

Devex - More interesting comments from NGO leaders on impact of "localization"

Localization for dummies

James Boomgard has a very different take on localization. The CEO of DAI — one of the world’s largest development companies and a top deliverer of USAID contracts — says the debate has been overly politicized and the concept is not that complicated.

“Development done well is a local activity,” he tells Omar in a wide-ranging interview. “It's not about whether a Pakistani NGO gets the money or a U.S. NGO gets the money. The question is: **Who can best do the work?**”

That’s why Boomgard disdains what he calls [“compliance-itis” — a focus on hitting accountability targets over results.](#)

He warns that accountability has become a blunt instrument that stymies innovation among development organizations: “They're constrained by this much more difficult, contentious, litigious environment that we find ourselves in.”

Read: [Is the aid sector suffering from 'compliance-itis'? One CEO thinks so](#)

The bottom line

We just can’t seem to get enough of localization, and neither, it seems, can our readers, hundreds of whom registered to hear three major international NGOs talk about how they’re embracing a bottom-up approach — and [how it’s affecting their bottom line.](#)

The CEOs of FHI 360, Catholic Relief Services, and Save the Children US told my colleague David Ainsworth that they were comfortable seeing their balance sheets shrink as more power and funding flowed to local organizations, and that **revenue can’t be the sole determinant of success.**

“What do we think [localization] is going to do to our income statements?” said Tessie San Martin of FHI 360. “I honestly think they're going to be lower.”

She noted that her organization is used to thinking about top-line growth as a measure of health and impact. “That's not the case, but, boy, that's **a big culture shift in the organization,** from the board on down.”

Janti Soeripto of Save the Children US echoed the point that revenue can’t be the sole barometer of success.

“We have to **wean ourselves off this vanity measure**,” she said.

In the meantime, INGOs will have to figure out their new place in the pecking order. “It’ll be fascinating to see what happens to our industry in the next 20 years,” San Martin said.