

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.

Trócaire: Leadership of Women-Led Organisations in Humanitarian Action

This case study introduces the experience of two women-led organisations in Somalia and South Sudan, which through the support, conscious changing of organisational behaviours and then the stepping back of its international partner, were able to contribute to increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian system by challenging the traditional under-representation of women in formal leadership and decision-making roles.



Introduction

Local women led organisations² with intimate understanding of the local context are ever-present before, throughout and after increasingly protracted and often forgotten crises as the presence, focus and capacity of international actors ebb and flow in response to the attention of back donors, media and political leaders. Despite this, and long-stated ambitions for greater equity, diversity and inclusion, women led organisations remain under-represented in formal leadership roles in the decision making and coordination architecture of the humanitarian system.

In Somalia and South Sudan, this lack of representation is underpinned by socio-cultural and resource barriers faced by women leaders and their organisations. Women leaders and women led organisations in the two countries work in the context of societies characterised by patriarchal sociocultural values that foster inequality in gender power relations, confining women to domestic functions and minimising their voice in decision-making processes. Such structural inequality is mirrored in the humanitarian system where resources and power are centred with UN agencies and INGOs that tend to overlook the knowledge, skills, reach and often unseen influence of women led organisations.

Women led organisations in Somalia and South Sudan

In this context, [Active in Development Aid \(ADA\)](#) in Gedo in Somalia and [Women for Change \(WFC\)](#) in Warrap in South Sudan have broken new ground. Both women-led organisations (WLOs) assumed leadership roles in 2022, coordinating and co-chairing state-level Gender-

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

² In line with the Gender Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR) Strategy (2021-2025), this project uses the term Women Led Organisations to refer to organisations that meet the Grand Bargain localisation workstream definitions of both Women Led Organisations *and* Women's Rights Organisations.

Based Violence (GBV) working groups. The progression of both organisations to these leadership roles was supported by partnership with Trócaire and the Gender Based Violence (GBV) Area of Responsibility (AoR)³, with funding from the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA).

This project recognised that local women-led organisations are rooted in communities, are most affected by the problems they seek to address and are instrumental in driving transformational change. Central to this project was a participatory feminist action research process which acknowledged and leveraged the extensive knowledge, expertise and

priorities of ADA and WFC. This approach fostered a collaborative environment based on equitable partnership between ADA and Trócaire and between WFC and Trócaire and CAFOD, with whom Trócaire implements a joint programme in South Sudan. The GBV AoR facilitated with initiatives specific to the state level GBV working groups.



WFC Protection Assistant Dorothy Luba leading a community consultation session in Kapuri Payam, Central Equatoria State, South Sudan. Photo Credit: Stephen Moro/WFC

Steps to success in Somalia and South Sudan

Key initiatives in these projects included:

- Tailored training and mentorship of ADA and WFC based on their priorities as civil society organisations, GBV service providers and coordinators of GBV sub-clusters, facilitated by Trócaire;
- Equitable sharing of the projects' Indirect Cost Recovery between ADA, WFC, Trócaire and CAFOD. The distribution of ICR was proportionate to each partner's grant amount;
- Budget allocation in the project grants to ADA and WFC to cover the often-unrecognised cost of staff time, travel and other related expenses;
- Peer-to-peer support through a global platform for women led organisations in leadership roles in the cluster system, facilitated by Trócaire and the GBV AoR;
- Leadership space created within the state level GBV working groups, in coordination with the GBV AOR. In Gedo, Somalia, Trócaire ceded its position, while in South Sudan, the GBV AOR facilitated in creating this leadership space.

³ The Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR) is the global-level forum for coordination and collaboration on GBV prevention and response and advancing risk mitigation in humanitarian settings under the Cluster System. A focus area within the Global Protection Cluster, it works to strengthen system-wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to humanitarian crises, bringing together non-governmental organisations, United Nations agencies, academics and others under the shared objective of ensuring lifesaving, predictable, accountable and effective action on GBV.



ADA staff Fahmo Shire Abdi, delivering a child nutrition education session for mothers in El Wak District, Gedo, Somalia. Photo credit: ADA

These leadership roles in state level working groups were turning points for both ADA and WFC, strengthening their technical and financial capacity in coordination functions, as well as building visibility and opportunity to influence the wider humanitarian system. ADA became a member of an advisory group for a USAID-funded project on GBV and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS). WFC now co-chairs the localisation working group of the South Sudan NGO Forum and was involved in the review of the Humanitarian Response Plan in 2023.

The partnership of Trócaire with ADA, and Trócaire and CAFOD with WFC continues, as the UNFPA-BHA funded phase 2 of the programme. The funding contributes to further strengthening the leadership and organisational resilience of WFC and ADA.

Lessons learned for the humanitarian system

There were broader key learnings for the humanitarian system too, notably:

- The opportunity to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the humanitarian system by recognising, acknowledging, complementing and enabling the capacities of women led organisations.
- The value of shifting interpretation of capacity sharing from a top-down, discriminatory, and even colonial process that is project focused to a process that is continuous, enhances the capacity of *all* members of a partnership to understand how they can better - both individually and collectively - enable transformation of the humanitarian system, and where the value of capacity is determined not by its origin or scale, but rather by how it best contributes to the lives of people affected by crisis.
- The importance of the wider humanitarian system building its understanding of GBV coordination mechanisms and leveraging its influence to promote the meaningful participation, voice and leadership of women led organisations in decision making.
- The demand, and indeed responsibility, of actors within the humanitarian system to better understand, anticipate and dismantle systemic barriers - whether technical, cultural, political or financial - to equitable participation by women led organisations.
- The role of Trócaire and the GBV AoR in enabling and promoting leadership by ADA and WFC was to cede, promote and maintain access to decision making spaces and support our partners to navigate the barriers they encountered in GBV coordination structures. This is not an ad hoc opportunistic function but is one sustained by a holistic approach to

partner centred institutional capacity strengthening and resource mobilisation to protect and enhance partner sustainability beyond the life of this project.

A key outcome of this project was the development of the [Women-Led Organisations' Leadership in GBV Coordination Resource Package](#).

Case study prepared by Trócaire
Funded by DG ECHO and supported by Groupe URD
2024

