

Grand Bargain Annual Meeting 25 June 2020



Christian Aid statement

On the future of the Grand Bargain beyond 2021, Christian Aid believes the ambitions of the Grand Bargain to improve sector-wide effectiveness remain valid and are yet to be fully achieved, so we must continue to progress energetically collective action on for example localisation, participation and cash even after reaching the original 2021 Grand Bargain end-date.

We consider it will be important to preserve the valuable opportunity that the Grand Bargain offers for IASC partners (UN, Red Cross/Red Crescent, NGOs) to engage with donors so that a holistic grouping of sector stakeholders can collaborate and co-create.

Four challenges with the current set-up of the Bargain include

- the relative exclusion of front-line national and local responders – more inclusive arrangements should prevail after 2021;
- a tendency for Geneva rhetoric to be slow to translate into action at country level – we strongly recommend that Grand Bargain stakeholders move the centre of gravity of the Bargain to country level and mobilise contextualised country level dialogues to create momentum for field-based action toward the commitments;
- it is unhelpful and overcomplicated that the Bargain is split into 8 separate silos. There is a case for reducing the number of silos by prioritising or combining toward a more coherent approach.
- the annual self-reporting process is excessively laborious and bureaucratic. The cost of the time that 60+ stakeholders invest in filling in the voluminous multi-layered Excel spreadsheets on each of the 51 commitments exceeds the value of this complex data. In the spirit of simplified reporting there is significant scope for self-reporting reform.

Christian Aid believes that an under-utilised incentive to accelerate Grand Bargain implementation at country level, for example on participation and localisation, would be for donors to strongly encourage agencies in receipt of their strategic flexible funding to evidence how they are concretely progressing key Grand Bargain

commitments as a condition of continued funding. This is critical both for humanitarian assistance in the short term to those most in need, and to ensure the viability of frontline organisations in the long term through investment in their overheads between grants. In this regard, we welcome DFID's recent decision to require that funding partners under its RRF mechanism pass a substantial share of overheads onto local partners.

To promote **localisation**, we would like to see more local partners given a voice at the Grand Bargain table. The localisation workstream has done sterling work under the energetic leadership of IFRC and the Government of Switzerland, but what is now key is that the other workstreams put localisation on their radar screens and identify how they can best support the localisation agenda. The Grand Bargain localisation workstream demonstrator missions to Bangladesh, Iraq and Nigeria were an important step forward in bringing the Grand Bargain agenda to country level and further such visits would be valuable when COVID-19 allows.

On **participation**, we very much welcome the workstream's promotion of the innovative Survivor and Community Led Response Approaches in their recent extremely popular workstream webinar, with compelling insights from national NGO leaders from East Jerusalem YMCA (IOPT) and ECOWEB (Philippines). We believe these approaches, often championed by Dan Church Aid, Church of Sweden and the Local 2 Global Protection initiative, among others, are a very promising avenue toward putting communities affected by crisis in the driving seat of their own response and recovery. We strongly encourage donors to find innovative ways to enable such approaches to be replicated and taken to scale, as one practical way forward toward a participation revolution.

The Grand Bargain primarily focuses on achieving the maximum bang from the bucks that the system already has. It would be important to give equal energy and attention to the other two priorities identified by the UNSG's **High Level Panel** on Humanitarian Financing – to achieve significant increases in resourcing and significant reductions in need. These deserve more attention moving forward.

Finally, the humanitarian policy community should be wary of becoming too exclusively technocratic. Finding the optimal templates for joined-up multi-sectoral needs assessment or for simplified and harmonised programme reporting, for example, are worthy and important. But let that not distract our attention from the need to combat with due outrage flagrant breaches of **international humanitarian law** whenever we encounter them, such as attacks on medical facilities and civilians in Syria and Yemen.