

REGIONAL LOCALIZATION STRATEGY IN THE AMERICAS



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UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

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Glossary of Acronyms

UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
APPV	Association for the Protection of Vulnerable Populations (Peru).
CBOs	Community-Based Organizations.
CEJIL	Center for Justice and International Law.
IACHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.
COCOMASUR	Community Council of Black Communities of the Tolo River Basin and Southern Coastal Zone (Colombia).
GIFMM	Inter-Agency Group on Mixed Migration Flows (Colombia).
GARLOS	Regional Articulation Group of Refugee-Led Organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean.
HOIFA	Humanitarian Operations and Innovation Fund.
ICBF	Colombian Institute of Family Welfare.
INAMU	National Institute for Women (Costa Rica).
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and other diverse identities.
MERLOS	Regional Liaison Mechanism of Leaderships and Organizations of Refugees (Mexico).
MIDIS	Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (Peru).
NEAR	Network for Empowered Aid Response.
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.
RLOs	Refugee-Led Organizations.
RLIF	Refugee-Led Innovation Fund.
Together 2.0	Regional initiative for funding and capacity strengthening of refugee-led organizations.
WLOs	Women-Led Organizations.

1. Introduction

The [Regional Localization Strategy 2026–2028](#) reflects a stage of consolidation in the way UNHCR promotes protection responses and solutions in the Americas. It represents an evolution from an approach primarily focused on direct funding as the main indicator of progress, toward a more comprehensive vision of localization—understood as effective leadership, meaningful and influential participation, organizational sustainability, and shared responsibility in decision-making. Direct and flexible funding remains a key tool, but it is no longer the only indicator of progress. This strategy also recognizes that the long-standing work the region has carried out for years in collaboration with local governments is itself a concrete expression of localization, and it invites a strengthening of this perspective to more strategically bring communities, territorial authorities, and other actors into the process of building solutions.

The consolidation of localization activities responds to a natural process of learning and to a decisive moment in the region. National and local actors, particularly community-based organizations and those led by refugees and displaced people, have strengthened their structures and advocacy capacity, while the dynamics of forced displacement continue to evolve and demand more sustainable responses. The strategy is grounded in a participatory exercise, which included open regional consultations, an Advisory Committee, and direct contributions from operations, reinforcing its legitimacy and coherence. It also incorporates objective self-assessment tools to establish a common baseline and measure progress in a transparent manner.

In this new context, consolidating solutions for refugees, displaced and stateless persons requires expanding the ecosystem of partnerships. For this reason, the strategy more strategically integrates the private sector and academia as allies in capacity-strengthening efforts, resource mobilization, and the promotion of a rights-based culture.

Who benefits from the strategy? Displaced communities and individuals, by receiving responses that are closer, more sustainable, and grounded in their territories; local governments, by strengthening their role in inclusion and durable solutions; private sector and academic actors, by becoming part of a territorial agenda grounded in rights and development; and UNHCR and its partners, by consolidating through a rights-based and community-based protection approach the effectiveness, transparency, and impact of their work in the region.

This roadmap is, therefore, a collective and realistic reflection of the needs and aspirations of local organizations, and an institutional commitment to advancing toward a localization that is operational, sustainable, and transformative.

2. Background

The 2026–2028 Regional Localization Strategy for the Americas is grounded in the lessons learned and challenges identified during the implementation of the first [localization agenda \(2023-2025\)](#), and lays the foundation for advancing toward more inclusive, sustainable, and locally led responses.

Among the main achievements of the first phase was the Regional Review Meeting held in October 2023, which highlighted the need for more inclusive mechanisms for listening and joint planning, and facilitated the collection of inputs intended to inform the discussion of [UNHCR's Global Localization Guidance](#).

Likewise, a [regional mapping](#) exercise identified 305 refugee- and displacement-led organizations (RLOs) across countries in the Americas, highlighting both their potential to lead humanitarian and solutions responses, as well as their structural limitations: 47% of these organizations reported operating with annual budgets below USD 2,000.

In terms of financial strengthening, a progressive evolution of grant agreements was achieved, reaching 47 agreements in 2024 that supported local initiatives in 12 countries¹. Additionally, five organizations² were selected to receive financial support and technical accompaniment through the Refugee-Led Innovation Fund (RLIF). Furthermore, support was provided to the consolidation of the Regional Articulation Group of Refugee-Led Organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean ([GARLOS](#))³, with effective participation in national, regional, and global consultation processes.

