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Background Study on Local Ownership Alliance for Sustainable Food Systems and Empowered Communities (SuFoSEC)

The present study was commissioned by

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction & Overview

The executive summary section constitutes a summary and principal overview of the main background to the study, research questions, findings and considerations.

Over the past few years, the international aid landscape has experienced a shift towards enabling local civil society actors to attain greater representation, voice and agency in the development ecosystem.

In order to strengthen learning, awareness and understanding around key thematic areas currently influencing international development cooperation, the Alliance for Sustainable Food Systems and Empowered Communities (SuFoSEC) commissioned this study with the objective of providing its members and their partners with an overview on and practical insights into the concepts and varying perspectives on local ownership and local partnerships.

This study is aimed at providing SuFoSEC Alliance members and their partners with an overview on and practical insights into the concepts and varying perspectives on local ownership and local partnerships.

Specifically, the study sought to answers the following questions:

1) What is the status of the current dialogue around the broad theme of local ownership in development cooperation?
2) What terminologies are being used to depict and capture the essence of local ownerships?

3) What are documented cases and lessons learned for local ownership?

4) Which factors influence successful partnerships as a means for local ownership?

5) What tools and resources can serve the SuFoSEC Alliance members to reflect on current practices and future directions in relation to local ownership and partnerships?

In line with the study aims, the approach for the background study was guided by the objective to provide direction and insights for practical application and learning for SuFoSEC Alliance members beyond academic notions, theories and abstract concepts. As such, the study primarily made use of:

1) Policy documents published by donor agencies, international organizations and INGOs. Particular attention was paid to documentation published from 2015 onwards to ensure the study reflected the most current debate and discourse.

2) Practitioner guides, frameworks and learning papers from actors in both the humanitarian and development space.

3) Well documented contemporary case studies and lessons learned from non-governmental agencies that cover a range of different geographic locations and perspectives.

4) Regular touchpoints and check-in meetings with SuFoSEC working group members to discuss initial findings, guide and shape study direction in an iterative manner.

1.2 Key observations from the literature and case studies

A number of observations emanated from the literature and case studies reviewed for this study:

1) There are no agreed upon definitions in the development and/or humanitarian sector for localization, local ownership and locally led development. The broader and all-encompassing definitions strive to be, the less helpful they become for INGOs and practitioners.

2) Furthermore, the use of the term 'local' in a development setting may hold negative connotations for the actors it refers to.

3) Despite an array of international agreements and commitments towards enhancing the empowerment of local actors, organizations are challenged in moving from rhetoric to action. This can be attributed to a variety of reasons including, lack of clarity on the concept, drivers and ethos of 'localization' and varying expectations amongst different development stakeholders.

4) True partnership creation which includes building trust, sense of purpose, transparency, accountability and value-addition is critical to attain sustainable development outcomes and requires substantial mindset shifts on the part of all actors involved (development organizations, donor agencies, local actors etc.). Consequentially, a different approach

to capacity strengthening at organizational and individual level is called for to bring about systems change.

5) Organizations need to fundamentally assess their strategies, systems, structure, culture, leadership styles and human resources in view of engaging in new operating models for development and partnerships.

1.3 Key considerations for the way forward

1) To avoid perpetuating in-balances in the aid system terminologies and working definitions around localization, local ownership, locally led development and partnerships require contextualization and need to be jointly defined with SuFoSEC partners at local and/or national level. **This may result in different working definitions for respective contexts and partnerships.** It may also lead to the removal of the term 'local' from organizational vocabulary.

2) Donors and their respective parliamentary groups they report to play a fundamental role in the development ecosystem. Greater discourse between INGOs, their 'local' partners, respective donor institutions and their corresponding parliamentary groups to bridge the existing gaps in the system and encourage un-learning and re-learning amongst all parties is required for meaningful changes in current operating modalities.

3) Meaningful, effective, impactful and sustainable partnerships in development cooperation between INGOs and 'local' partners require significantly more than organizational systems, policies and procedures. Much more intentional work is needed at organizational and individual level to generate true value add and address systemic challenges and inefficiencies.

2. Background to the study

Formed in 2019, the Alliance for Sustainable Food Systems and Empowered Communities (SuFoSEC) brings together six Swiss non-governmental organizations. Together they are focused on improving the livelihoods for vulnerable communities through agroecology and empowerment. As part of the SuFoSEC results framework 2021 – 2024, joint learning trajectories in key thematic areas have been identified. One of those thematic areas is around the concept of and varying perspectives on local ownership and local partnerships.

Over the past few years, the landscape in international development cooperation has been dominated by a shift towards enabling local civil society actors to attain greater representation, voice and agency in the development ecosystem. This pertains to multiple aspects including shaping policy and development priorities, establishing more equitable partnerships between local and international actors such as International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) as well as the direct ownership over implementation modalities. Global commitments made both in the

development and humanitarian space such as the Busan Partnership Agreement or the Grand Bargain illustrate the changing environment and put forward arguments from an ethical, strategic and financial perspective. As much as there is widespread agreement amongst various development stakeholders on the need for reform, moving from policy to practice and from intention to action remains an arduous journey. Financing institutions and donor agencies are grappling with the system change required and the operational challenges associated with shifting resources and power closer to the communities they are meant to serve. Local and national actors[1] are learning to navigate the procedural and relational labyrinth that constitutes the international development system, including holding donor agencies and INGOs to account on their global commitments. Finally, INGOs have been forced to rethink their position and value add in development cooperation while at the same time experiencing increasing demands for system change and reform from both the donor and local actor side.

In line with the aforementioned operational context, mandate and values of SuFoSEC Alliance members, that emphasize longer-term development cooperation initiatives and partnership formation, SuFoSEC recognizes the need to build its own capacity and strengthen internal learning. This background study is part of a longer term and multi-phase learning journey for SuFoSEC. Hence, the overarching aim of this study is to provide SuFoSEC with an overview of the current international debate, frameworks and tools

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[1] Referring to a broad range of stakeholders including National Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, Faith Based Organizations and Community Based Organization

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around local ownership[2] as well as evidence-based factors and lessons learned in the application and implementation of different approaches.

3. Objectives of the study

With the overall goal of fostering the deepening of learning and enhanced awareness both conceptual and concrete of SuFoSEC Alliance members pertaining to local ownership, the background study seeks to address the following questions:

1) What is the status of contemporary dialogue around local ownership in development cooperation?
2) What terminologies are being used to depict and capture the essence of local ownership? To what extent are there contextual nuances, differences or overtly conflicting perspectives?
3) What are documented and evidence-based successes and barriers to local ownership?
4) What factors are most critical for successful and sustainable local ownership? And to what extent can partnerships be leveraged as a means to local ownership?
5) What factors and references can serve the SuFoSEC alliance to evaluate its own practices pertaining to local ownership as partners in international development cooperation?

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[2] Despite the broadness of the term, for ease of reference and understanding the term 'local ownership' is used throughout this document unless otherwise specified.

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4. Approach

As much as the background study drew on conceptual frameworks, definitions and approaches it was mainly centered on providing direction and encouraging practical applications and learning that can guide SuFoSEC Alliance members beyond academic notions and abstract concepts.

Thus, the background study made use of a range of literature including case studies or practitioner guides to enabled concrete application, provide less unambiguous guidance and highlight an array of lessons learned. This included the following:

1. Governments, donor agencies and international organizations have published a wide range of policy documents, white papers and other literature resources around themes on local ownership, localization, locally led development, decolonizing of aid and sustainable partnerships. Relevant publications, reports and policy documents from International Organizations, donors and bilateral agencies such as the OECD, UN, World Bank were reviewed for the purpose of this study. The focus was placed on literature published from 2015 onwards to ensure it was reflective of the most current context and discourse.

2. An array of development agencies and stakeholders have developed practitioner guides, learning papers, approaches, sector frameworks and perspectives in relation to managing transitions, local ownership, development partnerships and localization. These are presented in the

study in so far that they provide answers to the study questions or may be adapted for the SuFoSEC operational and institutional context.

3. Contemporary case examples and lessons learned from non-governmental agencies who have been directly involved in transitioning ownership were selected for this study. Owing to the diversity of SuFoSEC program areas, efforts were made to provide geographic variety provided that cases studies were systematically documented and were not purely anecdotal in nature.

4. In keeping with the study aims of providing practical insights based on lived experiences, the use of academic literature, journals and publications was limited to select empirical research studies.

