

REPORT



# A Study of Localisation Efforts In Lebanon and Jordan

Shuayb-Brun-Saab-Ishaqat, Maha, Cathrine, Cyrine, Diana  
(Equal Authorship)



# A Study of Localisation Efforts In Lebanon and Jordan

This study was funded by  
The European Regional Development and Protection  
Program for Jordan and Lebanon (RDPP III)

ISBN: 978-1-914521-15-7

[www.lebanesestudies.com](http://www.lebanesestudies.com)

## **Disclaimer**

*This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Regional Development and Protection Program (RDPP III) for Jordan and Lebanon which is supported by Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the European Union, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. The content of this document is the sole responsibility of the Centre for Lebanese Studies and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the RDPP or its donors.*

# List of content

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	<b>8</b>
1.1. Context and background	8
1.2. Study rationale	9
1.3. Research questions	10
1.4. Structure of report	10
<b>Chapter 2: Research Context</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1. Lebanon	11
2.2. Jordan	12
<b>Chapter 3: Research methodology</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1. Research methods	14
Phase 1	14
Phase 2	14
Phase 3	15
3.2. Data analysis	16
3.3. Ethical considerations	17
3.4. Limitations	17
<b>Chapter 4: Literature review and conceptual framework</b>	<b>18</b>
4.1. Understanding localisation	18
4.2. Localisation in practice	18
4.3. A three-pronged approach	19
<b>Chapter 5: Key Findings</b>	<b>21</b>
5.1. Understandings of Localisation	21
5.2. RDPP's Approach to Localisation in Practice	22
5.3 Capacity Strengthening	24
5.4. Participation in project design and implementation	27
5.5. Funding and sustainability	28
5.6. Accountability	29
5.7. Power relations and advocacy	31
5.8 Localisation Networks	34
<b>Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>55</b>

## List of Tables

Table 1. Recommendations from RDPP Phase II study	10
Table 2. Overview of data gathering process	16
Table 3. Macro, meso and micro level synthesis	38

# List of Vignettes

Case Studies Vignette 1: Two partnerships with RDPP that put localisation in practice	24
Case Studies Vignette 2: The value of sub-partnerships in Lebanon and Jordan	26
Case Studies Vignette 3: What facilitates and undermines networks	35

# List of Acronyms

CBO	Community Based Organisation
CLS	Centre for Lebanese Studies
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DMFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
INGO	International Non Governmental Organisation
JONAF	Jordan National NGO Forum
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
LHDF	Lebanese Humanitarian and Development NGOs Forum
LTF	Localisation Task Force (Lebanon)
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PMU	Programme Management Unit
RDPP	Regional Development and Protection Programme
UN	United Nations
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

# Executive Summary

This study examines the European Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP III) and its contribution to advancing localisation in Lebanon and Jordan. Guided by three research questions, the study explores how RDPP III improves outcomes for local actors, how structural barriers shape implementation, and how RDPP's model of direct partnership offers lessons for the wider humanitarian and development sector. Using a mixed-methods approach that included literature review, organisational case studies, interviews, focus group discussions, and validation workshops, the research provides an in-depth view of localisation at micro, meso, and macro levels.

The study found that RDPP is widely perceived as a progressive multi-donor civil society funding mechanism in the region, distinguished by its willingness to provide direct funding to local NGOs, allocate a significant proportion of budgets to capacity strengthening, and adopt a co-creation approach in project design. These practices were valued by partners who highlighted that they enabled greater ownership, organisational learning, and responsiveness to community needs. RDPP's long-term, multi-year funding was also noted as a rare source of stability in a volatile aid landscape, offering local actors opportunities to invest in governance systems, retain skilled staff, and expand their own networks. However, while RDPP's model demonstrates promising practices, it also remains embedded within a wider aid architecture that continues to limit the transformative potential of localisation. Funding cuts, short project cycles outside RDPP, and the dominance of compliance-driven capacity frameworks persistently undermine sustainability and reinforce dependency.

A key challenge, one that falls outside RDPP's remit, continues to undermine localisation efforts. By effectively delegating localisation to a single entity, the donor community has weakened its mainstreaming across the sector. As a result, RDPP's contributions, while valued, have had limited influence on reshaping broader development and humanitarian agenda-setting or implementation. Localisation has thus been treated as a discrete project rather than a shared objective for all development and humanitarian actors.

This dynamic was evident in the interviews, where donors consistently referred to RDPP as the primary focal point for localisation, rather than seeing it as a collective responsibility. With current funding cuts, local civil society actors expressed heightened concern that localisation is even more at risk: donors are likely to prioritise their own agendas and immediate priorities, and localisation does not feature prominently among them. In the current set up, localisation efforts are primarily restricted to RDPP.

More broadly, the findings show that localisation remains deeply ambiguous in both meaning and practice. Across interviews in Lebanon and Jordan, participants noted the absence of a widely accepted Arabic term for localisation, with some translations with several existing translations carrying linguistic, political, or technical limitations that limit their use. This lack of shared terminology reflects the fact that it's a global agenda that addresses the unequal power and funding between global north and south. The lack of conceptual clarity surrounding localisation also affects how it is communicated, interpreted, and operationalised in practice, therefore, leading to inconsistent

understandings among donors, NGOs, and local actors about what localisation entails and how it should be implemented.

Several barriers emerged as particularly significant within the broader aid system. Donor compliance and risk-aversion continue to frame local actors as weak or deficient, reducing capacity strengthening to a donor-centric exercise rather than a locally driven process. Short-term, project-based funding continues to restrict the ability of organisations to plan strategically or pursue advocacy. Accountability, too, remains narrowly defined as upward reporting to donors rather than downward accountability to affected communities. This dynamic has created a cycle of reporting that privileges quantifiable outputs while sidelining relational and ethical forms of accountability grounded in community needs and participation.

At the same time, the study identified important enablers of localisation. Local organisations and networks demonstrate deep embeddedness in their communities, offering cultural knowledge, trust, and long-term presence that international actors cannot replicate. RDPP's direct funding, flexible approaches, and commitment to building organisational strengthening have provided space for experimentation and partnership-building. There is also growing recognition, across both donor and local circles, that localisation must move beyond rhetoric to genuine power-sharing if the aid system is to remain legitimate and effective in contexts of prolonged displacement and shrinking global aid budgets.

As for localisation networks, platforms such as the Lebanese Humanitarian and Development NGOs Forum (LHDF) and the Jordan National NGO Forum (JONAF) provide valuable entry points into coordination spaces and help amplify the voices of smaller organisations. In Lebanon, networks have played a significant role in raising the country's profile within regional localisation debates, while in Jordan they represent important, if still evolving, spaces for collective organising. However, both remain underfunded, reliant on voluntary contributions, and vulnerable to internal power imbalances. Their ability to move beyond information-sharing into systematic advocacy and policy influence is therefore limited, even though they remain indispensable for collective action.

The report concludes that localisation in Lebanon and Jordan needs to move from technical adjustment to a fundamentally political process. It requires revisiting the structures that shape aid, funding flows, compliance mechanisms, partnership models, and accountability frameworks and deliberately shifting them to strengthen local actors as co-leaders rather than subcontractors. RDPP's practices provide important examples of how donors can support this shift, but broader systemic change is still required. A genuine commitment from donors to mainstream localisation across their work is essential for moving beyond a non-performative, rhetorical approach. This requires donors to fundamentally rethink how agendas are set; to adopt flexible, multi-year funding models; and for INGOs to reconfigure partnerships into **co-leadership structures** rather than hierarchical arrangements. It also calls for local actors to strengthen their collective advocacy and networks, enabling them to negotiate from a position of greater influence.

Importantly, capacity strengthening cannot be viewed as a one-way process directed at Global South organisations. Actors in the Global North also require capacity building,

particularly in dismantling entrenched bureaucratic practices and power imbalances that continue to undermine meaningful localisation.

The study suggests that RDPP is well placed to use its convening power more strategically to revisit and rethink localisation. One critical recommendation for this report is for RDPP not to limit its role just to civil society in the GS but to push for critical thinking and reflective practice amongst donors as to how they are approaching and addressing localization. This requires RDPP to revisit its framework for assessing the impact of its work which needs to move beyond capacity strengthening of local civil society to encompass wider indicators related to power structures, power sharing and policy advocacy whether locally, regionally and globally.

Advancing and supporting local networks can be an important catalyst for advancing localisation. Providing sustained resources for advocacy and coordination, and creating structured spaces where local actors engage directly with donors and governments locally, regionally and globally is essential. It can also promote co-prime models of partnership that ensure shared agenda-setting between international and local actors, and support accountability frameworks that balance donor compliance with community responsiveness.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1. Context and background

The past two decades has witnessed a dramatic transformation in humanitarian needs, with crises growing increasingly protracted, complex, and underfunded. Since 2010, global humanitarian requirements have expanded sixfold, while available funding has consistently lagged, creating dangerous gaps in protection and assistance for millions of displaced and vulnerable people. During this period, humanitarian aid has become a higher immediate priority for many donors, often at the expense of longer-term development support. 2024 was the first year in six years that saw a decline in international aid (OECD, 2025). The pressures for funding have become more visible in recent years as funding cuts exposed the fragility of the system, revealing its dependence on volatile financial flows and its limited capacity to deliver equitable, sustained responses. In this context, commitments such as the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) and the Grand Bargain emphasised localisation as a pathway to improving efficiency, sustainability, and accountability in aid delivery and at the same time attempting to foster closer collaboration between humanitarian and development assistance. Despite the multiple initiatives and a renewed commitment to localisation that emerged from the Humanitarian Summit, in practice, localisation continues to operate within structural contradictions that limit its transformative potential. While over 70% of the world's refugees reside in global south countries, the humanitarian system remains overwhelmingly shaped and controlled by global north actors (McGrath et al., 2025). This imbalance marginalises their roles in decision making and constrains their influence over broader systemic change.

Recent funding cuts and intensifying competition for limited resources have only exacerbated these dynamics, further restricting the ability of local organisations to sustain operations, engage in advocacy, or pursue long-term strategies. These pressures have fuelled growing demands to move beyond tokenistic partnerships toward genuine power sharing with affected populations and local actors through stronger localisation efforts. It is within these wider humanitarian dynamics that the European Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP) in Lebanon and Jordan is positioned. RDPP is a joint European initiative supported by Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the European Union, Ireland, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Distinctively, RDPP seeks to place localisation at the centre of its programming not only as a humanitarian efficiency measure but as a developmental strategy. This study is designed as a learning study – using RDPP as a case to explore how localisation is being advanced in practice. Its purpose is to generate insights that can inform learning, reflection, and adaptation both for RDPP and for the wider humanitarian and development community. Building on previous experiences and the recommendations from the 2022 localisation study (Lassen et al., 2022), it examines how RDPP is progressing localisation within its programming, and how it can further support and engage with broader ongoing localisation processes

## 1.2. Study rationale

The RDPP in Lebanon and Jordan was established in 2014 to support civil society, host governments, donors, and other stakeholders in addressing the impact of protracted forced displacement from Syria, as well as the compounded challenges in neighbouring refugee-hosting countries. The programme is managed by Denmark on behalf of contributing donors, including Austria, the Czech Republic, the European Union, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. It is implemented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (DMFA), with responsibility decentralised to the Embassy of Denmark in Lebanon, which hosts a dedicated RDPP Programme Management Unit (PMU).

Now in its third phase, RDPP III (2023–2026), its overall objective is *‘vulnerable refugees and local communities in Lebanon and Jordan access rights and enjoy increased safety and enhanced self-reliance towards durable and sustainable solutions’*. Localisation has been identified as one of RDPP’s four strategic objectives. Building on the commitments of the Grand Bargain, this reflects a broader aim of enhancing the efficiency of assistance while ensuring that solutions are owned and led by local actors and institutions. One of the features that distinguishes RDPP from many other donor programmes is its direct partnership with local and national actors. Operating in Lebanon and Jordan – two middle-income countries that host large refugee populations – RDPP III represents a critical opportunity to assess whether localisation can move beyond rhetoric to meaningful practice, positioning the programme as a potential leader in locally driven aid.

RDPP III builds on lessons from its own earlier phases. The RDPP II Localisation Study (Lassen et al., 2022) highlighted RDPP’s distinctive localisation efforts. This includes its willingness to take on risk through participation with smaller NGOs, the use of co-creation and negotiation to establish trust with partners, and its unique approach to capacity development, which prioritised organisational vision rather than narrow compliance. At the same time, the RDPP II Localisation Study recommended that RDPP III needs to develop a clearer and institutionalised understanding of localisation with measurable indicators, explore the possibility of longer-term strategic partnerships, expand engagement to a more diverse ecosystem of actors – including refugee-led organisations – and invest more in cross-learning, reflection, and capacity exchange.

Against this backdrop, and given RDPP III’s explicit commitment to localisation, this study is important for examining how RDPP has sought to advance the localisation agenda over time – building on the findings and recommendations of the RDPP II localisation study as demonstrated in Table 1 (Lassen et al., 2022), and following up on progress and practices in its third phase. It seeks to identify good practices that can be maintained and replicated, while also highlighting areas where further efforts are needed to promote a more effective, sustainable, and transferable approach to localisation. In doing so, the study can inform RDPP’s future practices to maximise impact in upcoming partnerships and to draw broader lessons for the humanitarian and development sector on how best to advance genuine localisation.