The update of the Localization Strategy takes place within a regional context marked by significant changes in mobility trends, as well as by an evolution in approaches that have shifted from promoting coordinated and collaborative responses toward restrictive policies for asylum systems. This environment is also characterized by growing challenges to the protection space and a substantial reduction in the resources available for protection and solutions.

This reality underscores the need to recalibrate and review UNHCR's priorities in the Americas, without abandoning the commitments undertaken under the Grand Bargain, the Global Refugee Forum, and standards on meaningful participation. At the regional level, displacement dynamics continue to evolve: new, more dangerous and volatile routes have emerged, with limited access to essential services, which increases protection risks and reinforces the need for responses adapted to territorial contexts.

At the same time, pressure to ensure protection and solutions closer to places of origin is intensifying, giving way to approaches that place growing emphasis on stabilization. In line with UNHCR's Localization

¹ Argentina, Aruba, Belice, Brasil, Costa Rica, Chile, Republica Dominicana, Ecuador, Guatemala, México, Panama, y Perú.

² México, Costa Rica, Colombia, Brasil y Ecuador

³ [GARLOS - Factsheet update es.pdf](#)

Guidance and global commitments, localization comprises three complementary dimensions: (i) meaningful participation with the ability to influence decision-making; (ii) direct and accessible funding; and (iii) organizational strengthening for sustainability. This approach contributes to sustainable responses that reinforce self-reliance, integration, and the use of local assets from the earliest stages of an intervention.

This strategy is further updated based on an extensive process of listening and reflection that included the side event “Redefining UNHCR’s Role and Local Challenges⁴,” held in June 2025 in the framework of the Regional Consultations with Organizations⁵. Its contributions are reflected concretely in this document and are complemented by a component dedicated to systematizing good practices aimed at documenting impacts, lessons learned, and necessary adjustments.

To ensure a participatory and representative process, a Localization Advisory Committee⁶ was established, composed of local, community-based, and refugee-led organizations, as well as regional partners. This Committee supported the development of the strategy by providing insights from practice and ensuring that the vision faithfully reflects the priorities, lessons, and challenges of the actors directly involved.

3. Vision

A protection and solutions response in the Americas that is sustainable, built with and from the territories, where national and local actors, including community-based organizations and those led by refugees, displaced and stateless persons, exercise genuine leadership, participate with the ability to influence decision-making, and actively contribute to joint planning alongside governments, the private sector, and other actors, under the principle of “as local as possible, as international as necessary”⁷.

3.1 Specific Objectives

1. Promote the effective and influential **participation** of local organizations and those led by refugees, displaced and stateless persons in decision-making and in the design of responses at the local, national, and regional levels, ensuring equality, shared leadership, and joint responsibility.

⁴ [From Dialogue to Action, Localization in movement \(Spanish\)](#)

⁵ [20250826 AMERICAS NGO Consultations report.pdf](#)

⁶ [TORs Consultative Committee on Localization \(Spanish\)](#)

⁷ In line with [UNHCR Global Localization Guidelines](#), *The purpose of these Guidelines is to establish a standard approach to operationalize UNHCR’s commitments to localization, including applying the principle of ‘as local as possible, as international as necessary’.*

2. Promote the **sustainability** and autonomy of local organizations through access to **diversified funding**, the simplification of existing mechanisms, and capacity development for resource mobilization, including partnerships with local private-sector actors, strengthening their role as strategic partners.
3. Advance comprehensive **organizational-strengthening** processes that consolidate leadership, internal governance, institutional resilience, and sustainable local networks, promoting collective learning and the systematization of good practices.
4. Promote the systematic integration of gender, youth, and diversity perspectives across all localization actions, ensuring equal conditions and fostering **inclusion, non-discrimination, and comprehensive protection**.

4. Roadmap to Achieve the Objectives

I. Participation and Local Leadership

Meaningful participation of communities in decision-making is a right and a core principle of international humanitarian commitments. However, structural barriers continue to limit their influence and leadership, including the weakness of recognized collective spaces, the lack of sustainable coordination mechanisms, and the limited formal recognition of organizations. While there are multiple leadership structures within communities, these require support to strengthen their organization, consolidate internal structures, develop self-management skills, and scale their influence beyond the local level.

How do we drive this change? By consolidating consultation spaces, strengthening territorial and regional networks, and ensuring participation on equal footing, eliminating barriers such as language or excessive technical requirements. By promoting formal recognition and supported leadership of refugee-led and community-based organizations, strengthening their capacity to design, implement, and evaluate programmes grounded in their territorial experience.

