

WHAT IS LOCALISATION?

The Grand Bargain has brought localisation to the forefront of policy discussions between stakeholders in international humanitarian action, though the notion of empowering local responders is not particularly new.² Still, there is no single agreed definition of the term.

In the context of the Grand Bargain, “localisation” has mainly been used to refer to increasing international investment in the capacity, delivery and leadership of local responders. The text of the Grand Bargain calls for ‘making principled action as local as possible and as international as necessary’ while continuing to recognise the vital role of international actors, in particular in situations of armed conflict.

Local actors in the Pacific (government, national societies and local and national NGOs) developed their own definition of localisation as ‘a process of recognising, respecting and strengthening the independence of leadership and decision making by national actors in humanitarian action, in order to better address the needs of the affected population.’³ The global NGO network ICVA, defines localisation as the ‘process through which a diverse range of humanitarian actors are attempting, each in their own way, to ensure local and national actors are better engaged in the planning, delivery and accountability of humanitarian action, while still ensuring humanitarian needs can be met swiftly, effectively and in a principled manner.’⁴

In a narrow sense, localisation can be seen as strengthening the role of local actors in the context of international aid, with the goal of reducing costs and increasing the reach of humanitarian action. In a broader sense, it can be viewed as a way of re-conceiving of the humanitarian sector from the bottom up; recognizing that the overwhelming majority of humanitarian assistance is already provided by local actors.

2. For example, the 2013 [Missed Opportunities](#) report built the case for strengthening national and local partnership-based humanitarian responses and called for ‘a more balanced humanitarian system where local actors take their place alongside international actors, with a shift of power towards locally-owned and led response.’ Key initiatives that followed which support localisation include Charter for Change, INGO Accountability Charter, UN’s New Way of Working, and the Less Paper More Aid.

3. Australian Red Cross, [Going Local: Achieving a more appropriate and fit-for-purpose humanitarian ecosystem in the Pacific](https://www.redcross.org.au/getmedia/fa37f8eb-51e7-4ecd-ba2f-d1587574d6d5/ARC-Localisation-report-Electronic-301017.pdf.aspx), <https://www.redcross.org.au/getmedia/fa37f8eb-51e7-4ecd-ba2f-d1587574d6d5/ARC-Localisation-report-Electronic-301017.pdf.aspx>, October 2017

4. Localisation Examined: An ICVA Briefing Paper, September 2018 http://media.ifrc.org/grand_bargain_localisation/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2019/03/ICVA-Localization-Explained-Briefing-Paper.pdf