

Mobilization, Interaction, Contention: Relations between NGOs/Civil Society and States in Times of Covid-19

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Abstracts

Contents

Co-produced Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic in the City of York. Piergiuseppe Parisi and Marynka Marquez	2
Can we work together during times of need? Evidence from an experiment in slum settlements in Brazil. Natália S. Bueno.....	4
No Love Story: Relations Between the Government and Civil Society Organizations During the Covid-19 Pandemic in Israel. Hillel Schmid, Ph.D.....	6
Political critique, political trust, conspiracy theories and civil organisations: understanding state-non-state relations at the time of Covid-19 pandemic. Elzbieta Drazkiewicz.....	9
Civil Society Laws in East Africa: A Comparative and Institutional Analysis. Anthony J. DeMattee	11
Derogations and Democratic Backsliding: Exploring the pandemic's effects on civic spaces. Suparna Chaudhry	13
Doctors on the Frontlines: When COVID-19 became Israel's New Enemy, Palestinian Physicians were Called for Duty. Guy Shalev.....	14
Consulting firms' role in policy formulation - conceptualization and evidence from Canada and the COVID19 pandemic. Reut Marciano	15
South Sudanese NGO and local government responses to COVID-19. Alice Robinson, Naomi Pendle and Peter Hakim Justin.....	16

Co-produced Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic in the City of York. Piergiuseppe Parisi and Marynka Marquez

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a strain on the design and delivery of services by local authorities in the UK (OCSI, 2020). Councils across the country have had to respond swiftly to the needs of the population to guarantee their rights to life and nondiscrimination, health and to an adequate standard of living. Despite these hardships, the pandemic has also provided a fertile terrain for the emergence of innovative collaborative practices between the public and voluntary sectors (Groundwork UK, 2020; Lawson, 2020; Russell, 2020a; Russell, 2020b). Alliances between the local authorities and civil society organisations have proved essential to ensuring that services were responsive to the needs of the population (Steen and Brandsen, 2020). Emergency community hubs formed across the UK since the outbreak of the pandemic, where the public sector and volunteers came together to guarantee a rapid response that reached the most vulnerable individuals (Coutts et al, 2020).

Building on pre-existing plans, the City of York Council has set up a number of community hubs across the city to ensure coordination between Council staff and volunteers. Examples of coordinated efforts include the distribution of food parcels and medicines and in the provision of welfare calls. Alongside community hubs, other less structured co-produced initiatives have emerged that build on already existing partnerships between the public and voluntary sectors. For example, the Council, the police, private businesses and a number of charitable organisations collaborated to provide a number of asylum seekers with shelter and access to basic services.

This paper provides an appraisal of co-produced responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in the City of York: have these practices effectively responded to the needs of the community? What worked well? What could have been improved? Are there practices or models of co-production that have emerged during the pandemic and that could be retained and adapted after the pandemic?

Building on a review of the existing literature on co-produced responses across the UK during COVID-19, this paper relies on data gathered through several semistructured interviews with Council staff and volunteers in the City of York conducted between January and March 2021. Interviews have focused on three key areas:

Times of Covid-19 - An Interdisciplinary Workshop a) **Identification of needs and response design** – respondents first described how the public and voluntary sectors came together to identify vulnerable individuals and their needs during the multiple lockdowns that were imposed in the UK throughout the pandemic. Moreover, they explained how responses to the needs identified were designed bearing in mind the capacity of the actors involved, in terms of both financial and human resources.

- a. **Delivery of services** – respondents identified how services were delivered to end users relying on a referral system and a large pool of volunteers across the city. Respondents focused on the operational challenges that the deployment of volunteers evidenced,

including for example vetting volunteers, ensuring geographical coverage and minimising health risks for volunteers.

- b. **Lessons learned** – respondents described strengths and weaknesses of the model adopted in York. While, generally speaking, the collaboration between the public and voluntary sectors was able to deploy a large number of volunteers across the city to respond to a high volume of requests, respondents identified a tension between the Council’s need to quickly deploy their resources and the time-consuming nature of effective co-production. The data gathered so far show that initiatives built on existing or developing partnerships between the public and voluntary sectors tend to be delivered more organically. Factors that appear to have facilitated an effective coordinated response to the pandemic are: 1) trust between the public and the voluntary sectors; 2) time spent on developing strategic partnerships before the pandemic; 3) organisational culture that does not reproduce ‘command and control’ paradigms; and 4) individual character of the actors involved.

