

LOCALISATION CASE STUDIES

Case studies prepared by national and international organisations to share their experiences of consciously promoting locally led humanitarian action through equitable partnerships. These case studies were prepared as part of efforts to raise awareness of [DG ECHO's localisation guidance note](#) published in March 2023. The examples shared in these case studies are funded by a range of different donors.

Strengthening response, resilience and organisational self-sufficiency through localisation

This case study shares details of a programme which focused on enhancing local partner and communities' disaster response capabilities, but has also supported local communities to take charge of their own resilience and well-being and included organisational self-sufficiency and the creation of financial reservoirs for rapid disaster response.

Background



JOHANNITER

Johanniter International Assistance (JUH) in Kenya commenced its operations during the devastating drought crisis of 2011, providing immediate humanitarian aid to nomadic communities. In collaboration with partner organisations, JUH then expanded its assistance, with a mission is to help communities to survive with dignity, reduce vulnerability and enhance resilience during and after humanitarian crises. We focus on healthcare, water, sanitation, hygiene, emergency response, nutrition, and livelihood strengthening. Our commitment to accountability and transparency is unwavering, with ongoing improvements to decision-making processes, quality standards as well as regular audits to ensure professionalism.



MID-P engaging with women on the CVA project

Johanniter in Kenya recognises the role of local partners in contributing to impact based programming as local actors have a greater understanding of the context, social and community dynamics as well as relevant structures for implementing projects. Since Johanniter began its interventions in Kenya, it has supported the capacity strengthening of four local partners in the areas of programme management, procurement, communication and monitoring and evaluation for mutual benefit as well as higher quality programming.

¹ DG ECHO's guidance note [Promoting Equitable Partnerships with Local Responders in Humanitarian Settings](#), March 2023

Our Localisation Approach

Between December 2020 and July 2023, Johanniter implemented *the Fanikisha Kukabili Janga* (Improving the First Responder Sector in Kenya) and Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) projects together with three local implementing partners. The CVA project was designed in response to the severe drought that had been occasioned by a failure of rainfall over five seasons, while the First Responder project aimed to improve the internal capacities of local and national NGOs in order to effectively respond to disasters as well as alleviate the suffering occasioned by the drought.

JUH's local partners - Rural Community Development Agency (RACIDA), Merti Integrated Development Programme (MID-P) and St. John's Ambulance Kenya - directly implemented the *Fanikisha Kukabili Janga* project (First Responder project) in five counties (Embu, Kiambu, Nairobi, Mandera, and Isiolo) in a consortium approach with RACIDA being the lead partner.

Additionally, JUH in partnership with MID-P implemented a CVA project in Merti Sub County, Isiolo which provided cash and voucher assistance to 400 vulnerable households, who were grappling with the severe effects of the drought. The project fostered community engagement and empowerment by establishing 42 local food voucher committees, thereby ensuring community-led distribution and accountability. The communities participated in the identification and engagement of nine community food vendors for the food distribution process contributing to the programme's success and integrity.

The organisations worked closely with County Government Ministries and Departments, national agencies including the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), the National Transport and Safety Authority (NTSA), the National Disaster Operation Centre (NDOC), the County Steering Groups (CSG) and various line ministries. For purposes of influencing and advocacy, the organisations embedded their work in Civil Society Organisation platforms such as the Northern Frontier Alliance and the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) Stakeholders' Forum.

The engagement with government agencies was instrumental in strengthening the coordination of disaster response (drought and road accidents). This collaboration also led to policy undertakings as showcased by the engagement St. John's Ambulance had with the NTSA, which led to a mapping of accidents hotspots in Embu, Nairobi and Kiambu counties for strengthened response to such incidences by key stakeholders.

The First Responder project was also instrumental in improving disaster preparedness and awareness at community level. The JUH-led consortium built the capacities of community members and their structures to respond to disasters i.e., St. John's Ambulance was able to train more than 80 motorbike taxi operators in first aid to improve their response to road accidents. St John volunteers play a critical role in the provision of immediate emergency response after small and medium-scale road traffic accidents along the major highways. In 2022, St John volunteers stationed at the Emergency Care Centres responded to 852 car accidents and other incidents.

The volunteers provided emergency first aid to a total of 1,828 victims (1,561 were road traffic accident victims, which accounted for 8.1% of all road accident victims). The project also trained more than 100 social auditors, a collective of community members who are trained to utilise community-led research approaches in tracking implementation of public policies and the utilisation of public funds, in Nairobi and Kiambu counties. In addition, 60 St. John volunteers were trained in first aid then placed at Emergency Care Centres housed in shipping containers strategically located along major roads.



Motorcycle riders receiving first aid training

To ensure project sustainability Johanniter focuses on strengthening the internal capacities of its local partners through intentional trainings targeting fundraising, communications and project cycle management skills. According to Mr. Fred Majiwa, Head of Programmes at RACIDA, “the localisation agenda has been a game changer as it has helped local organisations, such as RACIDA, to improve our technical capacity which is very vital in humanitarian work. Through the Fanikisha Project, RACIDA staff were taken through a series of trainings with the aim of improving their capacity to respond to disasters in a swift manner. The trainings included fundraising, communication, monitoring and evaluation as well as project management. Furthermore, the Fanikisha Project enabled RACIDA to set up a Fundraising and Monitoring and Evaluation department which did not exist before the project.” From MID-P, Mr. Tepo shared the profound effect that setting up of the fundraising department has had in the organisation: “Through the funding from BMZ in partnership with Johanniter, MID-P has been able to recruit a fundraising officer who has set up the department within the organisation. Through this, MID-P has been able to secure KES. 187,766,127 (1,155,888 EUR) which has the potential to make transformational change for the communities the organisation serves as well as sustaining the organisation on a sound financial footing.”

