

LOCALISATION

A GOAL POSITION PAPER



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The GOAL Localisation Position Paper is the result of the considerable and collective efforts of colleagues, partners, donors and Board Members across GOAL's Global Network. GOAL is deeply grateful to all who contributed their valuable time and diverse perspectives to the consultation process.

The Localisation Position Paper builds on decades of experience working and collaborating with multiple actors across the globe.

This paper will be reviewed annually and adapted according to key learnings.



BACKGROUND

Humanitarian crises are growing in scale and complexity in the face of protracted global turbulence. As a result, the need for humanitarian organisations to adopt new approaches, adapt processes and foster new collaborations is more important than ever before.

GOAL, as an organisation with a 48-year track record responding to humanitarian crises across the globe, know that crises disproportionately affect those facing poverty and exclusion and threaten their health, well-being and lives.



GOAL's localisation vision: In line with GOAL's global strategy, from Crisis to Resilience, GOAL aims to further position affected communities at the center of humanitarian and development interventions, thereby maximising opportunities to improve the relevance, impact and effectiveness of such programming to achieve greater resilience and wellbeing.

By 2030, an estimated 59 percent of those deemed to be extremely poor will live in fragile and conflict-affected contexts (FCAC) and in a world facing interconnected crises, fragility compounds other global challenges, including climate change, pandemics, and food insecurity.¹ One in every 69 people, or 1.5 per cent of the entire world's population, is now forcibly displaced. This is nearly double the 1 in 125 people who were displaced a decade ago.² In 2024, more than 325 million people worldwide needed humanitarian assistance.³



GOAL's approach: GOAL proposes to achieve this vision of localisation through a comprehensive, whole of organisational adoption of GOAL's Local Systems Approach (LSA). It involves a deeper understanding of local systems and a commitment to evidence-based learning, built on a foundation of mutual understanding and accountability.

GOAL's vision is guided by our Principles of Partnership:

- A shared vision on a successful partnership
- Shared core values
- A mutual commitment to accountability and transparency
- Clear roles and responsibilities
- A shared vision of good governance
- A results-orientated approach to achieve greater impact, together

1 World Bank January 2024 - <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2024/01/16/pursuing-development-goals-amid-fragility-conflict-and-violence#:~:text=By%202030%2C%20an%20estimated%2059.%2C%20pandemics%2C%20and%20food%20insecurity.>

2 UNDP June 2024 - <https://www.undp.org/blog/world-must-stand-refugee-hosting-nations#:~:text=One%20in%2069%20people%20or,to%20the%20record%2Dbreaking%20number>

3 UNOCHA January 2025 - <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2024-november-december-update-snapshot-31-december-2024>



GOAL DEFINES THE LOCAL SYSTEMS APPROACH AS:

GOAL understands local systems to be an interconnected network of actors, resources, relationships, and institutions that operate within a community or region.

The interconnectivity of these systems is critical for delivering services, creating opportunities and building resilience. Enabling systemic change through dynamic and impactful relationships and partnerships with local system actors that recognises their leadership and our collective mutual commitment to and accountability in the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance and support for protecting, stabilising and strengthening of local systems to enable crisis-affected populations to move beyond crisis to resilience.

This position paper sets out the core elements of GOAL's approach to applying systems thinking to support local systems. It is grounded in the rationale that if the systems in which vulnerable communities live and work in are strengthened, and if the inherent capacities, knowledge and strengths of local actors are harnessed and maximised to create solutions, all built on a platform of mutual accountability, then communities facing crisis, poverty, and exclusion will achieve greater resilience and well-being.

In line with this, GOAL envisions increasing the practice of Local Systems Approach (LSA) in its humanitarian and development assistance to advance localisation with the ambition to achieve greater impact through partnership. Through our focus on local systems and longer-term resilience, GOAL's approach is informed by the *triple nexus/New Way of Working* between humanitarian and development interventions.

