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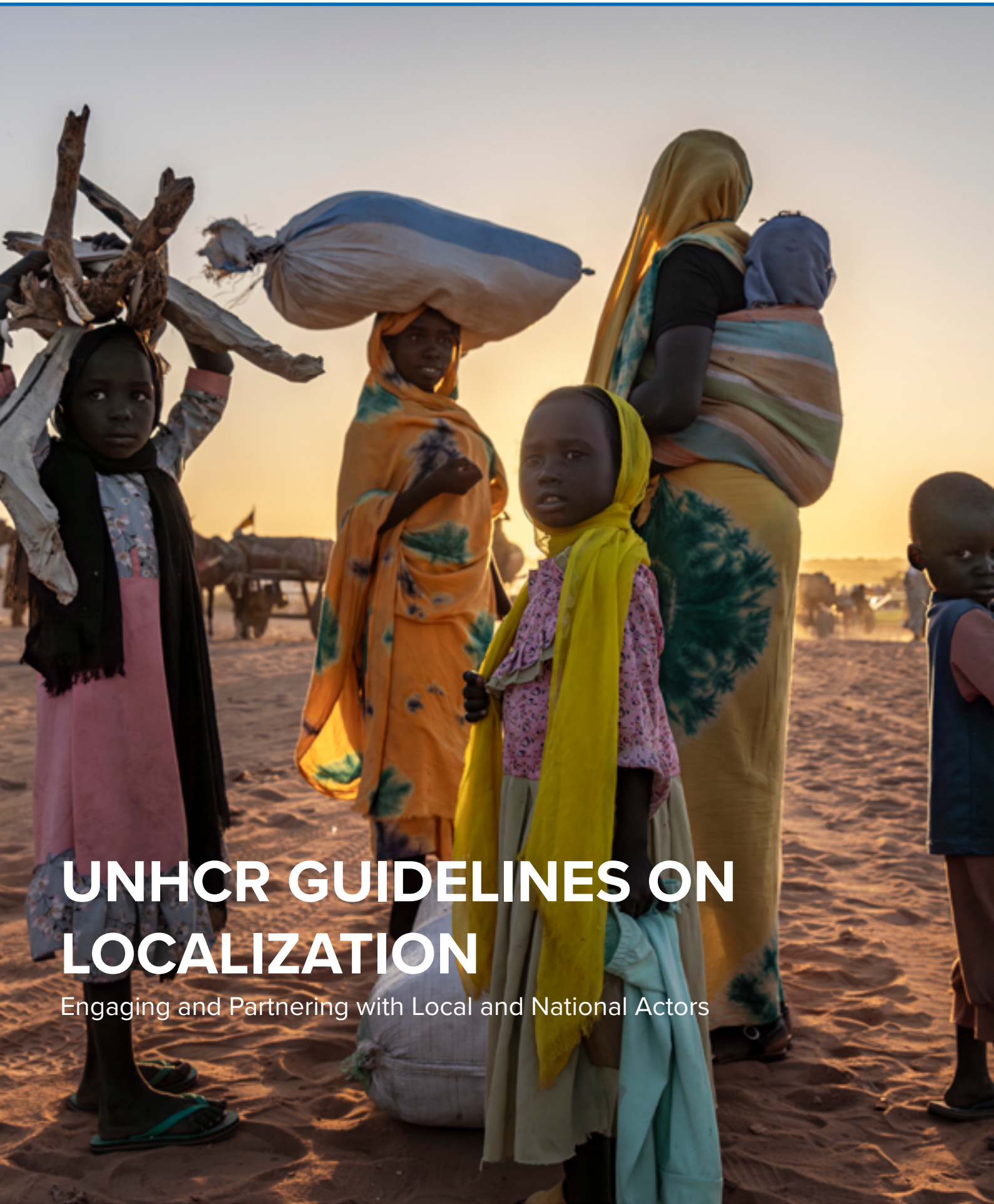

UNHCR GUIDELINES ON LOCALIZATION

Engaging and Partnering with Local and National Actors

OG/2025/04

Approval authority: Dominique Isabelle Hyde, Director, Division of External Relations (DER)

Date: October 2025

Signature:

CAPTION COVER PHOTO: © UNHCR/Andrew McConnel - 28 October, 2024. Newly arrived Sudanese refugees are seen in the border town of Adre, in Chad. More than 700,000 refugees fleeing the violence in Sudan have crossed into Chad since the conflict began in April 2023.

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT TABLE

Document Title	UNHCR Guidelines on Localization – Engaging and Partnering with Local and National Actors
Reference number	OG/2025/04
Version #	Version 1
Approved by	Dominique Isabelle Hyde, Director, Division of External Relations (DER)
Effective date	01/10/2025
Review/ expiry date	30/09/2030
Guidance owner/ contact	NGO and Civil Society Unit, Partnership and Coordination Section, partnership@unhcr.org
Regulatory status	Non-mandatory
Key mandatory content	N/A
Dissemination status	Can be shared externally.
Document history	N/A
Associated mandatory content	• UNHCR/HCP/2023/01 - Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response • UNHCR/HCP/2018/1 - Policy on Age, Gender, and Diversity • UNHCR/AI/2023/05/Rev.1 - Administrative Instruction on Procedures on Partnership Management • UNHCR/HCP/2019/1 - Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement • UNHCR/HCP/2021/01 - Policy on Procurement • UNHCR/AI/2021/05/Rev.1 - Administrative Instruction on Procurement • UNHCR/HCP/2022/01 - Policy on Cash-Based Interventions
Relevant guidance/ information & resources	• UNHCR Programme Handbook • Refugee Coordination Model • Guidance on Emergency Preparedness • Guidance package for UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement • UNHCR Focus Area Strategic Plan for Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People 2024-2030 • UNHCR Guidance on Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans • Risk Management Tool – Funded Partnerships • Guidance Note on meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless people in pledge implementation • Checklist on Meaningful Participation of Displaced and Stateless Persons and their Organizations in Regional and Global Events • UNHCR Learning Portal • UNHCR Factsheet on Localization • Multistakeholder Pledge on Advancing Localization in Displacement and Statelessness Responses and its monitoring guidance • IASC Guidance on Strengthening Participation, Representation and Leadership of LNAs in IASC Humanitarian Coordination Mechanisms • Inter-Agency Toolkit on Localisation in Humanitarian Coordination • Global Protection Cluster - Localization • Global Shelter Cluster Strategy 2030 • Global CCCM Cluster Coordination Toolkit - Localization • Principles of Partnership

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Purpose

The purpose of these Guidelines is to establish a standard approach to operationalize UNHCR's commitments to localization, including applying the principle of 'as local as possible, as international as necessary'. That means prioritizing local actors' leadership and capacity in crisis situations, while recognizing the vital role international organizations play, especially in complex or armed conflict situations. The Guidelines provide UNHCR colleagues with the principles, practical steps, and promising practices (Internal - see this regularly updated overview) on how to pursue equitable and meaningful collaboration and partnerships with local and national actors (see definition below).

Scope

These Guidelines are for use by UNHCR colleagues working in Protection, Resilience and Solutions, External Relations and Inter-Agency Coordination, Programme, Supply and any other functions or roles that should include engagement and/or partnering with LNAs. The Guidelines apply to Field Offices, Sub-Offices, Country Operations (CO), Regional Bureaux (RB), and Headquarters (HQ). Actions proposed in this document are not a one-size-fits-all and need to be contextualized and tailored to each specific country and situation.

These Guidelines have been issued by the Division of External Relations (DER) and developed in consultation with the Division of International Protection & Solutions (DIPS), the Division of Emergency & Programme Support (DEPS), RBs, COs in all regions, and through consultations with local, national and international civil society partners, together with the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), and with the Advisory Board to the UNHCR Task Team on Engagement with Organizations Led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless People.

The Guidelines are aligned with and support the implementation of existing Policies, Procedures, Standards and Global Strategies and other guidance categories, particularly the Programme Handbook, the Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response, the Policy on Age, Gender, and Diversity, the Refugee Coordination Model, the Policy on Procurement, the Focus Area Strategic Plan on Engaging Development Actors, and the Sustainable Reponses approach.[1]

The guidelines are non-mandatory, compliance is expected.

UNHCR follows the definition of local and national actors (LNA) in line with the Grand Bargain definition:[2]

Non-state LNAs	Non-state organizations engaged in relief that are headquartered and operating in their own country and which are not affiliated to an international organization.[3] • **National NGOs/civil society organizations (CSO)***: operating only in the country (or in multiple subnational regions) in which they are headquartered • **Local NGOs/CSOs***: operating only in a specific, geographically defined, subnational area of a country, including CBOs • **Local and national private sector organizations:** organizations run by private individuals or groups as a means of enterprise for profit, that are based in and operating within the country • **Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies**
(Sub)-national state actors	**State authorities of the affected country** engaged in relief, whether at local or national level. • **National governments:** National/federal government agencies, authorities, line ministries and state-owned institutions • **Local governments:** Sub-national governments exercising some degree of devolved authority over a specifically defined geographic constituency

*Local and national CSOs are very diverse and can be categorized based on certain criteria (not mutually exclusive):

- **Leadership**: refugee (RLO)[4], internally displaced people (IDP), women (WLO)[5], stateless people (SLO), persons with disabilities (OPD)[6], LGBTIQ+, youth.
- **Governance:** community-based (CBO), formal / informal group, association, NGO, federation, network.
- **Mission and objective:** faith-based, humanitarian, development, social, commerce, sport.

1 Consult the UNHCR Policy Assistant to find out how this guidance interacts with other UNHCR policy and guidelines
2 Grand Bargain: Definitions Paper IASC Humanitarian Financing Task Team, Localisation Marker Working Group (2018)
3 A local actor is not considered to be affiliated to an international organization even if is part of a network, confederation or alliance wherein it maintains independent fundraising and governance systems.
4 UNHCR definition of RLO: an organization or group in which people with direct lived experience of forced displacement play a primary leadership role and whose stated objectives and activities are focused on responding to the needs of refugees and/or related communities. Also available on Refworld and in the UNHCR glossary.
5 IASC definition of local WLO: an organization with a humanitarian mandate and/or mission that is 1) governed or directed by women; or 2) whose leadership is principally made up of women, demonstrated by 50 per cent or more occupying senior leadership positions. Also see recommended criteria here.
6 CRPD/C/GC/7: General comment No. 7 (2018) on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention.

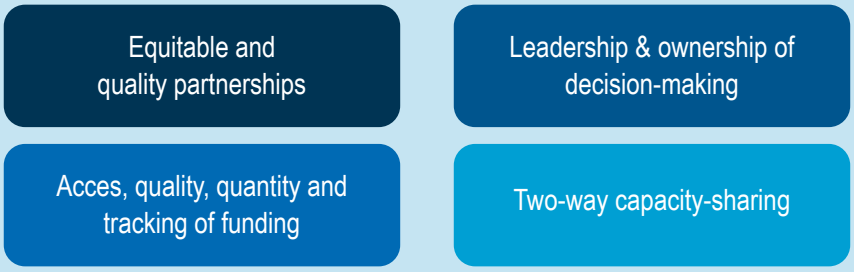
1. UNHCR's Localization Framework

This framework provides a common understanding and structured approach to localization and locally led action at UNHCR. It is designed to be adaptable, allowing UNHCR colleagues to tailor its application to the types (government, civil society) and characteristics of LNAs, as well as the specific needs of each situation at all levels (local, national, regional, and global).

1.1. What is localization?

Instead of enforcing a single definition, this document offers a shared understanding of what localization includes and provides a flexible framework to set priorities and support decision-making across UNHCR.

Graphic 1: Key areas of localization, in line with the Multistakeholder Pledge on Advancing Localization in Displacement and Statelessness Response



LNAs have a deep understanding of the local and national context, culture, and dynamics, along with valuable networks at local and national levels, easy access to populations including forcibly displaced people, and strong technical expertise. This enables them to effectively identify and address the needs, priorities, and protection risks of forcibly displaced and stateless people, as well as host communities, in an efficient, and contextually appropriate manner. They are often the first to respond to an emergency and stay on when international actors leave. Collaborating closely with LNAs is therefore essential for ensuring sustainable responses.

Localization can be understood as[7]:

- **an approach or process of shifting power and resources to LNAs**, characterized by a fundamental change to how the international community supports and collaborates with LNAs. The aim is to recognize, respect, complement and reinforce LNAs' leadership and decision-making power, as well as their existing capacities, rather than (unintentionally) sidelining or overpowering them, while ensuring risk-sharing.
- **a recognition that LNAs are a fundamental part** of the humanitarian system and therefore must take part in the development and implementation of humanitarian strategies.
- **a commitment to increase funding to LNAs** (25% Grand Bargain target), ensure two-way **capacity-sharing**, strengthen leadership, ownership and meaningful participation in **decision-making** processes, and build stronger, more equitable collaboration and **partnerships** between LNAs and international actors.
- a key element of humanitarian entry and exit strategies. It uses and/or strengthens national systems and, as such, enables sustainability and reminds that international humanitarian actors should be working towards their own obsolescence.
- having a **multiplying effect**, as it strengthens the impact, autonomy and the direct advocacy of LNAs.

Localization should not be valued primarily for its cost-effectiveness or in cases of access limitations.

According to ALNAP, locally led action "*denotes approaches where programmes are conceived, shaped and delivered closer to the communities facing crisis; designed in accordance with local norms and needs; and which may occur with or without support from the formal international system*"[8].

1.2. Why is localization important?

Respecting LNAs' agency and their place at the forefront can lead to more sustainable, effective, and contextually appropriate responses that are tailored to the specific needs, priorities and protection risks of affected communities. Strengthening LNAs' ownership and leadership is not only a matter of fairness - it is essential for building resilience, reducing dependency on intermediaries and international aid, and ensuring that responses are rooted in local realities.

In 2024, 87% of UNHCR's funded partners were LNAs (CSOs and authorities). They received 59% of partner funding ($729.4 million) and 27% of programme expenditures.

7 According to the Grand Bargain, there is no single definition of "localisation". Signatories committed to "making principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary". Localisation can be seen as strengthening international investment and respect for the role of local actors, and a way of re-conceiving of the humanitarian sector from the bottom up. It recognizes that the majority of humanitarian assistance is already provided by local actors.

8 Read more about ALNAP's definition here.

Working with local and national authorities and CSOs has long been integral to UNHCR's way of working, now further advanced through a multi-stakeholder approach under the Global Compact on Refugees. Leveraging LNAs, especially through a community-based approach, reinforces the people- and community-centered approach and fosters a system that is accountable to the people it serves, where key decisions are made at the grassroot level.

Inevitably, localization contributes to the improvement of protection and solution outcomes for forcibly displaced and stateless people. For example, investing in the local capacities and economies can improve resilience to shocks and social cohesion between refugees and host communities, create opportunities for inclusion, and potentially reduce onward movements[9].

A failure to sufficiently localize UNHCR responses would represent a missed opportunity to maximize its community-focused nature, impact, and relevance. By positioning LNAs as key protagonists taking ownership and leadership, where they are possibly best placed to do so, UNHCR can complement and strengthen existing local and national structures and capacities, ensuring more effective, lasting, and dignified solutions.

UNHCR commitments to more equitable and meaningful collaboration and partnerships with LNAs and to investing in and advocating for locally led and owned responses are outlined in the Global Compact on Refugees[10], in the 2022-2026 Strategic Directions, in policies, guidance and plans such as the Refugee Coordination Model, the Programme Handbook, the IDP 5-year Strategic Plan, Procedures on Partnership Management and the Sustainable Responses approach. In addition, UNHCR signed and contributed to global commitments made under the Grand Bargain in 2017 and through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) as well as to apply the Principles of Partnership[11] (2007) to enhance more equitable, principled and substantive partnerships with LNAs.

1.3. How is localization advanced?

There are many ways UNHCR can advance localization. However, for localization to succeed, the following four key enabling factors are necessary (see chapters 2-5 for more recommendations):

Key enabling factors

- Championing by senior management
- Mindset of UNHCR personnel
- Long-term localization plans
- Supportive systems and structures

1. Championing by senior management: Localization requires an investment in partnership development with LNAs, and potentially the readiness to take some calculated risks. **Clear direction and guidance to prioritize localization by senior management**, e.g. country representatives, is critical to avoid superficial or fragmented localization efforts and influence organizational culture. The commitment to localization needs to be made at the onset of an emergency and must be intentional, purposeful, ambitious, and forward-looking. Because the investment payoffs are in the medium- to long-term, senior management championing is critical to protect LNAs from short-term thinking considerations.
2. Mindset of UNHCR colleagues: In line with the Principles of Partnership, UNHCR colleagues must recognize and leverage LNAs' strengths and advantages, be accountable and use power responsibly, build trust and ensure openness and inclusivity, and address conscious and unconscious biases (see chapter 1.5). Internally, UNHCR colleagues must have a collaborative approach across functions.
3. Long-term localization plans: The development of regional and national localization agendas, plans or strategies are important in providing a clear vision with concrete steps. This should feed into overall strategic planning processes and multi-year strategic plans of operations. The plans will help developing entry and exit strategies, enable sustainable responses and a smoother transition from emergency response to long-term recovery and development (see chapter 2).
4. Supportive systems and structures: Adapted and flexible systems, tools, processes (including administrative requirements) and structures facilitate the implementation and standardization of localization approaches. In recent years, UNHCR enhanced partnership modalities (e.g. Grant Agreements, Refugee-Led Innovation Fund), coordination mechanisms (e.g. the Refugee Coordination Model) and procurement practices (e.g. Proximity Project[12]) to facilitate and institutionalize localization (see also chapters 2 and 3).