5. A number of touch points, progress and check in meetings with SuFoSEC working group members guided the study direction and ensured iterative adaptation of themes to be explored. An inception report further outlined key literature, resources and tools to be explored during the study. Moreover, in some instances SuFoSEC working group members also shared literature and case studies for consideration from their context, region or countries.

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5. Evolution of Local Ownership

The focus on greater involvement and agency of local and national actors is present in both the humanitarian and development sector. While in the humanitarian sector the rise of the localization agenda is frequently viewed as more of a recent phenomenon, within the broader aid sector, efforts to increase aid effectiveness via greater ownership, decision-making rights and participation of local and national actors have been emphasized since the seventies (Barbelet, Davies, Flint and Davey, 2021). The section below provides insights into the evolution of the local ownership discourse in both sectors by highlighting some of key events, commitments, policy documents and movements that have taken place over the last few years.

5.1 Evolution in the Humanitarian Sector

In recent years, most notably post World Humanitarian Summit, the humanitarian sector has witnessed increasing calls to address inherent unequal power dynamics between international, local and/or national actors. Accused of perpetuating a 'broken' system, humanitarian actors and stakeholders including governments and donor agencies have found themselves grappling with efforts to accelerate systemic change and transformation. The section below illustrates three complementary global efforts, notable the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), Charter4Change and Grand Bargain aimed at driving this system wide change to address historic challenges and inequities.

5.1.1 Core Humanitarian Standard

Developed in 2014 through a consultative process, the [Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS)](#) sets out 9 commitments for organizations to improve the effectiveness and quality of assistance provided. The CHS is a voluntary initiative and aims at placing people and communities affected by crisis at the center of humanitarian programing, action and assistance. Thus, for example the following CHS commitments make specific reference to issues around ownership, participation and involvement:

- *CHS Commitment 3* is focused on strengthening local capacities, local leadership and local organizations in humanitarian crisis.
- *CHS Commitment 4* is focused on ensuring the inclusion, involvement, representation and engagement of people affected by crisis in all stages of work.
- *CHS Commitment 6* is focused on ensuring humanitarian action is complementary to that of national and local actors.
- *CHS Commitment 7* is focused on ensuring communication and engagement with affected communities on lessons learned, feedback and complaints.

5.1.2 Charter4Change

Launched and originally developed in 2015, the [Charter4Change](#) laid out 8 commitments for International NGOs to alter the way the interact with and relate to national organizations. The commitments were to be implemented by 2020 and cover the following:

1) *Direct Funding:* Increase direct funding to national and local NGOs to 25%.

2) *Partnerships:* Reaffirm the partnership principles from the 2007 Global Humanitarian Platform.[3]

3) *Transparency:* Publish the amount of funding transferred to national and local NGOs.

4) *Recruitment:* Implement fair recruitment policies to avoid poaching staff from national and local NGOs.

5) *Advocacy:* Emphasize the importance of local and national actors to donors

6) *Equality:* Address sub-contracting and ensure equality program design and decision making.

7) *Support:* Provide robust organizational support and capacity strengthening.

8) *Promotion:* Communicate the role of local and national actors to the media and the public

At the time of writing this study, the charter had been signed by 38 INGOs and endorsed by over 300 national organizations and networks from across the world.

5.1.3 The Grand Bargain & World Humanitarian Summit
The Grand Bargain resulting from the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit is currently in its 5th year. The Grand Bargain constitutes an agreement between

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[3] The Global Humanitarian Platform (GHP) was an initiative following dialogue in 2006 between UN agencies and NGOs to discuss ways to improve partnerships between humanitarian actors

major donors and large humanitarian organizations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the global humanitarian system. Signatories to the Grand Bargain have increased over the past few years to a current total of 63, including Member States, UN agencies and NGOs. Though the Grand Bargain covers a range of commitments two particular workstreams are focused on enhancing the involvement, voice and decision-making powers of national and local actors.

- *Workstream 2*, focuses on providing more direct support and funding to local and national responders. The workstream is co-convened by IFRC and Switzerland.
- *Workstream 6,* focuses on meaningful participation of aid recipients in decisions that impact their lives and communities. The workstream is co-convened by the USA and the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR).

In addition to the above, there have also been a number of initiatives launched by actors from the Global South calling for and promoting more balanced partnerships and inclusion practices in the current aid system. Most notably, the [Network for Empowered Aid Response](#) (NEAR) which is a consortium that brings together local and national Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from across the Global South to influence and shape local participation across the humanitarian and development spectrum. While NEAR started as a movement of Global South leaders during the World Humanitarian Summit, it now represents a network of around 96 different organizations. The network plays a

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critical role in the global debate around local ownership and participation and has developed a range of resources and tools including a clear definitions paper on what constitutes a local and/or national organization, as well as localization performance measurement framework to gauge progress made on the various localization commitments.

5.2 Evolution in the Development Sector

Due to the long-term nature of many development-sector projects and the relatively stable environment in which they are undertaken, **the sector has long been concerned with issues around sustainability, ownership, partnerships, locally led development and involvement in a bid to produce more effective and transformative aid outcomes.** In the 1989 classic Lords of Poverty, Hancock posits "*perhaps when the middle men of the aid industry have been shut out it will become possible for people to rediscover ways to 'help' one another directly according to their needs and aspirations as they themselves define them, in line with priorities that they themselves have set, and guided by their own agenda.*" (Hancock, 1989, p.192).

In more recent times, organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) have very much been at the policy level forefront in terms of aid effectiveness and development outcomes. Since the 2003 Rome Declaration on harmonization, each subsequent high-level forum on aid effectiveness (Paris 2005, Accra 2008, Busan 2011, Mexico 2014) has centered on generating better development outcomes via country ownership,

participation, voice and agency. For example, in the 2005 Paris Declaration this is highlighted in the following two principles.

1) *Ownership*: Developing countries set their own development strategies, improve their institutions and tackle corruption.
2) *Alignment*: Donor countries and organizations bring their support in line with these strategies and use the local systems.

A few years later, the Busan Partnership agreement spelled out the principles for effective development corporation as constituting the following (OECD, 2011, p.3):

1) *Ownership of development priorities by developing countries*. Partnerships for development can only succeed if they are led by developing countries, implementing approaches that are tailored to country-specific situations and needs.
2) *Focus on results*. Our investments and efforts must have a lasting impact on eradicating poverty and reducing inequality, on sustainable development, and on enhancing developing countries' capacities, aligned with the priorities and policies set out by developing countries themselves.
3) *Inclusive development partnerships*. Openness, trust, and mutual respect and learning lie at the core of effective partnerships in support of development goals, recognizing the different and complementary roles of all actors.

4) *Transparency and accountability to each other.* Mutual accountability and accountability to the intended beneficiaries of our co-operation, as well as to our respective citizens, organizations, constituents and shareholders, is critical to delivering results. Transparent practices form the basis for enhanced accountability

Moreover, the emphasis on greater equity, inclusion and involvement from stakeholders in the 'Global South' is also illustrated in 2000 – 2015 Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 8: "*develop a global partnership for development*" and the current 2016 – 2030 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17: "*strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development*".

The similarities and overlap pertaining to local ownership in both the humanitarian and development sector are arguably not unexpected given the increased recognition of the triple nexus between humanitarian, development and peace actors. **While in theory there exists a clear demarcation between humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding and development cooperation, in reality, as argued by de Wolf and Wilkinson (2019), this is often not the case.** Regions, countries and communities may simultaneously experience humanitarian, peacebuilding and development needs as opposed to them occurring strictly in a compartmentalized and sequential manner. This is further substantiated by Barbelet et al (2021), recommending for donors to adopt comprehensive strategies across their humanitarian, peace and

development portfolios and enhance the blending of humanitarian and development financing.

6. Guiding Definitions & Interpretations

The aforementioned context, the historical separation between humanitarian and development actors and finally the myriad of actors involved in the aid system, have given rise to a proliferation of terminologies definitions and interpretations around local ownership. The breadth and diversity of terms can serve in contextualization and in ensuring nuances are not glossed over. Conversely it can also lead to a muddying of waters, prompting confusion amongst actors and fostering abstract and theoretical elitist discourse.

