

PRESS RELEASE

NEAR LAUNCHES ITS INNOVATIVE CHANGE FUND AND AWARDS FIRST GRANTS TO COUNTRIES IN CRISIS

Through its global Change Fund, The Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR) this week granted emergency funding to four local organisations leading the response to humanitarian crises in South Sudan, Somalia and Afghanistan.

East Africa is facing a catastrophic drought and millions of people will require humanitarian aid this year, while also facing conflict and displacement.

Six months after the fall of the Afghan government, the humanitarian situation is dire, with malnutrition and health crises rising as well as the number of displaced persons growing daily.

The response capacity of NEAR members in 27 countries has now been bolstered with a mechanism that enables them to quickly access funds through a simplified application. More importantly, local leaders can design the most impactful interventions without any restrictions.

Three grants worth \$540,364 were awarded to Child's Destiny and Development Organization (CHIDDO) in South Sudan; Centre for Peace and Democracy (CPD) and Save Somali Women and Children (SSWC) in Somalia; and Citizen's Organisation for Advocacy and Relief (COAR) in Afghanistan.

“The Change Fund is a concrete investment in the Grand Bargain commitments and a statement of confidence in the unparalleled capabilities and capacity of local actors to take leadership in crisis response. Our role is to put the resources and the decision-making in their hands while working to increase the support available to local responders and remove barriers to access,” said Hibak Kalfan, NEAR's Executive Director.

These grants are the culmination of an extensive participatory process in which NEAR members nominated and selected an Oversight Body of their peers through a consensus process with the mandate to monitor the humanitarian situation in 27 priority countries, determine crisis conditions and direct resources to local organizations.

The Fund is a standby mechanism supported by a locally-rooted early warning mechanism, simplified grant-making process and a community-centric, transparent approach. Within eight days, the Change Fund is able to declare a new acute crisis, request, receive, and review applications and ultimately, award grants to NEAR members. This agile process will ensure that emergency response is faster and more importantly, delivers impact for communities in need.

“NEAR Change Fund is a great initiative lead by local organizations towards building the resilience of communities,” said Surya Narayan Shrestha, a member of the Oversight Body and the Executive Director of NSET in Nepal. **“Through the Change Fund support we want to demonstrate a sustainable mechanism of mutual support for addressing humanitarian needs and long-term resilience building in communities. As the Change Fund launches, I feel very happy and proud to be one of the key members of the initiative.”**

In 2022, the Change Fund aims to award up to \$1.5M in grants. This was made possible by the support of the Hilton Foundation in its commitment to support innovative, impactful financing mechanisms to improve humanitarian interventions.

For applicant /member questions on the Fund please send an email to:
changefund@near.ngo

MEDIA CONTACT

For media comments, interviews, or information please contact njohnston@near.ngo

NOTES TO EDITORS:

About NEAR

We are a movement of Local and National Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) from the Global South rooted in our communities who share a common goal of a fair, equitable and dignified Aid system.

To learn more about NEAR please go to <https://www.near.ngo>

About the Oversight Body

The Change Fund Oversight Body comprises representatives from NEAR organizations in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region, and a member of the National Alliance of Humanitarian Actors in Bangladesh (NAHAB) representing networks that are affiliated with NEAR.