

# Best Practices of Localisation Assessment | UKRAINE

November 2024 - January 2025

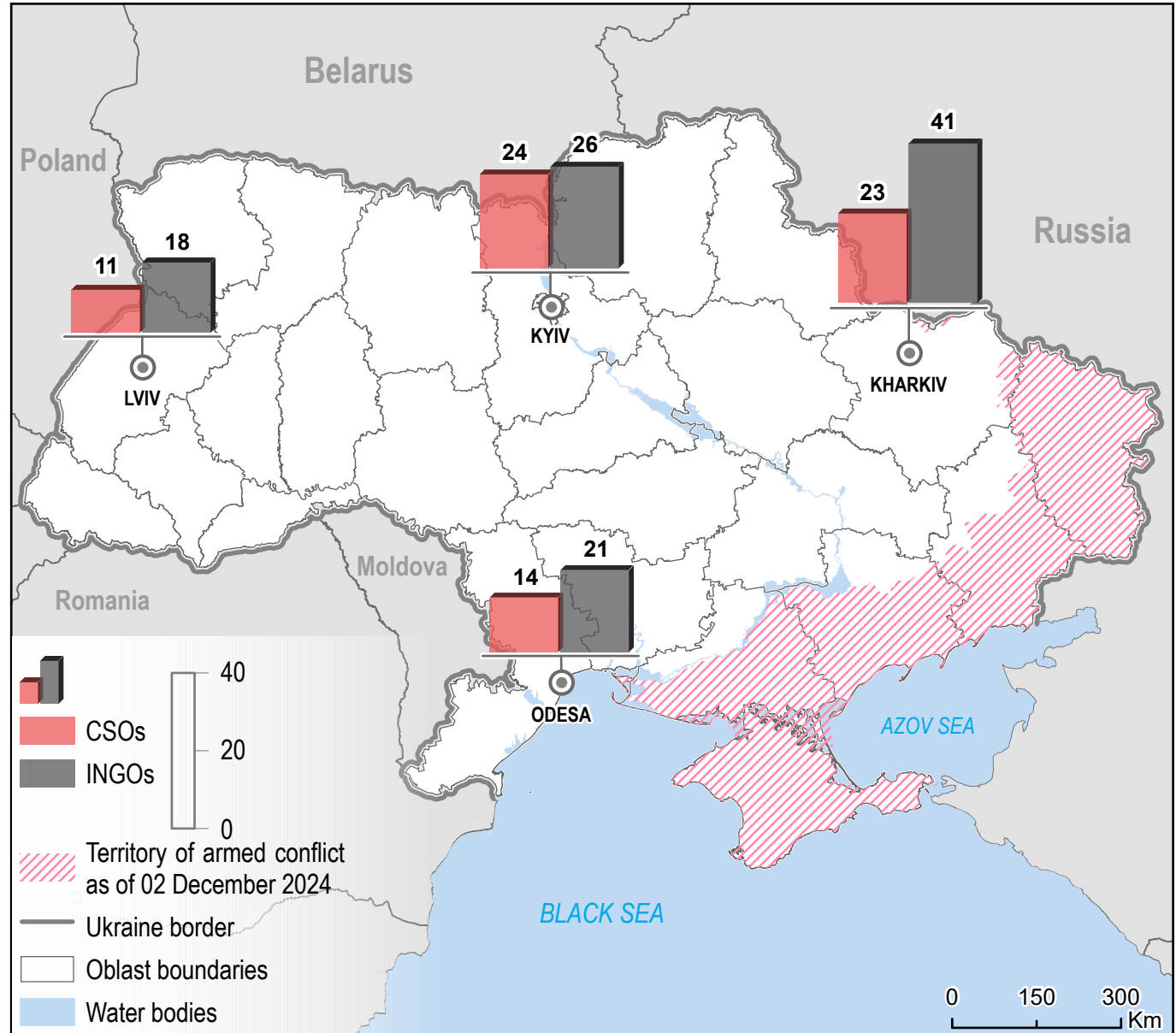
## INTRODUCTION

This assessment aims to identify best practices in the localisation of humanitarian efforts, focusing on the coordination and capacity-building between international and local actors in Ukraine. By documenting successful examples of localisation and assessing the effectiveness of current capacity-building efforts, the report will highlight areas for improvement in equity, mutual respect, and shared decision-making. The assessment will explore gaps in localisation, challenges in partnerships, and mechanisms that can promote more equitable cooperation. The geographic focus includes local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and International NGOs (INGOs) that operate in the West (Lviv), North (Kyiv), South (Odesa), and East (Kharkiv), ensuring a broad representation of Ukraine's regions. Ultimately, the goal is to provide actionable insights to enhance the role of local actors in the humanitarian response across the country.

All findings are not representative, but indicative only.

## COVERAGE AND SAMPLING

Areas where assessed CSOs and INGOs are reportedly conducting activities, by number of actors reporting:



## KEY FINDINGS

**Partnerships:** Partnerships between INGOs and CSOs are crucial for effective localisation. However, challenges such as competition for resources and insufficient communication hinder the full potential of these partnerships.

