



Dear Jan Egeland,

Congratulations and many thanks to you for taking on the role as Eminent Person for the Grand Bargain. We welcome the commitment to reforming the humanitarian system which you articulated at the Annual Meeting, and your recognition of the critical importance that localisation must play in this. With this open letter, we outline three specific priorities from the perspective of the Charter4Change coalition, which we believe could result in practical and transformative change over the coming two years.

The under-signed signatories represent the leadership of international NGO signatories and national NGO endorsers in the Charter4Change. The Charter4Change (C4C) was launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 as a coalition of international NGOs and national NGOs jointly committed to press for more deliberate action to implement global commitments on localisation. The coalition comprises 38 INGO Signatories and 440 local and national NGOs (LNNGO) Endorsers from 57 countries. 8 of the 17 NGO Grand Bargain signatories are also signatories of C4C.

Please refer to the Annex for more details, but in summary, we recommend the following three key priorities for your role and all signatories to the Grand Bargain on local leadership:

1. **Make the country-level Grand Bargain National Reference Groups (NRGs) a meaningful and inclusive process** to catalyse change on the ground, engage a wider range of local actors in a more inclusive way than is possible through global meetings, and connect country and global level discussions. Each donor signatory should be encouraged to champion and support these in at least one context; and facilitate linking these into in-country donor coordination. Donor input is critical to realise the added-value of a Grand Bargain process in contrast to existing in-country processes between the UN and NGOs.
2. **Establish a caucus to align how donors incentivise delivering on recommendations in the *'Bridging the intention to action gap: The future role of intermediaries in supporting locally led humanitarian action'* report** commissioned under the Localisation Workstream. As first steps, all signatories should baseline their organisation against its findings and recommendations and seek political level agreement on how to foster such alignment before the next Annual Meeting.
3. **Establish a caucus to scale-up support for country-level funding mechanisms, platforms and consortia that set out an ambitious plan to model local leadership.** Importantly – in contrast to UN country-based pooled funds – this caucus should focus on country-level mechanisms, platforms and consortia that centre local NGO leadership and support for multi-year capacity-sharing and emergency preparedness (including disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action), as well as response. Again, donor participation in this will be essential. By 2023, we would like to see at least three new country-level, locally-led mechanisms, platforms and / or consortia supported with a commitment to scale these up, and adapt and resource best practice models in additional contexts thereafter.

More detailed recommendations on the above points are outlined in the Annex to this letter. We would welcome your feedback on these points and a meeting at senior leadership level to talk these ideas, and other options, through with you.



For too long, efforts on 'localisation' have amounted to tinkering at the edges of the traditional way of working. International humanitarian agencies have critically important roles to play. But too often, the system works on the basis of 'as international as possible, as local as necessary' rather than the inverse. This needs to change. In many contexts, local NGOs deliver life-saving assistance and protection in the most insecure parts of the country. They face all the risks, but struggle to cover basic running costs from month to month, and violence against their staff often happens with impunity. Too often, it does not feel like the international community has their back. The dominant model remains one of 'risk transfer' rather than 'risk sharing'. It is often local groups that are most rooted in their community and addressing the social impacts of the crisis - women's rights organisations, local faith groups, disabled peoples' organisations and others - which are least effectively engaged by the international humanitarian response. Humanitarian responses continue to struggle with accountability, gender, age, disability and intersectionality, and the potential contribution of local civil society to understanding and addressing these is not effectively leveraged. This also needs to change.

We appreciate you have a challenging role as Eminent Person, but we hope these specific recommendations will help you and all signatories in shaping a credible, practical and transformative agenda on local leadership of humanitarian action.

Best wishes,

INGO signatories:

1. Christine Allen, Director, CAFOD, UK
2. Amanda Khozi Mukwashi, CEO, Christian Aid, UK
3. Birgitte Qvist-Sørensen, Secretary General of DanChurchAid
4. Abby Maxman, President and CEO, Oxfam America on behalf of Oxfam.
5. Waseem Ahmad, CEO, Islamic Relief Worldwide
6. Sean Callahan, President and CEO, Catholic Relief Services
7. Sofia Sprechmann Sineiro, Secretary General, CARE International
8. Rob Williams, CEO War Child UK
9. Carsten Montag, CPO, Kindernothilfe, Germany
10. Johannes Peter, CEO, humedica e.V Germany
11. Caoimhe de Barra, CEO, Trócaire, Ireland
12. Martha Rubiano Skretteberg, Secretary General, Caritas Norway
13. Lena Ingelstam, Secretary General, Diakonia Sweden
14. Lorraine Currie, Director, IHDD, SCIAF (Caritas Scotland)
15. Kees Zevenbergen, CEO, Cordaid, the Netherlands
16. Matthew Maury, CEO, Tearfund Australia
17. Nigel Harris, CEO, Tearfund UK
18. Ana Arranz de Pablo, General Coordinator, Asamblea de Cooperación por la Paz, Spain

