



# Transformations through locally led development

How different INGOs have transformed  
and the lessons they have learned



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# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Sarah Hand and Simon Moore from Avert, Alice Oyaro from Transform Trade, Bert Maarten, Sameena Gul and David Boaz from Helpage International, Nicolo Di Marzo from Link Education and Emily Wilder from The Mango Tree.

## Credits:

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# About Bond

Bond is the UK network for organisations working in international development. We unite and support a diverse network of over 350 civil society organisations to help eradicate global poverty, inequality and injustice.

## Transformations through locally led development

How different NGOs have transformed and the lessons they've learned

Published by: Bond, Society Building, 8 All Saints Street, London N1 9RL, UK  
Registered Charity No. 1068839 Company Registration No. 3395681  
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# Introduction

In 2015, the term 'localisation' received its due recognition in the Charter for Change and was brought to the forefront of discussions in the following years through the Grand Bargain and World Humanitarian Summit. In the decade since, complexities and nuances have arisen which are influencing the sector's localisation journey.

There have been remarkable strides in the process of localisation as well as justified criticisms of it. Existing power structures, the lack of a universally accepted definition of localisation, the positionality of actors in the localisation process and the gradual rightwards shift in global political discourse are creating confusion and exacerbating both fault lines and a lack of trust in the process of localisation. Localisation runs the risk of becoming a 'fatigued concept', caught between a lack of strategic will and institutional inertia in the sector. With a decade now passed since localisation rose up the agenda, the time to meaningfully act and engage on this issue is long overdue.

Much has been documented about what is wrong with localisation or what went wrong with shifting power. Building on the work we did in 2022 to develop a guide helping organisations to become locally led and ant racist, we now want to highlight the efforts some UK-based international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) have made to successfully move the project of localisation forward, all of which have taken different approaches and are at various stages in their journey. The aim of many featured is to become empathetic allies to their local partners and stakeholders. Perhaps this is the future of INGOs?





# Pathways to locally led development

What does it mean for an INGO to become locally led? Which practical components are involved? How and when should an organisation begin its transformation? These are the questions the following case studies seek to address.

We have documented examples from five very different organisations in the UK international development sector, presented from each organisation's point of view. The case studies are followed by concluding reflections and seven cross-cutting themes present in each example, which may help to guide your organisation's transformation journey.

As you will read below, there is no fixed route to locally led development. There are several possible pathways towards this goal. All of the organisations featured have experienced challenges on their journey, and many of them still have some distance to go. What they have in common is the act of taking bold steps to turn their principles and commitments into action, and through this each has undergone transformational change.

We hope the five examples presented here will inspire other organisations to initiate changes which enable a more effective, collaborative and locally led approach to their international development efforts.

# The Mango Tree

## Shifting educational support back to its community base

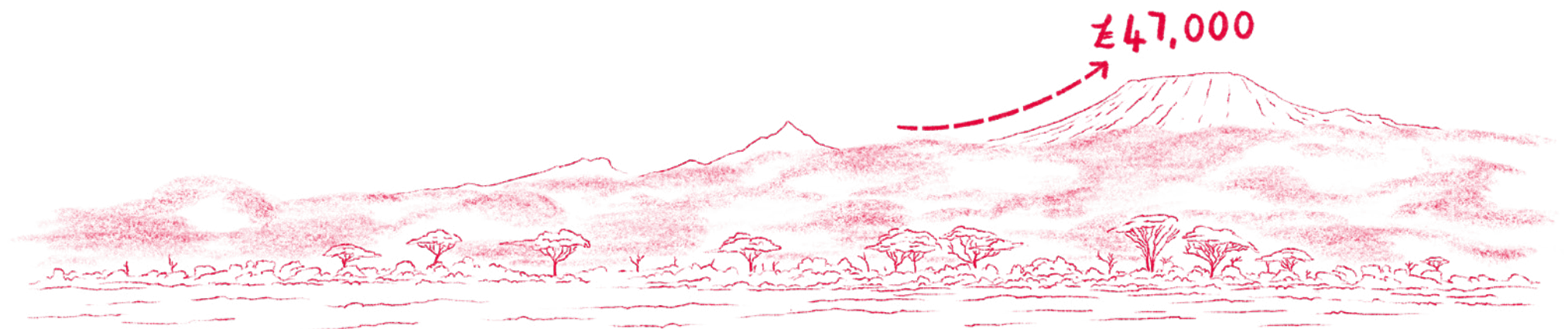
The Mango Tree launched its first projects in 1993 as a response to the AIDS crisis. Over the past 20 years it has delivered community-based programmes across four of the worst affected countries: Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda. Assisting children and young people orphaned by the HIV epidemic to get back into education and complete their full educational journeys has been the entry point and core focus of The Mango Tree's work.

