

## Localization policy

### Informal consultation

#### Introduction

1. This policy sets the strategic direction for WFP's efforts to advance localization in order to meet people's needs more efficiently and effectively and to support sustainable solutions by leveraging its programmes, activities and approaches in ways that place local and national actors at the centre of its efforts. 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.*

2. WFP recognizes that local and national actors<sup>1</sup> possess more context-specific knowledge, experience and networks than other actors and are often at the forefront of efforts to identify and address the food security and nutrition-related needs and priorities of their communities. By adopting and prioritizing locally based sustainable solutions tailored to diverse groups of people, WFP has an opportunity to do "better with less" in times of expanding needs and contracting resources.
3. In line with the 2022 country capacity strengthening policy update,<sup>2</sup> the localization policy recognizes that national governments are the lead actors in ensuring food security in their countries by designing and implementing effective policies and national systems, coordinating international and local actors, mobilizing resources, and strengthening the capacity of local institutions. Subnational authorities, such as local and regional governments, are often the first responders in the event of an emergency, with leading roles in facilitating access and coordinating efforts on the ground. Delivering assistance through both country capacity strengthening and localization channels demonstrates WFP's commitment to strengthening systems in a sustainable way. The policy promotes improved efficiencies by supporting local capacity in line with national development ambitions. Together, these efforts contribute to the long-term objective of transitioning WFP's programmes to national ownership when feasible.

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<sup>1</sup> See definition of local and national actors in paragraph 16.

<sup>2</sup> WFP's partnerships with national governments and its work through national systems are framed by several other WFP policies, including, but not limited to, WFP's country capacity strengthening policy update of 2022, social protection strategy of 2020, resilience policy update of 2024, climate change policy of 2024, emergency preparedness policy of 2017 and peacebuilding policy of 2013.

4. This policy is aligned with the humanitarian principles<sup>3</sup> and WFP's Global Assurance Framework,<sup>4</sup> and frames WFP's partnerships with other actors at the local and national levels, particularly local and national cooperating partners, community-based organizations (CBOs) and actors in local agrifood value chains.<sup>5</sup>

### **Global context and alignment with WFP's strategy, policies and frameworks**

5. The combined effects of the unprecedented escalation of conflict, extreme weather events, global economic contraction and rising inequality are leading to increasing food insecurity. Acute hunger is rising, affecting 343 million people,<sup>6</sup> with up to 1.9 million people estimated to be on the brink of famine,<sup>7</sup> and an estimated 44.4 million facing emergency or worse levels of acute food insecurity<sup>8</sup> and requiring life-saving and livelihood-saving assistance in 2024.
6. There is growing recognition that a change in approach is urgently needed. Assistance must be more tightly targeted to the people in greatest need, responsive to local needs, priorities and conditions, and provided safely and with accountability in ways that promote improved timeliness, cost-efficiency and sustainability. To accelerate this change, decisions must be made and solutions designed closer to, and involving, the communities served.<sup>9</sup>
7. Nevertheless, local partners continue to have less influence than other actors and are often less likely to be consulted as equal partners in the identification of programmes for implementation.<sup>10</sup> Effective localization stems from shifting the power dynamics between international and local actors, thereby enabling more inclusive and representative influence over the actions taken. Collaboration rooted in mutual respect, trust and complementarity ensures that local voices and partners shape the ways in which international resources are allocated.
8. The humanitarian community is exploring a reset under the guidance of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordination. In a message issued in March 2025,<sup>11</sup> the Under-Secretary-General reiterated the importance of prioritizing partnerships with local and national actors. This builds on the commitments made at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and through the Grand Bargain to making humanitarian action "as local as possible and as international as necessary".<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence are rooted in international humanitarian law and have been embraced by the United Nations through General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 58/114.

<sup>4</sup> WFP. 2024. [WFP Global assurance framework](#).

<sup>5</sup> See definitions in annex II.

<sup>6</sup> The estimate for 2025 is based on the data available in 74 of the countries where WFP works.

<sup>7</sup> WFP. 2024. [WFP 2025 Global Outlook](#).

<sup>8</sup> 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 (CARI).

<sup>9</sup> International Council for Voluntary Agencies. 2018. [Localization examined: An ICVA Briefing Paper](#).

<sup>10</sup> Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation. 2022. [Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Yemen Crisis](#).

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2025. [The humanitarian reset](#).

<sup>12</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee. [Localisation](#) (webpage).

