

Closer aid?

A social network approach to understanding localization in post-conflict humanitarian interventions

by

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Author's Declaration

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ann Poline". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ann" and the last name "Poline" clearly distinguishable.

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List of abbreviations

CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
FFS	Funding Facility for Stabilisation
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
ICRRP	Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRCS	Iraqi Red Crescent Society
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
MoDM	Ministry of Displacement and Migration
NFI	Non-Food Items
SNA	Social Network Analysis
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

I - Introduction

The case for providing “closer aid” gained traction over the past decade.¹ Localization goes hand-in-hand with the notion of ownership, and is associated with greater trust vis-à-vis affected communities and a higher reach of “left behind” populations.² It also carries connotations of de-westernization and can be appealing to pragmatic donors interested in lowering transaction and overhead costs.³

The localization of international aid was formally endorsed by major donors and humanitarian actors during the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit with the “Grand Bargain” agreement, then reiterated with the signature of the “Grand Bargain 2.0” in 2021.⁴ UN OCHA and its partners committed to a target of at least 25% of localized humanitarian funding by 2020 and the addition of ‘localization marker’ to its financial data.⁵ As of 2023, the target is yet to be reached and the marker has not materialized.

The notion is not constricted to the humanitarian field. It is closely connected to the broader debate about the humanitarian-development nexus, and seen as crucial to the transition from immediate relief to longer-term development interventions. The SDG Partnership Guidebook, for instance, emphasized the importance of robust country-level partnerships and reporting mechanisms for durable solutions.⁶

¹ The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, “Localization”. URL: <https://www.ifrc.org/happening-now/advocacy-hub/localization>

² Independent Evaluation Office, “Formative Evaluation of the Integration by UNDP of the Principles of Leaving No One Behind,” United Nations Development Programme, 2022. URL: <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/thematic/Inob.shtml>

³ Jean-Martial Bonis-Charancle and Martin Vielajus, “Aid Localisation: Current State of the Debate and Potential Impacts of the COVID-19 Crisis,” *Alternatives humanitaires* Issue 14, July 2020. URL: <https://www.alternatives-humanitaires.org/en/2020/07/23/aid-localisation-current-state-of-the-debate-and-potential-impacts-of-the-covid-19-crisis/> (English version).

⁴ The Inter-Agency Standing Committee, The Grand Bargain – Official website. URL: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain>

⁵ The Inter-Agency Standing Committee, “Caucus on funding for localisation - Endorsement of the three recommendations by the caucus members and outcome document,” March 2023. URL: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2023-05/Grand%20Bargain%20Caucus%20on%20funding%20for%20localisation_Monitoring%20and%20accountability%20framework_VF.pdf

⁶ United Nations, “The SDG Partnership Guidebook: A practical guide to building high-impact multi-stakeholder partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals” 2020. URL: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26627SDG_Partnership_Guidebook_0.95_web.pdf

There were cases in which the push for greater localization was met with skepticism.⁷ International NGOs denounced the binary rationale that underpins the concept,⁸ while some researchers pointed at the lack of evidence in support of localization.⁹ In conflict and post-conflict situations, it is noteworthy to address the possibility that some local responders may come with a higher likelihood of bias, which puts into question the neutrality, impartiality and independence principles that are fundamental to humanitarian action. This issue is of particular relevant to Iraq, where the aid community finds itself at a crossroads five years after the defeat of Da'esh/ISIL and the end of violent conflict.

The official humanitarian response coordinated by UN OCHA was formally deactivated on December 31, 2022, following a two-year extension due to COVID-19. According to data the organization's financial transparency portal (FTS- Financial Tracking Service), funding to the country dropped nearly by half between 2020 and 2022 (from \$972M to \$500M).

Despite the variations described above, actors across the board have been adapting to the transitional period with increasingly tightening budgets. This brings the question of sustainability and localization to the forefront.

Amidst the challenges faced by these organizations from transition and exit strategies to the exploration of non-traditional donor sources, a pertinent question arises: to what extent did they undertake efforts to transfer capacities and lessons learned, attempt to secure the long-term sustainability of the results achieved, and seek preserve the legacies established over the past decade or more?

⁷ Bonis Charancle and Vielajus, "Aid Localisation".

⁸ Kristina Roepstorff, "A Call for Critical Reflection on the Localisation Agenda in Humanitarian Action," Third World Quarterly, Volume 41 Issue 2, 22, pp. 284-301. URL: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01436597.2019.1644160?scroll=top&needAccess=true&role=tab&aria-labelledby=full-article>

⁹ Veronique Barbelet, Gemma Davies, Josie Flint and Eleanor Davey, "Interrogating the Evidence Base on Humanitarian Localisation: A Literature Study," HPG Literature Review, June 2021. URL: https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Localisation_lit_review_WEB-1.pdf

In numerical terms, the answer is quite straightforward: the proportion of funding allocated to Iraqi organizations is in line with the global trend. It is low and shows very minimal progress. This thesis argues that the localization of humanitarian aid is a multifaceted concept, the assessments of which must consider factors beyond funding allocation.

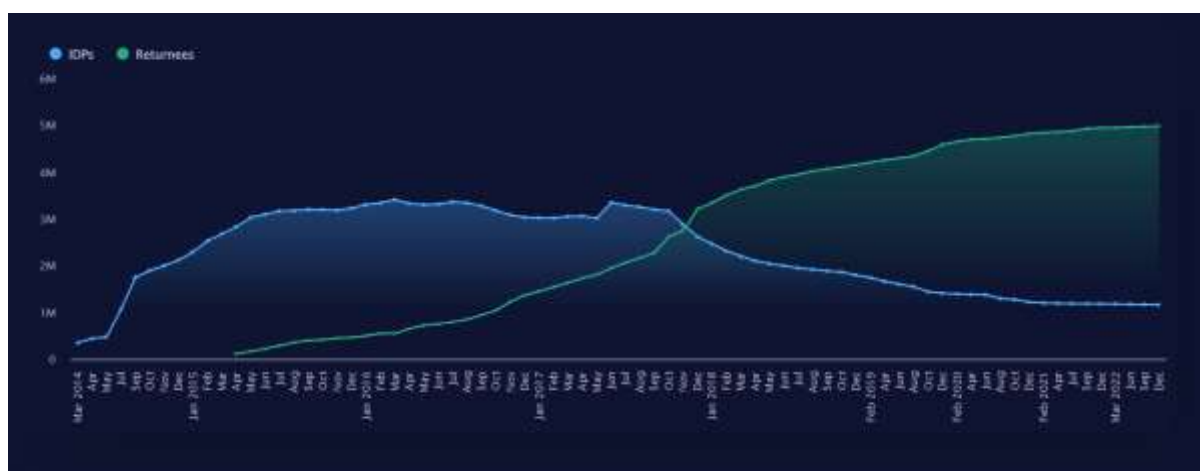
II - Contextual and conceptual framework

2.1 Humanitarian needs in post-conflict Iraq

Since January 2014, Iraq's war against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has caused the displacement of nearly six millions Iraqis – around *15% of the entire population* of the country. At its peak, the total number of displaced persons reached 5,836,350 individuals (972,725 families).¹⁰ Nearly four years later, on 9 December 2017, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi publicly declared the end to the country's war against ISIL.¹¹

While displacement did reach its peak in 2017, it has been a continuous phenomenon in Iraq. It dates back to the 1980s with the Iraq-Iran war, followed by a second wave at the onset of the 2003 US invasion, later exacerbated by sectarian violence episodes throughout the 2000s.

Figure 1: The evolution of internal displacement and returns in Iraq (2014-2022).¹²



Source: IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix.¹³

¹⁰ IOM, 'Iraq Displacement Crisis 2014-2017', October 2018. https://iraqdtm.iom.int/files/DurableSolutions/20203224827300_IOM-Iraq_Displacement_Crisis_2014-2017.pdf

¹¹ BBC, 'Iraq declares war with Islamic state is over', 9 December 2017. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42291985>

¹² Data source: [Home Page - IRAQ DTM \(iom.int\)](https://iraqdtm.iom.int/)

¹³ The International Organisation for Migration's (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) has been tracking population movements caused by the conflict with ISIL since the start of the crisis and through its different phases, up to this day. It is widely considered to be the most comprehensive and up-to-date source of information on the issue. Data collection started in December 2013 and is updated every two months. It is gathered via Rapid Assessment and Response Teams, as well as an extensive network of informants spread throughout the country; including security forces, local authorities and community leaders, and humanitarian partners. It undergoes a triangulation process. Other relevant data sources exist but their focus and methodologies vary. This report considers data from the government, namely the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM), the United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR Iraq), the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS), the REACH initiative, among others. Estimates such as MoDM's rely solely on the number of persons who are registered as IDPs at one of government centres, while others focus only on those who stay within the camps they manage (UNHCR, IRCS). Registration is voluntary, and requires documentation that many IDPs and

The North-Central region was the main setting for the 2014-2017 violent conflict. Nearly all IDPs requiring humanitarian assistance originate from these governorates, which also continued to host more than half of them throughout the crisis (fluctuating between 55% and 65% depending on the phase). Displacement flows took the form of both inter-governorate and intra-governorate (between districts) flows, the latter being due to strict border controls between some governorates.¹⁴

Age- and gender-disaggregated data collected by DTM shows that the IDP population is more female and predominantly young. A significant portion of the IDP population belonged to minorities who suffered greatly under ISIL rule: Yazidis, Shia Turkmen, Shabaks and Christians. Throughout the crisis, needs assessments were conducted. The priority items identified were food, proper shelter, and NFI kits.

It was towards the end of 2017 that the number of returnees exceeded that of IDPs for the first time: 3.2 million versus 2.6 million, respectively. Returnees report many of the same basic needs as IDPs: shelter, most notably, since many found that their properties were occupied or destroyed upon return. The data also shows that those who are part of target minority groups (see above) are less likely to return. Over 20,000 families also cited the “ethno-religious composition of the place of origin” as an obstacle to return. The rate of return has significantly slowed down. Five years after the end of the conflict, there are still 1,168,619 IDPs in Iraq, pointing to a case of protracted internal displacement.

The challenges of reintegration into locations of origin can be as complex as situations of displacement. Secondary movements are common among returnees due to inadequate

returnees lack, which in turn skews the estimates downwards. While these are valuable sources of qualitative information on the situation, needs, and intentions of IDPs, they are less reliable for the purpose of quantifying or estimating the flows of internal displacement and rates of return.

¹⁴ IOM, ‘Iraq Displacement Crisis 2014-2017’.

conditions in governorates of origin. These layers of vulnerability make returnees a central part and target group of the response.

2.2. System-wide response and the ‘Cluster Approach’

Under the leadership of UN OCHA, and upon the Iraqi government’s request for support, the international humanitarian community responded to the insurgence of the conflict in 2014 with a \$2.2 Billion appeal.¹⁵

The appeal was accompanied by the establishment of a Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), a strategic oversight structure led by a Humanitarian Coordinator (HC). The HCT is composed of representatives from UN entities, International NGOs, and the Red Cross/Crescent Movement. Concurrently, the partners agreed on the creation of thematic clusters covering various sectors of the humanitarian action: Protection, Shelter, Health, Food Security, Education, among others. Each cluster is led by a UN agency and, in some cases, co-lead by an INGO.¹⁶

The so-called ‘Cluster approach’ started as part of the 2005 Humanitarian Reform Agenda.¹⁷ This type of system-wide scale-up response was first applied that same year, in the aftermath of the earthquake in Pakistan. Its stated objectives are to:

- facilitate service delivery by creating a coordination platform aligned with the HRP and eliminating duplication;
- contribute to decision-making through needs assessments, identifying programming gaps and priorities;

¹⁵ UN OCHA, “UN launches US\$2.2 billion appeal for Iraq,” 23 October 2014. URL: https://reliefweb.int/attachments/2ce2e87c-4500-36f7-b0ee-77eb72bb4a9e/FINAL%20SRP%20PRESS%20RELEASE%20DS_0.pdf

¹⁶ The Education Cluster, for instance, is co-led by UNICEF and Save the Children.

¹⁷ Humanitarian Response, “The Cluster Approach,” <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/clusters/what-cluster-approach>

- engage in planning and strategy development, including the formulation of cluster plans and the fulfillment of funding requirements;
- advocate on behalf of participating organizations and affected populations;
- monitor and report on progress, recommending corrective actions when necessary;
- undertake contingency planning, preparedness actions, and capacity-building initiatives.¹⁸

Humanitarian clusters have since been activated in response to numerous emergencies (whether resulting from natural disasters or violent conflicts) worldwide, the most recent case being Ukraine in 2022.¹⁹ The national clusters are mirrored by global ones, under the umbrella of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), which meant to provide guidance and technical backstopping to local clusters deployed around the world.

The HCT also issues Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) on a yearly basis. Each plan identifies the total number of persons in need for the coming year, sets aggregate targets for the projects planned and implemented by the clusters in a given year, and defines indicative budgets based on which the appeals are launched. The table below synthesizes target figures from all Iraq HRPs since 2014, by type of beneficiary.

Table 1: Yearly beneficiary target figures reported between 2014-2022

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Persons in need	5.2	8.2	10	11	8.7	6.7	4.1	4.1	2.5
Target IDPs (in and out of camps)	1.8	2.2	2.9	4.2	1.8	1	0.6	0.5	0.4
Target host communities	1.5	2.5	2.5	3	0.65	0.19	end of target programming for hosts		
Target returnees		0.9	0.8	1.9	0.35	0.5	1.18	0.96	0.58
Non-IDP targets	1.7	0	1.1	1.4	0.6	0.06	0	0.04	0.01

Source: HRP reports between 2014-2022.²⁰

¹⁸ UN OCHA, "Coordinating Humanitarian Action at Country Level," Handbook for the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. URL: <https://rhc-handbook.unocha.org/chapter-b.html>

¹⁹ UN OCHA, "Humanitarian Response Plan 2022 – Ukraine," February 2022. URL: https://reliefweb.int/attachments/0a7eaf87-1213-3a66-9805-bd1a8a296389/Ukraine_2022%20HRP_ENG_2022-02-11.pdf

²⁰ HRPs 2014-2022. Note: IDPs in and out of camps were combined because the HRP did not provide separate figures every year.

It is important to note that the HRP's do not include foreign (in this case, predominantly Syrian) refugees, which are covered by a separate, UNHCR-led program. In the case of Iraq, the figures also do not include a number of non-IDP vulnerable persons who were not accessible by the partners at times for being located outside of government-controlled areas.

Since the conflict ended, there has been a push from the government for the phasing out of the humanitarian response, transition to stabilization and, most importantly, the start of the "development phase". Talks about putting an official end to whole-of-system humanitarian response and transitioning to "durable solutions" started in 2019, in recognition of the increased stability, growing capabilities of authorities, and better suitability of development interventions in addressing the long-term needs of remaining IDPs, returnees, and the wider Iraqi population.

The 2020 HRP was intended to be the last plan. However, the unforeseen impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, including its economic and political consequences and exacerbation of humanitarian needs, led to the decision to postpone the deactivation of clusters. With state revenues rebounding in 2022, negotiations resumed, and the HCT declared in March that "The system-wide international humanitarian response in Iraq will transition in 2022, with a view to handing over or discontinuing the majority of joint response components by 31 December 2022."²¹ Each cluster was required to submit a transition strategy.

Despite the two-year extension and needs resulting from the COVID-19 emergency, humanitarian funding to Iraq witnessed a sharp decline from \$972M to \$500M in 2022. The extent to which funding was reduced varies by thematic area and recipient. As seen in Table 1 below, the Iraqi Government and International NGOs witnessed higher-than average cuts. In the case of the Government, this was expected and is due to the country's classification as an upper-middle income country, which significantly reduces its access to ODA in a non-crisis

²¹ UNHCR, "CCCM Cluster Iraq Transition Strategy Update," August 2022. URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/cccm-cluster-iraq-transition-strategy-update-august-2022>

setting. It is noteworthy to remind that, even in the context of a humanitarian emergency, governments are considered by OCHA to be “primary duty bearers”. UN agencies and National NGOs, on the other hand, faced below-average reductions. The Red Cross/Crescent movement, which is considered a distinct organization type by OCHA, was able to retain a consistent amount of funding throughout the three-year period.

Table 2: % change in funding allocations by organization type between 2020 and 2022

Destination org type	% change
Government	-88%
International NGOs	-60%
National and local NGOs/CSOs	-38%
Other	-79%
Red Cross/Crescent	-1%
UN Agencies	-41%
Total	-48%

Source: calculations based on OCHA FTS data.²²

The subsequent sections review existing assessments of the Cluster Approach, contextualizes the response within the broader literature on collective action, with a particular emphasis on localization.