**Table 1. Recommendations from RDPP Phase II study**

No.	How RDPP Phase III can be improved:
1.	Concretise a common, institutionalised understanding and approach to localisation with national partners. Develop concrete localisation-related targets and indicators, in dialogue with local and national partners, to be included in the results framework of the programme to measure progress.
2.	Scale up the co-creation process to include more partners but consider shortening the duration to leave more time for implementation.
3.	Explore the potential to engage in longer-term, strategic partnerships with local and national partners, which may continue beyond the project funding cycle.
4.	Apply an 'ecosystem approach' by engaging a diverse range of local and national partners inter alia including the private sector and/or refugee-led organisations and coalitions. In the same vein, invest more time and resources in supporting linkages between partners, strengthening opportunities for cross-learning, reflection, and capacity exchange.
5.	Allocate funding toward capacity development support for RDPP's national partners' local NGO and community-based partners and promote more equitable partnerships between local and national actors.

### 1.3. Research questions

This study explores RDPP III's approach to localisation and its potential role in supporting broader efforts to advance localisation. The insights generated are intended to inform learning and adaptation for RDPP and the wider humanitarian and development community. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does RDPP III's localisation programmes improve outcomes for local actors?
2. How do barriers faced by local organisations – including power imbalances with international actors, restrictive funding models, bureaucratic hurdles, and political constraints – shape the implementation of RDPP III's localisation programme?
3. How does RDPP III's model of direct partnership with local organisations address these challenges and offer lessons for broader humanitarian and development practice?

### 1.4. Structure of report

Chapter 2 begins by setting out the research contexts in Lebanon and Jordan. Chapter 3 explains the research methodology, which draws on interviews and focus group discussions with a diverse range of stakeholders. Chapter 4 presents a brief review of the key debates on localisation and sets out the three-pronged conceptual framework that underpins this study. Chapter 5 presents the study findings organised to address key objectives and research questions. Chapter 6 offers actionable recommendations for RDPP to inform policy and practice across different stakeholders, with the aim of strengthening localisation and improving outcomes for local actors.

# Chapter 2: Research Context

Lebanon and Jordan have been among the largest recipients of Syrian refugees since 2011. The Syrian conflict was pivotal in both contexts: it magnified international aid dependence, expanded the role of NGOs, and entrenched international dominance in humanitarian governance. In 2016, agreements (compacts) between Jordan and Lebanon and their donor states and international institutions were formulated aiming to link humanitarian and development aid, institutionalising this dynamic by reframing displacement as a development challenge and attracting billions in grants and concessional loans (Tsourapas, 2019). Yet despite this apparent shift to development, in both countries the aid architecture continues to be approached primarily through a humanitarian lens, shaped by the conflicting agendas of different stakeholders.

In Lebanon, the state's largely hands off role in responding to displacement has enabled the emergence of a pluralist yet fragmented civil society landscape, marked by the proliferation of NGOs and the NGO-isation of aid (Shuayb et al., 2024). Jordan, by contrast, operates under a highly centralised governance model, where aid is channelled primarily through state-led initiatives, leaving limited space for independent civic actors. In both contexts, local actors – whether independent or state driven – are contracted to deliver donor agendas but remain excluded from meaningful agenda setting, power redistribution, or structural reforms. In this sense, despite donor rhetoric about a shift of aid to development, this shift has remained narrow – often reduced to financing instruments and resilience frameworks that ultimately prioritise containment – while neglecting broader questions of rights, welfare, and national development planning that would enable an environment for genuine localisation (Bank & Fröhlich, 2021).

## 2.1. Lebanon

Lebanon has historically maintained one of the most vibrant civil society landscapes in the region, offering relatively more space for mobilisation than many neighbouring Arab states. Since the 1970s, Lebanese CSOs – including unions, professional associations, and advocacy organisations – have played visible roles in social mobilisation. However, their role has shifted over time. After the Lebanese civil war (1975–1990), amid growing donor involvement, increasing political polarisation, and entrenched sectarianism, CSOs gradually moved away from politically active social movements towards roles centred on service provision (Shuayb et al., 2024).

This trend was exacerbated following the Syrian displacement and the arrival of more than 1.5 million refugees since 2011 – the highest number per capita worldwide (UNHCR, 2024). Lebanon, which is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, adopted a fragmented and ad hoc approach to refugee governance. The influx placed severe strain on already fragile education, health, and labour systems. International humanitarian actors channeled unprecedented aid flows into Lebanon, primarily through the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan (LCRP), largely with the aim of containing refugees within the region. The Lebanese state, in turn, bargained to secure increasing funds while offering limited commitment to refugees' rights (Tsourapas, 2019).

The scale of emergency needs made CSOs more numerous and visible during the Syrian response, but aid flows were largely managed through UN-led coordination mechanisms and international NGOs, often sidelining national and local organisations. These dynamics reinforced donor dependency and accelerated the NGO-isation of aid, pushing many CSOs into implementing externally funded projects rather than advocating for systemic reform (Shuayb et al., 2024). As a result, their influence has been uneven: success is measured more by service delivery and donor partnerships than by their ability to shape state policy or structural reform.

Today, this context is shifting again. Aid flows are declining, reflecting wider global cuts and donor fatigue, which has exposed the fragility of a system built on short-term humanitarian funding (UNHCR, 2024). Amid international dominance, domestic fragmentation, and the added pressure of reduced funding, to what extent can localisation in Lebanon evolve beyond these structural constraints to enable more meaningful and sustainable power-sharing with local actors?

## 2.2. Jordan

Jordan represents a contrasting case. Since independence in 1946, it has been ruled by a centralised political system with strong executive authority. Civil society operates in a closely regulated environment where NGO registration and political activity are subject to stringent legal and administrative frameworks. Many of the visible organisations are Royal NGOs or initiatives affiliated with the Hashemite monarchy, which play a leading role in service provision (Shuayb et al., 2024). Independent CSOs operate within tight regulatory frameworks and may encounter administrative challenges such as delays in registration or increased oversight. Professional associations and syndicates have also experienced periods of heightened state monitoring, which can shape the scope and nature of autonomous collective action. Despite these restrictions, Jordan plays a critical regional role as a refugee host. According to UNHCR (2024), it currently hosts around 650,000 registered Syrian refugees – with government estimates exceeding 1.3 million (ACAPS, 2025), in addition to long standing Palestinian refugee populations dating back to 1948 and 1967. Like Lebanon, Jordan is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol. Unlike Lebanon, however, it permitted the establishment of formal Syrian refugee camps – most notably Za’atari and Azraq – while also managing large numbers of refugees in urban areas, primarily in the capital Amman.

in Jordan, aid is highly centralised. Through the 2016 Jordan Compact the state came to manage a bulk of external assistance, which consolidates donor funding under state leadership (El-Abed et al., 2023). This has allowed Jordan to bargain effectively with the international community, presenting itself as a frontline refugee host in need of sustained financial support. In exchange for concessional loans, grants, and trade concessions, the government pledged to expand Syrians’ access to work permits and services (Tsourapas, 2019). Yet these commitments were unevenly implemented, with rights protections remaining limited, and many refugees confined to precarious forms of labour.

This dynamic reflects a dual logic of containment and negotiated cooperation. As

documented by Tsourapas (2019), donors have prioritised stability and the containment of refugee movements within Jordan's borders, while the state leveraged its hosting role for financial and political support. Amid broader governance and aid management arrangements, to what extent do current localisation efforts in Jordan genuinely expand the space for grassroots actors, rather than being primarily channelled through state-led and centrally coordinated structures? As in Lebanon, local NGOs and community actors are contracted to deliver donor agendas, but they remain excluded from meaningful agenda-setting, power redistribution, or systemic reform. These constraints have become more acute in the context of declining aid flows and donor fatigue, which have exposed the fragility of a system built on external funding and left many organisations struggling with shrinking budgets, growing competition, and limited scope for long-term planning.

# Chapter 3: Research methodology

## 3.1. Research methods

The methods of this study comprised three phases, combining semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), case studies, and validation workshops to provide breadth and depth in examining how RDPP III contributes to advancing localisation in Lebanon and Jordan. Table 1 provides an overview of the data gathering process.

### Phase 1

The first phase centred on interviews. In total, thirty-seven interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders, including nine donor representatives (four in Lebanon and five in Jordan), seventeen representatives from RDPP partners (nine in Lebanon and eight in Jordan), and eleven representatives from non-partner organisations, such as ministries and localisation networks (four in Lebanon and seven in Jordan).

These interviewees were identified from a longlist of stakeholders provided by RDPP and selected according to predefined sampling criteria developed in consultation with Centre for Lebanese Studies (CLS). The criteria aimed to ensure balanced representation across both country contexts and included RDPP partners, subpartners, donor representatives on the steering committee, as well as non-partners such as government officials, coalitions, and other actors involved in localisation processes. While RDPP provided the initial list, the interviews were carried out independently by the research team to safeguard the independence objectivity of the process.

To conduct these interviews, we built on recommendations from the localisation study under RDPP II and designed the questions to explore several interrelated areas. The questions examined the meanings and practices of localisation, the complexities of implementation, and the effectiveness of coordination structures and partnerships, including the power relations embedded within them. They also investigated context-specific barriers to localisation, such as competence gaps and organisational support needs in financing, accountability, and compliance. In addition, the interviews focused on the effectiveness of RDPP's own practices, particularly in relation to partner selection, project design, negotiation, monitoring, and management, and on how RDPP support has benefited partners and beneficiaries compared to other funding streams. The interview questions were designed to uncover lessons, highlight areas for improvement, and reveal new possibilities for advocacy and policy dialogue.

### Phase 2

The second phase comprised in-depth case studies designed to provide a closer understanding of how localisation unfolds in specific partnerships and networks. Four case studies were conducted – two in Lebanon and two in Jordan. These were selected in consultation with RDPP to prioritise local NGOs and networks that play a strategic role in advancing localisation, including those engaged as sub-partners in RDPP-funded initiatives, coalition leaders, and active members of localisation networks.

**Partnership case studies.** The first set of case studies focused on local NGO partnerships in Lebanon and Jordan. Each case study included an interview with a representative of the lead organisation and a focus group discussion (FGD) with up to five sub-partner organisations. This provided evidence of how RDPP-supported initiatives contributed to more equitable partnerships, strengthened local leadership, and shaped coordination structures.

The two lead organisations selected for the partnership case studies were long-standing national NGOs with extensive experience in community-based protection and education programming. Both have been active for over a decade and have played a strategic role in advancing locally led responses. Each worked through networks of smaller community-based organisations (CBOs) operating in vulnerable urban and refugee-hosting areas. These sub-partners included youth-focused and women-led CBOs with strong community ties, many of which have been active since the early 2000s. Their roles centred on outreach, service delivery, and trust-building with marginalised groups, while the lead NGOs provided technical support, coordination, and access to funding. This layered structure reflects how localisation is often operationalised through partnerships that combine organisational capacity with deep community embeddedness.

**Network case studies.** The second set examined localisation networks in Lebanon and Jordan. Both countries have two key platforms: in Lebanon, the Lebanese Humanitarian & Development NGOs Forum (LHDF, established 2016) and the Localisation Task Force (Lebanon) (LTF, established 2019); in Jordan, the Jordan National NGOs Forum (JONAF, established 2018) and the Localisation Task Team (Jordan) (established 2019). These networks bring together national NGOs to coordinate advocacy, engage in humanitarian and development planning, and influence localisation agendas.

In Jordan, the network case study included an interview with network representatives and an FGD with two well-established national civil society organisations that have been active since the early 2000s in areas such as youth empowerment, livelihoods, and community development. In Lebanon, an FGD could not be conducted due to limited availability during the summer season. Instead, relevant insights were generated through a validation workshop which included a leading member of the localisation network in Lebanon and a representative of a local RDPP-partner NGO, which also participated in the partnership case study.

### **Phase 3**

The final phase of data gathering involved validation activities aimed at enriching and verifying the study's findings. This included interviews with members of RDPP who are directly involved in the localisation programme, to capture their perspectives on the opportunities and challenges of advancing localisation through partnerships and networks. In addition, two validation workshops were held in October 2025, one in Lebanon and one in Jordan, bringing together local organisations and network representatives. These workshops presented the study's preliminary findings, including insights from the case studies, and facilitated structured discussions to identify key strategies for strengthening localisation networks and advancing localisation within the aid architecture.

**Table 2. Overview of data gathering process**

Phase	Method	Stakeholders	Sample	Breakdown by country	
				Lebanon	Jordan
Phase 1	37 Interviews	Partner representatives	17 interviews	9	8
		Non-partner representatives	11 interviews	4	7
		Donors' representatives	9 interviews	4	5
Phase 2	4 Case Studies	Partners	2 interviews	1	1
		Sub-partners	2 FGDs	1	1
		Network representatives	2 interviews	1	1
		Network members	1 FGD	1	n/a
Phase 3	Workshops	RDPP representatives	1 FGD	1	1
		Validation Workshops	2 FGDs	1	1

### 3.2. Data analysis

The qualitative data analysis followed a systematic, thematic approach. All interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed verbatim and carefully reviewed to ensure familiarity with the material. Initial coding was conducted by identifying meaningful units of text and assigning descriptive labels. These codes were then grouped into broader categories through a process of thematic coding aligned with the study's research questions.

