

# TRANSFORMING PARTNERSHIPS

## IN UKRAINE AND MOLDOVA

Learnings from World Vision  
Ukraine Crisis Response



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# Acronyms

<b>ADH</b>	Aktion Deutschland Hilft
<b>HAG</b>	Humanitarian Advisory Group
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>ISAC</b>	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
<b>NEAR</b>	Network for Empowered Aid Response
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>PCM</b>	Project Cycle Management
<b>PIANGO</b>	Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations
<b>WV</b>	World Vision
<b>WVUCR</b>	World Vision Ukraine Crisis Response

# 1 Executive Summary

World Vision has pursued an approach to be ‘as local as possible and as international as necessary.’<sup>1</sup> In Ukraine and Moldova World Vision partnered with national and local NGOs in line with World Vision’s commitment to the Grand Bargain Intermediary Caucus regarding localisation, and as a newly established response without prior presence in these countries. To measure how World Vision partnering approach enables its local partners to take up a stronger leadership role in delivering the humanitarian response, World Vision conducted an assessment with the support of the Aktion Deutschland Hilft (ADH). Using NEAR Networks’ localisation performance measurement framework, quantitative and qualitative data was collected through the review of the key World Vision documents and self-assessment survey facilitated with 40 World Vision international and local staff in Ukraine and Moldova, 10 partners in Ukraine and 5 partners in Moldova. Specific objectives and progress indicators were identified for each of the six pillars of the localisation measurement framework. Progress against the identified indicators was measured using a simple scale (poor (1), modest (2), good (3), and excellent (4)).

<sup>1</sup> As highlighted by the Secretary-General at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/localisation#:~:text=Recognizing%20the%20critical%20role%20local,and%20as%20international%20as%20necessary%E2%80%9D>



**The assessment has revealed that World Vision has progressed towards localisation outcomes under the core six localisation pillars, with more advanced progress achieved under the pillar of Voice and Participation (2.8 out of 4), followed by modest progress observed under Partnership, Funding, Capacity, and Policy Influence/ Advocacy/ Visibility (2 out of 4). The least progress has been made under the pillar of Coordination and Leadership (1.9 out of 4). The findings are as follows:**

## Partnership

World Vision has demonstrated its commitment to building partnerships with local and national organisations by building that into its response strategy and by continuously improving its approach and partnership arrangements, ensuring local partners could gain stronger voice in partnership and are more engaged in all stages of the project cycle management (PCM). Through a wide network of partners World Vision was able to assist over 1.5 million people affected by the conflict in Ukraine (in Ukraine alone World Vision managed to cover 13 out of 24 oblasts). World Vision's added value is recognised and commended on by partners, as they are thoroughly guided through the project delivery and feel their ideas are listened to. World Vision staff have been approachable, responsive, and supportive, showing care in respect towards local partners' staff. The partnerships have also proven to be flexible, which is critical in a fluid emergency context.

At the same time, the way these partnerships are formed prevents them from being equitable. The focus remains on the project delivery, without an initial conversation about building a partnership that extends beyond a specific grant. Joint vision or complementarity are not being discussed, and partner capacity assessments are limited only to local partners placing World Vision in a superior position. The lack of common minimum standards to working with partners within World Vision hinders partners from participating fully in every stage of the PCM. It facilitates a sub-granting approach, without placing equal value on each partner's contribution, which is critical to building equitable partnerships. Enculturing localisation within World Vision is key to transforming the current approach to ensure local and national organisations exercise power in partnership with World Vision, enabling their growth.

## Funding

By the end of 2023 World Vision has channelled 43% of its budget to partners. Funding allocated for the delivery of humanitarian project activities is acknowledged to be mostly adequate, and partners appreciate relative flexibility in designing their project budgets. The partnership with World Vision has also contributed to partners' financial sustainability, as most local partners have improved internal systems, gained experience of delivering new programs, and received multiple trainings (more on that is below under 'Capacity'). However, some issues remain for World Vision to be addressed to ensure it contributes to a funding environment that promotes, incentivises, and supports localisation to enable an effective and timely humanitarian response.

Operational cost should be sufficiently covered by World Vision, and flexible overheads should be shared with local partners, in the same way these are received from the donor (i.e. as unrestricted) to contribute to partners' sustainability, growth, and preparedness capacity. Partner salary scales should be respected, recognising the challenges they face with recruiting and retaining staff, as they cannot compete with salaries offered by INGOs or UN agencies. Financial transparency is encouraged as much as possible to improve trust and equal nature of partnerships. It has also been noted that fund transfer to partners by World Vision has often been delayed for a multitude of reasons, and the impact of that falls almost entirely on partners' shoulders. While delays are unlikely to be fully avoided, World Vision should revisit its internal processes to minimise funding delays.

## Capacity

Every partner interviewed has reported that the partnership with World Vision has contributed to their increased capacity. Even when the support was mostly directed to ensure a quality delivery of humanitarian projects, the experience of delivering these projects, extended partners' funding portfolio, multiple trainings and capacity support have in most cases led to stronger knowledge and skills, often improved internal systems, and even allowed them to secure new funding opportunities. Since the start of the response, [World Vision offered to its partners trainings and workshops on multiple topics](#), including financial management and [procurement](#), communication, reporting and grant management, security, safeguarding, [first aid](#), [MEAL](#), accountability, and technical subjects. [Comprehensive start-up workshops were organised before launching every project](#). In Ukraine World Vision's support went beyond skills' training and included provision of personal protective equipment to partners responding in insecure areas, security management guidance, support with policy development, and training and access to WatchDOG for partners so that they could perform blocked-party screening for staff and suppliers on their own. On-the-job support provided to local partners by World Vision team has been commendable. Although, according to some partners, certain knowledge and skills were built naturally, confidence growth among smaller local organisations has been reported to lead to new partnerships and donors. All the above have proven to be strong enablers of localisation.

Nevertheless, some changes to the current approach are needed for World Vision to contribute to the ability of local partners to respond effectively and efficiently to humanitarian crises and transition to recovery and long-term programming. The assessments of partner capacity should not be limited only to risks to World Vision, but should also consider identifying shared vision and values, common goals, partner technical expertise, potential complementarity, and other aspects. The current practice is not to share the assessment results with partners, undermining the transparency and the possibility for joint identification of capacity needs. Besides not seeing the assessment results, local partners neither know what standards they need to aim at. Capacity building action plans are often built on the assumption that there is no local capacity, while local partners often have sufficient expertise that World Vision could also learn from. The current approach is not always tailored to needs and does not include organisational strengthening of local organisations, while it is needed and is where World Vision can add value to contribute to sustainability and preparedness of local organisations. Finally, the lack of conversation about localisation within World Vision and certain minimum standards that should apply to working with partners, beyond their capacity assessment, all contribute to the lack of a unified approach by World Vision staff to working with partners and to contributing to their capacity.

**“ Alina Subotina, from Children of New Generation:**

**World Vision helped us grow and expand our network. This partnership wasn't only about providing funding, it was also about providing guidance and helping us grow. Thanks to World Vision we built our procurement skills. After gaining experience with small grants, we started looking for tenders and developing policies. It created a system, a strategy. It helped us grow and perform.**

**”**

## Coordination

World Vision local partners are actively involved in various coordination forums on the ground, including with local authorities, to avoid duplication and to prioritise humanitarian needs. Most partners are part of the cluster system, working groups and the NGO Platform in Ukraine. They also support each other when needed, offering advice when faced with common issues. Most partners are, however, somewhat frustrated with the existing coordination system and not always able to play an active role in it.

The system of international coordination is extremely time-consuming which places significant burden on smaller organisations who are fully dependent solely on project funding and do not have available human resources who could spend multiple hours in multiple cluster and working group meetings at different levels. Most discussions in these coordination forums do not cover practical concerns which local organisations deal with daily, and 'are removed from reality' which is another reason why these coordination meetings get deprioritised. In most cases World Vision has not facilitated partners' access to and participation in external coordination forums. When local organisations want to join those and look for entry points to clusters, World Vision is not actively supporting them with it. Some partners are lost in the humanitarian system and are unsure how they can meaningfully contribute to it. World Vision's support sometimes is limited to providing a relevant contact only, and partners are not sure what support to ask for. Additionally, local partners interviewed in Ukraine have expressed their desire to be better connected with other World Vision partners and would appreciate if World Vision could facilitate it. Stronger engagement with national government and local and regional authorities is also to be considered by World Vision, as the government is the key stakeholder in this response.

## Policy Influence/ Advocacy / Visibility

World Vision already partners with local and national organisations in Moldova and Ukraine who engage in advocacy work on a high level and have had successes in influencing policy. Most partners produce external communication materials and those who did not have a prior experience of that, have benefited from the guidance from World Vision. In its communication materials and reports World Vision accurately credits local partners, which are all positive indications.

At the same time, local partners have noted that World Vision has not engaged them in their advocacy efforts, although, as some partner staff pointed out 'it is local partners who are working directly with beneficiaries'. Given that most World Vision projects are delivered through local and national organisations, World Vision should seek ways to engage them in advocacy, either through more active cooperation or through using the data and inputs from local partners to shape its key advocacy messaging. World Vision should take into consideration that, similarly to the barrier to participation in coordination forums, not all local partners have the capacity or desire to actively engage in advocacy due to other more pressing priorities.



