A HUMANITARIAN LOCALIZATION BASELINE FOR UKRAINE

NGO RESOURCE CENTER

IS InfoSapiens

HUMANITARIAN ADVISORY GROUP

ICVA A GLOBAL NGO NETWORK FOR PRINCIPLED AND EFFECTIVE HUMANITARIAN ACTION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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About NGO Resource Center (NGORC)

Founded in 2018, NGORC provides humanitarian assistance throughout Ukraine and supports the capacity of Ukrainian civil society and the further development of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that aim to strengthen their communities, bring changes to our society, defend democracy, and protect the rights of Ukrainian citizens.

About Info Sapiens

The research agency Info Sapiens specializes in conducting public opinion surveys, behavioral measurements, and analyzing data from secondary sources. Info Sapiens complies with the ICC/ESOMAR International Code on Market, Opinion and Social Research and Data Analytics. Info Sapiens conducts fieldwork for GfK Ukraine projects and also independently conducts research projects, namely social and political surveys.

About the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)

Founded in 1962, ICVA is a global network of 150 NGOs active in 160 countries, operating at global, regional, national, and local levels, whose mission is to make humanitarian action more principled and effective by working collectively and independently to influence policy and practice.

About the Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG)

The Humanitarian Advisory Group was founded in 2012 to elevate the profile of humanitarian action in Asia and the Pacific. Set up as a social enterprise, HAG provides a unique space for thinking, research, technical advice, and training that can positively contribute to excellence in humanitarian practice.

Cover photo: Caritas, People in Need, Posmishka UA, Right to Protection, UNHCR.

FOREWORD

In the early morning of the February 24, 2022, the life of millions of Ukrainians changed as air-raid sirens rang out across the country and the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began. Ukrainian civil society was the first, second, and third to respond to the enormous humanitarian needs and challenges that followed. They demonstrated that they had the capacity and motivation and took responsibility to help those in need.

Within the Ukrainian response, increased localization efforts are not only critical to efficiently and effectively reach those in need, but indeed the nature of the response and strong civil society make it a natural and viable option. It is our firm belief that enhanced localization efforts will improve the overall humanitarian response in Ukraine, including quality, coverage, efficiency, effectiveness, and relevance. In Ukraine, we can translate global policy commitments into practice within programs, partnerships, and overall leadership within the humanitarian response, if there is a will to do so.

Shared understanding of the importance of localization is already discernible among increasing numbers of humanitarian stakeholders in Ukraine. Nevertheless, the failure to take concrete actions to ensure practical and tangible efforts in this regard is likely to hamper the immediate humanitarian response and will have significant negative medium- and long-term consequences.

There has only been limited strategic effort to develop approaches that can be used as tools towards common localization goals and desired impacts, facilitating stakeholders' development of practical and tangible approaches. The efforts of ICVA, HAG, Info Sapiens, and NGORC can hopefully be seen as a small step forward in this direction.

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ACRONYMS

CATI	Computer Assisted Telephone Interview
CAWI	Computer Assisted Web Interview
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GCA	Government-controlled Areas
HAG	Humanitarian Advisory Group
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICVA	International Council for Voluntary Agencies
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NGORC	NGO Resource Center
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIANGO	Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
URCS	Ukrainian Red Cross
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WFP	UN World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The understanding of humanitarian localization in the Ukrainian humanitarian response remains a key policy and practice concern for donors and humanitarian actors. The Grand Bargain stressed the importance of local leadership in enabling other priorities in humanitarian response, which sought to promote the interconnections between localization, quality funding, «efficiency and effectiveness, visibility, risk sharing, transparency and accountability – including accountability to affected populations[1]».

While localization of the humanitarian response in Ukraine is frequently stressed as a priority, there have been only limited efforts to date to build evidence, evaluate impact, strengthen accountability, and develop strategic tools that can facilitate practical approaches to local leadership and quality humanitarian response.

With this initiative, we are trying to establish «where we are» in terms of the localization of humanitarian assistance. Stakeholders can then establish the direction we need to go to reach an objective, as it is, in the end, up to the individual organizations to determine what can and should be changed. It further creates a baseline from which we can continue to regularly assess humanitarian localization development by using the same methodology in Ukraine, and in comparison with other responses across the globe.

The research methodology is based on the work done by HAG and PIANGO to develop the Localisation Measurement Framework and Tools. The framework provides participants with the opportunity to carry out a holistic measurement of progress in localisation. The framework provides for 7 domains that include: Partnership, Leadership, Coordination and complementarity, Funding, Capacity, Policy influence, Participation.

The highest level of evidence of localisation was recorded within the areas of Capacity and Participation, and the lowest evidence of localisation we find within the areas Funding and Policy influence.

[1] Grand Bargain 2.0 Framework

About the research

This study forms a baseline for localization within the current humanitarian response in Ukraine. It was undertaken by the NGO Resource Center (NGORC) in cooperation with Info Sapiens, a research agency specialized in behavioral and attitudinal analysis of public policy. The baseline process was supported by the Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG), the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), and a senior advisory group composed of members from international and national organizations, donors, and the private sector. This report presents the findings of a localization baseline study, using an adapted Measuring Localization approach and framework originally developed by the HAG and Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (PIANGO), as a common means of tracking progress at the country level[2]. The study combined a survey of 180 staff from national and international NGOs, 15 key informant interviews, and a document review.

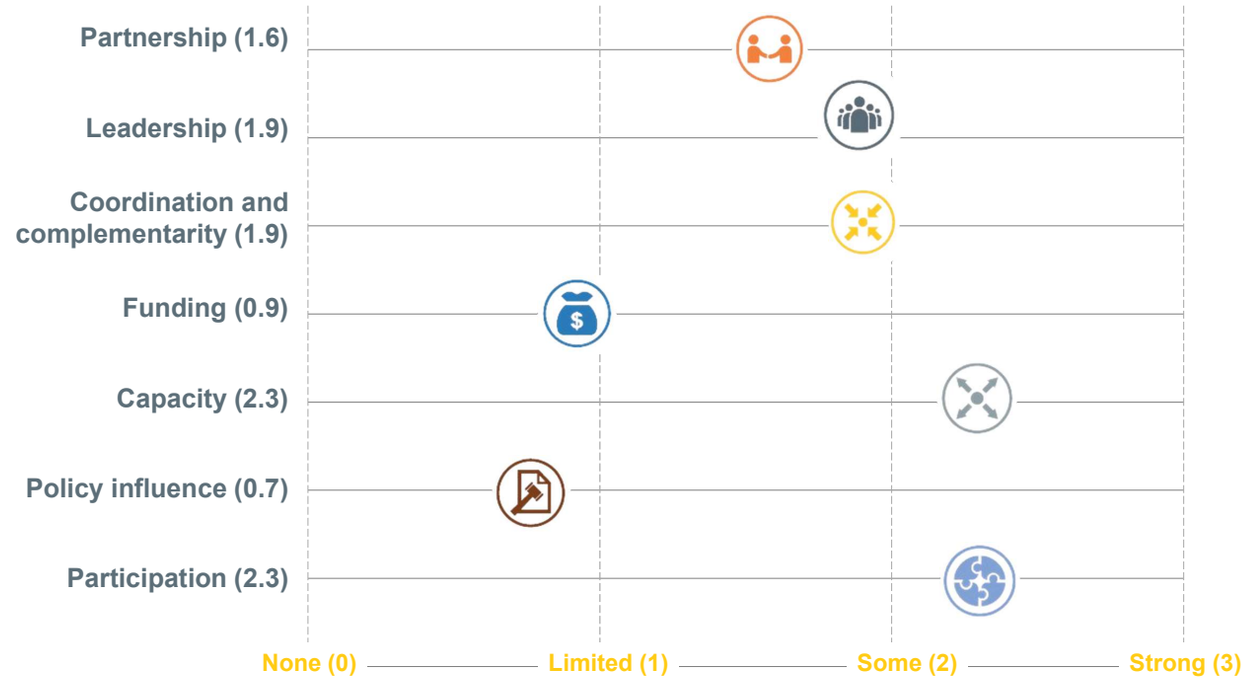
The primary purpose of this initiative is to provide a baseline and benchmarking of localization in Ukraine, recording findings against key indicators that can be used to create an evidence base for stakeholders to assess and track progress in the ongoing humanitarian response. For international and national actors, this can be used as a resource to track the implementation of localization commitments and identify challenges and opportunities in the response, as well as a potential resource and evidence base to advocate for accountability and change. Holistic explanations and recommendations fall outside the immediate scope of this initiative.

[2] Josaia Jirauni Osborne and Siale Ilolahia from PIANGO; Josie Flint, Pip Henty, Jessica Lees and Kate Sutton from Humanitarian Advisory Group, Measuring Localization Framework and Tools

Key findings

The baseline study analyzed seven critical domains corresponding to the work of humanitarian organizations in Ukraine. It found varying evidence of localized practices in different domains, suggesting trends that may be monitored over time to support local leadership in Ukraine.

Figure 1. Level of Evidence



Where was the most evidence of localized practices?

The most evidence of localization was recorded in **Capacity** and **Participation**. This can be explained by the active and practical involvement of Ukrainian expertise in developing and implementing humanitarian projects on the ground, as well as the long-standing contextual knowledge and current access to information directly from the affected population and local communities that inform local expertise. Nonetheless, only 18% of the international actors said they have increasingly involved Ukrainians within their organization's leadership circles.

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, national organizations and authorities have increased cooperation with international structures and stakeholders, often by necessity, which has helped strengthen their capacity – primarily in relation to internationally recognized procedures, practices, and policies, according to national actors.

However, lack of financial resources often hinders the effective enhancement of institutional capacity, especially national actors' lack of funding for indirect costs. Additional support could translate into greater influence on policymaking and within the humanitarian response, for example.

Where was the least evidence of localized practices?

The least evidence of localization was within Funding and Policy influence. The vast majority of international and national actors perceive current funding distribution as unfair. Respondents

overwhelmingly indicated that Ukrainian organizations do not have sufficient access to funding, and that national organizations have significantly fewer funding sources than their international counterparts. This is despite the majority of respondents, international as well as Ukrainian, perceiving an improvement in financing for local organizations' activities since the full-scale invasion. Insufficient funding towards both indirect and operational costs within partnerships with international organizations contribute to the challenges faced by Ukrainian organisations.

Even among national actors that said funding has improved, more than 20% stressed that their staffing situation has worsened.

This situation may have a negative impact on a number of other fields, such as policy influence and coordination. Ukrainian organizations often lack the resources, financial and human, to systematically implement activities that could lead to increased influence, including institutional development, advocacy, and participating in policy-influencing fora. Thus, Ukrainian organizations' experience and expertise are not effectively translated into strategies or engagement within policy processes.

If donors and international organizations that contract Ukrainian organizations increased coverage of indirect project costs, it could contribute to local and national organizations developing more powerful voices and making it possible for them to contribute more effectively to policy dialogue.

Where was the evidence mixed?

There is some evidence of localization in the areas of **Partnership**, **Leadership**, and **Coordination** and **Complementarity**.

Leadership shows some evidence of localization; however, it varies. There is limited evidence that international actors work to support and strengthen national leadership, while there is strong evidence that international actors work with and respect in-country leadership.

The research shows that **Coordination** and **Complementarity** and **Partnership** are often perceived as a hierarchical structure, where requests are transferred «from top to bottom», and information and reporting «from bottom to top». International organizations primarily occupy the «top» position within the hierarchy, and national organizations are at «bottom». For example, feedback practices about completed projects are much better developed from local to international organizations and are often lacking from international to local organizations. However, national organizations indicated that communicating on a more equal footing (e.g., exchanging financial plans and budgets) has a positive effect on all aspects of the partnership, in particular for building mutual trust.

Thus, developing more «horizontal» and equal connections and communication between Ukrainian and international organizations is considered to contribute to the strengthening of all localization indicators.

INTRODUCTION

While the Russia-Ukraine War has been ongoing for nine years, the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 created a severe humanitarian crisis. As of February 2023, the war had placed at least 17.6 million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance and protection, up from approximately 3 million around the time of the invasion[3]. The number of Ukrainian refugees is currently estimated to be 8 million, while the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) is currently approximately 5.4 million, with a peak of 8 million in May 2022.

Since the war's escalation, there has been an outpouring of support from companies, individuals, governments, and humanitarian donors around the world, which has allowed humanitarian organizations in Ukraine to quickly expand their presence and operations in the country. By the end of 2022, humanitarian organizations in Ukraine had received approximately $3.8 billion[4]. Of this, less than 1% of the funding was provided directly to local actors in Ukraine[5].

The strengthening of localization in the humanitarian response in Ukraine drew attention from the outset and increased over time through advocacy by various actors, practical on-the-ground cooperation, and policy and donor focus. Many in the international community have increased focus on initiatives that seek to progress global policy initiatives, for example the Grand Bargain and Charter for Change[6]. At the same time, Ukraine, with its strong civil society and government structures, is seen as a context where real reform towards a more localized humanitarian response is indeed possible and feasible.

[3] OCHA, Ukraine: Humanitarian Response Plan (February 2023) [EN/UK]

[4] OCHA, Ukraine: Humanitarian Response Plan (February 2023) [EN/UK].

[5] Nicholas Noe , Hardin Lang, Efforts to Localize Aid in Ukraine One Year On: Stuck in Neutral, Losing Time, Refugees International, February 24, 2023.

[6] Interagency Standing Committee, Grand Bargain; Charter for Change.

This report presents the findings of a baseline study using locally relevant indicators to benchmark and measure progress on localization within the Ukrainian context. It draws on the Localization Measurement Framework and Tools developed by the Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) and Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations (PIANGO) through a country-level research and analysis process[7]. This process produced tools and data that humanitarian stakeholders can use within localization discussions, processes, and dialogue within the Ukrainian context and accountability over time[8].

