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Localization policy

Draft decision*

The Board approves the localization policy as set out in document WFP/EB.A/2025/5-A.

* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the decisions and recommendations document issued at the end of the session.

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Introduction

1. This policy aims to place local and national actors at the centre of WFP's efforts to end hunger, recognizing their contributions as first responders and as stewards of local knowledge and experience in humanitarian and development work. It represents a paradigm shift that is aligned with international commitments and national priorities and is grounded in humanitarian principles¹ and WFP's global assurance framework.² The policy outlines a vision for more inclusive, cost-effective and efficient ways of working with new and existing partners.
2. WFP defines "localization" as:

A process that shifts the way that WFP's humanitarian and development work is designed, delivered and funded to better support locally led efforts that are responsive to the unique needs and priorities of affected people.
3. The policy sets out a structured approach to strengthening the role of local and national "non-state actors",³ which complements WFP's support to governments and promotes shared decision-making in humanitarian action. It emphasizes the importance of providing direct and flexible funding to local actors, amplifying local voices and adapting relationships with enabling actors⁴ – including national governments, other United Nations entities, international NGOs, private sector and other actors – to better support locally led solutions.
4. In an environment marked by growing needs and contracting resources, localization enables the scale-up of locally led responses and supports WFP's shift towards more cost-effective approaches and sustainable service delivery models. This approach requires improved contractual and financial mechanisms that facilitate direct funding for local and national actors. By refining tools and approaches for assessing and measuring success, WFP will support the transition of its programmes to national and local ownership, where feasible. This paradigm shift involves making trade-offs between risks and reward, which will be guided by context-specific, people-centred and conflict-sensitive risk assessments.

Context

5. Conflict, extreme weather, global economic contraction and rising inequality are driving up food insecurity around the world. In 2024, acute hunger affected 343 million people,⁵ 44.4 million of whom faced emergency or worse levels of acute food insecurity.⁶ Drawing on the knowledge and experience of local first responders is increasingly viewed as essential to ensuring that humanitarian responses are delivered in a timely, cost-effective, accountable, scalable and better targeted way. To promote this approach, decisions and

¹ The humanitarian principles are humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence; see United Nations General Assembly resolutions [46/182](#) and [58/114](#).

² WFP. 2024. [WFP Global assurance framework](#).

³ The term *local and national actors* is used broadly to refer to both state and non-state actors that have a mandate to address the essential needs of a population, represent people in need, and/or have context-specific knowledge and resources that can enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and scalability of humanitarian and development programmes. Local and national actors include non-state actors such as NGOs, community-based organizations, small-scale local enterprises, and state actors including government authorities and institutions.

⁴ The term *enabling actors* refers to national and international actors that stimulate the conditions that empower and support other national and local partners in assuming central roles in decision making with the goal of amplifying their impact on policy actions and at the systems level; such actors include national governments, international NGOs, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, international financial institutions, donors, private sector, and academic and research organizations.

⁵ WFP. 2024. [WFP 2025 Global Outlook](#). The estimate for 2024 covers 74 countries with WFP operational presence and where data are available.

⁶ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification/Cadre Harmonisé phase 4 and above, which includes "severely food-insecure" according to the Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security.

solutions must be made closer to and in collaboration with the communities served,⁷ acknowledging the critical role that affected communities play in strengthening resilience, fostering social cohesion, promoting environmental sustainability and advancing socioeconomic and human capital development.⁸

6. Adding to the urgency of this change, in March 2025 the Emergency Relief Coordinator launched the “humanitarian reset”⁹ to examine how to deliver effective crisis response with limited means; rethink how humanitarian work is organized; and shift power closer to local leaders and affected communities. These priorities build upon commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit 2016 and through the Grand Bargain to make humanitarian action “as local as possible and as international as necessary”.¹⁰ They require concerted efforts to rebalance power dynamics¹¹ and decision making to ensure that local voices drive action.
7. By promoting equitable and inclusive approaches grounded in respect, trust and complementarity, this policy highlights how large-scale response efforts can become more efficient through stronger local engagement and leadership. It focuses on improving access to funding, investment, partnerships and local actor capacity sharing – especially for civil society and community-based organizations (CBOs) led by women, persons with disabilities, young people, Indigenous Peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons – while strengthening partnerships with enabling actors.

Scope

8. This policy is aligned with WFP’s strategic plan¹² and complements its other policies and strategies¹³ that underscore the critical role of partnerships with local and national organizations, while prioritizing the use of existing national and local capacities. WFP’s frameworks also highlight the importance of community engagement, ownership and leadership.
9. In the context of the humanitarian reset – and considering that most of WFP’s operations are in humanitarian settings – WFP will adopt a more deliberate approach to localization, enhancing its delivery and service provision models through equitable partnerships with local and national actors.
10. Where possible, WFP will accelerate locally led efforts by providing technical assistance and services to local and national actors, not as intermediaries, but as leaders and owners of response efforts. In doing so, WFP will advance its transition from implementer to enabler, creating the conditions for scaled, sustainable and local solutions and paving the way for phased exit strategies that build on national capacity gains and safeguard accountability to all affected people.

⁷ International Council for Voluntary Agencies. 2018. *Localization Examined: An ICVA Briefing Paper*.

⁸ Sharetrust. 2022. *Passing the Buck: The Economics of Localizing International Aid*.

⁹ The “humanitarian reset” was first introduced by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator in March 2025.

¹⁰ Inter-Agency Standing Committee. *Localisation* (webpage).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² The policy is aligned with both the strategic plan for 2022–2025 (WFP/EB.2/2021/4-A/1/Rev.2) and the strategic plan for 2026–2029, which is under development at the time of writing.

¹³ Including, but not limited to, WFP’s policies on country capacity strengthening (WFP/EB.A/2022/5-A), gender (WFP/EB.1/2022/4-B/Rev.1), cash (WFP/EB.A/2023/5-A), resilience (WFP/EB.2/2024/4-A), climate change (WFP/EB.2/2024/4-C), school meals (WFP/EB.2/2024/4-B) and local and regional food procurement (WFP/EB.2/2019/4-C) as well as the *Strategy to improve diets and address malnutrition for 2024–2030* and the *Feeding health, the last mile on HIV – WFP’s global strategy for 2025–2030*.