## Voice and Participation

Every partner interviewed confirmed having established accountability channels to ensure the population they assist can provide their feedback to influence how and what assistance is delivered to them. Partners also confirmed regular assessment of needs that feed into the design of projects where possible. Needs are regularly re-assessed through constant interaction with affected communities, outreach to elderly members of the community and those with disability through mobile teams, community events, maintenance of various communication channels, and many others. Children are involved where possible in creating feedback mechanisms in child-friendly spaces. Importantly, it has been acknowledged that significant contribution has been provided by World Vision to improve partners' accountability systems, especially to newer and smaller organisations, but not limited to.

Nonetheless, according to World Vision partners some projects are designed prior to their teams going to the communities to understand the needs better. Partners are also often unable to consider specific needs of affected population in projects where World Vision provides them with ready kits to distribute in the community. Furthermore, World Vision partners and staff have expressed frustration with the fact that most donors often expect a high unique beneficiary reach. It is believed to harm the quality of projects, especially when assisting such vulnerable groups as people with disability who cannot be provided with a one-off service and then left behind. While these expectations might often be imposed by donors, it is important for World Vision to listen to partners and work together with them to raise these concerns with donors. Accordingly, partners should be invited to donor meetings from the onset for more efficient advocacy.

## Recommendations

The above findings have led to the development of a set of recommendations. World Vision is strongly encouraged to action these to strengthen its approach to partnering so that it enables local and national organisations to take a stronger leadership role in delivering the humanitarian response and managing the transition to rehabilitation and long-term programming. While all recommendations presented at the end of this report are important, below is the selection of those proposed as mandatory for more immediate actioning in order for World Vision to work in line with its Strategic Objective 4.



## World Vision needs to:

### PARTNERSHIP

- 1.1.1 'Enculture' localisation through raising awareness of World Vision staff and build partnership skills through dedicated sessions for all staff and through including partnership matters in regular meetings. This should not be limited to dedicated events and workshops only but should include embedding localisation into the standard working processes.
- 1.1.2 Define internal minimum standards for working with partners to ensure the key partnering principles are woven into working processes, and that approach to each partner is tailored to their experience and needs. The key principles should include equity and complementarity, transparency and mutual accountability, shared vision, values, and mutual benefit, open and timely communication, shared responsibility, and risks.
- 1.1.5 Involve partners in the World Vision strategy development and review, present to them the final product, including the results of this assessment.
- 1.2.1 Regularly consolidate feedback about partner performance after the project implementation, to be then discussed with the respective partners for transparency and to be considered for the next intervention (to be included in the partnering minimum standards).
- 1.2.2 Establish a system for regular feedback collection from partners, with clear roles and responsibilities within World Vision. Ensure there is a process in place for such feedback to be shared internally as required, to trigger change in approach or to resolve a problem identified by a partner, if needed. Create opportunities for informal feedback sharing.

### FUNDING

- 2.1.1 Partnering minimum standards should include a new standard for sharing overheads with local partners. This standard is to apply to every grant to a local or national organisation.
- 2.2.2 Include funding for operating costs (office, warehousing, transport, communications, printing) in funding agreements with local partners, and respect partner salary grids.
- 2.2.3 Conduct an internal review of the process of funds' commitment with the key departments to seek ways to minimise delays.
- 2.2.4 If final tranche is to be pre-financed by the partner, it has to be explicitly discussed with the partner prior to sub-grant agreement signature.
- 2.3.2 Seek ways to provide institutional support and intentional organisational strengthening where required.

### CAPACITY

- 3.1.1 Review the needs shared by the partners through the recent survey and seek to organise trainings, workshops, exchange visits, masterclasses engaging the partners in delivering those as much as possible.
- 3.1.2 Revisit the process of capacity assessment and capacity development plans:
  - share assessment results with partners – for transparency and so that it serves both parties.
  - look beyond compliance, consider the key localisation pillars and technical capacity.
  - before sending the plan to partners ask them to share their needs in capacity and consider what's feasible, be transparent about the outcomes.
  - ensure the assessment results are taken into consideration to define the ways of working with the partner (low capacity and young team -> more support, experienced organisation -> less guidance and oversight)
- 3.2.1 Embed the organisational support to partners within projects as much as possible or seek dedicated funding for such support alone. This should be tailored to specific needs of each organisation.
- 3.4.1 Tailor support to partners who's financial and people management systems aren't strong to improve those.

### COORDINATION AND LEADERSHIP

- 4.2.1 Plan a face-to-face event with local partners to connect them and facilitate internal coordination among them going forward.
- 4.2.3 Increase engagement and liaison with Ukrainian/ Moldovan national government, and local and regional authorities as the lead stakeholder in this response.

## 2 Background

World Vision is committed to supporting localisation as an essential factor to improving humanitarian assistance in line with World Vision's commitment to the Grand Bargain. Like in any crisis, local communities and civil society were the first responders to the crisis in Ukraine and will remain on the ground to lead the recovery efforts after international organisations leave. World Vision has prioritised working through local organisations in Ukraine and Moldova from the onset of the response. Partnering approach was embedded in the UCR strategy under Strategic Objective 4 'Support equitable, dignified, and empowering local partnerships to respond effectively and efficiently to needs'.

As part of the planning process for the gradual exit of World Vision from Ukraine and Moldova and for the transition from the humanitarian response to recovery, World Vision needs to ensure local partners are enabled to take up a stronger leadership role in delivering the humanitarian response and managing such a transition. Significant efforts have already been undertaken to strengthen the capacity of World Vision's local partners. Thanks to the Aktion Deutschland Hilft (ADH) support, between November 2023 and February 2024 World Vision undertook an assessment of the partnering approach in Ukraine and Moldova to measure how it progresses towards localisation outcomes and to identify the most effective practices in supporting local capacity and gaps still to be filled. The assessment results helped refining the current partnering approach to ensure World Vision's Strategic Objective 4 is fully met.

## 3 Methodology

The assessment was conducted using NEAR Network's Localisation Measurement Framework<sup>2</sup>, contextualising its indicators to World Vision's humanitarian response to the crisis in Ukraine. Some of the tools developed by the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Government Organisations (PIANGO) and Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) were adopted for this assessment. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected through the review of the key World Vision documents and self-assessment survey facilitated with 40 World Vision international and local staff in Ukraine and Moldova, ten partners in Ukraine and five partners in Moldova. The assessment focused on national and local organisations<sup>3</sup>, however some of those were affiliated with INGOs (8 national organisations, one local, and 6 local organisations affiliated with INGOs). Most of the interviews (72%) were conducted in person in Lviv, Kyiv, Dnipro, and Chisinau, with the rest done remotely online. Additional online survey form was shared with local partners in Ukraine and Moldova to collect the data about further training needs.

Specific objectives and progress indicators were identified for each of the six pillars of the localisation measurement framework. Progress against the identified indicators was measured using a simple scale (poor (1), modest (2), good (3), and excellent (4)). The proposed recommendations are structured in line with the same six key pillars, objectives, and indicators.

<sup>2</sup> NEAR Network Localisation Performance Measurement Framework [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/51c4d249698602e73a0592/519011621db06527096834204c71611251983166/LMPF-Final\\_2019.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/51c4d249698602e73a0592/519011621db06527096834204c71611251983166/LMPF-Final_2019.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> 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.

## 4 Limitations

- While World Vision covers Ukraine, Moldova, Romania and Georgia, the assessment covered only Ukraine and Moldova where World Vision delivers the response with partners, and as operations in Romania have already transitioned to World Vision Romania Foundation.
- The information collected during the assessment represents only a snapshot of lessons learned and there is a possibility that some points might not have emerged during the assessment. The assessment recommendations propose an adjusted approach to partnering that should allow World Vision capturing more in-depth information about partner capacity and needs and measuring the progress towards the localisation outcomes going forward. Adopting this approach is critical to building and maintaining empowering partnerships and contributing to a locally led response.
- The assessment involved 23% of World Vision staff and 65% of the current national and local partners (including those affiliated with INGOs) in Ukraine and Moldova, so not the full range of opinions and ideas were captured.
- Not all findings and recommendations equally apply to Moldova and Ukraine. While both countries are included under the UCR with the same rules and procedures applying to both as part of one response, the context of each country significantly differs from the other, and these differences impact the existing partnerships. More details will be included in the sections below.
- 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 World Vision to establish whether there are gaps and the level of support needed.
- Some of the answers provided by World Vision staff and partners during the assessment were not supported by the information from other sources. For instance, there was often a disconnect between the statements of equitable partnerships and the apparent inequality between World Vision and local partners that transpired in the existing processes, financial figures, and the lack of transparency from World Vision side. This could be explained by varying interpretations of certain terms and varying understanding of localisation.



