

GETTING INSIGHT INTO HUMANITARIAN ENGINEERS' PERCEPTION OF AID LOCALIZATION



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Aid Localization: A Shift in Humanitarian Engineering Sector?

Opinion: A spotlight on last-mile localization in development

By [Shahd Fares](#), [Angela Min Yi Hou](#), [Ricardo Miguel Morales Chaires](#), [Marisa Sofia Terán](#) // Sep 8, 2023

Working in
development

Koenraad Van Brabant

Five ways to make aid locally sourced

NGOs are calling for aid to be more local and grassroots led. How can this be achieved?



Editorial: Localization and the politics of humanitarian action



Kilian Spandler^{1*}



Kristina Roepstorff^{2†}



Sulagna Maitra^{3†}

Are European donors falling behind the US on localization?

By [Jessica Abrahams](#) // Jul 14, 2023

Opinion: How global organizations can support locally led development

By [Paul Weisenfeld](#) // Jun 22, 2023

How much are major donors spending on local contracts?

By [Miguel Antonio Tamonan](#) // Aug 30, 2023

Localization is Self-Determination



Hugo Slim*

Senior Research Fellow, Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom

Global Embrace of Localization: Changing the Power Dynamics in Development and Humanitarian Aid Systems

BY [DONALD STEINBERG](#)

What is Aid localization?

Aid localization is a set of **internal reforms, actions, and behavior changes** that are being undertaken to ensure that the **work puts local actors in the lead, strengthens local systems, and is responsive to local communities.**

[Source]



Who are Humanitarian Engineers?

Humanitarian engineers are professionals who **apply engineering principles and practices to address and alleviate the needs and challenges of vulnerable and underserved communities.**



Image courtesy: Bridges to Prosperity

Research Questions:

