April 2025

FROM GRAND BARGAIN TO GROUND REALITIES

Localizing Humanitarian Aid in Ukraine

Antonia Foldes, Harvard Kennedy School

Completed on behalf of Liza Baran, Deputy Country Director at Mercy Corps Ukraine

HARVARD Kennedy School

MERCY CORPS

From Grand Bargain to Ground Realities: Localizing Humanitarian Aid in Ukraine

Abstract

Humanitarian INGOs and the UN system have been slow to adopt localization despite public commitments and the demonstrated cost-efficiency of local actors. This report introduces a localization scorecard for INGOs to operationalize their localization strategies and track their progress through measurable indicators. Drawing on the humanitarian response in Ukraine, it incorporates different stakeholder perspectives to align efforts towards shared objectives. It is an adaptation of the Balanced Scorecard, a performance management tool developed by the Harvard Business School. The scorecard uses quantitative indicators to measure progress across key localization areas: equitable partnerships, leadership and strategy contribution, capacity strengthening, and policy influence and advocacy. Finally, the report offers concrete recommendations for INGOs to develop additional tools to implement the scorecard and measure its suggested indicators.

Cover photo by Ezra Millstein, Director of Global Photography at Mercy Corps, September 2024.

Acronyms

CSO	Civil society organization
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
INGO	International non-governmental organization
KPI	Key performance indicator
L/NA	Local and national actor
MEAL	Monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning
UN	United Nations

Mercy Corps is an international humanitarian organization operating in 40+ countries, where people are living through poverty, disaster, violent conflict, and the acute impacts of climate change. Its mission is to alleviate suffering, poverty, and oppression by helping people build secure, productive, and just communities.

Antonia Foldes is a Master in Public Policy candidate at the Harvard Kennedy School and research assistant to Dmytro Kuleba, former foreign minister of Ukraine. In March 2022, she was a first responder in Przemyśl on the Polish-Ukrainian border, where she coordinated transportation for hundreds of refugees to Germany. Previously, she worked at a global risk consultancy in London and published conflict analyses on Eastern Europe and Central Asia. She holds a Master in European Studies from the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite public commitments and the proven cost-efficiency of local actors, humanitarian INGOs and the UN system have been slow to adopt localization, a process that aims to shift power and decision-making to local organizations. Recent cuts to USAID and humanitarian funding further underscore the urgency to transform the existing humanitarian response model to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

Problem statement

Following Russia's full-scale invasion, Ukraine's humanitarian response was largely led by civil society groups, national organizations, and informal volunteers. Despite the strong localization context, the 2024 Humanitarian Localization Baseline found that barriers still exist for local actors, especially areas of Funding and Policy Influence. The **implementation of localization hinges on accountability** and "making [the] Grand Bargain commitments...functional."[1]

Mercy Corps has included localization as one of its five commitments in its new 10 year strategy Pathway to Possibility (2022-2023). To implement this commitment, Mercy Corps Ukraine commissioned this report to establish quantitative indicators, measurable performance criteria, and recommendations for tracking mechanisms to bring accountability to its localization goals. This report proposes a Localization Scorecard for INGOs to **operationalize their localization strategies with quantitative indicators**. While it is tailored to Mercy Corps' operations in Ukraine, the framework is easily applicable to other INGOs and contexts.

Goal: effective implementation of localization by INGOs in their humanitarian response programs

Objectives:
➤ Introduce a localization scorecard that integrates different stakeholder perspectives, i.e. partner, INGO, donor
➤ Develop quantitative indicators for partner and INGO objectives
➤ Propose MEAL tools, e.g. RACI accountability frameworks, risk measurement systems, and partner feedback surveys

Outcome: Localization Scorecard for INGOs

The report is a product of 8 months of desk review and consultations with experts on Ukraine, localization, and the humanitarian system. Based on the Balanced Scorecard, originally developed at the Harvard Business School, it incorporates four key perspectives: (1) partner, (2) donor, (3) internal, and (4) learning and growth. These were captured through stakeholder interviews and an analysis of existing organizational strategies to

---

[1] Irwin Loy, *"Why the Grand Bargain's Future Hings on Accountability,"* The New Humanitarian, October 15, 2024, accessed April 5, 2025, https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2024/10/15/why-grand-bargain-future-hinges-accountability.

develop indicators. Mercy Corps has yet to develop its metrics, and local partners were relying on qualitative indicators, so this report provides original quantitative measures for both.

The balanced scorecard is well-suited for localization as it **integrates internal and external perspectives alongside non-financial goals** – recognizing that true localization requires shifting not just money, but power. The Localization Scorecard aligns stakeholder objectives and proposes quantitative indicators:

Table 1. Final Localization Scorecard

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	INDICATOR
Equitable partnerships – fair distribution of costs, risks, and benefits.	% of L/NAs report fair risk sharing/distribution % of direct funding & overhead % of project agreements with a role-mapping aligned with Mercy Corps' Levels of Engagement % of projects meet Equitable Partnerships criteria
Leadership and strategy contribution – involvement in decision-making.	# of partners involved in the full program cycle, incl. the design & MEAL % of partner-driven programming
Capacity strengthening – partners develop organizational capacity.	# of capacity-strengthening initiatives co-designed with local partners % of local partners reporting improved organizational capacity
Policy influence and advocacy – communication and inclusion of partner priorities.	% of policy recommendations co-developed with local partners # of L/NAs prepared for high-level policy discussions # of invitations for direct access to donor/partner

The localization scorecard is the core recommendation of this report. To measure its indicators, INGOs using the scorecard should also develop **clear accountability frameworks, risk measurement systems, and partner feedback mechanisms**:

➢ **RACI Framework**: Embedding a Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed (RACI) model in project agreements ensures clear role allocation, enabling equitable partnerships between INGOs and L/NAs.

➢ **Risk Measurement**: Standardized risk assessments quantify hazard exposure, vulnerability, and capacity, guiding risk mitigation efforts.

➢ **Partner Surveys**: Localization success requires L/NA feedback, with indicators tracking cost-sharing fairness, risk distribution, and capacity strengthening over time.

1. INTRODUCTION

Humanitarian INGOs and the UN system have been slow to adopt localization since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022,[2] even though a locally-led response could advance cost-efficiency, effectiveness, and equity in humanitarian aid delivery.

Local actors are 32% more cost-efficient than international organizations in humanitarian programming in Ukraine,[3] reducing both cost per beneficiary and aid delivery time. In 2024, 28% of humanitarian funding to Ukraine was issued by the US.[4] With the U.S. contributing 28% of Ukraine's humanitarian funding in 2024 – and **recent cuts to USAID and broader humanitarian funding disruptions** – maximizing efficiency is more critical than ever.

National NGOs, civil society organisations, and volunteer groups are critical for the delivery of humanitarian aid to conflict-affected people, taking on significant risks to reach the most affected communities in hard-to-reach areas.[5] Their engagement is also of strategic importance for successful humanitarian aid delivery, given their local knowledge and networks.

Despite these advantages and existing policy commitments, local organizations only receive about 1% of total humanitarian aid funding allocated to Ukraine.[6] Risk-averse bureaucracy, opaque processes, and unfamiliar terminology make it hard for smaller actors to meet the funding requirements of donors. Funding is just one metric of localization, which also includes capacity strengthening, equitable partnerships, and leadership in decision-making.

The **aim of this report** is to create a tool that allows Mercy Corps and other INGOs operationalize their localization strategies and clearly track their progress with measurable indicators. This aligns with the goals in the strategy document of the Ukrainian Alliance of Civil Society Organisations that calls for the "development of indicators of implementation of locally led response and adherence to agreements by all participants in the process, including adoption of accountability mechanisms." It responds to the INGO joint statement "Why not

---

[2] Refugees International, East SOS, Center for Disaster Philanthropy, "Annual Ukraine Localization Survey 2024," December 2024, 4.

[3] The SHARE Trust, Center for Disaster Philanthropy, Refugees International, "Passing the Buck," July 2024, 5.

[4] UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Ukraine Humanitarian Funding Summary 2024*, OCHA Financial Tracking Service, accessed April 4, 2025, https://fts.unocha.org/countries/234/summary/2024.https://fts.unocha.org/countries/234/summary/2024.

[5] Andrew Stoddard, Peter Harvey, Neil Timmins, Viktoria Pakhomenko, M.-J. Breckenridge, and Marcin Czwarno, "Enabling the Local Response: Emerging Humanitarian Priorities in Ukraine March–May 2022," *Humanitarian Outcomes*, June 2022, 8.