# 5 Findings and Recommendations

## A. Partnership

**Objective 1:** 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):

1.1 Local partners exercise power in partnerships with World Vision.	2.3
1.2 Partnership quality monitoring tools exist and are used, and partnership reviews are conducted.	1.6
1.3 World Vision has longer-term strategic partnerships that commit to build systems and processes that reflect the ambition and goals of local organisations.	1.7
1.4 Local partners participate in all aspects of the Project Cycle Management (PCM).	2.5

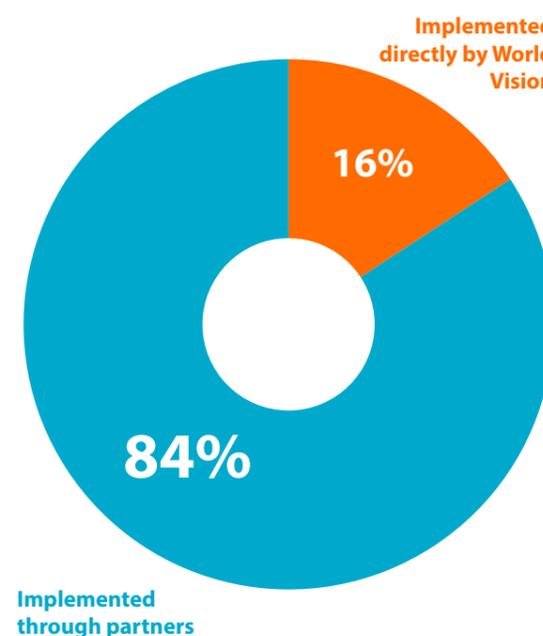


## What works well:

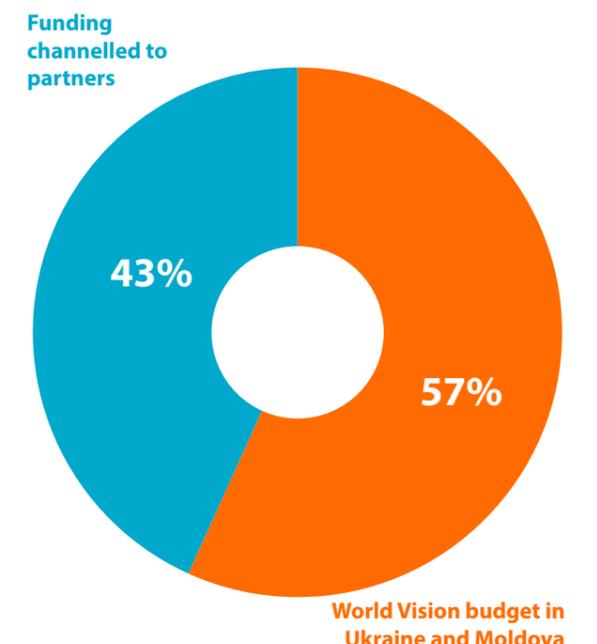
### Strategic approach to partnering.

- World Vision has pursued partnerships with national and local organisations in Ukraine and Moldova from the start of this humanitarian response. Partnering approach was embedded in the UCR strategy under the Strategic Objective 4 “Support equitable, dignified, and empowering local partnerships to respond effectively and efficiently to needs”. It is also in line with World Vision’s commitment to the Grand Bargain Intermediary Caucus regarding localisation.
- World Vision’s approach to working with partners has evolved since the start of the response in 2022, and both partners and World Vision recognize there has been a significant improvement of partnerships and the growth on both sides. While more decisions were taken by World Vision on behalf of partners at the start of the response, most partners report that this is no longer the case (with some exceptions as will be described below).
- Since the start of the response, World Vision partnered with 32 organisations in Ukraine (9 INGOs, 5 local organisations affiliated with an INGO, and 18 national and local organisations), and 11 organisations in Moldova (2 INGOs, 4 local organisations affiliated with an INGO, and 5 national and local organisations). As of December 2023, out of 38 grants awarded to the response, 6 (16%) were implemented by World Vision, and 32 were delivered fully through partners (84%). At the same time, out of USD 152,922,584 allocated to Moldova and Ukraine under the response, USD 66,108,833 (43%) were channelled to partners.

Project Delivery Modality



Funding Split



## Comprehensive guidance and support during the project delivery.

- Most partners acknowledge that World Vision does not just provide funds but ensures that it comes with the appropriate guidance and dialogue. This approach is greatly appreciated by the partners, supports quality project delivery and underscores World Vision's added value in these partnerships. It also supports the perception of World Vision as a partner rather than a donor.
- World Vision partners often referred to World Vision as 'the most pleasant partner to work with', and World Vision staff were referred to as 'approachable, responsive, and supportive'. World Vision partners acknowledge that they have observed 'care and respect' from World Vision staff, which played a significant role in building positive and trustworthy relationships in a fast-paced and challenging environment.
- World Vision has set an example for most organisations that emerged recently in Ukraine, and some local partners said they aspired to grow into an organisation like World Vision.
- In most cases World Vision team has been easy to communicate with. Partners usually know who to reach out to with queries, which has been critical in resolving operational issues. Most projects conduct monthly meetings with partners which helps not only to track progress of the project delivery, but also to address any emerging issues among the partners. At the same time, some partners shared their concerns about certain matters and requests taking long time to be resolved, approved, or responded to by World Vision, which could impact the project delivery. These concerns were also raised by World Vision operations and finance staff.
- Majority of partners have confirmed World Vision was listening to their ideas and was perceptive of feedback related to the implementation of projects. World Vision has been flexible, as long as changes could still be made within the limits of the existing project design. However, such flexibility does not always extend to the approval of certain budget lines, in particular partner staff salaries (more on that below).
- While World Vision partnership team has only recently started doing partnership health checks, there has been a practice of dedicating time to reflection and partner feedback at the end of some projects, led by the operations team. This practice provided partners the space to flag any concerns and share comments about partnerships.
- World Vision has been acknowledged to be uniquely flexible: most requests from partners, for instance to change delivery locations or to adjust the target group, were usually approved by World Vision.

**Vasyl Panteliuk**, from Caritas Donetsk:



**There is always clarity with World Vision, and there is always communication. World Vision's team creatively and openly think of solutions. I recall that once we were on the field and there's was a beneficiary from Crimea, who wasn't registered in the monitoring and evaluation database. The World Vision team came up with a timely solution and support. While IDPs from 2014 were not included in the target group, even though their vulnerability is very low, World Vision was flexible and listened to us to include this category. We were also allowed to include 10% of the local population.**



## Challenges and gaps:

### Need to move from sub-granting to equitable partnerships.

- When partnering with other organisations, World Vision is guided by World Vision's partnership policy, which doesn't set out equal partnership relationship. It's a financial policy document that regulates risks and compliance. Consequently, World Vision views other organisations more as a risk rather than as partners. As one of World Vision's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members stated: 'We have culturally set up our partnership policy as the one of risk and mistrust, which, at a practical level, makes it hard to implement it differently'.
- The fact that World Vision holds the financial resources and is accountable to donors for those resources, automatically gives more power to World Vision, unless it builds partnerships in an equitable manner, where equal value is placed on each partner's contribution, and mutual participation and benefit are recognised. In some cases, World Vision partners are almost fully financially reliable on World Vision, which puts them in a position of dependency and makes it harder for such partners to perceive themselves as equal and being transparent. World Vision current partnerships have been built using an approach of sub-granting for the delivery of specific projects. In this approach World Vision is not transparent about details of its financial share, in most cases does not share flexible cost provided by the donor with other partners and positions itself as a superior partner who conducts assessments of other partners, without disclosing their results to organisations assessed, and as a solely capable of capacity building of other organisations in the partnership. Such an approach is in line with World Vision policy however it does not lead to mutually accountable, equitable and empowering partnerships.
- It is true that national and local organisations in Ukraine and Moldova do not always have an extensive organisational structure, often lack certain management systems, have limited experience of working in a humanitarian setting and knowledge of donor policies. Not all small local organisations have an ambition to grow. However, none of this means that they cannot or do not bring an essential contribution to partnership with World Vision, and that they cannot be equitable partners. In partnership with World Vision, these organisations deliver the most essential component of the humanitarian response – they fully manage the relationship with and deliver assistance to the people affected by the crisis. In Ukraine they often take significant risk supporting affected communities near the frontline. Some areas where World Vision partners deliver humanitarian assistance, are off limits for World Vision staff. While most World Vision staff recognise the critical role of partners in World Vision response, some staff express frustration with gaps in the capacity of local organisations, not always recognizing partners' contribution as equally valuable and complementary.
- It is challenging to build equitable partnerships without a transparent conversation at the start of the relationship, where common goals beyond the project delivery and contribution of each partner are discussed, and clear expectations from each partner are agreed. At this point, there is no practice at World Vision to hold such conversations.
- Perhaps not every national or local organisation that World Vision works with is set to become World Vision's full-fledged partner, however, the partnership arrangement should be discussed at the start of such a relationship to establish each party's vision and expectations.
- The above leads to the lack of trust on the side of local partners, where they are not always comfortable to share feedback with World Vision. In an example regarding the delivery of a one-month project using UCR's 'small grant' mechanism in Ukraine, local partners

spoke about the fact that such a short timeframe was completely unrealistic in view of World Vision's own procurement rules. However, most partners did not feel comfortable to negotiate the duration with World Vision, and instead made their staff work longer hours to deliver it on time as much as possible. Ultimately, most had to ask for no-cost extension. Furthermore, World Vision is often perceived as the one performing a monitoring function in the partnership which also impacts the trust issue. In some cases, when World Vision visited partner organisations to offer support, partners were scared of the visit, and in one instance the partner apologised for not having finished their office renovation on time. Turning 'monitoring' visits into 'learning and reviewing' visits could help reinforcing the equitable nature of the partnership and fostering mutual trust.

