

**Grand Bargain in 2020:**

**Annual Self Report – Narrative Summary**

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(NB. Please limit your answer to no more than **5 pages in total** – anything over this word limit will not be considered by ODI in their analysis. Please respond to all of the questions below.)

## **Grand Bargain in 2020**

**Question 1: Reflecting on the information you have provided in the Excel spreadsheet, please highlight the 2 or 3 key outcomes or results relating to the Grand Bargain that your institution achieved in 2020?**

### **1. Strengthening Women leadership in humanitarian response**

ActionAid implemented a federation-wide response to Covid-19, with the goal to support the most affected communities in 40 countries, particularly women and girls and marginalised groups, in combatting the negative impact of Covid-19 and reducing the spread of the virus with a women-led, localised response. Working with crisis-affected women, networks and organisations, ActionAid was able to not only promote women's leadership in the response to Covid-19 but also amplify the voices and representation of women in humanitarian decision-making spaces.

In 2020, out of 23 responses that were analysed in 13 countries, ActionAid's average direct transfer to local organisations was 39%, with 22% of funds going to women led and women rights organisations. Of these, 54% of the responses had women in leadership positions and equally, 54% had women in community decision making roles.

In the first phase of the Covid response appeal (April to September 2020) ActionAid federation members raised a total of £1,210,740 and channelled this through the Disaster Preparedness and Response Fund. ActionAid's goal at the onset of the Phase I was to reach 14,997,764 people. By October 2020, ActionAid had reached 9,636,598 (64% of target) people directly or 25,859,280 (172% of target) people directly and indirectly.

ActionAid has noted a considerable percentage change in the reporting on direct funding support to women-led organisations. The humanitarian team will endeavour to engage countries to learn more on this in the coming months and share findings as applicable with the Grand Bargain.

### **2. Advocacy on Funding for Women-Led /Women Rights Organisations**

ActionAid countries, supported by work at the global level, advocated to governments, regional bodies, local authorities and other humanitarian agencies to ensure that measures established to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic were equitable, reached and benefited the poorest and most marginalised, and were influenced and led by local women, organisations and networks in affected communities. These efforts included a [joint letter to the G20](#) on inequality and Covid-19 recovery with 17 other organisations, a [WLO-Covid19-joint policy brief](#) on humanitarian funding; [joint letter with 500 organisations](#) to prioritise GBV and the role of women's organisations in the global Covid-19 response, partnerships and coordination in the Covid-19 crisis, and the national launches of the [Who Cares for the Future: finance gender responsive public services report](#) in nearly 20 countries for UN Public Services Day 2020.

### **3. Improved Gender Based Violence Prevention and Response in humanitarian response that integrates Cash and Voucher Assistance**

The women-led community-based protection (WLCBP) approach has become part of ActionAid's core humanitarian response. The roll out of WLCBP "[Safety with Dignity](#)" manual and piloting of a toolkit which has commenced in 2019-2020 (in Kenya, Jordan and Lebanon) supports ActionAid and partners to build on local women's strengths, knowledge and experience. Women Safe Spaces is a key successful area of women's protection programming for ActionAid and we have developed a lot of experience, notably in the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

The approach recognises women's capability to drive their protection, identifying problems and solutions and creating community-based support structures that can better protect women's rights in times of crisis. A key element of the approach is the integration of cash into key protection activities such as psychosocial activities to support women at risk and provide urgent support to survivors of GBV, to build the resilience of people living in poverty. 48% of the humanitarian responses analysed in 2020 by ActionAid included Cash and Voucher Assistance (20 projects with cash and voucher assistance out of around 36 emergency response projects). Additionally, a Cash community of practice has been formed to support improving CVA standards across the ActionAid federation.

**Question 2: How has your institution contributed to the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment<sup>1</sup> in humanitarian settings through its implementation of the Grand Bargain? What results/outcomes have been achieved in this regard? (please outline specific initiatives or changes in practice and their outcomes/results).** Please refer to the Guidelines for definitions of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, which are included in this self-report template package.

ActionAid has been able to carve out a niche area on women's leadership and protection in humanitarian emergencies with a feminist intersectional approach. As a member of [the Grand Bargain Friends of Gender group](#), ActionAid has pushed for bringing a gender lens to the agreement. The reporting now includes the option to disaggregate the support and funding to women-led and women's rights organisations.