2.3. Localization in Collective Humanitarian Action

2.3.1. Prior Studies and Evaluations of the Cluster Approach

Two independent evaluations of the approach were commissioned by IASC. The latest one, dating back to 2010, recognized the approach’s merits in improving the geographical coverage of interventions, identifying gaps and redundancies, promoting partnerships, successes in resource mobilization, and the clarity it brought to leadership structures. It also identified key shortcomings, the first and main one being the exclusion of local actors: “In their current implementation, clusters [...] fail to link with, build on, or support existing coordination and

²² Categorization varies from original source. UN pooled funds were merged in the broader ‘UN Agencies’ category. ‘Other’ includes private international foundations.

response mechanisms.”²³ The evaluators attribute this to the insufficient analysis of existing structures and capacities, and lack of clear transition/exist strategies, which sometimes even resulted in “weakened national and local ownership and capacities”.²⁴ They identified other areas for improvement, notably inter-cluster coordination and the integration of cross-cutting issues (age, environment, gender, and HIV/AIDS).

The expert evaluation team recommended, among other measures, to conduct thorough analyses in the early stages of the response to identify existing local actors and mechanisms, which should be reinforced and complemented by the clusters. The establishment of a coordinator role at the sub-national level was also suggested, when justified by the scale and coverage of the response in question.

Other studies on application of the Cluster approach’s in other settings yielded similar conclusions. Ex post assessments of the cluster-based humanitarian responses in to the civil war in Uganda,²⁵ the 2008 cyclones in Myanmar,²⁶ and 2010 earthquakes in Haiti,²⁷ highlighted overlapping weaknesses in the clusters’ work with local actors, from encouraging unhealthy competitive patterns among smaller NGOs, to the absence of capacity transfer efforts, unplanned cluster phaseouts, and the top-down UN-centric approach.

One study focusing particularly on the issue of localization in the cluster approach as applied to the Philippines concluded that the adaptation of the clusters to pre-existing national

²³ Global Public Policy Institute, “Cluster Approach Evaluation 2 Synthesis Report,” April 2010. URL: https://gppi.net/media/GPPi-URD_Cluster_II_Evaluation_SYNTHESIS_REPORT_e_180830_111454.pdf

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Justine Ladegger et al, “Strengths and weaknesses of the humanitarian Cluster Approach in relation to sexual and reproductive health services in northern Uganda,” *International Health*, Volume 3 Issue 2, June 2011, 108-114. URL: <https://academic.oup.com/inthealth/article-pdf/3/2/108/1967588/3-2-108.pdf>

²⁶ Trude Kvam Ulleland, “The Cluster Approach for Organizing Emergency Response: A Case Study of Myanmar and Haiti,” 2013. URL: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/30898719.pdf>

²⁷ Miriam Stumpenhorst, Rolf Stumpenhorst, and Olivier Razum, “The UN OCHA Cluster Approach: Gaps between Theory and Practice,” *Public Health*, (2011) 19:587-592. URL: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Miriam-Stumpenhorst/publication/251366413_The_UN_OCHA_cluster_approach_gaps_between_theory_and_practice/links/574b7dc008ae5c51e29eabca/The-UN-OCHA-cluster-approach-gaps-between-theory-and-practice.pdf

structures is key to their effectiveness. The paper calls for further research adopting a long-term perspective of the cluster approach and its adaptation to local contexts.²⁸

2.3.1. Collective Action in Humanitarian Response

Evaluations of the cluster approach, such as the ones mentioned above, fall into the category of studies looking into the effectiveness and sustainability of collective action in emergency or crisis situations. These are linked to the broader shift toward multi-level and multi-stakeholder partnerships in international cooperation.

The Partnering Initiative considers designates an Multi-Stakeholder Partnership (MSP) any partnership that:

“involve[s] organizations from different societal sectors working together, sharing risks and combining their unique resources and competencies in ways that can generate and maximize value towards shared partnership and individual partner objectives, often through more innovative, more sustainable, more efficient and/or more systemic approaches”.²⁹

Broadly speaking, MSPs or MSIs (Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives) are instances of collective action by a group of actors recognizing the inadequacy, insufficiency, or inefficiency of individual action in the face of a particular challenge. MSPs are inherently associated with the notion of public good, therefore excluding efforts and alliances formed for the purpose of private gain. They also go beyond the simple pooling of funds, i.e.. one-time activities or programs, and tend to be cross-sector.³⁰

MSPs are a heterogenous group of alliances, which includes a variety of goal areas (i.e.: policy and political support, resource mobilization and optimization, the development of a sector), approaches, and governance structures. This heterogeneity complicates the task of developing

²⁸ Mikael Raffael Abaya, Loic Le De and Yany Lopes, “Localising the UN Cluster Approach: the Philippines as a case study,” *Environmental Hazards* Vol 19 – Issue 4, 2020. URL: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17477891.2019.1677209>

²⁹ The Partnering Initiative, “An Introduction to Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships: Briefing Document for the GPEDC High-Level Meeting,” November 2016. <https://www.thepartneringinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Introduction-to-MSPs-Briefing-paper.pdf>

³⁰ Global Development Incubator, “More than the Sum of its Parts: Making Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives Work,” November 2015, pages 7-8. <https://globaldevincubator.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Making-MSIs-Work.pdf>

more detailed or formal definitions of such collective action entities. Most of the scholarly work surrounding MSPs is found in the fields of environmental governance and public health.

In practice, MSPs started gaining traction with the 1992 Rio Summit, and became progressively more popular with the Johannesburg Summit (2002) and Rio+20 Summit (2012). They were initially formalized as outcomes, then included in Sustainable Development Goal 17 (SDG 17) within the 2030 Agenda.³¹ More specifically, target 17.16 makes a direct reference to the concept: “Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by *multi-stakeholder partnerships* that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries”.³²

There is near-consensus at the multilateral level that only collective action can tackle global problems and lead to the achievement of sustainable development. Joint processes bringing together governments, civil society, the private sector, and other relevant stakeholders are highly encouraged by the UN System and by many top ODA donors (Germany, Netherlands, among others). However, a number of scholars and practitioners have expressed reservations as to the proliferation of initiatives negotiated at the international level, which have historically struggled to deliver at the country-level and yielded mixed results.³³ For instance, some argued that a reform of the global aid architecture is a prerequisite for the success of global poverty eradication programming. Other publications have put into question the accountability and

³¹ United Nations, “Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1),” September 2015. URL: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

³² Ibid.

³³ See for instance: Uma Lele, Nafis Sadik, Adele Simmons, “The Changing Aid Architecture: Can Global Initiatives Eradicate Poverty?,” World Bank, 2006.

evaluability of collective action.^{34 35} There has since been efforts on developing guidelines and frameworks such as the SDG Partnership Guidebook,³⁶ among others.

Based on the above, and the elements the cluster approach discussed previously, one can consider the cluster approach part of this shift towards collective action, spearheaded by the UN and proliferated throughout the humanitarian and development spheres over the last decades. As such, it would be of relevance to look into the ways in which scholars and practitioners have assessed the successes and failures of other such initiatives in promoting localization in crisis settings.

2.3.2. Localization

Most of the literature available for review in this regard is centered around collaborations aimed at the achievement of a specific SDG target with a long-term, sustainable development perspective. Notable is the scarcity of literature assessing partnerships in crisis or humanitarian situations, especially those that are due to conflict. When it comes to humanitarian interventions that are prompted by natural disasters, evidence supporting the ‘local turn’ is available – albeit limited.

A publication by Oxfam synthesizing lessons from the organization’s research and evaluations in the Asia-Pacific region suggests that a shared understanding of the concept of resilience among partners is vital to the effectiveness of collective action in crisis situations. The paper also emphasized the importance of shared learning. Success factors included cross-visits to project sites and peer or joint monitoring exercises. The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing

³⁴ Keith A. Bezanson and Paul Isenman, “Governance of New Global Partnerships: Challenges, Weaknesses, and Lesson,” Center for Global Development, 2012.

³⁵ Marianne Beisheim, “Partnerships for Sustainable Development: Why and How Rio+20 Must Improve the Framework for Multi-stakeholder Partnerships,” German Institute for International and Security Affairs, 2012.

³⁶ Darian Stibbe and Dave Prescott, “The SDG Partnership Guidebook: A practical guide to building high-impact multi-stakeholder partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals,” The Partnering Initiative and UNDESA, 2020.

global health crisis reignited the debate on collective action and the importance of local capacity strengthening in emergency contexts.

A 2021 journal article taking stock of collective action efforts that emerged in response to the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide assessed the adequacy of such initiatives in the broader scheme of disaster response. The COVID-19 pandemic cannot be qualified as a humanitarian situation *per se*, especially since this study accounts for higher income countries as well. It does nonetheless conclude that need-based initiatives were more likely to be effective in crisis situations.³⁷

Along the same lines, the Center for Humanitarian Leadership held an expert panel in 2021 titled “Promoting Localization through Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships”. It brought together representatives from multilateral financial institutions, academia, government, international and local CSOs who stressed the importance of localization in disaster response.³⁸

In post-conflict situations, however, the difficulty of reconciling local actors’ potential political inclinations with humanitarian principles is often cited as an important consideration and ethical challenge when considering the localization of aid. While some of these criticisms may be well-grounded, they stem from a view that international presence is inherently apolitical – which is highly debatable.

Addressing these imbalances between international and local responders is also beneficial to donors from a pragmatic lens, as it often comes with a reduction in overhead costs. This last point has been utilized, in particular by large INGOs questioning the rationale behind localization.

³⁷ Sigamani Panneer, Komali Kantamaneni, Robert Ramesh Babu Pushparaj, Sulochana Shekhar, Lekha Bhat, and Louis Rice, “Multistakeholder Participation in Disaster Management—The Case of the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Healthcare (Basel)*. 2021 Feb; 9(2): 203. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7918841/>

³⁸ The Center for Humanitarian Leadership, “Promoting Localization through Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships,” June 2021. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIF1oQoViY0>

Other challenges brought up by scholars and partitioners in resistance to the push towards localization is the logic that underlies it, seen as zero-sum, reductionist, and unnecessarily binary.³⁹ Some have questioned the very definition of ‘local’, arguing that many INGOs can be considered local, citing elements such as the numbers of local staff, among others. These claims, which can be dubbed a form of “gaslighting” that diverges decisionmakers’ attention from the core issue, are rejected by this thesis which considers local only actors which originate and operate solely in the context necessitating humanitarian assistance. This workaround, which will be visible in the sometimes-inaccurate categorization of INGOs/NNGOs in the self-reporting dataset used for network analyses, is avoided via a meticulous manual reclassification of the 188 actors which appear in the networks as described in the Methodology chapter.

Despite debates about its declinations and implications, all sources point to a “growing consensus towards the need for some form of localization of humanitarian action”.⁴⁰

Several factors contribute to this impetus. Firstly, the existing international humanitarian system has been facing criticism for being top-down, neo-colonial, extremely bureaucratic, and risk-averse. Concerns have been raised throughout the years regarding the disregard for local knowledge, the lack of recognition of local and national ownership, and the disproportionate representation of international staff in senior management roles, despite the majority of humanitarian workers actually being local personnel.

Secondly, limited access to conflict zones has driven many international humanitarian actors to work indirectly through local NGOs or government authorities, often resorting to outsourcing or remotely managing their response through private contractors with minimal

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⁴⁰ Sultan Barakat and Sansom Milton, “Localisation Across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus,” *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* Vol 15(2), 157-163, 2020. URL: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1542316620922805>

field presence (Libya, DRC). In other cases such as the Syria crisis, traditional Western NGOs no longer dominate the field response, as local and national NGOs have taken on a more significant role in the delivery of aid.

Thirdly, studies have long shown that culturally appropriate programming is more effective at identifying, communicating with, and assisting vulnerable groups in conflict-affected communities. This represents a recognition from the policy sphere of local actors' critical contributions in the form of access, first-hand knowledge, and deeper understanding of their own contexts.

Overall, increased localization is seen as a conducive to need-based responses, more sustainable results, and local mechanisms that are more resilient to future shocks. The interlinkages between the notion of localization and the humanitarian-development nexus will be explored in the conclusions.

2.4. Thesis scope

This thesis seeks to examine the ways in which humanitarian actors in Iraq adapted to the formal deactivation of the humanitarian response announced by UN OCHA, and accompanying reduction in funding. In particular, it is concerned with uncovering whether the international humanitarian community sought to engage more frequently and meaningfully with local actors during this transition period.

Looking at the funding allocation over the past three years (Table 3), very minimal increases are seen in the proportion of funds allocated to local actors.

Table 3: Humanitarian funding allocation in Iraq by organization type (2020-2022)

Destination org type	2020	2021	2022
UN Agencies	52.83%	60.29%	60.84%
International NGOs	37.25%	29.26%	29.13%
Red Cross/Crescent	3.82%	6.15%	7.33%
Other	3.97%	3.49%	1.64%
National and local NGOs/CSOs	0.58%	0.47%	0.69%
Government	1.56%	0.33%	0.37%

Source: OCHA FTS data. Own calculation.

However, as touched upon in the brief review of localization debates, the notion of localization is multifaceted, the assessments of which must consider factors beyond funding allocation. Here are some factors, beyond the allocation of funds, that can be indicative of localization:⁴¹

- **Capacity Strengthening and Knowledge Sharing** ensures the sustainability of interventions beyond the presence of external actors and organizations.
- **Contextual Adaptation** involves understanding whether interventions are driven by the priorities and preferences of local actors and are contextually sensitive.
- **Decision-making Power** involves understanding whether local actors have a meaningful voice in shaping priorities, strategies, and interventions.
- **Leadership and Management Roles** refers to the degree of local ownership and the ability of local actors to lead and manage aid operations.
- **Partnerships and Networks** can provide insights into the integration of local actors within broader humanitarian networks.

⁴¹ Some of the factors discussed were brought up in interventions by experts and practitioners in the Center for Strategic and International Studies' webinar on the topic: "Community Matters: Social Networks and Localization of Aid," held September 2020. Recording available: <https://www.csis.org/events/online-event-community-matters-social-networks-and-localization-aid>

Table 4 below aims to bring conceptual clarity to the points above. They are operationalized into measurable indicators, the feasibility of empirical investigation is assessed then ranked in terms importance to the thesis scope.

Table 4: Factors of localization and thesis scope definition

Localization factor	Description	Indicator	Measurability, data availability and reliability	Thesis scope
Partnerships and Networks	the patterns and nature of partnerships and networks that local organizations engage in	Local organizations collaborate with various types of organizations, frequently and in-depth. They play significant roles within these networks.	Detailed activity reporting data from all participating organizations is available for a three year period. SNA is a reliable method used to map actors in a network and analyze their interactions using a variety of metrics.	Main.
Decision-making Power	the extent to which local organizations have decision-making power and/or influence within humanitarian circles CEU eTD Collection	Local organizations participate in leading clusters, conducting needs assessments, planning processes, and coordination mechanisms.	Relevant documentation is available, including needs assessment reports, minutes from coordination meetings, among others. Higher centrality metrics suggest potential for influence within a given network. However, it cannot directly measure the actual impact that a node has on others. Contextual information on the content of interactions is needed in conjunction.	Secondary.

Capacity Strengthening and Knowledge Sharing	the two-way exchange and sharing of expertise between local and international actors	<p>1. International entities are actively investing in building the capacities of local organizations, by providing training, technical assistance, and resources.</p> <p>2. They are also receptive to and value the inputs of local organizations.</p>	<p>1. A brief portfolio overview indicates that the international organizations present in the country are actively engaged in building the capacities of local actors. However, the data is scattered. The operational presence matrix does not include a marker for capacity development.</p> <p>2. Some thematic clusters and organizations circulated periodic satisfaction surveys among partners and stakeholders which touch upon the issue.</p>	Secondary
Leadership and Management Roles	the presence of country nationals in leadership and management roles within humanitarian organizations	Positions such as country directors, project managers, and coordinators are occupied by country nationals.	Disaggregated HR data is not systematically collected and made public by participating organizations.	N/A.

Cultural Adaptation	the extent to which humanitarian interventions are adapted to the local context	Programs and interventions are culturally appropriate, relevant, and effective in meeting the specific needs and aspirations of affected population	This sort of assessment requires engagement with local stakeholders for in-depth qualitative data collection (surveys, interviews, focus groups).	N/A.
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III – Methodology

3.1. Social Network Analysis (SNA)

SNA is widely recognized in public policy circles as valuable research method for studying the dynamics of actors and their interactions. It provides researchers and evaluators a systematic framework for examining social relationships and mapping the structure of networks, making it particularly suitable for identifying and mapping participating institutional actors within a collective action context.

SNA notions and metrics such as centrality, density, and others, can shed light on power dynamics, influence, and information flow among participants (known as nodes). It can also enables the exploration of the nature and strength of interactions (or edges) between actors, revealing collaborative partnerships, knowledge-sharing patterns, and resource exchanges. When data allows, the method also has the benefit of offering a longitudinal perspective, allowing researchers to capture changes in the network structure and dynamics over time, thus providing insights into the evolution of relationships, organizational alliances, the emergence of new actors and the exit of others.