[6] Refugees International, "Less Than 1% of Humanitarian Funding for Ukraine Goes Directly to Local Organizations," December 19, 2024, accessed April 4, 2025. https://www.refugeesinternational.org/statements-and-news/less-than-1-of-humanitarian-funding-for-ukraine-goes-directly-to-local-organizations/.

local?" from October 2024, which demanded more accountability and regular measurement of progress towards localization.[7]

The following section outlines the project methodology, which included a desk review of existing reports and internal documents, as well as consultations with key stakeholders and third parties. Section 3 provides a background on the value of localization, Mercy Corps' localization strategy, the current status in Ukraine, and existing localization measurement frameworks. Section 4 presents a Localization Scorecard for INGOs, incorporating partner, internal, and donor perspectives. Finally, Section 5 maps a way forward with recommendations for additional tools to support the measurement process.

---

[7] Several INGOs, "Why Not Local? INGO Statement on the Urgent Need to Accelerate Progress and Accountability Towards Local Leadership of Humanitarian Action," *Inter-Agency Standing Committee*, October 2024, https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-official-website/ingos-joint-statement-why-not-local.

2. METHODOLOGY

Objective: develop a localization measurement framework for INGOs to improve implementation of localization in their humanitarian response programs

Timeline: 8 months (September 2024 to April 2025)

Research questions: How can INGOs measure progress on their localization commitments?

Audience: Mercy Corps and other INGOs that plan to increase effectiveness of their locally-led response

Research process:
- *Literature review:* 50+ English-language sources were included, such as internal organizational literature, public reports, articles, statements and public letters, conference outcomes, and webinars.
- *Consultations:* with key experts, such as researchers and academics, helped define the problem and gaps in localization implementation; they also provided an inside view to stakeholder activity and new programing.
- *Interviews:* donor, INGO, and L/NA stakeholders. These were semi-structured and developed into an open conversation with the direction set by participant response.
- *Feedback and verification:* sessions with ~35 other INGOs operating in Ukraine, as well as Mercy Corps' Equitable Partnerships Working Group in April 2025.

This research draws heavily upon recent studies by local actors and INGOs alike, given the great interest in localization of humanitarian aid in Ukraine. Further surveys or qualitative interviews to establish gaps and priorities would therefore have been duplicative. Key documents included:
- Localization Baseline for Ukraine, NGO Resource Center et al. (November 2024)
- Understanding Ongoing Localization Initiatives, Humanitarian NGO Platform in Ukraine (December 2023)
- Strategy for ensuring local leadership, CSO Alliance UA (October 2024)
- Passing the Buck, The Share Trust et al. (July 2024)

Due to the security context and increased Russian bombardment following the election of U.S. President Trump,[8,9] consultations and interviews were held online.

Assumptions & limitations: the limited sample yields a specific perspective which may not be widely applicable across all INGOs, research was conducted in English potentially limiting the ability of L/NAs to express themselves fully.

---

[8] David Brennan, "Russia Increases Ukraine Drone Attacks by 44% Since Trump Election," *ABC News*, November 14, 2024.
[9] Al Jazeera, "Russia Intensifies Assaults on Ukraine Ahead of Trump's Inauguration," December 13, 2024.

3. UNDERSTANDING LOCALIZATION

Localization aims to reshape humanitarian aid by shifting power to local actors. This chapter introduces its significance and the role it has played in Ukraine's humanitarian context, as well as Mercy Corps' localization strategy and existing frameworks used to measure such progress.

The Value of Localization in Humanitarian Crises

Localization allows for a faster, more effective, and cost-efficient humanitarian response. Local groups and civil society are usually the first to respond in a crisis, know how to leverage existing networks and infrastructure, and provide sustainable engagement. Many organizations were active before the crisis, transformed their operations to meet the new demand, and then continued to contribute to communities even after the emergency passes. Local actors are also 32% more cost-efficient in delivering programming than international organizations and the UN, based on recent findings from the Passing the Buck study in Ukraine.[10]

Mercy Corps defines localization as the "intentional shift of power and decision-making" to local actors.[11] This report also uses the extended definition issued by the Australian Red Cross in 2017:[12]

Localization is a process of recognising, respecting and strengthening the independence of leadership and decision-making by national actors in humanitarian action, in order to better address the needs of affected populations.

Aid organizations recognized the role of localization in improving the **effectiveness** and **efficiency** of humanitarian action by signing the Grand Bargain at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.[13] Core commitments were incorporated into nine workstreams, including capacity-building for national responders (Workstream 2) and greater participation of local actors in decision-making (Workstream 6).[14]

The meaningful implementation of localization is complex:

---

[10] The SHARE Trust, *Passing the Buck,* 5.
[11] Mercy Corps, *Pathway to Possibility* (2022), 37.
[12] Humanitarian Advisory Group, Centre for Humanitarian Leadership, Fiji University. "Going Local: Achieving a More Appropriate and Fit-for-Purpose Humanitarian Ecosystem in the Pacific," December 2017, 4.
[13] Inter-Agency Standing Committee, "About the Grand Bargain," accessed April 5, 2025, https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/node/40190.
[14] Inter-Agency Standing Committee, "Commitments and Core Commitments by Workstream," November 2021.

Localization is not just handing over all operations to local groups

Building on the ideal of the Grand Bargain "as local as possible, as international as necessary",[15] partnerships need to be established based on equity, where burdens and benefits are shared according to capacity. It's an oversimplification that all organizations should want to scale up and grow large enough to access direct funding from donors – some prefer to keep their operations focused on their communities.

Localization is not simply about selecting domestic partner

This report groups local and national actors for conciseness, however there is a great variety and difference in "local" actors. Localisation isn't achieved by just selecting a domestic partner, which can come close to tokenism.[16] In another example, some national actors may lack local experience if they have never operated in a region before.[17]

Localization is not just about money

The measurement of localization is also evolving beyond purely quantitative metrics, e.g. amount of funds passed on to L/NAs. For example, quality of funding – e.g. long-term contracts, capacity-strengthening support, and flexibility in spending – create more meaningful contributions to localization.

Across the humanitarian sector, international actors have been increasingly committed to changing the power imbalance within the humanitarian system.[18] Implementation however has been slow, in part due to intermediaries' bureaucratic barriers, risk-averse donor restrictions, and lack of political will.[19] [20]

In June 2023, the Grand Bargain signatories, which included Mercy Corps, reviewed their commitments and sought to improve their implementation. The implementation agenda was launched in November 2024, which specified actions for aid organizations (AOs) and donors to deliver on specific commitments.[21] This report contributes to the following action listed for AOs:

<u>Participation and Accountability to Affected Populations:</u> Donors and AOs champion collective efforts and sector-wide standards, such as Core Humanitarian Standards, to progress on the inclusion of affected populations in the design and adaptation of responses.[22]

---

[15] Inter-Agency Standing Committee, "Localisation," accessed April 5, 2025, https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/localisation.

[16] Maha Shuayb, "Localisation Only Pays Lip Service to Fixing Aid's Colonial Legacy," *The New Humanitarian*, February 8, 2022.

[17] ACF, CDAC, Start Network. "Localisation in practice: emerging indicators and practical recommendations," June 2018, 20.

[18] Inter-Agency Standing Committee, "DRAFT USAID Policy: Localization of Humanitarian Assistance," October 24, 2022.

[19] Christina Bennett, "Local Aid Groups Are Paving the Way for Progress on Their Terms. Internationals Need to Follow Their Lead," *The New Humanitarian*, June 27, 2023.

[20] Patrick Fine, "USAID Can't Go It Alone on Localization," *Brookings Institution*, February 5, 2024.

[21] Inter-Agency Standing Committee, "Grand Bargain Implementation Agenda 2025-2026," November 2024.

[22] Ibid.

Mercy Corps' Commitment to Localization

Mercy Corps is an INGO delivering humanitarian programs in response to conflict, disaster, poverty, and climate change globally. It is headquartered in Portland, Oregon and provides shelter, essential supplies, and evacuations to affected populations by working with local partners.[23]

In Ukraine, Mercy Corps has offices in Kyiv, Lviv, Mykolaiv, and Dnipro. It has worked with 40+ local partners and supported more than 470,000 people since Russia's full-scale invasion.[24] Its work has included an FCDO-funded humanitarian response project, an economic resilience program for over 8,000 IDPs, and a $60 million agricultural assistance program.[25] For example, Mercy Corps Ukraine has distributed over $56 million in multi-purpose cash assistance and provided over 600 grants to small businesses to restore operations.