**Capacity-Building:** CSOs value mentorship and training but need more tailored support in areas like management, security, and psychological well-being.

**Coordination:** Challenges in coordination remain, including inefficiencies in coordination efforts, bureaucratic hurdles, and a lack of communication strategies within CSOs.

**Policy Influence:** CSOs seek more participation in policy development, but face barriers such as limited access to relevant discussions and poor information-sharing.

**Equity and Accountability:** The majority of INGOs have feedback mechanisms, but some CSOs doubt their feedback is truly considered. Key barriers to localisation include bureaucratic challenges, competition for staff for CSOs and INGOs.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology was created in close collaboration with Alliance CSO UA to ensure a comprehensive and contextually relevant approach. The data collection for this assessment was conducted from 13 November 2024 to 31 January 2025, focusing on identifying and documenting best practices in the localisation of humanitarian efforts between INGOs and CSOs in Ukraine. The assessment covered partnerships across four key cities: Lviv, Kyiv, Odesa, and Kharkiv, aiming to capture a large sample of geographic and operational diversity.

REACH utilized a mixed-methods approach, beginning with quantitative surveys conducted from 13 November to 2 December 2024, targeting both local and international actors involved in localisation efforts. The quantitative survey captured data from 61 CSO representatives and 44 INGO representatives, exploring their perspectives on localisation practices, equity, capacity-building, and partnership dynamics.

Thereafter, qualitative key informant interviews (KIs) were conducted from 24 December 2024 to 31 January 2025, focusing on a smaller subset of organizations that demonstrated successful or challenging localisation practices. These interviews, conducted with 12 CSOs, 8 INGOs and 4 UN agencies representatives, delved into key topics such as decision-making processes, resource allocation, and challenges faced in promoting more equitable partnerships. The qualitative part also included interviews with 8 local research institutions and 3 donor representatives. These interviews provided valuable insights into the role of local research and education institutions in supporting localisation efforts, as well as the influence of donor perspectives on the effectiveness of localisation strategies.

The findings from both the quantitative and qualitative phases were analyzed to identify successful strategies and areas for improvement in localisation efforts across Ukraine.

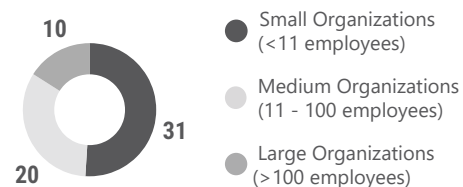
## LIMITATIONS

It is impossible to confirm that all relevant CSOs and INGOs engaged in localization efforts across Lviv, Kyiv, Odesa, and Kharkiv were identified by the field team. While efforts were made to contact all organizations that met the inclusion criteria, a small number did not respond or chose not to participate in the survey. As a result, some actors in these regions may not be represented in the study. Additionally, the results cannot be assumed to be statistically representative of the entire group. Therefore, all findings should be considered indicative rather than representative.

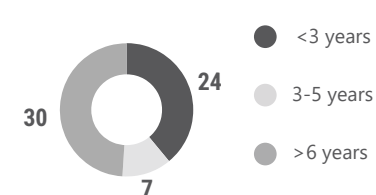
Moreover, the regional focus of this assessment limits its generalisability to other areas of Ukraine or to other countries, meaning the findings may not be directly applicable to CSOs and INGOs in different contexts. Additionally, it is important to note that INGOs typically do not operate in just one region of Ukraine; rather, they often have a presence in multiple locations simultaneously, making it challenging to assign a specific INGO to a single region.

## Local Organizations' Profile

CSOs' size, reported by CSOs (n=61):



Duration of humanitarian involvement, reported by CSOs (n=61):



## OVERVIEW OF LOCALISATION STRATEGIES

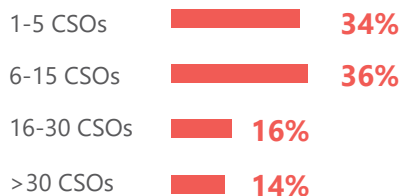
Localisation strategies implemented by INGOs in the last year, reported by INGOs (n=44)

Capacity-building initiatives	82%
Direct financing of CSOs	75%
Joint decision-making with CSOs	75%
Mentorship	52%
Establishment of local coordination mechanisms	36%

Localisation strategies CSOs engaged in the last year, reported by CSOs (n=61)

Capacity-building initiatives	85%
Direct financing of CSOs	57%
Coordination mechanisms	57%
Joint decision-making with CSOs	49%
Mentorship	33%

Number of CSOs that participated in localisation efforts, reported by INGOs (n=44)



Most successful localisation practices, by CSOs that engaged in these practices

Direct financing of CSOs	77%
Capacity-building initiatives	71%
Mentorship	60%
Coordination mechanisms	51%
Joint decision-making with CSOs	43%
None	2%

Many INGOs acknowledged that localisation has become a global trend, with several KIs highlighting that donors are actively driving this shift by requiring INGOs to have local partners.

