

Facilitation Group Sherpa meeting

Summary Note

16 January 2024

The Facilitation Group Sherpas (EU/DG ECHO, Germany, OCHA, UNICEF, IFRC, InterAction, and NEAR) met for their quarterly meeting, co-chaired by Germany and IFRC. During the meeting, Ambassador Koehler shared updates on progress in focus area 2, especially regarding innovative financing and nexus, while the Grand Bargain Secretariat provided updates on localisation and participation on behalf of Ambassadors Mahmood and Bessler. NEAR provided an update on the National Reference Groups while Germany briefed on latest developments on anticipatory action and the caucus launch on 16 February 2024. Ambassador Koehler repeated his call to the Facilitation Group members to act as co-champions in advancing the agenda.

Based on presented initiatives and plans, the Facilitation Group in its advisory role formulated recommendations to the Ambassadors facilitating tangible progress in the upcoming months. Additionally, decisions were made regarding the Annual Meeting date and ways to improve accountability. This summary note provides an overview of these recommendations and decisions.

Update on Ambassador efforts:

- **Anticipatory Action:** Following intensive preparatory work by the core-group of interested Signatories, a caucus on anticipatory action will be launched on 16 February 2024 aiming at finding solutions for a system-wide scale-up of anticipatory action. The outcome document shall be presented at the Annual Meeting 2024.
- **Innovative financing:** Ambassador Koehler disclosed plans for a senior-level retreat on innovative financing, jointly organised by ICRC and WEF in mid-April. The event aims to bring decision-makers together to showcase successful examples of innovative financing in fragile contexts, identify key enablers and explore untapped potential. The outcome will be a catalogue of effective models/approaches that can be replicated at scale, with the retreat serving as the first step towards future commitments and a potential establishment of Communities of Practice.
- **Nexus:** Ambassador Koehler also plans a closed-door meeting in April or May 2024 bringing together high-level decision-makers to find ways for operationalising the humanitarian-development nexus. Decision-makers will discuss institutional barriers and assess political willingness for responding collectively to crises and rising fragility.
- **Quality Funding:** On quality funding, no concrete proposal for next steps has been formulated yet. Similar to the approach on the Nexus, later in 2024 high-level talks to address remaining barriers in an honest, closed-door discussion are envisaged.
- **Localisation:**
 - Ambassador Manuel Bessler, previous EP Jan Egeland, and NEAR's Executive Director Hibak Kalfan sent a letter to the localisation funding caucus members, seeking updates on their roadmap progress by January 26, 2024.
 - An informal learning space on funding for localisation will be launched within the Grand Bargain, facilitated by Ambassador Bessler and NEAR.
 - Additionally, a collection of good practices, particularly on quality funding for locally-led action, supported by Development Initiatives, will be launched to encourage peer pressure and drive political-level commitments from donors.
 - The Grand Bargain Secretariat is actively participating in IASC Task Force meetings on localisation to improve synergies.

- NEAR provided an update on National Reference Groups (NRGs), reporting renewed energy. A survey has been launched ahead of a call with various NRGs. NRGs discussions are ongoing in Yemen, Lebanon, North-West Syria, South Sudan, Myanmar, Kenya, Turkey, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The Turkey NRG is organising a workshop on overheads and planning a virtual meeting of all NRG leads in the first quarter of 2024.
- **Participation:**
- The former Grand Bargain's Participation Revolution workstream is collaborating with the IASC AAP Task Force to improve donor support for participatory and accountable approaches. A recent report on donor support for AAP, discussed in key meetings in June, outlines pathways for improving donor-driven accountability to affected people.
- Together with the IASC AAP Task Force, Ambassador Jemilah Mahmood will lead a conversation focused on donor incentives for participation.
- The work with Development Initiatives on developing an indicator/target on participation is ongoing.