11. As WFP shifts towards more locally led efforts, it must engage with two distinct yet complementary types of partners, alongside other United Nations entities, donors and other enabling actors.
 - *Non-state actors*: this policy outlines WFP's approach to strengthening engagement with non-state actors, specifically local and national cooperating partners;¹⁴ CBOs;¹⁵ and local enterprises (micro and small) and entrepreneurs in local supply chains and markets.
 - *State actors*:¹⁶ the objectives of this policy aim to complement WFP's ongoing support and partnerships with state actors as outlined in other policies. The 2022 country capacity strengthening policy¹⁷ defines WFP's approach to supporting national systems.¹⁸ That policy underscores the central role of state actors in addressing their populations' food security and nutrition needs, while also recognizing the valuable contributions of non-state actors in government-led decision-making processes. Furthermore, engagements with national governments are anchored in country strategic plans (CSPs).

Leveraging WFP's portfolio and comparative advantage

12. This policy builds on WFP's extensive experience,¹⁹ operational presence, robust supply chain and strong partnerships with national governments, local authorities, civil society organizations and communities. In 2023, WFP worked in partnership with more than 700 local NGOs to support food-insecure communities. Overall, 31.1 percent of WFP's humanitarian funding – USD 2.63 billion – passed through local and national actors in 2023, with 24.2 percent of that sum allocated to non-state actors.²⁰ Those resources were used in a range of areas, including local disaster response,²¹ NGO capacity strengthening, local ownership²² and training on the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) to ensure safeguarding and dignity for all.

¹⁴ This policy focuses on local and national non-state cooperating partners who have their headquarters and operations in their own aid-recipient countries and maintain fundraising and governance systems that are independent of international foreign organizations and companies.

¹⁵ This policy places particular emphasis on CBOs including all the local groups that represent women, persons with disabilities, young people, Indigenous Peoples, refugees, internally displaced persons and other underrepresented or marginalized groups.

¹⁶ WFP's partnerships and work with national government systems are framed by several other WFP policies: 2022 country capacity strengthening policy, 2020 social protection strategy, 2024 resilience policy, 2024 updated climate change policy.

¹⁷ "[Country capacity strengthening policy update](#)" (WFP/EB.A/2022/5-A).

¹⁸ Emergency preparedness and response, social protection and food systems.

¹⁹ Evidence of WFP's work on localization can be found in nine documents issued between 2020 and 2024 including: WFP. 2024. [Synthesis of evidence and lessons on WFP's cooperating partners from centralized and decentralized evaluations](#); and WFP. 2025. [Summary of evidence: Country capacity strengthening](#); and WFP. 2023. [Summary of Evidence: Lessons on Community Engagement in West and Central Africa](#).

²⁰ [WFP Grand Bargain Self Reporting 2024](#). Figures for 2023 include the value of cash and commodities.

²¹ WFP. 2024. [Évaluation de la réponse d'urgence du PAM aux crises prolongées au Sahel et dans d'autres pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest et centrale 2018-2023](#); WFP. 2025. [Summary of evidence – Country capacity strengthening](#); Inter-Agency Standing Committee Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group. 2022. [Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the Yemen crisis](#); WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of WFP's Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Policies](#).

²² WFP. 2024. [Synthesis of evidence and lessons on WFP's cooperating partners from centralized and decentralized evaluations](#); WFP. 2024. [Évaluation de la réponse d'urgence du PAM aux crises prolongées au Sahel et dans d'autres pays d'Afrique de l'Ouest et centrale 2018-2023](#).

13. WFP currently supports localization through its robust supply chains by working through the local private sector for a range of logistics services, such as transport, warehousing and customs clearance. Approximately 90 percent of trucks used to transport WFP assistance are contracted from the local commercial sector. In addition, when rehabilitating critical infrastructure, WFP facilitates access to shared logistics assets that local responders depend on to enhance efficiencies and enable rapid emergency response.
14. WFP supports local economies by procuring food locally or regionally, often from smallholder farmers. This reduces transport costs and delivery times while boosting local agriculture and markets. In 2023, 60 percent of WFP's annual procurement budget (USD 1.1 billion) went to local and regional suppliers, and smallholder farmer groups supported by WFP sold nearly 90,000 mt of food worth USD 56 million.
15. Local markets benefit from WFP's cash-based transfer (CBT)²³ and market support programmes. Injecting cash into economies while addressing inefficiencies in supply chains boosts purchasing power and the demand for local food products.²⁴ WFP helps to stabilize markets and strengthen the resilience of local enterprises by addressing gaps in the demand for and supply of local products and services, enabling such enterprises to remain operational during times of shock. Research shows that CBTs create jobs and produce income multipliers ranging from USD 1.34 to USD 2.52 for every dollar transferred,²⁵ demonstrating the lasting impact of cash assistance on local communities (see box 1).

Box 1: Cash-based transfer assistance and local economies

In 2023, WFP transferred USD 2.9 billion in CBTs to 57.5 million people across 76 countries, which amounted to 40 percent of its total assistance portfolio. WFP leverages CBTs to support local value chain actors and promote women's financial inclusion in the digital economy by transferring funds directly into their accounts. WFP's efforts in 2023 included partnerships with 5,700 local retailers across 35 countries, enhancing their role in local markets. The organization also supported 2.3 million women through direct transfers totalling USD 309 million; this was more than double the 880,000 women reached in 2020.*

* ["Update on the implementation of WFP's cash policy"](#) (WFP/EB.2/2024/4-E).

Guiding principles

16. Two thirds of the people WFP serves live in conflict settings. Most are women and girls in remote and hard-to-reach areas with limited access to services. WFP is committed to delivering people-centred, needs-based and accountable programming that is safe and free from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse. WFP's assistance will adhere to the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and operational independence and be guided by conflict-sensitive, context-specific and risk-informed analysis and WFP's values.²⁶

²³ Cash-based transfers encompass all transfers of money or value entitlements and can be either "unrestricted", when in the form of money, or "restricted", as value vouchers. Cash-based transfers can be delivered in physical form as cash in-hand, or electronically into digital wallets and mobile money accounts. Value vouchers are redeemable at local contracted merchants. Commodity vouchers are not considered to be cash-based transfers.

²⁴ United Nations Development Programme. 2015. [The Impact of Cash Transfers on Local Economies](#).

²⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2016. [Cash transfers: their economic and productive impacts – Evidence from programmes in sub-Saharan Africa](#).

²⁶ WFP. 2023. ["World Food Programme: The values that drive us"](#).

