**Membership Criteria and application process**

**1. Introduction**

NEAR (Network for Empowered Aid Response) is a movement of civil society organizations with a bold ambition – to reshape the top-down humanitarian and development system to one that is locally driven and owned, and is built around equitable, dignified and accountable partnerships.

We want to increase genuine accountability to donors, the public, and affected communities by promoting greater transparency in community, local and national responses to humanitarian and development challenges. And we want people to be at the heart of every response so that donors at one end and affected communities at the other can see the quantity and quality of what is delivered and received. We envision closing the gap between the traditional aid system and the communities it aims to serve.

Local is powerful. It is local organisations that are often first at the scene of crisis and whose effectiveness and speediness in responding often saves lives within the first few days of an emergency. Local organisations are often the ones who are entrepreneurs and innovators in finding solutions to challenges that they intimately understand. We want to build on this and shape a system where local communities are empowered agents of change with the capacity to address the challenges that impact their own communities.

**2. History**

The need for NEAR has been long overdue but was first affirmed when Adeso commissioned a studyin 2014 to develop a more systemic understanding of the current demand, feasibility and scope of such a network. The report findings revealed positive and widespread support for the creation of this network.

A side-event at the Global Forum for Improving Humanitarian Action held in New York in June 2015, over 20 leading organisations working with local communities officially endorsed the network, reaffirming the need for a stronger local voice in the humanitarian and development system.

Since on-going consultations with local and national organisations in Africa, Asia, Middle East and Latin America provide further evidence for the network as well as a repository of voices from the communities in which they serve. It is these voices and issues that reaffirm the vital need for NEAR and are shaping the network’s strategy and framework.

**3. Our vision**

A world where local communities have the capacity, resources and agency to address the challenges that impact them.

**4. Our mission**

To work towards restructuring the global response to human, economic and environmental challenges so that actions to address these are locally driven and owned, and promote equitable, dignified and accountable partnerships.

**5. Our core values**

5.1 Humanity beyond identity: We bring “humanity back to humanitarianism” by focusing solely on the people and making sure that humanitarian and development responses go directly to the people in need;

5.2 Inclusiveness: We recognise the powerful role played by local communities in times of crisis and in development. We want to ensure that the muted voices are heard, resources are fairly shared and partnerships are equitable and dignified;

5.3 Dignity: We believe local people can and should shape humanitarian and development responses with their own ideas, values, lifestyles, preferences, needs abilities and desires;

5.4 Credibility and mutual accountability: We are determined to increase genuine accountability to donors, the public and affected communities by making the delivery of local and international humanitarian and development responses more transparent;

5.5 Independent: While we depend on the support of our partners and donors, we are independent of outside influences. Our leading light is the vision and mission of this network.

**6 Definition of NEAR Member organisations**

6.1 NEAR defines its member organisations as “local NGOs”.

These are civil society organisations or citizens’ groups who are locally rooted, founded, and headquartered in a country that is not a member of the OECD-DAC (except for Chile, Korea, Mexico and Turkey) and not affiliated to any international NGO\*.

6.2 Local NGOs could be carrying out operations at the international, regional, national, sub-national or community level.

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\* International NGOs are those based in an OECD-DAC member country and carrying out operations in one or more developing countries. Cited from Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) Report 2015.

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**7 General Criteria**

7.1 NEAR is an inclusive network, which leaves no one behind. Taking into consideration the diversity among local and national actors and the different contexts in which civil society actors operate the following categories of membership apply;

7.2 Have at least two years proven track record of operation activities in the humanitarian/development sector;

7.3 Must be locally rooted in the community and have a proven record of excellent working relations with or within the community;

7.4 Must provide audited financial statements for 2 consecutive years;

7.5 Must have a governance structure, constitution and by-laws written down in a publicly available document;

7.6 Not affiliated to terrorist organisation or involved in terrorist financing as dictated by International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (1999) (the “1999 Financing of Terrorism Convention”)[[1]](#footnote-1) or money laundering or any other criminal activities under international or national law;

7.7 Local and national organizations with special mandates on vulnerable/risk groups (such as gender equality, women and human rights, supporting people with disabilities) are encouraged to join.

