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Localisation of Humanitarian Aid Under the Grand Bargain in MMC and Jere LGAs of Borno State

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Abstract: Background: *This study assessed the implementation of the Grand Bargain localisation agenda in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) and Jere LGA, Borno State, Nigeria, fo-cusing on power, funding, and local leadership.*

Methods: *A mixed-methods case-study design used 100 questionnaires, 25 key informant interviews, eight focus group discussions involving 76 participants, and document review. Quantitative data were analysed descriptively, while qualitative data underwent thematic anal-ysis.*

Results: *Although 89% understood localisation, only 31% reported a formal localisation pol-icy. Local/national NGOs received 56.8% of funding through sub-grants and 23.4% through direct grants, compared with 84.2% direct funding for INGOs. Decision-making power was concentrated among UN agencies (36%) and government (34%), while only 4% identified local NGOs as most powerful. Major barriers were corruption (68%), accountability concerns (59%), insecurity (55%), limited capacity (52%), and restricted direct funding (49%).*

Conclusion: *Localisation has progressed unevenly, with greater gains in awareness and par-ticipation than in direct financing, strategic authority, and local leadership. Greater local control of resources, decision-making, risk, and leadership is required for meaningful locali-sation.*

Keywords: *Grand Bargain; localisation; humanitarian aid; funding; power; local leadership; Borno State.*

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1. Introduction

Since 2009, north-eastern Nigeria, particularly Borno State, has experienced a protracted Boko Haram insurgency that has caused widespread displacement, livelihood disruption, infrastructure destruction, and severe humanitarian needs across the Lake Chad Basin [1, 2]. The crisis has affected millions across Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria, with children and displaced pop-ulations disproportionately affected [3]. In Borno State, damage to health facilities, disrupted livelihoods, food insecurity, and displacement have constrained access to essential services and intensified humanitarian needs [3, 4]. Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) and Jere Local Government Area (LGA) are major humanitarian hubs, hosting substantial internally displaced and host-community populations and a dense concentration of humanitarian actors. However, insecurity, operational constraints, and attacks on aid infrastructure continue to challenge human-itarian access and expose aid workers to significant risks [5, 6].

The protracted nature of the crisis has intensified attention to how humanitarian assistance is governed and delivered. Following the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, the Grand Bargain sought to reform the humanitarian system by strengthening the role of local and national actors in financ-ing, decision-making, and implementation. A central commitment was to increase humanitarian funding directed "as directly as possible" to local and national responders, with an indicative tar-get of 25% by 2020 [7, 8]. Localisation, however, extends beyond financial transfers to encompass institutional capacity, equitable partnerships, accountability, risk-sharing, leadership, and the dis-tribution of decision-making power [7].

Evidence from other conflict-affected settings suggests that progress towards these objectives remains uneven. Locally led responses can improve the coverage, reach, and speed of humani-tarian assistance, yet international actors frequently retain substantial control over funding and strategic decisions [8]. In Syria, local actors have often undertaken frontline implementation and risk-bearing responsibilities without corresponding authority over resources and strategic priori-ties [9]. Similarly, evidence from Yemen indicates improvements in local funding, capacity de-velopment, and operational participation, but limited transfer of leadership and decision-making authority [10]. These findings suggest that greater local participation does not necessarily consti-tute transformative localisation.

The implementation gap is further shaped by donor requirements, accountability concerns, organisational capacity, risk management, and partnership dynamics, which can constrain direct resource and authority transfers to local organisations [11]. International–local NGO partnerships may also be influenced by competing stakeholder interests [12], while localisation can generate unintended effects, including competition for limited funding, increased administrative burdens, and the reproduction of organisational hierarchies [13]. Consequently, localisation should be assessed not simply by the extent of local participation, but by who controls resources, makes strategic decisions, bears risks, and exercises leadership. Critical scholarship therefore calls for greater attention to the political and relational dimensions of humanitarian power [14].

Despite the importance of local actors in Borno's humanitarian response, empirical evidence on the implementation of the Grand Bargain localisation agenda in MMC and Jere remains limited. Existing research has predominantly examined Boko Haram-related conflict, displacement, livelihoods, humanitarian needs, and operational insecurity [4, 5], with comparatively limited attention to localisation as a question of humanitarian governance. This represents an important empirical and conceptual gap because local actors may assume substantial frontline responsibilities while continuing to have limited access to direct funding, strategic decision-making, institutional recognition, and sustained leadership opportunities [9, 10, 15].

