

STUDY

CHANGING THE OUTLOOK: FOR A LOCAL APPROACH TO DATA

CONVERSATIONS AND
CHALLENGES OF LOCAL
HUMANITARIAN AID AND
INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT NGOS

CARTONG

Created in 2006, CartONG is a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) specialised in Information Management whose mission is to put data at the service of humanitarian, development and social action projects. We are dedicated to improving the quality and accountability of field activities, in particular through improved needs assessments, monitoring, and evaluation. As a multidisciplinary resource and expertise centre, we support the strategies and operations of our partners. Our teams also support the sector by producing documentation, building capacity and raising awareness of the technical, strategic and ethical challenges of digital technologies. Find CartONG at: www.cartong.org/fr

This study was produced as part of the project “Strengthening Information Management within francophone CSOs” led by CartONG and co-financed by the French Development Agency (AFD) over the period 2019-2022. For more information, please refer to the article published on our website <https://cartong.org/news/cartong-launches-project-strengthen-information-management-csos> or contact us via email at: renforcement-osc@cartong.org.

AUTHORS

This study was written by the CartONG team, in particular by Martin Noblecourt and Christophe Rodier. A special thanks also to Maeve de France for her sound advice, and to Marie Parisot for her translation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CartONG would like to thank the 68 members of local and international organisations who responded to the survey. We would also like to thank the organisations that spoke individually with the CartONG team to share their vision and thoughts on the subject.

This publication is supported by the French Development Agency (AFD). Nevertheless, the ideas and opinions presented in this document do not necessarily represent those of AFD.



This study is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International;
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.fr>



Readers are encouraged to use the content of this study for their personal publications, as long as they make due reference to the latter when it is mentioned (citation, excerpt, name of publication, etc.). For online use, we request that the link from the publication to the CartONG website (<https://www.cartong.org/fr>) or the IM Resource Portal (<https://www.im-portal.org/>) be used.

This publication was designed using resources from Flaticon.com and The Noun Project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
RATIONALE	4
METHODOLOGY	4
SCOPE OF THE STUDY.....	4
SOURCES OF THE INFORMATION USED.....	4
METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS	5
1. DEFINITIONS:	6
1.1. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT, PROGRAM DATA... WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?	6
1.2. THE “LOCALISATION OF AID”: DEFINITIONS, DEBATES AND CURRENT SITUATION.....	7
1.3. LOCALISATION OR DECOLONIZATION?.....	8
2. DATA MANAGEMENT AND AID LOCALISATION: WHAT CROSS-REFERENCES?	9
2.1. WHAT LOCAL DEMAND FOR DATA MANAGEMENT?.....	9
2.2. A BIASED REPRESENTATION OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND NEEDS.....	10
2.3. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CAPACITY OF ACTORS	11
2.4. A LINK WITH THE VERY ORGANISATION OF INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY PROJECTS.....	12
2.5. PROBLEM STATEMENT: LOCALISATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT	13
3. FUTURE AND CURRENT CHALLENGES	13
3.1. PRIORITY NEEDS FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT.....	13
3.2. ... WHICH DO NOT EXEMPT FROM A MORE GLOBAL REFLECTION	14
3.3. INCLUDING DATA ECOSYSTEMS.....	15
3.4. ASPECTS ON WHICH REFLECTION SHOULD BE SPARKED.....	17
3.5. CONTRASTING SITUATIONS	19
4. AVAILABLE SUPPORT AND BARRIERS TO USE	20
5. RECOMMENDATIONS	22
5.1. PRIORITISE SUPPORT TO ACTORS ON THE GROUND AND LET THEM DEFINE IT	23
5.2. FURTHER THE EVOLUTION OF GOVERNANCE AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT AROUND DATA.....	24
5.3. WORK ON INCLUSIVENESS IN THE DATA CHAIN.....	27
5.4. SUPPORT DATA ECOSYSTEMS THROUGH DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP.....	28
5.5. INVEST IN THE HUMANITARIAN LEADERS AND EXPERTS OF TOMORROW	30
APPENDICES	32

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a follow-up to the study published by CartONG in 2020, “Program data: the silver bullet of the humanitarian and development sectors”, this report explores the role of local organisations in the management of Humanitarian Aid and International Development industry data. Based on a review of **secondary literature**, a **survey** and a number of **interviews**, it provides a preliminary exploration of a relatively new topic.

Whilst the concept of “(aid) localisation” has been hotly debated since the formalisation of targets in 2016, its measured progress is insufficient. A number of actors are calling to extend this further, via a “decolonisation of aid”, highlighting shifting power relations issues rather than aid effectiveness.

The very purpose of data usage, often more so for the benefit of accountability towards international actors and donors than towards the local actors who produce them, raises questions. A similar bias can be evidenced in the sector perspective, with local actors structurally under-represented in data, far removed from their actual role. And a chronic under-investment in the capacities of local actors, linked to the very organisation of international solidarity projects.

CSOs’ general lack of access to digital and data support particularly impacts local organisations, namely, to take the analysis further. This should in no way exonerate from a more global reflection on representation bias and power relations between actors: these are plentiful and diverse, between CSOs themselves (international and local) and their data expert staff, specialised support actors, the private sector, universities, etc., each having their own agenda and structure that varies from one country to the next. The reflection could furthermore be extended to other issues that also impact local actors: responsible data management, inequalities in digital access, digital society and democracy, etc.

The report then provides a quick overview of the support and documentation available to local CSOs, pointing out barriers that they encounter to use resources seldom designed for them.

It concludes with recommendations for international actors (CSOs, donors and governments, support organisations), around 5 pillars:

- Prioritise support to actors on the ground and let them define it
- Further the evolution of governance and project management around data
- Work on inclusiveness in the data chain
- Support data ecosystems through distributed leadership
- Invest in the humanitarian leaders and experts of tomorrow

RATIONALE

This report settles into the continuity of the “Program data: the silver bullet of the humanitarian and development sectors” study published by CartONG in 2020¹. Aligned with the CartONG initiative to strengthen the practices of Francophone NGOs in program data management, it aims to continue its reflection on a specific sub-topic, that of localisation. The purpose is also to try to fill a blind spot in the 2020 study, namely the consideration of local actors, which the methodology at the time did not allow to satisfactorily include - the lack of maturity of international CSOs on the issue of data requiring a preliminary general exploration.

The situation has evolved since 2020, with both a (regular) revival of the debate on localisation and its sluggishness leading to the exploration of new angles thereof (decolonisation, sovereignty, etc.), the start of a transformative process of international CSOs’ practices and their partnership relations, and the rise of local actors (along with their international allies) creating practical illustrations of what would be desirable. We have therefore sought to complement our 2020 study with a focus on this localisation perspective in program data management.

METHODOLOGY

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The 2020 study and the scope of the project were mainly aimed at international solidarity francophone CSOs. While this report also aims to inform this target, the francophone ecosystem’s lack of maturity on the topic of data, identified in the preliminary study, is even more pronounced on this sub-topic. Accordingly, most of the sources used come from an international context, which does not specifically distinguish the francophone perimeter.

Just like the original study, this work includes (without distinction) both humanitarian action and international development in its scope. With localisation directly questioning the role of public actors, namely national authorities (governments, National Statistical Institutes, local authorities, government agencies), international organisations and donors, the latter are naturally strongly referenced. In essence, and in continuation of reflections on the “nexus”, the work, whether focused on the topic of localisation or data management, only somewhat considers such distinctions and often reflects on the global ecosystems of data.

SOURCES OF THE INFORMATION USED

This report mainly draws on a review of international secondary literature, on sources from after 2016 (the year the concept of localisation was formalised). Several different sources were also added, namely:

- A survey targeting local francophone CSOs and local or headquarters staff of international organisations in the field of international solidarity;
- Semi-structured interviews with 6 survey respondents;
- A workshop with Southern experts on data and in particular open data issues (from the OpenStreetMap ecosystem).

¹“Program data: the silver bullet of the humanitarian and development sectors?” CartONG, September 2020

- A workshop with the French community of practice in Information Management conducted in early 2023 (“COP IM”) and a workshop during the inter-NGO exchange days in program data management in late 2022.
- An interview with three specialists working on the topic for the Group URD.

These direct sources were intended to complement the literature review with a focus on francophone actors. Both contributions being complementary, elements from direct sources are not systematically sourced in the report.

METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

Localisation is a relatively recent subject for the international solidarity sector and the achievement of which remains limited (cf. Definitions below). While many studies relate to its global trajectory, the reflection has yet to be expounded on the relatively ancillary subject of data management (which is often evoked, we shall see, as a tool, but never as an end in itself). This report is therefore intended as a preliminary exploration of a relatively emerging topic at international level and even more so among francophone actors and does not claim to cover the topic in its entirety.

The documentary review primarily stems from a small number of organisations having shown an interest in the topic. Their starting points are quite varied, some coming from the field of statistics, especially official, others from more committed approaches to the inclusiveness of data and/or citizen participation, others finally secondarily dealing with the question of data in a broader perspective of reflection on localisation. With this in mind, we should thank the Development Initiatives CSO, which - from an angle focused on statistical challenges - has studied numerous dimensions of the issue of localisation for data and has strongly contributed to this report. Nevertheless, there are surely other angles that could have been explored to inform our work and that will have to be factored in moving forward.

The conducted survey, with its relatively small sample of respondents (68 respondents) and the lack of geographical diversity of the latter (more than 90% come from French-speaking Africa), thus makes it possible to assess the hypotheses set forth in the francophone sphere but not to draw definitive conclusions. On the other hand, the consulted CSOs’ wide-ranging areas of intervention do not show a strong differentiation in ownership of the subject. Moreover, the near total absence of francophone literature on the topic did not allow the filling of the gap identified.

Finally, it goes without saying that CartONG, a northern CSO with mostly Western staff, is not a neutral actor in this debate (even if CartONG has strongly included the consideration of the localisation issue in its 2022-2024 strategy²). Together with the fact that much of the literature on the topic has been produced by northern organisations, this inevitably generates biases for our study. We can thus only hope that the global movement in favour of localisation will allow data management experts from the Global South to tackle the subject in turn and explore it in greater depth.

² “Supporting humanitarian and Development actors to face the data challenges of an evolving sector”, CartONG, December 2021

1. DEFINITIONS:

1.1. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT, PROGRAM DATA... WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

Incorporating the framework from CartONG's 2020 study, this report falls within the **Program Data Management**³ or Information Management sector. Opening up further to non-humanitarian actors, the general terminology of "data management" is also used but must be understood as a synonym.

The connections with the issues of information systems (IS) and new information and communication technologies (or the term of ICT4D - Information and Communications Technologies for Development more used by development actors) are less pronounced viewed through the lens of localisation, which however often puts the spotlight on the role of the statistical community.

The motivation behind the development of data use is generally that of increased project efficiency: understanding the context, needs, improved management, quality monitoring, reporting and easier communication. This approach can be found in regulations at the highest level: for instance, the World Bank has set regulations that can be likened to localisation, for efficiency purposes (via an increase in data usage and sharing but also a fairer access)⁴.

Yet, although there seems to be little dispute over the effects on the efficiency and effectiveness of operations, the impact of data on decision-making seems to be more up for debate. In the survey conducted by CartONG in 2020, "the response on data usage that is most often selected is even, conversely, that data is mainly used for donor or contractual *reporting*"⁵ - a statement confirmed by other studies, notably ALNAP. **Decision-making would more likely be social than data-driven, whether or not the information helped justify and strengthen the decisions made**⁶. This observation seems to be shared by government actors, for whom the challenge of having data used for decision-making would be above all that they are of quality (and therefore sufficiently disaggregated) more than intended for *reporting*, especially international (aggregation at the global level rendering quality and precision issues invisible)⁷. **As we can see, the very purpose of data use raises the question of the role of local actors.**

³ It should be noted that the specificity of "program" data - excluding financial, HR, or organisational logistics internal data types - retained by CartONG's preliminary study remains relevant because it is de facto retained by most of the reviewed documentation. Having never been distinguished as such, however, we have decided not to reference it specifically hereinafter.