The remainder of this introduction is an overview of the humanitarian response in Ukraine. It is followed by a methodology section. The report then presents key findings in relation to the seven domains of the Localization Measurement framework.

Humanitarian response

Since the first days of the full-scale war in February 2022, Ukrainian civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were primary responders in trying to address humanitarian needs. National organizations remain the vast majority of all responders. The Ukrainian authorities also reacted quickly to provide and facilitate aid to affected citizens. The President of Ukraine created the Coordination Headquarters for Humanitarian and Social Issues, which coordinated volunteer initiatives, international humanitarian organizations, and funding from a specially-created National Bank of Ukraine account for donations for humanitarian needs. Numerous governmental internet platforms were created, for example to identify housing needs, connect people with law enforcement, or support practical initiatives that addressed humanitarian logistic challenges. There were numerous initiatives to coordinate the initial practical response, identifying needs and resources available.

While national and local organizations have often found effective and creative ways to respond, they have also faced numerous challenges. National NGOs and their staff suffered from the humanitarian crisis similarly to the general population affected by the war. Many organizations and staff who lived in the oblasts under occupation or close to hotspots were forced to relocate (Figure 2). Some were forced to evacuate; teams and organizations were often separated as people used different means and routes for evacuations, and some became refugees abroad. This, in turn, affected the nature, speed, and scope of their activities.

Nonetheless, most Ukrainian organizations did not cease their activities, but rather changed the vector of their activities, expanded existing areas, or went from working on development issues to become humanitarian actors.

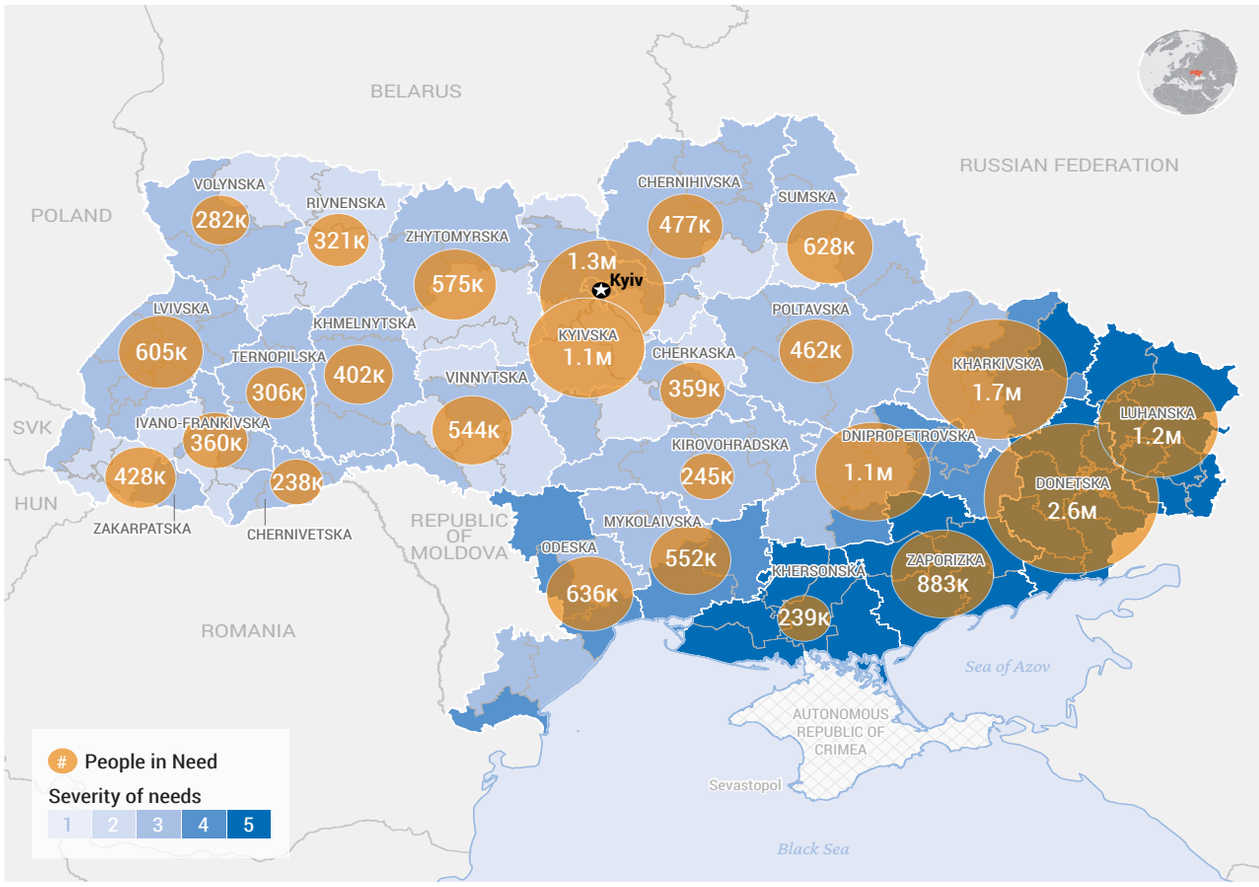
Despite full-scale military action and numerous challenges, Ukrainian NGOs continued to implement projects, and after two months, 48.3% of all NGOs were still fully active, 35% were implementing initiatives in part, and only 16.7% had completely stopped their project activities[9].

[7] Josaia Jirauni Osborne and Siale Ilolahia from PIANGO; Josie Flint, Pip Henty, Jessica Lees and Kate Sutton from Humanitarian Advisory Group, Measuring Localization Framework and Tools.

[8] Josie Flint and Alex Lia, Intention to impact: measuring localisation, Humanitarian Advisory Group.

[9] Educational and Analytical Center for Community Development, NGOs and activists during the war: current states and perspectives (in Ukrainian), 2022.

Figure 2. Severity of humanitarian conditions and number of people in need by oblast



The designations employed and the presentation of material in the report do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Ukraine Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023[10]

From the onset of the escalation, volunteer initiatives were established almost immediately in urban and rural settings alike. Those initiatives targeted the most urgent humanitarian needs in the neighborhood, the hromada (administrative-level communities), city, oblast, or even in some cases focusing on intercity cooperation and collaboration. Many non-governmental initiatives also had their own hub, contact points, and logistic operations. City or national authorities, businesses, and NGOs, or a combination of them all initiated platforms. Simultaneously, civil society organizations (CSOs), volunteers, and authorities created numerous other forms of humanitarian coordination systems, many based on social media or messenger platforms, focusing on, for example, identifying acute humanitarian needs and connecting them with available resources, organizing evacuations, and looking for missing persons.

International humanitarian organizations provided assistance to nearly 16 million people in 2022, and began to scale up in earnest in the third quarter of 2022, bringing increasing attention to coordination needs and gaps in the response[11]. International actors' initial slow response caused some resentment within Ukrainian society, who frequently critiqued and continue to criticize the humanitarian response, and especially international actors, in social media, official statements, and traditional media[12]. Slow-moving bureaucratic procedures, perceived branding priorities, weak

[10] OCHA, Ukraine Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023 (December 2022) [EN/UK].

[11] OCHA, Ukraine Humanitarian Response 2023.

[12] Pavlo Klimkin, Klimkin reproached on the UN leadership for inaction in the Mariupol issue (in Ukrainian), Ukrinform, 2022

operational response, perceived international staff conduct, perceived cynical political messaging, perceived weakness in the face of atrocities; and interaction with Russian Federation authorities-helped create a negative image of international actors in part of Ukrainian society during the initial part of the response[13].

There have also been challenges due to the international approach to coordination. The cluster coordination system[14] was augmented to scale up its coordinating role to cover all of Ukraine[15]. Some Ukrainian NGOs and authorities, especially in central and western parts, were unfamiliar with international humanitarian structures, standards, and systems. Some national NGOs saw it as problematic that the vast majority of Ukrainians working in or with the humanitarian sector had to wholly adapt to international models instead of tailoring coordination mechanisms to Ukrainians[16].

National and local actors have a good understanding of the context and acceptance by the people in need of assistance and they are essential for an efficient and effective humanitarian response. The number of active organizations in Ukraine's humanitarian mobilization and their institutional strength shape the opportunities for local leadership of aid, by engaging with national and local CSOs, national authorities, and existing systems. Importantly, Ukrainian civil society remains the key agent of change for a vast range of development issues, such as enhanced democratic development and the fight against corruption. Failure to preserve and strengthen national actors and systems could have negative long-term consequences.

This study aims to support a localized humanitarian response in Ukraine. Data collection creates an evidence base that can reflect changes in the localization of humanitarian aid. For international actors, such information can be an essential resource for tracking compliance with certain localization obligations and commitments, and to be able to identify and address possible challenges. For national and local organizations, this can provide a valuable resource and evidence base for accountability, representation, and advocacy.

[13] «Enhanced Coordination and Support to Local and National NGOs in Ukraine», NGORC ICVA, (unpublished), 2022.

[14] OCHA, Inter-cluster Coordination.

[15] Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster led by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (activated in March 2022); Education Cluster co-led by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Save the Children; Emergency Telecommunications Cluster led by UN World Food Programme (WFP) (newly activated in February 2022); Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster co-led by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WFP; Health Cluster led by World Health Organization (WHO); Logistics Cluster led by WFP (newly activated in February 2022); Protection Cluster led by UNHCR; Shelter and Non-Food Items Cluster led by UNHCR; Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) led by UNICEF; Child Protection Sub-Cluster led by UNICEF; Gender-Based Violence Sub-Cluster led by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); Mine Actions Sub-Cluster led by United Nation Development Programme (UNDP); Cash Working Group co-led by Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), International Organization for Migration (IOM), and Ukrainian Red Cross (URCS)

[16] Nicholas Noe, Hardin Lang, Efforts to Localize Aid in Ukraine One Year On: Stuck in Neutral, Losing Time, Refugees International, February 24, 2023.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is based on the work of HAG and PIANGO to develop the Localization Measurement Framework and Tools. The framework provides participants with the opportunity to carry out a holistic measurement of progress in localization. This approach has been applied in many other humanitarian contexts, including Fiji, Vanuatu, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, and regional initiatives.

The study was undertaken with a partnership approach. Info Sapiens, a research organization, worked closely with NGO Resource Center (NGORC) as the in-country coordinator, with ongoing engagement and technical support from the International Council for Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) and HAG throughout the study. The baseline study was also supported by a Research Advisory Group comprised of donor, United Nations (UN), international NGO, and local and national NGO representatives.

HAG provided initial and ongoing technical and practical support for the in-country research on how to contextualize and use the localization baselining process (as outlined in the Localization Measurement Framework) and approaches to identify key priorities for collective action by national and international stakeholders.

Using the localization measurement framework

Figure 3. Localization measurement framework

The framework provides for seven domains: Partnership, Leadership, Coordination and complementarity, Funding, Capacity, Policy influence, and Participation. Each area has an impact indicator and a short set of progress indicators covering both quantitative and qualitative aspects.

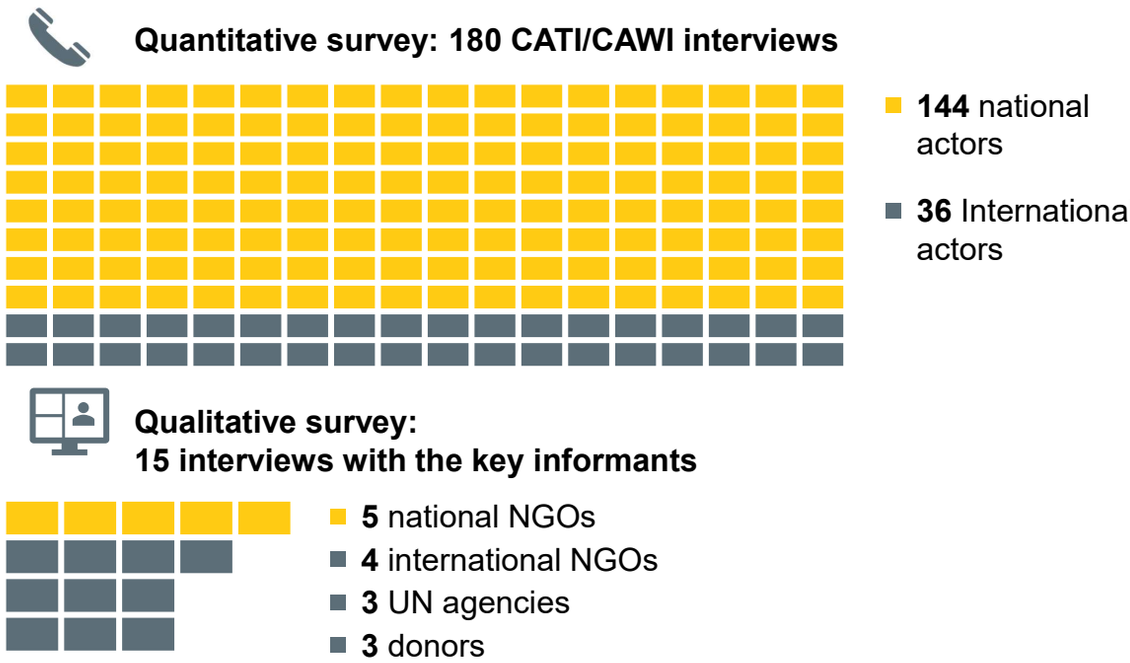
This methodology was further adapted to the Ukrainian context, with NGORC and Info Sapiens working closely to ensure the tools were suited for the operational context. Comprehensive translation of tools and key terminology was important to create a common ground to compare the Ukrainian localization process with other contexts and countries that use the same Localization Measurement Framework and Tools.