In a 2021 RTI research brief, Johnson and Chew advocate for a mainstreaming of the use of SNA as an analytics tool used by the international aid community, particularly for monitoring, evaluation, and learning purposes. They cite examples of studies showcasing the method's potential to address critical gaps in decision makers' knowledge of network structures, the changes they undergo overtime, and the role they play in shaping program outcomes.⁴² Recognizing that not all partners are equal, and that power dynamics play an important role in

⁴² Eric M. Johnson and Robert Chew, "Social Network Analysis Methods for International Development," RTI Research Brief, May 2021. URL: <https://www.rti.org/rti-press-publication/social-network-analysis-methods-international-development/fulltext.pdf>

defining the results of a collective action, Bester and Hermans echo this view. In the 2017 NEC Conference paper, they provide examples of the suitability and strength of the method in evaluating complex multi-stakeholder responses.⁴³

3.2. Data sources

The humanitarian operation presence matrix is a tool to which humanitarian actors report activities conducted on a monthly basis. It is powered by UN OCHA and is meant to allow for better coordination among partners and enhance the overall efficiency of programming in humanitarian settings. The underlying data is made available through the HDX (Humanitarian Data Exchange) platform. It includes detailed information on each activity conducted (description, number and types of beneficiaries, location coordinates, etc.) recorded by all participating partners. It is important to note one limitation of the dataset, which does not include activities conducted by the Red Cross and Crescent societies, which chose not to participate.

The analysis including visualization was performed using SNA software Gephi, version 0.10.1. It will be supplemented with desk-based review of documentation that serves as support to the findings that emerge from network analysis.

⁴³ Angela Bester and Leon Hermans, "Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships: Implications for Evaluation Practice, Methods and Capacities," Proceedings from the National Evaluation Capacities Conference. 2017. URL: <https://nec.undp.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/Multi-Stakeholder%20Partnerships%202017.pdf>

IV- Analysis and Discussion

4.1. System-wide mapping of participating actors

The first step in the SNA process was to develop an adjacency list. This initial list served to visualize all participating actors by thematic area of intervention, collaboration among actors notwithstanding. The eleven thematic clusters are the following:

- Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM)
- Child Protection
- Education
- Emergency Livelihoods (ELC)
- Food Security
- Health
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)
- General Protection⁴⁴
- Shelter and Non-Food Items (SNFI)
- Gender-Based Violence (GBV)⁴⁵

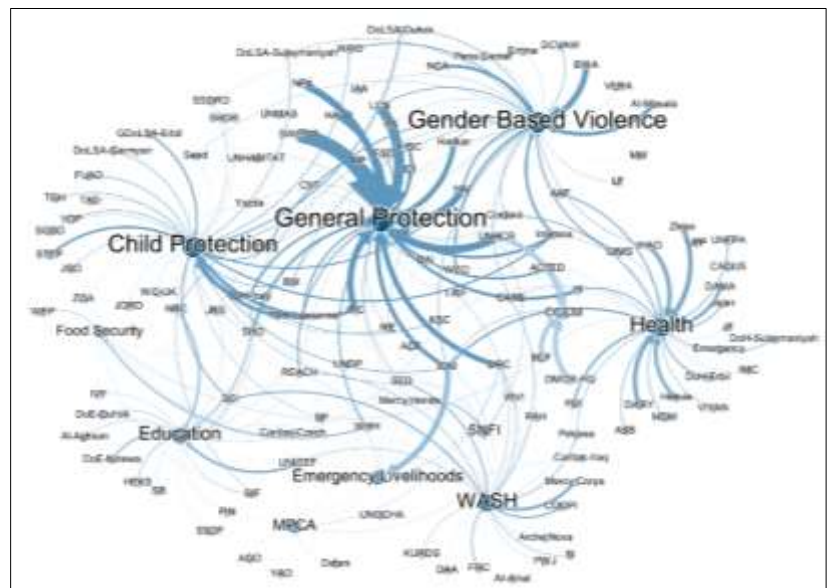


Figure 2: System-wide 2022 network visualized

The figure above pertains to the 2022 network. The thickness of the directed edges corresponds to the relative weight (number of activities implemented in that area).

Two of the official clusters that were established by OCHA/IASC are notably absent from the data: Logistics, and Emergency Telecommunications. This is explained by the nature of the clusters, which support operational activities without direct interaction with beneficiaries.

The remaining eleven are all consistently present throughout the three-year period.

⁴⁴ Child Protection is formally an Area of Responsibility (AoR) within the General Protection Cluster. Due to its relative size and distinct mandate (led by UNICEF) it is treated as a cluster for the purposes of this study. The GPPi evaluation acknowledged that AoRs “enjoy a similar status to independent clusters”.

⁴⁵ Gender-based Violence is formally an Area of Responsibility (AoR) within the General Protection Cluster. Due to its relative size and distinct mandate (led by UNFPA) it is treated as a cluster for the purposes of this study. The GPPi evaluation acknowledged that AoRs “enjoy a similar status to independent clusters”.

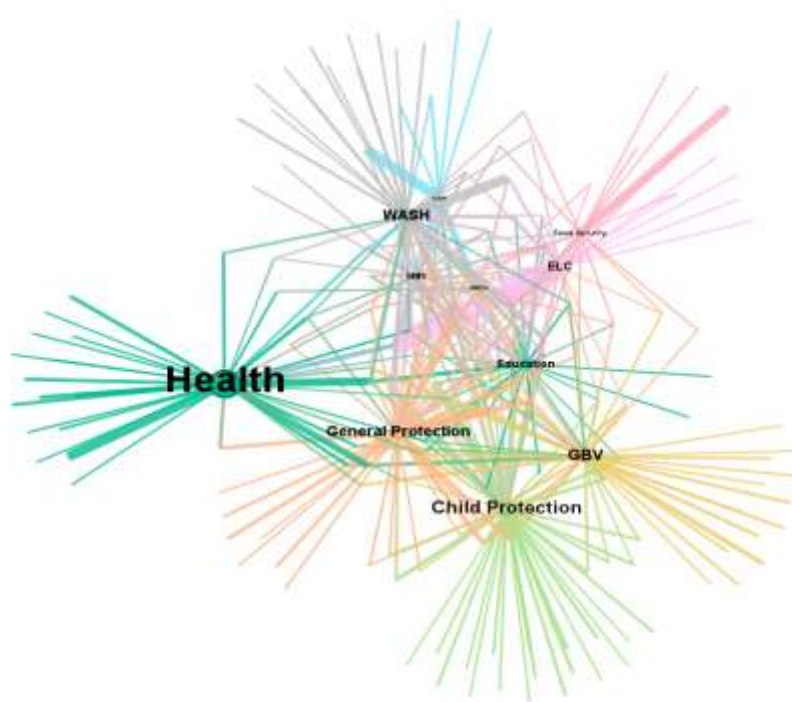
Below is an overview table of the system-wide network's metrics between 2020 and 2022:

Table 5: network metrics 2020-2022

Year	No of nodes	No of edges	Diameter	Density	Modularity	Avg path length
2020	175	373	4	0.024	0.59	3.10
2021	141	292	4	0.030	0.55	3.03
2022	133	249	6	0.028	0.56	3.14

In this initial network, the nodes stand for participating actors and edges correspond to the number of activities that have taken place. Given the previously mentioned contextual information regarding funding cuts, the decreasing number of nodes and edges and increase in diameter are expected. However, the stable density, modularity, and average path length indicate that the network's internal structure remained relatively unchanged.

The relatively high modularity at 0.55-0.59 (range for this metric being -1 to 1) suggests stronger divisions and a considerable level of community structure. The presence of distinct communities is in line with the stated intentions of the Humanitarian Response Plans.



This is understood to be advantageous for fostering specialization, focused interactions, and targeted interventions.

The eleven groups are not entirely isolated and do overlap to different extents as seen in the visualization below. In fact, the software's automated community detection algorithm detected distinct communities for each of the clusters above, with the exception of MPCA and SNFI.

This can be seen in the visualization below, in which the auto detected communities of the 2020 network were color-coded by modularity class.

This automatic grouping of MPCA (Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance) and SNFI can be explained by the relatively smaller size of these networks. MPCA is in fact a working group within SNFI, not a formal cluster. Similarities between activities in terms of beneficiaries and locations mean that they are often conducted concurrently or by the same organizations.

In the subsequent section, the clusters will be analyzed as separate networks to gain an understanding of the attributes and roles of nodes within each community, and the evolution of internal dynamics over the three-year period. This is also meant to take into consideration cluster-specific goals and contextual information (i.e.: COVID-19, closures of IDP camps by the government, etc.), without overlooking potential overlaps or dependencies between clusters.

4.2. Cluster-level collaboration

This stage of the analysis considers that a joint activity counts as evidence of collaboration.

Adjacency list were constructed from the humanitarian operation presence dataset. After a manual cleanup of the data, the relevant information was extracted and converted to an adjacency list format in the form of a .csv file. The adjacency lists reflect joint activities in each cluster, the nodes being the organizations. An edge, undirected, is an instance of one joint activity regardless of its size or the number of beneficiaries reached.

Each node was assigned an ID, label and one attribute: organization type. The latter was manually reassigned following thorough examination due to observed discrepancies in the raw data. Organization types are defined as follows:

- Government (governmental entities, whether HQ or governorate level);
- UN Agency (entities formally recognized as part of the United Nations system);
- INGO (all non-governmental organizations which are headquartered outside of Iraq);
- NNGO (non-governmental organizations headquartered in and active in Iraq);
- Other (private entities and consultancy firms).

A ‘Big 10’ maker was added to identify the largest INGOs. The following ‘Big 10’ INGOs appear in the networks: Save the Children, Oxfam, World Vision International, the International Rescue Committee, Catholic Relief Services, the Danish Refugee Council, CARE International, Action Contre la Faim.

Edges were marked based on the following attributes:

- Edge type: refers to the type of node/actor on each end (i.e.: INGO-UN, NNGO-GOV, NNGO-UN, etc.);
- A local edge refers to edges which contain at least one local actor (either NNGO or GOV).

A pilot test was conducted to ascertain that the detection of joint implementation based on the activity details previously mentioned was consistent.

The Emergency Livelihoods the cluster had already been collecting detailed data on their activities since 2019, including a unique output ID number which facilitates the identification of jointly implemented activities. Its data was therefore used to test and validate the process followed in detection of joint activities from the main dataset and creation of an adjacency matrix.

SNA metrics and visualization of the reconstructed system-wide data set (top set) were checked against those of the matrix provided by the Emergency Livelihoods Cluster (bottom set). This allowed for the validation of the method used. Please note that node color may differ based on the change in INGO/NNGO definitions as previously mentioned.⁴⁶

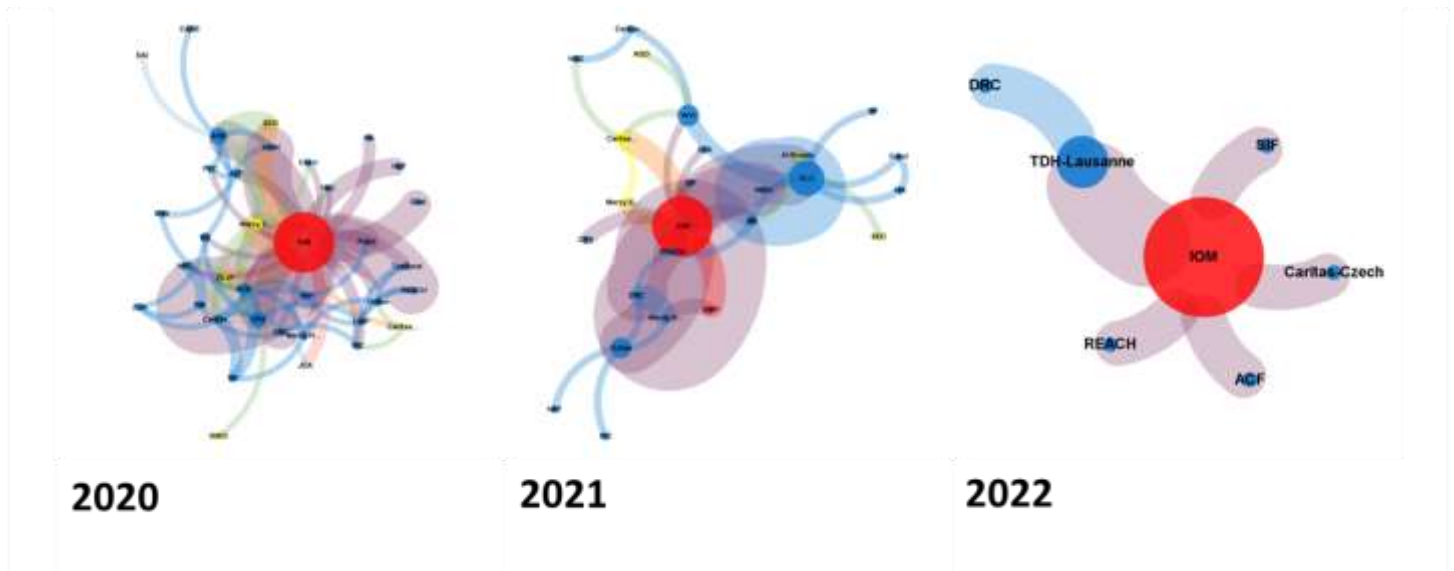


Figure 4: Interactions within the Emergency Livelihoods Cluster visualized (proxy)

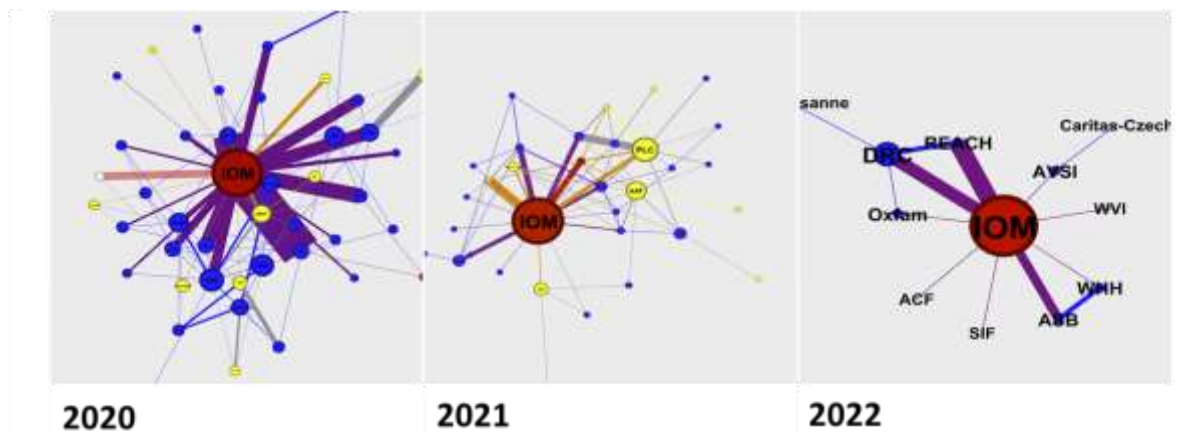


Figure 5: Interactions within the Emergency Livelihoods Cluster visualized (original)

UN ; NNGO ; INGO.

Edges are mixed based on node color for easy identification of cross-type connections.

⁴⁶ Example: Node PLC which stands for NGO 'Preemptive Love Coalition', visible in the 2021 networks, is considered an NNGO in the original data. Further research showed that it is a registered non-profit in the United States that operates in numerous countries. It is therefore considered an INGO in this study.

The same steps were followed to create and analyze each of the clusters (total of 33 adjacency lists). The following metrics were collected/computed:

- Number of nodes
- Number of edges
- Average Degree
- Average Weighted Degree
- Network Diameter
- Graph Density
- Average clustering coefficient
- Weighted degrees – Local*
- Betweenness Centrality – Local*
- Average Eigenvector Centrality – Local
- Average Eigenvector Centrality – International
- Cluster Lead (as per OCHA)
- Most influential node (= highest eigenvector centrality)
- Most frequent edge type
- Edge category (Intl-Intl, Loc-Loc, Intl-Loc)*

Yearly graphs for each cluster are available in the Annexes. The base graphs were made using the “Yifan Hu Proportional” layout on Gephi.⁴⁷ Additional modifications were brought to the original using open-source plugins.

⁴⁷ Layout properties (Optimal distance: 100, Relative strength: 0.2, Initial step size: 20, Step ratio: 0.95, Adaptive cooling enabled).

*** The metrics marked by an asterisk were normalized (number of local nodes, betweenness centrality of local nodes, weighted degrees of local nodes, weights of edge types) to account for the size of the respective networks and allow for a comparison of the relative

Certain metrics (such as the clustering coefficient) could not be computed for clusters with a small number of nodes. The final results exclude networks with less than 10 nodes due to the limited insights that can be obtained. Together, the removed nodes represent less than 5% of the aggregate (see the lines marked in red on the network metrics table, Annex 3).

