

Notes of 2017 Retreat of the IASC Humanitarian Financing Task Team

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25 and 26 January 2017

Retreat Objectives and Participation

The Humanitarian Financing Task Team (HFTT) held its 2017 retreat on 25 and 26 January in Geneva. The retreat objectives, as agreed by the HFTT during the November meeting, were as follows:

1. To advance the implementation of HFTT's work plan activities through group work on specific technical issues
2. To map the interlinkages between HFTT and other fora
3. To ensure that HFTT's work plan remains on track vis-à-vis the Grand Bargain processes
4. To strengthen the interaction between HFTT and GHD

The retreat was broadly attended (over 60 participants) and its objectives were fully met. Participants included representatives of NGOs, UN Agencies, ICRC/IFRC and the World Bank. In addition, guest speakers for selected sessions included six representatives of the Grand Bargain Facilitation Group and six representatives of GHD donors.

Objective 1: To advance the implementation of HFTT's activities

The core of the retreat were six two-hour sessions focusing on specific technical issues. These sessions resulted in advancing HFTT's activities and reaching agreements on key products to be completed by the end of 2017. Key outcomes of these sessions are:

1.1 Local Actors Engagement and Partner Capacity Assessments (PCAs)

The group recognised that HFTT activities seeking to strengthen local actors' engagement and review PCA processes have been on hold in 2016. Participants agreed that these two activities have to be revitalised in 2017. Key products to be delivered by the end of 2017 include:

- Capture existing analysis through mapping of relevant research and recommendations (to be completed by March 2017)
- Advance analysis in selected countries with a view to develop a 'Framework for Change' (to be completed by June/July 2017)

- Propose recommendations and meta-framework during the planned workshop in Kuala Lumpur (September/October 2017)
- Commission a study to be used at the ECOSOC HAS segment (to be completed by June 2017)

1.2 Transparency of funding flows

Following the presentation on fulfilling FTS reporting commitments through IATI standards, the group discussed the status of HFTT activities related to transparency. Current activities and expected deliverables in 2017 are as follows:

- Key messages on IATI and FTS (why, when and how) prepared by DI and OCHA-FTS will be circulated for comments to the group by mid-February. It is expected that this document will be finalized by the end of March.
- The first draft of technical guidance on the use of IATI for humanitarian reporting to FTS (prepared by OCHA-FTS) will be circulated by mid-February. Further multilateral technical discussions at IATI Technical Advisory Group meeting will take place in early March. Ongoing fine-tuning of the guidance will take place throughout the year, particularly through bilateral technical discussions with 'early adopting' agencies.

The group identified and discussed several points to be included in key messaging and issues concerning the guidelines. Key suggestions were:

- To establish the business case for IATI adoption, including the outline of required resources and commitments versus desired level of transparency.
- To put more emphasis on distinction between IATI use for tracking development funding and IATI use for tracking humanitarian funding.
- To use IATI to reduce reporting burden (e.g. satisfying multiple requirements and results reporting).

The group also discussed several key points related to security, reporting frequencies and tracking of advance allocations to support ongoing operations.

1.3 Development of Localisation Marker

The discussion on the development of the localisation marker included a large and diverse group of participants committed to making a rapid progress on the task. The discussion was the continuation of monthly meetings on the localisation marker, which started in mid-2016. The group recognised that while there is no consensus on the scope of the marker and key definitions yet, good progress has already been made and there is a widespread commitment to complete the development of the marker as quickly as possible. Key products to be delivered by the end of 2017 include:

- Agreed and implementable set of definitions of 'local and national responders' and 'as directly as possible' funding.
- Detailed proposal of the scope and type of localisation marker.

1.4 Multi-year planning and funding

Newly commissioned study on multi-year funding will complement recently completed study on multi-year planning. The World Humanitarian Summit and Grand Bargain have provided an important push to jointly look at humanitarian planning with a different approach. As of 2017, there are seven countries with a multi-year plan (though, with quite different approaches).

