



From Local Roots to Global Reach: Global South Intermediaries Driving Just and Equitable Governance

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Main Takeaways

This study aims to help funders better understand the potential to work with Global South Intermediaries (GSIs) in advancing localization efforts. We are particularly interested in their potential to help achieve just and equitable governance outcomes. We hope that our findings can inform the design of future partnerships and strengthen recognition of GSIs as an important player in the international funding ecosystem.

GSIs have a strategic role to play in today's funding ecosystem

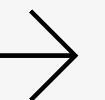
GSIs have a strategic role to play in today's funding ecosystem. GSIs can be a valuable bridge between Global-North-based funders and grassroots actors in the Global South, having the potential to foster locally led solutions and initiatives.

GSIs can be important partners for governance funding

There are intermediaries in Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America with a track record of supporting just and equitable governance funding at the local level and with strong systems to comply with donor requirements. Funders do not need to rely exclusively on Global-North-based groups to have confidence in the quality of programming.

GSIs are not monolithic and typologies can be helpful

Intermediaries have a variety of models and roots. We have developed a framework of four GSI models to facilitate thinking on how best to engage and potentially find the right partner. However, we recognize that classification can be complex and will continue to evolve, reflecting the often-diverse roles that GSIs perform.



Seven considerations for partnering with GSIs:



CLOSE TIES WITH LOCAL ACTORS AND CONTEXTS

GSIs can provide significant value to funders through their understanding of local contexts, often-deep connections with local actors, and ability to regrant in appropriate ways (often small amounts). Their ability to identify strategic allies and expand coverage beyond urban areas allows them to build strong relationships with local organizations. Global-North-based funders are often not well-placed to navigate local complexities or give very small grants (or other forms of support). GSIs can bridge this gap. Proximity better positions GSIs to implement locally led solutions effectively, enhancing localization efforts in governance programming.



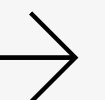
ABILITY TO TAKE A SYSTEMIC APPROACH

GSIs typically work on multiple thematic areas and are able to foster connections that make sense in the local context. This can importantly contribute to good governance programming that tends to be cross-cutting in nature.



TRUST IS CRITICAL

Trust is a fundamental component of advancing just and equitable governance. It is also critical to effective grantmaking. Given close relationships and being embedded closer to local contexts, GSIs can play a role in fostering trust-based practices that shift power dynamics toward local decision-making.





A DELIBERATE APPROACH TO POWER-SHIFTING

GSIs, as both grantees and grantmakers, can reflect on funding values and practices to ensure that trust and accountability are prioritized. Their effectiveness, however, also depends on funder behaviors. When funders adopt flexible, trust-based approaches, these values resonate within GSIs, encouraging similar interactions with local actors. Conversely, rigid controls can reinforce hierarchies that get passed on to subgrantees, replicating problematic dynamics. It is essential for stakeholders to actively engage in practices that foster genuine partnerships and collaborative governance.



FOSTERING COLLABORATION

Collective action is vital for addressing systemic governance challenges effectively. GSIs can facilitate collaboration among local stakeholders, helping them unite around common objectives and strengthening partnerships that are adaptive and responsive. When done well, this function can ensure that diverse perspectives are considered, leading to more effective and inclusive outcomes, minimizing the potential of duplicative efforts.



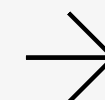
MORE INCLUSIVE ACCESS TO RESOURCES

GSIs can facilitate access to both economic and non-economic resources for historically underserved and underfunded communities. GSIs can make underserved communities more visible to donors and counter traditional resource distribution that often favors larger, well-connected organizations, which fosters equity within funding practices.



CAPACITY- STRENGTHENING

Strengthening the capacities of local actors is essential for achieving just and equitable governance. GSIs have proven that they can be effective in equipping local entities with the necessary tools and skills to be sustainable, impactful organizations.





Of course, **GSIs are not a panacea**. They can offer valuable support in achieving localization goals, but are not a one-size-fits-all solution. Nor are they a substitute for direct funding to local actors. Additionally, the complex political landscapes in which GSIs operate can present unique challenges.

Nonetheless, as Global-North-based donors look to find ways to shift more funding to Global South contexts while retaining reassurance on process, targeting of funds, and impact, GSIs should be proactively considered. With support, they can be **valuable partners in reaching localization targets** and in ensuring that local needs are prioritized in grantmaking. This extends to donors in the governance field, where a growing network of GSIs are building a relevant track record that can give confidence for future investment.