As a result of this niche area, since 2017 ActionAid played a key role in conceptualising and driving forwards a [Feminist Humanitarian Network \(FHN\)](#), hosting its secretariat and planning for its growth. The Feminist Humanitarian Network (FHN) is a membership-based organization comprising a global network of local and national women's rights organisations, national and regional women's networks, international NGOs, academic organisations, funding institutions and individual women leaders (current membership is 48, with 71% local organisations from the Global south) committed to a transformed humanitarian system that promotes a feminist agenda.

An example of joint advocacy in 2020: ActionAid and the Feminist Humanitarian Network (FHN) shared learning and case studies on the nexus between safeguarding and accountability in the humanitarian context using a feminist lens at the virtual global CHS exchange, 6-8 October 2020 (meeting report [here](#)). Ahead of this event, a video was produced on 'Feminist Approaches to Accountable Humanitarian Action' and is available [here](#). A representative from ActionAid also sat on the panel discussion for a session on 'Shifting the dynamic – CHS verification as a power broker in the drive from localisation'

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to the IASC definitions of gender equality and women empowerment, available [here](#).

**Question 3: How has the humanitarian-development nexus been strategically mainstreamed in your institutional implementation of the Grand Bargain commitments?**

Please explain how your institution has linked commitments 10.1 - 10.5 with other commitments from other workstreams.

Underpinning the ActionAid humanitarian signature, is the commitment to link emergency response to resilience-building and longer-term sustainable change, including empowering individuals and addressing underlying inequalities through all our development programming. Examples:

- ActionAid (with the leadership of ActionAid Denmark) has been implementing a multi-year (2018-2021) funding from DANIDA for Jordan, Gaza and Lebanon which translates in multi-year support to women and youth-led organisations supporting vulnerable people affected by protracted crisis.
- In May 2020, the Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR) [2020 - 2025 strategy](#) adopted Arabic as a formal working language. This has been part of ActionAid's global advocacy efforts towards ensuring programme partners in Gaza, Jordan and Lebanon are able to participate meaningfully and influence the agenda of the GNDR.
- The GNDR's strategy now include local level leadership, promoting gender equality and accountability to affected communities. This was influenced by ActionAid's new supplementary [guidance chapter on resilience in protracted crisis](#). The agenda for GNDR's 2020 Digital Global Summit, which took place in October 2020, was based around the 3 goals of "GNDR's 2020-2025 strategy: Local Leadership for Global Impact". Localisation featured on week two ("Champion a Localisation Movement") of the summit and Arabic translation was offered in all the virtual sessions.

**Grand Bargain 2016-2020: Overall achievements and remaining gaps**

**Question 4: What are the 2-3 key achievements/areas of most progress by your institution since 2016?** Please report on your institutional progress for the period 2016-2020, even if your institution did not become a signatory until after 2016.

ActionAid has championed the Grand Bargain, initially as critical non signatory and then as a member from 2018 onwards, to adopt a women-led and gender equality angle at the localisation workstream and in the whole agreement via the UN Women led Friends of Gender Group. ActionAid has published the following advocacy papers [On the Frontline](#), [Leading the Way](#) and [Shifting Power to Young People in humanitarian action](#).

As part of the Friends of Gender Group alongside UN Women and CARE, ActionAid has held events, roundtables, briefings, webinars, as well as authored papers highlighting the role of gender in humanitarian action such as [Getting Gender into the Grand Bargain](#), [Creating Lasting Impact](#), [ActionAid and CARE: Not what she bargained for?](#) ActionAid conducted consultations with local women's organisations to generate key messages and considerations from their perspectives and brought these perspectives to high-level plenary meetings. [Women leaders at the UNDRR](#); [Women voices at the Africa Regional Localisation Conference](#).

For multiple years, ActionAid brought local women leaders to events where they could directly interact with donors. Hearing the messages directly from the perspectives of affected women was credited with the extent to which the ideas gained traction in the minds of signatories. We have also joined the women leaders in advocating for meaningful participation of women

in global spaces and jointly with them developed a [guidance note on supporting local women leaders' participation in global humanitarian spaces](#).

Within the GBV specialist community, ActionAid has worked with others to forward a community-led approach to protection and promote localisation in coordination spaces. The CARE and ActionAid GBV Area of Responsibility localisation task team, active in 2018 and 2019, was instrumental in promoting the role of women's organisations, making the Call to Action embed localisation in its next RoadMap, which features localisation and paves the way for synergies between the Call to Action and Grand Bargain in terms of participation and localisation. ActionAid participated in the Global Protection Cluster, Cash for protection task team and has incorporated CVA in its Women Led Community Based Protection approach and toolkit

The ActionAid CHS (Core Humanitarian Standard) Group was verified in 2019 and in the Humanitarian Quality Assurance Initiative audit. An Accountability Resource Working Group was formed in October 2020 with representative from across the AA federation which has updated the Accountability in Emergencies resource book to include learning from Covid-19, accountability in protracted crisis and youth-led action. It will be translated into Arabic and final copies will be available in 2021. ActionAid has contributed to put localisation at the centre of the CHS, with the CHS Alliance now being committed to an increase in local members from 35% to 50%.

