

The AFS Localisation Approach

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background & Purpose

The [Aid Fund for Syria \(AFS\) Strategy 2025–2030](#) establishes localisation as a core pillar of the Fund and sets out the commitments that guide AFS’s support to Syrian civic actors and public institutions. This Localisation Approach document translates those commitments into an operational framework for use across allocation design, partner engagement, compliance, and monitoring. It serves as an internal reference for the Fund Management Agent (FMA), AFS partners, and national and sub-national governance bodies, ensuring that localisation is applied consistently across the Fund’s work.

The document is structured around two complementary tracks: support to civic actors and engagement with public institutions. It sets out the principles, parameters, and methods that shape each track, and explains how the two reinforce one another. The final section highlights cross-track coherence, and the annexes provide definitions, eligibility parameters, and partnership typologies. The document will be updated as the context evolves and new lessons emerge.

1.2 Context

Syria’s political landscape after the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024 has created new opportunities but also lasting constraints for humanitarian and recovery actors. The country is in a fragile and uneven phase of political change. The transitional government has begun to stabilise basic functions and improve coordination, but its mandate and public legitimacy are still developing.

National and subnational structures are slowly being rebuilt, yet many remain under-resourced and struggle to carry out their functions. Several sanctions have eased and diplomatic engagement has increased substantially, but key restrictions continue to shape how assistance is delivered.

Population movements add further complexity. Displacement and cautious returns place growing pressure on basic services, many of which were already overstretched before the political shift. Humanitarian needs remain significant across the country. At the same time, humanitarian funding continues to decline, while development-oriented support is only beginning to appear and remains constrained by political sensitivities, institutional risks, and donors’ cautious assessment of the unfolding process. This creates a widening gap in essential service provision and delays the investments required for early recovery.

Public institutions responsible for essential services often operate with partial functionality and limited tools for core technical tasks. Water, electricity, education, waste management, and public health systems suffer from chronic capacity gaps, damaged infrastructure, and irregular operational budgets. While some departments have reintroduced basic planning and data systems and show signs of improving performance, others continue to lack the technical expertise, information management tools, or predictable resources required for maintenance, service monitoring, and systematic prioritisation. The result is a landscape where pockets of progress coexist with deep structural weaknesses.

Civic actors remain central in this environment. Community Based Organisations (CBOs), informal groups, women-led and youth-led initiatives, Local NGOs, and National NGOs provide trusted links to communities and help define local priorities at a time when institutions are still being rebuilt. They play key roles in participation, accountability, and community monitoring, especially where public institutions have limited reach. Many of these actors, however, face challenges related to resources, organisational systems, and engagement with local authorities.

All actors must operate in an environment shaped by shrinking humanitarian budgets, limited appetite for large-scale recovery efforts, and the slow pace at which longer-term support can be deployed. These constraints require interventions that are realistic within limited resources and sensitive to political and institutional dynamics. Communities increasingly rely on both civic leadership and public institutions to sustain essential services. Effective recovery therefore depends on actors who can work across both spheres, align with local priorities, and strengthen the systems that support essential services in a context where progress and fragility continue to coexist.

1.3 What Localisation means for AFS

For AFS, localisation means ensuring that Syrian actors lead, shape, and deliver recovery efforts in ways that reflect community priorities across Syria and that strengthen the systems that sustain essential services. It represents a shift of leadership, decision-making power, and resources to Syrian civic and institutional actors so that those closest to the impacts of conflict, displacement, and decades of underdevelopment can influence the decisions that affect their lives.

Earlier guidance focused primarily on strengthening Syrian civil society, particularly Local and National NGOs and CBOs, and enabling them to access funding, shape programme design, and support accountability. This remains central to AFS's vision. In the current transition, however, localisation also requires recognising the role of mandated public institutions in sustaining essential services and ensuring that support to Syrian actors reflects both community leadership and the technical functions that underpin recovery.

Localisation for AFS is shaped by the realities of Syria's transition. It strengthens civic leadership by giving local actors a greater role in identifying needs, shaping programme design, and monitoring services, ensuring that recovery efforts reflect community priorities. It also broadens access to funding for diverse civic actors, improves participation in decision-making, and tailors compliance and risk management to partner capacity.

AFS treats localisation as a practical, adaptive approach that strengthens the role of Syrian civic and institutional actors in shaping priorities, designing programmes, and monitoring results. Localisation is integrated across the Fund's work and supports the Strategic Objectives of the [AFS Strategy 2025–2030](#). Section 2 outlines how these commitments are applied in practice.

1.4 Rationale for a Dual-Track Model

AFS applies a dual-track model to strengthen the recovery ecosystem in Syria. Civic actors provide community leadership, contextual insight, and accountability. Public institutions hold the mandates and technical functions required to deliver essential services at scale. Neither group can meet community needs alone.

The Fund Strategy and Theory of Change show that recovery is strongest when civic leadership and public institutions advance together. Support to civic actors increases participation in decision-making, programme design, and accountability. Targeted, time-bound Technical Advisory (TA) Services strengthen the technical functions of public institutions in a sanctions-compliant and principled manner. Together, these efforts create a recovery model in which community priorities guide service delivery and institutions have the systems they need to respond effectively.

This dual-track model guides how AFS designs allocation strategies, structures partnerships, and manages risk. It ensures that support for civic actors and public institutions is coherent, context-responsive, and grounded in Syrian leadership across both spheres.

2. Track I – Supporting and Enabling Civic Actors

2.1 Contribution to AFS Strategic Objectives

Support to civic actors contributes to all Strategic Objectives of the AFS Strategy 2025–2030. Civic actors provide trusted links to communities, help identify local priorities, and ensure that interventions reflect real needs and reach population groups often overlooked by formal systems. Their participation strengthens local planning, organisational systems, community monitoring, and safeguarding. Through joint assessments and area-based response planning, they help improve coordination with public institutions, support more transparent and efficient service delivery, and reduce tensions by making service gaps more visible and easier to address.

A detailed overview of how civic actors contribute to each Strategic Objective is provided in [Annex 4](#). This annex outlines the specific pathways through which civic leadership, community participation, and accountable practice advance the Fund's strategic aims and strengthen recovery outcomes across Syria.