Image 1. Mercy Corps Operations in Ukraine
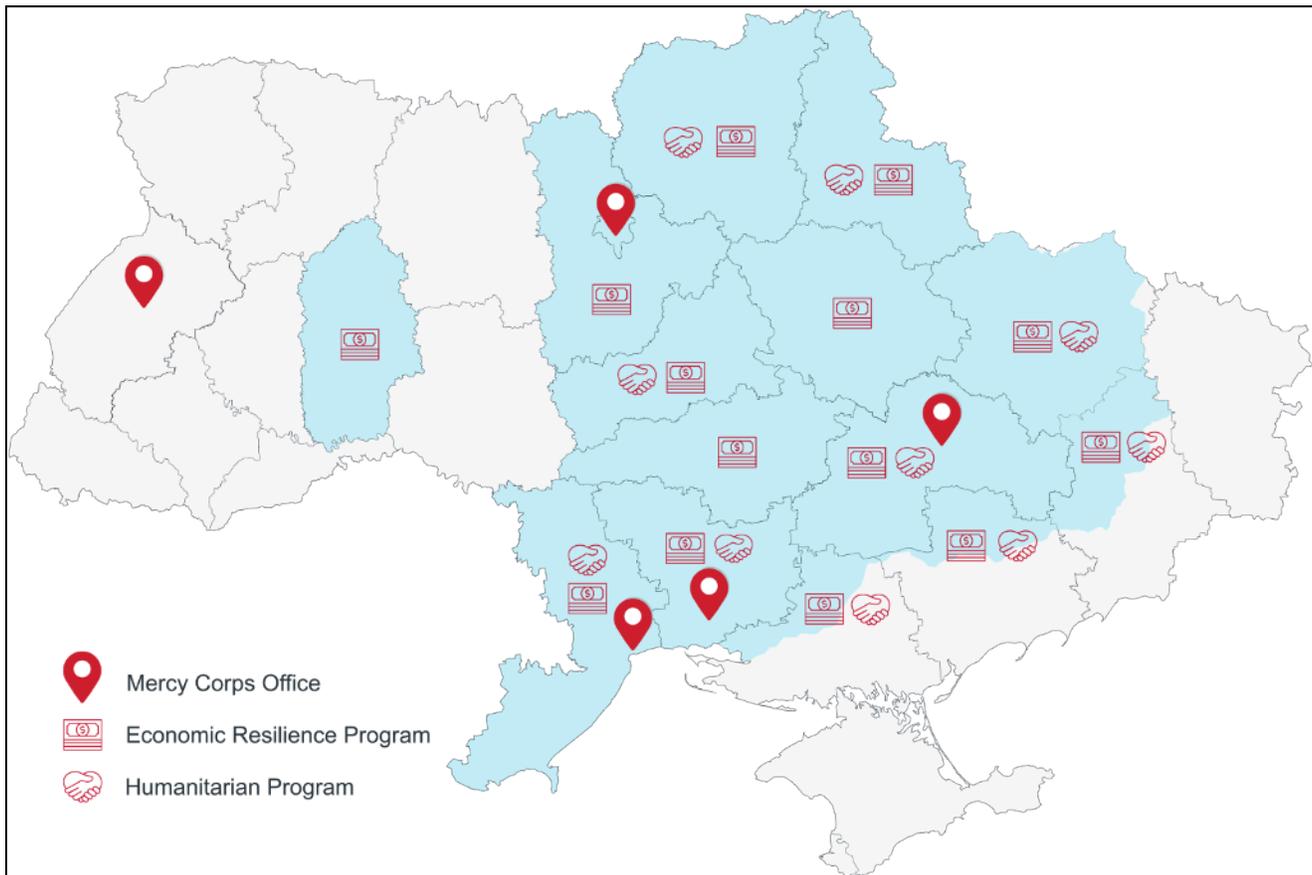
Source: Mercy Corps Ukraine

Mercy Corps launched its new 10 year strategy, Pathway to Possibility, in July 2022 and included localization as one of its five commitments. Their locally-led commitment outlines their approach to meaningful engagement with local actors and overcome inequitable power dynamics within their programs. Mercy Corps' strategy suggests the following approaches:

- Centering the perspectives of communities – and the most impacted within them – in all that we do
- Cultivating a global workforce and leadership team representative of the communities where we operate
- Establishing and nurturing more trust-based, equitable, and accountable partnerships with local actors
- Using our influence to inclusively advocate for more effective, locally driven, and accountable humanitarian aid and development systems

Under this commitment, Mercy Corps has established the Equitable Partnerships Working Group which is developing an equitable partnerships strategy.

Mercy Corps Ukraine is interested in advancing their implementation of localization and transforming their role as an intermediary. Key recommendations for an effective transformation of the intermediary role are (1) accountability driven by partner feedback or evaluations and (2) a change in internal processes.[26] Mercy Corps expressed a need for **quantitative indicators** and **measurable performance criteria**, as well as **tracking and reporting mechanisms** to bring broader accountability to INGOs. This will support INGOs like Mercy Corps evaluate their progress towards localization.

Existing Measurement Frameworks

Grand Bargain signatories participate in an annual self-reporting process by submitting data on key indicators: quality funding,[27] localization, participation, risk-sharing, gender, and caucus outcomes.[28] Yet several other frameworks have been developed to allow actors to monitor their own progress. Those developed by the Humanitarian Advisory Group and by NEAR in 2019 are especially relevant, as they have been used to measure sector-wide localization in Ukraine and Poland.

Localization frameworks usually evaluate across 7 measurement areas:

---

[26] Humanitarian Advisory Group, GLOW Consultants, CoLAB, inSights, Ziad Antonios, "Bridging the Intention to Action Gap: The Future Role of Intermediaries in Supporting Locally Led Humanitarian Action," June 2021.
[27] Quality funding is characterized by its multi-year and flexible nature.
[28] Inter-Agency Standing Committee, "Grand Bargain Self-Reporting Cycle 2024," accessed April 5, 2025, https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-official-website/grand-bargain-self-reporting-cycle-2024.

Table 2. Common Localization Measurement Areas

Localization Measurement Area	Objective[29]
Partnerships	Equitable and complementary partnerships between local, national and international actors
Funding	Increased number of national/local organisations describing financial independence that allows them to respond more efficiently to humanitarian response
Capacity strengthening	Local and national organisations are able to respond effectively and efficiently, and have targeted and relevant support from international actors
Coordination and Complementarity	Application and respect for commonly agreed approaches to "as local as possible and as international as necessary"
Policy Influence and Advocacy	Humanitarian action reflects the priorities of affected communities and national actors
Participation / Leadership[30]	L/NA participate and lead in humanitarian response
Visibility	The role and contribution of local actors is fairly represented through external communications

The **Measuring Localisation Framework** was developed by the Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG), a social enterprise focused on humanitarian action in Asia and the Pacific, and the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisation (PIANGO) in 2019. It records the impact of localization by measuring evidence against defined indicators across seven areas to create a baseline.[31] Besides Ukraine, the framework has been applied in other conflict-related humanitarian settings, e.g. Yemen.[32]

HAG and PIANGO's framework was used for the **first Humanitarian Localization Baseline in Ukraine** in 2023. It identified Funding and Policy Influence as the areas with weakest localization, while the strongest evidence for localization was found in Capacity and Participation. The priorities and recommendations of the baseline are further explored in the next section Current State of Localization in Ukraine.

---

[29] Humanitarian Advisory Group, "Intention to Impact: Measuring Localisation," February 2018, 11-15.
[30] Depending on the measurement framework, one of the two areas is included.
[31] VANGO, PIANGO and Humanitarian Advisory Group, "Localisation in Vanuatu: Demonstrating Change," January 2019, 1.
[32] Tamdeen Youth Foundation, ITAR for Social Development, ICVA and Humanitarian Advisory Group, "Measuring humanitarian localisation in Yemen: Baseline Report," November 2022.

The **Localisation Performance Measurement Framework** was established by the NGO NEAR, a network of civil society organisations from the Global South based in Nairobi, Kenya. The four-step framework was developed for L/NAs, NGOs and UN agencies, donors and academic institutions in 2019.[33]

Across six localization components, the framework indicates key performance indicators (KPIs) and specific measurement strategies, which are mostly qualitative. For example, Partnerships has the KPI "L/NAs have power in partnerships" and is measured by a review of partnership agreements.

> NEAR's framework was adapted by NGO Forum Razem in their June 2024 report to evaluate localization progress in **Poland's humanitarian response to refugees**. The findings indicate generally positive progress toward Grand Bargain localization commitments. This case study is particularly relevant given Poland's strong civil society, which is similar to Ukraine's context.

Existing frameworks are compared in the table below to illustrate their different application level and measurement framework. The table also highlights a downstream evolution from sector-wide assessment to country and organizational level.