**8. Types of membership**

There are 3 types of membership at NEAR:

8.1 Full Membership: meet all the criteria including definition;

8.2 Associate Membership: this category is open to movements, other local regional actors including Diaspora organizations, individual experts and professionals;

8.3 Observer Membership: This is a category of those who cannot meet the criteria but hope to work toward meeting that criteria in the future;

**9. Full membership**

An organisation is eligible to be made a full member if:

9.1 It is ready to commit to the mission, vision and values of NEAR;

9.2 The organisation fits the above definition;

9.3 It is legally registered or recognised as a not-for-profit organisation in the country where it has its headquarters;

9.4 It meets the requirements for financial accountability under the law in the country where it has its headquarters;

9.5 It is actively working towards improving accountability practices towards people and communities affected by disaster, conflict and poverty;

9.6 Willing to pay membership fees;

9.7 Full member organisations must be approved by the Membership Committee and Leadership Council and adhere to the NEAR membership by-laws and policies of NEAR.

**10. Entitlements of full members:**

10.1 Entitled to attend and speak at NEAR general meetings;

10.2 Entitled to vote at NEAR general meetings;

10.3 Eligible for election to the Leadership Council;

10.4 Entitled to nominate persons to stand for election to the Leadership Council;

10.5 Entitled to participate in committees and working groups of NEAR at global, regional, national and local levels;

10.6 Entitled to lodge proposals for consideration at the general assembly;

10.7 Entitled to preferential access to events and support services of NEAR network.

**11. Associate Members:**

11.1 The organisations or individuals who believe in the mission, vision and values of NEAR;

11.2 The CBOs who do not meet the criteria of NEAR full membership but who would like to take a pathway to full membership through coaching and mentoring;

11.3 The organisations or individuals who do not fit the above definition but would like to be associated with NEAR.

**12 Entitlement of associate members**

12.1 Can take part in meetings and events;

12.2 Can take part in working groups;

12.3 Cannot be a member of the governance structure;

12.4 Cannot stand for election or vote at the General Assembly;

12.5 Willing to pay membership fees.

**13 Observer Membership**:

13.1 The organisations who support the mission, vision and values of NEAR but who do not fit the definition of local and national NGOs;

13.2 Willing to pay membership fees.

**14 Entitlement of observer membership**

14.1 Can take part in General Assembly meetings;

14.2 Cannot be a member of the governance structure;

14.3 Cannot stand for election or vote at the General Assembly;

14.4 Cannot take part in working groups.

**15 Membership Fees**

All potential NEAR members should be willing to pay an annual membership fee based on different membership categories. The membership fee structure will be reviewed annually and will be based on annual income of potential members.

**16 Application Process**

A membership application form should be completed and sent to the NEAR Secretariat along with the following documents:

16.1 Statutes/ constitution/ Statutes of Incorporation/Articles of Association or similar document;

16.2 Staff Code of Conduct that includes the prohibition of sexual exploitation and abuse by staff including permanent and temporary staff, volunteers, and consultants;

16.3 Proof of non-governmental and non-profit legal status or proof of least 2 to 3 years proven track record of operation activities in the humanitarian/development sector (for full member applications only);

16.4 Two most recent annual reports and audited financial statements, including sources of income and current donors;

16.5 Names of Board of Directors, Trustees or equivalent;

16.6 Confirmation, via the application process, that the organisation or entity commits to the NEAR vision, mission and values;

16.7 Two references, one of which is from an existing NEAR member.

**17 Approval process**

17.1 Secretariat

* Secretariat reviews the application against the eligibility criteria and verifies that all documents are submitted, including references by the applicant;
* The secretariat may request additional information from applicant;
* Once the verification process is finalised the secretariat will notify the NEAR members that application has been made by the organisation.

17.2 NEAR Members

* Once the members receive notification of the membership application from the secretariat, the members can raise any objections with justification to the secretariat within 2 weeks;
* If there are any objections the secretariat will examine the matter and make a recommendation to the Leadership Council.

17.3 The Leadership Council

* The secretariat will provide full information with recommendation and justification to the Leadership Council for approval of the member’s application;
* The Leadership Council will deliberate and provide the decision for approval or not to the secretariat.
* The Leadership Council will review and approve applications quarterly.