2.2 Principles Guiding Localisation Through Track I

AFS applies a set of principles to ensure that support to civic actors strengthens Syrian leadership, improves accountability to affected populations, and contributes to coherent and inclusive recovery:

1. **Community-centred leadership:** Civic actors play a central role in identifying community priorities and turning them into practical programme plans, monitoring processes, and decisions. AFS promotes meaningful participation and encourages partners to create space for diverse voices, including women-, youth-, and minority-led groups.
2. **Equitable partnerships:** Partnerships are expected to distribute roles, responsibilities, and resources fairly. AFS promotes reciprocal accountability, transparent communication, and partnership arrangements that enable smaller organisations to engage confidently without being overburdened by compliance and administrative requirements.
3. **Inclusion and representation:** Localisation requires broadening access to groups that are often overlooked in formal aid structures. AFS encourages the proactive inclusion of organisations with limited operating space, including informal groups, where supported through intermediary arrangements.
4. **Proportionate compliance and risk management:** Compliance expectations and reporting requirements must reflect partner capacity, legal status, and organisational maturity. AFS applies a graduated approach to due diligence and risk management that safeguards funds while preventing disproportionate burdens on smaller or emerging actors.
5. **Strengthening organisational systems and leadership:** Localisation requires investment in organisational systems and leadership structures. Capacity strengthening is tailored to each organisation's mandate and maturity and focuses on areas such as financial management, safeguarding, monitoring, governance practices, and community engagement.
6. **Learning and adaptation:** Civic actors bring essential contextual insight. AFS encourages ongoing reflection and improvement through partner feedback, field learning, and participation in coordination and localisation forums such as the AFS Localisation Working Group.

2.3 Categories of Civic Actors and Partnership Typologies

AFS engages a wide and diverse range of civic actors. Their organisational forms vary, and many operate across more than one category over time. The **functional typology used by AFS is detailed in [Annex 1](#)** and provides a structured way of understanding how civic actors differ in mandate, maturity, formality, and operating space. The purpose of this section is to introduce these concepts and explain how AFS applies them in practice.

These organisational categories are not rigid. Civic actors evolve as their roles, capacities, and constituencies change. An informal CBO may formalise and register as a Local NGO, grow into a National NGO, or join wider civic networks. A National NGO may expand its geographic scope and become active beyond Syria, including through regional growth. AFS supports these trajectories by investing in leadership development, organisational resilience, and adaptive capacity. The aim is to enable organisations to grow without losing their community roots, so that they can continue to serve their constituencies effectively in a shifting environment.

AFS's engagement with these actors reflects this diversity. Women-led, youth-led, and minority-led organisations are explicitly recognised, and their roles are considered across all partnership modalities. This approach enables the Fund to engage a broad range of civic actors while maintaining appropriate standards of quality, compliance, and risk management. It strengthens inclusive leadership within Syrian civil society and ensures that engagement is tailored to organisational needs, roles, and levels of formality.

2.4 Programme Design and Partner Engagement

AFS integrates localisation across the programme cycle to strengthen the leadership of Syrian civic actors and ensure that interventions reflect community priorities. Funding instruments and partnership models are designed to expand civic actors' access to resources, enhance their role in programme design, and promote accountable and inclusive delivery.

AFS prioritises Local and National NGOs for direct partnerships where they meet the Fund's due-diligence requirements and can manage grants independently. International NGOs are eligible only where they demonstrate clear added value and commit to equitable and locally responsive partnership practices.

Informal civic actors and many CBOs are not eligible for direct funding due to legal and compliance constraints. However, these actors remain essential for community engagement, social cohesion, and local service monitoring. To support them, AFS applies intermediary models, including the [Anchor Organisation Modality](#), through qualified NGOs that can channel funding, provide mentoring and compliance support, and strengthen the systems of emerging civic actors while ensuring accountability and quality delivery.

AFS promotes equitable partnership practices across all modalities. Smaller organisations are encouraged to provide feedback on collaboration, including through reciprocal assessments that help prevent partnerships from becoming transactional or compliance-driven. AFS works with partners to reduce administrative and procedural barriers that can limit the participation of newer or less formal organisations, improving accessibility of application processes, compliance requirements, and reporting formats while maintaining necessary safeguards.

Inclusive engagement is central to programme design. AFS encourages the participation of women-, youth-, and minority-led organisations in needs assessments, area-based planning, and monitoring processes. Partners are expected to co-design interventions with relevant civic actors to ensure that programme logic reflects locally identified needs and community priorities.

Mutual-aid groups and informal initiatives also play an important role in Syrian civic life¹. These actors often mobilise quickly in response to local needs and provide insights that improve programme relevance. AFS will continue to explore practical and compliant ways for these actors to participate in planning, monitoring, and learning processes, including through intermediary partnerships. Their contextual insight and community reach can improve programme relevance and strengthen accountability.

Through these measures, AFS ensures that programme design and partner engagement under Track I remain locally driven, inclusive, and aligned with the Fund's localisation commitments. The approach expands the operating space of civic actors, strengthens their institutional resilience, and contributes to more responsive and accountable recovery efforts.

2.5 Funding Modalities and Risk Sharing

AFS applies flexible funding modalities to engage a diverse range of civic actors while upholding quality, compliance, and accountability standards. These modalities reflect the Fund's localisation commitments and allow for tailored engagement based on the capacity, formality, and risk profile of each organisation.

AFS provides two main types of support:

- **Direct grants:** Awarded to eligible National NGOs, Local NGOs, and, where required, International NGOs that meet AFS due diligence standards and can manage funds independently.
- **Sub-grants via intermediary partners:** Channelled through selected National and Local NGOs (and, only if needed, International NGOs), typically through the Anchor Organisation Modality, to support informal civic actors not yet eligible for direct funding. Anchor Organisations provide both funding and tailored mentoring and compliance support.

This approach maintains accountability while expanding access for diverse actors. Due diligence and reporting requirements are adapted to each partner's capacity, legal status, and organisational maturity, ensuring that smaller organisations are not overburdened.

