide airlift relief assistance and ensure protection to civilians facing life-threatening conditions. (Volker Riehl, 2001)

Though OLS operation was credited for reaching affected people on both sides of the conflict line (Volker Riehl: 2001, Daniel Maxwell et al, 2014), this is to be counter-balanced with further criticism from OLS reviews. OLS operation, though seen as an innovative approach, was criticized for being more an aid instrument at the hands of the warring parties and less a needs-based humanitarian response: “[...] it was also highly constrained by the political realities of its context, such that aid allocation was more determined by political considerations and caprice than by explicit need, and it was highly exploited by parties to the conflict for their own purposes at various times.” (Daniel Maxwell et al, 2014, p.8)

Volker Riehl (2001) argues that despite the long presence and influence of INGOs in South Sudan, they ultimately contributed to the weakening of political and administrative elite and literally fulfilled the role of state welfare. International humanitarian action though offering life-saving interventions has been seen as political tool for external domination: “INGOs’ interventions were indirectly demonstrating SPLM/A’s inability, incompetence, or unwillingness to constitute political organs such as the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association- a humanitarian wing of SPLM/A- as politically effective competent forces.” (2001, p.7)

Though a few Sudanese Indigenous NGOs –SINGOs emerged starting in the 1990s, they were mostly viewed as an external creation by INGOs as they depended exclusively on external funding for survival. They were not an emanation of local constituencies to operate independently and address locally-identified needs. (Volker Riehl, 2001)

As demonstrated in previous reviews (Ataul Karim, 1996; Volker Riehl, 2001; Daniel Maxwell et al, 2014), the OLS legacy did not leave behind strong national capacity to tackle humanitarian challenges that face South Sudan in the interim period after 2005 peace agreement and the current crisis that broke out in 2013. Localized response remains a rhetoric owing to multiple factors including inadequate funding mechanisms, coordination that prioritizes UN agencies and INGOs and sideline local actors, a narrow focus of capacity building aimed at INGO performance and asymmetrical power relationship between national actors and international aid agencies.

The purpose of this research is to assess the conduct of humanitarian action in South Sudan in relation to the development of national capacities for local leadership and management of humanitarian response. It develops an analytical framework of dynamic partnership and

cooperation where national actors play a central leadership role and international actors a supportive one.

The guiding questions for this research are framed as follows:

- 1. What is the rationale for strengthening local capacities for national leadership and management of humanitarian response?**
- 2. What are the key challenges that hinder the localization of humanitarian response in the current humanitarian system and South Sudan political landscape?**
- 3. Under what conditions could indigenization of humanitarian response be possible and feasible in South Sudan?**

The research relies mainly on a review of literature dealing with the topics on funding, capacity building, partnerships and coordination in humanitarian action and in some instances on development aid when it applies to national civil society organizations and state institutions in crisis-affected countries. The literature is composed of both books, articles from academic institutions and practitioners, media articles and web sources. Interviews with select resource persons from organizations supporting humanitarian response in South Sudan provide further insights¹. The main constraint of the research is limited access to literature dealing with the experience of national actors in humanitarian response in the new Republic of South Sudan and the changing context of analysis due to ongoing conflict situation in South Sudan.

The choice of South Sudan as a case study is justified by a number of factors. As a new state, efforts to resolve the country conflict and work for peace and state-building require the participation of a strong civil society. (KOFF Newsletter, no 131, October 2014)

The legacy of 16-year long Operation Lifeline Sudan demonstrates that there is a deficit in the capacity of national actors to take ownership and responsibility for humanitarian action when external actors take the driver's seat in the design, implementation and management of humanitarian action. The OLS experience also challenges the common justification that humanitarian agencies cannot build the capacities of national actors because that requires long-term engagement and resources while the focus should be on response to immediate and urgent needs of the affected populations.

¹ Face to face and telephone interviews were conducted with Handicap International, International Committee of the Red Cross; International Council for Voluntary Agencies and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Due to time constraints, interviews with UNDP, UNHCR, UNOCHA, MSF, and TDH were not possible.

This recipe does not hold in the context where emergencies can last longer and with reference to the current discourse on linking relief and development which can benefit from proximity and long-term field presence of a strong national workforce.

The current humanitarian architecture and the growing discontent with the humanitarian community in South Sudan by both government and Civil Society Organizations also warrants appropriate attention. The hate-love relationship between the South Sudan government and international humanitarian community dating back from the OLS operation demonstrates that there is a growing sense of frustration over what is seen as external delivery system viewed against the resurgence of state sovereignty. The current strategy to work around the state because it is a party to the conflict (KOFF Newsletter, no 131, October 2014) and the over-reliance on external actors is likely to produce the same result as with the OLS operation.

As demonstrated earlier, the current humanitarian system in South Sudan is likely to perpetuate the external-driven humanitarian response and fail once more the rendezvous of the indigenization of humanitarian response.

The paper is structured into an introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. After this introduction, the paper analyses the rationale for localizing humanitarian response. The first chapter summarizes the contours and relevance of localizing humanitarian response and then questions the validity of the current humanitarian system. Such system reflects the paternalistic image of humanitarian action as externally-driven and asymmetrical in terms of relationships between recipients of assistance and external humanitarian actors. The section then presents the case for localizing humanitarian response in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, appropriateness of interventions, accountability for the affected populations and sustainability.

The second chapter introduces challenges of localizing humanitarian response in crisis-affected countries. The section explores key challenges related to funding mechanisms, capacity building, coordination, partnerships, access and security, humanitarian principles and NGO internal governance. A brief parallelism with the current humanitarian architecture in South Sudan portrays the level of challenges this question poses in the local context.

The third chapter deals with the case study on localizing humanitarian response from the perspective of South Sudan. The section analyzes in depth the current humanitarian response and discusses proposals for a model of devolved humanitarian response to apply for South Sudan. Remodeled types of partnerships are proposed in view of strengthening the capacities of national actors while also highlighting the supportive role of international agencies, donors and regional organizations in the initiation and consolidation of this indigenization process.

Chapter One: Rationale for Localizing Humanitarian Response: Definition of Concepts and Setting the Scene

1.1. Concepts Definition

1.1.1. Humanitarian response

Humanitarian response entails actions aimed at addressing the needs of people affected by humanitarian crises arising from natural disasters, armed conflicts or social exclusion. It comprises actions to provide assistance to vulnerable populations and ensure their protection from the effects of the crises. The World Humanitarian Summit Scoping Paper on Humanitarian Effectiveness states that “the central aim of humanitarian action is saving lives and alleviating suffering of people through action that is guided by humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.” (World Humanitarian Summit, Initial Scoping Paper, WHS Theme 1: Humanitarian Effectiveness, p.3)

The principles² and Good Practice of Humanitarian Donorship (GHD 2003) add to the definition of humanitarian action prevention and preparedness for the occurrence of situations of man-made crises and natural disasters. This entails working before crises to strengthen capacities of communities, civil society organizations and government structures to prevent crises and increase their readiness to mitigate impacts of crises when they occur as well as recover from their aftermath. Local actors are well placed to deliver humanitarian assistance but can also contribute to protection by monitoring and reporting abuses and training to enhance the protective environment.

1.1.2. Localizing humanitarian response

Many writers (Abby Stoddard 2004; Antonio Donini et al, 2008; Francois Audet, 2011; Mary B. Anderson et al, 2012) have argued for grounding humanitarian action in local capacities, resources and local context. This process has the advantage of being less costly by avoiding multiple layers of aid delivery but also being sustainable in the long term and accountable to aid recipients. The World Humanitarian Summit Scoping Paper on Humanitarian Effectiveness recognizes the primary role of national and local authorities of affected countries to meet the needs of their populations.