The research team developed a coding framework that combines predefined categories based on the study objectives with inductive codes emerging from the data. This framework guided the organisation and analysis of transcripts, case study materials, and workshop discussions. A thematic analysis approach was applied to identify recurring patterns, similarities, and differences across data sources, while also attending to contradictions and silences.

To ensure rigour, the team maintained a transparent record of coding decisions and engaged in regular discussions to review and refine emerging themes. This process enabled the synthesis of rich insights from multiple sources and supported the development of findings that are grounded in participants' perspectives and contextual realities.

### **3.3. Ethical considerations**

We secured ethical clearance from the Centre for Lebanese Studies (CLS) through its internal review process. As part of this process, the proposal was reviewed and shared with experts in research ethics. All interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with the informed consent of participants, who were briefed in advance about the objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. No identifying information was included in transcripts or reporting. Transcripts and notes were securely stored, with access restricted to the core research team. Particular attention was paid to the power dynamics that can shape interactions in the field. For example, when interviews were facilitated through RDPP's networks, participants were reassured of the independence of the research and reminded that their responses would remain confidential and unattributed. These measures aimed to mitigate any risk of respondents feeling constrained or pressured to align with donor or institutional expectations.

### **3.4. Limitations**

There are a number of limitations to this study. The first relates to its scope. At the country level, the analysis focuses only on RDPP's current phase in Lebanon and Jordan. While the research sought to include a broad range of stakeholders, further studies in additional contexts would be valuable to broaden perspectives and enable comparative insights. Within both Lebanon and Jordan, the majority of RDPP's partner organisations and broader networks are based in the capitals, Beirut and Amman. Although many of these organisations run programmes outside the capitals and employ staff from other regions, this concentration meant that perspectives from governorates beyond Beirut and Amman were less directly represented among participants.

A second limitation concerns the research dynamics. Most interviews were conducted online rather than in person, which may have reduced the depth of interaction, the ability to observe non-verbal cues, and the richness of contextual insights. In addition, questions and reports were primarily designed in English. Although some interviews were conducted in Arabic – particularly with smaller NGOs – the reliance on English as the dominant working language among most participants may have constrained the nuances and depth of responses, as certain perspectives could likely have been expressed more fully in the native language.

The final limitation concerns access. The study was conducted within a four-month timeframe, during which several public and summer holidays limited the availability of some potential participants. As a result, although the research team made considerable efforts to capture diverse perspectives across local NGOs, INGOs, donors, and government representatives, not all stakeholders could be reached, and some viewpoints may therefore be underrepresented.

# Chapter 4: Literature review and conceptual framework

This chapter reviews the key debates in the literature on how localisation is understood and practiced and accordingly outlines the conceptual framework underpinning this study.

## 4.1. Understanding localisation

The localisation agenda gained global prominence at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in Istanbul, articulated in the Grand Bargain agreement between donors and aid agencies. The Grand Bargain sought to close the humanitarian financing gap by streamlining funding, reducing transaction costs, and directing at least 25% of international humanitarian funding ‘as directly as possible’ to local and national actors (OCHA, 2021). This marked a significant rhetorical shift: from viewing local actors as auxiliary implementers to positioning them as central agents of humanitarian action.

In this sense, localisation came to be understood as shifting power, resources, and decision-making closer to communities directly affected by crises. It emphasises the comparative advantages of local actors – cultural knowledge, proximity, legitimacy, and sustainability – while challenging the dominance of international NGOs and UN agencies (Barnett, 2011; Hilhorst & Jansen, 2010). Yet a core dilemma runs through such understandings. Arguably, localisation remains largely conceived within the humanitarian sector, tied to efficiency and proximity in crisis response. By contrast, within a developmental agenda – such as that of the RDPP – localisation comes to be seen as an effort of shifting power to local actors through longer-term capacity-strengthening, socio-economic inclusion, and structural reform. This mismatch between humanitarian frameworks and developmental ambitions represents a central challenge for localisation practices in Lebanon and Jordan.

## 4.2. Localisation in practice

Amid these overlapping logics, several studies highlight tensions in how localisation is actually practiced. While authority and resources should rest with local actors for both efficiency and sustainability, in practice international organisations continue to hold disproportionate control. This persistence is sustained by two interrelated dynamics that feed into one another.

The first is a containment logic that aligns humanitarian governance with the interests of the international community. Localisation has frequently been mobilised not to empower local systems, but to shift responsibility for hosting displaced populations onto national and community actors, with the implicit aim of keeping refugees closer to their countries of origin (Mbah et al., n.d.; Wilkinson et al., 2022). In this sense, the international community retains power, framing localisation as a means of stability,

mobility management, and cost-efficiency – while limiting its transformative potential.

Feeding this containment logic is a pervasive lack of trust toward local actors. Local organisations are often portrayed as politicised, technically weak, or financially risky, reinforcing donor concerns about accountability and compliance (Wilkinson et al., 2022). Yet evidence from diverse contexts shows that this distrust is often misplaced. Community-based organisations, faith networks, and refugee-led groups have long been central to crisis response (Apollo & Mbah, 2022; Wilkinson et al., 2022). However, they are legitimised only insofar as they conform to donor agendas and criteria, while their potential roles as political actors, knowledge producers, and agenda-setters remain sidelined. This lack of trust justifies keeping decision-making power in the hands of international NGOs and UN agencies, with local organisations compelled to bridge the gap through compliance-driven capacity-strengthening and alignment with donor standards.

These perceptions (Apollo & Mbah, 2022; Brumat et al., 2021; Wilkinson et al., 2022) reproduce dependency and reinforce containment, positioning local actors as subcontractors rather than autonomous agents – valued for their lower costs and proximity rather than achieving a genuine transformation of power relations between international and local actors (Robillard et al., 2020). This dilemma has become even more urgent in the context of recent funding cuts, which have exposed the fragility of a system built on short-term humanitarian financing. At the same time, intensifying competition for scarce resources further constrains the ability of local actors to pursue advocacy, institution-building, or long-term strategies.

Against these contradictions, a pressing question emerges: should localisation efforts centre on assimilating local actors within the existing humanitarian logic – with its emphasis on efficiency and service delivery – or push for a more radical transformation toward a developmental understanding rooted in rights, inclusion, and structural reform?

### 4.3. A three-pronged approach

Given these complex layers in which the RDPP localisation programme, alongside other initiatives, is situated, we adopt a three-pronged analytical framework:

- **Macro Level** – Strategic Analysis: Examines structural power at the global level, including donor priorities, multilateral frameworks, and humanitarian governance structures. The analysis considers how RDPP and other actors seek to enable local leadership in policymaking and programme design, while identifying persistent barriers to shifting power.
- **Meso Level** – Programmatic Analysis: Focuses on the translation of global and national policies into operational frameworks at the country level. This includes assessing RDPP's strategies to foster local ownership, strengthen organisational capacity, and promote equitable partnerships within coordination structures in Lebanon and Jordan.
- **Micro Level** – Implementation Analysis: Investigates how localisation unfolds

at the community level, where local actors negotiate constraints imposed by higher tiers of governance. The analysis explores whether refugee and host communities are genuinely leading projects or merely implementing donor priorities, and whether localisation shifts power in practice or simply rebrands top-down aid.

Through this framework, the study captures how stakeholders engaged in RDPP programmes perceive and experience localisation, and how they envision its future. The findings will highlight existing practices, emerging opportunities, persistent barriers, and aspirational goals. Ultimately, the study aims to articulate a strategic vision for localisation in Jordan and Lebanon, offering actionable recommendations for how RDPP can strengthen its strategies, foster local leadership, and ensure meaningful participation across the humanitarian-development nexus.

# Chapter 5: Key Findings

This chapter presents the main findings of the study, drawn primarily from interviews and organised thematically. It begins by examining how localisation is understood by different stakeholders in Lebanon and Jordan, before turning to how RDPP III has put localisation into practice. While RDPP's own framework for localisation highlights four key areas, capacity strengthening, partnership principles, fundraising, and coordination (RDPP Localisation Study, 2022), interviews revealed a broader and more layered understanding of how localisation is operationalised within RDPP's programming.

The analysis therefore looks beyond the formal framework to explore several dimensions of RDPP's approach. It examines capacity strengthening, both through direct investment in organisational systems and indirectly through the fostering of sub-partnerships at the community level. It considers the extent to which its partners engage in sub-granting, and the participation of local actors in project design and implementation. Issues of funding and sustainability, including efforts to strengthen national institutions, approaches to accountability are also addressed as well as RDPP's role in advocacy. Finally, the chapter analyses RDPP's added value to enhance and support coordination of localisation efforts.

Across these themes, the chapter highlights both the enabling practices and the persistent challenges of RDPP III's localisation approach, while situating them within the wider dynamics of the aid system.

## 5.1. Understandings of Localisation

Across Lebanon and Jordan, interviewees repeatedly stressed that there is no widely accepted Arabic equivalent for the term *localisation*. The concept is seen as externally imported, with little grounding in local traditions, practices, or vocabulary. As a result, interpretations diverge widely and, at times, take on negative connotations, raising doubts about how localisation is understood and operationalised in local contexts.

One of the most problematic translations was *tawṭīn* (توطين 'nationalisation'), which is politically charged. In Lebanon, it evokes fears of permanently resettling Palestinian refugees, concerns that have since extended to the Syrian refugees, who are often perceived as destabilising the country's fragile sectarian balance. In Jordan, it recalls historical disputes around Palestinian citizenship and the unresolved status of Syrian refugees. In both contexts, *tawṭīn* frames localisation as an imposed and threatening agenda – undermining its intended goal of empowering local actors.

To counter this, civil society actors have experimented with other terms. In Jordan, expressions such as *al-mahalliyya* (المحلية 'locality'), *tamkīn al-mahalli* (تمكين المحلي 'local empowerment'), and *ta'zīz al-'amal al-mahalli* (تعزيز العمل المحلي 'strengthening local action') are in circulation, though none has achieved consensus. Participants admitted that while they often practice elements of localisation, they struggle to define it clearly, reflecting both conceptual ambiguity and weak institutionalisation. In Lebanon, NGO networks and coordination platforms have attempted to draft definitions, indicators,

and tools. Suggested formulations such as *ta'zīz al-tabīi al-mahallī lil-amal al-insānī* (تعزيز الطابع المحلي للعمل الإنساني) 'enhancing the local character of humanitarian action' were viewed as more accurate. Yet several interviewees noted that these discursive gains have not translated into structural change.

The debates over terminology mirror deeper tensions around power and ownership. For some government officials, localisation should mean strengthening national public services so they can sustainably serve communities beyond the lifespan of international projects. As one Jordanian official argued: 'Every time a new crisis comes, international actors create new organisations instead of building up existing ones. That weakens local efforts rather than supporting them. Real localisation would treat organisations like ours not as short-term implementers of activities, but as long-term providers of essential services. One Lebanese government official was more critical of international agendas, warning: 'There is a risk that international agencies, and, in turn, we ourselves – overestimate the contribution of international aid. Isn't it the case that these large-scale funds are what keep refugees here, ultimately protecting European agendas?'

Despite these tensions, actors across both countries converged on three priorities for localisation: (1) securing long-term partnerships and funding to ensure organisational sustainability; (2) rebalancing power so that local actors shape priorities alongside donors and governments; and (3) recognising and valuing local knowledge as central to humanitarian and development responses. Yet questions of feasibility persist. Many doubted whether the current international aid system is still dominated by external priorities; short term projects, and donor driven compliance can genuinely enable these shifts.

The absence of a coherent Arabic term for localisation is not simply a linguistic gap but a reflection of unresolved power dynamics in the aid system. While stakeholders broadly agree on localisation's aims such as sustainable funding, power sharing, and recognition of local knowledge, international practices often weaken rather than strengthen local institutions. Without deliberate, long-term strategies to anchor localisation in local contexts, the agenda risks being reduced to donor driven rhetoric, detached from the histories and capacities of national and community actors.

These issues mirror those identified in the 2022 RDPP II Localisation study, underscoring how terminology and power dynamics remain unresolved obstacles to advancing localisation in both Lebanon and Jordan (see Lassen et al., 2022). This persistence highlights the need for more deliberate, long-term strategies to address these foundational issues rather than treating them as secondary concerns.

## **5.2. RDPP's Approach to Localisation in Practice**

Based on interviews and programme documents, this section describes the RDPP approach to localisation. Interviewed organisations across Lebanon and Jordan consistently described RDPP as one of the most progressive donors on localisation. They highlighted that its strategy, which is centred on capacity development, flexible funding, and long-term partnerships, stood out in comparison to other donors in the region. Partners particularly valued the way RDPP placed them in the driver's seat of programme design and organisational growth, rather than imposing externally designed frameworks.

**Capacity strengthening** is one of the key RDPP strategies for supporting localisation efforts. Up to 20% of funds were dedicated to organisational development with an emphasis of demand driven and tailored approaches to individual organisations' needs. We return to a deeper description of this approach in section 5.3

RDPP was seen as distinctive in its support for **ownership in policy development**. Instead of requiring partners to adopt pre-set donor templates, organisations were encouraged to draft their own internal policies. This was perceived as empowering and sustainable, as the resulting policies were tailored to organisational needs and meaningful in practice. As one partner explained, the process moved them away from 'box-ticking exercises' towards genuine ownership, increasing buy-in and ensuring policies had lasting value.