⁴ "World Development Report 2021: Data for better lives", World Bank, 2021

⁵ "Program data: the silver bullet of the humanitarian and development sectors?" CartONG, September 2020

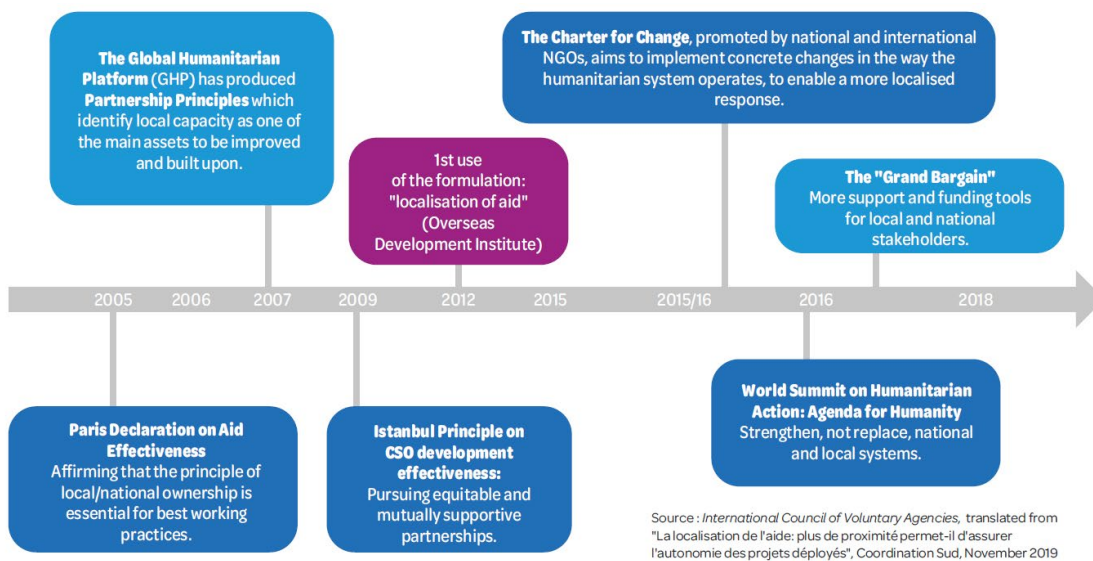
⁶ "Beyond Assumptions: How humanitarians make operational decisions", ALNAP, 2019

⁷ "The data side of leaving no one behind", Bernard Sabiti, Bill Anderson & Sam Wozniak, Development Initiatives, 29 September 2021

1.2. THE “LOCALISATION OF AID”: DEFINITIONS, DEBATES AND CURRENT SITUATION

“ While there is still a lack of consensus about what “localisation” means in practice, it generally refers to a loosely defined agenda to more systematically include local humanitarian actors in the international humanitarian system. It also includes reforms to centre local leadership in humanitarian response.
 - Feinstein International Center, Tufts University⁸

Image 1 - Timeline of the development of the localisation concept, summary by Coordination SUD



The concept of localisation, which emerged in the 2000s, has been officially at the top of the global humanitarian agenda since the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and its “Grand Bargain” (cf. [image 1 - timeline](#)). We will not detail its evolution over the past 7 years here, but attempt a quick summary of the current situation, based particularly on the recent summary prepared by ALNAP⁹.

The first widely shared observation is that **localisation has been lagging**. Local actors are pursuing it ever more strongly, but the concept faces a variety of structural barriers owing to the challenges for international organisations (inconsistencies with other objectives, particularly financial, in a context of competition for increasingly scarce funding) but also for donors (risks, regulatory constraints, etc.).

Localisation is moreover difficult to measure (which also relates to the data issue, as we will later see), with only the financial criterion being measurable and measured at present. Nevertheless, available figures show that the rate for direct funding of local organisations remains extremely low, hovering between 1.2% and 3.3% of all funding for 2018-2021 - including during the COVID-19 pandemic or the response to the Ukrainian crisis (which symbolizes the broken promises of localisation). Whilst new commitments were made in 2023 as part of the “Grand Bargain Caucus on Funding for Localisation”, the latter only brings together a (small) part of the Grand Bargain stakeholders; similarly, the commitments

⁸ “Localisation of humanitarian assistance”, Feinstein International Center, Tufts University

⁹ “A more localised aid system: current status discourse - Summary”, ALNAP, 20 June 2023

made by several major bilateral donors (notably the United States and the European Union) have yet to be implemented. In general, the funding, and more generally project management model (we will come back to this) of the international solidarity sector is inadequate, resting a vast majority of the responsibility for risk on local organisations without giving them the necessary means.

Finally, there is a **risk of “localisation-washing”** that would give the largest local partners priority, the latter being able to respect the system’s requirements, rather than removing barriers to access and allowing local actors the freedom to lay down their own organisation. Conversely, one might consider a “risk of doing without international experience in field projects and the innovation and mediation function of international NGOs (INGO)”¹⁰.

“ Localisation requires international organisations to confront a heady mix of complex challenges including their internal risk thresholds, partnering processes and systems, and fiduciary growth demands. In practice, localisation may put international organisations at odds with their own incentive structures and success measures, in a climate of stiff competition over scarce resources. -
ALNAP

1.3. LOCALISATION OR DECOLONIZATION?

The question of the “decolonisation of aid” (and anti-racism) has resurfaced since 2022 in connection with societal debates initially within Western countries¹¹. This debate can be summed up by an opposition that seems hard to reconcile - on the one hand that of “reformable” aid, and on the other hand that of a humanitarian system generating structural damage or even exploitation of populations: *« There [are] basically two different conversations happening at once: a technical discussion about how to make aid better, and a moral conversation on how to address the wider geopolitical power dynamics that led countries to be in need of aid in the first place. »*

Most of the sources reviewed in this study pertain more closely to the first vision, considering localisation above all as being an efficiency issue (although this has not been proven), but we have also proactively sought sources raising the question of power relations, like the second. In the absence of simple and short-term solutions to resolve these tensions, we have above all tried to diversify our sources, without positioning ourselves (which in itself could be questioned!).

Decolonization and overall ethical issues continue to emerge in debates that do not use the same analytical grid, such as the purpose, or endgame of humanitarian action, which also impacts data projects. But also on very practical questions such as the consent of populations to the collection of data relating to them, for instance during participatory mapping campaigns - including by questioning the aim of this collection: who chose to launch it and for what purpose?¹² Another example: requiring the use of a proprietary data format or tool, coupled with expensive software, can be a real barrier to entry to access projects or funding for local organisations.

¹⁰ “La localisation de l’aide - plus de proximité permet-il d’assurer l’autonomie des projets déployés ? (Synthèse)”, Coordination SUD, 2019

¹¹ “Policymakers and racial justice activists came together to discuss decolonising aid. Here’s what happened...”, The New Humanitarian”, August 2022

¹² “Colonialism in open data and mapping”, Humanitarian OpenStreetMap team webinar, June 2021

In any case, ignoring the debate does not seem possible if one wishes to reflect sincerely on the issues of localisation - which sometimes leads to political observations or recommendations, going beyond the individual action of CSOs¹³.

2. DATA MANAGEMENT AND AID LOCALISATION: WHAT CROSS-REFERENCES?

One of the difficulties of our research has been that most organisations working on data or more broadly on digital and localisation **do not use the term “localisation”**, although they are, in truth, interested in the same issues (shifting power relations, the transformation of the aid system, or inclusion of the voice of citizens and local communities in decision-making). We have therefore tried to extend the scope of the discussion, but have certainly missed some angles, and minimized the diversity of local situations (cf. part on the diversity of situations).

2.1. WHAT LOCAL DEMAND FOR DATA MANAGEMENT?

An important entry point to address this reflection is that existing work seems to converge on the fact that any localisation approach should take into account **a demand-driven approach**.

In its study on the subject¹⁴, Coordination SUD thus retains 3 possible entries to reflect on the topic: **project-driven** (humanitarian actors' usual framework for reflection), **by the actors** (angle often retained in localisation approaches - and which CartONG is currently working on), and finally **demand-driven**. The local demand-driven approach involves a participatory process for defining the need (and the strategy for responding to that need). This framework necessarily emphasizes the importance of diagnosis, and therefore of data.

“*Digitisation also plays a fundamental role in the outlook for localisation [...] New tools help support the localisation of demand: data collection tools, which are increasingly accessible, make it possible to take more specific action and directly involve the targeted populations in the “real-time” evaluation of actions.* -
Coordination SUD

However, this approach remains under-exploited: most often, data is generated for donors and not for local actors - and a fortiori for local communities benefiting from projects! This is probably the consequence of an **accountability generally thought out for project funders** before being for the populations impacted by them. A field actor recently testified in the case of Ukraine that the reporting requirements of international organisations required too wide a data collection, and unrelated to the operational monitoring needs of the project by local actors. This slows down the work, generates additional costs, and even raises safety concerns (time spent in the field)¹⁵.

¹³ To further explore the subject, THN produced a comprehensive and diverse literature review: “[Decolonising Aid: A reading and resource list](#)”, The New Humanitarian, August 2022

¹⁴ “[La localisation de l'aide - plus de proximité permet-il d'assurer l'autonomie des projets déployés ? \(Synthèse\)](#)”, Coordination SUD, 2019

¹⁵ “[Ukraine : Bureaucratie humanitaire contre survie des populations](#)”, François Dupaquier, Défis Humanitaires, n°83, December 2023

Similarly, local actors interviewed by CartONG report that while international organisations are helpful when they drive the use of data or promote unlocking the latter (in the context of increasingly asserted open data policies), they generally do not reflect on accountability to the actors who produce the data on the ground (by giving them access to analytical outputs or by discussing their choices).

2.2. A BIASED REPRESENTATION OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND NEEDS

Another point that shows the importance of the data management matter in taking the issue of localisation into account is its importance in itself for the measurement of said issue. Indeed, the aforementioned figures are biased because a whole section of humanitarian action and international development simply does not integrate the action of actors in its monitoring and reporting tools.



Case Study: Biases in International Reporting (IATI)

A systematic survey on the subject¹⁶ has demonstrated, by means of a case study, this discrepancy between global reporting data and the reality on the ground. Development Initiatives thus compared reports from the International Aid Transparency Initiative (the reference in aid project monitoring) and the 3W (Who/What/Where) reports from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Somalia covering the period January 2020-May 2021. While IATI activities provided an overview of a fraction of activities by local actors (<1%), 3W OCHA reflected their presence much more broadly, despite the fact that under-representation biases remain present in OCHA's work. The 3W not allowing for a financial analysis, they are not included in the overall monitoring of the aid driving reflection on localisation.

In addition, the barriers to the presence of local organisations directly in the IATI system have been well identified and are not surprising: technical complexity of the tool, taxonomy defined only from the donors' perspective, lack of recognition of local partners' work (which can be input but optionally) without even taking into account the global barriers to entry for local organisations in terms of access to international funding.

The study concludes, however, that better integration of data from local actors will not only allow greater aid effectiveness for donors (knowledge of local actors, of their references, their expertise and their presence in the field), but also, greater visibility for local actors - which they are asking for.

“ Interviews conducted for this report confirm how this information could go far in bridging the trust and knowledge gap that currently exists between international government donors and local organisations, as well as enhance transparency of the humanitarian system. - Development Initiatives

More generally, **recognition of the legitimacy of local actors** (and above all governments) is the first step towards such a reversal in perceptions. In a 2018 survey, representatives of National Statistical Institutes from 140 low- and middle-income countries believed that international actors were their main

¹⁶ “Improving the visibility of local and national actors in humanitarian aid data”, Development initiatives, July 2021

users, far ahead of local government and civil society actors¹⁷ – with an increasing divergence commensurate to their country’s income, in correlation with their own dependence on the funding of these international actors. Lastly, these representation biases extend beyond measurement.

2.3. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CAPACITY OF ACTORS

Another converging point of the work on localisation is the importance of the **capacities of Southern actors** to balance the power relations. For the time being, emphasis has been placed on implementation capacities, as yet somewhat stretched on the financial aspect (also identified as key) and on decision-making processes. Management and reporting mechanisms – on which data management capabilities have a significant impact – are nonetheless central.

This **under-investment in data-driven capacities** is primarily reflected at the level of institutional actors, who are primarily accountable to their citizens. Thereby, out of an approximately USD 3 million funding need for data and statistical capacities in low- and middle-income countries, only half could be covered by national capacities, and about a quarter by international donors, leaving a quarter unfunded.¹⁸ This dependence on international donors also contributes to the biases already mentioned. However, various field observations show that a significant part of the studies funded still contribute to duplicating existing surveys, or processes already established by national actors.

The survey conducted by CartONG shows that this under-investment is cascading among local CSOs, with 75% of respondents expressing difficulties associated with Information Management. This difficulty is directly connected to the global challenges of localisation: the most widely cited constraint is the **lack of financial resources and dedicated budget** - reflecting the challenges faced by local CSOs in getting funding for these posts, which are not directly related to the implementation of projects. This is followed by the lack of dedicated HR resources and sufficient IT resources, which have the same causes. The **lack of data culture** is also an existing factor but not the most widely mentioned, and the absence of backing by the senior management team is considered a problem only by a minority of respondents.

