



World Vision 

TRANSFORMING PARTNERSHIPS IN UKRAINE 2.0

2025 UPDATE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Summary.....

Background.....

Methodology.....

Limitations.....

Change process.....

Findings.....

Partnerships.....

Funding.....

Capacity.....

Coordination and Leadership.....

Advocacy and Visibility.....

Voice and Participation.....

Recommendations.....

3

6

7

7

8

10

10

14

16

18

20

22

24

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

The report was authored by Daria Musiienko, with contributions from Viktor Stepaniuk and Ian de Villiers. The authors extend their thanks to WV Ukraine Crisis Response staff and partner organisations Unity for the Future, Way Home Odesa, Arms of Mercy, Pomogaem, Will Help Together, Ridni, Angels of Salvation and SpivDiia, who dedicated their time and contributed to this assessment.



The PI Will Help Together team is working at the distribution point in Zaporizhzhia. The work is stressful due to the high workload, especially in the current security situation where air raid alarms can occur at any moment.

SUMMARY

World Vision Ukraine Crisis Response (WV UCR) has pursued an approach to be as local as possible and as international as necessary. In Ukraine World Vision partnered with national and local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in line with World Vision’s commitment to the Grand Bargain Intermediary Caucus regarding localisation. From the onset of the response in Ukraine in 2022 WV UCR implemented 31 projects in Ukraine, out of which 26 (83.8%) were delivered with local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

Following the [the assessment](#) of its partnering approach undertaken by WV UCR in 2023-2024, a follow-up survey was undertaken in May 2025 to measure any changes in partnering practices. This assessment focused on partners involved in the project 'Stronger Civil Society for Early Recovery and Child Wellbeing in Ukraine' funded by World Vision Australia (WVA) and implemented by eight local partners through 2024-2025. Both assessments were done using NEAR Networks' localisation performance measurement framework evaluating six localisation pillars, and quantitative and qualitative data gathered through interviews with local partners and WV UCR staff. Given the focus of the survey on the partnering approaches under one specific project, the findings relate to a distinct subset of partners.

The 2025 assessment results have demonstrated further improvements in the existing partnering practices advancing towards localisation outcomes under all six pillars. Under the **Partnership pillar** WV UCR have scored **3.3** out of 4 mainly through the shift in the approach to project design. A stronger leading role by partners in the design phase has translated into more autonomy for local organisations, as well as strengthened project's relevance, staff motivation to deliver and local ownership. Freedom of design has allowed for creativity and innovation contributing to the impact of humanitarian interventions and their sustainability. WV's role as Interpreter, Knowledge Broker, and Trainer/ Coach was valuable to successful project delivery. Interpretation of the compliance requirements by WV UCR and the complementary nature of the technical advice were appreciated by partners, while smaller and new partners of WV UCR welcomed available training and coaching that was tailored to specific partner needs. At the same time, WV UCR could strengthen its role as Convenor and Co-learner by creating more opportunities for partners to connect and collaborate, and by helping to consolidate learnings from local partners and sharing those externally to ensure local expertise contributes to the broader sector. Despite the improvements, WV UCR's approach still lacks uniformity to project design which could be addressed through the introduction of clear partnering minimum standards. Lack of multiyear funding continues being one of the major obstacles to building strategic partnerships that look beyond individual interventions.

Some significant improvements were observed under **Funding pillar** that scored **3.5** out of 4 as the funding quality has improved through the allocation of 7% overheads and additional flexible budget to cover organisational needs of local partners. In fact, the organisational strengthening component of the project has likely made a significant contribution to partner organisations' risk management systems, through improving their policies, providing access to essential software, staff training and others. While there have been significant improvements in terms of funding quality, there is still space for improvement when it comes to budgeting transparency from WV UCR side.

Further advancement was also achieved under the **Capacity pillar** scoring **3.4** out of 4, where the approach to capacity strengthening has become more demand driven. Support provided by WV UCR to partners was acknowledged to be tailored to needs. When it comes to the interpretation of compliance requirements it wasn't just about trainings – partners appreciated having the ability to simply call and ask questions. WV UCR's guidance support with implementing procurement requirements and in relation to monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) has proven critical to most partners interviewed. Financial resources made available by WV UCR for organisational strengthening of partners, allocated on their terms and in line with priorities identified by them, contributed to partners financial sustainability and are central to localisation efforts.

WV UCR support to partners under **Coordination and Leadership pillar** has remained demand based, although still lacks intentionality, with a score of **2.8** out of 4. In the third year of the humanitarian response in Ukraine, most local organisations are involved in the international coordination system, some more actively than others. WV UCR provided targeted support to some partners to become more active in the cluster system and share the results of their work; however, this isn't done systematically and is more driven by individual staff members.

WV UCR has demonstrated some progress under **Advocacy and Visibility pillar**, scoring **2.2** out of 4. This was achieved mostly through the flexible funding offered to partners for institutional capacity, that two of the partners have used to improve their communication and visibility capacity. WV UCR could improve further by engaging local partners in their advocacy efforts and doing more to amplify partners' voice through sharing their communication materials to its audience. Additionally, four out of eight WV UCR partners interviewed have been actively engaged in various advocacy efforts or worked towards policy change within their area of expertise, including deinstitutionalisation for children, gender equality, support for children with disability and other areas. Having visibility over partners' work, WV UCR could potentially play a stronger convenor role and help bringing those partners together for them to join forces in their advocacy efforts.

WV UCR has scored the highest under the **Voice and Participation pillar** – **3.7** out of 4. Community feedback mechanisms are now standard practice for every project and every partner organisation allowing affected population to provide feedback and contribute to either adjustments of ongoing programs or to the design of the future ones. The more the response involves partners in the project design, especially where it puts them in a leading position, the greater is the influence of affected population on its programming. As noted by some partners, the WVA-funded project was unique as it was designed for a specific target audience with a consideration of the actual needs of the target group, while many donor initiatives are first designed remotely and then target population is being sought to fit into the objectives or a ready program. Most importantly, WV's investment into local organisations contributes to their continuous operational presence and ability to remain and support the affected communities beyond the duration of individual projects.

