

# What impact is the Grand Bargain having in the Global South?

**PERSPECTIVES FROM LOCAL AND NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH**

**June 2020**

# INTRODUCTION

At the forthcoming Grand Bargain Annual Meeting on 25 June, states and stakeholders will take stock of the implementation of the commitments they made four years ago. The adoption of the Grand Bargain was a key moment in the localisation journey. Significant commitments were made, including targets to drive more funding to Local and National NGOs (LNNGOs), reducing barriers that prevent partnerships between LNNGOs and donors and engaging LNNGOs in coordination mechanisms. As we move into the final year of the Grand Bargain, it is a critical moment to review progress and challenges and take the urgent action needed to meet the commitments.

Inclusive and participatory review and follow up is vital in assessing the impact of the Grand Bargain at the national level. To help assess progress, NEAR conducted a survey with its members and partners. The survey was an opportunity for LNNGOs of the Global South to provide their perspective on the implementation and impact of the Grand Bargain at the country level in 2019. In order to support the shared reporting framework, the survey was based on the self-reporting templates followed by Grand Bargain signatories. With such templates, it has been difficult for LNNGOs to express the impact of the Grand Bargain at the national level. The findings from this survey are especially important, as little is known about the experiences of organisations in the Global South and their work with the Grand Bargain. This survey gives a voice to those organisations that are often overlooked in global discussions.

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<sup>1</sup> A civil society organisation or citizens' group who are locally rooted, founded, and headquartered in a country that is not a member of the OECD-DAC (except for Chile, Korea, Mexico and Turkey); carrying out operations at national, sub-national or community level and not affiliated to any international NGO.

The survey was conducted in March 2020 and produced 93 responses with a wide geographic balance across five regions (refer: Box 1). Ninety-two percent of respondents come from LNNGOs<sup>1</sup>, with the remaining responses coming from national offices of an INGO and individual experts from the Global South.\*

## Geographic distribution of responses

**Africa:** Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda

**Asia:** Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Turkey

**Latin America:** Suriname

**Middle East:** Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen

**Europe:** Belarus, Serbia, United Kingdom

\*Participants were not required to answer all survey questions.

# KEY FINDINGS

The Network has expressed that localisation is the area most important to them - important strides have been taken in this direction, with increased visibility of LNNGOs - however, progress has been uneven and true transformative change has yet to take place.

**Levels of awareness and understanding of the Grand Bargain remain low and are inconsistent across countries and amongst local actors.** Despite every signatory having a presence in multiple countries and there being high expectations for LNNGOs engagement, sensitisation efforts amongst partners and members to the commitments made by the International Community remain woefully inadequate. The resulting impact is that for some organisations the Grand Bargain remains irrelevant and has yet to change the situation on the ground.

*65% of respondents to the survey are familiar with the Grand Bargain and its 51 commitments, of those, only half use it as a framework to work with.*

There is lack of clarity about ownership of the Grand Bargain. There is a sense amongst some LNNGOs that it is not their role to engage with the Grand Bargain at the national level, but that this is a role of INGOs or the United Nations (UN). Sensitisation efforts have not gone far enough, therefore ownership remains at the top. The Grand Bargain is largely understood as part of the relationship with an INGO, with efforts being made to work with local partners and in doing so, has influenced the framework of some partnership agreements, partnership building and delivery of capacity strengthening activities. There is significant interest in engaging with the Grand Bargain framework, however, only a small number of respondents are using the Grand Bargain as an accountability and advocacy tool.

## LNNGOs use the Grand Bargain for the following purposes:

- To negotiate partnership agreements and ensure some standards – based on INGO/UN commitments in the Grand Bargain.
- As an advocacy tool in different settings at the national level.
- To promote localisation at the national level.

The Grand Bargain has somewhat improved coordination in certain contexts. For example, more than two-thirds of respondents have used the information and analysis from needs assessments conducted with affected people to influence partners' (INGOs, UN agencies, etc) on how best to respond. Seventy-one percent have experienced or noticed that Humanitarian Response Plans are informed by affected populations in their country. However, transparency challenges remain, the majority of respondents are not familiar with the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) and its standard and three-quarters of respondents have never used the data reported into the IATI Standard. Furthermore, almost half of LNNGOs are not registered on the UN partner portal, thereby restricting their access to partnership opportunities and UN tenders.