- While there are national and local organisations with whom World Vision has already delivered more than one project, which might indicate of their strategic importance to World Vision, no formal strategic partnerships have yet been formed by World Vision. Most partners have expressed their desire to continue working with World Vision, however all were unclear about World Vision's intentions. One partner shared that they were unsure of World Vision's opinion about the fact that they were partnering with other organisations, indicating of the lack of clarity about the partnership framework and expectations from each side. Smaller organisations who partner with World Vision under the small grant modality are keen to understand whether they could approach World Vision for other larger funding opportunities and what standards they should meet as an organisation to be considered as a partner for larger grants.
- The process of partner selection for a specific World Vision intervention has not always been clear or diligently documented, although the work is already ongoing to establish a clear process. Partner performance reviews have not always been done and if done, the results were not usually shared with the partners. Partnership health checks have not yet been fully rolled out with all partners and it is not yet fully clear to all staff and partners about how health checks can be used to address issues or improve partnerships.
- World Vision partners are not always involved in all stages of the project cycle management, with gaps highlighted by the partners regarding the design phase and monitoring and evaluation stage. The approach seems to differ from project to project, so a comprehensive review of the current processes and introduction of minimum standards regarding the project delivery with partners should be considered by World Vision.
- When it comes to the project delivery, World Vision's approvals are required concerning multiple aspects of the project cycle management. Most Ukrainian staff of World Vision involved in the project delivery see World Vision's partnership with local organisations as equal, which translates into relative flexibility and easy communication between World Vision operations staff and partners during the delivery. However most decision-making sits with World Vision.
- Most well-established local organisations with whom World Vision partnered since 2022 have expressed their frustration at the initial approach by World Vision, where their expertise and existing organisational culture were not recognised or respected. This was particularly the case for Moldova. They had to push back on some of the technical aspects initially imposed on them by World Vision, however, they recognise the relationship has mostly improved by now, and they feel more valued.
- Although 84% of World Vision projects have so far been delivered by its partners, World Vision did not involve partners in the design of its strategy. In fact, most partners have expressed their interest to see World Vision's strategy to understand better whether there is an alignment going forward.

## Recommendations:

Working with national and local partners is not simply a modality of choice, but a vehicle for responding effectively and efficiently to humanitarian needs and is critical to ensuring the sustainable transition to recovery. World Vision should seek building equitable and complementary partnerships with national and local organisations in Ukraine and Moldova to enable them to take up a stronger leadership role in delivering the humanitarian response and managing the transition to rehabilitation and development. The following actions are recommended for implementation for World Vision to achieve the above objective. The proposed indicators will allow measuring the progress towards achieving this objective. Although all recommendations are important, recommendations marked with 'M' throughout the report are proposed as mandatory to be prioritised for the implementation.

### Indicator 1.1 Local partners exercise power in partnerships with World Vision.

- 1.1.1 'Enculture' localisation through raising awareness of World Vision staff and build partnership skills through dedicated sessions for all staff and through including partnership matters in regular meetings. This should not be limited to dedicated events and workshops only but should include embedding localisation into the standard working processes. (M)
- 1.1.2 Define internal minimum standards for working with partners to ensure the key partnering principles are woven into working processes and that approach to each partner is tailored to their experience and needs. The key principles should include equity and complementarity, transparency and mutual accountability, shared vision, values, and mutual benefit, open and timely communication, shared responsibility and risks. (M)
- 1.1.3 Improve onboarding of World Vision staff - organise induction for staff about the work of the key departments, including a session about partnership for every new staff to be working directly with partners.
- 1.1.4 Create opportunities for World Vision to learn from partners. Involve operations team to identify partner strengths and expertise (to include in minimum standards).
- 1.1.5 Involve partners in the World Vision strategy development and review, present to them the final product, including the results of this assessment. (M)

### Indicator 1.2 Partnership quality monitoring tools exist and are used, and partnership reviews are conducted.

- 1.2.1 Regularly consolidate feedback about partner performance after the project implementation, to be then discussed with the respective partners for transparency and to be considered for the next intervention (to be included in the partnering minimum standards). (M)
- 1.2.2 Establish a system for regular feedback collection from partners, with clear roles and responsibilities within World Vision. Ensure there is a process in place for such feedback to be shared internally as required, and to trigger change in approach or to resolve a problem identified by a partner, if needed. Create opportunities for informal feedback sharing. (M)

### Indicator 1.3 Local partners participate in all aspects of the Project Cycle Management (PCM).

- 1.3.1 Strengthen the process of partner selection for specific interventions, documenting decision-making process, and involve partners in the design as early as possible.
- 1.3.2 Review the existing processes and ensure partner participation in all aspects of the PCM including in design and MEAL. Where the processes are still led by World Vision, ensure the transfer of knowledge and skills to partners (to be included in the partnering minimum standards).

### Indicator 1.4 World Vision has longer-term strategic partnerships that commit to build systems and processes that reflect the ambition and goals of local organisations.

- 1.4.1 Develop a process of partner growth/‘maturing’ (can be tied to the capacity assessments/plans). Align the minimum standards (p.2) to this process.
- 1.4.2 Build and formalise strategic partnerships (identify key partners ideally a combination of large national and small local organisations, develop a partnership agreement or an MOU to formalise such relationships).
- 1.5 Considering significant engagement World Vision has done with national and local partners and the progress made towards localisation outcomes, it should seek ways to showcase this work within World Vision and contribute to the efforts aimed at refining World Vision partnership policy.
- 1.6 World Vision should consider contributing to the process of simplifying and harmonising due diligence processes for local and national partners. As part of this effort World Vision could start sharing capacity assessment results with partners as a certification of World Vision due diligence process (more on capacity assessment process is covered below under Capacity).

## B. Funding

**Objective 2:** 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):

2.1 Overhead costs shared equally between local partners and World Vision without reporting conditions.

1.3

2.2 Funding provided by World Vision to local partners is adequate to deliver a response that meets quality standards.

2.7

2.3 World Vision actively seeks to strengthen the financial sustainability of local partners (e.g. strategic partnerships, joint donor meetings)

1.5

2.4 Local partners have increased decision making over funding matters.

2.1

2.5 Funding for operating costs (office, warehousing, transport, communications, printing) is included in funding agreements with local partners.

2.3



## What works well:

- Funding allocated for delivery of humanitarian project activities is acknowledged to be mostly adequate (the gaps usually concern the duration of the grants, operating cost and overheads which are discussed below).
- World Vision partners have relative flexibility in designing their project budgets within the framework provided by World Vision ('relative' is because World Vision does not always accept to cover all staff cost as proposed by partners).
- World Vision small grants' modality introduced in Ukraine has allowed World Vision partnering with small local and national organisations and responding efficiently and timely to urgent humanitarian needs.
- In most cases World Vision has extended flexibility to partners when budget revisions were required (within the allowable parameters and donor guidelines).
- Local partners (mostly in Ukraine) appreciated World Vision monthly reporting requirement, which helped them to keep better track of expenses and contributed to learning, even though it meant more work. The work of World Vision finance team in Ukraine has been commended by most local partners.
- Although not always intended, partnership with World Vision has contributed to partners' financial sustainability: as a result of their work with World Vision most have improved internal systems, have gained experience of delivering new programs, and received multiple trainings (more on that is below under the 'Capacity').

## Challenges and gaps

### Lack of sharing of flexible overheads, staff cost, and lack of budget transparency

- While World Vision has access to partner detailed budgets, it does not usually share the detailed breakdown of their share of the budget with its partners. It indicates of a lack of transparency impacting the trust needed to build equitable partnerships.
- In most cases World Vision does not share flexible overheads / indirect cost with local partners, and there is no set policy on it. According to World Vision senior finance staff, overheads can be shared only with international NGOs, with HQ outside the country of project delivery. However, most World Vision staff interviewed said there was no major difference of working with INGOs or local NGOs, in fact sometimes local NGOs performed better. Allocating higher cost to INGOs could have made sense if they have then taken on part of the grant management and compliance that is otherwise managed by World Vision, however it's not always the case. Limited World Vision projects share overheads with national and local partners (for instance the consortium funded by the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance).

