

Terms of Reference (Draft)

Consultant to Develop a Localisation Strategy for the Humanitarian Country Team in South Sudan

Last Updated: 13th April 2026

1. Background

The humanitarian situation in South Sudan remains one of the most complex and protracted globally, shaped by cycles of armed conflict, intercommunal violence, mass displacement, climate-induced shocks, chronic food insecurity, and deep structural governance and development challenges. These compounding vulnerabilities continue to drive acute humanitarian needs, with millions of people requiring sustained life-saving assistance and protection services across the country.

Humanitarian response in South Sudan is delivered through a diverse and multi-layered system of actors, including United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), national NGOs (NNGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), faith-based actors, and government institutions. These actors operate under the strategic and coordination framework of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), supported by cluster coordination mechanisms and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Despite the scale of response, coordination, resource distribution, and decision-making power remain largely concentrated among international actors.

In this context, localisation has emerged as a central pillar of global humanitarian reform. Through commitments under the Grand Bargain (2016), humanitarian actors pledged to increase the leadership, participation, and direct financing of local and national responders. These commitments were reinforced by subsequent global policy shifts, including the InterAgency Standing Committee (IASC) guidance on localisation and the Emergency Relief Coordinator's "humanitarian reset," which emphasizes the urgency of translating localisation from policy intent into measurable operational practice.

In South Sudan, progress toward localisation has been gradual and uneven. While there have been incremental improvements in partnership models, capacity strengthening initiatives, and limited increases in direct funding to national actors, the humanitarian system remains highly internationalized. Local and national organizations continue to face structural barriers including limited access to predictable funding, constrained participation in high-level coordination and decision-making platforms, capacity gaps, restrictive compliance requirements, and elevated operational risks.

The South Sudan NGO Forum, representing both national and international NGOs, is therefore supporting the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) in the development of a comprehensive National Localisation Strategy. This initiative builds on recommendations from the 2022

Emergency Directors' mission to South Sudan and subsequent commitments by humanitarian partners to strengthen equitable partnerships and enhance national leadership in humanitarian response.

The proposed strategy seeks to establish a shared and context-specific understanding of localisation in South Sudan, while providing a practical framework for implementation. It aims to strengthen the role of national and local actors across all phases of humanitarian action, including assessment, coordination, implementation, and monitoring.

Specifically, the localisation strategy is expected to contribute to the following strategic shifts:

- Establishing a shared and contextually grounded definition of localisation in South Sudan.
- Promoting more equitable, transparent, and accountable partnerships between international and national actors.
- Strengthening the leadership and meaningful participation of national NGOs and CSOs in coordination and decision-making structures.
- Increasing predictable and direct funding flows to local and national organisations.
- Enhancing institutional capacity, sustainability, and resilience of local actors in humanitarian response.

The strategy is also intended to support improved alignment between humanitarian response frameworks and broader national development priorities, including efforts toward peacebuilding, governance strengthening, and community resilience.

Given the complexity of the operating environment characterized by insecurity, climate shocks, weak infrastructure, and limited state service delivery the localisation agenda in South Sudan requires a carefully balanced approach that ensures humanitarian principles are upheld while progressively shifting leadership, resources, and accountability closer to affected populations.

To support this process, the South Sudan NGO Forum seeks to recruit a qualified national or international consultant to lead the development of a comprehensive, evidence-based, and consultative localisation strategy, including an actionable implementation roadmap and monitoring framework for endorsement by the HCT.

2. Purpose of the Consultancy.

The overarching purpose of this consultancy is to develop a context-specific, evidence-based, and action-oriented Localisation Strategy for South Sudan. This strategy will encompass a practical implementation roadmap and a robust monitoring, accountability, and learning framework. The assignment is designed to translate global and regional localisation commitments into an operational, measurable, and contextually grounded framework, thereby strengthening the effectiveness, equity, and sustainability of the humanitarian response system within South Sudan.