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Can we work together during times of need? Evidence from an experiment in slum settlements in Brazil. Natália S. Bueno

With: George Avelino, Ciro Biderman, Daniel da Mata, and Leonardo R. L. Bueno, Getulio Vargas Foundation.

Encouraging citizens to mobilize and participate in the design and implementation of development projects carries a lot of promise, especially in contexts where state presence is scarce and inconsistent, such as slum settlements. The potential gains of such community-driven solutions are particularly acute in contexts of crisis such as those created by the Covid-19 pandemic. Under which conditions can community-driven programs reduce the adversities induced by the spread of Covid-19? We study whether community-driven programs can increase compliance with measures to reduce risks of transmission and can alleviate the socioeconomic distress induced by the spread of Covid-19. Through a randomized controlled trial of an NGOled program with 611 families in 25 Brazilian slum settlements, we examine the impact of an NGO program on several outcomes related to the pandemic outbreak.

The NGO program is a bundle. On the one hand, the NGO subsidizes a wooden-made housing unit while providing a voluntary labor force to build them. On the other hand, residents must cooperate with other members of the community to make the constructions feasible. Beneficiaries must engage their previous networks and form new ones and rely on norms of trust and reciprocity. The expectation is that the combination of community work and reciprocity allows community members to plan, organize, and execute the program.

We hypothesize that the intervention increases beneficiaries' social skills which may be key in the cooperation to fight Covid-19. At the same time, better housing conditions could potentially diminish exposure to the virus, especially in densely populated slums. We test our theory by randomly distributing the housing units within a pool of eligible families that are at the bottom line of poverty in urban slums of the major Brazilian metropolises. Our randomized controlled trial (RCT) was conducted one year to three months before the pandemic break out (according to the NGO construction plan within each separate community). We test whether recipient families behave differently than the non-recipient families in a series of outcomes related to the pandemic outbreak. Additionally, our quantitative methodology is complemented by qualitative interviews with selected beneficiaries, community leaders, and NGO volunteers. We have also collected observational data on settlers that did not take part on the randomized program.

We find that even a successful community-driven program fails to induce actions to reduce the pandemic's fallout. The program increases trust in Covid-19 related information from community leaders, yet it fails to increase compliance with Covid-19 contagion mitigation measures and fails to increase solidarity among community members and to bolster individuals' claim-making in periods of need. We find that this result partly stems from individuals involved in clientelistic relationships who are distrustful of community leaders and reticent to ask them for help. Furthermore, we find that our program strengthens solidarity among individuals who had previous connections through friendships and especially

members of the same religious organizations. Overall, our results suggest that community-driven programs may have limited impact in creating solidarity and compliance to health measures due to structural inequities and political capture existent in the lives of these communities. Our work focuses on the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, and it contributes to a growing and broader discussion on the role of civil society in development promotion, co-production of policies, and government accountability in emergency humanitarian crises.

No Love Story: Relations Between the Government and Civil Society Organizations During the Covid-19 Pandemic in Israel. Hillel Schmid, Ph.D

This paper analyzes the relations between the government and civil society organizations (CSOs) during the COVID-19 pandemic in Israel. The paper presents the government's inconsistent policy, which has been influenced by various interest groups and the very limited financial support allocated to CSOs during the crisis. The paper describes the government's alienated attitude toward CSOs as well as the reasons for current behavior. Special attention is devoted to the government's misunderstanding of the mission and roles of CSOs in modern society, especially at times of crisis and national disasters. The paper also analyzes the organizational and strategic behaviors of CSOs toward the government, which have also contributed to the government's alienated attitude toward them.

Theoretical Framework

A literature review of the research about government-CSOs relations revealed that researchers have addressed many questions related to the nature of this relationship, developed various theories, analyzed the power-dependency relationships, examined the politics and the strategies of action of both sides, proposed different models to clarify the boundaries between the organizations, and devoted thought and research to issues of accountability and transparency (Almog-Bar, 2016; Gronbjerg & Salamon, 2012; Najam, 2000; Salamon, 1995; Schmid, 2003; Smith & Gronbjerg, 2006; Young, 2000). Studies on collaboration and cross-sector partnerships have been published extensively in the last few years (Almog-Bar & Schmid, 2018; Gazely & Brudney, 2007).