Table 1 - Constraints faced by national or local CSOs in Program Data Management



¹⁷ “Measuring and responding to demand for official statistics”, Mihir Prakash & Tanya Sethi, AidData, December 2018

¹⁸ “Data disharmony: How can donors better act on their commitments?”, Development Initiatives, March 2022

The work on localisation confirms that the lack of capacity often comes from a lack of funding and support to ensure long-lasting strengthening of said capacity: *“Capacity strengthening efforts focus on local actors’ ability to meet international standards –mainly administrative and compliance procedures– which are out of touch with what local organisations define as capacity”*¹⁹. This is done not only without taking into account the needs as identified by local actors, but also without recognition of their skills, sometimes even with counter-productive effects.

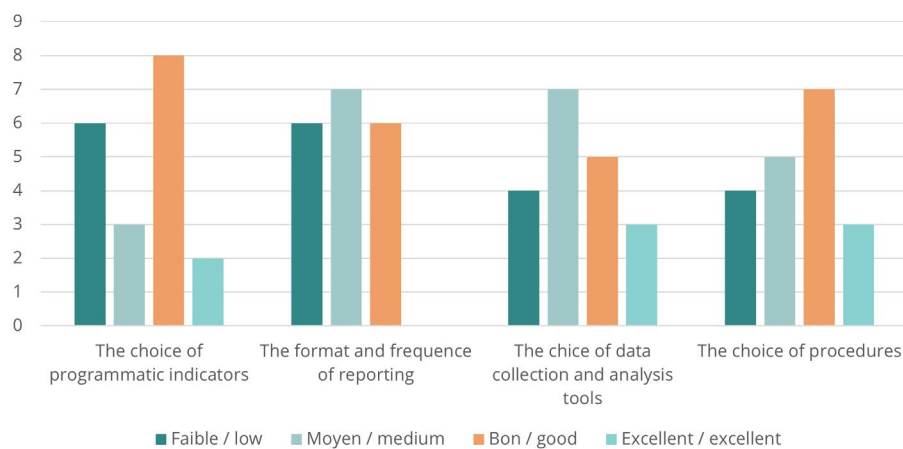
2.4. A LINK WITH THE VERY ORGANISATION OF INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY PROJECTS

More generally, project cycle management also prevents fair partnership approaches (equality, reciprocity, transparency)²⁰. It indeed brings out many other barriers: **Interests and fears** of international organisations and their staff, **organisational cultures, structural barriers, inequalities of power, lack of trust** (associated with differences, a lack of common experience and mutual knowledge).

This point, which has come up repeatedly in the existing documentation, has however not been **picked up on much** by the actors interviewed by CartONG. In addition to the bias represented by the survey sample (cf. part on contrasting situations further down), this probably reflects the fact that many actors, local or international, have not yet questioned the fact that data and its tools are not neutral in nature, and can integrate power relations. Similarly, it is not easy to challenge a project management method imposed with funding and promoted by an entire system.

It is thus interesting to note that even if the international actors interviewed consider that the level of decision they leave to their partners is generally good on all aspects of data management, the more strategic it is (choice of indicators), the less the level of decision left is considered high. Whereas, conversely, it is on the operational aspects (choice of tools and procedures) that it is judged to be best.

Table 2 - In the context of your partnerships with national or local CSOs, what level of decision-making is left to the partners?



¹⁹ “A more localised aid system: current status discourse”, ALNAP, June 2023

²⁰ “Localisation in practice - Facilitating equitable partnership in humanitarian project management”, Centre for Humanitarian Action, February 2023

2.5. PROBLEM STATEMENT: LOCALISATION AND DATA MANAGEMENT

The localisation of aid is therefore a subject debated in its sense and its purpose. While many humanitarian organisations have taken hold of the topic, and while some of the specialised actors in the data management ecosystem are also engaged, there is **little work on the articulation between the two** (for example, the bibliography compiled in 2021 by Groupe URD on the subject contains only one article indirectly related to this issue²¹). The data dimension is mainly addressed as **a possible tool for localisation**, or on the contrary **as a barrier**.

It seems obvious, however, that the program data management subsector cannot be exempt from working on the issue of power distribution within it. This study thus aims to provide an initial summary of reflections on the subject, fed by the results of a survey and various qualitative interviews. It certainly is not an exhaustive state-of-the-art or a source of final recommendations, but it does initiate the discussion on the topic.

3. FUTURE AND CURRENT CHALLENGES

3.1. PRIORITY NEEDS FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT...

It is quite difficult to get an overview of the support and resources specifically available to local organisations. Nevertheless, we can draw on the 2020 TechSoup International Network survey (with nearly 12,000 CSO members in 137 countries, about a quarter of whom are in the Global South)²². While 83% of Southern organisations surveyed see the benefits of new technologies, only 49% believe they have the resources to implement their digital strategy, and the lack of team resources and skills is the first barrier cited for better use of data. And yet, 78% of CSOs surveyed only seldom (annually) or never organise trainings on data management for their teams.

The survey conducted by CartONG for this study in 2023 - despite its limitations in the terms of sample size- also provides some clues as to the support needs of local CSOs (cf. [Annexes](#)).

The foremost need expressed by responding organisations, irrespective of the skill category (data collection, analysis and visualisation) is that of **staff training**. Then follows the need for **tools** and **processes** (especially on data analysis). The need for additional human resources appears more secondary (knowing that beyond the creation of positions it is often the retention of competent profiles that proves difficult).

Overall, however, what stands out overwhelmingly is **a strong need for support on all chapters**: be it training, tooling, methodology, or HR, and regardless of the aspect of data management in focus, a large majority of organisations have high to very high support needs.

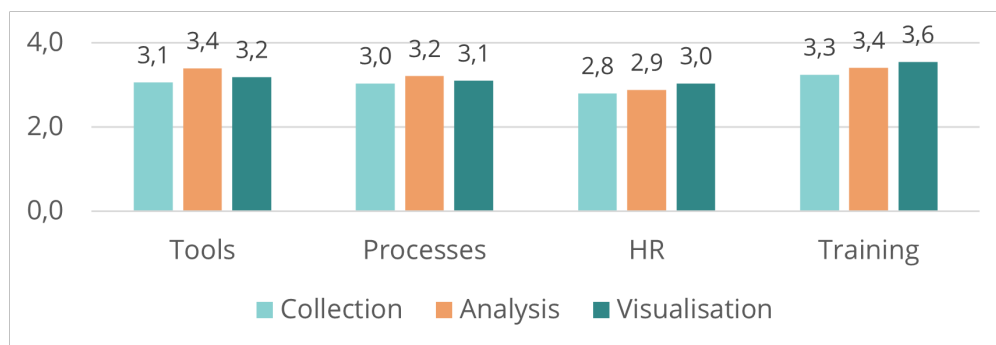
²¹ "Focus bibliographique sur la localisation de l'aide", Groupe URD, Revue Humanitaires en Mouvement, December 2021

²² "Data Handling and Digital Readiness in Civil Society - Global Study 2020", TechSoup, 2021

Moreover, although they are not extensively covered in this report due to falling more within the scope of Information Systems than that of Data Management, **equipment issues** also have a strong impact (they were regularly cited by the professionals interviewed by CartONG). Whether it is the lack of recent computer hardware, connectivity problems, the impossibility of buying software licenses (and its associated scourge, pirated licenses and all their resulting cybersecurity risks), all slow down or prevent the rise in capacity of actors, for purely hardware reasons. This is actually one of the reasons for the success of open-source software and free projects - often *low-tech* - in the Global South, which make it possible to overcome some of these barriers.

Finally, CartONG's field experience with many stakeholders has shown, once the technical bases have been acquired (data collection and updating), a **critical need for training and support on data analysis and data strategy definition**. The actors interviewed have often pointed to a need to collect data, without necessarily knowing what this data will be used for - which moreover raises questions of information overload and therefore environmental responsibility (cf. further). Data that is almost exclusively quantitative, with no openness to other models (more qualitative for instance, which generally require less technical skills or advanced statistical tools and are therefore more affordable for local organisations).

Table 3 - Regarding data collection, analysis and visualisation, how do you assess the support requirements for the following aspects?



3.2. ... WHICH DO NOT EXEMPT FROM A MORE GLOBAL REFLECTION

The “decolonisation of aid” issue, even if it is debated (cf. above), does not spare the data sector. We can thus define “**data colonialism**”²³ by the capture of data from the Global South by actors of the North (States, international organisations but also companies, especially American and Chinese), in a context of glaring inequalities in capacities. Thus, the example of Facebook’s Free Basic offer, a free (limited) access to the internet, accused of colonialist practices by its capture of data and non-observance of the internet neutrality rules.

In addition to not measuring the actions of local actors, as previously mentioned, the lack of recognition and consideration of said actors concerning data is also reflected in the very definition of the **chosen indicators**. Several international statistical standardisation processes (Global Health Metrics enterprise,

²³ “[Avoiding the Data Colonialism Trap](#)”, Hayden Dahmm & Tom Moultrie, Thematic Research Network on Data and Statistics, February 2021

Global Burden of Disease report) have as such been criticized as overly reflecting a “Northern” vision or for their lack of transparency²⁴. This can also be found in **new tools** such as satellite imagery and drones, or artificial intelligence (which, given the lack of diversity in the teams that create it, contributes to perpetuating biases).

Even highly participatory and global projects such as OpenStreetMap can be subject to representation bias with a Global South under-represented in data production, and tensions between historical contributors from the North and new users/contributors from the South not necessarily fitting into the project’s culture. This dynamic is further complicated by the fact that a form of “OpenStreetMap decolonisation” has indeed taken place via the massive production of data in the South in recent years... but because this is largely driven by multinationals seeking to exploit the data produced by local contributors, it can also by contrast be seen as neocolonial²⁵.

In general, the reflection on decolonisation, incipient in the Humanitarian Aid and International Development sector, will require further work on the issues surrounding data. One could thus question the focus on a quantitative vision of the information that is underlying in all the work on data (already mentioned), the imposition of standards including on legitimate subjects (such as responsible data management mentioned below), etc. Or to question the effects of the standardisation of communication methods, not adapted to local actors, and which skew the creation of information at source²⁶. This work will however need to be conducted by Southern actors themselves, the challenge of course being to support skills development without imitating a vision. This reflection should undoubtedly be pursued across the networks of local actors (national or regional).

3.3. INCLUDING DATA ECOSYSTEMS

It is important to note that in many Northern countries, data expertise is not fully internalised within the CSOs, which rely on an **ecosystem of partners and providers**: IT companies, specialised support actors, skills pooled at the associative networks level, public or para-public support agencies, etc. This is especially prevalent in the Information Management sector in international development and humanitarian action, with international support actors such as CartONG, MapAction, Humanitarian OSM Team, iMMAP, Impact Initiatives/REACH, etc.

In its global report on localisation²⁷, Tufts University thus points out the importance of third-party support in advancing the debate on the compliance of local actors - which is one of the major blocking points - and this obviously also applies to data. Coalitions between governments, civil society and the private sector (“Tech for Good” approaches) are also assets to facilitate access to licenses and tools, to pool skills, or to provide universal internet access²⁸. This is also reflected in the interviews conducted by

²⁴ idem

²⁵ “De/colonizing OpenStreetMap? Local mappers, humanitarian and commercial actors and the changing modes of collaborative mapping”, Susanne Schröder-Bergen, Georg Glasze, Boris Michel & Finn Dammann, *GeoJournal* 87(5), November 2021

²⁶ “More than the Money – Localisation in practice”, Groupe URD/Trócaire, 2017

²⁷ “Localisation: A ‘Landscape’ Report”, Sabina Robillard, Teddy Atim, Daniel Maxwell, Tufts University- Feinstein International Center, December 2021

²⁸ “Towards an enabling digital environment for civil society”, Forus, June 2021

CartONG, people questioning **the capacity of local actors to have a “critical mass” of projects** – and associated funding – to maintain permanent in-house expertise on data (as can international actors).

The TechSoup survey shows that the vast majority of CSOs, and much more markedly in the Global South, do not use support organisations for their digital needs²⁹. This is particularly true for skills development, strategic or technical support, or infrastructure or cybersecurity assessment (for all these issues, the share of southern CSOs benefiting from third-party support varies from 9% to 17%; with average rates higher by about 10 points for northern CSOs).

There is, nonetheless, a data ecosystem in each and every country: from a few isolated experts and open data pioneering activists to structured ecosystems with many engineering offices, specialised CSOs, university training, etc. (as can be found in Tanzania, Kenya, Tunisia, Nepal, etc.). These various actors, however, are often not connected. A professional interviewed by CartONG thus explains that in his country there are engineering offices that can provide support but that they only work for the largest CSOs or international agencies - which does not allow them to be challenged. This underlines the fact that each of these categories of actors has a different and variable agenda, the interest of local providers not necessarily aligning with that of CSOs, etc.