Stakeholders also underscored RDPP's **flexibility and responsiveness**. In Lebanon, interviewees highlighted the importance of regular field visits and a consistent in-country presence, which fostered trust and enabled rapid adaptation to emergencies. In Jordan, while the same level of field presence was less evident, stakeholders still praised RDPP staff as supportive and accessible. Across both contexts, RDPP was regarded as a rare source of stability within a volatile aid landscape, with long-term funding enabling partners to sustain programmes, strengthen organisational capacity, and plan beyond short-term project cycles.

RDPP's growing commitment to **direct funding to NGOs** was also highlighted by interviewees including the provision of 7% overheads. This shift, which followed recommendations from earlier Localisation Study of RDPP II, was described as a crucial enabler of organisational autonomy and sustainability, setting RDPP apart from donors who continue to route funds primarily through international intermediaries.

## Case Studies Vignette 1: Two partnerships with RDPP that put localisation in practice

The two case studies from Lebanon and Jordan showcase how RDPP's approach enabled national NGOs to both deliver projects and grow into stronger, more credible actors.

In Lebanon, the partner NGO, active since 2011 in youth empowerment and refugee-hosting areas – described its work with RDPP as a turning point. By co-designing projects and openly discussing priorities, the organisation was able to strengthen its governance and compliance systems while staying close to community needs. What made the difference, staff explained, was RDPP's trust: instead of treating them as 'high risk,' RDPP gave them the space and resources to prove their capacity. Over time, this credibility allowed the NGO to step up from a subcontractor role to a meso-level actor with a seat at broader strategic tables.

In Jordan, a long-established NGO highlighted how RDPP's long-term and flexible funding provided rare stability in a volatile aid environment. Unlike other donors who rely on short-term cycles or rigid templates, RDPP's model stabilised staffing, allowed adaptation to shifting contexts, and fostered institutional learning by practice rather than prescriptive training. For staff, this continuity was described as 'game changing,' enabling them to consolidate their expertise and credibility as a national actor.

In both contexts, the catalytic factor was RDPP's decision to dedicate up to 20 percent of funds to capacity strengthening. Partners emphasised that this was not a compliance exercise but an opportunity to design their own systems and policies, investments that stayed with them beyond the project. This flexibility helped to build trust, ownership, and confidence while still making their work legible to other donors.

Together, the two partnerships show what localisation can look like when it is built on trust, co-creation, and sustained investment: stronger organisations, greater credibility, and a clearer pathway for local NGOs to move from the margins of aid delivery to recognised national leadership.

### 5.3 Capacity Strengthening

The principle of earmarking up to 20% of capacity strengthening for organisational development and due diligence, was seen as the most valued and distinctive contributions of RDPP III. The approach was a clear evolution from RDPP II and a distinct approach from the sector more generally. A Jordanian interviewee noted: *'It's tiresome, honestly... most local organisations have received capacity building from multiple international actors on the same topics. Ideally, it should be the local entity determining what is actually needed, and sometimes it's not training, but financial flexibility to grow independently.'*

RDPP's emphasis on capacity strengthening has moved away from standardised and donor-driven capacity building programmes. Local actors emphasised RDPP's flexibility and their welcoming of demand-led priorities such as advocacy, resource mobilisation, governance, and peer learning.

Whereas localisation in the earlier phases of RDPP was framed primarily through engagement principles, RDPP III positioned localisation as a cross-cutting theme integrated into livelihoods, protection, and advocacy interventions. The shift recognises that local community actors have long practiced localisation, as one interviewee suggested: *'Local NGOs have long been engaged in localisation, well before the Grand Bargain. They are knowledgeable and capable; we need to move beyond this deficiency lens.'*

The capacity strengthening model was highly appreciated by smaller NGOs that often struggle to cover such costs. Interviewees emphasised that RDPP's funding model and reporting mechanisms directly contributed to developing staff skills, enhancing organisational workflow, and increasing efficiency. The capacity strengthening shaped internal workflows, organisational culture and staff confidence as well as external engagement which had positively influenced how RDPP-partners engage more proactively with other donors.

Taken together, the findings underscore that RDPP's model represents an important step forward in making capacity strengthening more flexible, locally defined, and structurally meaningful. Partners valued RDPP's willingness to fund higher-risk organisations and create space for experimentation. Yet they were equally clear that capacity strengthening alone is not sufficient to shift power. Unless it is linked to advocacy skills, access to decision-making spaces, and opportunities to influence policy and donor agendas, improved systems will remain confined to project delivery rather than structural transformation.

A distinctive feature of RDPP's capacity-strengthening approach lies in its investment in sub-partnerships with community-based organisations as highlighted in Vignette II. Within sub-partnership, local NGOs operate at the meso level, or intermediary actors that extend resources, mentorship, and decision-making power to smaller CBOs while also building their own institutional capacities. This model fosters joint planning, accountability, and mutual capacity strengthening between partners. Through these layered relationships, lead NGOs are supported to assess CBOs' capacity needs, develop tailored capacity-building plans, and provide ongoing mentoring to ensure implementation. In turn, CBOs gain greater institutional resilience and leadership in local coordination and service delivery. This approach fosters a more horizontal and locally rooted localisation process, allowing community actors to emerge as active counterparts, and embedding localisation within service delivery and community engagement. Still, partners cautioned that this institutional engagement remains uneven and requires further investment if it is to translate into sustained coordination and systemic impact. A critical missing element in most localisation agendas, including RDPP's, is capacity strengthening focused on equitable partnership practices, shared decision-making, and downward accountability among donors and international actors themselves. As long as capacity efforts focus exclusively on 'fixing' local NGOs to align with donor requirements, power asymmetries remain intact. What is required is a dual approach: building the resilience and leadership of local actors while simultaneously challenging donors' top-down practices, accountability mechanisms, and agenda-setting. Without this, capacity strengthening risks entrenching dependency rather than enabling transformation.

## Case Studies Vignette 2: The value of sub-partnerships in Lebanon and Jordan

The two case studies in Lebanon and Jordan highlighted how RDPP's localisation approach was extended through sub-partnerships, where national NGOs mentored and supported smaller community-based organisations (CBOs) to strengthen their institutional capacities. These arrangements gave grassroots actors greater visibility and voice, while anchoring RDPP's localisation agenda in community realities.

In Lebanon, a local NGO worked with a network of education and child protection CBOs. A focus group with five CBOs across different regions showed how sub-partnerships created opportunities for locally led responses in refugee-hosting and marginalised communities. The local NGO played a meso role, providing CBOs with support on organisational level. The plans dived deep into the institutional level of the selected CBOs, conducting capacity needs assessment for CBOs, identifying the areas of improvement, developing capacity building plans and providing mentoring to assure implementation of the agreed actions. The plans provided selected CBOs with tailored training in monitoring and evaluation, accounting, proposal writing, and IT systems. On the technical level, activities ranged from education and psychosocial support to community development and protection, with CBOs emphasising that their embeddedness allowed them to reach families and children often overlooked by larger NGOs.

In Jordan, sub-partnerships focused on protection and community development, particularly for children, youth, and women. Two CBOs engaged under RDPP III described how they contributed to preventing child labour and providing legal aid, while experimenting with community-led data collection and family case studies to shape interventions. For both organisations, the partnership model provided a platform to test locally driven approaches and build stronger ties with their constituencies.

In the validation workshop in Lebanon, participants also had some cautionary notes on the sub-partnerships. In particular, it was discussed to what extent the system of the sub-partnerships was in danger of replicating existing power relations in the aid system. Moving from INGOs to local NGOs as partners, is considered an important step for strengthening localisation processes. However, as local organisations took over the project responsibilities, CBOs as sub-partners were signed up in similar ways that local NGOs had done with INGOs earlier. Thus CBOs were socialised into the current aid system, adopting due diligence and accountability systems required for international funding. Consequently, there were concerns that this way of operating could contribute to losing the uniqueness and advantages of small CBOs. Similarly, some sub-partners interviewed emphasised that, although they appreciated the opportunities and expanded networks the funding made possible, they were not included in decision making.

**Evidence derived from the learning process of the RDPP model inform the following recommendations:**

- 1. Make capacity strengthening demand-led and long-term.** Support should reflect locally identified priorities, such as advocacy, governance, resource mobilisation, and long-term planning, rather than repetitive donor-driven workshops. Investments must be multi-year, flexible, and aimed at building resilience beyond project cycles.
- 2. Support institutional and systemic engagement.** Intensify capacity strengthening-efforts to municipalities, sub-national authorities, and national institutions. Sustained investment is needed to consolidate institutional learning and embed coordination mechanisms across levels.
- 3. Shift from one-directional to mutual learning.** Donors and INGOs must also build their own capacity to understand local contexts, decolonise aid practices, and co-create solutions. Capacity strengthening should be seen as a reciprocal process, not a deficiency model imposed on local actors.

## 5.4. Participation in project design and implementation

Across Lebanon and Jordan, local actors consistently described RDPP as significantly more participatory than other donors. Partners emphasised that projects were genuinely co-designed, with priorities openly discussed and adjusted as contexts shifted. As one local partner explained: *'What stood out to me in our first project with RDPP was co-creation. The funder wasn't just a name behind a screen – we built the programme together.'* Another described co-creation as *'a valuable learning experience'* and stressed that it should remain a core feature of future programming. In Lebanon, several participants similarly highlighted being consulted from the very start of projects and even included in discussions on the next iteration of RDPP, which they saw as evidence of genuine collaboration.

This contrasted sharply with their experiences with most other donors. While many donors employ the rhetoric of participation, local NGOs explained that design processes often remain top-down. One NGO representative gave the example of a sudden shift in donor emphasis towards child labour, imposed without consultation, which forced organisations to realign their programmes to meet external agendas rather than community needs. Such experiences underlined the disconnect between donor priorities and local realities, and the limited scope NGOs usually have to shape agendas.

Beyond the design phase, several partners emphasised that RDPP's support also extended into implementation, where regular check-ins, field visits, and open communication channels allowed them to adapt activities in real time as needs or contexts shifted. This was seen as particularly important in volatile settings, where programme relevance often depends on flexibility. A Lebanese partner described how mid-implementation adjustments were made to accommodate emerging community needs, something that would have been difficult to achieve with other donors. Similarly, partners in Jordan noted that RDPP's follow-up mechanisms enabled a more iterative approach, reinforcing their sense of ownership over both process and outcomes.

However, interviewees also pointed to structural limits that persisted beyond the design stage. While RDPP's participatory approach was valued, broader strategic decisions, such as funding priorities, thematic focus, and long-term frameworks, remained largely donor driven. Language barriers, limited access to high-level decision-making spaces, and the absence of structured roles for local actors in agenda setting meant that influence was strongest at the project level, not at the strategic one. From the donors' perspective, these limitations are often shaped by institutional constraints and accountability pressures, including compliance requirements and the need to demonstrate measurable results to taxpayers and funders. As a result, donors tend to retain control over strategic priorities, even when implementation processes are more participatory. This gap highlights a key challenge for localisation: participation in design and implementation does not automatically translate into strategic power or policy influence.

### **Strategic directions for action include:**

- 1. Institutionalise co-creation:** Ensure participatory design and implementation remain core features of RDPP, with local actors involved from project conception through delivery.
- 2. Expand influence beyond projects:** Move local actors from project-level consultation into strategic decision-making spaces at national, regional, and donor levels.
- 3. Prioritise flexibility:** Maintain iterative check-ins, field visits, and adaptable funding mechanisms to respond to shifting contexts and emerging needs.
- 4. Tackle structural barriers:** Address language gaps, create accessible entry points to high-level agenda-setting, and invest in advocacy capacities so local actors can shape wider aid frameworks.

## **5.5. Funding and sustainability**

RDPP's funding model stands out for providing multi-year support, allocating 7% for overheads in addition to up to 20% for capacity strengthening as discussed above. Local NGOs consistently credited these features for enabling them to build ownership and strengthen internal systems. As one interviewee noted, *'Short-term funding doesn't allow for ownership or meaningful engagement. Without time, there is no real space to avoid leaving people behind.'* This highlights a critical lesson: sustainability and transformative change are only possible through longer-term, flexible funding models that allow local actors to plan strategically and respond adaptively.

Yet funding cuts emerged as the most pressing concern across both countries. NGOs reported shrinking budgets, rising competition, and heightened donor restrictions. While this environment is deeply challenging, some organisations also framed it as an opportunity to rethink sustainability. Several expressed a desire to pursue income-generating activities as a pathway toward greater independence but also voiced scepticism that donors and INGOs would support such initiatives given their reliance on maintaining central roles in the aid ecosystem.

During the validation workshops in Lebanon and Jordan, participants highlighted that with lack of funding, donors will be less flexible in being responsive to the localisation agenda and will just focus on their own priority areas. Participants noted that since localisation is not institutionalised or embedded within the funding structures, it is most likely to be dropped from donors' agenda.

### **Strategic directions for action include:**

- 1. Longer-term funding horizon:** Donors should expand the provision of long-term, flexible, multi-phase funding, recognising that sustainability requires more than short project cycles.
- 2. Explore locally defined sustainability initiatives:** RDPP could pilot support for locally defined sustainability initiatives, such as training centres or social enterprises, which meet community needs while generating revenue. Supporting these models would signal trust in local organisations' ability to innovate beyond donor-driven projects.