Since its foundation, The Mango Tree has supported over 27,000 orphans and disadvantaged young people, the majority of whom have lost one or both parents to AIDS. Three out of four of the young people The Mango Tree has supported have now completed secondary school. Of these, over half have completed some form of further education or training. These efforts have led to over 14,000 people being employed across a range of professions.

Since the outset, The Mango Tree has listened to local ideas, partnering closely with grassroots organisations which work with large teams of community volunteers.

Projects are locally managed and highly collaborative with rural communities and local government departments. Maintaining a relatively small size within the context of the international development sector (£16 million raised in 21 years) has allowed The Mango Tree to keep overheads small and created opportunities for close engagement between the UK office and local delivery partners in East and Southern Africa. An example of this is a joint fundraiser in 2012 where staff, trustees and orphaned young people climbed Mount Kilimanjaro together to raise £47,000.

Despite always taking this partner-led approach, over 10 years ago The Mango Tree began reflecting on whether its organisational structure – as a UK-based and governed charity with a paternalistic relationship to its African counterparts – was a viable long-term fit with its ethos, culture and values.





## Stages in the handover of power

As early as 2013, The Mango Tree recognised that its governance structure needed to be reviewed. Some UK trustees were also sitting on the board of local partner charities in Kenya and Tanzania that deliver The Mango Tree's programmes. Due to the complexities of institutional funding applications, The Mango Tree realised this setup could reduce local organisations' potential to independently raise funds in the future.

At a strategy workshop, held with all staff and trustees in 2017, a five-year plan was agreed to enable all Mango Tree local partners to recruit local boards and increase in-country fundraising efforts. The Mango Tree UK started a gradual restructuring process. Firstly, all African partners became completely independent in terms of their governance structures. All UK trustees sitting on African boards resigned, and new local trustees were encouraged to take a greater strategic and accountable role.

By 2022, the INGO world was changing. HIV and orphan support was becoming less of a global funding priority, and the demand for decolonisation was rightly growing. In response to this changing landscape, The Mango Tree undertook an internal review in the UK, involving senior leadership and the board, with the support of an objective, external facilitator. From these findings, the organisation concluded that the status quo was no longer an option. Two possible pathways emerged: to diversify and move into different thematic areas or to close down. Ultimately, the decision was taken to close the UK charity and gradually handover responsibility to national institutions. Additional funds were secured for two key strategic areas:

1. The Sustainable Communities Project: A tailored package of support over three years for national partners in Africa, with a focus on organisational reviews and strategic development, governance, monitoring and evaluation training, financial systems development, social enterprise, business development and in-country fundraising.

2. A Legacy Fund: Managed under the Sustainable Communities Project, £500,000 of designated educational funding was generated through appeals, legacies and major donors. This money, alongside overseas partners' fundraising efforts, can now be invested to support the 800 to 900 remaining registered students to complete their educational journeys.



## Bringing donors on the journey

To launch the Sustainable Communities Project and the Legacy Fund for a smooth transition, it was crucial to build the transformation strategy in collaboration with existing donors. By bringing funding partners on the journey with them, The Mango Tree ensured that their steps to becoming locally led were not about winding down and closing up but about launching new campaigns and programmes. Two UK foundations and an individual donor came on board to support these programmes.

The charity ensured that preparing its national partners for independence and seeing out its full orphan support programme were part of its strategic shift. A key part of building greater ownership and autonomy was the creation of new institutions and investing in land and infrastructure. This includes a vocational training centre in Tanzania, a girls' boarding school in Kenya, plus boarding houses, offices, farmland, a library and a residential training centre (now converted into a primary school). It also included investing in locally led social enterprises, such as a micro-finance organisation and a café for the deaf community in Tanzania and a digital-inclusion IT enterprise in Kenya.



## Switching roles

To prepare the national institutions for their new responsibilities, a number of system changes took place during the transition phase.

For example, before the transition The Mango Tree UK was the sole funder to its overseas partners and allocated annual grants to cover each organisation's entire activities, running costs, overheads and capital costs, on receipt of a full budget. But as these organisations expanded, so did their budgets and the need for greater fundraising investment in the UK. This organisational model resulted in a steady increase in overseas partners' dependency on UK funding, and pressure to raise more unrestricted income to cover increased running costs in both the UK charity and its African partners. To break this pattern of dependency, a new organisational model was developed. The UK charity adopted a new grant-giving model which supported overseas partners to develop greater skills in fundraising and donor relationship management. Under the new system, overseas partners had to 'apply' for funds like an external organisation and adhere to stricter narrative and financial reporting requirements. Although this initially proved a challenge, particularly for existing colleagues with an embedded way of working, it built the skillset needed for future independent success.