In addition to this, particularly in the last decade, there has been an increasing preoccupation by the international aid sector with the use of the term '*local*'. The intention behind its use may be a positive one, indicating a willingness and openness to transform and rebalance traditional aid modalities. **At the same it time it is important to be cognizant that the terminology is not necessarily well received by the communities and individuals it refers to nor does it resonate widely in the Global South.** 2018 research from Peace Direct found that the term 'local' is perceived as limiting and unhelpful, oversimplifies context, highlights underlying racism present in the aid sector and can be used to perpetuate stereotypes.

The section below provides a range of definitions and interpretations for the frequently used terms *localization, locally led development* and *local ownership.*

6.1 Localization

In the context of the international aid sector the terms localization and localization agenda started to gain broad traction following the World Humanitarian Summit. In the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic and social movements such as #BlackLivesMatter, the term has received renewed momentum.

At the core of the #BlackLivesMatter movement lies the challenging of historic and contemporary institutional and systemic inequities and inequalities. This dialogue has also made its way into the international development sector, forcing the sector to unpack and reflect on its own structure and practices that often reinforce unequal power dynamics, stereotypes and inequities. In addition to this, in 2020, the world of work experienced a rapid change as a result of the Corona Virus outbreak. In development corporation, travel and movement restrictions meant that many organizations had to rely on local partners, local staff or alternative mechanisms to manage and implement their development programs. As a result of this, engrained organizational practices, decision making processes and consternations around capabilities have been brought into question. In many ways, the Covid-19 pandemic can be viewed as a catapult or steppingstone towards more meaningful local ownership.

With the sector witnessing increasing calls advocating for changes in funding flows and ways of working, concerted efforts are being made to recognize the contribution of local and national actors. **This includes the arguably overdue**

paradigm shift towards engaging with national and local actors as equals and key players in the development ecosystem and appreciating their demands for a transformed relationship with INGOs (Vielajus and Bonis-Charancle, 2020).

Despite the prominent use of the term localization in both implicit and explicit terms in much of the sector discourse and documentation, there seems to be an absence of a common understanding around what it entails and limited practical guidance on how best to identify, strengthen, build and maintain localization opportunities through partnerships, joint ventures, networks, alliances and other forms of collaboration beyond conceptual frameworks. The below table highlighting various definitions of localization illustrate the current state of affairs.

Source	Definition	Focus
Australian Red Cross (2017, p.4)	*"…a process of recognising, respecting and strengthening the independence of leadership and decision making by national actors in humanitarian action, in order to better address the needs of affected populations."*	• Local leadership • Decision-making
International Council of Voluntary Agencies (2018, p.2)	*"the process through which a diverse range of humanitarian actors are attempting, each in their own way, to ensure local and national actors are better engaged in the planning, delivery and accountability of humanitarian action, while ensuring humanitarian needs can be met swiftly, effectively and in a principled manner."*	• Engagement • Accountability • Project cycle management

Coordination Sud (2019, p.19)	*"…a series of measures which different constituent parts of the international humanitarian system should adopt in order to rebalance the system more in favor of national actors, so that a recalibrated system works to the relevant strengths of its constituent parts and enhances partnership approaches to humanitarian action."*	• Measures and steps • Re-balancing of system • Enhanced partnership
ActionAid (2019, p. 10)	*"…a shift in tasks, power, and funding from large international actors and donors to national and local responders."*	• Power dynamics • Financing mechanisms
IFRC (2021, p. 9)	*"In a narrow sense, localization can be seen as strengthening international investment and respect for the role of local actors, with the goal of reducing costs and increasing the reach of humanitarian action. In a broader sense, it can be viewed as a way of re-conceiving of the humanitarian sector from the bottom up. It recognizes that the overwhelming majority of humanitarian assistance is already provided by local actors."*	• Cost reduction • Effectiveness • Bottom-up implementation

As much as each of the definitions places emphasis on different components, **commonalities can be elicited around financing, equity, involvement, power dynamic, partnership and collaboration.** It is also important to note that the definition by the Australian Red Cross was developed as part of a consultative process with partners in the Pacific region. The aim of this process was to

ensure the working definition on localization was commonly understood, contextualized and shaped by actors from the region. **The absence of such consultation processes negates the very essence and spirit of localization and risks the localization agenda being dominated and defined by the Global North.**

6.2 Locally Led Development

At surface level the term locally led development may appear rather unambiguous and even straight forward. Yet upon closer reflection, nuances emerge around the nature of actors and stakeholders involved in locally led development, their roles and value additions in the process as well as the substantive shape, form and function of locally led development. For this reason, this section explores three different definitions for locally led development.

USAID defines it as "*a process in which local actors – encompassing individuals, communities, networks, organizations, private entities and governments – set their own agendas, develop solutions, and bring the capacity, leadership, and resources to make those solutions a reality.*" (USAID, 2021, p.1). In addition, they outline a spectrum for locally led development. While the spectrum was initially designed from a donor perspective, it can nonetheless be applied to International NGOs as well. The main stages on the spectrum for locally led development are indicated in the figure below:

Informed

In
Partnership

Local
Leadership

Consulted

Delegated
Power
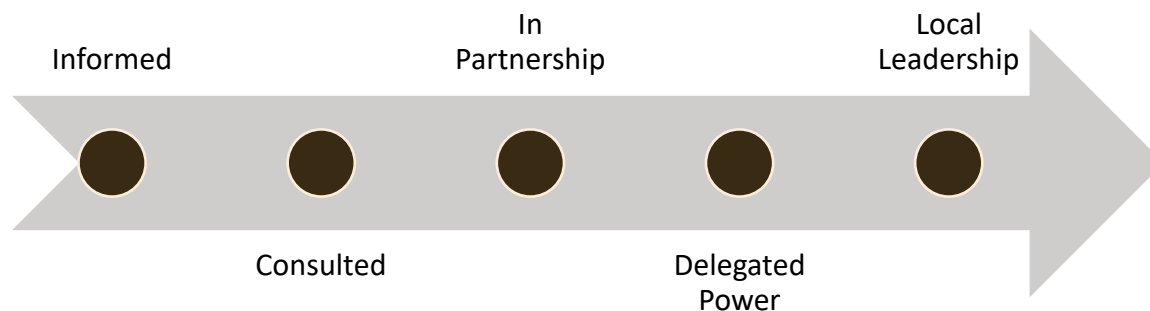
The five stages of the locally led development spectrum that can be applied to different stages of the program cycle including financing/budgeting are detailed out below:

1) **Informed:** At this stage of the spectrum local actors simply receive information about a project being financed by a donor or contracted to an INGO. Their views on the project may or may not be considered.

2) **Consulted:** At this stage of the spectrum local actors share their feedback on a project and some of those considerations are put into practice. The stage also demands communication from donors or INGOs on how local feedback is being used.

3) **In Partnership:** At this stage of the spectrum local partners are directly part of the formal system and have an opportunity to make decision jointly with the donor or INGO.

4) **Delegated Power:** At this stage of the spectrum local partners lead in decision making and implementation of a development project within a framework of joint pre-agreed parameters.

5) **Local Leadership:** At this stage of the spectrum local partners are fully independent and supported to carry out a development project that has been locally designed, conceptualized and initiated.

Bond provides a more succinct definition of locally led development referring to it as *"initiatives owned and led by people in their own context."* (Bond, 2021, p.7). At the same time, they also caution that to date locally led development approaches and initiatives are frequently dismissed or undervalued by the international aid system due to a range of engrained presuppositions and prejudices around capacity, risk and scalability.

Finally, in an ODI discussion paper Booth and Unsworth (2014) express two dimensions of locally led development. Firstly, it entails local ownership and secondly it is locally negotiated and delivered. Local ownership in this case referring to issues and challenges that have local significance and using resources available within a given context to influence change, recognizing that donor agencies or INGO partners may also provide value addition. With reference to it being locally negotiated and delivered this includes prioritizing local capacity and local leadership to determine solutions for context specific problem and challenges.

6.3 Local Ownership

In its most rudimentary form, the term local ownership can be broken down into its two constructs as depicted below:

Local	Ownership
Focus on: - Particular area (existing in or belonging to an area). - Dependent on viewpoint (region, country, district, town, village, community, group).	Focus on: - Control & Influence - Voice & Agency - Use & Rights - Responsibility & Power

However, in the context of the international aid system there are several considerations when it comes to the usage of the local ownership terminology.

Firstly, the term local ownership needs to be interpreted through a lens that acknowledges the origins of the system and the historic challenges of the system pertaining to power, control, decision-making and (self)-determination.