9. These commitments echo those of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>13</sup> They emphasize the scaling up of work at the local level<sup>14</sup> by enhancing leadership by, access to international funding for, and partnerships and capacity sharing with, local actors. The Grand Bargain and the SDGs emphasize the importance of working with and through representative civil society organizations and CBOs, such as organizations led by women, persons with disabilities, young people, Indigenous Peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons, among others. As the international community strives to translate these commitments into action, there is better awareness of the contribution that the people who are most affected can make to the design and delivery of actions that accelerate the building of local resilience, social cohesion, environmental sustainability, socioeconomic equilibrium and human capital development.<sup>15</sup>
10. WFP's strategic plan for 2022–2025 builds on this agenda, recognizing that “partnerships with local and national organizations are key to reaching vulnerable groups with life-saving services, engaging local communities and ensuring that the design of context-specific responses builds on local priorities, knowledge and capacity”.<sup>16</sup> The strategic plan underscores the importance of reinforcing – rather than replacing – local and national capacity to deliver effective and sustainable results. WFP's commitment to localization is further evident throughout its suite of policies and strategies,<sup>17</sup> which recognize local actors as first responders, underscore the importance of local leadership and capacity, prioritize local and traditional knowledge and expertise in strengthening adaptive capacity and resilience, and emphasize the “whole-of-society” approach to strengthening national and local institutional capacity.
11. This policy is also focused on transparent and participatory community engagement, empowerment and participation through local dialogue. It is in line with WFP's commitment to delivering people-centred programming and is reinforced by standard 1 in WFP's Global Assurance Framework, “WFP consults with and listens to the people it assists and respects their privacy”. However, advancing this agenda also brings risks that need to be managed through context-specific planning and proactive engagement with partners so as to ensure full adherence to the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and operational independence, and WFP's Global Assurance Framework. Actions include, but are not limited to, enhancing efficiency in the delivery of assistance while ensuring the protection of, and accountability to, affected people, and mitigating the risk of fraud, corruption, abuse of power and sexual exploitation and abuse, among other risks. Consequently, all actors are responsible for sharing the inherent risks involved in advancing localization while balancing the consequences of delaying or avoiding engagement with local actors.

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<sup>13</sup> United Nations. 2015. [Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

<sup>14</sup> Local 2030: Localizing the SDGs. [Webpage](#).

<sup>15</sup> Sharetrust. 2022.

<sup>16</sup> “WFP strategic plan (2022–2025)” ([WFP/EB.2/2021/4-A/1/Rev.2](#)), paragraph 116.

<sup>17</sup> Including, but not limited to, WFP's country capacity strengthening policy update of 2022, social protection strategy of 2020, gender policy of 2022, cash policy of 2023, resilience policy update of 2024, climate change policy of 2024, school meal policy update of 2024, strategy to improve diets and address malnutrition for 2024–2030, “Feeding health, the last mile on HIV” global strategy for 2025–2030, local and regional food procurement of 2019), emergency preparedness policy of 2017, environmental policy of 2017, and peacebuilding policy of 2013.

## Leveraging WFP's portfolio, strengths and partnerships to advance localization

12. WFP will advance the localization agenda by building on the results of its efforts so far, including the insights gained through evaluations,<sup>18</sup> and leveraging its unique comparative advantages, including its operational footprint in more than 80 countries, its proximity to local communities, and its strong networks and partnerships with governments and local authorities.
13. WFP recognizes that one of its strengths lies in its relationships with its cooperating partners,<sup>19</sup> which play a pivotal role in ensuring that assistance reaches the people and communities in greatest need. In 2023, WFP's collaboration with more than 700 local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) enabled the provision of direct technical support and funding to the communities in greatest need. Overall, 31.1 percent of WFP's humanitarian funding – amounting to USD 2.63 billion – passed through local and national actors, including the 24.2 percent allocated to non-state actors.<sup>20</sup>
14. These efforts have improved disaster response capabilities through stronger collaboration with local authorities, ensuring more timely and effective interventions during emergencies.<sup>21</sup> Capacity strengthening and sharing initiatives have supported local NGOs in better meeting the unique needs and priorities of communities, and have fostered greater local ownership of humanitarian action.<sup>22</sup> For example, organizational capacity strengthening in the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse has equipped local partners with the tools and knowledge to implement effective safeguarding measures and ensure the safety and dignity of the people they assist.
15. This policy will expand on WFP's investments in local markets by furthering the organization's work with local food value chains. WFP will continue to utilize its robust and responsive supply chains to strengthen its collaboration with cooperating partners, NGO networks, private sector aggregators in food systems, and financial service providers with a view to increasing the inclusion of local entities in agrifood value chains, particularly organizations led by women, persons with disabilities, young people or Indigenous Peoples. This builds on WFP's current investments in prioritizing local food procurement, which, in 2023, resulted in WFP disbursing 60 percent of its annual procurement budget – or USD 1.1 billion – directly to local and regional suppliers. In the same year, food sales from smallholder farmer groups supported by WFP reached nearly 90,000 mt, valued at USD 56 million. WFP also contributes to local economies through its cash-based transfer

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<sup>18</sup> Evidence from evaluations of WFP's work on localization was consolidated into nine documents between 2020 and 2024 and used to inform the development of the localization policy. The documents included the 2024 "Synthesis of evidence and lessons on WFP's cooperating partners from centralized and decentralized evaluations"; the forthcoming *Summary of evaluation evidence on country capacity strengthening*; and the 2023 *Summary of evidence: Lessons on Community Engagement in West and Central Africa*.

<sup>19</sup> WFP defines a cooperating partner as a non-profit entity that enters into a contractual relationship with WFP to assist in the organization's work. Cooperating partners include government entities, non-governmental organizations and other United Nations entities.

<sup>20</sup> [WFP Grand Bargain Self Reporting 2024](#). The current methodology used to track WFP's localization efforts differs from the approach suggested in the Grand Bargain reporting guidelines. Figures for 2023 include the value of cash and commodities.

<sup>21</sup> [Sahel CEE, 2024](#); [country capacity strengthening SEE, 2024](#); [Yemen Crisis IAHE, 2022](#); WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of WFP's Disaster Risk Reduction and Management and Climate Change Policies](#).