Strengthening local leadership also requires expanding visibility and public advocacy capacity. The strategy will promote spaces for regional and international representation and positioning, as well as the co-creation of narratives that highlight their experience and leadership as a central part of the response. UNHCR will support this positioning through accompaniment, technical guidance, and the transfer of organizational-governance methodologies aimed at generating measurable results in influence, representation, and the sustainability of local leadership.

Recommended actions

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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the institutionalization and sustainability of community leadership through support in internal governance, strategic definition (mission, vision, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical support oriented toward advocacy, developing tools, methodologies, and roadmaps that |
|---|--|
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work plans), and community consultation mechanisms.	enable organizations to advance their own agendas in decision-making spaces.
• Ensure access to information in accessible languages and formats, eliminating technical and linguistic barriers that limit effective participation.	• Establish and/or strengthen formal consultation and dialogue mechanisms, including permanent community spaces and national advisory boards, with feedback and follow-up to agreements
• Strengthen existing networks and coordination platforms with strategic plans and defined roles, enabling them to scale their work at territorial, national, and regional levels.	• Promote purposeful participation in national, regional, and global spaces, ensuring that representation leads to concrete outcomes in protection and rights advocacy.
• Promote spaces for coordination between community organizations and local governments, through formal consultation and dialogue mechanisms that facilitate joint territorial diagnosis and priority-setting.	• Support local governments interested in developing or strengthening focal points or municipal offices for refugees, establishing stable frameworks for participation, coordination, and local leadership.

From commitment to practice

In several countries across the region, UNHCR operations have already established concrete mechanisms through which community-based and refugee-led organizations can define priorities and influence decision-making. In **Mexico**, the Regional Liaison Mechanism for Refugee-Led Leadership and Organizations (MERLOS) enabled refugee-led organizations to convene their own dialogues and to hold the first national meeting of RLOs, moving from ad-hoc consultations to a space in which they themselves develop public policy proposals, with logistical and financial support from UNHCR. In **Colombia**, a mapping and consultation exercise with more than 90 RLOs and CBOs directly informed the operation's localization agenda, aligning the country strategy with the priorities identified by the organizations themselves and strengthening the local organizational ecosystem. In **El Salvador**, the adaptation of cash-based interventions so that youth groups could manage community protection funds allowed young people to design and implement their own projects, consolidating a model of shared responsibility between communities and UNHCR. In **Peru**, efforts to strengthen community-based and refugee-led organizations have focused on consolidating their role as protection actors and enhancing their engagement with local authorities and service providers, particularly through Protection Spaces. In the Peruvian context, priority has been given to women community leaders, recognizing their central role in delivering protection services and fostering community cohesion, as seen in the case of the Asociación Protección Población Vulnerable (APPV).

Rural Communities and Women Leading Local Integration – Costa Rica

The organization CENDEROS, with more than two decades of work along the northern border, has promoted two initiatives in Upala that place rural communities and refugee women at the center of local integration. The first initiative, "Strategies for Local Socio-Economic Strengthening for the Integration of Asylum-Seekers," brought together development associations, producer families, and public institutions through a participatory process of stakeholder identification, community diagnosis, and organizational strengthening, linking asylum-seekers with existing agricultural initiatives under rules and agreements defined by the community itself.

The second initiative, “Resistant Economy Strategy from a Social, Solidarity-Based, and Feminist Economy Approach,” developed in partnership with the National Institute for Women (INAMU), enabled the direct transfer of resources to strengthen 10 collective enterprises led by rural women survivors of violence, combining financial support with technical accompaniment and participatory governance.

THE IMPACT – 165 women strengthened their enterprises and territorial leadership; local communities assumed decision-making roles regarding the use of resources and productive organization; and public–community alliances were consolidated with genuine shared responsibility.

THIS IS LOCALIZATION BECAUSE it demonstrates effective transfer of power and resources to organized local actors, where strategic decisions, fund management, and territorial priorities are defined through community leadership.

POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION – The model can be adapted through public–community partnerships with clearly defined roles, direct funding accompanied by shared governance, and a combination of economic, organizational, and technical support that strengthens sustainable territorial ecosystems.

II. Sustainability and Diversified Financing

Community-based work in displacement contexts relies largely on voluntary effort. While this commitment reflects the resilience and leadership of displaced persons, sustaining it over time requires predictable, accessible, and locally adapted resources. Technical and administrative barriers, along with disproportionate risk-management approaches, have limited organizations’ access to flexible and sustainable funding, generating discouragement and perceptions of instrumentalization. Models such as consortia, grant agreements, and in-kind support have proven to be viable alternatives, but they require internal operational clarity, proportional administrative processes, and transparent eligibility and monitoring criteria.