*"Everyone is talking about localisation of partnerships. In many of these conversations, the key premise is that if you want to receive funding [as an INGO], you must have localisation and local partners." - INGO representative*

In the qualitative stage, CSOs also confirmed the growing focus from donors on localisation.

*"Localisation is what is done with us [local organizations] when the donor has decided that this is part of his strategy, vision, when the donor has the political will to do so." - CSO representative*

**Number of INGOs that reported having localisation strategies, reported by INGOs (n=43)**



Overall, the majority of INGOs reported either already having a developed localisation strategy or having one in progress. Capacity-building initiatives, including strategies for mentoring and knowledge transfer, were most often mentioned by INGOs as a key component of their localisation strategy.

One CSO expressed the desire for INGOs to publicly share their localisation and exit strategies to enhance local coordination, stating:

*"To international organizations providing services in Ukraine, I would like them to eventually make their localisation strategies and exit plans public."* - CSO representative

**PARTNERSHIPS**

Some INGOs raised concerns about unfair and gatekept local partnerships with CSOs, noting that INGOs tend to work with a limited number of local partners who already have established relationships with them. INGOs are often reluctant to form partnerships with new organizations.

*"...most donors, international organizations, etc., work with a selected list of local organizations in Ukraine, 10-12 organizations whose budgets have already exceeded the budget of the district center, and this organizations begin to further monopolize the market."* - INGO representative

One INGO shared a **unique example** of partnerships, where they collaborated with small, unregistered CSOs, helping them grow into powerful organizations.

*"The partners we work with, some of them were not even legal entities at the beginning of the war; they were just volunteer groups doing what they could. But we helped them institutionalize - creating legal entities, formalizing internal processes. Now, they are stable, effective organizations with clear roles, divisions, resolutions, strategies, plans, and policies that they adopted with our support. Over the past three years of the full-scale invasion, these volunteer groups have evolved into official, powerful public organizations."* - INGO representative

**Sections that are covered in localisation strategy, by INGOs having this strategy (n=31)**

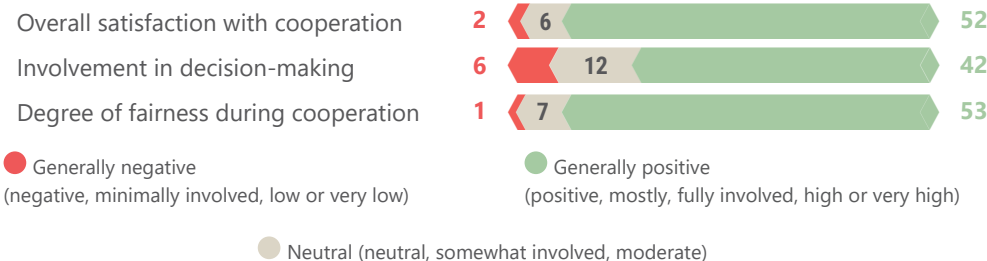
Capacity-building strategies	90%
Partnership frameworks	65%
Financial strategies	65%
Monitoring and evaluation of success of localisation	52%
Internal localisation of INGO	48%
Establishment of local coordination mechanisms	39%
Exit plan	29%

**Criteria INGOs use to select local partners, reported by INGOs (n=44)**

Official registration	89%
Completed due diligence	77%
Strict donor requirements for CSOs	66%
CSOs cannot engage with military actors	61%
Previous INGO collaboration experience	34%

**Decision-Making and Fairness**

**Self-reported ratings of aspects of international cooperation by CSOs (n=61)**



The majority of CSOs reported overall satisfaction with their international partnerships. However, the most frustrating aspect for CSOs was involvement in decision-making. Six CSOs reported being minimally involved, while twelve were somewhat involved.

During the qualitative stage, the majority of both INGOs and CSOs expressed concerns that full equity between CSOs and INGOs is difficult to achieve due to existing power dynamics and unequal access to resources. However, they believed that this dynamic could be improved if resources were distributed more fairly and CSOs had more secure and stable funding.

*"Informally, it seems that international organizations hold more power. This is primarily because they receive more funding, and Ukrainian organizations are dependent on them, adapting accordingly. Therefore, the more funding Ukrainian organizations receive, the more actively they will be involved."* - Donor representative

Many INGOs also mentioned that CSOs need to become more confident and better informed about their rights.

*"I was conducting a feedback session after one of the projects and there were mostly small organizations there. And I was very shocked that they were afraid of us... And several organizations said that they were afraid to set any requirements for us."* - INGO representative

Some INGOs and CSOs noted concerns about the power dynamics between INGOs and CSOs, with a few local organizations feeling that INGOs sometimes have limited trust in their expertise. Additionally, there were mentions of a desire for more flexibility in partnerships. These concerns can occasionally result in overlapping efforts and a lack of coordination.