Recommendations formulated by the Facilitation Group to the Ambassadors:

1. The Facilitation Group Sherpas welcomed the Ambassadors' plans. They agreed there is a lot of value in proposed plans to collect good practices and start informal spaces for learning exchanges. However, the Sherpas advised the Ambassadors to make sure these activities are outcome-oriented and yield concrete results. Renewed emphasis should be given to the 'bargain' element of the process to push towards systemic changes.
2. The Facilitation Group Sherpas recalled that efforts need to build on the achievements of existing caucuses (funding for localisation, role of intermediaries and quality funding) and that emphasis must lay on full implementation by the Signatories. If we are to set realistic targets, it remains critical to identify and agree on incentives that break through the barriers prohibiting stronger accountability to affected people, including strengthening engagement with communities, and their participation and leadership of local actors in humanitarian coordination mechanisms.
3. While plans for the majority of priority areas are already well developed, Sherpas underlined the need for concrete ideas in the field of Quality Funding. Sherpas would welcome Ambassadors' plans for next steps in this area. Generally, the Facilitation Group Sherpas recommended the Ambassadors to identify possible progress on 2-3 concrete objectives until the Annual Meeting in October 2024. They highlighted the following points as possible avenues to be followed to obtain concrete outcomes:
 - Leverage the collective power of the Grand Bargain Signatories to bring about tangible progress in the localisation and nexus agenda. Negotiate with unconventional donors, for instance, the World Bank, its upcoming IDA replenishment and reform processes, highlighting the need to do more to bring humanitarian and development funds closer to one another, especially in contexts where this directly benefits local and national actors. It is also important to get better at sharing experiences about innovations, including what works and what doesn't. As a community, we must push for increased risk tolerance, attract more financing actors, and embrace more innovative instruments.

- Consider supporting mechanisms that allow investing in capacities of local and national actors.
- Focus on solutions at country-level, taking into account context-specific barriers as well as opportunities to foster both nexus and localisation approaches.
- Some Facilitation Group Sherpas raised that Pooled Funds can play an important role in advancing the nexus approach and are well-positioned to catalyse coordination and informal cooperation between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors.
- Increase direct interaction with National Reference Groups.
- Consider taking on the advancement of risk-sharing as an enabler in several focus areas, most notably localisation, but also quality funding, nexus and innovative financing.

In their role as co-champions to the Ambassadors, Facilitation Group Sherpas offered individual contributions:

- Germany offered to host an FG retreat in September in preparation for the GB Annual Meeting, ensuring clear objectives and outcomes.
- IFRC reiterated its availability to work with the Ambassadors to launch a Community of Practice on localisation if this benefits the priorities set by them and the broader community after the closure of the workstream.

Accountability

Self-reporting revision process:

Development Initiatives (DI) made a presentation on the self-reporting revision process.

DI's approach includes reviewing existing definitions and caucus outcomes, learning from past reporting exercises, and narrowing down the reporting requirements to a reduced number of quantitative and qualitative indicators in key focus areas in line with the Grand Bargain 2023-2026. The approach also aims to outline pathways to improve accountability of the humanitarian system beyond the Grand Bargain. The timeline includes bilateral consultations in January and February with Signatories and external stakeholders, followed by consultations with all Signatories on proposed indicators in March, and finalising the exercise in April.

During discussions with the Facilitation Group, Sherpas reiterated the need for clear and comparable indicators for improved transparency and accountability, advised the Secretariat to look into options for simplifying the data collection process, such as an online tool, and suggested considering additional indicators for risk sharing and gender. Moreover, Sherpas recommended consulting Signatories on reporting challenges, exploring quantitative and qualitative indicators, and using existing platforms (such as FTS/IATI) for data collection.

Some of Facilitation Group Sherpas mentioned that it remains critical to identify and agree on incentives that break through the barriers prohibiting stronger accountability to affected people, including strengthening engagement with communities, and their participation and leadership of local actors in humanitarian coordination mechanisms.

FTS/IATI:

The IATI and FTS teams provided an update to the Sherpas on the complementarity between both platforms, outlining their achievements and work plans. Their focus is on improving communication to establish a shared responsibility for tracking humanitarian financing and improving reporting into IATI and FTS. Representatives from FTS and IATI made a strong call for accountability and increased reporting through IATI/FTS.

Next steps/Information

- The Annual Meeting will take place in person in Geneva on 17 October 2024 at Sherpa level.
- The next Facilitation Group Sherpa meeting will take place in Brussels on 19 March 2024 on the margins of the European Humanitarian Forum and will be co-chaired by OCHA and the EU/DG ECHO.

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- Grand Bargain membership: The Grand Bargain Secretariat has noted interest from non-traditional organisations wishing to join the platform. During the meeting, the Facilitation Group discussed it, though a definitive conclusion has not yet been reached. The Grand Bargain Secretariat will explore and outline the pros and cons of this potential expansion.