<sup>22</sup> WFP. 2024. [Synthesis of evidence and lessons on WFP's cooperating partners from centralized and decentralized evaluations](#); [Sahel CEE, 2024](#)).

(CBT)<sup>23</sup> programmes, including through local retailers<sup>24</sup> and financial service providers, among others (see box 1).

### **Box 1: Cash-based transfer assistance and local economies**

WFP is the largest global provider of humanitarian assistance through CBTs – transferring USD 2.9 billion to 57.5 million people in 76 countries in 2023. CBT assistance now comprises about 40 percent of WFP's portfolio. Injecting cash into local economies while addressing inefficiencies in supply chains can boost people's purchasing power and the demand for local food products, thereby supporting local food production.<sup>1</sup>

Through its CBT programmes, WFP promotes the economic empowerment of women by transferring cash directly into women's own financial accounts, thereby supporting their entry into the digital economy.<sup>2</sup> In 2020, 880,000 women received WFP cash transfers into their own accounts. By 2023, the figure had grown to 2.3 million women, with USD 309 million transferred.<sup>3</sup>

CBT programmes benefit the direct recipients of the transfers and the broader community. In 2023, WFP provided CBT assistance via a network of approximately 5,700 local and smallholder retailers in 35 countries. By stimulating demand, creating jobs and encouraging productive investments, the transfers inject cash into otherwise depressed markets. Research indicates that these spillover effects generate income multipliers in local economies, ranging from USD 1.34 to USD 2.52 for every dollar transferred.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Development Programme. 2015. [The Impact of Cash Transfers on Local Economies](#).

<sup>2</sup> "Update on the implementation of WFP's cash policy" (WFP/EB.2/2024/4-E).

<sup>3</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. 2016. [Cash transfers: their economic and productive impacts – Evidence from programmes in sub-Saharan Africa](#).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Partnerships for localization**

16. WFP engages with *state and non-state, local and national key actors*.<sup>25</sup> *Key actors* are actors that have a mandate to address the essential needs of a population, that represent people in need, and/or that have context-specific knowledge and resources that help to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and scalability of humanitarian and development programmes. Key actors include the following:

- government entities and state-owned institutions;

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<sup>23</sup> 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.

<sup>24</sup> See definition in annex II.

<sup>25</sup> For this policy, WFP considers its central partners to be the local and national non-state actors that have their headquarters and operations in their own aid-recipient countries and that maintain fundraising and governance systems that are independent of international foreign organizations and companies. It should be noted that some of WFP's cooperating partners are affiliated with international organizations. Definitions adapted from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee . 2018. [Definitions Paper: IASC Humanitarian Financing Task Team, Localisation Marker Working Group](#).

- civil society organizations – including non-profit organizations/NGOs, CBOs<sup>26</sup> and national faith-based organizations – working in multiple subnational regions;
  - Red Cross and Red Crescent societies;
  - local private sector actors, including micro- and meso-level value chain actors and micro- and small enterprises;<sup>27</sup> and
  - local academic and research institutions, and financial service providers.
17. WFP leverages its partnerships with national governments and other *enabling actors* – actors that help to create the conditions that empower and support local and national key actors in assuming central roles in decision making, and amplify the impact of those actors on policy and at the systems level.<sup>28</sup> They include 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 entities of all sizes,<sup>29</sup> and academic and research organizations.

## Guiding principles

18. Two thirds of the people with whom WFP works live in conflict settings, and the majority are women and girls living in remote and hard-to-reach areas with limited access to services. In serving people, WFP will strictly adhere to humanitarian principles and ensure that its assistance is conflict-sensitive, context-specific and risk-informed. Through its work with local and national actors, WFP is committed to delivering people-centred, needs-based programming with accountability and in ways that are safe and free from sexual exploitation and abuse of any form.
19. WFP recognizes its responsibility to engage with local actors within a culture of mutual respect and trust, guided by the sector-wide principles of partnership, which include equality, transparency, responsibility and complementarity.<sup>30</sup> WFP's policy on localization will be guided by the following principles:<sup>31</sup>
- i) *Local and national actors are the ultimate owners and leaders of local response efforts.* A more localized approach that taps into the responsibilities, knowledge and capacities of local and national actors, community groups and affected individuals is more effective in responding to and reducing crisis-related risks.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> In this context, community-based organizations include all the local groups that represent women, persons with disabilities, young people, Indigenous Peoples, refugees, internally displaced persons and other underrepresented or marginalized groups.

<sup>27</sup> See annex II for definition.

<sup>28</sup> "Systems level" in this instance refers to national emergency preparedness and response, social protection and food systems.

<sup>29</sup> See annex II for definition.

<sup>30</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee. 2007. [Principles of Partnerships – A Statement of Commitment Endorsed by the Global Humanitarian Platform](#).

<sup>31</sup> In alignment with global assurance standard 1, "WFP consults with and listens to the people it assists and respects their privacy".

<sup>32</sup> The WFP emergency preparedness policy (2017) states that affected people are often the first responders and that countries are ultimately responsible for supporting community preparedness actions, assessing risks and being ready to respond in an emergency. See "Emergency preparedness policy – Strengthening WFP emergency preparedness for effective response" (WFP/EB.2/2017/4-B/Rev.1\*).

