

## Assessing the impact of the Grand Bargain on local and national NGOs

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### INTRODUCTION

This report captures the voices of local actors from the Global South, comparing responses from surveys undertaken by NEAR in 2020 and 2023. The report provides valuable insights into their perspectives on the Grand Bargain and highlights their experiences of whether and how it has been helpful in their humanitarian work. Its purpose is to provide a perspective from LNNGOs on the Grand Bargain, its achievements and limits, as well as their recommendations for shaping its next phase.

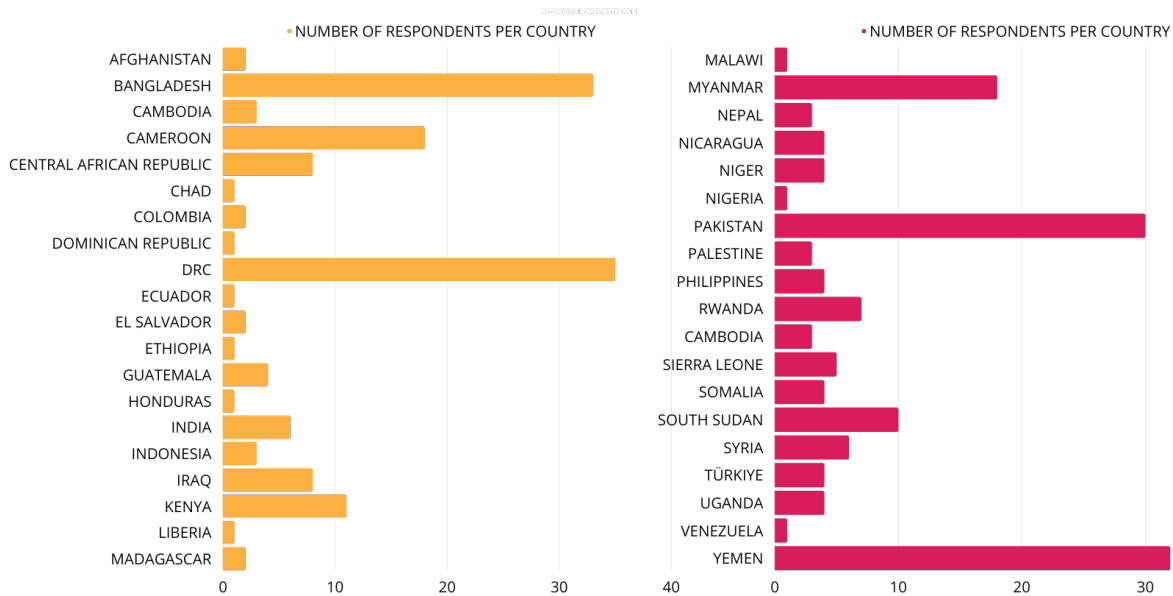
This study is based on an online survey developed, in cooperation with Overseas Development Institute, and distributed by NEAR among our membership and network of influence between 8 and 30 March 2023. It relies on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. It was available in four languages<sup>1</sup>, ensuring broader reach and better understanding.

This report examines the responses of 284 participants, representing a diverse range of local actors from the Global South. Almost two-thirds of participants are affiliated with National NGOs, while just over 30% are with Local NGOs or Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). National Networks of LNNGOs constitute a smaller proportion of the participants (3.9%), whereas National Government offices have minimal representation, accounting for under 1% of the respondents. 67% of respondents are in the staff leadership of their organisation while 18% act as board members of LNNGOs. The remainder of the responses come from staff members in non-leadership roles and volunteers.

The report benefits from diverse participation from various countries, reflecting a range of contexts and regions. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) had the highest representation, with 35 participants, followed closely by Bangladesh and Yemen, with 33 and 32 participants, respectively. Pakistan was also well-represented, with 30 responses.

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<sup>1</sup> Arabic, English, French and Spanish



## Ethics

NEAR is committed to ensuring, respecting, and protecting the rights of research participants. In collecting and analysing the data we observed the following standards:

- Received consent from participants following an explanation of the aims and objectives of the survey.
- Ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of participants.
- Securely stored the information collected.