The status of HFTT activities on multi-year planning and funding and key products to be completed by the end of 2017 are as follows:

- Study on multi-year planning commissioned by OCHA's Planning and Monitoring Section has been completed and the final report will be available in February.
- Study on multi-year funding has been launched by FAO, OCHA and NRC. Preliminary findings will be available by June. The study aims at capturing evidence of added value, best practices, and innovation, as well as identifying challenges associated with MYF.
- To conduct a review of existing literature and develop a snapshot of the state of play on multi-year funding (to be completed by the end of 2017)

Key points discussed included the need to demonstrate the evidence of the value added of MYF; the need to explore with donors new funding modalities, which bring together development and humanitarian funding; the need to ensure that humanitarian systems, structures and tools are adapted to handle multi-year projects; securing commitment of key donors to multi-year funding; and bridging the humanitarian/development divide.

1.5 Restrictive Donor Conditions

The status of activities on restrictive donor conditions and key products to be completed by the end of 2017 are as follows:

- The study on "Donor Conditions and Their Implications for Humanitarian Response" had been presented at the March 2016 Working Group meeting with GHD donors and was published in April 2016.
- The results of the "Less Paper More Aid" campaign have been published in May 2016. The findings were presented to UN agencies and Member States at the 17 May 2016 "NGOs Forward" briefing.
- Survey was undertaken gathering additional inputs and information on mapping of work on restrictive donor conditions.
- There is a momentum around harmonisation of narrative reports given the interest expressed by donors.
- Template for donor reporting following the GPPI recommendation of 10+3 approach is currently under development. Details related to the template, pilot countries, timeline, etc. will be discussed in a workshop planned by Germany in March.
- One-pager on objectives, opportunities, liability and risks of common reporting template to be developed.
- Detailed plan of the pilot of the template in selected countries to be developed by June.
- The 10+3 pilot focuses on narrative reports. A study to look into harmonisation of cost structure is planned to complement this work. Preliminary findings will be shared in June.

In addition, the study on pooled funds conducted by NRC has been discussed and it was agreed to include it as one of the activities in the HFTT work plan.

1.6 Humanitarian/Development Nexus

The status of activities on humanitarian/development nexus and key products to be completed by the end of 2017 are as follows:

- Engaged with UNDG working group on transitions on issues related to the humanitarian/development nexus.
- The HFTT is currently developing shared narrative on approaches, comparative advantages and contributions to collective outcomes.
- To create a normative repository for new ways of working, including learning from field experiences.
- To map financial flows and pooled funding mechanisms (by country), which support the humanitarian/development nexus.
- To develop a concept note on addressing financial fragmentation and a proposal for country-level financing assessments in 2017.
- To contribute to the engagement on financing in the next UNDG-IASC retreat.
- To engage with MPTF office in the work on financing solutions.

Objective 2: To map the interlinkages between HFTT and other fora

Given the growing complexity of humanitarian financing architecture, the HFTT agreed on the need to map the key fora that the group should work in close collaboration with in 2017. While HFTT's activities intersect with multitude of other fora, due to practical considerations, participants agreed that HFTT needs to prioritize key groups for interaction.

Following the presentation developed based on the review of available literature, the HFTT identified the following fora with which a continuous engagement in 2017 will be crucial: IASC Working Group, Grand Bargain Facilitation Group, Good Humanitarian Donorship group, CBPF – NGO Dialogue Platform, Pooled Funds Working Group, IATI Secretariat, IASC Humanitarian/ Development Nexus Task Team, World Bank - Financing in Fragile States, UNDG Working Group on Transitions, and OECD/DAC.

Out of these key fora, participants agreed that ongoing engagement with the Grand Bargain Facilitation Group and Good Humanitarian Donorship group on the implementation of HFTT's activities is the highest priority. The IASC secretariat also pointed out that while it is important to collaborate with other fora, the HFTT reports to the IASC Working Group.

Participants agreed that rather than officialising the relationships with identified fora through appointing dedicated focal points, it is the responsibility of all HFTT members to engage with other groups according to their respective roles. It is also the responsibility of each HFTT member to keep the group informed on key developments in other fora.

Apart from effective engagement between HFTT and other fora, the group also agreed on the need for productive interaction between the work streams within HFTT. For instance, the group working on simplifying reporting should work closely with the group working on increasing transparency to ensure complementarity and to avoid conflicts of interests.