This study examines the implementation of the Grand Bargain localisation agenda in MMC and Jere LGA of Borno State, focusing on three interrelated dimensions: *power, funding, and local humanitarian leadership*. Specifically, it examines how humanitarian stakeholders understand and experience localisation; assesses funding flows, partnership arrangements, and decision-making structures; and identifies barriers and unintended effects that constrain meaningful local lead-ership. Empirical evidence from a major humanitarian hub in north-eastern Nigeria, the study contributes to the localisation literature by examining whether the Grand Bargain is producing substantive shifts in humanitarian governance or primarily expanding local participation within structures where financial and strategic power remains concentrated among international and other dominant actors.

2. Materials and Methods

This section outlines the mixed-methods case-study approach used to examine the Grand Bargain localisation agenda in MMC and Jere LGA, focusing on power, funding, and local humanitarian leadership. It covers the study setting, population, sampling, data collection, analysis, and ethical considerations

Study Design and Setting

A mixed-methods case-study design was employed to examine the Grand Bargain localisation agenda in Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) and Jere Local Government Area (LGA), Borno State, Nigeria. The design was appropriate for investigating the context-dependent dimen-sions of humanitarian localisation, particularly power relations, funding arrangements, and local leadership [10, 16]. Quantitative data provided descriptive evidence of stakeholders' perceptions, while qualitative data from key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and document review provided contextual and in-depth insights. Integration of these sources enabled methodological triangulation and strengthened the credibility of the findings.

MMC and Jere were purposively selected because they are major humanitarian hubs hosting sub-stantial internally displaced populations (IDPs) in formal camps, informal settlements, and host communities [5]. The LGAs also have a high concentration of UN agencies, international and national NGOs, local NGOs, and government institutions involved in humanitarian coordination. Their relatively greater accessibility compared with more remote conflict-affected areas also facil-itated data collection.

Study Population and Sampling

The study population comprised staff of local and national NGOs, international NGOs and UN agencies, government officials involved in humanitarian coordination, community leaders, and IDP representatives in camps and host communities.

Sampling frames were developed from NGO directories, cluster membership lists, and relevant government rosters. Organisations with substantial humanitarian engagement in MMC and Jere were purposively selected, while key informants were selected based on their roles and experience in humanitarian coordination, funding, partnerships, or localisation. Stratified sampling was used for the questionnaire to ensure representation across major organisation types. The final sample comprised 100 questionnaire respondents, 25 KIIs, and eight FGDs involving 76 participants.

Table 1: Final sample achieved

Category	Target	Achieved	Response (%)
Questionnaire respondents	100	100	83
Key informant interviews	25	25	100
Focus group discussions	8	8	100
FGD participants	80	76	95

The 25 KIIs represented local NGOs, national NGOs, international NGOs, UN agencies, and government institution (Table 2).

The eight FGDs comprised local NGO staff, national NGO staff, community leaders/CBOs, and IDP/host-community representatives, with 76 participants (46 males and 30 females).

Table 2: Key informant participants by organisation type

Organisation	n	Roles represented
Local NGO	8	Executive Director, Programme Manager, MEAL Coordinator
National NGO	6	Country/Programme Director, Grants Manager
International NGO	6	Head of Programmes, Partnership Advisor, MEAL Manager
UN agency	3	Humanitarian, Coordination, Funding Officers
Government	2	SEMA and Ministry officials
Total	**25**	

Table 3: Focus group discussion composition

FGD	Focus	n	M/F
1–2	Local NGO staff	18	12/6
3–4	National NGO staff	20	14/6
5–6	Community leaders/CBOs	19	10/9
7–8	IDP/host community	19	10/9
Total		**76**	**46/30**

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Four complementary instruments were used: a 51-item structured questionnaire, a semi-structured KII guide, an FGD guide, and a document-review guide. The instruments covered localisation awareness and understanding, power relations, funding, leadership, partnerships, community participation, and implementation barriers. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants. Questionnaire data were collected from February to March 2026, yielding 100 valid responses. KIIs were conducted from March to April 2026, lasted 45–75 minutes, and were audio-recorded and transcribed with participants' consent. Eight FGDs were conducted in April 2026, each lasting 60–90 minutes, in English and Hausa, with translation where required. Documentary materials, including policies, cluster records, reports, and funding assessments, were reviewed between January and May 2026.

Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness

Content validity was assessed through expert review by the project supervisor and two practitioners experienced in humanitarian localisation and the Borno context. The questionnaire was pilot-tested among five NGO staff in January 2026, and minor revisions were made to improve clarity and applicability. Credibility was strengthened through methodological triangulation across questionnaires, KIIs, FGDs, and documentary evidence, consistent with mixed-methods research principles [16]. Preliminary findings were also shared with eight key informants for member checking. Standardised interview and FGD guides were used consistently, and an audit trail was maintained throughout the research process. Qualitative analysis followed established principles of thematic analysis [17].

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were coded, cleaned, and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used for descriptive analysis. Ninety-five percent confidence intervals for key proportions were estimated using the Wilson score method [18]. Qualitative data from KIIs and FGDs were analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework: familiarisation, coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition and naming, and reporting. NVivo 14 supported data organisation, coding, and retrieval.

Quantitative and qualitative findings were subsequently integrated to identify convergence, complementarity, and divergence across data sources.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by removing identifying information and reporting findings in aggregate. Given the sensitivity of the conflict environment, participants were not asked to disclose operationally sensitive security information. Data were securely stored and accessed only for research purposes. Data collection was conducted sensitively, with appropriate referral information available where conflict-related distress arose.

Methodological Limitations

The quantitative component was primarily descriptive. With $n = 100$, the maximum approximate margin of error for a population proportion at the 95% confidence level is ±9.8 percentage points under a simple random-sampling assumption and $p = 0.50$. The purposive selection of organisations and qualitative participants, the context-specific nature of MMC and Jere, and the sensitivity of the humanitarian environment may limit transferability to other settings. Accordingly, findings are interpreted as descriptive and context-specific rather than causal or population-level estimates. Triangulation across multiple data sources was used to strengthen interpretation and reduce reliance on any single method.

3. Results Presentation

The findings are presented according to the study objectives, focusing on stakeholders' understanding of localisation, funding and partnership arrangements, power relations and local humanitarian leadership, and the barriers and unintended effects shaping implementation. Quantitative findings from the questionnaire are integrated with evidence from key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) to provide a context-sensitive interpretation of the localisation process in MMC and Jere.

Characteristics of Study Participants

The quantitative component comprised 100 respondents drawn from international NGOs (38.0%), national NGOs (26.0%), local NGOs (23.0%), UN agencies (4.0%), and government institutions (4.0%); 5.0% preferred not to identify their organisation type. Programme/project staff consti-tuted the largest occupational group (33.0%), followed by monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEAL)/research staff (26.0%) and finance/grants personnel (13.0%). Most respondents had substantial humanitarian experience, with 58.0% reporting more than six years of experience. Respondents worked across several humanitarian sectors, particularly health and nutrition (49.0%), food security and livelihoods (43.0%), protection (40.0%), education (39.0%), and water, sanitation and hygiene (37.0%). Because multiple sector responses were permitted, sector percentages do not sum to 100%. The qualitative component comprised 25 key informants and 76 FGD participants. The KIIs included representatives of local NGOs, national NGOs, international NGOs, UN agencies, and government institutions. The FGDs included local and national NGO staff, community leaders and community-based organisations, and IDP/host-community representatives. This diversity of participants enabled the findings to incorporate perspectives from organisations occupying different positions within the humanitarian system.

Understanding and Organisational Engagement with Localisation

Awareness and Understanding of the Grand Bargain

Although general understanding of localisation was high, familiarity with the Grand Bargain itself was comparatively limited. Only 39.0% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were

familiar with Grand Bargain commitments, while 48.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed; the mean response was 2.73 (SD = 1.47). In contrast, 89.0% agreed or strongly agreed that they understood the concept of localisation, with a mean score of 4.27 (SD = 0.76). The 95% confidence interval for the latter proportion was 81.2–94.4%. This contrast indicates that localisation has become a more familiar operational concept than the specific policy framework through which it was promoted. Figure 1 illustrates this distinction.