This survey has also demonstrated that among the six pillars of localisation, the first two – Partnership and Funding – remain the most critical in advancing the localisation agenda and need to be prioritised. These are also the pillars where WV UCR has made the most adjustments under the WVA-funded project, which shifted the power dynamic as confirmed by the overwhelmingly positive reflections from partners. The way partnerships with local organisations are set up, partners' ability to lead on key processes, the way decisions are made, the recognition of each other's value-add – are defining for all other areas of a partnership and will ultimately determine whether these are empowering partnerships or sub-contracting arrangements. Additionally, providing quality funding to local organisations, that includes provision of overheads, is equally important to demonstrate partners' equity and to support their operations. Provision of demand-driven funding for institutional capacity reinforces equity and is essential to organisational sustainability. Getting Partnership and Funding right is an important first step when working towards stronger local leadership.

The recommendations devised as a result of this survey aim to cement those good partnering approaches across all WV UCR programs and to further strengthen its role as a wise intermediary.



BACKGROUND

This survey was conducted in May 2025 and is a follow-up to the assessment of the partnering approach undertaken by World Vision Ukraine Crisis Response (WV UCR) between November 2023 and February 2024 and supported by Aktion Deutschland Hilft (ADH). As a result of that assessment, a set of recommendations were proposed to WV UCR to improve its partnering approach to ensure it empowers local actors. The objective of this follow-up survey was to review the current partnering practices, following the implementation of those recommendations.

This follow-up assessment is supported by World Vision Australia (WVA) and has focused on the specific project funded by WVA's public appeal and designed with the consideration of the aforementioned findings and recommendations. This project 'Stronger Civil Society for Early Recovery and Child Wellbeing in Ukraine' has started in October 2024 and is being implemented by eight local partners, where six were identified through a call for proposals organised by WV UCR in September 2024, and two additional partners were included in the project at a later stage to absorb additional funding. Each partner has designed and implemented their unique individual interventions, supported and managed by WV UCR as one overarching project, with a dedicated project manager and technical support from other departments.

METHODOLOGY

The assessment was conducted using NEAR Network Localisation Performance Measurement Framework¹ (LPMF), contextualising its indicators to WV humanitarian response in Ukraine. Semi-structured questionnaires were developed using NEAR's LPMF and the tools developed by the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations (PIANGO) and Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG). Quantitative and qualitative data was collected through the review of the key WV UCR documents and interviews with 11 WV UCR international and local staff and staff of eight local partners in Ukraine (national and local organisations²). Most of the interviews (63%) were conducted in May 2025 in-person in Lviv, Kyiv, Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia and Odesa, with the rest done remotely online.

Similar to the survey in 2023-2024, specific objectives and progress indicators were identified for each of the six pillars of the LPMF. Progress against the identified indicators was measured using a simple scale (poor/1, modest/2, good/3, and excellent/4). Since the scale and scope of this assessment was different compared to the one in 2023-2024,³ fewer indicators were measured and some additional ones were introduced to focus on WV UCR's role in certain processes, so the comparison with the previous results wasn't always possible.

LIMITATIONS

- The survey focused mostly on WV UCR partners engaged in one specific WVA-funded project, although some of these partners were involved in parallel in other WV UCR projects.
- The measurement of the indicators identified for this survey was done based mostly on the information gathered during the interviews with WV UCR and partners and involved personal perceptions and subjective opinions. Consequently, the scores' objectivity has likely been affected.
- The assessment results might have been influenced by the limited time available for interviews and by varying interpretations of some of the terms used in this assessment.
- It is challenging to draw conclusions on some points which aren't easily measured through such an assessment. For instance, this relates to the question about the effectiveness of local partners' financial management systems. These issues need to be further assessed by WV UCR to establish whether there are gaps and the level of support needed, if any.

1 NEAR Network Localisation Performance Measurement Framework https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5fc4fd249698b02c7f3acfe9/t/6011621dba655709b8342a4c/1611751983166/LMPF+Final_2019.pdf.

2 National NGOs/civil society organisations (CSOs): National NGOs/CSOs operating in the aid recipient country in which they are headquartered, working in multiple subnational regions, and not affiliated to an international NGO. This category can also include national faith-based organisations.

Local NGOs/CSOs: Local NGOs/CSOs operating in a specific, geographically defined, subnational area of an aid recipient country, without affiliation to an international NGO/CSO. This category can also include community-based organisations and local faith-based organisations.

3 The previous survey included interviews with 40 World Vision international and local staff in Ukraine and Moldova, 10 partners in Ukraine and 5 partners in Moldova.

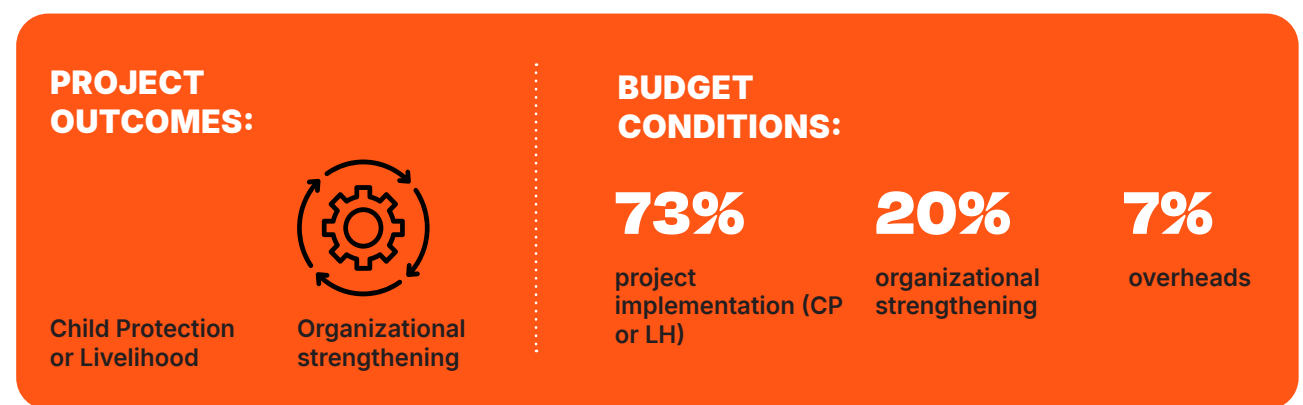


Following the 2023-2024 survey and in line with its recommendations, WV UCR has worked to ensure the approach to working with partners has been better tailored to partners' capacity and prior experience, and support offered by WV UCR is more demand-driven and cognisant of partners' existing capacity and expertise. WV UCR leadership has been critical in supporting this change process.

