

The Change Fund

WHAT IS THE CHANGE FUND?

The Change Fund is a locally led, global humanitarian response mechanism established by NEAR (Network for Empowered Aid Response) with support from the Hilton Foundation. It is an innovative finance solution that aims to localise aid responses and ensure that local organisations can access funds to respond to emergencies quickly, more efficiently and more cost-effectively.

The Change Fund grants are designed to provide quick allocation of funding to frontline local NGOs in the Global South who are directly responding to worsening humanitarian conditions in their communities. This mechanism aims to promote local leadership, build resilience, and support sustainable solutions to humanitarian challenges in the communities where they occur.



Outreach teams from Change Fund HANDS Pakistan, a Change Fund grantee, during the 2022 floods.

HOW DOES THE FUND WORK?

The fund is open to NEAR members in 27 priority countries with an emphasis on simplified grant-making processes.

Members of NEAR can apply for pre-approval from the Change Fund, which means that their organisation's registration and financial reports are completed before an emergency is declared.

Relying on open-source information systems to monitor global crises, the Change Fund prioritises responses to worsening conditions exacerbated by multiple factors such as a new phase of conflict, adverse climate effects or disease outbreaks.

Once a country is declared to be in crisis by the Fund's Oversight Body (elected from among NEAR members), pre-approved members from that country can apply for grants ranging from \$150,000 to \$250,000.

WHY IS THE FUND NECESSARY?

As a locally managed response fund, the Change Fund, recognises the value of local organisations in delivering aid during crises. The fund acknowledges that local organisations are often under-resourced and unacknowledged by the international aid system, and that complex donor requirements and heavy aid bureaucracy can hamper their ability to access the funding they need to respond quickly.

To address these challenges, the Change Fund prioritises local ownership and accountability by exclusively supporting local organisations and implementing simplified granting processes. By doing so, the fund provides local organisations with greater decision-making power on where and how the funds are delivered, which can help to ensure that aid is more targeted.

Overall, the Change Fund takes a more localised approach to humanitarian response, which helps to strengthen local capacities, promote greater accountability, and ultimately, improve the effectiveness of aid delivery.

WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED?

Since its inception, NEAR has awarded 13 grants in 11 countries. Our grantees reached affected people in 11 countries, including refugees, internally displaced populations, host communities and communities at large, targeting women-headed households, the elderly, people with disabilities and girls and boys (under 18 years of age).

As ten of these grants draw to a close, NEAR has been monitoring, evaluating and learning from these projects to contribute to our evidence-based learning and continuous improvement.

Through evaluation processes in Lebanon, Syria, the Philippines, South Sudan, Somalia, and Afghanistan, grantees have given us feedback that the core benefit of the fund was not just timely support for local organisations as well as flexible and responsive funding, but that the Fund also empowered local actors and contributed to more effective humanitarian action.

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