



Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief & Development (ACBAR) Localisation Technical Working Group (LTWG) Overview of 2025

The Localisation Technical Working Groups (LTWG), established by ACBAR in 2023 in consultation with donors, NGOs, and UN counterparts, serves as the central platform for guiding and supporting localization efforts in the country. In addition to a larger forum of diverse numbers of NGO's, the group currently includes a steering committee comprised of a representative from five national NGOs (NNGOs), four international NGOs (INGOs), UN agencies, and a cluster representative, enabling diverse engagement and collective strategic, decision-making. After constituting the working group in its current form, the efforts of the working group have been re-focused in the past year and meaningful progress has been made in advancing localization efforts in Afghanistan throughout 2025.

Governance and Structural Improvements

First, the LTWG strengthened its internal governance and coordination structure during 2025. An updated Terms of Reference (ToR) clarified participation expectations, accountability measures, and responsibilities for active engagement. This has opened the door more for active engagement from members with specific expertise and interest in support localisation strategies, and has helped generate energy for a wider support for the WG as members and stakeholders see demonstrable progress.

Guidance and Foundational Documents

One major innovative in 2025 was the development and finalization of the two, key defining and foundational documents. The LTWG Localization Factsheet and Partnership Principles document (Making Partnerships Work in Afghanistan). These documents are developed as context specific definitional pieces, following consultation with INGOs and NNGOs. The finalized documents were shared broadly with donors, UN partners, and through ACBAR's communication channels, helping increase visibility and understanding of localization commitments. As we continue to augment these documents and research, the LTWG is seeking to clearly define what localisation looks like for the future of humanitarian and development interventions in Afghanistan and provide practical steps on how we get from the status quo to a more equitable future for local actors.

Advocacy and Representation

Advocacy remained a core focus for the LTWG throughout the year, supported by ACBAR. ACBAR represented Afghan civil society and humanitarian actors in high-level international conferences, including the European Humanitarian Forum 2025 and the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in Brussels. Key messages delivered are the urgent humanitarian needs in Afghanistan, the complementary roles of INGOs and NNGOs, and the importance of flexible, multi-year funding for local actors. LTWG members also contributed to regional and global discussions on localization, including participation in a localization conference in Nepal sponsored by the NEAR Network and Asia Pacific Localisation Lab (APLL) and at the Regional Humanitarian Partnership Week (RHPW) in Thailand. Engagement with the ACG donor group continued both inside the country and internationally, with members of the LTWG presenting to a meeting of member states in Tashkent in early October. As a part of this advocacy effort, ACBAR, on behalf of the LTWG, is a signer of the [Kathmandu Covenant](#), a commitment by regional actors to work together to move forward strategic progress in meeting global localisation benchmarks.

Evidence and Research

A baseline survey targeting over 280 NGOs, donors, and UN agencies was launched to assess the current status of localization in Afghanistan. Regional workshops were also conducted to collect qualitative insights of community, INGOs and NNGOs across the seven domains of localization. These workshops collected actual perspectives from local actors and international actors and improved the comprehensiveness of the findings. In addition to this baseline survey, the LTWG has supported the Afghanistan Localisation Lab and CoAR in developing capacity-mapping tools designed to assess the existence capacity program and the needs and of national NGOs, forming the basis for future capacity-strengthening initiatives.



The LTWG has developed a commitment to growing the evidence base to demonstrate the importance and viability of making good on global commitment to localisation in Afghanistan. ACBAR, on behalf of the LTWG, has commissioned several new research pieces to look at strategic topics supporting the operationalization of localisation strategies. These will be published in 2026. Additionally, the LTWG has collaborated with ACAPS on their recent pieces on localisation by supporting joint discussions on their research paper, including a webinar and a donor briefing session.

Challenges

Despite these achievements, the LTWG faced several ongoing challenges. These have included:

1. Different understandings among humanitarian actors and stakeholders on the definition of “localization” leading to inconsistent expectations and prioritization.
2. Limited resources and funding dedicated specifically to localization activities.
3. Political factors and perceptions that may raise concern for some international institutions and influencers who worry localisation may lead to a loss of influence, control, or access to resources, especially within the Afghanistan context.
4. Expectations on the LTWG regarding funding for local actors, which is beyond the group’s direct mandate, while still advocating for the principle that local actors and organizations should be supported with equitable, flexible funding mechanisms.
5. Limited buy-in and participation and representation of NGOs in consultations, surveys, and decision-making processes. The effort toward localisation needs to commitment of all, not just the energy of a vocal few.

Conclusion and a Way Forward for 2026:

In summary, the LTWG has made considerable progress during 2025 in consolidating governance, developing key foundational documents, and strengthening advocacy for humanitarian funds, flexible funding in humanitarian and development response. The LTWG remains a central actor in promoting localization and ensuring coordination among stakeholders. To maintain momentum, it will be essential to address participation gaps, secure adequate resources, strengthen relationships, and continue engaging donors/UN on flexible and long-term funding for local organizations. The LTWG is commitment to inclusion, coordinated action, and strengthening the localization efforts.

In 2026, the LTWG remains committed to continuing this progress and momentum.

Some of these specific action points will include:

1. Developing a three-year Localization Strategic Action Plan, including a clear, actionable 2026 work plan.
2. Developing an engagement plan with current authorities in Afghanistan at the national and regional level.
3. Grow participation and buy-in from a wider audience of NGO members. This will include reviewing the ToR and securing expanded LTWG Steering Group membership through an Expression of Interest process.
4. Produce and publish relevant and timely research papers and hold roundtable discussions to continue to refine our approach to localisation strategies.
5. Further develop and operationalize a Donor–NNGO Engagement Platform.
6. Further advocacy for more equitable, flexible funding mechanisms for national NGO’s
7. Support expanded NGO-focused coordination mechanisms that place national actors in more strategic positions of leadership on what are traditional coordination forums, including reviewing ways to make the HCT more relevant to national NGO’s, and giving national and local leaders more decision-making power in clusters and working groups.

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