



The Glocalization Model

A locally-led, globally supported
approach to localization

September 2026

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Why Reading This Report Is Worth Your Time

The Glocalization Model responds to a tension at the heart of international development: local organizations have the knowledge, relationships, and expertise needed to lead change, while global organizations have access to resources, networks, opportunities, and expertise that can strengthen that work. Too often, however, the sector relies on approaches that reproduce extractive, hierarchical dynamics by concentrating decision-making power in the hands of global actors, leaving local organizations to implement priorities determined elsewhere. This often leads to localization in name and intention but not in practice.

The Glocalization Model offers an alternative. It creates a structure in which local actors lead and global actors have a clear, purposeful way to support. The simple premise is that we can achieve incredible things together without expecting local actors to give up their autonomy or requiring global actors to step away from supporting change. Rather than choosing between local isolation and global dominance, Glocalization as an approach brings the two together in a way that enables locally led, globally supported collective action. This, ultimately, is what leads to social impact that lasts.

The Glocalization Model is not a theory or an idea, it's a practical and proven approach. We co-created the Model first for our own work with the Flying Labs Network. We soon learned that our approach could prove valuable for other organizations and began documenting what we learned and paying close attention to what worked and what did not. The Model has grown through this cycle of doing, reflecting, adapting, and doing again, for ourselves and for others.

In 2022, we published our first report, [This One Continues to Shine](#), capturing our early learnings. In 2024, our second report, [Glocalization: From Local to Global and Back Again](#), built on those foundations, adding two more years of intensive exploration and refinement.



Since then, four organizations have adopted the Glocalization Model, giving us the opportunity to learn what it takes to make it applicable to the work of other organizations. At the same time, we have continued to fine-tune the Model in our own work with the Flying Labs Network, extending its use into collaborations and solutions.



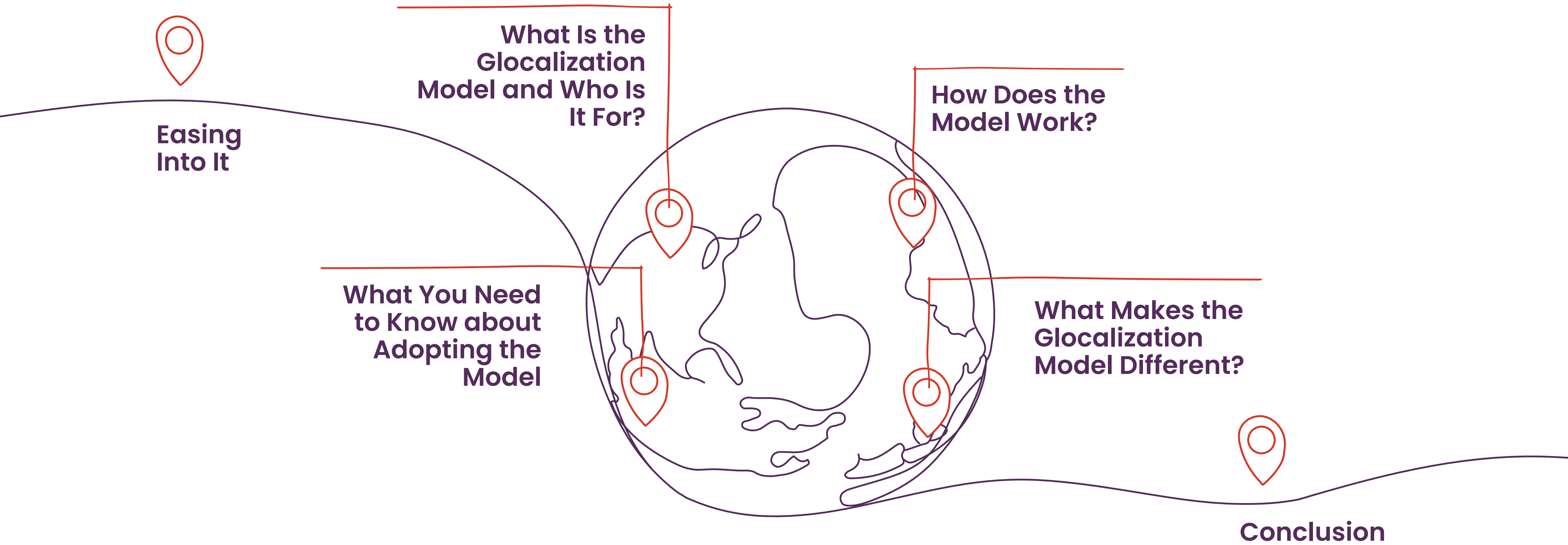
This third report carries that journey forward. It brings together the lessons, questions, successes, and missteps that we have experienced over the past two and a half years, including what we have learned through the first adoptions of the Model.

We dream of the day when we can turn these learnings into a detailed adoption handbook — a practical guide for those who want to take the Model, make it their own, and carry it into new contexts without our direct support. That handbook will come one day. For now, this report is another step towards it.

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Reader Guidance

There is no single way to read this report. We have designed it to give you the freedom to begin with what you are most curious about before wandering into other sections as they catch your attention. The easily recognizable subtitle pages are there to help you find your way through the ideas, experiences, and insights we share.



Easing Into It



How do we make the world a better place?

A simple answer is: Together, each of us shining a bright light in the corners of this planet where we find ourselves.

But the on-the-ground reality as well as the bird's eye view both tell us that while it is simple, it is not easy. Complex social challenges — such as alleviating poverty, delivering humanitarian aid in the wake of disaster, protecting biodiversity, and promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth — are complex because the factors that create and sustain them are numerous, interconnected, and deeply rooted.

Most significantly perhaps, each strand of this links directly to human life, not just to broad statistics. When this is what is at stake, more is asked of us — more care, more thoughtfulness, more humility.

No one person or organization can carry this alone. And history has taught us that when only a few are assumed to know what is best for everyone else, we leave too many of us behind. To make a better world, the power to create change has to be held in all of our hands. The sum of our collective effort can become something larger, more capable than what any of us could achieve alone. Individual acts of changemaking begin to join and reinforce one another, much like small mountain streams gathering as they travel downhill, becoming a river greater than any of its tributaries.

So we know we need to work together. Proverbs abound in our various languages and cultures telling us the same thing in different ways. United we stand, divided we fall. Many hands make light work. A bundle of sticks remains unbroken. Alone we go fast, together we go far. All to say that we are stronger — and better — together.

But it is easier said than done. When we look closer at what it would take to do this, the monumental task is clear before us. How do we practically bring

together people with different experiences and expertise, perspectives and priorities, and somehow enable them to move in concert towards a vision that they all hope to realize?

First, it requires the willingness to see one another, to see that we have different ways of seeing, and to see that this can be a strength if we allow it. Diversity is not an obstacle to collective action but an essential part of it. And it cannot be merely represented — it has to be genuinely welcomed, fully lived, and allowed to influence the work if it is to matter at all.

It also requires spaces where the human beings doing the work can remain at the center. Meaningful collaboration depends on precisely those human qualities that systems can struggle to hold: trust, curiosity, patience, reciprocity, connection. The work asks us to recognize authentic relationships as a critical part of it, and to learn how to facilitate them without needing to control them.

And finally, collective action needs an ecosystem capable of holding all of this together in a way that is scalable and sustainable.

WeRobotics has been on a journey, at times unknowingly, to create such an ecosystem. Along the way, we have found ways to bring together collective action, diversity, technology, and a people-first approach to achieve social impact at scale — one of which is the operating and scaling model we co-created for the Flying Labs Network.

In this report, we share with you the story of our Glocalization Model.



Making Sense of “Glocal”

The story of the word “glocal” begins with soil.

The Japanese term dochakuka was originally used in agriculture to describe the process by which crops or farming methods introduced from elsewhere became adapted to the unique conditions of a particular place. Literally meaning “becoming rooted in the local soil” or “taking root where one is planted,” the word pointed out that nothing really flourishes by being transplanted unchanged. You have to listen to the land and understand its rhythms, and you have to allow what is planted to be altered by where it is planted.

As Japan’s economy expanded during the 1970s and 1980s, this agricultural metaphor found new life in the world of business. Companies looking beyond their national borders recognized that success did not come from exporting identical products, strategies, or ways of working to every corner of the world. Instead, they embraced the philosophy of dochakuka, adapting to fit the cultures, needs, and aspirations of the communities they hoped to serve. The goal was not merely to enter a new market, but to belong within it, to become so responsive to the local context that the organization no longer felt like an outsider but a natural part of the landscape.