Achieving locally led action in humanitarian and development responses in general requires time and long-term commitments and planning, and cannot be done by UNHCR alone. Joint efforts with other international and national partners, including national and local authorities are necessary to address barriers to localization.

9 UNHCR Global Appeal 2025; Forced Displacement and Social Cohesion, World Bank Group, March 2022
10 Global Compact on Refugees, articles 37 and 40.
11 Principles of Partnership (GHP, 2007): equality, transparency, results-oriented approach, responsibility, complementarity.
12 In 2024, UNHCR emphasized access and proximity to displaced communities by exploring a 'Proximity Project.' This initiative aims to engage local suppliers near operational areas to enhance logistics, reduce costs, and support host community economies.

1.4. Who within UNHCR plays a key role?

Localization is a cross-cutting priority. It impacts and enhances multiple areas of humanitarian response. Hence, it is important that colleagues working in different functional areas are included in localization efforts, ideally through Multi-functional teams (MFT)[13] or appropriate internal coordination structures.

- **Chapter 6** suggests responsibilities and activities for some of the main functions that have localization in their portfolio, including Senior Management, Inter-Agency Coordination, Programme, Protection, External Engagement and Communications, Development, Supply, Information Management.

Localization starts within UNHCR. As part of the localization approach, UNHCR must value and promote the perspectives of national staff by creating opportunities for increased contributions and responsibilities. The knowledge of language, social, cultural and historical background allows national staff to help maintain and strengthen relationships with LNAs. The recruitment and empowerment of national staff is therefore essential for localization, ideally involving those already familiar with the organization during emergencies. However, it is important to avoid any harmful poaching of workforces from LNAs that may undermine local capacity and sustainability, and to observe potential power abuses of national staff.

1.5. What are key behaviors and attitudes of UNHCR colleagues?

UNHCR recognizes and values local actors as equal partners. UNHCR colleagues, national and international, are encouraged to apply the following key behaviours and attitudes towards LNAs, especially CBOs and organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people:

Dos

☐ Show respect to leadership of LNAs by putting them at the centre of relevant activities and decisions. Meet them at their location instead of only holding meetings at UNHCR offices. Make an effort to speak their language, to the extent possible.

☐ Demonstrate humbleness when interacting with their representatives. Treat them as valuable, equal partners and respect cultural differences.

☐ Build trust through partnership-building efforts throughout the year to be well prepared for emergencies and for smooth collaboration. Make field visits, see their work and meet their teams.

☐ Invest time in exchanges and capacity-sharing with LNAs, both formally and informally, and consult them on a regular basis. Be accessible, approachable and available.

☐ Ask them for suggestions for solutions and approaches and listen to their ideas. Incorporate their feedback wherever possible, and explain clearly when it is not possible and why.

☐ Share information in a transparent way and on a regular basis, not only when it's for funding opportunities, and allow for the transfer of essential knowledge.

☐ Ensure introduction of new staff and a proper handover to avoid losing trust.

Don'ts

☐ Don't make assumptions about LNAs' capacities.

☐ Don't work with LNAs only for our own image (e.g. conferences, missions, communications).

☐ Don't impose predefined interventions and priorities or western cultural norms on LNAs.

☐ Don't collaborate with LNAs only when access to populations is limited or impossible.

☐ Don't make LNAs feel less valuable or a cost-saving option.

☐ Don't reinforce existing power imbalances within local humanitarian structures.

13 The MFT does not call for a fixed structure and is understood as a flexible approach, with expert participation dependent on the specific matter at hand. It does not require a formal establishment with strict membership (also see DSPR Glossary).

1.6. What are general considerations when working with LNAs?

When partnering with LNAs consider that (see Annex 1):

- **Governments have the primary responsibility to uphold the rights of forcibly displaced people** to seek and enjoy asylum, provide protection and solutions to refugees, returnees, as well as prevent and resolve statelessness and protect stateless people.
- A country may have **defined roles and responsibilities** for LNAs. Understand and respect how the local/national system works, how the principle of subsidiarity applies, what role which type of stakeholder plays according to normative regulations and in practice, and thus with whom and on what UNHCR engages.
- LNAs, especially CBOs, often have limited **resources** in terms of funding and staffing compared to larger international actors. UNHCR must manage expectations accordingly and avoid burdensome and costly bureaucratic requirements on LNAs wherever possible, identifying alternative solutions.
- LNAs may **rely heavily on people in the community as employees or volunteers.** CBOs are often informal networks with members spread across countries and their activities can have a cross-border dimension.
- LNAs, especially organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people, may face **legal and structural barriers** in the host country, e.g. to register their organization and create a bank account.
- LNAs may have their own prio**rities** which may or may not align with the priorities of other forcibly displaced people or stakeholders in the location. Engage in discussions to understand their identified priorities and avoid imposing priorities on LNAs if they are not aligned with that LNA's mandate.
- LNAs may **not be familiar with working with UNHCR**. Support and facilitate their efforts to participate in and understand the work of UNHCR and humanitarian actors through sensitization and capacity-sharing.

Make sure to collaborate with LNAs that apply the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. Not all LNAs' mandates, policies, or practices may align with these principles. This includes organizations with political affiliations, those that may exclude marginalized groups, or those lacking accountability mechanisms to safeguard affected populations. Additionally, in highly insecure or politically sensitive contexts, partnerships should be assessed to avoid inadvertently putting local actors at risk or exacerbating tensions.

Collaborating with LNAs should also not be viewed as coming at the expense of strategic engagement with international partners, such as international NGOs (INGO). Rather, it should be part of a comprehensive approach guided by the principle of "as local as possible, as international as necessary" and the subsidiarity principle[14]. This fosters stronger partnerships for joint and inclusive action, promotes shared responsibility for financial, physical, and programmatic risks, and enhances mutual learning and capacity-sharing between UNHCR, its international partners, and LNAs.

14 Introduced at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, the phrase "**as local as possible, as international as necessary**" describes a pragmatic operational principle underscoring the importance of empowering local actors, with international assistance stepping in only when local capacities are exceeded. The principle of subsidiarity is a normative principle of governance that emphasizes how decisions should be made at the most immediate or local level closest to where outcomes occur, with higher levels of support intervening when necessary and justified.

2. Planning, Implementing and Reporting on Localization

This chapter outlines recommended steps to develop a localization plan that is operationalized through UNHCR's programme cycle and in line with a coordinated plan developed collaboratively with partners, such as Refugee Response Plans (RRP) or Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans (HNRP).

2.1. Planning for localization

A concrete **plan or strategy for advancing localization** at the regional, country, or sub-national level ensures a shared vision, defined goals, a consistent approach and, ideally, a clear roadmap. This helps align all areas of work contributing to localization efforts. The PLAN phase of UNHCR's results-based management cycle is a good opportunity to define such a plan (see PLAN for Results).

The purpose of PLAN for Results is to outline the desired changes in the lives of forcibly displaced and stateless people and formulate a coherent multi-year strategic plan of how these changes will be achieved[15]. When developing or updating a **multi-year strategic plan**, localization should be central to the process to ensure a sustainable responses approach. Throughout the PLAN, GET, and SHOW phases, consider consultations, collaborations, partnerships, and handovers to LNAs. Engaging local stakeholders from the outset - including local CSOs, authorities, and groups led by forcibly displaced and stateless people - and as defined by the country system, is essential to ensuring their insights shape strategic planning on issues that directly impact their lives.

The multi-year strategic plan should include a detailed plan or strategy of how to strenghten localization. This can include, for example, steps on how an operation strives to transition education and health service delivery to LNAs to ensure sustainable responses.

Promising practices

Armenia, Chad, Peru, Rwanda, Sudan, RBA: Developed or are in the process of developing localization plans, strategies or concept notes at regional or national level.

Armenia, RBA, RBAP, RBEHAGL and others: Set up MFTs on localization.

Uganda: Is co-creating the child protection and gender-based violence response jointly with local authorities.

Chad: Set up a task force on localization with humanitarian and development stakeholders.

Zimbabwe: The voices of RLOs are reflected in multi-year planning

Malaysia: The Refugee Advisory Board is continuously engaged in the operational cycle and helps improving services and programmes.

Things to consider:

- ☐ Ensure a Multi-Functional Team (MFT) or appropriate internal coordination structure is mobilized to enable cross-function collaboration and planning on localization (see chapter 1.4).
- ☐ Avoid duplication of work by including localization in existing UNHCR and multistakeholder processes to increase efficiency. Consider what has been done or is planned already, including government plans, UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCF), HNRPs, RRPs and Global Refugee Forum pledges.
- ☐ Involve LNAs from the beginning and in all steps of the process and organize regular conversations with them so that expectations are clear and aligned. Develop localization plans in partnership with LNAs. Explain why you are interested in localization and appreciate their inputs to avoid that the exercise is perceived as tokenistic.
- ☐ Promote the mainstreaming of localization across programmes by prioritizing local engagement and sources of supply[16], whenever feasible, minimizing reliance on external inputs and expertise, and involving external actors only when local capacities or products are insufficient to meet identified needs.
- ☐ Include localization in the structured regional dialogues on planned strategies with the Senior Executive Team, DEPS and RBs.
- ☐ Encourage national UNHCR staff to contribute actively to the discussions.

The following steps can help in formalizing a localization plan or strategy.

2.1.1. Situation analysis

The situation analysis process is an opportunity to identify the current situation on localisation in the country and review existing and potential local and national stakeholders as part of the context, stakeholder and protection and solution analysis (see PLAN Section 1 and Section 3).

Things to consider:

15 UNHCR Programme Handbook, PLAN for Results
16 See definition of "proximity sourcing" in DESS Internal Glossary, including the difference between local manufacturers vs a local procurement process.

- Engage LNAs in participatory assessment or community action research (joint planning, conducting, analysing and sharing of results), as this can also lead to capacity-strengthening and -sharing. A localized situation analysis ensures LNA perspectives shape the entire response, not just operational delivery.
- Use quantitative and qualitative data from national data systems, where available.
- Favour contracting LNAs for the needs assessment, instead of international ones, if outsourced and feasible.

Promising practices

Türkiye: Involves and provides technical training on needs assessments to local CSOs that are part of the protection working group before every round of data collection.

Stakeholder mapping

During the situation analysis, operations identify and analyse stakeholders who influence the situation of forcibly displaced and stateless people and their operating environment. This should include the mapping of LNAs to help identify local stakeholders, including relevant government entities, line ministries, CSOs, national Red Cross or Red Crescent societies, private sector, academia, financial institutions, professional associations, diaspora, human rights and peace actors, national sport federations and associations, local sport clubs or community centres, and development actors (see Annex 1 on differences between certain types of LNAs).

Promising practices

RBA, RBMENA: Did mapping of LNAs in their region.

Chad: Did a national mapping of RLOs.

Moldova: UNHCR & UN Women commissioned a mapping of local CSOs supporting refugee responses.

Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania: Did a mapping and rapid assessment of existing national NGO coordination mechanisms

Moldova, Romania, Syria, Türkiye, Ukraine, Venezuela: Mapped national and international service providers.

Things to consider:

- Choose what information is necessary to ensure the scope of your mapping matches the vision of your operation. If relevant for the mapping, identify expertise and scope of activities (e.g. gender-based violence, child protection, education), leadership type, areas of operation, etc.
- Explore possibilities of joint efforts at inter-agency level, e.g. through Inter-Sector Working Groups, Inter-Cluster Coordination Groups, clusters, UN Country Teams (UNCT) or Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT), to avoid duplication and to pool efforts.
- Reach out to UNHCR colleagues engaging regularly with partners to combine mapping and existing contact lists, such as coordination lists, advisory groups, outreach lists, Grant Agreement recipients, applicants to the Refugee-Led Innovation Fund, and NGO consultation participants.
- Pay attention to potential registration issues, especially for organizations and/or networks led by forcibly displaced and stateless people. They might work informally or under the umbrella of a registered local organization.
- Adopt a participatory approach to the mapping and analysis to ensure transparency, including LNAs.
- Apply an age, gender and diversity (AGD) lens when mapping LNAs. Pay particular attention to identifying organizations that are led by or focus on particular groups, such as WLOs, OPDs, youth and LGBTIQ+ led groups.
- Learn more about and acknowledge the existing capacity of LNAs (e.g. technical expertise, institutional capacities – see Annex 2) as well as their needs for support (see chapter 5).
- Seek out and consider community perceptions of the organization as part of the vetting process, ensuring that a representative sample of the community is consulted.
- Collect data ethically and ensure informed consent for the collection and sharing of data that is not publicly available, particularly for organizations operating in restrictive civil society environments.
- Manage expectations by making sure that it is clear to LNAs that sharing information and being 'mapped' in no way creates an obligation on behalf of either party (including funding or partnership with UNHCR).
- A 'good enough' mapping is sufficient as a starting point. Qualitative information is more important than a comprehensive mapping from the outset.
- If you already have a mapping of LNAs in an operation, reach out to your respective RB or HQ (partnership@unhcr.org) to see how the

Tool: UNHCR mapping CBOs and RLOs:

UNHCR launched a global mapping tool, through which organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people as well as other CBOs can self-register and provide information about their organization. The results can be viewed in an internal dashboard and provide a database for global and regional analysis and contacts. (External version)

mapping can be strengthened or harmonized with the global mapping tool.

Check out Annex 2 for guidance on methods for mapping, categories of data to collect, and a tool for the analysis of organizational capacities of local CSOs.

Check out the COMPASS Tool Kit for Stakeholder Analysis.

Understanding the local and national civic space

The environment in which LNAs, especially civil society, operate is shaped by legal, political, and social factors. A restrictive civic space, for example laws limiting civil society activities, political suppression, or social stigmatization of groups, can pose significant risks to local organizations. For organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people these challenges can often be amplified due to the status of displaced people in the country. Understanding their position and relationship in the wider civic space, how they operate, work with other stakeholders and communicate with community members (including level of influence with authorities, partnerships with INGOs, dynamics between LNAs, and relationships to specific social or ethnic groups) is essential to anticipate risks or obstacles.

Things to consider:

- Map the operating environment of local and national authorities to help determine to what extent and how to engage with them.
- Map the legal framework for CSOs, including laws that regulate formal registration, operation (recognized mandate, roles and responsibilities), and receipt of (foreign) funding. Pay attention to regulations that could affect non-nationals such as refugees or stateless people, or LNAs representing specific groups like women, LGBTIQ+, minorities, or indigenous groups, including the right to establish organizations, restrictions on work permits, and mobility.
- Analyse the political environment. This includes the political attitude towards CSOs, including how authorities interact with or perceive CSOs, what the risks are of political interference, harassment or intimidation to those advocating for the rights of displaced and stateless people or specific AGD groups, reputation of the behaviour and performance of CSOs as well as their accountability to affected people (AAP).
- Apply a conflict sensitive lens when analysing LNAs and their operating environment.
- Analyse the economic environment. Conduct local market research to assess risks and evaluate the feasibility of sourcing specific goods and services locally.
- Map the social and cultural environment towards CSOs that are led by or work for displaced and stateless people, as well as cultural and social norms, community acceptance and trust between host communities and displaced people and their organizations. Consider social dynamics such as clans, tribes, religion, political polarization, potential sensitivities, and sport club affiliations.
- Consider sub-national differences in countries that have a very localized presence of displaced and stateless people or strong sub-national political structures. In some cases, it is possible for local authorities to be more accepting towards civil society activities than at the national level or vice versa.

Promising practices

Rwanda: Mapped the legal framework for RLOs that showed that the requirements to establish NGOs are hard to fulfil, long and expensive therefore discouraging for Refugees. Re-aligned grant priority to RLOs to support in registering for NGO status.

2.1.2. Vision, strategic priorities and theory of change

Each multi-year strategic plan includes a **vision and strategic priorities** (see PLAN Section 4) which can be the basis for the operation's vision on localization. When developing the strategic priorities, the office should consider localization objectives and how best to mainstream those across the strategic priorities. Identify how localization objectives can inform a strategy's vision and strategic priorities based on information from the situation analysis.

Setting the vision, strategic priorities and theory of change requires careful examination of UNHCR's role shifting from implementer to supporter and **catalyst** (see PLAN Section 4.1). The vision can extend beyond the multi-year strategic plan, recognizing that structural change often takes longer.

Things to consider:

- Ensure a participatory process with engagement of LNAs at all stages. Invite LNAs to the kick-off meeting of the strategic planning process to incorporate their perspectives. Facilitate ways for them to attend in person, where possible.
- Align your plan as much as possible with existing national localization or civil society development strategies led by national actors, such as NGO forums or alliances, and other relevant development and humanitarian planning.

2.1.3. Multi-year results framework and monitoring & evaluation plan

Once a theory of change/roadmap for localization addressing how UNHCR intends to use and/or strengthen national systems and the various stakeholders involved in these systems has been developed, plan for how to implement and monitor progress towards localization. An operation's results framework should be used to reflect the different aspects of localization in the relevant outcomes and outputs of the strategy. This helps to ensure that localization is part of implementation and monitoring given that the results framework serves as the foundation for resource allocation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of progress. Operations can outline their plans for monitoring progress towards localisation in the operation's Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation workplan (see PLAN Section 5 and Section 6).

