

HMDC Presents... SOCHUM: Video 1 Transcripts

These are the words spoken in the two Video 1 films for SOCHUM (The Topic). We read along while we watch, pause at each time mark, and circle any word we do not know so we can look it up together.

VIDEO 1 (EXPLAINER)

[0:00] Welcome, delegates. I am absolutely thrilled to be guiding you through this explainer today. We've got some incredibly weighty issues to tackle together, topics that carry massive global consequences. I'll be speaking slowly and in plain English so we can easily master this critical material. Let's begin by looking at our title for today. HMDC Presents... SOCHUM. Role of Non-governmental Organizations, Foreign Aid, and Local Institutions. Okay, let's dive into this. We are going to cover six sections today. 1. Understanding NGOs and the topic. 2. The harms we face. 3. Solution 1. Localization. 4. Solutions 2 and 3. 5. Solutions 4 and 5. And finally, 6. Choosing your country's path. Understanding NGOs and topic.

[0:47] Key definitions and core questions. First things first, what exactly is an NGO? Well, we explicitly define a non-governmental organization as an independent group that isn't part of any government. Its whole purpose is to help deliver aid to the people who need it most. It's essentially a private group stepping up to provide essential services. Now, NGOs come in a few different shapes and sizes. We explicitly define an international NGO as a massive charity working across lots of different countries. Usually, these big groups are headquartered in a wealthy donor country, which means they're often pretty far away from the crises they're trying to help solve. Contrast that giant scale with a local NGO. We explicitly define a local NGO as an organization based directly inside the country receiving the help. Crucially, these are on-the-ground groups, staffed by community members who actually live there and deeply understand the local context. Alright, so the crucial point is that this topic asks you to answer three core questions. One, who receives the aid money? Does it go to those international giants or the local groups? Two, how do NGOs relate to local institutions?

[1:56] And three, how should national governments regulate NGOs? Keep these questions in mind as we go. The harms we face. Quantifying the global crisis. We have to face a really difficult reality here. According to the OECD in April 2026, government aid fell by 23.1%. Wow, think about that for a second. That's not just a minor budget adjustment. That marks the largest drop in the entire history of official development assistance. The resources are just disappearing. And right as that money vanishes, the need is unfathomable. According to the OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2026, published in December 2025, about 239 million people needed help. That's hundreds of millions of individuals requiring urgent support, right as the global budget is collapsing. Plus, the people trying to provide that help face incredible daily danger. Impartially speaking, according to UN News in August 2025, a record 383 aid workers were killed in 2024. This work is literally a matter of life and death on the front lines. The ripple effects of this lack of funding are just immense. First, according to UN News on October 15th, 2025, the World Food Program expected a staggering 40% drop in money. Second, because of cuts like these, according to the Council on Foreign Relations on December 23rd, 2025, about 25 million fewer people received aid. And finally, at the grassroots level, according to UN Women on May 13th, 2025, 47% of women's organizations in crisis settings expected to close within six months because they simply couldn't survive the cuts. Solution one, localization, funding local organizations directly. Now, what's really interesting about this slide is how it introduces our first major policy option. When there isn't enough money, scarcity forces innovation. First, we must explicitly define localization. Localization means shifting money, decisions, and leadership directly toward local and national actors. It's basically about cutting out the international middleman. So why is this approach desirable? Well, according to ALNAP's State of the Humanitarian System, 2026, UN News on February 3rd, 2024, and the OECD on June 10th, 2025, localization is highly desirable because it's cost efficient and reaches communities directly.

[4:19] But what makes it undesirable? According to the Brookings Institution on January 21st, 2025, local groups often struggle with complex donor reporting rules, and localization shifts immense physical danger directly onto local staff. Now, some critics argue local groups lack the capacity to help, but that claim is actually incorrect. According to the Brookings Institution on December 1st, 2022, weak capacity mostly just reflects strict donor rules that limit the overhead funding local partners need to operate effectively. Solutions two and three, UN pooled funds and cash assistance. Because direct funding is challenging, we have to look at alternatives. Let's explicitly define pooled funds. Think of a pooled fund as a single giant pot of money from many different donors, managed by the UN, and used to give grants to NGOs. Impartially speaking, according to OCHA with data last accessed October 2026, these funds are desirable because they successfully route money locally. But there is a major undesirable drawback. Some argue the UN simply acts as an additional middleman, adding unnecessary bureaucratic costs. Solution three gives the power directly to the people. We explicitly define cash assistance as giving people money or vouchers to buy what they need locally, instead of shipping supplies across the world. According to ALNAP's State of the Humanitarian System 2026, cash assistance is highly desirable because it delivers the absolute highest percentage of the budget directly to the people. But it carries an undeniable, undesirable risk. It fails completely where local markets have collapsed. Handing someone cash won't help them buy food that isn't there.