17.4 The applicant

* The organisation applying for membership will get a response within three months of applying for membership unless there are issues raised by the members or the LC;
* Once the membership has been approved by the LC the secretariat will inform the applicant and send member package and will request membership fee payment;
* On receipt of the membership fee the organisation will become a member;
* The organisation will provide their logo to be uploaded on the NEAR website. The member will also upload logo of NEAR on their website.

**18 Membership Renewal**

The membership will be renewed on annual basis on receipt of the membership fee.

**19 Suspension of membership**

The membership of NEAR will be suspended if:

19.1 Organisation is in violation of membership criteria or rules and regulations;

19.2 Failure to pay membership fee;

19.3 The organisation will be given the chance to justify and/ or rectify the mistake and will be asked to provide justification;

19.4 The leadership council will take the decision after reviewing the evidence.

**20. The right to appeal**

20.1 In case of rejection or deferred application the applying organisation has a right to appeal the decision once with justification to the LC;

20.2 An appeals committee will examine the facts and will provide a response with assistance from the secretariat. Their response is final

***Note Membership fees amounts and commencement will be determined at the first Annual General Assembly***

**Application Form**

**JOIN US – Closing the Gap!**

NEAR welcomes applications for membership from local and national Non-Governmetal Organizations (NGOs) worldwide, including coalitions, networks and individual organisations.

By joining our network, you will have the opportunity to be part of a global movement of local organizations with a bold ambition – to reshape the top-down humanitarian and development system to one that’s locally driven and owned, built around equitable, dignified and accountable partnerships.

Together our combined knowledge and experience will have a real impact on closing the gap between the aid system and the communities it aims to serve.

**MEMBERSHIP commitment**

As a member of NEAR you are committed to:

* Supporting the mission and vision of NEAR network
* Sharing relevant information related to humanitarian and development issues with the network,
* Contributing to our activities,
* Participating in the General Assembly where possible,
* Promoting the activities of NEAR in your country and with your partners,
* Contributing to NEAR’s sustainability by paying annual membership fees.

**How TO become a membeR**

Please fill -in the **Application Form** below *(linked - on the website)* then send your Application form along with the relevant supporting documentation listed in the **Application Checklist** to **NEAR Secretariat**, by e-mail to membeship@near.ngo or by post to:

NEAR

P.O BOX 70331-00400

Nairobi

Kenya

**APPLICANT DETAILS FORM**

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| Type of NEAR membeship applied for: (please tick one of the boxes)  Full Membership  Associate Membership  Observer Membership | |
| **Organisational Information** | |
| Organisation Name : | |
| Postal Address : | |
| Telephone : | Fax : |
| E-mail : | Website : |
| Other contact/media details (SKYPE, Facebook, etc.): | |

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| **Primary Contact Person** This person will receive all correspondende from NEAR and is responsible for dissemination within your organizaton. If you wish to nominate additions primary contacts, please contact NEAR at [membership@near.ngo](mailto:membership@near.ngo) | |
| Name : | |
| Title/Position : | |
| Postal Address (if different from organisation) : | |
| Telephone : | Mobile : |
| E-mail : | Fax : |
| Other contact details (SKYPE, Facebook, etc.) : | |

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| **Financial Contact Person** This person will receive invoice for the payment of membership dues and will be contacted for any membership dues issues. If you wish to nominate additional contacts, please contact NEAR at [membership@near.ngo](mailto:membership@near.ngo) | |
| Name : | |
| Title/Position : | |
| Postal Address (if different from organisation) : | |
| Telephone : | Mobile : |
| E-mail : | Fax : |
| Other contact details (SKYPE, Facebook, etc.): | |

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| **Head of Organization** Please indicate the name of the Head of the <organization (CEO/Executive Director extc). This person will only be contaczed for matters of the highest importance. (*Please complete this secton even if the person is the same as the contacts entered above)* | |
| Name : | |
| Title/Position : | |
| Postal Address (if different from organisation) : | |
| Telephone : | Mobile : |
| E-mail : | Fax : |
| Other contact details (SKYPE, Facebook, etc.): | |