4 'Towards Co-Ownership: The Role of Intermediaries in Supporting Locally-Led Humanitarian Action' The Grand Bargain Intermediaries Caucus <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2022-08/Outcome%20Paper%20Towards%20Co-ownership%20-%20Caucus%20on%20Intermediaries%20-%20August%202022.pdf>

5 'Overhead Cost Allocation in the Humanitarian Sector' Research Report endorsed by IASC OPAG, November 2022, [https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2022-11/IASC%20Research%20report\\_Overhead%20Cost%20Allocation%20in%20the%20Humanitarian%20Sector.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2022-11/IASC%20Research%20report_Overhead%20Cost%20Allocation%20in%20the%20Humanitarian%20Sector.pdf)

- Allocation of overhead cost to local /national partners by intermediaries like World Vision is among the Grand Bargain localisation commitments.<sup>4</sup> Local and national organisations require overheads for the same reasons as INGOs – they are 'an intrinsic part of programme delivery'.<sup>5</sup> Overheads play a critical role for sustainability and preparedness capacity of humanitarian actors. 'Depending on how indirect costs are defined, this could be to put in place the overarching policies and processes that enable organisations to deliver quality, effective humanitarian activities, to implement reserves policy, to manage risk, and to deal with unforeseen expenditure. L/NNGOs [local and national NGOs] that remain in communities affected by crisis once acute shocks have passed must build preparedness capacity, for which overheads are particularly critical.'<sup>6</sup>
- Most partners interviewed have raised their concern about the lack of flexible overheads provided by World Vision. As the funding provided by most donors and intermediaries like World Vision to local and national organisations is fully dedicated to the project delivery, all staff of such organisations are fully engaged in the implementation of projects. This leaves little or no availability for local organisations to attend multiple cluster meetings, spend time on organisational policies, search for new donors and apply for new grants. They neither have financial resources to cover the costs which are not directly linked to specific projects but are essential for running an organisation (and ultimately for delivering quality work). These might include hiring human resources manager or an accountant, buying a vehicle, organising a team-building event, and many others. They neither can afford maintaining their organisation for a period of time in between projects. Therefore, offering training to staff of small organisations without contributing to the organisational sustainability could be futile, since these trained staff will have to leave as soon as the project funding ends. In some cases when partners asked World Vision for overheads, they understood the choice was either to take on a project under the conditions offered, or there would be no project. So often smaller organisations feel that they have no choice but to accept the funding without flexible overheads.
- It is key for World Vision to provide flexible overheads to its local partners to contribute to their sustainability, growth, and preparedness capacity. It is equally important, 'that this funding is provided in the same way as it is received from the donor (i.e., as unrestricted, flexible, non-time-bound funding that is calculated as a proportion of the total grant)'.<sup>7</sup>
- Operational cost of local partners is not always sufficiently covered by World Vision. For instance, organisations delivering small grants with World Vision in Ukraine do not have their office rent or some staff cost sufficiently covered. One organisation was told that office rent could be included in the budget only if they delivered a one-year project.
- The impact of insufficiently covered overheads and operational cost goes beyond the ability of local organisations to deliver humanitarian projects. Recent assessment of localization in Ukraine confirmed that '[i]f donors and international organizations that contract Ukrainian organizations increased coverage of indirect project costs, it could contribute to local and national organizations developing more powerful voices and making it possible for them to contribute more effectively to policy dialogue.'

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid

8 'A Humanitarian Localization Baseline for Ukraine' NGORC, Info Sapiens, ICVA, HAG, September 2023 <https://humanitarianadvisorygroup.org/insight/a-humanitarian-localization-baseline-for-ukraine/>

- Another funding matter relates to salaries of national and local partner staff. Several World Vision partners in Ukraine and Moldova mentioned that in some instances UCR did not approve the budget covering staff salary in line with local partner salary grid and requested to reduce those. It appears that the reduction was done only to the cost, without the respective reduction of the time the staff was supposed to engage in the project, although this will have to be verified case by case. It was flagged as a significant concern and a matter of dignity for national and local organisations. Moreover, most partners in Ukraine face challenges with hiring and retaining staff due to 'the crisis of qualified staff' as large numbers of qualified personnel left the country due to the ongoing conflict, while at the same time a large number of international organisations scaled up their operation in Ukraine. One local partner reported they lost the full trained mobile team when another organisation offered them a better pay. World Vision local partners report that there seems to be limited understanding of such challenges with recruitment from World Vision side.

### **Short-term grants and limited time for planning.**

- Most partners have underlined the need for long-term funding. According to local partners it usually takes close to six months to build the trust with communities. Short-term funding is not always suitable to address the needs, especially when it comes to protection interventions or work with vulnerable groups such as people with disability. The director of one of the national organisations in Ukraine reminded: 'First we are people, and then beneficiaries.' Specialised local organisations stressed that it was harmful to offer one-off assistance to people with disabilities, although most donors are keen to see this group of people included in the provision of humanitarian assistance.
- It was also flagged as a concern by World Vision staff and partners that some projects were designed in a hurry which later resulted in multiple revisions, adjustments, and requests for no-cost extensions, distracting the team from the implementation. Allocating more time for the project development and start-up is essential for successful project delivery and should be sought as much as possible. It is equally important to ensure all the key requirements to the project delivery and reporting are shared and discussed with the partners as early as possible. While this is normally the practice for World Vision to do so at the project start-up meetings, most partners and World Vision staff were concerned about the frequent change of those initial requirements after the project launch. One partner in Moldova referred to it as 'being trapped' as they entered the partnership with World Vision with certain expectations and calculated their resources for the project based on those. However, they later learned of additional requirements that had to be fulfilled with no additional resource allocation.

### **Lack of dedicated support for organizational strengthening.**

- While World Vision provides guidance and support to local partners, it is primarily aimed at successful delivery of the humanitarian projects: both funding and technical support concerns specific projects alone and doesn't extend to organisational strengthening. World Vision partners admit that they naturally learned from the experience of delivering projects with World Vision. Most importantly having World Vision on their CV makes a huge difference for them when approaching new partners/donors, however, it does not necessarily translate into a sustainable growth of their organisation.

### **Funding delays and financial risks.**

- Most partners interviewed in Ukraine (and a few in Moldova) mentioned that in most cases World Vision funds came in late (sometimes over 1 or 2 months late). The reasons are diverse, and the partners understand that sometimes it's due to the reasons outside World Vision control or is linked to the quality of partners' financial reports, which require time to be fixed. Regardless of the reasons, such delays impact the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and the consequences are mostly faced by the partners and not to the same extent by World Vision. In most cases without timely received funding partners are simply unable to pay salaries to staff and to start the service delivery. One partner in Ukraine spoke about the challenges with maintaining their staff trust due to the delays with salary payment. Another partner, also in Ukraine, mentioned how challenging it was for their staff to respond to a large number of hotline calls from people who were registered for cash assistance but could not receive it due to delays with funds transfer from World Vision. Those affected community members represented some of the most vulnerable members of the community, including elderly people and people with disability. Bigger and more stable organisations affiliated to INGOs (eg Health Right in Ukraine) confirmed that it was an issue for them too. They couldn't borrow funds from their headquarters since they would not be able to return those funds afterwards due to the restrictions in Ukraine. While some delays with fund transfer are cannot be avoided, World Vision should revisit internal processes involved to seek minimising such delays.
- Most World Vision local partners in Ukraine shared their concern regarding the requirement to pay the final funding tranche (usually 10%) after the delivery and reporting, meaning local partners have to pre-finance these 10%. Such a requirement is a result of fund transfer restrictions in Ukraine, where it is challenging to transfer funds back to INGOs (if unspent fully or not spent properly). At the same time, pre-financing 10% of the project budget is usually unmanageable for most local organisations, big or small, as confirmed by the participants of this assessment. The risk of fund transfer and pre-financing should be openly discussed at the start of the project and solutions to these risks sought jointly by all parties.
- In view of the aforementioned delays, it would be pertinent to consider reducing the number of fund tranches on short-term grants. While all other risks should be taken into consideration as well, the fund commitment schedule should be developed to facilitate expedient project delivery, instead of preventing from it.
- In most cases complex grant management obligations are placed by donors on intermediary organisations like World Vision, with the expectation of those being transferred to World Vision's downstream partners. To promote localisation, World Vision, and in this case, it relates also to Support Offices, should be advocating towards its main donors for more realistic requirements to grant implementation that are suitable to emergency context and feasible for local organisations.
- At the same time, in order for national and local organisations to obtain donor funding, it is critical to build robust financial, human resources and risk management systems. An assessment of these systems of World Vision partners was not within the scope of this assessment, however World Vision partners and staff reported that financial management systems varied from partner to partner, and risk management certainly needed strengthening. It is recommended for World Vision to consider this aspect when supporting organisational capacity of its strategic partners in Ukraine and Moldova as one of the key pillars of their financial sustainability.

## Recommendations:

The following action points are recommended for World Vision to contribute to a funding environment that promotes, incentivises, and supports localisation to enable a more relevant, timely and effective humanitarian response:

### **2.1 Overhead costs shared equally between local partners and World Vision without reporting conditions.**

2.1.1 Partnering minimum standards should include a new standard for sharing overheads with local partners. This standard is to apply to every grant to a local or national organisation. (M)

### **2.2 Funding provided by World Vision to local partners is adequate to deliver a response that meets quality standards.**

2.2.1 Plan the number of tranches to partners in line with the project duration: shorter grants -> fewer tranches.

2.2.2 Include funding for operating costs (office, warehousing, transport, communications, printing) in funding agreements with local partners, and respect partner salary grids. (M)

2.2.3 Conduct an Internal review of the process of funds' commitment with the key departments to seek ways to minimise delays. (M)