National NGO endorsers:

19. Md. Ilias Miah, President, Climate Refugee Network, Bangladesh
20. Kuol Arou Kuol, Director, SPEAK, Uganda.
21. Ayuba Irmiya Vandj, Chief of Operations, Nkafamiya Rescue Mission, Nigeria
22. Md. Ilias Miah, Chief Executive, Centre for Environment, Human Rights & Development Forum- CEHRDF, Bangladesh
23. Riing Garwech, National Director, CHIDDO, South Sudan
24. Gloria Soma, Executive Director, Titi Foundation, South Sudan
25. Sudhanshu S. Singh, CEO, Humanitarian Aid International, India



26. Roushni Akhter, Executive Director, Women & Life Foundation, Bangladesh
27. Paul Tombe Azaria, Executive Director, Pilgrims of Hope (South Sudan)
28. Peter Nyorsok, Executive Director, ADS North Rift Region (Kenya)
29. Anthonia Obi, Executive Director - The Big Smile Foundation- Nigeria
30. Dr Maria Al Abdeh, Executive Director, Women Now For Development, Syria
31. Sheilah S. Vergara, Program Director, Food for the Hungry Philippines
32. John Ede, President CEO Ohaha Family Foundation, Nigeria
33. Ware santino, Team leader, Community Empowerment Network CENET Uganda and south Sudan
34. Annet Lekuru, Executive Director, Feminature Uganda
35. Samuel Luny, Prog Manager Women Vision- South Sudan
36. Onziat Teopista, Executive Director CEPAD-WN Uganda
37. Shibu Prosad Baidya, Chief Executive Director, Barokupot Ganochetona Foundation, Bangladesh
38. Nurul Alam Masud, Chief Executive, Participatory Research Action Network- PRAAN
39. Rokeya Begum shafali, Executive Director, AID-COMILLA
40. Abu Murshed Chowdhury, Executive Director, PHALS, Bangladesh
41. MUSUMBA Mathe Nestor, Cordinator of BOAD, Goma, in DRC,
42. Michael ,Okiro Emadit, Country Director, Down Syndrome Foundation Uganda - Uganda
43. Md., Mujibul Haque Munir, Joint Director, COAST Foundation, Bangladesh
44. Rasel Ahmed Liton, Chief Executive, SKS Foundation, Gaibandha, Bangladesh
45. Regina Salvador-Antequis, Ecosystems Work for Essential Benefits (ECOWEB), Philippines
46. Ritz Lee Santos III, Executive Director, Balay Alternative Legal Advocates for Development in Mindanaw, Inc. (BALAOD Mindanaw), Philippines
47. William Puok Ruach, National Director, AWACD, South Sudan
48. Momotaz Khatun, Executive Director , Ashroy Foundation , Bangladesh
49. De-Joseph Kakisingi, CEO, Santé et Développement (SAD), DR Congo.
50. Andrew Twuach, Executive Director, Uganda and South Sudan, Children Initiative for Peace Organization (CHIPO)
51. Ochepe Peter Ekiru, Executive Director, SORUDA, Bangladesh
52. Mohamud Hassan, Executive Director, Humanitarian Development and Relief Council Somalia, Somalia
53. Gilles Collard, CEO, Bioforce, Fr

Annex:

- 1. Make the country-level Grand Bargain National Reference Groups a meaningful process to catalyse change on the ground, engage a wider range of local actors in a more inclusive way than is possible through global meetings, and connect country and global discussions. Each donor signatory should be encouraged to support these in at least one context; and facilitate linking these into in-country donor coordination. Donor input is critical to realise the added-value of a Grand Bargain process in contrast to existing in-country processes between the UN and NGOs.**

C4C believes that it is critical that the next phase of the Grand Bargain connects to country level. Engaging national NGOs in the global process is important and there are steps being taken on this. As C4C members, we have invested significant time, resources and energy in supporting this. But we believe deliberate steps to connect to country level offer the most fruitful way to engage a wider range of LNNGOs (Local and National NGOs) and national NGO fora, including diverse forms of civil society often marginalised by the international response and global policy processes, including



women rights groups, local faith-based organisations and other crisis affected people's organizations. The central objectives of these should be to catalyse progress on the Grand Bargain commitments at a country level, and to draw from this effort and facilitate input from country-level into the global process and decision-making in a sustained fashion.