Some changes in WV UCR's approach to working with local actors have emerged organically over time. As projects progressed, local partners gained valuable knowledge and experience, which in turn enabled WV UCR to reassess and refine its partnership strategies. Recognizing that each local organization operates at a different level of capacity and development, WV UCR began adopting a more tailored, partner-specific approach. While certain elements, such as the mandatory training cycle (on safeguarding, procurement, finance), remained consistent and non-negotiable, WV has increasingly prioritized responding to specific needs and requests of local partners, rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all model.

WVA funding and willingness to put some of the advice into practice has proven instrumental in the change process. It presented a valuable opportunity to implement several key recommendations from the initial report, particularly those related to empowering local partners. These included enabling partners to submit their own project proposals, ensuring access to funding for organizational development, and covering overhead costs. This initiative marked the first instance in which WV UCR launched a competitive grant application process, selecting the most promising proposals for implementation. Notably, partners were provided with broad guidelines at the outset, limited to the thematic sectors (child protection and livelihoods) and the maximum project budget. All other components, such as geographic focus, activity design, logical framework, detailed budget, and implementation plan, were developed independently by the partners.

This approach aligned closely with the expectations of local organizations, as they consistently emphasized during the follow-up reporting. A particularly important feature was the ability to allocate up to 20% of the project funding towards organizational development and 7% for overhead expenses. This represented a significant departure from the traditional approach by intermediaries, where local actors are often viewed primarily as contractors. Instead, this model fostered a more equitable partnership – one in which local organizations contribute their expertise and deliver services to the affected population, while the international partner provides financial support not only for project activities but also for institutional capacity. A simplified representation of the WVA-funded project model is provided below:



While the funding presented an excellent opportunity to implement the recommendations, the availability of funding alone didn't automatically secure the required changes. Significant work had to be done internally at WV UCR and in coordination with WVA to align the adjusted ways of working with partners with the existing systems and processes. The major shift was required for the partners to take a more leading role in the project design, which defined their leading position in relation to other phases of the project cycle. WV's systems and processes are devised in a way that require WV's strong direction and control of program design and implementation that doesn't easily allow for a partner organisation's leadership in key processes.

However, WV UCR managed to accommodate partners' freedom of design providing sufficient guidance and support, as well as ensuring relevant checks are in place to ensure full compliance with policies. Q&A sessions with partners were held prior to the project launch, and individual consultations were organised after the partner selection was complete. While some elements of the project followed standard procedures, e.g. mandatory onboarding trainings, the consistent communication throughout the implementation phase played a critical role. These engagements ensured that all partners, while leading on some processes, adhered to WV's internal policies and compliance standards, reinforcing accountability and alignment with organizational expectations.

WV UCR's experience to enable changes in partnering approach coupled with feedback received from the partners through this survey have demonstrated that among the six pillars of localisation, the first two – Partnership and Funding – remain the most critical in advancing the localisation agenda and need to be prioritised.

The way partnerships with local organisations are set up, the power dynamic, partners' ability to lead on key processes, the way decisions are made, the recognition of each other's value-add – are defining for all other areas of a partnership arrangement and will ultimately determine whether it empowers local organisations or simply sub-contracts them. Providing quality funding to local organisations, that includes provision of overheads, is equally important to demonstrate partner's equity and to support their operations. Provision of funding to cover organizational needs, that is fully demand-driven, again, reinforces equity and allows for organisational growth; it covers those gaps that are often impossible to cover through grant funding, but which are essential to organisational sustainability.

Getting Partnership and Funding right is an important first step when working towards stronger local leadership. At the same time, most intermediaries usually focus on Capacity first, which is also a critical pillar, however, in our opinion, could lead to the needed transformation only if the first two pillars are actioned accordingly first. The below findings confirm this conclusion.



FINDINGS

PARTNERSHIPS



1

Objective: To build equitable and complementary partnerships with local partners to facilitate the delivery of timely, and effective humanitarian response

Key indicators measured (on the scale from 1 to 4):	2023 survey	2025 survey
1.1 Local partners exercise power in partnerships with WV UCR.	2.3	2.8
1.2 WV UCR has longer-term strategic partnerships that commit to build systems and processes that reflect the ambition and goals of local organisations.	1.7	3.7
1.3 Local partners participate in all aspects of the Project Cycle Management (PCM).	2.5	3.5



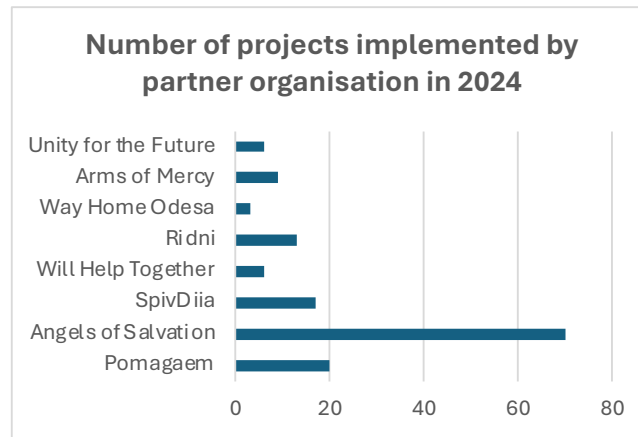
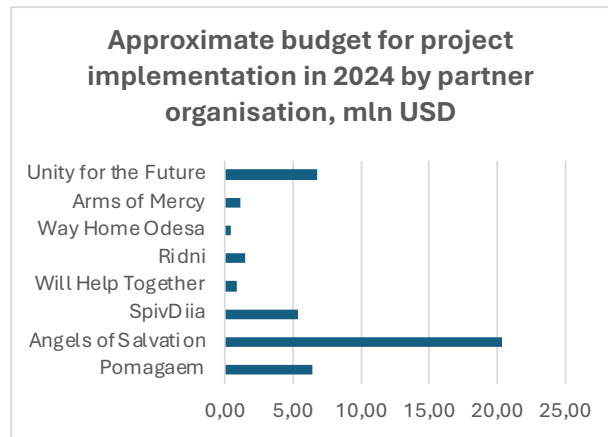
“Often organisations limit our ideas or recommend something to include in the project – it is often demotivating; we don’t own these ideas which impacts our motivation to deliver on them. The fact that WV did not limit creative ideas of our experts in this project, has only made it stronger.” Ridni Foundation, Lviv.