To navigate the challenge of changing power dynamics within the organisation, The Mango Tree hired a variety of specialist consultants to guide the process through to completion, many of them from the same countries as the new national entities being formed. Alongside external support, the charity also completed its transitions in several countries by forming new partnerships. This included handing over the Kyela Polytechnic College in Myeba to the Tanzanian government and completing a merger with Kids Club Kampala as part of its 2024 phase-out in Kenya.

The story of The Mango Tree demonstrates how efforts, made in international solidarity with needs witnessed in another country, can lead to a growth in partnership and understanding, and ultimately a complete handover of assets and responsibility. A key factor in The Mango Tree's story has been its willingness to listen to and understand community needs and approaches.



# Transform Trade

## Returning to its roots as a radical outsider

Traidcraft PLC, a UK-based fairtrade organisation, was set up in 1979 with the aim of creating an alternative mode of trade, based on partnership, power-sharing and mutual accountability. Richard Adams, Traidcraft's founder, recognised the imbalance at the heart of international trade and sought to model a shift that would ripple out across the industry. To further this aim, a charitable arm of the company was set up in 1986 called Traidcraft Exchange.

Traidcraft PLC and Traidcraft Exchange became separate organisations in 2018. The board made this decision as the two entities were often confused, and the lack of distinction was undermining the charity's mission. This newfound independence gave Traidcraft Exchange space to consider how best to achieve the transformation it desired.



## Becoming Transform Trade

Once independent, in 2020 Traidcraft Exchange began a strategic review. No longer governed under Traidcraft PLC, the charity was free to determine its own destiny and decide what values to centre its mission around. Over 18 months of internal consultation, the need to be locally led kept emerging. At its core, Traidcraft was born of the desire to re-write the rules of international trade and ensure equality in decision making. By returning to these roots and building them into its structures and practices, Traidcraft Exchange hoped to accelerate industry transformation. To make this ambition clear, and distinguish itself further from Traidcraft PLC, the organisation adopted the new name of Transform Trade in 2022.

Transform Trade's first priority was to begin the process of decolonising the organisation's internal management systems. This included moving UK-based leadership roles to regional hubs in Asia and Africa and recruiting new board members to ensure diverse voices were driving decision making. Since mid-2024, Alice Oyaro, Transform Trade's interim CEO, has been leading the organisation from Nairobi, Kenya. She oversees an organisation that has arms in South Asia (Bangladesh and India), East Africa (Kenya and Tanzania) and the UK, valuing input from staff across all three locations.

In India, the social enterprise Tradecraft Services had already been working independently since 2015, 20 years after Tradecraft set up its first development programme in the country. The mission-driven social enterprise provides advisory and capacity building support to farmers and artisans, strengthening collectives to diversify production and improve access to markets. The organisation also works with businesses, foundations and government programmes, and has positioned itself as expert consultants on fairtrade in South Asia. The success of Tradecraft Services, as an independent partner within the Transform Trade global network, provided evidence of successful localisation within the organisation ahead of the full transformation.



## Delivering its mission



Transform Trade's new programmes are partner-led, which makes the organisation more effective in altering power structures across the trade industry. Its updated internal ways of working now align with its vision for the world. To achieve this vision, Transform Trade adapted its support for producer organisations from low- and middle-income countries in a variety of ways. For example:

### A. The Producer Fund

Previously, funding priorities were shaped by institutional funders' requirements. This resulted in high levels of focus on compliance which undermined producers' autonomy. To reduce barriers and implement grant-making led by the needs of the producers themselves, The Producer Fund was created.

At the start of the process, producers that would benefit from additional support are identified, primarily by the teams located in each region. Factors that are considered include social impact, the involvement of people who are marginalised in that context and the potential for growth. Once identified, Transform Trade works with the producers to understand and address their needs, for example by providing direct participatory grants for equipment or training, facilitating partnerships with like-minded organisations or working directly with producers on advocacy.

Fundraising then takes place, and the producers' ideas are at the forefront of these efforts. Individuals who want to donate have the opportunity to select a single producer group and receive updates about their progress. This approach amplifies the producers' voices and builds a connection between the donors and programme participants.

### B. Advocating for change

Transform Trade has put local voices at the heart of its advocacy approach. It did this in a number of ways, including by prioritising local voices in its research, amplifying campaigns that originated in low- and middle-income countries and

using the organisation's access to decision makers in the UK and EU to highlight producers' needs. For example, in a 2023 photography project in India, members of a women's garment collective in Tirupur were given cameras and trained to use them. Over the course of three months, they documented their experiences of the benefits and challenges of homeworking.