Table 3. Framework Comparison

Framework	Application level	Measurement / indicators
Disasters & Emergencies Preparedness Programme (2018)[34]	Sector-wide assessment	Qualitative indicators
HAG & PIANGO: Measuring Localization Framework (2019)	Sector or country level, needs to be adapted for use at the organisational level	Surveys, focus groups, interviews, document review
Mercy Corps: Localization Scorecard (2025)	**INGO**	**Quantitative indicators**
NEAR: Localisation Performance Measurement Framework (2019)	Primarily L/NA	Qualitative indicators
PACT: Engaged Communities Accountability Commitment Tool[35] (2023)	Project level	No defined measurement or indicators

---

[33] NEAR, "Localisation performance measurement framework," 2019.
[34] CF, CDAC, Start Network, "Localisation in practice: emerging indicators and practical recommendations."
[35] Pact, "Promise and Accountability for Locally Led Development: Lessons and Recommendations from Pact's Global Engaged Communities Assessment," July 2023.

Examples of qualitative indicators include "interview L/NA human resource and management staff" or "review of cluster strategies," as proposed by NEAR.[36] This report will fill a measurement gap by developing an internal framework for INGOs that assesses their strategic performance through quantitative indicators.

It will build on the framework established by HAG & PIANGO, which is already being used in Ukraine, and follows several of their measurement recommendations as indicated by the ticked boxes below:[37]

    ☑ consider process and impact indicators across all areas of localization (listed above)
    ☐ indicators encompass qualitative and quantitative datasets
    ☑ tools and approaches draw on the experience of other sectors
    ☑ measurement processes seek input of range of stakeholders
    ☐ measurement determines the impact on the effectiveness of humanitarian response

Current State of Localization in Ukraine

Ukraine's immediate response to the Russian full-scale invasion was largely led by civil society groups, national organizations, and informal volunteers.[38] [39] This makes it a strong case for localization due to the **developed civil society and high-capacity host government**. Prior to 2022, 150 national NGOs were already operating in humanitarian response, mainly in eastern Ukraine.[40] Local groups quickly mobilized their networks and initially raised funds outside of the traditional humanitarian funding architecture. By 2023, the number of national NGOs had tripled. However, newer NGOs and volunteer-led civil society organizations have struggled to secure formal funding, as they often face barriers in meeting subcontracting and due diligence requirements.[41,42]

"In Mykolaiv there were a lot of attacks in 2022 […] more than 100 houses were destroyed and needed materials to cover roofs and windows. I started to call INGOs which I knew had the materials we needed in their warehouses […] I told them I can provide all the data, but they said they couldn't do it this way. They need to make a check and make a visit, they can't trust like this. I will never cooperate with this INGO anymore."
– Ukrainian NGO[43]

Despite this strong response, the ongoing war presents additional challenges to localization. Conflict settings complicate local actors' ability to uphold the humanitarian principle of neutrality, as well as fulfill more

[36] NEAR, "Localisation performance measurement framework," 8, 10.
[37] Humanitarian Advisory Group, "Intention to Impact: Measuring Localisation," 9.
[38] Isobel Koshiw, "The Informal Volunteer Groups Leading Ukraine's Aid Effort," *The Guardian*, July 1, 2022.
[39] Stoddard, Harvey, Timmins, Pakhomenko, Breckenridge, and Czwarno, "Enabling the Local Response: Emerging Humanitarian Priorities in Ukraine March–May 2022," 3.
[40] ACAPS, "UKRAINE: Perceptions of localisation in the humanitarian response," June 2023, 2.
[41] Ibid. 8.
[42] Australian Red Cross et al, "Localisation in Protracted Crises and Fragile Settings," November 2023, 21.
[43] Author interview with a Ukrainian NGO, January 2025.

stringent risk and compliance requirements by risk-averse donors.[44] Given their bureaucratic restrictions, INGOs prefer to pass along risks relating to humanitarian aid delivery to their downstream partners. These L/NAs then face significant dangers, including missile attacks and other physical threats, as they access hard-to-reach areas where INGOs won't go.[45] To address this, a Duty of Care package was recently co-developed by international and local partners to outline minimum standards and suggest how donors can improve partner safety in Ukraine.[46]

Local NGOs are also making headway in improving communication and building capacity:

➢ **Philanthropy in Ukraine** has created a platform to match grant-making organizations with local organizations.[47] To facilitate their cooperation, Philanthropy in Ukraine uses simple terminology and offers capacity strengthening webinars, such as a learning course on international standards, so that CSOs can meet the requirements.[48]

➢ **The National Network of Local Philanthropy Development** is helping train Ukrainians to offer workshops on humanitarian standards outlined in the Sphere Handbook. This training-of-trainers makes international standards more accessible and allows for a local-to-local dissemination.[49]

The current level of localization in Ukraine has been assessed through the Humanitarian Localization Baseline Progress Report and the complementary Annual Ukraine Localization Survey, both published in late 2024.

The **Humanitarian Localization Baseline**, published by the NGO Resource Center and its partners has been benchmarking progress on localization in Ukraine since September 2023. Through surveys with national and international actors, it identified key areas of progress and challenges in localization efforts across the aforementioned 7 measurement areas.

Most improvement is needed in areas of Funding and Policy Influence

Ukrainian organizations have been struggling to access sufficient funding and have a sense of decreasing financial stability.[50] While surveys indicated "some" evidence of an increase in humanitarian funding to L/NAs,

---

[44] Australian Red Cross et al, "Localisation in Protracted Crises and Fragile Settings," November 2023, 20.

[45] Stoddard, Harvey, Timmins, Pakhomenko, Breckenridge, and Czwarno, "Enabling the Local Response: Emerging Humanitarian Priorities in Ukraine March–May 2022," 9.

[46] Humanitarian NGO Platform in Ukraine, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and CSO Alliance UA, "Duty of Care package for local humanitarian responders in Ukraine," February 2025.

[47] "Philanthropy in Ukraine has presented the first verification platform in Ukraine," Philanthropy in Ukraine, accessed April 5, 2025, https://philanthropyinukraine.org/knowledge-hub/publication/philanthropy-in-ukraine-prezentuvaly-pershu-v-ukraini-platformu-dlia-veryfikatsii.

[48] Author interview with Philanthropy in Ukraine, January 2025.

[49] Author interview with The National Network of Local Philanthropy Development, January 2025.

[50] NGO Resource Center et al, "A Humanitarian Localization Baseline for Ukraine: Progress Report 2024," 38.

their role in financial decision-making was still very limited due to a lack of access to project budgets and financial reports.[51] For policy influence, there was "limited" evidence of national actors informing humanitarian policies or having an influence on program design.[52]

Most evidence of localization is in the elements of Participation and Capacity

There is increasing accountability towards affected people, as well as a joint determination of capacity needs and development.[53]

Specifically for INGOs and the UN, the **Annual Ukraine Localization Survey** listed the following areas of improvement:[54]

➢ Increase reporting and sharing of relevant data;

➢ Pilot more multi-year funding for Ukrainian responders and expand due diligence "passporting;"[55]

➢ Implement and monitor Ethical Recruitment Guidelines that reduce staff poaching by INGOs and UN agencies;

➢ Increase Ukrainian representation at the Humanitarian Country Team and the Ukraine Humanitarian Fund board and expand Ukrainian leadership across programs; and

➢ Speed up and expand an Area Based Coordination (ABC) approach.[56]

Despite Ukraine's engaged civil society, key challenges to localization implementation remain. This requires an accountability framework to oversee reforms in funding processes, risk-sharing, and capacity-building for INGOs to empower the locally-led humanitarian response.

---

[51] NGO Resource Center et al, "A Humanitarian Localization Baseline for Ukraine," September 2023, 33
[52] NGO Resource Center et al, "A Humanitarian Localization Baseline for Ukraine: Progress Report 2024," 43.
[53] Ibid. 40, 45.
[54] Refugees International, East SOS, Center for Disaster Philanthropy, "Annual Ukraine Localization Survey 2024," 24-25.
[55] Passporting is a process where INGOs accept due diligence assessments carried out by other INGOs or donors in lieu of conducting their own.
[56] ABC organizes humanitarian action around geographic areas, rather than sectors or demographics set by international aid agencies.

4. THE BALANCED SCORECARD AS A MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK FOR LOCALIZATION

The Balanced Scorecard is a tool that translates a company's strategy into specific measurable objectives and allows managers to view performance across several areas simultaneously.[57] The scorecard has the following key advantages:

➢ **Forward-looking orientation**, versus a report on past performance.