17. WFP endeavours to interact with local actors within a culture of mutual respect and trust, guided by sector-wide principles of partnership: equality, transparency, responsibility and complementarity.²⁷ This policy is guided by the following principles:
- i) *Local and national actors are the ultimate owners and leaders of local response efforts.* WFP will share decision making power with local and national actors, respecting their mandates and autonomy, while fostering inclusive spaces built on mutual trust, accountability and collaboration.
 - ii) *Local and national actors possess invaluable knowledge and capacity.* WFP will learn from the knowledge, experience, skills and capacities of these actors in order to improve crisis response and risk reduction.
 - iii) *Everyone deserves a seat at the table.* WFP will ensure meaningful participation by removing barriers that prevent underrepresented groups from contributing, whether those barriers are physical, geographical or socioeconomic; related to personal security; or based on characteristics such as sex, age, race, ethnicity or indigeneity.
 - iv) *People are at the centre of WFP's work.* WFP will seek direct input from affected people in the design and implementation of safe and accountable needs-based approaches that reflect local priorities and uphold the “do no harm” principle.

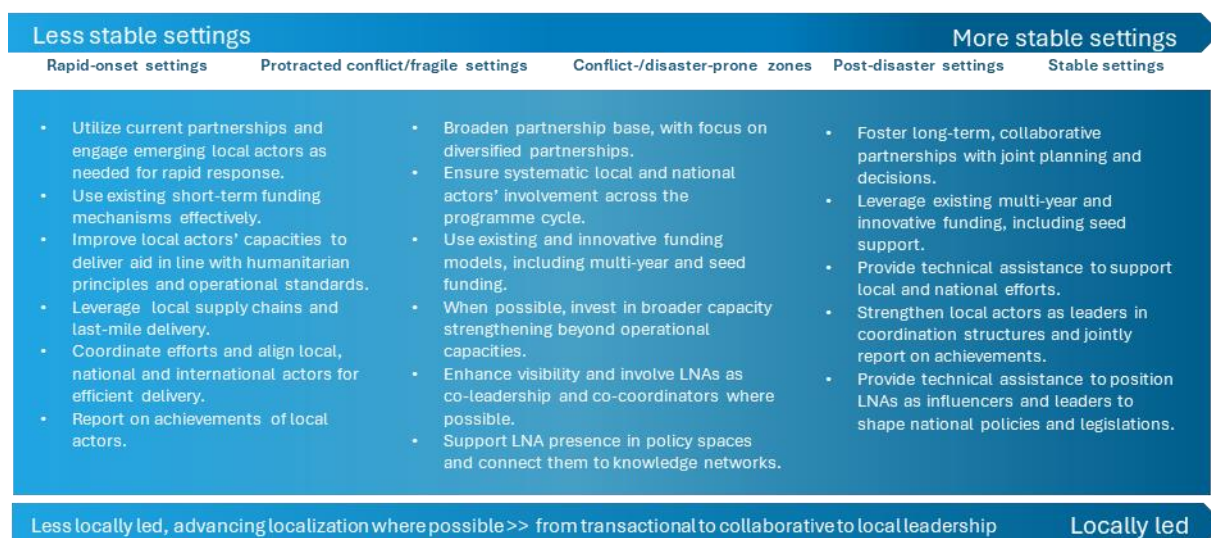
Adapting to different operational settings

18. There is no one-size-fits-all for advancing localization. WFP must be flexible and adapt to different actors and environments. In most settings, WFP will operate across multiple points along the localization continuum, as shown in figure 2, which outlines broad, non-prescriptive expectations for different operational settings.
- In *rapid-onset settings* such as disasters or sudden outbreaks of conflict, WFP will prioritize using existing partnerships and, where necessary, identify new local partners for swift, life-saving responses, while embedding local actors in decision making, laying groundwork for future collaboration.²⁸
 - In *protracted conflict and fragile settings*, WFP will focus on strengthening local leadership and governance, equipping local actors to address urgent food needs and contribute to inclusion, social cohesion and long-term stability.
 - In *zones prone to conflict or disasters*, WFP will engage local actors in anticipatory action, such as early warning and preparedness, while managing political and security risks.²⁹
 - In *post-disaster settings*, WFP will support local and national actors in leading recovery by strengthening local preparedness, restoring food security and building the resilience of local systems against future shocks.
 - In *stable settings*, WFP will promote locally led solutions by strengthening capacities, improving local networks and reinforcing coordination between government actors, civil society organizations, the private sector and others.

²⁷ Inter-Agency Standing Committee. 2007. [Principles of Partnership – A Statement of Commitment Endorsed by the Global Humanitarian Platform](#).

²⁸ A study commissioned in 2016 by the Humanitarian Policy Group of the thinktank ODI suggested that stronger partnerships between WFP and civil society could advance progress towards zero hunger and enhance local capacity to respond to emergencies.