1. What do Humanitarian Engineers think about aid localization?

2. How does aid localization contribute to changes in the Humanitarian Engineering sector?

3. In what ways have these changes influenced career changes among Humanitarian Engineers?



Research Method

Data Collection

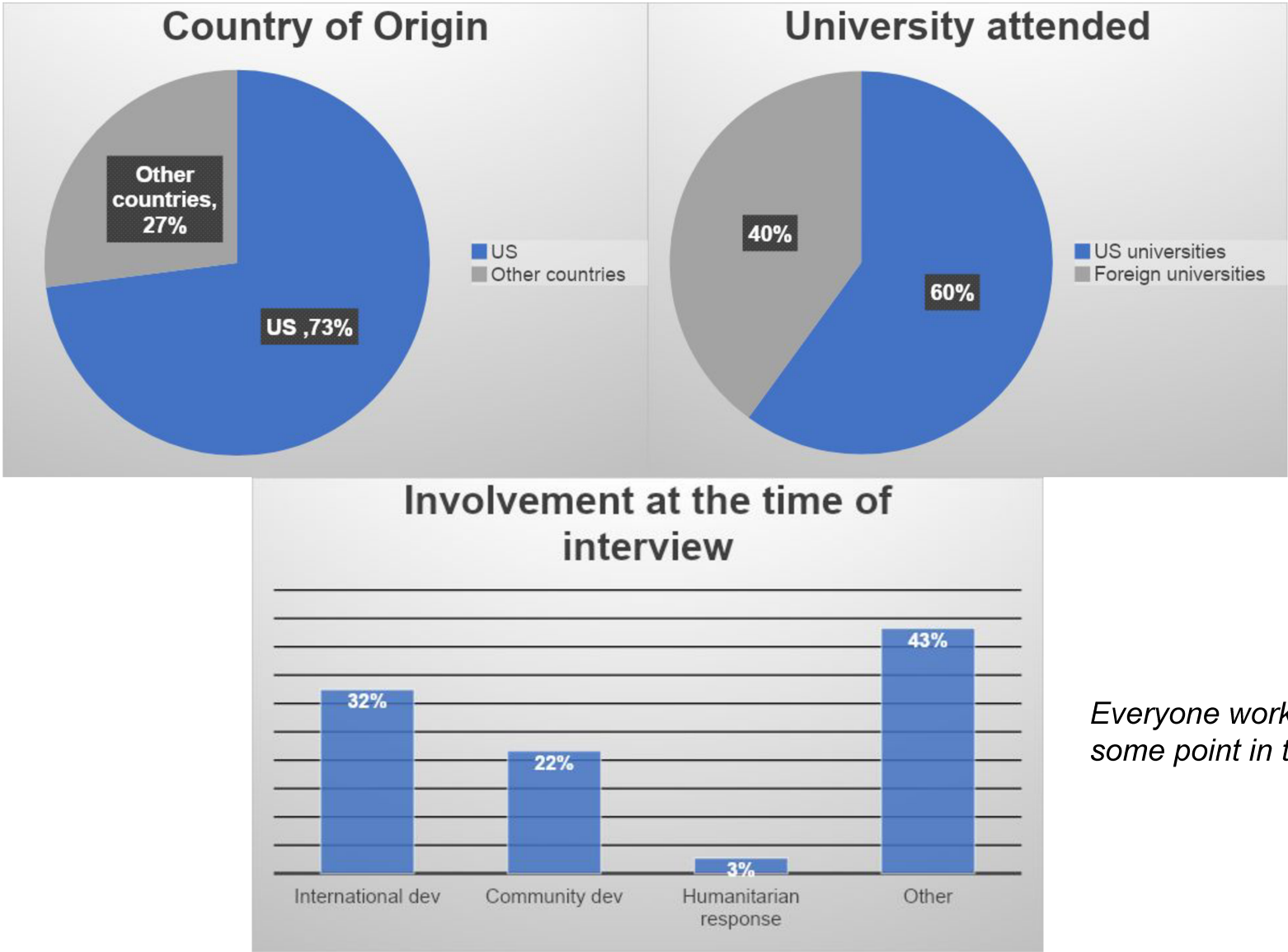


Interviewed 37 Humanitarian Engineering Practitioners

Q:

- *What is your opinion about aid localization?*
- *How has aid localization impacted the sector?*
- *How has/will this influence the career choices of HE practitioners?*

Research Method



Everyone worked in HE sector at some point in their life.

Demographic Information

Research Method

Data Analysis



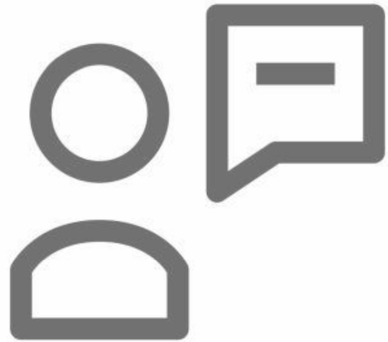
Transcribing (Trint)



Qualitative coding

- *Deductively coded into different themes like Aid Localization, Sectoral change, Career*
- *Main themes were further inductively coded into community focus, organizational/policy focus, benefits, and challenges. (work in progress)*

Research Method



Aid Localization

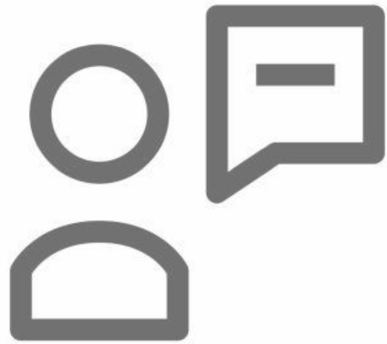
Changes in sector

Changes in career

Example:

“I think [aid] **localization is inevitable and necessary**. I think that it's going to be. I mean, if development is ever going to be **sustainable** and if we're actually going to do what we say we want to do in kind of handing this off at some point, but it's going **to require us shifting that decision-making power over to the [local] people.**”

100% of participants believe that Aid Localization is good



"I'll say, yes, I think it's **a good move**. It's a good move to **direct resources to the locals** so that the **problem can be solved** [at a local level]."