This approach ensures that the analysis is based on networks with a sufficient level of complexity and connectivity to draw meaningful conclusions. It is important to acknowledge the potential limitations associated with the exclusion of networks with a small number of nodes, which may impact the generalizability of the findings. However, this decision was made to ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis by focusing on networks that provide substantial data for comprehensive analysis.

4.2.1. Aggregate results across networks

The analysis revealed a 7% increase in the proportion of weighted degrees attributed to local actors across the 21 networks over the three-year period. The observed increase suggests a trend towards greater involvement of local actors and a gradual shift towards more localized collaborative partnerships.

The betweenness centrality values of all local actors was also aggregated and normalized to consider their cumulative influence and their overall facilitator role within the network. This metric highlights their growing significance as potential information brokers or intermediaries of further collaboration.

Table 6: weighted degrees and betweenness centrality of local actors

	Weighted degrees - Local	Betweenness Centrality - Local
2020	34%	30%
2021	36%	34%
2022	41%	38%

The average eigenvector centrality is an indicator of the (typical) influence of a node based on how well-connected it is to the most influential actors in the network. Unlike the previous metrics, there does not seem to be a pattern of growth. This would indicate that local actors have not gained influence nor access to more prominent actors within the network structures between 2020 and 2022. This metric has in fact decreased in 2022.

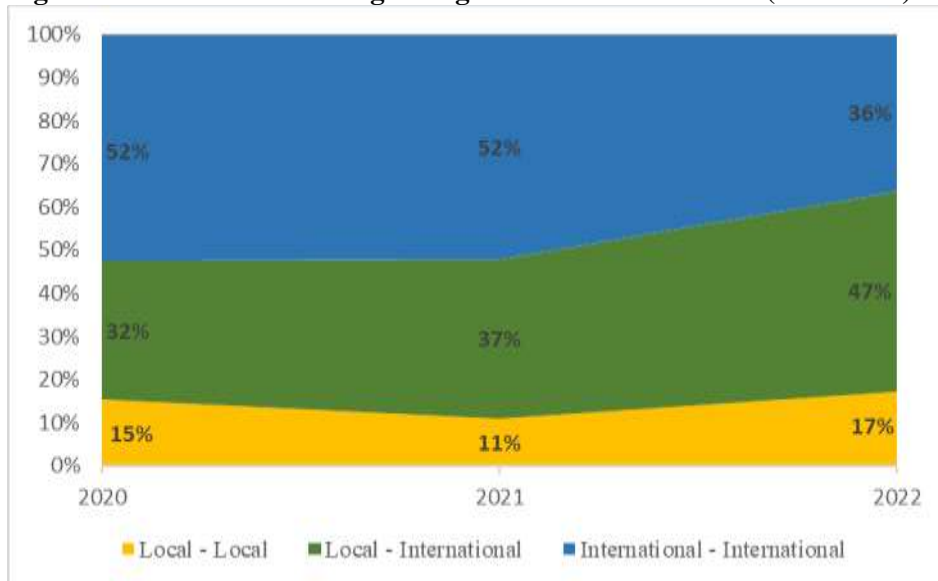
The latter is of primary concern for NNGOs, since the issue of ‘access’ to influential actors may not apply to local governmental entities.

Table 7: average eigenvector centrality values of local actors

	Average Eigenvector Centrality – Local
2020	0.36
2021	0.37
2022	0.30

As for the analysis of edge categories, there seems to be progress in joint implementation between Local-International actors. This type of interaction has grown by 15% in the three-year period, in contrast to collaboration among International actors which lost 16 percentage points.

Figure 6: The evolution of edge categories across all clusters (2020-2022)



A further examination of the Local-International edge category yields the following:

Table 8: breakdown of the Local-International edge category across all clusters (2020-2022)

Collaboration category	Edge_type	2020	2021	2022
International-Local	INGO-NNGO	21%	22%	23%
	UN-GOV	0%	0%	10%
	UN-NNGO	7%	6%	9%
	INGO-GOV	2%	3%	3%
	Other-NNGO	3%	5%	1%
	Other-GOV	0%	1%	0%

While the upward trend in 2022 can be attributed to UN agencies' heightened interactions with governmental entities,⁴⁸ International-Local collaborations are mainly driven by INGOs.

Factoring in the 'Big 10' marker, larger INGOs appear to be significantly less likely to collaborate with local actors.

Table 9: differences in the type of collaborations between 'Big ten' INGOs and the rest

Big 10	Collaboration type	2020	2021	2022
FALSE	Intl-Intl	31%	34%	26%
	Local - International	27%	30%	42%
TRUE	Intl-Intl	22%	18%	11%
	Local - International	5%	7%	5%

To recapitulate, these initial findings point to the following:

- On average, local actors in the 20 networks have been increased their presence and participation (+7%) to clusters over the three-year period.
- The collective betweenness centrality of local actors, a metric understood as indicative of the amount of influence a node or group of nodes has on the flow of information, also increased (+8%).

⁴⁸ This was observed, for instance, in the Education Cluster where UNICEF's joint programming shifted from joint activities with numerous INGOs to a collaboration with the Department of Education.

- The eigenvector centrality of a typical local node, a centrality measure that takes into consideration not only the connectedness of a node but also the importance of its connections decreased, pointing to a loss of influence for the average local actor (-0.06).
- International actors in the 20 networks have been engaging more frequently (+15%) with local actors over the three-year period. This can largely be attributed to growing closeness between UN entities and government entities.
- INGO-NNGO edges, which are the most common type across the 20 networks, unveil an interesting pattern once the largest ten INGOs are separated from the rest. The largest ten INGOs are much less likely to engage in joint implementation with local actors.

The subsequent section looks more closely into the dynamics of each clusters, complementing SNA results with qualitative evidence collected from a review of available documentation.

4.2.2. Results by cluster

Tabulations and visualizations of all clusters are available in Annex 3.

4.2.2.1. Camp Coordination and Camp Management – CCCM

Structure and type of activities:

This cluster is led by UNHCR. Its role is to coordinate the actions of all actors in locations hosting displaced persons, whether formal camps or informal settlements. It also guarantees the representation of the affected communities in terms of governance of the communal settings and access to the services available. According to the cluster's Terms of Reference, it also:

- “– *Ensure[s] that humanitarian responses build on local capacities;*
- *Establish[es] appropriate links with national and local authorities, state institutions, local civil society, and other relevant actors to maintain appropriate coordination and information exchange with them; and,*
- *Promote[s] the capacity-building of relevant authorities, where deemed necessary.*”⁴⁹

Network observations:

The number of actors in this cluster dropped by half from 2020 and 2021. This is in line with the aggregated financial data on FTS, which shows that the funding of camp coordination and management decreased by almost 70% in the same period (see Annex 1). Camp management is an endeavour that requires large operational capacities, which might in part explain the near-absence of NNGOs. Even within the INGO category, only the larger ones are part of this cluster.

Joint implementation in this cluster is very limited. There are only three instances of collaboration (jointly conducted activity). This small number of edges (4) makes it difficult to assess the degree to which actors of different types collaborate with one another. It is important to note that the camps being operated separately is not necessarily negative. This is a thematic area in which collaboration in this area might not necessarily take the form of joint activities.

There is, however, some indication that the presence of local actors in CCCM increased overtime. Previously active INGOs (notably Blumont, which was the top actor in 2020, RNVDO, NRC, and CAOFSR) all ceased to report CCCM activities by 2022.

The number of activities reported by BCF, the only national non-governmental entity in the cluster, increased by more than 250% between 2020 and 2022. There were notable changes when it comes to governmental entities as well. The Disaster and Migration Crisis Response

⁴⁹ CCCM Cluster, Terms of Reference, 2014.

(DMCR) HQ office seems to have taken over governmental response in this cluster, which previously included regional entities such as JCC-Sulaimaniyah and the governorate of Duhok's Board of Relief and Humanitarian Affairs (BRHA).

As for UN entities, IOM and UNHCR's presence is consistent throughout the three-year period, with varying levels of involvement.

Cluster documentation (2020-present)

Needs assessments were conducted by REACH (INGO) throughout the cluster's 8-year existence (including camp profiling surveys, camp intentions surveys, camp infrastructure maps, and informal sites assessments). At the start of 2020, 1.4 million Iraqis were still displaced, 20% of whom lived in IDP camps.⁵⁰ COVID-19 Camp Vulnerability Index reports were also issued and updated throughout 2020. There is no clear reference as to the participation of local actors in the making of these documents.

The cluster issued and periodically updated a standards document on the closure or consolidation of IDP camps, including a checklist aimed to guide camp management actors, including governmental entities. This did not prevent the sudden closure of most government-controlled IDP camps in this three-year period. Until the closure of all federal Iraq camps in late 2020, the camps had varied management structures across Iraq: direct management by INGOs and NNGOs, direct management by UN agencies, or government management with CCCM support from NGOs and UN agencies.

Available documentation on the activities of this cluster between 2020 and 2022 indicates a focus on responding to the large-scale closure of 16 government camp sites, which led to evictions and the forced returns or secondary displacement of thousands of IDP families

⁵⁰ IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix.

between the end of 2020 and early 2021.⁵¹ The cluster conducted special needs assessments targeting evicted families and individuals, and coordinated with other clusters for referrals (mainly General Protection, Shelter, and Child Protection in cases involving the eviction of child-headed households). There was a notable shift towards informal sites-based work.

Until its official deactivation in the end of 2022, the CCCM cluster engaged in advocacy efforts against premature camp closures with the support of OCHA leadership. Nevertheless, there are continuing concerns over the inadequate and unprepared closures of the camps, the latest one being the Jeddah 5 Camp in Ninewa which closed on April 17, 2023.⁵²

Since the deactivation of the cluster, 26 formal camps remain, all located in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, of which the government does not adhere to the forced closure policy adopted by the Federal government. All 26 camps are supported by UNHCR, which has secured funding and is committed to continuing camp management in 2023 and beyond.

Former CCCM cluster actors which remain active are IOM, DRC and ACTED (INGOs) which are working in 73 informal sites across the Iraqi territory. IOM has taken on the role of focal point for informal camp work, which involved coordination with the other two partners and engaging with the government to secure durable solutions for the IDPs hosted in the informal sites.

This cluster has been somewhat unsuccessful at passing on its responsibilities to local actors, notably the Federal government, as shown by its disregard of humane camp closure guidelines and continued stance on the issue.

⁵¹ CCCM, Case Studies 2021-2022: Updates from Camp Management. 2022.
https://www.cccmcluster.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/CS%202021-22_Chap%201.pdf

⁵² United Nations, Statement by the Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq on the closure of Jeddah 5 camp, 19 April 2023.

4.2.2.2. Protection

Structure and type of activities:

This one is also led by UNHCR, and includes General Protection, Child Protection (AoR under UNICEF leadership), and Gender-Based Violence (AoR under UNFPA leadership).

According to its Terms of Reference, the Protection cluster embraces a rights-based approach in providing protection to vulnerable civilians. This includes agreeing on common approaches, addressing duplication, and ensuring a coherent response to protection needs by participating members. It recognizes that the government of Iraq bears the primary responsibility for guaranteeing protection. Along the same lines, the Child Protection and GBV AoRs cover the specific needs of vulnerable children and women victims of violence, respectively.

While membership is voluntary, the terms stipulate the mandatory participation of members in regular coordination meetings, unified reporting, and engagement in advocacy and capacity building. The document also envisages sub-national representation. This ToR text is significantly more detailed than the remaining clusters', includes terms on the functions of the Chair, the frequency and utility of coordination meetings, and voting proceedings.⁵³

Network observations:

a- General Protection

⁵³ Iraq Protection Cluster, Terms of Reference. 2016. URL: https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/old/assets/files/field_protection_clusters/Iraq/files/iraq_npc-tor-endorsed-4-july-2016.en.pdf

The General Protection cluster is one of few which grew in size between 2020 and 2021. This can be explained by the role it had in responding to the closure of camps, especially in 2021 as a result of COVID-19 and increased vulnerabilities.

Most striking is the absence of government entities. The presence of actors from the other three types (INGO, NNGO and UN) remained consistent, with a slight increase of UN presence in 2021 and 2022. An increase in network density and decrease in diameter signals closer cooperation in 2022 as compared to two years prior. NGO-led joint activities are the most frequent, almost equally among internationals and between local-international ones. A slight decrease in the betweenness centrality of local actors is observed.

b- Child Protection

UNICEF is the lead agency for Child Protection. It is one of the networks with the best distributions among international and local actors of all types, including four governmental entities. It also boasts some of the highest levels of localization, both in terms of the presence of local actors, which increased from an already-high level of 52% to 61% in 2022. Network diameter steadily decreased, accompanied by a steady increase in density, signaling tighter cooperation.

NNGOs and governmental actors were more isolated in the network in 2020, mainly collaborating within their node type in 2020. Since 2021, interactions between INGOs and NNGOs became the most frequent. There was a notable increase in NNGO-GOV joint activities.

It is noteworthy to add that this network includes more nodes of the ‘Other’ category than any other. This is apparent both in the General Protection cluster and in the Child Protection Area of Responsibility. This category denotes private sector entities. Further examination of the specific actors in question shows that this consists of two entities, a private security

contractor and a prominent consultancy firm specializing in international development. Both are based outside of Iraq.

c- Gender-based Violence

Similarly to the Child Protection sub-cluster, the GBV one included at least 50% NNGOs in all given years, taking part in more than half of jointly implemented activities over the three years, most of which were in partnership with INGOs. The jump in the betweenness centrality of local actors is by far the highest, going from 33% to 55%.

Cluster documentation (2020-present)

In the area of General Protection, partners' work on the right to identity and civil documentation became increasingly central, and is explicitly mentioned as a priority area in the transition strategy, especially in light of concerns pertaining to governmental authorities' willingness to guarantee such a right. Missing civil documentation prevents persons from accessing basic public services such as education and healthcare. This is especially for concern given the observed number of discriminatory bureaucratic hurdles persons previously or perceived to be affiliated with extremist groups are faced with.⁵⁴

As for Child Protection, the partners focused their programming over the three-year period on awareness raising (notably the organization of parenting programs), capacity building and case management (accompaniment and referral of minors to a range of services including family reunification, shelter, health, etc.).^{55,56} UNICEF reports supporting the Federal and

⁵⁴ Iraq Protection Cluster, Protection Analysis Report : Right to Civil Identity and Civil Documentation. October 2021. URL: https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/protection_analysis_-_civil_documentation_.pdf

⁵⁵ Iraq Child Protection Sub-Cluster, HRP 2022 Response Progress, December 2022. URL: <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoieFZlZGZlMTU0MTVhZC00MmM5LTk5MDgtNW11Zjc3YjNIOWJmliwidCI6Ijc3NDEwMTk1LTE0ZTEtNGZiOC05MDRlLWFiMTg5MjAyMzY2NyIsImMiOiJh9&pageName=ReportSection7622428b6d2274047997>

⁵⁶ Iraq Child Protection Sub-Cluster, Local referral pathway, 2016. URL: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/fr/operations/iraq/document/cp-referral-pathway-template-0>

Kurdistan governments in the establishment of coordination mechanisms to serve as successors to the sub-cluster, and signaled its readiness to support the relevant ministries through 2023 to ensure the smooth transfer of functions.

The GBV sub-cluster focused its programming between 2020-2022 on legal and psychosocial assistance to GBV victims, the provision of dignity kits, case management, and community-based awareness activities. The sub-cluster published detailed frameworks operationalizing the HRP and appears to be the network with the most robust and elaborate monitoring and reporting structure,⁵⁷ including the elaboration and publication of a GBV M&E toolkit based on its members' accumulated expertise.⁵⁸ Its coordination structure at the sub-national level is very elaborate, including specific task forces on adolescent girls, GBV information management, and technology-facilitated GBV. As of 2022, many of the coordinators at the governorate levels were locals.⁵⁹

There is evidence of trainings organized by the Protection cluster for the strengthening of monitoring and reporting mechanisms and its members. It also kept an updated sub-national coordination structure including dedicated institutional focal points, some of which were NNGOs.

A survey was circulated among partners in preparation of the deactivation of the cluster. It collected inputs on various aspects of the upcoming transition to aid the formulation of a

⁵⁷ The repository includes a wealth of guidance documents, training recordings, templates and toolkits meant for field-based coordinators and case managers.