From this eventually emerged the English word “glocalization”, blending “globalization” and “localization.” It gained prominence in the English-speaking world through the work of sociologist Roland Robertson, who argued that globalization should not be understood as a force that erases local identities but rather as an ongoing interaction between global and local factors, which continually influence and redefine each other.

What is striking about the Japanese understanding is that it is far richer than the idea of localization as it is often understood today. Localization can often

imply making adjustments at the end of a process: translating the language or changing the design of a product that has already been conceived elsewhere. Dochakuka suggests a deeper thing. It evokes the image of roots pushing into the earth, drawing nourishment from their surroundings, and in turn becoming part of the ecosystem itself. It reminds us that places are not blank canvases awaiting outside solutions. Every community already possesses its own history, relationships, knowledge, and ways of making sense of the world. Anything new that hopes to endure must enter into conversation with what is already there.

This is what was lost in the transition from Japanese to English. Glocalization describes the meeting of the global and the local, but it leaves behind the image of taking root, which gives us a more organic understanding of change. A plant does not simply sit upon the soil. Its roots penetrate it, responding to its texture, its nutrients, its seasons, and its constraints. The soil shapes the plant, even as the plant gradually reshapes the soil around it.

When WeRobotics adopted the word glocalization, we did not know this history. We arrived at it from experience rather than scholarship, through a decade of amplifying the power of local expertise in the Tech4Good sector. Over those 10 years, we understood that lasting impact begins with the power of local experts — that local leadership, knowledge, and decision-making must remain firmly at the center of development efforts. But our experience with the Flying Labs Network also revealed that localization alone was not the whole story.

The Network created something more: a space where local experts could learn from one another across borders, exchange ideas born of their own contexts, and return home with new perspectives to adapt and apply. Knowledge traveled from the local to the global and back again, enriched by everything it touched.



In addition, we witnessed the potency of the relationship between the local and the global both through our own support of Flying Labs and the support provided by our global partner ecosystem, built in parallel to the Network and comprising organizational and technology partners. This was an important part of our learning: sustaining local action requires connection to global tools, relationships, opportunities, and expertise.

Our work taught us that the most enduring impact arises not from choosing between the local and the global but from cultivating a living relationship between them in which each is changed by the other and both are made more. From this comes an interdependence that allows social impact to be first locally led and then globally supported — and therefore sustainable. The word glocalization gave language to what we had already been practicing, and so we embraced it.

We could not have found a more fitting metaphor than the one dochakuka offers. It reminds us that lasting impact is made by the willingness to change and be changed. We are, we believe, much richer for it and proud to draw from it in our work as we amplify the Power of Glocal.



What Is the Glocalization Model and Who Is It For?

This section introduces the Glocalization Model: what it is, how it came to be, how it has served us, and how it might serve other organizations. It contextualizes the Model within the international development space.



Trying Out a New Approach

In 2016, we started out with an idea: finding an alternative way of localizing emerging technologies such as drones for the social good sector — not with a top-down approach but driven by local need and led by local technology experts. We believed that by connecting and supporting local drone and data experts, we could harness diversity of experience and perspective into a collective repository of knowledge that not only multiplied solutions to social and environmental challenges in the Global South but also ensured that the impact was locally led and globally supported — and therefore sustainable.

We started with a 2-year proof-of-concept in 3 countries to understand how local knowledge hubs using drones for social good could build capacity in their own countries and communities. These first 3 Flying Labs in Nepal, Tanzania and Peru were the forerunners to what would become the largest global network for drones for social good: [the Flying Labs Network](#).

To our surprise, even during the proof-of-concept phase, organizations from other countries across Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia-Pacific expressed to us their interest in joining the mission to localize drone technology for social good in their communities. With that came important questions:

- How could we keep growing without reproducing the very power dynamics we were out to challenge?
- How could Flying Labs remain independent while still benefiting from collaboration, knowledge exchange, and a shared mission?
- How could we ensure that no one was left behind and that diversity remained a source of strength rather than something to be managed?

The answers to those questions are what ultimately became the Glocalization Model. It is the structure that holds the Network together and allows it to grow organically, based on local needs and demand.

We co-created the first version of the Model as we went, beginning in 2018. As new questions came up — how should the Network be stewarded? How should decisions be made? How do we define roles and responsibilities collectively? How do we identify shared priorities while respecting local needs? How do we create opportunities and spaces for knowledge exchange? How do we welcome new members while also supporting those who choose to leave? How do we establish shared standards without sacrificing local autonomy? — we answered them with Flying Labs and strengthened the Model with each iteration.

In essence, we built the Model for our own work, to turn our initial idea into practice. And we are still building it, with every conversation, every adaptation, and every decision about how we can better support locally led action through a global network. In parallel, we documented our journey, believing that one day, our experience could serve and support other organizations, both local and global.



What It Looks Like in Practice

The Flying Labs Network is separate from WeRobotics. We are not in charge of Flying Labs — a distinction we have sometimes found ourselves amused to explain when people refer to them as “WeRobotics’ Flying Labs.” We have separate legal entities and distinct brand identities precisely because we want to make this relationship visible: we are connected, but we are not the same.

From that distinction flows the rest of our working relationship. Rather than teams that we manage, Flying Labs are our colleagues, fellow travelers on a journey we are on together. Decisions about the Network are made with Flying Labs, not for them. We ask what they need, listen to what matters to them, and work together to design ways of working that respond to those needs.

This is fundamental to how the Glocalization Model has evolved. We do not develop the Model in isolation and then ask Flying Labs to work within it. We develop it with them, in co-creation.

This requires more than occasional consultation. Our Coordination team stays in regular conversation with Flying Labs, checking in and remaining attuned to their circumstances, priorities, challenges, and ambitions — and to how we as a team can best support them. It is intensive, relationship-driven work, grounded in trust and sustained through many points of connection. Our Coordinators carry this work with remarkable care, which we explored in more detail [in this blog post](#).

We also create spaces for the wider Network to come together. Three times a year, we hold a call with all Flying Labs to share how we have translated the changes we have co-created into our work and to keep everyone connected to the direction we are taking together. Every three years, we go a step further, bringing Flying Labs from across the Network together in person for a global

retreat. Every other year, we organize regional retreats. These gatherings give us the rare opportunity to pause, reflect on how far we have come, and collectively imagine the road ahead.

And so the Glocalization Model is a thing alive, evolving as it needs to. Even after 10 years, we are still learning, refining, and co-creating it with Flying Labs, adapting it as the Network and its needs evolve. This flexibility is intentional. The Model does not attempt to fit people and relationships into rigid boxes. Nor does it rely on command-and-control approaches that reinforce traditional power dynamics. Instead, it creates the conditions for both independence and interdependence. It provides clarity and transparency, allowing trust and relationships to flourish while ensuring everyone understands how they contribute to the mission.



What the Glocalization Model Is For Us

Scale is one of those ideas in the development sector that often inspires as much unease as excitement. Growth means inviting more people into your mission. It means making room at the table for new perspectives and new ways of working. Sometimes it means releasing your work into the hands of others, trusting that it will evolve beyond your direct influence. For many organizations, that loss of control can feel unsettling. Yet without it, meaningful and lasting change is difficult to achieve.

At WeRobotics, we see the Glocalization Model as our “operating model”, or our “scale model”. Because of this, the Model remains at the heart of all our work, guiding our approaches to everything because it gives us a clear path to ensure trust, accountability, and the kind of radical collaboration that those two things make possible. It provides what we call the “people infrastructure” that allows independent grassroots initiatives and collective global action to strengthen one another with a clear direction: locally led, globally supported.

Here is a summary of how it works for us.

- Local experts within the Flying Labs Network design, decide, finance, lead and implement the drones, data and GeoAI solutions their communities need.
- WeRobotics takes on the role of the Flying Labs Network steward. In this supporting role, we provide Flying Labs with the support, additional resources, and visibility that the local experts of the Flying Labs identify as valuable.
- In parallel, WeRobotics facilitates and grows a global ecosystem of partners to connect Flying Labs to fitting technologies, opportunities and additional global expertises in line with their expressed needs.
- Flying Labs members connect with their peers in the Network across borders to exchange ideas, share lessons, and collaborate with other Flying

Labs facing similar challenges to develop better approaches together.