- 3. Prepare for uncertainty:** donors must prepare for the volatility of the aid landscape in conflict-prone regions by building financial resilience into partnerships for example, through reserve funds, core funding, and more predictable disbursement schedules.

## 5.6. Accountability

Accountability remains one of the most contested and complex issues within debates on localisation. It sits at the intersection of competing expectations among donors, international actors, local organisations, governments, and affected communities. In current practice, accountability is too often reduced to financial compliance and performance reporting for donors, with limited attention to the lived impact of aid on local communities. Interviewees stressed that this narrow donor-centric framing sidelines communities and undermines the transformative potential of localisation. However, they consistently distinguished RDPP's approach from that of many other donors.

Local NGOs in both Lebanon and Jordan reported that they had developed strong accountability systems, including mechanisms to gather feedback from communities and sub-partners and to report transparently to donors. Many explained that RDPP's capacity-strengthening and relational approach helped them improve and formalise these practices, enabling NGOs to adopt higher standards and apply them with other donors. For some partners, RDPP's regular field presence, openness to dialogue, and follow-up mechanisms created more trust-based and relational accountability, which they felt was missing in their interactions with other donors.

At the same time, participants pointed to persistent power imbalances. Even with RDPP's more participatory approach, accountability remained heavily donor-facing, with limited structural mechanisms for communities to hold donors or international actors to account.

International donors, they noted, remain primarily accountable upward, to their governments and taxpayers, while accountability downward to partners and communities is minimal. As one interviewee asked directly: *'What about the donors' accountability to us?'* From the donor perspective, accountability is primarily understood through the lens of transparency and compliance. Donor representatives interviewed for this study emphasised the need to ensure that public funds are managed responsibly, results are measurable, and implementing partners adhere to contractual and reporting requirements. This upward orientation reflects both political and institutional pressures within donor systems, where accountability is often tied to demonstrating efficiency and impact to taxpayers, parliaments, or oversight bodies. At the same time, many donors viewed RDPP as a trusted intermediary capable of operationalising localisation, allowing them to remain at a strategic distance from its day-to-day implementation – such as power-sharing, mutual accountability, and the long-term investments required to sustain equitable partnerships.

While NGOs improved their own standards, reciprocal accountability mechanisms were still weak. Partners felt that downward accountability to communities was encouraged but not institutionally required, leaving it uneven across projects and contexts. Interviewees suggested that RDPP is well positioned to push this conversation further.

RDPP's accountability practices – such as its participatory monitoring processes, flexible reporting mechanisms, and regular dialogue with implementing partners – creates more transparent and trust-based relationships compared to traditional donor-partner models. Building on that, the interviewees suggested that RDPP could model a more relational and power-aware accountability practice for the wider humanitarian sector. This includes, for example, influencing upwards accountability by providing the space to voice out local actors prospective to donors community. Strengthening these reciprocal mechanisms would also help balance the currently upward-heavy accountability structure, moving beyond box-ticking exercises to shared responsibility rooted in trust and responsiveness. Thus, localisation depends on acknowledging instead of erasing local community practices and meanings of accountability.

To move localisation forward, accountability must be redefined. It cannot remain a donor-driven compliance function; it must become a reflexive, adaptive practice that foregrounds the voices, knowledge, and priorities of affected communities. This involves shifting accountability from being primarily upwards to donors to also being relational, power-aware and grounded in community realities. It also requires creating mechanisms through which communities can hold not only NGOs but also donors and governments responsible for the outcomes of aid.

Ultimately, interviewees saw RDPP's existing accountability practices as a step in the right direction, but one that could be deepened to redistribute power more equitably between donors, partners, and communities. Doing so would allow RDPP to set a sectoral example – showing how accountability can move from control to collaboration and from compliance to co-creation.

**Strategic directions for action include:**

- 1. Balance upward and downward accountability:** RDPP could make accountability mechanisms as integral as financial reporting, presented as a model of practice for other donors
- 2. Embed community-defined standards:** Accountability measures should be designed and led with communities, ensuring they shape priorities and outcomes.
- 3. Protect community identity and legitimacy.** CBOs and grassroots actors should be supported to maintain their community roots, avoiding pressures to 'NGO-ise' purely to fit donor templates. This requires recognising their knowledge, legitimacy, and unique role in shaping responses.
- 4. Facilitate reciprocal accountability platforms:** RDPP can leverage its convening power to create spaces where partners and communities evaluate donor performance.
- 5. Move beyond reporting to relationships:** Build on RDPP's existing relational model to make accountability an ongoing, trust-based process rather than a compliance requirement.

## Case Studies Vignette III: Grounding localisation through sub-partnership

Across both contexts, sub-partners described their relationships with lead NGOs as trust-based, transparent, and adaptive, very different from the rigid and transactional sub-granting arrangements they had encountered with other donors. Community accountability mechanisms such as complaint boxes, youth committees, and family surveys ensured that feedback loops were built into programming, allowing community priorities to shape implementation in real time.

These sub-partnerships illustrate the critical role that grassroots actors play in grounding localisation. They enable access to hard-to-reach populations, build trust with local leaders, and deliver services that respond to lived realities rather than donor blueprints. By strengthening data collection, case management, and coordination with municipalities and schools, many CBOs also positioned themselves as credible interlocutors at the local level.

The experiences from Lebanon and Jordan show that sub-partnerships can serve as a bridge between localisation rhetoric and practice: they strengthen community leadership, embed accountability, and extend the reach of national NGOs. However, to unlock their full potential, they need to be supported not only as service providers but as legitimate actors in shaping agendas and policies.

### 5.7. Power relations and advocacy

Across both Lebanon and Jordan, interviewees were clear that advocacy is central to localisation because it directly shapes donor priorities, influences policy frameworks, and strengthens the voices of local and national actors. Yet their testimonies also underscored that advocacy remains uneven, constrained by entrenched power asymmetries in which donors and international agencies continue to hold decisive influence.

In Lebanon, government officials and civil society actors alike described localisation as highly centralised in donors' hands. Strategic and funding decisions, they explained, are largely determined outside the country, with local actors drawn in only at a late stage. Donors justify this centralisation in the name of efficiency and accountability, but interviewees questioned whose interests it really serves. A member of the RDPP steering committee voiced this bluntly: *'We want to make sure that refugees are served where they are.'* This view reflected broader unease that international aid in Lebanon often functions as a containment strategy aligned with European agendas rather than as a means of supporting national priorities.

Lebanese RDPP partners consistently argued that the government's role in coordination needs to be stronger, including in setting localisation priorities, convening actors, and ensuring donor projects align with national strategies. During the validation workshop in Lebanon, participants reflected on the Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework (3RF) – a coordination platform jointly led by the Government of Lebanon, the EU, the UN, and the World Bank – and discussed the need to revisit the reform agenda by identifying

how local actors are able to participate meaningfully within the 3RF task force structure. Drawing on their experience engaging with government institutions, participants noted that sustained collaboration remains constrained by fragmented coordination and the absence of clear mechanisms for CSO participation.

While RDPP projects have engaged ministries and municipalities, many felt the programme could use its position more effectively to support systemic change through advocacy. Several interviewees stressed that RDPP could facilitate more direct connections between local actors and donor governments, thereby building trust and enabling collaboration earlier in the process. Yet this was not without tension. Interviewees acknowledged that when governments adopt refugee-hostile policies, a stronger state role risks reinforcing exclusionary agendas and restricting rights. One government official captured the ambivalence of their position by describing themselves as *'shahadeen w msharteen'* (*beggars who cannot be choosers*), forced to take the money while wishing to impose their own agenda. This reflects a deeper discomfort with the blurred boundary between aid dependence and sovereign control and raises the fundamental question of whose priorities ultimately define 'the local.'

In Jordan, civil society representatives recognised the government's legitimate role in regulating funding and compliance but described bureaucratic procedures as major barriers to localisation. Approval and registration processes often slowed or blocked NGO activities, especially when combined with heavy donor compliance requirements. This led some to question what genuine representation really looks like in donor-led spaces: *'What does it actually mean to have a locally led actor at the table?'* one participant asked. *'Are they genuinely speaking for communities, or simply meeting donor requirements?'*

Interviewees also reflected on the imbalance in how local and international organisations are treated. As one Jordanian actor explained: *'Even among government organisations, we have this inferiority complex towards foreigners. We feel the foreigner is always right, and we are wrong. Local authorities respond more readily to foreign organisations than to us. When accused of serving foreign agendas, it is local organisations who are undermined, not the internationals.'* Such perspectives highlight how deeply power hierarchies shape the advocacy space, privileging foreign actors even when local organisations have the stronger community roots.

Others criticised the way localisation is sometimes implemented, not as genuine empowerment but as a transfer of risk. As one organisation put it: *'Localisation sometimes ends up being more about shifting responsibility than shifting power. It focuses narrowly on implementation. What we need is to shift power, not just tasks.'*

Case studies with sub-partnership also highlighted that despite the empowerment they received as sub partners, funding was still short-term, fragmented, and insufficient to cover overheads, while advocacy efforts were rarely supported. Sub-partners were not meaningfully engaged in higher-level policy or donor forums, which reinforced their role as implementers rather than strategic actors. Many expressed a clear aspiration to move from service delivery to influencing policy, but this would require longer-term, more flexible funding and structured opportunities to engage with ministries, municipalities, and donors

Across both contexts, participants singled out RDPP as a donor with unusual potential to address these challenges. Unlike many donors who operate at arm's length, RDPP's in-country presence and sustained engagement with partners gives it credibility as a convener. Several respondents urged RDPP to use this position more assertively, not to speak on behalf of local actors, but to amplify their priorities, facilitate access to decision-making spaces, and press for systemic reforms such as harmonised due diligence, risk-sharing, and longer-term funding. As one participant observed: *'If there's one question, it's this: how loud can RDPP be as a donor? They have real convening power. Are they using it fully? Can they push further?'*

Coalitions and localisation platforms were also discussed as potential vehicles for advocacy. Networks such as the Lebanon Humanitarian and Development NGOs Forum (LHDF) and the Jordan National NGOs Forum (JONAF) were valued for coordination and information sharing, but participants admitted they were not yet fully leveraged as advocacy bodies. Advocacy is often reactive, fragmented, and underfunded. Many argued that RDPP could help shift this by supporting coalitions to formulate clear and collective positions on structural issues such as funding modalities, accountability, and representation. With stronger resourcing and platforms for sustained dialogue, these networks could act as agenda-setters rather than remain confined to service delivery roles.

Together, these reflections underline that localisation is inseparable from questions of power. Advocacy is not an add-on but a central mechanism for redistributing influence among donors, governments, and local actors. For localisation to be meaningful, advocacy must move beyond token consultations to reshape the structures that determine who set priorities, who hold decision-making power, and whose voices are heard. A significant resource for advocacy would be networks of organisations and coordination platforms dedicated to promoting localisation. In the next section, we specifically analyse such networks in Jordan and Lebanon.

#### **Strategic direction for action includes:**

- 1. Enable state leadership while emphasising participation:** Support governments to coordinate localisation agendas and align donor projects with national strategies, while ensuring wide participation.
- 2. Push for earlier local involvement:** Advocate with donor governments to engage local actors in strategy design from the outset, not just in implementation.
- 3. Tackle compliance and bureaucracy:** that can hinder participation and representation of different groups and organisation including their ability to receive funding.
- 4. Challenge international dominance:** Amplify the expertise of local actors and ensure they lead advocacy spaces rather than being overshadowed by INGOs.
- 5. Shift power, not just tasks:** Ensure localisation goes beyond transferring responsibility to redistributing decision-making authority and control over resources.
- 6. Strengthen coalitions:** Invest in platforms like LHDF and JONAF to act as unified advocacy bodies capable of shaping donor priorities.
- 7. Leverage RDPP's convening power:** Use RDPP's embedded presence to amplify

local voices, broker access to decision-making, and advocate for structural reforms such as risk-sharing and longer-term funding.

## 5.8 Localisation Networks

This study examined two case studies of localisation networks in Lebanon and Jordan to understand their contribution to advancing civil society leadership in humanitarian and development governance. In Lebanon, networks such as the Lebanese Humanitarian and Development NGOs Forum (LHDF) and the Localisation Task Force (LTF) have long played a central role, predated the global localisation agenda and stepping in at a time when government engagement in humanitarian coordination was minimal. These networks have amplified the voices of smaller NGOs, connected national actors to regional and global debates, and positioned Lebanon as a reference point in localisation discussions.

In Jordan, platforms such as the Jordan National NGO Forum (JONAF) and the Localisation Task Team are more recent but equally significant attempts to unify civil society actors around a collective localisation agenda. They have created rare spaces for dialogue and joint advocacy in a more constrained environment. Yet their influence remains limited, shaped by structural imbalances in participation, donor favouritism, and limited engagement with government.

In both contexts, networks provide a critical entry point for civil society into donor spaces. Lebanese networks have engaged directly in donor roundtables, strategic partnerships with INGOs, and policy discussions. Jordanian platforms, while less institutionalised, enable NGOs to present a collective voice and to negotiate donor agendas that often bypass smaller organisations. However, across both settings, interviewees stressed that influence remains symbolic: networks are consulted for visibility but rarely shape donor priorities or policies. Localisation was repeatedly described as 'rhetoric without practice,' with donors using the term while continuing to fund larger NGOs or governments directly.