- ii) *Local and national actors possess invaluable knowledge and capacity.* Partners should feel respected and empowered in all their interactions with WFP through an explicit recognition of, and respect for, their knowledge, expertise and practices.
- iii) *Everyone deserves a seat at the table.* Barriers to access – whether caused by physical, geographical, personal security or socioeconomic factors, or based on attributes such as, but not limited to, sex, age, ability, race, ethnicity or indigeneity – should be removed so as to optimize the influence of voices from diverse underrepresented groups in food security and nutrition interventions.
- iv) *People are at the centre of WFP's work.* Working with local and national actors is not a proxy for direct engagement with the people WFP serves.<sup>33</sup> A safe, people-centred and needs-driven approach that ensures accountability requires adherence to the principle of doing no harm, and the prioritization of people's safety, security, dignity and meaningful access to services and assistance that are in line with, and reflect respect for, their choices, priorities and needs.

## Advancing localization and locally led efforts in different operational settings

20. Guided by these principles, and in line with its mandate for saving lives and changing lives, WFP will advance localization and support locally led efforts in different operational settings:
- In *rapid-onset settings*, efforts will focus on advancing localization by leveraging existing partnerships and contributing to a cost-effective and efficient humanitarian response. When needed, WFP will identify emerging local and national actors that can support rapid and efficient response and will explore opportunities for advancing local efforts and strengthening local capacity after the crisis.<sup>34</sup>
  - In *protracted conflict and fragile settings*, efforts will focus on the empowerment, capacity, governance and leadership of diverse local and national actors while promoting social cohesion, inclusion, food security and healthy diets.
  - In *zones prone to conflict and natural disasters*, efforts will focus on the early identification of local organizations to engage in anticipatory action and the strengthening of local capacities related to food security and nutrition, while mitigating political and security-related risks.<sup>35</sup>
  - In *post-disaster settings*, efforts will focus on supporting local and national actors – including local agrifood value chain actors – in leading recovery interventions and becoming better prepared for future emergencies through anticipatory action and resilience building related to food security and nutrition.
  - In *stable settings*, efforts will focus on advancing locally driven solutions that involve investments in local communities, institutions, networks and governance structures aimed at achieving sustainable food security and nutrition.

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<sup>33</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee. 2024. [IASC Discussion Paper: Exploring Linkages Between AAP, Localisation and the HDP Nexus](#).

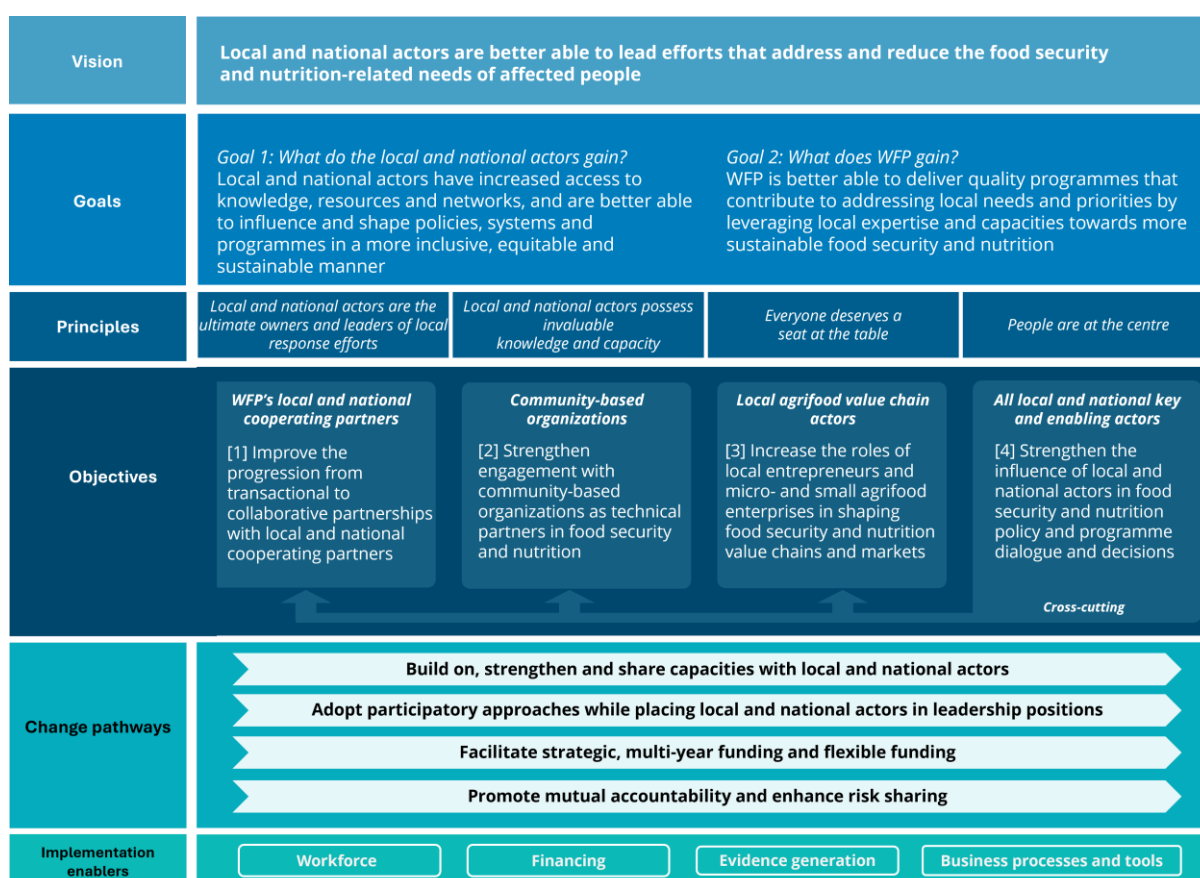
<sup>34</sup> A study commissioned in 2016 by the Humanitarian Policy Group of the thinktank ODI suggested that stronger partnerships between WFP and civil society could advance progress towards zero hunger and enhance local capacity to respond to emergencies.