Monitoring at global level:

UNHCR reports on the following indicators at global level (COs do not need to track these):

Core enabling indicator:

- % of total annual expenditure spent on implementing partnerships (including local & national partners) (enabling area 20)

Global Compact on Refugees indicators:

- % of partners that are LNAs (outcome indicator 1.2)
- % of the total ODA was channelled directly through national actors, which include recipient governments and developing country-based NGOs (outcome indicator 1.2)

Monitoring at country level:

It is strongly recommended that operations monitor their efforts and achievements on localization. It is important to track the number of funded partners that are LNAs and the percentage of partner funding that goes to LNAs. Key data can be found on the Partnership PowerBI where the 'business classification' column highlights all local and government funded partners. It is highly encouraged that operations also monitor the quality of collaboration and partnerships with LNAs.

In addition, it is suggested that operations evaluate how they are shifting from their current approach to a stronger localization approach in line with sustainable responses. This can include tracking UNHCR's efforts related to capacity-sharing, leadership support, meaningful participation in decision-making or co-creation processes.

Promising practices

Türkiye: Supported the establishment of the Grand Bargain National Reference Group and its local co-lead to address barriers to localization.

RBAP: Focus group discussions with local CSOs help building trust, especially in politically sensitive contexts.

Check out Annex 3 for relevant indicators (Grand Bargain, IASC, Multistakeholder Pledge on Localization, Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN), UNHCR user-defined indicators etc.).

Things to consider:

- Collect regular feedback from external partners, including LNAs, at country level on how UNHCR's collaboration and partnerships with LNAs is perceived and how it is making progress towards more locally led action. This systematic evaluation of external perceptions will help identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement in UNHCR's localization efforts. Ideally, this assessment is done jointly with other UN agencies, whenever possible, and/or results are shared with partners and align with AAP efforts.

2.1.4. Resource and management plan

The resource and management plan provides an overview of the resources required to achieve the results outlined in the strategy. When identifying resource requirements, the operation considers the roles and anticipated contributions of other actors, including national and local governments, development actors, financial institutions, private sector, and CSOs, including those led by forcibly displaced and stateless people. Also consider potential capacity-strengthening or -sharing costs for partnerships with LNAs (see PLAN Section 7 and the Policy on Resource Allocation and Management.

2.1.5. Partnership engagement

UNHCR's long-term goal is for protection and assistance to be delivered through country systems and structures led by **government authorities**, who have the primary responsibility to uphold the rights of forcibly displaced people to seek and enjoy asylum, provide protection and

Promising practices

HQ: The UNHCR-NGO Partnership Survey Report is done annually and publicly available on the UN Partner Portal.

solutions to refugees and returnees, prevent and resolve statelessness and protect stateless people (see Annex 1).

For the implementation of the multi-year strategic plan, the **Implementation Programme Management Committee (IPMC)** recommends the best-fit implementation modalities (see PLAN section 8). Partnership selection processes and/or consolidated procurement planning and supply chain management processes are then initiated.

Partner selection (for funded partnerships)

Where partnerships are identified as the best-fit implementation modality, a competitive selection process begins (with a few exceptions[17]) to identify funded partners capable of achieving the multi-year outcomes. **Calls for Expressions of Interest should prioritize LNAs,** with selection criteria published transparently. When applications for INGOs are accepted, prioritize INGOs with a proven track record of transferring responsibilities (not merely risk) to LNAs in a systematic and sustainable manner and encourage INGO applicants to demonstrate plans to partner with and transition activities to LNAs, including state institutions, during the partnership's duration. This approach ensures that UNHCR's collaboration with LNAs is not only strengthened but also sustained, fostering long-term capacity and resilience in the national response system.

Promising practices

HQ: A draft set of position statements and good practices of effective funded partnerships with government entities is available here.

Ukraine: Signed MoUs with five government ministries and other authorities and contributes to national programmes and initiatives benefitting IDPs and war-affected people.

Armenia: mobilizes municipalities through the "cities with Refugees" campaign to increase their engagement and ownership of refugee response efforts.

Peru: Developed a strategy on collaboration with authorities at different levels.

A. **When an LNA is selected for a funded partnership**, due diligence is applied through the various steps incorporated within the Procedures on Partnership Management, namely through the partner's self-declaration on the UN Partner Portal via registration, UN verification and assessing PSEA, internal controls (ICA) and data protection and information security (DPIS) capacity. Registration on the UN Partner Portal and the PSEA capacity assessment are not mandatory for national state actors, but the other two assessments apply. In countries where LNAs are required to register with public authorities to conduct humanitarian activities, this registration requirement should be respected when engaging with LNAs prior to their possible inclusion in relevant partnership and coordination mechanisms.

B. **When an INGO is selected under these conditions**, UNHCR will establish a multi-year **Partnership Framework Agreement (PFA),** ideally for the duration of the operation's multi-year strategic plan. The Project Workplan (PW) will be negotiated annually and LNAs may be subcontracted within the INGO's PW under a designated downstream account code. UNHCR, the INGO, and the LNA will collaborate to define the transition timeline and process. During this period, UNHCR will conduct necessary due diligence, including a capacity assessment of the LNA, to prepare for a potential directly funded partnership with the LNA. The IPMC will review the modality at both the initial selection of the INGO and when the LNA is identified. Upon the IPMC's recommendation and the Representative's approval, the LNA may enter into a PFA and PW within the current strategic plan's timeframe and in line with the Procedures on Partnership Management. However, once the PFA concludes, best practice dictates conducting a new competitive partnership selection process. This subsequent process may be tailored to exclusively target LNA applicants to further enhance localization efforts and promote long-term, sustainable local capacity.

See UNHCR/AI/2023/05 – AI on Procedures on Partnership Management, which lists localization as one of the "partnership management principles" (mandatory article 6).

Things to consider:

- Implementation modalities and partnership selection should prioritize:
  1. Development and strengthening of national systems and related public institutions to include forcibly displaced and stateless people in public services.
  2. Supporting LNAs, including the government, in their efforts for sustainable and impactful responses.
  3. Giving individuals, communities and their organizations the greatest consideration for their capacity, agency and dignity in meeting their needs and reducing barriers in accessing rights, assistance and services.
- Require that international partners demonstrate the application of localization principles, such as equitable partnerships, meaningful participation and mutual accountability (See 3. General Obligations terms of all parties in the partnership terms of the Partnership Framework Agreement).

17 Certain partners are exempted from the competitive partnership selection process, including UN organizations, government institutions with specific mandates, and groups or organizations considered for a grant agreement. In addition, in non-emergency contexts, based on the recommendation of the IPMC, a head of sub-office, representative or director has the discretion not to release a call for expression of interest if: 1) the most suitable partner is already identified through the theory of change and stakeholder mapping, and/or 2) the total estimated partnership budget will not exceed $100,000 for that particular partner within a calendar year.l.

- Provide feedback when LNAs were not selected for a specific partnership so they can learn and improve for future applications.

Funded Partnership Agreements with LNAs

Funded partnerships with LNAs are not to be viewed through a concept of **"implementing partners"**[18] but rather as equitable and collaborative partnerships. It is therefore essential that LNAs are included in all stages of the programme design and evaluation.

The provision of **indirect support costs (currently 4% of the project workplan financial plan) to LNAs is crucial for the quality of partnerships.** UNHCR has standardized its overhead provision to LNAs allowing them to invest in their institutional development, and with that, to reduce potential risks for UNHCR to partner with them.

Various options exist to enter into a funded partnership with an LNA:

A. Project Workplans (PWs), under Partnership Framework Agreements (PFAs) with the associated Partnership Terms, allow partners to receive funds to implement specific projects, while holding them responsible and accountable for the effective use of resources and the delivery of agreed results. When an LNA meets the criteria for a PW and associated PFA, it is recommended to explore if support in the application process is required.

If an LNA does not meet the requirements for a PFA and PW, alternative options exist:

B. Grant Agreements (GA) are simplified funding mechanisms that do not require implementation or financial reports, financial verification, or the return of unused funds as they fall under the category of transactions without binding arrangements per IPSAS 48. A GA allows a one-off payment of up to $12,000 per partner, per year, issued as a single or multiple grants and without the additional provision of indirect support costs. GAs give greater flexibility to support grassroots initiatives, allowing them to strengthen their organizational capacities. They aim to support initiatives that address needs of forcibly displaced and stateless individuals, as well as the communities hosting them. Operations may conduct a competitive selection process or accept unsolicited applications. GA partners are exempt from assessments like PSEA, the ICA/ICQ and the DPIS capacity assessment, but must meet eligibility criteria reviewed by the programme function. Selected partners are registered in Cloud ERP after completing a Registration Form. The contract can be made with an individual person, which allows unregistered organizations or those organizations without a bank account to enter an agreement. GAs are also a valuable tool to explore an organization's current capacities and offer potential future partners a chance to trial the collaboration. Consult the SOPs within the Grant Agreement Package (EN, FR, ES) for further details.

C. Agreements with networks or umbrella organizations of LNAs are another option. This can happen through a PW/PFA or GA with one organization who acts as the funded partner being the signatory to the UNHCR agreement. UNHCR welcomes the partner to collaborate with other local and/or international organizations to deliver a project successfully and best serve forcibly displaced and stateless people. However, written consent from UNHCR is required, or details of such subcontracting to be explained within the PW, before the partner can subcontract any of its obligations under the PW. Any agreement between the Partner and approved subcontractors must include provisions similar in substance to the UNHCR Agreement surrounding ethics and compliance. The signatory partner is responsible and liable to UNHCR for the subcontractor's performance. Clearly state in the PW the coordination duties and oversight of the parent organization, and which are the interventions of each partner. This option allows UNHCR to engage with a wider group of civil society actors at once,

Promising practices

Ukraine: In 2025, 13 of 14 partner organizations of UNHCR Ukraine are local (find out more here).

Sudan: A partnership with a local legal actor who knows the legal structure of the country was helpful, especially in an emergency when legal structures often break down.

Promising practices

Mauritania, Peru, Uganda: GA implementation with organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people strengthened community engagement initiatives.

Indonesia: Have GAs with seven RLOs as part of the Sport for Protection project, supporting their structural and programmatic development and expanding the impact of their community-based activities.

Argentina: Developed specific terms of reference for an open call for proposal and a tool to select LNAs for GAs.

Ecuador: GAs with WLOs aim at enhancing capacities for gender-based violence prevention and empowerment of forcibly displaced and stateless women.

Promising practices

Poland, Tanzania, Türkiye, Uganda: Apply umbrella model by supporting national CSOs who then mentor and provide further support to other local and CSOs, or RLOs only.

Ukraine: Partnership agreements with INGOs sometimes include that they will capacitate local NGOs and handover activities to them at defined point in time.

Nepal: Collaboration with Bhutanese Refugee Welfare Foundation (BRWF) WLO through sub-agreements with INGOs, let to gradual shift from UNHCR-led to BRWF-led services.

18 UNHCR no longer refers to "implementing partners" in its guidance and policies.

without having to develop individual agreements with each member of the group.

D. **Agreements with international actors or other LNAs** can include a conditionality to provide a pre-defined minimum amount of the funding to (other) LNAs or to hand over the work to (other) LNAs after a pre-defined period. It can further require a mentoring/twinning programme, enhancing capacity-strengthening of LNAs.

E. **The Refugee-Led Innovation Fund** provides not only financial resources to organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people (up to $45,000 for a project implementation phase of up to 18 months), but a holistic support mechanism combining financial resources with technical assistance, mentoring and peer-to-peer learning. The call for expression of interest is published online once a year in spring.

Things to consider:

- Tailor grant mechanisms to accommodate different types of LNAs, including small or informal LNAs. Consider simplification of administrative procedures to reduce access barriers for LNAs and increase of funding accessible through such simplified procedures.
- Raise awareness on GAs and explain the flexible solutions that are possible through these unique agreements.
- Consider partnering with organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people over an organization that does not comprise affected populations, where these two organizations have equal capacity and added value in a given area. Review UNHCR-funded partnerships and consider how much the operation directly or indirectly involves such organizations, the possible reasons, challenges and opportunities. Do not limit them to GAs, but support with tailored capacity-strengthening efforts and flexibility to meet eligibility for PWs and PFAs.
- Consider partnering with local or national WLOs, including those led by forcibly displaced and stateless women, to ensure women and girls' specific needs are met.
- Include criteria in calls for expressions of interest that ask for local presence, local expertise and potentially capacity for advocacy. Especially for LNAs, the first allocation is key to allow them to get other allocations.
- Provide guidance, technical assistance and training/mentoring on steps and procedures to be taken by LNAs to become funded partners of UNHCR such as registration on the UN Partner Portal. Consider having UNHCR colleagues, or where capacities are not available inhouse, a partner (potentially another LNA) supporting LNAs with registration, development of funding proposals and administrative processes.
- Facilitate legal support and advice (i.e. through linkages with pro bono legal services) to help organizations become legally registered, and potentially advocate before the authorities for the removal of barriers to legal registration for organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people.
- Apply due diligence when working with LNAs, as with any other partner. Ensure that organizations are vetted to prevent partnership with organizations subject to allegations of fraud or other integrity issues, taking into consideration that some organizations may require further resources to facilitate compliance. Tailor compliance mechanisms to small and emerging LNAs to avoid major barriers to funding for such actors.
- Provide multi-year, flexible and predictable funding to LNAs where possible. Multi-year funding enables strategic, sustainable engagement, not just short-term, project-based delivery, and recognizes LNAs' long-term role in leading/strengthening protection and governance systems. Transparency in funding decisions enables trust and long-term planning, especially for actors operating with fewer reserves.
- Support LNAs with project audits, as they may not have experienced an audit before. Beware of any disrespectful or abusive behaviours towards LNAs by external audit companies. Ensure that LNAs receive a copy for record-keeping.
- Encourage joint implementation among funded partners to foster greater collaboration with relevant government ministries and entities and LNAs to reinforce existing systems rather than creating parallel ones.
- Phase out funded partnership agreements with INGOs and even LNAs eventually, where this is a feasible and useful option to work towards. Think about a partnership's 'exit strategy' so that LNAs can truly take over long-term and be self-sufficient. "Work with local partners to develop an exit strategy whereby their support to forcibly displaced persons could continue after the gradual phasing out of UNHCR's support" Risk Management Tool, p.22.

Risk assessment and management

Partnerships with LNAs are often wrongly associated with higher risks. UNHCR's strategic approach is to see partnerships with LNAs **as an opportunity and investment,** given the important benefits that can be gained from localization. That said, some LNAs will have weaker internal controls in certain areas such as fiduciary controls. Given the benefits of localization, UNHCR is prepared to accept a higher level of residual risk (whilst still having key controls in place) when partnering with LNAs so that localization can be advanced: "*UNHCR is willing to take risks related to fiduciary controls and reporting in order to collaborate with local actors including organizations led by forcibly displaced*

and stateless persons", states the Risk Management Tool on Funded Partnerships (p. 22). This includes taking proactive measures such as budgeting for capacity-sharing in PWs, adapting training materials, and establishing funded partnerships with local actors.

Risks and responsibilities should be shared and distributed. **Risk-sharing** is understood as "*a reasonable sharing of the burden of preventative measures and reasonable sharing of responsibility for materialising risks"* (see Risk Sharing Framework developed in 2023 in the framework of the IASC). This means that UNHCR and LNAs should jointly consider the key risks and opportunities to achieving the objectives of the partnership and agree on distribution of responsibilities for managing and responding to those risks – with some mitigation measures being the responsibility of the LNA and others the responsibility of UNHCR.

Things to consider:

- ☐ Analyse risks for UNHCR, for LNAs themselves (funded and non-funded partners) and for funders/Member States by conducting a full risk and opportunity mapping, potentially through the localization MFT. This may include opportunities such as physical access to affected areas, understanding of local context, acceptance, etc; and risks such as risks of political affiliations by the LNA; fraud and corruption; risks to the forcibly displaced people the LNA would be serving (e.g. SEA); reputational risk to UNHCR and security risk for the LNA.
- ☐ Recognize and mitigate the transfer of risks, both when it implies transferring risks to LNAs (e.g. security risks) and when it involves increased risks for UNHCR (e.g. fiduciary risks). Mitigation measures can include financial support for security risk mitigations, information sharing, etc.
- ☐ Incorporate the principle of risk-sharing and the willingness to engage in risk-sharing dialogues across the delivery chain in partnership agreements (e.g. simplified reporting for smaller grants), localization plans and related documents. In funded partnerships, co-create effective risk registers for each PW with an equitable sharing of risk and mitigation measures.
- ☐ Consider the potentially different 'risk appetite' of LNAs because of their close identification with the population being served. LNAs may feel compelled to grow faster, accept more tasks and take greater risks than advisable. UNHCR can help assess risks associated with operational decisions as a duty of care. It is equally important to recognize and responsibly leverage the increased accountability opportunities that this close identification and embeddedness provide.
- ☐ Ensure appropriateness and proportionality of UNHCR's requirements and the support UNHCR provides to the LNA in order not to overwhelm the LNA.
- ☐ Mitigate these risks by dedicating time and resources to internal control capacity strengthening of LNAs.
- ☐ Consider data protection risks.[19]

2.1.6. Procurement and supply chain management

Where the operation determines a vendor is best-fit, a supplier or service provider is selected based on their ability to deliver goods or services and offer the best value for money[20]. UNHCR's commitment to more locally led responses includes promoting local procurement wherever feasible, in line with the Procurement Policy and AI as well as the Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response (2023), which states that, in emergency contexts, "*Country operation(s) should prioritize local procurement over international procurement where conditions allow*" (p.19).