For humanitarian response to be more effective: “It is critical that actors involved in humanitarian action understand what affected people and communities need and are doing to

² Principle 1 defines the objective of humanitarian programming as “to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of man-made crises and natural disasters, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations”

meet their needs. During and after any humanitarian crisis, affected people and local actors are the first responders and will be the most likely to first have direct access to people in need as well as remain there and to support their recovery. National and local responders are also more likely to work within existing infrastructure and markets, which can improve the sustainability of response efforts.” (World Humanitarian Summit, Initial Scoping Paper, WHS Theme 1, Humanitarian Effectiveness, p.2)

Other writers justify the growing interest in building the local expertise by the fact that humanitarian emergencies are also growing in scale and intensity and hence draining the existing international expertise, the increasing politicization and instrumentalization of humanitarian aid leading to insecurity for international actors in contested territories and the dwindling financial resources from traditional donors. Other factors include the need to link emergency with development in order to enhance resilience and preparedness to future shocks as well as reduce the impact of crises on affected populations. Equally important is the recognition of the communities’ own agency in the coping with emergencies and contributing to their own recovery. (Ian Smillie, 2001; Abby Stoddard, 2004; Antonio Donini et al, 2008; Dr. Beatrice Pouligny, 2009 and DFID, 2013)

To sum up, localization of humanitarian response encompasses a set of measures and activities that take into account local realities of affected populations, existing capacities and resources and the agency of affected populations to enhance quality, accountability and sustainability.

1.1.3. Capacity building/strengthening

The UN Terminology Database defines capacity building as a “process by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and countries develop, enhance and organize their systems, resources and knowledge, all reflected in their abilities, individually and collectively, to perform functions, solve problems and achieve objectives.” (Beatrice Pouligny, 2009, p.7).

In disaster response terminology, local capacity is defined as a “combination of all the strengths and resources available within the community, society or organization that can reduce the level of risk or the effect of a disaster” (ibid. p.7).

Support to local capacity involves a series of activities and mechanisms including: “material, infrastructural and technical support measures to key organizations and institutions; transfer of knowledge and skills to a variety of governmental, non-governmental and civil society actors; training; facilitation of planning processes with local actors, including through needs assessment, design of prevention and adequate response mechanisms and formulation of strategies and budgets; community-based approaches and community development activities” (ibid. p.8).

For many writers (Ian Smillie, 2001; Monica Kathina Juma and Astri Suhrke, 2002; Abby Stoddard, 2004; Dr. Beatrice Pouligny, 2009; Francois Audet, 2011; Mary B. Anderson et al, 2012) humanitarian capacity building goes beyond a mere transfer of skills to respond to immediate and urgent needs. It involves strengthening existing institutional capacities among state institutions and civil society structures. It aims to foster local knowledge of crises drivers and communities' own coping mechanisms. It seeks to build longer-term prevention, preparedness, response and resilience capacities especially in case of protracted conflicts and complex emergencies that require long term engagement so as to enable recovery and reconstruction of crisis-affected communities.

1.1.4. Partnership

Partnership and capacity building/strengthening are intrinsically related in that effective partnership is a key element of developing local capacities to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to emergencies. The current international humanitarian system is built on coordination and partnerships between diverse actors including the United Nations agencies, donors, international non-governmental organizations, the ICRC and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, academics, private companies, and local and national organizations.

The UN General Assembly Resolution 46/182 while mandating national governments to take responsibility for initiation, coordination and implementation of humanitarian response, this should be done in closer partnership with UN, international non-governmental organizations, the ICRC and national organizations.

Global Humanitarian Platform, 2010 defines partnership as follows: “Partnership in a humanitarian setting refers to the relationship between humanitarian organizations involved in similar activities. It is characterized by mutual cooperation and responsibility. In the context of humanitarian reform, effective partnership requires adherence to Global Humanitarian Platform Principles of Partnerships”. Such principles include equality, transparency, result oriented approach, responsibility and complementarity. Effective partnership characteristics include “voluntary and collaborative interaction, complementary interest and objectives, shared contribution of resources: financial, human or both; shared risks and benefits and mutual accountability” (Good Partnership Principles, CERAH CAS Strategy Lecture, 2015).

1.2. Setting the scene

“... I propose that [...] we set ourselves a new task; to bring the community of nations back into a genuinely multi-lateral fold and to use the resulting commitment to launch a new humanitarian agenda of strengthening the capacity of weak states and communities to fulfil

their own responsibilities towards their citizens and increasing the political commitment of stronger states to the same end. [...] Where and when this effort fails, as it inevitably will in certain circumstances, then the humanitarian community must step in and continue to meet the challenge. ...” (Sergio Vieira de Mello, UN Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, 2000)

The type of humanitarianism that Sergio Vieira de Mello is advocating for, testifies to the critical need to invest more in capacities and responsibility for local and national actors in preparing for, responding to and transitioning to development from disasters or humanitarian crises after conflict. It also points out to what other writers have called externality of humanitarian action in its current design. It reinforces the proposal that international humanitarian actors need to play supportive role rather than direct delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Mary B. Anderson et al (2012) criticize international aid as focusing more on a delivery system from external actors to needy people in the aid recipient countries: “In the eyes of people in countries that receive aid, international assistance is a multilayered and sometimes overbearing system of delivery system for resources and expertise from wealthier people and countries to poorer people and countries” (2012, p.43).

For aid recipients, international assistance turns them into objects of assistance rather than subjects of their own recovery and resilience. Focusing more “on gaps and needs rather than building on internal strengths and capacities, external aid in the long run undermines local capacities and create dependence” (Ibid, p.48).

Francois Audet (2011) also criticizes international humanitarian action as reflecting the legacy of post- World War 2 with its “interventional delivery method” in terms of “western expertise and funding in support of victims from the South” (2011, p.268). Dr. Randolph Kent et al (2013) join Mary B. Anderson et al and Francois Audet in their criticism of the external-driven humanitarian action. Projecting into the future of humanitarian sector, the authors criticize the humanitarian assistance as it stands today as more supply-driven and propose that for the sector to change there is need to interrogate the past practices and challenges in order to shape the new future direction.

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness 2005 and the Accra Agenda for Action 2008) highlights five guiding principles for good donorship namely ownership by partner countries, alignment of aid on partner countries priorities, harmonization of aid mechanisms and systems among donors, managing for results and mutual accountability between donors and their partners. The principles in themselves are meant to

foster positive return on aid investment in local capacities and self-reliance for recipients of international assistance.

The 2011 Busan New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States reinforces the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness by pointing out that addressing fragility requires long term investment and building local capacities and national systems. Justifying the relevance of a new deal for engaging in fragile states, proposers argue in these terms: “Transitioning out of fragility is long, political work that requires country leadership and ownership. [...] International partners can often bypass national interests and actors, providing aid in overly technocratic ways that underestimate the importance of harmonizing with national and local context and supports short-term results at the expense of medium- to long-term sustainable results brought about by building systems and capacities”, (A New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and State building, Busan, 2011)

Though both Paris Declaration and Busan New Deal focus on development aid, the types of complex emergencies and protracted conflicts that international humanitarian aid is addressing in majority of countries blur the line between emergency and development context. While those who oppose capacity building in emergencies say that development actors should invest more in capacity building (Francois Audet, 2011), it is becoming evident that the short term response strategy both in terms of funding and deployment of expertise needs to be adjusted to respond to long term engagement that many emergencies and humanitarian crises require.

Proponents for a new form of humanitarianism that strengthens local capacities, reduces dependency of beneficiaries of assistance and bridges the emergency-development divide criticize the ad-hoc and superficiality of the current humanitarian action. They propose more coordinated response and more investment in long term engagement to move beyond the crisis-level response which takes the highest proportion of international humanitarian aid.

For Garth Abraham (2003) the Associate Professor of Law, University of Witwatersrand and IHL Legal Advisor Pretoria Delegation of the ICRC: “Instead of relying on the commitment and largesse of international humanitarian agencies, the aim should be to strengthen the capacities of civil society, of government and of intergovernmental organizations so that the African continent as a whole must more successfully acknowledge and tackle its many responsibilities.” (2003, p.3)

The envisioned humanitarian agenda as a developmental and preventive endeavor is also championed by Kofi Annan, the then United Nations Secretary General, in that he recognizes that humanitarian action should address prevention of disasters and also the development needs of resource-scarce countries (Gareth Abraham, 2003). The importance of building capacities

and self-reliance of communities as a means to contribute to the prevention of disasters, preparedness and recovery after a crisis reinforces the necessity to link emergency to development.