*"Through photographs I hope everyone will get to know that homebased workers exist and understand how we do the work."*

**K. Kavitha, homemaker and leader of a workers' collective in Tirupur**

By empowering producers to tell their own stories, and then amplifying those stories to decision makers, Transform Trade is advocating for a fairer international trade system.

### C. Social enterprise

After it went into administration, Traidcraft PLC was repurposed to operate on a much smaller scale as the trading arm of Transform Trade. As a social enterprise, it sells products made by the producers Transform Trade works with, alongside recycled paper products made in the UK. This includes tea, loo roll and greeting cards. By selling directly to consumers, Transform Trade supports the sustainability and growth of its partners.

## Operational shift

The changes Transform Trade has made demonstrate a return to its roots as a radical outsider. It has significantly shifted the organisation's day-to-day operations and adapted programming to focus on building long-term partnerships with producers as a route to systemic change within international trade.



# HelpAge International

## Returning to the organisation's origins as a decentralised global network

HelpAge International, a large organisation with an annual budget of £35 million, started life as an international network dedicated to supporting people who were ageing. Five organisations in Canada, Colombia, Kenya, India and the UK set up HelpAge International in 1983, and the network has grown steadily in size and influence since. It now has over 190 members and partners in more than 90 countries across the world.

Over the past four decades, as HelpAge's operations and impact grew, it gradually adopted components of a typical INGO structure, with its main decision-making body in the UK, regional offices and country programmes. Conversations within the HelpAge leadership about a move back to its roots as a decentralised network of locally led national programmes were already underway before Covid-19, but the pandemic was the catalyst that spurred the organisation to fully review its structure. The board accelerated plans to return to its founding principles and become more locally led, commissioning a strategic positioning paper that outlined the following plans:

1. To replace the regional offices with global portfolios
2. To fully commit to partner-led programming
3. To transition all 13 country programmes to independent, locally determined initiatives

This extensive process, impacting 400 staff, required new structures to be set up, including a transformation team which would oversee the operational changes and work closely with an executive leadership group.



## Transforming to local leadership across the network

One of the central aims of HelpAge's board and management was to empower national organisations to decide for themselves what kind of structure would be most suitable for the local context. Sessions were held with local consultants to identify options, and the final proposition for a way forward was formulated locally and approved by the board. Two primary pathways emerged. Some countries decided to become national organisations, some of which decided to keep the HelpAge brand, such as HelpAge Tanzania, while others underwent a re-brand, such as the Foundation for Ageing and Inclusive Development in Pakistan. A second group chose to set up a new national network, closing HelpAge in those countries. This includes the AMEL-hosted training centre in Lebanon, an advocacy platform in Bangladesh and the HelpAge Advocacy Network Uganda (HANU).

### HANU: a network within a network

With HelpAge's national office in Uganda closing, the eight Ugandan organisations that had been HelpAge International partners launched a new national network to support people who are ageing. This approach has allowed the organisations to continue utilising their wide-ranging expertise, while enhancing capacity building in leadership, decision making, networking and resource mobilisation.

***HANU is an organisation that is proudly Ugandan and exemplifies exactly what HelpAge intended from its transformation.***

## Changing the global operational structure

Whichever route to change country partners took was a complex endeavour which required extensive legal, asset, training and financial changes. The transformation team tried to ensure clear timelines to keep work progressing, while also providing enough space and capacity for a tailored approach within each country. This flexibility was particularly important in locations with active conflicts, such as Ethiopia, Myanmar and Lebanon. The process is due to start in Ukraine in March 2025.

One of the benefits of this leaner organisational structure was cost saving. The closure of regional offices, which had been expensive to run and maintain, enabled funding to be re-allocated to investments in the localisation of national structures and unrestricted seed funding for the newly independent organisations. While HelpAge has provided financial backing for these initiatives during the establishment phase, the national organisations will be responsible for securing future funding from other sources.

More international donor agencies have set policies which require them to send funding directly to the country where programmes take place, rather than via headquarters. It is now a critical time for the new national organisations within the HelpAge network to secure some of these new opportunities, and they are well positioned to capitalise on this.