Financial sustainability emerged as the most pressing challenge for networks. In Lebanon, networks rely heavily on voluntary contributions, with coordination roles often carried out in members' spare time. The absence of membership fees and the prevalence of short-term, activity-based funding undermines continuity. Jordanian networks face similar issues: JONAF and the Localisation Task Team remain dependent on ad hoc support and lack resources to build strong institutional structures. This fragility has forced many organisations into 'survival mode,' where competition for limited funds fragments rather than unifies civil society.

Both cases highlighted persistent imbalances between large, well-resourced NGOs and smaller, grassroots associations. In Lebanon, the proliferation of NGOs has generated competition and internal rivalries within networks, with larger organisations often dominating. In Jordan, donor favouritism was repeatedly raised: funding channels are concentrated among a handful of large NGOs with established connections, sidelining smaller but capable associations. Participants called for frameworks that ensure equitable participation and distribute resources fairly across organisations of different sizes and capacities.

Networks in both contexts play an important role in capacity strengthening, though the

scope remains uneven. In Lebanon, RDPP-supported partners used networks to access sector working groups and co-lead with UN agencies. In Jordan, training through JONAF supported leadership development among around thirty NGOs, though this represented a small fraction of the 6,000 registered associations. Participants argued for more systematic pipelines for growth, akin to accelerators in the private sector, that could prepare small organisations for sustainable funding and participation in policy processes.

### **Case Studies Vignette 3: What facilitates and undermines networks**

In the case studies and validation workshops, a number of points on what facilitates networks were identified. Networks gain traction when they have multi-year core funding to staff secretariats, run policy units, and maintain member outreach beyond short, activity-based grants. RDPP convenings – including thematic or strategic meetings, workshops, or dialogue spaces – helped bring actors together, and when coupled with flexible funding, networks sustained task forces (advocacy, ethics, communities of practice) and showed continuity across cycles. At the same time, donor-brokered access to sector working groups, and occasional co-leadership with UN agencies, increased visibility and opened pathways for agenda-setting. Where local partners could bring rapid, community-anchored evidence – through complaint systems, youth feedback, or hotlines – networks converted that into concrete asks. Moreover, subnational engagement with governorates and municipalities strengthened legitimacy and diversified agendas, while partnerships that invested in local evidence systems helped members speak confidently to directorates and governorate officials, not just capital-based forums. Finally, elected steering committees, transparent rotations, and defined roles in coordination, representation, and policy influence built trust and reduced perceptions of capture by a few large NGOs.

At the same time, there are a number of factors identified that can undermine networks: Over-reliance on volunteerism and projectisation remains a key constraint. Absent membership fees and scarce core funds force networks to rely on unpaid labour; activity-only grants don't cover institutional functions (policy analysis, government liaison), so influence stalls. Similarly, dominance and favouritism persist, as status hierarchies (large, well-funded NGOs), donor comfort-bias, and 'invite after decisions' practices marginalise small or regional members and turn participation into optics. Donor-centric compliance and legal or bureaucratic drag further compound these issues: fragmented reporting, shifting formats, and weak legal footing for coalitions drain time and deter smaller actors. In Jordan, approvals and registrations, along with capital-centric decision-making, sideline governorate-level needs. Finally, tokenistic 'coordination' remains a challenge; without a mandate and budget for advocacy, networks become mere information exchanges, and dialogue rarely translates into policy unless platforms can draft positions, meet line ministries regularly, and track follow-through.

#### **Strategic direction for action includes:**

- 1. Finance the function, not just the meeting:** Provide multi-year core grants to network secretariats (lead coordinator, policy analyst, member engagement officer, M&E). Allow budget lines for government liaison and legal/administrative support.
- 2. Make advocacy a deliverable with milestones:** Fund annual advocacy roadmaps (3-5 priority issues), scheduled dialogues with ministries/donors, and publication of policy briefs in Arabic/English. Tie disbursements to progress markers (e.g., number of joint positions adopted; percentage of asks reflected in sector plans).
- 3. Promote equitable representation within networks:** Require inclusive

governance benchmarks – reserved seats for small, regional, and refugee-led groups; term limits and rotation rules; public minutes and voting records. Track member diversity indices and subnational participation rates.

4. **Build subnational reach:** Resource governorate/municipal chapters with travel and facilitation budgets; fund local evidence systems (simple dashboards, community scorecards) that feed national positions.
5. **Harmonise and simplify compliance:** Develop a donor-endorsed template pack (common concept note, budget, MEL and feedback forms) and organise joint workshops with regulatory authorities to streamline approval and reporting processes. Pilot a pooled fund for coalitions with a single, risk-shared due-diligence mechanism.
6. **Fund an evidence-to-influence pipeline:** Commission comparative value-for-money studies (local NGO vs. INGO vs. government delivery), curate case repositories of successful co-creation pivots, and support media/briefings that carry findings into donor capitals and cabinet rooms.
7. **Embed downward accountability:** Require networks to report on community-led monitoring (complaints resolved, programme changes triggered by feedback) alongside financials. Include public scorecards at national and subnational levels.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

This study set out to undertake an assessment of measures applied by RDPP to promote localization practices through its partnerships, notably as a follow up to recommendations of a location study conducted under RDPP II, and the effect that this has had in terms of promoting more locally led processes.

Aside from the examine Programmatic/operational level, the study looked at strategic level and analysed initiatives supported through RDPP and others to help create a conducive environment for enhanced local leadership of policy processes as well as implementation of development and humanitarian assistance, particularly in relation to the Syria response. This included examining the localization coordination structures in Lebanon and Jordan, with a particular focus on the unique barriers and challenges these systems face in each country.

The study found that RDPP III has advanced the localisation agenda in Lebanon and Jordan, using its direct partnerships, capacity-strengthening strategies, and network support as a lens to understand both progress and persistent barriers. The aim was to capture good practices that can be sustained and scaled, and to identify gaps and challenges that limit the transformative potential of localisation. By doing so, the study can inform RDPP's future programming while offering broader lessons for the humanitarian and development community on how to move localisation beyond rhetoric and towards meaningful power-sharing, sustainability, and systemic change. Using a three-pronged approach that captures localisation on micro, meso and macro levels, our findings demonstrate that RDPP's localisation programme has developed notable strengths on many levels.

As illustrated by Table 3, on the micro level, RDPP's approach has supported community-based organisations in their day-to-day functions through field visits, flexible use of funds, and the ability to respond quickly to emerging needs. At the meso level, RDPP has invested in strengthening organisational capacity, most notably through multi-year, flexible funding, while fostering more equitable partnerships, strengthening CSO coordination, and embedding local ownership in project design. Across Lebanon and Jordan, RDPP was widely perceived as a flexible, accessible, and trust-based donor whose approach enabled meaningful advances in localisation. Multi-year funding, adaptive budgeting, and autonomous capacity-strengthening helped NGOs build internal systems, plan strategically, and respond effectively to community needs. These practices also generated a cascade effect, as strengthened NGOs passed on similar flexibility and mentoring to smaller CBOs, supporting greater organisational legitimacy, evidence use, and community accountability.

However, at the macro level, RDPP's influence has not yet extended to shifting the wider donor architecture, where agendas remain largely donor-driven, participation remains largely on the micro level, and NGO coordination is fragmented. One observation from the research that illustrates these findings is the RDPP itself. Bilateral donors have delegated

responsibility for localisation to RDPP, meaning that localisation is not mainstreamed across the aid system but instead concentrated in limited initiatives. While this may appear to place greater emphasis on localisation, RDPP's approach remains largely one-directional, focused on localising local NGOs rather than also transforming how international organisations operate. This even extends to RDPP discussion of sustainability which seem to be largely concerned with the civil society alone without expanding to donors and their commitment to mainstream localisation within their system especially with the reduction in international aid. As such, localisation remains minimalist, occurring within a limited and defined sphere (in the case of Lebanon and Jordan within RDDP) rather than reshaping the existing system of aid and development. Moving beyond project-level interventions towards systemic change would require reimagining localisation not merely as a humanitarian efficiency measure, but as part of a broader developmental agenda rooted in rights, inclusion, and structural transformation. Full localisation cannot be achieved without aligning donor structures, national coordination mechanisms, and decision-making power with local leadership.

On a more regional level, limits to unsustainability local civil society amid aid budget cuts and restrictive regulations are undermined in Lebanon by the absence of long-term institutional support and a continued reliance on external aid. In Jordan, restrictive regulations, limited organisational capacity, and perceptions of inconsistent donor presence curtailed progress. Across both contexts, co-funding requirements, weak coordination structures, short funding cycles, and donor-driven agendas restricted opportunities for sustainability. However, the macro-level structural barriers identified above continue to contribute to limit the scalability and sustainability of the substantial gains at micro and meso levels.

One of the means for RDPP to achieve to promote the localisation agenda is through advocacy globally, regionally and locally. So far the work is more concentrated on the local and regional, RDPP could focus more on the donors and the role of international community in localisation. Consequently, the research demonstrates that RDPP needs to revisit their framework to broaden the scope, including indicators, and deepen the change to include more of the structural conditions. This indicates that there is a need to take seriously the insight that the meaning and practice of localisation are ambiguous and needs to be informed from the local level. Investing in networks that help to undo years of practice that have rendered civil society as service providers and to nurture actors that can act as agents of change and agenda setters locally and nationally.

**Table 3. Macro, meso and micro level synthesis**

Macro-level	Meso-level	Micro-level
Key Enablers	Key Enablers	Key Enablers
RDPP's flexible donor approach	Co-creation and collaboration	Locally owned capacity-strengthening
Multi-phase, medium-term funding	Field visits	Flexible response to community needs
Trust-based partnerships	Cascade effect of localisation	Accountability and feedback loops
Key Barriers	Cross-organisational learning	Responsive, community-driven programme design
Systemic donor dominance	Key Barriers	Key Barriers
Short funding cycles (6-12 months)	Exclusivity in funding criteria	Capacity gaps in local organisations
Externally imposed frameworks	Weakened coordination structures	Instability from aid cuts
Fragmented aid architecture	Fragmented civil society	Limited influence of affected communities
Fear of challenging donors	Institutionalisation gaps	Volatile aid environment

Taken together, to make localisation meaningful and sustainable, the following are recommended to the different stakeholders involved in localisation.

### For RDPP

- Expand its catalytic role by moving beyond micro-level support and directly influencing policy spaces and donor practices. RDPP can play a role in mainstreaming localisation within the aid community rather than restricting it to a programme.
- Support localisation networks with core funding for coordination staff, joint advocacy, and knowledge production.
- Strengthening existing platforms for local actors, donors, and governments, ensuring smaller NGOs and CBOs are included.
- Document and disseminate evidence of local actors' impact (in Arabic and English) to shift donor narratives and agendas.
- Create regular, structured spaces where local actors engage directly with donors and government representatives.
- Provide flexible, sustained funding, support inclusive participation of smaller actors, and foster joint advocacy platforms. RDPP can act as a neutral convenor with donors and governments, while resourcing proactive advocacy in Lebanon and

a shared localisation agenda in Jordan. Investing in accessible, Arabic-language knowledge products will further amplify local actors' impact and credibility.

- Amplify local narratives and generate evidence, for example from the sub-partnership model, that showcase successful localisation practices to reflect local priorities and strengthen ownership.
- Inspire and influence donors on what localisations entails and how they can restructure their agendas to facilitate the shift of power in decision making and planning to the local organisations and actors. Go beyond micro-level support to inform policy discourse and steer donor practices.
- Explore ways of channelling funds towards income-generating activities by local organisations to support sustainability and independence from external aid.

## **For Donors**

- Localisation needs to be mainstreamed within the ethos and way of working for donors rather than being restricted to a pot of funding for one donor agency to promote. This requires structural as well as procedural changes in the way donors dominate agenda setting and implementation.
- Within the existing constraints set by various donors, it is essential to foster deeper dialogue on the steps required to meaningfully advance locally led solutions. This calls for targeted, practical discussions that identify areas needing further development and adaptation in order to strengthen and sustain localisation efforts.
- Move away from a narrow focus on capacity strengthening for local and national organisations that emphasises due diligence, reporting, and technical fixes. Instead, investment should prioritise NGOs' agenda, leadership development, and advocacy skills that enable NGOs to act with confidence and entitlement in shaping agendas and negotiating with donors. Capacity strengthening should focus on NGOs' confidence and entitlement to shape agendas.
- Reframe accountability to balance upward donor reporting with downward community accountability, including funding for community-led monitoring.
- Resource networks and coalitions not only as coordination forums but as strategic policy actors.
- Avoid favouritism toward larger NGOs by ensuring equitable funding flows to smaller and grassroots organisations.
- Support co-creation processes in programme design with local NGOs and CBOs from the outset.
- Channel more direct funding to local organisations, building on RDPP's model, and provide predictable, multi-year commitments.
- Partner with academics and knowledge producers to critique dominant narratives and propose alternatives that centre local agency.

## **For Governments in Lebanon and Jordan**

- Create enabling legal and regulatory environments that recognise and protect the role of civil society in humanitarian and development governance.

- Establish accountability frameworks that support partnerships with local NGOs beyond tokenistic consultation.
- Facilitate access of local NGOs and networks to national coordination and policy spaces.
- Partner with networks and coalitions to map resources, coordinate responses, and shape national localisation agendas.

