



Keynote

Keynote Presentation by Meg Sattler, CEO, Ground Truth Solutions



In her keynote presentation, Meg Sattler, CEO, Ground Truth Solutions, began by reflecting on the **role of voices** and their importance in humanitarian work, sharing an anecdote about her father's challenge to her work. Her father, a man with a deep appreciation for the power of words, jokingly remarked that she would "just talk shit again," as she embarked on her trip to Doha. This prompted her to think deeply about the power of talking and the significance of voices in shaping the world we live in. Meg's father's words, though humorous, made her contemplate the wider issue of how voices, especially those of marginalised groups, are often silenced, even though they **hold immense power**.

She then shifted to discuss a painful moment in her own experience—Australia's October 2023 referendum, where the public voted against giving Indigenous Australians a voice in Parliament. As she witnessed the result and the ongoing assault in Gaza, Meg felt disillusioned about the world. She highlighted the global reluctance to **listen to those affected by crises**, especially marginalised groups, calling this reluctance a "deliberate and cruel act of dehumanisation." Drawing parallels between historical injustices and present-day crisis, Meg pointed out that **silence**, whether in governments or humanitarian systems, **can be just as harmful as the violence** we see. She spoke about the failure of humanitarian systems, which often listen more to donors and perpetrators of crises than to the people actually affected by them. Meg questioned whether the humanitarian system is inherently

flawed, and if so, whether we, as individuals, can reimagine and redefine the roles we play in these systems. She posed the important question: "Do we have to be humanitarians if the system is so limited, or can we simply be humans?"

In the second part of her talk, Meg shared insights from **Ground Truth Solutions'** recent research, based on conversations with **34,000 individuals** impacted by crises in **12 countries** over the past two years. In closing, Meg questioned the future of humanitarianism, urging the audience to think beyond traditional frameworks and to **challenge existing power structures**. She emphasised the need for a new world order where we move beyond "humanitarian exceptionalism" and embrace **radical change**, led by those directly impacted by the crises.



Insights from people affected by crises:

Support for Community-Led Response: People in crises want international actors to recognise and support the work being done by local communities. However, she stressed that while mutual aid should be celebrated, it should not be romanticised or left unsupported.

Recognising the Violence in the World: Meg highlighted how many people, particularly youth, are awake to the cruelty and violence embedded in the current world order. She stated that staying neutral in the face of genocide or large-scale violence is not acceptable and that the international community needs to rise to the occasion.

Long-Term Support for Recovery and Prevention: People affected by crises want international aid not just for survival but also for long-term recovery and prevention. This means supporting efforts to build resilience and allow communities to thrive, not merely exist.

Radical Transparency in Information: Meg stressed the importance of giving people the right information in times of crisis. She called for radical transparency, where aid organisations are honest about how resources are being used and not just focused on their own operations.

Ensuring Aid Reaches the Right People: Finally, Meg pointed out the often misdirected aid that fails to reach those who need it most. She called attention to the inequities in the global aid system, particularly the racism that often underpins aid distribution, as seen in the stark differences in how people in Ukraine and other countries are treated.