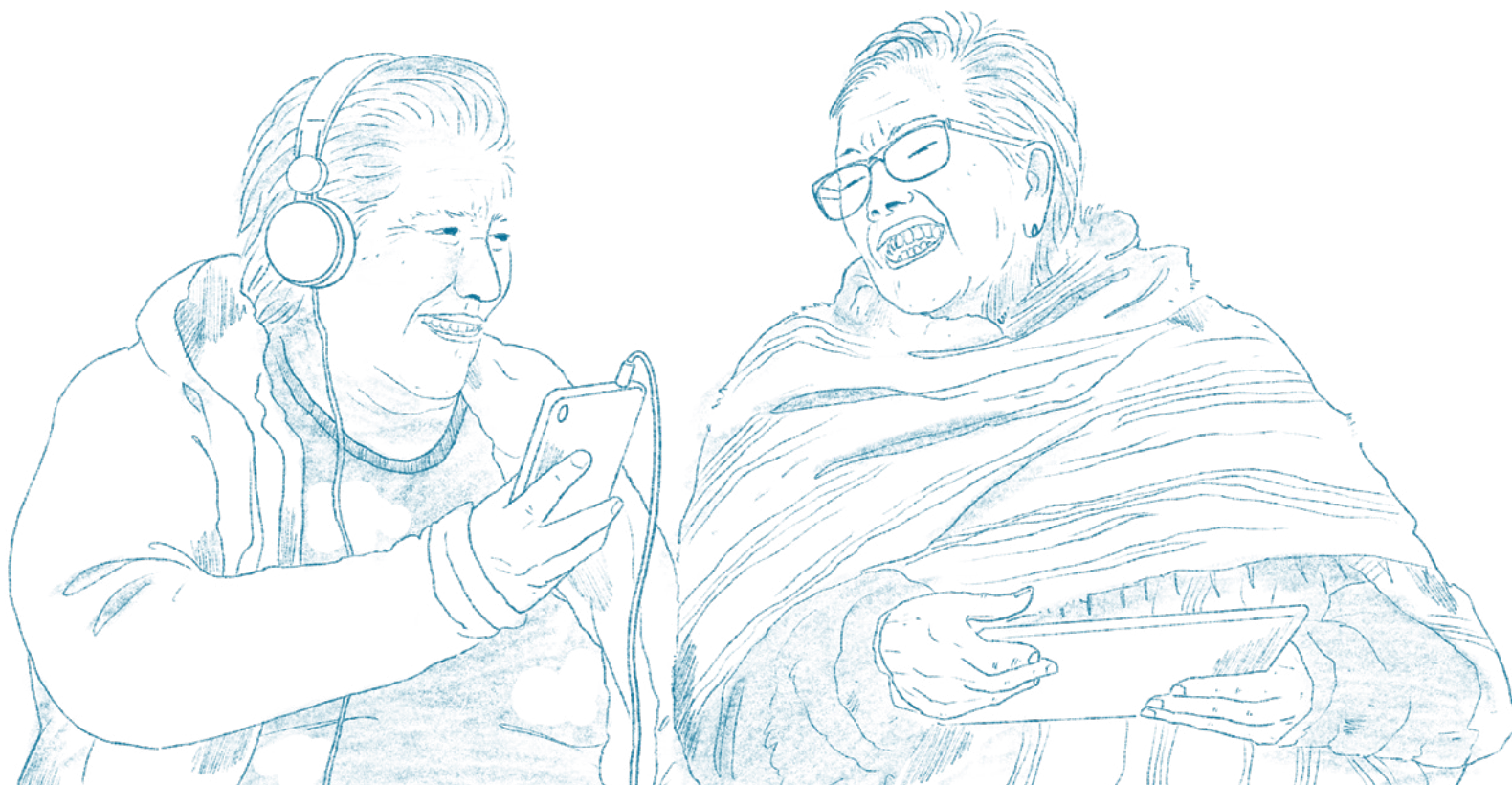
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## Defining the new role of HelpAge International

Although HelpAge International began as a network, for several decades many of its functions in regional and international offices were focused on donor stewardship, compliance and managing national programmes.

Alongside the localisation process, in which responsibilities were transitioning back to national organisations, HelpAge International's new global portfolios and teams are working hard on activating their new roles as supporters, convenors and thought-leaders of the global ageing agenda.

The organisation is committed to redefining its ways of working, locally, nationally and globally, although it remains the principal international voice representing the increasingly complex issue of ageing. HelpAge is midway through its transformation and is still navigating through a period of change and uncertainty as it continues to adapt to changing legal, financial and operational structures. Interestingly, the future that HelpAge International is moving towards has a similar, network-based approach to its founding principles. HelpAge continues to leverage the power of both the local and global within its international coalition to address the core issues facing older people.





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# Link Education

## Using systems-change thinking to guide organisational change

Link Education started life in 1989 as Link Africa, a student-led movement at the University of Cambridge. With roots in the anti-apartheid movement, Link Education has always been focused on education systems change. It believes the lack of access to quality education globally is the result of an embedded imbalance of power. Since its inception it has been working hard to address this, primarily in sub-Saharan Africa. Its efforts have included building the capacity of local education departments, supporting national education policy, improving teaching and school leadership, and engaging communities to challenge the multiple barriers standing between young people and a quality education.