<sup>35</sup> These local partners face disproportionately high exposure to security risks: more than 80 percent of WFP's security incidents recorded in 2024 primarily affected local first responders. Rising global threats emphasize the need for strengthened security measures, including for local humanitarian personnel.

## Objectives

21. Through the implementation of this policy, WFP envisions local and national actors becoming better able to lead efforts that address and reduce the food security and nutrition-related needs of affected people.
22. WFP's approach will be guided by the following four policy objectives:
  - i) Improve the progression from transactional to collaborative partnerships with local and national cooperating partners.
  - ii) Strengthen engagement with community-based organizations as technical partners in food security and nutrition.
  - iii) Increase the roles of local entrepreneurs, and micro and small agrifood enterprises in shaping food security and nutrition value chains and markets.
  - iv) Strengthen the influence of local and national actors in food security and nutrition policy and programme dialogue and decisions.
23. The fourth objective is an aim in its own right, in addition to enabling the achievement of the other policy objectives. WFP acknowledges that achieving the objectives presented in this policy will require common and collective commitments from all actors – international and local – for more balanced decision making and leadership from the outset of each initiative. The policy also demands new ways of working and the enhancement of harmonized approaches with all actors, including United Nations country team counterparts.

**Figure 1: Theory of change**





## **Objective 1: Improve the progression from transactional to collaborative partnerships with local and national cooperating partners**

24. WFP seeks to strengthen and accelerate collaborative partnerships with local and national cooperating partners, building on mutual respect, trust, values and benefits.<sup>36</sup> This approach recognizes the importance of cooperating partners' contributions as first responders and stewards of local knowledge and experiences that are critical for sustainable humanitarian and development work.
25. WFP has made progress towards more collaborative relationships with its cooperative partners,<sup>37</sup> with greater consultation and more balanced decision making, especially in the development of its country strategic plans.<sup>38, 39</sup> Despite this progress, however, a further shift is required<sup>40</sup> to reach a balance in the respective roles and responsibilities of WFP and its cooperating partners and to support a progression from transactional to collaborative ways of working. This objective seeks to i) improve the quality, sustainability and accountability of interventions; ii) promote a sense of co-ownership; and iii) when possible, strengthen the sustainability of cooperating partners and their ability to function effectively as leaders of local response efforts over the long term.
26. The transition to more collaborative partnerships requires a strengthened commitment to participatory approaches and improved mechanisms for systematic consultation<sup>41</sup> in which cooperating partners play a more central role in the management of programme cycles throughout the design, delivery, monitoring and assessment phases of humanitarian and development interventions. WFP recognizes the need for a shift in mindset<sup>42</sup> and the strengthening of employees' capacities to promote a culture that supports consistent, intentional and meaningful engagement with cooperating partners at key stages in the decision-making process, fostering greater co-ownership of programmes.
27. WFP will support cooperating partners by transferring and sharing skills and resources to help overcome the challenges that affect partners' overall efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. Capacity strengthening and sharing efforts must strike a balance between enhancing cooperating partners' capacity for effective implementation in the short term, while promoting the partners' long-term capacity and sustainability. Taking into account the comparative advantage of each actor, WFP will aim to incorporate and build on local

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<sup>36</sup> WFP. 2024. [Synthesis of evidence and lessons on WFP's cooperating partners from centralized and decentralized evaluations](#), recommendation 1.

<sup>37</sup> This is in line with WFP's corporate partnership strategy for 2014–2017, which defines partnership as "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."

<sup>38</sup> WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Country Strategic Plans – centralized evaluation report](#).

<sup>39</sup> 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." "Policy on Country Strategic Plans" (WFP/EB.2/2016/4-c/1/Rev.1).

<sup>40</sup> WFP. 2024. [Synthesis of evidence and lessons on WFP's cooperating partners from centralized and decentralized evaluations](#).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> WFP. 2023. [Evaluation of WFP's Policy on Country Strategic Plans – centralized evaluation report](#).

knowledge, complement local capacity and leverage the strengths of all the partners involved.<sup>43</sup>

28. Enhancing trust-based partnerships with cooperating partners requires a collaborative approach that identifies and addresses potential challenges and risks, such as the risk that the financial instability and resource constraints imposed by short funding cycles stimulate high staff turnover and the reprioritization of expenditures critical to ensuring safe and accountable operations.<sup>44</sup> Many cooperating partners operating on the “front line” may be disproportionately affected by safety risks owing to inadequate security infrastructure or protocols and reduced capacity to develop security risk management systems compatible with those of international counterparts. These pressures are even greater in instances where other international actors and local authorities lack presence or power. Mitigation requires greater commitment to strengthening the capacity of cooperating partners to assess operational, security and other risks, through knowledge sharing, coaching, coordination, and training aimed at minimizing the impact on operations, employees and front-line workers.