- They then bring those insights home, adapting and refining them within their own contexts.
- This allows resources to flow from local, to global, and back again to local. Thus, local and global actors connect and grow together, as equal contributors to a shared body of knowledge, creating an ecosystem where everyone both teaches and learns. This cycle of contribution, adaptation, and shared learning builds interdependence. Instead of concentrating expertise, it distributes it. And instead of growing our own organization, it scales locally owned solutions.



What the Glocalization Model Can Be for Other Organizations

As the localization movement gained momentum over the last decade through calls to #ShiftThePower, we realized that our model offered a practical answer to a question many organizations were asking: What does shifting power actually look like in practice?

The international development sector at large recognizes that local experts are best positioned to design, implement, and sustain solutions within their own communities. But too often still, particularly in emerging economies, local actors remain excluded from decision-making or are limited to implementing strategies designed elsewhere. This not only restricts local innovation but also undermines the long-term sustainability of development initiatives.

At the same time, many successful local solutions struggle to spread beyond their immediate context, not because they are ineffective but because there are few mechanisms for peers to discover, adapt, and replicate them. Existing approaches to scaling often become highly centralized, leaving little room for more collaborative and distributed approaches.

The Glocalization Model addresses both of these challenges. It creates a decentralized structure within which local actors can connect with peers in similar contexts and with global platforms, partners, and resources — which enables a locally led and globally supported way to co-create, replicate, scale, and adapt solutions. It creates enough clarity to keep a network aligned while leaving enough flexibility for local innovation and ownership to flourish.

In short: the Model is a fitting scaling model for local social enterprises that want to grow their work to more geographies and take their work global. It's also a powerful operating model for international and global organizations who want to take their localization and #ShiftThePower efforts a step further and/or try out a bottom-up and decentralized power approach to localization — for a program or for their full operations.



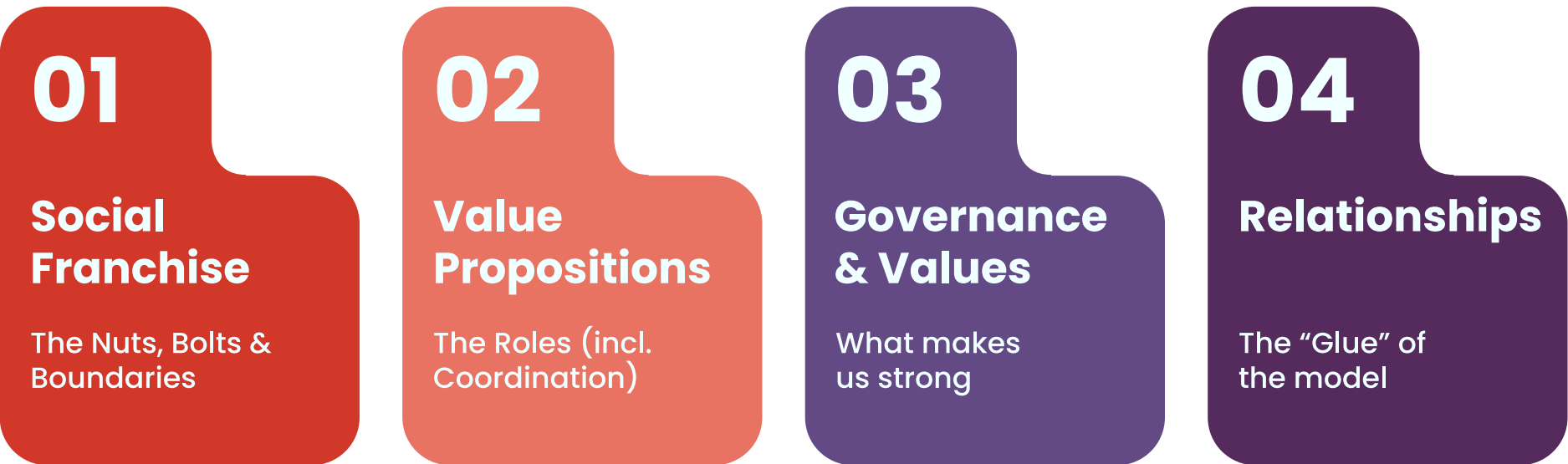
How Does the Model Work?

Here, we move from the principles into practice, looking at the different elements that make the Model work and why each of them matters.



For us the Glocalization Model has always consisted of interwoven elements — some that were there from the beginning and others emerging along the way as our experiences revealed something new that needed to be made explicit. The Governance element, for example, came later, influenced by what we were learning about shared decision-making.

Our first experience supporting an organization with adopting the Model in 2022 (see the Case Studies section) gave us an opportunity to step outside our own perspective and look at the Model with fresh eyes. We had to figure out how to explain something we had largely learned by doing, making its different parts visible enough for others to understand and make their own. What we learned is that, in essence, the Model can be broken down into the following interconnected elements that make it work.



The effectiveness of the Glocalization Model comes from the way the four elements reinforce one another. Organizations cannot adopt only the parts of the model they find comfortable — in practice, this won't work. It would mean that they end up with another management system rather than a transformation that matters in the long run. A decentralized governance system without clear Value Propositions will create confusion. A Social Franchise without shared governance will create top-down bureaucracy. Shared values without practical processes will become aspirations rather than reality.

A Point to Carry

Each element exists because it supports the others. Together they create an operating model that is simultaneously structured and adaptable, independent and collaborative — and most importantly, that keeps leadership in the hands of the people closest to the challenges they seek to solve.



1. The Social Franchise: Creating Shared Identity

A strong network needs a foundation that brings its members together and gives them a shared identity. The Social Franchise provides this base. It defines the practical structures that allow local organizations to come together while maintaining their autonomy. Rather than prescribing exactly how every member should operate, the Social Franchise establishes the expectations and standards that each member agrees to adhere to, and this then creates trust across the network.

The Social Franchise answers questions such as:

- What is the mission and vision?
- What informs the brand identity of the network?
- Who can become a member?
- How can members join, stay, and leave?
- What standards of expertise and quality do members need to meet?
- How will coordination within the network happen?
- What agreements, policies, and guidelines are necessary?
- What processes need to exist?
- What shared resources are required?

These are the nuts and bolts that create clarity and consistency while preserving room for local adaptation and innovation. Many organizations discover that they have grown organically over time, relying on informal understandings that work well with a small team but become increasingly difficult to sustain as the organization grows. The Social Franchise turns these into transparent systems that everyone can understand and contribute to.

Much like a business franchise, the Social Franchise operates through a licensing arrangement. When organizations join the network, they receive a license to use the Social Franchise, and this authorizes them to operate under the shared identity of the wider network. In this way, each network member remains an independent organization while also becoming part of something larger.

A Point to Carry

The license is not about ownership or control. It does not subordinate network members to a central authority. Instead, it provides the contractual structure through which independent, local organizations can connect to one another and to the wider Network while retaining their own legal identities, leadership, and connection to the contexts in which they work.



2. The Value Propositions: Defining What Everyone Has to Offer

Decentralizing and sharing power succeeds only when everyone understands both what they have to offer and what they stand to gain. The Value Propositions answer questions such as:

- Who do we serve?
- What unique value do we create?
- Who do we need to partner with in order to deliver our unique value?

Under the Glocalization Model, networks are composed of two bodies: the network itself and the network steward. The network steward is the body that takes care of coordinating and facilitating the activities of the network, guided by the needs of the network members. In our case, Flying Labs are the members of the Flying Labs Network while WeRobotics serves as the steward of the Network.

There are therefore two Value Propositions: one that makes clear the roles, contributions, and responsibilities of the network steward to the network, and another that does the same for network members to their local stakeholders.

What is the value of the network steward to the network?

The network steward creates the conditions that enable the network members to succeed, and it does this by facilitating connections among network members, providing shared resources, securing global partnerships that are valuable to and in line with needs of the network members, convening learning opportunities, coordinating network-wide activities, and documenting the network's impact, development, and evolution.

This work then makes it possible for network members to contribute their

expertise, share their knowledge and experiences openly and regularly, learn from and collaborate with their peers, and participate in shaping how the network moves forward.

