



## PLEDGE FOR CHANGE (P4C) 2030


Covid, conflict and climate change have focused attention on the inequities of the world as never before. As leaders of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), we're working with national and local organizations worldwide for a fairer future in which all people's needs are met and their rights upheld, governments fulfil their responsibilities and civil society flourishes. To achieve this, we need to build a stronger aid ecosystem based on the principles of solidarity, humility, self-determination, and equality.

Aid must work more effectively for those it is intended to help and reflect the challenges the world will face in the future. This means creating genuine partnerships with local and national organisations and governments, and shifting more power, decision-making and money to those in places affected by crisis and poverty. Only through such partnerships will we remove any dependency on aid and continue to build the strength of the communities we strive to support.

Being locally led and globally connected will mean we can have bigger, longer-lasting impacts on people's lives. There are times when INGOs should complement local knowledge, expertise and relationships with our resources and skills, but we need to know when to step away as well.

We also need to change the way we present our work to the public. We sometimes portray people living in poverty in the Global South as "different" to ourselves – as helpless victims in need of saviours. This 'white saviourism' reinforces stereotypes whereby we give, and *they* passively receive. The reality is quite different. The best results are achieved when people in their communities lead the decision-making. That is why we're pledging here not only to work more closely with communities, but also to tell their stories more respectfully.

Our pledge is the result of an unprecedented, year-long process convened by Adeso, a humanitarian and development organization in Somalia, in which INGO leaders in the Global North have heeded challenges to their ways of working from those based in the Global South. The pledge builds on previous commitments made by our sector, for example the [Charter for Change](#) and the [Grand Bargain](#), in pursuit of the [Global Goals](#) agreed by world leaders in 2015. While those initiatives focus on the role of INGOs, the pledge emphasises the part to be played by local organisations and the rights, needs and priorities of local communities.



We are committed to accelerating real change. We also recognize that our organisations are diverse in size, business models and partnership practices and will take different paths towards our collective goals. To measure progress and report on our work towards these shared goals:

- We will better define key terms and refine our shared measures for each pledge;
- We will share baseline reports and review our measures.
- We commit to transparent annual reporting on our progress. Change will be incremental at first, but we're committed to transforming our sector by 2030.

This is our Pledge for Change 2030. We invite our peers and donors to join us.

October 2022



## PLEDGE 1: EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIPS

Our organisations have taken some steps towards 'localisation', recognising, and strengthening the leadership and decision-making of national and local partners. However, we need to go much further and faster, so we're making the following commitments:

- Equitable partnerships will be our default approach by 2030. National and local organisations will lead humanitarian and development efforts wherever possible. We will help them take control, and we'll engage directly only when there isn't enough national or local capacity to meet people's needs.
- Where there is no partnership, or we're responding to an emergency, we'll find ways of working with national and local organisations at the first opportunity. We'll then support them as they take over the decision-making. Wherever we work, our broad aim is to encourage a more resilient, independent, and diverse civil society that works in real solidarity with international organizations.
- INGOs competing for funds, facilities, and talent can unintentionally weaken civil society in the countries where we operate. In the years ahead, we'll allocate more resources to help national and local organizations take the lead. We'll work in partnership with them to make sure they benefit from our presence.
- We will share the burden of costs in ways that will make our partners stronger and more sustainable.
- We'll take a more collaborative approach to risk management. We'll avoid applying stricter risk requirements to our partners than ourselves and look for ways of minimizing the compliance burden on partners.
- There will be more collaboration between INGOs to reduce duplication of effort when local organisations are dealing with two or more of us. This should mean a common approach to compliance and due diligence. It could also mean pooling funds and taking other steps to achieve economies of scale.

## PLEDGE 2: AUTHENTIC STORYTELLING

Some of the stories we tell and the pictures that illustrate them have reinforced harmful stereotypes. This kind of storytelling, sometimes associated with ‘white gaze’, distorts reality, and should be eradicated from our internal and external communications. We will make the following changes:

- Our fundraising and communications will reflect our commitments to anti-racism, locally led initiatives, gender equality and equitable partnerships. We will use our platforms to show the actions led by local communities both during a crisis and as they recover, and the impact made by local organisations.
- We will continue to show the harsh realities of poverty, conflict, hunger, and natural disasters because humanitarian crises should not be sanitised. But we’ll avoid exploitative imagery that portrays people as helpless victims. We will give credit to partners where it’s due.
- We will strengthen efforts to make all our storytelling ethical and safe, based on informed consent and accurate representation. We’ll amplify the stories people want to tell rather than merely speaking on their behalf. We’ll preserve the authenticity of a story all the way through our editorial process, from the gathering of words and pictures to editing, production and publication.
- We will stop using jargon that confuses our audiences, our colleagues, and the communities where we work. We’ll use plain words that can be easily translated from English or French into different languages and readily understood by all.
- We will regularly review our words and pictures, creating a culture of anti-racism, reflection and learning. As language evolves, we’ll invite views from colleagues and local organisations, and remove words that have become outdated or offensive.
- We will use language and imagery to inspire wider cultural change. We’ll co-produce stories, photographs and video with local organisations and talent. Wherever possible, we’ll put local people at the centre of the story.

## PLEDGE 3: INFLUENCING WIDER CHANGE

We will advance our goals by explaining the pledge to our staff, peers, supporters, and donors and urging them to support and join us.

- Our leaders will publicly announce the pledge, spelling out to peers, donors, philanthropists and the private sector why we’ve decided to change the way we work and how we’re going to do it.
- We will argue for these changes to be made across the aid and development sector and we’ll create opportunities for Global South leaders to lead conversations and advocate for change in public platforms.
- We will speak out against any government policies or international action that perpetuate a colonial approach to aid and development.
- We will track our progress in implementing the Pledge for Change 2030 and report it publicly to show staff, supporters, partners, and the global aid system that we’re ‘walking the talk’.
- We will share what we learn and demonstrate how we’re shifting power and resources to the Global South with the aim of encouraging other INGOs to follow suit.