

Advancing Localisation, Flexible Funding, and Meaningful Participation in Humanitarian Action

Philippine National Reference Group Report - 2025



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“The most important element which is solidarity has not been emphasized enough. This must be a top priority for the humanitarian community, especially during challenging times, to ensure that the humanitarian mandate and goals are met.”

- Maria Rosario Felizco, Executive Director, Oxfam Pilipinas.

One-Word Takeaway by the Participants of the Grand Bargain Conference



“The Filipino spirit of "Hinabangay" or "Bayanihan," a concept that embodies the core of local-led action and solidarity.”

-Regina “Nanette” Salvador-Antequis, Executive Director, ECOWEB.

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This report reflects the spirit of *hinabangay* and *bayanihan*—a testament to the power of solidarity, co-creation, and shared commitment to a more locally led humanitarian system.

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Acronyms

- A4EP – Alliance for Empowering Partnership
- AAP – Accountability to Affected People
- CBO – Community-Based Organization
- CBOs – Community-Based Organizations
- CLEARNet – Community-Led Emergency Action Response Network
- CSO – Civil Society Organization
- CSOs – Civil Society Organizations
- DG ECHO – Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations GB –
- Grand Bargain
- GEDSI – Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
- HCT – Humanitarian Country Team
- ICR – Indirect Cost Recovery
- IFRC – International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
- INGO – International Non-Governmental Organization
- INGOs – International Non-Governmental Organizations
- KPIs – Key Performance Indicators
- LGUs – Local Government Units
- LNA – Local and National Actor
- LNAs – Local and National Actors
- M&E – Monitoring and Evaluation
- NAPC – National Anti-Poverty Commission
- NRG – National Reference Group
- OCHA – United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
- PINGON – Philippine Inclusive NGO Network
- PRC – Philippine Red Cross
- PWDs – Persons with Disabilities
- RCRC – Red Cross and Red Crescent
- SCLR – Survivor and Community-Led Response
- UN – United Nations

Executive Summary

Summary of Progress of Grand Bargain in the Philippines: 2025 Findings with Comparison to 2021

OVERALL REFLECTION

Both the 2021 and 2025 assessments confirm that progress in the Philippines remains moderate, fragmented, and uneven, often championed by a few progressive organizations rather than embedded system-wide. Barriers identified in 2021 restrictive funding, compliance burdens, tokenistic participation, and lack of trust persist in 2025, though there are growing examples of good practice and stronger collective calls for reform.

The 2025 findings therefore provide an updated evidence base for NRG follow-through actions toward 2026, the 10th anniversary of the Grand Bargain, with a clear mandate: shift power, resources, and decision-making toward local actors to achieve transformative change.



SURVEY RESULTS 2025

The 2025 online perception survey revealed moderate but uneven progress on Grand Bargain commitments in the Philippines. Flexible funding was highlighted as the weakest area (36.6%), with most local actors still constrained by rigid, short-term, donor-controlled grants. Administrative simplification (29%) and participation of affected people (20.4%) followed as key gaps. By contrast, localisation ranked lowest among the least-progressive areas (14%), suggesting some visible advances. Still, progress was often described as partial and fragmented, with success driven by a handful of committed organizations.

In comparison, the 2021 assessment have already flagged similar barriers: resource gaps, divergent definitions of localisation, and uneven application of commitments. The persistence of these issues into 2025 underscores that systemic reforms remain limited, with only incremental improvements achieved.



INSIGHTS FROM LNA CONSULTATIONS

The LNA consultations in 2025 reinforced these survey findings. Local actors pointed to bureaucratic donor requirements, subcontracting cultures, and lack of direct access to funds as enduring barriers. They emphasized that participation remains tokenistic, with affected people consulted mainly at project level but excluded from decision-making. At the same time, LNAs highlighted positive practices, including women-led organizations and grassroots groups demonstrating strong leadership, underscoring the need for sustained investment and equitable partnerships.

In 2021, similar concerns were voiced: local actors were often sidelined in coordination platforms, treated as subcontractors, and excluded from shaping funding decisions. While 2025 consultations showed growing visibility of local actors and more examples of community leadership, the overall picture remained one of fragmented and uneven progress.



INSIGHTS FROM INGOS CONSULTATIONS

The 2025 consultation with PINGON members revealed that while many INGOs affirm support for localisation, they remain constrained by headquarters-driven policies, limiting their ability to adapt funding models or partnership practices. This disconnect continues to slow systemic change. This reflects the 2021 finding that global-level mandates and donor-driven priorities often prevented genuine shifts in country-level practice, showing a consistent pattern across both assessments.



NATIONAL CONFERENCE REFLECTIONS

The August 28, 2025 National Conference, attended by delegates from donors, UN agencies, INGOs, LNAs, RCRC, private sectors, government, and think tank, echoed these concerns while also surfacing collective priorities. Breakout sessions and plenary discussions emphasized:

- The urgent need for flexible, multi-year funding to strengthen resilience and reduce dependency.
- Ensuring affected people's participation beyond consultations, with accountability mechanisms that genuinely shape programs and funding priorities.
- Tackling administrative burdens by pushing for simplified, harmonized reporting requirements.
- Strengthening solidarity, visibility, and recognition of LNAs as equal partners.

The conference concluded with the signing of a Covenant Statement, reaffirming solidarity, collaboration, accountability, and flexible funding as anchors of the Philippine Roadmap for GB 3.0.

In comparison, the 2021 dialogue process also highlighted the importance of flexible funding, capacity-strengthening, and more inclusive coordination. However, the 2025 process showed a sharper consensus on accountability, equitable partnerships, and harmonization of reporting requirements—indicating a maturing localisation agenda, though still far from systemic change.



Introduction



ECOWEB Marawi Response Project Manager, co-facilitating the community scorecard roll out to youths in Bantogawato, Balindong, Lanao del Sur. The main facilitators were the community leaders who graduated the community scorecard training of trainers.

The Grand Bargain (GB), launched in 2016 with more than 71 signatories from donor governments, UN agencies, INGOs, the Red Cross Movement, and local and national actor (LNA) networks, was established to make humanitarian aid more effective, efficient, and accountable. While the original agreement outlined ten commitments, these were later streamlined under GB 2.0 (2021) into four priority areas: localisation, quality funding, participation of affected people, and humanitarian–development collaboration (the nexus).