## AWARENESS AND USE OF THE GRAND BARGAIN

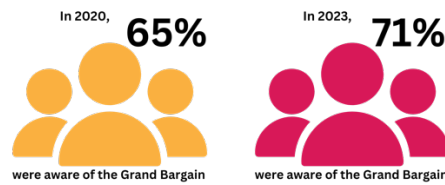
The 2020 survey, which analysed a smaller sample of responses from similar actors, found that local actors have lower levels of awareness<sup>2</sup>; It found, in fact, that 65% of responders demonstrated familiarity with the Grand Bargain and its 51 commitments.

In comparison, there has been a promising improvement in the levels of awareness among local actors regarding the Grand Bargain. This year, 71% of respondents indicated familiarity with the initiative, demonstrating a positive but moderate increase from 2020.

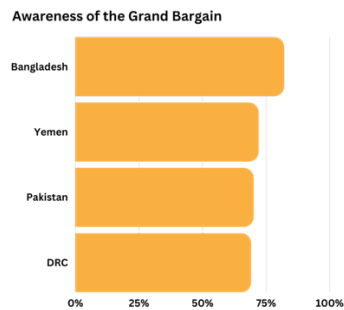
While it's encouraging to note the progress in raising awareness about the Grand Bargain among local actors, there is still work needed for improvement. Considering the survey is primarily distributed among NEAR's members and networks, who are typically involved with this topic, the percentage of participants in this study familiar with the Grand Bargain should ideally be much higher. For NEAR, this underlines the necessity for widespread outreach and strengthened communication efforts to ensure a broader and better understanding of the Grand Bargain by local leaders. It also emphasises an existing gap in

<sup>2</sup> NEAR. (2020). What impact is the Grand Bargain having in the Global South? PERSPECTIVES FROM LOCAL AND NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5fc4fd249698b02c7f3acfe9/t/601158f3bfa61501b1067754/1611749626670/NEAR+Grand+Bargain+Survey+Report.pdf>

awareness at the national level, suggesting that Grand Bargain promotion efforts need to be amplified, in order to ensure that the benefits and commitments are well understood and effectively delivered.



There are significant gaps and inconsistencies in the awareness and understanding of the Grand Bargain, both within and across countries.<sup>3</sup> In this year's survey, while 82% of participants in Bangladesh said they or their organisations are aware of the Grand Bargain, the percentage was lower in Yemen (72%), Pakistan (70%), and the DRC (69%).

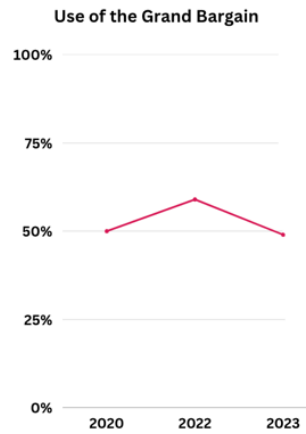


A 2020 NEAR report found that there is considerable interest in the Grand Bargain framework but its utilisation as an accountability and advocacy tool remains limited, indicating a gap between interest and active engagement.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the report highlighted that many LNNGOs perceive the Grand Bargain as irrelevant when it comes to its impact on their work.

This perception stems from the fact that many organisations do not actively use the Grand Bargain. Despite an increase in usage reported in 2022, with 59% indicating its incorporation into their engagement with donors or international actors, the situation this year mirrors findings from 2020, with just under half of the participants reporting using it in any capacity.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*



The use of the Grand Bargain varied considerably by country. While in Bangladesh, more than 70% of respondents said that they use the Grand Bargain in their regular advocacy or partnership work, in both the DRC and in Pakistan this figure accounted for less than one-third of the participants.

**$\frac{1}{3}$**  in the DRC and Pakistan use the Grand Bargain

In this year's survey, participants who have integrated the Grand Bargain into their work said that they primarily utilise it for advocacy purposes: highlighting the importance of localising aid, reminding donors and INGOs of the commitments made during the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, and promoting the provision of quality and sustainable funding for LNNGOs. Many actors said that they often use the Grand Bargain to negotiate more advantageous agreements and more equitable partnerships with donors and INGOs.