Significant progress towards equitable partnerships – stronger leading position in design and implementation

- WV UCR has continued refining its approach to partnering with local organisations, increasingly working towards equity in partnership. WV remained a supportive partner, always available, responsive, resourceful, people-centred and loyal, which contributed to trustful relationship and the perception of equality. Several local partners noted that WV is one of the most convenient partners to work with, the one that stands out among others because of the support provided, including the support with navigating the compliance requirements.
- Local organisations have certainly exercised more autonomy in partnership with WV UCR, especially under the WVA’s funded project, as acknowledged by the partners and WV UCR staff. The concept behind this specific project design was to give more freedom of design to partners within the proposed sectors rather than prescribing WV’s vision for the project and unifying the programming approach. As a result, each partner has developed their individual projects based on their expertise and understanding of local context, factoring in the distinctive needs and aspects of their operational areas. Such an approach has excluded a possibility of sub-granting and instead facilitated equity in relationships. Partners believe that this approach to design has also strengthened project’s relevance, staff motivation to deliver and local ownership. Freedom of design has allowed for creativity and innovation contributing to the impact of this intervention and its sustainability.
- While partners had the leading role in design, WV UCR provided support through refining the logframe and structuring it’s monitoring and evaluation system to ensure the targets are set properly and the project’s progress and impact can be measured accordingly.
- Partners leading position in all aspects of the Project Cycle Management (PCM) coupled with the continuous guidance and communication from WV side created a sense of equal partnerships for all partners interviewed. Partners didn’t feel that there was interference in their decisions but could always reach out with questions and receive an answer. In fact, during the discussion with partners WV was referred to as a partner more often than as a donor, which is how intermediaries are often perceived.

Greater impact through diverse partnerships

- The approach to partnering with a range of diverse local organisations without limiting the geographical focus of the project has allowed WV to reach crisis-affected population across 10 regions of Ukraine with interventions designed uniquely for each specific area, based on local expertise. The project is yet to measure its full impact, however the initial reporting and feedback from the project participants demonstrates sustainable results beyond addressing some of the immediate needs. The approach where local actors have greater autonomy and authority in programming funds allows for greater complementarity among humanitarian actors, where each one acts to their strength. This project is a great example demonstrating how joining forces of international and local actors can deliver impactful initiatives, funded through a public appeal internationally, but designed and owned locally, and implemented in line with all key compliance standards.
- The diversity of local partners involved in the WVA-funded project is demonstrated in these graphs. The project involved local organisations with a different scale of operation ranging from organisations that implemented only 3 projects in 2024 to those with 70 projects, and accordingly with different scale of budgets. While the size of operation is not necessarily indicative of capacity and independence of local organisations, it often impacts organisational capacity to acquire donor funding and deliver against the standard compliance and risk management requirements.
- In view of the systemic biases by the humanitarian funding mechanisms towards supporting larger local organisations, it is critical for WV UCR to continue partnering with smaller and less experienced local civil society organisations that are often rooted within local communities and could benefit from support and guidance of an INGO to strengthen their capacity and financial independence.



WV's key roles as an intermediary

- Despite the shift of the leading position in design to partners, WV's role in successful program delivery has remained critical. Using the terminology proposed by Peace Direct regarding roles of intermediaries in the international cooperation,⁴ WV UCR's roles in this specific project have included: Interpreter, Knowledge Broker, Trainer/ Coach, and to some extent Convenor.
- Such practices as the conduct of project start-up meetings followed by more detailed discussions between partners and different WV UCR departments allow to bring everyone together at the start of the project and help to interpret all the compliance requirements. The partners acknowledged this was extremely useful, especially for those partners who were new to working with WV. Both WV UCR staff and partners recognize the importance of WV taking care of clarifying all the compliance and donor requirements to partners. This isn't just done in a form of a single session, but tailored to individual needs of partner organisations, some more experienced and some not as familiar with standard compliance requirements. Additional meetings or written clarifications are usually provided where needed.
- WV was also able to perform a role of a knowledge broker, by carefully sharing WV's technical expertise, including in monitoring and evaluation, or related to specific sectors of intervention, to help improving the partners' projects. WV UCR partners appreciated the complementary nature of this advice, without imposing it or interfering in the project delivery, which confirmed recognition of partners' expertise. Additionally, WV provided training and coaching to partners based on needs, ensuring effective project delivery and contributing to partners' capacity. This role was more pronounced with smaller and/or less-experienced partners who relied more on this type of support. WV UCR's Project Manager (PM) initiative to conduct weekly project catch-up meetings and the manner of conducting those has been appreciated by all partners. The meetings were short but informative, and the format of having all partners joining those allowed for transparency, quicker resolution of various issues and partners' experience exchange.
- Actions, behaviour and attitudes of WV UCR staff have strongly influenced positive working relationships with partners and fostered open and trusted environment. The role of WV staff including the project management staff, procurement, MEAL, and finance teams was also recognized, as their advice and support were demand-driven. Some partners noted WV's risk-sharing approach, where if gaps or issues were identified, support was provided and solutions were sought together, rather than simply demanded from partners.
- WV has also played a role of a co-learner. Every project is concluded with a lessons-learned event, which is found valuable by the partners. WV UCR staff also admit learning from the partners about the specifics of the context on the ground and humanitarian needs, some nuances of the Ukrainian legislation in relation to the provision of humanitarian assistance, and others.
- The major progress has been observed in intentional efforts from WV UCR side to contribute to organisational strengthening of local partners. Over the last two years this was done through multiple initiatives, including through engaging one of WV UCR mature partners to support with institutional capacity smaller and less experienced partners, through incorporating organisational strengthening component in project design and budget, and others. More on that is under Capacity section below.

