



LOCALIZATION STRATEGY 2021/2025





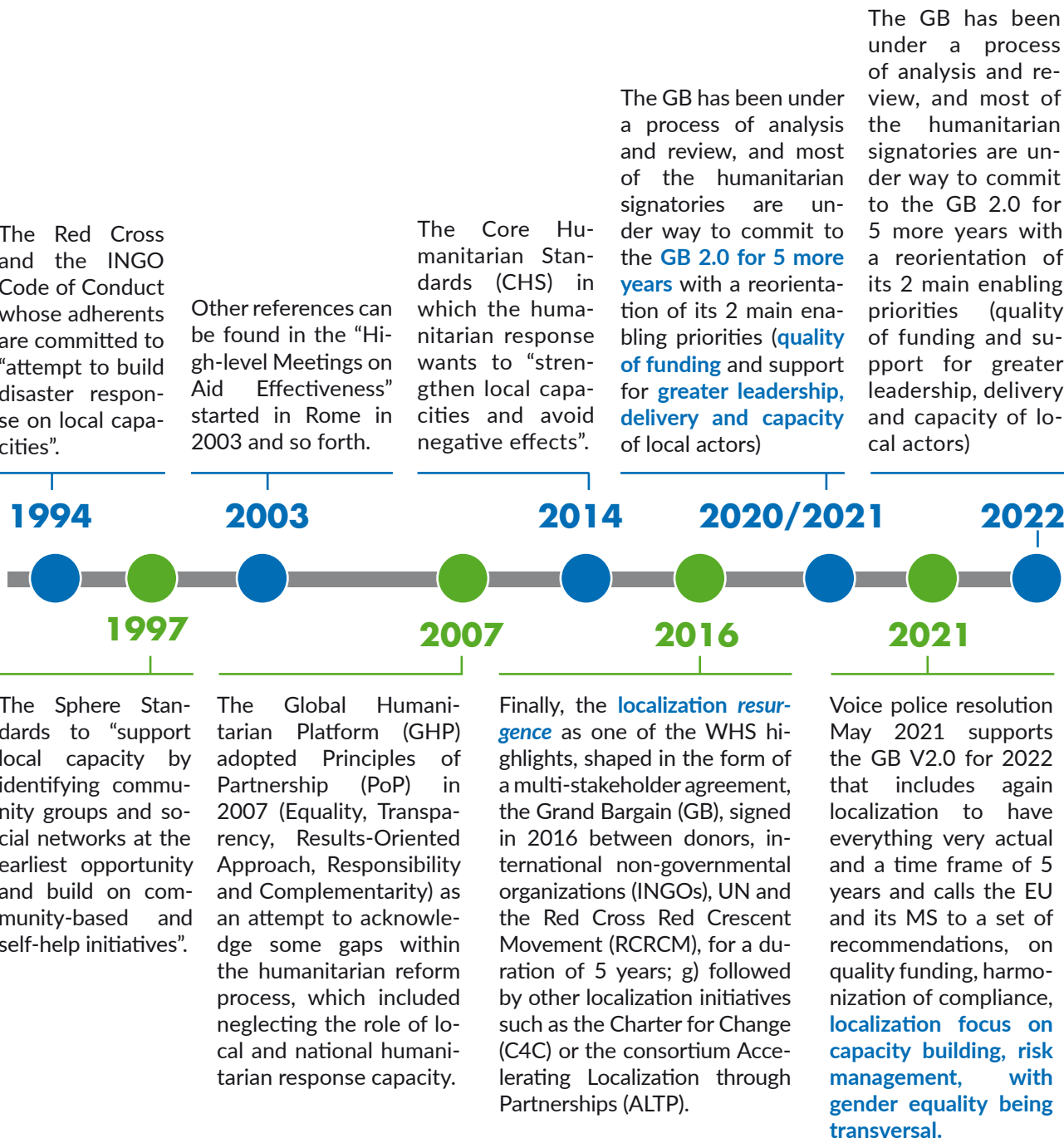
INDEX

1.INTRODUCTION UNDERSTANDING LOCALISATION	4
2. LOCALISATION IN ACTION AGAINST HUNGER, WHY AND WHAT FOR	6
3. OUR LOCALISATION STRATEGY	10
3.1 WHAT IS LOCALIZATION AND THE CONCEPT OF LOCAL FOR ACTION AGAINST HUNGER?	10
3.2 WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?	11
3.3 HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE LOCALIZATION?	11