⁵⁸ Iraq GBV Sub-Cluster, GBV Monitoring and Evaluation Toolkit, January 2022. URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-gbv-monitoring-evaluation-toolkit-january-2022-enarku>

⁵⁹ Iraq GBV Sub-Cluster, Coordination Structure, January 2022. URL: https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-gbv-sub-cluster-coordination-structure-january-2022?_gl=1*3yaop4*_ga*MTM2OTU3NzU0NC4xNjg0MTYxMzk5*_ga_E60ZNX2F68*MTY4NjQ5Nzg2MS4xOC4xLjE2ODY0OTkxMjluNjAuMC4w

strategy and future coordination platforms. This survey was addressed to 71 organizations, over 40% of which were local.⁶⁰

When asked about the biggest challenges they expected to face upon cluster deactivation, General Protection actors were primarily concerned about the capacities and readiness of governmental entities to ensure the adequate continuation of protection activities. Meanwhile, the lack of sufficient funding was of greater concern to actors working in the GBV and Child Protection areas. Other recurring answers included the short timeline of the transition and lack of clarity on post-deactivation leadership.

The fact that General Protection actors were more concerned with government capacities than funding is striking, given the fact that it was the area with the largest funding cuts (-85% between 2020 and 2022).⁶¹ GBV and Child Protection budgets were reduced by 36% and 47%, respectively.

This seems to support evidence from SNA, which showed that governmental entities were notably absent from the General Protection cluster all through the three-year period, but consistently present and engaging in collaborative action in both GBV and Child Protection areas. There was a consensus among respondents that the most important action to be taken by the cluster would be to engage in capacity building of government counterparts and establish a post-deactivation coordination platform.

The Protection Platform was activated in mid-October 2022, in anticipation of the clusters' deactivation on December 31st. The successes of both the Child Protection and GBV sub-clusters in securing the buy-in of governmental entities and building the operational and

⁶⁰ UNHCR, Iraq National Protection Cluster Deactivation Survey. December 2022. URL: <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiaWwN2ZlNTMtMmU4Yy00OTQ0LW15NzQtM2Y0YzlhNmQ2ZjgwliwidCI6ImU1YzM3OTgxLTlTY2NjQ0NDZlNC04YTBlLTlTY1NDNkMmFmODBiZSIsImMiOiJh9>

⁶¹ See Annex 1.

reporting capacities of local members, especially given the sensitivity of some of the issues they cover, stands out. In light of the concerns expressed by partners, in the area of general protection, the continuation of the cluster's work through to the establishment of a successor formal coordination platform can be deemed adequate.

4.2.2.3. Education

Structure and type of activities:

UNICEF is the UN agency leading this cluster. Activities within this cluster include teacher training, provision of school supplies, enrolment of children in situations of displacement, facilitating education access for children with a perceived affiliation with extremist groups, among others. The Terms of Reference of this cluster were not made public, which limits our ability to learn about its structure beyond the minimum functions mandated by OCHA for all clusters, mentioned in Chapter 2.

Network observations:

Unlike the Child Protection cluster, where UNICEF assumes the lead role in coordination but not in implementation, it is both lead agency and the actor which has that implements the most activities on Education throughout the three-year period. It is of note that is one of the clusters with the least budget cuts (see Annex 1).

While there was no record of collaboration in 2020, UNICEF is part of most joint programming in the subsequent two years. In fact, UNICEF's ego network accounts for the vast majority of collaborations in 2021 and 2022 (97% and 84% of all edges, respectively).

UNICEF remains the most central node throughout the two years. However, its closest collaborators were predominantly INGOs in 2021. (Intersos, Terres des Hommes, NRC). This drastically changes in 2022, when UNICEF's collaboration with the Department of Education accounted for more than 60% of all joint activities in the cluster.

Another visible difference between the two years is that the removal of UNICEF from the 2021 network breaks the cluster into two unconnected sub-clusters, while the network remains intact if it is removed in 2022, thanks to the strong linkages that DoE swiftly established with the rest of the actors in this cluster. This is a positive development, since ego networks are some of the least resilient – the main actor's withdrawal usually signifying the dismantlement of the entire structure.

Cluster documentation (2020-present)

Education is an area where the severity of needs continues to be very high. This is somewhat reflected in donor behaviour, education being the 3rd least affected by funding cuts (-22%). The cluster's work underwent severe disruptions as a result of COVID-19.

At the time of writing, the cluster's transition strategy was not made public. However, meeting minutes from the second half of 2022 indicate that government entities (Ministry of Education) were directly involved in the joint drafting the transition plan.⁶² Concerns were explicitly expressed regarding local partners' monitoring capabilities, and the impact that would have on the continuation of the response following cluster deactivation.

The scarcity of documentation for this cluster, coupled with the lack of collaboration before 2021 raises well-founded doubts as to the success of the education cluster in promoting local ownership and capacity transfer over the past 3 years. Increased UN-government engagement

⁶² Iraq Education Cluster, Meeting Minutes, 27 June 2022. URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-education-cluster-meeting-minutes-27-june-2022-meeting-minutes>

in 2022 and co-drafting of transition strategy could signal a turn, especially given the centrality of the state as an education provider, should the concerns raised by the other partners be appropriately addressed.

4.2.2.4. Emergency Livelihoods

Structure and type of activities:

The ELC is led by UNDP, which does not engage in the direct implementation of activities.

The terms of reference are not publicly available.

The type of activities performed include “cash for work”, business incubation, and asset replacement for persons in need. Some partners also engage in private sector and business skills development at the national level.

Network observations:

The Emergency Livelihoods network is predominantly international. The government is absent, and the presence of NNGOs seems to have decreased overtime.

Low density indicates that collaboration is below optimal for the number of partners in this network. Most collaboration took the form of UN-INGO joint activities. There is no clear pattern in terms of SNA metrics.

Cluster documentation (2020-present)

The ELC website includes a list of focal point for sub-national coordination, all of which are International. The website includes resources such as Standard Operating Procedures, which were outlined for each type of activity to guide partners in the field. In 2021, a special

taskforce was established to address the implications of water scarcity and prepare accordingly. Besides complying with the operational presence reporting requirements, the cluster does not provide additional data on its operations in the form of dashboards, etc. The transition strategy was not made public.

Sustainability sits at the core of the logic behind livelihoods cluster, which is intended to provide communities with the chance to sustain themselves and cease the reliance on immediate relief. One would expect this network to be more sensible to the issue of localization as a precursor to durable solutions, but the scarce evidence does not support this.

4.2.2.5. Food Security

Structure and type of activities:

Terms of Reference are not available for this cluster, which is co-led by WFP and FAO, The partners' activities consist in distribution of food baskets, support to agricultural communities in the form of supplies and training, and expert technical assessments of the food security situation.

Network observations:

The network is dominated by the World Food Programme. No collaborative activity was reported in 2020. In the subsequent year, WFP primarily collaborated with INGOs. In 2022, WFP's presence was very minimal, and the network consisted mainly of two INGOs and one NNGO. These fluctuations, and small size the network prevents from the observation of clear dynamics based on SNA.

Cluster documentation (2020-present)

The cluster's website stopped systematically publishing updated meeting minutes in 2018. It continued to issue monthly gap analysis maps and weekly Food Security Monitor briefs.⁶³ The latter point to a high engagement of the government in matter pertaining to food security. The scarcity of evidence on collaboration could indicate that this thematic area has already “transitioned” to the government, although this could not be ascertained.

4.2.2.6. Health

Structure and type of activities:

The Health Cluster is led by the World Health Organization. It serves as a technical advisor and coordinator, and is not engaged in direct implementation of activities. Despite the outbreak of COVID-19, this area of humanitarian response witnessed a YoY decrease in funding of 14%.

The cluster's Terms of Reference are brief, define the roles of the partnership in line with OCHA's global cluster directives, and foresees the establishment of technical working groups under the leadership of the Ministry of Health.⁶⁴

Besides direct provision of services (immunization, physical rehabilitation, reproductive health, mental health), the cluster also provides cash and voucher assistance to vulnerable persons to cover the costs of medicine and/or transportation. The partners also engage in disease awareness sessions and train health workers throughout the territory.⁶⁵

⁶³ Iraq Food Security Cluster Website. URL: <https://fscluster.org/iraq>

⁶⁴ Iraq Health Cluster, Terms of Reference, updated 2019. URL: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/iraq_health_cluster_tors_april_2019.pdf

⁶⁵ Iraq Health Cluster, Monitoring Interactive Dashboard, 2022. URL: <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrJoiQWM4MWJmOTUtNTk4OS00YTE4LWE4NDUtNTJINGY1NmE3OTExliwidCI6ImY2MTBjMGI3LWJkMjQtNGIzOS04MTBiLTNkYzI4MGFmYjU5MCIslmMiOjh9>

Network observations:

The number of actors remained stable throughout the three-year period, half of which are local. A small increase in network density and a 14% increase in the collective weight of local nodes point to a progression towards a tighter, more localized network. The betweenness centrality of local nodes also went up by 9%. In line with observations at the whole-of-system level, eigenvector centrality is decreasing.

The health network is characterized by strong cooperation both among local actors (among NNGOs, doubled in the three years) and between NNGOs and INGOs. The steady increase in presence and collaboration of governmental actors is clearly observable as well.

Overall, this is one of the most localized networks in this study.

Cluster documentation (2020-present)

The cluster publishes monthly bulletins, interactive dashboards, and meeting minutes. A review of meeting minutes between 2020 and 2022 indicates a consistent and active participation of nearly all partners. The cluster demonstrated a high degree of adaptation to the COVID-19 pandemic, which might have been due to the pre-existence of a flexible internal structure with the working groups, which provide individual updates during each meeting. The minutes also reveal frequent communications between WHO and Ministry of Health counterparts at the highest levels.

More recent minutes, since the deactivation of the response was announced, included updates and discussion on the course of action. In the field of health, it was deemed too early for a complete dismantlement of the humanitarian coordination mechanism. Partners confirmed their commitment, and agreed on a new structure which would mirror the cluster but emphasize health systems strengthening and eventually handover the coordination role to health authorities. In-camp provision of health services, when applicable, would cease.

Minutes also indicate a higher-than-average engagement with other clusters on topics of overlapping interest, in the form of guest speakers updates (Nutrition, WASH).⁶⁶

4.2.2.7. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene – WASH

Structure and type of activities:

This cluster is led by UNICEF. Specific national terms of reference, beyond the generic global WASH cluster ones by OCHA, are not available.

The activities implemented by partners in this cluster are wastewater management in IDP camps, informal settlements, the distribution of hygiene kits, and the rehabilitation of damaged WASH infrastructure.

Network observations:

The cluster is dynamic, as apparent in the changes of dominant nodes and collaboration dynamics from one year to the other. Overall, WASH response seems to be dominated by INGOs, which collaborate with NNGOs and, especially in 2021, with IOM. IOM was predominantly active in 2021, likely as a result from increased WASH programming in IDP camps that year due to COVID-19.

The presence of local actors remains stable at about 30%, with a slight increase in density. The betweenness centrality of local nodes significantly decreases over the three-year period (from 40% to 20%).

⁶⁶ Iraq Health Cluster, Meeting minutes. URL: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/iraq/health-cluster-iraq/documents/table>

Notable is the exit of governmental actors from the 2022 network, at least from joint programming and reporting.

Cluster documentation (2020-present)

The documentation available for this cluster is detailed. The website contains HRP cluster-specific follow-up strategies, technical assessment reports, guidance tools for field-based personnel, and even includes meeting minutes from the governorate-level coordination calls. A review of the minutes shows consistent, active participation by all partners.

It is also the only cluster to have conducted Cluster Coordination Performance Monitoring surveys, of which the findings were published.⁶⁷ About a third of respondents were local. The questions asked covered service delivery, strategic decision-making, monitoring and evaluation, government capacities, and advocacy. All elements were deemed ‘good’ or ‘satisfactory’, with the exception of early warning reports, which suffered from a lack of data attributed by respondents to the government’s lack of preparedness capacities and insufficient contingency planning.

As for the cluster’s transition, it was decided that WASH would become a government-led sector starting in 2023, a decision partly due to the funding cuts, which reached -55% of 2020 levels. Partners reiterated concerns related to the preparedness of governmental authorities, and it was agreed that some activities of a humanitarian nature would continue through 2023, notably services in remaining camps and informal settlements.

UNICEF would continue its engagement with governmental counterpart on strategic, structural issues pertaining to WASH, with the establishment of separate working groups for

⁶⁷ Iraq WASH Cluster, Performance Monitoring Final Report, 2022. URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-wash-cluster-performance-monitoring-final-report>

Kurdistan and Federal Iraq. This arrangement is foreseen for a maximum of two years, before the full transfer of all functions to governmental authorities.⁶⁸

The evidence suggests levels of accountability and transparency higher than the other clusters reviewed.

4.2.2.8. *Shelter and Non-Food Items*

Structure and type of activities:

The cluster's Terms of Reference were not published. According to updates on the global cluster's website, the Iraq national cluster has been implementing activities in the form of distribution of NFI kits, upgrading shelter conditions in camps, and providing "cash-for-rent", a form of housing subsidy to vulnerable persons in need.⁶⁹

Network observations:

The number of active partners in this cluster significantly dropped between 2020 and 2022. The small number of partners left in the 2021 and 2022 networks limits the ability to use network metrics in interpreting its internal dynamics.

What is clearly observable is the decrease in the number of INGOs, which primarily collaborated with UN agencies, notably IOM. IOM's participation is very limited in 2022, likely due to the closure of Federal IDP camps, which IOM predominantly operates in. One

⁶⁸ Iraq WASH Cluster, Monthly Meeting Minutes, August 2022. URL: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/national_wash_cluster_meeting_minutes_-_15_august_2022.pdf

⁶⁹ Iraq Shelter Cluster, Country Presentation, September 2021. URL: https://sheltercluster.s3.eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/public/docs/20210915_snfi_cluster_iraq_presentation_final.pdf

INGO, Mercey Hands, makes up for the vast majority of the network's activities and collaborations in the last year.

These results are somewhat contradictory to the fact that this is the only thematic area to have benefited from an increase (+5%) according to OCHA's tracking of aid flows.

Cluster documentation (2020-present)

The cluster's dedicated website hosts a variety of interactive dashboards, guidance documents, periodic factsheets and assessments.⁷⁰ However, it does not include documents such as meeting minutes and coordination plans, which are more likely to include qualitative evidence supporting localizations efforts or lack thereof.

The latest update on the cluster's transitions mentions that critical activities are planned for finalization in early 2023. The update mentions "low levels of funding", despite Shelter being the only thematic area to have benefited from an increase (+5%) in funding in 2022 compared to base figures of 2020 (See Annex 1). The transition update identifies the absence of a single-line ministry covering the thematic as a challenge for post-deactivation SNFI activities. Land, housing and property-related matters will be handed over to UNHABITAT, which will serve as focal point from 2023 onwards.⁷¹

The Child Protection, GBV and Health networks stand out for the strength of their reporting mechanisms, steadily growing inclusion of local actors in joint programming, proof of capacity building efforts, and the participative elaboration of detailed transition strategies.

⁷⁰ Iraq Shelter Cluster, Official website. URL: <https://sheltercluster.org/response/iraq/>

⁷¹ Shelter Cluster Iraq, Update on UNHCR-led Cluster Transitions in Iraq, August 2022. URL: <https://sheltercluster.s3.eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/public/docs/Update%20on%20UNHCR-led%20cluster%20transition%20in%20Iraq%2020220816.pdf?VersionId=KtPibfFRU4VfsBOGuv1274M5GAtumzYI>

Others networks, despite evidence of efforts by the partners, suffered from limited government buy-in. This is the case of the General Protection and CCCM networks. The reasons behind the low localization of clusters such as Shelter, Food Security, Emergency Livelihoods are not clear, especially given the favorable financial conditions they enjoyed in comparison to other clusters.

Conclusions

Most recently in Iraq, a task force co-led by UNDP and IOM, called the Iraq Durable Solutions Task Force (DSTF), was established. Its membership is predominantly donor- and UN-centered, with the inclusion of two INGOs (IRC, DRC) and two local organizations (NCCI – a Kurdish human rights organization, and KHORW – the national NGO Coordination Committee). This transition “towards development” was only a matter of time. Although challenging and seen as premature by a number of actors in the field, it could come with advantages. The humanitarian response and, to some extent, the provision of basic services by the government has largely neglected vulnerable communities in the South of the country, which was spared the 2014-2017 violence and hosted small numbers of internally displaced persons.

Although not conclusive as to the readiness of local actors for a transition, it appears from SNA that Iraqi governmental and non-governmental actors have been playing a growing role as an intermediary within humanitarian networks in the 2020-2022 period.

The extent of localization clearly varied from one area to the other. Clusters with high degrees of localization, notably in the areas of Health, Gender-based Violence, and Child Protection often displayed rigorous internal monitoring, reporting and learning practices. These are also thematics which seem to enjoy higher interest and buy-in from governmental counterparts at the strategic level.

However, SNA also showed that the access of a given local actor to the most influential actors in respective clusters remains limited, with an apparently downward trend in 2022.