Remaining gaps and challenges

- WV could strengthen its role of a co-learner and convenor, for instance by organising more in-person events for project partners, as it's harder to build strong connections purely through interactions online. For instance, an example of a successful in-person event organised by WV UCR is the partner workshop on humanitarian principles done in 2024, that provided a networking opportunity for its local partners and WV UCR. Moreover, the event was led by one of the local partners instead of by WV UCR staff, which has contributed to an improved power dynamic. In addition, WV UCR could do more to consolidate learnings from local partners and share those either within broader WV International partnership or within the sector. The humanitarian sector at local, national, and international levels can certainly benefit from local expertise however it's hard for local organisations to share their knowledge, new programming approaches and lessons-learned, and research initiatives to study those aren't always funded in the context of humanitarian response. INGOs like WV could play an important role here to ensure local expertise is acknowledged and contributes to the broader sector.
- In the current funding environment, it is challenging to transition from project-based to strategic partnerships. Where possible, WV UCR ensures continuity, for instance by engaging in its projects partners who have received organisational strengthening support but haven't yet been able to put it into practice. Using the example of WVA funded project WV UCR could refine how it delivers on its strategic vision in relation to partnering with local and national actors, through reinforcing its wise intermediary role and focusing on systems strengthening.
- Not all WV UCR projects are designed and implemented in the same way. There is a lack of uniformity in WV UCR's approach to project design, budgeting and even to some compliance requirements for projects where partners are involved. This could be addressed through the introduction of clear minimum standards regarding partnering to safeguard and promote the best practices in working with local partners.



"Your partnership is more than just collaboration — it is a true source of inspiration for the positive changes we create every day for the sake of children." Arms of Mercy, Chernivtsi



A collection of therapeutic fairy tales became one of the project's key outcomes.

⁴ Peace Direct 'The Nine Roles that Intermediaries Can Play in International Cooperation' (January 2023) <https://www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/The-nine-roles-that-intermediaries-can-play-in-international-cooperation-2.pdf>

FUNDING



2

Objective: To contribute to a funding environment that promotes, incentivises, and supports localisation to enable a more relevant, timely and effective humanitarian response.

Key indicators measured (on the scale from 1 to 4):	2023 survey	2025 survey
2.1 Local partners have increased decision making over funding matters.	2.1	3.7
2.2 Funding for operating costs (office, warehousing, transport, communications, printing) is included in funding agreements with local partners.	2.3	3.6
2.3 Overhead costs shared equally between local partners and WV UCR without reporting conditions.	1.3	3.2
2.4 Funding provided by WV UCR to local partners is adequate to deliver a response that meets quality standards.	2.7	3.6

Quality funding strengthening local leadership

- With partners taking on a leading role in the project design, their decision-making over funding-related matters has also increased accordingly. The project budgets are designed by the partners, and where revisions have to be made, WV UCR usually supports and ensures a smooth process of approval of changes.
- All partners under the WVA-funded project confirmed that the amount of funding was adequate to deliver the project according to the key sectoral standards. A suggestion was made to consider reflecting in the budget partners' financial contribution, for better transparency and to acknowledge that partners often contribute to the budget as well, using the organisational resources not covered by a specific grant.
- The WVA-funded project allowed allocation of 7% indirect cost (ICR) /overheads to local partners. Most partners have used this opportunity and allocated those funds towards the needs of their organisations – some covered additional staff salaries, some allocated these to a reserve fund or put aside to use in the future when transitioning between grants, when the funding to maintain the organisation is going to be limited. Others invested the overheads in their communication and

visibility capacity or other initiatives. One partner has utilised these funds to preposition for future project activities. The allocation of the indirect cost without the reporting requirements (but within the requirements of the key policies, so not on any activities prohibited by partnering agreements) is critical for local organisations. Most don't have reserve funds to rely on during the period between grant funding. In most cases donor funding does not fully cover all the staff requirements, especially for such positions as legal or finance specialists whose contribution to a specific project isn't always apparent to international partners and donors. Having the ability to retain experienced and trained staff helps to mitigate risks and contributes to program efficiency. In addition, overheads allow partners to innovate and preposition for future projects or cover any other gaps (e.g. in communication and visibility capacity) deemed by partners as critical to continuing their operation. To some extent, allocating ICR also demonstrates respect towards these organisations as equal partners, acknowledging their organisational needs. According to one of the partners interviewed, only about 35% of their funders/intermediaries provide ICR, while the majority still don't.

- It is difficult to comment on partners' financial management systems as no dedicated assessment was conducted on that as part of this survey. However, most partners assess their financial management systems as strong. WV finance team confirms partners currently have strong capacity and no major issues arose through financial oversight.

Improved risk management system through additional resourcing

- All partners interviewed believe that partnership with WV UCR has contributed to their financial sustainability. In particular, this is the case for the partners under the WVA-funded project thanks to sharing of overheads and budget allocation to cover the organisational needs. In fact, the organisational strengthening component of the project has likely made a significant contribution to partner organisations' risk management systems, through improving their policies, providing access to essential software, staff training and others. Partners have also appreciated the risk management matrix tool provided by WV UCR, and most confirmed they continued using it for other projects. Some partners noted that they found valuable the process of developing a contingency plan for the project. They haven't done that before and appreciated the utility of the tool for a quicker decision making in case of emergencies. The value for the indicator 3.3 below related to the strengthening of risk mitigation systems remained relatively low as organisational strengthening of local partners that strongly supports risk management is not yet common across all WV UCR projects, although it has proven successful under the WVA-funded project. The respective recommendation is included below for further improvement.
- As noted by some of the partner organisations interviewed, a strong risk management system requires more than just trainings and staff capacity to systemically assess and prevent risks. It requires flexible resources to build and improve internal systems. The expectations towards local organisations regarding risk management should factor in limitations of those, and the fact that they are not as well-resourced as INGOs. According to the partners, there are still instances where donors only cover the cost of inputs/services but not the support cost or do not sufficiently cover staff required to deliver the project, which only makes it harder for local organisations to maintain their operation while at the same time strengthening their risk management system. It should also be noted that the burden of the project compliance with the local legislation also falls on local organisations where they carry out most of the programmatic activities, while international partners and intermediaries focus more on donor compliance as it poses higher risk to them.