As the steward of the Flying Labs Network, WeRobotics handles the administration of the Social Franchise licenses, as well as network-wide Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL), communication, and technical drone and data support — in addition to the tasks mentioned above. The support we provide changes with the needs of Flying Labs. For example, in the early days, much of this support was technical, but as Flying Labs built up their own capacities, they increasingly took ownership of this work. Our role has therefore shifted towards the areas where Flying Labs continue to benefit from our expertise and resources. Today, this includes, among other things, support with regulations and policies and creating methodologies that help them deliver more impactful activities.



What It Looks Like in Practice

One of the key roles held by WeRobotics is the creation, facilitation, and expansion of an ecosystem of global partners that provide additional value and support to the Flying Labs Network. This ecosystem includes different kinds of partners, each contributing to and supporting the work of Flying Labs in a different way.

- **Technology partners** provide in-kind technology and train or certify Flying Labs in the use of their technologies. This gives Flying Labs access to tools and expertise that would otherwise be out of reach. For example, Flying Labs gain access to free software licenses of leading technologies, receive train-the-trainer training directly from drone soft- and hardware companies and access free or reduced certifications to become technology certifiers themselves, a service they can then provide to clients in their countries.
- **Private-sector partners** provide pro-bono services to support WeRobotics and Flying Labs with frameworks, methodologies, and other resources that strengthen our work. For example, a private sector consultancy company provided extensive pro-bono services to create a drone regulations framework that WeRobotics and Flying Labs can implement together with Civil Aviation Authorities to inform drone regulations.
- **Organizational partners** (INGOs, multilateral and UN agencies, etc.) provide opportunities for local activities and collaborations to Flying Labs. For example, UN agencies outsource drone capacity building for their teams and organizations they support to Flying Labs instead of running such programs themselves.

Our ecosystem of global partners reflects a deliberate decision about how WeRobotics grows. Instead of expanding the organization in size, we keep a small core team focused on the key areas where our direct support matters most while investing in relationships and partnerships that can extend the

Network's reach and impact far beyond what our own team can manage. We do not try to house every expertise and resource within WeRobotics. Rather, we open the door to what already exists in the world and bring it into relationship with the Network.

This approach further refines WeRobotics' role as a facilitator. It allows us to tap into the best existing expertise and technologies directly from global market leaders and connect their supply with the demand of trusted, vetted local actors who can effectively utilize these resources within their varied local contexts.



What is the value of network members to their local stakeholders?

Because members are independent organizations, they each have their own clients, partners, and/or funders, and they operate within the specific realities of their local contexts. The value they provide through their work is connected to the network's broader mission and vision as articulated through the Social Franchise but takes different forms at the local level depending on each member's expertise, priorities, resources, and the needs of their local communities.

For example, Flying Labs support stakeholders of civil society, government, academia, research institutes and communities in their countries to sustainably and responsibly include drones, data and GeoAI into their work. Each Flying Labs adapts this Network-wide Value Proposition to their own expertise and the needs of their stakeholders. Some Flying Labs may only focus on one or two sectors, like agriculture and environmental monitoring, while others may work across a multitude. Some may only offer drone piloting and drone data capacity building while others may also offer national certification. Some also organize local conferences or support Civil Aviation Authorities with consultancy services for regulations in addition to capacity building through training and projects. This choice is fully up to each individual Flying Labs.

The Value Propositions are crucial to outlining with clarity how the network members and network steward relate to each other, thereby supporting effective collaboration within the network and maintaining unity of mind. This way, the network steward and network members complement each other, creating a relationship built on mutual value rather than dependency. And from this relationship comes the value that the network as a whole offers to its local and global partners.



3. Governance: Distributing Leadership

Governance is often where organizations encounter the deepest questions because governance is ultimately about power. Rather than concentrating authority in a central organization, the Glocalization Model creates clear pathways for collective participation and decision-making.

Shared decision-making

Shared decision-making is what allows power to remain distributed as a network grows. It invites diverse network members to contribute to strategic and operational direction, and it makes this the starting point rather than the final step that's tacked on just to check a box. Additionally, shared decision-making creates mechanisms for accountability and feedback.

In 2020, after four years of organic growth for the Flying Labs Network, WeRobotics began to explore how to share network governance with Flying Labs. With a larger and more diverse community, it was necessary to adapt our ways of engaging with one another to prioritize inclusivity in our decision-making and strategy. In 2024, following co-creation workshops within our team and with Flying Labs, we launched the Flying Labs Network Council — made up of regionally distributed Flying Labs coordinators — to take co-ownership of Network stewardship.

The Council provides Flying Labs with a formal voice in determining the future of the Network. Through these representatives, Flying Labs influence the Network's growth, direction, and long-term strength. This shared governance structure ensures that WeRobotics does not make operational decisions about the Network in isolation. Additionally, ensuring representation from the different geographical regions in which the Network is present means that the diverse contexts, priorities, and experiences of the Network are reflected in everyday decision-making.

Self-evaluation

Governance is also reinforced through accountability and reflective practice. Using agreed-upon criteria defined through co-creation, network members periodically evaluate their own alignment, participation, and contribution to the network, creating accountability that comes from shared ownership rather than external oversight.

For the Flying Labs Network, the annual global self-evaluation presents an opportunity for each Flying Labs to look at its performance over the past year and gauge it based on the criteria agreed upon and regularly updated by the Network as a whole. Self-evaluation makes the space for honesty and for growth that matches each Flying Labs' capacity and goals. Consequences imposed from an external body are replaced with a network-wide benchmark and open sharing of results. In addition, Flying Labs work with the WeRobotics team to assess how they might build on what they have accomplished in the coming year. That way the independence of each Flying Labs is respected and supported even as each works towards strengthening its operations, sustainability, contribution, and accountability to the Network.

Interesting to note: it was Flying Labs in 2020 that asked WeRobotics to lead the co-creation of a governance structure, based on the understanding that a network is only as strong as its weakest link.

Core values

While the Value Propositions define the value offered to others, the core values help guide how that value is created. They act as a kind of guiding light, helping members shape their ways of working, make decisions, and think about what impact and success should look like.

Core values help a network recognize those who are a natural fit for membership, and, just as importantly, recognize when it may be time to part ways with those who are no longer aligned. In this way, values help protect the



integrity of the community by foregrounding what brings it together beyond the technical work itself.

Additionally, they support self-evaluation by offering a human-centered rubric that helps members continually return to what matters. They can use the network's core values to reflect on their work, measure their growth, and determine what they need to strengthen.



“Old power institutions view power as a currency that is traded. Whereas new power institutions view power as a current that connects. And so it flows through me as much as it flows through you. And the power is actually in the connection rather than in the holding. UrbanBetter is a new power institution, and I think the Glocalization Model was really key for us as a way of adopting and practicing that new power approach. Our adoption of the Glocalization Model has strengthened our ability to cultivate hope in that way, and that’s the core ingredient for systems transformation.”

— Tolullah Oni, UrbanBetter

(Inspired by Jeremy Heimans. From his book, New Power: How Power Works in Our Hyperconnected World—and How to Make It Work for You.)



What It Looks Like in Practice

Collaboration and sharing are the core values of the Flying Labs Network. Its internal infrastructure is intentionally designed to keep knowledge moving, circulating like blood through a living body.

Every time a Flying Labs documents an activity — whether it's a project, training, or event — and shares what they did, experienced, and learned, that contribution becomes part of the collective record. These stories take many forms. Some are designed for members of the Network exclusively, in formats such as coffee chats and internal virtual events, with access hosted on the Network's internal knowledge sharing platform. Externally, Flying Labs share through blog posts, use cases, Story Maps, videos, and podcasts. All are hosted on the [Flying Labs website](#), which has grown into a repository of knowledge accessible to anyone interested in how local experts in the Global South are using drones, data, and AI for social good.

This is not a small achievement. For too long, countries in the Global South have been left out of global conversations, often because of “a lack of data.” The assumption has been that too little is known about what is happening locally to even begin making decisions. The repository that is the Flying Labs Network website counters that narrative. Through it, local experts say, “We are here, we are working, we are changing things, and this is how.” Today, the Flying Labs Network Blog has grown to the largest repository of drones for social good activities across Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia-Pacific.

Like any good repository, its value grows with time. A Swahili proverb says, *haba na haba hujaza kibaba*: “little by little the pot is filled.” As one example, Flying Labs contribute blog posts and use cases from their activities every year. A little is added at a time by willing hands bringing what they have,

and it accumulates into something extraordinary. After 10 years, what has emerged is not just a collection of knowledge but the story of the Network told in real time, with each Flying Labs adding its voice. The Network becomes its own chief storyteller.

