

## **Ukraine – An opportunity for the Grand Bargain signatories to translate their commitments to local leadership of crisis response into practice**

On 30<sup>th</sup> June to 1<sup>st</sup> July, the heads of donor humanitarian departments, UN agencies and NGOs meet in Geneva to take stock of progress on Grand Bargain commitments to reform the humanitarian system. One of the priority commitments adopted under the Grand Bargain was to support national and local leadership of crisis response, and to ensure that humanitarian response is “as local as possible, as international as necessary.” The under-signed organisations are actively involved in the humanitarian response in Ukraine. We see how the international community – donors, UN agencies and NGOs – is struggling to act on these commitments in Ukraine. It is likely that many participants at the Grand Bargain meeting will acknowledge this, and we appreciate that. But looking forward, local actors do not want rhetorical statements or acknowledgement of their role, they want practical and ambitious action to support what they are doing. For this reason, we highlight the following very practical steps that we expect in support of local humanitarian action in Ukraine by Grand Bargain signatories, and we hope you will use your meeting to send a strong signal of support for these:

1. Donor, UN and INGO strategic frameworks and plans for the Ukraine response should outline specific objectives, time-bound milestones and metrics to promote accountability for support to local leadership. The previous UN Flash Appeal made reference to engagement with national and local actors, but more specifics are needed in the next UN strategic plan framework. This should outline specific metrics on priorities that local actors have been raising; including on provision of flexible, longer term funding, consistent support for overheads, and scale-up of longer-term accompaniment and mentoring approaches to capacity strengthening.
2. The UN Ukraine Humanitarian Fund (UHF) should adopt clear and more ambitious targets for percentages going directly to local actors, and this percentage should increase over time (eg towards 70% within 12 months). The UHF should also adopt new guidance requiring that local partners get fair overheads support even when they act as sub-implementing partners to an international agency, rather than leaving this to the discretion of the intermediary agency. The model of the NGO Twinning Programme in Afghanistan could be adapted to support a more deliberate approach to enabling a wider range of national NGOs to shift from being sub-grantees to leading on directly accessing funding from the UHF. Additional pooled funds or consortia should also be supported to get small grants to diverse local actors, who do not have the scale of operations or systems in place to pass UHF selection processes.
3. Donors should establish clear expectations with UN agencies and INGO grantees that require these agencies to articulate a clear approach to reinforcing, complementing and supporting – rather than undermining – national and local actors’ roles. One key aspect of this is that international agencies implement a clear and joined-up approach to partnership and capacity strengthening aimed at fostering local leadership of the response. Donors should hold international agencies accountable for demonstrable outcomes in terms of strengthened local leadership; such as on supporting local NGOs to transition from being sub-grantees to lead grantees on funding from the UN and other donors.
4. Donors and international agencies should adopt a ‘no regrets’ and enabling approach to support for smaller national NGOs, local organisations and voluntary networks. This has to involve adopting a proportionate approach to due diligence and compliance so that funds can reach smaller and informal groups and networks leading aid efforts. Due diligence passporting by some agencies should be scaled-up and harmonised across the response so that local organisations are not required to complete multiple duplicatory or inconsistent due diligence processes all addressing fundamentally the same questions. This should be packaged with sustained support for capacity-sharing; recognizing and building on the leadership, expertise and creative ways of working that local actors have brought to the response; whilst investing in capacity strengthening (including through local-to-local capacity-sharing) on identified areas of improvement needed for effective and accountable delivery of humanitarian aid.
5. Donors and international agencies should take into account local legislation on tax and charitable work, and factor this into their budgeting and liaison with Ukrainian authorities. National legislation requires

taxes to be paid on assistance beyond a certain level and on reimbursement of volunteer expenses, as well as documentation of charitable work, which can represent a challenge in areas under occupation. A common approach by donors and international agencies to resourcing the costs involved and problem solving any issues arising with national authorities would be helpful.

6. All international agencies and clusters should endorse and act on the Ethical Recruitment Guidelines, which have been tabled at the HCT. Poor practice has been observed and mentioned in coordination meetings across Ukraine. Examples such as one international agency attempting to recruit the staff of local NGOs that were engaged in initial life saving work in Irpin and Bucha demonstrate the extent of the problem. The Ethical Recruitment Guidelines aim to stop the worst kinds of 'cowboy' practices of poaching of local organisations' staff. Donors should systematically hold international agencies accountable for this, and funding should be conditional on adhering to the Guidelines.

7. Donors and international agencies should encourage and build on existing cooperation between government and civil society at the local level to ensure effective needs-based programming and capacity-strengthening in the response. Prior to the invasion, the Ukrainian government had initiated a process of decentralisation, and various processes were underway, including national NGOs experienced in social and public services at the local level supporting local government authorities on training of their staff. Donors and the international humanitarian community should look to foster government-civil society cooperation in support of solutions that will strengthen government systems at national and local levels, rather than establish parallel systems. This will simplify coordination, enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian needs' assessment and the implementation of programs, while strengthening the overall system's capacity to respond to what is likely to become a long term crisis.

8. Donors and international agencies should ensure that localisation efforts across funding and coordination engage with diverse local actors; including organisations supporting marginalised groups, given the critical role they play in reaching those living under most vulnerable conditions and in ensuring the critical gender, age, language, and disability dimensions of this crisis as well as specific needs are addressed.

9. Donors and international agencies should ensure systematic use of local languages and a focus on inclusion in humanitarian coordination, especially at the local level. Use of local languages in coordination made important differences in terms of local staff being able to engage meaningfully in the east after 2018. Yet, there is no consistent use of local languages in cluster meetings and documents in the current response, limiting the ability of local actors to truly influence decisions.

## SIGNATIROIES

Благодійна організація "Мережа 100 відсотків життя Рівне" / Charitable Organization "Network 100 Percent Life Rivne"

Благодійна організація "Фонд громади Березані" / Charitable Organization "Berezan Community Fond" NPLGBT

Громадська організація "Чарівні Руні" / NGO "Charivni Runy"

Громадська організація "Спадщина!" / NGO "Spadshchyna!"

Громадська спілка "ЕА Екосистема" / Public Union "Ecological Association Ecosystema"

Благодійна організація "Фонд громади міста Олешки ім. Софії Фальц-Фейн" Херсонщина / Charitable Organisation "COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF OLESHKI NAMED AFTER SOFIA FALZ-FEIN"

Громадська організація "МИ РІВНІ" Буковина / NGO "WE ARE EQUAL"

CAFOD

CRS

Christian Aid

Благодійна організація "Благодійний фонд Право на захист" / Charitable Foundation "Right to Protection" (R2P)

CLEAR Global

PAX

Благодійний фонд Восток SOS / Charity Foundation East SOS

Mercy Corps  
People in Need  
ГО "Альтернатива" (Корюківка) / Korukivka city youth NGO "Alternative"  
Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation  
Caritas Ukraine  
Caritas Kolomyya  
CARITAS TERNOPIIL  
Caritas Kharkiv  
Caritas Buchach  
Caritas Zaporizhzhia  
Caritas Volyn  
Caritas Donetsk  
Caritas Kamianske  
Caritas Zhovkva  
Caritas Chortkiv  
Caritas - Zhytomyr  
Caritas-Brody  
Caritas - Khmelnytskyi UGCC  
Caritas Volyn  
Caritas Nadvirna  
Caritas Boryslav  
Caritas Chernivtsi  
Caritas Kyiv