Such agenda challenges the predominant current focus on crisis-level response and short-term design and funding of humanitarian action. Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme 2000 notes: “Development does not preclude conflict or other types of disasters, but it does drastically reduce the likelihood of their occurrence. And when disasters do take place, the consequences in terms of loss of life are less severe, and the recovery process faster and more complete.” (Ibid, p.4)

Those who project into the future of humanitarian system (Antonio Donini et al (2008); Francois Audet, 2011, Dr. Randolph Kent et al (2013), and Ben Ramalingam et al (2013) also make an insistent call to reconsider the ways international aid is organized and delivered in the context of emergencies and humanitarian crises. They argue that humanitarian action should not continue being seen as a monopoly and external venture in the hands of international NGOs and their traditional donors.

Despite this growing consensus on the need to relocate capacities and resources to where humanitarian action is most needed by building on and strengthening existing capacities and resources, grounding humanitarian response on accurate understanding of local context and realities as well as affected communities’ own agency to cope with and recover from crises; the reality on the ground proves that this rhetoric of ‘localization’ of humanitarian response is far from concrete action.

Among many other factors, proponents of local humanitarian capacity building identify funding mechanism, types of partnership between INGOs, donors and civil society, capacity gaps, humanitarian coordination mechanisms and internal governance among national NGOs as fundamental obstacles to effective engagement, participation and ownership of decision-making by local and national actors among state institutions and civil society structures in the current humanitarian architecture.

Chapter Two: From Rhetoric to reality: Exploring the challenges behind the localizing of humanitarian response

2.1. Actions Speak Louder Than Words

Critics of the rhetoric and reality gap (Ian Smillie, 2001; Monica Kathina Juma and Astri Suhrke, 2002; Abby Stoddard, 2004; Antonio Donini et al, 2008; Dr. Beatrice Pouligny, 2009; Francois Audet, 2011; Keystone 2011; Mary B. Anderson et al, 2012; Katherine Nightingale 2012 and Ben Ramalingam, 2013) all point out to the fact that international humanitarian actors often bypass local and national actors and have little understanding of the local context and realities. They also say that the short-term funding and the project and programme-based quantifiable results and tight timelines linked with humanitarian aid funding do not match the need for long-term capacity building. They also hold that the type of donor-client relationships between aid recipients and international donors and humanitarian agencies stands in contrast with shared responsibility, equality and mutual accountability and long-term partnership relationship that effective humanitarian response so requires.

Respondents in Time to Listen Report (Mary B. Anderson et al, 2012) concur to say that local NGOs and CBOs in their current partnerships with donors are viewed as mere agents of assistance and without any independence to ground their work into local constituencies' needs and priorities. The kind of capacity building they get from donors in terms of developing funding proposals and reporting serves to advance donor interests rather than their internal capacities: “[...] That is, instead of becoming independent civic entities addressing local problems with local people, they are appealing to external donors (and responding to external donor agendas) for their continued existence.”(2012, p.101)

Keystone final report 2011 highlights that when asked to indicate the type of partnerships they would wish to be developed national NGOs emphasize “joint strategic planning, networking and access to other sources of support, shared decision-making rather than acting as implementing agents or sub-contractors” (Keystone Partner Survey, Final Report, 2011, p.5).

Antonio Donini et al (2008) recognize that much as humanitarian action has gained a lot in terms of institutionalization, standardization, contextualization and professionalism, humanitarian action remains much more northern-driven and fails to acknowledge in most parts locally-based initiatives and other non—western forms of humanitarian action. (2008, p.8)

They point out the gap between the rhetoric of local participation and the current practice in the conduct of humanitarian action by international actors: “[...]. Yet despite the rhetoric of downwards accountability to beneficiaries, mainstream humanitarians continue to talk principally to the like-minded, shunning different or dissenting voices. Much that is local and

non-western in humanitarian action goes unrecognized: the coping mechanisms of communities, the parallel life-saving universe that includes zakat, migration and remittances. These constitute the un-recorded assistance flows of groups and countries that are not part of the northern-driven humanitarian system” (Ibid, p.8).

Monica Kathina Juma and Astri Suhrke (2002) also emphasize that current humanitarian action-relief and protection activities- are still dominated by northern NGOs though most of the operations in contrast take place in the South. This poses a big challenge for southern NGOs to assume active role they should play in international humanitarian regime. For the authors, not only does this current business model challenge the need for capacity strengthening but also erodes even existing capacities in the worst case scenario: “The dominant rhetoric on all sides has long emphasized the need to build more ‘local capacity’, yet this is generally followed by non-action. Even long-term, semi-permanent emergencies have not generated significant local capacity to assist. In some cases, whatever local capacity did exist in this arena has been overwhelmed by international aid presence and eroded.” (2002, p.6).

The failure to strengthen local capacities for humanitarian response and even worse undermining existing capacities is also captured by Daniel Maxwell (2014) in the case of South Sudan during the Operation Lifeline Sudan. Joining other critics of OLS experience in terms of building local capacities (Ataul Karim, 1996; Volker Riehl, 2001), Daniel Maxwell highlights key shortcomings of OLS operation. They include the failure to take into account local realities and needs in both planning and delivering humanitarian aid, bypassing local actors and existing capacities and even worse undermining and destroying traditional and kinship structures of authority and finally failing to exercise equity to reach the most affected populations (2014, p.9-p.10).

The author decries the politicization and instrumentalization of the humanitarian assistance which ended up strengthening warring parties’ grip on civilians in controlled territories and hence prolonging the war, the suffering and disenfranchisement of local populations. Regarding local capacity building: “One area in which OLS was criticized was limited ownership of and participation in relief activities and decision-making by Sudanese institutions and beneficiaries. It was criticized for having passed over opportunities to hire local staff members in both north and south and for having failed to adequately consider Sudanese observers and beneficiaries’ views.” (Ibid, p.11). Like other writers before him, he maintains that strengthening local humanitarian capacities rests on grounding humanitarian response on solid understanding of local context and realities, taking into account affected communities’ own agency to cope and

recover from crises and using community systems and structures where they exist to deliver assistance.

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation acknowledges that the failure to understand the local realities have undermined the international community response to support peace building and state-building following the signature of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with Khartoum in 2005. Despite huge amount of aid money poured into the country by international actors, more effort was put into technical support and state-building to improve service delivery and less on peace building and national reconciliation.

Part of the responsibility for the resurgence of conflict in December 2013 can be attributed to the failure to grasp the local context and address long-standing political power struggles and social tensions: “The international community has failed to sufficiently take into account the complexity of the country and the long-standing, highly contentious power-political and social tensions that date back to the last civil war.” (KOFF Newsletter, no 131, October 2014, p.3)

According to SDC staff, capacity building is not stand alone endeavor but a component of programme implementation in SDC-supported projects to foster state building and conflict resolution. In the spirit of implementation of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, SDC supports state-level service delivery for access to water and sanitation in Northern Bahr el Ghazal since 2011. Furthermore, SDC supported a joint project with Irish Aid (The Sustained Humanitarian Presence Project, 2014) to contribute to the security of humanitarian actors and to enhance the capacity of NGOs to maintain a secure and safe operating environment in a view of increasing field presence and acceptance in affected communities. (Interview with SDC staff, July 3rd, 2015)

Despite positive outcome of this capacity development pilot project of which 50% of participants were members of national NGOs, it remains a one-off and ad-hoc event that needs scaling up and replication in other areas. (Interview with SDC staff, 3rd July 2015).

Other piecemeal capacity development projects are implemented by SIDA and INGOs. Nevertheless, their long term benefits remain to be seen in a context where social and ethnic polarization is highly divisive and humanitarian aid being increasingly contested by both parties to the conflict. The initiatives are also likely to undermine social cohesion, equity among beneficiaries and make the operating environment more insecure for humanitarian actors as long as they are only implemented in areas under government control. They also need to be coordinated and based on joint capacity development plan between national NGOs, INGOs and donors.

A survey conducted by the South Sudan NGO Forum in 2013 indicated that INGOs employ national staff in management, professional and technical positions and train them to build their capacities. The survey also indicated that 97% of international staff are in skilled roles while the ratio in technical, administrative and unskilled roles is 19:1, 12:1 and 30:0 respectively. (NGO Forum 2013 Employment Survey) The trend shows that expatriates from INGOs occupy skilled and managerial positions while majority of local staff take support functions.