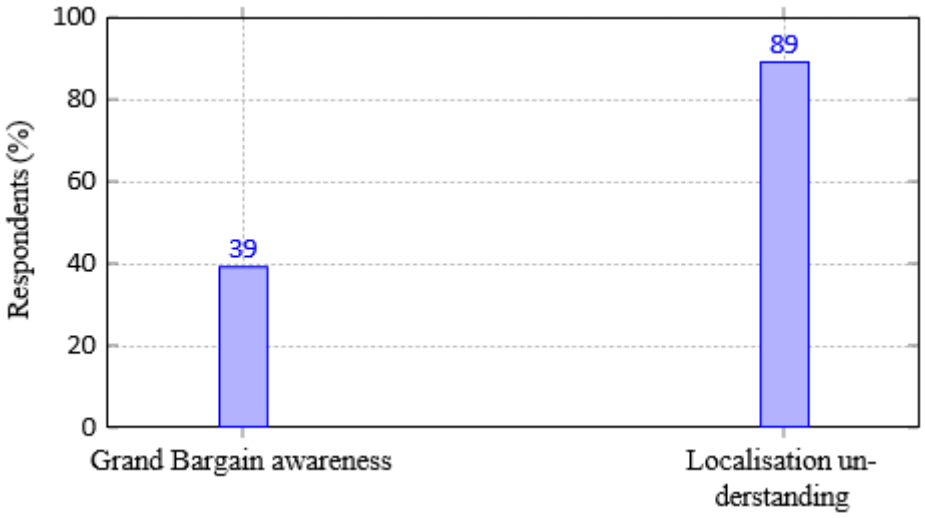


Figure 1: Awareness of the Grand Bargain and understanding of localisation among questionnaire respondents.

At organisational level, only 40.0% reported that their organisation had discussed the Grand Bargain internally, and just 31.0% reported that their organisation had a written localisation policy or strategy. Nevertheless, 70.0% indicated that they clearly understood how localisation should operate in Borno, while 71.0% considered localisation to have practical implications for their projects. Approximately half (52.0%) reported that their organisations had adjusted practices in response to the Grand Bargain. The qualitative findings provide further insight into these results. Four interrelated understandings of localisation emerged: localisation as (i) direct funding transfer, (ii) decision-making authority, (iii) capacity strengthening, and (iv) meaningful community engagement. Local NGO participants particularly associated localisation with direct access to resources, whereas international actors emphasised institutional capacity and accountability. Community representatives placed greater emphasis on participation in identifying needs and priorities. Thus, localisation was not understood simply as transferring implementation responsibilities; rather, participants associated meaningful localisation with changes in resources, authority, organisational capability, and community voice. These findings reveal an important implementation gap. While 89.0% of respondents understood localisation, only 31.0% reported the existence of a formal organisational localisation policy. The pattern suggests that conceptual acceptance has advanced more rapidly than institutionalisation. This is consistent with evidence that localisation can in-crease local participation without necessarily transferring strategic authority or resources to local actors [8, 9].

Funding Flows and Partnership Arrangements

Access to direct funding emerged as one of the clearest constraints on localisation. Only 20.0% of respondents agreed that local NGOs had adequate access to direct funding (mean = 2.54, SD = 1.14; 95% CI: 12.7–29.2%). Conversely, 68.0% agreed that most humanitarian funding continued to flow through international actors (mean = 3.70, SD = 1.26; 95% CI:58.0–76.9%). Furthermore, 76.0% identified donor requirements as a major barrier to localisation (mean = 3.89, SD = 1.10; 95% CI: 66.4–84.0%). The reported funding profiles reinforce this asymmetry. Among local and national

NGOs, 56.8% of funding was reportedly received through sub-grants from INGOs or UN agencies, compared with only 23.4% through direct institutional grants. In contrast, INGOs reported 84.2% of their funding as coming directly from institutional donors and only 10.5% through sub-grants. Government funding represented 4.5% and 0.5% of reported funding for local/national NGOs and INGOs, respectively.

Table 4: Reported funding sources by organisation type

Funding source	Local/National NGOs (%)	INGOs (%)
Direct institutional grants	23.4	84.2
Sub-grants from INGOs/UN	56.8	10.5
Government funds	4.5	0.5
Private donations/other	15.3	4.8
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**

The funding structure suggests that localisation has not yet produced substantial financial autonomy for local actors. Rather, local and national organisations remain heavily dependent on intermediary funding relationships. This pattern is consistent with evidence that localisation may increase operational involvement while leaving international organisations in control of financial resources and associated strategic decisions [8, 11].