Investing in local and national private sector actors, including RLOs and CBOs as service providers, can **stimulate the local economy**, foster livelihoods, support job creation, and reduce UNHCR's carbon footprint. Local procurement initiatives should therefore be viewed not only as a transactional activity but also as a strategic contribution to **resilience and sustainability** (see the Policy on Procurement (2025) and the Supply Strategy (2024-2030).

Humanitarian interventions at the local level promote demand and shape supply patterns. Therefore, it is essential to adapt supply chain practices to align them with local and regional market capacities, ensuring humanitarian assistance is both efficient and supportive of **sustainable economic development.**

Promising practices

Brazil: Has a Frame Agreement for catering services with a local RLO and developed a web platform that consolidates information on suppliers led by refugees and migrants and circulated it with the SOPs for Low Value Procurement (LVP).

Armenia: Localized procurement of visibility materials, prioritizing RLOs and refugee artisans, strengthens economic self-reliance and recognize their craftsmanship and skills.

Ukraine: In 2024, 84% of UNHCR's procurement was done through Ukrainian suppliers. Over $100 million was channeled through local suppliers in 2023 and 2024.

Kenya: Global frame agreements are in place for buckets and tarpaulins that are manufactured in Kenya using recycled content that is locally sourced.

19 See Policy on the Protection of Personal Data of Persons to Concern to UNHCR (UNHCR/HCP/2015/6)
20 Also see the UNHCR Due Diligence Criteria and Procedures for Private Sector Engagement

All procurement actions - whether under regular or emergency circumstances - must always adhere to the UNHCR Procurement Policy and procedures[21]. UNHCR must continuously assess sustainability factors and risks in the procurement process, actively seeking locally available options to enhance sustainable practices. This may involve engaging local suppliers near operational areas and establish frame agreements managed at the global level to enhance logistics, reduce costs, and support host community economies. By fostering partnerships with selected nearby suppliers, UNHCR can strengthen its supply chain resilience while contributing to the economic well-being of host communities.

Things to consider:

- ☐ Apply the proximity sourcing approach by identifying manufacturers in locations where UNHCR operates, and ensure that products are procured from sources located as close as possible to the point of delivery where conditions permit, as outlined in the Policy on Procurement (4.9).
- ☐ Explore and encourage contracts with LNAs, including RLOs, if local/national sourcing is recommended and/or represents the most suitable option based on UNHCR's general procurement principles (a) best value for money b) fairness, integrity and transparency, c) effective international competition and d) best interest of UNHCR), and where the local market conditions allow. In any circumstances, procurement actions should always ensure alignment with UNHCR Procurement policies and procedures[22].
- ☐ Think of risks for UNHCR and for suppliers or service providers (e.g. quality assurance, fraud risks, financial risks, supply chain limitations).
- ☐ Explore possibilities to gradually expand local procurement options through multi-year planning, and comprehensive local market assessments, aimed at identifyng secure, reliable local suppliers, that can engage with UNHCR on frame agreements.

2.1.7. Cash-Based Interventions (CBI)

CBIs are a powerful enabler of localization as they strengthen local markets, reinforce existing financial systems, and empower displaced and stateless people to meet their own needs with dignity (see Policy on Cash-Based Interventions).

When implemented through nationally mandated social protection institutions, local service providers, or in collaboration with local CSOs, CBIs can significantly **strengthen national capacities** and advance sustainable, area-based approaches. By leveraging local delivery mechanisms, such as mobile money, community-based targeting, or local retailers, CBIs **reduce reliance on international supply chains** and infrastructure.

Promising practices

Türkiye: A local actor co-leads the Cash Working Group, which allows to increase local capacities so that UNHCR can phase out one day.

HQ: UNHCR, as co-lead of the Global Cash Advisory Group, promotes localization under the new cash coordination model. In refugee settings, 83% of Cash Working Groups are now co-chaired by local actors. Localization is also embedded across tools and processes.

Things to consider:

- ☐ Co-design CBIs together with LNAs and representatives of the community and involve them in the different stages of the process. LNAs may play a critical role in assessment, response analysis, targeting, community outreach and monitoring of CBIs.
- ☐ Deliver CBIs through local financial service providers, e.g. local bank, or other LNAs, in line with the country system's roles and responsibilities.
- ☐ Promote local leadership by ensuring Cash Working Groups are co-chaired by local actors, in line with the new cash coordination model's commitment to inclusive and equitable governance, and ensure their processes, materials, and meetings are inclusive and accessible.
- ☐ Enable local actors to adopt or build on shared tools and systems, including Minimum Expenditure Baskets, transfer values, and data platforms, so they can actively contribute to and benefit from coordinated approaches.

2.2. Implementing localization

The GET phase provides a strategic opportunity to ensure that the collaboration and partnerships with LNAs are fully integrated throughout the implementation of the operation's multi-year strategic plan (see GET Results). During the **Indicative Operating Level (IOL)** prioritization process, UNHCR, in consultation with partners and stakeholders, including local and national ones, determines the results and activities to be prioritized given a certain budget allocation (see GET Section 1).

21 See Policy on Procurement (UNHCR/HCP/2021/01) and Administrative Instructions on Procurement UNHCR/AI/2021/05/Rev.1)

22 See Policy on Procurement (UNHCR/HCP/2021/01) and Administrative Instructions on Procurement UNHCR/AI/2021/05/Rev.1)

Operations should closely collaborate with LNAs to develop project workplans and detailed activities. The detailed planning is the last opportunity to ensure that localization outputs, indicators and their targets are discussed with partners and included in the operation's programme for the coming year. During the establishment of projects, prioritize activities that contribute to the inclusion of displaced and stateless people in local systems and structures, contributing to sustainable responses (see GET Section 2).

Localization can be reinforced through **area-based approaches** that align UNHCR's objectives with the plans and division of labour of local authorities, as defined in regulations and practices at (sub)country level and involve collaboration with LNAs across multiple sectors.

Things to consider

- Work closely with LNAs as their likely ease of access to affected areas can allow more regular on-site visits for follow-up and monitoring of project activities.
- Use the GET phase for capacity-sharing, on one hand, to strengthen LNAs' capacity in evidence gathering, monitoring and internal controls, preparing them for increased responsibilities in the future, and, on the other hand, to create opportunities for LNAs to share expertise with international actors and other LNAs (see chapter 5).
- Monitor the progress of localization throughout the implementation phase. Measure both the degree of involvement of LNAs in the GET phase and the progress towards the gradual handover of responsibilities to LNAs. Make adaptations to programmes based on observations and lessons learned.
- Integrate AAP systematically throughout all phases of the localization process, ensuring that feedback, participation, and transparency mechanisms are co-designed with LNAs and adapted to the local context. This will strengthen community trust and enhance the accountability and quality of localized responses.
- Recognize and support complementary community-driven initiatives such as mutual aid, survivor- and community-led responses, and community philanthropy, which reflect local agency, solidarity, and self-determination in crisis response and recovery.

Promising practices

Togo: Organizes regular partnership coordination meetings with funded partners, including local, national, international and government entities, to discuss progress and gaps creating an atmosphere of trust.

Ecuador: Created a national sport coalition with local sports organizations, athletes, and content creators for a strategic approach to promoting refugee protection through sport.

Armenia: Under the Community Project framework, 28 projects have been implemented with CBOs, RLOs and municipalities to support refugee inclusion and local resilience.

RBMENA: The MENA Community Protection Network is currently co-led by an RLO from Mauritania, and is composed of RLOs, CBOs, and national organizations promoting participation and shared regional leadership.

2.3. Monitoring impact of localization efforts

The SHOW phase is a pivotal moment in the UNHCR programme cycle where progress, results, and lessons learned are analyzed and presented. It allows to reflect on how interventions have fared, including the progress achieved in using country systems, and ensures that all actors are held accountable for the commitments made during the planning and implementation phases (see SHOW Results).

The phase presents an opportunity to highlight and assess the role of LNAs in the success of an operation. The Strategic Moment of Reflection (SMR) brings together UNHCR and external stakeholders to review this analysis and reflect on the progress towards protection and solutions results outlined in the multi-year strategic plan. The inclusion of LNAs in these SMRs helps define lessons learned, course corrections and future strategic reorientations.

Promising practices

Ukraine: Published a localization factsheet presenting key figures and achievements.

RBSA: Prepared a report on efforts done with and by local women RLOs and their role in strengthening protection in Southern Africa.

Key localization achievements should be reported through metrics and qualitative analysis, reflecting the degree to which LNAs have taken on leadership roles, the extent of capacity-sharing and risk-sharing achieved, and how responsibilities have been progressively handed over to LNAs throughout the multi-year strategic plan (see Annex 3 on indicators).

It is essential to analyze and document not only the overall outcomes of interventions but also on the specific progress made in advancing localization. This includes demonstrating how partnerships with LNAs have contributed to the achievements of implementing the strategic plan. It provides an opportunity to publicly acknowledge the role of LNAs. This aligns with the principles of transparency and accountability. By emphasizing these contributions, UNHCR can reinforce the importance of local ownership and capacity-sharing (see chapter 4 on external relations).

This phase also allows for reflection on **challenges faced during the partnership and localization process.** Highlighting both successes and obstacles in localizing UNHCR responses can lead to valuable insights for future programming and foster an environment of continuous learning. If challenges arose during the handover of responsibilities to LNAs, these should be discussed openly and solutions identified to improve future collaboration and/or handovers.

Things to consider

- ☐ Clearly present data (both quantitative and qualitative indicators) and examples showing how LNAs contributed to the delivery of jointly defined programmes, e.g. activities led by LNAs.
- ☐ Listen to the feedback from LNAs and local communities on the relevance and quality of the interventions and use it to improve current and future programmes.
- ☐ Give visibility and a voice to LNAs in presentations, reports and discussions during the SHOW phase. They should not only be participants but active contributors, sharing their own perspectives on the outcomes, and are supported with resources for this contribution (see chapter 4).
- ☐ Ensure that evidence collected is shared with local communities and actors, creating a feedback loop that ensures a two-way accountability process where local populations and actors are informed and able to provide feedback on the effectiveness of the support received and that informs both LNAs and UNHCR's ongoing strategic decisions.
- ☐ Plan for future capacity efforts to ensure that localization remains a long-term priority.

3. Emergency Preparedness and Response Coordination

3.1. Why is localization key in emergency preparedness and response coordination?

Localization in emergency preparedness and contingency planning builds the foundation for a swift, effective and culturally sensitive response, ensuring that international assistance complements rather than overrides local initiatives. By prioritizing the involvement of LNAs, UNHCR can ensure their engagement from the outset and facilitate an appropriate response informed by their in-depth knowledge of local contexts and communities, understanding of capacities and protection risks, their connections with authorities, community leaders and other LNAs, as well as their community trust and legitimacy.

UNHCR facilitates and actively supports the participation of LNAs in coordination structures, including in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle and the UNHCR-led Refugee Coordination Model, and advocates for their contribution to the development and implementation of associated response plans, such as RRPs and HNRPs. This approach improves response efficiency and also fosters resilience and sustainability of local systems, enabling an independent management of future crises over time.

3.2. Localization in Emergency Preparedness, Response and Coordination

3.2.1. Emergency preparedness

UNHCR colleagues are strongly encouraged to respect and support the leadership of the government and strive for the contribution of a wide range of stakeholders to anticipate and plan for comprehensive responses that build on, and potentially strengthen, national systems and capacity. Include LNAs in all stages of emergency preparedness and contingency planning, as appropriate in the given country system, to ensure that strategies are grounded in local realities. Engage them in emergency scenario development, risk assessment and monitoring, early warning systems, and the design of preparedness measures (see Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response 2023, p.9).

Things to consider:

- Ensure early and active involvement of LNAs in emergency preparedness activities, including contingency planning, to pre-establish joint plans and strategies, as well as strong partnerships. Early collaboration is key as there will be limited time to form new partnerships once an emergency occurs.
- Undertake a mapping of LNAs to identify organizations and interlocutors who would be well placed to engage in the emergency response, including an analysis of capacity and support required for them to engage. Check out existing mappings to avoid duplication.
- Use preparedness and contingency planning processes to identify and include LNAs with response potential in the planning. In many cases, LNAs provide first-response assistance spontaneously based on the situation and needs, pivoting from their usual activities or target groups.
- Integrate coordination structures with LNAs into contingency plans to foster effective partnerships, prevent duplication, and enhance the speed and efficiency of emergency responses.
- Advocate for or help secure timely access for LNAs to national budgets or other financing to address early emergency needs, aligning with national disaster risk management and social protection systems when present.
- Develop and maintain community-led early warning systems, in collaboration with LNAs, to ensure timely and effective emergency responses.
- In case of heightened risk, collaborate with LNAs to pre-position resources, such as non-food item kits, for immediate action when a crisis occurs. Prioritize the establishment or use of frame agreements from other UN entities as proactive procurement solutions to meet the requirements of UNHCR's multi-year strategic plans.
- Consider providing training, resources and technical support tailored to the needs of LNAs for their active and meaningful participation in preparedness and response activities. Set aside budget for potential capacity support, as this process can take time (see chapter 5).

Promising practices

Libya: Arabic translation support made available to Protection and Shelter/NFI clusters and the CBI Working Group resulted in increased participation of relevant LNAs in coordination meetings and greater engagement, contributing experience and expertise to preparedness and responses activities.

Dominican Republic: Applies an adaptive social protection practice in context of preparedness for hurricane seasons and early warnings.

Poland: Facilitates lessons learned on contingency planning and emergency preparedness with LNAs and INGOs, producing recommendations that foster better integration of local NGOs into crisis management structures.

3.2.2. Emergency response - In general

Under the leadership and guidance of national and local authorities, and in close collaboration with LNAs and other relevant stakeholders, UNHCR supports and complements existing mechanisms and efforts to respond to emergencies (see chapters 3.2.3.-3.2.5 specifically for refugee, IDP and other scenarios.).

UNHCR promotes a shift towards a localization of coordination systems, i.e. a decentralization of coordination to the subnational level or a **multi-sectoral area-based coordination** close to the point of delivery, as appropriate for the operational context. UNHCR colleagues are encouraged to scale up such demand-driven, bottom-up coordination architectures that focus on essential functions and to advocate for local leadership and/or support the LNA responsible for the coordination according to the country system, if needed, and link them up to structures at other levels.

In national or international coordination structures, the Emergency Handbook advises to "***dedicate time and effort*** *to enable participation of national NGOs and civil society, (…) refugee or IDP-led organizations. Such* ***participation needs to be meaningful and throughout*** *the humanitarian system and programme cycle. It is not enough to consult, and barriers to participation need to be proactively identified and addressed at sector/cluster-level, at inter-cluster level and as needed at HCT-level*" (chapter on coordination skills, methods and good practices).

Things to consider:

- ☐ Align with local processes, plans or coordination mechanisms that already exist. Explore their strengths and weaknesses and how to link and support them, if necessary (e.g. national emergency response coordination and contingency plans). Speak to LNAs to understand in which mechanism they may already be engaged, how they could be scaled, merged or complementary.
- ☐ Conduct a risk mapping and consider the operational and protection environment for local and national CSOs, in particular refugee- and IDP-led organizations, and ensure sensitivities are taken into account in the localization/LNA engagement strategy.
- ☐ Advocate for and support local leadership and engagement in coordination mechanisms through active outreach to LNAs, advocacy for meaningful participation and contribution as equal partners. Ensure that they have a voice in decision-making processes, their contributions are valued and acted upon. Keep track of how UNHCR is providing organizations encouragement for local leadership of coordination mechanisms, and the extent to which this encouragement has positive effects (monitored by MOPAN assessments). A rotational leadership model could be a great opportunity for several LNAs to gain and build governance experience.
- ☐ Undertake introductory visits and provide induction sessions and packages to LNAs to help them understand the RCM and IASC coordination structures and operating modalities as well as the time commitment that might be required and how such an engagement might be mutually beneficial.
  - Use the visit to ask about the LNA's successes and challenges, which may provide an entry point to link to the benefits of inter-agency coordination participation.
  - Don't forget that LNAs may not be familiar with the processes of a large humanitarian response. The sessions can therefore be an opportunity to increase understanding and agreement on roles, responsibilities, mutual expectations and potential benefits around coordination.
  - Remind LNAs of PSEA and humanitarian principles during such introductory sessions.
- ☐ Identify barriers to local leadership and engagement and develop or advocate for solutions to improve active participation. These obstacles may include language barriers, jargon, cultural or political differences, structural social discrimination, resistance from international or other LNAs, government policies, logistical and technological challenges (including access to information and delays in dissemination), security issues, as well as resource and capacity constraints like funding and HR.
  - Actively integrate local and national languages by translating materials, understanding local concepts where direct translations are not available, and amplifying voices of non-dominant language speakers. Provide translation support as much as possible.
  - Consider logistical requirements conducive to needs of LNAs, including meeting frequency, time, location, and modes of transport (e.g. avoiding meetings after dark, at prayer time or days of religious or cultural

Promising practices

Türkiye: Support co-lead of Grand Bargain National Reference Group on Localization, and acts as member of secretariat and steering committee.

Ukraine: Monthly meetings with partners, also at field office level.

Brazil: Operation Welcome, coordination structure led by the national government and including local, national and international actors (also see here).

Sudan: Close collaboration with CBP networks given the restricted access.

Armenia: Collaborated with ICVA at regional level to support establishment of a national NGO Forum.

HQ: Developed guidance on Localization in UNHCR-led coordination structures.

observance). Consider "mobile" meetings that take place in different locations to ensure easier access and diverse participation for LNAs.