1.INTRODUCTION

UNDERSTANDING LOCALISATION

Although the **concept [Localization] might have sound innovative in the last 5 years** since the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) and the signature of the Grand Bargain (GB) in 2016, the **word has been somehow present** along the principles and policies of our humanitarian action as **local capacities**:



For over 40 years, since its foundation, **Action Against Hunger charter of principles** has given primacy to the **demand for free access to victims and direct control of its programs**, ensuring that resources go directly to the beneficiaries, taking stock that these resources are optimized and correctly used, aligned with the principles of neutrality and independence regarding external stakeholders. On the one hand, **Action Against Hunger identity is a humanitarian organization that implements directly** in countries affected by conflicts and natural disasters, and this has been the **main response to reach the most vulnerable** and deliver relief in the fastest way possible. One the other hand, **Action Against Hunger has never been "alone" in tackling hunger**, having a long history of engagement with a wide range of local, national, and international actors from the public and private spheres.

Such long history of engagement has witnessed a steady evolution since the early 2000's, when conflicts or natural disasters occur simultaneously, not between borders, but within their territories and across regions, with international spillover effects. The number of compounded needs never stops to increase, contexts are complex, alongside the diversity of actors which come to the help of the affected populations, communities, local institutions, and national governments. And yet humanitarian access has been shrinking.

Despite never putting at risk its principles of free access to the people in need, maintaining neutrality and independence, Action Against Hunger **adapted its direct response model** with the **establishment of different types of alliances with a diversity of local stakeholders, empowering and capacitating them and improving acceptance and access to intervene at national and local levels**. Therefore, we could state that somehow Action Against Hunger had always implicitly embedded in its foundational principles the **buildup of local resilience and promotion of self-initiatives by the population and local actors, who are at the same time beneficiaries and local actors**. This experience of establishing alliances and partnerships with a diversity of stakeholders **redefined the strategic orientation** of Action Against Hunger as an **organization that prioritizes fighting hunger tied with national and local capacities**.



2. LOCALISATION IN ACTION AGAINST HUNGER, WHY AND WHAT FOR

Although Action Against Hunger decided not to be part of any localization initiative, it recognizes that localization is one of the topics at the forefront of the humanitarian agenda for the last 5 years since the Humanitarian Summit in 2016, and through its partnership response models it has been endorsing local capacities. The organization has therefore embedded in its 2020-2025 strategy the spirit of the GB, choosing to **enhance the localization of humanitarian action** and advocating for it through its value model proposition, in which **AAH always chooses to work with local actors first, before it chooses to implement alone**.

WHAT IS THE MAIN RATIONALE BEHIND FOR ACTION AGAINST HUNGER?

In 2020 Action Against Hunger organized a workshop in Spain (Localization Board Workshop, Madrid, February 2020) where several African NGOs were invited to discuss and share their views around partnerships and localization and how to tackle them together. Not surprisingly, they cited challenges which include cultural barriers and the rigid approach of INGOs to building and managing partnerships, a lack of decision-making power in partnerships with INGOs, the project-based partnership culture with no long-term vision, lack of capacity to uphold any long-term positioning and finally “negative perceptions” of each other. Next to these challenges, the same NGOs declared AAH’s ability to amplify the voices of local civil society and “shed light onto the communities”, to advocate widely. Through the organization’s visibility, far-reaching impact and international network, n/INGOs can access more funds or strengthen their own visibility and advocacy work. AAH’s technical expertise was considered a strong - or possibly the strongest - added value, cited by the National NGOs, the organization’s ‘ability to transfer knowledge’. Likewise, AAH also recognizes the local knowledge rooted in the communities and the structures of these local actors, which should be respected and embraced so that cultural barriers against their intrinsic value dissipates gradually.