Table 4 - Data ecosystem (in italics: data specialists)

LOCAL	INTERNATIONAL
Local CSOs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector specialists • <i>Data specialists (M&E, IM, etc.)</i> 	International CSOs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector specialists • <i>Data specialists (M&E, IM, etc.)</i>
Specialised support actors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Private engineering/consulting offices</i> • <i>CSO/data (open data) and digital activists</i> 	Specialised support actors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Private companies and engineering//consulting offices, including major solution providers</i> • <i>CSOs specialised in digital and data for solidarity</i> • <i>CSOs/activities specialised in open data or open source</i>
State <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Data administrations (INS, etc.)</i> • <i>Sector administrations and their data-related functions</i> 	International donors and cooperation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilateral donors • International organisations (UN) • <i>Data expert donors and foundations</i>
Universities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Data and research-related training</i> 	Universities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>International cooperation projects around data</i>

²⁹ “Data Handling and Digital Readiness in Civil Society - Global Study 2020”, TechSoup, 2021

3.4. ASPECTS ON WHICH REFLECTION SHOULD BE SPARKED

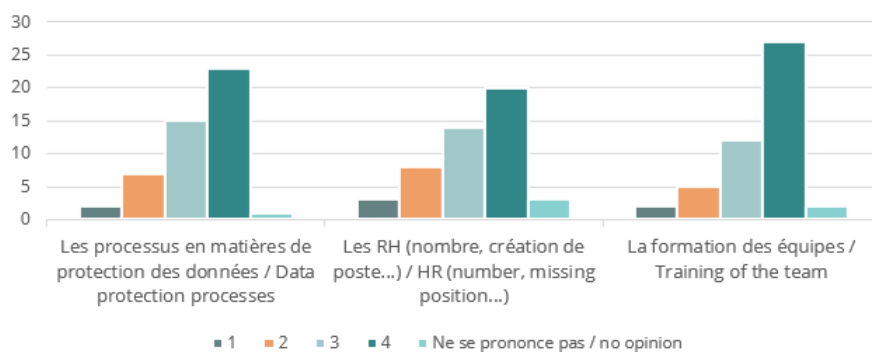
3.4.1. RESPONSIBLE DATA MANAGEMENT: INSUFFICIENT PRACTICES DESPITE ITS IMPORTANCE

Responsible data management is an interesting key to interpreting the localisation and data topic. Indeed, the subject concerns both the data protection of affected populations (also called “data management oversights” in the CartONG 2020 study), which must be effective throughout the data chain and all actors combined, but also in a way related to the question of data culture, which is the basis of responsible management, and where the level of CSOs varies greatly. It is a rare occurrence for a CSO today to feel unconcerned by data management, all the more so in connection with the subject of data protection, which touches on the issue of accountability towards principles such as “Do No Harm,” so dear to the humanitarian sector. Nevertheless, the survey showed that despite the interest in the subject, it is sometimes **misunderstood**, and above all **not taken sufficiently into consideration**, often owing to resource constraints in this regard. Some nuance must of course be brought to this observation, depending on the size of the CSOs as well as on their thematic areas of intervention.

In organising a training for 300 Monitoring & Evaluation and Data Management field practitioners from 12 French humanitarian NGOs for instance, more than 65% of respondents to the pre-training needs survey indicated to CartONG that they had never been trained on the topic of responsible data management or a directly related topic. And yet they were rather privileged profiles in terms of the level of available resources / structuring on these topics. Moreover, the topic of **data sharing** with local partners was repeatedly addressed by participants as one of the **most important data-related risks**. The survey conducted for this study points in the same direction, with CSOs expressing a considerable need for processes and training (cf. [Table 5](#)).

Finally, it should be noted that on this topic as for many others, the **role played by state actors** is undeniable, as shown by the accelerating effect of the GDPR on taking into account data accountability issues in Europe. Conversely, only 43% of least developed countries have data protection legislation (compared to 96% of European countries)³⁰, which does not help to create an incentive for civil society to keep moving forward. Responsible data management therefore remains a core component in terms of the skills and knowledge acquisition necessary for local actors to take ownership.

Table 5 - How would you assess the support requirements in terms of data protection?



³⁰ “Data and privacy unprotected in one third of countries, despite progress”, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, April 2020

3.4.2. THE IMPACT OF OTHER INEQUALITIES CONCURRENTLY WITH THE LOCALISATION ISSUE

Whatever the political angle chosen, localisation cannot be treated without a reflection on **inequalities of power**. Yet, the “local” nature of the actors (with all of the associated debates), even if the fight against racism is included, cannot be considered as the sole cause of inequality of power or discrimination. An approach that could be described as “intersectional” is therefore necessary.

The first factor is, of course, **gender**: as pointed out by the CartONG 2020 study³¹, women are under-represented in the data management sector (both within the humanitarian sector and in general), as in many so-called “technical” professions. This issue of perceptions is key and can be addressed at different levels, including during initial training and project implementation.

The same imbalance can be observed in the inclusion in data that affect the **political choices for the allocation of aid**. Development Initiatives hence observed³² that, in the case of climate action, not only did the *gender mark* used for official monitoring of aid not correctly track the projects in question, but it failed to measure the needs and lived experiences of women on the frontline of climate change - while pointing to the importance of an intersectional approach to data (citing the example of the higher rate of child marriage in areas prone to recurrent droughts).

“*We have seen first-hand the value that the inclusion of voices can have across the development data value chain – from conceptual development to collection, and from analysis to use – as well as the value of novel sources of data directly provided by citizens and communities in the form of citizen-generated data.*
- Development Initiatives

This can also be linked to the more global **digital divide** question: audiences less exposed to the digital world will necessarily have more difficulty mastering data tools and challenges. The fight for the localisation of data management projects is therefore closely linked to that of digital inclusion – a subject acknowledged as a priority by the United Nations. Other factors could also be explored, such as the question of taking into account the voices of people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+, etc.

3.4.3. THE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE

The **environmental impact of digital technology** and therefore of data is an issue that has gained particular momentum in the last few years, especially in the North (cf. for example, the summary reports of the GeOnG 2022 conference³³). Interpretation through the localisation approach also applies: southern countries are the most impacted by climate change, they are suffering the full impact of the new technologies industry (mines, factories, waste, etc.), it is thus impossible to disregard it.

³¹“Program data: the silver bullet of the humanitarian and development sectors?” CartONG, September 2020

³²“When the data doesn’t tell the full story: improving gender-responsive climate finance”, Development Initiatives Blog, November 2023

³³“What was GeOnG 2022 about? A snapshot of 3 days of debate and key learnings”, Information Management Resources Portal Blog, CartONG, November 2022

Reflection on the link between data/location/environmental impact is however as of now only **emerging**, if not **non-existent**. We could thus study the question pertaining to server location, equipment and software production sites, local control over the infrastructure of information systems, the fight against information overload in the Global South... all subjects that would be interesting to explore.

3.4.4. DIGITAL SOCIETY AND DEMOCRATIC CHALLENGE

Digital technology can be described as a “megatrend” that globally influences human life (in work, communication, governance and ultimately culture). This is also the case for civil society as a whole³⁴: by even superficially addressing the subject, digital technology can both extend **civic space** and give CSOs new means (for instance via Civic Tech tools, identified as a strong trend by Coordination Sud including for international solidarity³⁵), as well as being a **repressive tool**. The defence of human rights, the creation of a favourable operational and legislative environment, inclusion, transparent governance are all issues that exist both in the digital space and “offline.” While these issues may seem far from the operational management of data by CSOs, the global dimension of digital tools can quickly cause cascading effects. This issue should be explored in relation to the field of “digital human rights,” referring for example to the work of the CSO the Engine Room³⁶.

3.5. CONTRASTING SITUATIONS

To conclude this part on current and future issues, it is necessary to provide some nuances, which will certainly further complicate the picture painted, but are necessary to understand how multifaceted this subject is:

- **Local vs. international:** the definition of what is “local” and “international” is a debate in itself, which takes up a large chunk of the discussions on localisation. This same debate exists in the data field, with national public actors (e.g., National Statistics Institutes) who can be seen as just as intrusive and unfamiliar with local reality as international actors (or who can even be considered as having neo-colonial practices themselves³⁷). Conversely, large private sector players may have a policy on autonomous branches and diversity of leadership that perform (without conceptualising) important acts in terms of localisation.
- **Humanitarian vs. international development:** whilst we specified in the introduction that this interpretative framework was not evident from the discussions on our subject of interest, it nevertheless remains very present. The discourse on localisation is thus quite different when it is carried by international humanitarian actors (for whom it may resemble a real revolution, but also a welcome shock of efficiency) and by development actors, for whom it is a natural extension of traditional partnership approaches (but among whom it can paradoxically lead to an equally important shock by questioning often unrecognised power relations). Similar inconsistencies are partially reflected in the subject of data, with humanitarian actors working to modify their methods to better take into account local populations and actors; and development actors

³⁴ “Towards an enabling digital environment for civil society”, Forus, June 2021

³⁵ “Acteurs et actrices de la solidarité internationale : quelle(s) mutation(s) ?”, Coordination Sud, April 2023

³⁶ For an example of synthesis, see “Strengthening intersectional approaches to data and digital rights advocacy”, The Engine Room November 2021

³⁷ “Colonialism in open data an mapping”, Humanitarian OpenStreetMap team webinar, June 2021

drawing further on ICT4D tools that they often imagine can be transposed whatever the context, in both North and South - even if their complexity often earmarks them for use by major actors, particularly public and CSO networks.

- **Support vs. operational:** while CartONG's initial study voluntarily restricted its field to program data, observing that in the field of international solidarity (its primary field of observation) management methods and issues around data were completely different, boundaries are blurred when focusing on localisation. Indeed, for government actors, the measure of internal capacities (for example of State expenditures and human resources) becomes an observable variable and therefore both "program" and "support" data.
- **Regional specificities:** the strength of the positioning on the issue of data localisation seems logically correlated with the maturity of data ecosystems. It is hence highly variable: in regions of implementation of international solidarity projects where the digital and data ecosystem is dynamic (North Africa, Middle East, Ukraine, East and South Asia, English-speaking East Africa), with a number of qualified local experts and the presence of both support actors (private or even incorporated as CSOs themselves) and a government active on digital issues, the debate is of course more vigorous on an evolution of power relations with international actors. The specialised actors interviewed by CartONG thus demonstrate strong ownership in their countries (that might all be included in the list of these "mature ecosystems") of the data localisation concept by the various stakeholders.



The aforementioned specific case of Ukraine is thereby revealing, with an already structured government, civil society and private sector on the issues surrounding data. These actors therefore do not necessarily understand the logics and procedures of international actors, whose disruptive effects are found at many levels, for example on coordination methods or even on employee pay scales.

- **National/crisis contexts:** national and/or crisis contexts (for humanitarians) also, of course, have a strong impact. A natural disaster will obviously not have the same effects as an armed terrorist conflict on the demands of international actors in terms of accountability, and therefore the possibilities of local actors to grow. Similarly, a high-intensity war like Ukraine carries its own risks, including cybersecurity. Finally, the level of trust between civil society and institutions will affect the ability to mobilise a truly local approach to data.

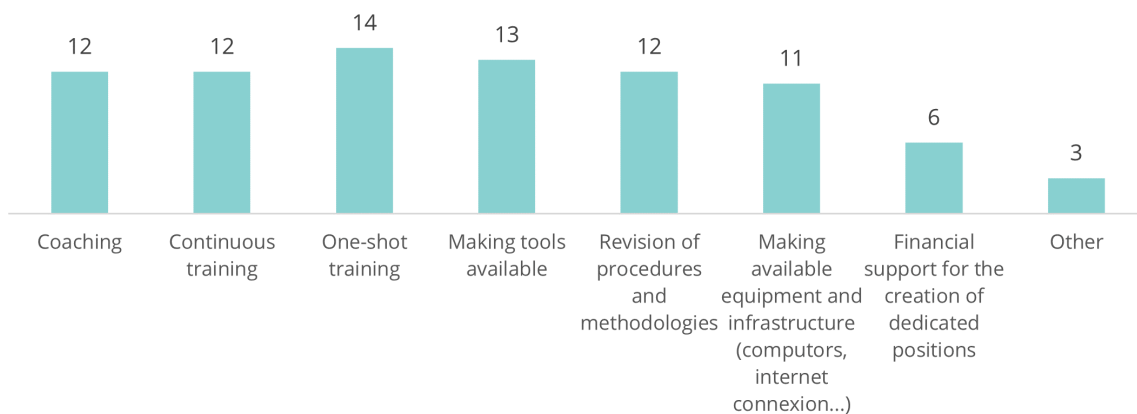
4. AVAILABLE SUPPORT AND BARRIERS TO USE

As we have seen, a large majority of CSOs does not receive support on digital tools, this is especially true for those in the Global South. This does not mean, however, that the supply is non-existent, far from it. Among the support offers accessible or targeted for CSOs in the South, we have **identified different offers** - with fairly different angles:

- CartONG's "pro bono" support offer targets small and medium-sized international and local solidarity structures around mapping and information management tools (based on implementation by CSO volunteers with funding to facilitate the scheme).