- Offer entry points for LNAs unable to participate regularly in coordination structures to remain aware of ongoing processes which also allows them to choose when to weigh in.
- Discuss and explicitly explain the meeting style, including conduct expectations, and solicit inputs from group members to ensure meetings can be as productive and effective as possible.
- Involve LNAs in the review of coordination mechanisms and structures, while also making them lighter and more functional. Invite LNAs to think in innovate ways, specific to their context, that meet their needs and coordination objectives.

- Play a facilitating or intermediary role, e.g. between local organizations, funders and potentially authorities (see chapter 4).
  - Advocate for and support emergency funding mechanisms for LNAs, possibly those foreseen by the country system, that allow for quick and efficient emergency response activities.
  - Increase the visibility of local and national responders by recommending speakers from LNAs for global and regional engagements, such as briefings on the humanitarian situation in the country.
  - Arrange for advocacy and public speaking training, if desired, so that LNAs can speak confidently and effectively when given the floor.
- Establish regular information exchange with LNAs, aligned with the country's governance structure. While some LNAs may have granular but geographically limited information, UNHCR has convening and IM power, which allows to aggregate and feedback on the big picture for the benefit of all contributors.
  - Ensure efficiency of information-sharing and decision-making, e.g. through interoperable digital platforms, as it can prove vital in emergencies.
  - Ad hoc and informal exchanges can also have an important impact on the trust of the partnership.
  - Engage with informal structures, e.g. CBP networks, who may become frontline responders when international and even LNAs no longer have access.
  - Consider collaborating with Red Cross and Red Crescent societies who sometimes have access to other information channels, government, and consortia of local groups.
  - Collaborate with NGO forums. Encourage, if needed, the development of networks to help represent LNAs, especially in cases where the number, size, location or resource limitations of LNAs make it infeasible for them to participate individually.
- Accept that not everyone needs to be coordinated. In some cases (e.g. an LNA working at small scale with few human resources), it may be more efficient to simply maintain an open two-way communication channel.
- Consider deploying localization experts to operations to support response activities, either through internal deployments or through UNHCR's emergency standby partners that have localization experts on their rosters and can fund time-bound deployments (six months with possibility of extension).

3.2.3. Emergency response - Refugee situations

In refugee responses, it is essential to collaborate closely with national and local authorities and CSOs to link up with existing coordination mechanisms and service provision to effectively bolster operational capacity without creating unnecessary parallel systems. UNHCR should capitalize on networks of local CSOs, including RLOs, from the beginning to reinforce sustainable responses and help create an inclusive and community-driven humanitarian system.

The Refugee Coordination Model (RCM), which guides UNHCR and partners towards accountable, inclusive and transparent coordination in refugee responses, highlights localization as one of the core principles. This can include giving more space to municipalities, local communities, and RLOs to coordinate and optimize the local resources for a more localized refugee response (see the RCM guidance website). As such, the RCM advises that:

> RRP 2025 Guidance Note, p.6-7:
>
> *"LNAs (…) generally constitute well-developed networks, which are essential during a refugee response and are often at the forefront of the response. Adopting an inclusive approach from the assessment and analysis phase onwards, including the systematic inclusion of LNAs in coordination forums, will help to foster ownership and acceptance of the response."*

- **UNHCR** will take an operational leadership role only when State authorities lack the capacity to lead the refugee response and will mobilize support to develop the host State's capacity. While responsibilities lie with the central government, regional and local authorities have an important role to play as well.
- **The Refugee Coordinator** is responsible to encourage co-coordination of sectors by partners, particularly LNAs, that have the necessary capacity, expertise, and experience.

- **The government leads** the coordination of all sector working groups, where feasible, through the relevant line ministry. If coordination by the designated government authorities is not possible, the following alternative options can be considered, in order of priority, and based on expertise and capacity: 1. national NGO, 2. international NGO, 3. UN entity.
- **Membership of sector working groups is inclusive** of government representatives and local CSOs, including RLOs. Sub-national sector working groups should be co-led by local authorities.
- **The (Inter-/Sub-) Sector Coordinator is responsible to promote avenues for national and local stakeholders** to access funding opportunities and for capacity-sharing.
- The **Refugee Coordination Forum** is co-coordinated by the UNHCR Refugee Coordinator and the government and foresees the participation of relevant national NGOs and other civil society actors.
- The **Inter-Sector Working Group** is coordinated by UNHCR with a government counterpart and convenes coordinators of sectors, task forces and designated representatives from national NGO networks.

Also consult the guidance on Local partner's engagement and resource mobilization in RRPs; and this RRP specific guidance: RRP Guidance Note and Internal Guidelines and Checklist for Regional and Country RRP Focal Points.

Things to consider:

- ☐ Have refugee- or host community-led organizations and other LNAs contribute meaningfully to sector working groups, the Inter-Sector Working Group and the Refugee Coordination Forum, including in leadership roles where possible. Include those led by women, youth, LGBTIQ+, and people with disabilities. Consider private sector representation, depending on the context.
- ☐ Integrate localization practices and strategies into key planning documents, especially the RRP.
- ☐ Promote the RRP as a network building platform for LNAs, a tool to boost engagement and inclusion. It is also an opportunity for UNHCR and other partners to build a stronger civil society.
- ☐ Promote visibility of LNAs in RRPs and resource mobilization events, such as launches (see chapter 4).
- ☐ Advocate for a Refugee Coordination Forum localization strategy, potentially with an annual localization workplan that includes practical actions for members. This could be done through the establishment of a localization Task Force, which is (co)led by and includes LNAs. Include metrics for measuring success or guiding course correction.
- ☐ Develop transition plans for sectors to hand over roles and responsibilities to LNAs (see chapter 3.2.6).
- ☐ Adopt a humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) approach by advocating for the integration of long-term refugee protection and solutions into development frameworks, while upholding UNHCR's mandated responsibilities and accountabilities within development-focused platforms such as the UNSDCF and national development plans, with emphasis on the SDGs.
- ☐ Consider how to transform inter-agency coordination structures and processes to best reach coordination objectives together. The RCM is flexible and adaptable. Innovate according to the needs and capacities of LNAs in the country.

Promising practices

DRC: Localization is a cross-cutting priority in the Regional RRP for DRC.

RBE: Four localization priorities were identified for the Ukraine Regional RRP: 1) visibility, 2) access to funding, 3) access to capacity-building opportunities, 4) recognition of central role of LNAs.

Moldova, Poland, Romania: Established local refugee coordination fora/networks, in Romania co-led with government authorities, in Moldova, with local administrations and CSOs, to strengthen local decision-making.

3.2.4. Emergency response - Internal displacement

UNHCR advocates for and supports the meaningful contribution of LNAs, especially of IDP-led organizations, in coordination and response efforts by promoting local leadership, representation and participation in clusters, Inter-Cluster Coordination Groups, Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT), and similar mechanisms (see Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement, 2019).

The Guidance package for UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement (2024, p.34) advises that UNHCR's interventions should strive to align with and/or be integrated into relevant national and sub-national level laws, policies, strategies, and plans to ensure national/local ownership and the sustainability of solutions over time.

The Focus Area Strategic Plan for Protection and Solutions for Internally Displaced People 2024-2030 (p. 24-31) prioritizes localization as a means to its three programming principles, namely:

A. Strengthening national ownership, by working with national actors from the onset in all that we do

B. Stepping up IDP- and community-led action, through a serious shift towards localization, with a view to improve

local ownership and sustainability

C. Increasing sustainability across our programming to avoid the creation of parallel systems and the heightened risk of long-term legacy programmes that foster dependency

In the Implementation Planning Tool for IDP Contexts (p. 6-12), the 6 Building Blocks identify LNAs to collaborate with, e.g. local authorities, legal clinics or service providers. It further recommends that effective resource mobilisation is underpinned by adopting an assertive posture towards locally and regionally sourced humanitarian and development public funding sources such as pooled funds.

Localization in Cluster and Inter-Cluster Coordination:

UNHCR is the IASC-appointed Cluster Lead Agency for Protection, and in conflict-induced settings for Shelter, and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM), and *"has a **responsibility** to engage and work with partners including national and LNAs for effective strategic planning and response."* (UNHCR Guidance for HRPs, 2024, p. 5)

The Guidance package for UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement (2024, p. 7-12) recommends that, whenever possible, UNHCR led-clusters are (co)led with government authorities and/or national organizations and that LNAs (co) coordinate the IDP response in their areas of expertise, strengthening their engagement with and inclusion of IDPs in Cluster Coordination Platforms. The Implementation Planning Tool for IDP Contexts (p.3) asks that where systemic change remains a long-term development objective, country strategies need to tailor and adapt UNHCR's cluster coordination and operational response to local contexts.

Cluster-specific guidance on localization:

- Global Protection Cluster: https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/themes/localisation
- Global CCCM Cluster: Localizing CCCM cluster coordination: a pathway forward and CCCM Cluster Coordination Toolkit - Localization
- Global Shelter Cluster: GSC Strategy 2030 (enabler 2: Localization)

Also refer to the IASC Guidance on Strengthening Participation, Representation and Leadership of LNAs in IASC Humanitarian Coordination Mechanisms (2021) that was developed with local and national NGOs, co-led by UNHCR, for recommendations and indicators, and the Inter-Agency Toolkit on Localisation in Humanitarian Coordination.

Promising practices

Ethiopia, Niger, Ukraine: The CCCM cluster is co-chaired with national authorities (Niger) and with a national NGO (Ethiopia). In Ukraine, the Protection cluster is co-led with a national NGO.

Things to consider:

- ☐ Have IDP-led organizations and other LNAs contribute meaningfully to clusters, sub-clusters, cluster strategic advisory groups and inter-cluster coordination mechanisms, including in leadership roles.
- ☐ Advocate for and contribute to an HCT localization strategy, potentially with annual localization workplans.
- ☐ Integrate localization strategies into key planning documents such as cluster strategies and the HNRP.
- ☐ Promote visibility of LNAs in HNRPs (see chapter 4).
- ☐ Ensure contributions to 3/4/5Ws matrix by LNAs and disaggregate the data to showcase their contributions.
- ☐ Ensure and/or advocate that LNAs are prioritized for funding, according to their roles and responsibilities in their respective country system, also in the framework of coordinated pooled funds such as Country-based Pooled Funds (CBPF) or the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), and/or participate in their advisory boards. Advocate that allocation criteria and requirements are conducive to proposals from LNAs. To be eligible, ensure that LNAs are cleared by the Humanitarian Funding Unit (HFU) in advance.
- ☐ Develop transition plans for clusters to hand over roles and responsibilities to LNAs (see 3.2.6).

3.2.5. Emergency response - Other scenarios

In mixed situations (refugees and IDPs), closely coordinate with OCHA and other actors on the engagement with LNAs to avoid gaps and duplication. Contribute to common advocacy messages and resource mobilization for LNAs[23].

In cases of mixed movement (refugees and migrants), advocate for close collaboration with and support to LNAs in the framework of Refugees and Migrants Coordination Platforms.

3.2.6. Disengaging responsibly

In line with the **Sustainable Responses approach,** UNHCR supports inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless people in national systems from the onset, and only operationally engages if inclusion is not (yet) possible. In this

23 Also refer to the Joint UNHCR and OCHA Note on Mixed Situations: Coordination in Practice (2014), the UNHCR Guidance on HNRPs, the Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response (UNHCR/HCP/2023/01) (p. 15), and the Guidance on Emergency Preparedness (p. 9).

case, it ensures from the start that initiatives are developed in a way that enable transition and inclusion (e.g. advocate for inclusion, raise awareness and strengthen capacity to address access barriers to national systems; work closely with ministries e.g. of social protection to align cash assistance with social assistance).

Things to consider:

- Prepare for and hand over activities and responsibilities to national systems (e.g. individual child protection case management is handed over to national child protection systems), or other LNAs that have been assigned the role and responsibility and/or are recognized by the country system, as early as circumstances allow.
- Ensure that the transition is done responsibly and progress achieved is sustained over the long term. Explore close collaboration with development actors and development investments.
- Facilitate the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless people in civil society and entrepreneurial ecosystems by promoting their participation in national CSOs and inclusion in entrepreneurship support services and related structures.
- Enable the early registration of RLOs to improve their access to national systems and financial services.
- Consider facilitating access to the registration of patents, intellectual property rights, and innovations to support the economic and cultural contributions of forcibly displaced and stateless people and their organizations.

Promising practices

Nepal: Since 2020, UNHCR in Nepal has shifted from a direct assistance model to an advocacy and capacity-development approach, focusing on registration and self-reliance through livelihoods, while continuing efforts to document Bhutanese and Tibetan refugees.

In refugee situations, the RCM Guidance (p. 34) advises that RCM actors are engaged in transition planning from the outset of an emergency. The RCM's annual review will inform operational planning, with the expectation that humanitarian response activities will scale down and become more targeted while other activities may be integrated into national or international develop¬ment planning frameworks and coordination systems. This process shall be conducted in close consultation with the Government. In addition, the RCM is advised to "*provide strategic and operational coordination until such a coordination mechanism for humanitarian actors is no longer needed or more suitably led under a differentiated national arrangement or if activities are no longer humanitarian in nature and better coordinated by other national or international development coordina¬tion systems*".

In situations of internal displacement, the Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations Internal Displacement (p. 9) states that UNHCR will disengage responsibly when LNAs can meaningfully take over operational delivery, coordination and monitoring in relation to protection and solutions for IDPs. This will require that, from the outset of its involvement, UNHCR undertakes interventions and measures aimed at enhancing national response capacity. The Guidance package for UNHCR's engagement in situations of internal displacement (2019, p.33-34) recommends a strategic shift that requires the organization to work in a different manner to lay the groundwork for national actors, interagency or other stakeholders to take over responsibilities and activities from UNHCR. Fundamental to this approach is grassroot engagement by UNHCR from the onset, including with IDPs, communities, and CSOs. It further advises to develop a transition plan, in close coordination with OCHA and the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), that outlines how and when cluster leadership responsibilities will shift to national authorities (see the IASC Guidance on Cluster Transition and Deactivation).

4. External Relations

4.1. Why is it important and strategic to support the visibility of LNAs?

Localization includes working with LNAs in external engagement with States, donors, international partners and the general public. LNAs should be recognized for their roles, responsibilities and contributions to the response, including their capacities, skills and knowledge, and the results of their activities. Yet, they often face greater challenges in gaining visibility and recognition of their work, and developing a positive reputation with donors compared to international actors. They are often underrepresented in (international) decision-making spaces. By elevating the visibility and recognition of LNAs, UNHCR can support more equitable partnerships with LNAs[24].

LNAs often:

- Have fewer resources in terms of staffing and funding for visibility, including for branding, creating stories and visuals, participation in events, and developing effective advocacy strategies.
- Lack the established reputation and relationships that INGOs have with donors, policymakers and the public for fundraising, advocacy and influencing policies.
- Face challenges accessing international decision-making spaces due to language barriers, lack of resources for travel, administrative barriers such as visas and due to many stakeholders seeing refugees as only beneficiaries of aid, rather than active participants.
- Are sub-contractors of an INGO and as a result do not have a direct link to donors and lower visibility of their role in achieving results.
- Work in countries with a challenging political and civil society environment, which can result in additional restrictions to organize, fund or access international or high-level discussions (see more under 5.3).

While there can be an assumed tension between increasing visibility for LNAs and UNHCR's own external engagement objectives (e.g. resource mobilization), there are several reasons why supporting LNAs' visibility benefits UNHCR:

1. Donor priorities: Institutional and private sector donors are increasingly prioritizing localization in their humanitarian and development strategies. By highlighting UNHCR's partnerships with and the work of LNAs in reporting and public information, UNHCR shows that our strategic objectives are in line with theirs.
2. Sustainable responses: Providing visibility and empowering subregional governments, NGOs and RLOs will allow them to autonomously access resources by national governments, development actors, regional bodies and the private sector, allowing them to create decent employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, facilitate enrolment in educational institutions, strengthen effective access to social protection and social care services and enhance social cohesion.
3. Local advocacy: Strengthening local capacity for external engagement can amplify UNHCR's own advocacy for protection and inclusion. Where possible and safe, LNAs can lead or support the advocacy of UNHCR, which can increase access to local audiences and shows that calls for protection are not only a demand from international actors.

4.2. Key considerations and risks related to visibility activities

UNHCR and its partners often work in complex operational contexts with restricted civic space for (local and national) CSOs, particularly those led by forcibly displaced and stateless people. In these environments, supporting the external engagement of and bringing attention to local and national CSOs can bring significant risks with it. It is therefore important that UNHCR and its partners make informed decisions about visibility-related activities and consider the security, political, and reputational risks. In some instances, concerns around risks and security, and to protect the (limited) space they have to operate, CSOs should be supported to maintain a low profile.

In line with UNHCR's Programme Handbook, as well as UNHCR's responsibility under the Principles of Partnership, UNHCR should consider risks connected with visibility activities during the situational analysis and risk review of the programme cycle (see chapter 2). All organizations supported have the right to informed consent which should be obtained before any visibility activity. When visibility can put a national or local CSO at risk from political and/or armed actors, no communication should be released without their approval of content, timing and even the decision to share. Such risks may become more pronounced at times of emergency.

- Risks that local and national CSOs may face due to increased visibility include:
- Security risks and physical threats,

24 Also see UNHCR Factsheet on Localization, and IASC Guidance on Strengthening Participation, Representation and Leadership of LNAs in IASC Humanitarian Coordination Mechanisms, and Inter-Agency Toolkit on Localisation in Humanitarian Coordination.