[5:56] Solutions four and five, legal space and national governments. Let's move to and see how this builds into our final two solutions regarding legal and governmental frameworks. This brings us to foreign agent laws. We explicitly define a foreign agent law as strict rules requiring groups that receive money from abroad to register and openly label themselves as foreign funded. According to ICNL on April 16th, 2024, setting international standards against these laws is desirable because it protects NGOs from forced closure. However, according to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace on November 2nd, 2015, limiting these laws is undesirable for many governments who argue it infringes on their sovereign right to stop foreign political interference. Solution five suggests working directly through national governments. According to the Brookings Institution on January 21st, 2025, this is desirable because it strengthens permanent public institutions. But according to the ICRC Humanitarian Law and Policy Blog on July 11th, 2024, there is a deeply undesirable risk.

[6:59] If an NGO works too closely with a government, rebel groups might view them as the enemy, which threatens vital humanitarian neutrality in war zones. Choosing your country's path, the final decision. And this brilliantly illustrates the massive task ahead of you in committee. Every single solution we've discussed requires delegates to weigh competing tradeoffs. So as you prepare to debate, I ask you, which solution best suits your assigned country? The future of global aid is in your hands. HMDC forensics, Harvard MUN online, December 2026.

VIDEO 1 (CINEMATIC)

[0:00] Welcome to the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee. Your mandate is to evaluate the role of non-governmental organizations, foreign aid, and local institutions. An NGO is an independent group that delivers a massive share of the world's humanitarian and development aid. You must answer three core policy questions. Who gets the aid money? How do these groups relate to local institutions? And how should host governments regulate them? This might sound like routine administrative debates. But how you route this capital and define these legal boundaries dictates whether food, shelter, and medicine actually reach the people in these camps. And right now, the financial math supporting that delivery system is failing.

[0:45] This tracks official development assistance. Watch 2025. Funding plummets 23%, the largest one-year drop in history. Simultaneously, a second line represents 239 million people requiring help. The gap between them creates an unprecedented structural deficit. When top-level institutions absorb these cuts, like the World Food Program losing 40% of its budget, the impact hits instantly. You're looking at people waiting for WFP and USAID rations, where the volume of human need overwhelms the shrinking supply. The human fallout is absolute. In 2025, 25 million fewer people received humanitarian aid compared to the year before.

[1:31] The top-heavy model of international aid is mathematically incapable of covering this gap. Without immediate restructuring, the system will collapse under the weight of its own deficit. Small, local institutions are the most fragile link in this breaking chain. Faced with a sudden loss of grants, 47% of women-led organizations in crisis settings expect to close within six months. The physical danger of aid work is equally localized. In 2024, a record 383 aid workers were killed. The vast majority of those casualties were national staff, serving their own communities on the front lines. The entire international aid system relies entirely on these local staff to assume the physical risks of delivery.

[2:17] Yet, when budgets tighten, it cuts their financial lifelines first. This global funding pie chart reveals a severe bottleneck. Despite years of international agreements to localize aid, an overwhelmingly tiny 4.3% sliver goes directly to local groups. Meanwhile, Sudan's local emergency response rooms reached over 4 million civilians on fractional budgets. Why does this bottleneck exist? Watch the chart transition to a comparative bar graph. Donors restrict local organizations to a 10% overhead limit, granting international partners 40% [Our report says: 20 to 40 percent], withholding capital needed to build capacity. Solving the resource deficit requires transferring that overhead, decision-making power, and direct capital to the local actors who do the work the cheapest and the fastest.

[3:09] To maximize cost efficiency, delegates must implement structural mechanisms. The first is UN-managed pooled funds. These collect donor money into one central pot, bypassing heavy red tape and sharing the risk. This model delivers proven results. In 2025, pooled funds successfully channeled 55% of their money directly to local and national NGOs. The second major efficiency solution is shifting away from shipping physical goods. Here, a woman receives direct cash assistance to purchase exactly what her family needs in local markets. The math strongly favors this approach. On average, 71 to 77% of a cash budget directly reaches people. Traditional food aid only delivers 54 to 56%.

[3:57] In an era of historic budget cuts, pooled funds and cash assistance are strict operational necessities to stretch every remaining dollar. But there are severe political roadblocks to these solutions. Events worldwide are heavily regulating civic spaces, passing foreign agent laws that strictly monitor or block NGO operations. State-level restrictions carry absolute consequences. In 2022, Nicaragua removed the legal registration of more than 150 organizations, shutting their doors completely. State governments present a legitimate counterargument rooted in the Paris Declaration Principles. They argue that developing countries should own their own strategies, and that aid should build up public institutions rather than bypass them with competing parallel NGO structures.

[4:45] Delegates now face a delicate balancing act. You must protect the operational neutrality of NGOs from government overreach while fully respecting a sovereign nation's right to govern its own territory. You have five primary mechanisms to negotiate. Localization, pooled funds, cash assistance, legal protection, and national government alignment. With the global aid budget plummeting, the committee must rewrite the rules of humanitarian delivery before the remaining resources dry up entirely. Delegates, we wish you good luck in committee.