In parallel, the organization recognizes its own barriers and motivations as far as working with local actors is concerned. As we can see in the pictures below, there is the underlying **barrier of its weak partnership culture**, which goes hand in hand with the question why and how we want to work with local partners” (Partnership project 2020).

BARRIERS FOR ACTION AGAINST HUNGER TO WORK WITH LOCAL ACTORS



Internal barriers

- No partnership strategy at country-level.
- Lack of time in emergencies (no strategic approach to seek out partners beyond projects and proposals).
- Lack of tools and guidelines.
- Limited good practice examples.
- Lack of human capacity and partnership expertise/skills.
- Lack of support from HQs to Country Offices.
- Weak partnership culture (a tendency to work alone as a direct implementing humanitarian organisation).
- Lack of understanding what it means to work in partnership, unawareness and/or misinterpretation of the Partnership Policy.



External barriers

- The need to assure impartiality and neutrality of response.
- Limited local actors in affected areas to partner with.

MOTIVATIONS: WHY WORK WITH LOCAL PARTNERS?



Access and implementation

- Geographical coverage (7)
- Sectorial coverage.
- Access to and acceptance from communities, reaching those most in need (7).
- Access to local networks.
- Advocacy.
- Donors and/or government requirements/priorities(7)



Building local capacity

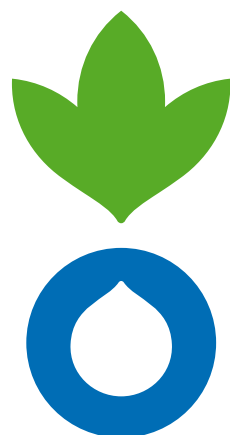
- Promoting local ownership, autonomy and self sufficiency.
- Increasing sustainability and long-term development(11).
- Maximising resources.



Local Knowledge

- Knowledge of the local development context.
- Understanding of beneficiary needs.
- Opportunity for learning and innovation.





THE MOTIVATIONS OR STRENGTHS for Action Against Hunger to work with local partners can be grouped into three categories:

1. ACCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION,
2. EMPOWERING LOCAL CAPACITIES AND
3. LEARNING AND GAINING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE, MATCHING THE LOCALIZATION RATIONALE AND THE LOCAL ACTORS' EXPECTATIONS.

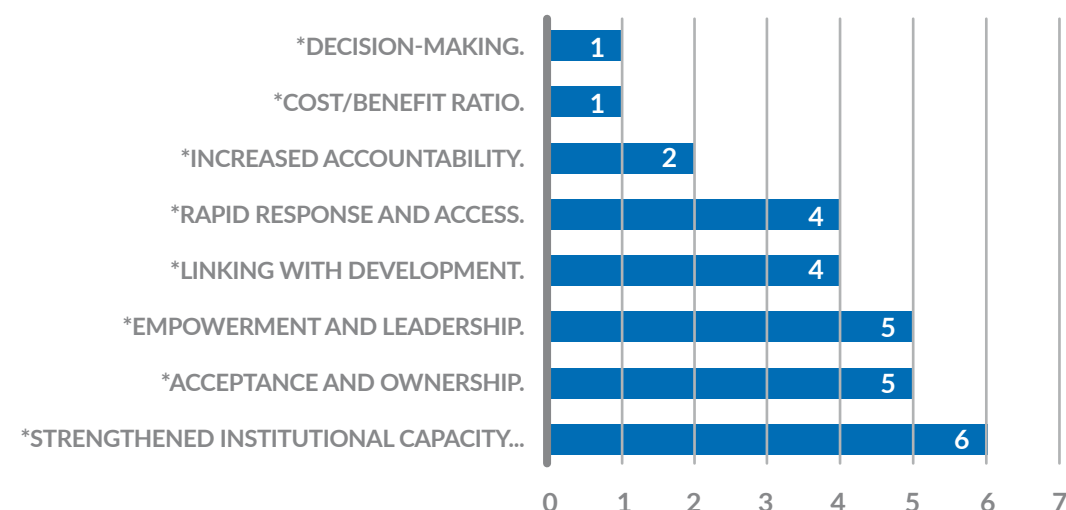
To tackle both the organization and the local actor's challenges and motivations, Action Against Hunger has therefore committed specific objectives in the next 2020-2025 Strategic Framework to save more lives and therefore foster its operational capacity tied with alliances and localization:

(I1) "to strengthen the operational capacity by leading collaborative actions in emergency, rehabilitation and resilience that reduce human suffering".