- Legal restrictions for their activities (in particular for RLOs), operational and resource strain
- Political backlash and administrative measures, retaliation, or interference in their activities
- Community backlash/stigmatization.

4.3. Guidance on steps for UNHCR colleagues

In general, UNHCR colleagues should work closely with LNAs to understand their priorities in relation to advocacy, government engagement (for CSOs), communication, and potential associated risks. Below is a list of activities that UNHCR teams can undertake to increase visibility and the capacity for external engagement of LNAs.

4.3.1. Communication with LNAs

- ☐ Identify preferred communication channels, jointly with LNAs, for information sharing.
- ☐ Ensure representation of all relevant local and national communities, including different displaced and stateless communities, in your communication and outreach plans to prevent exclusion of groups, particularly those less engaged with UNHCR or representing (often) marginalized groups such as women, people with disabilities, minorities, etc. (see Ethical Communications Guidelines).
- ☐ Partner with existing umbrella organizations and coordination platforms to facilitate communication with LNAs, e.g. on funding opportunities, coordination, updates, UNHCR programme cycle.
- ☐ Designate a national UNHCR colleague as the communication focal point for LNAs in that area to foster a stronger and more responsive relationship and engagement, without stifling broader relationship building with the relevant UNHCR team.
- ☐ Translate key information in relevant local/national languages and the languages of the displaced communities and provide interpretation and translation services where possible. Communication must also be accessible to people with disabilities.

Promising practices

RBE: Supports resource mobilization for LNAs involved in the Ukraine RRP, e.g. by connecting LNAs with donors in Slovakia, Poland, the Baltics and Romania.

Moldova: Publishes quarterly Factsheets highlighting the work of local and national RRP partners to increase their visibility with donors.

Romania: Organized a donor meet-up to foster inclusivity and build partnerships for sustained refugee support.

4.3.2. Donor engagement and reporting

- ☐ Actively communicate and advocate on the added value of LNAs to donors (including States, philanthropies, foundations etc.) and the broader humanitarian community.
- ☐ Recognize and highlight LNAs' contributions and achievements in donor reporting, including specific successes, innovations, and milestones to their work, to emphasize the importance of the collaboration and capacity-sharing exercises.
- ☐ Organize (joint) donor briefings and missions with LNAs and ensure their activities and locations are included in visits of state delegations. Giving a platform to LNAs to explain the project's impact first-hand demonstrates their expertise, establishes them as critical actors and contributors to the services offered, and fosters a more authentic understanding of the impact for donors.
- ☐ Support LNAs to interact directly with in-country donors, including by inviting them to relevant events and meetings, and proactively giving them an opportunity to speak up for themselves, while accompanying them, including, where appropriate, to informal spaces where relationships are built and decisions prepared.
- ☐ Support capacity strengthening of LNAs focusing on donor communication and reporting to equip them to engage directly with donors in the future, allowing for more autonomy and visibility.

4.3.3. Government engagement

- ☐ Act as an intermediary between authorities and LNAs (if desired by them). The presence and support of an international partner can increase the operational space for LNAs in an area. Avoid taking all the space and let LNAs speak up for themselves. Regular communication and introductions can lead to new support, including funding, or expanded activities.
- ☐ Advocate for LNAs to take on meaningful and suitable, substantive roles and responsibilities within the country systems and that funding mechanisms are established to ensure they can fulfil their roles and

Promising practices

Armenia: Regular meetings with RLOs and CBOs help understand their issues and allow to do advocacy with authorities.

Zimbabwe: Through sustained advocacy efforts with the Government three RLOs have been successfully registered as CBOs.

responsibilities (and temporarily contribute to them).

- Consult LNAs on priorities when advocating with authorities, and advocate for localization with government.

4.3.4. Advocacy

- Research and support ongoing advocacy initiatives led by LNAs to prevent undermining locally determined priorities or initiatives. Ensure that UNHCR's advocacy messages are informed by the advocacy priorities of LNAs by consulting/including them in the development of communication material.
- Give a voice to a diverse range of LNAs, including those led by women or by forcibly displaced and stateless people and their umbrella organizations, recognizing the diversity of civil society.
- Identify and understand the restrictions and opportunities for LNAs to engage in responses and advocacy efforts. Advocate to authorities for the importance of an open civic space and for a sustainable response.
- Provide information on and increase awareness of national, regional, and international advocacy opportunities.
- Share tools and trainings on advocacy with LNAs, e.g. to develop advocacy strategies.

Promising practices

RBAP: Consulted RLOs to inform the regional Inter-agency Advocacy Forum.

HQ: The recently published UNHCR report "Beyond Full Time" highlights the role of local clubs and grassroot football initiatives in mobilizing around refugee issues and provides recommendations on how UNHCR can better engage and communicate with football fans.

Promising practices

Ukraine: Helped establish IDP Councils that facilitate IDPs' active participation in local policies and programmes.

HQ: Developed a Guidance Note on meaningful participation of forcibly displaced and stateless people in pledge implementation.

4.3.5. Policy making

- Promote the voices of LNAs and ensure their priorities are reflected in policy making processes and fora, at global, regional and national/local levels, e.g. development of new policy documents, international and legal frameworks, and changes or amendments.
- Promote a safe and enabling environment for LNAs to contribute to policy making.

4.3.6. Public events

- Proactively invite LNAs to speak at national, regional, and global events, webinars, and panel discussions to position them as credible and equal partners in the sector. Visibility in international fora builds their reputation as trusted sources for insights and strategies in their regions.
- Arrange advocacy and public speaking training, if desired, to support the speakers to effectively present and communicate their work, including reviewing and practicing speeches.
- Provide funding and support logistical arrangements for the participation of LNAs in global or regional events, such as UNHCR's Consultations with NGOs, Global Refugee Forum, High-Level Officials Meeting, regional events, and conferences on topics related to forced displacement and statelessness. Ensure timely initiation and support on visa and travel process.
- Develop national/regional events or work together with national civil society platforms to highlight local organizations' work, and promote LNAs, for example through awards, exhibits, and panel interventions.
- Consider providing digital access to widen the reach of local voices and support access to the necessary technology and internet connection to participate in online/hybrid events.

Guidance:

See the Checklist on Meaningful Participation of Displaced and Stateless Persons and their Organizations in Regional and Global Events

Promising practices

HQ: Funding and preparatory support for the participation of refugees, RLOs and local/national NGOs in the GRF and Consultations with NGOs.

HQ: Advises regularly on local CSOs to invite for specific events.

DRC: Local organization spoke during the regional RRP launch in 2024.

4.3.7. Media and communication

- Co-create and/or feature LNAs in reports, press releases, case studies, and success stories that increase their credibility and visibility. Through co-branding and shared authorship, UNHCR can support LNAs to build a stronger reputation and elevate their status, showing that both parties contributed meaningfully to outcomes.

Promising practices

RBE: Stories of local CSOs are published on the website of the Regional Bureau.

- Spotlight LNAs in UNHCR media products, such as infographics, videos, newsletters, human interest stories and social media posts to showcase their or joint promising practices of local initiatives.
- Request that the role of LNAs is explicitly referenced in public communications, such as news articles and reports, where appropriate, developed about UNHCR-funded programmes and projects that include them.
- Ensure that terminology used in external publications reflects the autonomy, agency, and leadership of LNAs rather than positioning them as passive recipients of aid.
- Offer communication training for LNAs, including through access to computers and internet for online training, on topics such as media relations and social media. Media training helps LNAs prepare for interviews, press conferences, and public speaking and can increase their confidence and effectiveness in communicating their insights to broader audiences.
- Be ready to support LNAs with content, design of their own brand/logo or key messaging if feasible.
- Provide and promote learning opportunities, including peer-to-peer learning between INGOs and LNAs, to advance their institutional priorities and capacities in developing communications and media engagement.
- Ensure that LNAs have the opportunity to lead delegations through their activities and showcase their expertise during media and GWA missions to share experiences firsthand, building credibility and visibility.

4.3.8. Coordination and funding appeals

Visibility in coordination and funding appeals demonstrate to donors that LNAs are integral to the humanitarian response (see chapter 3).

- Actively promote the participation of LNAs in funding appeals to increase visibility, including proactive outreach to the local civil society to participate in new/updated RRPs/HNRPs. It is important to explain the objectives, opportunities, and limitations of funding appeals to LNAs to avoid raising expectations.
- Ensure visibility and explicitly mention the role of LNAs in all joint humanitarian assessment and response documents, such as RRPs, HNRPs, contingency plans, and respective reporting.
- Include LNAs in events and communication related to funding appeals they will benefit from, including the appeal document, launch events, donor briefings, as well external communication, incorporating photos, quotes, and success stories of LNAs.
- Give space to LNAs to speak during launch events to showcase their activities, knowledge of the local contexts, as well as funding needs, emphasizing their contribution from the onset of a crisis.
- Host (in-person or online) funding and visibility events for partners under funding appeals, such as RRPs, where LNAs can showcase their work directly to potential funders/donors.

Promising practices

RBE: Actively promotes regular circulation of funding opportunities to local organizations, e.g. in Poland, Moldova, in English and the local language. Read more here.

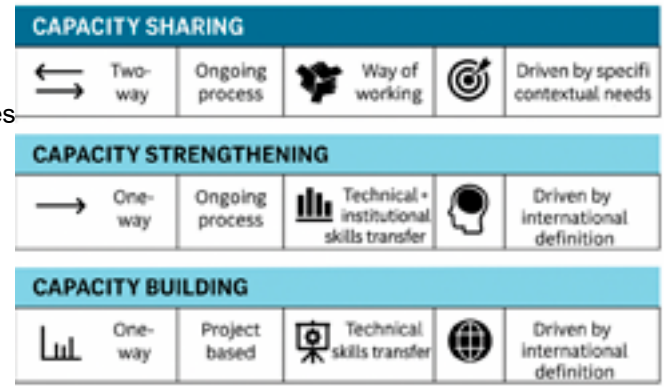
HQ: Developed a fundraising concept note for local partnerships.

- Link LNAs to other funding opportunities, if country system for contingency funding is insufficient, whether within the UN system or with other (local) donor representation, including philanthropies and foundations. This can include disseminating information about these funds, supporting in submitting funding proposals and advocating on behalf of promising organizations before stakeholders managing the grants, e.g. UN thematic funds, or funding opportunities made available by local State embassies, foundations, RLOs or networks.

5. Capacity-Sharing between Local, National, Regional and International Actors

5.1. Why is it important to support capacity-sharing initiatives?

The concept of capacity-sharing moves beyond traditional capacity-building approaches and acknowledges that LNAs bring important knowledge and capabilities to the table, which are to be recognized and respected. This approach emphasizes mutual learning and knowledge exchange, co-creation of solutions and leveraging the strengths of all stakeholders to achieve shared goals. Capacity-sharing initiatives can help LNAs to become important players and decision-makers in response efforts, while enabling international actors to ensure their complementary and supportive actions are appropriate and adapted to local situations. Eventually, capacity-sharing initiatives should empower LNAs to undertake humanitarian activities independently, as needed.



According to the IASC Task Force on Localization[25], capacity-sharing is: ***"The approach of recognising, respecting, and sharing existing knowledge, skills, and resources within and between diverse actors with the central aim of improving the lives of affected populations"***.

UNHCR's approach to capacity-sharing is further guided by the Global Compact on Refugees, which emphasizes that "*In consultation with national authorities and in respect of relevant legal frameworks, support by the international community as a whole may be provided to strengthen institutional capacities (...) at local level, including through funding and capacity development where appropriate.*[26]" The Refugee Coordination Model also stresses that *"A key feature of the RCM is to strengthen local institutional and response (…). RCM sector coordinators promote avenues for national and local stakeholders to access funding opportunities and for capacity-sharing.*[27]"

Things to consider:

- Think about how "capacity" is defined. Often times, there is a disconnect between how capacity is defined by international actors and the specific capacities needed in a given context[28].
- Demystify the assumption that LNAs' capacities are scarce or rudimentary by systematically mapping their capacities and identifying opportunities to learn from each other.
- Shift from a "capacity-building" to a "capacity-strengthening" (when it's one-way) and "capacity-sharing" (when it's two-way) approach. By strengthening the capacity of local organizations, but also by learning from their experience and knowledge, UNHCR and partners can enhance their collective ability to better respond to needs.
- Avoid imposing standard training programmes on a very diverse set of LNAs but adapt capacity-sharing initiatives to 1) the actual training needs of the organization, and 2) the context, to ensure the local appropriateness of approaches and modalities.
- Promote and prioritize capacity-sharing as an integral part of programmes, emergency responses and exit strategies to ensure appropriate coverage and quality, rather than considering it as part of support costs. All activities should ideally account and plan for two-way learning transfers (e.g. adaptive response strategies, community-based accountability, culturally grounded protection).
- Consider using Grant Agreements for capacity strengthening support to CBOs that meet the eligibility criteria.

> Tool: UNHCR launched an information repository for organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless persons that offers a global platform for these organizations to share and seek good practices and other resources.

5.2. Guidance on steps for UNHCR colleagues

5.2.1. Conduct a capacity needs assessment

Recommendation: In line with the Policy on Emergency Preparedness and Response (p. 9) "*As part of contingency planning, where necessary, country operations (...) assess potential partners' capacity.*" Begin by conducting a (reciprocal) assessment of capacities, learning needs and interests among local, national and international actors. The assessment should focus on identifying strengths and gaps, in both areas, institutional and technical capacities.

25 IASC Task Force on Localisation Webinar on Capacity-Sharing, 25 June 2024.
26 Global Compact on Refugees (2018), article 37, page 15.
27 Refugee Coordination Model (2024), page 13.
28 Rethinking capacity and complementarity for a more local humanitarian action, HPG Report, October 2019.

Based on the results, develop tailored solutions. Through this exercise, local resilience will be strengthened, and LNAs will feel heard and supported, which will build trust and thus strengthen partnerships.

Things to consider:

- Assess capacities early on as a preparedness measure, while looking at capacities required for country systems, e.g. contingency planning and emergency response.
- Fundraising, including donor relations, proposal writing, project management, communication, advocacy, and leadership, have been identified as priority learning needs by local organizations and should be included in the assessment[29].
- Understand and build on existing capacities. It is important to recognize, understand, and support existing capacities, and it is not always necessary to introduce complicated new processes or tools. Sometimes a simple template can help.
- Identify learning needs and opportunities for colleagues of international organizations that can be delivered by LNAs, e.g. on the (sub)national context, customs, and approaches. The evaluation of UNHCR's work by external partners can be a good moment to assess training needs and opportunities for UNHCR colleagues to learn from LNAs on how to best do things in their context.
- Keep in mind that not all local initiatives may want to become formal organizations or NGOs, e.g. small community-based or refugee-led initiatives, but may still benefit from alternative support such as informal mentoring or guidance.

Promising practices

Baltic States: Developed a survey to identify training needs. Workshops are developed and tailored accordingly.

Rwanda: Conducted a capacity needs assessment, together with Inkomoko, a regional private sector network, and now provides workshops and services to meet identified needs.

Poland: Designed a capacity stocktaking matrix to assess capacities that can be mobilized within 72 hours of a new influx.

RBMENA: A capacity needs assessment was conducted within the MENA Community Protection Network to identify learning priorities among RLOs, WLOs, CBOs, and local/national actors and to inform tailored capacity-sharing efforts.

5.2.2. Map existing training offers and identify gaps

Recommendation: Map and promote existing local, national, regional and international training offers (including online) and identify suitable opportunities or potential gaps. Update the mapping regularly.

Things to consider:

- Coordinate with national or international partners to avoid duplication or gaps in training offers. See how, to the extent possible, local knowledge and know-how partners (e.g. academia, consultancies, state institutions) can engage in capacity strengthening of LNAs rather than to create dependency on international actors.
- Support LNAs to design and deliver capacity-sharing initiatives for other LNAs, INGOs, and UN actors and compensate them for their time and effort invested.
- Explore opportunities with local institutions, including academia or the private sector, to develop new training offers or enhance existing ones.
- Include learning platforms and coalitions in the mapping.

Promising practices

Romania: Collaboration with NGO arm of a Commercial Bank on trainings related to fundraising and sustainable financing.

RBA: Engages LNAs in private sector fundraisers webinar.

eCentre for Asia and the Pacific and eCentre for Africa: strengthen the capacity of LNAs to better respond to humanitarian crises.

HQ: Participated in training provided by APNOR, a regional RLO network in Asia Pacific, on funding RLOs.

5.2.3. Develop a capacity-sharing plan

Recommendation: In line with the Risk Management tool (p.22) "*Budget and plan for capacity strengthening activities for local and national partners, ensuring to incorporate these activities in the funded partnership agreement.*" Develop a two-way capacity-strengthening plan that matches identified learning needs with available offers. Where gaps exist, look for LNAs that could offer the training or engage UNHCR or other international or regional actors. Ensure that the training content is contextually appropriate. Include the capacity-sharing plan in the operation's assessment, monitoring and evaluation plan.

Things to consider:

29 Identified through surveys conducted internally (e.g. Refugee-Led Innovation Fund, UNHCR Hungary), and by partners (e.g. APNOR, InterAction) and through consultations with RBs and operations.