In 2023, signatories endorsed Grand Bargain 3.0 (2023–2026), reaffirming these core priorities while adding a stronger emphasis on anticipatory action and preparedness, innovative financing models, and sector-wide transformation.

GB 3.0 seeks not only to deepen implementation of commitments at the country level, but also to leverage the Grand Bargain’s convening power to drive systemic change across the humanitarian–development–peace landscape.

In the Philippines, the first Grand Bargain assessment was conducted in 2021 as part of the localisation workstream dialogue. In 2024, the National Reference Group (NRG) Philippines was revitalized as one of seven focus countries identified for structured engagement under GB 3.0. In 2025, the NRG led a second national assessment through online survey, consultations, and a stakeholders’ conference with GB signatories and local actors.

This report presents the 2025 findings, compared with 2021, to highlight progress and persistent challenges in advancing GB commitments in the Philippines.

The multi-stakeholder dialogue process

Grand Bargain Country Level Localisation Dialogues 2021

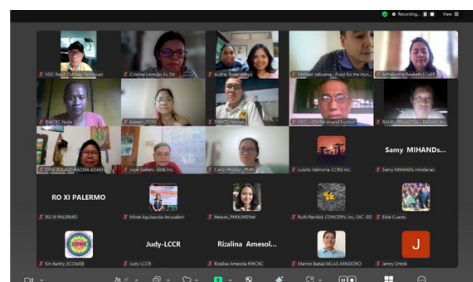


In 2021, the Grand Bargain Localisation Workstream launched country-level dialogues to assess how localisation commitments were advancing in different contexts. These highlighted that localisation is context-specific, with the seven-dimension framework proving useful in capturing diverse perspectives. Persistent challenges, however, included resource gaps, divergent definitions, and uneven application of commitments.

In the Philippines, a six-month dialogue was co-organized by ECOWEB, A4EP, Oxfam, and OCHA, with strong support from the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator. The process included 25 FGDs (236 participants across six regions), 78 survey respondents, and six dialogue sessions with 155 participants, co-organized with various CSOs. Participants included CSOs, UN agencies, INGOs, government representatives, the private sector, and affected communities. This inclusive effort laid the groundwork for introducing National Reference Groups (NRGs) under GB 2.0 to strengthen localisation commitments at the country level.

2025 Localisation Dialogue with GB Signatories, INGOs, LNAs, and other Stakeholders

At the 2024 Grand Bargain Annual Meeting, National Reference Groups (NRGs) were revitalized as mechanisms to link global GB 3.0 discussions with local actors. Under the 2024–2026 Terms of Reference, they were tasked to advance commitments through dialogue, align national priorities with global engagement, and enhance accountability by tracking progress and challenges. Seven focus countries were identified: Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon, Myanmar, the Philippines, South Sudan, and Ukraine.



In the Philippines, the NRG—co-led by ECOWEB (A4EP affiliate), the Center for Disaster Preparedness (NEAR affiliate), and Oxfam Pilipinas—undertook a series of initiatives from June to August 2025. These included two online consultations with LNAs (July 4 and August 15) involving 39 participants, an online perception survey on GB implementation with 53 respondents, bilateral dialogues with 3 GB signatories, a consultation with INGO members of the Philippine Inclusive NGO Network (PINGON), and an engagement with the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) composed of UN agencies, INGOs, LNAs, and donors. These efforts culminated in the Philippine Grand Bargain National Conference on August 28, 2025,

Grand Bargain National Conference in the Philippines 2025

The National Conference on the Grand Bargain in the Philippines was attended by 93 participants representing donors, UN agencies, INGOs, RCRC societies, local and national actors (LNAs), the private sector, think tanks, and government. The conference gathered stakeholders to discuss and evaluate the current progress of localisation efforts. Most participants, including GB signatories (see list in annex), remained actively engaged throughout the event. In addition to plenary and panel discussions, breakout sessions were held to generate further insights and inputs for co-creating the Philippine Roadmap for Grand Bargain 3.0. The conference concluded with the signing of a Covenant Statement.



2025 Progress on the Grand Bargain Commitments in the Philippines

Focus Areas: Localisation, Funding, Participation, and Administrative Requirements

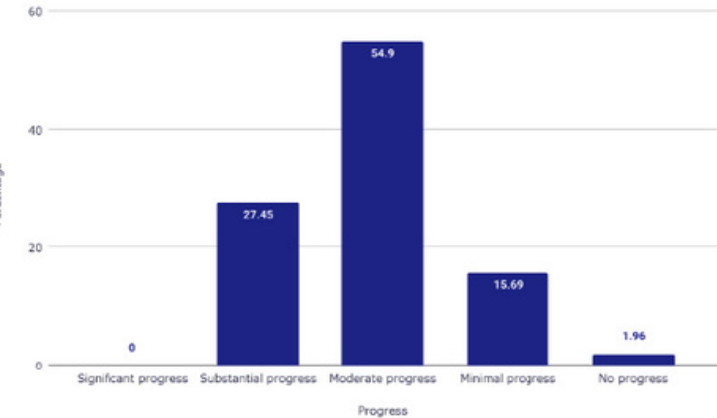


Localisation and Equitable Partnership

As shown in the figure, a majority of respondents (54.9%) observed moderate progress in localisation, particularly in terms of local actors’ participation in decision-making, equitable partnerships, and capacity investments. Meanwhile, 15.69% reported minimal progress and 1.96% saw no progress at all, underscoring persistent gaps. Only 27.45% of respondents noted substantial progress, showing that just over a quarter of stakeholders have experienced meaningful change.

These results suggest that while momentum toward localisation is evident, progress remains partial and fragmented, with good practices often concentrated among a handful of committed organizations.

Localisation: Meaningful participation of local actors in decision-making, equitable partnerships, and increased capacity investments



Consultations and conference discussions largely echoed these findings. LNA consultations emphasized that localisation agendas remain well-articulated but poorly operationalized, often hindered by donor influence, subcontracting cultures, and rigid funding processes. Local actors also noted their contributions were under-recognized in humanitarian coordination and visibility spaces, with many partnerships still perceived as unequal.