Secondly, the term local ownership is frequently associated with development initiatives in the security, justice, conflict transformation and peacebuilding arena.

Thirdly, the term local ownership remains vague and has not been clearly defined. Moreover, it normally does not imply full control by local actors over all aspects or resources (Reich, 2006).

Finally, Interpeace (2018) notes that while local ownership is "*fostered by a commitment to build the capacity of local actors through inclusive participatory processes that are accompanied by international partners*" (Interpeace, 2018, p.3) it presents two primary challenges:

1) In the international community there are many different interpretations of the term local ownership depending on the audience.
2) There is a prevailing notion that while local ownership may be desirable, it is not viable to achieve.

Despite its ambiguous use in the aid sector, some agencies have been able to incorporate the terminology and contextualize it to their setting. Thus, for example boosting local ownership is a key component of the Hivos 2021 – 2024 strategy. In their case local ownership encompasses addressing unequal power dynamics, decision making, inclusion, decentralization, representation, joint messaging and visibility.

7. Guiding Frameworks

While the various definitions and terminologies may offer some insight into key concepts and themes, alone they will likely not suffice in providing the guidance and direction needed for practitioners and International NGOs to make informed decisions, allocate adequate resources and develop appropriate strategies for meaningful engagement and collaboration with national/local partners and actors. The section below outlines two frameworks that can guide SuFoSEC Alliance members defining engagement, collaboration and ownership approaches together with their partners.

7.1 Seven Dimensions of Localization

The 'seven dimensions of localization' framework provides a structured and systematic approach to localization and local ownership, offering critical question areas, considerations for decision making and entry point options via demand, programs or actors.

It appears that the framework was originally elaborated in 2017 by the Start Fund and Network and refined in 2018 by GMI. Since then, it has been reviewed, adapted, re-purposed and tested by a range of actors. Thus, for example it served to inform the 'Localisation Performance Measurement Framework' developed by NEAR. Between 2018 - 2019 the framework was used in a baselining process in the Pacific region undertaken by PIANGO and the Humanitarian Advisory Group. And in a 2020 study by Coordination Sud, the framework was applied while gathering case studies based on lived experience.

Though the seven dimensions framework was initially developed in and for the humanitarian sector as a result of the Grand Bargain, it nonetheless lends itself to development actors as well. This is especially the case when considered against the backdrop of the triple nexus.

The below figure presents an adapted version of the 7 dimensions framework to align with the objectives of this study and based on the context of SuFoSEC Alliance members.

Entry Point: Program Level			Entry Point: Actor Level		Entry Point: Demand Level	
Dimension 1	Dimension 2	Dimension 3	Dimension 4	Dimension 5	Dimension 6	Dimension 7
Ownership of Funding	Ownership of Decisions & Partnerships	Ownership of Activities	Ownership of Capabilities & Capacities	Ownership of Visibility	Ownership of Participation	Ownership of National Policies & Strategies

Each of the overarching entry points and their respective dimensions are detailed in the section below.

To engage in more concerted efforts around collaboration, partnership, ownership and power-structures, according to the framework, Coordination Sud (2020) proposes three main entry points that can be pursued by INGOs, simultaneously, sequentially or in an adapted fashion based on context.

1) *Entry through program or project level* which is concerned with the substantial management in terms of receipt of funding, accountability, decision making and implementation.

2) *Entry through actor level* which is concerned with power relations, determination of capacities, public recognition and visibility.

3) *Entry through demand level* which is concerned with the process for defining demand for interventions and situating the demand in the broader national/regional policy context.

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When combined the entry points and their respective dimensions can be used to generate questions that can guide reflection, strategies and actions of INGOs towards establishing more effective and meaningful collaborations with national or local actors.

Entry Point: Program or Project Level		
Dimension	*Focus*	*Guiding Questions*
1	Funding	Who receives and manages funds? Who is ultimately accountable for the management and oversight of funds?
2	Partnership & Decisions	Who decides on the direction of interventions, projects and/or programs? Who defines the nature partnership and collaboration?
3	Activities	Who is in charge of different activities? How are activities distributed amongst various stakeholders?
Entry Point: Actor Level		
4	Capacity	What operational support is needed? Who defines and determines capacity needs?
5	Visibility	Who is recognized by donors, governments and other stakeholders? Who shapes communication and messaging?
Entry Point: Demand Level		
6	Participation	Who is involved in defining local demand? To what extent is there an element of choice?
7	Policy	How are interventions, project and/or programs aligned with local and national strategies? How are interventions, projects and/or programs supported by local or national authorities and public agencies?

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Two case examples have been chosen to highlight the seven dimensions in practice.

7.1.1. Case 1: Locally Led Programming in Myanmar

Between 2018 and 2020, Karuna Mission Social Solidarity [(KMSS)](#) and [Trocaire](#) transitioned from a traditional INGO-NGO partnership model to a localized partnership model (KMSS and Trócaire, 2020). Over the course of a three-year period KMSS moved from being a sub-grantee to a direct grant recipient. KMSS is a faith based social network at the service of the Catholic Church of Myanmar while Trócaire is the overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland.

Trócaire is a partner-based organization and has been working with a range of local partners in Myanmar since 1995. KMSS and Trócaire had been partnering together in Myanmar since 2012 and over the past seven years the partnership has evolved significantly, in particular to support key localization objectives.

The transition is well documented as the two agencies commissioned a multi-year research to accompany their journey and facilitate learning for a broader range of stakeholders. The agencies highlighted a number of key transformations that occurred during this transition period in the areas of:

1) **Funding:** By becoming a primary grant recipient, KMSS was able to directly access donor funding and function more independently. It also enabled KMSS to recognize and address their skills and process gaps for managing direct funding while building confidence in their own abilities to increasingly manager larger donor grants

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2) **Partnership:** The relationship between KMSS and Trócaire experienced a transformation in terms of complementarity, equity and equal decision-making rights. Though the two agencies had been working together since 2012, the nature of this partnership challenged both parties to step out of their respective comfort zones.

3) **Leadership:** KMSS has been able to take up the leadership role in defining program needs with Trócaire providing support when required. Particularly at country level, KMSS has been the public face of the partnership as regards communication, visibility, media representation and inter-agency engagement.

4) **Capacity:** KMSS and Trócaire worked together to elaborate a capacity strengthening framework which supported a more strategic and long-term approach to capacity building. Moreover, KMSS also took an active role in determining and prioritizing their own capacity needs.

While the research culminated in a number of lessons learned and recommendations for donors, national and international partners a few pertinent ones are highlighted here:

Lesson: Develop mutually agreed transition plans that are based on joint capacity assessments carried out by both the local and international partner.

Lesson: Ensure that any changes are agreed upon by all parties and involved open dialogue and communication.

Lesson: Develop capacity strengthening approaches that foster buy in and engagement from national partners and their staff.

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Lesson: Jointly define and agree on operational and management capacity markers to inform the scope and speed of transition.

7.1.2 Case 2: Locally owned and led development in Kenya
The transition from [Nuru International](#) to Nuru Kenya between 2007 and 2014 (Peace Direct, 2020) highlights the importance of designing for locally owned and locally led initiatives from the onset. Moreover, it provides insight into participation, ownership, involvement and long-term capacity strengthening strategies in practice. Nuru International is an international non-governmental organization focused on locally led solutions to eradicate extreme poverty. It was founded in 2007 and established its Kenya operations in 2008. Nuru International worked over time to transition program and operations from Nuru International to Nuru Kenya in entirety.

Nuru International took a number of approaches that while frequently aspired to by international development actors are seldomly acted on or implemented. From the beginning Nuru International put the community at the center of determining their primary development challenges. Programs were designed only after extensive community consultation and listening sessions. This also mitigated against negative sentiments expressed by communities based on previous experiences with other INGOs. From an operational standpoint, in Kenya, Nuru International purposefully put in place a dual staff structure. The structure was designed to ensure that each international staff member had a Kenyan counterpart thus allowing for a more seamless exit and transition. The intention to transition from Nuru International to Nuru Kenya was clearly communicated to all stakeholders including staff from the start

and continuously throughout the seven-year period. To realize a successful transition, Nuru International was intentional in a number of areas:

1) **Ownership of Capabilities:** Nuru International leadership was supportive of local staff making choices for themselves, even if this meant learning, adapting, and course corrections along the way. This approach explicitly acknowledged the capabilities of the Kenyan team and allowed for the support of international counterparts to be clearly mapped out and targeted.