Knowledge sharing and collaboration are the Network's core values because they keep Flying Labs growing in tandem and holding one another accountable. They allow them to acquire a collective strength that far surpasses what any single organization could muster on its own.



4. Relationships: Taking a People-centered Approach

When we first began articulating what the Glocalization Model is, it was composed of just the three elements already delineated. Over time, however, and especially once we began guiding other organizations through their journeys adopting our Model, we felt that something was missing in our description of how the Model works. It was difficult to put a finger on, and in many ways we still struggle to. But it soon became clear that what we were failing to account for were the role and the design of relationships in making the whole Model effective.

Relationships are difficult to capture in a framework. It is not easy to demonstrate precisely how they function within an ecosystem or whether they are fit for purpose. So much of modern life has been built around overcoming the perceived inefficiencies of human interaction: the ways in which people rub up against one another, the time it takes to build trust, the conversations that go in circles, the hours spent dwelling on things that do not appear immediately productive. We innovate to make things faster and smoother. So proposing that relationships — as messy as humans ourselves are — are an essential ingredient of the Model can seem counterintuitive.

Perhaps part of the difficulty is that we have become accustomed to treating relationships differently in our work than we do in our personal lives. Most of us understand that trust, care, reciprocity, and time are essential to the relationships that matter to us personally. But in the workplace, we have often flattened these same human qualities, treating them as distractions from the “real” work or as liabilities to be managed — as though our humanity is not the very reason we work to make a better world.

We therefore cannot yet claim to have a neat formula for understanding, measuring, or documenting the role relationships play in the Glocalization Model. What we do know, from experience, is that they matter enormously. They are what transform a collection of organizations into a genuine community of practice. We believe that technology is only a tool, and it is people who create solutions. As such, we champion investment in the people who create social impact, and in the relationships they form with one another — not just in the tools they use.

Relationships run through every part of the Model. They are the oil between the cogs. Without them, the other elements begin to grind against one another until they eventually come to a halt. So essential are they to the functioning of the other elements that we now view them as a distinct element as well.

With strong relationships come the regular exchange, peer learning, collaborative projects, and shared decision-making through which network members develop the confidence to learn from one another, challenge one another, and grow together. Without strong relationships, even the best-designed governance systems and operational processes become little more than paperwork.

And it is these relationships that ultimately make decentralization possible. When trust exists across a network, power no longer needs to be concentrated in a single place. Where the top-down approach gives directives and judges performance while far-removed from the work itself, a people-centered approach makes it possible to hold in many hands the power to create social change that lasts.



What Makes the Glocalization Model Different?

This section looks beneath the structure to explore how the flow of resources informs the flow of power, and how the Model enables practical shifts to move from dependence to interdependence.



In the traditional development model, a handful of organizations — often based in the Global North — decide which initiatives to fund, influencing the futures of millions in the Global South. Local communities and even national governments are forced to reshape their missions to align with what appeals to distant decision-makers, rather than what truly meets their needs. Solutions designed for entirely different cultural, economic, and geographic contexts are imported and implemented with little adaptation. Foreign teams arrive with funds tied to predetermined impact indicators, and they set to work, often with an implicit bias as to what knowledge is valuable and what processes are effective.

In these circumstances, community buy-in and local ownership are squashed before they ever have a chance. But without them, the interventions often fail to create lasting change. Instead, they produce a cycle of short-term initiatives whose numbers and stories serve more to justify the continued presence of these organizations than to build real, long-term solutions. Thus the local communities are left navigating the same persistent challenges, now compounded by a growing dependence on external aid. In this system, sustainability and genuine collaboration take a backseat while control remains in the hands of outsiders.

Our sector has learned that this dependence is unsustainable. When change is built around foreign-led organizations and their projects, it evaporates as quickly as the funding ends and those organizations move on.

The Glocalization Model proves that a different way is possible — removed from reliance on the benevolence of distant donors, from the need to wait for approval from international headquarters, from the shadow of foreign aid. It offers a different way for international development to understand how power flows and a path towards interdependence — which, in turn, moves us closer to sustainability.

Power and Money

In much of life under extractive, hierarchical power structures — those who control financial resources frequently determine what work is undertaken, how it is carried out, and who participates. Even when it is unintentional, the flow of money becomes the flow of power. The international development sector is no exception.

For this reason, the independence of network members is critical under the Glocalization Model. This is what keeps at bay the pitfalls of dependence that are common under the traditional international development model.

Each Flying Labs determines its own goals, institutional structure, and path to sustainability. This independence makes Flying Labs deeply embedded in their communities, responsive to changing contexts and in tune with local needs. They work hand in hand with local government agencies, civil society and community organizations and academia, building the trust needed to finance and sustain their activities.

What this means is that if WeRobotics were to close its doors today, Flying Labs in Senegal, Bangladesh, or Panama would still stand. While challenges may arise in the absence of the Network, they will survive and go on to thrive. Even when a Flying Labs team leaves the Network, it doesn't mean an end to their work; they continue operating, and when circumstances allow, they can apply to rejoin, as can other organizations in their country.



What It Looks Like in Practice

Financial relationships within the Flying Labs Network are not fixed or one-directional. Resources can flow from WeRobotics to Flying Labs, from Flying Labs to WeRobotics, between Flying Labs themselves, or from entirely different partners and clients. No single organization is positioned as the permanent source of funding for the rest of the Network.

1. WeRobotics to Flying Labs

WeRobotics can finance the implementation of new projects or programs for the Network through joint learning projects, as in these examples:

- **Collaborative learning projects for Drones for Disaster Risk Management** — WeRobotics received a grant and sub-granted learning projects to Jamaica, Panama, and Colombia Flying Labs to implement learning projects of their choice in their countries that then can serve as scalable solutions for other Flying Labs. One of the recent outcomes has been the Drone for Disaster Response Blueprint co-created during Hurricane Melissa in Jamaica.
- **Drone regulations learning project in Togo** — WeRobotics bought services from Togo Flying Labs to lead the logistics and organization on the ground and also from Morocco, Senegal, and Burkina Faso Flying Labs to provide co-facilitation.
- **Turning Data into Action microgrants** — WeRobotics finances microgrants to Flying Labs to learn how to implement the TDIA methodology through a project of Flying Labs' choice. 23 Flying Labs have made use of this opportunity over the past 5 years and learned how to create greater impact by concentrating first and foremost on stakeholder engagement. WeRobotics has, in turn, learned from Flying Labs how this methodology can evolve and become an underlying method for all Flying Labs Network projects.

2. Flying Labs to other Flying Labs or to WeRobotics

A key benefit of the Network is that Flying Labs can easily find and pay for expertise they need from other Flying Labs or WeRobotics, as in these examples:

- Burkina Faso Flying Labs bought expertise from Namibia Flying Labs to support their first solar power plant inspection.
- Bhutan Flying Labs bought expertise from Nepal Flying Labs for a drone for disaster risk management training.
- Nepal Flying Labs bought expertise from WeRobotics to support a drone policy consultancy.
- Panama Flying Labs bought expertise from WeRobotics to support with in-depth technical and strategic capacity building for their first 3 years of operation, financed by BID-Lab.

3. Joint initiatives

Flying Labs and WeRobotics sometimes apply for joint funding for initiatives that neither of us can conduct alone and where our collaboration offers unique value, as in these examples:

- Sierra Leone Flying Labs, Nepal Flying Labs and WeRobotics submitted and won a national tender to create the national drone policy for Sierra Leone. The project lead and funding were held by Sierra Leone Flying Labs and partly subgranted to Nepal Flying Labs and WeRobotics to provide specific services.
- South Africa Flying Labs, WeRobotics, and Esri co-organize annual regional conferences for drones, GIS and AI for disaster risk management, each bringing funds they raise themselves as well as expertise and time.



This fundamentally changes the nature of our relationships. Network members are connected because they see value in collaborating — not because they depend on a central organization for financial support. The result is a network built on mutual respect, shared purpose, and reciprocity rather than dependency.

This is important because simply applying the language of localization while continuing to fund every activity through a central organization does not produce the same outcome. When funding remains centralized, decision-making and influence tend to become centralized as well. To distribute power we must also distribute resources.

The same philosophy shapes how opportunities are created within the Network.