- Co-create the plan together with LNAs as equal stakeholders in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the plan.
- Go beyond one-off capacity-strengthening events (e.g. workshops), where appropriate. Consider (two-way) twinning, coaching, shadowing, training of trainers and peer-to-peer support. Capacity-sharing can also be strengthened by strongly involving LNAs in various programming steps (e.g. joint needs assessments, planning, evaluation etc.).
- Develop multi-year capacity-sharing plans and include training on leadership and coordination skills, where appropriate, with the intention to equip LNAs to take on key roles in the broader coordination space and also to strengthen their self-sustainability. Consider ability to retain developed capacities given the high staff turnover within LNAs.
- Co-design the training programmes with LNAs where appropriate.
- Take a holistic and phased approach, e.g. by providing technical and mentoring support when providing financial support or establishing partnerships.
- Plan enough time and allocate resources to strengthen the capacity of LNAs and analyse when and how the operation should transition to other forms of engagement with, and support for, these actors. Allow UNHCR colleagues to learn more about organizational development and mentoring/coaching/accompaniment competencies.
- Offer regular information sessions on UNHCR, the RCM and the international humanitarian and development architecture, including the definition of roles and responsibilities between UNHCR, other international actors and LNAs to avoid competition and improve information flow.
- Promote the UNHCR Learning Portal and the UN Partner Portal offering learning resources and partner guidance material to external audience. A partner e-learning course on the Programme Handbook will also soon be published.
- Offer trainings on PSEA and AGD awareness to actively identify and eliminate age, gender and diversity discrimination, sexual harassment, and barriers to women's meaningful participation within the working environment, as well as to raise awareness of potential cultural barriers and biases. Include inputs from LNAs on local customs and culture.

Promising practices

Peru: Capacity is one of the four activities to achieve objectives of the country level localization strategy. An annual training plan with learning opportunities accessible to all members of the CBO cooperation network capitalizes on expertise of member organizations.

Togo: Accompanied a local WLO with organizational capacity-strengthening to eventually sign the first partnership agreement with a local WLO in the region.

Uganda: Is piloting a twinning arrangement between international and local organizations with clear objectives and milestones identified for the journey.

Rwanda: Offers workshops on institutional development, e.g. legal assistance, development of strategic plans, good governance, recruitment, etc.

Moldova: Strengthen the institutional capacity of local RRP partners linked to a small grant scheme.

Global CCCM Cluster: Developed a Localization Framework, including a workplan with clear activities and a timeline. One of the objectives (nr. 2) is to "strengthen the capacity of national CCCM partners" – see p. 2-3.

Innovation Service: Offers winners of the Refugee-Led Innovation Fund a holistic approach through technical support and mentoring, on top of funding.

RBMENA: Five training modules were disseminated by the MENA Community Protection Network. Also see the MENA Capacity Development Series 2024 Report.

5.2.4. Implement and monitor progress of capacity-sharing plan

Recommendation: Implement the capacity-sharing plan and consider mobilizing diverse stakeholders to contribute, including the private sector, academia, government ministries or development actors, who typically fund institutional development and organizational strengthening of LNAs (HDP approaches). Evaluate progress and success on a regular basis. Also establish mechanisms for continued learning exchanges.

Internal guidance: "*Monitor the effectiveness of the capacity strengthening support provided to local partners. There may be need to course-correct the approach to ensure objectives are met.*" Risk Management Tool (p. 22)

Things to consider:

- Ensure that learning opportunities are accessible to LNAs by providing financial or logistical support such as internet connection or laptops.
- Implement staff shadowing programs, where UNHCR and LNA staff work with each other's organizations for a set period. This promotes mutual understanding of operational challenges and strengthens organizational ties.
- Establish feedback mechanisms that allow LNAs to provide input on the capacity-sharing process and use the

feedback to refine strategies and approaches.

- Encourage continued learning through regular information sessions, communities of practice, online platforms or applications, where partners can share promising practices, lessons learned and innovative approaches.

5.3. UNHCR internal capacity-strengthening on localization

Recommendation: Require UNHCR colleagues to deepen their understanding of localization and effective engagement with LNAs, potentially through joint initiatives with other partners. Integrate localization incentives into staffing (responsibilities and accountabilities in job descriptions, performance evaluation), operational and strategic management processes.

Things to consider:

- Establish regional communities of practice to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange.
- Host webinars on key localization themes at global, regional or country level to facilitate learning and discussion among UNHCR colleagues, inviting LNAs whenever relevant.
- Document, share, and promote UNHCR's best practices and case studies on localization.
- Engage systematically in national and regional localization working groups and initiatives to strengthen partnerships and coordination.
- Curate and disseminate relevant external studies and tools on localization and civil society development.
- For Senior Management to regularly inform and encourage operations and RBs to undertake efforts to advance and report on localization, and to advocate for it publicly, in events and through social media.
- The following internal training resource is recommended: Inter-Agency Coordination Training - Module 5 on Multistakeholder Partnerships, chapter 2.1.4 "Engagement with local civil society organizations".

Promising practices

Italy: The programme ParticipAzione (by INTERSOS) aims to enhance the organizational development and growth of RLOs and CBOs.

Rwanda: Provides support to organizations led by displaced and stateless people by reviewing funding proposals or profiles.

Uganda: Provides guidance to LNAs on how to register with relevant government ministries.

Peru: Developed a specific tool to monitor the capacity development of local CBOs conducting evaluations based on nine criteria (see Promising Practice, p.14).

RBE: Strengthens local fundraising capacity through multilingual sessions for L/NNGOs to mobilize private sector funding to lead and sustain their own fundraising efforts.

RBEHAGL: Conducted a learning series for refugee and host community youth, in collaboration with UNICEF and ILO, where the youth designed projects to address challenges in their community, identifying support needed from UNHCR and partners. Eight projects were selected to receive funding and coaching.

Promising practices

RBE: Established a Community of Practice on localization for operations in Europe to share localization practices and insights and to encourage knowledge-sharing, collaboration and inspiration. It includes an emerging practices repository.

6. Responsibilities and activities for functions with localization in their portfolio

This chapter provides recommendations aimed at strenghtening the efforts of the organization on localization. Recommendations target UNHCR staff performing the main functions in operations, bureaux and headquarters.

6.1 Senior management (also see chapter 1.3)

- Prioritize and champion localization efforts in your context (country, region, unit/section, service, division, area of work) and mobilize necessary resources (workforce, funding, time) to meaningfully advance this agenda.
- Track progress on localization (funding, partnerships, collaboration) and ensure that it is not a rhetorical commitment. Establish feedback mechanism for LNAs.
- Promote localization across policy and operational decisions (partnership modalities, joint strategic planning, coordination, capacity-sharing, external relations).
- Advocate for localization and locally-led action, as well as for funds for LNAs, with donors, at inter-agency level and in multistakeholder fora. Give visibility and leadership to LNAs.
- Support a shift to collective risk management and be prepared to take calculated risks. Encourage flexible solutions where context requires and allows it.
- Engage directly and regularly with LNAs to show respect and build trust.
- Create incentives for UNHCR personnel to deliver and show proof of progress on localization. Add localization efforts and goals to relevant job descriptions and management objectives and hold people accountable for delivering on these objectives (performance evaluation). Hire and empower national staff.
- Invest in capacity-strengthening of UNHCR personnel on localization, including on local ways of working, potentially provided by LNAs

6.2 Programme (also see chapter 2)

- Ensure inclusion of LNA in the complete programme cycle, particularly for co-creation and consultation opportunities during the PLAN phase.
- Guide the IPMC in prioritizing localization when deliberating best-fit implementation modalities for the multi-year results.
- Discuss within the MFT ahead of each Call for Expression of Interest the possibility of tailoring certain Calls for LNA applications and/or for INGOs to be asked to include transitional measures and build-in to the application hand-over to LNAs in alignment with the operations strategic plan.
- Ensure increased support toward the implementation of Grant Agreements.
- Monitor funding provided to LNAs in line with the Grand Bargain definition.
- Work together with not-for-profit LNAs to develop their understanding of and capacity to meet the minimum partnership requirements and procedures.

6.3 Project Control, Results management (also see chapter 2)

- Support partner selection and evaluation criteria in favour of LNAs, ensuring they are not systematically disadvantaged.
- Support simplification of due diligence and financial reporting requirements for LNAs in line with risk-sharing principles and existing flexibility within UNHCR's policies.
- Ensure project control processes are proportional and enabling by applying risk-based, context-sensitive approaches that do not create unnecessary administrative burdens for smaller or less formal local actors.

6.4 Supply (also see chapter 2.1.6)

- Actively seek locally available options to enhance sustainable practices by applying the proximity sourcing approach, ensuring that products are procured from sources located as close as possible to the point of delivery, where conditions permit.

- Explore and encourage contracts with LNAs, including RLOs, if local/national sourcing is recommended and/or represents the most suitable option based on the UNHCR´s general procurement principles and where the local market conditions allow.
- Assess sustainability factors and risks for UNHCR and for suppliers or service providers (e.g. quality assurance, fraud risks, financial risks, supply chain limitations).
- Explore possibilities to gradually expand local procurement options through multi-year planning, and comprehensive local market assessments.

6.5 Cash-based Interventions (also see chapter 2.1.7)

- Co-design CBIs together with LNAs and representatives of community and involve them in the different stages of the process, e.g. assessments, response analysis, targeting, community outreach and monitoring.
- Deliver CBIs through local financial service providers (FSP) or other LNAs, in line with the country system's roles and responsibilities.
- Promote local leadership by ensuring Cask Working Groups are co-chaired by local actors, in line with the new cash coordination model, and ensure CWG processes, materials, and meetings are inclusive and accessible.
- Enable local actors to adopt or build on shared tools and systems, including Minimum Expenditure Baskets, transfer values, and data platforms, so they can actively contribute to and benefit from coordinated approaches.

6.7 Inter-Agency Coordination (also see chapter 3)

- Ensure and increase the participation and (co-)leadership of LNAs in coordination mechanisms through measures such as outreach and addressing language, mobility, security and other barriers. LNAs need to be part of decision-taking at all levels, particularly at cluster and sector level.
- Proactively include LNAs in inter-agency needs assessment and response planning, leveraging their unique capacities and knowledge, e.g., their cultural and linguistic knowledge to verify clarity of survey questions and accuracy of translations.
- Conduct an inter-agency analysis of LNAs and use the results for coordinated and systematic capacity and partnership development, including institutional capacity (ex. human resource and financial policies).
- Advocate for LNAs and raise the visibility of their activities to partners and donors, including through Refugee Response Plans (RRPs), Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans (HNRPs) and the related launch events.
- Create opportunities for capacity-sharing, strengthening and development and safeguard against LNA overcommitment. It is common for more than one international organization to approach the same LNA for partnership and the LNA may feel obliged to say yes to all offers in a desire to do as much good as possible for their community. But scaling-up operations extremely rapidly may come with more risks than benefits. International organizations should be mindful of their requests and help LNAs assess the risks and benefits of large partnership commitments.
- Strengthen engagement with diverse LNAs and LNA networks while supporting and forming linkages with broader localisation efforts in specific country contexts, such as National Reference Groups in line with the Grand Bargain vision.
- Maintain an eye on inter-agency and UNHCR-internal localization efforts to ensure coherence and complementarity. A coordinated approach to localization is most efficient.

6.8 External Relations (also see chapter 4)

- Advocate and engage in close dialogue with donors, states and international partners, to give space, involve in dialogues and bring visibility to LNAs.
- Consider associated risks when exposing LNAs publicly.

6.9 Protection

- For all new partnerships that include protection activities, or which may have a protection impact, participate in the LNA selection process (from the Call for Expression of Interest to the suitability assessment, etc.).
- Engage in localization MFT discussions to ensure activities are developed with a protection lens and are implemented in alignment with our protection policies and guidance, including the Protection Policy Paper on

Understanding Community-Based Protection (CBP) and the "How-To Guides" on Working with Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons and its complementary piece on Working with Women-led Organizations.

- Leverage the trust relationships established with communities as part of the CBP efforts and advise on preferred modalities and channels to engage affected communities and their representatives in localization activities. Support the development of a local response to protection and solution needs through CBP activities.
- Ensure accountability to affected people (AAP), i.e. support LNAs to use power responsibly by intentionally and systematically consulting and including the expressed needs, concerns, capacities, and views of affected people in all assistance, protection interventions, programmes and solutions, and ensure communities have the opportunity to assess and, where feasible, alter or sanction LNA's actions.
- Strengthen LNAs' capacity for reporting abuse, exploitation, harassment, fraud, corruption.
- Ensure trusted LNAs that represent or provide services to marginalized groups are included in localization initiatives, and supported through partnership, capacity strengthening and coordination mechanism.
- Ensure that LNAs led by women or girls and those working on gender equality and protection from gender-based violence (GBV) are represented in mapping and strong partnerships are built with them.
- Ensure and support LNAs to adhere to child-safeguarding, and registration and recognition by national child protection systems, for any activities involving children. Ensure that child protection is represented in mapping and provide capacity strengthening in case of identified gaps, including child-friendly procedures.

6.10 Development

- Proactively identify new opportunities and partnerships with LNA engaged in activities related to development to support inclusion in national social systems and host society (including local social networks, volunteer opportunities, pro-bono support, local private sector organizations) towards sustainable responses.
- Conduct capacity-sharing activities with LNA on integration of refugees in national systems.
- Engage with LNAs in the creation of development strategies to ensure alignment of activities with the needs of local businesses and other relevant partners.

6.11 Information Management

- Make humanitarian data accessible to LNAs by using easy formats and translating information in local languages.
- Make information exchange inclusive and proactively share data with LNAs, particularly organizations led by forcible displaced and stateless people.
- Provide guidance and induction on mapping and data collection tools, including data entry and reports, to new LNAs participating in coordination mechanisms.

Annex 1: Additional guidance on approach when engaging with different types of local actors

It is important to distinguish the different types of LNAs as considerations, strategies, and support mechanisms vary significantly for each stakeholder group. A brief overview is provided here, with more detailed information below.

Stakeholder Type	1. State Entities	2. CSOs (incl. RLOs/ SLOs)	3. Private Sector Actors
Core Role & Mandate	Duty bearer under international and national law; responsible for protection, asylum, and solutions	Service providers, advocates, community connectors with deep local trust, monitoring and reporting function.	Economic and innovation actors with capital, supply chains, and local knowledge
UNHCR Engagement Objectives	Support state-led responses; strengthen national systems; ensure legal protection; align with national plans	Strengthen community-based protection; enable access to services; amplify local leadership.	Leverage innovation, resources, job creation, and local infrastructure
Key Engagement Modalities	Policy, technical support, co-leadership in coordination, partnerships	Funded or non-funded partnerships, co-design and co-implementation, advocacy, co-leadership and representation in coordination	Strategic collaboration, procurement, joint projects, innovation partnerships
Distinct Considerations	Requires alignment with national laws/ policies; potential capacity-strengthening; oversight role under Article 35; may involve de facto authorities	May face structural barriers (e.g. legal registration, funding); special focus on organizations led by displaced and stateless people	Different due diligence, contracting and visibility rules; assess reputational and ethical risks
Reference Resources	• Global Compact on Refugees • UNHCR-Government Partnership Guidance	• Working with Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Persons - A How-To Guide for UNHCR Operations	• UNHCR Private Sector Engagement Strategy • AI on Due Diligence for private sector

1. State Entities

- Governments have the primary responsibility to uphold the rights of forcibly displaced people to seek and enjoy asylum, provide protection and solutions to refugees, returnees, as well as prevent and resolve statelessness and protect stateless people.
- UNHCR engages with state entities to support their “Duty Bearer” role and to protect forcibly displaced and stateless people. UNHCR collaborates with government line ministries, parliament, local governments, municipal authorities, judiciary, and other public sector institutions (i.e. National Statistics Office), depending on the context, in order to maximize protection and solutions for refugees, IDPs or statelessness people.
- UNHCR exercises also its oversight role based on its mandate under its Statute and its supervisory responsibilities under Article 35 of the 1951 Refugee Convention.
- In complex and conflict-affected environments, UNHCR may engage with de facto authorities who exert control over territory but are not formally recognized by the international community.
- Check out this draft guidance for more information on funded partnerships with governments: Government Partnerships: Position Statements and Good Practices

2. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

A Civil Society Organization (CSO) is an organized entity that is functionally independent of, and does not represent, a government or state. This term is often applied to not-for-profit organizations devoted to humanitarian and human rights causes or to other social, political, scientific, professional or public-interest issues. [UNHCR DSPR Glossary - intranet]

Local and national CSOs, ranging from CBOs, faith-based groups, NGOs, sports associations (and other denominations), often have strong trust and networks within affected communities. Special attention should be given to organizations led by displaced or stateless people, which may face additional systemic barriers. Strategic collaboration with local and national CSOs can include ‘bridging’ activities, helping people to access state systems to

which they may become entitled to.

Specific internal guidance is available for the following types of CSOs:

- Working with Organizations led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless People - A How-To Guide for UNHCR Operations
- Working with Women-led Organizations, including those led by Forcibly Displaced and Stateless Women - A How-To Guide for UNHCR Operations
- Guidance on Engagement with Faith-Based Organizations
- UNHCR Sport Strategy 2022-2026 and 'Multistakeholder Pledge on Sport for Inclusion and Protection'.

3. Local and National Private Sector Actors

UNHCR engages with the private sector as part of the 'whole-of-society' approach advocated in the Global Compact on Refugees. The ambition is to expand engagement with the sector, leveraging its expertise and resources to create innovative products and services and to deliver social, economic and financial inclusion for displaced people whilst also impacting the organisation's bottom line to unlock efficiencies and cost savings.