There is a lack of consistency in engagement in UN driven joint assessments or analysis, with half of LNNGOs reporting not having been engaged or contacted. Also, harmonisation of reporting is still a distant goal, with almost three-quarters of the respondents having never been asked to use the reporting template 8+3. The Grand Bargain reporting framework has the potential to be a useful accountability mechanism for LNNGOs, however, an

inability to capture data accurately and inconsistent reporting against the agreed indicators across workstreams does not support transparency or effective monitoring.

### **Meaningful spaces for engagement are lacking**

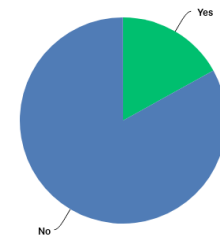
Some LNNGOs are experiencing more engagement and collaboration with donors and INGOs due to the Grand Bargain. In Bangladesh, discussions and capacity strengthening sessions on localisation have been conducted with LNNGOs, INGOs and government institutions for the past three years. Through these activities many local NGOs around the country have been able to elevate their voice. However, such opportunities for sustained and open engagement are not the norm. There is continued frustration over limited opportunities to meaningfully engage with the Grand Bargain. Many respondents reported feeling 'dismissed' or being engaged on a mere tokenistic basis by INGOs. Some discussions are happening with LNNGOs on the humanitarian-development peace nexus in their country, however, these conversations are not always relevant to LNNGOs, some of whom have transitioned between the humanitarian and development sectors and do not see these conversations as being pertinent to their context.

Among respondents, half are active in the work of a Grand Bargain workstream, with almost 70% of this subset engaged in localisation. This however does not equate to LNNGOs themselves being members of a workstream but suggests that they engage via other means. For example, NEAR's reach as a Global South network has provided LNNGOs with the opportunity to engage in consultations or information sharing linked to the Grand Bargain. NEAR

holds regular calls with a large number of LNNGOs (beyond its own membership) to engage them on the localisation work of the Grand Bargain. Charter for Change also plays an important role through which INGOs engage their partners in the Grand Bargain work. Efforts to engage more LNNGOs in the workstreams are welcomed, however, LNNGOs must also play leading roles in setting agendas which currently are not based on their needs or perspective. From this stance real and equal dialogues can take place.

### **Increased funding is not reaching LNNGOs**

Progress on increasing funding to LNNGOs is slow, with persisting challenges around accessibility. An overwhelming 83% of respondents have seen no increase of unearmarked funding in 2019, which is contrary to what is stated amongst various reports. In



*Have you experienced an increase in unearmarked funding in 2019?*

2019, more than half of respondents did not experience an increase of humanitarian funding awarded as directly as possible. Moreover, 73% of respondents have not experienced any increase of multi-year funding opportunities and among those that have, almost half of them say that it counted for between 1 and 10% of their annual budget. One of the explanations for the paltry amounts of funding going to LNNGOs is the perception of 'risk', which assumes a lack of capacity or financial due diligence. These unsubstantiated perceptions must be challenged and negated.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from the survey serve as a stark reminder that LNNGOs remain on the margins of the humanitarian system. More and urgent action is needed to rebalance and shift the power in the system so that LNNGOs take the lead in setting and implementing the humanitarian agenda.

## Recommendations

- **Increased openness and transparency by raising awareness of the Grand Bargain, its' benefits for LNNGOs and how it can be utilised.**
  - With a year left of the Grand Bargain, and the possibility of an extension, it is important to continue to sensitise all local actors, including LNNGOs, government and academia.
  
- **An enabling, equitable and sustainable environment must be created for LNNGOs to engage in and influence the Grand Bargain process by:**
  - Meaningfully engaging LNNGOs through existing coordination bodies (Government, UN Cluster Systems, National/Local Coordination bodies, etc.).
  - Inclusive engagement in local languages and supporting varying capacities of LNNGOs.
  
- **Funding to LNNGOs:**
  - Provide flexibility on current funding (inclusive of direct and indirect budgeted lines).
  - Go beyond the OCHA Country Based Pool Funds and work with already existing community foundations, national funds, and Global Funds such as the Global Fund for Community Foundations, the Start Fund, the Global Fund for Women, and the Global Fund for Children (to name a few), who are already structured to manage both small and large grants to local and national NGOs.
  - Support national mechanisms allowing sub granting – with effective risk sharing and partnership principles in place – in order for LNNGOs to access funding.