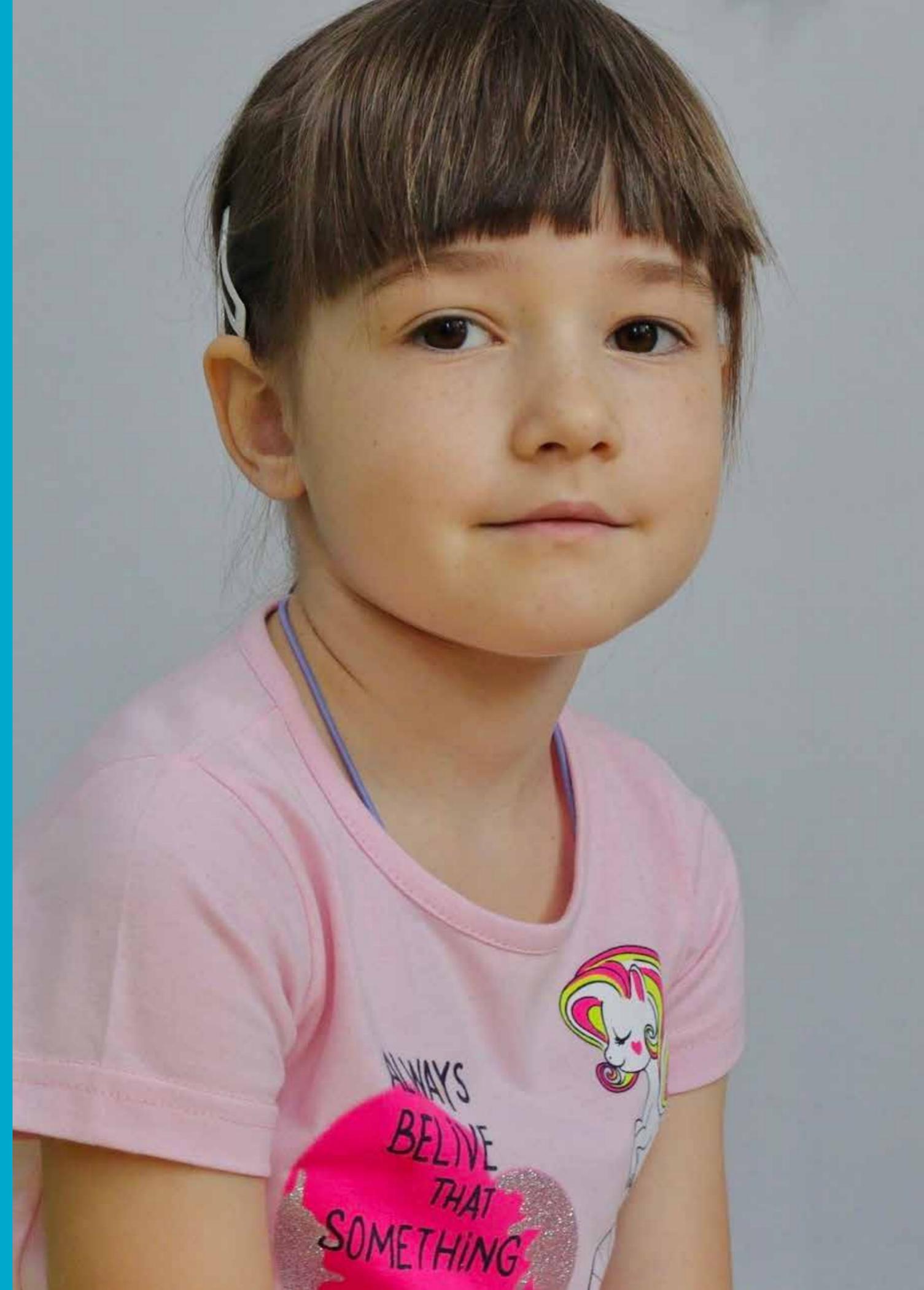
2.2.4 If final tranche is to be pre-financed by the partner, it has to be explicitly discussed with the partner prior to sub-grant agreement signature. (M)

### **2.3 World Vision actively seeks to strengthen the financial sustainability of local partners (e.g. strategic partnerships, joint donor meetings)**

2.3.1 Inviting partners to donor meetings and to meetings with SOs funding the response, to provide the space for partners to raise issues from the field level. Bringing partners at the table with donors is also likely to contribute to partner organisations' capacity to manage donor relationships which is key to their financial sustainability.

2.3.2 Seek ways to provide institutional support and intentional organisational strengthening of local partners when required. (M)

2.3.3 Offer possibilities (for instance, training opportunities) to support partners' capacity to diversify funding sources which is essential to partners' organisational growth.



## C. Capacity

**Objective 3:** To improve the ability of World Vision 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):**

**3.1 Approach to supporting each partner is tailored based on needs to complement and avoid undermining the existing capacity.**

2.3

**3.2 Organisational development is a core objective of partnerships.**

1.7

**3.2 Programme and technical staff of local organisations have a sound understanding of humanitarian principles and contextualised quality standards.**

2.0

**3.4 Local organisations have robust financial and people management systems and accounting procedures and have a financing strategy in place.**

2.2

**3.5 Fraud and corruption risks are acknowledged by local partners and effective systems are put in place to mitigate and manage risks.**

1.7

9 Ukrainian Civil Society under the War' Dec 2022- Jan 2023, Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (funded by the USAID) <<https://ednannia.ua/attachments/article/12447/Ukrainian%20civil%20society%20under%20the%20war.pdf>>

10 Суспільні Новини <https://suspilne.media/636498-z-pocatku-vijni-v-ukraini-majze-udvici-zroslo-kilkist-blagodijnih-organizacij-opendatabot/>

11 'Mapping of Local CSOs in Refugee Response in Moldova' UN Women, UNHCR, October 2023 <https://moldova.un.org/en/250932-mapping-local-csos-refugee-response-moldova>

## What works well:

**World Vision partnerships lead to capacity growth.**

- Every partner interviewed has reported that the partnership with World Vision has contributed to the increased capacity and the growth of their organisations. Even when the support was mostly directed to ensure a quality delivery of humanitarian projects, the experience of delivering these projects, extended funding portfolio, multiple trainings and capacity support have in most cases led to stronger knowledge and skills, often improved internal systems, and even led to new funding opportunities. Although, according to some partners, certain knowledge and skills were built naturally, confidence growth among smaller local organisations has been reported to lead to new partnerships and donors, and World Vision's name and reputation has certainly played a role.
- While both Ukraine and Moldova have had an extensive civil society before the full-scale invasion, 6,367 new charitable organisations were registered in Ukraine in 2022 alone,<sup>9</sup> and by December 2023 the increase in these organisations has reached 74% (from 20,499 charitable organisations registered in Ukraine by the end 2021).<sup>10</sup> The increase has not been the same in Moldova presumably due to a significantly smaller scale of the crisis (and as this country is much smaller than Ukraine). A mapping of local CSOs in Moldova, commissioned by UN Women and UNHCR in 2023 demonstrated that only 8% of CSOs involved in the refugee response who responded to the survey were established around the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and nearly half (47%) have been operating since 2009.<sup>11</sup> National and local organisations that have existed in both Ukraine and Moldova had to significantly scale up their operation since the start of the crisis. The magnitude of the crisis inside Ukraine (with over 17 mln people in need at the end of 2023) has prompted many organisations to expand the sectors of intervention, respond in new geographic areas, hire a bigger team. Most partners appreciated World Vision's training on various subjects accompanying the projects, as most had new and largely somewhat inexperienced staff. Some partners reported being able to hire staff with stronger skills thanks to World Vision funding.
- Since the start of the response, World Vision provided trainings and organised workshops for partners on multiple topics, including financial management and procurement, communication, blocked part screening, reporting and grant management, security, first-aid, safeguarding, MEAL, participation and humanitarian accountability, mental health and psychosocial support, education, food and non-food items distribution, cash assistance, child protection, and others. Start-up workshops were organised before launching every project.
- World Vision support extended beyond trainings alone. In Ukraine World Vision provided personal protective equipment to partners responding in insecure areas. It also facilitated training and access to WatchDOG for partners so that they could perform blocked-party screening for staff and suppliers on their own. World Vision has also offered security management guidance and support with organisational policy development.
- On-the job support provided to local partners by World Vision team has been commendable. Regular meetings with partners and face-to-face events have proven extremely valuable not only to ensuring smooth project delivery but also to building stronger and better partnerships.