Apart from considering the broader picture of engagement with other groups, participants discussed interlinkages between the specific activities of HFTT and respective work streams of other fora. As a result, the group identified the following interlinkages:

Local Actors Engagement and PCAs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grand Bargain Work Stream 2 - increasing support and funding tools for local and national responders [Switzerland, IFRC] • GHD Activity 1.2 - localizing preparedness and response [Australia] • CBPF – NGO Dialogue Platform [OCHA-FCS] • Pooled Funds Working Group [OCHA-FCS] • HFTT Activity 1.4 - development of localisation marker [CAFOD, DI, OCHA-FCS] 	Transparency of funding flows <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grand Bargain Work Stream 1 - Greater transparency [Netherlands, World Bank] • IATI secretariat • HFTT output 2 - Renegotiate restrictive donor conditions [ICVA, NRC, UNICEF, WFP] • HFTT Activity 1.4 - development of localisation marker [CAFOD, DI, OCHA-FCS]
Development of Localisation Marker <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grand Bargain Work Stream 2 - Increasing support and funding tools for local and national responders [IFRC, Switzerland] • GHD Activity 1.2 - Localizing preparedness and response [Australia] • HFTT Activities 1.1 and 1.2 - Local Actors Engagement and Partner Capacity Assessments [Mercy Malaysia, OCHA FCS] • HFTT Output 4 - Transparency of funding flows [DI, OCHA-FTS] 	Multi-year planning and funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grand Bargain Work Stream 7 - Increase collaborative humanitarian multi-year planning and funding [Canada, UNICEF] • Grand Bargain Work Stream 10 – Enhance engagement between humanitarian and development actors [Denmark, UNDP] • GHD Activity 2.2 - Strengthen multi-year planning by agencies and multi-year funding by donors [Canada, EC] • HFTT Output 3 - Humanitarian Development Nexus [FAO, UNDP, World Bank]
Restrictive Donor Conditions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grand Bargain Work Stream 9 – Harmonise and simplify reporting requirements [Germany, ICVA] • GHD Activity 2.1 - Harmonized, streamlined reporting, consistent with donor requirements [Germany, US] • HFTT Output 4 - Transparency of funding flows [DI, OCHA-FTS] 	Humanitarian/Development Nexus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grand Bargain Work Stream 10 - enhance engagement between humanitarian and development actors [Denmark, UNDP] • Grand Bargain Work Stream 7 - Increase collaborative humanitarian multi-year planning and funding [Canada, UNICEF] • GHD Activity 1.1 - Humanitarian/development nexus [Denmark, Japan] • IASC Humanitarian-development Nexus Task Team [UNDP, WHO] • World Bank - Financing in Fragile States • undg Working Group on Transitions [MPTF Office] • OECD/DAC - development of funding strategies

Objective 3: To ensure that HFTT's work plan remains on track vis-à-vis the Grand Bargain processes

The retreat included a session dedicated to the exchange of information with the Grand Bargain Facilitation Group to ensure that HFTT's work plan remains on track vis-à-vis the Grand Bargain processes. The Grand Bargain Facilitation Group was represented by ECHO, IFRC, SCHR, Switzerland, UN-Women and WFP. This session was the opportunity to have a two-way exchange between HFTT and the GB Facilitation Group to better understand how the HFTT and the Grand Bargain can best complement each other.

The work plan of HFTT is closely linked to the Grand Bargain commitments. HFTT's activities support the implementation of the financial dimension of five out of 10 Grand Bargain work streams. These are:

- Work stream 1 - Greater transparency
- Work stream 2 - Increasing support and funding tools for local and national responders
- Work stream 7 - Increase collaborative humanitarian multi-year planning and funding
- Work stream 9 - Harmonise and simplify reporting requirements
- Work stream 10 - Enhance engagement between humanitarian and development actors

Activity leads of HFTT work streams briefed the group on the current status of HFTT activities supporting the Grand Bargain and on expected products to be delivered in 2017 (see updates in section 1 for details). The Grand Bargain Facilitation Group was then given the chance to comment on these activities and provide feedback.