(S2) Increasing access to basic services and coverage of needs by developing strategic alliances with key actors and fostering localization.

Moving forward in time, in May 2021 the organization submitted a survey to some national and local actors with whom it jointly delivers humanitarian actions. There these actors chose the main benefits for their institutions if the humanitarian action is localized. Alongside, Action Against Hunger displays its added value to support the localization process.

CHOICE OF BENEFITS BY LOCAL ACTORS



TOP 5 BENEFITS matching with the **LOCAL ACTORS' VIEW OF AAH**, reflected on its added value, motivation and strategy to pursue localization.

1. STRENGTHENED INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY AND CIVIL SOCIETY.
2. EMPOWERMENT AND LEADERSHIP.
3. ACCEPTANCE AND OWNERSHIP
4. LINKING EMERGENCY WITH DEVELOPMENT, TRIPLE NEXUS
5. RAPID RESPONSE AND ACCESS

WHAT IS OUR ADDED VALUE



"Placing our knowledge more at the centre"
"Creating/Sharing knowledge with the local actors, learning from each other"
 our technical expertise is our most valued asset and our DNA.

3. OUR LOCALISATION STRATEGY

3.1 WHAT IS LOCALIZATION AND THE CONCEPT OF LOCAL FOR ACTION AGAINST HUNGER?

Based on the findings presented in the local partnership report (December 2020), Action Against Hunger value model (2021), as well as working group discussions with the missions' representatives and the survey results extended to some local actors (April-May 2021), there is the common decision to adopt the following definition of localization (adopted by the NEAR framework) and ecosystem of local actors:

LOCALIZATION

"Localizing humanitarian response (or localization) is a process of recognizing, respecting, and strengthening the leadership by local authorities and the capacity of local civil society in humanitarian action, in order to better address the needs of affected populations and to prepare national actors for future humanitarian responses" (NEAR Framework).

LOCAL AND NATIONAL ACTORS/ACTORS:

Experience and evidence tell us that in the case of a sudden emergency, local actors are the first actors, and, in the case of long-term crisis, local actors are the ones helping during the most acute phases of the emergencies and those remaining in the affected areas for recovery and rehabilitation. In our localization agenda, we give prominence to an ecosystem made up of a rich diversity of local/national actors (Figure 1.) who are the key frontline actors during and after emergencies, highlighting that we need these local/national actors in the continuum between emergency and development. We need their rooted knowledge and solutions.

3.2 WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

The following strategic objectives are the echo of the working sessions with members representing all regions of intervention by the organization, as well as the benefits and expectations communicated by the local actors' survey with whom Action Against Hunger works. The strategic framework of the organization and the spirit of the GB are also aligned, namely the capacity development/sharing and learning with the local and national actors (see local actors survey in annex 1).

LOCALIZATION STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Strategic Objective 1** – Local actors rooted knowledge and experience is respected and embedded in the strengthening of their human capacities and structures in emergency preparedness and response, and surge capacity (scale up capacity).
- Strategic Objective 2** – National and Local actors cogenerate/co-construct with Action Against Hunger a mutual institutional capacity, leadership and influence aimed at addressing the needs of crisis affected populations within the humanitarian- development-peace nexus approach.
- Strategic Objective 3** – Support a people centered approach and the participation of affected communities in addressing humanitarian needs.

3.3 HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE LOCALIZATION?

To advance progress in localization as per our added value, along the strategic objectives and the local actors' expectations, Action Against Hunger proposes to follow customized action plans at different speeds, as the contexts where the organization intervenes are very diverse. The practice of localization is a strategic objective for the organization, and it is to be implemented in all the countries where it operates taking into consideration a combination of factors and processes:

- A)** decentralization – transfer of decision-making to our bases accompanied by the strengthening of their capacities and resources.
- B)** link the missions' strategy and programming with the localization action plan and the partnerships strategy.
- C)** define the localization process.
- D)** long term engagement and commitment towards the local actors, to develop and retain their trust and acceptance; to embed the principle of do no Harm.