In this baseline, we assess the level of evidence of action against indicators in each of the seven areas of measurement. The four levels of evidence are no evidence, limited evidence, some evidence, and strong evidence.

Data collection

The study used a mixed methods approach with both quantitative and qualitative data (Figure 4). A quantitative survey (mix telephone and web) was conducted in February-March 2023, with 180 responses, the majority of which came from Ukrainian organizations. All respondents have worked in the humanitarian field for more than six months and work as senior staff. Fifteen key informant interviews (KIIs) were also conducted across national organizations, international organizations, UN agencies, and donors: five national and 10 international actors, made up of four international NGOs, three UN agencies, and three donors. All interviewees were heads or senior managers in their organizations. HAG provided the data collection tools and Info Sapiens adapted and translated them with NGORC support. The two data sets were used in combination with data emerging from the document review to identify key trends, while also providing context and nuance.

Figure 4. Sources



Limitations

- Interpretation bias: The data may be influenced by differing interpretations of key terms used during the survey process.
- Level of evidence: Where indicators are rated as having no or limited evidence of action, this does not mean that action is not taking place but that it did not emerge as part of the baseline process.

- The report presents a high-level analysis that considers specific areas and does not intend to overview all challenges affecting the response.
- Many national responders are very geographically localized in Ukraine, and this could be a sample that has not been fully reflected within this study.
- The study is limited to government-controlled areas (GCA).

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of the localization baseline in a way that makes tracking progress and benchmarking at the country level possible. Below is a summary of the results for the seven areas, which are each explored in turn.

Figure 5. Summary of results

Domains	Average score (Level of Evidence on a scale from 0 to 3)
Partnership	1.6 (Limited to some evidence)
Leadership	1.9 (Some evidence)
Coordination and complementarity	1.9 (Some evidence)
Funding	0.9 (Limited evidence)
Capacity	2.3 (Some evidence)
Policy influence	0.7 (Limited evidence)
Participation	2.3 (Some evidence)

A 4-points scale was used, where 0 = No evidence; 1 = Limited evidence; 2 = Some evidence; 3 = Strong evidence[17].

[17] According to the Methodology, «no evidence» means up to 30% positive answers on the indicative question, «Limited evidence» is 31-50% positive answers, «Some evidence» is 51–75% positive answers, and «Strong evidence» is more than 75% positive answers.

PARTNERSHIPS

1.6

KEY FINDING:

Limited to some evidence of localization

Progress Indicators	Level of Evidence
Partnerships are based on equitable and ethical partnership practices	1.0 (Limited evidence)
Longer-term strategic partnerships exist that aim to build systems and processes mirroring the ambitions and goals of the local or national partner	2.0 (Some evidence)
Increased power and decision-making of local and national actors within partnerships	1.7 (from limited to some evidence)

The partnership indicator is rated at an average score from limited to some evidence of localization (1.6). «True, genuine, and equal partnership remain one of the possible solutions *[promote localization of response]*, but it can be argued that the current Ukrainian response has been shaped by the power dynamics inherent in the humanitarian sector and the rigid systems of support and coordination. […] True partnership means long-term engagement, acceptance of strength and weaknesses, and a transfer of knowledge in both directions. All made possible through trust»[18].

Effective and quality partnerships between international actors and national actors are often seen as a crucial part of the process towards localized humanitarian response. Partnerships were recognized by many participating international NGOs as a major part of their approach to humanitarian programming. Equitable partnerships are another major element of all three sets of global humanitarian sector commitments endorsed at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), and mentioned explicitly in the 2021 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendation on enabling civil society in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. International NGOs are recommended to re-evaluate partnerships with local organizations so that they are «more equitable, and mutually accountable, and support and strengthen local leadership and sustainability» in *Time to Decolonise Aid*[19]. In addition, seven DEC members recently pledged to support equitable partnerships that «will prioritise and value the leadership of national and local actors and invest in making partners stronger and more sustainable» in the *Pledge for Change*»[20].

International organizations have a larger number of formal partnerships (based on some written form of agreement) than national organizations. 41% of the surveyed international organizations have more than 10 partnership agreements, while 17% of national organizations have the same number of agreements (see Figure 6)[21]. Thus, international organizations have broader partnership experience with national organizations, while a significant part of national organizations have isolated experience with international partnerships, and often function in a sub-contracting capacity.

[18] Fredric Larsson, speech at Ukrainian Localization Conference, National Workshop on Localizing Humanitarian Aid in Ukraine, 2023.

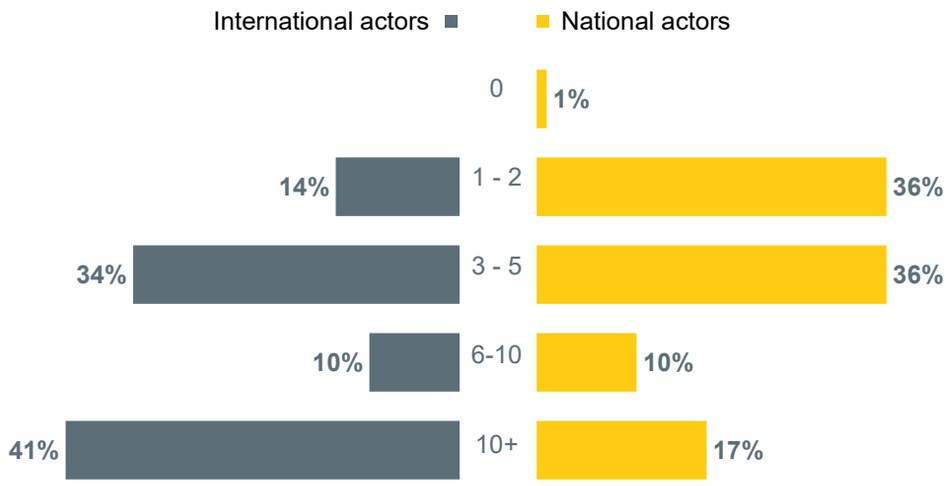
[19] Peace Direct, Time to Decolonise Aid.

[20] Lizz Harrison, with Dmytro Kondratenko and Kateryna Korenkova, Options for supporting and strengthening local humanitarian action in Ukraine: a scoping exercise report, DEC, 2023; Nicholas Noe , Hardin Lang, Efforts to Localize Aid in Ukraine One Year On: Stuck in Neutral, Losing Time, Refugees International, February 24, 2023.

[21] By «partnership agreements», we mean any written documents between organizations, such as memorandums of cooperation, agreements on project implementation, etc.

Figure 6. Number of partnership agreements

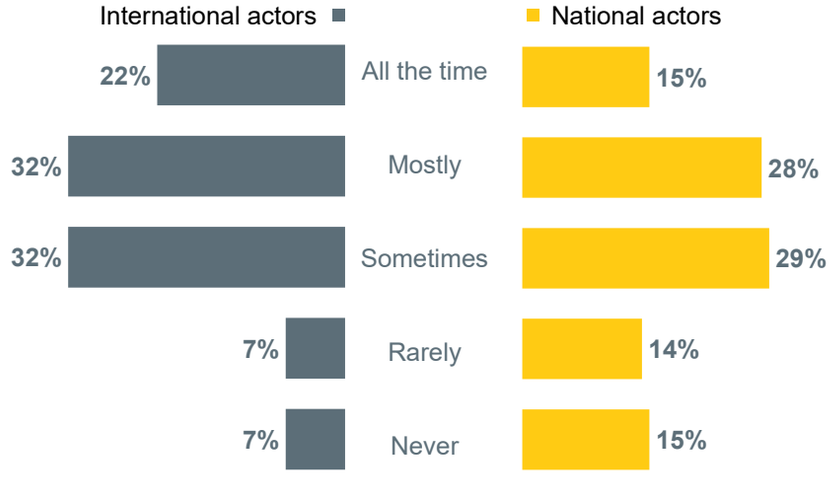
National actors: How many partnership agreements do you have with international/foreign actors?
International actors: How many partnership agreements do you have with local/national actors?



Although equitable practices are important to meaningful partnerships, information about national organizations' involvement in decision-making processes in joint projects with international partners (which is one indicator for such practices) is very limited. In the survey, while there was broad agreement from national and international actors about the former being involved «mostly» or «sometimes», perceptions differed more strongly when it came to the ends of the spectrum (Figure 7). Less than half of the national actors indicated that they are involved in the decision-making process «all the time» or «mostly». While 29% percent of Ukrainian responders said they are rarely or never consulted, only 14% of international organizations reported this was the case.

Figure 7. Involvement in decision making process

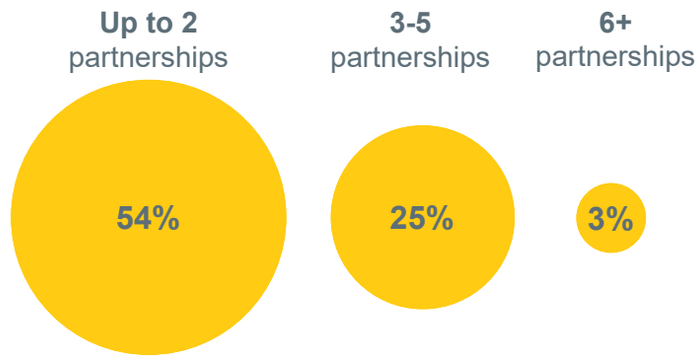
National actors: Is your organization involved in decision making in partnerships with international/foreign actors?
International actors: Is your local/ national partner organization involved in decision making in partnerships?



The responses showed that the more partnerships national organizations have, the more actively they are involved in decision-making processes. Among national organizations with up to two partnerships, more than half feel rarely or never involved in decision making processes. In contrast, among national organizations with more than six partnerships, only 3% say this is the case (Figure 8). There thus appears to be a link between number of partnerships and the level of cooperation with foreign partners, although the nature of this link requires further investigation. It may be important as a factor for the sustainability and development of national and local organizations – something which is further explored below.

One of the reasons for the insufficient development of partnerships may be the bureaucratization of processes. This is sometimes due to the inclusion of intermediates or sub-contracting agencies in the chain between the donor and the implementing organization, as well as intense capacity assessments and due diligence processes[22]. Other research in Ukraine has also identified long, complex, and often duplicative due diligence processes as a significant obstacle for national organizations to enter into formal partnerships, forming part of what national actors often stress as bureaucratization[23]. Respondents highlighted that, compared to direct funding, the involvement of «intermediary» organizations increases the level of bureaucracy, particularly if intermediaries approach engagement through a sub-contracting model rather than partnership approach.

Figure 8. Involvement in decision making process



How do partnerships operate?

> *And then, in order to confirm, let's say, that they work, they begin to include this bureaucracy to somehow justify the involvement of their time. The same is happening with Ukrainian partners. In other words, an international [partner] provides them with funds, and I have the impression that they use up their money…They start demanding too many papers, too many explanations, too many perfect letters, and so on and so forth.*

National actor, KII #5

The national organizations with the least number of partnerships are also the most vulnerable when it comes to funding from international actors. Overall, just over one-third said they did not receive non-project overhead costs (Figure 9).

[22] Refugees International, Communique from the National Conference on Localization in Ukraine, 2023; Lizz Harrison, with Dmytro Kondratenko and Kateryna Korenkova, Options for supporting and strengthening local humanitarian action in Ukraine: a scoping exercise report, DEC, 2023.

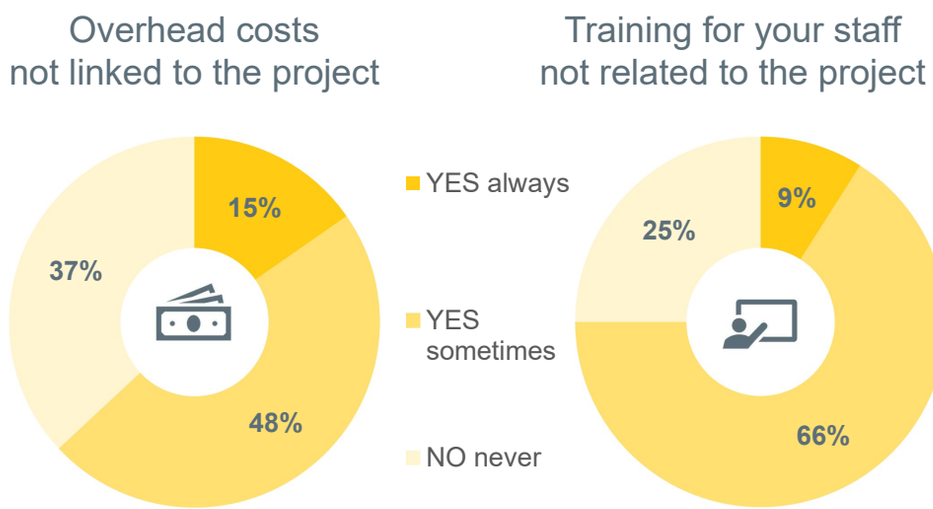
[23] Lizz Harrison, with Dmytro Kondratenko and Kateryna Korenkova, Options for supporting and strengthening local humanitarian action in Ukraine: a scoping exercise report, DEC, 2023.

Many Ukrainian NGOs experience operational costs not being funded, for example fuel, staff, or facilities, in partnerships with international organizations. NGORC asked 51 Ukrainian NGOs if their operational costs are always funded, and almost two thirds of these organizations experienced operational costs not being funded in partnerships with international organizations. Striking examples given by Ukrainian organizations included operational costs only being covered in 3 out of 11 projects; that financing for fuel was only given by other Ukrainian organizations never by their international counterparts; that international partner delivered humanitarian aid to the central office, but could not support the distribution costs for implementing organization to where the people in need actually were located. Ukrainian NGOs who had not experienced this stressed that they had refused such arrangements, or they were not involved in direct assistance. Among these 51 NGO close to 90% utilized volunteers within the framework of their humanitarian work[24].