The facilitation group emphasised that Grand Bargain attracts more and more signatories and has continuous momentum. The secretariat of the Grand Bargain will include one person (currently under recruitment) and will be hosted by the IASC Secretariat. The role of HFTT is very important in the implementation of Grand Bargain commitments. The Grand Bargain Facilitation Group launched a reporting exercise, which will take stock of the progress made so far on the implementation of the Grand Bargain commitments.

The need for better information sharing was emphasised by HFTT. It would be useful to receive on regular basis updates on key developments in Grand Bargain work streams. Lack of the official Grand Bargain secretariat was so far the major limitation in information sharing. Grand Bargain work stream leads and HFTT activity leads agreed to remain in touch on regular basis. It was also agreed that the secretariat of the Grand Bargain Facilitation Group should participate in future HFTT meetings.

Objective 4: To strengthen the interaction between HFTT and GHD

The session with GHD provided an opportunity for interaction between the two groups on shared priorities. The GHD was represented by Australia, Canada, ECHO, Germany and the United States. The co-chairs of GHD briefed HFTT on GHD work plan and ongoing initiatives. Following the introduction, the discussion focused on key joint priorities between GHD and HFTT, which are: localisation, multi-year funding and reporting requirements.

Activity leads of HFTT work streams briefed the group on the current status of HFTT activities related to the joint GHD – HFTT prioritises and expected products to be delivered in 2017 (see updates on localisation, multi-year funding and reporting requirements in section 1 for details).

Feedback from GHD on reporting requirements included:

- GHD is focusing on the roll out of 10+3 reporting template to ensure that it is used by as many donors as possible
- GHD is reviewing donor requirements and works on identification of common denominators
- GHD agreed on a pilot template and needs to move on with the pilot project. So far, WFP and NRC have fully committed to it. Ideally, five to six agencies and donors should participate. The design of the pilot needs to be completed soon and the pilot project will be launched on 24 March in Berlin. Key questions to be considered are:
 - Transparency and frequency of reporting – there may be a need to launch a survey on the minimum level of reporting expectations.
 - Reporting for coordination – this aspect is not explored in details by GPPI. There is a need to define the minimum amount of reporting requirements in terms of collective reporting.
 - Tools to be used – such as IATI and FTS
 - Frequency and volume of reporting – it is difficult to set clear common rules
 - Informal reporting
- GHD will commission GPPI to collect data on other aspects of reporting as well

Feedback from GHD on multi-year funding included:

- Canada works on sharing the experiences on using multi-year funding with other donors
- There is also a need for sharing experiences by partners on the implications that multi-year funding has on the ground
- ECHO explores possibilities of expanding multi-year funding to country operational support on top of capacity strengthening
- There is a need for a mapping exercise to build informed basis for the work on multi-year funding
- Depending on the contexts, there are different reasons why multi-year funding would make more sense, such as predictability of costs, longer-term outcomes, nature of humanitarian situation, etc.
- Sufficient consideration needs to be given to the issue of efficiency savings in shifting to multi-year funding
- National budgetary law of many donors, for historical reasons, is set on yearly cycles. Any request for a multi-year funding is challenging. Donors need solid information from agencies and NGOs to be able to make a strong case to their parliaments for approval of multi-year funding
- Apart from looking at multi-year funding from donors, many recipients need to make the same changes considering that UN agencies and many NGOs are also donors and should extend the same benefits of multi-year funding to their partners

Feedback from GHD on the localisation marker included:

- There is a strong emphasis on the issue of better supporting locally led, context specific humanitarian action. Donors have a duty to ensure that local response is sufficiently supported.
- GHD plans to convene an expert roundtable on the current state of play with regards to localisation
- Many donors have the will but not necessarily the practical ways of moving forward. Some donors can share best practices, failures and options for improvements.
- There is a potential in looking at operational best practices at country level
- Donors are committed to engage and play a central role in defining the marker

In conclusion, the importance of ongoing cooperation between GHD and HFTT was emphasised by retreat participants. It was agreed to hold regular meetings and ensure effective exchange of information in 2017 between GHD and HFTT co-chairs and activity leads.