In this context, the private sector, especially at the local and territorial levels, constitutes a strategic actor to diversify sources of funding and non-financial support, complementing humanitarian and public funding through financial contributions, in-kind support, knowledge transfer, mentorship, and connections to value chains. A financing strategy oriented toward local leadership must integrate multiple sources, strengthen territorial support ecosystems, and promote shared-responsibility schemes among community organizations, local governments, and private-sector actors.

How do we drive this change? By diversifying, streamlining, and simplifying mechanisms for accessing resources, promoting proportional grants that include operational costs and reduce administrative burdens. Structured partnerships with the private sector at national and territorial levels will be advanced, facilitating financial contributions, community sponsorship, technical and specialized support under clear collaboration frameworks. This approach promotes shared and proportional risk management, grounded in international standards of equitable financing and in an institutional culture that recognizes local capacities beyond their level of formalization.

Recommended actions

• Simplify and make more flexible the mechanisms for accessing resources, including small-scale funds, proportional grants, and in-kind support with transparent criteria, administrative processes adapted to the size and capacity of organizations, and systematic feedback for both successful and unsuccessful applications.	• Acknowledge volunteer work and promote a culture of institutional trust, incorporating explicit recognition of volunteerism and community leadership as capacity indicators in assessment criteria and due-diligence processes; adopt proportional risk-management practices that avoid penalizing organizations that are not highly formalized.
• Provide technical support for the design and submission of proposals, including peer-to-peer exchange and the transfer of methodologies to strengthen financial and administrative management capacities. Ensure the mapping and dissemination of calls for proposals and funding opportunities (including private philanthropies and flexible funds) in coordination with Pillar 3.	• Engage with donors and partners to secure operational and flexible funding, preventing local organizations from having to assume hidden costs that undermine their sustainability.
• Promote cooperation models among local and national organizations and intermediary actors (such as consortia) with defined governance, clear financial responsibilities, and shared accountability mechanisms that enable scaling interventions while reducing the individual administrative burden.	• Provide technical support to municipalities interested in incorporating budget lines for integration and protection into their annual operational plans, strengthening the financial sustainability of local initiatives beyond humanitarian funding.
• Promote partnerships with local businesses, cooperatives, chambers of commerce, and territorial private-sector actors to channel financial resources, in-kind support, technical mentorship, and opportunities for integration into value chains that strengthen the sustainability of community organizations.	• Where the context allows, link refugee-led organizations with existing services that support income generation with protection objectives, business training, and market linkages to develop social enterprises.

From commitment to practice

With regard to funding, UNHCR operations in the Americas have made progress in translating the localization agenda into the identification and effective allocation of concrete resources for RLOs, WLOs, and CBOs. In 2025, a total of 33 Grant Agreements were signed across five countries, amounting to USD 228,181. In **Argentina**, specific tools were developed to select national and local organizations and to measure the impact of grants, making processes more transparent and predictable and strengthening organizations' trust in their relationship with UNHCR. In **Ecuador**, one of the first Grant Agreements with the Integral Association of Migrant Women enabled financing for both the structural strengthening of the organization and projects on the prevention of violence against women and girls and economic empowerment, marking a significant step forward in its advocacy capacity and sustainability. In **Brazil**, the creation of a procurement platform for refugee-led suppliers, integrated into low-value procurement procedures, opened an additional channel for accessing resources through purchasing, diversifying funding beyond traditional grants. The experience in **Peru** confirms that small-scale Grant Agreements with community-based organizations, adapted to their level of organizational development, serve as a tool that not only expands protection-service coverage, but also strengthens the self-management capacities

of local organizations. In **Colombia**, the experience with the Community Council of Black Communities of the Tolo River Basin and Southern Coastal Zone (COCOMASUR) demonstrated that supporting strategies designed and led by ethnic-territorial authorities can pave the way for direct partnership agreements. The Council's own methodology strengthened the organization's autonomy, legitimacy, and territorial-management capacity, consolidating sustainable mechanisms of protection and generational transmission of cultural practices in a context marked by the presence of armed actors. This partnership showed that technical support can enhance community governance and local response capacity to risks associated with armed conflict, becoming a reference for effective localization. Meanwhile, in **Mexico**, the partnership between UNHCR and FEMSA illustrates how the private sector can act as a key territorial actor in expanding sustainability opportunities for local initiatives. The combination of employment opportunities, financial inclusion, and technical accompaniment has strengthened sustainable integration pathways and provides replicable insights for other operations in the region.