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| **References contact details:** | |
| **NEAR member** | |
| Organisation Name : | |
| Contact Person : | |
| Title/Position : | |
| Postal Address : | |
| Telephone : | Mobile : |
| E-mail : | Fax : |
| Other contact details (SKYPE, Facebook, etc.): | |
| Second reference contact details: | |
| Organisation Name : | |
| Contact Person : | |
| Title/Position : | |
| Postal Address : | |
| Telephone : | Mobile : |
| E-mail : | Fax : |
| Other contact details (SKYPE, Facebook, etc.): | |

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| **Information about your organization** | | |
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| Is your organization a not-for-profit entity which conforms with the law of the State your country? | Y | N |
| Does your organization have a transparent, accountable and representative governance structure?  (deemed to mean that the statues/articles/regulations/bylaws and toher constitutive institutional instruments for a governance structure that affrds the members of the organization fair and adequate participation in the activities and governance of the organization.) | Y | N |
| Does your organization have a board that is autonomous and independent?  (deemed to mean a board whose decision making processes adhere to the provisions contained in the statues/articles/regulations/by-laws and other constitutive institutional instrumnets, and are not controlled or unduly influenced through financial or other pressures exerted by government agencies or public or private entities) | Y | N |
|  | | |
| List the countries in which your orgnanization has activities: | | |
| List the countries in which your organizations has country offices reporting back to headquarters  (out posted or country offices means that the organization must have registered or proved activites in at least one State/country which is different from where the main office or headquarters is located. Out posted staff based in partener organizations cannot be considered as such) | | |
| Reported income in last 2 financial years:  Eg: USD 99,000 and under, USD50 000 and under etc | | |

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| Map your activities against NEAR’s four main focus areas which it aims to have an impact on:  (please tick one of the boxes)  Advocacy (We enhance policy-level and operational collaboration between local and national organizations. We aim to increase local influence on decision-making at international, regional and national policy level through advocacy, networking and communication).    Organisational Development (We believe that robust and resilient organizations are key to increasing local capacity to respond to crisis and development challenges. We offer a platform for collaboration, along with learning and resources to strengthen the organizational capacity of our members as well as their accountability and preparedness to respond to the needs of their communities.)    Financing (We advocate for increased access to direct funding for local and national organizations. As part of this we are exploring the design of innovative financing models including piloting independent, pooled funding mechanisms at country levels managed by the network. The national funds would invest in the standing responsive capacity of organizations working with local communities and strengthen their ability to work with a wide range of partners, both for humanitarian aid, development and resilience building.  .)    Research (Research We counteract the lack of visibility in the international space of organizations working with local communities by actively promoting their work through research and evidence-based publications.) |
| State any other activites that are relavant |
| State briefly reason for joining NEAR (e.g. to share knowledge/to network/establish partnerships etc  (Maximum 50 words) |

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| **Authorization (**to be completed by the duly authorized Head of organization/institution) | |
| On behalf of (name of of organization), I hereby confirm that the information contained in this application is correct and confirm our application for NEAR membership. (name of organization) shares and supports the objectives of NEAR. | |
| Name : | |
| Title/Position : | |
| Signature : | Place and Date : |
|  |  |

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| **Application Checklist** | | |
| Application Details Form – completed and signed | **Notes** | **Y/N** |
| Statutes, constitution, Statutes or Articles of Incorporation, Articles of Association or similar document |  | **Y/N** |
| Staff Code of Conduct |  | **Y/N** |
| Proof of NGO legal status OR activitiy report pf at least 2 to /3 years of operation activities in the humanitarian/development sector |  | **Y/N** |
| 2 most recent annual reports and audited financial statements, including sources of income and current donors |  | **Y/N** |
| Names of Board of Directors, Trustees or equivalent |  | **Y/N** |
| Confirmation, via the application process, that the organisation or entity commits to the NEAR vision, mission and values |  | **Y/N** |
| Two references, one of which is from an existing NEAR member |  | **Y/N** |

1. General Assembly resolution 54/109, annex. Available at www.un.org/law/cod/ finterr.htm. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)