"I'm in **support of aid localization** and I think that's a **more effective way to use resources**."

I think **it's a good thing**, in the sense that, **it's bringing making the decision to those who are closest to the issues** and who probably understand the issues the best.

A significant transformation will occur within the HE sector from aid localization.



Budget
distribution

“It's interesting because, you know, USAID is pushing a lot. They have I think, **their goal is 20 or 25% [of annual budget] in the next few years.**”

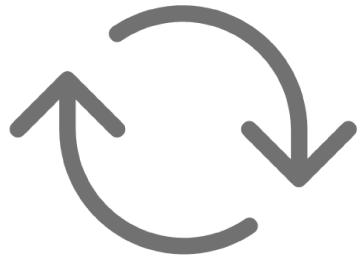
Programma
tic changes

“We have really **decentralized programing**. Our **country offices own their strategies**. Not all of our country programs are led by locals, but most are. And we do a lot of our planning through kind of local structures. And I mean, **we [headquarters] are more or less what I call like a systems facilitator.**”

Leadership
changes

“You know, again, like I was saying, you have a lot of **nonprofit organizations switching to local leadership**, which has been big, even a lot more. Even so, for example, we have much more of our advisors that are just like head office with advisors there throughout the world. They're like regional advisors, and I think that's a really good step in that direction.”

Career opportunities for Humanitarian Engineers will change.



More local opportunities

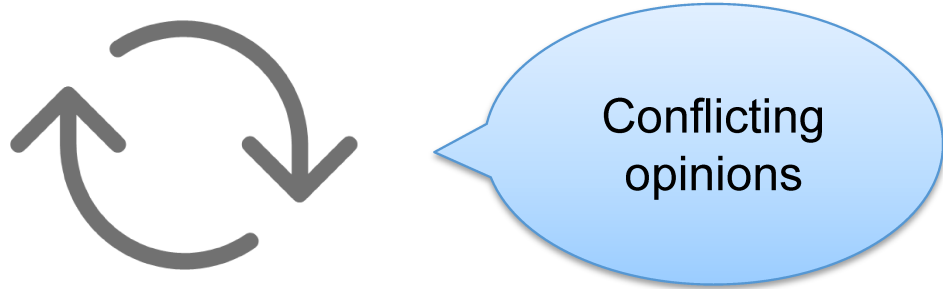
Different skillsets

“I think that there’s going to be more **regional-based positions** and more **positions open to locals.**”

“We don't have a category like 25% that [recruits] we're trying to meet, but we're trying to push that when the work is being done to select a general contractor, which would likely be an Alaska company, but maybe not a local construction company, focus on **hiring some percentage [of locals]**, 10% of the local population to work on the project.”

“Those **individuals internationally** are going to have to start to **specialize a bit more in terms of regions** or countries where certainly we've seen more mobility of those expat staff across countries. So I think, you know, **language skills** where there's more of an **awareness of working across those specific cultural boundaries**, I think, is something that will become increasingly important.”

Career opportunities for Humanitarian Engineers will change ?



"I think that will definitely change the way international agencies approach this because I think there **won't be as many opportunities for people from the higher income countries to work on these projects.**"

"I think one of the biggest **misconceptions** that I see is that a lot of people think about localization as **removing those international positions, and I don't think that that's actually going to happen.**"

Discussion and Future Work

- Many acknowledged the importance of aid localization.
 - Practitioners believes that aid localization efforts will bring changes in the humanitarian engineering sector.
 - Consecutively, career choices will be impacted due to the sectoral change.
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- The extent of practitioners' knowledge and the influence of aid localization vary based on their respective professional backgrounds.
 - HE in international development
 - HE in community development (US)
 - HE in humanitarian/crisis response

Thank You!

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