Factors are the type and magnitude of the disaster or conflict and its long-standing duration and impact on the resilience of the population; legal and political space for humanitarian actors; security/access situation; role of the local authorities; role and capacity of local actors; relief experience in the country; funding levels and donor appetite. There are countries or regions where localization is broader and gradually occurring as by default the organization intervenes with national and local actors, others where localization will focus on a set of actions, and others where localization will be absent.

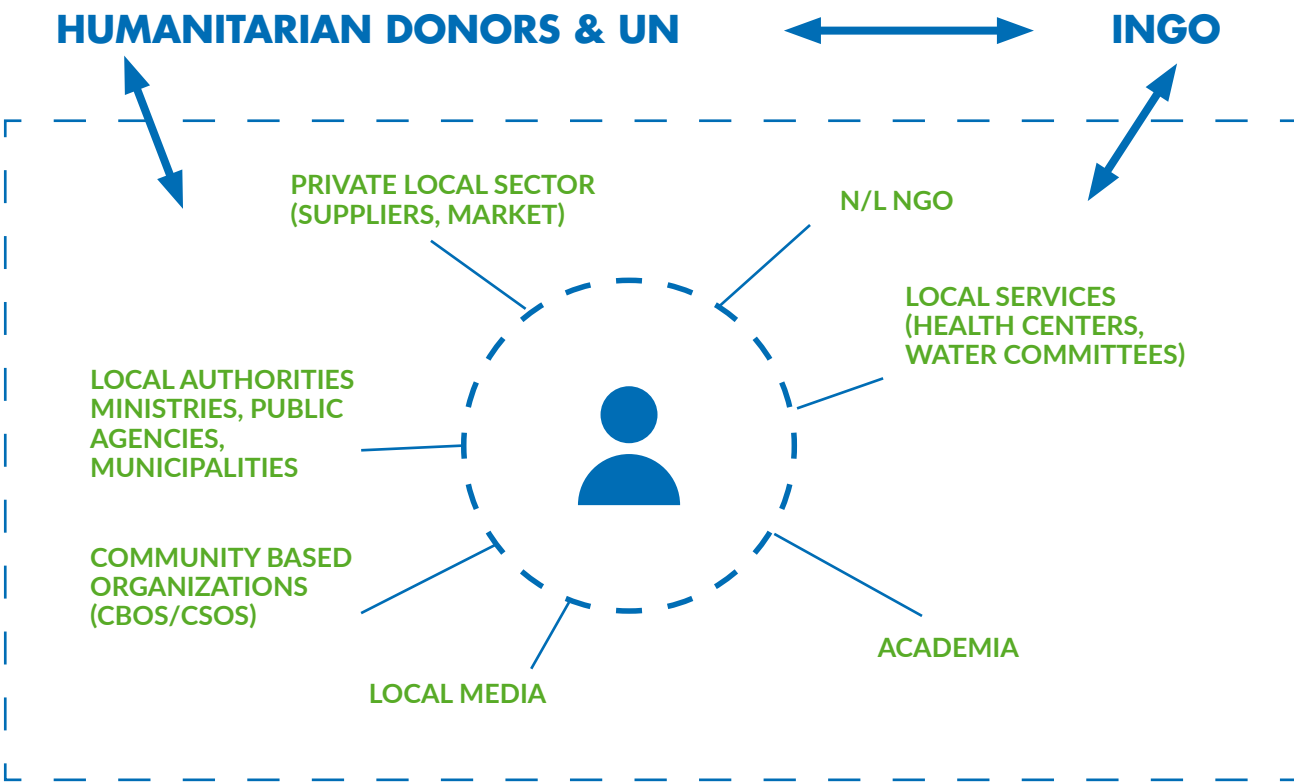


Figure 1. The Local ecosystem composed by a diversity of local actors

The practice of localization has been implemented and measured against the GB workstreams and other initiatives – NEAR Framework, Startup Network, ALTP, C4C. Action Against Hunger decided to follow the seven dimensions developed by the Global Mentoring Initiative (GMI) under the Start Network and the **NEAR localization performance measurement framework** (LPMF as previously piloted with STL Turkish NGO and in other network projects) as follows:



Figure 1: The Seven Dimensions Framework for Localisation

The LPMF does not require to follow the order of the dimensions as exposed above, but rather rearranging the 7 dimensions according to AAH and the local actors/actors' priorities. The LPMF provides a means of measuring progress towards the transformative process of entitling the local actors/actors to a leading role and demonstrating at the same time, the ability to handle greater responsibility. Therefore, the localization strategic objectives and the local actors/actors' benefits, and expectations are synced in each one of the dimensions as follows:

- **PARTNERSHIPS** – qui por quo spirit translated in more genuine and equitable MoU clauses.
- **CAPACITY** – co-creation of solutions to address the needs of the affected population; capacity sharing of both AAH and the local actors/actors through the transfer of knowledge, the complementarity of their local level innovations with AAH technical expertise (in emergency response, strategy and programming, cash transfers, risk management, transversal issues such as gender, environment, protection, conflict sensitivity, security/access).
- **PARTICIPATION REVOLUTION** – mechanisms for an improved accountability between AAH, local actors and the affected communities; Principle of do No Harm.
- **FUNDING** – improvement in the management of funds and compliance, balancing between risk transfer and risk sharing (see local actors survey and risk mapping).
- **COORDINATION MECHANISMS/VISIBILITY** – facilitate the presence and co-launch with local actors/actors their influence and leadership towards the donors and humanitarian community.
- **POLICY** – co-develop with local actors their engagement in policy debates and advocacy agendas in topics important to their contexts: gender equality, environment, specific to their mandates.

Benchmark Indicators to measure the strategic objectives progress alongside each of the seven dimensions:

- **PARTNERSHIPS:** # of new proposals / long term partnership agreements between International and National/Local actors which, outline the roles, responsibilities and the capacities of both partners and include clauses on reciprocal respect for leadership and decision-making, budgetary sustainability including capacity development invested; # of projects and budgets that are co-designed, implemented and monitored and evaluated with local actors and affected people.
- **CAPACITY:** # of organizational strategies or action plans designed by national and local actors in accordance with their mandate that increase both their notoriety and institutional relationships; # of innovation labs/solutions co-created by the national and local actors; (%) cross cutting issues knowledge has improved with a positive impact on the work and the organization. # of organizational co-developed activities that include a variety of methodologies (e.g., on the job coaching, co-located working, access to e-learning, workshops and trainings) focused on the mutual exchange and transfer of competences among local actors and AAH.
Participation Revolution: # of feedback/complaints/satisfaction received and addressed in a timely manner in accordance with established accountability mechanism (internal or external); (%) of mutual learning, trust and satisfaction between AAH and the local actors.
- **FUNDING:** # of local actors that have a robust financial management system and procedures; # of local actors that acknowledge fraud and corruption risks and have effective procedures to manage risk; increase the amount of financing through local and national actors by 10%. % of national and local purchases; % of cash-based interventions channeled through local institutions and local markets.
- **COORDINATION MECHANISMS/VISIBILITY:** # of National and Local actors actively coordinating their strategies/insights/information and lobbying for budgetary allocation of resources aligned to their mandate and complementarity with the country/region humanitarian country teams.
- **POLICY:** # of times that National and Local actors succeed in creating space for their representation and positions through agenda setting, influencing the debate and/or creating space to engage

**FOR FOOD.
FOR WATER.
FOR HEALTH.
FOR NUTRITION.
FOR KNOWLEDGE.
FOR LOCAL ACTORS.
FOR LOCAL PURCHASES.
FOR COMMUNITIES.
FOR EVERYONE.
FOR GOOD.
FOR ACTION.
AGAINST HUNGER.**



C/ Duque de Sevilla, 3.
28002 Madrid
Tel. +34 91 391 53 00
Fax +34 91 391 53 01
www.accioncontraelhambre.org