2) **Visibility and Access:** Nuru International consistently created forums and mechanisms for the community to build relations with Nuru Kenya staff members and for community members to provide feedback, raise concerns, discuss progress areas and indicate their needs.

A few lessons learned from this transition case are highlighted bellow:

Lesson: Plan for sustainability and meaningful community involvement with exit in mind from the beginning.

Lesson: Transitions in programs should be gradual and well-planned with clear indicators and targets linked to program impact, operational capacity and leadership.

Lesson: Create a safe space and ample room for failure and learning. Allowing local partners to experiment without fear of repercussions can also be an effective risk management strategy.

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Lesson: Establish two-way accountability flows and feedback loops between all stakeholders to overcome the traditional top-down approach.

Lesson: Acknowledge the different levels of the word local within a given context. While Nuru Kenya staff were Kenyan nationals, they did not always originate from the communities they were working in. Thus, trust and relationship building were integral to success.

7.2 The Local Engagement Assessment Framework

The Local Engagement Assessment Framework (LEAF) was designed by Save the Children, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and Oxfam USA. The framework provides direction to practitioners for integrating country ownership into development programs. The aim of the framework is to promote the highest level of ownership that is appropriate in a given development intervention and context. While LEAF was foreseen to be a planning tool, it can also be used as a monitoring and evaluation tool at later stages of the project cycle.

LEAF defines country ownership as "*allowing countries that are recipients of international development assistance to lead their own development in those partnerships.*" (Save the Children and Oxfam, 2017, p.1). As such, within the framework ownership is divided into several distinct categories:

- Ownership of priorities
- Ownership of implementation
- Ownership of resources
- Ownership of sustainability

It is important to note that in using LEAF, INGOs are not considered as local actors or stakeholders, even if they have in-country operations.

The framework recognizes that while local actors and stakeholders are critical in defining and implementing development priorities, the degree of engagement necessary will vary depending on the context and stakeholder. It thus, outlines engagement choices along the lines of informing, consulting, partnering and delegated power. The latter two choices are to be understood as follows:

- **Partnering:** establishing local and/or national stakeholders as part of the formal system, engaging directly with donors/implementing agencies and making joint decisions in the different project phases.
- **Delegated Power:** placing local and/or national stakeholders in the lead on all aspects of the project phases within previously agreed parameters.

The four steps involved in LEAF are relatively straightforward resulting in a visual depiction of various ownership and engagement level. Moreover, LEAF includes a detailed workbook for practitioners to guide each stage of the process. The LEAF steps are outlined in the table below:

Step	Focus
1	Identification of local stakeholders
2	Determination of respective engagement levels for priorities and implementation

3	Determination of respective engagement levels for resourcing and sustainability
4	Elaboration of visual depiction

7.2.1 Case 1: Local Ownership in Rwanda

The following case example is provided in the LEAF documentation and has been summarized for the purposes of this study. The African Evangelist Enterprise (AEE) is the USAID implementing partner for the Ubaka Ejo program in Rwanda. AEE is a Christian, local, Non-Governmental organization based in Rwanda, founded in 1984. It is dedicated to working with children, youths, families and their communities to address the root causes of poverty.

AEE grew from 7 staff around the time of the genocide in 1994 to employing 209 staff ten offices throughout the country in 2015.

AEE had previously served as a sub-contractor for other USAID projects, with the primary lead being taken by an INGO. During the sub-contracting phase AEE received strong support on organizational capacity development including governance, financial management, fundraising and proposal development.

Owning to the strong local roots that AEE has in the country and the community, the program was designed by AEE, closely aligns with the Rwandese government policies and national frameworks and is anchored in solid engagement and joint planning with the Rwanda Ministry of Health. Moreover, a built-in program component was to gradually move towards

complete ownership by transferring capacity from AEE to Community Based Organizations and even household level.

A few lessons learned from this transition case are highlighted bellow:

Lesson: Alignment of development initiatives with national and local government priorities is critical.

Lesson: Use pre-existing national guidelines for a more seamless integration. For example, AEE uses Rwandese government guidelines for selecting program participants.

Lesson: Re-evaluate the value add of different stakeholders in the formal system. For example, AEE is able to call on USAID when needed to address issues directly with the Rwandese government.

Lesson: To ensure sustainability, anchor projects in already existing community-based structures. For example, AEE uses community level savings associations, youth and self-help groups.

7.2.2 Case 2: Participation, Ownership and Coordination in Kyrgyzstan

A research study conducted by Lakhonin (2016) looked at aid perceptions, participation and ownership by villagers in Jerge-Tal in Kyrgyzstan finding that empowerment, participation and collaboration with local aid agencies and government authorities is critical for successful development interventions. Over the years Jerge-Tal has received support from multiple aid agencies, implementing both short-term and long-term projects mainly in the areas of agriculture and livestock farming. In the case of Jerge-Tal the pre-existing

community representation structure enabled villagers to provide perspectives on aid provisions and aid priorities. Moreover, due to their involvement, sense of agency and influence in determining development priorities, the village was able to address resource gaps through communal fund mobilization thus complementing already existing aid grants. Finally, community representatives were proactive in owning the demand for their development needs by developing proposals and approaching aid agencies directly.

Lesson: Examining recipients' perception on aid and development initiatives should constitute the starting point for any intervention.

Lesson: More agency and influence over development projects at community level leads to more ownership and sustainability.

Lesson: Authority for development programs can only emanate from communities themselves and not from aid providers.

Lesson: Emphasis needs to be placed on creating true civil societies as opposed to 'project societies'.

8. Re-Imagining Partnership

Effective and value enhancing partnerships, between INGOs and local actors, lie at the heart of sustainable development corporation and the creation of new operating models.

While the concept of partnership appears seemingly elementary in its nature, it has proven to be rather elusive in its implementation within the sector.

Unequal power relations between Global North and Global South actors, a lack of trust, transparency and information asymmetry have permeated partnership approaches. To re-think, re-constitute and re-imagine partnerships, a return to the basics may be required reflecting on:

- Q   What is the ultimate goal of the partnership?
- Q   How will the partnership be defined?
- Q   Why is the partnership important for the organization (e.g., financially, strategically, morally, visually etc.)?
- Q   Who will be involved in management and coordination of the partnership?
- Q   How will the partnership be set up and structured?
- Q   What will constitute the measures of success?

This section, provides a range of definitions on partnership that may be relevant for SuFoSEC, expounds on some of the critical elements of an effective partnership and provides tools and resources that alliance members can tap into as they embark on the evaluating current and setting up future partnerships.

8.1 Partnership Definitions & Principles
 The table below highlights some of the commonly used definitions for partnerships in the context of development cooperation.

Source	Definition	Focus
The Partnering Initiative (2016, p.6)	*"an ongoing working relationship between organisations combining their resources and competencies and sharing risks towards achieving agreed objectives while each achieving their own individual objectives."*	• Ongoing relationship • Balance of shared vs individual objectives • Resource, competency, and risk sharing
Capable Partners Program (2011, p. 6)	*"an association between USAID, its partners and customers based upon mutual respect, complementary strengths, and shared commitment to achieve mutually agreed upon objectives."*	• Association • Mutual respect • Complementary strengths • Shared Commitment
United Nations (2020, p.6)	*"An ongoing collaborative relationship between or among organisations from different stakeholder types aligning their interests around a common vision, combining their complementary resources and competencies and sharing risk, to maximise value creation towards the Sustainable Development Goals and deliver benefit to each of the partners."*	• Complementary resources • Aligned interests • Value creation • Risk sharing

It is important to note that the above definitions, just like many other terminologies used in the development sector, are predominantly derived from a Global North perspective. Anderson, Brown and Jean (2012) offer an insightful perspective on the same. Recognizing INGOs aim of strengthening civil society organization in recipient countries, they do not question their intent, but rather the manner in which implementation and roll-out take place. They note that lack of contextualization leads to the imposition of societal and developmental models based on national experiences from the Global North as opposed to being grounded in the realities and markers of the Global South. An intentional rapprochement is seemingly required to ensure congruence in perspectives on partnership definitions, form and function between the Global North and Global South.

Moreover, while definitions may be fluid, changing with time, context and needs, overarching principles for partnership and engagement may offer a more stable foundation or reference point. The table below shows two sets of partnership principles elaborated from a humanitarian and development perspective.