Funding conditions also appear to have deteriorated for many respondents. Altogether, 56.0% reported a decrease in funding since 2016, comprising 26.0% who reported a significant decrease and 30.0% a slight decrease. Only 31.0% reported any increase, while 13.0% reported no change. Respondents attributed declining resources to donor funding reductions, donor fatigue, compliance requirements, and broader changes in donor policy.

Perceptions of partnership fairness were mixed. Slightly more than half (52.0%) considered partnership agreements fair and transparent, while 49.0% believed funding arrangements provided sufficient flexibility. However, only 34.0% considered risk to be fairly shared. Capacity strengthening was more positively assessed: 66.0% reported receiving capacity-strengthening support, although only 57.0% considered that support adequately aligned with organisational needs.

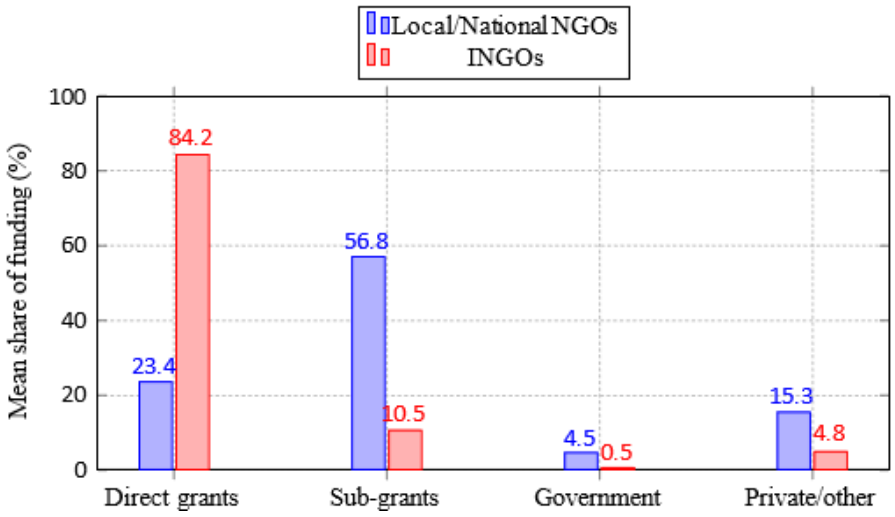


Figure 2: Reported funding sources among local/national NGOs and INGOs.

These findings indicate that localisation has progressed more strongly in capacity development than in the redistribution of financial risk and decision-making authority. This distinction is im-portant because genuine localisation requires not only strengthening local organisations but also creating

equitable partnership structures through which local actors can exercise greater control over resources and strategic choices [10, 13].

Power Relations and Local Humanitarian Leadership

Distribution of Decision-Making Power

Power remained concentrated among international and state actors. More than half of respondents (59.0%) agreed that international actors dominated strategic decision-making, while the same proportion reported that local NGOs were generally consulted only after key decisions had been made. Although 55.0% believed their organisations could challenge international partners, only 26.0% considered international partners to treat local NGOs as equals. Most notably, 76.0% agreed that local NGOs were viewed primarily as sub-contractors (mean = 3.90, SD = 1.08).

When respondents were asked which actors possessed the greatest power in humanitarian decision-making, UN agencies were identified most frequently (36.0%), followed by government authori-ties (34.0%) and donors/embassies (16.0%). International NGOs accounted for 8.0%, while only 4.0% identified local NGOs as the most powerful actors.

Table 5: Perceived distribution of humanitarian decision-making power

Actor	Percentage (%)
UN agencies	36.0
Government authorities	34.0
Donors/Embassies	16.0
International NGOs	8.0
Local NGOs	4.0
Mix/Other	2.0