More budgeting transparency is needed

- There has still been limited transparency from WV UCR side in terms of sharing their budgets and financial reports with partners. It would be important for WV to start working towards it, as budgeting transparency is an important component of equitable partnerships.



"All these [risk management] systems cost money, we are not INGOs, we are working within our own limitations, not everyone funds even sufficient staff. Some donors only want to cover eg. food or NFIs, and not the support cost to distribute those. If we have resources – we can do anything." Angels of Salvation, Dnipro.

CAPACITY



3 Objective: To improve the ability of WV UCR’s local partners to respond effectively and efficiently to humanitarian crises through targeted and relevant support.

Key indicators measured (on the scale from 1 to 4):	2023 survey	2025 survey
3.1 Organisational development is one of the core objectives of partnerships.	1.7	3.7
3.2 Approach to supporting each partner is tailored based on needs to complement and avoid undermining the existing capacity.	2.3	3.8
3.3 Local partner financial management and risk mitigation systems are strengthened through partnership with WV	1.7 ⁵	2.6

WV as Interpreter, Knowledge Broker, Trainer/ Coach

- All partners interviewed agreed that partnership with WV UCR has strengthened their capacity. This was done through trainings sessions, coaching, regular meetings, sharing of project management templates, support with clarifying procurement requirements, partner exchange and through allocating part of the budget specifically for organisational needs.
- Following 2023-2024 survey and recommendations, WV UCR has revisited its standard Capacity Building Action Plan which now looks at the following key areas: risk mitigation measures, mandatory activities related to project delivery, and support needed for organisational strengthening which is fully prioritised by partners. The plan is now titled ‘Capacity Sharing Action Plan’ to acknowledge the existing local expertise.
- New partners that worked with WV for the first time have appreciated multiple training sessions done for their staff at the start of the project in relation to various policy requirements. One partner noted that after few months of working with WV their procurement team acknowledged that their life would have been easier if they worked like that before, using the tools WV UCR team provided.
- Training on security and first aid organised over the last few years were flagged again as an example of risk sharing and much needed capability strengthening provided to local partners by

5 The indicator from the previous survey “Fraud and corruption risks are acknowledged by local partners and effective systems are put in place to mitigate and manage risks” was reformulated to look at WV’s partnership role in strengthening the systems.

WV UCR. It is also an example of delivering on the duty of care which is critical for Ukraine as the operating context often poses significant risks to safety and security of partner staff. Support provided by WV was acknowledged to be tailored to needs. When it comes to the interpretation of compliance requirements it wasn’t just about trainings – partners appreciated having the ability to simply call and ask questions.

- WV UCR MEAL team has also provided significant support to partners including on issues of targeting, project monitoring, measuring and documenting impact. According to WV UCR team, sometimes partners can have a great programming idea but require support to design a MEAL system that contributes to effective implementation through issues such as target setting, beneficiary verification, impact measurement and others.
- WV UCR Technical Advisors (TAs) provided relevant training and guidance to partners, and e.g. Mental Health and Psychosocial Support TA has also offered her support with supervision to partner psychologists, which was greatly appreciated. It should be noted that two WV UCR TAs who work with partners under the WVA-funded project are national staff, which has certainly contributed to building positive relationship with partners, facilitating easier communication and providing a possibility to offer such support as supervision for psychologists (which wouldn’t be possible with international staff due to language barrier). This point reinforces the need for WV to determine which staff roles are best suited to national staff to enable better partnering response.
- Specific to project design and monitoring, WV UCR team recommends offering more specific guidance to partners prior to proposal development/project design to strengthen partners’ MEAL capacity and to make the work smoother after the design is completed. For instance, this guidance can include some of the standard monitoring activities that should be factored in the project design along with the minimum budget percentage allocated for it.
- Several partners highlighted challenges regarding various procurement requirements that were hard to contextualise and comply with, especially for small organisations. As an intermediary, WV UCR sought to support its partners on this matter as much as possible, however WV’s power to amend those requirements is often limited, and stronger advocacy towards back donors should continue to ensure donor contractual obligations facilitate localisation and genuine risk sharing arrangements.
- WV UCR’s engagement with diverse partners, ranging from small, localised organisations to large national ones, is critical to promoting localisation efforts. WV provides access to funding and strengthens small local organisations that might not be able to access bilateral or pooled funding opportunities. Through partners’ feedback and as observed by WV UCR, its added value as an intermediary is particularly visible in partnerships with smaller organisations, that become stronger, better organised and more autonomous as a result of the partnership with WV.

Demand-driven organisational strengthening

- WVA-funded project was designed with a specific organisational strengthening component in mind, where partners chose what type of activities or inputs they required, based on self-identified needs. The type of activities/ inputs that were covered under this organisational strengthening component varied from dedicated trainings for staff, policy development, strategy sessions, to procurement of software and covering grant acquisition expert support. One of the local partners has procured a minivan to support transportation of their staff and resources to assist conflict-affected population, which decreased their operational cost and enabled their quick deployment to project sites in case of urgent operational needs.
- The investment into institutional capacity of local organisations, on their terms and in line with priorities identified by them, is central to localisation efforts. Funding for this type of support is rarely allocated under project-specific grants, especially in humanitarian action, but is ultimately that critical contribution needed to support the localisation agenda and for effective transition to recovery. Donors often allocate funds for ‘capacity building’ which are then spent by intermediaries on trainings for local organisations to cover the needs identified by those intermediaries, and at times even without consulting local partners. Furthermore, local organisations are often expected to manage risks without being sufficiently resourced for it. Investing into institutional capacity of local organisations boosts their risk management capacity, yet it is not commonly factored in humanitarian grants.