At the same time, the breakout sessions during the August 28 National Conference highlighted encouraging practices such as co-design with community-based organizations, capacity-sharing, mentoring, and peer-to-peer learning. These were cited as tangible demonstrations of localisation in action, though participants stressed that these remain exceptions rather than the norm.

The meeting with INGOs (PINGON) confirmed a similar pattern: while many INGOs express support for localisation, they remain constrained by headquarters-driven policies and lack country-level guidance, slowing systemic change.

Overall, the collective reflection across survey data, consultations, and the conference underscores a dual reality: localisation is advancing through pockets of good practice, but systemic barriers—such as donor control, inequitable partnerships, and superficial participation—continue to limit broader transformation.

“While IAs want to ensure safety and quality, they often transfer the risk to local partners without providing the necessary budget for due diligence, safeguarding, and audits. This leaves local partners vulnerable, facing financial hardships and delays. As she put it, If we want them to have seatbelts, we must pay for those seatbelts”

-Reiza S. Dejito, Country Director, CARE Philippines

Key Recommendations:

1. Foster strategic partnerships with local organizations, work in collaboration with the government to support Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and promote partnerships among organizations with diverse capacities.
2. Establish a platform for sharing information, ensuring equal access to resources, and advocating for accountability in the humanitarian and development sectors.
3. Engage with donors to promote flexible funding and bolster the localization movement.
4. Institutionalize localization: Incorporate localization into staff onboarding processes and performance metrics.

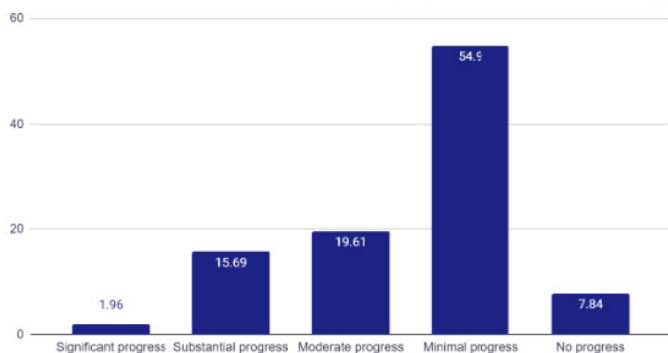


Flexible Funding

Regarding the progress on flexible funding in the Philippines, data reveals that efforts on advancing flexible funding remain significantly challenged, with the majority of participants reporting minimal progress (54.9%) and 7.8% observed no progress at all, on increasing flexibility in funding, suggesting that access to flexible, crisis-responsive, or pooled funds for local actors is still limited.

Despite ongoing discussions and efforts, funding streams remain largely rigid, short-term, and tightly controlled by donors or intermediary organizations.

Flexible Funding: Increased flexibility in funding, including direct access by local actors to pooled or rapid response funds



Key Recommendations:

1. Innovative Funding: Explore blended finance approaches that combine traditional and non-traditional funding sources to unlock new resources.
2. Flexible Funding: Encourage donors to adopt more flexible, multi-year funding arrangements.
3. Transparency: Advocate for a clearer policy on ICR and more transparent cost recovery processes.
4. Simplified Accountability: Simplify reporting requirements and introduce alternative accountability mechanisms, such as regular check-ins, to reduce paperwork.

Consultations and conference discussions echoed these survey findings. LNAs underscored that access to timely, flexible, and predictable resources remains the greatest barrier to scaling localisation, with donor mistrust and risk-averse funding practices as major obstacles. INGOs, while supportive of localisation in principle, admitted being constrained by headquarters-driven policies that prevent them from adjusting funding structures. Breakout groups at the National Conference cited positive examples, such as pooled funds, adaptive grant-making, and ECOWEB's survivor- and community-led response (sclr) micro-grants, which show how flexibility can empower local actors. Yet these remain isolated practices, far from systemic adoption.

Overall, the findings suggest that while promising models exist, the mainstreaming of flexible funding in the Philippines remains uneven and constrained, requiring stronger advocacy with donors, INGOs, and humanitarian coordination platforms to institutionalize such approaches.

Examples of flexible funding in the Philippines include:

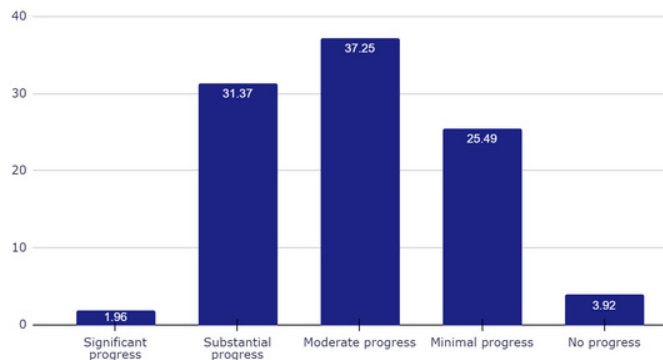
- (1) the Abot Kamay Solidarity Fund for Resilience managed by CDP; and (2) flexible support from philanthropic agencies, channeled through ECOWEB and its LNA partners under CLEARNet, which provided micro-grants directly to mutual aid community groups to manage and implement their own priority actions.



Participation of Affected People

On the participation of affected people, most respondents observed moderate progress (37.25%), while 31.37% reported substantial progress in including crisis-affected people in program design and feedback. This indicates that participatory practices are gaining traction, with some affected populations actively engaged in consultations, assessments, and monitoring processes.

Participation of Affected People: Inclusion of crisis-affected people in program design and feedback



However, these mechanisms remain largely project-level and consultative. A significant 25.49% of respondents noted minimal progress, and 3.92% reported no progress, reflecting persistent gaps. Respondent comments emphasized that while feedback is often gathered, it is rarely acted upon in meaningful ways, and participation seldom extends to strategic decision-making or funding priorities. Consultations with LNAs echoed these concerns, stressing that participation is often tokenistic, with limited representation of marginalized groups such as women, youth, and Indigenous communities.

The National Conference breakout sessions confirmed this, noting that although community-based organizations are increasingly involved across the humanitarian cycle, they remain underrepresented in policy and coordination spaces. Participants called for moving beyond consultation toward institutionalized, rights-based participation with clear accountability mechanisms ensuring that crisis-affected people's voices shape not only projects but also strategies, partnerships, and resource allocations.