While this trend of employing and building capacities for national NGOs staff working for international NGOs is welcome, the practice also has the disadvantage that national NGOs are stripped of the qualified personnel which undermine their further development and might lead managers not to invest in staff capacity building (Yuri Tsitrinbaum , 2012).

2.2. Pawns and Knights: Who Calls the Piper Pays The Tune.

Statistics indicate a sharp increase in humanitarian crises and impact with 33.3 million IDPs and 16.7 million refugees in 2013. Global humanitarian needs continue to rise with UN-coordinated appeal shooting at US\$ 16.9 billion by end of July 2014 (Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2014). In this funding picture, government donors from OECD/DAC members accounted for $\frac{3}{4}$ of the international humanitarian response contributing US\$ 16.4 billion while non-OECD/DAC government donors contributed US\$ 2.3 billion in 2013 (GHA, Report, 2014).

Funding for humanitarian aid remains one of the key challenges towards building local humanitarian capacities. Not only is funding for humanitarian aid short term but also comes with tight deadlines and attached quantifiable results. Funding for humanitarian aid is selective in most instances, serves to implement donor policies and agendas, and is delivered in a multi-layered and costly manner whereby local and national actors merely serve as conduits for funding and channels of humanitarian assistance (Abby Stoddard, 2004; Antonio Donini et al, 2008 and Mary B. Anderson et al, 2012).

Not only is funding globally distributed unevenly according to donor priorities, policies and emergency profile but also goes through lengthy and complex delivery channels where local and national NGOs take the tiniest share: “Despite the widely recognized importance of national and local NGOs in the humanitarian preparedness and response, they only directly accessed US\$ 49 million of international humanitarian assistance in 2013, a decrease of US\$ 2 million from 2012.” (GHA, 2014, p.12)

According to Start Network estimates, “70% of initial emergency response is carried out by local actors and yet in 2012 only 2.3% (\$51m) of the overall funding went direct to national and local NGOs / CSOs,” (David Hockaday, September 2013). In spite of their comparative

advantage of having presence, access and knowledge where international actors often do not, “in 2013 only 93 national NGOs and 22 local NGOs were recorded as having received funding in UNOCHA Funding Tracking System compared with 294 international NGOs.” (GHA, Report, 2014, p.70). An example that shows the possibility of local NGOs direct funding is the case of remote management operations in Somalia due to security constraints. With more and more remote management modus operandi “direct funding to national NGOs peaked at US\$ 54 million in 2011, US\$ 16 million of which was for Somalia- an operating environment largely inaccessible to international humanitarian agencies.” (GHA, 2014, p.70).

Statistics also indicate that fewer of local and national NGOs access pooled funds channeled through the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and Emergency Response Funds (ERF) although meant to support their operations and capacities: “In 2012, pooled funds provided a total of US\$ 452 million to 4 main UN agencies- WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF and UNRWA... However in the past 5 years national and local NGOs have only accessed US\$ 31 million of the US\$ 464 million disbursed through ERFs.” (2014, p.70).

GHA report 2014 indicates that “between 2009 and 2013, local and national NGOs combined received a total of US\$ 212 million- 1.6% of the total given to NGOs and 0.2% of the total international humanitarian response over the period.” (Ibid, p.70).

The current short-term and uneven funding mechanism also means that priority is given to immediate and urgent needs at the expense of long-term recovery. It also encourages competition over scarce resources among NGOs despite the stated good intentions of coordination and collaboration. (Abby Stoddard, 2004)

Aid distribution by expenditure also indicates that humanitarian funding goes to crisis-level response and less on recovery and resilience building and capacity development at local level. Figures from the Global Humanitarian Assistance 2014 (US\$ billions) indicate a sharp decrease in funding level as we move from emergency response to support towards preparedness, recovery and reconstruction. In 2012, material relief assistance and services took US\$ 5.9 billion -58%, emergency food aid US\$ 2.4 billion- 24% while reconstruction relief and rehabilitation and disaster prevention and preparedness got a share of US\$ 0.6 billion -6% each (Ibid, p. 76)

South Sudan humanitarian response is primarily funded through the Common Humanitarian Fund - a multi-donor pooled fund established in 2012 to meet critical needs on the ground. Since the beginning of the crisis in December 2013 it has allocated \$194.5 million to South Sudan (OCHA, Response Plan, 2015). Estimates from the UNOCHA 2015 Strategic Response Plan for South Sudan indicate that \$1.8 billion is needed to respond to the humanitarian needs

of about 6.4 million people in need of assistance in 2015. Of these 2.5 million people are severely food insecure, 1.9 million people displaced by violence, 235,000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition and 293 thousands refugees inside South Sudan.

The country comes second among 10 top recipients of money channeled through pooled funds in 2013 totaling US\$ 103 million -12 million representing 1.2 % of Central Emergency Response Funds and US\$ 91 million representing 9.5% of Common Humanitarian Fund-(GHA,2014). Though figures for allocation of funding to local and national NGOs in South Sudan are not available, the breakdown of funding from Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation for 2014 shows that an insignificant allocation of CHF 0.2 million goes to the South Sudan NGO Forum (of which 92 national NGOs are members) for coordination . ICRC and WFP take the biggest share of CHF 3.5 and CHF 2.5 million respectively (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Factsheets South Sudan, December 2014).

The funding profile and distribution points out to a big mismatch between the reality of the much more needed locally-based response and the scarcity of means required to achieve this shift. The reality still indicates that the power lies in the hands of the international actors (the knights) while aid recipients (the pawns) will have to rely of the external funding to meet their humanitarian needs.

2.3. The Dilemma of humanitarian principles

Effective delivery of humanitarian assistance rests on the ability of humanitarian actors to get funding and access to populations in need. It also requires enabling humanitarian space for crisis-affected populations to access equitable humanitarian assistance. Limited funding for local and national NGOs means that they have less access to victims despite their field presence and proximity to affected populations. Furthermore, presence and access are also currently limited by donor selectivity in humanitarian aid allocation and security consideration deriving from increasing politicization and instrumentalization of humanitarian aid. This has come to question the centrality of humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, independence and humanity and the autonomy of humanitarian actors from external influence. Such selectivity also creates victim hierarchy among those in high profile emergencies with high donor interest and those in forgotten areas in contradiction to 2003 OECD/DAC Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles that emphasize needs-based access (Sarah Collinson, 2009).

Humanitarian principles also face a big dilemma in South Sudan where acceptance of humanitarian actors is more and more questioned and access being increasingly jeopardized by the growing association of the humanitarian community with UN Mission in South Sudan – UNMISS- peacekeeping force. Out of logistics and security demands, “major UN humanitarian agencies co-locate their offices or accommodation with UN peacekeepers and inappropriately or unnecessarily share assets. This high level of cooperation between the Mission and humanitarian actors has not gone unnoticed by communities and armed groups, who routinely lump humanitarian actors into the same category as UNMISS and question the real intentions of humanitarian actors- leading in some cases, to the outright denial of humanitarian access.” (Nicki Bennett, 2013, p.6)

In South Sudan, the 2013 crisis led to an increase and severity in number of humanitarian access incidents: “South Sudan ranks third in the world after Afghanistan and Syria in terms of insecurity for aid workers.” (IRIN, November 14th, 2014) According to UNOCHA, the number of incidents rose from 15 in November 2013 to 104 reported incidents through 15 December to 31 January 2014 and 541 access incidents in the first eight months of 2014. Access incidents include but are not limited to looting of aid supplies, attacks on and harassment of aid workers, mines and unexploded ordinances and administrative impediments (UNOCHA, South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan, 2015).

While many people in areas worst hit by armed violence, displacement and looming food insecurity heavily depend on humanitarian assistance by aid workers, humanitarian access is becoming more and more dependent on security situation.

National aid workers have been killed in intra-ethnic attacks or detained by security forces on account of their ethnicity and perceived association with the enemy because they were delivering assistance to civilians in rebel-held areas. (UNOCHA, Press Release, August 6th, 2014)

Leaders in SPLA in opposition –SPLA/IO - claim for separate relief operations in their strongholds that they refer to as liberated territories. They want to have safe corridors and enter into agreement with aid agencies to deliver assistance in the zones under their control: “We seek to deal directly with international, regional and local relief agencies that operate in liberated areas. This is important so that it eases their access to our areas and make provisions of relief assistances unhindered and effective” (Sudan Tribune, January 6th, 2015) . Not only does this move stand in direct conflict with humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence

and impartiality but also constitutes more security threats for humanitarian actors and limits access to humanitarian assistance for populations in need.

