

Recommendations that promote effective participation of people affected by crisis in humanitarian decisions and incentivise participation as a way of working for GB signatories

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Purpose of these recommendations:

The aim of the Grand Bargain Participation Revolution work stream is to promote a culture of transparency, accountability and learning in relation to participation.

The recommendations in this document aim at achieving this through the incentivisation of good practices for effective participation, while avoiding being prescriptive on how these are achieved. The assumptions under-lying these recommendations can be summarised as follows:

Aid organisations need to be sure that they are appreciated by donors if they demonstrate that they are transparent both about what they can test and achieve in terms of participation in each context, and responsive to what people affected by crisis are saying about their own needs and their organisation's performance.

Donors and affected people need to be convinced that aid organisations are genuinely investing in effective participation and acting to put the needs and interests of people affected by crisis at the core of their humanitarian decision making in a cost-effective manner, at an individual and collective level, in line with the objectives of the Grand Bargain.

It is anticipated that Grand Bargain signatories will work individually and in collaboration to implement the recommendations proposed in this document, and that the implementation of these recommendations will progress the achievement of the Grand Bargain Participation Revolution Workstream commitments.

As signatories progress on implementation, the Participation Revolution co-convenors will focus the work stream on the following: 1/ providing a forum to share implementation experiences and seek expertise if needed, 2/ advocacy to promote consistent implementation of these recommendations and 3/ identification of synergies with other work stream and / or processes.

The co-convenors also suggest that these recommendations could be reviewed one year down the line and further adjusted based on experiences gained in the course of implementation.

Definition of "participation" (for the purpose of the Grand Bargain Participation Revolution work stream)

The term "participation" used throughout this document encompasses the following (please refer to the full definition of "participation" in annex of this document):

Effective "participation" of people affected by humanitarian crises puts the needs and interests of those people at the core of humanitarian decision making, by actively engaging them throughout decision-making processes. This requires an ongoing dialogue about the design, implementation and evaluation of humanitarian responses with people, local actors and communities who are vulnerable

or at risk, including those who often tend to be disproportionately disadvantaged, such as women, girls, and older persons.

- Such a dialogue includes the provision of information to affected communities about i) lifesaving information, including protection services, ii) humanitarian agencies' activities and ways of working, and iii) opportunities, risks and threats.
- It also includes proactively and regularly seeking communities' perspectives and feedback¹ on the humanitarian response and key aspects of humanitarian agencies' performance, including service quality and relevance and responsiveness to beneficiary concerns. This dialogue should entail understanding of communities' practices, capacities and coping strategies.

This ongoing dialogue is about managing the performance of humanitarian programming, and seeking to ensure effective action is taken in response to inputs received. It implies clear and consistent communication to inform people affected by crises what has been learned from them and how follow-up action will address their concerns, where this is feasible. To be effective this ongoing dialogue requires action by senior decision makers based on information received. Action may be required at an agency or country response level. Decisions made and action taken must be clearly and consistently communicated to affected people.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS TO ACHIEVE GRAND BARGAIN PARTICIPATION REVOLUTION INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENTS (= COMMITMENTS FOR INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANISATIONS TO TAKE FORWARD)

Grand Bargain Participation Revolution Commitment 3: ensure dialogue with and secure feedback from affected people

Grand Bargain Participation Revolution Commitment 4: programming is based on input from affected people

Grand Bargain Participation Revolution Commitment 6: time and resources are made available for participation activities

Recommendations to aid organisations:

What is good practice?

- 1) Aid agencies continuously provide essential and life-saving information to affected people and systematically collect, report and act on feedback from affected people at key decision points in the program cycle, explaining how their programming has been adapted to reflect these views.
When possible, the feedback from affected people is complemented and verified by affected people's views and perspectives collected independently from the organisation providing assistance.
- 2) Aid agencies ensure that all sectors of the affected population have the capacity to engage in effective participatory processes.

¹ Feedback includes affected people's perspective on the relevance and quality of services, the adequacy of engagement, trust in aid workers, and their sense of 'agency' or empowerment. Providing relevant information to affected people on the organisation's mandate or mission, competencies, capacities and commitments goes hand in hand with feedback.

How can aid organisations incentivize this?