Flexible Direct Funding for Local Leadership – Colombia

Between 2021 and 2025, the Association Salto Ángel, a refugee- and migrant-led organization in Colombia, accessed direct and flexible funding through the ToGETHER 2.0 programme and the Humanitarian Operations and Innovation Fund (HOIFA). The resources were channeled directly, with proportional administrative requirements, allowing the organization to cover both response activities and operational costs. A distinguishing element was its involvement in the fund's governance structures, including committees and advisory spaces, where it contributed to the definition of priorities and allocation criteria, going beyond a solely implementing role.

THE IMPACT – The organization consolidated greater programmatic autonomy in highly complex territories, expanded its coverage to 9 of the 13 municipalities of La Guajira, and strengthened its emergency preparedness and response capacity. This model also reinforced its position in national and international spaces for dialogue on localization.

THIS IS LOCALIZATION BECAUSE it links flexible funding with real influence over resource orientation, recognizing refugee-led actors as part of the decision-making architecture and not only as implementers.

POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION – It requires direct access to funds with proportional requirements; substantive participation in decision-making bodies; and accompaniment based on trust and joint learning that strengthens capacities without replacing leadership.

III. Organizational Strengthening

Organizational strengthening has been a central pillar in the region, with training, accompaniment, and mentorship initiatives that have contributed to the development of multiple community-based, national, and refugee-led organizations. However, structural gaps continue to limit their sustainability, including legal and administrative barriers in some countries, stemming from restrictive regulatory frameworks or predominantly compliance-driven practices that hinder access to resources for organizations that are not formally registered.

The challenge is not only to expand training opportunities, but to consolidate capacities that allow organizations to sustain their work overtime, strengthen their internal governance, and exercise programmatic autonomy, building on existing capacities and recognizing the diversity of starting points across the region.

How do we drive this change? Through comprehensive strengthening processes that combine practical training, strategic mentoring, and technical support oriented toward concrete results in sustainability, advocacy, and self-management. The support will cover areas such as proposal development, financial and programmatic management, results measurement, strategic communication, and resource mobilization, in alignment with the funding opportunities promoted under Pillar 2.

The systematization of good practices will be integrated as a crosscutting tool for collective learning, distinguishing emerging, promising, and consolidated practices in order to highlight replicable models and generate legitimacy. Likewise, mechanisms for self-care and for the protection of leaders and human rights defenders will be promoted, recognizing the risks associated with community-based work in contexts of violence and discrimination.

Recommended actions

• Conduct participatory assessments of organizational capacities and needs as the basis for realistic plans on strengthening, sustainability, and resource mobilization, tailored to each organization's starting point.	• Promote community leadership schools and circles, with an emphasis on gender equality, diversity, and inclusion, strengthening internal governance, advocacy, and territorial leadership.
• Develop comprehensive mentorship and peer-support programmes, involving consolidated organizations, coalitions, and experienced civil-society actors, as well as practical support in proposal development, financial management, and strategic planning.	• Strengthen capacities in ethical management and protection standards, through training on codes of conduct, PSEA, and the joint development of protocols for assisting persons in situations of vulnerability, integrating learning from existing projects (CEJIL, IACHR, etc.).
• Systematize and disseminate good practices, distinguishing emerging, promising, and consolidated experiences as tools for collective learning and organizational positioning.	• Strengthen protection pathways for community leaders and human rights defenders, ensuring access to self-care and community safety tools, as well as spaces and sessions on caregiver support.
• Develop joint training and accompaniment processes with local governments, strengthening shared capacities in governance, protection, inclusion, and administrative management, and incorporating participatory methodologies into territorial plans.	• Promote technical exchange spaces with private-sector actors, including business mentorship, digital transformation, and organizational sustainability models, in coordination with the diversification strategies under Pillar 2.

From Commitment to Practice

Operations have also developed models in which training and technical support are directly linked to real opportunities for funding and visibility. The urban-level experience in **Peru** shows that