*"The problem is a lack of trust in the expertise of national partners, and a lack of understanding or unwillingness to understand the context. I encountered situations where partners proposed developing mechanisms that already existed, without even asking what had already been done by others. This results in inefficient use of resources, duplication of efforts, and, at the very least, disrespect for those who worked here before you."* - CSO representative

One **effective strategy** mentioned by our KIs was the presence and dialogue between CSOs and donors or HQ without the involvement of INGOs.

*"An important point is to give CSOs the opportunity to communicate with us directly. We tell implementing Ukrainian partners that they can write to us directly if they have comments or questions."* - Donor representative

CSOs also expressed a desire to involve donors in field monitoring more often to enhance mutual understanding.

## FUNDING

### Access to Direct Funding

Among assessed CSOs,

**81%**

reported receiving direct financing from international partners during the last year.

Described process of obtaining direct funding from IOs, reported by CSOs (n=46)



14 the process was **easy**

17 the process was **neutral**

15 the process was **difficult**

The majority of CSOs reportedly receive direct funding from international partners, with this practice being highlighted as the most frequently successful form of localisation (27 out of 35). On the other hand, only 14 CSOs described the process of receiving direct funding as easy.

*"Everything was great until we got to the [financial] reports... If our work, preparation and the project itself, took three weeks, then [financial] reporting took almost three months." - CSO representative*

The duplication of financial reporting requirements, both under Ukrainian legislation and specific donor requirements, is a frustrating challenge for CSOs:

*"[We have to] fill out the same thing in Ukrainian, but it's not the same there, there's a different application form altogether. And you just make another application again. That is, you do the same job twice. I understand that there are certain requirements there, there's probably some rationale in it, but it's difficult." - CSO representative*

Both INGOs and donors agree that direct funding remains a significant challenge, with many noting that it is particularly difficult for CSOs to access it. However, **positive initiatives** like the **pooled funds** have helped donors overcome some institutional barriers.

*"We once joined the Ukrainian Humanitarian Fund, which allows for direct financing to organizations - this is an indicator of how we promote localisation. If we can't do it directly, we create mechanisms that enable it." - INGO representative*

That said, direct funding is still very bureaucratically challenging for donors to implement.

*"As a donor, we, for our part, do not have the capacity to work with smaller organizations because it requires a lot of human resources, which we do not have." - Donor representative*

CSOs that successfully accessed direct funding from donors (such as **through a consortium**) consider it their **best practice**.

*"We have many [successful localisation] examples, but the first one that comes to mind is our funding consortium. As an organization, we grew within this consortium and learned how to work with the <name of the donor>. By 2023, we had reached a point where we were able to secure direct funding from this donor." - CSO representative*

### Overhead Costs and Operational Costs

The lack of overhead cost coverage by INGOs continues to be a significant challenge for many CSOs. Out of 48 CSOs, only 13 reported that their overhead expenditures were fully covered by international partners. This issue was also highlighted during the qualitative phase, where CSO representatives voiced their concerns about the strain this places on their operations.

*"The downside is that the organizations we collaborated with had no overhead; they did not provide support to the local organization at all. We had to find separate funding to maintain the team and cover our internal needs. All their funds were focused solely on supporting the population, and none were allocated to supporting those who carry out these essential tasks." - CSO representative*

The interviewed INGOs, in contrast, reported that they do provide overhead funding to their local partners. Four KIs reported allocating 7-10% for overhead costs, while two reported 2-7%. However, one donor representative pointed out a potential gap in the way overhead costs are managed, stating:

*"If you look at the <name of the donor> policy, we have a 7% overhead for certified partners. The policy is designed with the intention of fostering an honest and open partnership, where we expect our partners to ensure a fair division of overheads. However, the policy does not specify a clear percentage for local organizations. In some cases, international partners may interpret this flexibility as an opportunity to allocate zero for overhead costs." - Donor representative*

This highlights a key concern about the lack of transparency and consistency in the allocation of overhead funds. While INGOs may have guidelines in place, the absence of clear, mandatory overhead provisions for local partners can lead to discrepancies in the support provided.

Reported coverage of overhead costs, reported by CSOs (n=47)

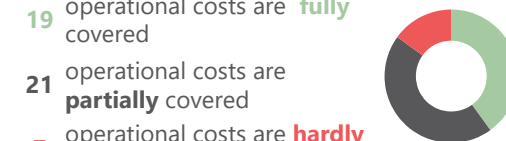


13 overhead costs are **fully** covered

23 overhead costs are **partially** covered

11 overhead costs are **hardly** covered

Reported coverage of operational costs, reported by CSOs (n=47)



19 operational costs are **fully** covered

21 operational costs are **partially** covered

7 operational costs are **hardly** covered

Among the **successful practices** shared by INGOs, several highlighted the importance of having **flexible funds** that can be dedicated to covering "extravagant" expenses for CSOs.

*"We have a flexible fund. This is money that we accumulate from the citizens of [name of the country]... this fund allows us to support something very extravagant [for CSOs], something that donors may not be interested in supporting." - INGO representative.*

Other INGOs mentioned lavish coverage of expenses, such as **full coverage of salaries** for local partners or inclusion of **additional 20% of "support" funding** on top of funding exclusively for programs.