Recommendations:

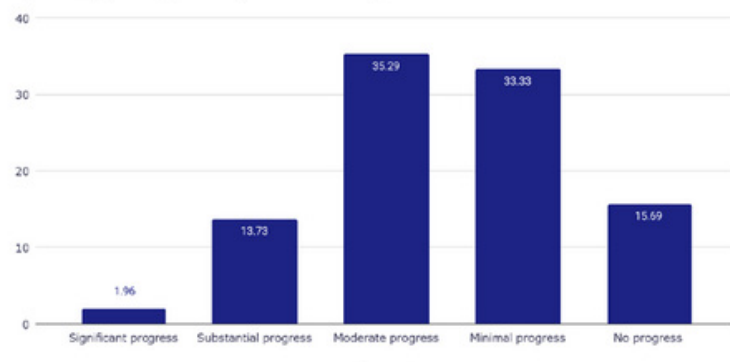
- **Mainstream and Maximize Feedback Mechanisms:** Local feedback mechanisms should be institutionalized within organizations and networks.
- **Recognize and Organize:** Organizing and capacity building should be recognized as a vital part of humanitarian work, including "hand-holding" CBOs until they can operate independently.
- **Engage Government:** engage the League of Mayors, to advocate for legislation related to localisation to ensure continuity and maximizing existing government mechanisms like Local Development Councils and NAPC to elevate the playing field for AAP.
- **Inclusion of Refugees:** The group also proposed including refugees, as a vulnerable population group, in localisation efforts.



Example of participation of affected people in the Philippines can be seen in the mutual aid and leadership of community groups, strengthened through the SCLR approach and the provision of flexible micro-grants. These enabled communities to prioritize emergency, recovery, and resilience actions based on their needs, while also building their capacity and agency in humanitarian response.

On Administrative Requirements

Administrative Requirements: Efforts to simplify or harmonize reporting, compliance, and audit systems



As shown in the figure, administrative simplification remains one of the least progressive areas of Grand Bargain implementation in the Philippines. Nearly 70% of respondents reported little to no improvement with 33.33% minimal and 15.69% none, while only 13.73% noted substantial progress. A further 35.29% reported only moderate progress. This indicates that burdensome reporting and compliance systems remain a major obstacle, with fragmented and duplicative donor requirements disproportionately affecting local actors.

These results suggest that while there are isolated examples of simplified templates and adaptive compliance practices, overall progress remains limited and uneven. Most local actors still face time-consuming and complex reporting demands, reducing resources available for actual program delivery.

Consultations and conference discussions largely echoed these findings. LNA consultations stressed that compliance requirements remain bureaucratic and rigid, often discouraging smaller grassroots organizations from accessing funding. Respondents emphasized the need for harmonized reporting systems, developed in partnership with local actors, to ensure accountability without adding unnecessary burden.

At the August 28 National Conference, breakout sessions confirmed this picture. Participants pointed to the urgency of simplified and harmonized reporting requirements across donors and intermediaries. Some INGOs shared encouraging practices, such as mentoring systems, safe-to-fail pilots, and streamlined partner templates, but admitted these remain the exception rather than the rule. Overall, the collective reflection across the survey, consultations, and the conference underscores a clear reality: administrative burdens remain a systemic barrier to localisation and equitable partnerships. Simplification and harmonization are seen not just as technical adjustments but as a matter of fairness and shifting power in humanitarian financing.

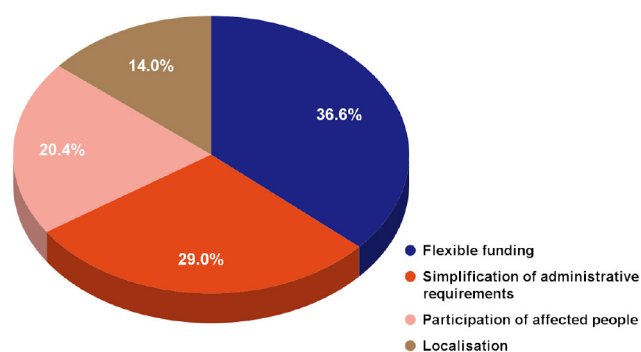
“These standards are fixed and not likely to be lowered. The policy is hard to change... but the good news is that money is going to the locals. The solution is not to lower standards but to bring everybody up. This means investing in capacity building before a crisis occurs, a “two-handed” approach: one hand responds to immediate needs, and the other builds the capacity of local responders.”

-Arlynn Aquino, Program Officer of Antenna, DG ECHO

Recommendation:

1. **Simplified Accountability:** Simplify reporting requirements and introduce alternative accountability mechanisms, such as regular check-ins, to reduce paperwork.

Areas of least progress



Respondents were asked to identify the least progress that they have observed and majority of the responses have reported flexible funding (36.6%) as the least progressive area, emerging as the most concern among other areas.

This suggests that despite efforts, challenges remain among most local actors and organizations on directly accessing flexible and adaptive funding mechanisms due to restrictive and rigid funding mechanisms still largely donor-driven, which some of the respondents have attributed to donor mistrust and risk-averse behavior of most funders.

Meanwhile, the area of administrative simplification (29%) closely follows. As cited by most respondents in their comments in this survey, reporting and compliance systems remain complex and fragmented, which has burdened most local actors and organizations.

Both the LNA consultations and conference breakout sessions echoed this, stressing that without flexible and multi-year funding, local actors remain trapped in short-term project cycles and dependent on intermediaries.

The simplification of administrative requirements (29%) was the second-most cited concern.

Respondents pointed to complex and fragmented reporting systems that place disproportionate burdens on local actors. This aligned closely with consultations, where LNAs described administrative requirements as overly demanding and duplicative, and INGOs at the PINGON meeting acknowledged limited room to adjust compliance demands due to headquarters-level restrictions.

Participation of affected people (20.4%) also emerged as an area of concern. While progress has been made in involving crisis-affected people in consultations and assessments, both survey respondents and breakout groups noted that participation is still largely consultative and project-level, with minimal influence on strategic decision-making.

By contrast, localisation (14%) ranked lowest among the least-progressive areas, suggesting that more visible progress has been achieved compared to other commitments. Yet, consultations and the conference revealed continuing barriers, including tokenistic inclusion of local actors, underrepresentation of CSOs in coordination mechanisms, and insufficient support for grassroots organizations. This reflects a dual reality: while localisation is advancing in practice through co-created models and peer-to-peer capacity sharing, systemic change remains uneven.