## Challenges and gaps

### Need to shift from one-size-fits-all to tailored approach.

- Although World Vision conducts partner capacity assessment as per World Vision's partnering policy, these are done for the purpose of risk assessment and miss an opportunity to identify shared vision and values, common goals, partner technical expertise, potential complementarity, and other aspects.
- The capacity assessments are used by World Vision to develop partner capacity development plans, however the assessment results are never shared with partners undermining transparency and the possibility for joint identification of capacity needs. Besides not seeing the assessment results, local partners neither know what standards they need to aim at.
- World Vision applies one similar approach to managing partnerships regardless of the capacity assessment results. Most of the experienced local organisations felt their expertise was disregarded at the start, as if they didn't have it and only World Vision expertise was relevant. The same set of trainings was mostly offered to all partner organisations, without taking into considerations their existing expertise and knowledge, or their structure and ambition to grow or lack of thereof. Not all trainings seem to have been contextualised. As one local partner in Moldova mentioned regarding some of the technical trainings offered by World Vision: 'People were coming with prescriptive ideas of curriculum, so we had to take a stance here. It's so much context-related, you can't come with prescriptive things.'
- Several World Vision staff, including among the senior leadership, have pointed out how instead of complementarity World Vision was looking for mini-World Vision in partners, and was often over-demanding. When World Vision requirements are not fully satisfied, there is at times certain reluctance to continue partnering with some organizations.
- The capacity development action plans are developed for the purpose of delivering specific grants, missing an opportunity to identify and provide organisational strengthening support. Such plans are first prepared by World Vision staff and then sent to partners for comments. These plans are developed in English language, while not all partner staff are fluent in English. In most cases partners sign those without adding anything as they are often unsure how much World Vision is willing to consider their self-identified needs given that the plans are drafted solely by World Vision.
- Often partner support needs go beyond just trainings and key policies. For instance:
  - A partner in Ukraine shared that they would like to learn more about World Vision structure and the underlying logic of certain working processes, to learn from it and see how these could be adopted for their organisation.
  - A partner in Moldova shared the need for support with staff care and prevention of burn out, considering the pace of and challenges associated with delivering humanitarian response.
- Most partners in Ukraine have flagged the challenges they experienced with reconciling World Vision and donor policies and requirements with the local legislation, to which they are not always adapted. This responsibility fell almost fully on local partners. An example can be mentioned, where World Vision requires only digital beneficiary lists and informs partners that the paper copies aren't required, while it contradicts the requirement of the local legislation. Local partners are unsure if World Vision could provide certain support in this area but highlighted this as one of the major challenges putting significant pressure on them.
- Considering how the humanitarian system is heavily reliant on the knowledge of English, the lack of this knowledge has been flagged as one of the barriers for small organisations to engage fully in this system. It impacts partner participation in the humanitarian coordination, their role in humanitarian policy and advocacy, their ability to engage with donors directly. Although this issue is not easily fixed, especially given the staff turnover and the time it takes to build this knowledge, it is included in this report as an area for World Vision consideration.
- Local partner needs are diverse, and while not all have to be addressed by World Vision, having a clear picture of those would help tailoring World Vision's resources and support to partners better. To have a clear picture it is important to ask partners about those needs, not in a form of a ready capacity development plan provided for comments.
- World Vision Partnership team have developed an online survey to collect the needs in various subjects among the partners. The survey was completed by most partners in Ukraine and is currently with the partners in Moldova. In Ukraine, the top subjects that partners expressed interest in included project management, project development, grant acquisition and work with donors, and MEAL.
- Given that most World Vision local partners were new to working in the humanitarian field, it is critical to raise their awareness about the key humanitarian principles and Core Humanitarian Standards. This should facilitate their engagement with the humanitarian system and help building these minimum standards into their work. Some World Vision staff and partners attended a dedicated external course that included these subjects (eg. Crisis Leadership Program) however there appears to have been no other comprehensive sessions conducted on that subject by World Vision. Additional sessions on this topic would be beneficial for local partners, including to discuss challenges with applying these standards in a particular context. This is especially relevant for Ukraine considering the crisis is still ongoing, while the context in Moldova has gradually transitioned out of the emergency.

## From capacity building to capacity sharing

- World Vision often refers to capacity building of local partners, which presumes there is no capacity already available. While World Vision local partners can often benefit from support and certain training, they often possess significant expertise and capacity that should not be undermined, but rather complemented. There is also significant expertise World Vision could potentially learn from partners, however it is not being considered as part of standard World Vision capacity assessment, which is very much a one-sided exercise. For instance, as mentioned by few World Vision staff, some partners have better capacity than World Vision in some areas, but World Vision is still required to train them on those topics. On a question about additional support that World Vision could provide to them, one of the partners in Moldova asked to conduct a training for World Vision staff on disability inclusion as they have noticed certain gaps. It is important to provide space for World Vision staff and partners to identify the strengths of local partners that World Vision and other organisations can learn from.
- When World Vision partners were asked in a survey to specify what expertise they would be ready to share with others, the following topics were offered:

- Project management
- Core Humanitarian Standards
- Gender approach in programming
- First psychological aid
- Engagement with clusters
- Donor engagement
- Case management

- Building on the aforementioned capacity is critical to creating equitable partnerships and promoting localisation, since this practice reinforces the available local expertise and seeks ways to complement it.
- In addition to workshops and trainings, World Vision should consider organising exchange visits among the partners, as these could offer an excellent peer-to-peer learning opportunity and could strengthen local coordination. Joint trainings should be considered where possible to build on the existing capacity among the partners.

## Need for dedicated organisational strengthening support.

- There is a need for dedicated organisational strengthening, especially of smaller and 'younger' local organisations. As one of the local partners in Ukraine pointed out: 'It is hard to build an organisation while everyone works fully on the projects.'
- Such support, where needed, could be embedded within regular grants as much as possible.
- In line with the above points on sharing capacity, organisational strengthening support could involve some of the existing World Vision partners who have such expertise and could offer support and coaching to smaller organisations eager to grow.

## Build World Vision partnering skills and systems.

- There seems to be a lack of clarity on the key process within World Vision, although there is work currently ongoing to address that. New staff do not receive a comprehensive induction from all key departments, which impacts their capacity to support partners. Lack of conversation about localisation within World Vision and certain minimum standards that should apply to working with partners, beyond their capacity assessment, all contribute to the lack of a unified approach by World Vision staff to working with partners. It is critical to address internal gaps to contribute to quality partnerships.



# Recommendations

For World Vision to contribute to the ability of local partners to respond effectively and efficiently to humanitarian crises in a complementary manner, the following recommendations are proposed:

## 3.1 Approach to supporting each partner is tailored based on needs to complement and avoid undermining the existing capacity.

- 3.1.1 Review the needs shared by the partners through the recent survey and seek to organise trainings, workshops, exchange visits, masterclasses engaging the partners in delivering those as much as possible. (M)
- 3.1.2 Revisit the process of capacity assessment and capacity development plans (M):
  - share assessment results with partners – for transparency and so that it serves both parties.
  - look beyond compliance, consider the key localisation pillars and technical capacity.
  - before sending the plan to partners ask them to share their needs in capacity and consider what's feasible, be transparent about the outcomes.
  - ensure the assessment results are taken into consideration to define the ways of working with the partner (low capacity and young team -> more support, experienced organisation -> less guidance and oversight)
- 3.1.3 Determine which trainings are mandatory and which are 'nice to have' to ensure effective and efficient response to humanitarian crisis - based on the results of the capacity assessment. For partners with strong expertise consider alternative solutions - eg joint workshop to discuss the policy rather than training by World Vision.
- 3.1.4 Review feasibility of having a legal expert within World Vision to offer legal advice to partners and staff (could be within the partnership team).
- 3.1.5 Consider a possibility to offer partners English language courses.
- 3.1.6 Seek to coordinate training provision to local organisations with other international stakeholders to avoid duplication.
- 3.1.7 Identify existing expertise among World Vision partners and use it for capacity strengthening, including for exchange visits, joint training by World Vision and partners, organisations capacity strengthening, trainings by partners to World Vision staff and partners.

## 3.2 Organisational development is a core objective of partnerships where required.

- 3.2.1 Embed the organisational support to partners within projects as much as possible or seek dedicated funding for such support alone. This should be tailored to specific needs of each organisation. (M)

## 3.3 Programme and technical staff of local organisations have a sound understanding of humanitarian principles and contextualised quality standards.

- 3.3.1 Conduct training for staff and partners in Core Humanitarian Standards and the basics of the humanitarian system.

## 3.4 Local organisations have robust financial and people management systems and accounting procedures and have a financing strategy in place.

- 3.4.1 Tailor support to partners who's financial and people management systems aren't strong to improve those. (M)

## 3.5 Fraud and corruption risks are acknowledged by local partners and effective systems are put in place to mitigate and manage risks.

- 3.5.1 Work with partners on strengthening their risk management systems through training and other tailored support measures.

## D. Coordination and Leadership

**Objective 4:** 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):

**4.1 Local partners of World Vision participate in the existing coordination mechanism, are active members of clusters and are represented in working groups.**

2.1

**4.2 World Vision response is delivered in a way that is collaborative and complementary (i.e. based on an analysis of the specific strengths/weaknesses of different humanitarian actors).**

1.7



## What works well:

### Existing participation in the coordination mechanisms

- World Vision local partners are actively involved in various coordination forums on the ground, including with local authorities, to avoid duplication and to prioritise humanitarian needs.
- Where World Vision local partners are connected (eg if involved in one joint project), they extend support to each other, offering advice and coaching.
- Most partners interviewed in Ukraine are part of the cluster system, working groups and the NGO Platform. Two of World Vision local partners in Ukraine are the only two local organisations on the Steering Committee of the NGO Platform. In Moldova not all partners interviewed participate in relevant working groups, however, are coordinating with the relevant governmental agencies and local authorities, and many are part of various regional or global networks. One partner works directly with the UNHCR as the lead for a specialised task force. However, there are some gaps discussed more in detail below.

## Challenges and gaps:

### Gaps within the external coordination system.

- Most partners are somewhat frustrated with the international humanitarian coordination system. The system of international coordination is extremely time-consuming which places significant burden on smaller organisations who are fully dependent solely on project funding and do not have available human resources who could spend multiple hours in multiple cluster and working group meetings at different levels. Most discussions in these coordination forums do not cover practical concerns which most local organisations deal with daily, and 'are removed from reality' which is another reason why coordination meetings get deprioritised.
- Most data shared by the clusters is usually outdated, and a lot of information is still provided in English. Out of 850 organisations only 8 are participating in PSEAH network meetings, since they these meetings are not very practical (and again, conducted in English). A Ukrainian local partner noted that 'the UN chairs every cluster and wants to coordinate others but don't ever tell us about their own plans.' A partner in Moldova has pointed out that 'real coordination in the country will be when the Ministries will take the lead on that.'
- As a result of these gaps, most organisations are part of a parallel local coordination on the ground which is essential to efficiently address the humanitarian needs.