This consultancy will be meticulously informed by a comprehensive and inclusive consultative process. This process will engage a diverse array of key stakeholders across the humanitarian

and development ecosystem, including, but not limited to, relevant Government of South Sudan institutions, donor agencies, United Nations agencies, international NGOs (INGOs), national NGOs (NNGOs), civil society organisations (CSOs), community-based organisations, and other pertinent coordination and implementing partners. This inclusive approach will ensure that the resulting strategy accurately reflects diverse perspectives, lived experiences, and operational realities across various levels of the humanitarian system.

Specifically, the consultancy will aim to achieve the following objectives:

- **Define a Shared and Context-Specific Vision:** Articulate a clear and shared vision for localisation in South Sudan, ensuring clarity on key concepts, guiding principles, and strategic priorities that harmonize global commitments with local realities.
- **Strengthen National Leadership and Participation:** Identify strategic priorities and delineate practical, scalable actions to enhance the leadership, agency, and meaningful participation of national and local actors throughout all stages of the humanitarian programme cycle, encompassing preparedness, coordination, response, and recovery.
- **Increase Direct and Quality Funding:** Propose practical and scalable mechanisms designed to increase direct, predictable, and quality funding streams to local and national organisations. This includes advocating for reforms to existing partnership modalities, optimizing funding channels, and establishing equitable risk-sharing arrangements.
- **Enhance Coordination and Partnership Frameworks:** Strengthen existing coordination and partnership frameworks to foster more equitable, transparent, and mutually accountable relationships between international and national actors within the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) architecture and the broader humanitarian coordination system.
- **Establish Monitoring, Accountability, and Learning Framework:** Develop comprehensive monitoring, accountability, and learning (MAL) framework to systematically track progress on localisation commitments, measure performance against agreed indicators, and facilitate adaptive learning and continuous improvement initiatives.

3. Objectives of the Consultancy

The overall objective of this consultancy is to generate a comprehensive, evidence-based understanding of the current state of localisation within the humanitarian response in South Sudan and translate this analysis into a practical, contextually relevant, and implementable localisation strategy. The assignment is designed to strengthen the leadership, participation, and resourcing of national and local actors in line with global humanitarian reform commitments and the operational realities of South Sudan.

Specifically, the consultant will:

- **Assess the current state of localisation within South Sudan's humanitarian system,** including the extent of national and local actor participation in coordination mechanisms, decision-making structures, and programme implementation.

- Generate robust primary and secondary evidence through structured data collection methods, including key informant interviews, stakeholder consultations, and document review, with a focus on funding flows, partnership modalities, and capacity strengthening initiatives.
- Analyze systemic barriers, risks, and opportunities affecting the leadership, effectiveness, and sustainability of national and local NGOs, including institutional, financial, regulatory, and operational constraints within humanitarian architecture.
- Develop a context-specific localisation strategy that is fully aligned with global humanitarian commitments, including the Grand Bargain, the humanitarian reset agenda, and relevant Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidance, while remaining responsive to local needs and realities in South Sudan.
- Formulate clear, actionable, and prioritized recommendations, including a phased implementation roadmap and practical mechanisms for strengthening equitable partnerships, increasing direct and quality funding to local actors, and enhancing coordination and accountability frameworks.

In addition, the consultancy will ensure that **cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, social inclusion, youth participation, and protection of marginalized groups are mainstreamed** throughout the analysis and recommendations, with particular attention to the differentiated experiences and capacities of women-led organisations, youth groups, and community-based structures operating in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

4. Stakeholders and Intended Use

The consultant is responsible for ensuring that the localisation strategy is evidence-based, inclusive, and widely owned by all relevant stakeholders across the humanitarian system in South Sudan.

Specifically, the consultant will:

- Map and analyze stakeholders across the humanitarian ecosystem, including government institutions, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), UN agencies, INGOs, NNGOs, CBOs, donors, private sector actors, NGO networks, and community groups, identifying their roles, influence, and interests in localisation.
- Design and implement an inclusive stakeholder engagement plan that ensures meaningful participation of national and local actors, particularly women-led organizations, youth groups, and marginalized communities.
- Facilitate structured stakeholder consultations through key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and multi-stakeholder workshops at national and sub-national levels.
- Gather and synthesize stakeholder perspectives on key localisation issues, including barriers, opportunities, dynamics of partnership, funding access, and coordination challenges.
- Ensure validation and consensus-building by presenting preliminary findings to stakeholders and incorporating their feedback into the strategy.
- Promote participatory and conflict-sensitive approaches, ensuring transparency, ethical data collection, and inclusion of affected communities in shaping recommendations.