GOAL's current global strategy introduced our approach to strengthening local systems and understands that crises occur when local systems are failing or collapsed. As one actor within the system, it is vital we make all efforts to protect, stabilise and strengthen the local systems which are composed of multiple formal and informal structures and actors including, but not limited to, the corporate sector, government agencies, civil society organisations, academia, community based organisations, faith-based organisations water or health committees, traditional community leaders, schools, hospitals, foundations, voluntary organisations, individuals and other community networks.



Evidence of GOAL's commitment has been the establishment of a **Global Partnership Centre (GPC)**, which was created to identify new ways of collaborating, partnering and learning for greater impact.

The GPC is central to GOAL's localisation approach. The GPC will facilitate the training of our global team and local partners in the application of systems thinking. Leveraging corporate sector collaboration and expertise, the GPC will develop new tools to enhance approaches to the creation of dynamic partnerships to facilitate the effectiveness of LSA efforts.

The GPC is generously supported by Irish Aid, demonstrating their commitment to and support of localisation.

A critical element of GOAL's LSA involves developing organisational tools and capacity to analyse and understand the system it is operating within, considering its complexities. We also acknowledge the positive and negative impacts that external players and drivers can have on a system. Our role is to analyse the full spectrum of the vulnerabilities within a system and harness the positive strengths that inherently exist.

Strengthening a system requires a long-term sustained commitment, and there are significant tensions that currently exist between the demands to deliver immediate results and the process of building mutual trust, respect, accountability and learning to achieve greater resilience and impact. Addressing these tensions will take time and will require effective collaboration and discussions amongst all stakeholders, which must include strategic donors.

GOAL implements the Markets for Youth programme in Uganda in collaboration with local partners, including MUCOBADI, a community resilience and development agency based in Bugiri, Eastern Uganda.



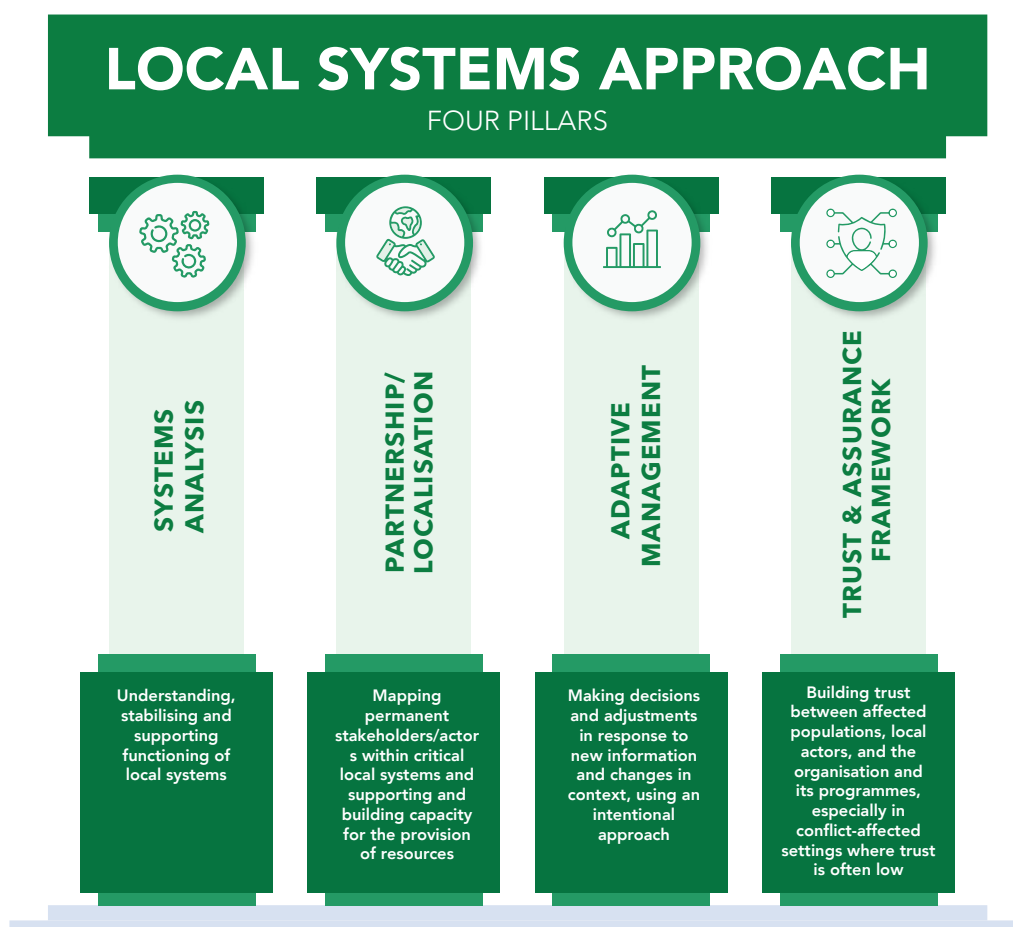
1. THE GOAL LOCAL SYSTEMS APPROACH (LSA)

