



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

LOCAL CAPACITY STRENGTHENING POLICY

An Overview

The Local Capacity Strengthening (LCS) Policy guides USAID decisions about why and how to invest in the capacity of local actors based on principles derived from an emerging consensus across the development landscape, feedback from local actors and partners, and years of implementation experience and evidence.



The LCS Policy **reaffirms USAID's commitment to local capacity strengthening** by laying out **seven principles** to guide USAID humanitarian assistance and development programming.

While approaches to capacity strengthening vary by sector and context, the LCS Policy gives the Agency a shared framework to inform programming that **builds upon the existing strengths of local actors and systems, responds to dynamic local priorities, and aligns with USAID strategic aims.**

Together, the principles and guidance outlined in the LCS Policy will help USAID **support local actors to achieve their objectives, lead their communities' development, and shape their countries' future.**



ADVANCING LOCALLY LED DEVELOPMENT

Today's global development and humanitarian challenges are vast, demanding, and complex. They are also inherently local, shaped by the unique histories, power dynamics, and other factors specific to each context in which they occur. Locally led development is the process in which local actors set their own agendas, develop solutions, and bring the capacity, leadership, and resources to make those solutions a reality.

USAID recognizes that local leadership and ownership are essential for fostering sustainable results across our development and humanitarian assistance work. Appreciating and building on the strengths of local actors is a fundamental component of USAID programming, and the LCS Policy marks an important milestone in realizing the Agency's localization goals.

SEVEN PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE AND EQUITABLE CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

The policy is organized around **seven mutually-reinforcing principles** to lead to more **effective programming and equitable partnerships** in local capacity strengthening activities.

- **Principles for effective programming** guide our understanding about why and in what circumstances making strategic and intentional decisions to strengthen the capacity of local actors as part of the USAID Program Cycle can contribute to broader systems change and sustainable outcomes. These principles also guide our understanding about why measuring performance is important.
- **Principles for equitable partnerships** center the values of mutual respect and reciprocity to guide the Agency's local capacity strengthening programming across different sectors and regions.

Bureaus will develop sector-specific guidance based on these principles to inform their programming.



Photo credit: Bobby Neptune for USAID

FROM PRINCIPLES TO PRACTICE

USAID will implement the LCS Policy through four overlapping priority areas:

1. Develop key implementation guidance and resources, including for sector-specific contexts.
2. Create accountability and feedback mechanisms to sustain LCS Policy implementation.
3. Support integration of LCS into programming and grow USAID capacity to implement the Policy.
4. Share evidence and stories to highlight the importance of local capacity strengthening and further encourage operationalizing the Policy.

PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMING

- 1 Start with the local system.
- 2 Strengthen diverse capacities through diverse approaches.
- 3 Plan for and measure performance improvement in collaboration with local partners.

PRINCIPLES FOR EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIPS

- 4 Align capacity strengthening with local priorities.
- 5 Appreciate and build on existing capacities.
- 6 Be mindful of and mitigate the unintended consequences of our support for local capacity strengthening.
- 7 Practice mutuality with local partners.

Visit the [LCS Policy page](#) to learn more about USAID's first-ever Local Capacity Strengthening Policy, find resources for policy implementation, and discover opportunities to engage.