capacity-strengthening within the localization strategy must include not only community-based organizations, but also municipal institutions and local public services, through participatory assessments, training, and the co-design of action plans or referral pathways. These CBOs are also organized into a network of 23 organizations, through which they receive ongoing training on regulatory and protection-related matters. In **Ecuador**, the First National Strengthening Workshop for RLOs and WLOs brought together 18 representatives from 13 organizations across five provinces, mostly women, to exchange experiences, strengthen internal organizational structures, and document good practices in violence prevention and community participation, highlighting their leadership in decision-making spaces. In **Brazil**, a mentorship programme between consolidated organizations and emerging RLOs enabled more than 70 organizations to strengthen their governance, fundraising, and management capacities, and allowed some to participate in national platforms such as COMIGRAR and parliamentary hearings. In **El Salvador**, UNHCR supports the Human Rights and Community Organization School, where leaders from different communities and LGBTIQ+ grassroots groups come together. It serves not only as a space to develop knowledge and skills, but also to exchange experiences. These leaders also transfer their learning within their communities by replicating the topics covered in the school. The experience in **Haiti**, where local universities have developed academic initiatives on forced displacement and statelessness, including summer schools and specialized training spaces, demonstrates the potential of academia as a strategic ally to strengthen a territorial culture of rights and expand the institutional base that supports international protection. Together, these experiences show that UNHCR is already using strengthening pathways that combine training, accompaniment, and access to resources to reinforce organizational sustainability.

Organizational Strengthening of AIMME and FUMVID as Key Local Partners – Ecuador and Colombia

Between 2023 and 2025, HIAS led a regional organizational-strengthening initiative that combined flexible resources with technical accompaniment for community-based organizations. In Ecuador, the Asociación Integral de Mujeres Migrantes en Ecuador (AIMME) used this support to advance its legal registration, reform its statutes, and consolidate its internal governance by defining its mission, vision, and strategic plan. In parallel, it carried out 18 community activities that reached 748 people of diverse profiles, strengthening its role as a local reference organization for psychosocial support and sororal self-care in Santo Domingo.

In Colombia, the Fundación Mensajera Fuente de Vida (FUMVID) implemented the project “Strengthening the Resilience of Migrant Communities in Barranquilla,” with a focus on gender-based violence prevention, mental health, and livelihoods. It trained 92 people in entrepreneurship (10 of whom started businesses), trained 63 people in psychosocial support and GBV response, and established key territorial partnerships. Its participation in GIFMM working groups strengthened its institutional recognition and collaboration opportunities.

THE IMPACT – Both organizations consolidated their internal structures, expanded their technical capacity, and strengthened their positioning within territorial coordination spaces.

THIS IS LOCALIZATION BECAUSE it brings together organizational strengthening, flexible funding, and recognition within decision-making spaces, respecting the leadership and self-defined agendas of community organizations.

POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION – The model suggests combining small grants with participatory assessment, gradual legal formalization, and continuous technical accompaniment—without replacing organizational autonomy.

IV. Inclusion, Non-Discrimination and Comprehensive Protection

Structural and social discrimination continues to limit access to opportunities and participation spaces, particularly for LGBTIQ+ persons, women, youth, Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant communities, persons with disabilities, and other historically marginalized groups. Linguistic, cultural, and accessibility barriers persist, preventing full and meaningful participation, for example, the lack of interpreters or adapted materials for Indigenous communities or persons with disabilities. These gaps, combined with gender inequalities and various forms of violence (gender-based, ethnic, institutional, symbolic, digital, or structural), continue to restrict the influence of organizations and community leaders in humanitarian action and development.

How do we drive this change? By ensuring equal conditions, accessibility, and comprehensive protection in participation processes as well as in access to resources and decision-making spaces. This requires moving toward participation that is real, not symbolic, in which historically excluded groups actively influence the definition of priorities, the management of resources, and the design of solutions adapted to their contexts.

Recommended actions

• Strengthen capacities in gender, diversity, and inclusion, promoting training, awareness-raising, and joint learning processes targeting both institutional teams and community organizations and diverse collectives.	• Ensure universal accessibility and inclusive communication, through the use of interpreters, intercultural translation, accessible materials, and adapted methodologies, incorporating equity and representation criteria in calls for proposals, committees, and selection mechanisms.
• Develop and share practical tools and inclusion protocols, applicable to localized projects, labour-sector initiatives, funding calls, and coordination mechanisms, enabling the mainstreaming of inclusion across different areas and levels of action.	• Provide technical support to diverse collectives and organizations (Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant communities, persons with disabilities, youth, LGBTIQ+ populations, women and girls, etc.) to strengthen their capacities in proposal development, resource management, and sustained participation in decision-making spaces.
• Integrate mechanisms for prevention, response, and redress for the multiple forms of violence, including gender-based violence, discrimination, harassment, symbolic violence, and digital violence.	• Promote specific protection measures for at-risk community leaders, particularly women human-rights defenders and LGBTIQ+ persons, through risk analysis, community safety plans, and coordination with local authorities.
• Support local governments in the inclusive adaptation of public services and regulatory frameworks, promoting policies, ordinances, and protocols that	• Promote public campaigns and intersectoral alliances to combat stigmatization, highlighting refugees and

ensure cultural, linguistic, and physical accessibility and prevent discrimination.

migrants as active agents of change and strengthening rights-based narratives.