The literature provides us with a firm basis for analyzing the relationship between the government and CSOs around the world, and in Israel in particular. It also provides us a basis from which to ask the following research questions about the situation in Israel:

Research Questions:

1. What has happened to the relationship between the government and civil society organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. Why does the government behave as if it is alienated from civil society organizations rather than treat them as partners who have come a long way together?
3. Does the behavior of the government toward civil society organizations during this crisis differ from its behavior toward organizations in other sectors such as the business sector?
4. Is the government's policy toward civil society organizations discriminatory as compared with its policy toward organizations in other sectors?
5. Are bewilderment, confusion, inconsistency, and lack of leadership the main causes for the government's failure to acknowledge the need to provide a safety net to organizations that fill the vacuum left by its failure to cope with the consequences of the pandemic?

Methodology

This research is based on mixed methods design. Quantitative findings from studies conducted by academic institutions and civil society organizations will be presented, analyzed, and evaluated. Formal reports published by the Central Bureau of Statistics, The National Insurance Institute, The Ministry of Welfare and Social Services, and the umbrella organization of Israeli civil society organizations will be presented and discussed. In addition qualitative analysis of reports, documents published by the government, the parliament and its committees, and content analysis of interviews with senior officials in the government and the civil society organizations will be analyzed, and conclusions will be presented. Above all the analysis of the relations is based on the personal insights, lessons, and experience of the author of this study drawn from almost 35 years of studying civil society organizations in general and the relations between government and these organizations in particular.

Lessons and Implications for Theory and Policy

Government policy and attitude towards CSOs, specifically during times of crisis or national disasters, have received too little theoretical attention thus far, yet this constitutes a critically important field for further research and the developing of advanced theories regarding the relations between governments and CSOs. Current theories are not sufficient to explain the ambivalent and alienated attitude of the government towards CSOs which are generally considered to be the delegates and partners of the government in the provision of social, human, educational and health services to populations at risk. This is especially true in times of a crisis such as Covid-19 – a crisis of a scale that the world had not experienced for many decades. This paper discusses these issues and highlights the implications for government policy as well as outlines the strategies government must adopt in order to cope more successfully with national disasters and pandemics. Government policy makers should establish policies, guidelines, and procedures for operation during emergency situations in advance. Many governments around the world, including the Israeli government, were caught unprepared to deal with the Covid-19 crisis. Israel's government bodies and mechanisms had been emptied of authority over the years, leaving hollow spaces, and a lack of prepared plans or ability to deal effectively with the pandemic in real time. The relationship between the government and CSOs should be based on more trust, mutuality, and understanding on the part of both actors in order to change the current power-dependence relationship. There is a need to establish more cross-sectoral partnerships for the benefit of citizens. Specifically and operatively, it is recommended that governments and CSOs should prepare for emergencies and national disasters with a prepared standby "work folder" including a map to help navigate the ship to a safe shore.

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Political critique, political trust, conspiracy theories and civil organisations: understanding state-non-state relations at the time of Covid-19 pandemic. Elzbieta Drazkiewicz

When the SARS-CoV-2 virus began its global spread, around the world authorities sought to reduce the novel coronavirus's propagation by regulating not only where people could go and with whom but how to dress (with masks, gloves, etc.) and behave (no shaking hands, keeping 2m distance from each other, etc.). As epidemiologists turned to intensified contact tracing, private companies and governing bodies joined forces not only to develop new medical devices, vaccines and medications, but also to create new technologies and mobile apps for scaling up surveillance. Consequently, the pandemic shone a light onto extant tensions between governance and freedom as individual rights got pitted against state-defined visions of the public good, to be achieved through lockdowns, testing, tracking and vaccination.

Moreover, the pandemic brought to the fore questions that previously were concerning mostly niche groups. The questions such as 'what is the truth?', 'what science knows?', 'what is the real agenda of the medical industry?' which used to preoccupy the so called 'conspiracy theorists', 'anti-vaxxers' or 'science deniers', now seem to be at the centre of most conversations and public debates. In many instances, concerns over control, authority, transparency, and freedom—fuelled by competition between officially sanctioned, expert knowledge and popular knowledge—support the circulation of 'conspiratorial beliefs' generating conflicts and dividing societies. Around the world, fraught discussions of COVID-19 cover-ups, pandemic geopolitics have risen to a notable high.

This exploratory paper will investigate *conflicts over conspiratorial views* on pandemic in order to reveal what utopian and dystopian visions of the state and civil society they carry. The paper asks what can conflicts over scientific knowledge and health governance – the Covid-19 pandemic at large – reveal about people's perception of what counts as a legitimate political critique, and what does not?