This issue of access and influence might not be applicable to governmental entities, but is of primordial relevance to NNGOs.

This thesis sought to bring nuance to the notion of localization beyond the fixation of funding allocation which more often than not, lies not in the hands of practitioners in the field.

With decreased funding to INGOs, which have been the most likely actors to engage in joint programming with local actors, decision makers from leading organizations in the field, especially UN agencies, ought to engage more frequently and more meaningfully in with local actors, if sustainability and durability are of concern. Where the direct channeling of funds to NNGOs or governmental entities is not possible, whether due to restrictive donor requirements, weak accountability mechanisms, or other considerations, prioritizing smaller INGOs with a track record in joint implementation with NNGOs could represent a viable alternative.

Limitations

The author recognizes a number of limitations pertaining to the data used and the generalizability of the thesis' findings.

- Data-related:
 - The Red Cross/Crescent Societies, which receive a sizeable portion of aid flows to Iraq and reach a significant number of beneficiaries, are not part of the quantitative analysis due to its functioning outside OCHA structure and the unavailability of disaggregated data that can be consolidated with the main dataset. This is a main shortcoming given the relative importance of this actor in the humanitarian response.
 - The adjacency lists do not factor in the size of the joint activities, which likely impacts the quality and intensity of collaboration between partners.
 - While the joint implementation of activities is a significant form of interaction, actors in the field interact in a variety of ways that cannot be captured through reporting data. An organization's ideological background, track-record, and personal connections among staff are some of the many factors that play into the likelihood of collaboration.
 - Self-reporting may come with a bias and the possibility of misreporting.
- Generalizability
 - This study focuses on a specific country and a limited timeframe. A larger sample size, including network data from multiple countries, would be more suitable for drawing conclusions on the localization of humanitarian aid networks in transitional post-conflict settings.

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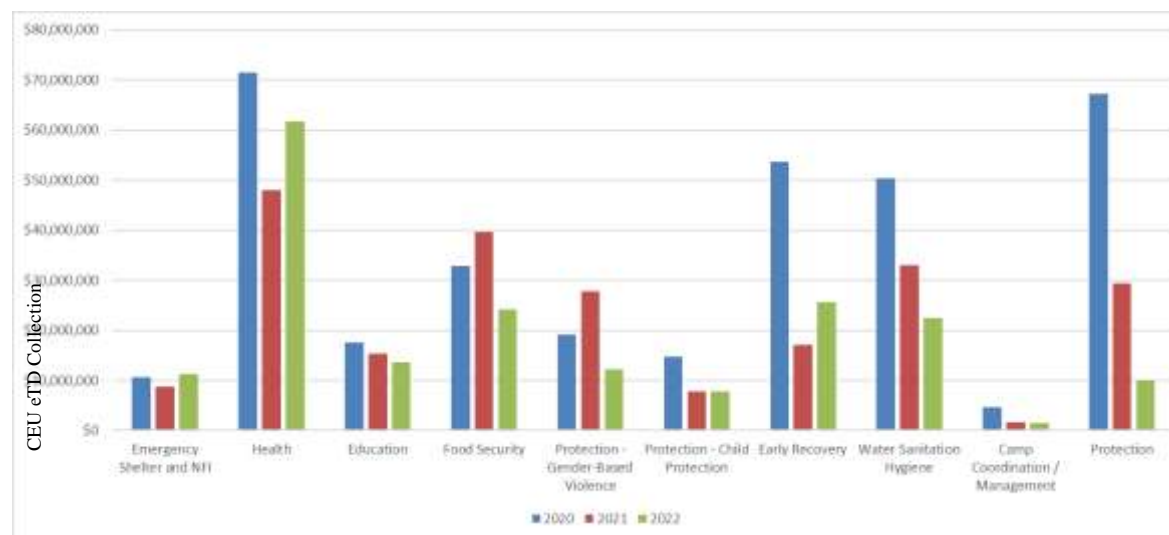
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Annexes

Annex 1: Financial data for Iraq based on OCHA's Financial Tracking Service

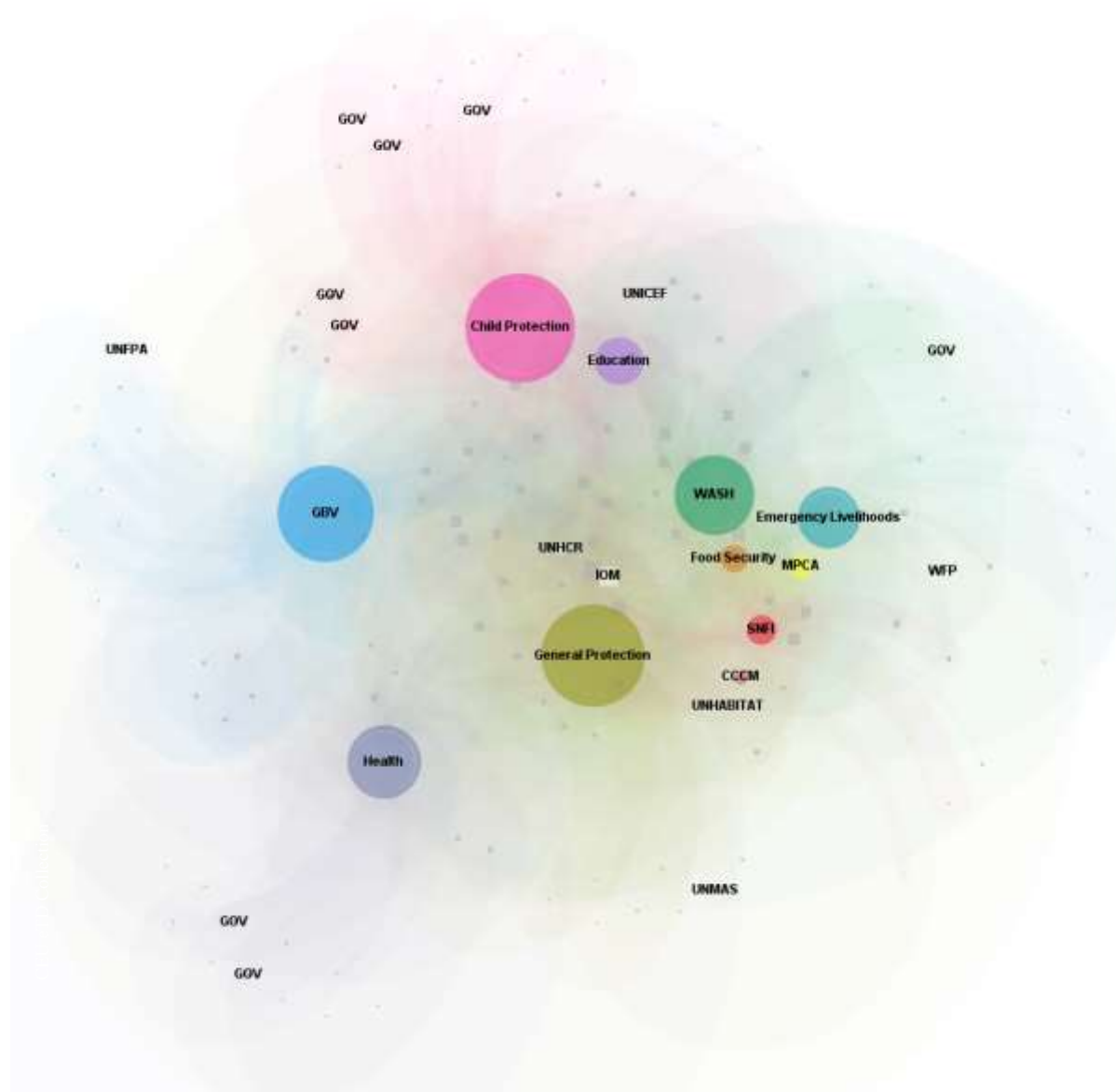
Sector	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Sparkline	Total	Percent change (2020 vs. 2022)
Emergency Shelter and NFI	\$41,220,326	\$62,788,782	\$10,690,195	\$8,729,276	\$11,274,914		\$540,520,509	5%
Health	\$80,936,101	\$75,245,365	\$71,451,897	\$47,985,170	\$61,642,982		\$683,340,394	-14%
Education	\$47,669,064	\$30,259,348	\$17,490,661	\$15,346,154	\$13,694,935		\$210,070,172	-22%
Food Security	\$97,327,149	\$45,266,640	\$32,857,006	\$39,597,618	\$24,242,432		\$763,750,961	-26%
Protection - Gender-Based Violence	\$6,436,193	\$17,237,243	\$19,057,796	\$27,785,117	\$12,237,713		\$82,754,062	-36%
Protection - Child Protection	\$13,986,680	\$31,348,769	\$14,777,500	\$7,831,478	\$7,809,587		\$79,909,312	-47%
Early Recovery	\$18,034,672	\$25,210,438	\$53,640,740	\$17,136,935	\$25,634,770		\$234,946,551	-52%
Water Sanitation Hygiene	\$69,424,680	\$61,226,088	\$50,401,307	\$32,950,400	\$22,504,927		\$536,117,535	-55%
Camp Coordination / Management	\$12,735,907	\$14,871,060	\$4,574,307	\$1,661,206	\$1,426,255		\$51,253,715	-69%
Protection	\$54,254,599	\$61,254,185	\$67,172,083	\$29,445,132	\$9,961,425		\$405,999,582	-85%



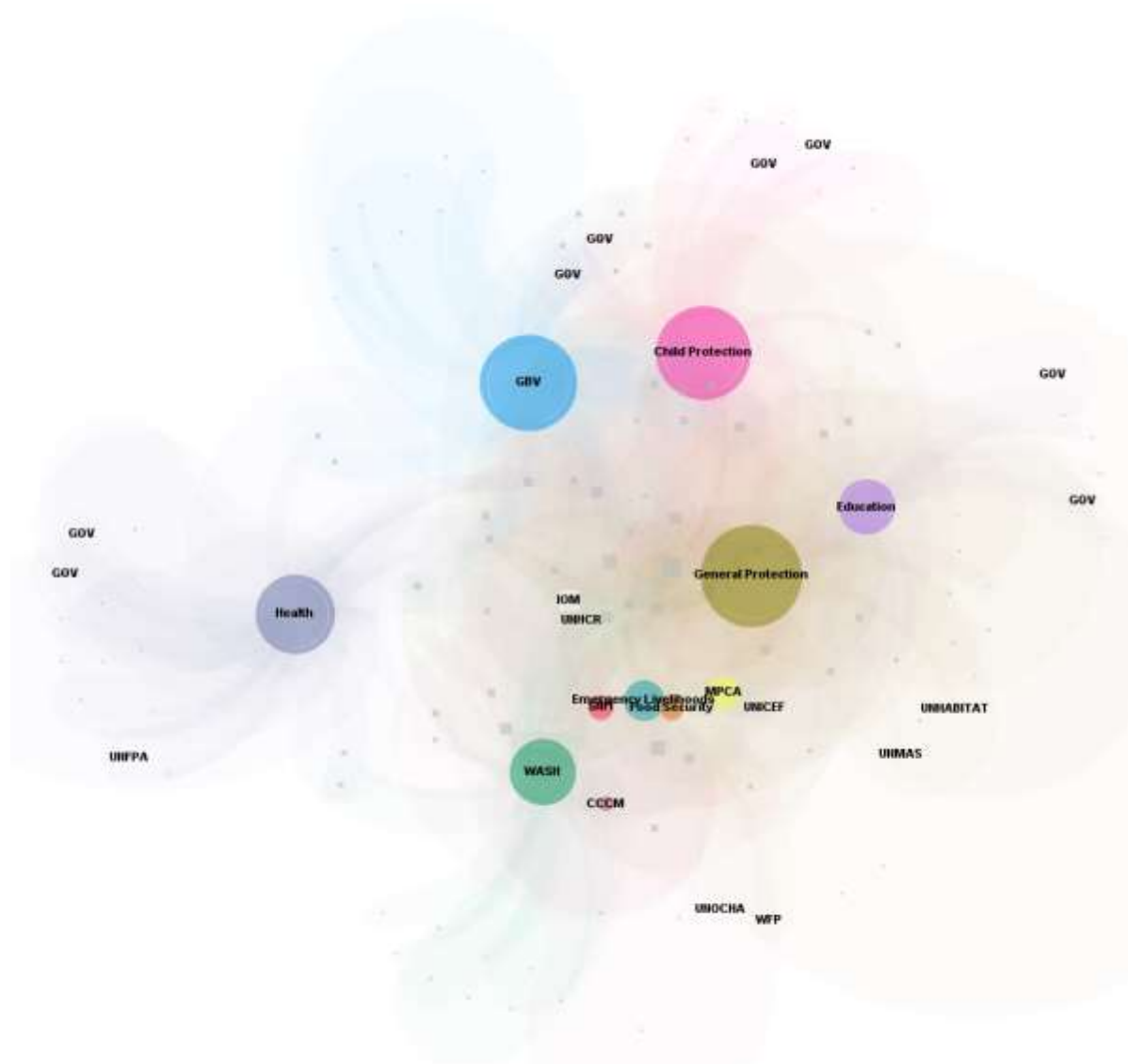
Annex 2: 2020, 2021, and 2022 whole-system visualizations



2020 system-wide humanitarian response network visualized



2021 system-wide humanitarian response network visualized



2022 system-wide humanitarian response network visualized

Annex 3:

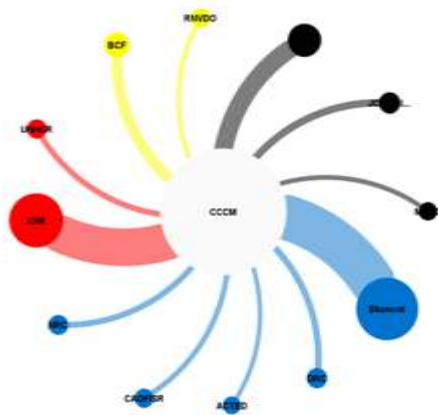
Table: Network metrics by cluster

Cluster	Year	# of nodes	% of local nodes	Avg weighted degree	Diameter	Density	Avg clustering coefficient	Weighted degrees - % local	Betweenness centrality - % local	Eigenvector centrality - avg local	Cluster lead
CCCM	2020	4	0.75	8.0	1.00	0.33	NaN	0.97	N/A	1	UNHCR
CCCM	2021	2	0.00	1.0	1.00	1.00	NaN	0.00	N/A	N/A	UNHCR
CCCM	2022	3	0.67	33.3	2.00	0.67	0.00	0.75	1.00	0.85	UNHCR
Education	2021	21	0.32	4.8	5.00	0.16	0.62	0.57	0.47	0.44	UNICEF and Save the Children
Education	2022	19	0.24	14.1	6.00	0.15	0.31	0.15	0.29	0.24	UNICEF and Save the Children
ELC	2020	36	0.14	9.3	4.00	0.13	0.52	0.11	0.05	0.24	UNDP
ELC	2021	25	0.20	9.0	4.00	0.13	0.50	0.07	0.05	N/A	UNDP
ELC	2022	7	0.00	2.0	3.00	0.29	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.27	UNDP
Food Security	2021	9	0.22	6.2	4.00	0.31	0.24	0.07	0.20	0.34	WFP and FAO
Food Security	2022	5	0.40	8.8	4.00	0.40	0.00	0.48	0.30	0.68	WFP and FAO
Health	2020	31	0.42	6.5	5.00	0.15	0.29	0.55	0.70	0.61	WHO
Health	2021	26	0.62	7.0	5.00	0.18	0.35	0.79	0.66	0.51	WHO
Health	2022	26	0.50	5.8	6.00	0.15	0.18	0.69	0.79	0.54	WHO
Protection - Children	2020	48	0.52	6.7	7.00	0.09	0.37	0.55	0.38	0.29	UNICEF
Protection - Children	2021	39	0.49	9.6	6.00	0.15	0.30	0.51	0.40	0.26	UNICEF
Protection - Children	2022	31	0.61	6.0	5.00	0.13	0.44	0.51	0.33	0.25	UNICEF
Protection - GBV	2020	38	0.55	5.4	6.00	0.10	0.25	0.60	0.33	0.42	UNFPA
Protection - GBV	2021	39	0.49	9.6	6.00	0.15	0.30	0.51	0.54	0.32	UNFPA
Protection - GBV	2022	27	0.56	3.4	7.00	0.11	0.19	0.58	0.55	0.29	UNFPA
Protection - General	2020	44	0.27	9.2	5.00	0.13	0.38	0.32	0.19	0.27	UNHCR
Protection - General	2021	44	0.32	18.0	4.00	0.18	0.53	0.26	0.24	0.30	UNHCR
Protection - General	2022	40	0.28	17.7	4.00	0.19	0.46	0.21	0.13	0.24	UNHCR
SNFI	2020	21	0.10	7.1	4.00	0.15	0.48	0.12	0.00	0.25	UNHCR and IFRC
SNFI	2021	10	0.20	6.6	3.00	0.33	0.56	0.08	0.00	0.58	UNHCR and IFRC
SNFI	2022	4	0.25	3.0	2.00	0.50	0.00	0.17	0.00	0.46	UNHCR and IFRC
WASH	2020	42	0.29	12.6	5.00	0.15	0.52	0.30	0.42	0.41	UNICEF
WASH	2021	23	0.39	7.4	5.00	0.16	0.54	0.35	0.38	0.19	UNICEF
WASH	2022	21	0.29	5.9	6.00	0.17	0.36	0.35	0.21	0.24	UNICEF