Organizations with a larger number of partnerships have a higher degree of flexibility regarding indirect costs, as cost can be shared among projects. Nonetheless, this also mean that some projects do not bear their full costs and the actual costs are consequently subsidized by other donors/projects.

Figure 9. Funding within partnerships

In your partnerships with international/foreign actors, do the partnerships fund the following?



Greater coverage of indirect project costs contributes to the strengthening of institutional development of local organizations. International partners usually understand this and stress that they try to take into account the interests of local partners[25]. Indeed, respondents believed that the overhead percentage is one of the stumbling blocks in the humanitarian sector. This concern is widely shared by other sources and a problem that is often referred to within numerous other studies and recommendations[26].

International organizations have more trust and contact with partners with whom they have worked for a long time. From this position of trust, they often try to avoid bureaucratization of processes, such as by simplifying due diligence processes, application forms, and requirements connected to organizational policies or procurement procedures. This indicates that trust functions

[24] Based on conversations with 51 Ukrainian NGOs.

[25] 10 out of 10 respondents from KII (international actors) stated this. KII #1, 7-15

[26] IASC Guidance on the Provision of Overheads to Local and National Partners, 2022, Lizz Harrison, with Dmytro Kondratenko and Kateryna Korenkova, Options for supporting and strengthening local humanitarian action in Ukraine: a scoping exercise report, DEC, 2023.

as an effective builder of quality partnership and that long-term commitment between organizations is key to making that happen.

How do partnerships operate?

> *We have, like, strategic partners, they get really big grants, and we work closely together, we kind of design the project together with them. We work on the implementation, we support them in the implementation, so that concerns big partners. And then regarding small ones, we just give them small grants, and we, you know, we aim for really building up the newly established organizations that may come up from volunteering, different volunteer groups. So, really, it is just kind of quite small local initiatives, and we give small grants, and we potentially give them support with project management, financial management, reporting.*
>
> *International actor, KII #15*

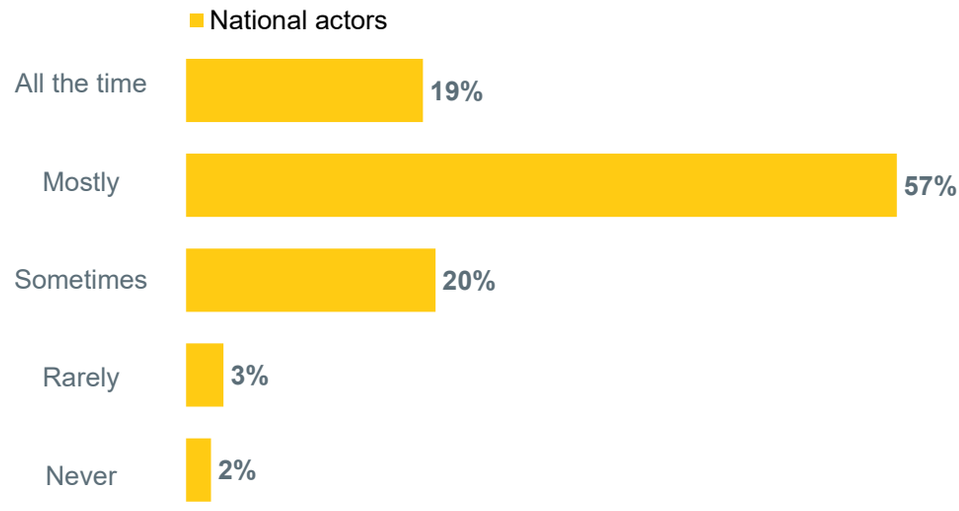
Stronger practical cooperation is facilitated by a lower degree of bureaucratization, more informal contacts facilitate the exchange of ideas and result in greater involvement of national actors within project development processes. Almost three out of four national actors say they believe that their ideas and views always or mostly are taken into account, which is a very high score (Figure 10).

Question: Do you consider the local partners' ideas of what activities are worth funding?

> *Yes, in general, whenever the partner submits something…we can discuss the different activities. There is always room for discussion, defending some ideas or not, to be appropriate for the funding. In order to find a compromise, to identify the best, most adapted activity. For example, we go on the ground to monitor activities, and we always discuss with the partners in order to understand their thinking, how to improve the project, to improve the activities. I would say we have ongoing consultations.*
>
> *International actor, KII #14*

Figure 10. Ideas sharing within partnerships

Are your organizations' ideas and views taken into account in partnerships with international/foreign actors?



Despite this positive picture, two-way communication on other aspects of humanitarian partnerships in Ukraine appears to be inconsistent. International organizations report that their local/national partner organizations formally assessed partnership capacity in only a small number of cases: 22% of respondents undertook an assessment and 24% of respondents provided recom-

mendations (Figure 11). National organizations, however, say that they provide feedback and information to their foreign partners more often: 30% of respondents undertook an assessment and 50% of respondents provided recommendations within formal partnerships (Figure 12). It should be noted that communication «in the reverse direction», from international to local organizations, is more frequent and three times higher. Using mutual evaluation and feedback communication, formal and informal, is limited.

Figure 11. Receiving Feedback

National actors: Has your international/foreign partner organization ever formally assessed your capacity in your partnership?
International actors: Has your local/national partner organization ever formally assessed your capacity in your partnership?

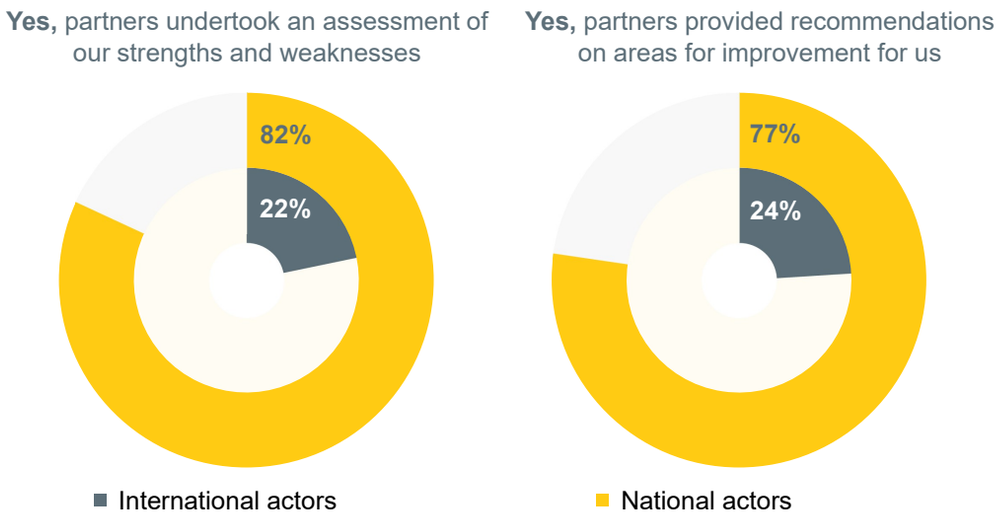
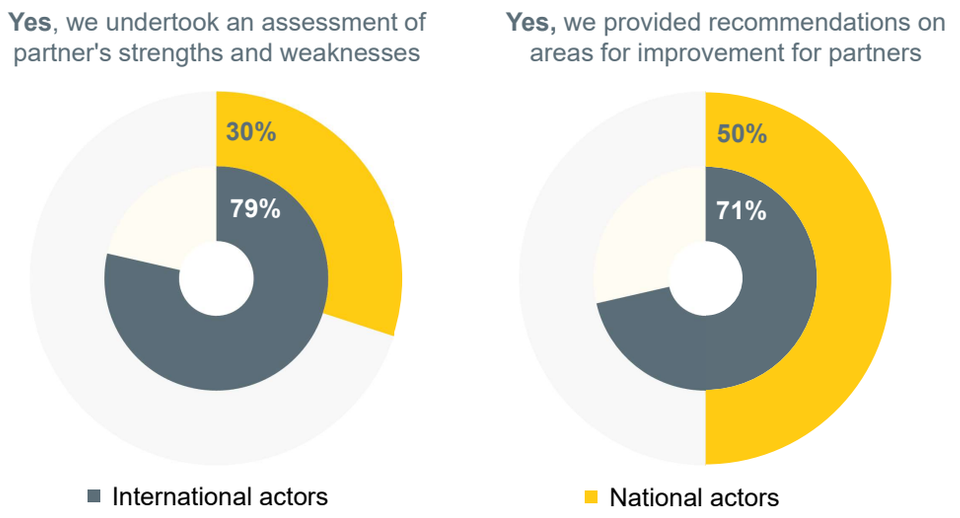


Figure 12. Providing Feedback

National actors: Have you ever formally assessed the capacity of your international/foreign partners in your partnerships?
International actors: Have you ever formally assessed the capacity of your local/ national partner in your partnership?



LEADERSHIP

1.9

KEY FINDING:

Some Evidence of Localization

Progress Indicators	Level of Evidence
International actors support and strengthen national leadership	1.3 (Limited evidence)
Local and national actors lead response and dominate decision-making	1.8 (Some evidence)
International actors work with and respect in-country leadership structures and mechanisms	2.8 (Strong evidence)

There is some evidence of localization within leadership (1.9). However, the evidence varies among the sub-areas investigated, with limited evidence that international actors work to support and strengthen national leadership, yet strong evidence that international actors work with and respect in-country leadership.

The Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) stresses that humanitarian leadership should be inclusive, representative, gender-balanced, accountable, and supportive of the entire humanitarian community. National actors should have equitable opportunities with international actors and among their own peers to take on leadership and co-leadership roles at both national and sub-national levels, including as part of strategic advisory groups and coordination mechanisms[27].

If in terms of leadership, international organizations dominate decision-making processes, which creates a risk that humanitarian action will not reflect the priorities of affected communities. National and local leadership is both an ethical obligation and a way of achieving other goals: «local leadership over where, how, and why we collaborate is the route to greater equity, effectiveness, and sustainability»[28].

Findings on leadership are closely tied to the issue of equitable partnerships. Expanding the depth and quality of cooperation between local and international organizations will help to strengthen the leadership of Ukrainian NGOs. Where formal partnerships already exist, their quality is very important. When an organization has no or few formal partnerships, establishing such partnerships and then developing their quality should be a priority[29].

As discussed above, the number of partnership agreements that Ukrainian organizations have appears to shape issues such as their access to resources and involvement in decision-making. These links are also seen in Ukrainian organizations' relationships with donors, as having fewer partnerships reduces potential opportunities for interaction with and exposure to donors. The vast majority (85%) of international actors indicate that they facilitate direct contacts between local partners and donors. However, only 47% of national respondents indicate that they have had meetings with donors more than five times in the last six months, while every tenth person has never met donors. (Figure 13) Not surprisingly, donors meet more often with the national organizations that have more partnerships (Figure 14).

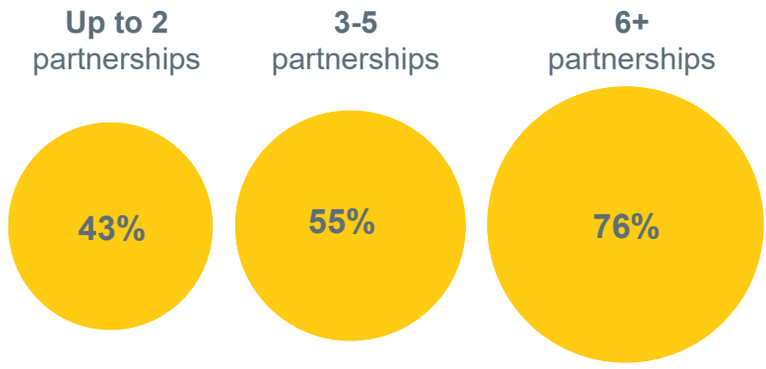
[27] IASC, 2021

[28] USAID, Localization.

[29] KII #6, 11, 14

Figure 13. Number of meetings

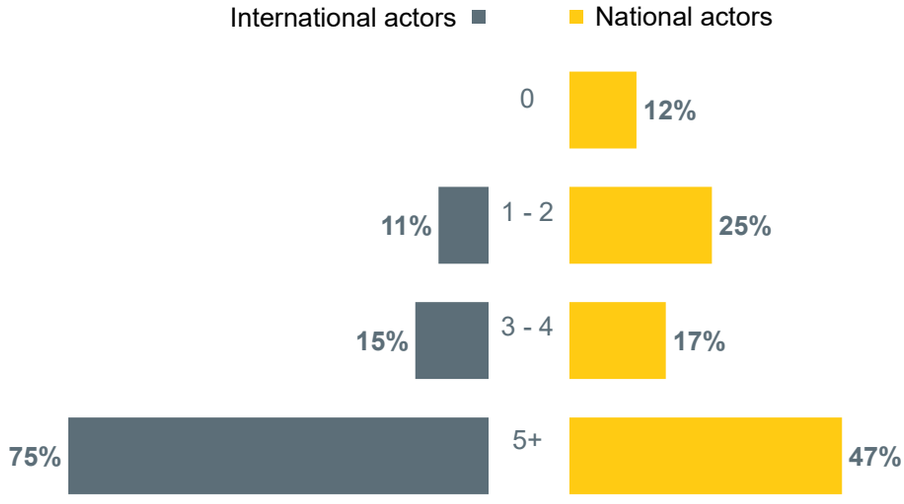
How many times in the last six months has your organization met directly with an international/foreign donor? (% of National actors who have more than 5 meetings, by number of partnerships)



Compared to local organizations, international organizations have significantly more direct meetings with donors: 75% of respondents had more than five meetings in the last six months, while 37% of local organizations had up to two meetings, compared to only 11% of international actors indicating the same frequency.