### **For Civil Society in Lebanon and Jordan including networks**

- Reclaim the meaning of localisation by way of developing civil society's own localisation agendas as localisation is not a project, but it is a positionality.
- Develop strategic visions within the bigger schemes of development-aims. These should be visions beyond funding and meso-level engagements and more about collectively redefining the role of civil society and influence at macro-level such as policy and systemic change.
- Utilise capacity strengthening to develop organisational agendas and strategic visions
- Redefine accountability based on how it is understood by the communities civil society exists to serve
- Strengthen coalition-building and adopt collective advocacy positions to amplify a unified voice in national and regional fora.
- Prioritise inclusive governance in networks to address internal competition and ensure meaningful participation of smaller and grassroots actors.
- Actively engage donors and put forward concrete, actionable recommendations for overhauling donor policies and due-diligence requirements so they become genuinely inclusive and enabling of locally led solutions.

# Appendices

## Interview Guide (1). Beneficiaries (*Focus Group Interviews*)

### A. General Experience with RDPP Programs

- What kind of support have you received through RDPP-funded programs?
- How has this support affected your daily life, livelihood, or community?
- Have you been involved in deciding what kind of assistance is provided? If so, how?

### B. Understanding & Practicing Localisation

- How do you define localisation in your work?
- How does your organisation engage local actors and refugee-led organisations in humanitarian/development response?
- What are the main barriers to implementing localisation in Jordan and Lebanon?
- What are the main barriers to implementing localisation in global spaces?

### C. Participation and Influence Over Assistance Priorities

- Have you been consulted about your needs and priorities before or during program implementation?
- Do you feel that your voice and feedback are considered in program decisions? Why or why not?
- What could be improved to ensure that assistance better reflects your priorities?

### D. Quality and Effectiveness of Support

- How do you compare the support from RDPP programs to other aid programs you have received?
- Do you feel the support is relevant, timely, and sufficient for your needs?
- Are there specific areas where RDPP-supported programs could be improved?

## Interview Guide (2). Implementing Organisations (*RDPP Partners & Local/InternationalINGOs*)

### A. Understanding & Practicing Localisation

- How do you define localisation in your work?
- How does your organisation engage local actors and refugee-led organisations in humanitarian/development response?
- What are the main barriers to implementing localisation in Jordan and Lebanon?
- What are the main barriers to implementing localisation in global spaces like GRF, donor working groups?

- What are the conditions nationally for localisation, what are national barriers and opportunities for localisation?
- What do you think of RDPP definition of localisation?

## **B. Experience Working with RDPP**

- Based on your experience, how does RDPP define or approach localisation? What do you think of their approach? Does it capture the needs and the gaps with the humanitarian system?
- To what extent has your organisation been involved in influencing the programme?
- How has RDPP's approach to localisation influenced your organisation's work?
- How has RDPP-supported funding differed from other humanitarian funding sources?
- What have been the benefits and challenges of partnering with RDPP?
- Were you involved in any decision making during this partnership? In which level?

## **C. Coordination & Power Dynamics**

- How well do existing coordination mechanisms in Jordan and Lebanon support localisation?
- Do local actors have meaningful decision-making power in coordination forums? Give us examples? Which level of decision making do local actors have a say in?
- What challenges do you face when working with donors and international organisations in particular in terms of decision making?
- Tell us about your engagement with policy actors and influence. Have you engaged with any local policy actors (e.g. municipality, ministries, working groups etc..)
- What do you anticipate to be the impact of funding cuts on localisation and development? Will it strengthen local civil society? Do you think it might strengthen any other international actors or agencies?
- Do you anticipate this funding cut to create further tensions between national policy actors and civil society?

## **D. Capacity Building & Sustainability**

- What capacity do you as an organisation bring to the localisation process?
- What kind of support and capacity building do the international actors and donors need to unlearn and develop practices and systems that challenge their control, top/ down and dominating practices?
- International agencies often claim or argue that local actors need capacity strengthening in order to assume more power, how do they understand capacity strengthening discourse and debate as presented by international actors? What is capacity building for you? what kind of capacity strengthening you need?
- What do local actors need to further enable them to assume a more leadership role?
- Has there been any impact on the capacity strengthening of your organisation as a result of being a partner of RDPP? In what way please elaborate?
- Have you been able as a result of being a partner of RDPP to strengthen the capacities

of other organisations or communities or groups? Please elaborate (structural, technical, conceptual)

- Has RDPP contributed to building long-term local capacity? If so, how and in what areas? Did it result in greater involvement in any of the following: decision making of policies, programming or implementation?
- What are the risks or limitations of relying on short-term project-based funding for localisation?

## **E. Accountability & Future Directions**

- How do accountability mechanisms work in RDPP-funded projects?
- What steps could RDPP take to improve transparency and accountability?
- What lessons from RDPP's approach could be applied to other humanitarian/development funding models?
- How about accountability towards the local communities in terms of the relevance of the programmes to their own needs? How relevant has these programmes been? Do you have any evidence? Have these communities been consulted or their feedback sought.

## **F. Lessons Learnt and Recommendations**

- How has RDPP's approach to funding and partnerships benefited your organisation?
- How does RDPP funding compare to other donor models in terms of flexibility, support, and impact?
- What recommendations would you give to improve RDPP's approach to localisation and partner engagement?
- Are there national policies that need to change to promote localisation?

## **Interview Guide (3). Implementing Organisations (RDPP Partners & Civil Society Actors)**

### **A. Understanding Localisation in Practice**

- How does your organisation define and implement localisation?
- What are the key ways RDPP supports localisation in its funding and project design?
- What are the major barriers to localisation in Jordan and Lebanon?
- What do you think of RDPP definition of localisation?

### **B. Coordination and Partnerships**

- How effective are current coordination structures (e.g., clusters, networks) in promoting localisation? (probe nationally, regionally and globally).
- Do local actors have a meaningful role in decision-making within these structures? Which levels you have the opportunity to make decisions? (on which level global, nation, regional?) what type of decisions you have a say in ( vision/policy,

programmes, implementation) If not, what prevents this?

- What are the main challenges in working with donors, INGOs, and government agencies that undermine localisation?
- Tell us about your engagement with policy actors and influence. Have you engaged with any local policy actors (e.g. municipality, ministries, working groups etc..)
- What do you anticipate to be the impact of funding cuts on localisation and development? Will it strengthen local civil society? Do you think it might strengthen any other international actors or agencies?
- Do you anticipate this funding cut to create further tensions between national policy actors and civil society.

### **C. Project Implementation and Capacity Gaps**

- What are the biggest implementation challenges you face in RDPP-supported programs that undermine localisation?
- Are there competence gaps or organisational needs that hinder your ability to fully develop, lead and implement projects and policies?
- What additional support (technical, financial, policy) would strengthen your organisation's capacity?
- What kind of support and capacity building does RDPP and international actors and donors need to unlearn and develop practices and systems to foster localisation?
- Has there been any impact on the capacity strengthening of your organisation as a result of being a partner of RDPP? In what way please elaborate?
- Have you been able as a result of being a partner of RDPP to strengthen the capacities of other organisations or communities or groups? Please elaborate?

### **D. Accountability and Power Dynamics**

- How are accountability mechanisms currently structured in RDPP-funded projects?
- Do you feel your organisation has equal decision-making power in partnerships with INGOs and donors? (on which level global, nation, regional?) what type of decisions you have a say in (vision/policy, programmes, implementation) If not, what prevents this?
- How can power imbalances between local and international actors be addressed in humanitarian/development nexus funding and coordination?
- How about accountability towards the local communities in terms of the relevance of the programmes to their own needs? How relevant has these programmes been? Do you have any evidence? Have these communities been consulted or their feedback sought.

## **Interview Guide (4) Donors (RDPP & Other Humanitarian Funders)**

### **A. Understanding & Practicing Localisation**

- How do you define localisation in your work?

- How does your organisation engage local actors and refugee-led organisations in humanitarian/development response?
- What are the main barriers to implementing localisation in Jordan and Lebanon?
- What are the main barriers to implementing localisation in global spaces like GRF, donor working groups?
- What do you think of RDPP definition of localisation?

## **B. Partnership & Funding Structures**

- How does RDPP (or other donors) select and engage local partners?
- What criteria are used to determine funding allocations to local vs. international actors?
- Have you observed shifts in power and responsibility towards local actors in RDPP-funded (or other donor) programs?
- What do you anticipate being the impact of funding cuts on localisation and development? Will it strengthen local civil society? Do you think it might strengthen any other international actors or agencies?
- Do you anticipate this funding cut to create further tensions between national policy actors and civil society.

## **C. Effectiveness & Impact**

- How do you assess the impact of RDPP-supported (or other donor supported) projects on localisation?
- What mechanisms are in place to ensure that funding directly benefits local communities?
- Have RDPP's (or other donor's) efforts led to sustainable changes in how localisation is practiced?
- What opportunities or mechanisms are available and accessible for local organisation in decision making on global, regional and local? What would be the nature of this policy, programming or implementation?

## **D. Accountability & Transparency and Power Dynamics**

- How do you hold yourself accountable? To whom?
- How do donors currently hold INGOs and international agencies accountable for supporting localisation?
- What mechanisms exist to ensure local actors can also hold donors accountable?
- How can the donor community promote greater transparency and equitable partnerships in humanitarian/development funding?
- How about accountability towards the local communities in terms of the relevance of the programmes to their own needs? How relevant has these programmes been? Do you have any evidence? Have these communities been consulted or their feedback sought.

## **E. Future Directions & Advocacy**

- How can RDPP (or other donors) improve its approach to localisation in future phases?
- What role should RDPP and other donors play in advocacy and policy change to promote localisation?
- How can localisation efforts in Jordan and Lebanon inform broader humanitarian/development funding reforms?

## **Interview Guide (5). National Policymakers**

### **A. Understanding & Implementing Localisation**

- How does your ministry/government agency define localisation in the context of humanitarian/development response?
- How do you contribute and shape localisation agenda?
- How are local organisations, including refugee-led initiatives, engaged in national humanitarian and development strategies?
- What are the main barriers to implementing localisation at the national level?
- How does Jordan/Lebanon contribute to shaping global localisation policies in donor forums, UN platforms, or regional initiatives?

### **B. Policy & Funding Structures**

- How does the government coordinate with donors and international organisations to ensure localisation?
- Are there national policies or frameworks that promote direct funding to local organisations?
- What mechanisms exist to prioritize funding for national NGOs and local actors over international organisations?
- Have there been shifts in power and decision-making towards local actors in government-led humanitarian/development nexus efforts?
- What do you anticipate to be the impact of funding cuts on localisation and development? Will it strengthen local civil society? Do you think it might strengthen any other international actors or agencies?
- Do you anticipate this funding cut to create further tensions between national policy actors and civil society.

### **C. Effectiveness & Impact**

- How does the government assess the impact of localisation efforts in Jordan/Lebanon?
- What mechanisms are in place to ensure that donor funding directly benefits local communities?
- Have localisation policies or initiatives led to sustainable improvements in

humanitarian/development response and governance?

## **D. Accountability & Transparency**

- What measures are in place to hold international organisations accountable for supporting localisation?
- How does the government ensure that local actors have a meaningful role in decision-making rather than just being implementers?
- Are there mechanisms for local actors and communities to provide feedback or challenge donor/government decisions related to humanitarian/development funding?

## **E. Future Directions & Policy Advocacy**

- What steps can the government take to strengthen localisation efforts in Jordan/Lebanon?
- How can government policies better align with donor commitments to localisation?
- How can localisation experiences in Jordan/Lebanon inform regional and global humanitarian/development funding reforms?
- What policy changes would help create a more sustainable, locally-led humanitarian system?

## **Case Study Guide (1). Representatives of RDPP Partners**

### **A. Quality in Relationships**

- How would you describe the quality of partnership between your organisation and RDPP? Can you give examples of how this relationship impacted your internal decision-making, sense of ownership, and strategic development?
- Has your partnership with RDPP remained project-based, or has it evolved toward more strategic or long-term collaboration? How has this shift (or lack of it) influenced your institutional planning, internal systems, or staffing?
- To what extent were you involved in different project stages (e.g. needs assessment, implementation, and M&E)? Were you able to adapt or reshape any components based on your local expertise?
- Do you think this partnership has helped strengthen your organisation's ability to lead, grow, or influence decisions? What changes would further support this?

### **B. Funding**

- What percentage of your funding currently comes directly from donors (vs. intermediaries)? Has this changed over time, and has RDPP across different phases helped improve your access to direct funding? And how?
- With the recent funding agreement with RDPP, did it include overhead, allow for flexibility, and align with your local financial systems? How do you compare it with other donors' funding agreements?
- Have you ever been engaged by RDPP in setting funding priorities or co-designing

projects? What worked well and what was missing?

- Have you influenced what RDPP decided to fund in your area or sector? If yes, how? Can you compare it to working with other donors?

### **C. Capacity Strengthening for Leadership**

- What types of capacity-building have you experienced through RDPP? Did these lead to greater independence or internal system improvements? Can you compare it to working with other donors?
- Did the RDPP approach support leadership development inside your organisation? (e.g., mentoring, strategic planning, or succession support), if yes, how? Can you compare it to working with other donors?