- [The Engine Room’s “Light Touch Support”](#) also targets individuals and organisations committed to social justice and provides a lightweight plan for support that can lead to more substantial assistance.
- Many H2H (“Humanitarian to Humanitarian”) support organisations work with CSOs and local actors by providing them with support on data issues, without having a global support offer: for instance, [MapAction working with regional risk management agencies and networks](#), [iMMAP providing training to Ukrainian CSOs as part of their response](#), [HOT via regional open mapping hubs that support local mapping communities](#), [CyberPeace Institute around cybersecurity](#), [Development Initiatives supporting local data ecosystems](#) such as in Nepal, [Tactical Tech supporting communities in the appropriation of digital technology](#), etc.
- Many companies also offer support, either paid or pro bono, to CSOs. This ranges from [large international companies such as ESRI offering a variety of services to CSOs](#) to the multitude of engineering offices specialised in data collection or management that exist in almost all countries, by way of various consulting firms that also specialised and mainly based in the North.
- Finally, many international CSOs naturally provide support (notably through training) to their national staff, but also to their local CSO partners. This support is by nature highly adapted to the realities of local actors and their needs and affects a wide variety of aspects (cf. chart from CartONG’s survey below). Generally falling within the scope of a project, it nevertheless raises questions about the capacity for initiative and the ability to define local partners’ expectations.

Table 6 - As part of the projects that you conduct with partners, what types of key support do you provide in terms of program data management?



Regarding **documentation-type resources**, the study conducted by CartONG in 2020 showed that CSOs fell into 2 profile groups: those feeling as though they are drowning in a mass of resources and not knowing where to start, and those - with a more advanced profile - conversely expressing a lack of very specific resources³⁸. Local CSOs being more highly associated with the first group, it could be argued that the dispersion of resources is what ultimately blocks them - the interviews conducted by CartONG generally confirming this hypothesis. There are many resource centres or simple tutorials on specific aspects (open data³⁹, health data, internal organisation around data⁴⁰, etc.) or intended for other

³⁸“Program data: the silver bullet of the humanitarian and development sectors?” CartONG, September 2020

³⁹“Open Government Data Toolkit”, World Bank

⁴⁰“Data Governance Toolkit: A guide to implementing data governance in nonprofits”, NetHope, April 2022

audiences (Red Cross Societies⁴¹, governments) but that can benefit CSOs. However, they are often only part of the program data management component, or sometimes are not dedicated to the specific operation of CSOs, and even less to that of local CSOs in Southern countries.

One of the few resources specifically developed for fledgling CSOs⁴² (but without a geographical angle) was developed by CartONG (as part of the Learning Corner⁴³ available on the IM Resource Portal) to respond to this observation. A discrepancy thus remains between a rapidly developing support and resources offer, and organisations that do not necessarily know how to access them. One could also cite the School of Data's Data Fundamentals courses⁴⁴, even if the latter are geared towards an individual audience wanting theoretical and general training, which does not directly correspond to the expectations of many CSOs requiring useful resources to improve their concrete practices.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are a first draft based on the review of the dictates drawn from different reports and actors having worked on various angles, and on our own observations during the survey conducted by CartONG (including requests from local data experts during our workshop). They are intended to be consistent with more global approaches to the implementation of localisation⁴⁵.

As part of this preliminary report on the topic, said recommendations are addressed primarily to actors in a position to change the system, namely international actors:

- **CSOs and operational international organisations** and their networks/heads of networks
- **Data support organisations**, which includes both expert CSOs and private actors (these are mainly actors from the North but not only - we have chosen to highlight them via a dedicated category given their importance, cf. the data ecosystems section)
- **Governments** and **international donors**

It goes without saying that the avenues of work we suggest are for the most part valid for local actors in the Global South and their networks, especially for their advocacy. However, the number and diversity of actors we were able to contact in preparing this report were not sufficient to entitle us to be prescribers with respect to their action.

⁴¹ "Data Playbook Toolkit", IFRC, November 2022

⁴² "First steps with Program Data Toolbox", CartONG, September 2022

⁴³ "Learning Corner of the Information Management Resource Portal", CartONG

⁴⁴ "Online Courses - Data Fundamentals", School of Data

⁴⁵ We feel that the data-centric approach here is thus consistent with the 7 dimensions detailed in the Disasters & Emergencies Preparedness programme, including the START Network and the British aid ("[Localisation in practice: emerging indicators & practical recommendations](#)", K. Van Brabant & S. Patel, DEPP, June 2018), that of the United Nations Inter-Agency toolkit ("[Inter-Agency Toolkit on Localisation in Humanitarian Coordination](#)", Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility, 2022) or that of the European Union ("[Promoting Equitable Partnerships with Local Responders in Humanitarian Settings](#)", DG ECHO, March 2023)

5.1. PRIORITISE SUPPORT TO ACTORS ON THE GROUND AND LET THEM DEFINE IT

While the **financial factor** is key (cf. above) in the ramp-up of the capacity of actors, it is not the only way forward. Supporting the increase in capacity of actors on the ground is thus a constant of the action in favour of localisation:

“*Interestingly, many key informants were more interested in the role large international donors could play outside of changes to direct humanitarian project funding structures. Namely, there was significant interest in donor investments in processes, structures, and services that could help create an “enabling environment” for localisation. - Tufts University for USAID⁴⁶*

In the data sector as in the other sectors, it is therefore essential to first-off **let local actors define their own needs for capacity building**. And not to fall into a localisation paradox, which would organise approaches to aid in a “top-down” rather than “bottom-up” manner⁴⁷. At the risk of seeing local actors pretend and artificially recreate local empowerment to meet the expectations of donor sponsors, rather than asking themselves the question of their real needs. However, this requires local actors to analyse their needs and be proactive in seeking funding and support and ensuring that it addresses identified gaps.

When led by international actors, investment in data should prioritise the rise in capacity of actors on the ground, thus supporting the organisation of a national data infrastructure from the ground up. Based on observations drawn from their multiple expertise missions, Development Initiatives recommends **concentrating investments on field actors**: local administrations (civil registry), primary schools and health centres, in order to build a backbone for data management and push a global acculturation from below⁴⁸. For example, the DHIS2 health data system, which is deployed in more than 60 countries and can be considered a model, could thus be complemented by investment in equipment for medical actors in the field to speed up data reporting and also allow them to consult their own data. This also applies to emergency contexts: the professionals interviewed by CartONG highlight that vigilance should be exercised in designing solutions from the outset allowing for the transfer of skills (and governance) to local actors once the crisis is over. And to offer technically interoperable tools between local and international actors (headquarters/donors), including if necessary by prioritising the needs of the former.

A parallel observation can be made by CartONG for the various missions conducted in recent years in support of local and particularly national actors. Initial requests are often formulated around advanced support - e.g. on a specific technical tool - often coming from individual proposals (in a logic of career progression and vocational training). Alternatively, proposals from donors or international partners, model their vision of the business and also project themselves on advanced tools, too often without reflection on their sustainability within the local partner (including as basic a compatibility of the equipment or the ability to pay for licenses over time). Whereas starting a real organisational analysis of

⁴⁶ “Localisation: A “Landscape” Report”, Tufts University for USAID, January 2022



⁴⁷ “The paradox of externally driven localisation: a case study on how local actors manage the contradictory legitimacy requirements of top-down bottom-up aid”, Femke Mulder, Journal of International Humanitarian Action, volume 8, 2023

⁴⁸ “The data side of leaving no one behind”, Bernard Sabiti, Bill Anderson & Sam Wozniak, Development Initiatives, September 2021

needs, which also allows training in data literacy, then makes it possible to initiate meaningful discussions with local partner teams to define the support and tools required, which are often much more operational than these initial requests. On a more technical note, the global TechSoup survey shows that the predominant uses (including in the Northern CSOs) remain on basic tools: spreadsheets are still dominant for editing, storing and sharing data⁴⁹. And the main barriers to the use of digital tools are its cost (68% of respondents) and staff training (53%).

Finally, any localisation approach should be... localised! Indeed, the diversity of situations does not allow for a one-stop solution:

“ There is no “one size fits all” approach to localisation. [...] However, the complex and context-specific nature of localisation should not be used as an excuse by those with power to say, “it’s too complicated,” and maintain the status quo. Rather, these complexities should be utilized to motivate a deeper engagement with crisis-affected countries, greater investment in context-specific research, a fundamental commitment to listening to local humanitarian actors and crisis-affected communities, and a practice of policymaking informed by those data and voices. - Tufts University for USAID⁵⁰ ”

 Recommendation	 Type of actor concerned
Finance and support (with training and resources) the capacity building of local actors on data issues and tools, in particular by letting them define their own strategy and by recognising the priority of their operational needs over the accountability needs of their international partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International CSOs • Donors & Governments
Support local CSOs in their ownership of program data management, by suggesting debates / experience-sharing and / or support on this matter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International CSOs
Support networks of local actors on these issues to enable a pooled capacity build-up.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support organisations • Donors & Governments

Reminder: These recommendations are intended for international actors but can enrich local actors in their reflection and advocacy.

5.2. FURTHER THE EVOLUTION OF GOVERNANCE AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT AROUND DATA

In addition to prioritising the needs of local and field actors, Development Initiatives recommends **increased investment in national institutional data actors** (National Statistical Institutes) and

⁴⁹ “Data Handling and Digital Readiness in Civil Society - Global Study 2020”, TechSoup, 2021

⁵⁰ “Localisation: A “Landscape” Report”, Tufts University for USAID, January 2022

recognition by international actors of their legitimacy. In particular, by ceasing to bypass and duplicate their systems.

From an institutional point of view, this can also take a **legislative form** as many countries have done by obliging operators to store data in their territories or by other restrictions (such as the European GDPR)⁵¹. One of the induced effects of this institutional localisation is to revalue the expertise of local actors, who know and respect their national legal framework.

For example, the report published by READY (Global Readiness for major disease outbreak response) mentions among its 4 “key actions” the fact of relying on the skills of local actors to drive responses to health crises⁵². It highlights the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where many international partners have supported various Congolese public institutions, including the Integrated Analysis Cell (CAI) within the Ministry of Health since the Ebola epidemic of 2018-2020. The CAI plays different roles including analysing, sharing results, and steering actions. All this while leaving control of the data to local actors, who can use their own data to understand health dynamics and identify the causes of epidemics for prevention purposes.

It should be noted that investment and recognition of national government actors is **not a sufficient solution in itself**. Thus, local Civil Society Organisations themselves not only expect a strengthening of their national institutional actors’ capacity, but also a change in their governance (government, NSI). Indeed, the rebalancing of the power relationship concerning data is also taking place within each country between the authorities and the civil society. The authorities often have a sovereign vision that limits recognition (usually for reasons of supposed inferior quality) and therefore the use of data produced by communities and CSOs, and a fortiori by local CSOs. To which a further question arises - still underlying but that will inevitably become important - on the financial value of this data, which will also require a legal framework. For example, an open data activist in East Africa testifies to the organisation of a coalition of civil society actors to get public actors to recognise the value of data produced by communities⁵³.

Institutional actors and in particular donors and bilateral partnerships therefore have a **responsibility to help their local public interlocutors** regulate the data sector, but without reducing the capacity of initiative and recognition of civil society. The Engine Room (CSO), which specialises in the citizen and responsible use of technologies, highlights the importance of community-led initiatives to restore trust in the information ecosystem, beyond data stricto sensu⁵⁴. Similarly, interviewed stakeholders in the OpenStreetMap ecosystem demand that data-based projects be designed by and for local communities, requiring transparency and transfer of power to local actors, including humanitarian or civil society projects (*“If foreign aid and support from citizens from powerful countries mean communities will be exploited, communities are better off without it”*)⁵⁵.

⁵¹ “Data Localisation Laws Around the World”, Bridgette Hernandez, Women in Localisation, January 2020

⁵² “Why the delay? Perspectives of national and local actors on progress toward locally led outbreak readiness and response”, READY Initiative/Anthrologica, October 2023



⁵³ Interview.

⁵⁴ “A slow-burning process: to improve the information ecosystem we need to rebuild trust and focus on local, community-driven initiatives”, The Engine Room, November 2023

⁵⁵ “Colonialism in open data an mapping”, Humanitarian OpenStreetMap team webinar, June 2021

More generally, the **simplification and adaptation of Monitoring & Evaluation processes** would make it possible to meet the expectations of these different local actors and avoid opposing them⁵⁶. The use of more personalised reporting formats (allowing to absorb different information formats, including for example qualitative ones), the joint construction of success criteria and indicators (also with local communities), the establishment of direct reporting mechanisms (mobile applications, for example of the anonymous “complaint mechanism” type) are all tools to go in this direction. Unfortunately, a different picture is currently emerging, namely the imposition of reporting formats and uniform monitoring and evaluation tools without regard for those existing within structures (which often amounts to setting up dual tracking or duplicating tools). The transformation of power relations governing data is therefore a necessary prerequisite for genuine transformations of local organisations’ working conditions; a similar recommendation to the global recommendations on localisation can be found here, requiring a transformation of accountability methods as a prerequisite for a true evolution of financial flows.