➢ **Integration of external and internal measures**, making managers aware of trade-offs.

➢ **Capture of financial and non-financial goals**, as successful locally-led engagement cannot just be measured through financial indicators, e.g. funds transferred.

The scorecard was developed at the Harvard Business School in 1992 and has since been adapted for the public and non-profit sectors.[58] The scorecard typically aligns four perspectives: customer, financial, internal, and learning and growth. For our purposes, the perspectives have been adapted to reflect humanitarian stakeholders: partner, donor, internal, and learning and growth. In the non-profit sector, overall mission rather than financial objectives drives the strategy and is placed at the top of the scorecard.

Mercy Corps' Pathway to Possibility outlines its commitment to locally led programs, which serves as its mission for the scorecard:

"We are intentional about sharing and ceding power, building meaningful partnerships, and centering communities' voices in all we do."[59]

---

[57] Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton, "The Balanced Scorecard—Measures That Drive Performance," *Harvard Business Review*, January–February 1992, 70-79.
[58] Robert S. Kaplan, "Strategic Performance Measurement and Management in Nonprofit Organizations," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 11, no. 3 (2001): 353–70.
[59] Mercy Corps, *Pathway to Possibility* (2022), 36.

Image 2. Adaptation of the Balanced Scorecard framework for the humanitarian INGO[60]
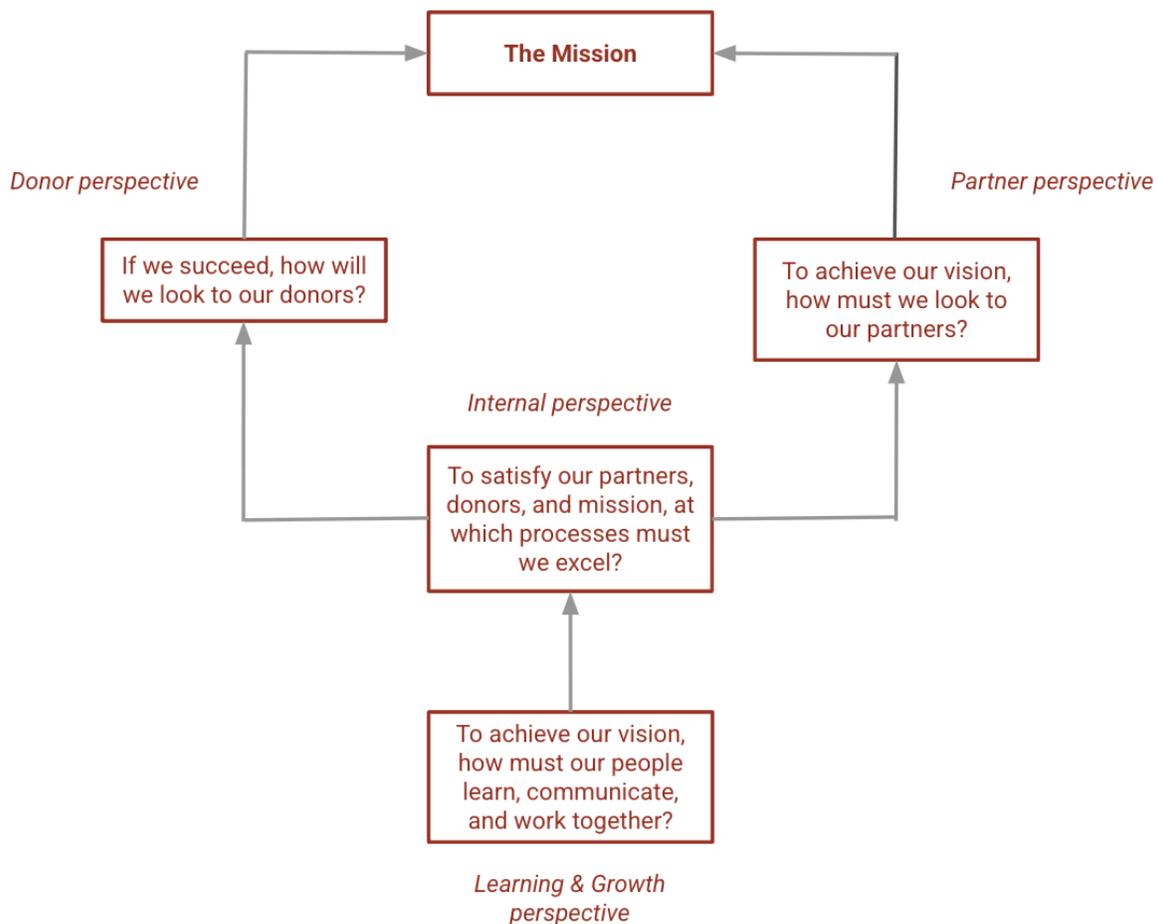
The development of a scorecard for Mercy Corps began with a thorough analysis of the existing objectives and indicators used by donors, partners, and Mercy Corps itself. While all three perspectives had established their own strategies, the partner organization's indicators were primarily qualitative, and Mercy Corps had yet to develop any indicators of its own.

This gap was addressed by **creating original quantitative metrics for both the partner and Mercy Corps.** All three perspectives were structured into the Balanced Scorecard format to identify any potential alignment or overlap. This approach enables Mercy Corps to better understand the priorities and metrics of its partners and integrate them into its own performance evaluation. The final goal is a scorecard that can be used internally by Mercy Corps or incorporated into donor agreements for accountability. The ultimate targets, against which the indicators measure progress, are set by the organization using the scorecard and therefore not included in the scorecard itself.

---

[60] Kaplan, "Strategic Performance Measurement," 361.

Partner Perspective: CSO Alliance UA

The Ukrainian Alliance of Civil Society Organisations (CSO Alliance UA) united a group of 16 Ukrainian CSOs in September 2023 to address power imbalances and advance local leadership in Ukraine's humanitarian response.[61] It is a key ally of Mercy Corps in its advocacy on localization issues. Their key strategy documents, as well as interviews with them and other Ukrainian CSOs helped establish the key concerns within their perspective.

Participation and access

The terminology of the humanitarian system as well as its reliance on English creates a significant barrier for partner organizations to participate. For example, local groups may not understand what "cash and voucher assistance in the Global Education Cluster"[62] encompasses, even though this terminology describes the common humanitarian programming of INGOs and the UN.

Coordination and complementarity

One partner had a positive experience with the INGO ShelterBox, who visited their office in Ukraine and adapted their due diligence process to them. Instead of completing new forms for ShelterBox's due diligence process, the partner was allowed to submit a previous application to another donor, to which ShelterBox would follow up with any additional questions.[63]

Instead of a long reporting form, regular meetings (e.g. 5-hour quarterly call, 30-minute weekly call) relieve the administrative burden and enable a two-way exchange of information.[64]

"Understanding [INGO] requirements and our needs, we are finding a sweet spot." – Ukrainian NGO[65]

Open communication and transparency

Partners emphasized the importance of understanding the INGOs application to the donor and what indicators were set by the donor in the agreement. This transparency allows partners to understand why INGOs may be creating requirements for them and helps them see "the bigger picture." Bad or intermittent

---

[61] Refugees International, "Looking Forward: The Alliance of Ukrainian CSOs," accessed April 5, 2025, https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports-briefs/looking-forward-the-alliance-of-ukrainian-csos/.
[62] Cash and voucher assistance (CVA) refers to the direct provision of cash transfers to aid recipients. The UN also coordinates the Humanitarian Cluster System.
[63] Author interview with a Ukrainian NGO, January 2025.
[64] Author interview with a Ukrainian NGO, January 2025.
[65] Author interview with a Ukrainian NGO, January 2025.

communication on INGOs' internal processes leads to frustration, when partners need to wait for approvals or verifications, which can hinder their responsiveness to emergencies.

Feedback on grant applications or the criteria INGOs use to select their partners would be very useful. "Some organizations know the system quite well and know how to hack it, but others don't," commented the co-founder of a Ukrainian NGO.[66]

CSO Alliance UA has outlined its vision for a locally led response in its strategy document, setting both operational (12-month) and long-term (5-year) goals.[67] This report adopts their strategic improvement vector while introducing quantitative indicators to measure progress towards the long-term objectives. The selected goals are those that fall within INGO capacity and align with other stakeholder localization priorities. The balanced scorecard draws upon these and the interviews to understand how Mercy Corps' performance will be viewed from a partner perspective.