- 3) Ensure that senior agency management or programming decision makers allocate funds to enable effective participation and promote a culture among staff of acceptance of failure and negative feedback from affected people.
- 4) Update TORs for relevant staff and managers to require responding to feedback from affected people and reporting back on that feedback and how it has been addressed, and include responsiveness to feedback as a criterion in staff recruitment and performance management systems.
- 5) At a programme/operation level, require the inclusion in standard reporting of information about how programming has been adapted to take the views and perspectives of affected people into account. .
- 6) At an organisational level, assess the implementation of the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) or the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Accountability to Affected People (AAP) commitments or organisation standards which adhere to such collective standards, through self-assessment, peer review, third-party verification or certification.
- 7) Use feedback from in-country coordinated effective participation mechanisms including two-way communication mechanisms and consolidated CHS assessment data across organisations, making sure that these are disaggregated by at least age and sex, as a benchmark in analysing and improving performance at programme/operation and organisational levels.
- 8) Conduct capacity development efforts with staff as well as with local and national partners, including national governments, to support effective participation, including two-way communication.
- 9) Work with relevant local and national partners and actors, including through targeted outreach to women-led organisations, in designing participation mechanisms in support of effective design, implementation and monitoring of the response.
- 10) Ensure robust, contextual vulnerability analyses and allow for all parts of a community, including those who are vulnerable or at risk, including those who often tend to be disproportionately disadvantaged, such as women, girls and older persons, to equally contribute and share their views.
- 11) Undertake preparedness activities to ensure timely and predictable participation approaches in situations of emergency/humanitarian crisis.

Recommendations to donors:

What is good practice?

- a) Donors require and enable aid organizations to provide evidence that their programming takes feedback from affected people into consideration at all stages of the programme cycle.

How can donors incentivize this?

- b) In funding decisions, consider aid organisations' planned participation mechanisms, including two-way communication, and their track record to act on feedback from affected people.
- c) Require aid organisations to include adequate budget for effective participation mechanisms in the appeals they make to donors.
- d) Provide grantees with the flexibility to make changes in the way they use funds in response to feedback from affected people.
- e) Fund activities that provide for effective participation, including two-way communication, and capacity building of staff and partners in support of implementation of effective participation programming.

- f) Assess grant compliance requirements against the Core Humanitarian Standard and the IASC Commitments to AAP to determine whether they promote programming that is appropriate, relevant, and responsive to feedback.
- g) Include feedback from affected people and organisations' reactivity to such feedback as an essential measure of an organisations' performance. For donors who require project or programme-specific reporting, reduce output and outcome reporting, so that agencies can put more efforts into including feedback of affected people as a measure of their performance.
- h) In funding announcements, encourage aid organisations to allocate appropriate funding to participation and demonstrable use of feedback.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS TO ACHIEVE GRAND BARGAIN PARTICIPATION REVOLUTION COLLECTIVE COMMITMENTS (= COMMITMENTS WHICH REQUIRE COLLABORATION BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANISATIONS)

Grand Bargain Participation Revolution Commitment 1: leadership and governance at HCT and clusters level to ensure participation

Grand Bargain Participation Revolution Commitment 2: A coordinated approach to participation

Grand Bargain Participation Revolution Commitment 5: Flexible funding to enable programme adaptation

Grand Bargain Participation Revolution Commitment 7: HRP and monitoring of HRP implementation reflect participation

Recommendations to aid organisations:

What is good practice?

- 13) Multi-sector needs assessment include questions to ascertain how communities wish to receive and provide feedback on the quality of the response and on issues which affect them personally such as corruption and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA).
- 14) Aid organisations actively collaborate, including with local and national organisations and host governments, in coordinated approaches to effective participation, the outcomes of which are integrated in Humanitarian Needs Overviews (HNO), Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) or other Humanitarian Plans² and complement agency-specific activities.
- 15) Monitoring and reporting on HRP, Real Time Evaluations (RTE) and Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations (IAHE) include analysis of how the response has been adapted to reflect the views and feedback from affected people.
- 16) Aid organisations consolidate information and perspectives of affected people so they are accessible to government and non-state armed group (NSAG) counterparts, Humanitarian Coordinators (HC), Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT) and individual agencies.
- 17) Aid organisations' individual complaint and feedback mechanisms are harmonized and linked with collective mechanisms, to the extent that this improves efficiency and makes it easier for affected people to share their complaints.

How can aid organisations incentivize them?

- 18) The ToRs for humanitarian coordinators, humanitarian country teams, and cluster coordinators include responsibility for integrating the IASC AAP commitments or the CHS,

² For organisations which do not participate in the HRP, such as for example Red Cross / Red Crescent.

especially commitments 4 and 5, into all aspects of programme design and implementation, including needs assessments, needs analysis and response plans.

