



LISTENING TO OUR PARTNERS –

WORLD VISION PARTNER SURVEY 2024

INTRODUCTION

World Vision (WV) partners with more than 4000 national and local Civil Society Organisations for humanitarian and development work serving their local communities across 100 countries. 'We are partners' is one of World Vision's core values, and local empowerment and ownership are the core of its programming approaches. As a signatory to the Grand Bargain (a 2016 agreement to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian action, in order to get more means into the hands of people in need), WV is committed to equitable partnership within humanitarian action.

Recognising the centrality of equitable partnership to locally led development and humanitarian action, WV commissioned a partnership review to hear from its local and national partners. This review is intended to support World Vision in its localisation agenda and in improving its partnering approaches and practices.

This review was conducted by an external consultant through a 100-question survey and 24 partner interviews, all participants contributing anonymously. A total of 181 partners from 31 countries spread across Africa, Asia, Americas, Europe and Oceania participated, ranging in size and capacity, and equally split between humanitarian and development work. Feedback was sought on the following components.

- (1) **Localisation objectives:** contribution to partners' own localisation ambitions;
- (2) **Partnership:** equitable, trustful and effective partnerships;
- (3) **Funding:** fair and transparent funding practices;
- (4) **Capacity strengthening:** demand driven capacity support;
- (5) **Voice & visibility:** voice, visibility and coordination;
- (6) **Community participation:** maintaining people at the centre of all.

FINDINGS

Overall findings showed a **high general satisfaction**¹ with World Vision as a partner. 91% of partners scored the state of their partnership as satisfactory or highly satisfactory. Across the areas surveyed, the quantitative scores were broadly positive with satisfaction ratings of over 60% for 37 out of the 44 indicators. 69% of partners stated that *the partnership with WV met all expected benefits*, including *increasing their reach and connection with local communities*. World Vision scored highly on its commitment, staff attitudes and behaviours and on processes of due diligence, contracting and training.

Partners were most critical of a lack of participatory co-design of projects/programmes and power sharing, levels of flexibility and responsiveness on project/budget amendments, and paying partners on time. The biggest challenge for partners was the **coverage of overhead and administrative costs** and payment processes, causing – in at least some instances - partners to subsidise projects or limit their investment in their organisational growth. They called for greater strategic investment in their organisations, not just as implementers, but leaders in determining their own capacity strengthening, in liaising with national actors, donors and coordination mechanisms and in building sustainability strategies. The key recommendation is **to shift the partnership dynamic from transactional implementation to a culture of equal partnership**.

¹ The survey used a 5-point Likert scale to assess partner satisfaction with ratings from 1. 'Not at all' to 5. 'Highly Satisfied'. Responses indicating 4. Satisfied or 5. Highly Satisfied were taken to indicate a satisfactory performance by WV in its partnership relations.

LOCALISATION OBJECTIVES

Partners were asked to state their own localisation ambitions and comment on how partnership with World Vision supports these. The most common objectives were characterised as:

1. Effective delivery of humanitarian and development assistance goals by local and national actors.
2. Capacity strengthening and empowerment of community leaders, grass roots organisations and local and national organisations.
3. Enabling access to funding for local and national civil society organisations, including accessing donors directly; improved cost sharing; providing unrestricted funding; funding administrative costs; and not competing for funding.
4. Sustainable/ effective partnerships, including joint engagement and project co-creation.

68% of partners affirmed that World Vision supported them in meeting their localisation objectives. They provided detailed recommendations which have been incorporated in the section below.

PARTNERSHIP

Partners rated World Vision counterparts positively over a range of **partnership attitudes**, with ratings of 'satisfied' or 'highly satisfied' against a series of statements characterising different aspects of World Vision's partnering attitude. Positive scores were generated around World Vision's 'respect' (87) and 'availability' (84) for the partner, including 'clarity' (80) of their communication, their 'ability to listen' (83) and 'willingness to learn' (81); interviewees did however request greater clarity, transparency and responsiveness related to some of the issues listed below.