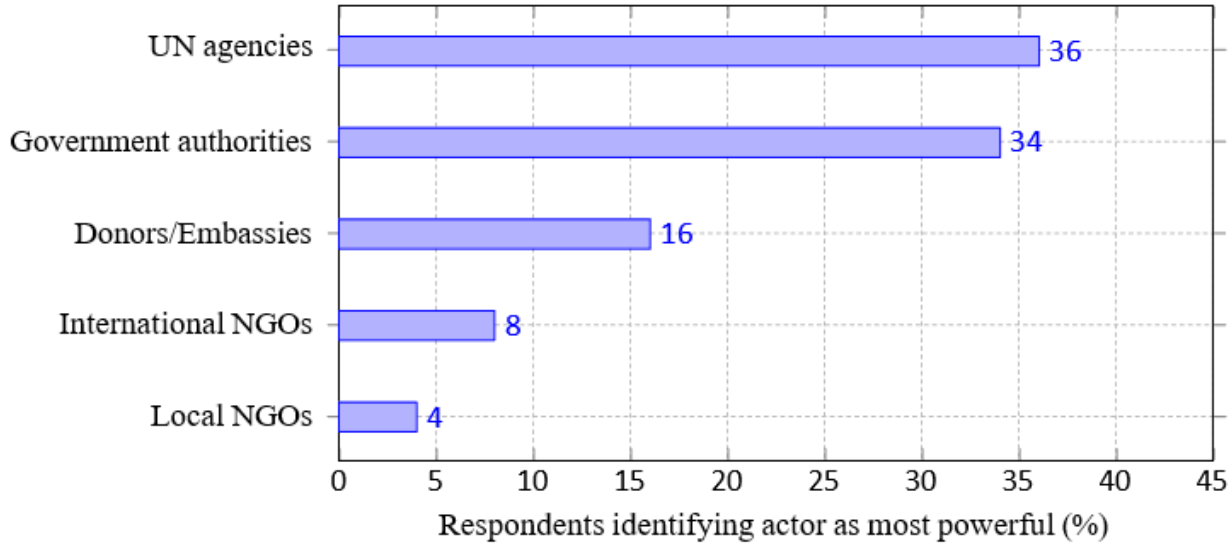


Figure 3: Perceived distribution of power in humanitarian decision-making.

The qualitative evidence reinforces this pattern. Participants described local organisations as important frontline implementers but reported limited influence over strategic priorities and resource allocation. One local NGO participant characterised localisation as requiring local actors to re-ceive resources directly, while a UN informant similarly associated meaningful localisation with local

actors being able to determine priorities. These accounts indicate that participation in implementation does not necessarily translate into authority over strategy.

The findings closely resemble evidence from Syria, where localisation has been characterised as the transfer of labour and risk without a corresponding transfer of strategic authority [9]. They also support evidence from Yemen showing that technical and operational localisation can advance without sufficiently disrupting hierarchical relationships between international and local organisations [10]. In MMC and Jere, therefore, the central issue is not the absence of local participation but the limited redistribution of decision-making power.

Local Humanitarian Leadership

Local leadership showed signs of gradual expansion but remained limited in scope. Overall, 26.0% of respondents considered local leadership to have developed to a great extent, 39.0% to a moderate extent, 23.0% to a small extent, and 12.0% not at all. The mean score was 2.79 (SD = 0.95).

Regarding specific indicators, 49.0% agreed that local NGOs were taking on more leadership roles in coordination, while 42.0% reported that local actors were leading or co-leading key clusters or working groups. Only 36.0% considered community-based organisations to be recognised as legitimate humanitarian actors.

Qualitative evidence suggests that local leadership is most visible during rapid-onset emergencies and in specialised technical working groups. During the 2024 flood response, local organisa-tions reportedly mobilised rapidly because of their physical presence and contextual knowledge. However, participants indicated that international organisations subsequently assumed greater coordination responsibilities. Local NGOs were also reported to co-lead selected technical working groups, demonstrating that local leadership capacity exists but is unevenly institutionalised.

These findings suggest that local leadership in MMC and Jere is emerging primarily through operational necessity rather than through a systematic transfer of authority. The 2024 flood experience illustrates the capacity of local actors to lead rapid humanitarian action, but the subsequent reassertion of international coordination indicates that such leadership may remain episodic rather than structurally embedded.

Perceived Progress, Barriers and Unintended Effects

Respondents generally perceived localisation as progressing, although the extent of progress was moderate. Overall, 52.0% rated the level of localisation as good or excellent, while 39.0% rated it as fair. The mean overall rating was 3.47 (SD = 0.84). Furthermore, 59.0% agreed that observable progress had occurred since 2016. However, only 42.0% believed that donors were increasingly prioritising funding to local organisations, and only 33.0% believed that international actors were genuinely committed to transferring power. Less than half considered localisation to have improved effectiveness (46.0%) or the sustainability of local NGOs (42.0%).

