



# OVERVIEW OF USAID'S Policy on Locally Led Humanitarian Assistance

The Locally Led Humanitarian Assistance Policy outlines USAID's vision and goals for advancing locally led assistance in our humanitarian work.

Local organizations are often the first to respond to humanitarian crises, offer unique contextual knowledge and expertise, and have deep connections within affected communities. Partnerships with local actors are vital to providing accountable, effective, and efficient humanitarian assistance, along with supporting early recovery, risk reduction, and community resilience.

USAID is working to put local actors in the lead as part of its enduring commitment to supporting principled humanitarian assistance. USAID recognizes that humanitarian and development assistance use different approaches to achieve distinct objectives, and also face unique challenges and opportunities. The Locally Led Humanitarian Assistance Policy furthers USAID's broader internal reforms towards localization and local capacity strengthening by speaking specifically to localization objectives in our emergency response, early recovery, resilience, and disaster risk reduction activities.

As the Agency implements the Locally Led Humanitarian Assistance Policy, USAID will also engage in continual learning to expand the evidence base for locally led humanitarian assistance, including by compiling and analyzing lessons learned across its humanitarian partnerships. Through these practices and a sustained commitment to self-reflection and learning, the Agency can adapt and improve how it achieves the vision set forth in the Locally Led Humanitarian Assistance Policy.

## WHAT IS **LOCALLY LED** HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE?

Locally led humanitarian assistance occurs when local and national actors lead in one or more stages of humanitarian response and/or early recovery, risk reduction, and resilience activities.

**POLICY VISION:** USAID places local communities at the center of humanitarian work and supports a humanitarian system that operates on the basis of local decisions and priorities, reflecting the needs and preferences of affected groups. Success in USAID's efforts to advance locally led humanitarian assistance is not defined by a single funding target, the launch of new processes, or a specific number of local partners. Instead, success is achieved when USAID's ways of working meaningfully engage local partners to lead effective humanitarian planning and response.



(Top to Bottom) The Vietnam Red Cross trains communities in Son La province, Vietnam on emergency preparedness and response. Photo courtesy of Vietnam Red Cross • The North-East Gender Platform, a network of Haitian civil society organizations, organizes a public demonstration in advocating to end gender-based violence. Photo courtesy of North-East Gender Platform • East SOS, a Ukrainian organization, evacuates Ukrainians from war-affected areas. Photo courtesy of Charity Foundation East SOS

The Locally Led Humanitarian Assistance Policy identifies five goals to realize its vision:

**1. Increasing the amount and accessibility of funding for local humanitarian organizations:** USAID’s efforts to reduce funding barriers to local partners will prioritize accessible humanitarian award-making processes and flexible partnership models. USAID will also encourage international humanitarian partners to form more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable relationships with local organizations.

**2. Strengthening USAID’s ability to build humanitarian partnerships:** USAID will develop the guidance, training, and resources necessary to empower the USAID workforce to become champions of locally led humanitarian assistance.

**3. Increasing capacity strengthening and sharing, as well as mutual learning in humanitarian partnerships:** Recognizing the significant existing capacities of local actors, USAID will invest in innovative humanitarian capacity strengthening and sharing initiatives which center local knowledge and expertise and seek to reduce—rather than reinforce—existing power balances through mutual collaboration.

**4. Advocating for local humanitarian leadership:** USAID will support humanitarian approaches that engage local leadership in all aspects of humanitarian assistance, from assessment to response planning to program design, implementation, and learning, while also advocating for changes that elevate local partners to leadership roles within humanitarian coordination structures.

**5. Leveraging humanitarian diplomacy and policy leadership:** As the world’s single largest humanitarian donor, USAID will use our leadership role to help change the international humanitarian system in ways that create space for authentic local participation and leadership. USAID will collaborate with the broader donor community to collectively reduce barriers to local partnership and advocate for equitable and inclusive local partnership models in high-level humanitarian fora.