- Align stakeholder inputs with the intended use of the consultancy outputs, ensuring that findings directly inform:
 - NGO Forum and HCT decision-making
 - Policy and strategy development
 - Donor engagement and funding reforms
 - System-wide coordination and accountability mechanisms
- Document and report on stakeholder engagement outcomes, including key insights, priorities, and agreed actions, to strengthen ownership and uptake of the localisation strategy.

5. Scope of work and Methodology

1. Strategic Objective and Core Mandate

The consultant is tasked with undertaking a rigorous, mixed-methods, participatory, and gender-responsive assignment to generate a robust evidence base. The ultimate goal is to develop a practical, context-driven localisation strategy that is credible, inclusive, and operationally relevant. This strategy must directly inform decision-making within the NGO Forum and Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), guide policy development, influence donor engagement, and strengthen system-wide coordination and accountability mechanisms.

2. Integrated Scope of Work

The consultant will deliver a series of interrelated tasks structured across several core components, ensuring a seamless flow from research to strategy formulation.

2.1. Foundational Research and Context Analysis

The assignment begins with a comprehensive desk review of national and global frameworks, including humanitarian response plans, HCT guidance, donor policies, prior localisation studies, and evaluation reports. This foundational step establishes a baseline understanding of localisation progress, gaps, and trends in South Sudan, while benchmarking against comparable contexts and global best practices.

2.2. Stakeholder Mapping and Inclusive Engagement

A critical component is the mapping and analysis of stakeholders across the humanitarian ecosystem. The consultant must identify the roles, influence, and interests of government institutions, HCT, UN agencies, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), National Non-Governmental Organizations (NNGOs), Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), donors, private sector actors, NGO networks, and community groups.

Following this analysis, the consultant will design and implement an inclusive stakeholder engagement plan. This plan must prioritize the meaningful participation of national and local actors, with specific mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of women-led organizations, youth groups, and marginalized communities.

2.3. Primary Data Collection and Consultations

The consultant will design and deploy structured qualitative and quantitative tools to collect primary data on funding flows, partnership modalities, operational constraints, organizational capacity, and risk-sharing practices. Data must be systematically disaggregated by gender, geography, sector, and organizational maturity.

This data collection will be driven by multi-modal consultations (MM4), including:

- Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): In-depth interviews with a representative crosssection of stakeholders to explore decision-making processes, incentives, barriers to localisation, and opportunities for reform.
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Workshops: Facilitated sessions at national and sub-national levels to gather diverse perspectives and ensure broad ownership.

2.4. Localisation Landscape Assessment

Data gathered from the desk review and field engagements will be synthesized to assess key dimensions of the localisation landscape. The consultant will analyze funding flows to national actors, participation in coordination mechanisms, partnership models and power dynamics, capacity strengthening efforts, and structural barriers versus enabling opportunities.

2.5. Strategy Development and Validation

Based on the synthesized evidence, the consultant will develop a comprehensive, actionoriented localisation strategy aligned with operational realities. This strategy will include strategic priorities, a clear and sequenced implementation roadmap, and a monitoring, evaluation, and accountability framework with measurable indicators.

To ensure validation and consensus-building, the consultant will present preliminary findings to the NGO Forum, HCT, and other stakeholders. Feedback from these validation workshops will be integrated into the final strategy, fostering consensus and ownership before the submission of the refined, high-quality final report.

3. Methodological Framework

The consultancy will apply a blended methodological framework combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to ensure rigor and inclusiveness.

Methodology Component	Description
Mixed-Methods Research	Integration of desk review, surveys, interviews, and consultations to triangulate findings and enhance reliability.
Participatory Approach	Active engagement of stakeholders at all stages to ensure ownership, inclusivity, and practical relevance.