Rather than designing programs with donors and then selecting Flying Labs to participate, we begin with the strengths, interests, and priorities of the Flying Labs themselves. We invite them to lead projects, co-create programs, and shape initiatives from the outset. The role of WeRobotics is to facilitate these opportunities, connect partners, and help mobilize resources — not to direct participation.

Again, this creates a fundamentally different set of incentives. Flying Labs join initiatives because they align with their mission and the needs of the communities they serve, not simply because funding is attached. In many development models, organizations understandably pursue opportunities that may not be the best fit because they need the financial support. By centering opportunities around locally defined priorities instead of externally defined agendas, the Glocalization Model reduces this pressure and creates space for more authentic, effective, and sustainable collaboration.

A Point to Carry

It bears mentioning that this approach sits at odds with how much of development funding still works. Most funders expect programs and their activities to be defined in advance, with decisions about what will be implemented where and by whom often made before local actors have had the opportunity to shape them. Only a small number are willing to leave that space open, to allow local actors to decide which programs they need and what those programs should look like in their own contexts.

Therefore, Glocalization calls for a deep mindset shift within the philanthropic community. It must become more comfortable with making space for local say, trust, and adaptation. This way, financial resources can become an enabler of local leadership rather than a mechanism for controlling it.



From Independence to Interdependence

The independence of network members is essential to moving beyond the culture of dependence that has been reinforced by the traditional, top-down, project-based model on which international development has relied for decades. Under the Glocalization Model, local organizations remain independent actors, with their own leadership, priorities, expertise, and relationships with the communities they serve.

However, independence is not the final destination. Beyond dependence, and even beyond independence, is interdependence. Getting there requires us to recognize and honor the ways in which we need one another. Interdependence is, in part, a question of directionality: when approaching our collaborations with others, do we push, or do we pull?

A top-down model pushes. It begins from the assumption that those who hold the power to decide — and the resources to act on those decisions — are benefactors. Their decisions are pushed outward as directives to their beneficiaries, who are expected to implement them gratefully. But genuine collaboration cannot happen without shared ownership of decisions and outcomes. Change may happen, but often only for as long as the external push remains. It is change secured through compliance rather than conviction, imposed and managed from outside, and therefore difficult to sustain in the long run.

A locally led model pulls. It knows that every actor has something unique to offer, and that we become stronger by bringing those different gifts into relationship with one another. Rather than directing people towards a predetermined outcome, it creates the conditions for them to be drawn into partnership because they recognize they stand to gain by working together. The pull directionality is an invitation to come into co-creation, into shared ownership.

When we pull instead of push, we make it possible to move from the extractiveness of dependence and the isolation of total independence, and into the long-term sustainability of interdependence.

This interdependence is one of the most compelling aspects of the Glocalization Model (and other network approaches). It holds together the power of the one and the power of the many. This balance echoes the spirit of ubuntu: “I am because you are.” Each person is self-determining, the expert of their own life, the only one who knows best what they need and desire; yet it is only through individual power that we can have collective power, and it is only through collective power that we can have individual power. The two sit on a scale that balances itself, ideally in a kind of homeostasis. And from here comes the ability to remain aligned and become more together.



What You Need to Know about Adopting the Model

Here we turn to the journey of adopting the Glocalization Model, sharing how we support other organizations to transition into using it for their specific needs and how the Model challenges organizations to rethink their ways of working. We also share case studies of the four organizations that have adopted the Model to date.



Perhaps your international organization wants to move beyond localization as a principle and begin embedding it into its structures. Or maybe yours is a locally grounded organization ready to expand its geographic reach without sacrificing the independence, community trust, and contextual knowledge that make your work effective. Either way, the Glocalization Model might be for you.

The Model is well suited for organizations in search of an infrastructure around which they can:

1. Bring together a diverse and large group of existing and locally owned organizations committed to a common goal/purpose
2. Use a decentralized power structure and shared governance model
3. Focus on growing and learning collectively through open collaboration, contribution, and sharing.

What is essential to know about adopting the Glocalization Model is that it's not a matter of introducing a new process or restructuring an organizational chart. It's about fundamentally rethinking how an organization works, how decisions are made, how relationships are nurtured, and ultimately how power is shared.

Many organizations begin this journey because they believe in localization. They want local actors to lead, for communities to have greater ownership, and for local-global partnerships to become more equitable. But then they quickly discover that these aspirations cannot be achieved simply by changing language or introducing new programs. The structures that underpin the organization must also evolve.

The Model therefore helps an organization redesign itself around the principles of decentralization, trust, and shared governance. It creates the conditions in which people can become both more independent and more

interdependent: empowered to lead locally while remaining connected globally through relationships of mutual support.

This can be an intimidating task, and therefore WeRobotics supports organizations that are interested in adopting the Model through the process. We do this in four stages:

- **Preparation Phase:** Depending on the needs of the organization, this consists of 2–3 in-depth discussions conducted virtually to understand the organization's context and reasons for exploring the Glocalization Model. We use these conversations to jointly align on the co-creation workshop program and agree on any preparation participants will undertake beforehand, usually through selected reading. Where useful, this phase can also include qualitative surveys with different stakeholders, including the team, executive leadership, and board. These help surface both the opportunities the Model might create and the questions, concerns, or fears that may need to be addressed along the way.
- **A Co-creation Strategy Workshop:** Over the course of 3 days, we facilitate expansive in-person discussions around the 4 elements of the Model and support the organization in designing a detailed implementation plan.
- **A Resources Package:** This contains templates for both processes and documents that the organization can use to begin implementing their Model adoption plan, such as social franchise license agreement contracts, onboarding and offboarding processes, and detailed coordination practices. These are the same resources we use in our own work, and while they will need to be adapted to the specific needs of the organization, they build a sturdy base.
- **Ongoing Remote Support:** No one knows the ins and outs of the Glocalization Model better than the WeRobotics team members who co-create, facilitate, and improve the Flying Labs Network on a daily basis. Depending on need, organizations adopting the Model can receive



direct access to our team for targeted discussions around coordination, facilitation, growth, Monitoring Evaluation, communication, and more.

The Difficult Questions

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the Glocalization Model is that it demands honesty.

Every organization says it values collaboration, and many say they believe in local leadership and ownership. Far fewer are prepared to examine how power actually operates within their own structures, which then becomes an obstacle to the very equity they pursue in their work.

The Glocalization Model therefore asks difficult questions:

- Where does decision-making really happen?
- Who controls resources?
- Whose voices are consistently heard and whose are absent?
- Which processes reinforce dependency rather than autonomy?
- What power are we genuinely willing to share?
- How do we let go of control, and what do we replace it with?
- What are we afraid will happen if we actually embed the principles of decentralized governance and radical collaboration into our organization?

There are no shortcuts around these conversations. An organization cannot declare itself decentralized and locally led while continuing to centralize authority and give directives from the top down. Likewise, trust cannot exist where decisions are made in rooms where not everyone is represented.

The Model has a way of exposing inconsistencies between stated values and organizational reality. This honesty is one of its greatest strengths. It creates the opportunity to address structural barriers that might otherwise remain invisible.

And of course, this is not an easy thing. Changing how power flows within an organization means challenging beliefs, habits, expectations, and relationships. It means embracing complexity, recognizing that relationships are just as important as structures and processes, and taking the time to build trust. Not everyone welcomes that. Therefore, as organizations adopt the Model, they may find that some team members or partners choose not to continue the journey. While this can be difficult, real organizational transformation depends on people who genuinely buy into new ways of working rather than simply complying with new procedures.

What this means is that the Glocalization Model is not designed for every organization. It works best for those that genuinely believe solutions should be locally led, that value collaboration over control, and that are willing to distribute leadership rather than accumulate it. Organizations seeking tighter central control, standardization above all else, or rapid top-down expansion are unlikely to find the Model a comfortable fit.

What Changes After Adoption?

Really, it depends on the organization and what it intends to accomplish using the Model. The case studies we share offer a first glimpse.

However, this is what we have seen so far: roles between local and global actors become clearer and they are able to build on each other's strengths, decision-making becomes more collaborative and transparent, relationships become stronger because accountabilities are better understood, and advocacy for local leadership and ownership turns into daily practice. As a result, knowledge flows more freely across the organization, and innovation comes from multiple directions instead of a central office. And this, in turn, makes the organization more resilient as a whole because it no longer depends on one source of power.



