

## **Bond Humanitarian Working Group: Global Partnership Conference Position and Recommendations, May 2026**

Bond, the UK network of international development and humanitarian NGOs, developed this paper through consultations with members and local partners in contexts such as Sudan, Syria and Kenya. It informs the Global Partnership Conference (GPC) and focuses on three priority areas: Disaster Risk Finance (DRF); Artificial Intelligence (AI) in humanitarian action; and Local Leadership and Equitable Partnerships. The paper also highlights broader political challenges shaping humanitarian action.

- **Aid cuts and political context:** Bond highlights that reductions in Official Development Assistance (ODA) alongside rising defence budgets are political choices with severe humanitarian consequences. Attacks on humanitarian action, both politically and operationally, are fundamentally political challenges that require political solutions. Spiralling disrespect of International Humanitarian Law and actions that undermine the principled basis of humanitarian aid delivery must be countered by partnerships between donors, international agencies and local actors that demonstrate a commitment to, and take practical actions to protect, humanity in times of crisis.
- **Modern partnerships:** While the concept of “modern partnerships” is welcomed, Bond cautions against its misuse as a justification for reducing aid or withdrawing international engagement. Genuine partnerships must uphold principled humanitarian action and follow the principle “as local as possible, as international as necessary.” The term only has meaning where power, decision-making and resources are actively shifted, and where partnerships are genuinely inclusive of those most affected by crises.
- **Fragile contexts:** Fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS) must be central to GPC outcomes, as these contexts now concentrate the highest levels of humanitarian need, displacement and extreme poverty. ODA, IFI and philanthropic grants should be prioritised for FCAS — particularly hard-to-reach areas and core sectoral responses such as protection — where no alternative financing is feasible. At the same time, humanitarian assistance alone cannot carry the weight of today’s crises.
- **Partnership architecture for Fragile and Conflict Affected States (FCAS) investment:** The GPC must showcase and scale tested approaches for unlocking greater public, private and philanthropic investment in FCAS, despite well-known barriers and the differing perspectives of humanitarian, development and private actors on risks, outcomes and impact. The Compact should set out an explicit partnership principle establishing a coordination architecture for investment — clarifying the distinct roles of different actors, agreeing risk-sharing thresholds, and committing to a common long-term cross-sector objective measured by impact. Where development finance and private sector instruments are mobilised in FCAS, robust ethical safeguards and FCAS-adjusted impact metrics are essential; these instruments cannot substitute for grant-based ODA in contexts and sectors where they do not typically operate.

## **Local Leadership and Equitable Partnerships**

Despite commitments, most donor funding still flows to large international actors, with local organisations often relegated to subcontracting roles. Structural inequalities persist in funding access, decision-making and risk sharing. Localisation efforts have tended to benefit larger national NGOs that most closely resemble big international agencies, not local actors more rooted in community structures. Recommendations:

### **Transform funding models:**

- Channel funding through consortia and pooled funds led or co-led by local actors, especially those often excluded from mainstream humanitarian partnerships including women, youth, faith-based, indigenous and refugee-led organisations; establish dedicated funding windows and simplified access mechanisms for grassroots actors.
- Support long-term strategic partnership agreements with local actors grounded in solidarity, building on demonstrated models from previous UK experience under DFID and other donors such as Sweden that show the effectiveness of longer-term, flexible support in enabling timely, accountable, efficient locally-led response.
- Reconfigure international actors to enable local leadership, and hold them accountable for this.

### **Reform risk management:**

- Provide funding for risk mitigation, duty of care, and core systems.
- Ensure adequate, systematic provision of overheads (ICR) for local actors, building on innovation by other donors recognising the need for both international agencies and local actors to cover their costs.
- Introduce tiered and proportionate due diligence, due diligence passporting and risk-sharing approaches; harmonise frameworks across donors to reduce duplication and administrative burden on local organisations, and promote mutual accountability rather than one-directional compliance.
- Promote tripartite dialogue to foster partnership approaches in risk management within delivery chains between donors, intermediaries and local actors, including extending the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) beyond INGOs.

### **Strengthen accountability:**

- Collaborate with Switzerland, Netherlands and other donors scoping aligned approaches to Equitable Partnership Clauses in funding agreements.
- Improve transparency of funding flows through intermediaries to local actors.
- Require intermediaries to demonstrate how they involve local actors in consortium and/or programme design and decision-making.

- Set measurable equitable partnership and local leadership targets, including at least 25% of funding to local actors.

## **Disaster Risk Finance**

Disaster Risk Finance (DRF) enables a shift from reactive to proactive crisis response by providing funding before disasters occur. While pre-arranged finance is growing, it remains insufficient relative to needs. Access remains highly unequal, with low-income and fragile countries receiving a very small share. Key challenges include limited scale, inequitable access, operational constraints in FCAS (including insecurity and weak systems), and fragmentation across funding instruments and frameworks. Development finance and private sector engagement have a role to play but cannot substitute for grant-based ODA, particularly in FCAS contexts where many development finance and private actors do not typically operate; where these instruments are mobilised, robust ethical safeguards and FCAS-adjusted impact metrics are essential.

### **Key recommendations:**

- Scale pre-arranged financing and broader DRF support by leveraging climate finance, MDB resources, and public-private partnerships to crowd in additional capital, expand coverage, and make every pound go further. Evidence from early pilots should be used to demonstrate what works and support a shift from pilots to systems operating at scale.
- Prioritise ODA and grant-based support in FCAS contexts, ensuring DRF approaches are more flexible and adapted to operational constraints.
- Improve coordination and complementarity across instruments and institutions in support of government-led DRF systems, while linking these to sub-national and local delivery systems where this improves responsiveness, last/first-mile delivery, and accountability.
- Ensure local actors can access pre-arranged finance and play a leading role in DRF approaches, including through instruments that embed local ownership in governance, design and activation. Anticipatory action mechanisms should integrate community-led early warning, indigenous knowledge, and flexible locally-set triggers adapted to fragile and conflict-affected settings.

## **Artificial Intelligence in Humanitarian Action**

AI is transforming humanitarian work, but governance and safeguards lag behind. Bond proposes a “Right to Know” principle: people should be informed when AI affects decisions and must be able to challenge outcomes. Key risks include lack of transparency, inconsistent standards, and exclusion of local actors. The rapid pace of technological change further amplifies these risks. These risks are compounded by digital inequalities between Global North and Global South actors: local organisations are often excluded from AI governance conversations due to limited access to infrastructure, funding and technical expertise; AI systems risk reproducing bias where local languages, contexts and datasets are under-represented; and there is a real prospect that premium AI tools become exclusive and unreachable for local actors.

**Key recommendations:**

- Adopt responsible AI governance frameworks such as 'SAFE AI'.
- Develop actionable operational standards.
- Increase transparency on AI use, including failures.
- Strengthen risk mitigation systems.
- Ensure inclusive governance with local participation, addressing digital inequalities directly and supporting locally-modelled, contextually-grounded AI solutions so that capability is not concentrated in a small number of Global North actors.
- Work towards a global independent AI assurance mechanism.

**Explanatory Note:**

This position paper reflects extensive consultation and policy dialogue amongst INGO members of the Bond Humanitarian Working Group as well as with national/local civil society actors from Kenya, Syria, Sudan, Lebanon and other contexts. Sub-groups of the Bond HWG were formed to develop joint analysis and recommendations, which were tabled for discussion at a half-day Humanitarian Pre-Event to the Global Partnership Conference hosted at the FCDO in April 2026. A debrief workshop and follow-up consultation with the members and partners involved contributed to development of the above recommendations.