GOAL's Local Systems Approach is founded on the four pillars, outlined in GOAL's current global strategy:

1. Systems Approach
2. Partnership
3. Adaptive Management and
4. Assurance Framework

Building on almost 50 years of experience, this externally validated approach, was developed through comprehensive research, analysis and learnings from our development and humanitarian programmes in some of the most complex, fragile and often protracted conflict affected settings in the world.

FIGURE 1 below sets out the Four Pillars of GOAL's Local Systems Approach





PILLAR 1: SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

Even in the most fragile contexts, there are pre-existing local systems and GOAL works to understand these systems as an integral part of its programme interventions in humanitarian response and development assistance. In this way, we minimise harm and support the continuity of essential services and build on inherent local capacities to prepare for and respond to future crises.

Our Local Systems Approach ensures that we will:

- Where possible, undertake collaborative mapping, analysis and engagement of local systems to **understand local contexts** and the role, capacity and strengths of local actors.
- **Protect, leverage, stabilise and strengthen critical existing local systems** that deliver lifesaving and life-sustaining goods and services.
- **Temporarily carry out specific functions** to support or stabilise those existing systems, where permanent actors are absent, and new actors have not yet emerged.



PILLAR 2: PARTNERSHIP WITH FULL SPECTRUM OF LOCAL ACTORS

We recognise that local systems have multiple actors that are the key catalysts of change. Facilitated by the GPC, GOAL will work in partnership with more permanent local actors based on our analysis and understanding of their role within the local systems, while also relying on their inherent capacities, knowledge and strengths.

Our commitment to partnership with local actors ensures that we will:

- Engage with the diverse range of local actors in each context for greater impact. This involves listening and learning, **exploring new ways of collaborating**, and encouraging new and alternative perspectives to achieve common goals for better results and impact.
- Collaborate with key local actors to identify and analyse their organisational weaknesses, development needs, and **support a pathway forward for growth**.
- Strategically **engage the corporate sector** to leverage their diverse range of experience, (including assurance, R&D, change management, technology) to partner with local actors, thereby accelerating the localisation vision. Promote strategic networking for collaboration, agility in learning and influencing with other international actors.



PILLAR 3: ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Building on decades of experience responding to complex and often protracted crises characterized by unpredictability, GOAL applies an agile, adaptive management approach to risk-monitoring, learning and readiness to support local systems and affected populations.

Our commitment to adaptive management ensures that we will:

- Collaborate with local actors to maintain **context-specific monitoring of identified risks** (e.g., conflict and security monitoring, threats to food systems, extreme weather threats, etc) and carry out regular scenario planning to prepare and adapt to changes in context and risk, to inform effective operational and programming adaptations.
- **Coordinate with key local actors to make timely decisions and adjustments** in response to new information and changes in contexts to protect and stabilise systems that support affected populations.
- **Exchange learnings with local stakeholders** from programme interventions through collective analysis and reflection, to adapt programmes and resources and improve the relevance, impact and effectiveness of interventions to achieve greater resilience at local level.