From Commitment to Practice

To advance this pillar, UNHCR has promoted alliances and tools aimed at transforming public narratives and strengthening the capacity of local actors to provide environments free from xenophobia and violence. In **Ecuador**, the national sports coalition “Allies for a World of Possibilities in Sports” brings together 17 organizations, professional teams, community groups, and athletes who connect sports with protection, requiring concrete action plans from their members and positioning the inclusion of refugees in a large, positive public space such as sports. In **Argentina**, grant agreements with the Network of Venezuelan Psychologists (Psicoven) have strengthened community mental health initiatives led by refugee professionals, highlighting their technical contributions and helping transform perceptions of the role of refugees within social service systems. In **Peru**, the association Betesda, a refugee-led organization of persons with disabilities, promotes the integration of refugees with disabilities through sports, while also fostering peaceful coexistence by intentionally involving Peruvian participants in all its activities.

Art and Interculturality Against Discrimination – Ecuador and Chile

Ecuador, the “Muralidades” project, led by the organization Lluvia de Arcoíris, uses art as a tool to address violence, xenophobia, and discrimination affecting children and adolescents in school settings. Through participatory processes with educational institutions, teachers, and psychosocial teams, the initiative incorporates coaching, psychodrama, Theatre of the Oppressed, and graphic arts to promote human rights, empathy, and peaceful conflict resolution. Each cycle concludes with the creation of collective murals in schools and neighbourhoods, strengthening community cohesion and local ownership.

In Chile, the Intercultural Facilitators Programme of the NGO Solidaridad Activa, in partnership with the Universidad de Las Américas and the Regional Secretariat of Culture of Valparaíso, offers intensive training in intercultural management, project development, and outreach. It has trained 55 facilitators across six municipalities; 11 projects were designed and five implemented with funding, resulting in campaigns and community spaces sustained by the participants themselves.

THE IMPACT – Both initiatives strengthened local intercultural leadership, expanded spaces for community dialogue, and promoted sustained responses to discrimination.

THIS IS LOCALIZATION BECAUSE – They position migrants, refugees, and community actors as protagonists in building cultural and educational solutions to exclusion.

POTENTIAL FOR REPLICATION – It requires documenting methodologies, building partnerships with schools and cultural institutions, and facilitating initial resources that enable local leaders to design and implement their own projects.

5. The Role of Local Governments

The Americas region has been a pioneer in advancing initiatives aimed at protection and solutions for refugees, displaced and stateless persons, working in close coordination with local governments. Long before localization was formalized in global commitments, local governments across Latin America and the Caribbean were already responding directly to the dynamics of human mobility in their territories. Their responsibility for the provision of public services, the development of inclusive regulations, and the coordination of multisectoral responses positions them as key actors in guaranteeing rights at the territorial level. Their proximity to communities also enables them to identify gaps, coordinate sectoral actors, and adjust public policies to evolving local dynamics.

This role is reflected in multiple experiences across the region. In **Colombia**, in the municipality of Villa del Rosario, Norte de Santander, the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF) provides assistance to Venezuelan children and breastfeeding mothers entering the country through the “Mi vecino protector” programme; while Barranquilla has developed a comprehensive socio-economic inclusion model that integrates vocational training, psychosocial support, documentation, and job placement with more than 90 employers. In **Mexico**, Tlaxcala eliminated the requirement to apostille birth certificates, facilitating access to dual nationality and reducing risks of statelessness. In **Peru**, districts such as Carmen de la Legua and San Martín de Porres, in coordination with municipal authorities and the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion (MIDIS), have implemented registration processes that include socioeconomic criteria to enable refugee families to access social programmes. In **Argentina**, the City of Buenos Aires has promoted digital inclusion and civic participation through programmes such as “Nosotras Conectadas” and multilingual electoral tools. In **Brazil**, São Paulo is advancing the establishment of Migrant Assistance Centres with cultural mediators, while São Leopoldo has institutionalized Portuguese-as-a-host-language courses.

Initiatives such as [Cities of Solidarity](#) reinforce this approach by facilitating technical exchange and cooperation among municipalities committed to protection and integration. Although capacities vary across territories, these experiences demonstrate a consolidated potential that can be further strengthened through strategic partnerships and sustained technical support.