<i>Country or thematic examples to be included.</i>
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## **Objective 2: Strengthen engagement with community-based organizations as technical partners in food security and nutrition**

29. WFP recognizes that CBOs and community-based representative groups – including organizations led by women, Indigenous Peoples’ organizations, organizations of persons with disabilities, young people’s groups, and organizations led by refugees – play a critical role in meeting the food security and nutrition needs of their communities. Actors in these groups typically have a profound understanding of local culture, history, diversity and other complex characteristics, coupled with invaluable experience and insight. They are uniquely positioned to engage with the people who are hardest to reach and most vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition.
30. WFP will expand its partnership base by increasing its focus on direct and formal partnerships with CBOs. This objective seeks to ensure that response efforts i) are informed by the experiences of the diverse people represented by CBOs; ii) extend the reach of humanitarian and development assistance by building stronger ties with representative groups and local communities; and iii) value and benefit from the technical support of CBOs as knowledge, resource, policy, advocacy and capability partners.<sup>45</sup>
31. The process for identifying potential CBO partners – including organizations with a long-standing presence in their communities or that are considered to be emerging actors<sup>46</sup> – will be guided by conflict-sensitive cross-cutting context analyses, and capacity and risk assessments. These assessments will gauge the capacities of CBOs and identify their distinct

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<sup>43</sup> WFP. 2024. [Synthesis of evidence and lessons on WFP’s cooperating partners from centralized and decentralized evaluations](#), recommendation 2.

<sup>44</sup> (SEE country capacity strengthening, 2024; Inter-Agency Standing Committee. 2022. [Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation of the Yemen Crisis](#).

<sup>45</sup> WFP’s corporate partnership strategy of 2017 recognizes five categories of partnership: capability/implementation, resource, knowledge, policy, and advocacy.

<sup>46</sup> 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.

characteristics, challenges and risks and the unique value that they offer WFP as potential technical partners.

32. Assessment findings will inform how, when and with which CBOs new partnerships are formalized, ensuring that selection processes promote a diverse range of collaboration with mutual accountability, while minimizing risks such as compromised governance, mismanagement, abuse of power, or inaccurate representation of communities' interests. Capacity assessments will help to address the challenges that CBOs might encounter as a result of their new partnerships with WFP, such as overextension or diversion from their core missions as they become technical partners in food security and nutrition.
33. Many CBOs encounter obstacles to formalizing their roles as humanitarian and development partners. These challenges include their inability to meet national and United Nations fiduciary, financial and legal requirements for partnership, capacity constraints, lack of information in relevant local languages, and internet connectivity difficulties, especially in remote areas. Such obstacles often confine CBOs to small-scale operations, limiting the breadth and scope of the impact that they could have on the communities they represent and serve. WFP will explore ways of facilitating agile and flexible partnership modalities and establishing pathways that acknowledge and elevate CBOs' technical contributions to programme design and delivery while enhancing their access to information, resources and guidance that help them to overcome the practical challenges that hinder their ability to navigate partnership requirements and procedures.

<i>Country or thematic examples to be included.</i>
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**Objective 3: Increase the roles of local entrepreneurs, and micro and small agrifood enterprises in shaping food security and nutrition value chains and markets.**

34. Local and community-based entrepreneurs and micro- and small enterprises – referred to as local agrifood value chain actors – often possess unique and cross-generational knowledge as stewards of sustainable practices. These actors are well positioned to play key roles throughout food systems, from producing to supplying and distributing to consumers. However, their impact on value chains and markets, and their ability to benefit from economic activities, is determined by their access to, and the extent to which they can benefit from, productive assets, services, finance, information and networks to influence local and national food systems.
35. WFP recognizes and supports the roles of these actors in shaping food security and nutrition value chains. In partnership with other enabling partners, including other United Nations entities, this objective seeks to i) improve the responsiveness of local food security and nutrition value chains and markets to the diverse needs and preferences of local consumers; ii) strengthen the capacity and self-sufficiency of local agrifood value chain actors, and their contributions to the sustainability of systems; and iii) support local economies by creating more livelihood opportunities at the nodes in agrifood value chains.
36. Building on commitments established through its local and regional food procurement and cash policies, WFP will continue to explore ways of leveraging its procurement power, CBT support and other financial inclusion services to enhance access to local markets for local agrifood value chain actors. WFP will work with local agrifood value chain actors to overcome the social, cultural, structural, digital and financial barriers that affect their market entry, influence and profitability, paying particular attention to organizations led by women, young people, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples and other groups facing disproportionate hurdles and challenges. As capacity strengthens, value chains grow and

markets diversify, WFP will continue to promote the resilience of these actors, in accordance with locally expressed food security and nutrition needs and preferences.