PILLAR 4: TRUST & ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

GOAL's approach is built on the fundamental principle that all partners will be mutually committed to the highest standards of transparency and accountability.

We commit to these standards through our complaints response and whistleblowing mechanisms and through the functions of compliance, internal audit, safeguarding, controls and investigations.

GOAL's commitment to building trust and accountability will ensure that we communicate and engage with local stakeholders on GOAL's approach and commitment to continuous improvement of its accountability and assurance framework.

- Where possible, we collaborate and support local actors to develop and further **strengthen their systems of accountability that build trust and increase transparency** with key stakeholders and donors who are funding the work.
- We support an **agility in our collective learnings**, through periodic reviews on our joint activities, and compliance and audit processes to deliver greater understanding on our results and learnings.
- Capture learnings on how we **build relationships of trust and mutual accountability to achieve greater impact.**

2. DELIVERING GOAL'S LOCAL SYSTEMS APPROACH (LSA)

To achieve the ambition of our Local Systems Approach, GOAL will strengthen and enhance internal and external processes, including a commitment to;

1. Whole-of-organisation approach
2. Agile partnering processes
3. Pursuing long-term strategic partnerships and multi-year funding with donors to support the localisation approach
4. Supporting organisational development of local actors to foster collective assurance and accountability
5. Enhancing risk management and mutual accountability frameworks with partners

WHOLE-OF-ORGANISATION APPROACH:

Through the Global Partnership Centre (GPC), GOAL will invest in developing an organisational commitment to the LSA. This involves investing in developing the skills and competencies of staff, while prioritising cross organisational learning to ensure the creation of meaningful and impactful relationships with local actors.

- Over time, the GPC will strengthen our organisational understanding of, and capacity to embrace an LSA, acknowledging that many opportunities and challenges will emerge on this journey.
- GOAL's global Leadership Team and Board will be accountable for the delivery of the LSA in accordance with GOAL's core values of courage, humanitarianism, inclusiveness, partnership, and transparency and accountability. An adaptive learning approach will also foster accountability and greater agility in context-specific decision-making to achieve greater resilience and well-being of local actors and communities.

GOAL's LSA will engage, empower and rely on local stakeholders in all stages of the programme cycle, ensuring that affected communities' needs are at the centre of designed interventions. We will foster diverse and meaningful structured engagements built on a platform of mutual listening and learning, which will enable the adaptation of approaches to ensure the effective delivery of support and programmes.

With the successful implementation of this approach, GOAL and local systems actors, will collectively deliver greater impact in humanitarian and development interventions, thereby strengthening the resilience and wellbeing of affected populations.

AGILE PARTNERING PROCESSES:

Accountability and commitment to a strong Assurance Framework will continue to be a top priority, while acknowledging the need for a more adaptive risk-based approach to partner selection processes to enhance engagement and agility in our programme responses.

Facilitated by the GPC, with corporate sector support, we will streamline current partner engagement processes to minimise barriers to local partner engagement. We will also apply risk management tools to make decisions or adjustments in response to new information or changes in context.

Guided by GOAL's Principles of Partnership, the engagement criteria with local actors will be grounded in our collective understanding and knowledge of:

- Vision and Mission
- Inherent strengths and capabilities
- Organisational, governance and accountability structures
- Community engagement capacities and networks
- Impartiality and commitment to transparency and accountability
- Willingness to collaborate and learn
- Alignment with shared values

GOAL will aim to develop longer-term dynamic and impactful relationships with local actors, built on a foundation of mutual trust and accountability. Ultimately, the ambition is to achieve greater impact in our responses/programmes. Communities facing crisis, poverty and exclusion will be empowered to improve their resilience and well-being, fostered by the Local Systems Approach.