Collaboration with local governments is fundamental to advancing localization through public policy and territorial planning. Their role in providing essential services, such as health, education, infrastructure, and economic inclusion, gives them the structural capacity to integrate refugees and migrants beyond temporary interventions. This represents an opportunity for UNHCR to strengthen advocacy and co-creation with municipal authorities, promoting the explicit inclusion of integration in development plans, budgets, and local regulatory frameworks. By aligning humanitarian response with territorial planning, it becomes possible to leverage existing public resources and legal frameworks, reinforcing shared institutional responsibility for protection and inclusion.

6. Operational Role

The Regional Localization Strategy provides a common and adaptable framework that guides UNHCR operations in the Americas toward a coherent and progressive practice. It does not prescribe a uniform model; rather, it offers a flexible guide for translating the four pillars of the roadmap into actions aligned with national contexts, existing capacities, and priorities defined jointly with local partners.

Each operation is expected to identify, within its annual planning and in line with its multi-year strategy, which pillars and actions are most relevant and feasible to implement, prioritizing realistic and sustained progress. Localization must be concretely integrated into operational management, including clear targets, monitoring mechanisms, and spaces for participatory evaluation. The goal is not to implement all components simultaneously, but to advance strategically, documenting lessons learned, identifying challenges, and feeding back to the regional level to strengthen coherence and accountability.

The Regional Bureau will support this process through strategic and technical guidance, exchange spaces among operations, and the systematization of experiences. This support will help identify trends, share relevant practices, and assist with progressive adjustments in implementation, while respecting the diversity of national contexts.

The strategy recognizes that localization entails operational, financial, and legal risks, particularly for refugee-led organizations and other local actors who may face greater structural vulnerabilities. These risks should not become barriers to their participation nor result in a disproportionate transfer of responsibilities.

In practice, risk management will be carried out through existing institutional mechanisms, including risk registers and mitigation measures, applying proportional criteria and promoting relationships based on trust and shared responsibility. UNHCR will operate within institutionally defined risk levels, ensuring that risk identification and mitigation are systematic and shared, and that they contribute to continuity and predictability in the response.

6.1. Self-Assessment and Monitoring

As part of the operational role, it is proposed that all operations carry out an annual localization self-assessment, using the global self-assessment form⁸ as a practical tool for monitoring, learning, and planning. This exercise will help identify each operation's starting point, guide realistic priorities, and facilitate an aggregated regional reading of progress. It is not an audit exercise, but rather an internal management and learning tool.

The self-assessment is based on the Localization Performance Measurement Framework (NEAR, 2019)⁹, which considers seven dimensions: funding; quantity and quality of partnerships and collaboration; capacity-strengthening and exchange; meaningful participation in UNHCR-led processes; participation

⁸ Kobo - Herramienta de autoevaluación sobre Localización - <https://enketo.unhcr.org/x/Ulv7c33k>

⁹ Para detalles metodológicos y dimensiones completas, ver Marco de medición del desempeño de la localización, [NEAR](#)

and leadership in coordination mechanisms; visibility and advocacy; and influence on public policy. Progress is organized into three benchmark levels—minimum expected, intermediate, and advanced—which allow each operation to understand its position in context and define progressive steps for improvement.

Progression is not necessarily linear and may be influenced by factors such as regulatory changes, restrictions on civic space, or emergency contexts. The initial self-assessment will serve as the baseline for the 2026–2028 period, with the expectation that all operations achieve at least the minimum level and define contextualized actions to advance progressively.

7. Conclusion

The *2026–2028 Regional Localization Strategy* represents a common roadmap for advancing toward a more coherent, structural, and results-oriented practice in the Americas. Its added value lies in bringing together community leadership, funding, organizational strengthening, inclusion, and institutional shared responsibility within a single strategic framework, adaptable to diverse contexts yet aligned with shared principles.

The strategy proposes a gradual but substantial shift in the way localization processes are conceived and managed in the region. It is not only about transferring resources, but about transforming relationships, building trust, removing barriers that limit access and participation, and creating the conditions for community-based organizations led by refugees and displaced persons to play a leading role in the response and in the development of solutions. The systematization of good practices will help demonstrate the concrete value of this approach, strengthening regional learning and inspiring operations, States, and partners to replicate and scale models that have proven effective.

Its success will depend on institutional coherence, a commitment to learning, and shared responsibility among UNHCR, States, local governments, donors, including the private sector and philanthropic actors, and civil society. Above all, it will depend on the full recognition of the right of refugees and forcibly displaced people to participate on equal terms in decisions that affect their lives. “Nothing about us, without us” is not a slogan, but the guiding principle of this strategy, and the commitment to advancing toward more just, inclusive, and effective responses in the region.