Table 4. Partner Perspective: Vectors and Indicators

Improvement vector	Indicators for long-term (5 year) goals
Partnerships	# of INGOs and donors using a shared due diligence framework for local partners % of INGO country strategy documents co-developed with L/NAs % of INGO country programs with time-bound exit strategies
Leadership and Policy Influence	% of bilingual meetings with INGOs; partner satisfaction rating on language accessibility in meetings (via surveys) % of humanitarian coordination meetings with representation of local organisations % of emergency response plans with designated roles for volunteers
Coordination and Complementarity	# of humanitarian projects with data cross-checked by local partners Community-reported awareness of humanitarian response process and established civil protection systems (via surveys)

---

[66] Author interview with a Ukrainian NGO, January 2025.
[67] CSO Alliance UA, "Locally-led response strategy in Ukraine," October 2024.

Improvement vector	Indicators for long-term (5 year) goals
	% of INGO program staff trained on cultural and legal adaptation requirements
Funding	% of INGO grant application processes adapted to local CSO capacities (e.g. simplified requirements, local language availability) 7% of project budgets cover indirect costs[68]
Capacity	% of L/NAs that declare improved knowledge of humanitarian response tools (e.g. needs assessment, humanitarian principles, risk analysis) after an INGO partnership % of L/NAs that have personnel development and strategy plans
Participation	# of needs assessments that consult L/NAs % of trainings for L/NAs on incorporating gender-sensitive approaches to their strategy and services

Donor Perspective: British FCDO

The British Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) is one of the main donors that funds the work of Mercy Corps Ukraine, as well as the CSO Alliance UA.

Intermediary INGOs can take on a key role in facilitating communication between donors and down-stream partners to advance localization advocacy and policy influence. Through direct contact with local partners, donors can adapt their objectives to local needs and include these in their reporting templates for INGOs. As funds are dispensed from donor to INGO to local and national NGOs (L/NNGOs), ensuring feedback reaches the most up-stream partner creates accountability throughout the partnership chain.

---

[68] Many humanitarian organizations have set a 7% indirect cost rate to cover the overheads of their local partners.

Figure 3. Stakeholder mapping with flow of funding from donor to L/NNGOs

Donor	INGO	Local & National NGOs
UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office	Mercy Corps Ukraine	CSO Alliance Ukraine
		NGO Platform in Ukraine
		Philanthropy in Ukraine
		National Network of Local Philanthropy Development
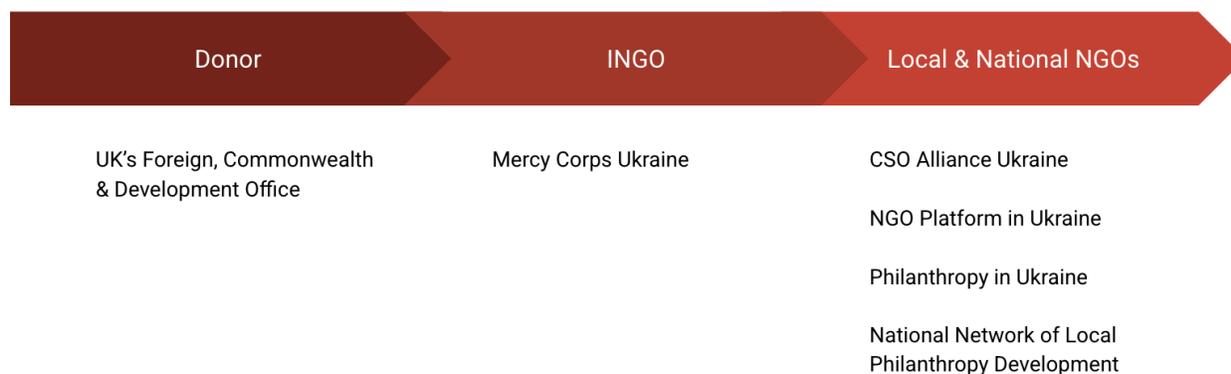
Mercy Corps set-up discussions between the FCDO and the CSO Alliance UA, which resulted in the FCDO's Humanitarian Partner Principles 2024-25.[69] The FCDO now annually assesses its performance against these 7 principles with their corresponding quantitative indicators:

Table 5. Donor Perspective: Principles and Indicators

Principles	Indicators
Equitable partnerships	Up to X% overhead provided to local partners to cover costs of security, insurance % of funding passed to local partners for programming purposes Programme log frame: # of partners providing fair reimbursement of/contribution to overhead costs to downstream partners
Capacity building	% of local partners declaring improved skills, knowledge, understanding policies, due diligence etc. % of local partners that have accessed other funding sources
Policy influence	# of decisions taken by coordination mechanisms that included local partners ideas # of partner consultations on project strategies

---

[69] Author interview with the FCDO in Ukraine, January 2025.

Principles	Indicators
	# of partner advocacy opportunities
	# of partner-donor dialogues set up
	% of project meetings where feedback and lessons learned can be shared with all donors and local partners
Sustainable staffing	# of staff who have moved from downstream partner to direct partner
Local coordination	# of successful coordination platforms that led to mutually beneficial decisions
	# of local partners involved in coordination fora
Strategy contribution	# of local partners involved in the overall analysis and evaluation of the programme cycle
	% of partner-driven programming (initiated by local partner based on local needs).
	Qualitative reporting on partner participation in planning
Visibility	Lead partner credits the role of their local partners when sharing information about project activities and results in communication with the donors and during coordination with other actors, reports, on social media, etc.

These principles show how the FCDO assesses their progress to localization and the metrics they are planning to incorporate in their report templates for INGOs like Mercy Corps.

Internal Perspective: Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps has long been at the forefront of localization and in early 2025 began drafting its global strategy on equitable partnerships at headquarter-level in Portland, Oregon. The following priorities emerged during an interview with Mercy Corps' global lead on their locally-led response:

Effective metrics

Hollow metrics can give the impression of localization without a true shift in power that delivers results for affected populations. Engaging a national organization alone does not ensure effective localization; for example, a Kyiv-based NGO may have limited reach in remote areas. Similarly, if funding volume remains the primary metric, it can incentivize grants to large national NGOs over smaller CSOs that may be more effective

locally. The number of national staff, who may be directed by international decision-making, is also not sufficient in capturing localization. Ultimately, localization requires a shift in power, not just funding or labor.

"We're trying to shift power, not labor." – Mercy Corps director

---

Equity over equality

Partnerships should be built on complementarity, leveraging the distinct skills and strengths of both INGOs and L/NAs. Leadership should align with organizations' capacity, staff, technical skills, and subject expertise.

True partnerships

Long-term strategic partnerships, spanning multiple projects or including collaboration between fixed projects, foster sustainability and move beyond transactional relationships. Key metrics here could be the number of meetings per year or the number of co-written agreements.

In addition to the priorities above, the objectives below are informed by Mercy Corps' Partnership Principles for team members' engagement with local partners. As Mercy Corps had developed the strategy but not the indicators, these have been developed using the quantitative metrics in the Pledge for Change,[70] as well as the partner-based measures of localization above.

Table 6. Internal Perspective: Objectives and Indicators

Objectives	Indicators
Equity *Partners have different roles and responsibilities, but there is fair distribution of risks and benefits in our relationships.*	Operational risk score assumed by partners, e.g. risk = hazard x exposure x vulnerability / capacity % of total project funds directly managed by local partners % of local partners who agree distribution of risk and benefits are fair
Humility *Partners' views are valued and respected.*	% of projects or initiatives where the design is partner-led, co-created or meets the criteria for Mercy Corps' Equitable Partnerships # opportunities and meetings that facilitate direct engagement of local partners

---

[70] "Metrics & Accountability," Pledge for Change 2030, accessed April 5, 2025, https://pledgeforchange2030.org/metrics-accountability/.

Objectives	Indicators
	% of local partners who agree their perspective is valued in decision-making
Complementarity *Partners have their own individual strengths that should be leveraged to reach collective goals.*	% of project agreements include a role-mapping exercise (e.g. RACI matrix) that aligns responsibilities with partners' identified strengths % of program activities have been aligned with the core competencies of local partners, as outlined in the partnership agreement
Accountability *Partners are provided with clear communication, responsiveness to feedback, and involvement in decision-making relating to shared work.*	Project updates are shared between partners every X days % of projects with a partner feedback mechanism, with response plan to be submitted by managers within X days % of partners' decision-making aligns with Mercy Corps' Levels of Engagement[71]

Learning & Growth Perspective: Mercy Corps

INGOs need to continuously make improvements and adapt their organizational systems (performance management, governance, training platforms) to better support localization. This element of the scorecard evaluates Mercy Corps' progress to "innovate, improve, and learn,"[72] for example by offering training to its employees to close a skills gap or enhance its information management systems for greater accountability to partners.

