

THE GRAND BARGAIN:

PRIORITIZING ACTIONS, COHERENCE AND SYNERGIES WITH THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

18 September 2017 | 14:00-16:00

Concept

A high-level dialogue on the margins of the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly high-level week capitalized on the recent re-engagement of Ms. Kristalina Georgieva as “Eminent Person” in the Grand Bargain (GB) process. The dialogue was also a platform for a handover from the outgoing facilitators to the new team, to take stock of the GB process and ensure that it continues to reflect the spirit of quid pro quo between donors and aid organizations and UN entities.

To deliver on its commitments and positively impact field activities and outcomes, the process needs to regain political momentum through an injection of energy and a review of its priorities. Following the Annual Meeting, and looking forward to the meeting in 2018, the participants discussed coherence and prioritization, and recognized the need to avoid duplication of efforts both among GB workstreams and external complementary processes such as the UN’s New Way of Working.

Summary

The discussion was framed in the difficult environment for delivery of humanitarian aid and the ever-increasing financial need. Despite these challenges, the meeting recognized the positive achievements of the Grand Bargain, noting field examples. Progress from the major donors on harmonization and simplification of reporting requirements was recognized, as was the progress on enhancing transparency by the aid agencies, with the caveat that more can be done from both sides. Although there is effort and commitment, some aid organizations have not made enough progress towards more harmonized cost structures and management transparency. It was also recognized that both donors and aid organizations can do more to maintain the spirit of the quid pro quo. All participants agreed on the need to reinvigorate the Grand Bargain process.

Participants welcomed Kristalina Georgieva’s re-engagement and efforts to put some weight behind the initiative. She put herself at the service of the Grand Bargain, and shared her enthusiasm to work together to revive and strengthen the process. During the tour de table, outgoing and incoming members of the facilitation group shared what they saw as main challenges and priorities to fulfill the GB commitments. There was broad agreement on the direction the new facilitators could take in guiding the process and engaging all signatories. Participants were unanimous that success should be judged on the impacts at field level.

Recommitting to the quid pro quo of the Grand Bargain

Several participants said that the quid pro quo was at the heart of the Grand Bargain and consequently more progress is needed in a number of directly related areas., including reducing earmarking, increased pooled funding by donors, and greater transparency of cost structures and commitment to efficiency by aid organizations—each requiring increased trust. In some cases, donors are hesitant to reduce earmarking and increase financing flexibility when there is a lack of transparency from the aid organizations. Aid organizations may struggle to reduce management costs as donors increase the number of assessments. It was recognized that:

- All parties must act simultaneously for the GB to succeed.
- Success must be defined. To build best practice, Grand Bargain signatories should look at previous successes, noting contexts and financing mechanisms.

Participants also agreed that issues around the humanitarian development nexus could best be left to the UN and other fora such as the IASC. The GB could usefully interact with them to ensure alignment but leave the initiative on the New Way of Working to them.

Prioritization

Participants agreed that priorities must be set out transparently and in advance. A few areas should be identified where GB signatories together could make a significant difference. While priority-setting requires wider engagement, a few potential areas of collaboration could include:

- *Cash*. Good progress has been made on the use and coordination of cash-based programming, and success is within reach. There are positive examples to learn from, such as the experience in Somalia. Participants noted the importance of context and adaptation to the needs of local markets.
- *Digital transformation of humanitarian space*. The agenda should look to the future, and recognize the potential of new technologies to revolutionize the management and delivery of humanitarian services, including cutting costs and enhancing data and transparency.
- *Engagement of private sector*. There are some examples of some exciting innovations, such as a humanitarian bond, or working through the private sector in Somalia when there were no other partners. This needs, of course, to be context specific, and may not always be possible.
- *Gender*. There are several areas where a small amount of effort could make a real difference for women, for example, ensuring targets are met in participation and needs assessments.

Improving GB Structure to Improve Effectiveness and Impact

Participants raised the need to consolidate and merge workstreams, as well as coordinate efforts. This could be taken up at the meeting of the facilitators in Berlin on October 24. Some proposed criteria included:

- Complete areas within workstreams, by focusing on targets that are close to being met, and where an extra push is need to reach the goal. The next Annual Meeting of the GB could be useful deadline for completion of those targets.
- Identifying (technical) areas where the experience and expertise of GB signatories could have an impact at field level.
- Looking carefully at each workstream, and considering how to manage, reduce duplication and merge them.
- Ensuring work is complementary with external processes, and focusing on the added value of the GB.
- Clarifying the GB monitoring framework by separating short-term and medium- to long-term objectives, and encouraging timely and quality reporting from each workstream.