### **D. Localisation and Policy Influence/Advocacy**

- Are you part of any local or national coordination platforms? If so, have you played a role in shaping any major decisions? Did RDPP support you in taking such a role, if yes, how? Did this facilitate your ability to participate in global platforms that can influence global aid strategies? If yes, give examples
- Have any coordination spaces set goals to promote local leadership? Were you supported in taking such roles?
- Have you contributed to policy positions, joint advocacy, or standard-setting initiatives related to localisation? What kind of support enabled this?
- How RDPP influenced your engagement on localisation with government/policy makers and donors?
- In your opinion, what are the challenges/barriers to enhance localisation efforts aside from your engagement with RDPP? What do you propose to mitigate these challenges?

### **E. Accountability to Local Community**

- How are the communities you serve involved in your project design, implementation, and follow up on any provided feedback or complaints?
- How do you ensure they know their rights and see how their feedback influences programming?
- Do you feed community perspectives into broader conversations beyond your organisation (e.g. coordination, advocacy)? If so, how?
- What are the existing complaints and feedback mechanisms in the community you serve?

## **Case Study Guide (2). Representatives of Coordination Platforms**

### **A. Donors Relationships**

- How would you describe the relationship/engagement between your platform and donors in general? Can you provide specific examples?
- Has this engagement resulted in long term partnership? How do you evaluate this

partnership? Provide examples?

- Has the platform been able to influence donors' strategic decisions? If yes, how? Provide examples? If not, what are the reasons for this in your opinion?
- Does your interaction with donors help shift power toward your network or its members? What kind of power are we talking about – decision-making, agenda-setting, resource control? Have you or your members been able to influence what donors fund, or shape policies, response plans, or localisation strategies? In which sectors or coordination spaces has this occurred? What would need to happen for this power shift to become more substantial? If you haven't seen a shift in power, why do you think that is the case?
- What added value can RDPP provide to strengthen your relationship with donors, and to enhance localisation efforts?

## **B. Funding**

- How have donors involved your platform in funding decisions (themes, risk-sharing, co-design)?
- Has your platform influenced what donors chose to fund collectively across members?
- Does your platform receive direct funding or channel funding to members? How sustainable is this model?
- Have you been informed in any other decision making?
- Can you share a recent funding engagement with different donors and explain whether it supported coordination roles, core staff, or communication?
- What added value can RDPP provide to strengthen funding opportunities for local networks to enhance localisation efforts?

## **C. Capacity Strengthening for Leadership**

- Have donors supported your network's coordination capacity or leadership development?
- Are there governance structures within your platform to build representation and assure rotation among members?
- What is the objective of capacity strengthening efforts within your platform? What areas do you currently focus on (e.g. coordination, leadership, technical skills, representation)?
- What capacity strengthening do donors need to improve localisation efforts?
- What added value can RDPP provide to strengthen capacity opportunities for local networks?

## **D. Localisation and Policy Influence/Advocacy**

- Has your platform participated in key decision-making forums (e.g. LCRP, clusters)? Were your positions adopted or reflected in outcomes?
- Are there time-bound plans to transition cluster/platform leadership roles to local networks? Are donors aligning funding with that?
- Has your platform led or co-authored policy papers, advocacy statements, or joint

calls to action? shaping proposals and collective planning

- From your perspective, what is still needed to make the platform stronger and better equipped to have a meaningful voice in national and global spaces – such as the Global Refugee Forum, response plans, or locally developed strategies?
- How do you evaluate your engagement with government/policy makers as a network?
- How RDPP influenced your engagement on localisation with government/policy makers and donors?

## **E. Accountability to Local Community**

- How does your platform remain accountable to its members in relation to localisation efforts? Have you developed tools, strategies, or principles to assess the effectiveness of your work on localisation? How is accountability defined, by whom, and to whom you are accountable? How do you communicate and evaluate your accountability commitments?
- How do you ensure community perspectives and the civil society actors are represented in coordination and response strategies at national or regional levels?
- If there hasn't been much work on accountability within the platform, what are the reasons behind that?
- Based on the recent emergency response (based on context of Lebanon and Jordan), how you evaluate the engagement of local actors compared to international efforts to respond to the immediate needs\_ how this is different than the work in development?

## **Case Study Guide (3). RDPP Sub-partners (Focus Group Interviews)**

### **Case Study Focus Group Discussion Questionnaire with RDPP Sub-partners**

#### **A. Quality in Relationships**

- How would you describe the quality of partnership between your organisation and (Tamkeen/Initiate) Can you give examples of how this relationship impacted your internal decision-making, sense of ownership, and strategic development?
- Has your partnership with (Tamkeen/Initiate) remained project-based, or has it evolved toward more strategic or long-term collaboration? How has this shift (or lack of it) influenced your institutional planning, internal systems, or staffing?
- To what extent were you involved in different project stages (e.g. needs assessment, implementation, and M&E?) Were you able to adapt or reshape any components based on your local expertise?
- Do you think this partnership helped strengthen your organisation's ability to lead, grow, or influence decisions? What changes would further support this?

#### **B. Funding**

- What percentage of your funding currently comes directly from donors

(vs. intermediaries)? Has this changed over time, and has (Tamkeen/Initiate) across different phases helped improve your access to direct funding? And how?

- Do your current donors' agreements include overhead, allow for flexibility, and align with your local financial systems?
- Have you ever been engaged by (Tamkeen/Initiate) in setting funding priorities or co-designing projects? What worked well and what was missing?
- Have you influenced what donors decided to fund in your area or sector? If yes, how? Can you compare it to experience working with partners funded by RDPP?

### **C. Capacity Strengthening for Leadership**

- What types of capacity-building have you experienced through your partnership with (Tamkeen/Initiate)? Did these lead to greater independence or internal system improvements? Can you compare it to your experience working with others?
- Did (Tamkeen/Initiate) approach support leadership development inside your organisation? (e.g., mentoring, strategic planning, or succession support), if yes, how? Can you compare it to experience working with others?

### **D. Localisation and Policy Influence/Advocacy**

- Are you part of any local or national coordination platforms? If so, have you played a role in shaping any major decisions? Did (Tamkeen/Initiate) support you in taking such a role, if yes how?
- Have any coordination spaces set goals to promote local leadership? Were you supported in taking such roles?
- Have you contributed to policy positions, joint advocacy, or standard-setting initiatives related to localisation? What kind of support enabled this?
- How (Tamkeen/Initiate) influenced your engagement on localisation with government/policy makers and donors?
- In your opinion, what are the challenges/barriers to enhance localisation efforts aside from your engagement with (Tamkeen/Initiate)? What do you propose to mitigate these challenges?

### **E. Accountability to Local Community**

- How are the communities you serve involved in your project design, implementation, and follow up on any provided feedback or complaints?
- How do you ensure they know their rights and see how their feedback influences programming?
- Do you feed community perspectives into broader conversations beyond your organisation (e.g. coordination, advocacy)? If so, how?
- What are the existing complaints and feedback mechanisms in the community you serve?

## Case Study Guide (4). Members of Coordination Platforms (Focus Group Interviews)

### A. Donors Relationships

- How would you describe the relationship/engagement between your organisation and CSOs network and the Localisation Task Force in general? Can you provide specific examples?
- Has this engagement resulted in long term partnership? How do you evaluate this partnership? Provide examples? For both CSOs network and the Localisation Task Force
- Has the CSOs national network been able to influence donors' strategic decisions? If yes, how? Provide examples? If not, what are the reasons for this in your opinion? What about the localisation task force (Same questions)
- Does your interaction with the CSOs national network help shift members' power? What kind of power are we talking about – decision-making, agenda-setting, resource control? Have you or your members been able to influence what donors fund, or shape policies, response plans, or localisation strategies? In which sectors or coordination spaces has this occurred? What would need to happen for this power shift to become more substantial? If you haven't seen a shift in power, why do you think that is the case? What about the localisation task force (Same questions)
- If you are familiar with the RDPP approach, what added value can RDPP provide to strengthen your relationship with Networks/donors, and to enhance localisation efforts?

### B. Funding

- How have donors involved CSOs in funding decisions (themes, risk-sharing, co-design)? What about the Localisation Task Force role?
- Has the CSOs network influenced what donors chose to fund collectively across members? What about the Localisation Task Force role?
- Does the CSOs network receivedirectfundingorchannelfunding from members? How sustainable is this model? What about the Localisation Task Force role?
- Have you been informed about any other decision making?
- Can you share a recent funding engagement with different donors and explain whether it supported coordination roles, core staff, or communication?
- What added value can RDPP provide to strengthen funding opportunities for local networks and localisation task force to enhance localisation efforts?

### C. Capacity Strengthening for Leadership

- Has the National CSOs Network supported your coordination capacity or leadership development? What about localisation task force role?
- Are there governance structures within the National CSOs Network to build representation and assure rotation among members? What about localisation task force structure?

- What is the objective of capacity strengthening efforts within the National CSOs Network? What areas do you recommend focusing on (e.g., coordination, leadership, technical skills, representation)? What about the localisation task force?
- What are the capacity strengthening areas that the National CSOs Network need to focus on to enhance localisation efforts? What about the localisation task force?
- What added value can RDPP provide to strengthen capacity opportunities for local networks?

#### **D. Localisation and Policy Influence/Advocacy**

- Has the National CSOs Network participated in key decision-making forums (e.g. LCRP, clusters)? Were your positions adopted or reflected in outcomes? What about the localisation task force?
- Are there time-bound plans to transition cluster/platform leadership roles to local networks? Are donors aligning funding with that?
- Has CSOs Network led or co-authored policy papers, advocacy statements, or joint calls to action? shaping proposals and collective planning? What about the localisation task force?
- From your perspective, what is still needed to make the CSOs network stronger and better equipped to have a meaningful voice in national and global spaces – such as the Global Refugee Forum, response plans, or locally developed strategies?
- How do you evaluate the CSOs Network engagement with government/policy makers as a network? What about the localisation task force?
- How does the CSOs Network influence your engagement on localisation with government/policy makers and donors? What about the localisation task force role?

#### **E. Accountability to Local Community**

- How does CSOs Network remain accountable to its members in relation to localisation efforts? Have you participated in developing tools, strategies, or principles to assess the effectiveness of network efforts on localisation? How is accountability defined, by whom, and to whom you are accountable? How do you communicate and evaluate your accountability commitments? What about the localisation task force?
- How do you ensure community perspectives and the civil society actors are represented in coordination and response strategies at national or regional levels?
- If there hasn't been much work on accountability within the CSOs Network, what are the reasons behind that? What about the localisation task force?
- Based on the recent emergency response (based on context of Lebanon and Jordan), how you evaluate the engagement of local actors compared to international NGOs efforts to respond to the immediate needs\_ how this is different than the work in development?

# References

- ACAPS. (2025). *Country Analysis Jordan*.
- Apollo, A., & Mbah, M. (2022). Engaging local youths in humanitarian response is not a matter of if but how. *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*, *7*(10).
- Bank, A., & Fröhlich, C. (2021). The governance of Syrian refugees in the Middle East: Lessons from the Jordan and Lebanon Compacts: Special Issue (SI) of *Digest of Middle East Studies*, ed. by Kelsey Norman: Contribution to "Taking Stock of Middle East Migration since the Arab Uprisings." *Digest of Middle East Studies*, *30*(4), 256–261.
- Barnett, M. (2011). *A History of Humanitarianism*. Cornell University Press.
- Brumat, L., Geddes, A., & Pettrachin, A. (2021). Making Sense of the Global: A Systematic Review of Globalizing and Localising Dynamics in Refugee Governance. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *35*(2), 827–848.
- El-Abed, O., Najdi, W., & Hoshmand, M. (2023). Patterns of refugees' organization amid protracted displacement: An understanding from Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, *11*(1), 109–124.
- Hilhorst, D., & Jansen, B. (2010). Humanitarian Space as Arena: A Perspective on the Everyday Politics of Aid. *Development and Change*, *41*(6), 1117–1139.
- Lassen, L., Yurtaslan, A.-K. O., & Shquier, M. (2022). *Localisation of Aid in Jordan and Lebanon: A Longitudinal Qualitative Study*. NCG.
- McGrath, M., Kurt, G., Davis, E., Lekkeh, S. A., Beetar, A., Mozumder, M. K., Almeamari, F., Rosenbaum, S., & Wells, R. (2025). The localisation of humanitarian response to conflict and displacement: A scoping review from a health systems perspective. *BMJ Global Health*, *10*(9), e018331.
- OCHA. (2021). *Syria factsheet* (No. OCHA reliefweb).
- OECD. (2025). Global inspirations, local transformations. *OECD Local Development Forum 2025 Annual Meeting*.
- RDPP. (2022). *Regional Development and Protection Program Jordan and Lebanon (RDPP III) 2023–2026 Program Document* (Nos. 2022–7589).
- Robillard, S., Jean, I., Gingerich, T., Mejía, C. E., Farfan, L. B., Grisgraber, D., Joseph, T., & Maxwell, D. (2020). *Anchored in Local Reality: Case Studies on Local Humanitarian Action from Haiti, Colombia, and Iraq*.

Shuayb, M., Samhoury, O. A., Nehme, N., & Brun, C. (2024). *The Role of the Civil Society in Shaping Education Change in Lebanon*.

Tsourapas, G. (2019). The Syrian refugee crisis and foreign policy decision-making in Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 4(4), 464–481.

UNHCR. (2024). *Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2024*.

Wilkinson, O., Logo, K. H., Tomalin, Emma, Anthony, W. L., De Wold, F., & Kurien, A. (2022). Faith in localisation? The experiences of local faith actors engaging with the international humanitarian system in South Sudan. *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*, 7(4).