Partner interviews highlight the need for a "personal connection" or a "champion" within the INGO to drive localization.[73] Success therefore depends not only on broader organizational processes but also on staff values and priorities. Here performance evaluations that reward alignment with Partnership Principles can help reinforce this commitment.

---

[71] The Levels of Engagement is a Mercy Corps framework that clarifies roles and responsibilities in partnerships; it is currently under development.
[72] Kaplan and Norton, "The Balanced Scorecard—Measures That Drive Performance," 75.
[73] Author interview with a Ukrainian NGO, January 2025.

Table 7. Learning & Growth Perspective: Objectives and Indicators

Objectives	Indicators
Strengthen staff commitment to localization	% of performance evaluations including Partnership Principles
Embed localization measurement in organizational processes	% of country offices completing annual localization assessment, guided by the balanced scorecard # of localization measurement tools (see below section 5) developed and rolled out across % of country offices
Facilitate upstream learning	# of organizational policy updates or HQ-led strategies incorporating country-level lessons, e.g. from scorecard application in different humanitarian contexts

Integrating Stakeholder Perspectives

Across the three key stakeholders (partners, donors, and INGOs) there is already significant alignment in the core areas of localization measurement. Despite differences in terminology and indicators, the underlying objectives remain consistent. The aim of this section is to highlight the existing alignment and bring the three stakeholder perspectives together into one scorecard.

Table 8. Alignment of Stakeholder Objectives

Partner	Donor	Internal	Localization area[74]
Quality partnerships	Equitable partnerships	Equity	**Partnerships**
Leadership and policy influence	Strategy contribution	Humility	**Leadership**
Capacity	Capacity building	Complementarity	**Capacity**
Participation	Policy Influence	Accountability	**Policy Influence and Advocacy**

For example, what partners refer to as leadership and policy influence is termed strategy contribution by donors. However, both fall under the broader localization area of leadership. By recognizing these shared

---

[74] VANGO, PIANGO and Humanitarian Advisory Group, "Localisation in Vanuatu: Demonstrating Change," 1.

objectives, it is possible to establish a common scorecard to track progress across four localization areas of Partnerships, Leadership, Capacity, and Policy Influence and Advocacy.

Table 9. Final Localization Scorecard

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE	INDICATOR
Equitable partnerships – fair distribution of costs, risks, and benefits.	% of L/NAs report fair risk sharing/distribution % of direct funding & overhead % of project agreements with a role-mapping aligned with Mercy Corps' Levels of Engagement % of projects meet Equitable Partnerships criteria
Leadership and strategy contribution – involvement in decision-making.	# of partners involved in the full program cycle, incl. the design & MEAL % of partner-driven programming
Capacity strengthening – partners develop organizational capacity.	# of capacity-strengthening initiatives co-designed with local partners % of local partners reporting improved organizational capacity
Policy influence and advocacy – communication and inclusion of partner priorities.	% of policy recommendations co-developed with local partners # of L/NAs prepared for high-level policy discussions # of invitations for direct access to donor/partner

5. IMPLEMENTING THE SCORECARD AND NEXT STEPS

Recommendations

This report's core recommendation is the localization scorecard outlined in Section IV. Its effectiveness relies on the implementation by managers and clear communication to staff, so that humanitarian actors are aware of internal and external localization goals. While it is specific to Mercy Corps' local partners and key donors, the scorecard framework can be adapted by other INGOs seeking to operationalize their own locally-led response policies.

To enable the measurement of scorecard objectives, several additional mechanisms will need to be developed and implemented:

#1 RACI framework incorporation into project agreements. This will ensure competency-based responsibility allocation and equitable partnerships, according to Mercy Corps' Levels of Engagement. Mercy Corps is currently developing a framework to clarify roles and responsibilities in partnerships. RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) is a project management tool that clearly defines roles and ensures accountability.

Example: RACI frameworks will indicate the level of ownership of each task in the project.

- ➢ Responsible – completes the task.
- ➢ Accountable – decision-maker who reviews the task before delivery.
- ➢ Consulted – provides input and expertise.
- ➢ Informed – updated on progress without contribution.

	INGO	L/NA	Donor	Hromada
Program design	R	C	A	I
Risk assessment	A	R	I	-

#2 Risk measurement systems are developed and integrated into project plans. Project-related risk can be calculated according to the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction formula:[75]
Risk = (Hazard x Exposure x Vulnerability) / Capacity

Hazard refers to a phenomenon that has the potential to produce harm.

Exposure is the total amount that could be lost to a hazard.

Vulnerability is susceptibility to damage or loss.

Capacity is the ability to mitigate or withstand the hazard.

---

[75] Sam Barrett, Dave Steinbach, and Simon Addison, "Assessing Vulnerabilities to Disaster Displacement: A Good Practice Review," (IIED, London: November 2021): 14.

Risk assessment should be followed by mitigation as per the minimum standards outlined in the Duty of Care package, developed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.[76]

Fictional example: Mercy Corps has a partnership with a local organization to deliver non-food items in an area experiencing frequent missile attacks. The organization needs to assess the risk level of aid distribution to determine necessary safety measures. The calculation below uses a scale of 1-5.

➢   Hazard (severity of harm – daily missile attacks) = 5
➢   Exposure (people at risk – four local staff and one van) = 3
➢   Vulnerability (susceptibility – damaged roads, no evacuation route) = 4
➢   Capacity (mitigation – security protocol followed, HEAT certification) = 2

Risk = 30 out of a maximum 125

#3 Partner surveys and project feedback mechanisms. Several indicators, e.g. capacity strengthening, rely on the reporting of L/NAs. Perception scores and feedback are useful methods through which to measure engagement of locally led responses. Surveys can be used to gather quantitative data and track progress over time.

Example questions: Following the conclusion of a project, partners should be invited to give feedback in order to measure progress on localization objectives.

% of L/NAs who confirm fair division of cost, risk, benefit
➢   *Are project costs (e.g. administrative, operational, program expenses) fairly distributed between your organization and the INGO partner?*

% of L/NAs reporting improved organizational capacity
➢   *Has your organizational capacity (e.g. financial management, technical expertise, operational effectiveness) improved as a result of your partnership with the INGO?*

Closing Considerations

The localization scorecard and its quantitative indicators offer a starting point for Mercy Corps Ukraine to adjust its monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) framework to measure the implementation of localization. Indicators are presented in a simple and efficient format; however, feedback suggested they could offer more detail with an expanded scoring system rather than a binary measure (e.g., reflecting the degree of L/NA involvement rather than simply involved/not involved). Moving forward, it will need to be routinely adapted to reflect changes in stakeholder strategy, operational capacity and funding, and priorities. For example, as of April 2025 the Humanitarian NGO Platform in Ukraine is running its first localization self-assessment and collecting data from its participating organizations with results yet to be finalized.

---

[76] Humanitarian NGO Platform in Ukraine, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and CSO Alliance UA, "Duty of Care package for local humanitarian responders in Ukraine."

Besides enabling internal accountability, the scorecard can be used externally to demonstrate how INGOs comply with donors' localization requirements and work as a concise communication tool.[77]

For a lasting shift in power, the scorecard and its localization indicators could be used not only at the country level, like in this instance Mercy Corps Ukraine, but inform the localization strategy at global headquarters. This can then be further shared with other Mercy Corps country offices and global MEAL experts. As one colleague at a Mercy Corps office in East Africa commented about the scorecard, "Ukraine is absolutely a game changer on this front. The global team will definitely have something more definitive to start from." Alignment within and across the organizational structure will further enable country teams to implement localization processes and transition towards a locally-led response.

---

[77] Robert S. Kaplan and David P. Norton, *The Strategy-Focused Organization: How Balanced Scorecard Companies Thrive in the New Business Environment* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2001), 159.

References

1. ACAPS. "UKRAINE: Perceptions of Localisation in the Humanitarian Response." June 2023.

2. ACF, CDAC, Start Network. "Localisation in Practice: Emerging Indicators and Practical Recommendations." June 2018.

3. Al Jazeera. "Russia Intensifies Assaults on Ukraine Ahead of Trump's Inauguration." December 13, 2024. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/13/russia-intensifies-assaults-on-ukraine-ahead-of-trumps-inauguration.

4. Applebaum, Anne. "The Other Ukrainian Army." *The Atlantic.* August 2022.

5. Australian Red Cross et al. "Localisation in Protracted Crises and Fragile Settings." November 2023.

6. Barrett, Sam, Dave Steinbach, and Simon Addison. "Assessing Vulnerabilities to Disaster Displacement: A Good Practice Review." *IIED*. November 2021.