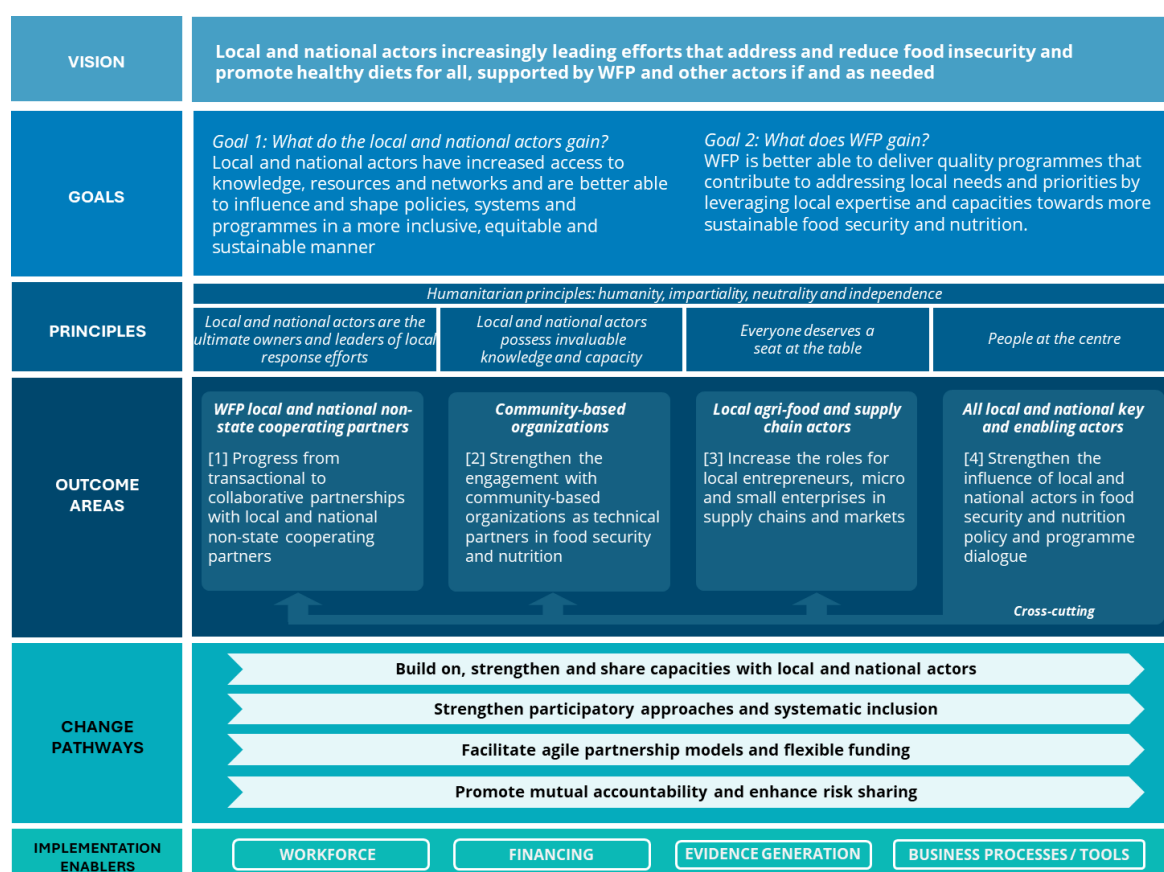
²⁹ These local partners are disproportionately exposed to security risks: more than 80 percent of WFP's security incidents recorded in 2024 primarily affected local first responders. Rising global threats increase the need for stronger security measures, including for local humanitarian personnel.

Figure 1: Advancing localization and locally led efforts in various operational settings

Abbreviation: LNA = local and national actors.

Objectives

19. WFP envisions local and national actors increasingly leading efforts to address and reduce food insecurity and promote healthy diets for all, supported by WFP and other actors, if and as needed. WFP's approach will be guided by the following four policy objectives:
 - i) Progress from transactional to collaborative partnerships with local and national non-state cooperating partners.
 - ii) Strengthen engagement with CBOs as technical partners in food security and nutrition.
 - iii) Increase the roles of local entrepreneurs and small enterprises in supply chains and markets.
 - iv) Strengthen the influence of local and national actors in shaping policies, operations and coordination spaces.
20. The fourth objective is an aim in its own right while also supporting the achievement of the other policy objectives.

Figure 2: Theory of change

Objective 1: Progress from transactional to collaborative partnerships with local and national non-state cooperating partners

High-quality partnerships that drive local response efforts on the ground

21. WFP has made progress towards more collaborative partnerships with local non-state cooperating partners (LCPs),³⁰ particularly through its CSPs.^{31, 32} Despite these gains, further effort is needed³³ to balance the roles and responsibilities of WFP and LCPs. A shift from transactional to truly collaborative ways of working will enhance programme effectiveness and responsiveness through co-creation and implementation (see figure 3). The aim is to nurture trust-based partnerships rooted in mutual respect and benefits and shared values,³⁴ positioning LCPs as leaders of response efforts. To achieve this, renewed commitment is required in the four change pathways of the theory of change, as described below.

³⁰ Aligned with WFP's corporate partnership strategy for 2014–2017: Collaborative relationships between actors that achieve better outcomes for the people we serve by: combining and leveraging complementary resources of all kinds; working together in a transparent, equitable and mutually beneficial way; and sharing risks, responsibilities and accountability, to achieve objectives that could not be achieved as efficiently, effectively or innovatively alone, and where the value created is greater than the transaction costs involved.

³¹ WFP. 2023. *Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Country Strategic Plans*.

³² The country strategic plan framework, which was introduced in 2016 and updated in 2024, underscores that partnerships with cooperating partners should be "managed in ways that build on partners' deep understanding of local contexts to enrich WFP programmes, facilitate increased access and support greater accountability to target populations." Source: "Policy on Country Strategic Plans" (WFP/EB.2/2016/4-C/1/Rev.1).

³³ WFP. 2024. *Synthesis of evidence and lessons on WFP's cooperating partners from centralized and decentralized evaluations*.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, recommendation 1.

Capacity strengthening and sharing

22. WFP will adopt a tiered approach to assessing and defining LCP capacities, identifying partnerships that balance immediate operational requirements with long-term organizational sustainability. WFP will continue providing technical assistance, training and access to innovative digital solutions and tools in areas such as finance, procurement, monitoring, reporting and programming, including community needs assessments, beneficiary targeting and verification, selection of assistance modalities, local procurement, accountability to affected people and PSEA.³⁵
23. Capacity assessments will determine the comparative advantage and leadership readiness of LCPs, enabling WFP to build on local knowledge, complement existing capacity and leverage the strengths of all partners involved.³⁶ This could be an opportunity for peer learning and mentorship programmes that promote knowledge exchange between international NGOs and local partners.

Enhancing capacity sharing through digital solutions

WFP is pioneering “The Food Stack”, a digital framework for agriculture and early warning systems in several countries, including Egypt and Lebanon. The Food Stack provides local actors with sustainable access to timely, reliable and relevant food ecosystem data and insights acquired from satellites, geospatial platforms and generative artificial intelligence tools, which can enhance their operations and overall resilience. This “knowledge engine” is a magnet for partnerships with local actors including NGOs, CBOs, small businesses, start-up enterprises in the technology sector and local financial institutions, creating a multiplier effect for WFP’s initial investments. WFP anticipates that this framework will have a cascading and sustainable impact on the performance of food ecosystems in targeted communities.

Participatory approaches and systematic inclusion

24. WFP values meaningful consultation with LCPs,³⁷ yet its previous experiences³⁸ highlight some inconsistent engagement practices and limited capacity for sustained collaboration. WFP will emphasize early and continuous engagement with LCPs throughout the programme cycle. This includes mapping and enhancing existing consultation mechanisms, expanding LCP involvement through joint steering committees or working groups, and facilitating regular open dialogue, such as through innovative digital collaborative platforms that allow real-time information sharing.