COORDINATION AND LEADERSHIP

4

Objective: To contribute to the ability of local organisations to participate in international coordination mechanisms as equal partners.

Key indicators measured (on the scale from 1 to 4):	2023 survey	2025 survey
4.1 Local partners of WV UCR participate in the existing coordination mechanism, are active members of clusters and are represented in working groups.	2.1	3.4 
4.2 Partnership with WV has contributed to partners' capacity to participate in/ lead the external coordination forums		2.3 ⁶ 



"Our organisation exists for 26 years but we are not visible to other organisations and partners. Before we worked based on grants available, but now we want to develop our organisation in those directions that are needed and where we have strong expertise. We want to engage donors in those area and want to share our expertise with others. Thanks to WV's project we organised for the first time a comprehensive strategic planning workshop, three sessions, three days each. We have 80% new staff and it's so important for them to understand the organisation, its values and mission, so these sessions were very important for them."

Way Home, Odesa.

6 The respective indicator has been modified in the last survey and cannot be compared with the results of the previous survey.

Stronger participation of local actors in coordination mechanisms

- All WV UCR partners interviewed participate in the international coordination system, some more actively than others, including co-chairing cluster's area of responsibility at the regional level. Some partners are still trying to identify the best way to engage with the system or engage more actively with clusters when planning to start a new project for coordination purposes, to ensure there is no duplication. Smaller organisations find it harder to allocate human resources to attend cluster meetings, however it's not the case for all local partners and some are big enough and are able to prioritise it.
- In terms of the perception of local actors within the cluster system, as one of the partners noted: 'If you have expertise, then you'll be listened to'. At the same time, some local organisations point out that the issues of concern for INGOs and local NGOs aren't often the same and it's harder to connect in coordination forums with the mix of INGOs and local CSOs.
- There is still perception shared among the partners that, although necessary, not all clusters are equally effective in terms of coordination and that they haven't always contributed to effective delivery of humanitarian assistance locally.

Stronger connection to the local government/state efforts

Local partners often ensure better complementarity of programs with the state and local government services, as they work closely with local authorities and are aware of gaps and opportunities for cooperation. For instance, the partner that provided business courses for women under the WVA-funded project ensured these were linked to the state grants' program. Another partner offering career consultations has worked closely with local employment centres complementing their work and covering the gaps. Local and national partners' proximity to and ability to complement local government and state initiatives are often overlooked due to a deficit-based approach, where intermediaries focus on the lack of local capacity rather than local strengths.

Demand-based support:

- WV UCR was responsive to requests for support from local partners regarding external coordination where possible. Some examples of such support include a) connecting one of its partners with the local authorities in one of the regions where this partner was seeking to start operations; b) providing a letter of recommendation that allowed one of the partners to join a regional network.
- One partner noted that they appreciated WV UCR taking the role of reporting to the clusters in relation to the joint project, which took pressure of this local organisation and freed their resources for other tasks.
- Targeted support was provided to some partners to become more active in the cluster system and share the results of their work; however, this isn't done systematically and is more driven by individual staff members. The lack of intentionality and consistency in understanding partners' needs in relation to their engagement in the coordination system is behind the low score for the indicator 4.2.



ADVOCACY AND VISIBILITY



5 Objective: To improve the ability of WV UCR’s local partners to shape humanitarian priorities of the response and receive recognition for this in reporting.

Key indicators measured (on the scale from 1 to 4):	2023 survey	2025 survey
5.1 WV UCR local partners play a lead role in national humanitarian advocacy.	1.8	2.0
5.2 WV UCR local partners play a lead role in communicating national humanitarian issues both nationally and internationally.	2.2	2.2
5.3 Partnership with WV has contributed to partners' capacity to participate in/ lead the advocacy efforts and communicate regarding the humanitarian response		2.3 ⁷



"This project was created here on the ground. The situation is very dynamic, and we know how to adapt." Unity for the Future, Zaporizhzhia.

7 The respective indicator has been modified in the last survey and cannot be compared with the results of the previous survey.

Local leadership in national advocacy and policy change

- Half of the eight local partners interviewed have been actively engaged in various advocacy efforts or worked towards policy change within their area of expertise, including deinstitutionalisation for children, gender equality, support for children with disability and other areas.
- The other half do not engage in advocacy efforts in a systematic way, however some have occasionally advocated for various issues of concern, for instance in relation to staff reservation from military mobilisation.

Strong local communication capacity

- Most partners have strong communication capacity and have produced and published multiple communication products nationally and on social media raising awareness about the needs on the ground and impact of their work.

WV’s contribution

- Two partners have strengthened their communication and visibility capacity through flexible funding offered under the WVA-funded project for organisational support.
- WV UCR is usually providing a training on basics of communication and partners are requested to develop a communications plan for each project. Impact stories are regularly prepared by the partners and submitted to WV UCR as part of regular project reporting.
- WV UCR does occasionally publish impact stories crediting its local partners, however some partners noted this wasn’t sufficiently done. There is an expectation for WV to amplify partners’ voice and share their stories to a wider audience, including to the international audience and donors which are more accessible to WV. However, often after sharing their impact stories with WV, partners don’t hear back on those and are not sure whether these were shared further with other audiences. A way forward could be for WV to have a conversation with partners regarding the communication to clarify expectations and for WV to understand what support/ contribution is most critical for local organisation. For some it could be the need to strengthen their communication capabilities, while for others – to amplify their stories.
- WV UCR hasn’t engaged local partners in their advocacy efforts. The major focus of partnership remains on the delivery of individual projects and to support the organisational needs identified by the partners. Given the overlap in areas of concern among some of WV UCR’s local partners, there could be space for potential collaboration among local organisations and joining forces on some of the key advocacy messages and actions. Having visibility over partners’ work, WV UCR could potentially play a convenor role and help bringing those partners together for them to join forces in their advocacy efforts.