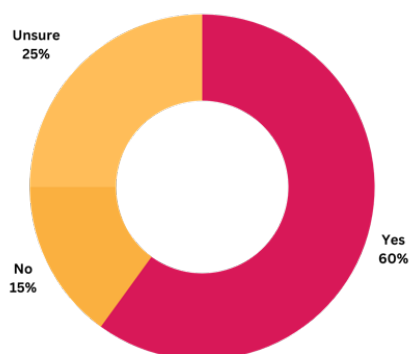
*"In the 2022 flood, the UN, INGOs and donors were funding each other as well as implementing projects directly instead of partnering with local organisations." - respondent from Pakistan*

Meanwhile, many other participants said they use the Grand Bargain primarily for national and local advocacy. The framework is also used for capacity-strengthening initiatives and serves as a platform for discussions within their networks, consortiums, and task forces.

## PERCEIVED IMPACT OF THE GRAND BARGAIN

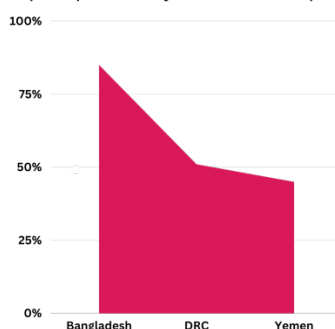
According to the 2023 survey, 60% of participants believe that the Grand Bargain has helped improve the way humanitarian aid is provided to people in need. Additionally, one-quarter of respondents indicated uncertainty about the Grand Bargain's impact, while 15% expressed a negative opinion, stating that it has not led to improvements.

Has the Grand Bargain helped improve the way humanitarian aid is provided to people in need?



In Bangladesh, where a larger proportion of actors reported awareness of and engagement with the Grand Bargain, it comes as no surprise that the percentage of individuals perceiving it as instrumental in improving humanitarian aid stood at an impressive 85%. Conversely, in the DRC, where usage of the Grand Bargain was much lower, just over half of the participants acknowledged its positive impact in enhancing humanitarian aid. This was even lower in Yemen, where only 45% of participants perceived the Grand Bargain as contributing to the improvement of humanitarian aid.

Has the Grand Bargain helped improve the way humanitarian aid is provided to people in need?



For some participants, the Grand Bargain has proven to be instrumental in supporting the work of LNNGOs. Firstly, for almost half of the participants (46%), the Grand Bargain may have played a role in enhancing access to international funding for local actors, at least to some extent. This increased access to resources enables LNNGOs to effectively address humanitarian needs within their communities, which are now reportedly more involved in decision-making (44%) regarding the aid they receive, in part because of the Grand Bargain.

*“To some extent, organisations and donors have begun to pay attention to local and national organisations, but it is still weak.” - respondent from Iraq*

Meanwhile, almost half of participants (44%) have said that the Grand Bargain have successfully improved the participation of local actors in international coordination mechanisms for humanitarian response. According to one participant, this may be the result of a shift in the way LNNGOs are perceived.

*“The Grand Bargain is causing the traditional mechanisms and the perception of the Global South needing “aid” to be reviewed; we only need the opportunity and the means to get ready and walk on our own.” - respondent from Mexico*

Moreover, the Grand Bargain has been credited for contributing to transparency by strengthening the allocation and use of funds by 37% of participants. According to a minority of people (14%), the Grand Bargain has also demonstrated its effectiveness in reducing the number and scope of donor assessments and requests while reducing management costs (21%). This may, perhaps, be due to the higher quality of needs assessments conducted by international humanitarian organisations that, according to some participants (32%), may have resulted from the Grand Bargain.

Despite this, some felt that the improvements resulting from the Grand Bargain still do not necessarily mean that LNNGOs have gained a significant seat at the decision-making table.

## WHAT HAS THE GRAND BARGAIN ACHIEVED SO FAR?

While a large percentage of participants did not think that the Grand Bargain has had an impact, some credited it with their increased participation, access to funding, and technical capacity.

**Participation:** More than half of the participants (55%) who did record an improvement because of the Grand Bargain, reported that the Grand Bargain has created space for greater involvement of LNNGO actors in national-level leadership and decision-making processes. Much lower (37%) was the percentage of those who thought that this increased participation in leadership and decision-making processes has happened at the global level. Additionally, 49% of respondents reported increased participation of LNNGO actors in developing programmes to address humanitarian needs. The increased participation of LNNGOs may reflect a growing recognition of the value and expertise that these actors bring to the table, facilitated by the Grand Bargain forum.

**Access to Funding:** The survey revealed that almost two-thirds of participants believe the Grand Bargain has had an impact on increased access to funding.