Early engagement and co-designing in line with local needs

In 2023, amid rising displacement, climate shocks and the arrival of over one million refugees, the **Chad** country office identified 21,000 of the hardest to reach refugees and host community members to collaborate on a value chain initiative. This activity was co-designed with local authorities and NGOs and aimed to deliver practical support through training, packages of assets and access to climate data, inputs, financial services and markets. Collaboration was fostered with national authorities, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and supply chain actors, providing opportunities for mutual capacity strengthening and the stimulation of locally led approaches.

³⁵ In 2024, WFP worked with over 920 cooperating partners (including Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), 85 percent of whom were national partners. More than 2,000 partner staff were trained on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee United Nations implementing partner harmonized protection from sexual exploitation and abuse capacity assessment tool.

³⁶ WFP. 2024. *Synthesis of evidence and lessons on WFP’s cooperating partners from centralized and decentralized evaluations*, recommendation 2.

³⁷ “Policy on Country Strategic Plans” (WFP/EB.2/2016/4-C/Rev.1); “Country capacity strengthening policy update” (WFP/EB.A/2022/5-A).

³⁸ WFP. 2022. OIGA observations on WFP Country Strategic Plans – 2018 to date (3.1 CSP design i.).

Agile partnership models and flexible funding

25. Short-term funding cycles and contractual agreements often result in LCP staff turnover and limited continuity of interventions, which negatively impact operational quality and the capacity to contribute to large-scale responses.^{39,40} Whenever feasible, and as permitted by funding prospects, WFP will seek to transition from short-term project contracts to multi-year agreements to improve financial stability and sustain capacity strengthening. WFP will fully utilize existing funding mechanisms, exploring options for small catalytic grants, seed funding and pooled funding in collaboration with other United Nations entities and others in order to channel funding through LCPs as directly as possible.

Longer-term agreements enhance NGO sustainability and United Nations resource sharing

To deliver more predictable and sustained funding, the **Afghanistan** country office has moved from short-term field-level agreements to multi-year arrangements with local NGO partners. For example, in 2023 WFP signed two-year agreements for nutrition interventions and 18-month agreements for nutrition projects. In so doing, WFP strengthened its partnerships with local NGOs, reduced the administrative burden for both parties, secured operational continuity for beneficiaries, supported staffing and resource stability for partners and enabled greater coordination with the United Nations Children's Fund and other actors on improved cost-efficiency through joint planning and resource sharing.

Mutual accountability and risk sharing

26. Partners working on the front line of operations are particularly exposed to safety risks owing to limited security infrastructure and protocols.⁴¹ WFP will prioritize strengthening partner capacity in risk assessment and management through training, coaching and coordination, especially in areas with limited international presence or governance. Collaboration will be guided by comprehensive risk analyses, which will inform programme cycle management decisions. In addition, WFP and LCPs will establish criteria for measuring success, reflecting partnership quality, leadership capacity and mutual satisfaction in relation to performance and accountability.

Figure 3: From transactional to collaborative partnerships



³⁹ "Report of the External Auditor on the management of cooperating partners" (WFP/EB.A/2022/6-H/1).

⁴⁰ WFP. 2023. *Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Country Strategic Plans*.

⁴¹ WFP. 2025. *Summary of evidence: Country capacity strengthening*; Inter-Agency Standing Committee. 2022. *Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Yemen Crisis*.

Objective 2: Strengthen engagement with community-based organizations as technical partners in food security and nutrition

New partnerships that bring communities in all their diversity to the forefront of local response

27. WFP will broaden its partnership base by strengthening direct, formal collaboration with CBOs and representative groups, including those led by women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and refugees. These actors possess deep-rooted local knowledge and can contribute to innovative solutions and ensure that a diverse range of voices informs food security and nutrition actions. However, many face systemic barriers to formal engagement, such as difficulties in meeting national and United Nations fiduciary, legal and financial standards; limited institutional capacity; language constraints; and poor access to technology, particularly in remote areas. As a result, many operate informally or at small scale, limiting WFP's ability to leverage their expertise as knowledge holders, service providers, policy influencers and advocacy partners.⁴² WFP's engagement with CBOs must advance in the four change pathways, as described below.

Capacity strengthening and sharing

28. Based on capacity gap analyses, WFP will provide training in areas such as digital and financial inclusion, risk mitigation, safety and protection principles, and monitoring and evaluation. Peer exchanges and partner pairings with experienced LCPs will support CBOs in relevant skill areas, for example in relation to establishing a localization help desk or creating field-level coaching teams to provide ongoing support. A partnership readiness scale could be developed in coordination with other national and international actors as a resource to inform decisions about increasing leadership responsibilities for CBOs.

Capacity sharing through peer exchanges

With the goal of strengthening collaboration between CBOs and established local partners, the **Myanmar** country office recently launched a capacity-sharing initiative that brought together two organizations of persons with disabilities and two WFP LCPs. Through a co-designed two-way mentoring model, each organization of persons with disabilities was paired with an LCP to gain experience working with the United Nations, including support in navigating the humanitarian system and meeting United Nations Partner Portal requirements. In turn, the organizations provided institutional capacity strengthening on inclusive practices to the LCPs and WFP. This equitable and inclusive approach supported stronger collaboration and mutual understanding among partners.

Participatory approaches and systematic inclusion

29. WFP will refine its partnership mapping and stakeholder analysis tools to prioritize factors such as understanding of the operating environment, community trust and local actor's ability to target those most in need. The tools will be used to identify both established organizations and emerging actors⁴³ working in food security, nutrition and disaster preparedness. WFP will establish regular, accessible forums, such as advisory groups and joint planning workshops, with a diverse range of community representatives to discuss and

⁴² WFP. 2014. [WFP Corporate Partnership Strategy](#).

⁴³ An *emerging actor* is an organization, entity or stakeholder that does not have a formalized or established long-standing presence in its community but that is gradually becoming an influential actor by stepping up to address food security and nutrition needs, often in a humanitarian setting, while not yet reaching the level of prominence or recognition of more established actors.

identify practical ways of dismantling harmful social norms and structural barriers that affect participation.

Agile partnership models and flexible funding

30. WFP will pilot a tiered partnership model that enables CBOs to gradually increase their engagement based on their strengths and mandates. Where feasible, CBOs may transition from informal collaboration to full LCP status through practical contractual modalities. WFP will explore micro-grants and pilot simplified micro-partnership schemes with simplified administrative requirements. Low-barrier funding mechanisms, developed with other United Nations entities and partners, will be pursued. Flexible arrangements for mentoring CBOs and supporting their growth and scale may include “umbrella” partnerships and triangular agreements with national NGOs, LCPs or others.⁴⁴

Mutual accountability and risk sharing with responsible scaling

31. WFP will review due diligence, procurement and audit processes to better reflect the capacities of smaller organizations. These will be flexible rather than one-size-fits-all, with expectations adjusted according to the stage of development and potential of the CBO. Capacity and risk assessments will help CBOs to identify and manage risks, such as governance gaps, mission drift, power imbalances and operational overextension, with particular attention paid to equality, empowerment, protection and accountability to affected people, and PSEA. WFP will provide targeted training, guidance and access to networks and tools to mitigate these risks.

Engaging emerging actors responsibly

In the **Sudan**, WFP worked through emergency response rooms (ERRs) – volunteer-led, CBOs rooted in traditional support systems – to deliver life-saving food assistance in hard-to-reach areas. ERRs operated communal kitchens across Khartoum, including in zones controlled by the Rapid Support Forces, providing daily hot meals to 300,000 people. While unregistered and unable to partner directly with WFP, the ERRs were able to collaborate through trusted national NGOs, who transferred funds, monitored delivery and ensured accountability. This locally driven model extended humanitarian reach, built trust and facilitated operations in hard-to-reach places. WFP applied a layered risk mitigation approach, routing funds through vetted NGOs, maintaining robust monitoring and ensuring transparency. This experience underscores the value of adapting engagement models utilizing partnerships with trusted national NGOs and emerging local actors, especially in times of crisis.

Objective 3: Increase the roles of local entrepreneurs and small enterprises in supply chains and markets

Connecting actors to enhance local responsiveness and preparedness

32. WFP will leverage its leadership in humanitarian supply chains and its extensive logistics network – which relies on local private sector actors – to strengthen the resilience and long-term viability of local supply chain actors, such as transporters, logistics providers and warehousing services. As both a supply chain operator and an enabler, WFP will continue to embed these actors as first responders in crisis settings, enhancing local preparedness and response capacity. Through systematic investments in their agility, efficiency and ability to meet international quality and accountability standards, WFP will also foster their competitiveness, autonomy and business-to-business linkages, ultimately enabling them to operate independently of WFP support.

⁴⁴ WFP will explore how best practices from South-South and triangular cooperation can accelerate learning and scale-up for CBOs as well as other local and national actors.

33. Where possible, WFP will promote the inclusion of local entrepreneurs, micro and small agrifood value chain actors – such as smallholder farmers, agricultural cooperatives, and smaller aggregators and traders – as contributors to resilient supply chains, including as vendors and retailers. These actors often have local connections and hold deep, cross-generational knowledge as stewards of sustainable practices. Their agility during emergencies enhances local preparedness and resilience. However, their growth may be limited by restricted access to capital, technology, data and opportunities, constraining their competitiveness and scalability. To position local supply chain and market actors as first responders and support their long-term operational independence, WFP will pursue the action in the four change pathways, as described below.

Capacity strengthening and sharing

34. As first responders, local actors in supply chains and local markets – ranging from small private sector companies to community-based aggregators and farmer associations – must consistently deliver high-quality goods and services on time and at scale, through safe practices that are economically and environmentally sustainable. Based on needs, WFP will leverage investments and partnerships – such as with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and global private sector partners – to strengthen the technical, financial and digital capacities of local actors while leveraging their local knowledge, infrastructure and networks.⁴⁵ This support aims to strengthen the resilience of local supply chain actors in logistics planning, warehousing, transport and last mile delivery, and compliance with safety and quality standards.⁴⁶ It also involves enhancing the access of local agrifood value chain actors to marketing and climate information and to digital tools adapted to local languages and contexts.

Participatory approaches and systematic inclusion

35. WFP will enhance the meaningful participation of local enterprises in its delivery operations by simplifying vendor registration and pre-qualification processes and leveraging local procurement, CBTs⁴⁷ and financial inclusion services⁴⁸ to expand opportunities, in particular for organizations led by women, young people, persons with disabilities and Indigenous Peoples. For actors that traditionally face disproportionately large hurdles in accessing this competitive space, efforts will focus onto overcoming the structural, digital and financial barriers that limit their entry and sustained engagement in markets.

⁴⁵ The Farm to Market Alliance exemplifies this type of partnership, supporting smallholder farmers in Africa to transition to commercial agriculture by facilitating integrated access to markets, finance, high-quality inputs and post-harvest solutions and generating a global network of public and private organizations, each contributing expertise to drive the initiative forward.

⁴⁶ Launched in 2023, the Changing Lives Transformation Fund is a WFP initiative designed to bring transformative programming to scale. Active in ten countries, the fund has demonstrated early success in Peru and the Philippines by supporting smallholder farmers' access to government school meal programmes through capacity strengthening and catalytic funding from governments, donors and the private sector.

⁴⁷ Building on commitments outlined in WFP's policies on cash (2023) and local and regional food procurement (2019).

⁴⁸ WFP promotes financial inclusion in several programmatic areas, including through CBT and non-CBT livelihoods and resilience programmes. Examples include smallholder agriculture market support, inclusive risk financing, Youth in Work, the Post-Harvest Loss Venture and the SheCan initiative.

36. WFP will also foster stronger business-to-business linkages by leveraging its programmes – such as school meals and nutrition initiatives – to generate consistent demand for local goods and services. By facilitating access to infrastructure and digital platforms, WFP will encourage participation across all supply chain segments. In addition, WFP will promote proactive planning and coordination so that these actors are embedded in preparedness frameworks, have stronger institutional linkages and can take on formal roles in national disaster response systems.

Connecting micro and small businesses to public supply chain channels

Funded by the Changing Lives Transformation Fund, WFP's "Sharing the Table" initiative in **Peru** focuses on empowering smallholder farmers – women, young people and Indigenous Peoples – by dismantling the barriers that restrict their participation in local food value chain activities. This project, co-created in collaboration with the Government and local actors, connected over 470 farmers to public procurement channels through the new "Wasi Mikuna Community School Feeding Programme". Responding to national legal requirements that 30 percent of food procurement involve smallholder farmers, this programme has catalysed over USD 38.4 million in investments – USD 34.7 million from public sources and USD 3.7 million from the private sector.

The initiative has also supported the accreditation of 12 farmers associations to the Government-issued "Family Farming" certification, which increases market access for registered producers. The project demonstrates the importance of incentivizing partnerships with local smallholder farmers as part of efforts to strengthen livelihoods and advance national food security objectives.

Agile partnership models and flexible funding

37. WFP will support local enterprises in accessing innovative financing and impact investments through technical assistance, upskilling and derisking measures, connecting them to investment opportunities where possible.⁴⁹ Flexible arrangements, such as umbrella partnerships alongside agreements with warehousing or aggregation centres, will be considered as a means of easing operational burdens on small actors. Pre-arranged service agreements, activated during emergencies, can integrate new local business partners into supply chains and markets, enhancing crisis responsiveness while supporting their long-term business continuity through access to essential networks.
38. In line with its commitment to local sourcing, WFP will balance short-term cost increases – associated with the prices of locally sourced commodities compared with prices on the international markets – with the long-term benefits of self-sufficiency, stable livelihoods and sustainable food security practices throughout agrifood supply chains.

⁴⁹ WFP is working with new partners such as development finance institutions, to develop funding and other innovative investment mechanisms that identify key agrifood-related private sector stakeholders, fortify their business models through upskilling, and stimulate competitive marketplaces for sustainable food security and nutrition.

Unlocking external financing for local enterprises

Since 2022, through its IGNITE Hub, WFP has supported small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in fragile and conflict-affected settings across sub-Saharan Africa. This support includes catalytic grants and targeted technical assistance aimed at strengthening SME capacity and promoting sustainable, market-based solutions to food insecurity. To enhance scalability, the hub established a network of impact investors, enabling SMEs to leverage, on average, ten times their initial WFP grant amounts through blended finance models within a period of 18 to 24 months. This approach has facilitated greater private sector engagement and investment in fragile contexts.

To date, over 100 SMEs working in various areas (e.g. agro-processing, energy, financial services, logistics and poultry) have been supported through 16 local programmes, which collectively reached more than 500,000 people including smallholder farmers, refugees and community members across sub-Saharan Africa. Many of these enterprises have since graduated from WFP support, demonstrating the effectiveness of catalytic funding in fostering resilience and local economic growth.

Mutual accountability and risk sharing

39. WFP will promote joint contingency planning with local actors as a means of integrating them into anticipatory action, emergency response and recovery efforts, while also using insurance schemes to reduce risk exposure for local providers. In partnership with other United Nations entities and enabling actors, WFP will help local partners to prepare for, anticipate and respond to geopolitical crises, environmental instability, price fluctuations and changing consumer preferences. Improved information-sharing, expanded access to cash and technology, and efforts to diversify markets can enhance the resilience of small local enterprises and reduce their risk exposure.
40. WFP will also embed local monitoring mechanisms to track performance, reliability and accountability of local supply networks and to generate evidence that informs and refines WFP's contributions in this space.

Objective 4 (cross-cutting): Strengthen the influence of local and national actors in shaping policies, operations and coordination spaces

Collective action to remove barriers, raise visibility and amplify local voices

41. WFP will leverage its convening power to increase the contributions of local and national actors, including first responders, and to strengthen business continuity beyond its direct support. Delivered through its long-standing partnerships with national governments, WFP's technical assistance reinforces linkages between national and subnational systems, and between state and non-state actors.

Peer learning for policy impact: localizing solutions through South-South cooperation

In 2019, in collaboration with FAO and IFAD and with funding from China, the **Ecuador** country office organized an intra-regional peer learning exchange involving rural women's organizations from Ecuador, Guatemala and Peru. This exchange featured 12 round tables with the participation of 744 rural women, contributions from international women leaders, and technical input from 77 staff members of Ecuador's Ministry of Agriculture. The insights and advocacy experiences shared during these sessions directly informed the development of Ecuador's national policy on family agriculture, ensuring that the policy was inclusive and responsive to grassroots priorities.

42. Drawing on its leadership role within the broader humanitarian system, WFP will promote harmonized efforts and joint planning with other United Nations entities and other partners across key coordination platforms, such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, global food system coalitions and the Grand Bargain. WFP will also build on the localization efforts of WFP-led clusters to strengthen its engagement across the national, regional and international humanitarian spheres and the public and private sectors. WFP will pursue action in the four change pathways, as follows.

Capacity strengthening and sharing

43. WFP's relationship with national governments is an entry point for convening actors and fostering collaboration between state and non-state actors, including for the development of inclusive policies, the review and adoption of standard operating procedures, and the strengthening of government-led feedback mechanisms to enable the meaningful participation of local state and non-state actors – particularly those led by women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and refugees – in national decision making processes.
44. WFP will also strengthen the strategic and operational readiness of local non-state actors by expanding access to tools, information and networks. This may involve connecting with research and academic institutions to generate locally relevant evidence for advocacy, or launching engagement platforms involving national systems and the private sector. Efforts will be aligned with the work of United Nations partners to ensure coherence and maximize the impact of joint capacity strengthening initiatives.

Stronger local participation in national coordination platforms

The **Philippines** country office is working with local communities, the private sector and academia to develop more inclusive and sustainable national school meal programmes. Complementary to the Government's commitments to the global School Meals Coalition, WFP provides technical assistance to groups such as the inter-agency technical working group on school meals and the Bangsamoro Food Security Task Force to generate policy-relevant and locally driven evidence that can inform the design of the national universal home-grown school meal programme by 2030. Through support from the Changing Lives Transformation Fund, WFP plays a catalytic role by connecting community and local actors' voices, knowledge and experience with institutional actors to promote locally led solutions that deliver healthy and nutritious school meals.

Participatory approaches and systematic inclusion

45. WFP will promote the leadership and involvement of local and national actors in decision making at all levels, including national policy dialogues (e.g. on food security and social protection), United Nations coordination processes (e.g. humanitarian response plans, common country analyses and United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks), and global platforms (e.g. the Committee on World Food Security, or continued empowerment and leadership in the humanitarian clusters). In line with the Grand Bargain's "participation revolution," WFP will continue advocating for reforms – such as flexible travel support, translation services and flexible funding such as pooled funds – that remove barriers and amplify local voices.