Global Humanitarian Platform (2007)	Busan Partnership Agreement (2011)
• Equality • Complementarity • Transparency • Accountability • Results-oriented • Responsibility	• Ownership of development priorities by developing countries • Focus on results • Inclusive development partnerships

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	• Transparency and accountability between the partners

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From the table it becomes apparent that while the principles may have been designed from two seemingly different angles, there is nonetheless significant overlap and similarity.

8.2 Partnership Foundations

Translating partnership aspirations into concrete action requires more than just organizational commitment. An awareness on key success factors and enabling elements based on lessons learned from other actors, can support SuFoSEC Alliance members determine the appropriate course of action for their organizations. The section below highlights documented lessons from two agencies, namely the Unite Nations and the World Bank.

The United Nations SDG Partnership Guidebook (2020) details out building blocks for successful partnerships in development cooperation that are based on success factors observed over multiple years and various organizations. They constitute the following:

1) **Fundamentals:** "*Partnerships must be able to create significant value and the 'right' partners at the table must be included to be successful.*" (UN, 2020, p.45).

2) **Partnership relationship:** "*The complex, multifaceted dynamic relationship among partners must be kept strong.*" (ibid).

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3) **Structuring and set-up:** "*The partnerships' structure should be fit for purpose.*" (ibid).

4) **Management and leadership:** "*The partnership should be well managed and requires the application of leadership at multiple levels.*" *(ibid).*

While the above represents merely a snapshot of the building blocks, for each of the four areas sub-components and guidance have been detailed out in the UN guidebook. It is important to note that the building blocks do not represent sequential steps but rather a set of connected ideas. Moreover, adaptation based on circumstance and context may be required.

The concept of participation is central to meaningful partnerships and collaboration. Recognizing the broadness of the term, the World Bank (2013) nonetheless provides some guidance on critical participation elements that are aligned with the various definitions and partnership principles highlighted in the study. Three of them relevant to the SuFoSEC context are summarized below:

1) **Participation in decision making:** The emphasis is placed on equity and meaningful participation beyond consultation and towards real voice, agency and authority of all stakeholders.

2) **Contribution of resources:** The emphasis is placed on complementarity and value add of different stakeholder as opposed to supremacy of financial resources only.

3) **Provision of information**: The emphasis is placed on the need for transparency in terms of access to pertinent information, involvement in and awareness of different elements amongst all stakeholders.

The definitions, principles and foundations illustrated in this section suggest that considerable thought needs to be put into partnership models developed by INGOs. The quality and value add for parties involved needs to be at the forefront of those considerations.

This is especially in light of findings from Emmens and Clayton (2017). They describe a substantive gap in resource allocation (financial, time, personnel, capacity) for partnership management amongst INGOs. **In addition to this, they highlight the mismatch between INGOs description and perception of development partnerships and the realities of how those partnerships are actually experienced by local and/or national partners.** The issue of in-adequate resource allocation for partnerships has also addressed previously by OECD (2006) particularly as it pertains to an overall operational budget and specific overhead budgets.

Two case examples provide insight into successful partnerships in practice.

8.2.1 Case 1: Transition through partnerships in Timor
Columbia University Center for International Conflict Resolution (CICR) transitioned to Belun over a five-year period (Peace Direct, 2020). Belun was formed in the early 2000s and continues to be in existence at the time of writing this study. Moreover, the relationship between CICR and Belun has been

sustained in three main ways, firstly through continued technical and business development support, secondly through CICR membership on Belun's board and finally third through the provision of interns from Columbia University.

The successful transition was guided by a partnership founded on equity and trust, planned capacity building, an understanding of the local context, structures that further engrained equality and clear transition plans.

The partnership journey being well documented, is considered to have been the main ingredient of success in the transition process. While several factors influenced the successful partnership some of the key components pertained to:

1) **Understanding of the Local Context:** The CICR staff took time to understand the local context, history and dynamics and how to apply that knowledge into the program design in collaboration with Timorese staff.

2) **Open Communication and Transparency:** CICR and Belun staff had a history of open communication. The Timorese staff were given the opportunity to share ideas and give feedback creating a sense of trust and ownership. Organizational documents were consistently translated in 'Tetum' the local language to ensure understanding widespread access to information and knowledge of English language was not a recruitment requirement.

3) **Collaboration and Effective Management Practices:** Collaboration in decision making was a major focus of this partnership. The strategic

vision was developed jointly by both the international and Timorese CICR staff. In addition to this, Belun staff were involved in decision making at all levels. The process promoted collaboration and a strong sense of equity.

4) **Trust:** At organizational level, rigorous policies and procedures were developed that ensured Belun grew in reputation as one of the few NGOs in Timor capable of meeting international compliance standards. The policies and procedures were all written in Timorese.

There were a number of lessons learned that emanate from this case example. A few pertinent ones are highlighted here:

Lesson: Develop an equal partnership at the point of forming the partnership by fostering an environment that acknowledges and implements mutually agreed upon vision, strategy and program design where all partners' ideas are heard.

Lesson: Invest in understanding the local context by sector, culture, available resources and country specific needs in order to include this is program design and collaboration approaches.

Lesson: Trust is invaluable. It is not policies and procedures that drive a partnership but rather whether or not people feel their ideas are appreciated and welcome.

Lesson: Develop capacity strengthening approaches that foster growth for the partner and foster ownership of the program and sustainability.

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Lesson: Ensure that decision making no matter how small, includes all parties and partners are involved in open dialogue and communication.

8.2.2 Case 2: Effective Partnership from an OECD Lens

The OECD (2006) presents a number of lessons learned from partnerships in New Zealand, United Kingdom, the Slovak Republic, Spain and Finland. The OECD work is aimed at serving as a practical guide for both practitioners and policy makers involved in partnerships. Moreover, it provides insights from various experts working at different levels, thus combining academic knowledge with actual empirical result from policy approaches. Though the details of each partnership are not made explicit, they nonetheless highlight that effective partnership is driven by the same factors irrespective of context i.e., Global North or Global South. A selection of key lessons are as follows:

Lesson: Involvement of all important partners (e.g., local/regional government, public benefits organizations, NGOs, non-formal communities, private sector, individual citizens and voluntary and community-based agencies) and the sustained support from national and regional government bodies is critical.

Lesson: An understanding of cultural difference between various partners needs to be established. Moreover, those differences need to be explicitly acknowledged and respected.

Lesson: A high level of information exchange and mutual confidence in each other's abilities needs to be created. This is further aided by a clear

understanding of each party on their roles, responsibilities and contributions to the partnership.

Lesson: Establishing clear and simple visions that is shared by all parties can yield greater returns than complex, abstract and highly aspirational vision and strategies.

Lesson: A professional approach towards partnership management by those in charge of coordinating and leading the partnership is necessary.

Lesson: Resources to set up and sustain the partnership need to be allocated and agreed upon in advance.

9. Organizational level considerations

Organizations such as those of the SuFoSEC Alliance do not operate in a vacuum and must respond to factors and drivers within their external environment as detailed out in the previous sections of this study. Deepening organizational knowledge around complexity of the international development system is a pre-requisite for effecting any kind of systemic change.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that internal organizational conditions and set-ups have a direct bearing on actions, strategies and decisions pertaining to engagement and collaboration with national development partners and actors. This section provides an overview of two models that organization can follow and adapt to better understand their readiness to transition to new development partnership and approaches.