Another KI mentioned **extensive information sharing** of all relevant existing donor opportunities with their local partners:

*"We always send all relevant opportunities to all our partners. And these are more than 100 CSOs in Ukraine. Just so that they are informed about various opportunities, like grants, capacity building, training, anything." - INGO representative*



## CAPACITY-BUILDING

Capacity-building support provided by INGOs, reported by CSOs (n=52):

Trainings, workshops	90%
Financial support	71%
Provision of resources	67%
Mentorship, coaching	40%
Technical assistance	38%
Mental health support	19%
Medical insurance	2%

Capacity-building support INGOs provided, reported by INGOs (n=36):

Trainings, workshops	97%
Financial support	81%
Provision of resources	81%
Technical assistance	72%
Mentorship, coaching	67%
Mental health support	42%
Medical insurance	19%

Overall, capacity-building initiatives were viewed as effective by most of CSOs, with 42 out of 50 rating them positively. Five expressed a neutral opinion, while only three considered them ineffective.

Five CSO representatives highlighted mentorship as **successful practices** of localisation. Assistance with bureaucratic procedures, in particular, was highly valued by CSOs. As two CSOs mentioned:

*"[Successful] cooperation with an INGO stood out because they guided us very well on how to report. There were numerous calls with our procurement and finance experts. We also had the opportunity to attend many management training sessions, which proved invaluable when we began our work."*

*"INGO held sessions where they talk in detail about each document... Literally all the steps that will need to be taken to finish the project. And you just understand that you can work differently, and make much fewer mistakes, much faster to get involved in the document flow process with the donor, if the donor finds time to make normal project settings."*

This kind of support not only helps CSOs navigate bureaucratic processes but also provides them with skills for effective management.

INGOs mentioned various **successful capacity building initiatives** related to security, such as duty of care, provision of personal protective equipment and medical insurance.

*"We conducted an assessment on the minimum package of protection for volunteers... We saw that the protection that INGOs have is not always available to local implementing partners. And based on this assessment, we want to standardize it and include it in all our contracts, so that automatically if an INGO cooperates with a Ukrainian one, they assume the obligation to properly protect the employees of local organization."* - Donor representative

One INGO representative shared their **approach** to cooperating with partners who work close to the frontline:

*"Those partners who work for near the front line, ... work only under the cover of the local police, because the police are in constant radio contact with the military, they always know if there is a threat of a drone attack, a threat of artillery shelling... Without this, our field teams do not leave, because unfortunately we have seen many cases when humanitarian workers were attacked. We value our partners, so for us their safety is priority number one."* - INGO representative

One INGO representative emphasized the **importance** of providing retreats for local partners to prevent burnout among their teams.

*"The emotional, moral, and psychological state of Ukrainian teams, in my opinion, is declining. We also work in this sector, helping them by providing retreats, offering opportunities for paid psychological assistance, and conducting training sessions on psychological self-help."* - INGO representative

Additionally, two INGO representatives highlighted the **need** to strengthen and analyze the internal capacity of CSOs through self-assessments.

*"Capacity strengthening is something that the partner should decide for themselves first. To facilitate this, we have developed a special tool called the 'capacity self-assessment.' This tool allows them to assess their organization in all areas. We can act as facilitators—helping them work with the tool if they feel it might be difficult. We present it to them and show them how to use it. Afterward, they can identify their most critical gaps and create their own capacity strengthening plan. We can provide support if we see that shifting priorities might be beneficial, but ultimately, it's up to the partner to decide what actions to take."* - INGO representative

### Skills CSOs Need for Effective Humanitarian Response

Three INGOs raised concerns about the contextualisation of capacity-building activities, such as training programs, emphasizing that courses must be tailored to the specific context and needs of each organization. One INGO representative expressed frustration with the current approaches, stating:

*"I really don't like the approaches that are currently used in international organizations. The same training for everyone is a very colonial practice that should become a thing of the past."* - INGO representative

This sentiment was echoed by two CSOs, who shared similar views on the need for customized training programs.

*"We have different problems and requests, and I believe that any training programs should be tailored to the specific needs of an organization in order to have a real impact. It's one thing to provide general training on protection for all partners, but it's another to help them implement a very specific mechanism, like a referral mechanism, or develop competencies in accounting. These are specific needs that require more than just a one- or two-hour session."* - CSO representative

Among interviewed CSO representatives many highlighted the importance of short-term education, particularly in areas like management, financial reporting, and procurement. Some also emphasized the need for long-term training and mentorship to ensure sustainable organizational growth.

A few CSOs also highlighted the critical need for psychological support for local partners, as well as first aid, medical, and security training.