Risk management and shared accountability:

AFS applies a graduated and context-sensitive approach to risk management, particularly when working with emerging or informal civic actors. Risk must be shared fairly and never shifted disproportionately onto smaller organisations. Intermediary partners are expected to distribute overheads and compliance responsibilities in ways

¹ Mutual aid refers to self-organised and voluntary support through which individuals, families, and communities assist one another during crises. These efforts may emerge spontaneously or build on established, traditional systems of mutual support and local networks, and they often operate outside formal humanitarian or organisational structures ([ALNAP 2025](#)).

that reflect the roles and capacities of all actors. This enables AFS to widen access to funding while upholding quality, compliance, and integrity, and supports partnerships that are equitable, transparent, and sustainable.

Key measures include:

- **Risk-based assurance approach:** Tailored assurance approach, reporting requirements, and proportionate monitoring, based on each partner's assessed risk profile (size, experience, legal status, institutional maturity), including where relevant the risks associated with sub-partners.
- **Shared accountability:** Intermediary partners provide mentoring, compliance support, and safeguarding of funds when managing sub-grants.
- **Embedded compliance support:** The FMA provides tools, guidance, and hands-on accompaniment to help partners meet requirements.
- **Third-party monitoring and field visits:** Used not only for oversight but also for learning and performance improvement.
- **Grievance and feedback mechanisms:** Available to partners and communities to raise concerns or report irregularities.
- **Reserve Fund:** AFS has introduced a reserve fund mechanism to promote equitable sharing of financial risk with partners — typically Anchor Organisations — working with civic local actors. Partners may include in their project budgets a dedicated reserve to cover non-negligent financial losses that occur despite full compliance with agreed mitigation measures. Losses caused by negligence, weak oversight, or breaches of donor requirements remain the partner's responsibility. Confirmed fraud or misappropriation by a sub-partner may be eligible for coverage only where the partner has demonstrably met all due diligence, monitoring, and reporting obligations.

This approach enables AFS to expand access to funding while maintaining appropriate standards and ensuring that risk is managed constructively rather than restrictively.

2.6 Capacity Strengthening and Leadership Development

AFS considers capacity strengthening to be an essential component of localisation. The aim is to enhance the ability of Syrian civic actors to plan, deliver, and account for programmes in a way that reflects community priorities and meets required standards. Capacity strengthening helps organisations operate more effectively and strengthens their leadership, resilience, and long-term contribution to recovery.

AFS applies a tailored and proportionate approach. Support reflects each organisation's mandate, maturity, and operating context. It may include institutional development, leadership skills, community engagement systems, programme management, safeguarding, financial management, monitoring, and governance practices. Support can be provided directly through AFS, through mentoring by more established organisations, or through intermediary arrangements such as the Anchor Organisation Modality.

Capacity strengthening is not a one-way process. Needs are identified jointly through due diligence, organisational assessments, and ongoing dialogue. Civic actors are encouraged to shape their own capacity-strengthening plans and to monitor their progress. AFS places importance on collaborative relationships in which partners can express their needs openly, propose solutions, and highlight areas where current arrangements may limit participation.

AFS also promotes learning and adaptation. Capacity strengthening is linked to broader monitoring and learning processes, and partners are encouraged to participate in sector and localisation forums, including the Localisation Working Group. This helps ensure that improvements in organisational systems and leadership practices are sustained and that learning is integrated into programme design and delivery.

Through this approach, AFS contributes to stronger, more resilient civic actors who are able to engage meaningfully with communities and institutions and support more inclusive and accountable recovery efforts across Syria.

2.7 Governance, Accountability, and Internal Practice

AFS embeds localisation across its governance systems and internal practices. Governance structures and decision-making processes are designed to reflect community priorities, expand the leadership of Syrian civic actors, and strengthen accountability to affected populations. Civic organisations have representation within AFS governance bodies, ensuring that their perspectives inform allocation design, partner selection, and strategic decision-making.

AFS promotes transparent, equitable, and participatory governance practices among its partners. Civic actors are encouraged to take part in area-based planning, coordination meetings, and joint assessments. Their contributions help shape programme logic, strengthen community engagement mechanisms, and support more responsive and accountable service delivery.

Accountability to affected populations is central to this Track. AFS supports partners to establish accessible and safe feedback channels, strengthen safeguarding and protection systems, and ensure timely follow-up to community concerns. Civic actors play a key role in facilitating two-way communication with communities, identifying gaps, and supporting adaptive management based on feedback. Grievance and reporting mechanisms are available to raise concerns about programme quality, conduct, or financial integrity.

AFS promotes partnership models where roles and responsibilities are clear and manageable for all actors. Intermediary partners working with informal or smaller organisations are expected to uphold principles of transparency, proportionality, and mutual accountability. Smaller organisations, including community-based groups, are encouraged to provide upward feedback on the quality of partnership arrangements, ensuring that collaborations remain constructive and equitable.

Internal practice within the FMA is also aligned with localisation commitments. The FMA reviews due diligence tools, reporting formats, and compliance processes to ensure they are proportionate to partner capacity and do not create unnecessary barriers. It provides hands-on accompaniment, clear guidance on legal and administrative requirements, and support to partners as they navigate operational challenges. The FMA also works to strengthen the enabling environment by promoting inclusive administrative practices, simplifying procedures where possible, and supporting consistency across AFS allocations.

Governance and accountability arrangements are periodically reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant, accessible, and aligned with localisation objectives. This includes incorporating learning from partners and communities, adapting to changes in the Syrian context, and making improvements that reinforce the leadership and effectiveness of civic actors.

2.8 Monitoring, Learning, and Adaptation

AFS integrates localisation metrics across its monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems to ensure that progress is tracked consistently and used to inform programme improvement. Monitoring frameworks capture not only who receives funding, but also how meaningfully civic actors are engaged in shaping, delivering, and overseeing recovery efforts.

Key indicators for this Track include:

- **Funding flows:** Disaggregated by partner type (for example, National NGOs, Local NGOs, community-based organisations, women-led organisations, youth-led organisations).
- **Institutional development:** Tracking new systems, policies, processes, roles, or functions established by civic actors.
- **Accountability and safeguarding:** Monitoring feedback mechanisms, protection systems, and safeguarding tools established and maintained by partners.
- **Representation and funding:** Reporting the share of AFS funding channelled through civic actors and the distribution by actor type, including the proportion vetted.