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9.1 Six Conditions of System Change

Recognizing that non-profit entities including INGOs and foundations have rarely been able to achieve their overall objectives and ambitions for sustainable change and transformation, Kania, Kramer and Senge (2018) elaborated a model detailing the different conditions necessary for system change. In this case system change refers to shifting the conditions that hold a given problem in place. Given the increasing complexity in international development cooperation, constraining factors, internal and external pressures being placed on organizations as well as the number of actors involved, the model is aimed at supporting organizations in establishing an indicative baseline i.e., starting from a point of knowledge. The model is highlighted in the figure below:
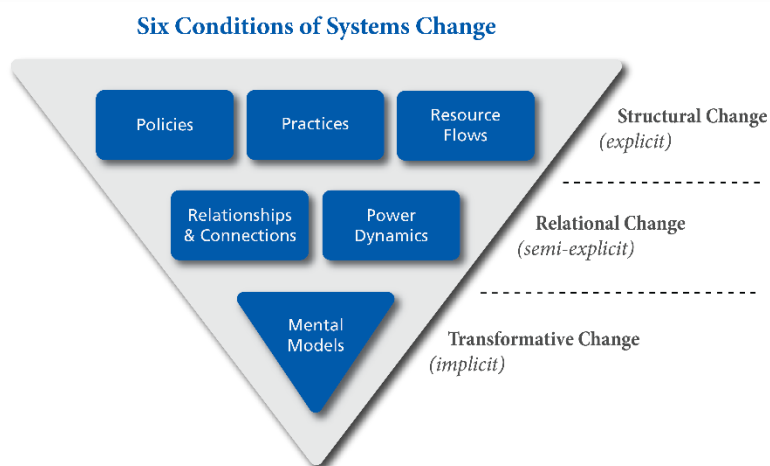

Figure 1 Kania, Kramer & Senge (2018, p. 4)

9.1.1 Level 1: Structural Change

At the first level conditions are observable and explicit. Donor and government policies as well as internal organizational regulations guide interventions and the set-up of ownership models and partnership approaches. Practices both within an organization as well as amongst partners, networks, consortia and alliances inform habits, ways of working and the type activities carried out to contribute to social and economic transformation and development. Finally, resource flows determine how elements such as assets, information, knowledge, money and staff are allocated, distributed and accessed.

Vielujas and Bonis-Charancle (2020) also suggest that in the context of new development and aid modalities reflection, considerations around a number of factors at a structural and explicit level can also guide INGOs in their action. These include:

- The state of civil society organizations in a given country context in terms of their independence and structure
- The political context in a given region or country in terms of how open it is to INGOs and international aid
- The holistic and objective nature of the development project in terms of level of expertise required and the type of funds and resources available
- The type(s) of INGOs involved in terms of their economic funding models (e.g., restricted vs. unrestricted funding, short-term vs multi-year project, donor dependency vs donor diversification) and specializations around partnerships and intervention areas
- The institutional capacities of current and prospective partners

9.1.2 Level 2: Relational Change

At the second level, conditions for change become influenced by relational factors and interactions. The strength and quality of connections, communication and collaboration between actors in the development ecosystem comes to have an increased bearing. Formal and informal power dynamics shape the way decisions are made and the manner in which authority is distributed.

Kania et al (2018) point out that at its core system transformation is centered on the transformation of relationships between actors who make up the system. As such at this level, organizational discourse can be structured around gaining insight into the following question areas:

- Whose voices are being listened to and heard? Are conscious or unconscious inclusion and/or exclusion biases being injected into various interactions?
- To what extent are work and development programs being viewed through an equity lens?
- What organizational efforts and/or approaches need to be strengthened or abolished to address inherent inequities and unbalanced power dynamics?

9.1.3 Level 3: Transformative Change

At the third level the role of the individual becomes apparent. The level deals with deeply engrained habits, beliefs and assumptions that influence behaviors, thought patterns and ways of working. **Addressing mental models constitutes a significant challenge in development cooperation due to history and evolution of the sector. Yet, unless change is undertaken at this fundamental level, changes in the preceding levels will remain temporary or deficient**. This level requires a range of nuanced and delicately balanced actions around:

- Examining prevailing narratives
- Making implicit social norms explicit
- Delegitimizing behaviors that serve to reinforce or perpetuate limiting mental models

9.2 The Integrated Organizational Model

Once organizations have begun to appreciate and internalize the system complexity, they can now embark on determining how they themselves are positioned within the system and explore specific areas of organizational functioning for change and adaptation.

Designed by MDF (2004), the Integrated Organizational Model (IOM) depicts the interconnectedness of various organizational components. It can be used as a cornerstone tool to analyze and investigate strength and weaknesses in the local ownership endeavors of SuFoSEC alliance members as a collective body

or through the lens of the individual organization. The model is presented in the figure below:

Integrated Organisation Model
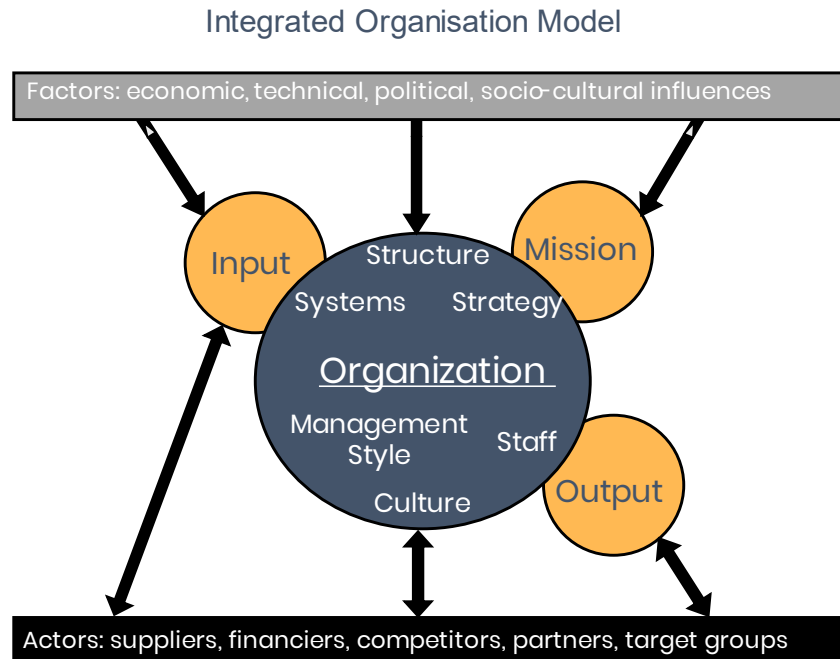
The table below briefly describes each of the components in the IOM for clarification purposes:

Component	Summary
Institutional Setting	
Factors	Influences on the organization specific to local, national, regional or global dynamics.
Actors	Influences on the organization as a result of boarder stakeholder ecosystems and relational setup therein.
External Organizational Elements	

Mission	Reason for organizational existence. Core approaches and objectives
Inputs	Resources (financial and not financial) available to work towards the organizational mission.
Outputs	Services, value and products delivered to target groups (communities, vulnerable populations, countries etc.)
Internal Organizational Elements	
Strategy	The concrete manner in which an organizational mission is translated into objectives, outcomes, approaches and actions.
Systems	The internal processes that regulate the functioning of an organization.
Structure	The formal and informal division and coordination of activities and responsibilities within an organization.
Style	The patterns, characteristics, behaviors, inclinations and behaviors of management/leadership within an organization.
Staff	The utilization, motivation, performance and development of staff within an organization.
Culture	The shared norms, values and beliefs of people within an organization.

Specific to SuFoSEC's aim around strengthening ownership and partnerships with its Global South stakeholders and in line with the objectives of this study, the IOM gives rise to a number of reflective questions on the internal elements.

Strategy constitutes the overarching direction, vision and goal posts for changes in ownerships models and partnership approaches. Guiding questions can include:

- Q Where and how prominently does transition to new operating models feature in organizational strategies? What concrete strategies and strategic decisions create enabling conditions?

- Q What concrete progress markers, targets, indicators and accountability mechanisms are set out in the strategy to accompany and inform the transition process?

- Q To what extent have partners in the Global South played role in defining, inputting or co-creating progress markers and more broadly strategic objectives?

- Q How has transition to new operating models been broken down and detailed out in operational plans?

Systems inform the organizational readiness from a tactical and operational standpoint to engage in different ownership models and partnership approaches. Guiding questions can include:

- Q What are the current practical and day to day enablers and barriers for new operating models?

- Q What extent of organizational readiness is in place to adopt/integrate different policies, systems and working approaches?

Q What value and importance are given to non-financial agreements that foster new operating models (covering representation, communication, ways of working, problem solving etc.)?

Structure informs how activities and responsibilities required for different ownership models and partnership approaches are coordinated and executed both formally and informally. Guiding questions can include:

Q Who manages activities for new operating models on both ends (INGO and 'local' partner)?

Q Where do positions responsible for managing and informing new operating models sit in the organizational hierarchy? Do they have adequate authority, legitimacy and influence?

Q Is there sufficient coordination, communication and collaboration between units/departments responsible for new operating models?

Staff informs the willingness, ability and motivation of individuals to implement and support different ownership models and partnership approaches. Guiding questions can include:

Q Do we have the rights staff with the right attitudes, expertise and mindsets on both ends (INGO and 'local' partner)? What underlying assumptions, beliefs and biases need to be addressed?

