

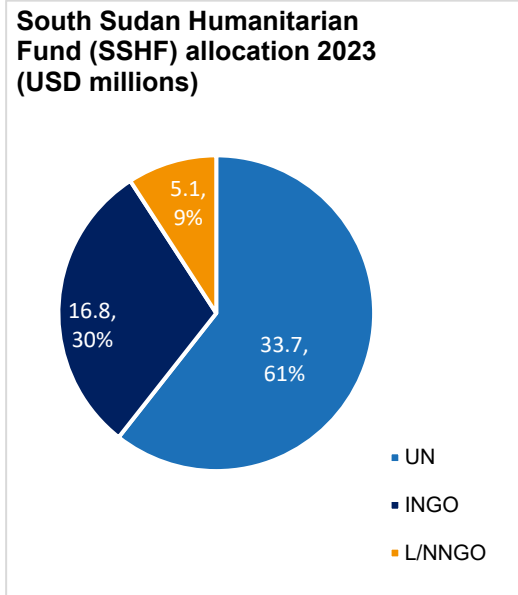
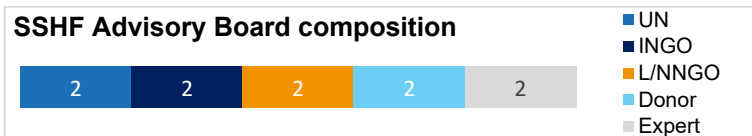
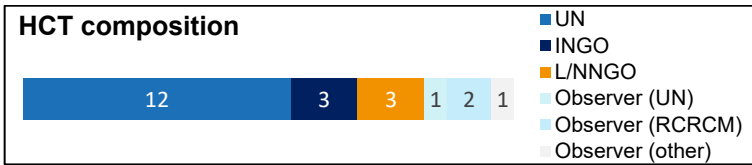
Localisation in Humanitarian Leadership - South Sudan

October 2024



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

SOUTH SUDAN¹



L/NNGO leadership in coordination: South Sudan has a notably high inclusion of NGOs in cluster coordination teams, eight out of the nine activated Clusters and Areas of Responsibility (AoRs) co-coordinated by NGOs². Six clusters or AoRs and the Cash Working Group include L/NNGOs in their national coordination teams, some of which have recently been added. The positions vary between bodies. In five of these, L/NNGOs are designated as 'Co-ordinators' or 'National Coordinators' alongside UN and INGO (co)-coordinators. One has an L/NNGO taking on a Roving Coordinator role, and another a 'trainee co-chair' position. Participants noted that the designation and intended responsibilities of the positions affect the hierarchies and power distribution within the coordination team and therefore how much influence the L/NNGO member feels they can have.

This change in the composition of coordination leadership was welcomed by participants. When discussing inclusion, most stated they thought L/NNGO co-coordinators' voices were listened to in cluster teams and in the inter-cluster/sector coordination groups (ICCGs). However, it was felt that L/NNGOs did not always wield equal influence, sometimes lacking consultation and decisions being made by Cluster Lead Agencies or OCHA. Examples of good practices in inclusive processes were cited, such as the Humanitarian Response Plan Review being co-facilitated by nominated cluster (co)-coordinators with OCHA.

With some L/NNGO roles recently introduced, participants discussed the role UN coordinators have played in onboarding their new L/NNGO colleagues. For some, this has included extensive initial briefings and a gradual shift towards equal representation - efforts viewed positively. As outlined elsewhere in this report, consideration of power dynamics is vital to ensuring L/NNGO co-coordinators and organisations are perceived as having an equitable role in coordination.

Across all coordination bodies, from sub-national to the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), some participants discussed challenges related to the presence, confidence, and representative capacities of some L/NNGO members. It was noted that additional support, clarity of role expectations, or different ways of working might be necessary to bolster these aspects. This was

¹ Data on HCT, ICCG, and Cluster composition provided by OCHA South Sudan in May and June 2024. Data on the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SSHF) from: OCHA, [South Sudan Humanitarian Fund Annual Report 2023](#), April 2024.