C4C therefore highlights the following four considerations for the Grand Bargain NRGs:

- A. **Each donor signatory should be encouraged to engage with and support National Reference Groups in at least one context, and to report back on progress on this before the next Annual Meeting.** A major added-value of the Grand Bargain is donor engagement, making it essential that the National Reference Groups engage donors and connect into country-level donor coordination to bring the Grand Bargain process into wider donor discussions and decision-making in each context. Given most donors at country level have both their development and humanitarian teams and funding instruments represented, we believe both should be engaging in NRGs as a way of accelerating the operationalization of the Nexus.
- B. **All signatories should task their country leadership to engage with and then build on the on-going Grand Bargain Country Level Dialogues on Localisation in Nigeria, South Sudan, Syria, the Philippines and beyond.** It is striking that many of the signatories who spoke to their commitment to localisation at the Annual Meeting are yet to participate in these dialogues at country level. These dialogues should be built on, their recommendations considered, and could evolve into the National Reference Groups in these contexts. C4C stands ready to support you and other signatories on this effort.
- C. **National Reference Groups must prioritise an inclusive and meaningful approach to engagement by national and local actors.** The Grand Bargain is still too far from local organisations and at-risk communities. NRGs could play a critical role in changing that and creating a process that is more democratic and inclusive of the larger diversity of LNNGOs. Existing humanitarian coordination structures, such as HCTs and government processes, often only engage a limited range of LNNGOs. Thus, we recommend establishing guidance on inclusion for NRGs so that they include GB signatories, but others as well based on interest and strategic relevance.

NRGs should design, themselves, the most relevant composition for their context with a view of strengthening and complementing (not duplicating) existing structures already in place. We recommend NRGs are separate spaces (not expanded HCTs as initially recommended by the GB Facilitation Group). This will enable discussing both a more effective and efficient humanitarian response but also how we "shrink" needs or prevent (rather than only "respond") humanitarian crisis from happening or worsening, contributing to the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.

Process will be important to enable LNNGOs to engage in a meaningful fashion alongside other participants. Learning from C4C partners points to the importance of including proactive drives for LNNGO membership in urban and rural areas, transparent dissemination of meeting invitations, dates and times to LNNGOs, virtual meeting models, translation of meetings in local languages, and costs being reimbursed for long distance travel or other needed basic investments to engage virtually when face-to-face meetings are not possible. Modalities for engaging with government authorities, private sector and other national actors should also be scoped. This needs to be informed by a contextual analysis of how



these actors enable or obstruct principled humanitarian action and independent civil society, and how Grand Bargain discussions can complement or contribute to existing national processes.

- D. **Clarify how National Reference Groups connect to and inform the global process.** There should be a two-way exchange to effectively explore challenges and opportunities, and reality-check proposals on ways forward. At least in the contexts in which there are current Grand Bargain Country Level Dialogues on Localisation, there should be a process to foster these linkages and report on progress on this before the next Annual Meeting.

We stand ready to support you on all of the above as C4C members, but it will require active participation by yourself, the Facilitation Group and other signatories as well.

2. **Establish a caucus to align how donors incentivise delivering on the recommendations in the ‘*Bridging the intention to action gap: The future role of intermediaries in supporting locally led humanitarian action*’ report commissioned under the Localisation Workstream. As first steps, all signatories should baseline their organisation against its findings and recommendations, and seek political level agreement to foster such alignment before the next Annual Meeting.**

C4C was founded as a platform to stimulate collaboration on principled and effective partnership between international and national humanitarian actors. We welcome the recently-published report ‘*Bridging the intention to action gap: The future role of intermediaries in supporting locally led humanitarian action*’ commissioned under the Localisation Workstream, which provides an excellent basis for follow-up with all Grand Bargain signatories.¹

In terms of specific recommendations emerging from the report and based on consultation amongst C4C members, we highlight the following priorities for donors to harmonise their incentive structures and expectations for intermediary agencies:

- A. **a consistent and fair approach to overheads for local partners;**
- B. **mechanisms for improved accountability to and ownership of LNNGOs throughout the programme cycle towards fostering local leadership;**
- C. **multi-year support for capacity-sharing** of LNNGO partners; designed in ways that are led by local partner priorities, and including flexible funding to support the longer term Institutional Development and Organizational Strengthening of LNNGOs, support for ‘learning by doing’ and local-to-local capacity-sharing.

