

UNFPA statement

Grand Bargain Annual Meeting June 2020

UNFPA remains committed to the Grand Bargain and its spirit of reform and wishes to thank the Eminent Person, the Facilitation Group, and the Grand Bargain Secretariat for their leadership and tireless efforts in organizing this meeting despite challenging circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Enhancing effectiveness and efficiency is critical for the humanitarian system to help address the funding gap and ensure the best possible response for those in need. Grand Bargain is instrumental for pushing this agenda that is becoming even more pertinent in light of COVID-19, with reducing management costs being a key element. Last year, UNFPA became a member of the UN Partner Portal (UNPP) and we are currently rolling it out within the whole organization. UNFPA also supports the use of the UNPP to streamline due diligence and reduce duplicative processes. We expect great efficiency gains from the UNPP and call on other UN agencies to join for the benefits of both UN agencies and NGO partners.

While COVID-19 has devastating long-term impacts globally, it could at the same time become a catalyst to address gaps in our collective response approaches and to fulfill Grand Bargain commitments:

Firstly, COVID-19 is accentuating the need to have a strong response structure build up at national and local levels. It is very positive to see an increase of signatories that have reached the target of 25% funding directly to national and local respondents, and UNFPA was among these with 38.6 % of total humanitarian funding in 2019 to national and local respondents. However, funding is not enough. A perspective of capacity strengthening of national and local partners, including women's organisations, should always be integrated in programmes in the field. This includes training on programmatic, operational and financial management aspects as well as support cost to local partners, and it can be done: UNFPA is allowing an average of 6,86 % in support cost to our partners.

Secondly, COVID-19 has also underscored the importance of cash-based assistance, and even provided momentum for this form of assistance, including for UNFPA in some country contexts. However, for large-scale multipurpose cash assistance programmes, there often seems to be a lack of consistent and meaningful gender and protection analysis, resulting in exclusion errors, lack of effective monitoring and mitigation of GBV risks, and lost opportunity to measure the protection and gender dividends of multipurpose cash. UNFPA therefore calls for more consistent protection, gender and GBV analysis jointly by protection/GBV and cash actors as part of coordinated needs assessments and risk assessments in order to "leave no one behind."

Finally, COVID-19 has also enabled progress on quality funding. We have seen an increase in un-earmarked funding from donors to the COVID response, which has allowed for flexibility to quickly adapt responses and prioritize interventions where the needs are highest and most under-financed. A more permanent tendency of increased flexible funding would allow for a change of practice and higher degree of cascading the flexibility down to local partners, including local women's organisations. In this regard, it would be important to examine the reporting requirements and audit framework as well as risk management considerations, which is often determined by donor conditionalities.

As we look forward, UNFPA strongly supports a continuation of the Grand Bargain in some form. It is a unique forum, encompassing donors and organisations alike, and it has proven its value in bringing progress on reform steps within the humanitarian system. However, a revised version of Grand Bargain is needed to ensure momentum on reform steps:

- Updated commitments, with a focus on fewer gaps that will be feasible to address.
- Progress should be measurable for most actors, backed up with available data.
- Gender responsiveness needs to be mainstreamed in all relevant commitments, and should also be addressed by specific commitments: e.g. follow up on the need for greater transparency on financial flows directed to meet the needs of women and girls including sexual and reproductive health and rights and addressing GBV, as well as strengthening leadership and empowerment of women and girls, with clear disaggregation of data and a stronger monitoring system.

Work on preparing new or adapted commitments should start early to ensure sufficient consultation in the field, including among national and local respondents. Research could also be commissioned to assess gaps that might not be captured by work streams today, for example on gender, humanitarian-development-peace nexus such as links to the UNSDCF and the emergency preparedness agenda. UNFPA would also support a revision of the work streams to avoid siloed discussions. It will likewise be central to bring the Grand Bargain up to a more strategic level to set the direction and to commit to agreed steps. An updated Grand Bargain could bring momentum to address gaps and ensure progress towards a more effective and efficient humanitarian system to the benefit of affected populations.