“Promote the role of humanitarian action within all development frameworks, specifically by ensuring that humanitarian efforts are integrated into both local and national development plans. This requires active engagement with government at all levels.”

-Mr. Bong Masagca, PDRRN





Overall Findings and Priorities

The 2025 survey results highlight persistent barriers to advancing Grand Bargain commitments in the Philippines. These include risk-averse behavior among donors, limited trust in local actors and CSOs, power asymmetries in coordination platforms, burdensome compliance and accountability requirements, tokenistic participation, and inadequate localisation of decision-making.

In response to these challenges, respondents identified the following key priorities for the National Reference Group (NRG) to pursue:

- 1. Push for flexible and direct funding to local actors and organizations.**
- 2. Develop co-created, harmonized compliance systems to ease administrative burdens.**
- 3. Ensure genuine participation of crisis-affected people and local actors in decision-making.**
- 4. Invest in sustained capacity strengthening of local and national actors.**
- 5. Inter-Agency Coordination: Strengthen coordination to avoid resource competition and review existing government models and manuals.**

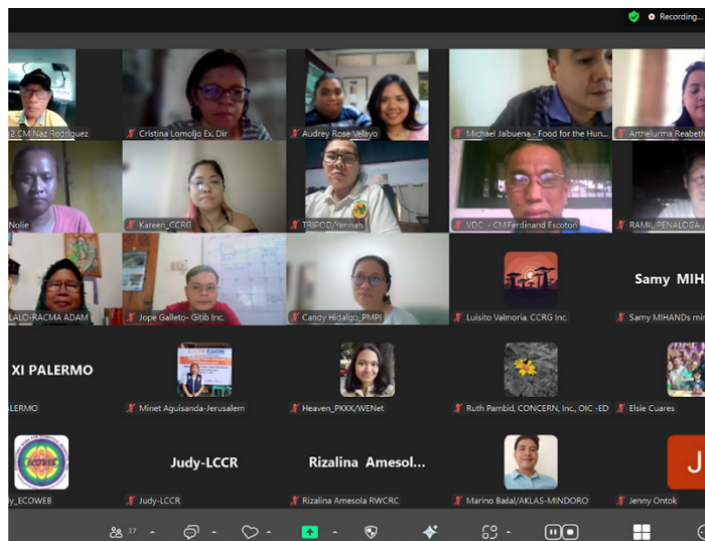
These findings underscore the urgent need for a deliberate and accelerated shift of power, resources, and decision-making authority toward local actors and organizations. The priorities cited show that local actors are prepared to lead—provided they are given not only space but also the means and authority to do so.



While moderate progress has been observed in areas such as localisation, participation, and some steps toward inclusive coordination, overall advancement remains fragmented, inconsistent, and driven by a handful of champions rather than a broad-based institutional shift. Persistent barriers—such as centralized decision-making, restrictive and donor-specific funding requirements, complex compliance mechanisms, underrepresentation of local actors, and mistrust from donors—continue to constrain systemic change.

Despite these limitations, there is clear momentum among local and national NGOs and strong demand for transformation. The collective call from survey respondents, consultations, and the national conference points to the need for flexible funding, equitable partnerships, genuine participation, and harmonized compliance as the core pillars of the Philippine Roadmap for GB 3.0.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS 2021-2025 Progress in the Philippines – 7 Dimensions Framework



During the national conference on the Grand Bargain Philippines, the current findings regarding the perceptions on localisation progress which was drawn from the accounts and responses from localisation dialogues up to the 2025 perception survey was presented among the participants. The purpose of the presentation was to report the current standing and progress of localisation in the Philippines and to solicit further data from the participants during the breakout sessions which was held afterwards.

The breakout sessions revealed more persisting barriers and most importantly it has also revealed best practices from various organizations per thematic area. Further panel discussions and Q&As revealed the complexities of the presented gaps regarding localisation, as one participant emphasized its complexity goes beyond what the survey can capture. Shown in the table below are the key summary and highlights of the data sourced from 2021 dialogues up to the recent grand bargain conference. (See Annex A.2.)

Summary of Findings (2021 vs 2025)



The comparative assessment of the Grand Bargain commitments in the Philippines shows that, while localisation has gained greater visibility and recognition since the 2021 country-level dialogue process, progress in 2025 remains moderate, uneven, and largely fragmented. Findings from the survey, consultations, and the national conference consistently point to persistent structural barriers rigid and short-term funding practices, complex compliance requirements, limited participation of affected people, and power asymmetries in coordination platforms that continue to prevent a systemic shift toward locally led humanitarian action.

In 2021, the multi-stakeholder dialogues co-organized by OCHA, ECOWEB, Oxfam, and A4EP identified similar barriers: subcontracting relationships, limited direct access to funding, weak representation of local actors, and burdensome donor-driven compliance systems. At that time, localisation was largely framed as a policy aspiration, with local actors demanding recognition, resources, and space to lead.