*"[We need] retreats and psychological support sessions because it's crucial to support those who provide humanitarian aid. We also experience burnout. It can be very difficult for us, especially when we hear stories from our beneficiaries."* - CSO representative

Another CSO pointed out the shortage of essential first aid trainings, stating:

*"There are very few first aid classes, critically few. We are involved in evacuation efforts, so it's extremely important for us to have this training. I've signed up for these courses many times, but there's usually a huge demand for them, and spots fill up quickly."* - CSO representative

### Role of Research Institutions in Capacity Building

Overall, five interviewed research institutions (RIs) reported that they are already engaged in networking with civil society by organizing workshops and facilitating networking opportunities. These institutions also shared that they offer sporadic training sessions when requested by local CSOs. One such institution mentioned that they had published a guide outlining their best practices in research, which CSOs can utilize for their own operations and capacity-building. This demonstrates the RIs' commitment to supporting local organizations by providing valuable resources and expertise, even if the training is not consistently available.

RIs also shared the view that courses for CSOs should be tailored to the specific needs of each organization, as every CSO has its own unique challenges and approaches. They emphasized that creating a one-size-fits-all course is complex, as it is difficult to design a program that would effectively meet the diverse needs of all local organizations.

A few INGOs expressed concerns that university courses are not always relevant to the needs of local organizations, as the humanitarian context is too volatile and dynamic to support the creation of long-term, standardized courses. An INGO and donor representatives highlighted the importance of first assessing existing opportunities to avoid duplicating capacity-building efforts, ensuring resources are used efficiently.

*"Before creating anything in Ukraine, I always remind you that Ukraine has been facing a humanitarian response since June 2015, not just since February 2022. Nearly 7-8 years before the full-scale invasion. So, before introducing anything or discussing new initiatives, it's important to understand what has already worked in Ukraine and what hasn't."* - INGO representative

## COORDINATION

Coordination mechanisms CSOs use to cooperate with INGOs, reported by CSOs (n=35):

Information sharing platforms	69%
Regular meetings	66%
Formal agreements	66%
Project implementation	63%
Joint planning sessions	51%

During the quantitative stage, the majority of CSOs (26 out of 35) reported satisfaction with international coordination efforts. Additionally, CSOs generally indicated that coordination efforts occur monthly or weekly, while INGOs reported more frequent efforts (daily or weekly).

During the qualitative stage lot of CSOs reported that cluster meetings, online meetings, and emails were common coordination mechanisms, with many highlighting their role in facilitating communication. However, one CSO noted that humanitarian coordination might be ineffective and, often failing to align efforts with local needs. Some CSOs emphasized the need for increased information sharing and stable communication to improve coordination with INGOs.

Coordination mechanisms INGOs use to cooperate with CSOs, reported by INGOs (n=44):

Regular meetings	93%
Formal agreements	82%
Project implementation	80%
Joint planning sessions	61%
Information sharing platforms	39%

Reported challenges during coordination with INGOs, reported by CSOs (n=35):

Coordination efforts are not efficient	46%
Bureaucratic processes	43%
Communication barriers	29%
Limited involvement in decision-making	29%
Differing priorities	17%
None	17%

Among those CSOs that reported having coordination efforts, the majority (16 and 15) reported inefficiency of coordination efforts and bureaucratic processes as their greatest challenges in coordination.

Many INGOs (4 IIs), on the other hand, highlighted the lack of communication strategies within CSOs, which hinders their ability to engage with broader humanitarian networks and form partnerships with INGOs.

*"Why are some small, excellent initiatives not selected? Because they are either invisible to market research, their websites aren't properly indexed, haven't been updated since 2022, or they only check their emails once a month and don't respond to messages promptly."* - INGO representative

Many INGOs (3 IIs) also pointed out that a lack of capacity within CSOs prevents them from being more proactive in coordination efforts.

*"One person from <some> working group came to me and said, 'We haven't been able to find a co-chair for the group for three months.' CSOs are hesitant to take on these roles because, for them, it means additional time and effort. They didn't include it in their budgets, so it becomes an extra burden. This burden is often too much to bear, and as a result, they don't position themselves as leaders in these efforts."* - Donor representative

A successful example of overcoming this barrier is the separate funding of coordination positions within CSOs.

*"This organization finances these coordination positions, and this is crucial. It's a relatively small investment in the global context, considering the percentage of the budget it represents. If more international organizations adopt this practice, it would cost them very little, but the impact on the response could be significant. We would likely see some excellent results very quickly."* - INGO representative

A CSO highlighted the creation of initiatives like the NGO Platform<sup>1</sup> or Alliance UA CSOs<sup>2</sup> as a **successful coordination effort**:

*"[Such platforms] create great opportunities for coordination. They help [INGOs] better understand the context in Ukraine and how things work here. I think this is one of the most important steps for them to truly grasp how local NGOs perceive the situation. Then, when INGOs say, 'But international standards require it to be done this way,' discussions and conversations can lead to a third solution that works for both sides. Local NGOs are satisfied with the cooperation, and international donors can address the need while ensuring transparency and proper reporting. In essence, such initiatives are invaluable for improving coordination."* - CSO representative

A donor representative also emphasized the **importance** of creating consortia or platforms for CSOs to amplify their voices and improve networking and coordination:

*"Ukrainian organizations need to create consortia, with one organization taking the lead. While organizations often say that it's difficult for them to unite, there are examples of successful collaboration and unity."* - Donor representative

This demonstrates that consortia play a crucial role in improving coordination, fostering collaboration, and bridging gaps.