**Technical and Administrative Capacities:** Respondents reported a positive impact on their technical and administrative capacities. The Grand Bargain was credited by those who said that it has had an impact with enhancing the ability of LNNGO actors to respond to humanitarian needs (54%) and manage donor funding efficiently (53%).

**Increased Influence in International Policy and Practice:** 36% of respondents said that the Grand Bargain has empowered LNNGO actors to have a greater say in shaping international policies and practices.

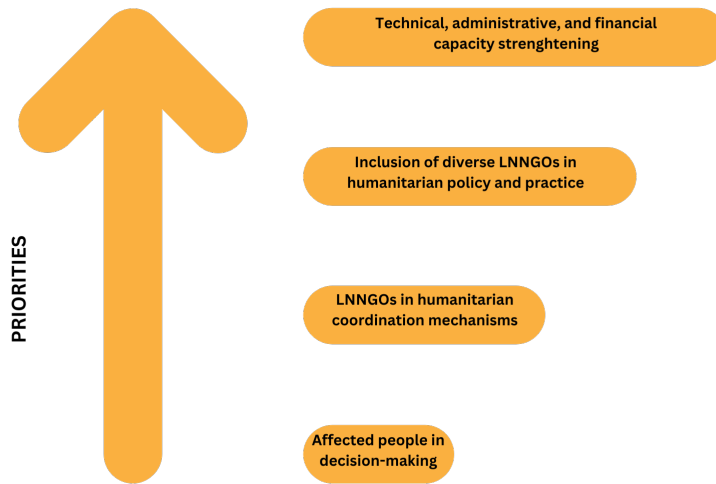
Although opinions around the impact of the Grand Bargain are mixed, many participants reflected on the opportunities it has created for increased participation of LNNGO actors in national-level leadership and decision-making processes. A smaller, but still significant, number of participants thought that this participation was reflected at the global level.

### Challenges and Priorities

According to participants in this year's survey, to address humanitarian challenges, Grand Bargain signatories should prioritise finding solutions for:

1. Inclusion of diverse LNNGOs, including WROs/WLOs, organisations working with people with disabilities, and youth groups in humanitarian policy and practice (60%)

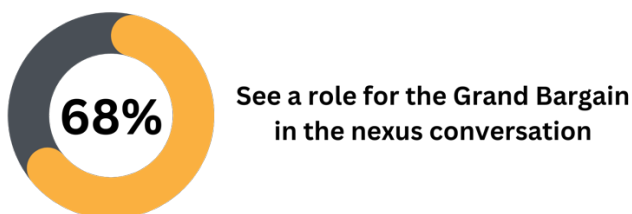
2. Inclusion of LNNGOs in humanitarian coordination mechanisms (48%)
3. Technical capacity strengthening for LNNGOs (36%)
4. Administrative and financial capacity strengthening for LNNGOs (35%)
5. Lack of opportunity for affected people to influence decisions around the aid they receive (23%)



Based on the survey, including diverse LNNGOs in humanitarian policy and practice should be a top priority for Grand Bargain signatories. The importance of including LNNGOs in humanitarian coordination mechanisms, as well as strengthening their technical, administrative, and financial capacities, was also emphasised by participants. Additionally, this priority list highlights the need to ensure that affected people have opportunities to influence decisions regarding the aid they receive.

## ROLE OF THE GRAND BARGAIN IN THE NEXUS CONVERSATION

Regarding the next phase of the Grand Bargain, the survey reveals that nearly seven in ten participants (68%) believe that the Grand Bargain process should play a role in the nexus conversation and contribute to discussions and coordination efforts among humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts. However, it is important to note that 32% of participants do not see a role for the Grand Bargain in the nexus conversation.



Participants who expressed support for the Grand Bargain's involvement in the nexus conversation as part of its next phase emphasised the need for more coordination and collaboration between

humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts to address complex crises and promote sustainable solutions.

However, according to participants, this increased collaboration must better engage LNNGOs, while considering the realities of the contexts in which they work. Participants stressed the importance of ensuring that LNNGOs have a genuine voice and active participation in decision-making processes.