Gender-Responsive & Inclusive Analysis	Systematic disaggregation of data and targeted engagement with women, youth, and marginalized groups.
Comparative Benchmarking	Drawing lessons from global localisation models and comparable humanitarian contexts.
Field-Based Validation	Targeted field visits (where feasible) to capture ground-level realities and validate findings.
Conflict-Sensitive & Ethical Practice	Ensuring "do no harm," confidentiality, transparency, and culturally appropriate engagement throughout the process.

4. Documentation and Reporting

Throughout the assignment, the consultant must document and report comprehensively on all stakeholder engagement outcomes. This includes capturing key insights, identified priorities, and agreed actions. Robust documentation is essential to strengthen ownership, facilitate the uptake of the localisation strategy, and ensure that the findings directly support the intended systemic improvements.

6. Expected Deliverables

The consultancy will produce a series of high-quality, evidence-based deliverables that guide the development and implementation of the localisation strategy for South Sudan. All outputs must be clearly written, analytically rigorous, and supported by credible evidence. Furthermore, all collected data must be systematically disaggregated by gender and other relevant variables to ensure inclusivity and depth of analysis.

The consultant is expected to deliver the following key outputs:

1. Inception Phase Deliverables

- **Inception Report:** A comprehensive document outlining the consultant's understanding of the assignment. This report must detail the proposed methodology, a clear work plan with timelines, and a robust stakeholder consultation plan. It should also include the initial stakeholder mapping and the finalized data collection tools (e.g., interview guides, survey questionnaires).

2. Research and Analysis Deliverables

- **Localisation Landscape Analysis Report:** An in-depth analysis synthesizing findings from the initial desk review and primary data collection. This report will assess the current state of localisation in South Sudan, identifying key trends, funding flows, partnership dynamics, structural barriers, and enabling opportunities.
- **Summary of Findings:** A concise summary document highlighting the core insights derived from both the desk review and the stakeholder consultations.

3. Consultation and Validation Deliverables

- **Preliminary Findings Presentation:** A clear and engaging PowerPoint presentation summarizing the initial findings and emerging strategic priorities, designed for presentation to the NGO Forum, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), and other key stakeholders.
- **Facilitation of Stakeholder Validation Workshop:** The consultant will organize and facilitate a validation workshop to present the preliminary findings, gather feedback, and build consensus among diverse stakeholders.
- **Validation Workshop Report:** A summary report documenting the proceedings of the validation workshop, capturing stakeholder feedback, key discussions, and agreed-upon adjustments to be integrated into the final strategy.

4. Strategy and Final Reporting Deliverables

- **Draft Localisation Strategy:** A preliminary version of the comprehensive strategy document for review and feedback by the commissioning body and key stakeholders.
- **Final Localisation Strategy:** The definitive, action-oriented strategy document, refined based on stakeholder feedback and prepared for HCT endorsement. This final strategy must include:
 - A clear Strategic Framework outlining priorities and objectives.
 - A sequenced Implementation Roadmap detailing actionable steps.
 - A robust Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) Framework with measurable indicators to track progress.
- **Clean Dataset:** Submission of all raw and clean data collected during the assignment, encompassing both qualitative (e.g., interview transcripts, consultation notes) and quantitative (e.g., survey results) datasets.

5. Final Report Structure and Quality Standards

The final report must be concise, not exceeding 25 pages (excluding annexes), and structured to ensure maximum readability and impact. The required structure is as follows:

Section	Description
Executive Summary	A high-level overview of the assignment, key findings, and primary recommendations.
Background and Context	An introduction to the localisation landscape in South Sudan and the rationale for the strategy.
Methodology	A summary of the mixed-methods approach, data collection techniques, and analytical framework used.
Key Findings	Detailed presentation of the evidence gathered, structured around the core dimensions of localisation.
Strategic Priorities	Clear, actionable priorities derived from the findings to advance localisation efforts.