### Lack of World Vision's support to facilitate access to coordination systems.

- In most cases World Vision hasn't facilitated partners' access to and participation in external coordination forums. Although one of the main issues remains the fact that partners do not often have sufficient human resource available to attend such meetings, when local organisations want to join in and look for entry points to clusters, World Vision is not actively supporting with it. Some partners are lost in the humanitarian system and are unsure how they can meaningfully contribute to it. World Vision's support sometimes is limited to providing a contact only, and partners are not sure what support to ask for.

### Lack of coordination among partners.

- Partners in Ukraine are keen to know each other as when they do, they offer each other practical guidance and support, not always available from World Vision (simply because World Vision does not do direct implementation and does not face the same issues faced by organisations on the ground). Those local partners who are engaged in the same project usually overlap in different meetings and get to know each other. All partners in Ukraine have expressed their desire to be better connected with other World Vision partners and would appreciate if World Vision could facilitate it.
- Although partner coordination was not raised as an issue in Moldova, one partner shared an example where there was a lack of internal coordination within World Vision and two separate partners were allocated funding for similar activities in the same area, and only learnt about it later. It is recommended to ensure World Vision facilitates coordination and exchange among its partners for joint learning and to avoid potential duplication.

### Lack of World Vision liaison with the government.

- A few World Vision staff shared their observation that World Vision did not liaise with the national and local government who is the lead stakeholder in this response. A stronger engagement with the national government and local and regional authorities is encouraged as part of the localisation effort.

## Recommendations

The below action points are recommended for World Vision to contribute to the ability of local organisations to participate in international coordination mechanisms as equal partners.

- 4.1 Local partners of World Vision participate in the existing coordination mechanism, are active members of clusters and are represented in working groups.**
  - 4.1.1 Support partners with their external engagement. For instance, for those organisations willing to engage with clusters, offer an awareness session about the global humanitarian coordination and a practical advice how to get into clusters, invite to join World Vision staff for one of the meetings. Although, it is important to be mindful of partners' limited human resources.
- 4.2 World Vision response is delivered in a way that is collaborative and complementary (i.e. based on an analysis of the specific strengths/weaknesses of different humanitarian actors).**
  - 4.2.1 Plan a face-to-face event with local partners to connect them and facilitate coordination among them going forward (to be discussed jointly with partners how best to do it). (M)
  - 4.2.2 Consolidate the information about World Vision's local partners and share it with them.
  - 4.2.3 World Vision to increase engagement and liaison with Ukrainian/ Moldovan national government and local and regional authorities as the lead stakeholder in this response. (M)



## E. Policy Influence / Advocacy / Visibility

**Objective 5.** To improve the ability of World Vision 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):**

**5.1 World Vision local partners play a lead role in national humanitarian advocacy.**

1.8

**5.2 World Vision local partners play a lead role in communicating national humanitarian issues both nationally and internationally.**

2.2

### What works well:

**World Vision local partners already engage in advocacy and credited in communication materials and reports.**

- Few World Vision partners, both in Ukraine and Moldova, engage in advocacy on a high level and have had successes in influencing policy.
- Most partners produce external communication materials and those who did not have a prior experience of that, have benefited from the guidance from World Vision.
- World Vision accurately credits local partners in reports and external communication.

## Challenges and gaps:

**Lack of World Vision's involvement of local partners in its advocacy work.**

- Local partners have noted that World Vision has not engaged them in their advocacy efforts, although, as some pointed out 'it is local partners who are working directly with beneficiaries'. Given that most World Vision projects are delivered through local organisations, World Vision should seek ways to engage local partners in advocacy, either through more active cooperation or through using the data and inputs from local partners to shape its key advocacy messaging. World Vision should take into consideration that, similarly to the barrier to participation in coordination forums, not all local partners have the capacity or desire to actively engage in advocacy due to other more pressing priorities.
- There has been an interest in advocacy training on children's rights among World Vision partners in Moldova. This could be an excellent opportunity for World Vision to make a contribution to partners' capacity with regard to advocacy.
- There is also space for World Vision to support local partners' capacity to communicate both nationally and internationally about their work and national humanitarian issues. This support will need to be tailored based on needs, as some local organisations have already significant experience in this work.

## Recommendations

The below actions are recommended for World VisionCUR to undertake in order to improve the ability of World Vision's local partners to shape humanitarian priorities of the response and receive recognition for this in reporting.

**5.1 World Vision local partners play a lead role in national humanitarian advocacy.**

- 5.1.1 Consider involving local partners in World Vision's advocacy work. That said, be considerate of their limitations in terms of human resources.
- 5.1.2 Facilitate tailored trainings on advocacy and policy influence as per partner needs - e.g. advocacy on children rights.

**5.2 World Vision local partners play a lead role in communicating national humanitarian issues both nationally and internationally.**

- 5.2.1. Facilitate tailored trainings on communication as per partner needs and provide opportunities for local partners to communicate on humanitarian issues and their work nationally and internationally.

## F. Voice and Participation

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

**Key indicators measured (on the scale from 1 to 4):**

**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

**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



### What works well:

**Affected people are consulted on the assistance provided to them.**

- Every partner interviewed confirmed having established accountability channels to ensure the population they assist can provide their feedback to influence how and what assistance is delivered to them. Some organisations have their own hotline. Most feedback received is usually to thank for the assistance provided, but sometimes issues are raised that help to refine the delivery of assistance.
- Partners also confirmed regular assessment of needs that feeds into the design of projects. Needs are regularly re-assessed through constant interaction with affected communities, outreach to elderly members of the community and those with disability through mobile teams, community events, maintenance of various communication channels, and many others. Children are involved where possible in creating feedback mechanisms in child-friendly spaces.
- It has also been acknowledged that significant contribution has been provided by World Vision to improve partners' accountability systems, especially to newer and smaller organisations, but not limited to.

### Challenges and gaps:

- According to World Vision partners some projects are designed prior to the teams going to the communities to understand the needs better. As one local partner in Ukraine pointed out: 'We are coming to the community already with money. There are communities that are fully supported and some completely forgotten. Clusters do not involve the state authorities enough to understand the needs better.'
- Partners are often unable to consider specific needs of affected population in projects where World Vision provides them with ready kits to distribute in the community. There are also cases where first local partners are allocated certain funding within a project, and then they go to the community to identify their priorities, so the needs are confirmed after the project design is completed.
- Funding limitation is usually a barrier to address the existing needs in a comprehensive way. Some partners raise a question of necessity of multiple needs assessments, as they raise expectations of the affected community, while often the needs identified cannot be covered.
- Most partners in Ukraine and Moldova underscored the need to provide for medium- and long-term needs of affected communities, especially related to employment / income generating opportunities. At the same time the major focus of the main donors has been on funding relief work. In Ukraine it translates into the focus on the most affected East and South of Ukraine. National organisations are concerned this focus is not well balanced and excludes multiple communities in need in other regions of Ukraine from potential assistance.
- Some World Vision staff have pointed out that while World Vision and partners collected data about the needs and feedback from the communities, they were not 100% sure how and whether these were fully captured in program design.

- In terms of understanding the needs and the context on the ground, some partners wish to see World Vision staff, especially MEAL team, more often in the field, especially during the distribution of items, which should help their understanding of feasibility of certain requirements established by the UCR for partners to implement.

### Numbers over quality.

- World Vision partners and staff have expressed frustration with the fact that most donors often expect a high unique beneficiary reach. It is believed to harm the quality of projects, especially when assisting such vulnerable groups as people with disability who cannot be provided with a one-off service and then left behind. While these expectations might often be imposed by donors, it is important for World Vision to listen to partners and work together with them to raise these concerns with donors. Where possible, partners should be invited to donor meetings for more efficient advocacy.

## Recommendations

The below actions are recommended for World Vision to implement to ensure affected people fully shape and participate in humanitarian response.

### 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.

- 6.1.1 Discuss with partners the programming needs they see on the ground to inform World Vision's focus and advocacy (eg East-South focus is criticized by those partners working nationally).
- 6.1.2 Ensure information and voices from the partners and communities on the ground are channelled back to the donors to shape their funding strategies.
- 6.1.3 Push for quality over quantity for service provision sectors eg protection - constant push to have more unique participants compromises the quality of support provided to the affected population (example of particularly vulnerable groups like people with disability).

### 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.

- 6.2.1 Involve local partners in project design as early as possible, including the design of ready kits for distribution. Help to channel their feedback to the clusters through inviting them to speak or at least sharing feedback on their behalf.

## 6

## Exit strategy

When World Vision set up the response in Ukraine and Moldova, it was agreed that World Vision presence in these countries would be temporary, as long as needed for the duration of the crisis and the humanitarian response to it. As the conflict in Ukraine shows no signs of abating, the timeline for World Vision's gradual exit has not yet been set. It is likely that the full-scale transition from the emergency response to recovery will align with the ending or subsiding of the conflict, which is expected to align with World Vision's exit strategy. At the same time, engaging local and national organisations in the response early enough, as was done by World Vision, will certainly contribute to a smooth exit strategy and transition to recovery. The recommendations proposed as a result of this assessment are aimed at empowering local and national organisations in Ukraine and Moldova to take stronger leadership of the response and to manage the transition out of the crisis. Therefore, the implementation of these recommendations, which will be outlined in an action plan, will help laying the groundwork for the future exit.





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