### The move to decolonise

The rise of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 led to an internal reflection process at Link Education. Its growing recognition of the need to decolonise its approach, alongside a desire to live by its systems-change ethos, resulted in several strategic decisions.

Firstly, Link Education decided to address any unconscious bias in its team. The UK development sector has a history of presenting low- and middle-income countries – particularly in sub-Saharan Africa – in a way that undermines the autonomy and potential of the people who live there. While staff members were not consciously working to perpetuate this belief system, it was important for them to reflect on the ways in which they had been influenced by this bias and how best to combat it. Using a number of Bond's tools, including its Guide to Become Locally Led, the organisation underwent an internal review. This training, alongside a wider review process, led to staff advocating for a change in its internal management structures to become more locally led.

### Updating its structures

*"It takes buy-in from leadership to enact organisational change."*

In response to Link Education's review process, the CEO began questioning her role as global executive. What power structures are perpetuated by having an international CEO based in the UK? What ideas are missed or dismissed? What impact does this have on the charity's beneficiaries?

Ultimately, these questions led to a new co-leadership model for Link Education. The CEO became Executive Director – Operations and Resources of the UK entity, sided by an Executive Director – Programmes and Partnerships, with country offices led by national leadership where possible. For example, Link Malawi and Link Uganda have always operated independently with their own board of trustees, and Link Ethiopia is now considering transitioning to a fully national team run through local structures. To prevent siloed working, a global decision-making body was established with representation across the organisation. This international management team includes staff from Ethiopia, Malawi, Uganda and the UK and meets regularly to make decisions on strategy and implementation. This ensures all country offices have an equal voice in the organisation's future direction.

## Amplifying local voices and learning

Historically, many INGOs based in high-income countries have seen their role primarily as trainers and experts, imparting their knowledge to colleagues in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC). While aspects of this remain important, Link Education has begun prioritising learning between LMIC partners, much like HelpAge International. This approach ensures that experience-informed knowledge of what works in a local context can be shared between national teams.

Beyond facilitating learning, Link Education has also worked hard to further amplify voices from local partners. For example, more local experts are attending international conferences to inform decisions and global approaches. A locally led webinars series has also been established to provide a platform for experts in low- and middle-income countries to speak more prominently within key debates on the direction of the humanitarian sector.

## The future

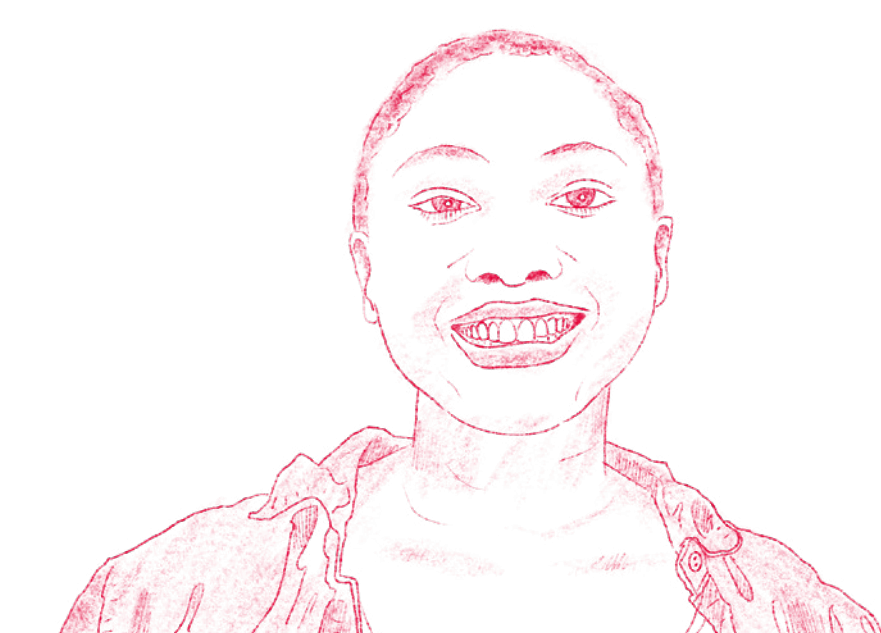
While Link Education has taken several bold steps to reconnect with its systems-change ethos and become more locally led, it recognises there is still a way to go. Some of its plans include working harder to embed community's voices in its internal decision-making processes, building a more diverse global board and educating donors about the benefits of its new approach. It is an ongoing process, but one the organisation is committed to seeing through. Quality education for all remains its unwavering mission.