Figure 14. Number of meetings

How many times in the last six months has your organization met directly with an international/foreign donor?



In interpreting these figures, it should be noted that the concept of «donor» varies among national organizations. This reflects wider issues related to the barriers that language and terminology constitute within the humanitarian response[30]. National organizations that said they met with «donors» more than five times were asked to specify with which donors and how these

[30] For example: «..for many L/NAs, this includes international actors as intermediaries between them and donors/funders». Lizz Harrison, with Dmytro Kondratenko and Kateryna Korenkova, Options for supporting and strengthening local humanitarian action in Ukraine: a scoping exercise report, DEC, 2023.

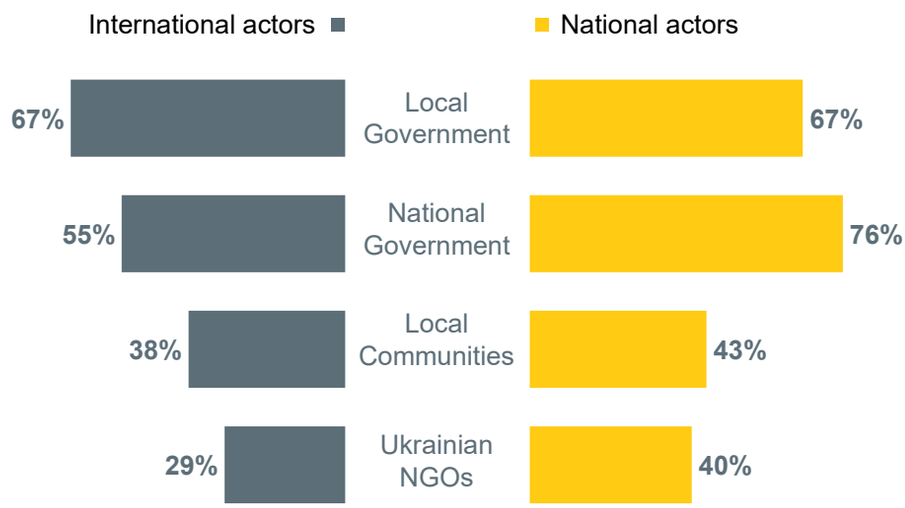
meetings took place. The majority of national actors mentioned various platforms for online communication, such as Zoom, in terms of meeting format. The respondents also named various organizations as «donors», including international and national sub-contracting agencies, UN organizations, and embassies.

At present, the leadership role of the national government is assessed differently by national and international stakeholders (Figure 15). 76% of the Ukrainian organization representatives believe that the government is the primary decision-maker within the humanitarian response in the majority of situations. In contrast, only 55% of respondents representing international organizations believe this to be the case. Both groups have the same perception of the role of local authorities, which in the eyes of international stakeholders have a perceived greater role in response leadership.

In general, Ukrainian humanitarian organizations tend to attribute leadership to Ukrainian institutions (state and non-state) more than their foreign counterparts. For example, the role of national NGOs as leaders in decision-making process is rated much lower among Ukrainian and international organizations. Only 40% of national actors and 29% of international actors attribute a leadership role in decision-making to NGOs. Some interviewees pointed to national legislation as a factor in limiting the role of Ukrainian NGOs.

Figure 15. Leading the decision making process

Do you think the following local and national organizations lead on decision making in humanitarian emergencies in Ukraine all the time or mostly?

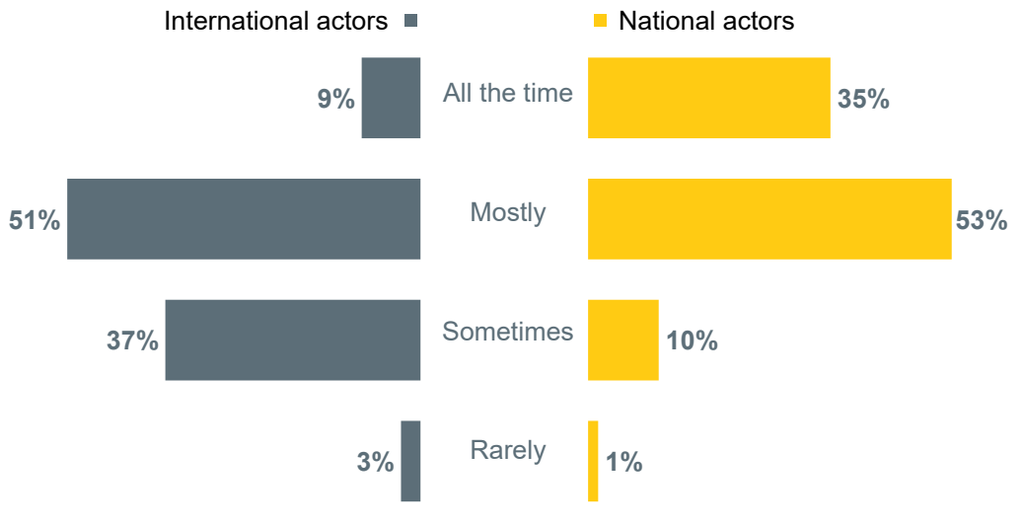


However, representatives of international organizations also viewed the approaches of international humanitarian actors as contributing to a limited scope for local leadership. Only 9% of the international respondents said that international/foreign actors always respect and work with in-country leadership structures and mechanisms, while 35% of the surveyed national organizations responded that international/foreign actors always do (Figure 16). During interviews, some suggested that international actors' desire to respect in-country structures is undermined by a lack of meaningful capacity to do so due to insufficient knowledge of how they work.

> *«Yes, I think that there is respect for those mechanisms but not always an understanding of these mechanisms».*
>
> *International actor, KII #9*

Figure 16. Respect towards in-country leadership

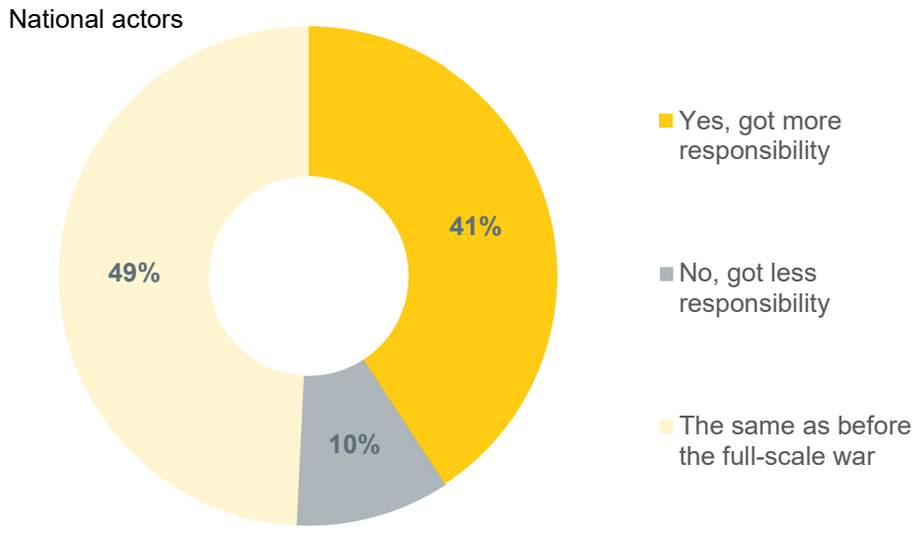
Do you think that international/foreign actors respect and work with in-country leadership structures and mechanisms?



In terms of change over time, the study explored whether local organizations have become more influential within decision-making processes at the local level in Ukraine since the escalation of the war in February 2022 (Figure 17). 41% of the national actors indicated they felt an increase in influence, while almost half said their influence had not changed, and nearly one in ten respondents said their influence had decreased.

Figure 17. Responsibilities

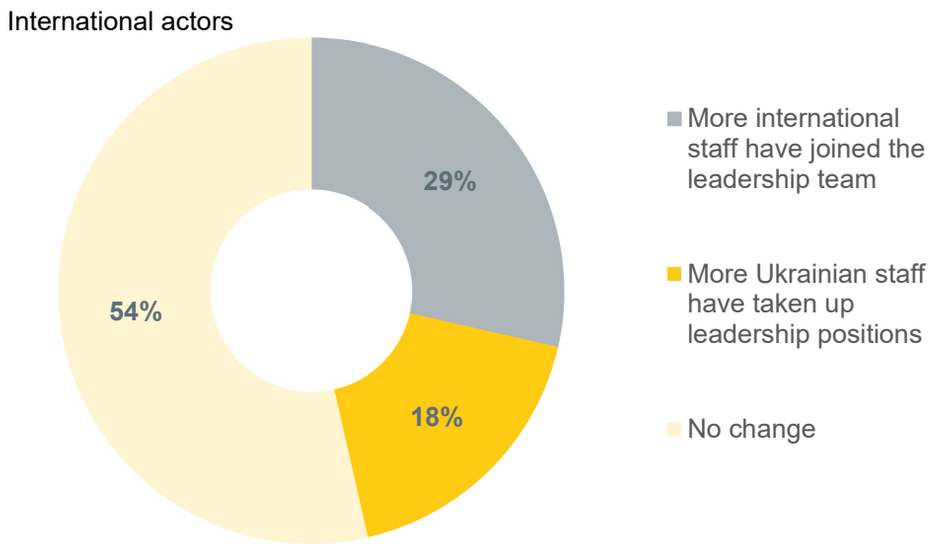
Did your organization get more responsibility for decision-making locally in Ukraine since the beginning of the full-scale war, in February 2022?



On the one hand, many international organizations have significantly strengthened their presence or are completely new to the Ukrainian context; on the other hand, many Ukrainian organizations and individuals have acquired significant experience responding to an acute humanitarian crisis and strong civil society, combined with high educational levels, since the beginning of the war in 2014. Yet there is little evidence that foreign organizations have involved more Ukrainian colleagues in the leadership circle as the response has progressed. Only 18% of the surveyed international organizations say that they have increasingly involved Ukrainian personnel within management structures. This is especially notable given staff poaching, highlighted in the funding section below. 29% of international organizations strengthened their capacity by employing international staff, and more than half (54%) say that there have been no changes in the management (Figure 18).

Figure 18. Leadership structure

How has the leadership structure within your organization changed since the beginning of the full-scale war in February 2022? International actors



This suggests there is significant work still to be done to reinforce the role of Ukrainian NGOs and CSOs at key leadership levels in humanitarian responses, improving the contextual understanding of international NGOs, and increasing the representation of Ukrainian staff within these NGOs' decision-making. While some of these needs directly concern humanitarian institutions, others go beyond them. Systematic strengthening of the positions of humanitarian organizations within Ukrainian legislation and society in general can contribute to improving the inclusion of national and local NGOs.

COORDINATION AND COMPLEMENTARITY

1.9

KEY FINDING:

Some evidence of Localization

Progress Indicators	Level of Evidence
National representation and engagement in coordination forums and meetings	1.8 (Some evidence)
Clearly defined parameters for international actors complementing local and national actors in humanitarian response[31]	2.0 (Some evidence)

The study found some evidence (1.9) of localization in approaches to coordination and complementarity. In this area, the two progress indicators – which look at participation in forums and delineation of roles – had similar levels of evidence.

Coordination within a humanitarian response is key to promoting efficiency, effectiveness, and overall success of operations and delivery of humanitarian assistance, as well as for promoting a principled approach that indeed contributes to long-term recovery. Related, effectiveness and efficiency draw from ensuring complementarity, avoiding duplication and replacement, ensuring a balance between local and international action, building on respective strengths, and maximizing comparative advantages to the benefit of all.

In Ukraine, the problematic nature of coordination efforts during the response has often been highlighted, for example that «progress remains sporadic and uneven, and the system as a whole does not appear to be prioritizing and investing in coordination proportionally to the current or intended scale of the response[32]». At the same time, «formal and informal coordination by local CSO/NGOs and particularly by local authorities is widespread and appears both sophisticated and effective in delivering assistance to large numbers of people, although not necessarily according to a principled or needs-based approach[33]». While this baseline study did not seek to evaluate the effectiveness of coordination, it was notable that less than half of the interviewees believed that the coordination system is functional, and the rest lack a shared understanding of how the system actually works[34].

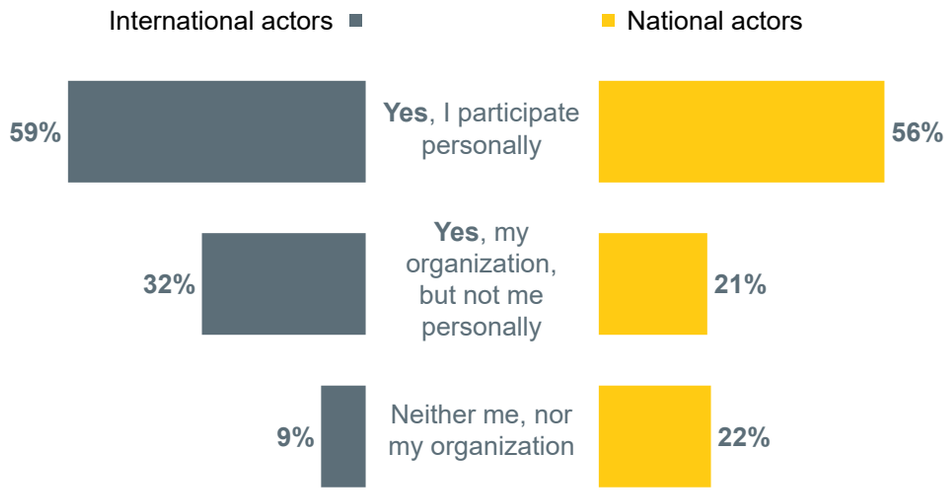
While data indicate that participation is strong within coordination structures, there also seems to be a disconnect between international and national coordination structures. Broadly speaking, international actors participate in coordination forums more frequently than national actors. This can be considered in two ways: reported participation rates and degree of participation in different forums.

According to the survey, international NGOs' participation in coordination forums is 14% higher than local NGOs: 91% vs. 77%, respectively; while 22% of national NGOs said they do not participate in coordination meetings at all (Figure 19).

[31] Only the qualitative survey was used for the assessment.
[32] ICVA Mission Report, 2022
[33] ICVA Mission Report, 2022
[34] Only the qualitative survey was used for the assessment.

Figure 19. Cluster Participation

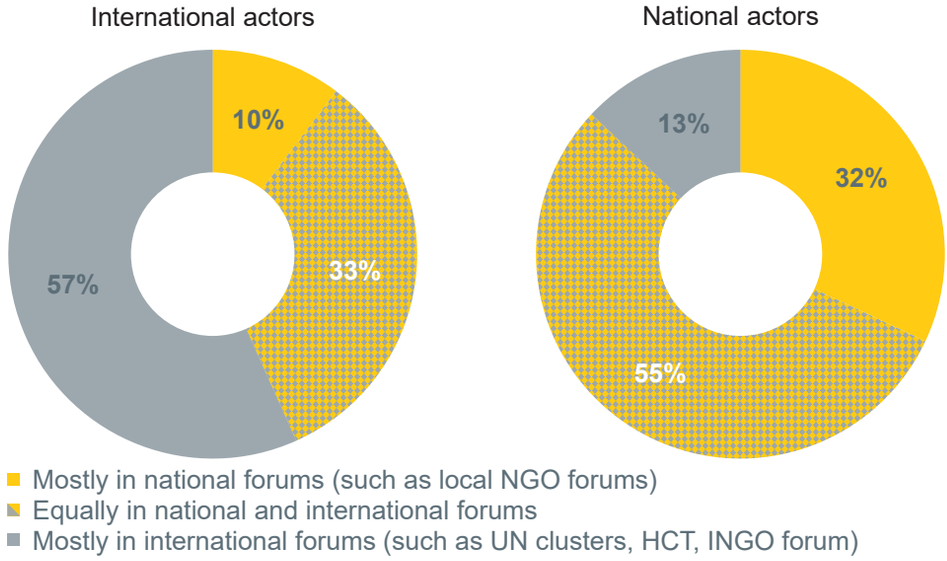
Do you / your organization participate in international and national coordination forums and meetings such as clusters?



While significant proportions of both types of actors reported engaging equally in both international and national coordination mechanisms (just over half of national actors and about one-third of international organizations), the distribution and level of participation varied between the two types. When asked about their primary participation, 32% of national organizations responded that they «mostly» participate in *national* coordination meetings while only 13% mostly engage in *international* forums. Among international actors that participate in coordination structures, 57% mostly engage in *international* coordination mechanisms. A majority of local actors participate equally in national and international forums, while the majority of international organizations are more likely to participate in international forums (Figure 20).

Figure 20. Forum Participation

What national or international forums do you engage in the most?

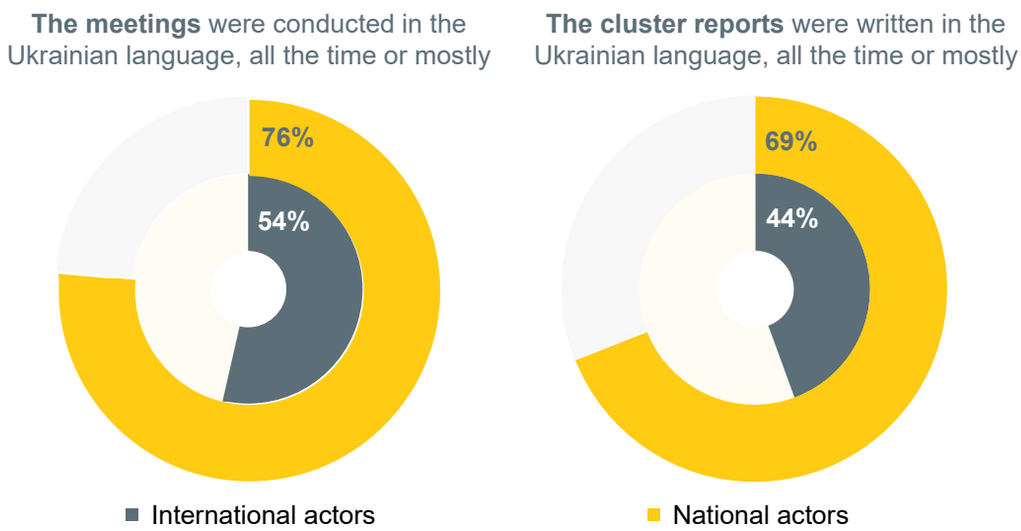


There is a direct correlation between the number of partnerships an organization has and its level of participation in coordination forums. National organizations that have more formal partnerships participate more often in international coordination mechanisms. A significant proportion of organizations with the fewest number of foreign partnerships (two or less) do not have experience of participating in coordination meetings (34% of the respondents). Among those with 3–5 or more than 6 partnerships, only 10% and 3%, respectively, do not participate in coordination meetings. Some national actors are thus likely to be significantly more visible than others.

Even if national actors want to participate in international humanitarian forums, barriers still exist that make it difficult for them to actively participate, such as language, terminology, and lack of time. The working language of key forums has been identified as an important factor in facilitating or inhibiting meaningful participation[35]. In Ukraine, a majority of stakeholders report frequent use of Ukrainian at coordination meetings. Representatives of national organization participate more often in international meetings that have Ukrainian translation (speeches and presentations and reports, 76% and 69%, respectively). National organization say that 15% of meetings are always translated into Ukrainian, and 44% say that bilingual reports are sent after meetings (Figure 21).

Figure 21. Impressions of the forums

Please share your impressions about cluster meetings and other international forums?



Beyond working language, however, using specialized terminology, concepts, or standards can present barriers. Previous research has highlighted a belief that coordination meeting agendas are tailored to the needs of international actors[36]. The opinions of international and national organizations differ when it comes to coordination[37]. International actors highlight the need to prevent overlap of the roles and areas of responsibility, while Ukrainian organizations indicate that they understand the importance of coordination mechanisms but they disagreed about design and practical functionality, including reporting and information flows in coordination areas[38].

[35] International Rescue Committee, Why Wait? How the Humanitarian System Can Better Fund Women-Led and Women's Rights Organisations, 2023, Humanitarian Advisory Group, No turning back: local leadership in Vanuatu's response to Tropical Cyclone Harold, 2020.

[36] Nicholas Noe , Hardin Lang, Efforts to Localize Aid in Ukraine One Year On: Stuck in Neutral, Losing Time, Refugees International, February 24, 2023.

[37] KII #1, 3, 7, 9, 14

[38] 6 out 15 KII respondents said that coordination systems are functional, and 7 out 15 said that they do not understand how the system works.

Do you think local, national, and international actors understand the complementarity of roles?

For local organizations, actually, a cluster system and the working principles of international organizations are often unclear. For example, if we talk about some meetings or public events, sometimes it happens that organizations are invited to discuss some important topics, for example, localization. And then nothing happens after that. Therefore, this is also the case. Here, of course, this does not promote trust of international organizations that take time, yes, well, for preparation.

International actor, KII #1

Even if national actors participate in coordination meetings, their voice is not always taken into account compared to international actors: 72% of the international actors say that their position is taken into consideration compared to 52% of the local actors (Figure 22). This is especially true for NGOs with the least number of partnerships (Figure 23).

Figure 22. Participation in the forums

Your or your organization's ideas and suggestions were heard in coordination forums

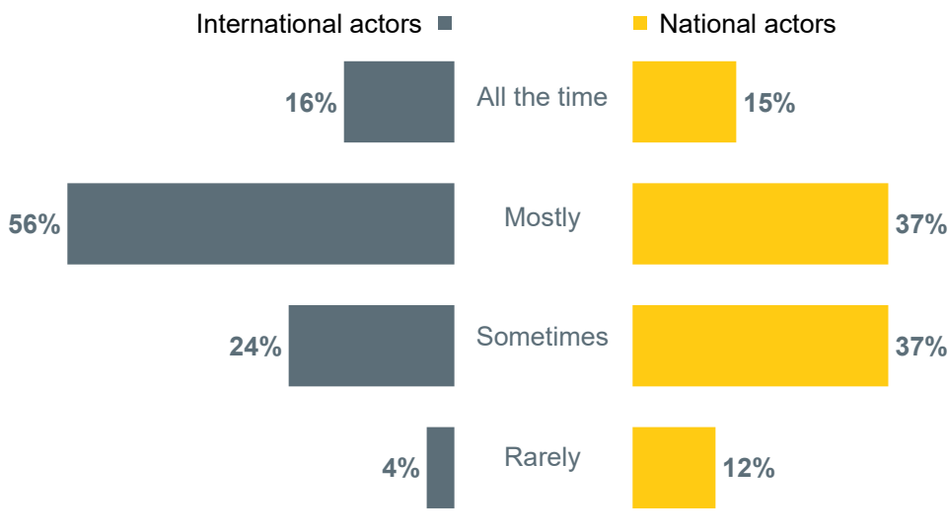
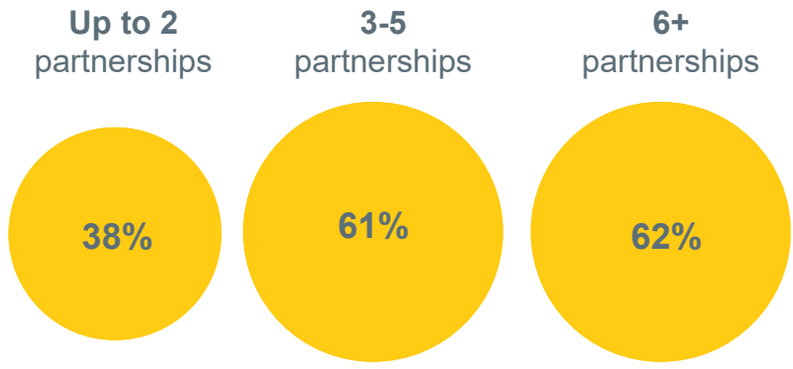


Figure 23. Participation in the forums

Your or your organization's ideas and suggestions were heard in coordination forums.
(% of national actors whose ideas were heard all the time or mostly by number of partnerships)



FUNDING

0.9

KEY FINDING:

Limited evidence of Localization

Progress Indicators	Level of Evidence
Local and national actors have access to direct funding with limited or no barriers	0.0 (No evidence)
Increase in the amount of humanitarian funding to local and national actors	1.8 (Some evidence)
Local and national actors have increased decision-making over financial matters	1.0 (Limited evidence)

Quality funding – funding that is flexible, predictable, and multi-year – is currently recognized as critical not only to improve the humanitarian system overall, but specifically for enhanced and effective localization within any humanitarian context. Furthermore, the funding of indirect costs links directly to the sustainability and institutional quality of an organization, and to the possibility for it to participate in coordination and have influence on humanitarian policy and decision-making – all key factors for effective localization efforts.

According to OCHA, the number of organizations providing humanitarian assistance in Ukraine has increased five-fold since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. More than 60% of these organizations are Ukrainian. Yet less than 1% of the $3.9 billion tracked by the UN in 2022 went directly to local actors[39].

The study found limited evidence for localization within this area, with an average score of 0.9**.** The vast majority of funding within the responses' initial phase went to international actors, at a time when many were not providing direct assistance on the ground. At the same time, the many actors that were providing direct assistance had only limited access to funds. This created a structural imbalance, placing serious strains on the national-led response and national actors, through, for example, the poaching of their staff. Paradoxically, although 62% of national actors now indicate that overall funding to their organizations has improved, more than 27% say that their staffing situation has worsened.

The distribution of funding between international and national organizations has remained very unbalanced. The study found little evidence that local and national actors have access to direct funding with limited or no barriers[40].

Only 24% of national organizations have five or more different funding sources, and 14% have no funding source at all (Figure 24). In comparison, a majority of international organizations have multiple funding sources, and 54% of respondents have more than five sources of funding.

Several obstacles to Ukrainian organizations receiving direct funding have been identified, including lack of processes and mechanisms for delivery of funds; due diligence processes, which are time-consuming, resource-intensive, and often involve duplicated processes; and languages

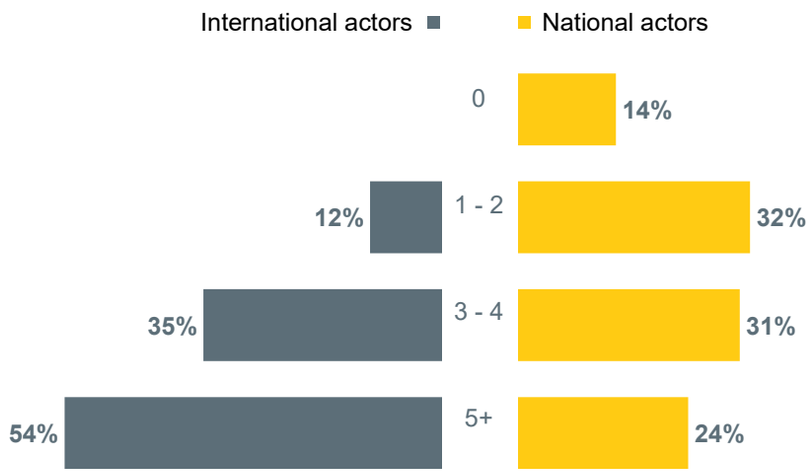
[39] OCHA, Ukraine: Humanitarian Response Plan (February 2023) [EN/UK].

[40] According to the Methodology, «no evidence» means that less than 30% of respondents have more than five sources of funding.

barriers, as some calls for proposals are only in English[41]. In addition, and as described above many Ukrainian NGOs experience lack of funding not only of overhead costs but of operational costs in partnership within partnerships with international organisations.

Figure 24. Sources of funding

Approximately how many different sources of funding does your organization have for humanitarian activities?



This funding distribution is perceived as unfair, a view expressed by both international and national respondents. Only about 16% of national and 17% of international organizations believe that the distribution of funding between national and international actors is fair.

Do you feel that national actors receive a fair proportion of funding compared to international?

I would say, from what I've seen, no. I don't think it is well-balanced, there is a lot that we don't see when we look at the formal reporting system. There are a lot of forms of financing but when you look at the officially counted figures, I would say, that the answer would be, no.

International actor, KII #9

No. I think that is unfair. But we're working on changing that so that this proportion becomes larger... There are several studies that have specific indicators. I do not remember now, but these indicators are impressive. It seems like 90% of funds go to international organizations. Of these, less than 1% goes to local organizations[42]. In other words, quite a lot of has been done and you can Google and find. Regarding our organization, it's somewhere, I think, 15–20% of what we get. We transfer directly to local organizations

International actor, KII #1

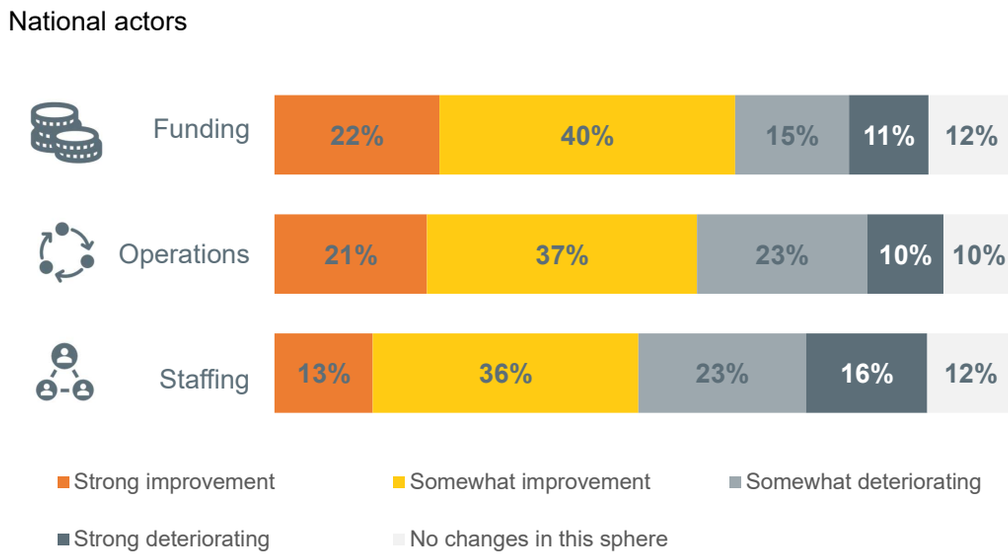
Nevertheless, funding has increased for the majority of organizations, with 62% of the surveyed national organizations saying that there has been strong or somewhat improvement in funding (Figure 25).

[41] Nicholas Noe , Hardin Lang, Efforts to Localize Aid in Ukraine One Year On: Stuck in Neutral, Losing Time, Refugees International, February 24, 2023; Lizz Harrison, with Dmytro Kondratenko and Kateryna Korenkova, Options for supporting and strengthening local humanitarian action in Ukraine: a scoping exercise report, DEC, 2023.

[42] CARE, One Year After the Escalation of the War in Ukraine - Making International Funding Work for Women's Organisations, 2023.

Figure 25. Organizational changes since the full-scale invasion

What changes did you have connected to the war? Please estimate each sphere.



Funding improvements do not guarantee staffing improvements, although these processes are correlated. One in five of those who experienced funding improvements report a worsening staffing situation. Among those who report a decline in funding, 71% of respondents report a worsening staffing situation. The «flexibility in funding is absolutely essential to make sure that local NGOs can respond quickly. […], while also minimising the grant administration that takes them away from delivering support to vulnerable individuals[43]».

Within this overall picture, the research drew attention to several ways that funding approaches in Ukraine could be improved to support localization. Funding of indirect cost is seen as of significant importance by respondents, but at the same time often lacking. Respondents believe this would contribute to institutional development and the inclusion of national actors, which is critical for developing Ukrainian NGOs. As noted above, funding of indirect costs is an important aspect of equitable partnerships. The common practice of not supporting Ukrainian partners' indirect costs has been increasingly recognized as unfair and at odds with commitments to support institutional development and strengthen capacity[44].

In terms of joint decision-making, there is some evidence that local and national actors have increased decision-making over financial matters. 45% of national organizations and 58% of international organizations say that international organizations share financial documents (budgets and reports) with their local partners (Figure 26). According to respondents, this practice is useful and contributes to improving the partnership.

Do your international partners share project budgets and financial reports with you?

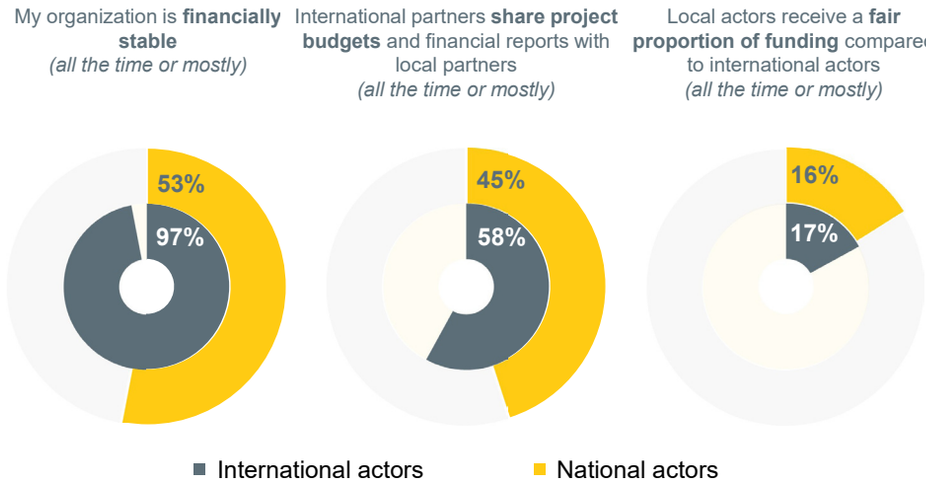
I've only seen it with one donor...I was so happy to see that...
It takes away the feeling that you're being taken advantage of.

National actor, KII #5

[43] Street Child, Elevating Local Leadership – 6 months of Street Child's Ukraine Crisis Response, 2022.
[44] IASC Guidance on the Provision of Overheads to Local and National Partners, 2022.

Figure 26. Funding Process

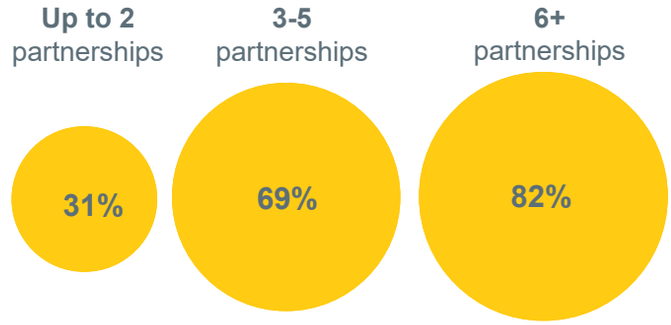
Please estimate your impressions about the funding process.



There is a significant difference between international and national organizations' estimates of their financial stability. Almost all international organizations surveyed (97%) indicated that their organization is financially stable all or most of the time, whereas only 53% of national organizations said the same. Among national organizations, financial stability statistically correlates with the number of partnership agreements. Thus, only 5% of Ukrainian NGOs with up to two partnerships indicated that their organization always has an operating budget for at least three months, and every tenth respondent from this group said that they never feel that their organization is financially stable. National organizations with more partnerships feel more confident about financial matters (Figure 27).

Figure 27. Financial Stability

Do you feel that your organization is financially stable
(% of national actors who feel financially stable, by number of partnerships)



While it seems clear from this study and others that funding is a clear obstacle to effective localization efforts, moving from current short-term, project-level grants to multi-year, flexible grants with simplified reporting requirements and reforming the pool fund systems are seen as possible solutions that could allow organizations to adapt to a rapidly changing humanitarian context and strengthen capacity[45].

[45] John Bryant, Patrick Saez and Sarah Redd, Humanitarian action in an evolving Russia–Ukraine conflict, 2022.

CAPACITY

2.3

KEY FINDING:

Some evidence of localization

Progress Indicators	Level of Evidence
Increased use of local, national, and regional capacity over international expertise	3.0 (Strong evidence)
Actors do not undermine the capacity of national actors in emergency response	1.7 (Some evidence)

To align with the Grand Bargain efforts in this area, capacity strengthening should be considered as «a deliberate process that supports the ability of organizations and networks to institutionalize new or improved systems and structures, and individuals and groups to acquire or improve knowledge, skills, or attitudes, which are necessary to function effectively, achieve goals, and work towards sustainability and self-reliance[46]».

Overall, the study found some evidence of localization within capacity (2.3), which makes it one of the strongest areas. Capacity is also directly linked to funding, as due diligence processes and capacity assessments often shape access to funding. These often focus on systems, processes, and policies rather than the actual capacity to implement an effective humanitarian activity within the Ukrainian context, contributing to faulty assessments of an organization's actual «capacity».

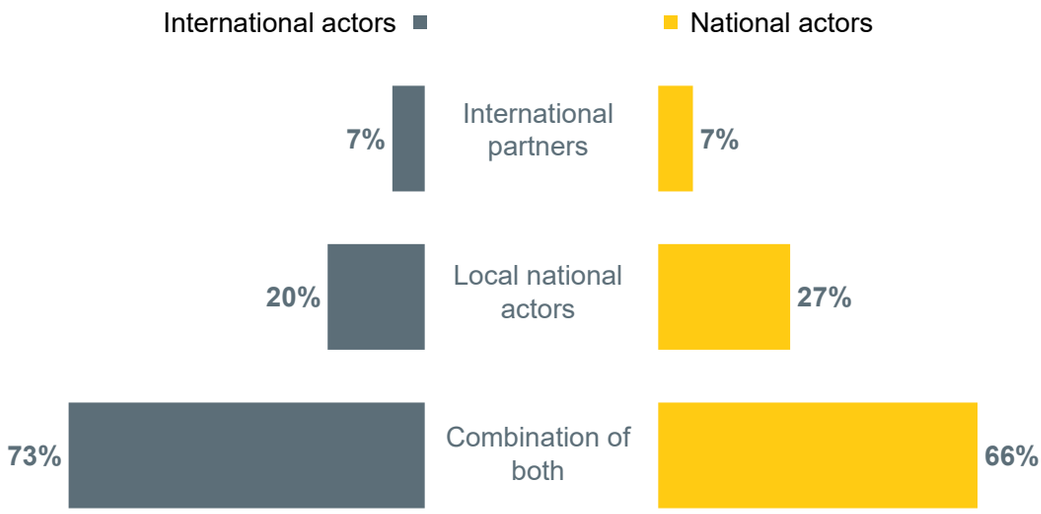
The capacity, local knowledge, and operational access of Ukrainian civil society is well documented. Many Ukrainian organizations have been working in the humanitarian sector since 2014 and have an accumulated wealth of knowledge, while many of the international actors are new to the context. Still, there have been no substantial structural efforts for national actors to build relevant capacity within international organizations. Instead, most discussions have focused on potentially strengthening the capacity of national actors. In the context of these approaches, one marker of localization is who is involved in understanding and acting on capacity priorities and support.

When asked about how decisions on capacity are made, a significant majority of all respondents believe that the needs of local and national organizations are determined jointly, although international actors were more likely to say this was the case than national actors (Figure 28).

[46] Interagency Standing Committee, Grand Bargain.

Figure 28. Capacity Needs

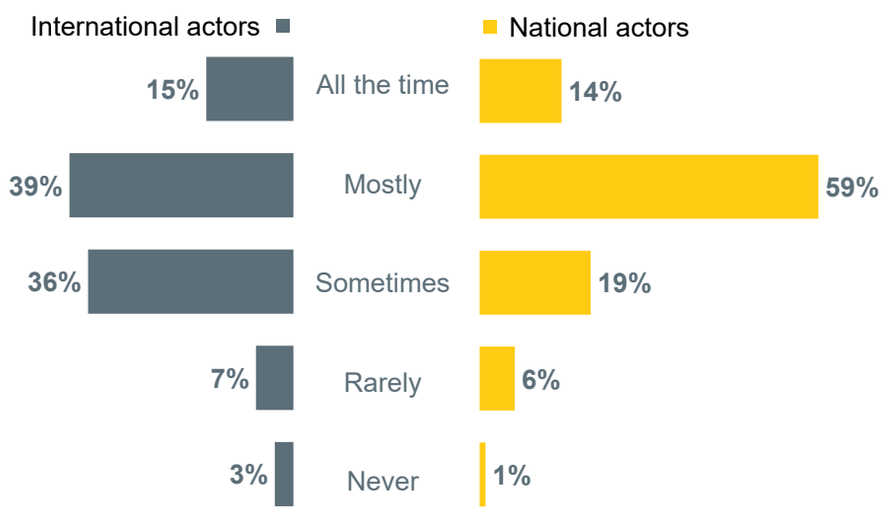
Who defines the capacity needs of local and national actors?