Finally, the strong 2019 ActionAid and partners presence at the Global Platform for DRR has made women's leadership and gender considerations central in the implementation of the Sendai Framework, as reflected in the [Co-Chair's Summary](#) (point 17).

**Question 5: What, in your institutional view, have been the main achievements of the Grand Bargain signatories, as a collective, since 2016?** Please indicate specific commitments, thematic or cross-cutting issues or workstreams where you think most progress has been made collectively by signatories.

Four years after being agreed at the World Humanitarian Summit, the Grand Bargain continues to show its value as a unique platform and space to discuss and take joint action among UN, NGOs and donors to increase the effectiveness and transform the humanitarian system so it serves the people affected by crisis more effectively.

The progress made in certain workstreams is creating systemic shifts in policy and practice and positive normative guidance in areas such as cash programming, localisation, participation, joint intersectoral needs assessments, multi-year funding and transparency.

**Question 6: What has the Grand Bargain not been able to achieve in its five year tenure? What outstanding obstacles, gaps, areas of weakness still remain after five years, in terms of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian action?** Please indicate specific commitments, thematic or cross-cutting issues or workstreams where you think there remain key gaps or obstacles.

The Grand Bargain signatories focused in its first four years on the technical barriers to progress on localisation. It is now recognised that the blockages to progress on women's leadership and localisation need high level political discussions and agreements.

There is also recognition from humanitarian actors that the next level of discussion on women's leadership and localisation need to be led by local actors, holding international

actors accountable to their commitments, and discussions must be closer to the ground, with less discussions at Geneva and New York level and hearing more voices of frontline actors, particularly women and young people. The Grand Bargain discussions on different workstreams have not trickled to country level or local actors. NEAR's survey with local and national organisations found that most respondents are not familiar with the IATI and its standard and three-quarters of respondents have never used the data reported into the IATI Standard. Also, almost three-quarters of the respondents have never been asked to use the reporting template 8+3.

The Grand Bargain also requires a new governance structure in which the Friends of Gender Group and local groups, including women's and young people's organisations and networks are included. This structure would serve as an overarching umbrella for existing related initiatives, normative frameworks, and commitments, aimed at advancing gender equality and women's and young people's local leadership and decision-making in the humanitarian system.

### **Risk and the Grand Bargain**

**Question 7a: How has risk (financial, operational, reputational, etc) affected your institution's implementation of the core commitments since you became a signatory to the Grand Bargain?**

All humanitarian actors recognise that risk sharing needs to be addressed by both donors and humanitarian actors and that quality funding, defined as multi-year and flexible, is key for progress in localisation and more effective and sustainable humanitarian action.

ActionAid's due diligence and procedures can result, partly due to conditions cascaded by institutional donors linked to internal procedures in barriers that can affect the implementation of localisation and participation commitments.

**Question 7b: How has your institution sought to mitigate or address these risks to enable implementation of the core commitments?**

ActionAid has been doing influential advocacy work on women's leadership and localisation to several humanitarian donors including DFID, DFAT, Irish Aid, Danida and AECID. The organisation has also been promoting a women-led localised approach in sudden onset and protracted crisis, following the activities of the DFID funded Shifting the Power and Transforming Surge projects that ended in March 2018. New projects have allowed specific activities to influence the national responses in Palestine, Jordan and Lebanon (i.e. a DANIDA funded programme, which will end in September 2021) and Myanmar, Nigeria and Nepal (ECHO funded Accelerating Localisation Through Partnership Projects which ended in March 2020). There is also a number of ActionAid countries that strongly advocate for women's leadership and protection through its preparedness and response work: Haiti, Liberia, DR Congo, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somaliland, Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, Myanmar and, via Australia, Vanuatu, Fiji and Philippines.

ActionAid has also joined the Charter for Change in 2020. As part of the process, it has consulted all the forty-five countries in the Federation to obtain agreement for the commitments endorsed. In a next phase, ActionAid will look at specific internal organisational issues related to risk and due diligence, which might need review to implement the Charter and the localisation commitments in full.