Quoting the Humanitarian Country Coordinator for South Sudan, IRIN News report indicates that before the crisis (pre-December 2013), nine in ten staff members with international NGOs in South Sudan were South Sudanese. However the crisis affected the deployment of local staff from different ethnic backgrounds to some hotspots: “The ethnic tensions fueling the violence meant that some South Sudanese aid workers were not able to work where they were most needed, as their lives were potentially in danger.” (IRIN, November 14th, 2014)

Access and acceptance are being challenged by negative perceptions of humanitarian actors (both international and national staff) by affected communities and parties to the conflict in South Sudan. Aid actors avoid working directly with the government because of alleged human rights violations. Humanitarian actors and government representatives need to engage in dialogue and consider how they can improve collaboration to ensure unhindered access to affected populations.

2.4. Who Pays Coordinates

Coordination mechanism in South Sudan still prioritizes the UN system and cluster functions. Under the leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator, coordination is done through the Inter-Cluster Working Group and then the Operational Working Group which coordinates implementation of the response with actors on the ground (South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan 2015).

Though the 2010 evaluation of Southern Sudan NGO Forum (created in 1996) indicated positive results in terms of developing NGO coordination mechanisms and NGO participation in the UN, government and donor meetings, the Forum was still criticized as being dominated by international NGOs and the absence of local NGOs raised questions about how representative the forum was (Paul Currion: 2010).

This led to some reluctance from donors to fund the forum secretariat since “Both donors and local NGOs themselves were interested to know what the Forum was doing to build local civil society as part of wider effort to reconstruct South Sudan” (Ibid, p.4).

A parallel indigenous NGO forum was formed after the signature of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement and formalized in 2010. The two groups still maintain separate meetings structures though their chairs and deputy chairs sit on each other’s steering committee meetings (Paul Currion: 2010). By 2013, the South Sudan NGO Forum comprises 136 international non-

governmental organizations and 92 national non-governmental organizations mainly due to the influx of international NGOs and the emergence of national NGOs after independence.

The Forum has a secretariat, a steering committee and a number of working groups. The secretariat staff sit at government and donor meetings, attend the humanitarian coordination forum and has a seat at the Humanitarian Country Team while NGO representatives assume co-leadership role at different clusters (Nick Helton and Ivan Morgan, 2013). Though the Forum is believed to have improved the coordination system among NGO community and the representation role with external actors ((Nick Helton and Ivan Morgan, 2013), there is a risk of duplication of role with the indigenous forum regarding some issues like capacity building initiatives and negotiation with government and donors.

Though national NGOs are represented at the Forum Secretariat, the steering committee and thematic working groups, the Forum still relies on international expertise and might not be sustainable in the long run should national NGOs have to assume leadership.

Like Antonio Donini et al, 2008; Francois Audet 2011 and Mary B. Anderson et al 2012; Daniel Maxwell and Martina Santschi (2014) comment that the more standardized, coordinated and centralized at the top, humanitarian action departs from response based on specific needs of the affected populations and limits the participation of local, national actors and affected populations in humanitarian programming: “Aid workers on the ground complain that as the humanitarian industry has professionalized, the growth of globalized standards, globalized analytical and programmatic frameworks, and globalized indicators have squeezed out the possibility for good context analysis and context-specific responses- and are at least partially implicated in the analytical “blind spot” regarding the widespread outbreak of violence (2014, p.9)

As it stands now, the complex coordination structure in South Sudan is not likely to work for the effective participation of South Sudanese Indigenous NGOS in humanitarian response and their effective capacity building.

2.5. Partners or patrons?

There is growing consensus among writers and humanitarian actors (Abby Stoddard, 2004; Antonio Donini et al, 2008; Francois Audet, 2011; Mary B. Anderson et al, 2012; Dr. Randolph Kent et al, 2013 and Ben Ramalingam, 2013) on the primary importance of national and local actors in the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the need to strengthen their capacities to effectively meet this challenge. Arguments in favor of ‘working with’ and not ‘working through’ local and national actors include their comparative advantage of field presence, access and proximity with affected communities. They are also able to continue working throughout

the emergency-development contiguum from prevention to preparedness to response and reconstruction.

The recent experience in remote management of humanitarian response by local and national actors in insecure operating environments where international actors cannot access like Somalia demonstrates that locally-based response is possible. However supporters of this approach (Abby Stoddard et al, 2006) recognize the risk that comes with this arrangement in terms of security for local actors and quality of programs. They call for proactive engagement and capacity support for local and national NGOs to minimize the burden of risk and guarantee program quality when developing humanitarian partnerships.

Antonio Donini et al (2008) for example argue that the ever-increasing, complex and changing humanitarian crises in the South needs strong and ready in-built capacities to respond; Francois Audet (2011) and Dr. Randolph Kent et al, (2013) anticipate the future where international NGOs field presence might be redundant and will have to take on new facilitative and supportive role.

Critics of the current paternalistic partnership relationship (Ian Smillie, 2001; Katherine Nightingale, 2012; Mary B. Anderson et al., 2012 and Ben Ramalingam, 2013) propose new types of partnerships based on shared responsibility, mutual accountability and equality. For Katherine Nightingale: “Where partnerships bring together local knowledge and experience together with humanitarian expertise in a working relationship that is collaborative, risk-sharing and inclusive, they can deliver better emergency aid, and more resilient development in the long term.” (2012, p.2)

Ben Ramalingam et al (2013) criticize partnership between INGO and NNGOs as an ad hoc and emergency-driven initiative rather than a systemic effort to build sustainable relationship that can survive beyond the emergency response: “However, the approach taken to partnership in the majority of humanitarian responses tends to be reactive, driven by the emergency, and shaped by ad-hoc interactions that take place at the point of crisis. The sector is not yet systematic about partnerships: how they are thought about, designed, implemented or assessed” (2013, p.4). The authors argue that partnership with national and local NGOs enable relevance and appropriateness in that local actors understand better local context and dynamics; their presence and proximity with the affected populations increase accountability with the beneficiaries. This allows for the emergency-development contiguum because local actors can work throughout the crisis spectrum from preparedness to prevention, response and recovery and hence fostering long-term sustainability of the response.

As demonstrated above, localizing humanitarian response and empowering local constituencies should be much more partnership-based where local and national actors take center stage and international ones a facilitative and supportive role. Localizing humanitarian response as an agenda for humanitarian system in this century and beyond is both a matter of upholding humanitarian ethics and principles, doing justice to those who are on the other line of the receiving end of international humanitarian assistance and a means to achieve humanitarian effectiveness.

The current donor-client type of partnership in South Sudan still translates into an asymmetrical power relationship where national and local actors depend exclusively on international aid to operate sometimes at the expense of their independence and accountability towards affected communities.

While there is on principle consensus on the devolving of humanitarian system and relocating responsibilities and capacities closer to those who need humanitarian assistance most, the will to translate the rhetoric into concrete action on the ground remains elusive. The following section looks into how the rhetoric can transform into concrete action towards a more indigenous response to humanitarian challenges facing South Sudan.

Chapter 3: Towards indigenization of humanitarian response in South Sudan: Analysis of the current practice and proposal for a devolved humanitarian response

3.1. Background

After a short-lived period of peace and national pride following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with Sudan in 2005 and the declaration of independence of July 9th 2011, conflict returned to South Sudan on December 15th, 2013.