Case Studies

In 2022, after 6+ years of developing and refining the Model through our work with the Flying Labs Network, we began sharing it with other organizations, supporting them as they adapted its principles to their own contexts and missions.

Since then, four organizations working across different areas of international development have adopted it. Their experiences have provided valuable insights into how the Model translates beyond our own sector, demonstrating both its adaptability and the practical realities of adopting a decentralized, people-centered, networked approach to social impact.

One key value of the Model for organizations interested in adopting it is that it is not a theoretical or academic concept — it is practical and it is proven.

The following case studies illustrate how these organizations have applied the Glocalization Model to strengthen their work and expand their impact. They show that while every organization's journey is different, the underlying principles of the Model can be adapted across diverse contexts without losing sight of what is most important to them.



[UrbanBetter](#) is a first-of-its-kind, Africa-led global institute that activates a youth-powered movement and leadership pipeline to enable earlier and healthier climate action in cities—with urgency, equity and legitimacy.

It cultivates hope as infrastructure: a scalable ecosystem that equips and connects young people with data, futures-oriented mindsets, practical skills and pathways to generate solutions across the sectors that shape healthier, climate-resilient urban futures.

UrbanBetter exists to transform urban places and spaces by tackling the interconnected health and climate risks associated with the air people breathe, the ways they move and the food they eat.

Geographic focus

UrbanBetter is Africa-led and globally connected. Its Cityzens Hub Network includes hubs in Ghana (Accra), Nigeria (Lagos and Abuja), South Africa (Cape Town and Johannesburg), Kenya (Nairobi), Botswana (Gaborone), Madagascar (Antananarivo), Uganda (Kampala), Sierra Leone (Freetown), Ethiopia (Addis Ababa), and a first hub in Latin America (Colombia, Bogotá) and in Asia (Thailand, Bangkok)

Glocalization Model Use

Geographically scaling the concept of the first 2 city-based Cityzens Hubs globally across Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

Motivation to adopt the Glocalization Model

1. Geographic scale without the need of creating a large back office and a path forward to start with 30 cities in the first 3 years, to then shape it into a movement of 100,000 Cityzens and 100 Hubs over ten years.
2. Leverage cross-city learning.
3. Philosophical alignment rather than growth alone. UrbanBetter understands itself as a “new power” institution, one that treats power not as a currency to be held and traded, but as a current that connects and flows through people. The Glocalization Model offers a practical way of adopting and practicing that new-power approach.



Model adoption journey

UrbanBetter moved through the same co-creation workshop and packages. The most striking documented outcome is speed. The organization reports that the Glocalization model adoption enabled UrbanBetter to scale to roughly 10 hubs in under two years while keeping shared ownership with local communities at the centre. Those hubs, Lagos, Accra, Nairobi, Johannesburg, Bogotá, and beyond, are the visible franchise structure the model produced.

- July 2024: first discussion
- August 2024: 3-day in person co-creation adoption workshop in Accra, followed by sharing of resource package
- September – December 2024: adopting the resources and model fully
- Through 2025: onboarding of 3 new Cityzens Hubs (Nairobi, Bogotá and Johannesburg), in addition to the original Lagos and Accra hubs
- As of 2026: onboarding a further 8 new Cityzens Hubs

Learnings made

For a young social impact organization with operations in 2 first cities (Lagos and Accra) and a founder with a deep appreciation for decentralized power and a “local first” mindset, adopting the model was both easy and fast. The 3-day in person workshop allowed us to decide on all the strategic elements and a detailed implementation plan. For a small organization, looked overwhelming at first for the small team. Sharing the resource package made all the difference, as an overwhelmingly large task was essentially reduced by 80%.

Learn more

[Blog post](#), [video](#) and [website](#).



[Aiducation](#) was born in Kenya in 2006, with its international headquarters now based in Switzerland. Local ownership has been part of its DNA from the start, and the organization focuses on education and long-term economic resilience for talented, underprivileged young people.

Geographic focus

Historically 2 locations: Kenya and Philippines

Goal to expand to additional countries in Africa and Asia

Glocalization Model Use

New operating model for the organization and its relationship with countries

Motivation to adopt the Glocalization Model

Integrate the Glocalization Model as their new operating model to:

1. First shift their current approach of a Swiss headquarters that supplies 2 country chapters with programs and funding into a new approach where the local talent hubs co-design/decide/fundraise programs and activities and share replicable resources across countries.
2. Evolve the current relationship with Kenya and the Philippines into independent Talent Hubs, operating as partners in a shared Glocalized Social Impact Network
3. Then scale the network by adding new Talent Hubs and activating locally financed Fundraising Chapters



Model adoption journey

Seeing the deep organizational implications of turning around a traditional INGO approach to the Glocalization approach, the adoption process has stretched over several years:

- 2023: first discussions to learn more on the model
- 2024: first adoption proposal submitted to Aiducation's board. WeRobotics then held interviews with key stakeholders (board, senior management, country offices) to gain deeper insights and allow for needed discussions before adoption
- 2025: 3-day co-creation adoption workshop, followed by detailed 2-year project plan for implementation
- 2026 – 2028: phased implementation, establishing the model in the current setup while bringing in two more Talent Hubs and working on the activation of additional Fundraising Chapters



Learnings made

For well established non profit organizations using a traditional operational model, adopting the Glocalization Model means a complete shift of how the organization works. This takes time, and asks for a phased approach. Change management is one of the most important factors along the adoption journey. Building local capacity and ownership, not just designing new structures, has proven to be the real bottleneck. Courage and unwavering commitment from everyone, starting with the board and senior management, remain key success factors.

Learn more

[Blog post](#) and [video](#).



[Cibervoluntarios](#) (Fundación Cibervoluntarios) is a Spanish non-profit founded in 2001 to close the digital divide and ensure everyone has equal access to the opportunities technology enables. Its model is built on a network of technology volunteers, who deliver free, hands-on digital-skills training and awareness activities, with a particular focus on people who are digitally vulnerable such as older people, people with disabilities, migrants, and refugees.

Geographic focus

Cibervoluntarios' geographic focus is Spain, operating nationwide through local partnerships with municipalities, NGOs, schools and other grassroots organizations. Beyond Spain, it also works at the European level, leading and participating in EU-funded projects with partner organizations in France, Italy and Romania

Glocalization Model Use

Scale a highly relevant and successful local solution to other geographies by building a global Network ([Cibervoluntarios Network](#))

Motivation to adopt the Glocalization Model

Cibervoluntarios has 25 years of impact concentrated in Spain. Their motivation to adopt the Glocalization model was for geographic expansion, using the model to extend their work to Latin America first, then Africa and Asia by creating the Cibervoluntarios Network, a global community of local entities.

Seeing Cibervoluntarios strong network and decentralized power approach in their work in Spain, the traditional INGO model for geographic expansion did not fit their organizational culture. The Glocalization Model however does so perfectly.



Model adoption journey

- October 2023: first encounter and first discussion
 - April 2024: 3-day in person co-creation adoption workshop in Malaga, followed by sharing of resource package
 - May 2024 – December 2024: creating all needed elements for the Cibervoluntarios Network.
 - 2025: Launch of the network based on a social franchise, with 4 franchise partners in 4 countries to date
-

Learnings made

Cibervoluntarios already used a “locally led, nationally supported” approach for their highly successful work over their first 25 years in Spain, with strong growth in-country. Their wish to “go international” was held back as the traditional INGO approach was not fitting their culture. The Glocalization Model allowed Cibervoluntarios to scale their work to other countries without compromising their organizational culture and network-based approach.

Learn more

[Website.](#)





[GRAIN](#) (Gender and Responsible Artificial Intelligence Network) is a decentralized network focused on advancing responsible AI and gender equality across sub-Saharan Africa. It was officially launched in November 2023 and is run by a consortium of three African organizations: IPAR Think Tank (Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rurale, Senegal) and CSEA (center for the Study of the Economies of Africa, Nigeria), together with the NGO Sunbird AI (Uganda).

