



## Grand Bargain: ICVA Statement for the 2024 Grand Bargain Annual Meeting 16 and 17 October 2024

As the Concept Note and Agenda for the Grand Bargain Annual Meeting 2024 sets out, the sector is ever more in dire need of reforms to ensure principled and efficient aid delivery.

The risks highlighted in the report “Too Important to Fail - Addressing the Humanitarian Financing Gap (2016) have only been magnified. As the latest report of Development Initiatives Falling Short? Humanitarian Funding and Reform attests the current humanitarian funding architecture is not meeting rising humanitarian needs.

**Prioritisation or targeting needs is not an answer.** While investing further in anticipatory action, harnessing climate and development funding sources as well as scaling solutions in innovative financing will help, we are still far from reaching the levels and quality of funding needed from these sources, including their accessibility to local and national actors. Furthermore, these sources cannot substitute for increasingly earmarked or decreasing government humanitarian aid.

The Grand Bargain calls for both increased quality funding and increased efficiencies in the system, including strengthening the voice, leadership, and programming of local and national NGOs. Clearly, operational efficiencies can always be gained and indeed, we experienced some gains. The Grand Bargain has offered an opportunity to collectively align reporting tools, increase the use of cash programming, and recognise the key role that local and national NGOs play in meeting the humanitarian needs of their populations (among other key areas). **We need to however go further in reforming the system and shifting power.**

We need to move away from a culture of implementing partnerships among and between international and national agencies and establish truly equitable partnerships, in which the exit strategies incorporate leaving partners better off than at the start of the partnership, both in terms of technical expertise and assets.

We need to continue investing in intermediary mechanisms such as pooled funds which enable local and national NGOs to develop and fund their own programmatic approaches. ICVA continues to support both local and national NGO voices in pooled fund governance mechanisms, through its Resource Facility, as well as continues to support learning and best practises among funds, through its research and convening a community of practice of funds.

Our risk sharing approaches must be built on notions of solidarity and recognition of the complex environments in which we work. They also need to recognise the power imbalances which currently shape how risk is apportioned and find solutions to support the risk management efforts of front-line responders, often least able to shoulder the financial, reputational or operational repercussions of events largely out of their control.



We need to take full advantage of new technology, including Artificial Intelligence, not just for international organisations, but even more importantly for local and national NGOs – whose work and scale could be dramatically enhanced.

Quality, flexible multi-year funding, cannot be reserved for the larger intergovernmental actors but must be provided equally to NGOs, enabling them to implement effectively and efficiently.

It is crucial that funding is provided as directly as possible to the operational entities, including frontline local and national NGOs, enabling them to develop their programming approaches and partner directly with donors, where their systems enable this. Enhancing locally led action, however, also includes strengthening the hundreds of local NGOs and smaller community-based organisations who are essential in meeting the needs of their communities. These organisations fight for their survival, especially in the context of humanitarian financing shifts. Their work, safety and impact are blocked by simple things –lack of fuel for motorbikes, inability to pay for electricity in their offices, the need for one or two paid staff to enhance the work of volunteers. In many contexts, these smaller organisations are the only actors present providing essential life-saving services. Strengthening these actors at scale includes supporting their national NGO forums who can and should provide their members with access to technical expertise, information, and facilitating shared 3<sup>rd</sup> party services.

We collectively need to remind parliaments that the impact of funding reductions are not just numbers but life or death decisions for thousands and thousands of people.

Therefore, at this Grand Bargain meeting, let's set aside our institutional interests and pre-written interventions. **Let us not settle on easy answers, without thinking through whether the measures will bring the change we need.** ICVA and our over 160 members, urge for collective and concrete measures that urgently improve the system and make it truly and efficiently serve the people affected by crises.