37. WFP's work with enabling partners will aim to stimulate a steady and increasing supply of, and demand for, sustainable local produce, goods and services, while reinforcing the viability and sustainability of local food systems. Increasing supply involves increasing the share of direct procurement and the aggregate demand from micro- and small-scale food producers, retailers and cooperatives, and incentivizing vendors to stock more locally produced items. This is complemented by the increased demand generated through boosting the purchasing power of local consumers receiving CBTs and promoting local nutritious food choices, thereby benefiting both consumers and local supply chains. These efforts will be reinforced by work with enabling partners, including local governments, financial service providers, and local research institutions, universities, innovators and start-ups, to create favourable environments in which local businesses and markets grow sustainably.
38. Deeper engagement with local agrifood actors must be based on their ability to consistently deliver, through safe and sustainable practices, high-quality goods, on time and at scale. This is particularly important when WFP seeks to establish links between local agrifood value chain actors and government school meal programmes. Reliable, efficient and high-quality production will require investment from WFP and other enabling partners in the form of mechanisms that help actors to prepare for, anticipate and respond to geopolitical crises, climate change and environmental instability, price fluctuations, and changing consumer preferences. Improved information sharing on climate issues, agriculture and local markets, along with the facilitation of better access to cash, financial services and technology, can help mitigate the risks.
39. To promote the attainment of zero hunger by strengthening local food security and healthy food choices, and in line with its commitment to local sourcing, WFP will utilize the flexibility provided in its local and regional food procurement policy to balance the short-term cost increases associated with the procurement of locally sourced commodities – compared with prices on the international market – with the long-term benefits of self-sufficiency, stable livelihoods and sustainable food security practices along agrifood value chains.

<i>Country or thematic examples to be included.</i>
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**Objective 4 (cross-cutting): Strengthen the influence of local and national actors in food security and nutrition policy and programme dialogue and decisions**

40. WFP seeks to complement national food security and nutrition activities by expanding the space for dialogue with governments and civil society.<sup>47</sup> In collaboration with national enabling partners, WFP will support the enhancement of national institutional systems by adopting inclusive, holistic and context-sensitive analytical and consultation processes. This may include strengthening the community feedback mechanisms, internal processes and procedures of national and subnational government to ensure that women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, refugees and other groups are represented on food and nutrition decision-making platforms.
41. The breadth and depth of WFP's footprint places it in an ideal position to leverage its strategic partnerships so as to amplify the influence of local and national actors on decision making related to food security and nutrition policy and programmes at all levels.

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<sup>47</sup> WFP. 2017. [WFP Guidance on Capacity Strengthening of Civil Society](#).

This objective seeks to advocate the involvement of local and national actors in food security and nutrition discussions and decision making with national and subnational authorities; United Nations country teams and other country-level coordination platforms led by the United Nations; the private sector; and other national partners leading data, evidence and analytical exercises.

42. As a convener and leader in policy and programming dialogue and networks in the broader humanitarian and development community, WFP will continue to advocate collective and coordinated efforts to dismantle the barriers that hinder the participation and representation of local and national actors as leaders in food security and nutrition action. WFP will leverage its roles in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, global food system coalitions, the Committee on World Food Security and the humanitarian cluster system to promote the stronger representation of local and national actors in these coordination mechanisms and platforms. This will ensure that collective food security and nutrition solutions are more practical, efficient, locally driven and sustainable.
43. In collaboration with enabling actors, WFP will explore opportunities to simplify due diligence, capacity and risk assessment processes for partnership, review risk-sharing practices, mobilize pooled resources, and identify pathways for “cascading” funding and facilitating partnerships that integrate smaller organizations into broader operational and governance structures.

Country or thematic examples to be included.
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### **Risk sharing and mutual accountability**

44. In promoting the localization agenda, WFP reiterates its commitment to upholding global assurance standard 4, “maintain operational independence”, and ensuring adherence to the humanitarian principles. WFP commits to generating evidence of the efficiency gains and high-quality programming stimulated through enhanced localization. In doing so, WFP will weigh the risks associated with expanding partnerships with local and national actors against the risks of delaying or avoiding engagement. It is clear that failing to leverage local knowledge, networks and coordination mechanisms could undermine WFP’s ability to promote sustainable, locally driven solutions that respond efficiently to the food security and dietary needs and priorities of the people who are hardest to reach.
45. To mitigate and manage risks, WFP draws from its more than 60 years of experience of working in challenging environments, which has stimulated a risk-aware culture and a robust risk management system.<sup>48</sup> This framework sets the parameters for collaboration with partners in identifying, assessing and managing context-specific risks, whether strategic, operational, fiduciary or financial.<sup>49, 50</sup> The application of a thorough risk analysis will guide WFP’s actions at the corporate and country levels, clearly defining risks and outlining the responsibilities and mutual accountability of all actors.
46. Specific risks related to advancing localization in the manner proposed in this policy will be examined from the perspective of the type of local actor involved and the operational setting, thereby acknowledging that a “one-size-fits-all” approach is not viable. The advancement of locally led efforts requires collective accountability to affected people on the part of all stakeholders. This approach will enable WFP and its partners, including

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<sup>48</sup> WFP. 2018. [WFP Enterprise Risk Management Policy](#).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> WFP’s risk management system identifies four types of risk: strategic, operational, fiduciary and financial.

donors, to engage in careful planning and the proactive management of risk by balancing their respective appetites for risk management and risk sharing. WFP's risk management approach will consider the risks, and its own commitments, to the people it serves, local and national actors, and its Executive Board and donors.