Enabling locally led action through humanitarian clusters

In **Mozambique**, after Cyclone Idai in 2019, the emergency telecommunications cluster rehabilitated six damaged community broadcasters – trusted, community-owned stations and the only source of information in local languages. It then established a community broadcaster consortium and provided training on equipment installation and operation to prepare for future emergencies. This investment enabled fully localized emergency responses in subsequent crises.

Agile partnership models and flexible funding

46. WFP will collaborate with donors, other United Nations entities and leaders in innovative financing to simplify financial processes and expand access to flexible, multi-year financing for local actors. This includes adapting tools such as country-based pooled funds, promoting cascaded funding in order to integrate small local organizations, and piloting United Nations-managed small grant facilities for local partners. WFP will advocate localized eligibility criteria, such as simplified proposal and reporting requirements, and dedicated inter-agency funding windows to support local actors.

Mutual accountability and risk sharing

47. WFP will work with other United Nations entities, donors and other partners to harmonize due diligence, risk management and reporting processes; eliminate duplication; and adapt processes and compliance expectations to match the scale and capacities of local actors. Through shared assessments and joint capacity strengthening, WFP will foster mutual accountability, transparency and recognition of local actors' contributions in global reports, helping to dismantle systemic barriers and create a more efficient and inclusive humanitarian response system.

Facilitating access to coordination platforms and joint resources

In 2024, WFP initiated a strategic partnership with the Somali NGO Consortium (SNC) to strengthen local organizations and foster more inclusive partnerships across **Somalia**. Supported by contributions of USD 100,000 in 2024 and USD 200,000 in 2025, the two-year initiative focused on expanding access to coordination platforms, promoting peer-to-peer learning among local NGOs, and broadening WFP's partner base through targeted engagement with organizations led by women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, young people and others. By the end of 2024, the SNC had mapped local cooperating partners by mandate (e.g. gender equality, disability inclusion and social inclusion) and capacity strengthening needs. This outreach led to a 10 percent increase in the number of WFP cooperating partners registered with the SNC, enhancing their access to coordination networks and institutional support.

Risk sharing and mutual accountability

48. WFP will advance the localization agenda while upholding humanitarian principles and global assurance standards.⁵⁰ WFP commits to generating evidence on efficiency and quality gains that result from stronger partnerships with local and national actors. In doing so, WFP will weigh the risks of expanding these partnerships against the consequences of delaying or avoiding engagement. Failing to leverage local knowledge, networks and coordination mechanisms could undermine WFP's ability to promote sustainable locally driven solutions that meet the food security and nutrition needs of those hardest to reach.
49. Localization carries risks, including in relation to protection, accountability, fraud, corruption, PSEA and abuse of power. These will be mitigated through proactive, context-specific planning and engagement with partners, and application of WFP's ethical values and robust risk management system.⁵¹ This framework guides collaboration in identifying, assessing and managing context-specific risks, whether strategic, operational, fiduciary or financial.^{52, 53}

⁵⁰ Global assurance standard 4: maintain operational independence.

⁵¹ "2018 enterprise risk management policy" (WFP/EB.2/2018/5-C).

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ WFP's risk management system identifies four types of risk: strategic, operational, fiduciary and financial.

50. All state and non-state local and national actors, along with international enabling partners, will be expected to examine and commit to sharing risks. Joint comprehensive risk assessments will help WFP and its partners, including donors, to proactively manage risk by contextualizing and balancing their respective risk appetites with risk sharing.
- *Risks to the people WFP serves.* WFP is accountable first and foremost to the people it serves.⁵⁴ WFP will prioritize timely and efficient responses without compromising the safety and dignity of affected people, upholding the overarching objective of “do no harm”. WFP acknowledges that some local actors may unintentionally reinforce sociocultural biases or exclusionary practices, or face operational limitations that increase the risk of non-delivery. These risks will be mitigated through careful partner selection, informed by context and sociocultural analyses. Where principles or standards may be compromised, WFP may adjust, suspend or halt engagement, ensuring a balance between local and international actors when necessary.
 - *Risks to WFP’s local and national partners.* WFP recognizes that local and national actors often operate under heightened risk, especially in insecure or hard-to-reach areas. WFP will maintain open dialogue with local and national actors and provide training and resources to strengthen partner safety and security. It will explore ways to share capacity, responsibility and risks. Local actors also face risks arising from unresponsive short-term or inconsistent funding mechanisms, and from increased barriers linked to due diligence and common screening procedures. Addressing these challenges, while also safeguarding impartiality and preventing conflicts of interest in partnership decisions, will require collaboration with United Nations and international actors to align and harmonize approaches.
 - *Risks to WFP and international partners.* WFP must ensure that accountability mechanisms maintain financial integrity, transparency, responsiveness, sound monitoring and governance. It will work with partners to ensure business processes are flexible and context-appropriate, while adhering to international risk management standards. The risk of external or implicit influence over partner selection⁵⁵ will be managed through joint and/or independent conflict-sensitive analyses and tailored assessments of risks and potential conflicts of interest, ensuring that risks are not only managed but shared across the system.
51. The success of the localization policy will depend on building a shared understanding of and reaching consensus on acceptable levels of risk, particularly in relation to new partnerships. It also requires well-defined and flexible mechanisms for managing “pass-through” funds, shared overhead costs and multi-year or other flexible funding arrangements with diverse partners and donors. WFP’s ability to operationalize these commitments through targeted and joint risk identification, mitigation and management at all levels will be central to making progress on localization.

⁵⁴ “WFP protection and accountability policy” (WFP/EB.2/2020/4-A/1/Rev.2).

⁵⁵ By national governments, de facto authorities or donors.

Implementation

52. A costed implementation plan accompanies the policy, outlining the critical actions required to meet goals in relation to monitoring, evidence generation, risk management and the securing of sufficient financial allocations, including by prioritizing localization in CSP budgets. Together, these efforts will support WFP in transitioning its programming to local and national actors.
53. The policy will be reviewed through an independent evaluation conducted between four and six years after its approval. The evaluation findings will inform further implementation and any subsequent updates of the policy.

Acronyms

CBO	community-based organization
CBT	cash-based transfer
CSP	country strategic plan
ERR	emergency response room
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
LCP	local non-state cooperating partner
NGO	non-governmental organization
PSEA	protection from sexual exploitation and abuse
SME	small and medium-sized enterprise
SNC	Somali NGO Consortium