To go even further, and going beyond the scope of data management, **a transformation of project management methodology** through agile methods would limit many of the biases previously identified in this study. The fact of not predefining the activities/outputs but only coming to an agreement together on the overall objectives (outcomes) and organising the projects accordingly (“product owner” from the beneficiary community, mixed NGO/donor project team, etc.), however, would be a real revolution for many players in the sector.

 Recommendation	 Type of actor concerned
Systematically co-construct data management tools and related monitoring, evaluation and reporting tools with the local actors involved, including CSOs, adapting them to contexts and adjusting them to project life cycles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International CSOs • Donors & Governments
Recognise the expertise and legitimacy of national public data actors, and systematically take part in their frameworks and tools, or collaborate to improve the latter if necessary and sought by them, whilst supporting them in collaboration with their civil society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International CSOs • Donors & Governments • Support organisations
Explore, where possible, alternative project management methods, particularly on the data management component, to give leadership back to local actors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donors & Governments • International CSOs

Reminder: These recommendations are intended for international actors but can enrich local actors in their reflection and advocacy.

⁵⁶ “[Localisation in practice - Facilitating equitable partnership in humanitarian project management](#)”, Centre for Humanitarian Action, February 2023

5.3. WORK ON INCLUSIVENESS IN THE DATA CHAIN

The localisation and thereby recognition of local organisations cannot be conceived without a **political and global reflection on the fairness of the data chain**. Various proposals have been initiated towards that end, including for instance the principles for digital development⁵⁷ (which go beyond but include the subject of data), the Inclusive Data Charter⁵⁸, or the Data Values project.



Focus: the Data Values project

The Data Values project, led by a coalition of actors, proposes in its manifesto⁵⁹ a global vision to rethink the fairness of the data chain, through five principles:

- Help people shape how they are represented in the data.
- Invest in public participation to ensure accountability.
- Democratise data skills for greater equality.
- Create cultures of transparency, sharing and use of data.
- Fund open and responsive data systems so that everyone can enjoy the benefits of data.

Following a wide consultation, the Data Values project produced a white paper summarising and operationalizing these principles for the different categories of actors⁶⁰.

Similar principles can be found in the methodology for the use of human rights-based data of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: with the principles of disaggregation, participation of populations, self-identification of respondents (on their characteristics), the rights to privacy, transparency, and accountability on the use of data⁶¹.

This type of approach also makes it possible to **work on data inclusiveness issues**. For instance, by better accounting for gender inequalities in data: breaking them down (to identify inequalities), reflecting specific gender-related issues (e.g. health needs, gender-based violence, etc.), and through appropriate, localised and non-biased collection methods⁶².

On the other hand, one might **regret the multiplication and complexity of these charters and methodologies** on the fairness of the data chain: only the most structured and powerful local actors - who are already strengthening their position in advocacy on localisation in general - seem to have seized it. These tools are in any case quite far removed from the concerns expressed by the field actors interviewed in the CartONG survey. We are, however, aware of the irony of lamenting a multiplication of documents issuing recommendations whilst issuing one ourselves.

⁵⁷ Principles for Digital Development



⁵⁸ [Inclusive Data Charter](#), Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, 2018

⁵⁹ ["The #DataValues Manifesto: Demanding a fair data future"](#), Data Values project, 2021

⁶⁰ ["Reimagining Data and Power: A roadmap for putting values at the heart of data"](#), Data Values project / Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data

⁶¹ ["A human rights-based approach to data"](#), United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2018

⁶² ["Improving gender data to leave no one behind"](#), Deborah Hardoon, Development Initiatives, May 2023

 Recommendation	 Type of actor concerned
Simplify and disseminate accessible understanding and advocacy tools on data issues to local stakeholders, particularly in local languages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support organisations • International CSOs
Bring international initiatives in favour of data equity closer to local actors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International CSOs • Donors & Governments
Improve government understanding of data issues and the role of civil society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support organisations • Donors & Governments
Develop the role of expert CSOs on data issues as network leaders and support for local expert CSOs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support organisations

Reminder: These recommendations are intended for international actors but can enrich local actors in their reflection and advocacy.

5.4. SUPPORT DATA ECOSYSTEMS THROUGH DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

We have found that local actors mostly lack specialised support on digital issues, and data in particular. Yet there are examples of fields in which the creation of an ecosystem of specialised local actors, in close connection with their civil society but also their local government, has made it possible to advance localisation much more rapidly. Examples of dispersed leadership include the [Open Mapping hubs of the Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team](#), the [Start Network hubs](#), the transformation of the [Ipas CSO into a decentralised network](#). But also, organisations that reinvent their identity, change their storytelling, international CSOs withdrawing from certain countries to give way to local actors, etc.⁶³

The reflection de facto questions the purpose and the development model of international CSOs, which then move from a role of implementation / leadership of projects to that of facilitator of networks supporting local actors. This is what WeRobotics did⁶⁴ (cf. example detailed below), which by questioning its “endgame” (purpose of the organisation) believes it has a stronger impact by adopting a replication / open sourcing model of its processes than through direct growth of its actions.

These different models therefore show that **work in an ecosystem**, with distributed leadership (between countries and organisations) is favourable to the distribution of decision-making power and the taking into account of local communities. However, they are still minimally connected, and not very visible internationally. Thus, while connoisseurs of the data ecosystem can cite a multitude of examples, and while some local actors are beginning to gain appreciable visibility at national level, very few of these examples appear in literature, even the most recent, studying the progress of localisation at global level. Which is a shame, because some of the most promising and ambitious initiatives in terms of localisation

⁶³ Examples drawn from “[Ten efforts to decolonise aid](#)”, The New Humanitarian, August 2022

⁶⁴ “[Do Social Good Organizations Have an Endgame?](#)”, WeRobotics, June 2021

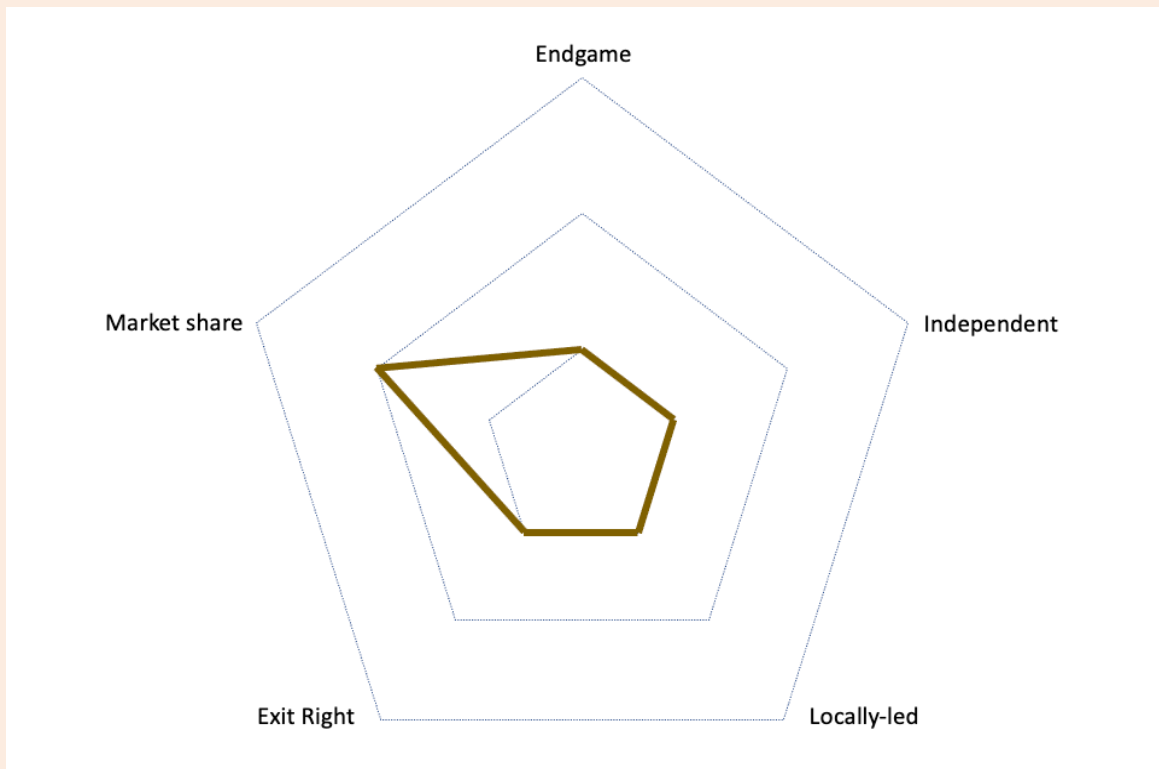
are precisely in the data and digital field. This therefore raises the challenge of developing a collaboration between CSOs engaged in localisation and these initiatives (and their methods, often linked to free licenses, sharing and commons).



A claimed success story: the Flying Labs Network

The Flying Labs Network, spurred by the Swiss-American CSO WeRobotics, lays claims to being a “rare success” and has above all documented⁶⁵ - and developed a strong reflexivity⁶⁶ - on its own localisation practices. This network is currently active in more than 30 countries across all continents. The network was built on a demand-based approach, and with the ambition to extend the initiative capacity of local actors (and not only therefore to improve the impact of projects) and especially local leaders.

The Flying Lab Network has taken the exercise a step further, to conceptualise the idea of a “power footprint” that can be measured. Reducing this power footprint of international organisations then logically becomes the best way to advance localisation. The application to WeRobotics⁶⁷ shows the approach and areas for improvement that all players could consider:





It should be noted, however, that these successes vary greatly - depending on the themes within the digital and data space, but also on the regions of the world. **Particular attention should be paid to the francophone sphere:** in the same way that francophone international CSOs lag behind their English-

⁶⁵ [“Here’s How We Expanded Locally-Led Action to Shift the Power”](#) WeRobotics, March 2022

⁶⁶ Drawing in particular on the localisation improvement framework developed by the Overseas Development Institute: [“Are we there yet? Localisation as the journey towards locally led practice”](#), ODI, October 2021

⁶⁷ [“What is the Power Footprint of International Organizations?”](#), WeRobotics, October 2021

speaking counterparts on the appropriation of data issues⁶⁸, we have unfortunately identified few pioneering initiatives from francophone countries in the local sphere. The strong consideration of the digital issue by the main francophone donors (AFD with its [Seed funding by Digital Africa](#) or Enabel with [WeHubit funds and projects](#)) should help bridge this gap, even if relatively few supported initiatives specifically target data.

 Recommendation	 Type of actor concerned
Support the creation or development of networks of actors on data: either national with different types of actors (CSOs, private, State, etc.) or decentralised international networks where power is distributed (around a theme, a tool, a digital commons, etc.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support organisations • International CSOs • Donors & Governments
In the Global South, support and finance the emergence of local data expert players - especially if they are in a culture of SSE and/or open source.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International CSOs • Donors & Governments • Support organisations
Promote sustainable approaches in terms of technologies, by favouring low-tech, collaborative and widely used/usable tools, as well as the production and sharing of open data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donors & Governments • International CSOs
In the North, support and finance actors (especially the smallest ones) wanting to transform their model by reducing their power footprint.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donors & Governments

Reminder: These recommendations are intended for international actors but can enrich local actors in their reflection and advocacy.

5.5. INVEST IN THE HUMANITARIAN LEADERS AND EXPERTS OF TOMORROW

Many of the success stories cited so far in this report have been based at least in part on the leadership of enthusiastic individuals, promoting new tools and initiatives using data in often unfavourable contexts.