When asked whether international organizations act on the priorities of national actors, 73% of national organizations indicated that international actors focus all the time or primarily on the capacity strengthening areas requested by their Ukrainian counterparts (Figure 29). International organizations themselves evaluate their influence more critically, with only 54% saying that they always or mostly prioritize national partners' desired capacity areas.

Figure 29. Capacity Strengthening

Do International actors focus on the areas of capacity strengthening requested by local and national actors?



Regarding the benefits of the resulting support, international organizations again rate their impact more modestly: only 64% say that local partners' capacity is always or mostly enhanced,

compared to 89% of national organizations (Figure 30). However, there is also evidence of negative experiences. For example, some key informants pointed out that expertise is often not transferred from foreign partners, even when it has been agreed before project implementation. National humanitarian organizations often want capacity-building support in the form of mentoring and assistance that is tailored to their needs and requests, and enabled by systematic comprehensive support, rather than in the form of short one-off online trainings[47].

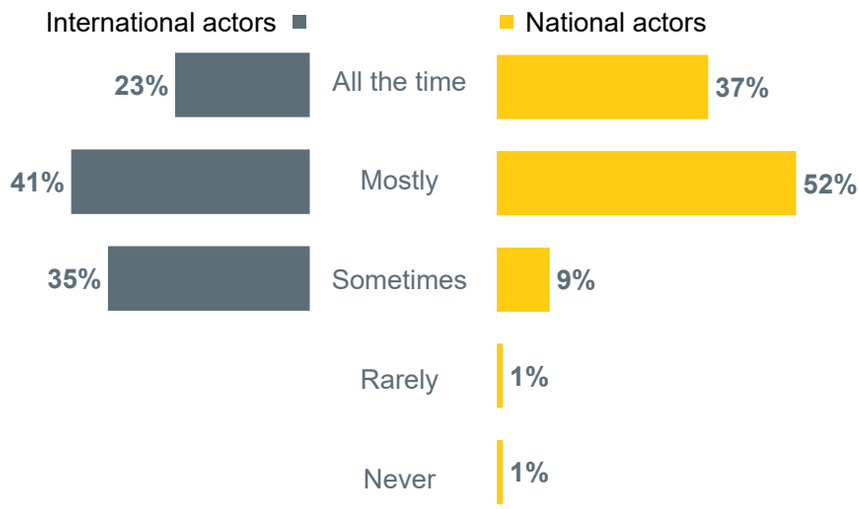
Who defines the capacity needs of local/national organization?

> *We were waiting for someone to come and help us from scratch. It did not happen, and we did it ourselves. I think that this, transferring expertise, should be their main task in Ukraine, and they are not capable of this.*

National actor, KII #3

Figure 30. Capacity Strengthening

Do you feel that the capacity of local and national actors and organizations is strengthened by support from international actors? (% of national actors who feel financially stable, by number of partnerships)



The key informants emphasized that the greatest value of international partnership lies in exchanging experience about processes, procedures, and policies. However, as some respondents emphasized, developing processes and procedures requires resolving the issue of financing indirect cost for it to have any practical effect long-term.

Do you feel that your organization's capacity was strengthened by international support?

> *It definitely strengthened. I've told you that we had few people, now we have many more. We have new departments, new processes that never existed before. And, in general, we now do a much larger volume of work than before. It seems to me that we have grown a lot in the amount of aid, both procedurally and structurally. I mean, we reviewed absolutely all our internal policies, improved what we had not seen before and did not pay attention to.*

National actor, KII #6

[47] Lizz Harrison, with Dmytro Kondratenko and Kateryna Korenkova, Options for supporting and strengthening local humanitarian action in Ukraine: a scoping exercise report, DEC, 2023.

Thanks to the cooperation with international partners, we get not only resources, but we also gain experience, because every organization has its own rules, certain laws. It is very cool when there is this different experience, multi-cultural experience of cooperation and politics in general. For me, this is the first thing, precisely to learn how to conduct affairs and implement humanitarian action, the best practices.

National actor, KII #2

POLICY INFLUENCE

2.3

KEY FINDING:

Limited evidence of localization

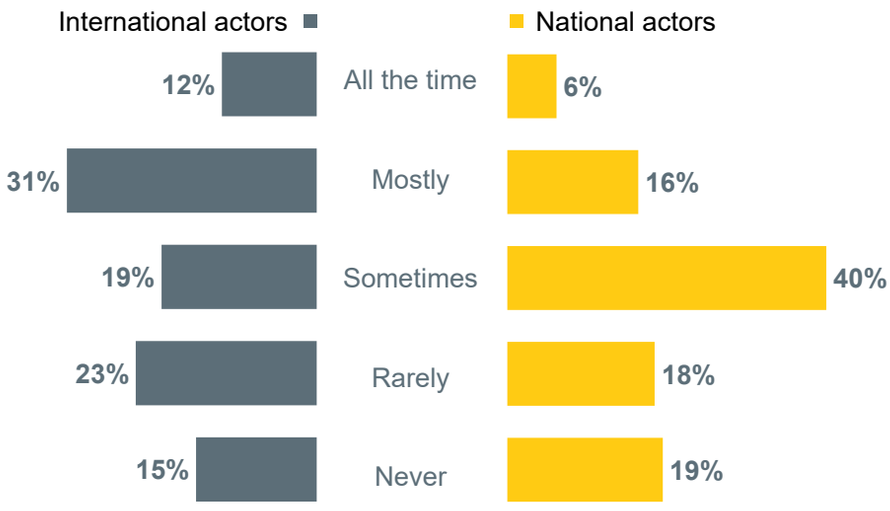
Progress Indicators	Level of Evidence
Policies are informed by local and national voice including communities	1.0 (Limited evidence)
National actors are recognized as key stakeholders in national debates about policies and standards that may have significant impact on them[48]	1.0 (Limited evidence)
Local and national actors have influence on donor priorities in-country, including program design and implementation[48]	0.0 (No evidence)

The study found limited evidence of progress on policy influence, with an average score of 0.7 (lowest domains). The majority of organizations within the humanitarian response are local or national organizations. Nonetheless, the humanitarian system is currently dominated by international actors, and local and national actors do not have sufficient influence on policy decisions, including program focus. This can impact intended beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance, for example, through humanitarian tools and policies that are not sufficiently contextualized.

Only 22% of Ukrainian organizations said that they always or mostly have the ability to influence humanitarian policy compared to 43% of international organizations (Figure 31).

Figure 31. Involvement in policy development

How much are you or your organization involved in influencing/feeding ideas into developing humanitarian policies and planning processes in Ukraine?



[48] Only the qualitative survey was used for the assessment.

However, the qualitative survey respondents tended to agree that local organizations have the opportunity to influence policies, but currently do not have the resources to do so[49]. Resources in this context refers not only to financial resources, but also to time and human resources, and possible degradation of the same, through, for example, poaching and burn-out.

National organizations do not consider themselves to have influence over donor policies, or only consider it indirect due to information sharing at the donor's request. The word "influence" is perceived as problematic as it is hierarchical and seem to indicate lack of self-determination by respondents, and that it is more appropriate to talk about equal horizontal relations when joint policies are built on a partnership basis.

Do you feel that you are able to influence donor policies?

I don't want to say the word «influence».I want to say a word, perhaps, about building a horizontal partnership, when you can be on an equal footing in these negotiations. I think we can definitely say that it is.

National actor, KII #2

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[49] KII #3, 6, 13

PARTICIPATION

2.3

KEY FINDING:

Some evidence of localization

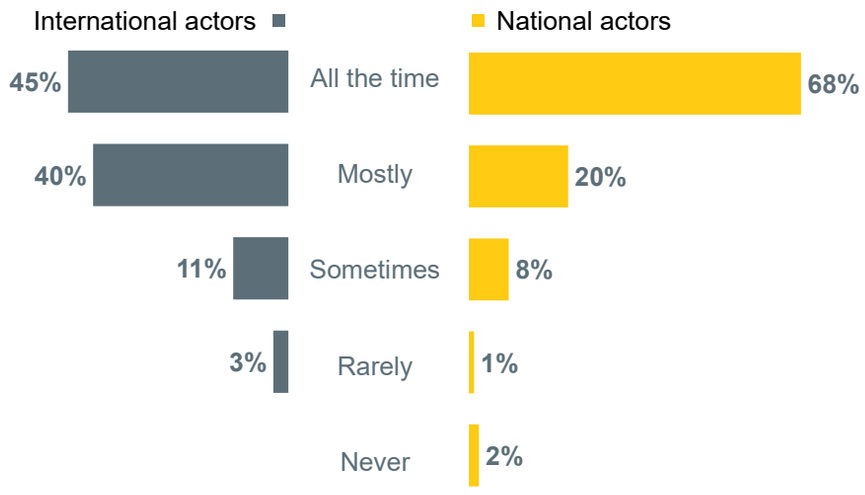
Progress Indicators	Level of Evidence
Community/contextualized standards exist for all actors working in that context	3.0 (Strong evidence)
Communities have increased opportunities to shape programming, including evaluating international actor programs[50]	1.5 (Some evidence)

There is some evidence of localization through participation in the Ukrainian Humanitarian Response. The average score is 2.3, making this one of the strongest areas. During humanitarian responses with an international component, national stakeholders are often treated as implementers or sub-contractors and not fully included in strategic and decision-making processes. However, the involvement and participation of Ukrainian actors in all aspects of the humanitarian program cycle (analysis, strategic planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) is essential for accountability to affected populations and ensuring that assistance and protection is relevant[51].

It is important for national actors to participate in programming and different discussions with international actors during implementation to provide a better understanding of the affected population's needs and priorities. Engaging with the local communities, providing consultation on the ground, will bring efficient programming activities and responsible funding use.

Figure 32. Accountability to affected people

Does your organization take the opinions of affected people into account during the design and implementation of programs in Ukraine?



[50] Only the qualitative survey was used for the assessment.

[51] IASC, 2021

Most actors consider that the needs of the affected population are taken into account when developing and implementing humanitarian programs: 87% of national actors said they take the opinions of affected people into account during the design and implementation of programs in Ukraine, with 67% believing this is the case «all the time». Although a large share of international organizations responded affirmatively (85%), only 45% said «all the time» (Figure 32). This can be explained by the fact that international organizations often act indirectly, through their local partners, to contact the affected population and collect needs. These results are not surprising and indicate the stronger capacity of national organizations in contextual understanding and community engagement, which previously has been highlighted.

The study shows that it is easier for Ukrainian organizations to keep in touch with the affected population and receive information from them. Ukrainian organizations indicate that they are in close contact with the target audiences of their humanitarian programs and form the assistance according to requests[52].Some national organizations' staff also stressed that international organizations are quite willing to make changes to projects if they are based on data demonstrably related to the needs of the affected population in the region.

Do humanitarian organizations have the flexibility to adjust their projects and programs when conditions change/based on needs articulated by the affected population?

> *I think that it is much easier and faster for local organizations to do this. Bureaucracy probably takes some time for the international ones.*
>
> *National actor, KII #4*

> *Most often, yes. There could be a work meeting where we say, 'Well, I've told you that we do not meet the request or that the needs in the region have changed already. We need something else.' And then we think together about what we can do about it. Actually, as a rule, if it is a major change, then it is the budget and the logical framework that change. Then we conduct the procedure through contract renewal. But, in principle, we went through these procedures with all donors. They are a bit lengthy, but they are possible. Or we can react immediately. Within the framework of what we have, for example. And we can just change our activities a little bit. Then it will be better.*
>
> *National actor, KII #6*

International organizations are primarily in contact with local communities through their partners on the ground. Direct contact can be one-way basis through a website, social media pages, brochures, and occasional field visits. New contact methods, such as QR codes, are used, but may be limited due to insufficient computer literacy amongst the affected population or service disruption. Thus, only limited evidence has been collected of international organizations' direct contact with affected population[53]. Given the relatively limited extent of local and national organizations' participation in decision-making and the uneven distribution of funds, this situation may have implications for the extent to which the views of Ukrainian people are informing response decisions.

[52] KII #2, 4, 6

[53] KII #7, 10, 12, 14

CONCLUSION

Through this initiative, we have tried to establish «where we are» in terms of localization. Only through knowing where were we are can we establish the direction that we need to go to reach an objective. It creates a baseline from which we can continue to regularly assess localization development by using the same methodology.

It is important to note that the purpose of this report is not to note specific failures or successes, but to provide a benchmark of current standing.

While the report analyses progress in seven areas (leadership, coordination and complementarity, partnerships, funding, participation, and policy influence), it is evident that there are many times when progress in one has a direct influence on another, such as between funding and policy influence. And some are mutually supporting, such as partnership and coordination.

This baseline can be used as a catalyst for change by various national and international stakeholders active in Ukraine, and a starting point for dialogue and discussion, setting targets, and tracking change. Nonetheless, it is up to each individual stakeholder to identify what can and should be changed within their approach, or to advocate for general change.

- As a *basis for discussion*. This baseline is intended to provide an objective basis for discussion about how localization is progressing within the Ukrainian context. This discussion could be useful at an organizational level as well as at a system level.
- As a *basis for planning*. This report can be used to identify areas in which progress is limited and that could be prioritized in planning processes. International, national, and local organizations, donors, and policy makers could work together to identify specific actions and set targets for change.
- As a *basis for tracking change*. The framework for measuring change and associated indicators are publicly available in this report. Organizations or networks can track how they are progressing against these key indicators at any time and can develop their own organizational baselines to track their progress.

While this initiative provides a baseline, and indeed identifies areas that are stronger or weaker in terms of localization within the humanitarian response, continued and sustained efforts of measure will remain a key priority to ensure tangible change and development of localization efforts in Ukraine, and its failure or success.

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