The Localization Pledge

For international NGOs, foundations, and institutional donors

A commitment to use, promote, and finance localization.
In the spirit of the Grand Bargain.

A note before you begin

This document is written to be read by everyone.

Localization is about removing barriers, so a pledge for localization should have none of its own. We have deliberately kept this text clear, plain, and free of jargon, so that it speaks as easily to a community organizer as to a foundation director, anywhere in the world. Where technical terms are unavoidable, you will find them explained in the Glossary. But we wanted to make sure nothing here requires an expert to interpret it.

The goal is also to free the system from more bureaucracy, keeping the pledge short and to the point. If you need any clarification on the topics exposed in this document, we created a document sharing platform, accessible to everyone on this issue.

If any part of this pledge is unclear, that is our shortcoming, not yours. And we want to know, so we can fix it. Accessibility is the principle we start from, and we want to keep it in every detail of our work.

Glossary

LLOs - Locally-led Organisations[1]
CBOs - Community-based Organisations
Grand Bargain - agreement made in 2016 at the World Humanitarian Summit between major humanitarian donors and aid organizations to make humanitarian aid more effective and efficient
Local Actors - LLOs, CBOs, RLOs, Beneficiaries and national citizens
RLOs - Refugee-led Organisations

[1] Throughout the Pledge, we will use mostly LLOs to encompass all forms of Local organisations, to be inclusive not only to national organisations, but RLOs as well.

Introduction

For nearly a decade, the humanitarian sector has agreed on where it needs to go. The creation of the Grand Bargain was proof that the humanitarian actors agree that empowering LLOs is essential for long-lasting change. Local actors are the closest to the crises we all work to answer, and empowering the beneficiaries of the humanitarian action allows to create systematic change, instead of only problem acting. The agreement put the needs in writing: more resources, more trust, and more decision-making power into the hands of local and community-based organizations.

The direction has never been in doubt. The delivery has.

This pledge is an invitation to close that gap with concrete and shared commitment for tangible action. It asks international NGOs, foundations, and institutional donors to do three things they are uniquely positioned to do: use the tools that make locally led organizations visible and fundable, promote those organizations as partners rather than sub-contractors, and finance the shared infrastructure that keeps localization moving forward.

At its heart is a simple conviction: we already understand that the communities we serve are not only recipients of change, but the most capable authors. We already signed the commitment to fund LLOs and make humanitarian aid more effective. But we did not change the system in which we operate. Therefore, although we keep trying to achieve sending at least 25% of all funds to LLOs, we keep failing at it. We need to change the tools we use for financing localisation. Connect for Humanity (C4H) exists to build that system, and this pledge is how funders choose to stand behind it.

Signing is voluntary, public, and specific. It commits your organization to real practice, aligns you with the Grand Bargain and IASC localization commitments you have already endorsed, and places your name alongside others choosing to turn a decade of promises into measurable action.

Why this pledge

A decade after the Grand Bargain, the humanitarian sector still channels most of its funding through international intermediaries, with 81% of all Grand Bargain funds still flow through multilateral organizations. In 2025, only 8.6% was verified to have reached LLOs, and a mere 1.7% was verified to have reached LLOs directly[2].

LLOs are still being excluded from the system, remaining under-funded, under-recognized, and hard to find. The commitments exist; the evidence of how we are honouring them does not. The evidence that is being implemented does not exist.

The failure does not lie in pledges or in the actors involved. It lies in the lack of tools and platforms built to drive the Grand Bargain forward. Change was attempted without first creating the systems and means to support it.

We need to rethink how we approach and execute change. Starting by sourcing and funding systems designed to transform the sector, rather than maintain the status quo.

