



Open Letter to the Grand Bargain Ambassadors and Facilitation Group
11th August 2023

Dear Ambassadors Manuel Bessler, Jemilah Mahmood, Michael Koehler, and colleagues on the Grand Bargain Facilitation Group,

We write to you as representatives of national NGOs which participated at the 2023 Grand Bargain Annual Meeting and ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment in June, and localisation networks active in the process. Some of us had the opportunity to briefly meet Manuel and Michael in the fringes of Day One at the Annual Meeting and Facilitation group gathering. We warmly welcome you into your roles and look forward to working with you to realise the ambitions of the Grand Bargain.

You invited us to reach out, as we now do, to request a meeting with you later in the Summer to initiate consultation with networks playing active roles in supporting policy dialogue on localization. As members of Charter4Change, NEAR and other networks, we are ready to start this process at the earliest opportunity to build and maintain momentum as we transition to the next phase of the Grand Bargain. In anticipation of that meeting with you, we take this opportunity to share with you three priorities that emerged from discussions amongst those of us who participated in June, and through consultation within our networks.

Firstly, we commend to you the [joint recommendations on this next phase of the Grand Bargain developed by Charter4Change, NEAR, and A4EP](#), which were published before the Annual Meeting as summarised below:

1. Strengthen accountability for localisation commitments.
2. Translate global localisation commitments into action at the country-level.
3. Consult local actors on specific priorities for action on localisation to unblock progress.
4. Centre the leadership of local actors in framing and facilitating the Grand Bargain.

We urge you to read the detailed suggestions that underpin each of these recommendations in that joint C4C, NEAR and A4EP statement. A lot of work went into developing those recommendations, and we look forward to hearing your thoughts on them when we meet. In light of the discussions at the Annual Meeting and since then, we believe they retain their relevance and can serve as a good basis to make progress over the coming years.

Secondly, we want to highlight how much we valued the opportunity of national NGO representatives participating both formally as speakers and moderators in the Annual Meeting, as well as the opportunities for others to participate informally in the fringes and at side events. From our perspective, there are two central added values of the Grand Bargain in contrast to UN-led humanitarian policy processes, such as the global IASC and country-level UN-led humanitarian coordination. The first is that donors are formally a part of the Grand Bargain process, and national NGOs can engage directly with them on a policy level. The second is that national NGOs have established more of an equal seat at the table in the Grand Bargain than has been the case until now in other processes involving the same constituency groups. We encourage you in your respective roles as Ambassadors and the Facilitation Group to promote this potential of the Grand Bargain to 'think outside of the box' and progress reform centring the interests of communities affected by crisis, rather than the institutional interests of any one Grand Bargain constituency.

An excellent example of the kind of initiative that we would like to see more of was a roundtable between nine donors and national NGOs convened in the fringes of the Annual Meeting in Geneva

by Charter4Change INGO allies and the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the UN. This meeting provided an opportunity for direct dialogue between donors and national actors, which built on the discussions in the formal Annual Meeting and catalysed opportunities for follow-up. In future, we hope to see other donors participate in and co-host such roundtables. Furthermore, UN agencies and other INGOs should offer a similar level of dialogue with national NGO representatives. Doing so can help to articulate clearer collective action priorities for each constituency group to unlock progress on commitments made in the formal process and meetings.

Thirdly, our experience at the Annual Meeting has further underscored the importance of Grand Bargain processes at the global level connecting more effectively to the country level. The joint C4C, NEAR and A4EP recommendations provide more detailed ideas on this front, but one idea that emerged from our participation in Geneva is that Grand Bargain signatories should task their embassies, country offices, and country-level networks to plan for country level 'National Grand Bargain Annual Meetings' in a limited number of pilot countries ahead of the 2024 Annual Meeting. Such an initiative could be a great way to reinforce efforts to bridge the gap between global and country levels (including the National Reference Groups), and to ensure that global Grand Bargain processes (eg communities of practice) effectively engage a wider range of national and local NGOs than is possible through global meetings alone.

Take the Grand Bargain Risk Sharing Framework as an example. Until now, information about this has reached a very limited number of national NGOs. Only one member of the C4C/NEAR/A4EP national NGO delegation who came to Geneva had the opportunity to read the Framework before joining the Annual Meeting as it had been published one week prior to that and presented in one webinar to Grand Bargain signatories. Yet we all left Geneva excited about the potential of the Risk Sharing Framework. If it is applied in good faith, and if national NGOs are engaged in this, it offers an important opportunity to drive change in partnerships, funding and programming with national/local actors. But for this to happen, we need to be engaged in a structured way at the country level going forward, not just infrequent, ad-hoc global seminars. Existing UN-led global and country-level processes of coordination do not provide a space to think creatively about risk-sharing, do not provide us with an opportunity to engage directly with donors and do not give local actors an equal seat at the table. We look to the Grand Bargain process to enable this going forward.

Again, we welcome you into your roles as Ambassadors. We appreciate the commitment of your time, energy and expertise to achieving meaningful change in the humanitarian system through this process. We look forward to engaging with you on this, and we hope the above ideas provide some interesting ideas to follow up on.

Yours faithfully,

Sema Genel Karaosmanoğlu, Executive Director, Hayata Destek Derneği/Support to Life, Türkiye

Saba Gebremedhin, Executive Director, NEWA, Ethiopia

Nadine Saba, Director, Akkar Network for Development, Lebanon

Aung Zaw Win, Director, GLAD, Myanmar

Riing Garwech Kuol, National Director, CHIDDO, South Sudan

Naomi Tulay-Solanke, Executive Director, Community Healthcare Initiative, Liberia

Paul Asquith, Research and Advocacy Director, Shabaka (diaspora organisation)

Contacts for follow-up:

Clare Atwine, Charter4Change (admin@charter4change.org)

Alix Masson, NEAR (amasson@near.ngo)