# Avert

## Co-creating locally owned, internationally recognised brands

Avert has a 38-year history of working on HIV, predominantly across East and Southern Africa. Its work has focused on information sharing, including supporting efforts to build the knowledge, health literacy and agency of people most affected by HIV. In recent years, Avert has focused on using digital strategies to reach people and has built two high impact digital brands. Since Avert's foundation, the nature of the HIV epidemic has changed significantly, and global interest in funding HIV-related programmes has dropped. In response to this shift, coupled with Avert's desire to continue making maximum impact, the organisation underwent a strategic review. Ultimately, it decided to align itself with the decolonisation and localisation movements and evolve into a fully locally led model.



### Deciding to transition

In 2023, Avert decided it was the right time to transition its UK funding, assets and programmes to African-run and -led organisations.

*"When Avert took this decision, the need for our work remained strong. Sexual health and HIV literacy was and still is the foundation for HIV prevention and treatment programmes and critically builds agency, empowers and allows for informed choice. Our brands were strong and growing, reaching over 13 million people across sub-Saharan Africa last year alone. But the HIV response, funding patterns, and the international development sector more broadly were all continuing to change. So, like all international NGOs should, we asked ourselves if we were still best placed to deliver this work, or whether we should step back and allow others to move forwards."*

**Sarah Hand, CEO, Avert and Simon Moore, Director of Programmes and Digital Health Strategy**

The transformation process completed in December 2024 and will be finalised in March 2025 when the full asset transfer and liquidation of the UK charity takes place. This is the culmination of a 15-month intensive process which was only possible due to a clear core strategy and strong leadership and commitment across

the whole team. From the outset, all 10 UK staff knew that delivering the transition strategy would mean their roles would be made redundant on completion. Despite this, 90% of the staff remained until the end, working hard to mentor the takeover partners, sharing their years of experience to ensure success.

For Avert, the closure of the UK entity marks a new beginning, and it has been a very creative and future-focused process.

## Locally-owned brands

Central to Avert's story of change was transitioning its core digital brands to be run by African counterparts. These core brands are Boost, a digital job aid for community health workers, and Be in the Know, a digital product offering trusted content on sex and sexual health. While the investment for these brands came from the UK charity, they were co-created and co-designed with local partners. A key part of Avert's conviction that transition could be successful was the existing evidence of the strength and impact of these two key brands to foster informed choices on sexual health and HIV prevention.

Co design was essential to ensure that local organisations saw the brands as 'theirs' and would continue managing them successfully into the future. Boost had benefited from a five-year relationship with national NGO the Organization for Public Health Interventions and Development in Zimbabwe, which had already integrated it into a large USAID programme before the transition. In addition, a rebranded version of Boost called Himarika has been adopted by LVCT Health in Kenya to scale up in the East Africa region.. Be in the Know has been taken over by Well Made Strategy's Kenya Comms Hub. This demonstrates that the core products resonate internationally.

Avert was clear that the transformation could only have long-term success if the brands were of clear strategic value to the takeover organisations and would support their existing strategies. Having established this, Avert is now able to close, safe in the knowledge that two powerful African-led brands have been rebirthed.

## Closing a UK charity, while boosting African partner organisations

A core part of Avert's transformation strategy, much like The Mango Tree's, was to raise additional funding to support the transition. This was achieved by sharing the newly formed transformation strategy with their donors, who saw the value of investing both to support the localisation agenda and to safeguard their previous investment in the brands. The additional funds allowed time for Avert staff to fully engage with and mentor staff at the new takeover partners throughout 2024. The additional funds also meant that Avert had an accumulated reserve of 12-month's running costs for the two brands. These funds will be transferred to the new Africa-based partners to support ownership and provide breathing space for them to finalise a longer-term funding and sustainability plan.

It is also worth noting that the process for final closure of the UK charity is closely and legally connected to the growth of the African entities. Avert's dissolution clause, which is present in all charity constitutions, will be activated in March 2025. At this point, all remaining financial assets held in the UK bank will be transferred to its charity's partners in Zimbabwe and Kenya. It is symbolic at the completion of a localisation process that all the assets, both financial and intellectual, will be inherited by the local partners rather than 'donated'.





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## A rapid but successful approach

Looking back at its journey over the past year, Avert has moved quickly and decisively to its point of handover. A key lesson from the process is don't drip feed change. Once Avert's staff knew transitioning was the right approach for the organisation, they didn't hesitate and this set them up for success. The decision was made while the organisation was still in good financial health and the brands themselves had benefited from good investment. There was capacity and adequate funding to implement an effective transition.

While this is the end of an era at Avert, it is the beginning of a new chapter in Kenya and Zimbabwe. Avert's role in leading international efforts to end AIDS is now placed in the hands of locally led organisations. Planning its transition and close-out allowed Avert time to produce a legacy report. This captures the breadth of work achieved by the organisation over the decades which will live on. Later in 2025, Avert will share learning from the transition process to support other organisations considering a similar move.



