



## Reversing the inequity – Opportunity knocks again or missed opportunity again!?

The consultations prior to the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit highlighted inequity and inefficiencies in the aid architecture. Influenced by the UN High-Level Panel (HLP) Report on Humanitarian Financing, “Too Important to Fail: addressing the humanitarian financing gap”, an overall purpose of the Grand Bargain (GB) is to increase the value-for-money of the available resources. One approach is increased cash programming. Another a reduction in paperwork and more resources into actual aid. A third, the provision of more resources to local and national actors to reduce transactional costs<sup>1</sup>. The purpose and spirit of collaboration are also clearly stated: *“We engage with local and national responders in a spirit of partnership and aim to reinforce rather than replace local and national capacities.”*

The Covid-19 crisis response and Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) present opportunities to accelerate progress on GB commitments and reverse the existing inequities. The Alliance for Empowering Partnership (A4EP) is a network of organisations committed to strengthen the humanitarian architecture and locally led response. A4EP is pleased that its position paper, ‘[Localised response to Covid-19 global pandemic](#)’ was referred to while developing the first Covid-19 [Global Humanitarian Response Plan](#) (GHRP). Discussions are now taking place to update the GHRP. The following recommendations from frontline responders are intended to ensure we do live up to the commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit.

**Recommendation 1: Increase the focus and allocation of resources to economic and social net programmes.**

While the GHRP analyses the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 and refers to ‘livelihoods’ in strategic priority 2, the objectives largely focus on food delivery. The revision should lead to more support for income, particularly for people working in the informal sector, daily wagers and small-scale rural and urban producers who cannot sell their products during lockdown. Around the world, sex workers, overwhelmingly women, are in dire economic need.

**Recommendation 2: Direct more assistance to the many migrant labourers** who are stranded overseas or in their own country, without income and adequate access to food and other essentials, in crowded conditions.

**Recommendation 3: Direct more assistance to non-COVID 19 health issues.** Resources and attention have been diverted away from other critical health issues such as malaria, HIV/AIDS, regular vaccination programmes and care for people with other acute or chronic diseases.

**Recommendation 4: Recognise, acknowledge and credit the local governmental and non-governmental responders** who globally are at the forefront of COVID-19 response. Ensure that, at last, they are at the decision-making tables, and can participate meaningfully. International actors should stop speaking on their behalf.

**Recommendation 5: Direct more and better-quality funding to local responders, faster.** For the last two months, around the world local and national actors have been funding their responses less from the slow international funding and more from philanthropic donations from the general public raised through their networks and crowd funding. Now is the opportunity to demonstrate the seriousness of the Grand Bargain commitments and provide them with the financial resources to continue that vital work. Of available management support or internal cost recovery provisions, 80% should go to those doing the actual work on the ground.

**Recommendation 6: Decentralised decision-making.** International agencies may be familiar with the situations of refugees and IDPs, but they are not with the contexts of the many other segments of the population that are now impacted by COVID-19. Local actors do have that knowledge. Several contexts do not easily lend themselves to good practices such as physical distancing, self-isolation etc. Decision-making therefore should be fit-for-context, include local actors and be highly decentralised. Decision-making should also be faster as the situation

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<sup>1</sup> The Grand Bargain – A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need, May 2016, p2

evolves rapidly.

**Recommendation 7: Lighten the administration.** Local and national actors are fully committed to intelligent programming and financial integrity and accountability. But this is not the time to demand lengthy proposals and constant and heavy reporting. International actors can support local and national responders by taking on most of the paperwork, rather than using this as a barrier to deny them support.

**Recommendation 8: Local actors are home-grown.** The IASC definition of local and national actors must not be manipulated so that nationally registered country offices of international agencies again receive the bulk of the funding.

**Recommendation 9: Financial reporting to the FTS mandatory.** Financial reporting to the Financial Tracking System (FTS) must be mandatory, and in a simpler form, so that local actors can also track the funding flows.

**Recommendation 10: Review and evaluate COVID-19 response from a Grand Bargain perspective.** A first review of the international humanitarian COVID-19 response, through the lens of the Grand Bargain commitments, needs to be concluded by the end of July 2020.

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