Partner feedback mechanisms:

AFS is committed to listening to partners and acting on their feedback. The Fund uses structured and informal channels to gather input from a broad range of civic actors, including those reached through intermediary partners. Feedback processes support reciprocal accountability, enabling smaller organisations to comment on the quality of collaboration and the extent to which partnership commitments are upheld.

AFS collects partner feedback through:

- partner surveys
- focus group discussions and after-action reviews;
- feedback through the Localisation Working Group;
- consultations during field visits and via third-party facilitators; and
- a dedicated feedback email account managed by the FMA, with clear triage and response timelines.

Partner feedback is used to refine tools, strengthen partner support, and address barriers to equitable engagement. Insights also contribute to the annual localisation review conducted by the Localisation Working Group, which identifies recurring challenges and recommends adjustments across funding cycles.

Adaptive learning and strategy alignment:

AFS treats localisation as a continuous process of learning and adaptation. The Fund uses insights from allocation cycles, partner feedback, and field-level experience to:

- inform allocation design and planning, ensuring that partnership and capacity support models contribute to better outcomes for communities;
- strengthen support for underserved actor types and improve their engagement in programme co-design; refine due diligence, compliance, and capacity-strengthening processes so that they remain proportionate, relevant, and accessible;
- balance accountability requirements with the need to avoid unnecessary barriers for smaller or emerging organisations.

By embedding learning throughout the programme cycle, AFS ensures that its localisation approach remains relevant, responsive, and grounded in field realities and the priorities of Syrian civic actors.

AFS will continue to refine its localisation approach for civic actors through ongoing learning, partner feedback, and lived experience. Localisation is not a fixed blueprint, but a process that evolves with context, capabilities, and trust. Over time, this approach will be shaped by the Syrian actors and communities it is intended to empower, ensuring that recovery is not only locally led, but also locally defined.

3 Track II – Technical Advisory (TA) Services to Public Institutions

3.1 Contribution of TA Services to AFS Strategic Objectives

TA Services contribute to all Strategic Objectives of the AFS Strategy 2025–2030. They strengthen the technical functions that allow public institutions to deliver essential services, including planning, maintenance, data systems, and monitoring. This leads to more reliable and transparent services and helps reduce service-related tensions. Over time, stronger and more consistent technical practices also support more sustainable essential service delivery and reduce reliance on external aid. Stronger institutional systems also make it easier for civic actors to share priorities and feedback, improving how services respond to community needs.

A detailed overview of how TA Services contribute to each Strategic Objective is provided in [Annex 4](#). This annex sets out the specific pathways through which technical support to public institutions complements civic leadership and advances the Fund's strategic aims.

3.2 Principles Guiding TA Services under the Localisation Approach

AFS applies the same core localisation principles to its engagement with public institutions as it does with civic actors. TA Services must reinforce community priorities, strengthen accountability, and support essential service functions in a manner that is principled, sanctions-compliant, and grounded in local realities.

TA Services must adhere to the following principles:

- **Time-bound and adjustable:** TA Services are provided for a defined period with clear deliverables, including agreed break and exit points. This keeps support focused, realistic, and responsive to changes in the institution or the wider context.
- **Needs-based and locally anchored:** TA Services must address service gaps identified through inclusive, area-based planning processes, consultations with technical departments, and engagement with civic actors. Support must respond to clearly defined operational needs and contribute to improved essential service functions that benefit affected populations.
- **Non-political and humanitarian in scope:** TA Services focus solely on technical and service-related functions. It does not engage in governance reform, policymaking, political negotiations, or other activities that exceed

humanitarian scope or carry political implications. TA Services remain fully compliant with sanctions and applies strict safeguards to ensure neutrality.

- **Accountable and transparent:** TA Services must promote institutional responsiveness and transparency. Where relevant, TA Services are accompanied by mechanisms for community feedback, public information sharing, and civic oversight. This helps ensure that institutional support contributes to accountable service delivery and reinforces trust between communities and service providers.
- **Complementary to civic leadership:** TA Services must reinforce, not substitute, community engagement processes. Strong civic participation, transparent feedback, and active involvement of civil society remain central to locally led recovery and form the basis upon which institutional support is built.

AFS applies a gradual and phased approach to institutional engagement. This allows TA Services to evolve in line with contextual developments and the readiness of institutions to absorb support. AFS also facilitates regular discussions with relevant ministries

, professional syndicates, civic actors, and other stakeholders. These discussions help build shared understanding, improve coordination, and support collective ownership of service delivery priorities.

3.3 TA Service - Scope and Parameters

TA Services under AFS focus strictly on strengthening the technical functions that enable public institutions to deliver essential services for affected populations across Syria. Support is directed to technical departments and mandated service entities whose performance directly affects access to these services.

TA Services priorities are identified through consultations with relevant line ministries, technical departments, and civic actors. This ensures that support responds to specific service gaps. Authorities in several sectors have already requested assistance in functional areas such as maintenance planning, data management, vulnerability mapping, and service monitoring.

The scope of TA Services includes a defined set of technical, non-political functions such as:

- assessment and analysis of service gaps in essential sectors;
- design or improvement of maintenance procedures and operational workflows;
- strengthening of information management and data systems;
- development of monitoring tools and quality assurance processes;
- improvement of early warning, preparedness, and risk management functions;
- advisory support for planning and prioritisation of service interventions;
- basic field-level technical verification and service assessments.

TA Services remain strictly technical in scope, with clear boundaries to safeguard humanitarian principles (see [Section 3.5](#) for full parameters).

TA Services are designed to complement civic leadership and community feedback, ensuring that advisory support remains grounded in local priorities and strengthens accountable service delivery. Joint assessments can be an effective entry point for cooperation between civic actors, public institutions, and partners. They must remain focused on essential service gaps and avoid drifting into broader institutional or policy matters.

TA Services are flexible and can be adapted to institutional readiness and changing contextual factors. Engagements are framed by scope statements, deliverables, and clear boundaries to ensure that support is realistic, proportionate, and aligned with the Fund's localisation commitments.