As conspiracy theories have been flourishing the boundary between legitimate concerns, questions and critiques on the one side and conspiracy theories on the other started to blur. In order to address these issues, particularly to restore the trust in a scientific knowledge and democratic governance, social activists, political leaders, journalists and scientists designed campaigns, mobile apps, but also research projects committed to fact checking, debunking false claims or investigating the phenomenon of conspiracy theories. By the early March of 2020 conspiracy theories became central issue not only to those people who propagate or endorse them, but significantly also to those who fear of their societal consequences. Conflicts over 'the truth' soon became a highly antagonising topic, strongly dividing many societies.

But with this paper I argue that what is at stake is not simply facts about Covid-19 pandemic, but larger questions regarding transparency and accountability, the right to political and social critique and the relationship between state authorities

and citizens. The paper therefore asks: where do we draw a line separating authentic and necessary questioning of the state and unjustified suspicion or scaremongering disrupting democratic process? What conflicts over those issues can tell us about the ways in which people understand transparency and accountability – values particularly important for the existence of democratic states and state-civil society relationships? What is Covid-19 pandemic revealing about the condition of political trust and the future of democracy?

As I have explained elsewhere (Drażkiewicz 2016) the understanding of what civil society is, what is the role of NGOs in the state differs significantly between states and societies. Also the latest work I conducted with Elisa Sobo (Sobo and Drażkiewicz 2020) reveals, that not all societies define conspiracy theories in the same way. Our work suggests that the way the term ‘conspiracy theories’ is applied and loaded with meanings differs across societies: what counts as conspiracy theory in one context, in another, can be seen as valid form of theorising about the world, a ‘critical thinking’. Finally, as other scholars have pointed out conspiracy theories are highly politicised phenomenon with conspiracy label being frequently weaponised against political opponents.

In this paper, focusing on Polish examples, I will explore what implications those issues have for the state - non-state relations and the future of civil society in Poland. I will demonstrate that increased importance of conspiracy theories, brings new challenges for our understanding of what civil society is: who is included and who is exclude from that phenomenon? Do anti-mask, anti-restriction groups count? Should groups denouncing Covid-19 as a scam and ‘plandemic’ be treated in the same way as those expressing concerns regarding state transparency and surveillance strategies?

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Civil Society Laws in East Africa: A Comparative and Institutional Analysis. Anthony J. DeMattee

Research Questions: This work conducts three interrelated analyses exploring the factors that lead governments to add permissive or restrictive rules to the laws that regulate civil society organizations (CSOs) within their borders. The analysis asks first, do nondemocratic regimes with autocratic institutions enact permissive provisions? Second, do laws currently on the books predict the types of new legal provisions that governments enact? If so, does that relationship change concerning new permissive and restrictive provisions? Third, when governments enact new legal provisions, are these changes associated with the circumstances and ideologies in other jurisdictions, namely neighboring African countries and global hegemony?

Theoretical Framework: Policy diffusion, which is the inter-jurisdictional influence that one government's policy decision has on changing the probability of adoption by the remaining pool of non-adopters (Simmons et al. 2006; Strang 1991). For a recent application in *Law & Society Review* see "How Their Laws Affect our Laws" (Cook-Martin and FitzGerald 2019).

Data: An original dataset created by collecting, translating, and systematically coding a legal corpus of 285 statutes enacted by 17 governments between 1872 and 2019. These cases include 12 East African countries and the five Permanent Members of the U.N. Security Council. A novel application of the highly-cited ADICO syntax (Crawford and Ostrom 1995) underpins the creation and use of a 58-item coding protocol.

Methods: I transform the country-year data into a directed-dyad format to study the intrajurisdictional diffusion of CSO laws. Using a directed-dyad event history analysis approach allows me to control for the unequal levels of influence that neighboring countries and global hegemony have on East African governments. The data and modeling choice also allow me to study the institutional development of CSO laws in countries while controlling for pathdependency, domestic factors, and international influence.

Contributions to the Field: To understand how and why governments regulate CSOs, we must understand the conditions under which governments choose to enact permissive or restrictive legal provisions. Specifically, this means knowing which factors predict the direction and size of institutional change. Shortcomings in existing research led me to evolve my analysis in three meaningful ways. First, I use two response variables: one measures restrictive changes and the other permissive ones. Second, I replace binary response variables with continuous ones. Rather than treating all changes to the regulatory regime as the same (binary) or arbitrarily clumping different sizes together (counts), continuous response variables accurately measure the direction and magnitude of the year-over-year change to the regulatory regime. Finally, I study the addition *and* removal of over 50 legal provisions while accounting for differences in international commitments and constitutions as preexisting intuitions. Treaties represent preexisting constitutional rules, while current provisions represent preexisting collective-choice rules embodied in laws (Buchanan and Tullock 1961; Ostrom 2005). This new understanding of civil society laws and CSO regulatory regimes raises the stakes for researchers and practitioners. As a methodological

contribution, it shows it is possible to rigorously and systematically code statutes and other legal sources for comparative analysis.