HFTT Organisational Issues

The retreat was concluded by a session on HFTT operating modalities. This session provided an opportunity to comment on what works well and what should be improved. Key points agreed were:

- Secure the venue for 2018 retreat and finalise the agenda earlier
- Do not presume that everyone knows everyone. Each member should introduce her/himself in the meetings using the full first and last name and name of the organisation
- The quality of phone connections is poor and members who dial in are dis-privileged as compared to those attending from Geneva or New York. Consider using WebEx or any other better technology.
- Make key action points from HFTT meetings more prominent in meeting notes
- Increase the frequency of progress briefings on HFTT activities at monthly meetings
- Improve the documents management and circulation
- Organise a briefing on the use of IASC website at the next HFTT meeting
- Include hyperlinks to relevant documents in the agenda and meeting notes
- Ensure that each member has decision-making ability in her/his own organisation on issues discussed in HFTT
- Develop a visual on how HFTT connects to other fora
- Activity leads to send to HFTT secretariat inputs to the HFTT progress report by 10 February
- As of 2017, HFTT will meet every third Thursday of each month instead of every third Wednesday of each month, which was the practice before.

Retreat Participants			
Name	Organisation		
Anne Street	CAFOD	Nick Imboden	OCHA – FTS
Michael Mosselmans	Christian Aid	Tanja SCHÜMER	OCHA – IASC
Jennifer Poidatz	CRS	Julie Thompson	OCHA – RMSS
Charlotte Lattimer	Development Initiatives	Shashank Sreedharan	OCHA – RMSS
Lydia Poole	Development Initiatives	Esty Sutyoko	OCHA – RMSS
Sandra Aviles	FAO	Taija Kontinen-Sharp	UNDP
Laurence Boymond	Handicap International	Annemarie Schuller	UNFPA
Marie-Jeanne Eby	ICRC	Andrew Billo	UNFPA
Melissa Pitotti	ICVA	Sara Baschetti	UNHCR
Sophie Helle	ICVA	Sanjana Quazi	UNICEF
Nan Buzard	ICVA	Christelle Loupforest	UNMAS
Ajay Madiwale	IFRC	Magali Murlon	Voice
Caroline Nichols	Interaction	Priya Behrens-Shah	Welthungerhilfe
Jordan Menkveld	IOM	Marie-Helene Kyprianou	WFP
Amran Mahzan	MERCY Malaysia	Gordana Jerger	WFP
Zuraidah Mian	MERCY Malaysia	Bahar Zorofi	WFP
Cecilia Roselli	NRC	Silvia D’Angelo	WFP
Clemence Boutant-Willm	NRC	Cintia Diaz-Herrera	WHO
James Kunjumen	OCHA	Daniel Kull	World Bank
Mateusz Buczek	OCHA - CERF	Lobna Hadji	World Bank
Michael Jensen	OCHA - CERF	Julian Srodecki	World Vision
Lisa Doughten	OCHA - CERF	Agnese Spiazzi	OCHA – PAMS
Juan Chaves	OCHA - FCS	Fatima Sherif-Nor	UNHCR
Daniela L. Gilotta	OCHA - FTS	Smruti Patel	
Laura Calvio	OCHA - FTS		

Additional Group Work Participants			
Name	Organisation		
John Crowley	IFRC	Kaela Glass	OCHA-FTS
Ivana Mrdja	IFRC	Bates Asilbekova	UNHCR
Victoria Stodart	IFRC	Paloma Vora	UNHCR
Alberto Rampazzo	NRC	Annika Sandlund	UNHCR
Maiju Jolma	OCHA-FTS	Nicola Brass	UNHCR

GHD Guest Speakers		Grand Bargain Guest Speakers	
Name	Organisation		
Tristen Slade	Australia	Harmke Kruithof	ECHO
Irine Plank	Germany	Kate Half	SCHR
Thomas Weithöner	Germany	Ajay Madiwale	IFRC
Nance Kyloh	US	Nathalie Goetschi	Switzerland
	Canada	Hiba Qasas	UN-Women
	EU	Gordana Jerger	WFP