3.4 Types of Institutions and TA Service Modalities

AFS delivers TA Services to a range of mandated public institutions that hold responsibility for essential service functions. These may include line ministries and their technical departments, municipal departments, technical directorates, public utilities, education directorates, health authorities, disaster management entities, and other statutory bodies with clearly defined service mandates. Support is focused on technical functions that directly affect service delivery for conflict-affected populations.

AFS delivers TA Services to these institutions through two complementary modalities:

- **Partner-led TA Services:** Implementing partners, particularly National NGOs, may integrate advisory support for public institutions within their interventions. This can include joint planning and coordination, technical input into service restoration efforts, support to data systems, and the embedding of relevant sector standards and good practice within institutional processes.
- **AFS FMA-led TA Services:** AFS, via the FMA, may provide TA Services directly to institutions where it identifies a clear opportunity to increase the value and sustainability of AFS-funded partner activities or to address institutional gaps affecting service delivery identified during implementation that were not foreseen in partner proposals. The FMA also provides centralised oversight of sectoral best practice embedded through partner activities and can deliver TA Services to institutions seeking to replicate or scale proven approaches, in coordination with relevant donors and stakeholders.

These modalities are designed to improve the effectiveness and accountability of services delivered at the local level, ensuring continuity and alignment with recognised standards and good practice.

Sample areas of support include:

- **Education:** Introduction of safeguarding protocols and referral pathways within education directorates; advisory support on data utilisation and school-level planning.
- **WASH:** Development of maintenance registers and preventive maintenance schedules for rural water systems.
- **Disaster preparedness:** Strengthening of GIS-based risk mapping and early warning protocols within municipal disaster management units.
- **Health:** Strengthening outbreak early warning and alert workflows through technical advice on data standards, protocols, and staff training within public health departments.
- **Higher education (linked to public service delivery):** Targeted technical inputs to improve data systems, planning tools, or safeguarding protocols within faculties that train personnel supplying public service departments. Such support remains strictly technical and humanitarian in scope and focuses on functions that contribute directly to essential service delivery.

AFS and its partners apply practices that enhance the quality and relevance of TA Services. These include collaborating with relevant syndicates to facilitate institutional engagement, aligning advisory support with national service priorities identified through allocation consultations, and convening joint workshops to develop sector-specific roadmaps. These measures help ensure that TA Services remain coherent, contextually grounded, and responsive to both institutional needs and community-defined priorities.

TA Services are always framed within a humanitarian scope and must relate directly to services benefiting conflict-affected populations.

3.5 Compliance, Risk Management, and Sanctions Considerations

TA Services to public institutions must comply with all donor requirements, sanctions regulations, and internal AFS policies. Engagements are designed to strengthen essential service functions without providing political, financial, or institutional support that exceeds humanitarian scope. Compliance systems ensure that TA Services remain strictly technical, time-bound, and non-political, and that it does not lead to material or reputational risk for partners, AFS, or affected communities.

AFS applies a graduated and proportionate approach to risk management when working with public institutions. This approach reflects the need to balance operational feasibility with strict adherence to legal and humanitarian parameters. TA Services must be structured in a manner that prevents diversion of value, avoids strengthening political actors, and ensures that advisory inputs benefit affected populations directly.

Key risk management measures include:

- **Sanctions screening and due diligence:** All institutions, departments, and focal points involved in TA Service engagements are subject to enhanced due diligence and sanctions screening. TA Services may only be provided to technical entities that are not sanctioned and that operate within clear humanitarian parameters.
- **Strictly defined TA Service scopes:** Terms of Reference for all advisors and TA service activities must specify narrow, service-related functions. TA Services cannot involve institutional reform, drafting of policy or regulatory frameworks, political negotiation, or engagement with security structures.

- **No transfer of material benefits:** TA Services cannot include financial support, salary or stipend payments, fuel, equipment, vehicles, construction, or assets of any kind. Support must not create long-term liabilities or contribute to operating budgets of public institutions.
- **Clear separation from political authorities:** All TA Services must be channelled to technical departments and functions with a clear operational remit that directly or indirectly influences service delivery. Engagement at political or senior administrative levels remains limited to coordination necessary for access or technical validation.
- **Documentation and auditability:** All TA Service activities must be fully documented, including deliverables and evidence of outputs. Advisors must keep detailed work logs to support transparency and audit requirements.
- **Risk mitigation and oversight:** The FMA provides oversight to ensure that TA Service engagements remain within scope and compliant with sanctions regulations. It conducts periodic reviews, field verification, and independent checks where necessary. Partners must report any concerns, deviations, or risks promptly to AFS.
- **Community visibility and safeguards:** Where relevant, TA Services are accompanied by community feedback or public information mechanisms to ensure that advisory support does not undermine trust and remains accountable to affected populations.

This compliance and risk management framework ensures that TA Services remain humanitarian in scope, legally sound, and operationally safe. It protects AFS and its partners while enabling principled cooperation with public institutions responsible for essential services. By upholding these safeguards, AFS ensures that TA Services contribute to improved essential service delivery without generating undue risk, institutional dependence, or political benefit.

3.6 Governance and Coordination with National Authorities

Governance and coordination arrangements are essential to ensuring that TA Services remain aligned with AFS's mandate, strategic priorities, and localisation commitments. TA Services are provided within a clear governance framework that promotes transparency, strengthens institutional cooperation, and ensures that support remains anchored in the needs of affected populations.

AFS engages with relevant ministries, technical departments, syndicates, and civic actors to ensure that TA Services are coherent, coordinated, and responsive to service-related needs. Consultations during allocation design help identify priority service gaps and ensure that TA Services contribute to wider sectoral objectives. Regular dialogue with institutional stakeholders promotes shared understanding of technical needs, improves coordination among actors, and helps manage expectations around the scope and limits of humanitarian TA.

The AFS Steering Board plays a central oversight role. TA Service proposals are submitted to the Steering Board for no-objection, based on documented scope, relevance, and risk analysis. This step ensures that all TA Services remain consistent with the Fund's mandate, strategic objectives, and risk parameters, and that they complement the Fund's broader support to civic actors and public institutions. The no-objection process also strengthens collective accountability for institutional engagement and provides a governance safeguard when working in politically sensitive environments.