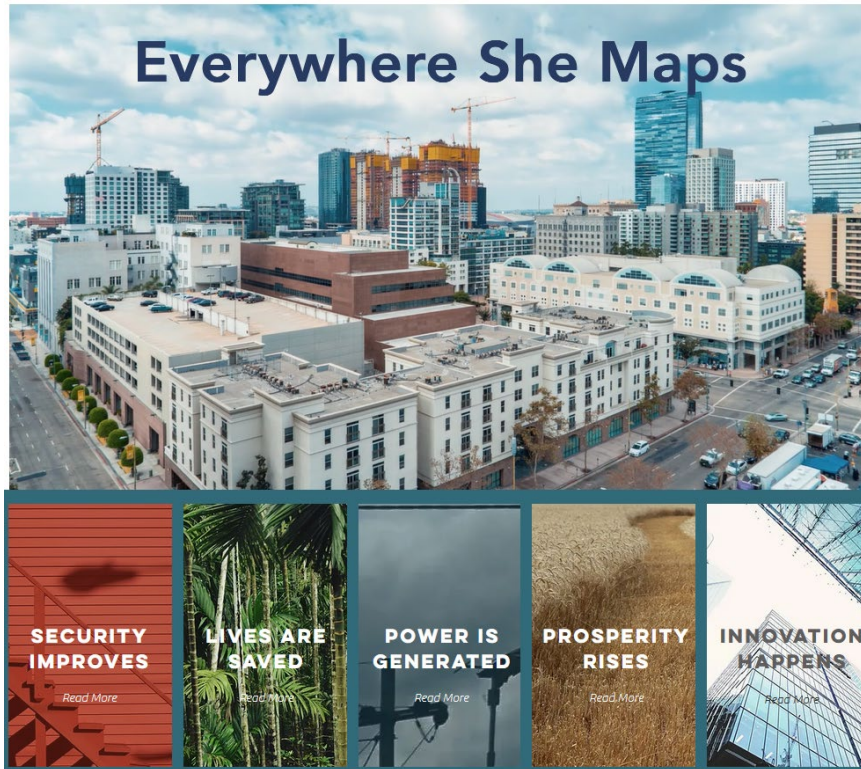
Creating conditions that will enable these leaders to express their potential more simply is a sure way to multiply local data use initiatives.

A good model is the [YouthMappers network](#) on the theme of participatory mapping on OpenStreetMap. Initiated in 2016 by teams from 3 American universities with the support of bilateral aid from the United States, the network now brings together more than 400 chapters across all continents. Its slogan, “We don't just build maps, we build mappers” summarises its vision: to support students in developing their skills through a multitude of local groups, and to use participatory mapping tools in the service of public-interest projects. In practical terms, the network offers support for new chapters, freely accessible online

⁶⁸“Program data: the silver bullet of the humanitarian and development sectors?” CartONG, September 2020

resources, scholarships to participate in group training/seminars, and finally collective capitalisation/communication work. The network also has a specialised “Everywhere she maps” program to build inclusive mapping collectives for women working to solve gender inequality issues.

Image 2 - Visual of the Everywhere She Maps program by YouthMappers with examples of themes on which projects have been allowed.



Recommendation	Type of actor concerned
Support and finance initiatives and networks that help disseminate data-related skills in universities in the South.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International CSOs • Donors & Governments
Support and finance local leaders’ initiatives using data for public-interest projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International CSOs • Donors & Governments
Recruit and facilitate the recruitment of young data experts in national and international CSOs by supporting their leadership development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support organisations • International CSOs

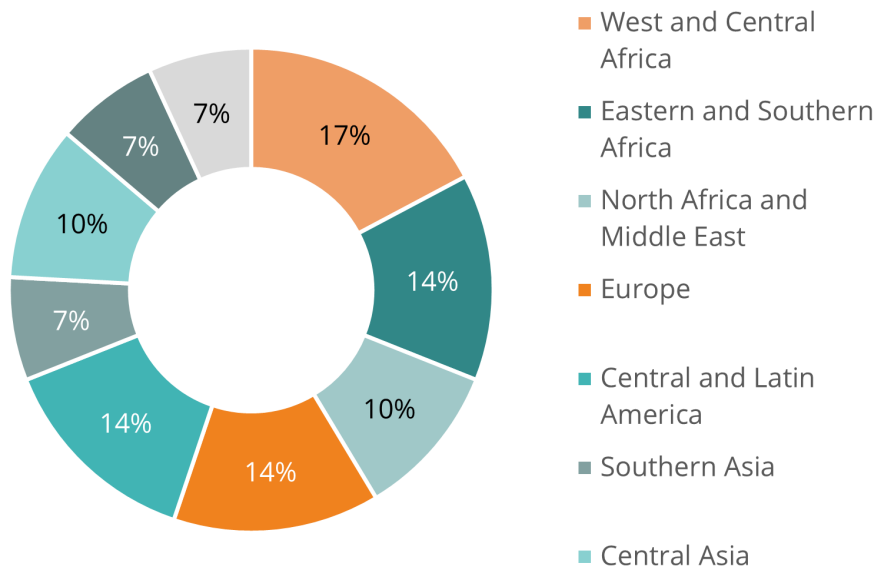
Reminder: These recommendations are intended for international actors but can enrich local actors in their reflection and advocacy.

APPENDICES

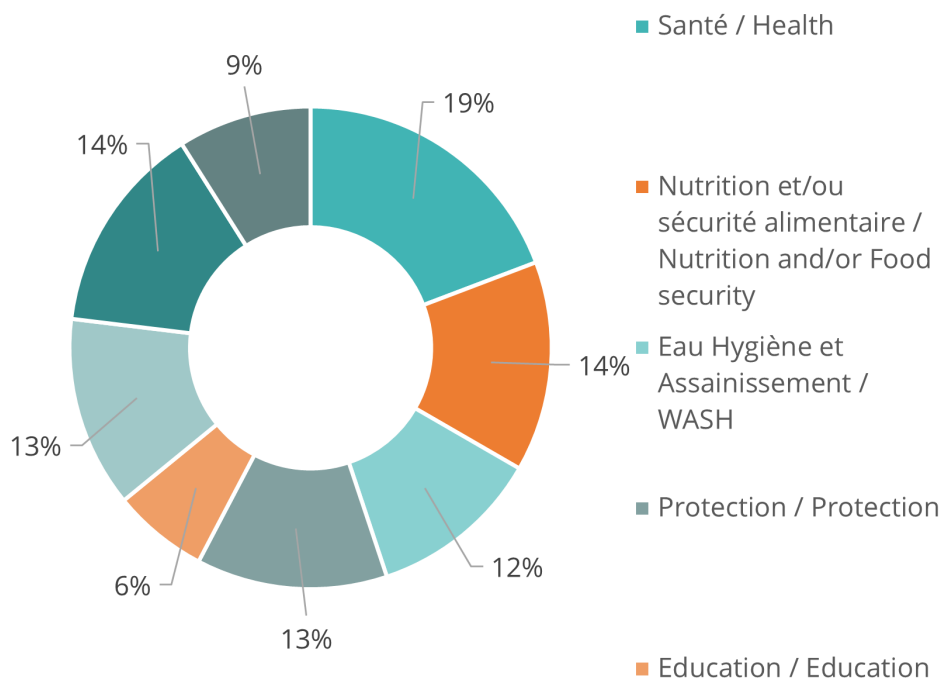
1. SURVEY RESULTS

1.1. INTERNATIONAL CSOs

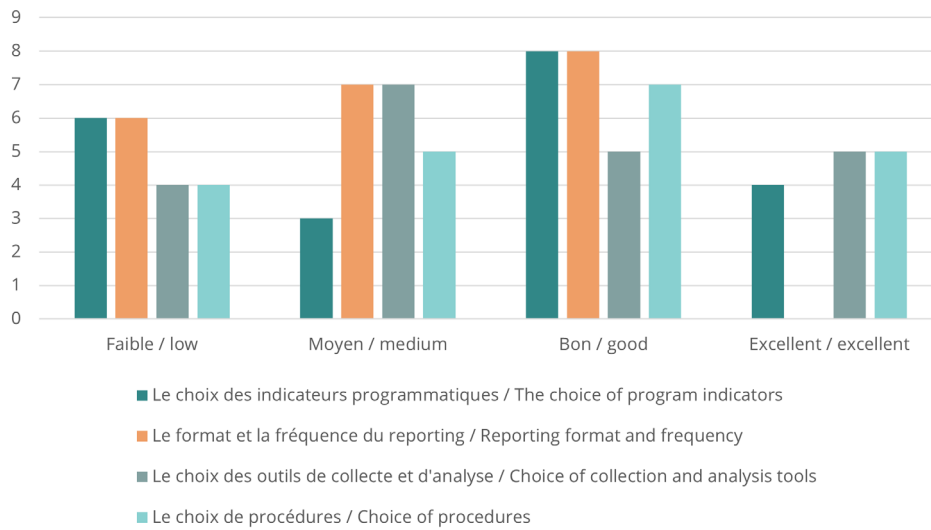
Geographical areas of intervention of international CSOs



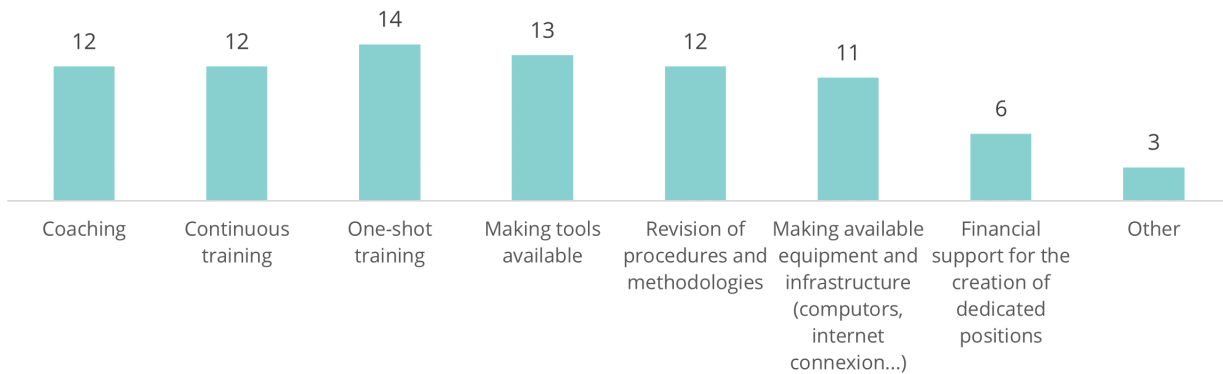
Sectors of International CSOs



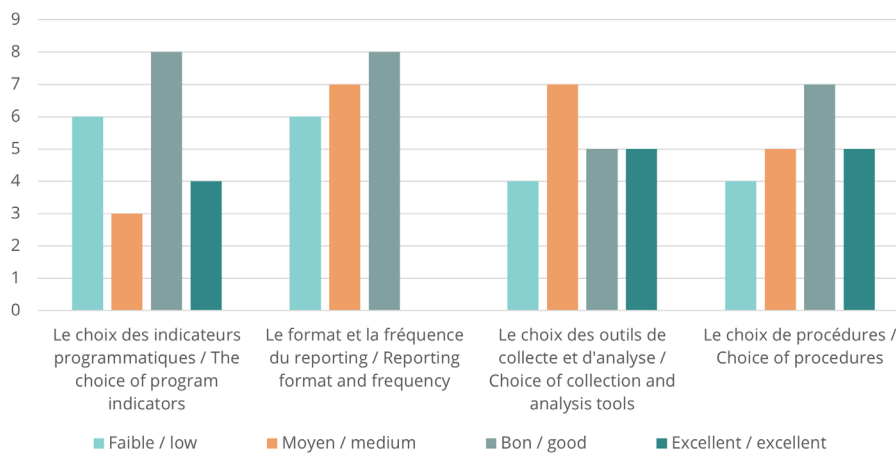
In the context of your partnerships with national or local CSOs, what level of decision-making is left to the partners?



As part of the projects that you conduct with partners, what types of key support do you provide in terms of program data management?

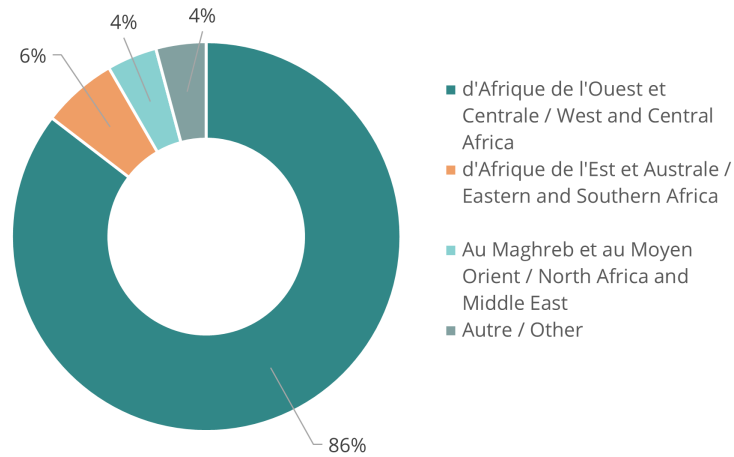


In the context of your partnerships with national or local CSOs, what level of decision-making is left to the partners?