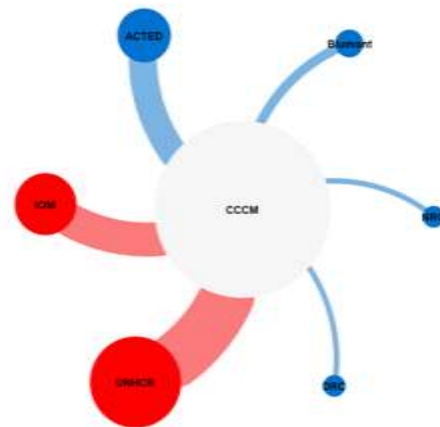
CEU/ITD Collection

Figures: Yearly partner presence and collaboration by cluster

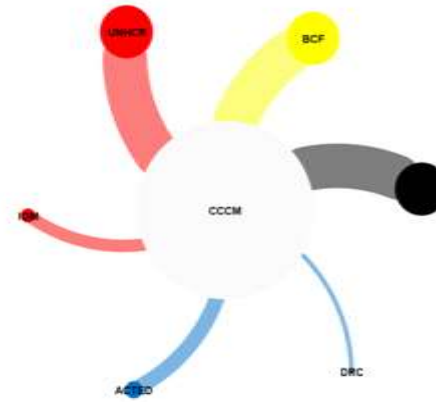
Camp Coordination and Camp Management Network