We call on you to use your influence as Eminent Person with donors and other signatories to make action on these recommendations a priority over the coming two years. Towards this end, we propose four specific and practical follow-up actions.

- Firstly, all Grand Bargain international signatories – donors, UN agencies and INGOs – should be encouraged to baseline the status of their own organisation’s efforts in relation to the ‘*Bridging the intention to action gap*’ report’s findings and recommendations before the next Annual Meeting.

¹ <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-official-website/bridging-intention-action-gap-future-role-intermediaries-supporting-locally-led-humanitarian-action>

- Secondly, a process should be convened among donors at political leadership level to agree a harmonised approach to implementing the recommendations and incentivising change amongst intermediary organisations; including appropriate processes to factor these issues into partnership and programme design, reporting and accountability.
 - Thirdly, given the specific challenges, barriers and risks frontline women’s organizations are facing (including backlash, threats to their organizations or physical integrity of their leaders, etc) for delivering “sensitive” services to crisis affected women and girls in contexts where their rights are typically abused, a specific target for funding to women’s organizations should be set, tracked and publicly reported against by donors and by international signatories which claim a mandate as intermediary organisations working on gender issues in crisis response and supporting women’s organisations.
 - Fourth, progress on the above should be presented at the next Grand Bargain Annual Meeting. Ultimately this should result in a joined-up set of donor expectations on ‘intermediary’ agencies – NGOs and UN agencies – regarding meaningful partnership and local leadership. Money talks and can incentivise change.
- 3. Establish a caucus to scale-up support for country-level funding mechanisms, platforms and consortia that set out an ambitious plan to model local leadership. Importantly – in contrast to the UN country-based pooled funds – this caucus should focus on support to locally-led multi-year capacity-strengthening and emergency preparedness (including disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action), as well as response. Donor participation in this will be essential. By 2023, we would like to see at least three new country-level, locally-led mechanisms, platforms and consortia supported with a commitment to scale these up, and to adapt and resource best practice models in additional contexts thereafter.**

C4C believes that the next two years should catalyse positive collaboration, partnership and investment to scale up innovative, creative and transformative examples of local leadership of humanitarian action. Whilst discussions on localisation often end up negative – what is not happening – there are already exciting initiatives underway led by local actors. So we propose that a Grand Bargain caucus is established to scale up support to country-level locally led funding mechanisms, platforms and / or consortia that set out an ambitious plan to champion local leadership.

Importantly – in contrast to the UN country-based pooled funds – this caucus should focus on funding for mechanisms, platforms and / or consortia that champion local leadership in their design and governance.² This may involve different context-specific models of partnership between national, local and international NGOs and / or other actors; building on learning from existing mechanisms like the Start country-level Hubs in Bangladesh, India, the Pacific region, Pakistan, DRC and Guatemala, the LIFT Funds in Turkey and Myanmar and the Nexus consortium in Somalia. But strengthening local leadership over time should be central. In addition, priority should be given to support for locally-led multi-year capacity-strengthening and emergency preparedness (including DRR and anticipatory action), as well as response. Such a focus would provide an opportunity to

² C4C supports continued effort to strengthen the contribution of UN Country Based Pooled Funds to local leadership. However, these will remain limited in terms of their geographic presence and their focus on short-term response funding. C4C believes in, and all the evidence points to, the importance of a more diverse ecosystem of country-level funding mechanisms to invest in local leadership as outlined in our recommendation.

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translate global efforts under the Grand Bargain on multi-year, flexible quality funding into tangible action for local responders. To centre diversity, country-level funding mechanisms, platforms and consortia need to both take deliberate steps to do so (for example setting targets on gender as outlined by the Friends of Gender Group) but support should also be given to dedicated regional and country level funding instruments, platforms and consortia led and governed by relevant regional or local civil society actors (eg regional level women's funds).

Such a caucus could encourage existing mechanisms, platforms and consortia to share best practice and strengthen approaches to promoting local leadership, to ensure actors typically excluded are at the table including specifically women's organisations, marginalized groups and crisis affected people's organizations, but it should also catalyse support for new initiatives in contexts where they do not yet exist. We propose that at least three new initiatives should be supported before the end of 2023; with a commitment to gather learning from these, scale them up, adapt and replicate in more contexts later.