Coordination at the operational level is facilitated through joint workshops, technical consultations, and area-based planning processes involving implementing partners, institutional counterparts, and civic actors. These forums help align TA Services with national service priorities, promote the uptake of relevant sector standards, and support the development of sector-specific roadmaps. When appropriate, AFS and its partners work with relevant syndicates to facilitate institutional engagement and ensure that advisory support is recognised and understood by the appropriate professional bodies.

AFS ensures that civic actors remain meaningfully involved in institutional engagement processes. Civic participation in joint assessments, feedback mechanisms, and service monitoring helps ensure that TA Services remain responsive to community priorities and does not reinforce unaccountable institutional practices. Coordination mechanisms therefore serve both technical and accountability functions, strengthening trust between institutions, civic actors, and affected populations.

These governance and coordination arrangements ensure that TA Services are anchored in locally defined needs, technically relevant, and aligned with the Fund's localisation approach. They promote coherent, inclusive, and accountable engagement with public institutions while upholding the Fund's commitment to principled, community-centred recovery.

3.7 Monitoring, Learning, and Adaptation

AFS monitors all TA Service interventions to ensure that they remain relevant, effective, and aligned with localisation goals. Monitoring focuses not only on compliance but also on learning which forms of technical support contribute most to sustaining essential service delivery and reinforcing community-centred approaches. TA Services are treated as an adaptive process that evolves with context, institutional readiness, and lessons drawn from implementation.

TA Service outputs are tracked through regular reporting, field visits, and third-party monitoring. Key areas of observation include:

- delivery of agreed outputs, such as maintenance plans, safeguarding protocols, operational tools, or data systems;
- evidence of improved institutional practices that contribute to service continuity, quality, or responsiveness to affected communities;
- adherence by partners and institutions to agreed roles, scope, and timeframes;
-

Feedback from partners and public institutions is gathered through site visits, debriefings, learning reviews, and consultations during allocation cycles. This input informs adjustments in design and implementation and supports more responsive and adaptive management across funding cycles.

AFS also encourages shared learning between civic actors and public institutions, particularly where joint needs assessments, field coordination, or co-developed tools are used. These exchanges strengthen understanding of local priorities, improve coordination, and reinforce complementarity across the two Tracks of the localisation approach.

TA Service approaches are not fixed. They are expected to evolve as institutions gain experience, as new essential service gaps emerge, and as the wider Syrian context continues to shift. By embedding monitoring and learning throughout the TA Service process, AFS ensures that its support to public institutions remains principled, effective, and genuinely supportive of locally led recovery.

4 Cross-Track Coherence and Interdependence

Localisation under AFS relies on civic leadership and effective public institutions working together. Track I and Track II are therefore designed as complementary parts of a single approach. Civic actors bring community insight, trusted engagement, and local accountability. Public institutions provide the technical functions needed to deliver essential services at scale. When both tracks advance together, recovery efforts become more relevant to communities and more sustainable over time.

The two tracks reinforce each other. Civic actors identify service gaps, validate community priorities, and monitor delivery. Their feedback informs area-based response planning and the design of TA Services. In turn, TA Services strengthen the technical systems within public institutions so they can respond more effectively to these priorities. Better planning tools, data systems, and procedures enable civic actors to share feedback more easily and influence service delivery.

Cross-track coherence also strengthens accountability and helps reduce tensions linked to uneven or unreliable services. Civic actors gather community feedback and contribute to joint planning, while TA Services help institutions act on this information by improving procedures, data use, and technical capacity. This allows civic actors to focus on oversight and participation rather than substituting for institutional roles.

AFS designs allocations, partner engagement, and monitoring systems to reinforce this interdependence. Joint assessments, shared planning forums, and complementary funding modalities allow civic actors and institutions to contribute from their respective strengths.

Sequencing matters. TA Services are prioritised where civic actors identify clear service gaps and where technical improvements will directly benefit communities. Civic-actor engagement is strengthened in areas where institutions show readiness to absorb feedback and adjust how they deliver services.

By linking the two tracks, AFS supports a recovery system that is locally defined and technically sound. Civic actors help ensure that priorities reflect community needs and perspectives, while institutions define technical priorities and provide the systems needed to sustain essential services. Together, they strengthen accountability, improve service delivery, and, over time, help reduce reliance on external aid.

Annexes

Annex 1 – Categories of Civic Actors and Partnership Typologies

Annex 2 – Definitions Related to Localisation

Annex 3 – Eligibility Parameters for Technical Advisory (TA) Services

Annex 4 – Localisation Contributions to AFS Strategic Objectives

Annex 1 – Categories of Civic Actors and Partnership Typologies

AFS uses a functional categorisation of local and international actors to guide funding eligibility, partnership structures, capacity support, and representation in governance processes. These categories describe roles and operating models rather than ranking organisations or prescribing levels of formality. *Some categories are cross-cutting characteristics (for example women-led, youth-led, thematic or identity-based) that can apply across multiple organisational forms listed in this annex.*