Recent literature on the humanitarian response in South Sudan indicates growing tension between the government and the humanitarian community and discontent among the local and national NGOs with their level of participation in the current response (Nicki Bennett, 2013). Currently, there is growing resentment in South Sudan against foreign workers. In September 2014, the South Sudan Labor Ministry issued a directive asking to expel foreign nationals working with non-governmental organizations and privately held companies by mid-October and to be replaced by South Sudanese, but retreated on the decision when it raised bitter criticism among the humanitarian community. (BBC, September 16, 2014)

According to the South Sudan National Civil Society Organizations Position Paper issued for the 2014 Oslo Donor Conference, South Sudan CSOs are not sufficiently represented in the humanitarian response despite their comparative advantage of presence and proximity with affected populations and the cost-effectiveness that their cheap and readily available contributions would bring: “[...] South Sudanese National Civil Society Organizations offer a unique advantage which makes them a quicker and cheaper agent of emergency and humanitarian response. [...] National NGOs have a high spirit of voluntarism and low logistical demand which demonstrates cost effectiveness as agents of humanitarian response.” (South Sudanese National CSO Position Paper, May 2014, p.2)

To materialize this remarkable importance of national NGOs, the signatories to the position paper ask for an increase of national NGO participation in the current humanitarian response. They say that the practical way to achieve this is by scaling up humanitarian funding channeled through the current UN cluster system in the following quota ratio: “This means funds allocated to implementing agencies within the clusters should take the format 40% of funds allocated to UN agencies, 30% allocated to national CSOs and 30% allocated to INGOs.”(Ibid, p.2)

Critics of past humanitarian initiatives in South Sudan (Volker Riehl, 2001; Bennett, J. et al, 2010; Humanitarian Practice Network, 2013 and Daniel Maxwell, 2014) point to the failure of humanitarian actors to develop local capacities and to base humanitarian response on locally-identified needs. They further criticize the intervention model which has prioritized short-term

emergency response rather than providing state institutions and civil society structures with long-term support and enhancing communities' livelihoods to foster their resilience and coping mechanisms.

3.2. Development-focused humanitarianism

While the main aim of humanitarian action is to save lives, alleviate suffering and restore dignity, recent literature has argued that humanitarian action should embrace a development perspective. The statistics from the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2014 indicate that there is a correlation between humanitarian crises, poverty and conflict. The GHA data indicates that humanitarian assistance has been mostly directed towards conflict-ridden countries over the past years and that there were an estimated 179.5 million people living in extreme poverty in countries classified as receiving long-term humanitarian assistance in 2012 (GHA, 2014, p.13)

GHA data analysis reveals that in some instances humanitarian crises are mainly caused by developmental imbalances and the uneven distribution of resources and development priorities: “With domestic government expenditure across developing countries now exceeding US\$ 6 trillion a year, these resources can support people’s long term resilience to shocks. But for many countries, particularly those facing entrenched crises, per capita spending by the national government remains low with little prospect for growth. Almost 40% of long-term humanitarian assistance went to countries with government expenditure of less than US\$ 500 per person per year –one quarter of the developing country average.” (GHA, 2014, p.13).

Currently, “food aid constitutes the bulk of the international community’s humanitarian response in South Sudan, with 2.7 million people receiving food assistance in 2012” (Toby Lanzer, “South Sudan’s Greatest Humanitarian Challenge: Development”, p.3). Yet South Sudan has a lot of potential for agricultural and livestock production but does not invest a great deal in the agriculture sector, “with South Sudan national budget’s portion to agriculture currently standing at 5.2% below the Maputo Declaration 2003 indicator of 10%.” (ibid, p, 4). Toby Lanzer argues that emergencies in South Sudan could be averted if more effort was made to support development operations and improve state capacities and local governance: “[...] Nevertheless, in order to build a viable and sustainable state in which people are able to cope with shocks without large-scale and costly emergency assistance, addressing under-development requires our increased support.” (Ibid, p.5).

Bennett, J. et al (2010) and Daniel Maxwell and Martina Santschi (2014) claim that aid architecture and programming in South Sudan have failed to address both conflict dynamics and peace prospects and that international actors are obliged to navigate between short-term

humanitarian response and long-term needs to give peace and development a chance, which the rigidity of the current funding cannot address.

Daniel Maxwell and Martina Santschi argue that the sudden relapse into conflict in 2013 forced actors to shift back to emergency response and to readjust programs and funding to meet urgent emergency response needs. At the same time, actors have to consider long term perspectives to support peace initiatives. This proves that the need to link relief and development in protracted emergencies is a reality in South Sudan.

3.3. Living on spoils of war: Self-sustaining humanitarian market

The rationale for building local capacities for humanitarian action, peace-building and development can be weighed against the amount of money that has been spent on relief operations since the time of Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) in 1989. US\$2.0 billion were spent on relief supplies between 1990 and 2000, which represents US\$200 million annually (Volker Riehl, 2001, p.8). Further analysis is necessary to compare the costs and benefits of programs that have been implemented to build local capacity in terms of prevention, preparedness and response.

Between 2012 and 2014, US\$300 million (total Common Humanitarian Fund aid budget) was spent in South Sudan on 6.4 million affected people. Based on these figures, we can calculate the average allocation per person to be around US\$47.

According to Alex de Waal, South Sudan has the capacity to produce three hundred and fifty thousand barrels of oil per day. With this income, each of the 8 million citizens of South Sudan would be able to earn US\$1000 per year. He adds that by 2012 oil revenue for South Sudan amounted to US\$650 million per month. (Alex de Waal, January 24, 2012). With this income, South Sudan would be able to provide much needed assistance to its war-affected citizens. However, with the war raging in more than 7 out of 10 states of South Sudan and mainly in its oil-rich states of Unity, Jonglei and Upper Nile, the South Sudan government is shifting its spending priorities. 70% of the government budget is said to have been diverted to security and military spending (KOFF Newsletter, no 131- October, 2014) and oil production was stopped in January 2014 despite the fact that oil accounts for 98% of government revenue (Toby Lanzer, 2013). This further undermines South Sudan's prospects for development and opens the door to more conflict and dependence on international humanitarian assistance.

3.4. Universalism vs. localization: The Dilemma of Humanitarian principles

Localization of the humanitarian response in South Sudan is further compromised by the dilemma that humanitarian actors face in relation to delivering a principled humanitarian response. In keeping with the principles of neutrality and independence, humanitarian actors

are not working directly with the state on the grounds that the government is party to the conflict. This has raised suspicion and mistrust between the humanitarian community and government officials (Nicki Bennet, 2013; Daniel Maxwell and Martina Santschi, 2014).

Data from interviews with actors supporting the South Sudan humanitarian response (HI, ICRC, ICVA and SDC, June-July 2015) confirm this dilemma. All the interviewees confirm that national and local actors are affected by the conflict and that the tribal and ethnic diversity among local actors is reflected in the current political crisis.

Much as the international actors might want to rely on external expertise as insurance for the neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian aid in South Sudan, the growing politicization and instrumentalization of aid is increasingly alienating the humanitarian community from the people they want to serve.

As clearly stated by Ian Christophos (2005), international humanitarian actors are no longer the stamp of insurance for humanitarian neutrality and impartiality in the face of growing politicization of aid and the impact this has on security and access for international actors. The ICRC Deputy Head of Operations for South Sudan argued that neutrality and impartiality need to be perceived as being translated into concrete actions by humanitarian actors on the ground. As was repeated by interviewees, the ultimate objective of developing the capacities of local actors should be to improve their ability to gain access and provide assistance to affected people (ICVA, ICRC, SDC, HI, 2015).

For this reason, supporting government institutions and civil society actors should not be overlooked when weighed against the added value that they can bring to the humanitarian response. For Daniel Maxwell and Martina Santschi (2014): “Nevertheless there is still good reason for liaison and coordination efforts to be GRSS-led ... If, as seems increasingly likely, the situation evolves into a protracted crisis, humanitarian agencies and the government will have to work together. Identifying and bolstering positive linkages-even while making clear the dismay over violations of human rights-is both essential and possible.” (2014, p.9)

From the literature, it appears that the localization of the humanitarian response in South Sudan reaches beyond the traditional issues around capacity gaps, the funding system, coordination mechanisms and partnerships between national actors and international aid agencies. It involves a complete paradigm shift in funding and programming approaches including a drastic change of mind-set and culture among international aid actors regarding the capacity development agenda. It requires an inward-looking perspective for local and national actors to draw from existing indigenous resources and explore available opportunities to shift from supply to demand-driven partnerships both for humanitarian and development encounters with the North.