Partnership dynamics were more complex. Partners rated World Vision positively on statements such as *World Vision made them feel like a trusted partner* (87%) and that the partnership was fair and equitable (74%). However, lower ratings of satisfaction (59-65%) related to statements about 'equitable power dynamics', 'playing a leadership role' and in particular, 'co-designing projects and programs' indicating that partners often perceive that they are an implementer rather than a true strategic partner.



Many partners positively rated the **due diligence processes** with 87% being satisfied with the relevance of questions asked and documents requested. However, humanitarian partners indicated that partner assessment, contracting and programme design processes were too slow. The Ukraine response offered a positive exception of rapid assessment that could be replicated elsewhere. WVI's **contracting processes** were deemed helpful with 80% of partners positively rating *'Easy to understand contractual terms and conditions'* and commenting favourably on accessing contracts in their own/locally used language. Nonetheless, several partners requested greater freedom to use their own policies rather than World Vision's.

88% of partners were satisfied/very satisfied with World Vision's **reporting requirements** and 85% had no issues with meeting them. Partners requested more flexibility/extensions on reporting deadlines and for project close out.

Partners generally appreciated World Vision's open and **trustful communication**, although they felt it could be more regular/timely, without the many urgent deadlines. Regular check-in meetings were considered essential for trust-building, effective learning and programming flexibility. 86% of partners confirmed having clear focal points for communication. However, only 60% indicated that confidential feedback mechanisms were in place and used. **Several partners requested the development and strengthening of feedback mechanisms.**

"We also observed how (World Vision staff) feels sad or worried when partners are disrespected by another World Vision staff."
Partner comment

At least 70% of partners attested to some degree of **risk management support**, most commonly in safeguarding with most partners confirming having received Protection from Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) support. Scores were much lower for support in risk identification, mitigation, and analysis; partners requested increased mentorship, budgets and support for risk management.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Improve co-design processes with partners.
2. Ensure partners' strengths, operational realities, constraints and costs are reflected in programme design and budgets.
3. Improve timely and transparent communications – with regular partner check ins.
4. Seek due diligence passporting opportunities with other peer organisations.
5. Review and scale the rapid assessment processes used in Ukraine for new partnerships elsewhere.
6. Default to permitting partners to use their own policies/ procedures where they meet agreed standards.
7. Provide longer term multi-year funding agreements with partners.



FUNDING

Among the 75% of surveyed partners² receiving funding from World Vision, 73% felt that **budgets** were developed transparently, although some partners commented on what they perceived as a ‘take it or leave it’ budget process. Only 65% of partners felt that the budgets covered the full project costs. Although activity costs were funded, only 45% rated as satisfactory administrative cost coverage and only 37% positively rated overhead coverage. This generated some of the most critical feedback of World Vision from partners who described the negative impact on staffing, organisational investment and meeting their own statutory commitments.

Financial reporting procedures were generally seen as a clear and fair process, but the timeliness of disbursement of funding was a challenge. Partners reporting needing to ‘push back on’ having to provide funding upfront or function on a reimbursement basis given the limitations of their own resources. Only 24% of partners reported having visibility over the entire programme budget, including that implemented by World Vision.

Partners perception of World Vision’s **partnership management, especially regarding budget management issues**, was mixed, with some partners praising World Vision’s agility, others feeling that World Vision could be more responsive and timelier in managing requests for project or budget changes or extensions. Only 57% of partners were satisfied or highly satisfied in relation to the statement ‘Requests for project or budget adjustments treated quickly and efficiently’. Partners asked for increased communication on programmatic and budget issues, as well as budget flexibility to facilitate responding to emergency needs in country.