## POLICY INFLUENCE

During the qualitative stage, a lot of INGOs highlighted that it is crucial to involve CSOs in the design of humanitarian policies because of their unique local and contextual understanding. The majority of INGOs (8 KIs) reported that local partners' opinions are considered when designing humanitarian policies such as the Humanitarian Needs Response Plan (HNRP) or similar documents. However, some INGOs mentioned that CSOs' voices are often not fully heard, and that not all of their ideas are reflected in the final version of policies.

*"Local CSOs, in my opinion, should be more involved in humanitarian policy-making, but the reality is that their views are often not always taken into account, and this can be a problem... There are some barriers. First, there is a lack of mechanisms for involving CSOs in the policy-making process. Many organizations on the ground simply do not have access to relevant discussions at the government or international level. Second, there is some mistrust between international and local organizations, which can make it difficult for them to collaborate in the policy-making process. Local organizations may feel that their views will not be heard, or that INGOs have more influence because of financial resources. Regarding mechanisms for engagement, I think that more opportunities need to be created at the government and international levels for such organizations. These could be special working groups, advisory boards or platforms where local organizations can express their views and participate in policy-making. It is also important that international organizations not only play the role of donors, but also work with local partners as equal participants in the process."* - INGO representative

Additionally, INGOs noted that it is logistically challenging to incorporate more stakeholders into these documents, especially given the strict deadlines that often must be met.

*"200 people are involved in this process [HNRP], each cluster, then assessments - that's a lot of meetings. And if you add local organizations, their disputes, the national government, other partners - it complicates the process. If we write strategies for 10 years, perhaps such involvement will be appropriate. But now, when we write a new plan every year, it will be very difficult to implement it in a short time."* - INGO representative

However, some **positive efforts** have been made, with INGOs organizing consultations to gather valuable input from CSOs and incorporate their perspectives into the HNRP.

*"Regarding the writing of the HNRP document, it is the responsibility of the clusters to develop these plans. I conducted consultations in 7 oblasts, and local organizations were actively involved. I made an effort to include as many organizations as possible, including representatives from Roma organizations, LGBT organizations, and both local and international groups."* - UN Agency representative

Other INGOs also emphasized the **importance** of including CSOs in the development of internal policies related to partnerships and localisation.

*"When I was developing a strategy for my advocacy direction, I invited all our partners to contribute. Not everyone found the time, but we involved four of them, and they helped shape the priorities. This small example shows that the key is to involve them in the right way. Don't force them if they don't need to participate, but instead create a space where they can engage meaningfully. It's not about sending a questionnaire in English and expecting it to be filled out on the spot, as often happens."* - INGO representative

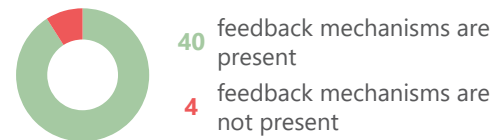
## CSOs' Preferences

Most CSOs emphasized the importance of engaging with Clusters and participating in consultations and workshops to influence policies. However, some CSOs also pointed out that information sharing regarding such activities is often limited.

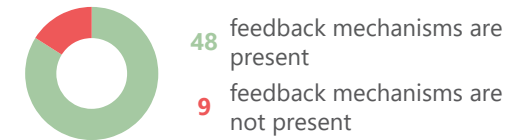
*"For example, we were included in the Shelter Cluster working group on developing mechanisms for rebuilding and repairing high-rise buildings. While this exists, returning to our earlier point, there is no mechanism for announcing or informing local partners that they can join in creating these humanitarian response mechanisms."* - CSO representative

## EQUITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

### Presence of feedback mechanisms for local partners, reported by INGOs (n=44)

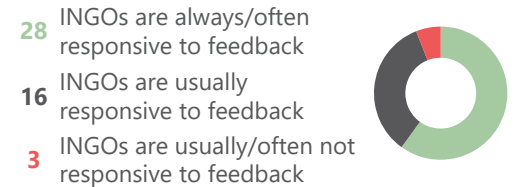


### Presence of feedback mechanisms for local partners, reported by CSOs (n=57)



Overall, the majority of both CSOs and INGOs reported having feedback mechanisms in place, allowing local actors to share suggestions for improving cooperation. Among the CSOs that utilize these channels, most indicated that INGOs are responsive to their feedback, with only three CSOs reporting that INGOs are typically not responsive. During the qualitative stage, many CSOs emphasized the need for such feedback channels, though some expressed doubts about whether their feedback would be truly considered.