Category	Definition
Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)	Non-profit, non-state entities operating on a values-based framework to advance the rights, well-being, and participation of communities. Their work spans humanitarian response, development, peacebuilding, advocacy, and social accountability, and strengthens civic engagement and representation in public life.
Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)	Independent, non-profit entities that are not part of, nor controlled by, government authorities. In the AFS context, NGOs include both Syrian (national and local) and international organisations, with diverse mandates across humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding sectors.
International NGOs (INGOs)	NGOs headquartered outside Syria that operate across multiple countries. They implement activities in Syria either directly or through national partners. They are registered in their home countries and have international mandates.
Regional NGOs from the Global South	Organisations originating in neighbouring or wider Global South countries that operate across several contexts, including Syria. These organisations often have cultural and geographic proximity, long-standing ties to the region, and operational models that differ from traditional northern INGOs. While international in scope, their approaches tend to be more locally rooted, and they may act as intermediaries between national actors and the wider aid system.
National NGOs (NNGOs)	NGOs that are registered and headquartered in Syria, led by Syrians, and operating with a Syria-specific mandate. They may be legally registered in Syria and/or outside Syria. They are not formally governed by an international organisation.
Local NGOs (LNGOs)	Syrian-led, independently governed NGOs with an area-based mandate and primary operations within a specific sub-national area of Syria. They are rooted in the communities they serve, with strong contextual knowledge and local networks. They may be legally registered in Syria and/or outside Syria, depending on operating constraints. LNGOs are typically smaller in scope and geographic reach than NNGOs.
Community-Based Organisations (CBOs)	Community-rooted organisations or groups, sometimes informal, that operate in a specific locality and deliver direct services and support in areas such as health, education, livelihoods, and social protection. They play an important role in community engagement, social cohesion, and local resilience. As locally proximate civic actors, they can be essential for reaching vulnerable populations.
Community Committees and Local Syndicates	Informal or semi-formal collective structures rooted in specific localities, including neighbourhood committees, sectoral committees, and locally organised professional or service-related syndicates. They contribute to community representation, mobilisation, and coordination with service-mandating entities. In the AFS framework, they are considered part of the wider CBO ecosystem. <i>(This definition is distinct from sectoral or professional syndicates referenced under Track II, which relate to institutional engagement.)</i>
Mutual Aid Groups	Autonomous, self-mobilised initiatives formed by community members who come together to address local needs through voluntary collective action. They design and lead their own responses, often supported through local and diaspora fundraising. These efforts meet immediate needs while contributing to

Category	Definition
	longer-term recovery and resilience, and they naturally operate across the humanitarian, development, and peace nexus. Mutual Aid Groups are informal by nature and may be supported through intermediary arrangements within the AFS framework.
Women-Led Organisations (WLOs)	Formal or informal organisations governed or directed by women, with women holding the majority of senior leadership and decision-making roles, including at board and management levels. Their programmes advance the rights, well-being, and participation of women and girls, and apply a women's perspective across sectors by grounding priorities, analysis, and delivery approaches in women's lived experiences and the barriers they face. <i>This is a cross-cutting characteristic and may apply to any organisational category above.</i>
Youth-Led Organisations	Organisations with mandates and programmes shaped by the priorities, perspectives, and lived experiences of young people. Their work enhances youth participation, leadership, and skills across sectors, and ensures that programming reflects the needs and viewpoints of youth in their communities. Youth-Led Organisations may be formal or informal and are eligible across all AFS partnership modalities. <i>This is a cross-cutting characteristic and may apply to any organisational category above.</i>
Thematic or Identity-Based Organisations	Organisations with focused mandates linked to a specific issue or identity group, including faith-based actors, organisations of persons with disabilities, and minority-led organisations representing ethnic, religious, or marginalised social groups. Their work reflects the priorities, perspectives, and lived experiences of the constituencies they serve, and they help address barriers to participation, rights, and access to services across sectors. These organisations may overlap with other categories and are often underrepresented in formal aid channels. <i>This is a cross-cutting characteristic and may apply to any organisational category above.</i>

Annex 2 – Definitions Related to Localisation

This annex provides standard definitions used by AFS in relation to localisation, community engagement, and partnerships with Syrian civic actors and public institutions. The purpose is to ensure consistent understanding of key terms across allocations, partner engagement, monitoring processes, and governance discussions. These definitions complement the functional categories presented in [Annex 1](#) and support coherent application of localisation principles throughout the Fund's work.

Term	Definition
Localisation	A systematic shift of leadership, decision-making power, and resources to Syrian actors—civic and institutional—so that recovery efforts are shaped and driven by those closest to communities. Localisation strengthens community voice, supports essential service functions, broadens access to funding, and applies proportionate compliance and risk management. It is a practical approach to ensuring that aid is relevant, accountable, and sustainable.
Civic Actors	A broad category encompassing informal groups, community-based organisations, Local NGOs, National NGOs, women-led, youth-led, and minority-led organisations, and networks rooted in Syrian society. They provide community leadership, mobilise participation, and ensure accountability to affected populations. (See Annex 1 for sub-categories.)
Public Institutions	Mandated technical departments and service entities responsible for essential public services (for example, water, education, health, waste management, disaster preparedness). These entities are eligible for TA Service support under AFS. They do not include political, security, or regulatory bodies.
Technical Advisory (TA) Services	Targeted, time-bound, and service-specific technical support provided to public institutions to strengthen essential functions such as planning, data systems, maintenance, quality assurance, and monitoring. TA Services under AFS is strictly humanitarian in scope, non-political, and fully sanctions-compliant.
Locally Led Recovery	Recovery processes in which affected people, civic actors, and technical institutions define priorities, shape programme design, participate in decision-making, and influence accountability mechanisms. Local leadership applies across both Tracks of the AFS localisation approach.
Equitable Partnerships	Partnerships that distribute roles, responsibilities, resources, and risks fairly between AFS partners and Syrian actors. Equitable partnerships require transparency, reciprocal accountability, and meaningful participation in planning and oversight.
Intermediary Partner / Anchor Organisation	A Local or National NGO (or, only where necessary, an International NGO) engaged to support civic actors not eligible for direct funding. Anchor Organisations channel sub-grants and provide mentoring, compliance accompaniment, and capacity strengthening in support of Track I. They are one form of intermediary modality used to expand access for informal or emerging civic actors.
Area-Based Approach (ABA)	A planning and delivery model that engages civic actors, communities, and technical institutions within a defined geographic area to identify needs, coordinate interventions, and strengthen local systems. ABA supports alignment across both Tracks of the AFS approach.
Community Feedback Mechanisms (CFM)	Safe, accessible channels that allow affected populations to share concerns, complaints, or suggestions about AFS-supported activities. CFMs inform adaptive management and strengthen accountability across both Tracks.
Service-Related Functions	Technical activities directly linked to essential service delivery, such as maintenance planning, data verification, quality assurance, operational procedures, or safeguarding. These functions define the scope of permissible TA Services under AFS.
Local Systems Strengthening	Support that reinforces the way local civic and institutional actors interact, coordinate, plan, and deliver services. Local systems strengthening remains technical and community-anchored and does not extend to institutional reform or political functions and excludes support to policy, regulatory, or administrative reform.