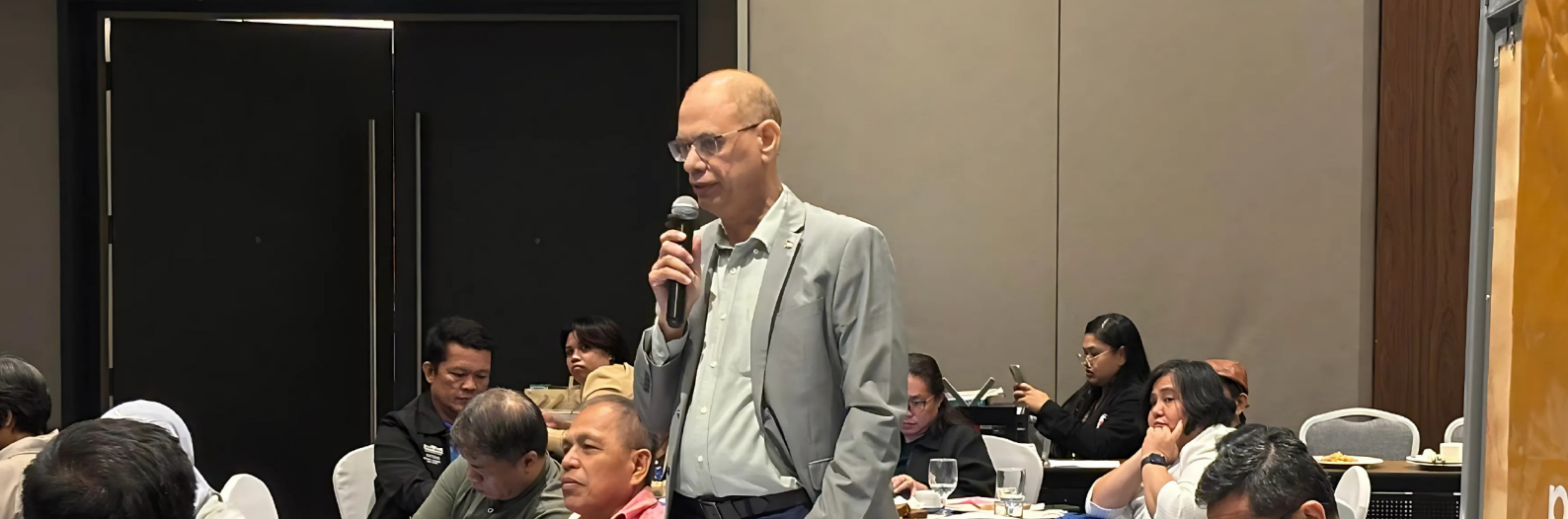
By 2025, progress is noted in recognizing local actors, particularly women-led groups, for their leadership. Emerging practices like co-design and peer learning aim for equitable partnerships, with 31% of survey respondents reporting progress, although this is primarily at the project level. Localisation ranks lowest in progress compared to other commitments like flexible funding, which remains a challenge.

Despite improvements, systemic change is lacking. Funding is still donor-driven and short-term, with flexible funding as a major barrier. Compliance burdens hinder grassroots organizations, and participation is often seen as tokenistic, lacking influence on high-level decisions. Although coordination and visibility for local networks are improving, they remain overshadowed by international actors.

Overall, localisation is moving beyond rhetoric into practice but hasn't yet achieved the systemic reform intended by the Grand Bargain. The Philippines shows progress from agenda-setting in 2021 to incremental practice by 2025, but more sustained action is needed to transfer power and resources to local actors.

In summary:

1. **Continuities** : Funding, compliance burdens, and tokenistic participation remain the most persistent challenges.
2. **Shifts since 2021:** Localisation is more visible (ranked lowest among “least-progressive” areas in 2025), showing incremental but fragmented gains.
3. **Emerging strengths:** Women-led and grassroots groups demonstrate leadership; positive practices in co-design, mentoring, and peer learning are expanding.
4. **Overall:** The Philippines has moved from dialogue and agenda-setting (2021) to modest but uneven practice (2025), but systemic barriers remain largely unaddressed.



Ways forward in advancing locally-led actions in the Philippines

Based on the consolidated recommendations from the 2025 perception survey, local and national consultations, the Grand Bargain National Conference, and the Covenant Statement on Advancing Localisation and Quality Humanitarian Action signed at the conference, clear directions have been identified for the National Reference Group (NRG) Philippines. These priorities reflect the collective voice of diverse stakeholders—local and national actors, INGOs, UN agencies, donors, government representatives, and crisis-affected communities—and provide the foundation for follow-through actions toward 2026, the 10th anniversary of the Grand Bargain. The roadmap below outlines the areas where NRG Philippines will concentrate its efforts to accelerate systemic change, close persistent gaps, and ensure that localisation commitments translate into meaningful practice at scale.

Roadmap Priorities

1. Flexible and Direct Funding

Push for expanded access to flexible, predictable, and multi-year funding for local and national actors. This includes advocating for direct financing mechanisms and reducing dependence on restrictive, donor-driven project-based grants.

2. Simplified and Harmonized Compliance

Work toward the development of co-created, harmonized reporting and compliance systems that reduce administrative burdens, increase efficiency, and enable LNAs to focus resources on program delivery and community impact.

3. Genuine Participation of Affected People

Ensure the systematic inclusion of crisis-affected people in decision-making, moving beyond tokenistic consultations toward rights-based participation where communities influence priorities, strategies, and funding allocations.

4. Equitable Partnerships and Capacity Strengthening

Promote equitable and transparent partnerships between LNAs, INGOs, and donors. This includes investment in capacity-sharing, mentoring, and peer learning systems, with emphasis on women-led and community-based organizations demonstrating strong leadership.

5. Accountability and Solidarity

Strengthen collective accountability mechanisms anchored on solidarity and collaboration among humanitarian actors. The NRG will continue to act as a platform for monitoring progress, surfacing challenges, and ensuring that Philippine perspectives inform global Grand Bargain processes.

Next Steps for NRG Philippines

- Document Innovations: All innovations and good practices discussed during the conference will be documented.
- Form Working Groups: The five breakout group themes will be transformed into official working groups to continue the process.
- Co-create a Roadmap: These groups will work together to co-create a roadmap and implement the commitments.
- Mainstream Results: The conference results will be mainstreamed into various platforms, including existing networks and government mechanisms.
- Expand NRG representation: include representative from affected population and donor agencies

National Reference Group Philippines

	ORGANIZATION	NAME OF REPRESENTATIVE	DESIGNATION	EMAIL
CO-LEADS				
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3	OXFAM PILIPINAS	RHODA AVILA	Humanitarian Portfolio Manager/ GB NRG Co-lead for International agencies	Rhoda.Avila@oxfam.org.ph
Other GB Signatories				
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5	IFRC Philippine Office	GOPAL MUKHERJEE	Program Coordinator	gopal.mukherjee@ifrc.org
6	CARE Philippines (also representing PINGON)	REIZA S. DEJITO	Country Director	reizasalindo.dejito@care.org
LNA Networks				
7	Philippine Red Cross	DR GWEN PANG	Secretary General	gwenpang@redcross.org.ph
8	DRRNet Philippines	SINDHY OBIAS	Lead Convenor/ ACCORD Ex. Dir.	obiassindhy@gmail.com
9	CODE NGO	ANNA ABALAHIN	Deputy Executive Director	annacodexicnl@gmail.com
10	NAPC-VDC Sectoral Council	JOY ACUNA LASCANO	Council Member/ Balay Rehab ExDir	jralascano.balayrehabctr.ed@gmail.com

Co-leads:



Networks of Local and National Actors:



Grand Bargain Signatory Members:



Annexes

A.1. Philippine statement

Covenant on Advancing Localisation and Quality Humanitarian Action in the Philippines

Grand Bargain National Conference in the Philippines – 28 August 2025

We, the participants of the **Grand Bargain National Conference in the Philippines**, composed of local and national humanitarian actors, donors, UN agencies, international NGOs, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and Philippine Red Cross (PRC), government partners, civil society organizations, private sector, think tank, and crisis-affected representatives, hereby affirm our shared commitment to **advance localisation, quality funding, accountability, and system transformation** in line with the **Grand Bargain 3.0 priorities**.