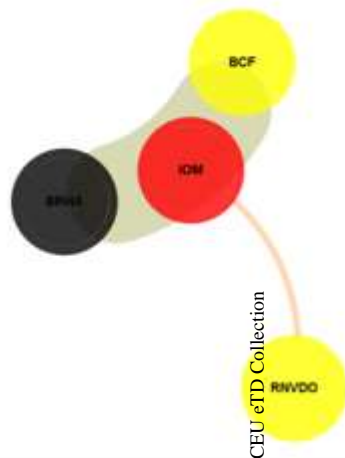
2020 - All partners



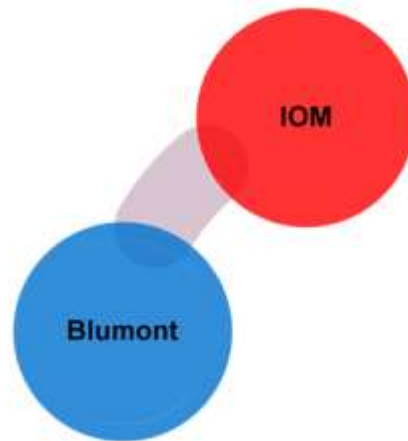
2021 - All partners



2022 - All partners



2020 - Collaboration

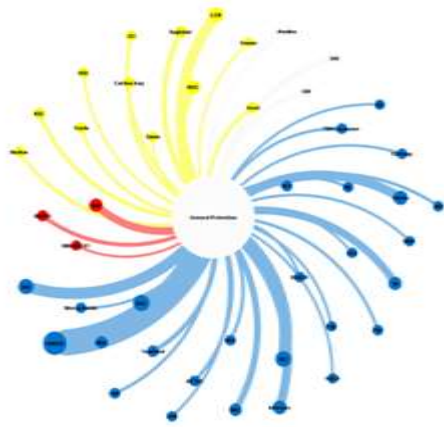


2021 - Collaboration

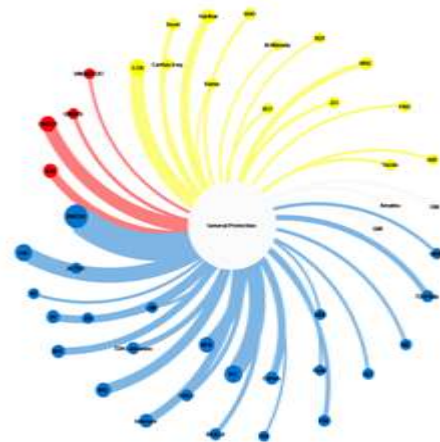


2022 - Collaboration

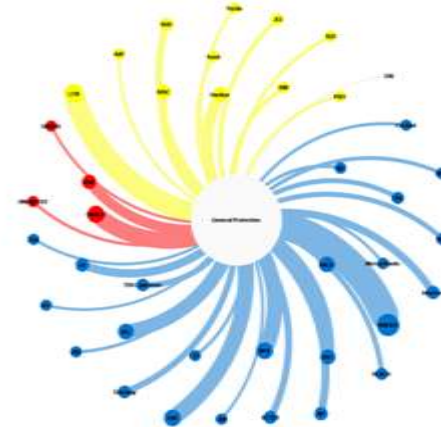
General Protection Network



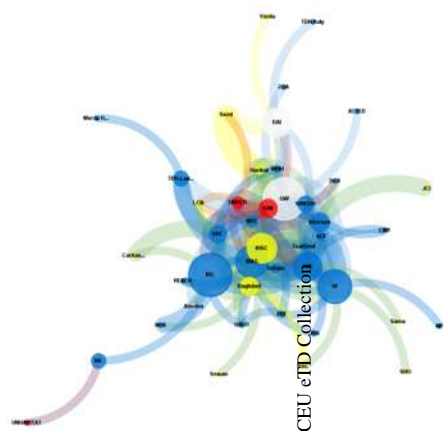
2020 - All partners



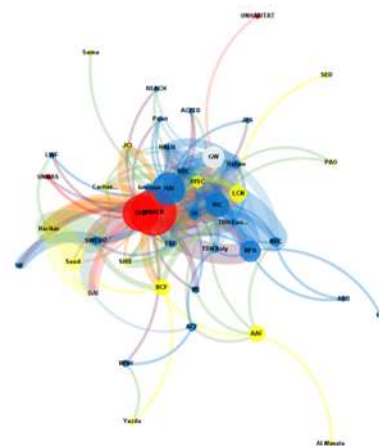
2021 - All partners



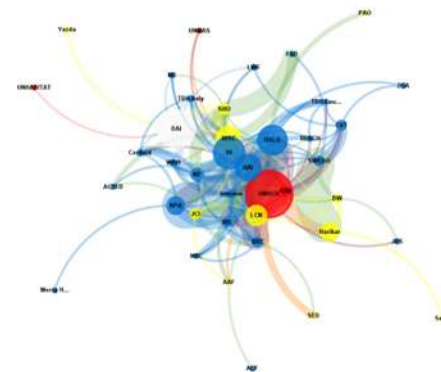
2022 - All partners



2020 - Collaboration

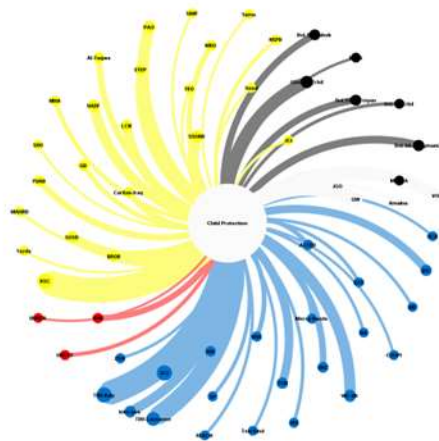


2021 - Collaboration

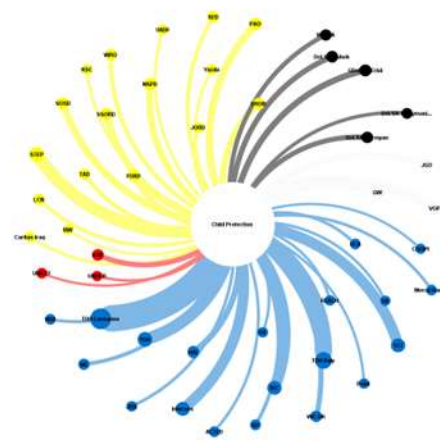


2022 - Collaboration

Child Protection Network



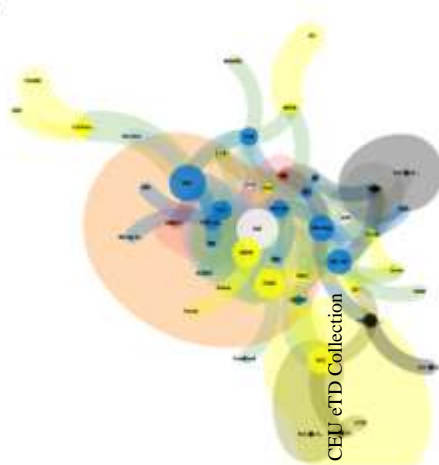
2020 - All partners



2021 - All partners



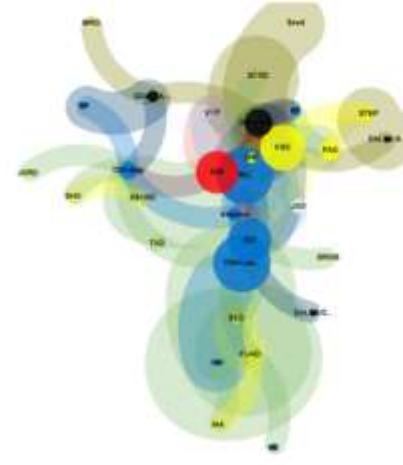
2022 - All partners



2020 - Collaboration

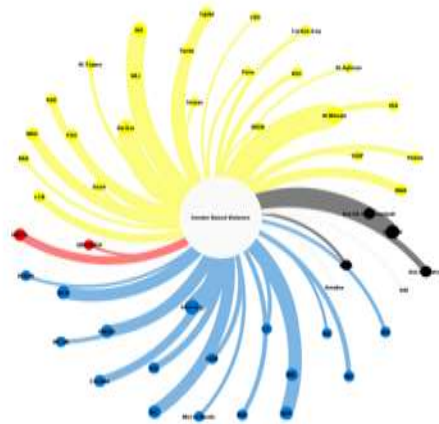


2021 - Collaboration

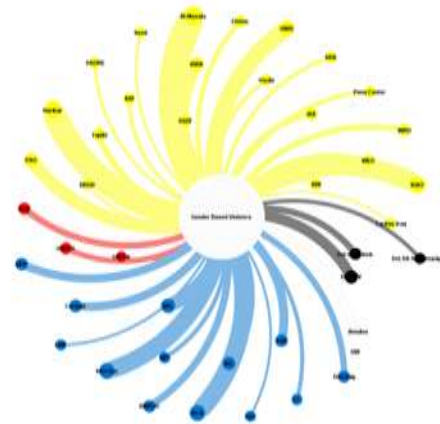


2022 - Collaboration

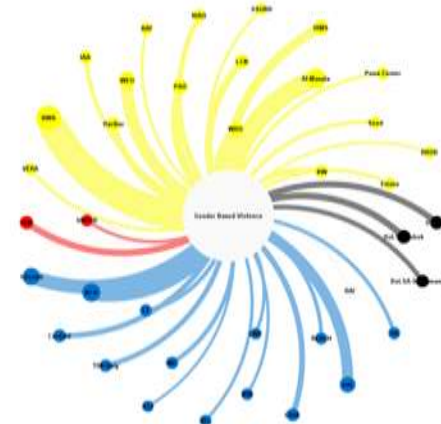
Gender-Based Violence Network



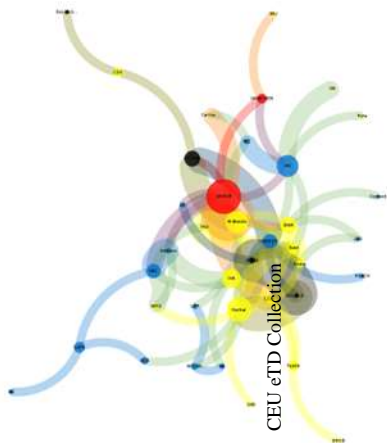
2020 - All partners



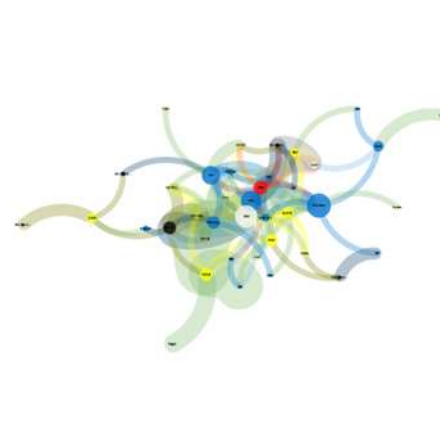
2021 - All partners



2022 - All partners



2020 - Collaboration

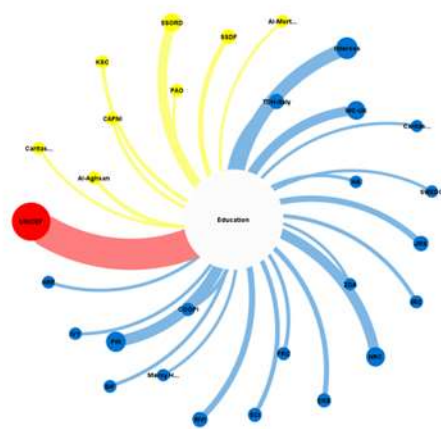


2021 - Collaboration

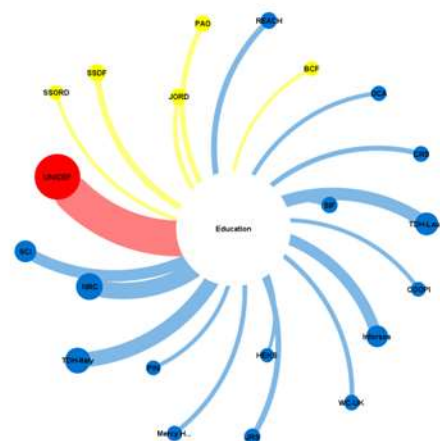


2022 - Collaboration

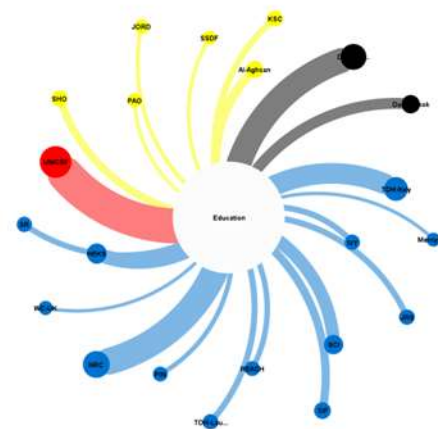
Education Network



2020 - All partners

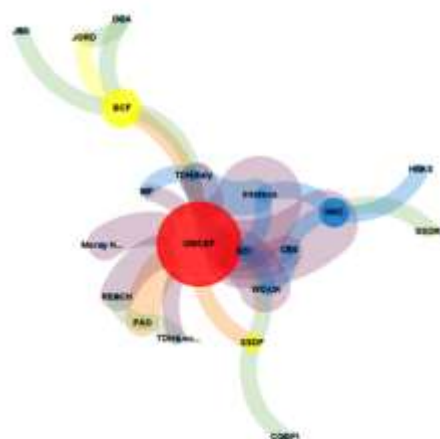


2021 - All partners



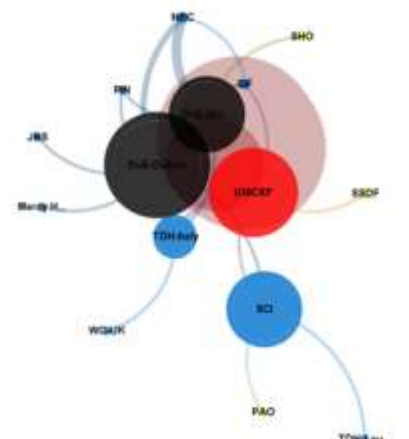
2022 - All partners

CEU eTD Collection



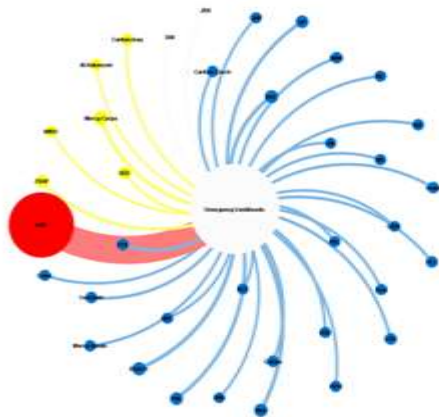
2020 - Collaboration

2021 - Collaboration

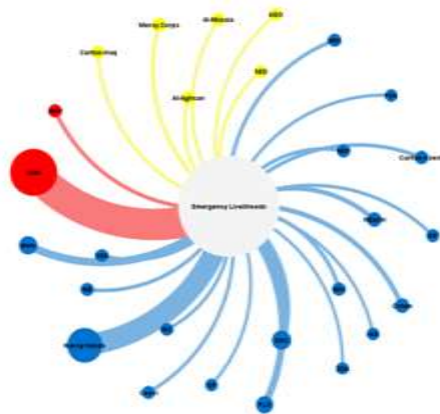


2022 - Collaboration

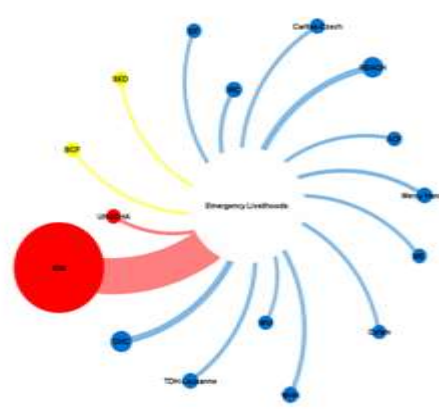
Emergency Livelihoods Network



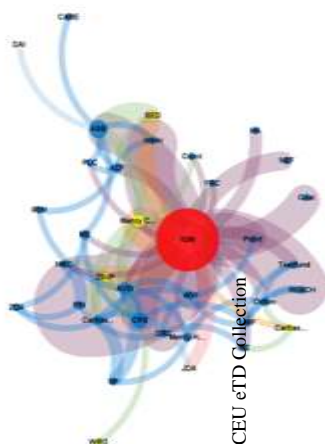
2020 - All partners



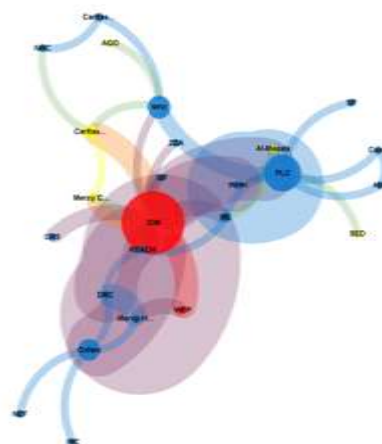
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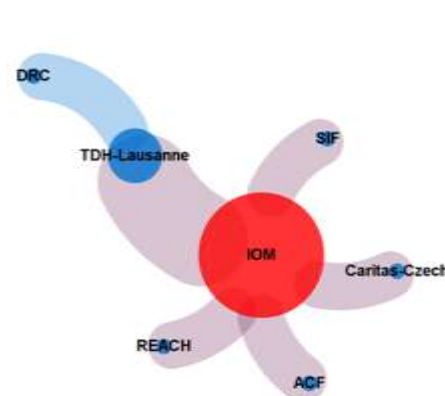
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2020 - All partners

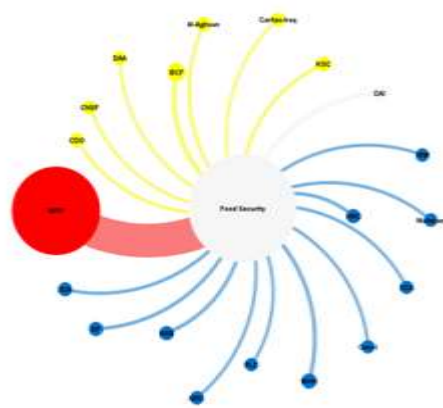


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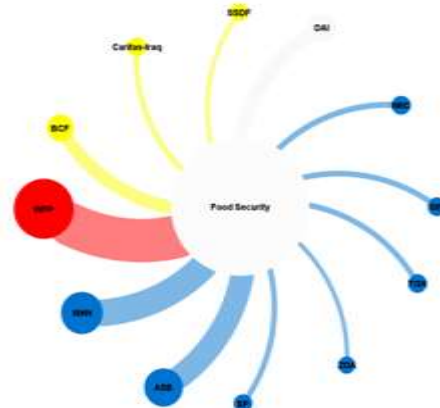


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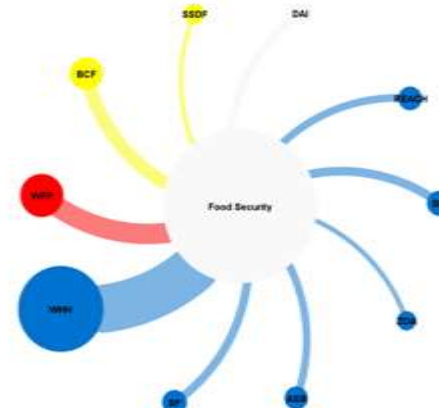
Food Security Network



2020 - All partners

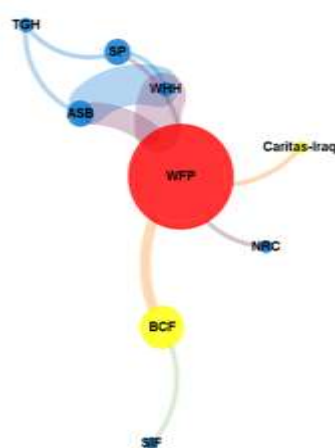


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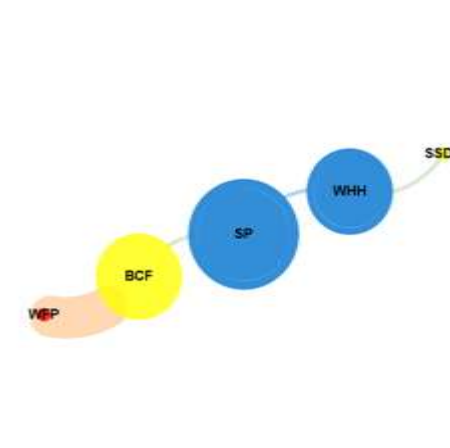
2022 - All partners

CEU eTD Collection



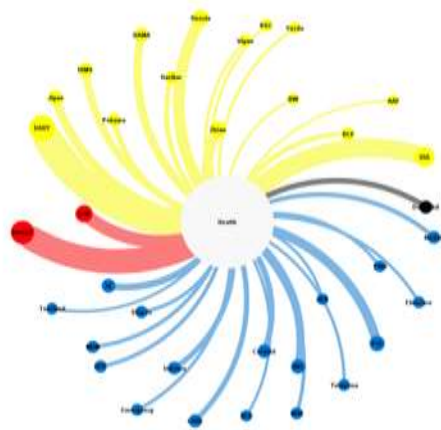
2020 - Collaboration

2021 - Collaboration

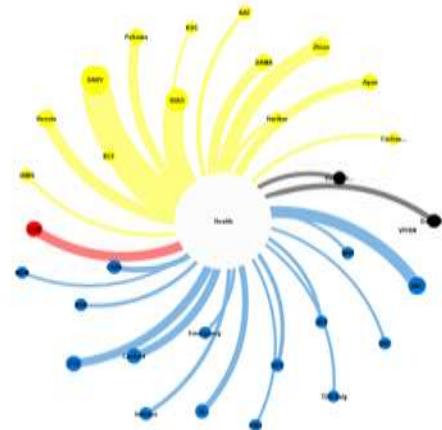


2022 - Collaboration

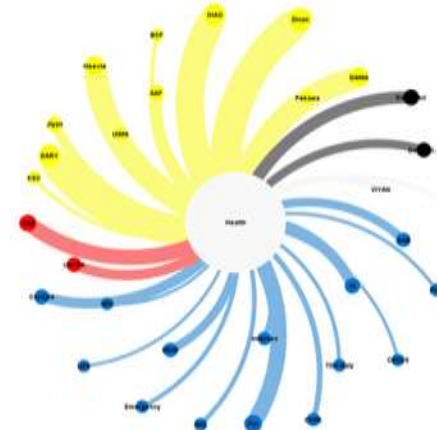
Health Network



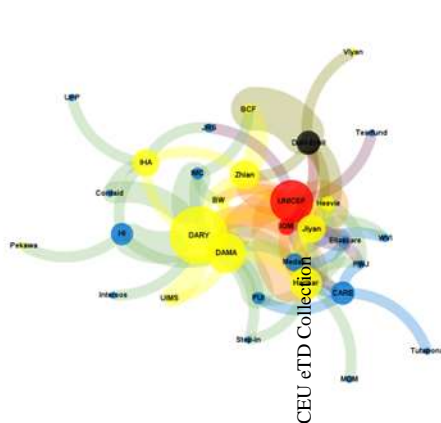
2020 - All partners



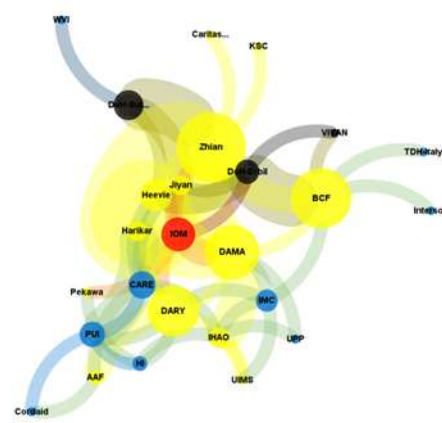
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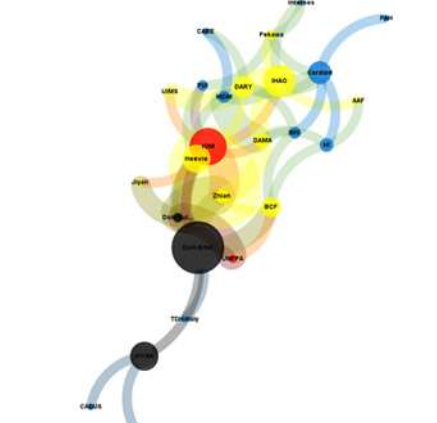
2022 - All partners



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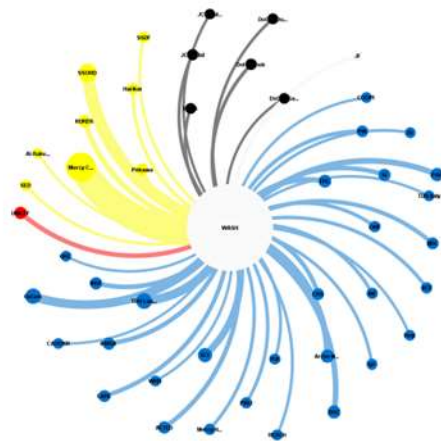


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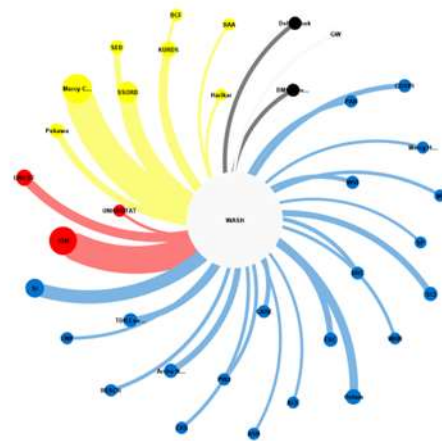


2022 - Collaboration

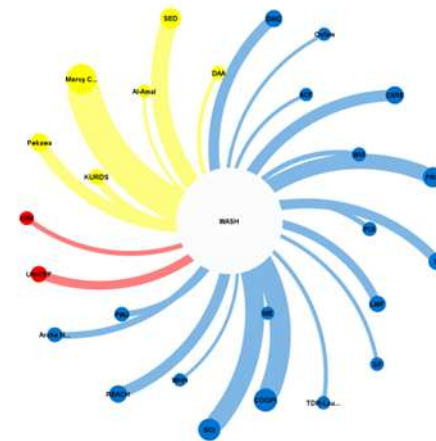
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Network



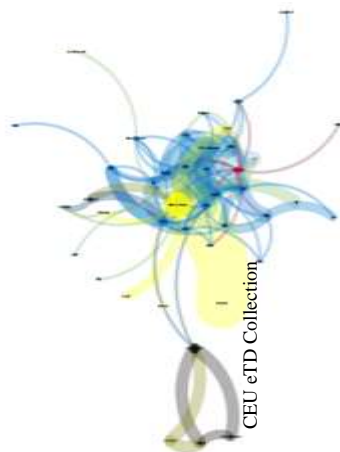
2020 - All partners



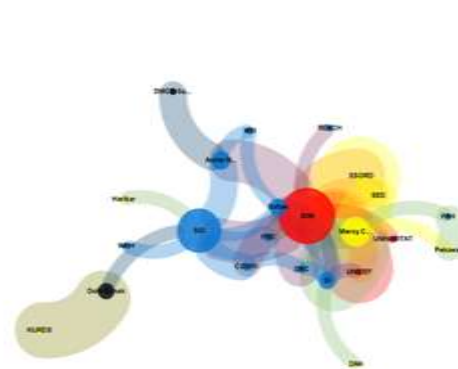
2021 - All partners



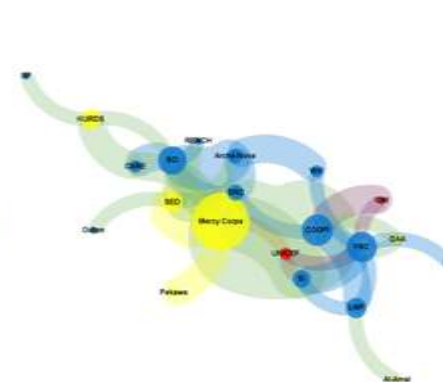
2022 - All partners



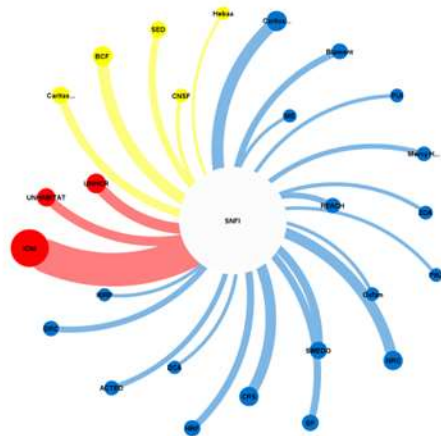
2020 - Collaboration



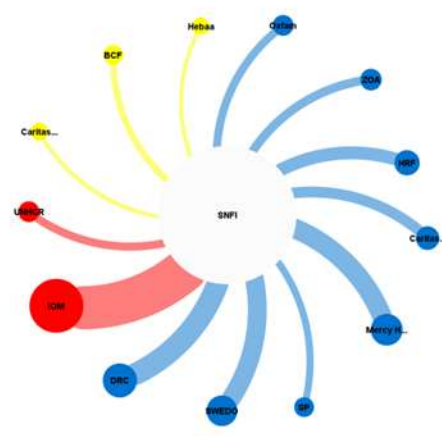
2021 - Collaboration



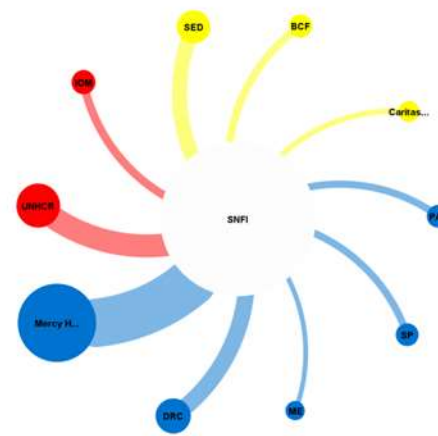
2022 - Collaboration



2020 - All partners

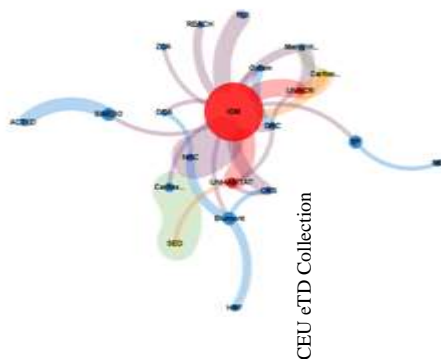


2021 - All partners

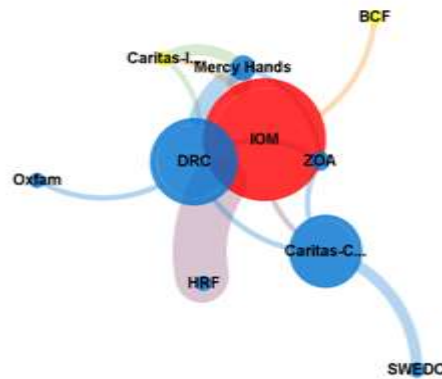


2022 - All partners

Shelter and Non-Food Items Network



2020 - Collaboration



2021 - Collaboration



2022 - Collaboration