² The Logistics Cluster does not have a co-coordination arrangement.

described as important to ensure all L/NNGO representatives can fulfil the responsibilities of their roles, representing the humanitarian interests of their constituents. Others noted the importance of the creation of inclusive spaces to enable L/NNGOs to fully participate and influence.

NGO representation: The (mixed) South Sudan NGO Forum is the main NGO representative mechanism in the humanitarian system. It consists of separate national NGO and international NGO forums and steering committees, brought together under a joint steering committee. The forum has a markedly large membership³, and representing such a large constituency was noted to be challenging and time-consuming for its elected L/NNGO and INGO representatives. Some participants underscored the essential role of L/NNGO members in holding their representatives accountable.

One participant suggested a potential role for other civil society platforms in representation, particularly relevant to nexus or durable solutions efforts. The South Sudan Civil Society Organisation Forum, primarily engaged in peace work, was cited as an example for potential future development-humanitarian-peace engagement.

Funding and coordination engagement: While L/NNGO access to funding was a core issue in all five countries, it had special resonance in South Sudan. Funding was repeatedly highlighted as the top concern for L/NNGOs, with limited availability of particularly direct grants generating a competitive funding environment.

Operational funding was noted to be often the main issue raised by L/NNGO representatives in coordination forums. This was acknowledged to reflect the importance of the issue. However, some participants expressed concern that focusing primarily on funding might cause L/NNGO representatives to miss opportunities to address and influence other pertinent issues.

The funding for L/NNGO cluster co-ordination was discussed with arrangements reported to vary. For some, this is an 'add-on' to programmatic responsibilities, with a staff member double-hatting. For one, a multi-year grant was in place. Participants stressed the importance of L/NNGOs accessing dedicated, multi-year funding for coordination to ensure continuity. Funding (access to, and knowledge of how and where to advocate for it) was often raised in this study as a barrier to L/NNGOs putting themselves forward for coordination functions.

The multiple cluster co-ordination arrangements in South Sudan could provide useful examples of how funding has been secured, and how different arrangements have impacted the ability of L/NNGOs to perform the co-ordination functions such as staff hiring, continuity, and independence from the Cluster Lead Agency.

Localisation strategy: In 2023, the HCT adopted a localisation strategy, although some participants felt it lacked full consensus. The document sets out principles and the overall approach of the HCT, including local actor participation, representation, and inclusive leadership. It does not yet define activities and targets, which were identified in other contexts studied here as important for making progress towards agreed goals. At the time of writing, the NGO Forum's Localisation Working Group, comprising L/NNGO, INGO, UN, and donor representatives, was developing a draft action plan to operationalise the strategy for discussion by the HCT.

Country-based pooled fund: The recent funding trends of the SSHF, usually an important source of direct funding for L/NNGOs, seem to have exacerbated the magnitude of the issue of funding. In 2019, 38% of SSHF funds were allocated directly to L/NNGOs, dropping to 16% in 2021 following a capacity risk re-assessment. This reduction led to many L/NNGOs becoming ineligible or classified as high risk. Direct funding to L/NNGOs further decreased to 9% in 2023, with most funds directed

³ Of 253 L/NNGOs and 114 INGOs, as of mid-2024.

to seven UN agencies⁴. L/NGO Advisory Board members recounted having advocated against this trend but felt they had consistently not been listened to. Participants frequently raised the funding trend as a concern, diminishing trust in pooled fund allocation processes and the humanitarian system's overall commitment to localisation.

⁴ Attributed to *'the nature of emergency [flood] response in 2023, which required quick response capacity, operational presence and demonstrated capacity in large-scale emergency response, ability to pre-finance, and quickly scale up'* OCHA, [South Sudan Humanitarian Fund Annual Report 2023](#), April 2024.



A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK
FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE
HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Regional Hubs

Africa

Nairobi, Kenya
Dakar, Senegal

Asia-Pacific

Bangkok, Thailand
Islamabad, Pakistan

MENA

Amman, Jordan

Latin America

Guadalajara, Mexico
(Coordination)

Geneva Office

Humanitarian Hub, La Voie-Creuse 16, 1202 Geneva
secretariat@icvanetwork.org
www.icvanetwork.org