*"There is a dire need for the nexus conversation because we need to be more proactive rather than reactive in our humanitarian response actions. We need to focus on anticipatory actions for preparedness and invest [i]n the resilience building of vulnerable people." – respondent from Pakistan*

To facilitate the participation of LNNGOs, participants emphasised the importance of donors and INGOs adhering to their commitments, especially regarding direct long-term funding for LNNGOs. Many actors recommended implementing improved and transparent monitoring mechanisms for compliance with the Grand Bargain, which would ensure accountability and sustainability of the process and enable effective tracking of progress.

Additionally, participants discussed the need to strengthen the administrative, technical, and financial capacities of LNNGOs and invest in long-term capacity-building efforts.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Grand Bargain has made significant strides towards its goals but is yet to fully realise its transformative potential for LNNGOs. This analysis provides valuable insights into the perspectives of LNNGOs from the Global South on the Grand Bargain and its impact on the humanitarian work in their context.

It highlights that while there has been a moderate increase in awareness of the Grand Bargain among local actors, significant gaps and inconsistencies across and within countries still exist in understanding and engagement with its principles and commitments. This lack of awareness hinders the full participation and benefit of LNNGOs in the Grand Bargain process.

As a result, the utilisation of the Grand Bargain as a reference point is low. Despite a slight increase in usage in 2022, it declined again in 2023, and overall stayed relatively low. The share of participants who said that they use the Grand Bargain in their regular advocacy or partnerships also fluctuated considerably by country.

The 2023 survey reveals diverse opinions regarding the impact of the Grand Bargain on humanitarian aid. Only about one-fifth of respondents believed it has helped improve aid delivery. The Grand Bargain has been recognised by those who believe in its positive impact for its role in enhancing access to funding, fostering increased participation in international coordination mechanisms, improving transparency, and strengthening needs assessments. However, some participants felt that LNNGOs still lack significant decision-making power. Overall, the Grand Bargain has created opportunities for increased participation, access to funding, and technical capacities, but opinions remain mixed regarding its overall impact.

The survey also revealed the key challenges and priorities that Grand Bargain signatories should address. Inclusivity emerged as a main priority, with participants emphasising the need to include



diverse local and national NGOs in humanitarian policy and practice both globally and at the national levels. The inclusion of LNNGOs in coordination mechanisms and the strengthening of their technical and administrative capacities were also highlighted. Additionally, there was a pressing need to ensure the meaningful participation of affected communities in decision-making processes regarding the aid they receive.

Lastly, looking ahead, nearly two-thirds of participants believe that the Grand Bargain should contribute to the nexus conversation, fostering coordination between humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts. Supporters emphasised the need for better engagement of local and national NGOs, ensuring their active participation and decision-making role in the nexus conversation.

The overall findings highlight the need for expanding the impact of the Grand Bargain to fully realise its transformative potential for LNNGOs. In line with NEAR's position paper on the future of the Grand Bargain,<sup>5</sup> this report recommends:

1. **Enhance awareness and understanding of the Grand Bargain:**
  - a. Signatories to engage with their country offices at national level with national and local networks to disseminate information about the Grand Bargain, its principles, and its potential impact
  - b. Secretariat to develop tools to increase understanding and familiarity with the Grand Bargain among local actors, particularly in countries with low levels of awareness
2. **Increase trust and create a truly inclusive and participatory process for LNNGOs:**
  - a. Signatories to agree on and establish stronger monitoring and accountability mechanisms to track the progress and implementation of the Grand Bargain commitments
  - b. Secretariat to improve the accessibility and transparency of information related to the Grand Bargain
  - c. Encourage donors, UN agencies and INGOs to support and promote the participation of LNNGOs in the Grand Bargain process both nationally and globally
3. **Promote the utilisation of the Grand Bargain:**
  - a. Encourage LNNGOs to actively incorporate the Grand Bargain into their engagement with donors and international actors
  - b. Signatories to agree on and secretariat to establish mechanisms to monitor and track the utilisation of the Grand Bargain
  - c. Secretariat and signatories to seek the input and insights of LNNGOs to gather information on their needs, challenges, and expectations of the Grand Bargain

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<sup>5</sup> NEAR. (2023). Reflecting on the Grand Bargain after six years and on the way forward:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5fc4fd249698b02c7f3acfe9/t/642198cc9fd0f8322c02bdbbc/1679923405130/2023+Draft+N+EAR+Position+Reflecting+on+the+Grand+Bargain+after+6+years+-+FINAL.pdf>