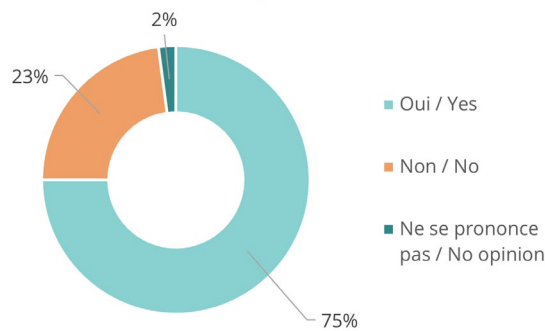


1.2. LOCAL/NATIONAL CSOs

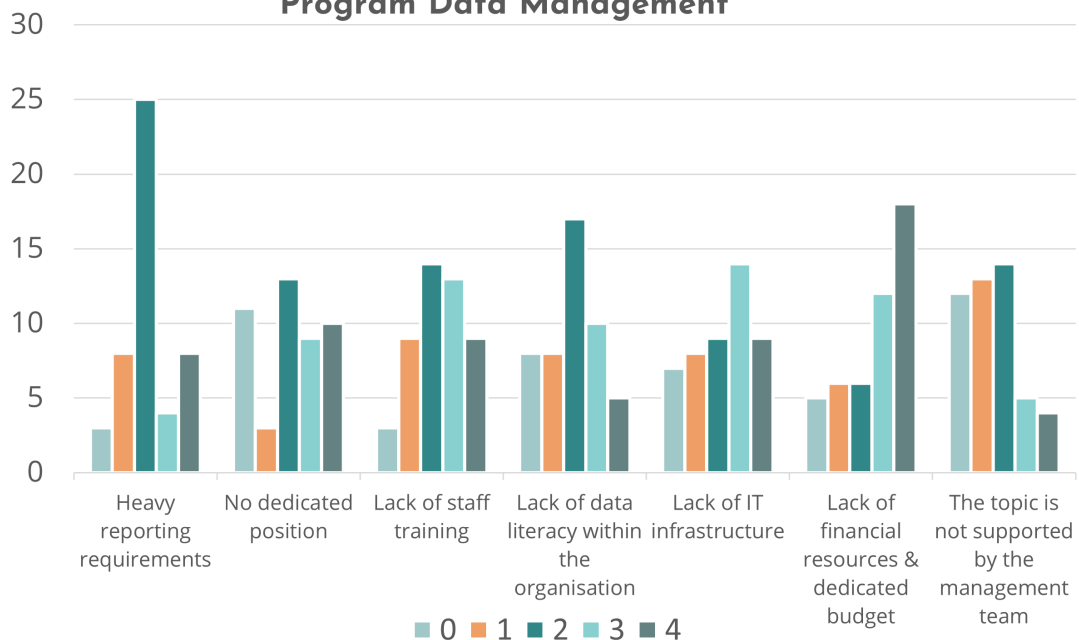
Geographical areas of local/national CSOs



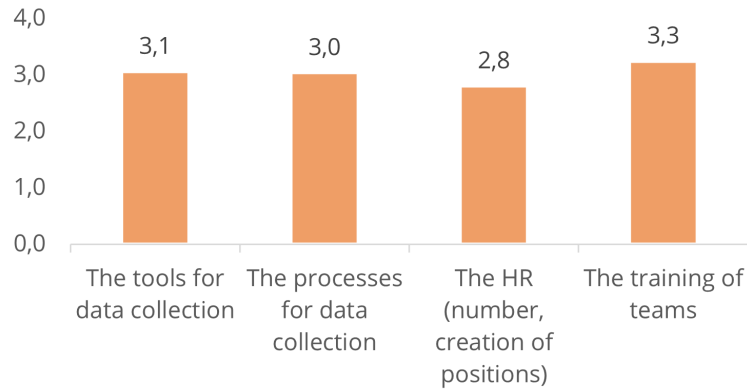
In your daily work, do you face difficulties related to information management?



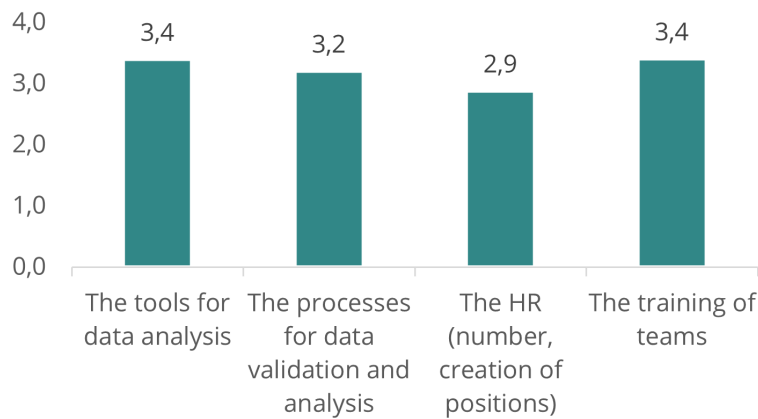
Constraints faced by national or local CSOs in Program Data Management



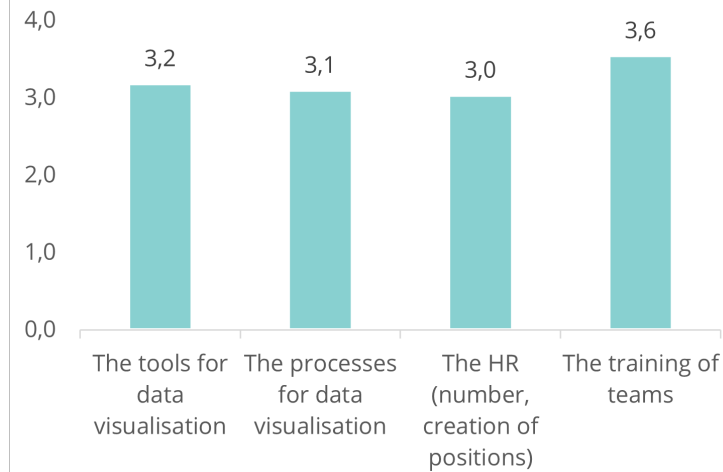
With regard to data collection, how do you assess the need for support in the following areas?



With regard to data analysis, how do you assess the need for support in the following areas?



With regard to data visualisation, how do you assess the need for support in the following areas?



2. SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW RESULTS

List of local/national organisations interviewed	List of international organisations interviewed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association des Femmes Appliquées pour le Développement Durable - Burundi • Fondation Agir Contre l'Exclusion - Tunisie • Collectif des Femmes du Mali - Mali • SOS Médecins secours - Côte d'ivoire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter Aide - France • Groupe URD - France • Terre des Hommes - Suisse

Key messages drawn from interviews:

- One of the main bottlenecks is data access, analysis and visualisation.
- Capacity-building of local authorities is key, without focusing only on NGOs/CSOs.
- There is often a “need” to collect without understanding why and what will happen next.
- Data culture is not (yet) part of the culture at local level.
- Need to question the perception of data at local level and be ready to hear what local actors have to say.
- Very strong imbalance on the bias “data = quantitative.” Qualitative data is missing from the spectrum.
- “Quantity” is perceived as a demand from donors. Are they open to other things, to a change of model?
- If international actors support capacity building, understanding of the meaning, methodology, local actors will feel more legitimate to question international actors and donors. Focus on a better understanding of the system around program data management as a whole.
- There are very strong regional specificities in terms of skills around program data management (ex: good level of command for implementation but missing the global management/strategy part on why data is collected).
- The issue of data sharing is essential in localisation (NGOs, donors, local authorities, governments).
- Difficulty of keeping staff competent on these subjects.
- Huge demands for training.
- Difficult to have dedicated people at local level on the program data management topic.
- Need to improve methodology at the local level to be more effective.
- There sometimes exists (ex: Tunisia) a local ecosystem of support organisations on these subjects but they work mainly for NGOs or international agencies such as the European Union. These organisations do not provide training.
- Often no budget line related to monitoring & evaluation or data management on projects with donor funding, so it is impossible to recruit or pay external consultants.
- Problem of recruiting local profiles with the right skills. Since few exist, these profiles are very expensive.
- There is a preference for internalising these functions if possible, but this is difficult from a budgetary point of view and requires a lot of training.
- The lack of material resources is regularly found to be a major barrier.
- Careful not to ask too much of local organisations without providing appropriate support.

- Important to have local program managers (recruiting these profiles can be difficult).
- Recommendations from the field should be taken into account. Back-and-forth, discussions and team meetings improve tools and protocols.
- Plan solutions well enough in advance to transfer knowledge and skills locally (when they exist) with expat profiles.
- To train and coordinate: have regional representatives, based in the region, with present and sustained links with headquarters.
- Will local organisations be able to finance and support full-time positions on these topics (at headquarters these staffs are solicited on multiple projects)? Can field teams reach the critical size necessary to justify these specialised profiles?
- Have change management, decentralisation or localisation project teams at headquarters. Pool resources.
- Search for donations locally, finding local unconditional donors is not easy. The operational challenges may not be so great, but the funding is complicated
- What will the role of international NGOs that provide guarantees in terms of 'compliance' be (only tool or data providers, academic "super experts," "super-advisor", etc. ?).
- There are some serious questions about the interoperability between local systems and those of headquarters/donors.
- How will local organisations manage the extra workload (especially administratively) to stay afloat?
- Will localisation exclude new local NGOs due to excessive demands and requirements (e.g. admin) that will be potential entry barriers?
- Find synergies and collaborate on the same tools and processes in consortia (to facilitate the deployment of a tool, grouping SOPs, setting rules and interoperability of tools). Difficult because NGOs are also often competing for funding.

3. SUMMARY OF THE “LOCAL DATA EXPERTS” WORKSHOP

The workshop was organised with the participation of 5 local experts from different countries (Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, Bangladesh, Indonesia). These professionals come from open data activism (OpenStreetMap communities) and are thus good connoisseurs of both their countries’ data ecosystem and relations between stakeholders (especially with governments), but also have an interesting international vision because of the networks in which they participate.

The small number of participants does not allow definitive conclusions to be drawn but nevertheless gives trends, especially for countries whose data ecosystem could be considered “mature.”

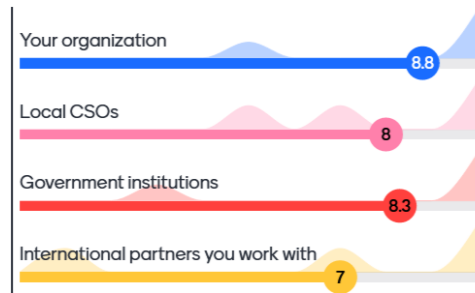
The key points identified by participants were:

- The level of maturity of civil society in their countries on data management is considered relatively low, more so than that of governments, universities and the private sector. The latter are considered to be quite out of step with international actors.
- The issue of localisation is logically seen as a very high priority of these (rather militant) organisations, as well as of their countries’ governments and civil society, but less of their international partners, even if there are also some strong responses (perhaps linked to these activities’ ecosystem of direct partners, who collaborate with international organisations mobilised on the topic such as Humanitarian OSM Team, CartONG or the START Network, but also to international rules on the opening of data). The link between localisation on data and localisation of responses / adaptation is obvious to them. The strong demand for data by international actors with no return to actors on the ground / visibility on the analysis is also mentioned. The barriers to better data ownership mainly revolve around skills (of the actors, communities themselves) and governance, with a strong focus on the link to their national government (trust, interest in the subject, etc.). One participant thus identified the gap between the high level of regulation imposed by the government and its lack of capacity to support local actors and even use regulated data as a major obstacle. Another participant’s organisation had also initiated a workshop with local CSOs on the subject in order to make a plea to her government, particularly on the recognition of data produced by local communities and actors.
- Conversely, the cited solutions logically revolve around training, especially at community level, and advocacy, especially around governments (with cited examples of achievements already attained).
- Finally, regarding the more thematic approaches, we note a strong angle on the quoted 4 axes of further reflection, and in particular on responsible data management and the reduction of inequalities of access to data-related tools - and therefore an expectation of spaces to reflect on these aspects.

The level of maturity on data management is high enough in



This topic (localization & data) is important for



What are the main blockers to local ownership of data management in your country?

5 responses

Government policies

One of them is data privacy, as some actors eg. The government do not trust especially open data. They feel some information do not have to be known there they question the data.

Lack of skillsLack of awereness of the ownership

1. Luck of .data awareness from the community level 2. Political Interest of some leaders 3. Skills base barrier no enough investment in students who want to study in data science and management

Limited technical Infrastructure, especially in rural areas where Internet connections are limited

What would be useful to reinforce local skills on data management in your country?

5 responses

training program for the communities	More advocacy at a national level	Education/advocacy
Advocacy to the Government & all other stakeholder is the key. At the same time skill development programs can be of real game changer.	community and youth involvement in the data collection process and share the output for them to discuss possible solution with the community that way they can start believing in data to make decisions	

These angles are important to have proper ownership of data management in your country