PURSuing LONG-TERM STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND MULTI-YEAR FUNDING WITH DONORS TO SUPPORT THE LOCALISATION APPROACH:

GOAL will strengthen our advocacy for enhanced funding opportunities for local actors.

GOAL will also continue to pursue multi-annual funding opportunities to develop a sustained approach to supporting local actors' strategies for growth.

Where possible, based on thorough context analysis and systems mapping, **the GPC will continue to explore new partnership models with local actors** with the objective of enabling local actors to assume a broader role in delivering humanitarian and development assistance, based on their role within the local system.

SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL ACTORS TO FOSTER COLLECTIVE ASSURANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY:

There are many stages and phases to the growth of an organisation and developing capacities takes time, resources, expertise and a sustained commitment. Given GOAL's commitment to accountability within the Local Systems Approach, the GPC has established an **Organisational Development Fund** designed to strengthen organisational infrastructure and assurance frameworks, both essential to achieving longer term growth and development. Where appropriate, GOAL will support partners to achieve their longer term development.

Where appropriate, GOAL will also encourage, and where possible support, partners' efforts to mobilise resources beyond GOAL to enhance their strategic vision and direction.



ENHANCING RISK MANAGEMENT AND MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORKS WITH PARTNERS:

GOAL is committed to implementing an effective **risk management strategy** to ensure the successful implementation of the Local Systems Approach in adherence with GOAL's partnership principles and **commitment to accountability and transparency**.

Facilitated by the GPC, GOAL will emphasise **risk-sharing with local partners to assess and mitigate risks systematically** and ensure a joint commitment to reporting and accountability requirements. Collaborative planning sessions and proactive engagement, including mitigation measures development, will promote adaptability and trust while acknowledging the potential risks and challenges inherent in local systems approaches.

Alignment with donor requirements and accountability mechanisms will continue to be a priority. Risk assessments with local actors will be conducted, guided by donor policies regarding LSA. This will inform decision-making, resource and funding allocations that will ensure alignment with donor expectations to advance locally led efforts for greater sustainability.



3. CONCLUSION

Embracing a whole of organisation Local Systems Approach is a journey of change, while recognising that GOAL is but one actor within a much larger system and community of global actors.

Critical to delivering on the ambition of this commitment is:

1. Recognising that it requires an **organisational infrastructure (GPC)** that will facilitate the LSA process and deliver results.
2. Acknowledging the positive and negative impacts that external drivers have on a system. Understanding these challenges, our role is to analyse the full spectrum of the vulnerabilities within a system, while **harnessing the positive capacities and strengths that inherently exist**.
3. It will require **changes in systems, practices and behaviours** – at partner level and within GOAL.
4. **Building the internal understanding and capacity of our global teams** by providing sustained support, tools and structured ways to apply the approach.
5. Ensuring that **mutual accountability and trust** is the cornerstone of the LSA approach with all partners and donors that we engage with.
6. Ensuring **good communications, engagement, sharing of learnings and acknowledgement of risks** with our key donors on this journey of change.
7. Facilitated by the GPC, prioritising collaboration and **data driven learning**, acknowledging there will be many challenges and obstacles along the journey.
8. **Embracing expertise from the corporate sector** through collaboration with the GPC.

IN THE END, THE WIDER AMBITION IS TO DELIVER GREATER IMPACT THROUGH A PARTNERSHIP MODEL, IMPROVING RESILIENCE AND WELL-BEING FOR ALL.

4. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The GOAL Local Systems Approach has been developed in alignment with:

- GOAL Strategy 2025 “From Crisis to Resilience”
- GOAL Gender Equality Policy (2021)
- GOAL Risk Management Policy (2024)
- GOAL Anti-Fraud Policy (2022)
- GOAL Global Emergency Preparedness and Response Framework (2024)

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