



World Humanitarian Summit Commitments

Closing the gap - reinforce, do not replace local capacities

NEAR, the Network for Empowered Aid Response, has been created from the desire by local and national NGOs from Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America to promote a more equitable and dignified humanitarian and development system. **NEAR** wants to see communities and local and national capacities at the centre of all aid efforts. It also provides a much-needed forum for local and national NGOs to influence the wider policies and practices that affect their capacities and operations and the wellbeing of communities.

This paper sets out the position of **NEAR** on key issues identified by local and national organisations. It is the result of consultations carried out by **NEAR** with local organizations in 11 countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East and a members' meeting in Nairobi in March. It states our demand for actions and lays out **NEAR's** commitments to close the gap between how the international aid system is working at present and what needs to change to have a more equitable, dignified and accountable system.

Our vision

A world where local communities have the capacity, resources and agency to address the challenges that impact them.

Our mission

To work towards restructuring the global response to human, economic and environmental challenges so that actions to address these are locally driven and owned, and promote equitable, dignified and accountable partnerships

While localization has become the term to describe this agenda, and for the sake of ease we have used that term, we however believe that this term needs to be reviewed. What is being proposed essentially is the people's agenda in bringing the principles of humanity and solidarity into the humanitarian and development aid architecture.

Context

There is growing consensus that humanitarian action needs to be more locally rooted: *"One that leverages the responsibilities and capacities of states, civil society and affected communities, supported by international actors, is one which will be more effective in responding to and mitigating the risks of crises."*¹

Local and national civil society organisations play a critical role within the global aid architecture. They are often the first responders to a rapid onset disaster; in many violent contexts they are often the only ones with reasonable access to affected communities. And they are the ones that stay, throughout the succession of relief, recovery, development and resilience-building.

¹ ODI (2015). Localising humanitarianism: improving effectiveness through inclusive action. Humanitarian Policy Group, July 2015.





In the run up to the WHS, the regional consultations have called for reform of the international system². The importance of national and local authorities and organizations taking the lead in humanitarian response was widely affirmed, as was participation and accountability to affected people. It was reiterated that international humanitarian actors need to include local capacity building measures as an integral part of their programming, which will help facilitate a timely and planned exit.

Call for Actions

More Equitable Relationship: We want to create more meaningful partnerships with mutual trust and accountability according to agreed partnership principles. We want to move away from inequitable power relations to genuine partnership in which local communities, local and international partners make joint decisions about strategic direction, programming, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Local in-country consultations have made more specific recommendations.³

Equitable partnerships imply:

- Mutual accountability between donors and partners, and between organisations and effected communities.
- Current salary structures should be reviewed to ensure that international salary scale by UN and INGOs does not distort the market. Further, sufficient funding needs to be provided to cater for salaries of local organisations to discourage brain drain from local organisations to international organisations.
- There must be recognition of existing capacity of local organisations. Any capacity strengthening initiatives must be shaped by demand and challenges faced by local organisations and not be supply-driven.

More Direct and Better Quality Funding for National and Local Actors: We want humanitarian action to be more effective and to reach affected people as directly as possible. For this to happen, the humanitarian system must move away from a centralized response dominated by international actors to a more diverse system with local and national actors. Recognising that the governments have the duty to respond and protect their people they should receive adequate and timely resources to meet the needs of the communities. There should be a robust national framework led by the government that provides a coordination and accountability mechanism. Such an accountability framework should ensure that affected communities are at the centre of policies and strategies. Meanwhile, non-governmental organizations, CSOs and private sector organizations should strengthen their advocacy for the mainstreaming of accountability to affected populations by all stakeholders.

² Regional Consultation - Middle East and North Africa, Jordan 3-5 March 2015, North and South-East Asia, Japan - July 2014, Eastern and Southern Africa, South Africa - October 2014, South and Central Asia, 2015, Global Consultation, Switzerland - October 2015

³ Making Humanitarian and Development Activism Localized and Accountable. 7 Initial Actionable Proposals on Reshaping Aid





Local organizations should receive a greater portion of humanitarian funding directly to respond to communities in need. This decreases inefficiencies by removing the multiple levels of sub-contracting and intermediaries. If lack of trust is an obstacle, then a sustained investment needs to be made to create resilient and capacitated institutions through meaningful partnerships with mutual trust.

NEAR strongly supports the Grand Bargain commitment of all humanitarian funding to local and national organisations being increased by 25% by 2020 and to further continue increasing year on year.

The quality of funding has to be improved. This implies:

- Multiyear funding must be made available for local and national organisations in order for them to more effectively respond to communities in which they work and live. (WHS Proposed Core Commitment 4)
- Overheads of 10% and appropriate staff allocation in budgets to ensure that organisations can sustain good qualified staff who are able to respond. (WHS Proposed Core Commitment 1)
- At least 5% of the budget allocated to local and national NGOs should be for investments in capacity and emergency preparedness. (WHS Proposed Core Commitment 1)
- National pooled funding mechanisms managed by local and national organisations need to be established and resourced in order to meet the 25 % by 2020 Grand Bargain target. The existing UN pooled funds at country level have to be made more accessible to local and national NGOs with 80% earmarked for local and national actors. (WHS Proposed Core Commitment 1)
- Review existing donor rules and regulations to ensure that they are realistic and can be applied to local NGOs such as the requirement to provide a bank guarantee. (WHS Proposed Core Commitment 5)
- More transparency is required on the amount of funds being committed to local and international organisations and the UN. (WHS Proposed Core Commitment 5)





NEAR's Commitments

The success of the WHS should be measured by improving equity in decision-making and financing and resource allocations to local and national actors and affected communities. Below are our commitments to an improved aid system that is fit for the future and able to meet the needs of the affected communities.

1. **NEAR** commits to raise the voices of local and national NGOs and affected people from Asia, Africa, Middle East and Latin America at international policy and decision making forums.
2. Post WHS, **NEAR** will publish an annual report that tracks progress on localization, including the percentage of aid flow to local actors.
3. **NEAR** will advocate for a global transparent mechanism to track progress on how much funding is flowing to local actors such as the IATA or OCHA FTS.
4. **NEAR** will also undertake seminal pieces of research, such as documenting the transaction cost in the aid industry. This research will further articulate the challenges, opportunities and capacities that exist within local communities and actors.
5. In an effort to implement the Grand Bargain 25 % target of funding going to local organisations by 2020, **NEAR** will undertake research to inform the design of national pooled funding mechanisms. Three country level pilots of pooled funds managed by local actors will be implemented, monitored and evaluated within the next five years.
6. **NEAR** will provide a platform for dialogue on equitable partnerships by organising exchange forums and documenting good practice in partnerships. It will help to develop practical implementation of principles of partnership from local and national perspectives.
7. **NEAR** will work with other strategic networks at regional, national and local levels to strengthen the capacity of its members and establish robust accountable systems to the community and public donors.