“We wish the partnerships were longer. Yearly plans are always delayed for 3 months and you end up with 9 months for implementation. If delay to release funds occurs, there is lack of delivery which is sometimes blamed on the partner.”
Tanzania partner

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Ensure projects are fully costed and inclusive of partner administrative costs, with a fair share of overheads/administration as per global localisation guidance.
2. Explore financial/contracting solutions to ensure no upfront payments are requested from partners, but instead operate on a reimbursement basis.
3. Review budget negotiation process to ensure maximum transparency

² World Vision’s operating model intentionally builds partnerships based on shared value and impact, each partner contributing to shared outcomes, and not all partners receive funding.



CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

Most partners found that partnering with World Vision strengthened their organisations. Specifically, they reported having improved policies and systems, increased programmatic expertise, and heightened reputation. 86% of partners described their partnership with World Vision as one of *'mutual learning'* through regular dialogue, and 73% of partners reported receiving some type of formal capacity support either provided or facilitated by World Vision. This was usually from World Vision staff (116 partners), but other support included: training from external experts (59 partners); mentorship (39); peer learning (46); secondment (18); or access to information (69). Safeguarding and financial management were the two most common topics for support, and the least common were governance, donor relations, human resource management and strategic management. In the context of humanitarian assistance, of the 83 partners receiving humanitarian funding, 38 had partnered in advance of the crisis and of these at least 31 had received some form of disaster risk reduction, disaster preparedness or contingency planning support. However, partners repeatedly requested **more systematic, tailored, and partner-driven capacity strengthening** including **investment in their organisational infrastructure**.

"By increasing field visits, and open exchanges with us, you help us train ourselves to take a step forward in our development."
(Translated from French)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Increase partner engagement and dialogue throughout the programming cycle including joint research and innovation, combining knowledge and skills to expand and improve programming and mutual learning.
2. Ensure demand-driven capacity strengthening is included in every partnership, with dedicated budget lines and investment in partner assets.
3. Jointly advocate with partners for overheads coverage by donors and support partners to develop their own cost recovery policies.
4. Adopt a more diversified and creative capacity strengthening approach.



COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Community participation is critical to local ownership and empowerment. 80% of Partners felt that **World Vision and the partners put the community in the lead in programming approaches**. 72% of partners confirmed that community feedback mechanisms were in place and used effectively. In terms of humanitarian programming, several respondents highlighted a need for more engagement in community resilience building. There were **mixed views on the sustainability of programme outcomes**. Partners felt more could be done to invest in their organizational sustainability by helping partners sustain their activities in communities (continuing programme impact), supporting joint advocacy and fundraising, and providing greater investment in partners' assets.

"Lend your ears to your partners so as to improve in weak areas."
Tanzania partner

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Ensure that community feedback mechanisms are in place across all offices and effectively used.
- Support systematic resilience and preparedness capacity strengthening of communities and partners in humanitarian contexts.





VOICE AND VISIBILITY

82% of partners found that **World Vision supported their visibility within their communities** and 66% in their regions; 57% felt that World Vision promoted their brand identity nationally and only 36% internationally. Similarly, in relation to statements about *'raising partners' voice'* 66% felt their voice was amplified locally, 49% nationally but only 25% internationally. Only 25% of partners confirmed that World Vision had supported them to publish or promote their research. Although the majority agreed that World Vision ensured inclusion of partners in reports, **partners felt that World Vision did not sufficiently promote access and recognition of partners' work to donors** and were even at times in competition with them. 61% of partners felt that World Vision promoted their organisations with their national governments, 57% with other potential partners, 52% with national media and 51% with donors. Only 54% perceived that WV helped them take a leadership role in country.

"We should be given opportunity to submit success stories for publication on World Vision websites."

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Promote partners (and WV's localisation work) at country level and where relevant, internationally.
2. Support partners to promote their research, best practices and lessons learned.
3. Organize regular in-country partners' meetings, enabling partners to network among themselves, interact with World Vision leadership, and engage in strategic discussions.
4. Ensure exit planning includes strengthening the capacities and abilities of partner organisations to continue the provision of needed services or otherwise sustain outcomes.

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www.wvi.org/our-partners



World Vision 

World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities to reach their full potential by tackling the root causes of poverty and injustice. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.