Recommendations	Specific, evidence-based recommendations targeted at various stakeholder groups (e.g., donors, UN agencies, INGOs, NNGOs).
Implementation Roadmap	A step-by-step guide for operationalizing the strategy, including timelines and responsible actors.
Annexes	Supporting documentation, including the Terms of Reference (ToR), detailed methodology, data collection tools, comprehensive stakeholder lists, and supporting data tables.

7. Duration

The consultancy is expected to be completed within a period of **three (3) weeks**, with a structured timeline covering inception, data collection, analysis, validation, and final reporting.

8. Reporting and Coordination

The consultant will report directly to the NGO Forum Secretariat Director and will work closely with representatives of the Humanitarian Country Team and other coordination bodies. Regular updates and coordination meetings will be required to ensure alignment and quality assurance.

9. Required Qualifications and Experience

The ideal consultant for this assignment will possess a robust combination of academic credentials, extensive professional experience, and demonstrated competencies in humanitarian affairs, particularly within localisation and strategy development. The selection process will prioritize candidates who meet the following criteria:

1. Educational Background

- An advanced university degree (master's or higher) in humanitarian affairs, international development, public policy, social sciences, or a closely related field is essential.

2. Professional Experience

- A minimum of seven (7) years of progressive professional experience in humanitarian policy, coordination, or localisation initiatives is required.
- Demonstrated experience in developing comprehensive strategies, policy frameworks, or programmatic guidelines within complex humanitarian or development contexts.
- Proven experience working in fragile or conflict-affected environments is mandatory. Prior experience specifically within South Sudan or the broader East Africa region is highly desirable and will be considered a significant advantage.
- Documented experience in facilitating multi-stakeholder processes, workshops, and consultations, involving diverse actors such as government institutions, UN agencies, NGOs, donors, and community representatives.
- Both international and national consultants are encouraged to apply; however, proposals that combine both are preferred.

3. Key Competencies and Skills

- **Localisation Expertise:** Strong and in-depth knowledge of localisation principles, humanitarian reform agendas, and their practical application in operational settings.
- **Analytical and Research Skills:** Exceptional analytical and research capabilities, including the ability to synthesize complex information, conduct rigorous data analysis, and draw evidence-based conclusions.
- **Communication and Drafting Skills:** Excellent policy drafting and report writing skills, with a proven ability to produce clear, concise, and high-quality written outputs. This includes strong command of English for both written and oral communication.
- **Facilitation and Interpersonal Skills:** Strong communication, presentation, and facilitation skills, enabling effective engagement with diverse groups and fostering collaborative environments.

11. Expression of Interest

Interested consultants or firms are invited to submit a technical proposal outlining their understanding of the assignment, methodology, and workplan; a financial proposal with a detailed budget; curriculum vitae of key personnel; samples of similar work; and a proposed timeline.

12. Payment Modality

Payments will be made in two instalments: 40% upon approval of the inception report and 60% upon successful completion and approval of the final deliverables.

13. General Considerations

- All outputs produced under this consultancy will remain the property of the NGO Forum. The consultant is required to maintain strict confidentiality and may not subcontract the assignment without prior written approval. Any extension of the timeline must be agreed upon in writing.
- All costs should be quoted in USD and remain valid for 30 days. Dissemination of outputs requires prior authorization from the NGO Forum.

14. Application Process

Interested candidates should submit their applications by via email to With the subject line: **“Localisation Strategy for the Humanitarian Country Team in South Sudan.”**

15. Strategic Value

This consultancy represents a critical opportunity to advance localisation in South Sudan by translating global commitments into practical, system-wide change. The resulting strategy will position the HCT and its partners to deliver more inclusive, accountable, and sustainable humanitarian outcomes, while strengthening the leadership and resilience of national actors.

16. Safeguarding Commitment

South Sudan NGO Forum has a zero-tolerance policy toward any form of abuse, exploitation, or harassment. All staff consultants are expected to uphold the highest ethical and safeguarding standards. The successful candidate will undergo background checks and must sign and adhere to the Forum’s/organization’s safeguarding and PSEA policies

Application details Reference No.: 1

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Issuing Entity: World Vision International South Sudan (WVI)

Submission Email/Address: toc_no@wvi.org