- 19) Funding is allocated for coordinated participation mechanisms in HRP.
- 20) Data and feedback collected across aid organisations are shared, and where possible standardised and aggregated, to track performance from the bottom up and identify gaps in the overall response.
- 21) In-country pooled funds and similar mechanisms include provision for participatory monitoring so that affected people can comment on the relevance and effectiveness of assistance provided, as well as report fraud and submit complaints.
- 22) Complaints mechanisms have adequate systems in place to receive and address complaints, as well as appropriate and safe referral.
- 23) Act on feedback collected across aid organisations and, where applicable, independently, and inform programming and course correction accordingly
- 24) Recognise and use existing local and national mechanisms for coordinated approaches to participation; recognise when these do not adequately capture the needs, voices and leadership of women and girls and marginalised groups and if so, identify alternative methods of reaching these.

Recommendations to donors:

What are good practices?

- i) Donors require Humanitarian Response Plans to provide evidence of how affected people's input has been considered in their development, how information about the response is being fed back to affected people, and for reporting on HRPs to provide evidence on how feedback from affected people is considered in all stages of the humanitarian programme cycle.
- j) Donor funding and terms and conditions encourage humanitarian actors to engage in coordinated approaches to effective participation during program development, implementation and monitoring.

How can donors incentivize them?

- k) Fund regular independent surveys to seek affected people's perceptions of key aspects of the overall humanitarian response.
- l) Include the views of affected people in their own reporting to legislatures and other actors in their authorizing environment, modelling good behaviour.
- m) Fund (including via pooled funds) the development of in-country coordinated platforms for effective participation and promotion of uptake of the feedback from affected people.
- n) Research and invest in incentives so that agencies use the services offered by the platforms.
- o) Provide support for preparedness activities to support coordinated platforms, services, and tools for effective participation at the national level.

ANNEX: Definition of Participation (for the purpose of the Grand Bargain Participation Revolution work stream)

The Grand Bargain “Participation Revolution” work stream: include people receiving aid in decisions which affect their lives.

There are a number of different terms in use by different stakeholders in relation to this area of work (e.g. accountability to affected persons, participation). We believe, therefore, that an important first step for this workstream is to establish an agreed, practical definition of the meaning of “participation” within the context of this workstream which all stakeholders can use to guide programming in the field.

[The Core Humanitarian Standard](#) describes the essential elements of principled, accountable and high-quality humanitarian action that puts affected people at its heart. It is an essential element of effective participation.

The Grand Bargain Participation Revolution workstream commitment document states:

We need to include the people affected by humanitarian crises and their communities in our decisions to be certain that the humanitarian response is relevant, timely, effective and efficient.

We need to provide accessible information, ensure that an effective process for participation and feedback is in place and that design and management decisions are responsive to the views of affected communities and people.

Donors and aid organisations should work to ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable groups, considering gender, age, ethnicity, language and special needs are heard and acted upon. This will create an environment of greater trust, transparency and accountability.

We believe effective “participation” of people affected by humanitarian crises puts the needs and interests of those people at the core of humanitarian decision making, by actively engaging them throughout decision-making processes.

This requires an ongoing dialogue about the design, implementation and evaluation of humanitarian responses with people, local actors and communities who are vulnerable or at risk, including those who often tend to be disproportionately disadvantaged, such as women, girls, and older persons. This dialogue should take place through channels that beneficiaries prefer and with which they feel safe.

- Such a dialogue includes the provision of information to affected communities about i) lifesaving information, including protection services, ii) humanitarian agencies’ activities and ways of working, and iii) opportunities, risks and threats. This should enable beneficiaries of assistance to make informed decisions for their survival and safety.

- It should also include proactively and regularly seeking communities' perspectives and feedback on the humanitarian response and key aspects of humanitarian agencies' performance, including service quality and relevance and responsiveness to beneficiary concerns. This dialogue should entail understanding of communities' practices, capacities and coping strategies.

This ongoing dialogue is not just about exchanging information and learning. It is about managing the performance of humanitarian programming, and seeking to ensure effective action is taken in response to inputs received. It implies clear and consistent communication to inform people affected by crises what has been learned from them and how follow-up action will address their concerns, where this is feasible.

To be effective this ongoing dialogue requires action by senior decision makers based on information received. Action may be required at an agency or country response level. Decisions made and action taken must be clearly and consistently communicated with affected population.