Guided by the theme *"From Commitments to Co-Creation: Advancing Localisation of Humanitarian Aid in the Philippines,"* and building on the progress and lessons from the 2021–2025 localisation journey, we recognise that:

- Progress has been made but remains uneven, with persistent barriers such as **donor-driven partnerships, limited flexible funding, compliance burdens, and tokenistic participation**.
- Innovations led by local actors, women-led organisations, and affected communities have shown that **equitable partnerships, risk-sharing, and inclusive participation** are not only possible but essential to humanitarian effectiveness.
- The **National Reference Group (NRG) Philippines** is a vital platform for bridging local realities with global Grand Bargain discussions, ensuring accountability and co-creation of solutions that reflect the voices of the most affected.

Therefore, through this Covenant, we solemnly agree to:

1. **Strengthen Partnerships** – Promote trust-based, equitable, and long-term collaboration between local, national, and international actors, ensuring visibility and recognition of local leadership.
2. **Unlock Quality and Flexible Funding** – Advocate for and implement predictable, multi-year, and accessible funding mechanisms, including pooled and rapid funds directly available to local and national actors.
3. **Simplify and Harmonize Systems** – Work towards co-created reporting, compliance, and audit frameworks that reduce administrative burdens and enable local actors to focus on response and resilience.
4. **Institutionalize Localisation** – Mainstream localisation in policies, financing, and programming beyond pilot projects, embedding commitments in national frameworks, humanitarian coordination mechanisms, and development agendas.
5. **Ensure Participation and Accountability** – Scale up meaningful and systematic participation of affected people in program design, implementation, monitoring, and decision-making processes.
6. **Advance System Transformation** – Support anticipatory action, innovative financing, humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus, and climate resilience as integral to localisation and crisis response.

Our Commitment

We sign this Covenant as a collective pledge to act on the recommendations co-created in this conference, and to contribute to a stronger, more inclusive, and accountable humanitarian system in the Philippines.

Together, we move from commitments to action, from pilots to systemic change, and from tokenism to genuine partnership, so that humanitarian aid truly empowers and uplifts the communities it seeks to serve.

Signed this 28th day of August 2025, at Park Inn by Radisson, North EDSA, Quezon City.

A.2. . COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS MATRIX OF THE FINDINGS FROM 2021 DIALOGUES VS 2025 LOCALISATION DIALOGUE SESSIONS, AND GRAND BARGAIN CONFERENCE BREAKOUT SESSION, BASED ON THE 7 DIMENSIONS OF LOCALISATION.

Issues & Recommendations		Breakout Group Insights (Aug 2025)	Perceived Status of Progress
2021	2025		
Partnership Issues: Sub-contracting, politicization of aid, competition. Recommendations: Promote shared values, joint programming, capacity strengthening.	Issues: Subcontracting culture persists, INGOs keep control, Extractive partnerships, “local branches” of INGOs Recommendations: Shift to equitable partnerships, Develop power-shift frameworks, Support women-led & IP orgs	Best Practices: co-designing, tripartite partnerships, reverse call for proposals, federations/hubs. Barriers: lack of trust, shrinking civic space, time constraints. Recommendations: promote strategic partnerships, resource-sharing platforms, engage donors, government support for CSOs, elevate PH conference outcomes globally.	Incremental improvement, but systemic inequality continues. Trust and recognition remain key challenges.
Participation and Accountability Issues: Communities treated as recipients, excluded in planning, lack of feedback. Recommendations: Institutionalize co-creation, support community organizing, strengthen feedback systems.	Issues: Participation still tokenistic, Assessments superficial, Feedback not acted upon, Marginalized groups excluded Recommendations: Ensure meaningful participation, Institutionalize AAP, Champion inclusivity (women, PWDs, IPs, CBOs)	Best Practices: rights-holder involvement, GEDSI mainstreaming, use of NAPC mechanisms. Barriers: weak GEDSI, red-tagging, govt leadership changes, accreditation burdens. Recommendation: institutionalise feedback, maximise govt mechanisms, recognise organising, legislate support, include refugees.	Slight traction, but participation remains tokenistic; needs systemic embedding into strategies and funding.
Funding and Financing Issues: Local CSOs lack access, overheads, unfunded, rigid donor Rules. Recommendations: Simplify requirements, flexible multi-year funding, fund overhead	Issues: Flexible funding least-progressing area, Donor mistrust & risk aversion, CSO competition, INGOs retain majority Recommendations: Push for direct, multi-year, flexible funding, Risk transfer mechanisms (SSS/GSIS), Donor pledges for NRG	Best Practices: pooled funds, consortiums, mentoring. Barriers: reduced grants (middle-income status), fragmented systems, risk transfer, weak ICR knowledge, competition. Recommendations: blended finance, simplify accountability, institutionalise localisation in staff KPIs, multi-year funding, transparent ICR, collaboration.	Little systemic change; remains the top barrier to localisation.