The coexistence of perceived progress and limited confidence in power transfer is important. It indicates that respondents recognise incremental changes in localisation while remaining sceptical about whether these changes constitute a fundamental redistribution of authority.

Table 6: Perceived progress in localisation since 2016

Indicator	Agree/Strongly agree (%)	Mean (SD)
Observable progress since 2016	59.0	3.57 (1.14)
Donors increasingly prioritise local organisations	42.0	3.25 (1.16)
International actors committed to power transfer	33.0	3.12 (1.26)
Current efforts address community needs	36.0	3.15 (1.14)

Localisation improved effectiveness	46.0	3.31 (1.15)
Localisation improved NGO sustainability	42.0	3.30 (1.12)

The principal barriers were corruption (68.0%), lack of accountability and transparency (59.0%), insecurity (55.0%), limited capacity of local NGOs (52.0%), limited direct funding access (49.0%), donor compliance requirements (42.0%), government policies or interference (36.0%), and perceived INGO/UN power dominance (30.0%).

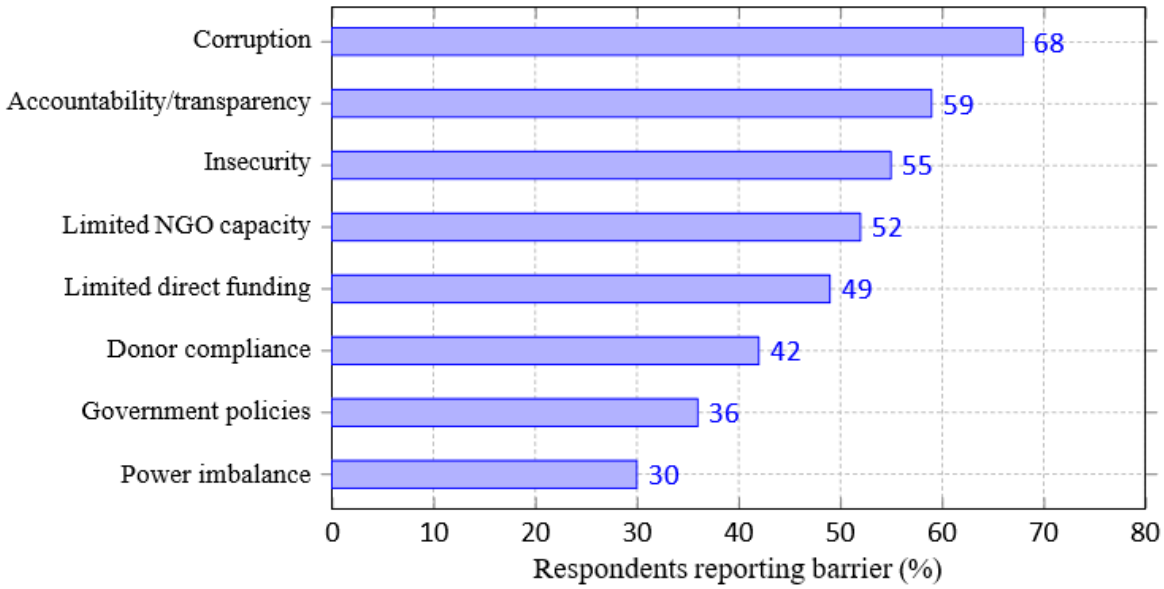


Figure 4: Reported barriers to localisation among questionnaire respondents.

The prominence of corruption and accountability concerns is particularly noteworthy because these issues may influence both donor willingness to transfer resources and local organisations' ability to access direct funding. At the same time, insecurity remains a structural constraint in Borno, potentially increasing the operational value of locally embedded actors while also expos-ing them to risks that are not necessarily accompanied by greater decision-making authority.

The qualitative findings also identified several unintended effects of localisation. Participants described increased competition among local organisations for limited funding, greater administrative and compliance burdens, tokenistic participation in coordination structures, and the concentration of funding among a relatively small number of established organisations. These effects suggest that localisation can reproduce inequalities within the local humanitarian sector if funding and partnership mechanisms are not designed to broaden access and strengthen accountability.