Separating the political and technical

The Grand Bargain signatories are well placed to handle technical issues, and much positive progress has been made in some of these areas. However, a number of participants noted the political climate and the need to keep making the political case for international development aid. At field level, it is important to recognize the need to understand and engage local politics, which can make or break an intervention. Participants suggested:

- Identifying issues with the greatest political sensitivity, and determining the best fora in which to tackle them. This may include external, political fora with a potential advocacy role for GB signatories and workstreams.
- Using the role of the Eminent Person, Kristalina Georgieva, to elevate issues into political discourse.

Localization

Participants said that while localization is often raised in technical discussions, it is one of the most political issues on the agenda. While it is vitally important, to ensure local ownership, a lack of agreement on the definition of localization is impeding faster progress from being made. Participants suggested:

- Identifying the right fora to discuss localization and agree on some common definitions and objectives.

- Starting the discussion at the October technical meeting, in partnership with the Eminent Person, and informed by a World Bank Group concept note on the political economy of localization which can be shared through the Secretariat to start a dialogue.
- Recognizing that localization is also a data challenge, and working to enhance the frequency and quality of local data. This data must also be contextualized with local stories, which can inform the dialogue on what localization means.

Agile Leadership

Many participants called for a stronger GB Secretariat, able to provide leadership to prioritize and drive progress. The Secretariat must:

- Ensure better support of workstreams through agile and effective leadership.
- Avoid heavy bureaucratic structures and commit to efficiency and cost savings.

Summary of Conclusions

- 1) Prioritize reinvigorating the quid pro quo of the Grand Bargain, with identification of actions on issues including reporting and transparency.
- 2) Engage signatories on the consolidation and merging of workstreams, defining a process of prioritization and ensure that the New Way of Working is left to UN and other fora such as the IASC.
- 3) Identify key commitments within workstreams where progress is within reach and agreeing on actions and the upcoming GB Annual meeting as a deadline to achieve them.
- 4) Identify commitments with a longer time horizon, and agreeing to sequence workstreams appropriately.
- 5) Separate technical issues from political issues and determine the best fora for follow up, with localization a priority.
- 6) Engage the Eminent Person to elevate relevant issues at a political level, and develop a plan and timeline for her engagement.
- 7) Reinforce the secretariat, without the creation of heavy bureaucratic structures.

The technical meeting taking place in Berlin on October 24, 2017 is an opportunity to build on these ideas and flesh out the specifics.

PARTICIPANTS

1. Ms. Nan Buzard, Executive Director, International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)
2. Ms. Kelly T. Clemens, Deputy High Commissioner, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
3. Ms. Kristalina Georgieva, Eminent Person, Grand Bargain and CEO, World Bank Group (WBG)
4. Mr. John Ging, Director, Operational Division, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
5. Mr. Yannick Glemareck, Assistant Secretary-General, UN-Women
6. Mr. David Hallam, Director for Middle East & North Africa, Department for International Development (DFID), United Kingdom (UK)
7. Mr. Michael Keating, Special Representative of the Secretary General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM)
8. Mr. Rüdiger König, Director-General for Crisis Prevention, Stabilization, Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Assistance at the German Federal Foreign Office, Germany
9. Mr. Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (OCHA)
10. Mr. Peter Maurer, President, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
11. Mr. Mahmoud Mohieldin, Senior Vice-President, 2030 Agenda, UN Relations and Partnerships, World Bank Group (WBG)
12. Ms. Ursula Mueller, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
13. Ms. Elisabeth Rasmusson, Assistant Executive Director for Partnerships, Governance and Advocacy, World Food Program (WFP)
14. Mr. Manuel Sager, Director-General of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Switzerland
15. Mr. Christos Stylianides, Commissioner, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), European Commission
16. Mr. Elhadj As Sy, Secretary-General, International Federation for the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)
17. Mr. Sam Worthington, CEO, InterAction