- Highly bureaucratic systems exclude LLOs. They fail to consider the difficulties on the ground and the lack of resources and support that they face.
- Dispersed vetting systems. A LLO does not go through a single vetting system; it goes through one for each potential partner. Yet none of these vetting processes guarantees that they will receive the support they need to create change.
- No uniform directory of LLO's; Without a centralised, standardised and simplified directory, organisations waste time, resources and effort trying to find partners. There is no guarantee that the directories they use offer what they are looking for.
- Grant systems are still being used when:
    - LLOs have unreliable internet connections;
    - LLOs don't have capacity and resources for the applications;
    - LLOs need to be formally registered, in consortiums or vetted.

To fulfil the grand bargain, we need to change the practices we have used up to now. We need to join forces and take action to ensure that our actions are in line with our aspirations. Only in this way can we strengthen confidence in the sector and within the

[2] Falling short? Humanitarian funding and reform October 2024/ALNAP- Global Humanitarian Assistance summary/

humanitarian sector. That is why there is a need for a uniform directory and vetting system, transparent and real information sharing, reaching the most CBOs possible.

This pledge is how funders put their names behind that shift.

It is a Public, Voluntary commitment to bring forward localization in practice Not as rhetoric, not as a wish. But as a practical approach, designed and intended for everyone. anchored in the Grand Bargain and IASC localization commitments. Signatories are amplifying an agreed agenda, not inventing a new one.

The commitment

By signing this pledge, our organization commits to three concrete actions:

1. **Use:**

- Adopt localization tools and platforms, including trusted directories of vetted local actors in our funding, partnership, and referral decisions, so that local organizations are discoverable and reachable in the work we already do.
- Use, finance and promote platforms that empower local actors: directories, local vetting platforms, apps that foster collaboration, and tools that streamline work on the ground.
- Focus on platforms that:
    - Promote local actors and highlight their work.
    - Rely on vetting systems managed by recognized partners.
    - Establish consistent funding models that stick.
    - Provide standardized, accessible reporting systems for local actors.

This means moving away from proprietary systems, internal red tape, and unilateral vetoes. We must take responsibility for decision-making rather than dumping heavy compliance burdens onto under-resourced local groups just to access funding. It's time to take the initiative, absorb the risk, and fund local actors and projects on these platforms. While actively working to increase the number of local organizations we vet and onboard ourselves.

2. Promote

- Champion localization within our networks and among our peers, recognize the provenance and credentials of local organizations, and publicly stand behind the principle that local actors are partners, not sub-contractors. Give them credit to partner LLOs, on reports, websites and social media. Allowing them to be findable and fundable.
- Expand our network of local partners over lateral organizations. Reject redundant and excessive veto systems, trusting instead in previously established vetting frameworks and accepting proof of real-world action and impact.
- Collaborate with other International Actors in creating shared networks of LLO partners.

3. Finance

- Contribute to sustaining the shared infrastructure that makes localization possible - directories, provenance records, and reporting that give local organizations visibility and a pathway to funding - and, over time, increase the share of funding that reaches local and community-based organizations directly.
- Sustain alternative models to grant funding. Promote financial models based on partnership creating with LLOs, rather than competitive systems that exclude them.
- Transition to a long-term funding system. Build genuine, long-term partnerships with local actors to develop projects that aim for community empowerment and self-reliance. Accept and actively encourage the allocation of funds toward staff salaries to ensure money flows directly into local communities, boosting their economic development.
- Adopt systems that ensure transaction security and oversight without resorting to mandates or roadblocks. Focusing on fund transparency that upholds the Grand Bargain.

Levels of commitment

Signatories choose a level that reflects their commitment. Each level names a number of local organizations whose visibility the signatory helps sustain. Named, tiered signatories make the pledge a public marker of leadership on localization.

Level	What it sustains
Supporter	Sponsors the visibility of 10 local organizations in the directory.
Champion	Sponsors the visibility of 50 local organizations and is recognized as a localization champion.
Anchor	Sponsors the visibility of 200 local organizations and is named as a founding anchor of the platform.

By signing this pledge, you promise to honour the commitments expressed here.
To work, fund, and cooperate to overcome the challenges facing the humanitarian sector. Focusing on creating mechanisms and methods that simplify, protect, and improve the sector for all stakeholders.