4. General Discussion

The findings demonstrate a clear distinction between *operational* and *transformative localisation*. Local and national organisations play substantial roles in humanitarian implementation and capacity strengthening, yet direct funding, strategic decision-making, equitable risk-sharing, and sustained local leadership remain limited. Notably, while 89.0% of respondents understood localisation, only 31.0% reported a formal organisational localisation policy, indicating a substantial gap between awareness and institutionalisation.

Funding arrangements further demonstrate this imbalance. Local and national NGOs received 56.8% of reported funding through sub-grants but only 23.4% through direct institutional grants, whereas INGOs reported 84.2% through direct grants. This pattern suggests that increased lo-cal participation has not been accompanied by a proportional transfer of financial control. The power

structure reinforces this finding: 76.0% of respondents viewed local NGOs primarily as sub-contractors, while only 4.0% identified them as the most powerful actors in humanitarian decision-making. Although 49.0% reported increased local leadership in coordination, only 42.0% indicated that local actors led or co-led key clusters or working groups.

These findings are consistent with evidence from other conflict-affected settings. The study [8] found that locally led responses can improve humanitarian reach while international actors retain substantial control over funding and strategic decisions. Similarly, [9] reported that localisation may transfer frontline responsibilities and risks without corresponding strategic authority, while evidence from Yemen shows that capacity and operational participation can increase without fundamentally altering hierarchical humanitarian relationships [10]. The findings from MMC and Jere therefore reinforce the need to assess localisation in terms of the redistribution of authority, resources, risk, and leadership rather than participation alone.

The Borno context presents additional power dynamics. Government authorities were identified by 34.0% of respondents as the most powerful actors in humanitarian decision-making, closely following UN agencies (36.0%). Moreover, the 2024 flood response demonstrated the capacity of local organisations to assume rapid leadership during emergencies. However, the subsequent return to more internationally dominated coordination suggests that operational leadership does not necessarily translate into sustained institutional authority.

In general, the findings indicate that the Grand Bargain has generated measurable but uneven localisation progress in MMC and Jere. Progress is strongest in awareness, operational participation, and capacity strengthening, but weaker in direct financing, strategic authority, equitable partnerships, and sustained local leadership. Meaningful localisation therefore requires greater local control over resources and decisions, equitable risk-sharing, proportionate accountability requirements, and institutional recognition of local leadership. The central challenge is not sim-ply increasing local participation, but translating participation into a substantive redistribution of humanitarian power and resources.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the implementation of the Grand Bargain localisation agenda in MMC and Jere LGAs of Borno State, with particular attention to power, funding, and local humanitarian leadership. The findings demonstrate that localisation has made measurable but uneven progress. Stakeholders generally understood the concept of localisation, and local and national organisa-tions played substantial roles in humanitarian implementation and capacity-building activities. However, these gains have not been matched by a comparable transfer of financial resources, strategic decision-making authority, or sustained humanitarian leadership to local actors. A major finding is the persistent gap between understanding and institutionalisation. Although 89% of re-spondents reported understanding localisation, only 31% indicated that their organisations had a formal localisation policy or strategy. The funding structure further demonstrates the persistence of intermediary relationships, with local and national NGOs relying substantially on sub-grants while INGOs maintained greater access to direct institutional funding. Similarly, strategic power remained concentrated among UN agencies, government authorities, donors, and international NGOs, with local organisations occupying a comparatively weak position in decision-making de-spite their substantial frontline responsibilities. Local leadership is nevertheless emerging, particularly in operational and technical coordination. However, such leadership remains uneven and has not yet translated into sustained institutional authority. The findings also show that corrup-tion and accountability concerns, insecurity, limited organisational capacity, donor compliance requirements, restricted direct funding, and unequal power relations continue to constrain locali-sation. These challenges indicate that increasing local participation alone is insufficient to achieve transformative

localisation. The study therefore concludes that the central challenge for the Grand Bargain in MMC and Jere is not the inclusion of local actors in humanitarian response, but the extent to which authority, resources, risk, and leadership are genuinely redistributed. Future local-isation efforts should prioritise more direct and flexible financing for capable local organisations, equitable partnership and risk-sharing arrangements, proportionate accountability requirements, sustained organisational strengthening, and meaningful participation of local actors in strategic decision-making and coordination. Strengthening these dimensions would help move localisa-tion from operational participation towards a more substantive and sustainable redistribution of humanitarian power.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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