47. *Risks to the people WFP serves.* WFP is accountable first and foremost to the people it serves.<sup>51</sup> Localization efforts must not compromise timely and efficient response or the safety of the people WFP serves. WFP will continue to balance the operational capacities of local and national actors with corporate operational flexibility and will carry out contingency planning that ensures uninterrupted support. Guided by the humanitarian principles, WFP will continue to strengthen local and national actors as they integrate protection and accountability measures for affected people so as to improve the safety of those people, including their protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.<sup>52</sup>
48. WFP must continuously assess the inherent risks associated with localization. For example, some local actors, whether consciously or unconsciously, may perpetuate sociocultural power imbalances, exclusionary behaviours or favouritism. These practices and attitudes create barriers to the delivery of needs-based support, reinforce sociocultural biases and undermine social cohesion. To mitigate these risks, it is essential to ensure that the selection of partners is informed by context and sociocultural analyses. WFP may be compelled to amend, suspend or even halt localization efforts if there is an increased risk that humanitarian principles or global assurance standards may be compromised. Striking a balance between local and international actors, who may be less susceptible to local political dynamics, may foster a more equitable distribution of risks in certain situations.
49. *Risks to WFP's local and national partners.* WFP recognizes that local and national actors are often subject to additional risks, especially in hard-to-reach and complex operating environments. Local and national actors should not face threats to their personal safety owing to the transferred security risks associated with localization efforts. WFP commits to maintaining dialogue and communication with local and national actors on mitigating potential or anticipated safety and security risks. This includes delivering training and providing resources to inform the employees of local and national actors and help protect them from security risks. WFP will explore ways of improving capacity sharing in relation to safety and security risks among local and national actors<sup>53</sup> with a view to promoting relationships in which all key and enabling partners are equally invested in the safety and security of local and national actors.
50. Local and national actors also face risks due to unresponsive funding mechanisms, such as earmarked funding that is short term or inconsistent, unearmarked funds that rarely trickle down to those actors, and increased barriers due to the demand for better controls and accountability. Likewise, some local actors, in particular CBOs and representative groups, may not be able to meet rigorous due diligence requirements and common screening mechanisms. WFP is exploring new financial and contractual modalities that might better support partnerships with these actors. This will include collaboration with other United Nations and international actors at the country level on sharing common practices and harmonizing approaches that facilitate engagement with these local and national actors.

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<sup>51</sup> "WFP protection and accountability policy" ([WFP/EB.2/2020/4-A/1/Rev.2](#)).

<sup>52</sup> United Nations Secretariat. 2003. [Secretary General's Bulletin: Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse \(ST/SGB/2003/13\)](#).

<sup>53</sup> For example, see the risk sharing framework produced by the Grand Bargain's community of practice on risk-sharing (see figure 1): Inter-Agency Standing Committee. 2023. [Risk Sharing Framework – Enhancing the Impact of Humanitarian Action through Improved Risk Sharing](#).

51. *Risks to WFP and international partners.* WFP needs to ensure that resources are channelled with minimum risk of fraud, error or inefficiency. Local and national actors may have limited capacities to deliver on the financial reporting requirements that provide WFP and donors with sufficient assurance against loss, fraud and corruption. Accountability mechanisms for ensuring the transparency, responsiveness, sound monitoring and governance of humanitarian and development initiatives need to be practical and relevant to the specific operational circumstances of each partnership and aligned with risk management commitments and WFP's global assurance standards, including standard 3, "WFP knows that its in-kind assistance is safe and where it is – from origin to distribution". Measures for mitigating such risks require investments of time and resources in capacity strengthening, alongside innovations that increase the flexibility of WFP's business processes.
52. The exertion of external or implicit control over the selection of partners<sup>54</sup> may challenge WFP's ability to ensure high-quality programming that adheres to its values, the humanitarian principles and WFP's Global Assurance Framework. Balancing these risks requires investments in context analysis, system strengthening and participatory approaches with local people, communities, representative groups and authorities.
53. The implementation plan for this policy will prioritize the identification of risks and mitigation and management actions for various actors and settings at the global and country levels, in accordance with the Global Assurance Framework. The success of the policy depends on the willingness of WFP, its partners and donors to manage and share risks, prioritize efficiencies, and harmonize approaches that facilitate collaborative partnerships with local and national actors. Agreement on acceptable risks when embarking on partnerships with new or emerging actors, mechanisms for "pass-through" funds or the sharing of overhead costs, and a commitment to multi-year or other flexible funding arrangements are foundational to driving this agenda forward and building long-term, trust-based partnerships for sustainable outcomes.

## Implementation

54. This policy will be accompanied by a costed implementation plan. The internal structure through which the policy will be implemented will be guided by four enablers:
  - *Workforce:* Ensure that employees have appropriate skills, expertise and organizational capacity, and promote a shift in mindset and culture that supports the intentional and meaningful engagement of local and national actors at key stages of decision making.
  - *Financing:* Secure financial resources and strengthen WFP's ability to channel flexible funding to local and national partners.
  - *Evidence generation:* Strengthen the analytical tools for monitoring progress against corporate targets, generating evidence on enhanced efficiencies, and reviewing practices that facilitate systematic learning from local and global best practices.
  - *Business processes and tools:* Revisit business processes and partnership models with a view to facilitating flexible, agile and sustainable partnerships with local and national actors, including by enhancing and harmonizing approaches to due diligence, risk management, capacity assessment and funding.

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<sup>54</sup> By national governments, de facto authorities or donors.

## **Acronyms**

CBO	community-based organization
CBT	cash-based transfer
NGO	non-governmental organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal