

The Paradox of “Localization” and “Country Ownership” in NTD Funding:

Grant managers’ insights from the END Fund’s ARISE Phase II

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Background

Localization aims to strengthen national leadership and sustainability (WHO 2021), but prior studies show that such efforts can reinforce dependency when power and authorship remain externally defined (Cornwall & Eade 2010; Roepstorff 2020).

This poster examines how these dynamics unfolded within ARISE Phase II under Priority Outcome 3: *Adaptable Oversight of Effective and Efficient Fund Management*.

Methods

A stakeholder survey (n = 41) and 14 key informant interviews were conducted with representatives from government, implementing, technical, and donor partners.

The interviews explored roles and responsibilities, clarity of scope and core principles, coordination and communication, technical rigour, data management and communication requests, and country ownership.

Data were thematically analyzed using localization and capacity-strengthening frameworks (Bates et al., 2014; Franzen et al., 2017).



Key Findings

Localization endorsed in principle, but **decision-making processes remained externally steered**, reflecting ongoing tension between partnership ideals and operational realities.

Financial and decision authority largely unchanged, with compliance mechanisms defined by donors (Goldberg & Bryant 2012).

Capacity strengthening and domestic resource mobilization goals deprioritized amid shifting priorities (WHO 2021).



Feysel Abdullahi, 30, finishes a TT surgery on both eyes in Darimi Health Center in Tuli Guled district, Somali region. He says his eyes used to tear since he was a child and he pulls out his eye lashes every six months to relieve himself of the pain. He is happy that he is finally getting the surgery and excited to continue to provide for his family without difficulty.

Reflections on Country Ownership

Findings illustrate the limits of participation when ownership remains symbolic rather than substantive. Achieving genuine country ownership may require rethinking how authority, accountability, and authorship are shared. This paradox invites reflection on whose definitions of capacity and success shape practice, and how more plural forms of knowledge might inform system strengthening.

Join the Dialogue

How do you define “country ownership” in your work?



Key References (Abridged)

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