- In particular, private sector actors can contribute to humanitarian and development responses by raising awareness of, and appreciation for, the refugee cause and UNHCR's mission; influencing policies & practices; inspiring empathy for, and understanding of, refugees; leveraging the voice of individual supporters; engaging in public-private partnerships and innovative financing mechanisms; investing in refugee-hosting areas; including refugees in the workforce as well as value chains; and providing philanthropic contributions.
- National and local businesses in particular have critical local knowledge and ability that can be leveraged in crises. In protracted situations, local businesses may play a crucial role in helping UNHCR advance socio-economic inclusion objectives.
- As a reminder, any UNHCR Office considering partnering with a private sector actor must follow the due diligence process set out in PR/2025/02. Generic advice and guidance on private sector engagement (including due diligence, co-branding, donor missions, etc.) is available on SharePoint ("Best Practice Approach" and "Scenarios of Engagement").

For tailored guidance and advice on private sector engagement, feel free to contact your nearest PSP focal point. This is strongly encouraged prior to engagement with new actors and particularly in the case of engagement with local branches of companies headquartered in another country, as there may be an existing relationship with this company managed from a different UNHCR office.

Annex 2: Additional guidance on mapping and capacity-sharing with local and national CSOs

Methods for mapping

There are many ways to map local and national CSOs, which will depend on your objective. Consider mapping techniques that are systematic. They can include a desk research, surveys/questionnaires, and interviews.

- System mapping & stakeholder mapping
- Global CBO and RLO mapping tool for small organizations.
- NGO and civil society networks
- Coordination tools and mechanisms, including RRPs, 3Ws, sector / cluster members, OCHA contact lists, etc.
- Government and municipal registrations of civil society actors (when appropriate)
- Ask funded or coordination partners
- Consult communities and local leaders
- Consult local/national sport entities, such as clubs, Olympic and Paralympic Committees, national sport federations
- Consult GCR pledge dashboard to identify actors operating in your area/ country

Categories of data and information

It is important to collect the right information that can support the development of the localization plan and inform UNHCR's engagement with CSOs. Adapt the information you are collecting of an organization, based on your objectives of the mapping. If you are doing an initial screening of all LNAs in an area, you could consider only collecting their basic information, while you will need more detailed information about organizations' existing capacities and learning needs, if you are planning capacity-strengthening or sharing. Consider collecting the following information when mapping CSOs:

- Organizational details: legal status and registration, financial status, existence of policies
- Leadership: refugee-led, IDP-led, women-led, host community, etc.
- Governance structure of the organization
- Contact details: focal point names and contact information, website
- Activities, projects, and services provided by organization
- Geographical reach of operation (local, national, regional).
- Thematic focus/expertise (education, GBV, CP, faith-based, climate, sport, etc.)
- Specific target group (e.g. women, people with disability, LGBTIQ+ persons, elderly, youth, children etc.)
- Existing partners and relationships (i.e. government, INGOs, consortia, other LNAs, UNHCR).
- Coordination mechanisms and networks (consortia, clusters, government-led, GRF Pledges or coalitions).
- Participation in (UNHCR-led) coordination mechanisms, UNHCR programme cycle, consultations, etc.
- Capacity and resources (financial, technical, operational, language) and interest for delivering and upscaling
- Funding landscape and access to resources (availability, barriers to direct funding, funding sources, quality and quantity of funding)
- Operational challenges and risks (logistical, bureaucratic, security-related)
- Community perceptions and engagement (trust, acceptance, role in service delivery, political affiliations)
- Power authority, roles and responsibilities (nominated by national power-holders, elected locally)
- Digital and technological readiness (access to digital tools, data systems, online platforms for coordination and advocacy).
- Learning needs and objectives of the organizations (see chapter 5).

Analysing and strengthening organizational capacity of CSOs

In addition to an organization's basic information, it is important to understand the organizational and programme capacity of the LNA, and assess their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for learning, and risks. The guide below can support with understanding the existing capacity and potential needs, which is key to planning the right activities and the allocation of support resources under the localization plan (see chapter 5).

The assessment can be used as a tool to understand what activities should be included in your localization plan and potentially to adopt a graduation approach[30] to enhance the local response capacity and increase our funded partnerships with selected LNAs. As organizations grow and their capacity is strengthened where needed, there should be a noticeable progression in systematization, ability to manage larger-scale funding and complex projects, leadership, and coordination.

Through different funding options, capacity-sharing activities, and inclusion in humanitarian systems, it is possible to support promising CSOs to become local leaders in the protection and assistance to forcibly displaced and stateless people. Below are a few examples of how the guide above can help with assessing the LNAs.

- CBOs (level 1) lack formal systems but could be valued partners in community engagement and AAP. They could be interested in capacity-sharing focussing on applying for small grants for individual activities with local donors.
- Smaller NGOs (level 2-3) could benefit from the GAs for individual activities or specific institutional development where they lack capacity. They could be considered for sub-contractors or part of a consortia with other local or international NGOs and be linked to RRPs, although they would likely need capacity-building/strengthening in fundraising and coordination activities.
- Established NGOs (level 4) with robust internal systems can be funded partners, with high confidence for scale, results, and internal management. While they might not have dedicated expertise in support for forcibly displaced and stateless persons at the beginning of a humanitarian response, their existing service provision (education, child protection, etc.) can make them key partners for sustainable responses and locally-led advocacy.

Dimension	CSO Level 1	CSO Level 2	CSO Level 3	CSO Level 4
Examples	CBOs & grassroot initiatives	Small CSOs with short-term grants	Medium-sized NGO with moderate funding	Established national NGOs with multiple funding sources
Staff capacity	Often volunteer or informal, with no paid staff, different levels of qualification	Few paid functions (mostly for core functions), supported by volunteers for implementation	Dedicated paid staff with defined roles, many dependent on funding for specific projects	Significant paid staff across core and implementation functions
Response capacity	Can provide activities and basic services based on immediate knowledge of and strong connections with community. Limited to no reporting capacity, except for narratives and stories and small numbers.	Highly motivated to deliver services, but often need capacity and organizational development support. Reporting capacity is limited and based mostly on qualitative examples, with unreliable data	Already responds based on set project based on funding availability, with potential for scale up if desired and with support. Can report and has some data collection tools, which need improvement	Professionalized response operations based on internationally recognized standardized methodologies and guidelines. Can report periodically with reliable data
Registration, legal status	No	Often, but not always	Yes	Yes
Funding & fundraising capacity	Minimal, relies on community and in-kind donations, rarely bank account, no formal strategy, potentially small grants	Limited capacity for fundraising, small grants from INGOs or local government	Stronger capacity for fundraising, has received funding from INGOs or UN agencies, likely depended on one source	Has operational fundraising strategy and staff, with multiple sources of income (not only UNHCR), has direct engagement and visibility with donors

30 Note that **not all local organizations can, need, want, or should become funded partners.** A graduation approach does not mean there should be an expectation of LNAs to become funded partners. Also, most LNAs will not fall in one single level for all dimensions, which can help you identify what learning needs an organization has and where to focus capacity-strengthening activities (see chapter 5). Consider the long-term viability of the organization to grow.

Dimension	CSO Level 1	CSO Level 2	CSO Level 3	CSO Level 4
Policies, including fraud, PSEA, etc.	Absent policies and awareness	Awareness and presence of some policies but requires significant strengthening and awareness-raising	Policies exist but may not be comprehensive and require better implementation and awareness. May or may not meet UN PW/ PFA requirements	Comprehensive policies and existing training for staff, that meet UN PW/PFA requirements
Internal systems	Systems and internal control are absent, informal system for record-keeping	Limited systems, but have basic control systems, can receive GAs but not sufficient for external audits and UN PA	Developing systems with basic financial controls and administrative processes, can receive GAs, potentially sufficient for UN PWs/PFAs	Comprehensive systems with robust financial controls, regular external audits, and compliance mechanisms that meet UN PW/PFA requirements
Project/ programme management	Capacity for individual community-based activities/small projects, no annual planning or project design processes	Basic skills to plan short-term projects and manage small grants, but no long-term planning	Moderate capacity for managing multiple, smaller projects. Can plan for medium/ long-term activities and design a results-based activities, design project activities, basic M&E, etc	Advanced systems for large-scale, multi-sectoral projects or programmes
Coordination capacity	Community engagement, but rarely involved in formal humanitarian coordination mechanisms	Participation in coordination groups, needs capacity-strengthening on coordination. Engages with other local private sector/ public actors.	Regular participant in coordination platforms at sub- and national level, but no capacity to lead. Engages with other local private sector/ public actors.	Regular participant and could lead coordination structures at sub- and national level. Has relationship with other local private sector/ public actors and has influence in the relevant sector.

Annex 3: Additional guidance on indicators relevant to localization

Existing UNHCR indicators relevant to localization

UNHCR Core indicators:

- Outcome area 7: Community Engagement and Women's Empowerment - Core outcome indicator 7.1 "Extent participation of displaced and stateless people across programme phases is supported"
    - Standard self-assessment questionnaire: Question 6. Select those community structures/ groups with whom you worked in implementing your activities: Community networks /outreach volunteers, Women committees/ networks, Leadership structures, Organisations led by persons with disabilities, Faith leaders, Youth committees, LGBTIQ+ local organisations, Organisations led by displaced people
    - Standard self-assessment questionnaire: Question 9. Did the operation directly, or through a funded partner, support organizations led by displaced and stateless people (e.g., through PPA, umbrella agreement, grant agreement)
- Output area 2: Status Determination – Core output indicator 2.1.1 "UNHCR has provided capacity development support to strengthen the national status determination system(s), in accordance with international standards"
- Output area 3: Protection Policy and Law – Core output indicator 3.1.1 "UNHCR has engaged in legislative and judicial processes to strengthen laws and policies for the protection of refugees, IDPs, returnees and stateless people and/or the reduction and prevention of statelessness"

Good practice indicators

- OA07: # of community-led projects that are supported by UNHCR and partners
- OA07: UNHCR contributed to contingency plans for natural hazards in collaboration with government, local responders, and/or non-state actors
- EA19: # of local UNHCR, government and partner staff trained
- EA20: Volume (in USD) of funds raised locally leading to OL increase based on the new RAF

User-defined indicators that several UNHCR Country Operations tracked in 2024:

- % Of total annual OL budget spend in implementing partnership agreements (disagg. by local/national/intern. partner) (35 operations)
- # of refugee-led or community-based organizations/structures supported (6 operations)
- # of local authorities and community members capacitated on Protection fundamentals (18 operations)
- # of civil society organizations involved in activities supporting inclusion (6 operations)
- # of GRF pledges implemented by civil societies and municipalities (5 operations)
- # of advocacy interventions with municipalities, civil society and private sector aiming at facilitating refugee inclusion (10 operations)
- # of community awareness and sensitization campaigns, workshops, events and projects organized, including by refugee-led organizations (9 operations)
- # of partnerships established with development actors at national and regional levels

Existing indicators UNHCR reports on that are relevant to localization

GCR indicators

- Outcome 1.2: National arrangements and coordinated refugee responses are supported:
    - % of partners that are LNAs
    - % of the total ODA was channelled directly through national actors, which include recipient governments and developing country-based NGOs.

Existing external indicators relevant to localization

Grand Bargain indicators

- Evidence of organizational policies or strategies in place that promote equitable partnerships.

- Evidence of coverage of overheads/indirect costs of local and national partners.
- % of members in humanitarian coordination bodies (HCTs, ICCGs) and CBPF Advisory Boards that are LNAs
- % of cluster leadership positions occupied by LNAs
- Evidence of support and incentives for the participation and leadership of LNAs, including WROs/WLOs, in coordination mechanisms
- Volume of humanitarian funding and % of total humanitarian funding provided directly to LNAs, disaggregated by non-state and state actor
- Volume of humanitarian funding and % of total humanitarian funding provided through one intermediary to LNAs, disaggregated by nonstate and state actors
- Number of CBPFs out of total number of active CBPFs that provided 25% or more of their allocations directly to LNAs)

IASC Guidance on Strengthening Participation, Representation and Leadership of Local and National Actors in IASC Humanitarian Coordination Mechanisms indicators

Participation and Representation

- % members of a coordination body (HCTs, ICCGs, Clusters) who are L/NA
- % members of a coordination body (HCT, ICCGs, Clusters) who are WLO or OPDs and other diversity groups
- % coordination meetings (HCTs, ICCG, clusters) held in local/national language(s) or offering translation and interpretation
- % of coordination meetings (HCT, ICCG, cluster) with no L/NAs present
- % of satisfaction level recorded in locally administrated qualitative surveys per different coordination level/body

Leadership:

- % of national-level bodies (clusters) that have L/NAs as leads or co-leads
- % of national-level bodies (clusters) that have L/NAs as co-chairs or co-facilitators
- % of national-level bodies (technical working groups) that have L/NAs as leads or co-leads
- % of subnational-level bodies (clusters) that have L/NAs as cochairs or co-facilitators
- % of subnational-level bodies (clusters) that have L/NAs as leads or co-leads
- % of subnational-level bodies (clusters) that have L/NAs as cochairs / co-facilitators
- % clusters that have developed localisation action plans (relevant for their context)

Capacity strengthening

- % of coordination bodies that have induction packages adapted to L/Nas needs (as defined by L/NAs)
- % of coordination bodies (HCTs, ICCGs, Clusters) providing twinning/mentoring programmes

Resourcing for Coordination

- # of CBPF advisory boards and review committees with L/NA members
- # of staff hours/ or equivalent dedicated to support localisation of coordination (RC/HC Office, OCHA)

Visibility

- % of HRPs that achieve a medium to high quality score on localisation (through an annual multi-agency scoring exercise, dependent on the multiagency group's approval on localisation scoring parameters)
- % IAHE (Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation) in-country advisory group members that are L/NA

Preparedness, Response and Humanitarian-Development-Peace Collaboration

- % L/NAs that are organisations contributing to 3/4/5Ws matrix
- % members of Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework teams who are L/NAs

Multistakeholder Pledge on Localization indicators

Evidence of laws or policies developed, strengthened, and/or implemented that advance locally-led action in displacement and statelessness responses

- Evidence of new or improved policies, procedures and/or practice which advance equitable partnerships between

local/national and international actors in displacement and statelessness responses

- Evidence of change towards safe, inclusive, meaningful and equitable participation of LNAs in decision-making and/or coordination processes or structures at local, national, regional or global level
- Number and description of capacity-sharing initiatives implemented and/or supported.
- Evidence of improved accessibility, quality, quantity and/or tracking of funding for LNAs

MOPAN indicators relevant for localization

- 6.3: The organization is set up to enable localization:
  - Processes are in place, and used, to first consider local capacity, including government, local authorities and local organisations, including women led organisations, and to build on existing structures and capacities rather than establishing parallel international mechanisms.
  - Local and national partners are included in emergency preparedness, needs assessment and analysis, and planning, implementation and monitoring/feedback processes.
  - The organisation shares risk with LNAs in an ethical manner.
  - Localization practices and strategies are explicitly referenced in planning documents.
  - Capacity strengthening strategies and activities for local and national partners and structures, including for governance and administration, and not just technical skills, are in place and implemented.
  - The organisation passes on the same quality of funding it receives to its LNAs.
  - Partnerships with LNAs are based on equality, mutual respect and mutual accountability, including not passing on unreasonable safety and security risks to LNAs, supporting local leadership, and giving visibility to LNAs in reporting and public communications.
- 6.2: The organisation passes on quality funding to partners.
  - The organisation passes on a fair share of the quality funding it receives (e.g., multi-annual, flexible) to its partners, including local organisations.
  - Reasonable and justifiable overhead costs are allowed as part of the partnership funding arrangements.
- 6.1: Partnerships are based on an explicit statement of expected results and engagement, and are rooted in equality.
  - The Principles of Partnership - Equality, Transparency, Result-oriented approaches, Responsibility and Complementarity - are respected in engagement with implementing partners and informed by appropriate due diligence.
  - Key stakeholders are a key part of the organisation's programme cycle, both in global strategic planning but also related to country operations - including strategic advice, guidance, information and co-creation – while respecting humanitarian principles.
  - Downstream partnerships with international and LNAs are selected based on a solid shared understanding of the capacity, limitations, expectations and interests of each partner.
  - Where possible, partnerships start long before an emergency arises, and in the case of the Global Compact on Refugees in particular, includes issues related to recovery and development.
  - Partnership agreements, including expected results and timeframes, clearly outline the roles, responsibilities and mutual benefits to each party – especially on fraud, corruption, safeguarding and financial and reporting arrangements and capacity needs - and uneven power dynamics are addressed.
  - Results reporting and monitoring ensures that partners can criticize one another, adapt, learn from one another, and continue working with positive outcomes.

Other recommendations to monitor progress on localization

- Extent to which LNAs perceive partnership and collaboration with UNHCR as equitable
- # of UNHCR strategic plans/approaches co-designed with LNAs
- # of initiatives supported that promote engagement and participation of LNAs
- Extent to which LNAs feel their perspectives shape decision-making
- % of UNHCR-led coordination meetings co-chaired by LNA

- % of members in coordination mechanisms representing LNAs
- Extent to which LNAs perceive participation in UNHCR-led coordination mechanisms as meaningful
- # of capacity-sharing initiatives conducted with or supported by LNAs
- # of initiatives that engage local suppliers
- # of cash-based interventions that are co-designed with and/or involve LNAs

Annex 4: Promising localization practices at UNHCR

Visit the live document on the UNHCR Localization HUB (Internal).

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