### CSOs reporting whether INGOs are responsive to feedback (n=47)



*"There is a certain sense of inferiority. To be honest, I don't really believe that anyone will listen there. It's possible to conduct basic surveys to identify needs and areas for change, but I'm not sure those surveys would lead to any meaningful conclusions."* - CSO representative

### Most reported mechanisms INGOs have to ensure equitable cooperation, reported by INGOs (n=44):

Transparent communication	89%
Monitoring and evaluation	81%
Feedback mechanisms	81%
Joint decision-making bodies	36%

During the quantitative phase, the majority of INGOs reported having transparent communication, monitoring and evaluation processes, as well as feedback mechanisms to ensure equitable cooperation with CSOs. However, it is important to note that a monitoring and evaluation mechanism specifically tracking the success of localisation efforts was present in only 27 out of the 44 (61%) INGOs interviewed.



## CHALLENGES AND AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

### Main challenges INGOs face during localisation process, reported by INGOs (n=44):

Lack of expertise in CSOs	59%
Bureaucratic process	57%
Communication issues	32%
Different priorities	32%
Low awareness of localisation recommendations	30%
Complicated requirements from donors	25%
Lack of trust to CSOs	25%

### Main challenges CSOs face during localisation process, reported by CSOs (n=61):

Bureaucratic process	48%
Contextual gaps in INGOs	41%
None	28%
Different priorities	23%
Limited involvement in decision-making	20%
Limited access to funding	16%
Communication issues	16%

When asked about challenges during the localisation process, 17 CSOs and 1 INGO reported not to have any issues. However, a potential limitation is that some CSOs may not have been fully honest in the interviews due to apprehension about speaking openly with INGOs, possibly withholding details about their challenges.

During the qualitative phase, both bureaucratic challenges and contextual gaps were identified as the primary barriers to localisation by CSOs. Additionally, some CSOs highlighted competition with INGOs over staffing as a significant issue.

*“Our qualified staff in local organizations are being attracted to INGOs by considerably better working conditions, while, as a national organization, we are being forced to limit our staff budget categories. This creates a situation where we cannot compete with international organizations. In my view, this imbalance is quite artificial.”* - CSO representative

### Mechanisms that could improve cooperation with INGOs, by CSOs reporting (n=61):

More capacity-building	61%
More grants/proposals	59%
Increase local decision making	54%
Simplified bureaucratic process	48%
Transparent access to grants	44%
Transparent communication	41%
Feedback mechanisms	30%

INGOs often cited their headquarters as a barrier to localisation.

*“Our problem is that we develop something, but then the HQ takes over and redoes everything—there’s no involvement from us, and they adjust everything to a framework we’re not familiar with.”* - INGO representative

Some INGOs identified limited HQ involvement as a **success factor**:

*“We were lucky [to have successful partnerships], probably because it was a pilot project of the HQ, to see how partnerships can work differently, so we were given a lot of opportunities to make decisions. We were able to influence our tools.”* - INGO representative

## ROLE OF RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS IN LOCALISATION

### INGOs reporting cooperation with local research institutions during the last year, (n=44)



- 16 INGOs have cooperated
- 8 Don't know
- 20 INGOs haven't cooperated

### INGOs reporting types of collaboration with research institutions, reported by INGOs (n=16):

RI conducted assessments	10
RI provided expertise in specific topics	9
RI collected data	7
RI provided technical data	6

About one third of the interviewed INGOs reported collaborating with local research institutions in the past year, primarily for conducting assessments or providing expertise on specific topics. This collaboration typically occurs when specific needs arise. During the qualitative phase, RIs shared that they often access grants from INGOs or donors or conduct research on behalf of INGOs. Many RIs are actively involved in Ukrainian civil society, offering assessments, workshops, and training for local organizations.

Some research institutions highlighted the value of collaborating with INGOs due to Ukraine’s limited research resources, emphasizing the potential of applying scientific methods in these partnerships. However, others noted that in-depth scientific research may not always align with the needs of the humanitarian sector, which requires fast decision-making in crisis situations.

*“In most cases, international humanitarian organizations focus on responding quickly to a crisis at a critical moment. When it comes to the research component, our larger goal and task is to think in advance about what can be done and where government policies can be strengthened so that such crises do not occur at all in the future, or their consequences are less painful. If an international humanitarian organization is also interested in a more long-term, planning and research component, then such cooperation makes sense.”* - Local research institution representative

Most research institutions also identified bureaucratic challenges as significant barriers to effective cooperation with INGOs. These challenges often include lengthy administrative processes and rigid organizational structures that can slow down decision-making.

*“I notice that organizations that work on emergency response often do not fully understand how to work with research, especially from a legal and financial perspective. For example, contracting with us is a new experience for them. Most of the services that an organization purchases are usually related to physical goods or event management, but not research. And in our experience, it took a lot of time — just to think through a contract that would be comfortable for both parties.”* - Local research institution representative

In summary, while INGOs and local research institutions do collaborate, the success of these partnerships is influenced by the urgency of humanitarian needs, the relevance of scientific research, and bureaucratic challenges.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



### ABOUT REACH

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).