VOICE AND PARTICIPATION



6 Objective: To ensure affected people fully shape and participate in humanitarian response.

Key indicators measured (on the scale from 1 to 4):	2023 survey	2025 survey
6.1 Affected people are actively involved in assessment of needs, and have a say in how assistance is prioritised, the nature and quality of the assistance and the identification of beneficiaries.	2.5	3.3
6.2 Affected people are actively asked for feedback during and after the assistance provision and have a means of making suggestions or providing feedback.	3	4



“With this project we created something really based on needs, which would have been much harder if you imposed the design on us. Finally, we do a project that we developed for a target group and not the other way round, not looking for a target group for already designed project.”
Way Home, Odesa.



Strong local leadership in design

- The more WV UCR involves partners in the project design and especially where it puts them in a leading position, the greater is the influence of affected population on its programming.
- According to some WV UCR staff WV’s role is to advise partners on back donor requirements and expectations to ensure that partners’ project ideas get funded. The relative flexibility of WVA funding is believed to have facilitated partner’s freedom of design and creativity. Some WV UCR staff believe that securing institutional donor funding for the same type of activities would be less likely, given donors’ rigid focus on the key humanitarian priorities and methodologies that have proven efficient, and the lack of appetite to trial new approaches that might not neatly fit within the cluster defined direction. This view seems to confirm the importance of flexible funding to prioritise support to locally-led initiatives. In a volatile context of a humanitarian crisis, the closer the program design is to the ground, the more relevant the program is to the needs of affected population. As noted by some partners, the WVA-funded project was unique as it was designed for a specific target audience with a consideration of the actual needs of the target group, while many donor initiatives are first designed remotely and then target population is being sought to fit into the objectives or a ready program. While flexible funding has made it easier for WV to let go of some control and give space for partners’ initiative and leadership, WV as an intermediary should be more intentional about seeking a ‘brokering’ role, advocating towards donors to ensure that funding opportunities respond to local needs prioritised by local actors and communities as opposed to by donors and intermediaries.

Stronger sustainability of outcomes

- WV’s investment into local organisations contributes to their continuous operational presence and ability to remain and support the affected communities beyond the duration of individual projects.
- While all WV UCR’s local partners have strong knowledge of local context and needs, a few of WV’s localised partners under WVA-funded project stand out. Some have been present in their area for over 20 years and have comprehensive understanding of local challenges and greater access to local communities. They design new projects based on the experience from other programs delivered in the same area and factor in the voices of communities they support. They know how best to adapt their programming in a volatile context. Working with such organisations is essential to ensuring the relevance of the humanitarian response. Their engagement in the response is also critical to a more sustainable transition to recovery.

Effective feedback mechanisms

- All partners interviewed shared examples of feedback mechanisms put in place, that include both communication channels to partners and WV. The channels are diverse, including QR codes, feedback boxes, direct communication with project team present during the activity, through WhatsApp/telegram chat, hotline, regular post-distribution monitoring exercise, and others. Partners seek to adapt feedback mechanisms to various characteristics of their project participants, for instance, one partner spoke about doing an oral reflection with children after the activity and a focused group discussion with parents and caregivers to understand what type of support is more effective. Feedback is taken on board as much as possible and, where feasible, it is absorbed by the ongoing project, otherwise is taken into consideration to improve the design of future programs. WV UCR usually shares with partners any feedback/complaints that come to WV in relation to partners’ activities.
- WV provided extensive support with building the accountability systems of local organisations at the start of the crisis in Ukraine, especially for newer and less-experienced organisations. At this point of the response, partners didn’t have to rely on WV support as much as they already had these systems in place.

RECOMMENDATIONS

THE BELOW RECOMMENDATIONS PROPOSE FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS THAT COULD BE CONSIDERED BY WV UCR. THE BEST PRACTICES THAT ARE ALREADY IN PLACE, AS REFLECTED ABOVE, SHOULD CONTINUE AND BE SCALED UP ACROSS ALL WV UCR PROJECTS AS FEASIBLE.

1. Partnerships

- 1.1 Develop and introduce internal minimum standards for working with partners to ensure the key partnering principles (from the WVI's Working with Partners policy) are woven into working processes and best practices are applied for all projects as much as possible.
- 1.2 Ensure local partners have a leading role in the project design as much as possible.
- 1.3 Seek opportunities to consolidate learnings from local partners and share those externally, both nationally and internationally, to ensure local expertise contributes to the broader sector.
- 1.4 Look for possibilities to form strategic partnerships with local organisations beyond individual grants, and focus on wise stewardship and systems' strengthening.

2. Funding

- 2.1 Ensure overheads are shared with local partners in every project where these are provided by the back donor.
- 2.2 Seek ways to allocate the budget for organisational strengthening of local partners.
- 2.3 Consider providing local partners with an opportunity to reflect in project budgets their own contribution (if any) to support transparency and power dynamics.
- 2.4 Consider moving towards budgeting transparency with local partners to strengthen equity in partnerships.

3. Capacity

- 3.1 Embed the organisational support to partners within projects as much as possible or seek dedicated funding for such support alone. It should be demand-based and tailored to specific needs of each organisation.
- 3.2 Engage strategically with smaller local organisations who could benefit from WV UCR capacity strengthening and other support contributing to their empowerment.
- 3.3 Work with local partners to understand how best to strengthen their risk management systems critical for their growth, stability and ability to access donor funding.

4. Coordination and Leadership

- 4.1 Be intentional about understanding the need for and provide tailored support where required to local partners to meaningfully engage with the international humanitarian system.

5. Advocacy and Visibility

- 5.1 Amplify local partners' voices through WV UCR communication materials.
- 5.2 Ensure local partners are informed if their communication materials/ photos / impact stories are published further externally, based on agreed communication plans as part of the partnership agreement.
- 5.3 Facilitate collaboration among local partners who advocate on similar issues and support those advocacy efforts where possible.

6. Voice and Participation

- 6.1 Continue investing into local organisations to support their operational presence and the ability to remain and support the affected communities beyond the duration of individual projects.
- 6.2 Ensure local leadership in the design of new programming opportunities to better factor in local needs and unique characteristics of each location.