3.5. The power within: towards a devolved humanitarian response in South Sudan

The literature confirms the old rhetoric of capacity development alongside inaction and the continued dominance of international actors on the ground. There is, however, a growing consensus that the situation needs to change and has indeed changed. The change may not be the result of international actors' desire to reverse the trend, but rather of changing realities in the international aid system and in the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

For Ian Christoplos 2005: "The humanitarian sector is no longer expatriate-led, nor should it be. Agencies are being pushed by security and financial realities, and pulled by their own normative commitments, into relying on local organizations and nationally recruited staff. Capacity-building priorities are being driven by the need to adapt to these new realities. It is getting harder to brush aside capacity building as a secondary priority." (2005, p.36).

Ian Christoplos criticizes the fact that the capacity building approach is solely built on training to save lives more efficiently and improve service delivery. He also argues that 'institutional nomadism' and high staff turn-over among national and international humanitarian actors does not support long-term capacity building; therefore, there is a need for local and national actors to assume more responsibility for humanitarian response. (Ian Christoplos, 2005).

Data from the interviews in June-July 2015 (HI, ICRC, ICVA and SDC) confirm that localizing the humanitarian response in South Sudan is difficult but not impossible. All the interviewees agree that South Sudan has the internal potential to avert crises and address the development agenda. They argue, however, that both the government and civil society organizations would need to build on existing strengths and opportunities and accept to work on internal weaknesses if they want to move the localization process forward.

3.5.1. Refocusing capacity development discourse

As regards capacity development, South Sudan NGO Forum statistics indicate that 9 out of 10 staff working for INGOs are South Sudanese (South Sudan NGO Forum Employment Survey, 2013). Sudanese nationals working with international NGOs are trained and exposed to management and technical support functions. Some of them could compensate for the lack of expertise among national NGOs. This would be one of the ways to promote in-house capacity development that could be piloted in selected national NGOs. Donors need to consider this option and support incentives to compensate for the high salaries paid by INGOs.

One interviewee further points out that South Sudan faces a shortage of qualified personnel generally because of poor management of human capital. The majority of qualified personnel migrate elsewhere to look for better employment opportunities, competitive salaries and social benefits.

Furthermore, CSOs will have to forge a truly national identity and make sure that NGO management and operational teams reflect the diversity that exists in South Sudan if they want to earn the confidence of the communities they serve. They will also have to move from individualistic interests and form expertise- or thematic-based networks and consortia in order to speak with one voice and constitute a unified front to advance the capacity building agenda and negotiate equal partnerships with external actors.

The literature indicates that capacity building for humanitarian action has to be anticipated well before disasters strike or armed violence occurs. It also has to survive the big emergency operations to accompany affected communities into their recovery process. This will require flexibility of funding and collaboration between emergency and development actors to coordinate pre- and post-crisis capacity development. The results have to impact on humanitarian performance, steer the way towards harmonious recovery and lead the way to development.

The recent experience of surge capacity from the Rapid Response Team in handling the L3³ emergency in South Sudan in February 2014 did not provide local and national actors with the opportunity to learn and develop their response capacities. Rather than supporting the core staff within South Sudan emergency programs, the RRT team took over and side-lined existing personnel. To be more sustainable in the long term, expertise of this kind should be used to establish a regional hub to develop capacities in advance and to mentor and monitor performance during emergency operations.

Donors will have to be flexible enough to support this anticipatory capacity development initiative. The remote management modus operandi now in action will help to build operational and managerial capacities beforehand to make up for the quality gap and reduce the burden of risk.

3.5.2. Fixing the coordination paradox

Today coordination is top-down, and local and national actors are more and more side-lined. The one-size-fits-all standardized procedures tend to overlook local and context-specific realities and alienate affected communities from having a voice in the management of humanitarian response and the recovery process. In South Sudan, the existence of parallel NGO

³ By declaring a crisis a 'Level 3' emergency, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator aims to mobilize the resources, leadership and capacity of the humanitarian system to respond to exceptional circumstances. The decision to designate an L3 emergency is based on 5 criteria: the scale, urgency, complexity of the needs, as well as the lack of domestic capacity to respond and the 'reputational risk' for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the UN (GHA, 2014, p.57)

The South Sudan crisis was declared an L3 emergency in February 2014.

Coordination Forums may not play in favor of developing indigenous capacities as it might lead to the duplication of services. As it stands now, the international-led Coordination Forum will gain by putting forward local and national staff in the coordination forums at different levels to enable them to develop further their coordination capacities.

Regional organizations such as the Intergovernmental Authority for Development, the East African Community and the African Union play a facilitative role in conflict resolution in South Sudan. There is a need to develop further the prevention and emergency response arsenal within these organizations. Humanitarian focal points should be designated and supported to coordinate funding and humanitarian programming within the member countries.

3.5.3. Beyond Paris Principles: Walking the talk of aid effectiveness

All the interviewees (HI, ICRC, ICVA and SDC 2015) agree that local capacity development and the localization of humanitarian and development processes in South Sudan need an enabling environment to take shape. Security and peace as well as a conducive working environment will go a long way towards supporting long term investment in human capital and eradicating the breeding grounds for social conflicts and violence.

To push forward the development-focused humanitarian response, aid actors need to reconsider aid allocation and prioritize more long-term development assistance. For many donors, humanitarian action has come to be a substitute for political action and development support. GHA 2014 statistics indicate that most OECD/DAC donors commit 0.7% of their Gross National Income to Official Development Assistance (ODA), while the proportion of ODA for humanitarian assistance stands at 10% over the last decade (GHA, 2014, p.105). It would be more beneficial to raise the ODA contribution and allocate a specific percentage to prevention and preparedness interventions, including advanced capacity development for national actors. However, data from all the interviewees indicate that there is a need to develop local NGOs' capacities in proposal writing, programme cycle management, reporting and communication so that they can serve affected populations effectively.

3.5.4. Investing in people and improving local governance

South Sudan CSOs will have to lobby government to improve the management of oil reserves and the effective use of oil revenue to promote what an SDC staff member calls an "Oil for People" policy. They also have to look for alternative funding opportunities with private investors like telecommunications and oil companies as well as mobilizing donations from the diaspora. There is an urgent need to strengthen the coordination capacity of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission and the oversight role of the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management to lead on policy development, Disaster Risk Reduction and Prevention.

Localizing humanitarian response in South Sudan has to take into account multi-dimensional changes such as equal partnership relations and long-term funding that bridges the emergency-development contiguum. This is a long-term process which needs flexible funding and an affected people-centered coordination mechanism, improved local governance and investment in people in order to navigate through the sometimes fluid emergency environment and bridge the way to recovery and development.

For Ian Smillie and Larry Minear, the road to localization reaches beyond the charitable and voluntary nature of humanitarian action to embrace a rights-based endeavor with obligations to do more and better. It goes beyond the ‘political economy of humanitarianism’ that focuses on the needs and demands of donors and international agencies to that which puts the agency and betterment of affected people in the center. It moves away from ‘ad hocism’ and a ‘take-it-or-leave-it’ approach and towards a humanitarianism that is more accountable, predictable, development-oriented and transparent to achieve the humanitarian imperative. (Ian Smillie and Larry Minear, 2004)

Conclusion

This dissertation has set out to demonstrate that there is a gap between the rhetoric and reality in the local humanitarian capacity building discourse. Critical analysis of the South Sudan experience of humanitarian response since Operation Lifeline Sudan in 1989 to date further reveals that localizing humanitarian response reaches beyond the traditional issues around capacity gaps, the funding system, coordination mechanisms and partnerships between national actors and international aid agencies. It involves a complete paradigm shift in funding and programming approaches including a drastic change of mind-set and culture among international aid actors regarding the capacity development agenda.

Six key changes stand out from the case study as making the cornerstone for remodeling humanitarian partnerships and achieving devolution of humanitarian response in South Sudan.

1. Assuming new supportive role without doing themselves out of business. International humanitarian agencies should support local actors by building their operational capacities rather than taking over operations as has been the case for the Rapid Response Team deployment during the L3 emergency response in February 2014. Such supportive role could also include tools, guidelines and training modules development, international advocacy for protection of local actors and resource mobilization.

2. Developing complementarity and not integration. There is need to separate the political mission and the military component of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan from the humanitarian assistance and protection in order to avoid the security incidents for staff and

rebuild local communities' confidence vis-à-vis the humanitarian community perceived as partial and biased. The complementarity could target advocacy to improve human rights and humanitarian protection by parties to the conflict, training in security management for humanitarian actors and lobbying government and donors to increase the humanitarian and development funding.