The *Fanikisha Kukabili Janga* project went a step further to support three organisations in instituting and strengthening their internal fundraising mechanisms. The organisations were funded to establish an income generating mechanism to ensure the availability of own funds to support internal structures but also enable the activation of a rapid response to disasters in case they occurred within their geographic areas of focus. Mr. Majiwa stated, “Through the Fanikisha Project, Johanniter was able to aid RACIDA to construct the Rhamu conference facility. In addition, RACIDA was provided with additional funds to furnish the conference facility with seats, projector and the projector screen which are crucial when the conference facility is being hired. RACIDA felt that the intervention was very useful and important as the funds acquired from the conference facility were used to pay the salary for the Fundraising Officer and Monitoring and

Evaluation Officer. Additionally, some income from the conference facility was used to fund the county disaster coordination meeting in Rhamu where the agenda was to discuss the responsiveness of different agencies to disasters within the county.”

Lessons learnt from projects on Localisation

- The value of coordination with local partners in disaster management/disaster risk reduction cannot be understated. JUH’s partnership with local organisations has played a pivotal role in prioritising funding for coordination mechanisms within projects. The strengthening of coordination mechanisms has not only led to increased pro-activeness in response to adapting to community needs but has also improved the efficacy of the response infrastructure.
- In the CVA project, Johanniter and its implementing partner ensured the meaningful inclusion of women in decision making, which strengthened the localisation approach. Through our partnership with local organisations, JUH was able to harness the power of cash programming, addressing women's immediate needs while amplifying their voices within existing community structures.
- Localisation works best when there is an intentional purpose to strengthening the operational capacities of the local partners. By collaborating closely with these organisations, JUH has enabled them to develop income-generating initiatives, ultimately contributing to their self-sufficiency and the creation of financial reservoirs for rapid disaster response within their operational areas. This success story is a testament to the transformative impact of localisation, which has not only enhanced local partner and communities’ disaster response capabilities but has also empowered local communities to take charge of their own resilience and well-being.

Lessons learnt from partnership challenges with the local partners

- From Johanniter’s perspective, one significant challenge in fostering effective partnerships and localisation efforts is the varying capacity and operational gaps within local organisations. All four local organisations that JUH Kenya worked with had different levels of technical expertise, funding and infrastructure making it challenging to provide tailored support.
- JUH’s local partners felt that it is important for INGOs and donors to ensure that they support the internal capacities of the local organisations to operate more efficiently. Most of the time, the local partners work with multiple international organisations that do not always invest in developing the workforce necessary to deliver on the designed projects.
- Johanniter experienced some coordination and communication challenges with the local partners, especially related to their perception of JUH’s partnership approach. Some of the local partners viewed JUH as a donor and not as an implementing partner *per se*. This narrative affected how the communities perceived and worked with Johanniter.
- Local partners believed that learning was one-way and not mutual. JUH recognises that there was more that it could have learnt from the local partners and will look to implement joint feedback mechanisms.
- Power imbalances between international organisations and local partners can hinder meaningful collaboration. Local partners may feel overshadowed, affecting decision-making processes and resource allocation. Johanniter recognises these power imbalances (addressing Power and Privilege is part of Johanniter’s Nine Leadership Guiding Principles)

therefore takes steps to actively monitor the process of project design and implementation to ensure equal participation in the decision-making process by local partners.

- The local organisations are overly reliant on external funding from international partners, making them vulnerable if funding priorities change or diminish. This is one reason why Johanniter included activities focused on supporting the strengthening of partners' fundraising capacities.

Recommendations

- There is a critical need for a more purposeful intention to strengthen internal capacities and systems of local organisations in order for them to become agile and efficient in offering timely and appropriate humanitarian aid. This support can include training, skill development and infrastructure improvement, empowering local partners to become more self-sufficient and effective collaborators.
- Establishing clear and efficient communication channels, regular meetings, and feedback mechanisms is essential for bridging language and cultural gaps. This ensures that all parties involved are well-informed and working together toward common goals.
- To address power imbalances, local partners should be actively involved in decision-making processes. Encouraging their participation in project planning, implementation, and evaluation can help level the playing field and create partnerships that are more equitable. To enhance the sustainability of local organizations, it is important to support them in diversifying their funding sources. This can be achieved through grant application assistance, networking opportunities, and the development of fundraising strategies.
- A long-term commitment to relationship building with local partners is vital. Consistency and reliability are crucial for building trust and ensuring successful partnerships. Multi-year funding can help ensure the sustainability of projects. Additionally, implementing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms is key to assessing the impact of partnerships and localisation efforts. Regular assessments can help identify challenges early on and aid in making necessary adjustments for improved collaboration.
- Lastly, involving local communities, especially the most vulnerable, in the partnership and localisation process is critical. Their input and feedback are essential for shaping effective disaster response and localization strategies. By addressing these challenges and implementing these recommendations, partnerships and localisation efforts can thrive, ultimately leading to more effective and sustainable disaster response initiatives.

Conclusion

The efficacy of localisation as a concept cannot be overemphasised. As Mr. Molu Tepo said: "These efforts in strengthening the capacity of MID-P through the partnership with Johanniter and other partners is the true spirit of localization. The country is just recovering from one of the worst droughts in 40 years. Livelihoods have been disrupted. Looking at it from a compounded angle, the effects of climate change are likely to make the recovery even tougher. This period will be challenging; hence, the more reason for local organisations to have their capacities strengthened in order to offer timely and effective responses."

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