7. Bennett, Christina. "Local Aid Groups Are Paving the Way for Progress on Their Terms. Internationals Need to Follow Their Lead." *The New Humanitarian.* June 27, 2023.

8. Brennan, David. "Russia Increases Ukraine Drone Attacks by 44% Since Trump Election." *ABC News.* November 14, 2024. https://abcnews.go.com/International/russia-increases-ukraine-drone-attacks-44-trump-election/story?id=115808759.

9. CSO Alliance UA. "Locally-Led Response Strategy in Ukraine." October 2024.

10. Development Initiatives. "Falling Short? Humanitarian Funding and Reform." October 2024.

11. Duituturaga, Emele, Josie Flint, and Josaia Jirauni. "Tracking Progress on Localisation: A Pacific Perspective." Humanitarian Advisory Group and Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations. June 2018.

12. Fine, Patrick. "USAID Can't Go It Alone on Localization." *Brookings Institution*. February 5, 2024.

13. Humanitarian Advisory Group. "Intention to Impact: Measuring Localisation." February 2018.

14. Humanitarian Advisory Group, Centre for Humanitarian Leadership, Fiji University. "Going Local: Achieving a More Appropriate and Fit-for-Purpose Humanitarian Ecosystem in the Pacific." December 2017.

15. Humanitarian NGO Platform in Ukraine, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and CSO Alliance UA. "Duty of Care Package for Local Humanitarian Responders in Ukraine." February 2025.

16. Inter-Agency Standing Committee. "About the Grand Bargain." Accessed April 5, 2025. https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/node/40190.

17. Inter-Agency Standing Committee. "Commitments and Core Commitments by Workstream." November 2021.

18. Inter-Agency Standing Committee. "DRAFT USAID Policy: Localization of Humanitarian Assistance." October 24, 2022.

19. Inter-Agency Standing Committee. "Grand Bargain Implementation Agenda 2025-2026." November 2024.

20. Inter-Agency Standing Committee. "Grand Bargain Self-Reporting Cycle 2024." Accessed April 5, 2025. https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-official-website/grand-bargain-self-reporting-cycle-2024.

21. Inter-Agency Standing Committee. "Localisation." Accessed April 5, 2025. https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/localisation.

22. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). "Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments." Accessed April 5, 2025. https://preparecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/VCA-guide-ifRC.pdf.

23. Kaplan, Robert S., and David P. Norton. "The Balanced Scorecard—Measures That Drive Performance." *Harvard Business Review*, January–February 1992, 70-79.

24. Kaplan, Robert S. "Strategic Performance Measurement and Management in Nonprofit Organizations." *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 11, no. 3 (2001): 353–70.

25. Kaplan, Robert S., and David P. Norton. *The Strategy-Focused Organization: How Balanced Scorecard Companies Thrive in the New Business Environment*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2001.

26. Koshiw, Isobel. "The Informal Volunteer Groups Leading Ukraine's Aid Effort." *The Guardian*. July 1, 2022.

27. Loy, Irwin. "Why the Grand Bargain's Future Hinges on Accountability." *The New Humanitarian*. October 15, 2024. Accessed April 5, 2025.

https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2024/10/15/why-grand-bargain-future-hinges-accountability.

28. Maha Shuayb. "Localisation Only Pays Lip Service to Fixing Aid's Colonial Legacy." *The New Humanitarian*. February 8, 2022.

29. Mercy Corps. Various internal factsheets on Ukraine programming. 2025.

30. Mercy Corps Europe. "Local Partners Are Vital to Supporting Millions Affected by Ukraine War." Accessed April 5, 2025. https://europe.mercycorps.org/en-gb/blog/partners-supporting-millions-ukraine-war.

31. Mercy Corps, and Humanitarian NGO Platform in Ukraine. "Understanding Ongoing Localization Initiatives and Improving the Policy and Operational Environment for Local Actors." December 2023.

32. Noe, Nicholas. "Localizing the International Humanitarian Response in Ukraine." *Refugees International*. September 9, 2022.

33. Noe, Nicholas. "Localizing Aid in Ukraine: Perspectives from Ukrainian Humanitarians in Odesa, Lviv, Zaporizhia, and Dnipro." *Refugees International*, December 22, 2022.

34. Noe, Nicholas. "Looking Forward: The Alliance of Ukrainian CSOs." *Refugees International*. March 27, 2025.

35. Noe, Nicholas, and Hardin Lang. "Efforts to Localize Aid in Ukraine One Year On: Stuck in Neutral, Losing Time." *Refugees International.* February 24, 2023.

36. Nonviolent Peace Force. "Localization in Practice: Implementing Responsible Humanitarian Partnerships in Ukraine." November 2024.

37. NGO Forum Razem, Groupe URD et al. "Grand Bargain Localization Commitments (Poland Case Study)." June 2024.

38. NGO Resource Center et al. "A Humanitarian Localization Baseline for Ukraine: Progress Report 2024." November 2024.

39. Pact. "Promise and Accountability for Locally Led Development: Lessons and Recommendations from Pact's Global Engaged Communities Assessment." July 2023.

40. Pledge for Change 2030. "Metrics & Accountability." Accessed April 5, 2025. https://pledgeforchange2030.org/metrics-accountability/.

41. Refugees International. "Less Than 1% of Humanitarian Funding for Ukraine Goes Directly to Local Organizations." December 19, 2024. Accessed April 4, 2025. https://www.refugeesinternational.org/statements-and-news/less-than-1-of-humanitarian-funding-for-ukraine-goes-directly-to-local-organizations/.

42. Refugees International, East SOS, Center for Disaster Philanthropy. "Annual Ukraine Localization Survey 2024." December 2024.

43. Several INGOs. "Why Not Local? INGO Statement on the Urgent Need to Accelerate Progress and Accountability Towards Local Leadership of Humanitarian Action." Inter-Agency Standing Committee, October 2024. https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-official-website/ingos-joint-statement-why-not-local.

44. The SHARE Trust, Center for Disaster Philanthropy, Refugees International. "Passing the Buck." July 2024.

45. Stoddard, Andrew, Peter Harvey, Neil Timmins, Viktoria Pakhomenko, M.-J. Breckenridge, and Marcin Czwarno. "Enabling the Local Response: Emerging Humanitarian Priorities in Ukraine March–May 2022." Humanitarian Outcomes. June 2022.

46. The 2nd Annual Ukrainian Aid Leadership Conference Post-Conference Update: "It's Time to Accelerate the Locally Led Response." March 15, 2024. Accessed April 5, 2025. https://d3jwam0i5codb7.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Post-Conference-Update-ENG-1.pdf.

Appendix

Below is an expanded version of the Localization Scorecard that keeps the different stakeholder perspectives distinct. This scorecard was ultimately condensed for the final version by aligning stakeholder objectives.

Perspective	Strategic Objective	Indicators
Partner	**Quality partnerships**–even distribution of risks and financial incentives.	# of INGOs and donors using a shared due diligence framework for local partners, % of INGO country strategy documents co-developed with L/NAs
	Leadership and policy influence–involvement in decision-making.	% of bilingual meetings with INGOs; partner satisfaction rating on language accessibility in meetings (via surveys)
	Capacity–partners grow to take the lead.	% of L/NAs that declare improved knowledge of humanitarian response tools after partnership
	Participation–involvement of all local voices.	# of needs assessments that consult L/NAs
Donor	**Equitable partnerships**–fair share of partner overheads covered.	% of overhead and direct funding to partners
	Strategy contribution–partners participate in intervention design.	# of partners involved in project design, % of partner-driven programming
	Capacity building–partners develop organisational capacity.	% of partners report considerable increase of their capacity as a result of partnership
	Policy influence–communication between partners and donors.	# of partner consultations, # of partner-donor dialogues
Internal	**Equity**–risks and benefits are fairly distributed.	Operational risk score for partners, % of direct funding, % L/NAs who confirm fair division

Perspective	Strategic Objective	Indicators
	Humility–partners' views are valued.	% of projects or initiatives where the design is partner-led, co-created or meets the criteria for Mercy Corps' Equitable Partnerships
	Complementarity–partners' individual strengths are leveraged.	% of project agreements with a role-mapping/RACI matrix
	Accountability–clear communication, feedback incorporation, and decision-making involvement.	Updates shared every X days, 100% of projects have L/NA feedback mechanism
Learning and Growth	**Staff commitment to localization**–building allyship from within.	% of performance evaluations including Partnership Principles
	Integrate localization measurement–tools support processes.	# of localization measurement tools developed
	Facilitate upstream learning–HQ strategy learns from country-level context.	# of organizational policy updates draws country-level lessons