3. Supporting development-focused humanitarianism. International donors need to increase their development aid and allocate a substantial percentage to humanitarian action beyond the current 0.7% allocation to Official Development Assistance and the 10% contribution to humanitarian portfolio. Donor requirements should also be reviewed and simplified to enable local actors access the humanitarian financing system mainly the Common Humanitarian Fund and the Emergency Response Fund. These funds should prioritize capacity strengthening during the pre and post-emergency phases to ensure adequate preparedness, swift response and smooth transition to development.

4. Harnessing local capacities and promoting good governance. Improving local governance initiatives should target primarily responsible management of natural resources and investing in food production to prevent food crises and social conflicts. Responsible management of oil revenue for example could result into allocation of a quota to supporting capacities of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission and the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management in order to improve oversight and coordination of humanitarian action at local level. The Humanitarian Country Team should also develop mechanisms of consultation with the Indigenous NGO Forum to ensure that the humanitarian planning and coordination takes into account local perspectives and active participation of local and national NGOs.

5. Building in-house response and community-based resource base. Local response capacities can also be built through mobilization of existing human resources. This can be done by deploying trained Sudanese staff working for international NGOs to work with national NGOs. Donors should be flexible to support the payment of incentives to compensate for the high salaries they earn with international NGOs. Sudanese humanitarian NGOs need to promote national identity that go beyond current ethnic cleavages and partisan politics in order to build confidence with people they work with and minimize security incidents linked to perceived lack of neutrality and impartiality from both sides of the ethnic divide.

Local communities provide non negligible contribution to humanitarian response in form of care and protection of most vulnerable persons like unaccompanied minors, elderly and chronically-ill people; protection monitoring and reporting as well as distribution of humanitarian assistance and conflict resolution initiatives. Local government departments

provide basic services including education in emergencies, health and nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene for crisis-affected people. Given the resource constraints coming with humanitarian crises international humanitarian actors should be flexible to support these local initiatives while upholding quality standards and respect for human rights of affected populations.

6. Fostering cross-border and regional initiatives. Regional organizations of which South Sudan is a member mainly the African Union-AU, the Intergovernmental Authority for Development- IGAD and East Africa Community-EAC should establish/support humanitarian units to coordinate humanitarian planning and funding and build capacities of humanitarian actors and focal points. UNOCHA office in South Sudan should develop coordination and collaboration with these mechanisms to ensure coordination of cross-border initiatives including sharing of expertise, data and building capacities for local actors.

One of the thematic focus for the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey in 2016 is localizing humanitarian response to achieve effectiveness. Our ultimate hope is that this paper contributes to the reflection to tackle the key challenges that hinder the localization process. While international actors have a supportive role to play to make this happen, change will spring from the willingness and ability of local actors to build on existing indigenous capacities. Only in this way will they move from supply to demand-driven humanitarian and development encounters with the North.

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List of annexes

List of Interviews⁴

Name	Function	Organization	Date	Method
Nathalie Herlemont Zoritchak	Director of Operational Development	Handicap International Foundation	29 June 2015 11:00 am	Face to face
Florence Gillette	Deputy Head of Operations for South Sudan	International Committee of the Red Cross	1 st July 2015 15:00 pm	Face to face
Karina Lehmann	Cooperation (within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement) Desk Support for Sudan	International Committee of the Red Cross	3 rd July 2015 8:30 am	Face to face
Raphael Gorgeu	Senior Policy Officer	International Council for Voluntary Agencies	2 nd July 2015 9:30 am	Face to face
Simone Droz	Programme Officer Conflict and Human Rights	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	3 rd July 2015 13:30 pm	Telephone

Interview guideline

Over the years humanitarian response towards war-affected or disaster-hit populations in the South has been undertaken by mostly international non-governmental organizations mobilizing funds and material from the north and directly delivering assistance to victims in the South.

In the 1990s the increase in civil wars mostly on the African continent also saw an increase in humanitarian action to respond to the needs of affected populations. The humanitarian portfolio of international organizations has been growing tremendously but did not go in parallel with the development and participation of national NGOs. In South Sudan for example, it is claimed that NGOs deliver approximately 85% of basic services, which makes them an important partner for both the government of South Sudan and the United Nations (Paul Currion, 2010, p.5)

⁴ Interviews with MSF, TDH, UNHCR, UNDP and UNOCHA did not take place because of time constraints.

Despite 16 years of presence of Operation Lifeline Sudan 1989-2005, critics abound that there has been minimal effort to develop local capacities to manage and provide leadership for humanitarian response. There has been growing discontent among government officials and local NGOs with this international NGOs monopoly over the humanitarian action in South Sudan.

Many writers argue for the need to reverse the trend and increase the participation of local actors and transfer of ownership and capacities to where the humanitarian response is most needed. They argue that the current multi-layered delivery model where local NGOs just serve as conduit for humanitarian funding is cumbersome and costly. On the contrary, increasing local capacities and participation of national actors proves to be efficient, cost-effective and sustainable.

Despite the old rhetoric around the need to develop capacities and increase participation of local NGOs, key issues that stand on the way to their development and participation remain unresolved. These include but are not limited to weak capacities, funding, partnership between INGOs and local NGOs and the coordination mechanism mostly dominated by UN agencies and international NGOs.

The purpose of my paper: “Localizing humanitarian response: Can the Rhetoric Translate into Concrete Action? South Sudan Case Study.” aims at addressing the central question of how to localize humanitarian response with South Sudan as a case study. The contributions of different actors involved in humanitarian response in South Sudan will provide the basis for developing a devolved model whereby local actors take the center stage and international actors a supportive role.

Interview questionnaire

A. Current Challenges in the humanitarian system and response

1. In your opinion, what are the key challenges that hinder the development and active participation of local NGOs in humanitarian response in general and in South Sudan in particular?
2. What are the key conditions that need to be fulfilled in order for local NGOs to take center stage in management and leadership of humanitarian response?
3. How do you rate the current partnerships between international NGOs and national NGOs in the delivery of humanitarian response?
4. What type of partnership would you propose that will strengthen the capacity of national NGOs and enable progressive transfer of responsibility over management of humanitarian response?

5. In your opinion, what are the key areas to take into account in order to strengthen local humanitarian capacities? Who should be involved in capacity strengthening and at what level should the initiative take place?
6. In your opinion what are the key challenges pertaining to local NGOs internal governance and operational environment should be addressed in order to succeed the capacity strengthening objective?
7. In your opinion does the current funding mechanism enable local NGOs to develop their technical and operational capacities?
8. What are key issues that motivate donors not to provide direct funding to local NGOs? What needs to be done to ensure confidence-building for donors vis-à-vis direct funding?
9. What are the key changes that need to be made to the current coordination mechanism to ensure active and meaningful participation and representation of local NGOs?

B. Proposals for indigenization of humanitarian response in South Sudan

In order for South Sudan Indigenous NGOs to take center stage and assume leadership and management role in the delivery of humanitarian response, key changes need to be made in the current system.

What is your opinion on the following?

1. Review the model of South Sudan NGO forum and develop their capacities to coordinate, build capacity and mobilize resources for humanitarian response.
2. Review the current humanitarian funding and application procedures to enable local NGOs access direct and sufficient funding to be more operational?
3. Establish a humanitarian unit and funding mechanism at regional level, NEPAD (New Partnership for Development)/ IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority for Development)/EAC (East African Community) to oversee management and funding for local NGOs?
4. Increase humanitarian aid budget by main contributing countries and allocate earmarked percentage to capacity building for local NGOs through established regional body and national coordination forum?
5. Establish/strengthen regional humanitarian hub based in Nairobi Kenya to mentor/carry out on-job coaching of local NGOS, develop tools and capacity building modules, M&E system over a period of time following an agreed exit and handover plan.
6. Establish a quota on oil revenue to fund humanitarian operations and local capacity building following an operational guidelines to guarantee independence of local NGOs vis-à-vis government?

7. Strengthen the capacity of South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission with financial autonomy and establish a MoU of collaboration with South Sudan Indigenous NGO Coordination forum.