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Derogations and Democratic Backsliding: Exploring the pandemic's effects on civic spaces. Suparna Chaudhry

In an effort to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, most governments have imposed restrictions on freedom of movement, association, assembly and other civic freedoms in the interest of public health. Many countries have done so by declaring states of emergency and formally derogating from their international human rights treaty obligations. Derogations in international law authorize states to temporarily escape some of their international treaty commitments during times of crisis. By acknowledging a state of public emergency and formally derogating, governments acknowledge that these measures are temporary, necessary and proportional to the interest at stake, with an aim to restore normalcy as soon as possible. In many cases, emergency measures have been temporary and respect for human rights has returned to normal. In many other instances, however, governments have used these restrictions to suppress opposition and more permanently restrict space available to civil society.

Systematically measuring the consequences of COVID restrictions, however, is a difficult task. We first begin with the descriptive question – during the pandemic, how many countries have formally derogated from their human rights treaty obligations? How does the nature of emergency measures implemented across this time period differ across countries? In answering the above questions, we begin by focusing on derogations from the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), as well as violations of this treaty. We then aim to use our rich data-based descriptions of the relationship between pandemic restrictions and civic space to examine whether those emergency measures lead to lasting declines in associational and human rights.

We answer the above questions through the collection of original data on derogations during the pandemic. While many countries sign international human rights treaties that ostensibly bind states to respect rights, several treaties allow for emergency derogations from these obligations. We will tabulate formal human rights treaty derogations due to the pandemic, the time period of these measures, and the nature of measures implemented. We will then use the Variety of Democracy project's newly released Pandemic Violations of Democratic Standards Index to explore if and how civil society restrictions predict democratic backsliding. Our project will ultimately help assess whether the pandemic contributed to the trend in democratic backsliding and led to more permanent restrictions in freedoms available to civil society and NGOs.

Doctors on the Frontlines: When COVID-19 became Israel's New Enemy, Palestinian Physicians were Called for Duty. Guy Shalev

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

When the pandemic threat became imminent, Israel went to war. Leaders and commentators used a militaristic jargon to address the “war on corona” and the “heroes” on the medical frontlines. But since a fifth of Israel’s healthcare workers are Palestinian citizens, Israeli heroism took on a new face. This research-in-progress includes interviews with Palestinian physicians and political activists, and media analysis. The study considers the experiences and perspectives of Palestinian physicians in moments of health crisis and in light of unprecedented visibility as Palestinians in the Jewish-Israeli public. Particularly, in the context of public campaigns that seized upon this increased visibility to challenge the marginalization of Palestinians by featuring Palestinian doctors saving Israeli lives. This visibility highlighted the limitations of the recognition of the indigenous Palestinian national minority in Israel and the potential and constraints of the medical field as an arena for a politics of recognition.

Consulting firms' role in policy formulation - conceptualization and evidence from Canada and the COVID19 pandemic. Reut Marciano

Management consulting firms are increasingly involved in public policy in recent years in various jurisdictions. Consulting firms stand in a unique intersection of institutions and ideas since they regularly operate both in the private and public sectors and are often involved in advising policy actors in more than one jurisdiction. Despite being involved in policy, they are unelected and unaccountable to the public through regular democratic mechanisms. This unique position has drawn attention in research in multiple disciplines, with studies quantifying their increasing use by governments; research considering the discourse and narratives consulting firms employ when advising government, their association with specific policy ideas and practices - often as connected to neo-liberal and pro-market paradigms and how their involvement in policy is related to issues of accountability, de-politicization and public service capacity. To date, however, little is known about the roles they play in public policy formulation. Research in that avenue is important to more clearly direct the research on consulting firms' influence and impact in public policy.