<p>Capacity and Local Leadership</p> <p>Issues: CSOs lack compliance/technical capacity; local knowledge is undervalued.</p> <p>Recommendations: Invest in capacity building, academic partnerships, mindset shifts.</p>	<p>Issues: CSO capacity still undervalued, Grassroots lack resources, Small orgs excluded</p> <p>Recommendations: Provide pooled funds for small CSOs, Amplify local leadership, Capacity sharing as equal exchange</p>	<p>Capacity building activities/initiatives cited by most participants but gaps remain in expertise and dependency risks due to undefined timelines.</p>	<p>Progress exists but fragmented. Capacity is acknowledged but still underfunded and underutilized.</p>
<p>Coordination & Representation</p> <p>Issues: INGOs overshadow CSOs, weak gov't coordination, CSOs lack resources to join.</p> <p>Recommendations: Strengthen local leadership, CSO-led coordination, ensure representation of affected people.</p>	<p>Issues: Power asymmetries persist, Subnational & sectoral voices excluded (IPs, faith-based, women), PRC not engaged fully</p> <p>Recommendations: Establish Sub-National NRGs, Map wider constituencies, Engage PRC/IFRC</p>	<p>Barriers: exclusion of CBOs, data gaps, lack of recognition, siloed work.</p> <p>Recommendations: co-create inclusive NRG with CBO seats, foster trust, institutionalise NRG for continuity.</p>	<p>Persistent gaps; coordination remains dominated by international actors with LNAs underrepresented</p>
<p>Standards & Policy</p> <p>Issues: Standards not contextualized, CSOs lack resources for compliance.</p> <p>Recommendations: Harmonize standards, participatory M&E, sanctions for non-compliance. Visibility & Credit Sharing</p>	<p>Issues: Fragmented donor-specific compliance, Reporting burdens remain, State procedures restrict CSOs</p> <p>Recommendations: Co-create harmonized compliance, Policy reforms for CSO engagement, Mainstream GB with gov't/CSOs</p>	<p>Barriers: Reporting/requirement compliances burdens affirmed by most</p> <p>Recommendations: recommendation to simplify accountability and adopt alternative mechanisms.</p>	<p>Still a systemic barrier; no broad harmonization achieved. Remains highly donor-driven.</p>
<p>claiming credit), CSOs under-recognized, Communities value presence over visibility</p> <p>Recommendations: Equitable visibility in partnerships, Inclusive & culture-sensitive materials,</p> <p>Community recognition</p>	<p>Issues: CSO contributions underrepresented in media, INGOs dominate branding, Lack of systematic documentation</p> <p>Recommendations: Promote CSO visibility in donor/media platforms, Evidence-based documentation, Equitable branding & credit sharing</p>	<p>Call for recognition of CBO/CSO contributions and documentation of local practices.</p>	<p>Some progress but still uneven; INGOs dominate narratives.</p>

A.3. Links to Conference, Survey Analysis, and Consultation References and Materials

1. August 28, 2025 GB Conference in the Philippines materials
 - 1.1. Program
 - 1.2 Conference proceedings
 - 1.3 Actual participants of the conference
 - 1.4 Photos and videos
2. Minutes of 2025 Consultations and Dialogues.
3. 2025 Perception survey analysis
4. Moving forward localisation of humanitarian action in the Philippines: 2021 Localisation dialogue report.
- 4 Toolkit on the conduct of dialogue on localisation of humanitarian actions

A.4. Survey questionnaire

Survey: Reflections on Grand Bargain Implementation – Philippines (For Grand Bargain Signatories and stakeholders in the Philippines)

The Grand Bargain National Reference Group (NRG) for the Philippines is launching this survey as part of the preparatory process for the upcoming Country-Level Grand Bargain Stakeholders Meeting in July 2025. Your responses will also inform the Grand Bargain Annual Meeting of Signatories in Geneva this October 2025.

We invite all stakeholders engaged in humanitarian action in the Philippines—donors, UN agencies, international NGOs, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and local and national actors—to share reflections on progress, challenges, and emerging priorities related to the implementation of Grand Bargain commitments in the Philippine context.

The survey will remain open until September 5, 2025. We highly value your input, as it will help shape collective strategies for a more effective, accountable, and locally led humanitarian response.

Thank you for your participation.

Data Privacy Notice: By submitting this form, you agree to the collection and use of your personal information solely for registration and communication purposes related to this activity. Your data will be handled in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 and will not be shared with third parties without your consent.

Section 1: Respondent Information

1. Name (optional):

* 2. Organization:

*3. Type of Organization (select one):

☐ Donor Agency

☐ INGO

☐ Local/National NGO

☐ RCRC Movement

☐ Other (please specify): _____

* 4. Position/Role:

*5. Are you actively following Grand Bargain processes in-country or in global level?

☐ Yes☐ No☐ Not sure

▼ Section 2: Progress and Challenges in 2024

▼ Section 2: Progress and Challenges in 2024

Please rate the following areas based on your observation of progress in the Philippines (1 = No progress; 5 = Significant progress):

*6. Localisation: Meaningful participation of local actors in decision-making, equitable partnerships, and increased capacity investments

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

6.1. Comments/Examples: _

*7. Participation of Affected People: Inclusion of crisis-affected people in program design and feedback

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

7.1. Comments/Examples: _

*8. Flexible Funding: Increased flexibility in funding, including direct access by local actors to pooled or rapid response funds

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

8.1. Comments/Examples: _

*9. Administrative Requirements: Efforts to simplify or harmonize reporting, compliance, and audit systems

☐ 1

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

9.1. Comments/Examples: _

Section 3: Barriers and Priorities

10. In which areas has there been the least progress in your context? (select up to two)

☐ Localisation

☐ Participation of affected people

☐ Flexible funding

☐ Simplification of administrative requirements

10.1. Comments: _

11. What are the top 2-3 specific barriers in your context to advancing these commitments?

12. What 2-3 key priorities should the Philippine NRG focus on in 2026 based on GB 3.0 and the Implementation Agenda?

Section 4: Inclusivity and Engagement

13. In your consultations or activities, have the following constituencies been meaningfully engaged? (Select all that apply)

☐ Donors

☐ UN Agencies

☐ INGOs

☐ Local/National NGOs

☐ RCRC Movement

☐ Affected populations

☐ Not yet, but planned

13.1. Comments: _

14. Would you or your organization be willing to join or support future NRG consultations (e.g., stakeholder meetings, peer learning exchanges)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Maybe - I need more information

14.1. Suggestions on format or themes: _

Thank you for your participation!

Your responses will help ensure inclusive and evidence-based discussions at the Grand Bargain Annual Meeting and shape the direction of the NRG in the Philippines.



Photo Credit: Engr. Doni Koshi S. Estacion, (ECOWEB)

NATIONAL REFERENCE GROUP PHILIPPINES



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