Q How is staff capacity for new operating models being assessed, measured and developed on both ends (INGO and 'local' partner)?

Q Who brings what value-add? What capabilities are needed, when and for how long?

Management/Leadership Style informs the actual commitment towards and prioritization of different ownership models and partnership approaches. Guiding questions can include:

Q How are frameworks for autonomy, decision making rights, input, involvement and veto rights established and executed?

Q How are risks assessed, analyzed, defined and managed? Does the process constitute a joint effort involving relevant stakeholders as equitable parties?

Q Considering context, to what extent is there adequate balance between relations and results, quality and outputs and responsibility and control?

Culture informs the alignment of shared norms, understanding of and values around different ownership models and partnership approaches by key stakeholders. Guiding questions can include:

Q To what extent is there a right mutual fit? Are key drivers for new operating models shared?

Q How will negotiations, disagreements and conflict be navigated on both ends (INGO and 'local' partner)?

Q What different conventions and contextual nuances need to be made explicit?

10. Way Forward

On the basis of the study findings, it becomes apparent that definitions, concepts and approaches around localization, local ownership, locally led

development and partnerships are more nebulous and less useful for practitioners the broad and all-encompassing they strive to be. The issue of contextualization and adaptation needs to be placed clearly at the forefront of discourse and decisions around operating models. It is within the framework of contextualization that themes emerging from the literature need to be viewed. These include:

- Development cooperation from an equity lens
- Examining capabilities and capacity gaps from both a Global North and Global South perspective
- Meaningful voice, agency and involvement of partners from the Global South
- Re-balancing of traditional partnership approaches and a revisiting of partnership forms and functions
- Reflections on mental models, myths and assumptions that dominate development discourse

On the basis of this, a number of discussion and reflection points are presented in this section for SuFoSEC Alliance members, that can inform current thinking as well as future phases and actions around evaluations, communication, lobbying and advocacy.

10.1 Terminologies

Working definitions on terms such as localization, local ownership and/or locally led development amongst others, should be jointly elaborated with SuFoSEC Alliance partners. This will ensure meaningful engagement and

appropriate contextualization for different regions. Moreover, it creates a foundation for developing and adapting existing monitoring and evaluation frameworks. It is important to note, that engaging in this process may touch on underlying mental models and lead to different interpretations in different context. It may also result in the term 'local' being removed entirely from day-to-day vocabulary in favor of more equitable terminology.

10.2 Donor Engagement & Advocacy

The fundamental role that donors play in enabling new and transformed ways of conceptualizing and implementing development programs cannot be negated. Due to their pivotal role and position in the development ecosystem they can either constitute enablers or obstacles. Currently, much of the donor rhetoric is centered around shifting the power, ownership and fostering development solutions from within recipient countries. Yet in practice this requires a fundamental paradigm shift in operating models and the constellation of aid financing mechanisms. Donor preferences for fund distribution and risk management via larger scale organizations or INGO consortia as well as other historical practices between donors, INGOs and local partners need to be addressed in a gradual manner. The examples highlighted throughout this study, illustrate the need for greater discourse between INGOs, their 'local' partners, respective donor institutions and their respective parliamentary groups to bridge the existing gaps in the system as it necessitates degree of un-learning and re-learning amongst all parties. Proactive engagement with donor agencies on what transformation requires may take on a range of forms including:

- Pilot projects in which jointly defined conditions for success pertaining to trust, financing, capacity and risk management are met.

- Listening sessions in which traditional power-dynamics and assumptions are replaced by an openness to embrace new mental models.

- Joint targeted and strategic push-back by both INGOs and their local partners when it comes to specific donor requirements that are counter to the transformations the aid system is seeking to affect.

10.3 Partnerships

There is no one-size- fits all approach to effective partnering. Each partnership is unique, complex and characterized by distinctive identity markers and will inevitably be influenced by a myriad of factors in the external environment including:

- The nature of the program

- Uniqueness of the context: cultural, legal, political, economic and social

- The institutional, regional, local and national structures

As suggested by the literature, sustainable, impactful and transformational partnership require more than policies and procedures. Simultaneously, they are built on engagement that extends beyond the traditional practices around consultation, information sharing and decision-making which are often only surface level.

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Exploring partnership jointly via the six conditions of change model, especially the semi-explicit and implicit elements can lead to compelling insights around current practices, areas for change, mis-alignment perceptions and expectations. Both at organizational and individual level competencies need to be strengthened around a number of tacit and non-tangible areas. While organizational reflection in INGOs may be a rather conventional practice implemented via learning sessions, workshop and the like, a deeper reflection at individual level usually does not constitute part of the approach.

The table below provides an entry point for questions than may serve as starting point for reflection and awareness raising. It does not constitute an exhaustive list and questions may need to be re-framed based on circumstances.

Organizational	Individual
Q Are the right people who have the most/right knowledge about the issue/solution involved in decision making? Q Is participation and involvement of different stakeholders grounded in context and meaningful?	Q Do I have the necessary self-awareness and contextual awareness to drive and contribute to effective partnerships? Q Am I cognizant of the complex interplay between various factors? Q Am I applying the necessary amount of humility recognizing

Q Are there ways to make participation and involvement more deliberate? Q Does current modes of engagement, collaboration and partnership place a heavier burden on one party than another?	others may have more appropriate knowledge? Q To what extent am I willing to give up decision-making authorities and/or share power?

As such, to foster the creation of effective partnerships, there is a need for SuFoSEC Alliance members to not only have clear guidelines, approaches and methodologies adapted to context but also invest time in a deeper degree of introspection. This applies equally to partners in the Global South. This way partnerships will not only constitute a means to an end but also a way to complement knowledge, resources and capabilities to achieve impactful and sustainable outcomes for the communities being served.

10.4 Partnership Tools

A myriad of tools, guidebooks and resource exists for INGOs around partnership management. They frequently address a range of areas around partnership mapping, formation, assessment, analysis, evaluation etc. Given the diversity of SuFoSEC members, the tools selected are broad enough to enable different organizations to adapt elements or use components based on their context. Three tools are briefly indicated below that SuFoSEC members

may wish to explore moving forward. Given the diversity of SuFoSEC members, the tools selected are broad enough to enable different organizations to adapt elements or use components based on their context.

Moreover, the tools also support individual SuFoSEC members to delve into a range of organization specific areas around partnerships such as:

- Identifying and prioritizing the organizational drivers for partnership
- Establishing the degree of organizational readiness to partner
- Providing self-assessment tools for various partners
- Reflecting on the different types of partnerships that would be most suitable given context and need
- Establishing ways to identify new partnerships and/or strengthen existing ones

1) The SDGs Partnership Guidebook

   Developed by the UN in 2020 the guidebook provides comprehensive and practical guidance for development practitioners in the realm of building high impact partnerships. It is based on the foundation of viewing partnerships through a sufficiency lens i.e., what do different entities bring to the table rather than a scarcity lens i.e. what can each entity get. Tools in the guidebook cover:

   - Stakeholder mapping
   - Partnership agreement

- Partnership and value assessment

- Troubleshooting and partnership challenges

- Power imbalance assessment

- Partnering health check

The guidebook is available from: [SDG Partnership Guidebook](#)

2) **The Spindle Power Awareness Tool**

Published in 2020, the tool is designed to analyze power in partnerships for development. The tool outlines why power matters, how power operates and gives detailed steps on identifying topics for decision making, scoring the level of decision-making powers for each party and engaging in meaningful conversations around power and decision-making.

The tool is available from: [Power Awareness Tool](#)

3) **GMI Partnership Maturity Index**

The index was published in 2021 by the Global Mentoring Initiative. It provides practitioners with five levels of partnership maturity against which they can measure and analyze the status of their partnerships. The index can also serve organizations to engage in deeper reflection and discussions around:

- The quality of existing collaborations and partnerships

- Entry points for targeted conversations to address current challenges and obstacles in partnerships and collaboration

- The presence and impact of 'fear' in current collaborations and relationships

The tool is available from: [GMI Partnership Maturity Index](#)

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Annexes

The following list of annexes constituted the presentations from the different touch points with the SuFoSEC alliance core working group members for this background study.

1. Background Study Local Ownership Inception Meeting 12 August 2021
2. Background Study Local Ownership Check In Meeting 27 Augusts 2021
3. Background Study Local Ownership Check In Meeting 23 September 2021
4. Background Study Local Ownership Final Presentation 25 October 2021