The network functions as a collaborative space that brings together universities, research institutions, grassroots organizations, government, innovators and private-sector actors to promote a better understanding of how AI can be developed and deployed responsibly to advance gender equality and inclusion

Geographic focus

Sub-Saharan Africa

Glocalization Model Use

Start a new network

Motivation to adopt the Glocalization Model

GRAIN was established as a network from the start, which makes it the most natural to adopt our model. As a consortium bringing together academics, institutions, and grassroots actors across Africa around AI and gender, they needed a tested infrastructure for decentralized, multi-stakeholder collaboration rather than building governance from scratch. The Glocalization Model offered exactly that: a framework for shared governance and power-sharing among independent local entities pursuing a common goal. Prior to adopting our model, both WeRobotics and Senegal Flying Labs already had active collaborations with IPAR, which meant that IPAR already knew the outcomes of our model well, and trust was already established to be the first adopter of the model.



Model adoption journey

- Early 2022: joint proposal to donor, with WeRobotics holding the role of the expertise partners bringing in the network infrastructure
- June 2022: 3-day in person co-creation workshop to create all elements of the new GRAIN network structure, modeled after WeRobotics' experience with the Flying Labs Network.
- June 2022 – May 2024: remote support to support Network launch in November 2023

Learnings made

This first adoption allowed us to learn how we can turn our own experience with the Glocalization model into an adoption experience.

Through the 3-day workshop experience emerged the model's 4-part structure used today for adoptions. Existing relationships with the consortium members allowed for the needed trust and open mind of organizations to be the first mover.

The model proved purpose-agnostic, an approach designed for drone and data localization translated to an entirely different domain (AI and gender).

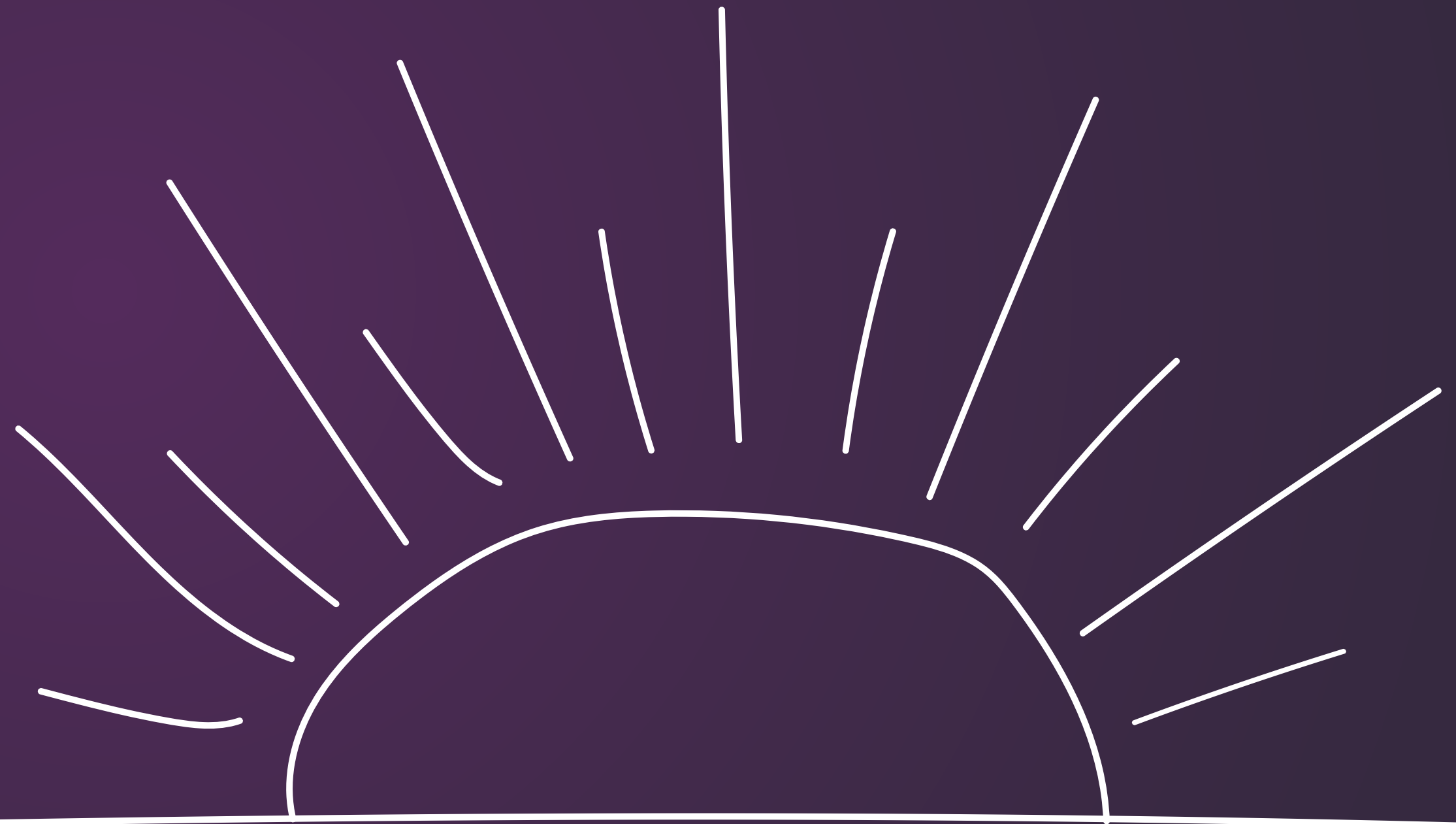
The first two years of GRAIN were invested in research and network-building, rather than a rush to scale.

Learn more

[Blog post](#)



Conclusion



So how do we make the world a better place?

The top-down model, where large international organizations control funding and dictate its distribution, has achieved a great deal, but it has proven unsustainable in the long term. It continues to struggle to build the local ownership and resilience needed to create social impact that lasts.

What we can build in the gaps it has left is an approach that begins with local expertise, which then expands to the global stage to be enriched by a diversity of perspectives, and thereafter returns to the local strengthened. What we can build is an interdependence that allows the many to be enriched by the one and the one to be enriched by the many. What we can build is a more expansive understanding of power: one that sees it less as something to be owned and hoarded, and more like a river — flowing across borders and through forest, farm, and savannah, nourishing what it touches and bringing life wherever it goes. This, at the end of it, is what the people infrastructure of the Glocalization Model is all about.

For the first 10 years of WeRobotics, our clarion call has been the Power of Local. It has guided our work in demonstrating that sustainable technology adoption depends first and foremost on strengthening local expertise. Our key learning from this work has been that the greatest potential to transform the world lies in the Power of Glocal. It lies in the power that emerges when local and global partners combine their knowledge, resources, relationships, and lived experience to co-create solutions that neither could have developed independently. It is not about just the local or just the global — it is about how they enrich one another and become more in collaboration.

The Glocalization Model is one way through which we continue to witness and experience the Power of Glocal. It offers a proven and practical way for local actors to work together in global networks to create lasting impact across health, education, disaster response, climate action, food security, and

countless other challenges within their own communities.

Throughout the Flying Labs Network, we have seen this collaboration create locally led and owned impact that is strengthened by the gifts of global connection and partnership. Just as importantly, we have seen that these outcomes are not accidental — they are made possible by the Glocalization Model itself.

When asked what power means to them, Flying Labs shared a range of perspectives. The common thread that emerged was that they see power not as a weapon to wield over others but as a tool for creating change — one that belongs to everyone. Many communities in the Global South are rooted in collectivist values, where progress is a shared journey rather than an individual pursuit. This belief is reflected in the African proverb that is the Network's guiding mantra: Alone we go fast, together we go far.

The Glocalization Model draws deeply from this worldview. By treating diversity as a source of strength, decentralizing power and decision-making, and fostering openness, trust, and shared governance, it creates the conditions for collaboration that can endure and scale.

We will create a better world together, that much is certain. The challenge has never been whether collaboration is necessary, but how we choose to practice it. Human relationships are complex. They take time, resist flattening for efficiency's sake, and require continual investment. People are not technologies, and they cannot be managed as though they are.

So collaboration will have its challenges and comes with embracing messiness, but that does not make it any less worth pursuing and cultivating with relentless hope. The relationships we build are not obstacles to impact — they are the very foundation of it. We are the task and we are the reward. With network approaches such as the Glocalization Model, social impact



organizations can place their missions in many capable hands. As local experts in other contexts make those missions their own, they spread further than any single organization could reach, creating change that ripples outward again and again across cultures, regions, and generations.

“The question of the sustainability of the organization was triggered, and I realized we really needed to change something and that there are ways that can help us to exactly address this issue – an existing successful model that could help us go into something sustainable.”

— Matthias Meier, Aiducation





Learn more and contact us

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 **WE**
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