

WEBINAR REPORT

The Reality of Shifting Power to Local Actors: Case studies on child protection initiatives in Nigeria, Kenya, & Malawi

Panelists

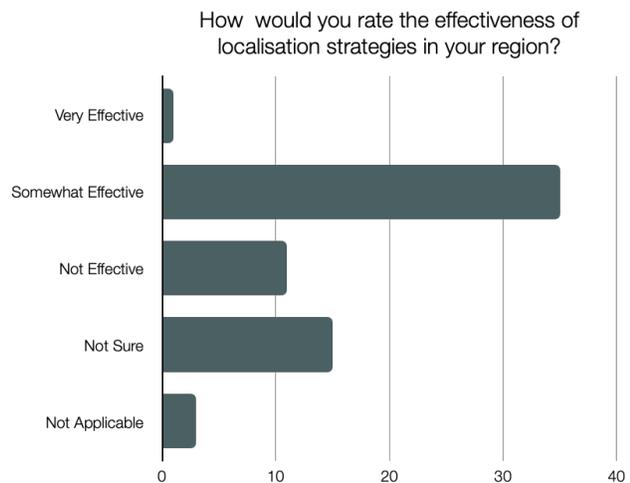
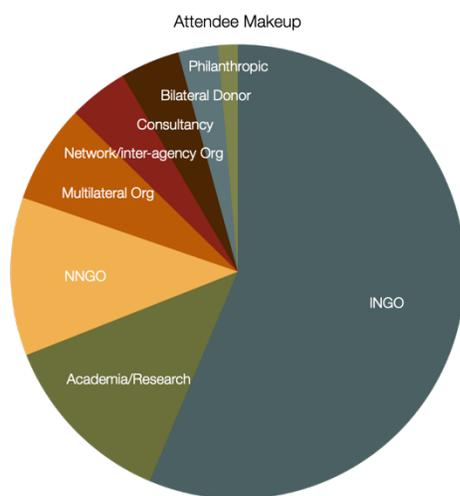
Abba Yusuf, Executive Director, Grow Strong Foundation, Nigeria

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Poll Results



Key Takeaways

1. **Capacity gaps** are often used to justify and maintain the **power imbalance** between national and international actors in terms of staffing, access to funding, decision-making power, and representation in leadership, even though local actors are the first responders on the ground and often make up INGO's in-country staff.

“Most of the excuses given by both the UN agencies and international NGOs that tend to put the national NGO down or partially involved in things have always been anchored on capacity gaps...but...all the [INGO] work, including field activities,... are carried out by the national that are locally recruited here and the same locals are the ones working with the national NGOs. When they work with the international NGOs, you don't hear issues around capacity gaps. But when it is time to hands-off or shift power or implement side-by-side with the national NGOs, you hear the UN agencies and the international NGOs talk about capacity gaps.”

2. Funding mechanisms and donor conditions can be **exclusionary** in terms of meeting standards for due diligence. NNGOs are often not **trusted** with resources for medium to long-term programming preventing them from delivering on project goals and objectives, and thus making it difficult for them to obtain additional funding. It is critically important that funding be allocated to operational capacity strengthening and overhead costs that ensure the sustainability and growth of NNGOs.

“The international NGOs have to support with unrestricted funding. Most of the funding is very restricted, it is not direct funding at all. It has to be opened...”

“Even to give them direct subgrants – I think that’s also one of the ways to capacitate them. Normally, these organisations don’t have funding to adequately achieve the results or the outcomes that may be needed so the issue of also trusting them with more resources, not only just for a month or two and then we expect them to come up with tangible outcomes...Short-term programs normally don’t work. Trust them with medium to long term programs as long as there is technical backstopping, routine monitoring and support, they should also be able to grow with time.”

3. National organisations should be invited into **equitable partnerships** and **bilaterally engaged** with international actors. NNGOs should not only have a seat at the decision-making table, but also feel **empowered** to contribute, and sought out for their practical expertise in child protection. NNGOs often have on-the-ground experience but lack technical capacity – INGOs and UN agencies should provide **mentorship** and **hands-on coaching** in reporting, planning, and implementation.

“...the issue of the competition between national and international non-governmental organisations. We shouldn’t look at it as a competition. We should rather look at it as a partnership. We should maintain those principles of partnership...lets have our policies speak to one another, rather than just giving us programs to implement...let’s come to a middle ground where we have maintained those principles of partnership in place...”

“We should just move away from the issue of capacity building. Rather, [we should focus on] mentorship...”

“If we have international NGOs that have the capacity to subgrant, at least putting in conditions to ensure that they also involve the local actors in program implementation...to ensure that [partners] are engaged in the process, their capacity is strengthened, and over time they are also reliable even at that level, at the local level to also implement the programs and also ensure the sustainability of programs...”

“Representation at various platforms where decisions are made...For example, within the humanitarian response, we have the inter-cluster coordination groups...the humanitarian technical committee. This is where decisions are made at the highest level of authority so it would be important also to have them represented at that level.”