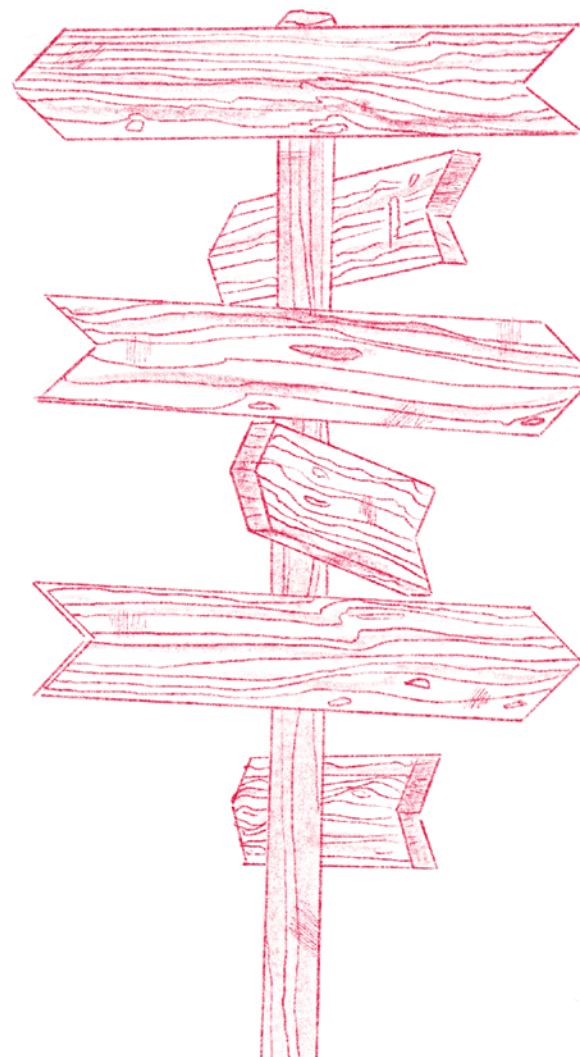
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# What these case studies show

These case studies show there is no 'one size fits all' approach to INGOs becoming locally led. Not only did the organisations in these case studies have different starting points in their journey, their final destinations also varied: some UK-registered charities closed, while others took on a new role within their global organisations, entering a different form of partnership.

The amount of time required to transform also varied between organisations, depending on their funding situation, size, organisational structure and local context. What was common across all the organisations was the need to be decisive, both at the moment of recognition of the need for strategic change and to navigate a series of challenging decisions during the process. It is clear that transforming an INGO necessarily involves risks, while success requires a strong level of consensus, built internally with staff and trustees and externally with funders.

One of the key lessons is that, while the process of transformation requires challenging reductions in terms of funding cuts, redundancies and restructures, the strategy for becoming locally led must be highly creative. Leaders challenged themselves and their teams to imagine a different future and new ways of working, and this took courage, determination and hard work. Interestingly, each of these organisations was able to retain, and often returned to, their founding purpose and values.





# Key themes

Each case study has been told from the context-specific view of the organisation involved. This provides a diverse range of examples and several different approaches. Nevertheless, key themes cut across all the case studies, which may help to inform your organisation's transformation journey. The following themes are also shared in Bond's [Guide to Become Locally Led](#).



## Purpose and strategy

Some form of strategic review was key to each organisation's transformation. Sessions that maximised the involvement of staff as well as senior management were most successful. Sessions often benefitted from an external, neutral facilitator.



## Governance structures and decision making

Without change at the governance level, an organisation will not transform. Diversity within non-executive boards and changes in international senior management team dynamics were common in initiating organisation-wide change.



## Programmes and partnerships

Organisations that already had partner-led programmes were able to transition more smoothly to locally led development. Within international organisations, the internal power dynamics between grant holders and implementing partners are a core area to review.



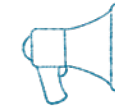
## Funding and relationships with funding partners

Involving funding partners as early as possible is key to success. Donors who 'bought in' to the INGO's localisation strategies were more likely to provide crucial funding to support their partner's transformation.



## HR and operations

Changes to staff positions across the whole organisation are a reality, and they are a key operational challenge of transformation. Consultation across the organisation for those in roles that will change or be made redundant is therefore essential.



## Communications and marketing

Both internal and external communications were common components of success. In addition to financial and operational structures, transformations involve changes to an INGO's brand. Organisations may need to change their name or create a new visual identity.



## Values and culture

Across the case studies, an organisational commitment to principles of locally led development, often coupled with decolonisation of development, was present. In each case, organisations achieved change by reflecting on, and returning to, their core values.