Annex 3 – Eligibility Parameters for Technical Advisory Services

The table below summarises the parameters that determine when, how, and with whom AFS may deliver TA Services under the localisation approach. These parameters ensure that TA Services remain humanitarian in scope, sanctions-compliant, technically focused, and aligned with AFS's mandate.

Category	Parameter
Eligible Institutional Types	- Technical departments and service-mandated entities such as water units, municipal engineering offices, education directorates, and public health departments. - Mandated entities responsible for essential service delivery benefiting conflict-affected populations. - Relevant higher-education faculties only where support contributes directly to essential service functions such as data systems or safeguarding protocols.
Ineligible Institutional Types	- Political authorities, senior administrative bodies, governors' offices, or entities involved in policymaking. - Security institutions or structures performing political, coercive, or law-enforcement functions. - Any sanctioned entity or sub-entity failing AFS's enhanced due-diligence procedures.
Scope of TA Services	- Time-bound, narrowly defined advisory support targeting specific service-related functions. - Activities may include maintenance planning, information management, safeguarding, quality assurance, risk mapping, outbreak monitoring, and data utilisation. - Joint planning, assessments, and practical technical input linked to essential services.
Non-Permissible Activities	- Institutional reform, drafting of policies or regulations, political negotiations, or administrative restructuring. - Transfer of financial resources, salaries, stipends, fuel, vehicles, equipment, construction, or assets. - Activities that risk legitimising political authorities or creating long-term liabilities.
Sanctions and Compliance Requirements	- Enhanced due diligence and sanctions screening for all institutions, focal points, and TA Service activities. - Strictly defined Terms of Reference specifying technical scope, deliverables, and exit points. - Full documentation of TA Service activities, including work logs, meeting records, and evidence of outputs.
Community Accountability Parameters	- TA Services must reinforce rather than replace civic engagement and community feedback mechanisms. - Advisory work should include transparency measures or channels for community input where relevant. - Civic actors should help inform or validate identified service gaps where possible.
TA Service Delivery Modalities	- Partner-led TA Services within NGO-implemented activities. - Partner-led embedded TA Services, in which short-term advisors contracted by partners support technical departments. - AFS FMA-led TA Services, provided directly by the FMA where added value is demonstrated.
Engagement Preconditions	- TA Service priorities identified through allocation consultations involving line ministries, technical departments, and civic actors. - Evidence of a clearly defined service gap within humanitarian parameters. - Mutual agreement on deliverables, timeframes, and exit conditions.
Coordination Parameters	- Engagement coordinated with relevant ministries, syndicates, civic actors, and donors to avoid duplication. - TA Service proposals cleared through the AFS Steering Board's no-objection process based on documented scope, relevance, and risk analysis.
Humanitarian Boundaries	- TA Services must remain strictly technical, sanctions-compliant, and humanitarian in scope. - All TA Services must relate directly to essential services for crisis-affected populations.

Annex 4 – Localisation Contributions to AFS Strategic Objectives

This annex provides an overview of how the AFS Localisation Approach contributes to the Strategic Objectives set out in the [AFS Strategy 2025–2030](#). While localisation is integrated throughout the Strategy and reflected in each Track, the table consolidates these linkages for ease of reference. It shows how civic leadership, participatory planning, accountable partnerships, and targeted TA Services strengthen service delivery, institutional responsiveness, and community-level recovery, and how these contributions help reduce long-term dependence on external aid. The annex serves as a crosswalk between the Fund Strategy and the Localisation Approach, supporting coherence across AFS planning, monitoring, and reporting.

Strategic Objective	Track I – Strengthening Civic Actors	Track II – Technical Advisory (TA) Services to Public Institutions
S01 – Access to Essential Services and Economic Opportunities	- Civic actors identify community priorities and gaps in essential services, mobilise participation, and support outreach. - Their feedback mechanisms inform adaptive planning and help partners tailor interventions to community needs.	- TA Services strengthen the ability of mandated institutions to plan, operate, and monitor essential services. - It improves technical functions such as maintenance, data systems, and quality assurance, enhancing continuity and reach of essential services critical to recovery.
S02 – Strengthened Capacity of Civil Society	- Investments in leadership, organisational systems, and resilience strengthen the role of civic actors in coordination and decision-making. - The approach expands the participation of underrepresented groups, including women-led and youth-led organisations.	- TA Services contribute indirectly to a stronger civic environment by improving institutional processes that enable structured engagement with civil society. - Strengthened information and planning systems support joint assessments and evidence-based collaboration.
S03 – Support to Local and Technical Governance	- Civic actors contribute to oversight, feedback, accountability, and local representation. - Area-based approaches enable joint planning and problem-solving between civic actors and institutions.	TA Services reinforce the statutory functions of technical departments in a sanctions-compliant manner. It supports operational planning, service monitoring, and adherence to recognised standards, strengthening the effectiveness and neutrality of governance functions related to essential services.
S04 – Foundations for Peacebuilding	- Civic actors support social cohesion, inclusion, and community dialogue. - Their involvement in participatory decision-making helps reduce tensions linked to unequal access or unaddressed community needs.	- More reliable and equitable essential services help reduce service-related grievances. - TA Services improve institutional responsiveness, building trust between communities and authorities, and supports joint civic–institutional engagement that contributes to local stability.
S05 – Quality, Accountability, and Community Engagement	Civic actors support accountability to affected populations, outreach, safeguarding, and feedback mechanisms that allow communities to express concerns and influence programme decisions.	- TA Services improve institutional transparency and strengthen systems for service monitoring, data verification, and follow-up on community feedback. - They enhance the ability of service providers to respond to concerns raised by affected populations.
S06 – Insight, Innovation, and Learning	- Civic actors provide contextual insights, field-level learning, and adaptive practices that inform allocations and wider strategy adjustments. - Their participation in the AFS Localisation Working Group and other learning forums supports evidence-based planning.	- TA Services strengthen institutional data systems, planning tools, and learning processes. - They support pilots, innovation, and the replication or scale-up of effective technical approaches, improving evidence generation for future funding decisions.