This paper makes an advance in closing this gap on consulting firms' role in policy, by adding new data from 30 interviews with senior consultants and with their clients, in provincial ministries and service providers, in the healthcare policy subsystem in Ontario, Canada. I draw on the new data and integration with existing research in policy studies, organizational sociology, and business management to develop a conceptualization of consulting firms' roles in policy formulation. I utilize the concepts of policy advice and policy management; and of policy content and process, as used in existing literature on other policy advisory actors. I argue that consultants take four major types of roles in policy formulation: (1) subject-matter experts and points of access to extra-jurisdictional networks - in which consulting firms offer advice in their areas of expertise, or utilize their broad international or cross-sectoral networks (2) legitimisers and risk mitigators, in which consulting firms provide symbolic "window-dressing" for chosen courses of action (3) conduits for stakeholders' policy preferences - in which they operate as an arm of the state in transferring positions and insights from stakeholders that later feed in to policy (4) and finally, "seeing for the state" - where consulting firms take part in constructing the a picture of the policy field for the state. I consider how these roles came into play during the recent COVID19 pandemic, when governments in Canada and elsewhere relied extensively on consulting firms in producing policy responses.

This paper contributes directly to research on consultants' role in public policy, by adding empirical data on their role in policy formulation. While their roles as experts and legitimizers have been discussed before in literature, the analysis of their role as channels for policy preferences and as an arm of the state in understanding the policy field, is an original contribution of this work. These roles, however, might take different shape and importance in different jurisdictions, depending on specific and local context, as I further discuss in the paper.

South Sudanese NGO and local government responses to COVID-19.

Alice Robinson, Naomi Pendle and Peter Hakim Justin

This paper examines the actions of and interactions between local government authorities, national NGOs and civil society organisations in South Sudan during the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing on almost 100 interviews conducted between November 2020 and February 2021, our paper explores dynamics of collaboration and competition between and across South Sudanese NGOs and local authorities. It also examines trust in different actors in relation to healthcare messaging and provision, and compares the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic to previous epidemics in different parts of South Sudan.

In South Sudan, the COVID-19 pandemic coincided with a vacuum in local government. Extended delays in the implementation of the 2018 national peace agreement meant that the appointment of key actors, including state governors and commissioners, was delayed until early 2021, leaving a vacuum in these official appointments throughout the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Local authorities have not been absent, but their involvement has been complex, shifting and fragmented. Meanwhile, NGOs - local, national and transnational - have sought to respond to the pandemic, while navigating these shifting local government structures. Many describe their response to the pandemic as requiring, to some degree, 'stepping in' for the state; yet at the same time, they depend to a certain degree on the permission and cooperation of local authorities to operate.

This research focuses particularly on the responses of South Sudanese NGOs to the pandemic, the responses of local government actors, and the interaction between them. Research questions examined how local and national NGOs and community-based organisations have been responding to COVID-19, and how and why this varied across organisations and locations; how the pandemic affected their pre-existing work and priorities, as well as their relationships and working practices; and how the pandemic interacted with and exacerbated the risks and challenges they face in their work. We also considered how South Sudanese NGOs have worked with local government and other local authorities in their response to COVID-19 and how their responses were shaped by sub-national governance structures. The research also explored how local governments and other local authorities themselves have responded to COVID-19, how this has been affected by recent political dynamics, and what forms of power and logics of authority are entrenched through their responses.

The research findings highlight the various ways in which local, community-based associations in South Sudan have been active in responding to the pandemic and its social and economic effects, often without any external funding. Many national NGOs, too, have adapted existing programming or implemented new activities in response to the pandemic, engaging both in COVID-19 prevention measures and in responses to its economic repercussions. These responses vary across different locations and types of organisation, ranging from local women's associations engaging in awareness raising and mask-making with no external funding, to some of the largest national NGOs engaging in the construction and

rehabilitation of hand washing stations, isolation facilities and other activities with funding from international donors. Yet, their responses to COVID-19 have been complicated and curtailed by the vacuum in local government and by precarious and declining funding, as well as by travel restrictions and other measures imposed to prevent the spread of the virus.

For a small number of organisations, responding to the pandemic allowed them to increase their exposure and profile, leading to connections with new donors. Yet, despite cautious optimism early in the pandemic that restrictions on international travel would help advance the 'localisation agenda' in humanitarian action, the reality for most South Sudanese NGOs has been one of lost or delayed funding, staff cuts and struggles to stay afloat. The pandemic has also, in various ways, affected relationships between NGO staff and project participants, with face-to-face contact restricted and increased suspicion towards aid workers.

The paper draws on data collected during an FCDO-funded study conducted between November 2020 and February 2021. In total, 98 interviews were conducted across six locations in South Sudan, with local, national and international NGO staff and a range of local authorities. It also builds on each of our previous and ongoing research focusing on South Sudanese NGOs, local authority and local government.