

# The Grand Bargain Facilitation Group Principals and Eminent Person meeting

## Facilitation Group Sherpa Proposal for the strategic direction for the future of the Grand Bargain

### 1. Where do we go from here: CURRENT PROGRESS AND FUTURE DIRECTION

Launched by the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 and providing a unique platform that brings together all humanitarian actors across constituencies, the Grand Bargain contributed decisively to the transformative process of the humanitarian system aiming to achieve better efficiency and effectiveness in the face of the increasing funding gap for humanitarian needs worldwide. The current circumstances marked by Covid19 pandemic further validate the relevance and strategic importance of the objectives underpinning the Grand Bargain.

The 2020 Independent Report by ODI on the Grand Bargain recognised that *"collective and individual efforts by signatories have brought tangible results in a number of areas, demonstrating that the Grand Bargain can lead to system-wide changes in policy and practice"*<sup>1</sup>. The Independent Report goes further in saying that the Grand Bargain *"...is acting as a lever for change, that it is evolving in response to the dynamics of the wider aid context and even that it is maturing, offering advantages not necessarily envisaged when it was originally designed in 2016. ... It is evident that the Grand Bargain is having a wider impact in terms of a more cohesive, collaborative approach across the international humanitarian aid sector – a crucial element in helping drive forward reforms of the whole humanitarian system"*<sup>1</sup>.

Despite such positive progress, the *"potential that the Grand Bargain offers in supporting reform of the international humanitarian system has not been realized"* and *"there remain substantial challenges in moving towards the original goals of the Grand Bargain, with very limited substantive progress on some of the core commitments in particular"*.

In the spirit of the "maturing process", the five-year anniversary of the Grand Bargain offers an opportunity to revamp the process, building on its comparative advantages, addressing its perceived weaknesses and unlocking the outstanding blockages. Orientations proposed include **"a) harnessing political will, b) narrowing the focus to a handful of strategic objectives, c) instituting a nimbler, more innovative approach, and stripping away bureaucracy."**

The following sections will explore these components in more detail.

#### a. Harness political will

Building on five years of intensive and constructive discussions, the Grand Bargain must now precipitate the remaining priorities that will ensure further system-wide reforms. To achieve

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<sup>1</sup> <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2020-12/Grand%20Bargain%20Annual%20Independent%20Report%202020.pdf>

this, the role of the Principals should be strengthened to provide a continuous political steer and oversight of the process.

The first element for this purpose is to anchor the “Grand Bargain 2.0” to its intended impact on the ground by reconfirming the strategic objective, remembering that the process is not an end *in se* but a means to an end:

**Better humanitarian outcomes for affected populations through enhanced efficiency, effectiveness and greater accountability, in the spirit of quid pro quo as relevant to all constituencies.**

The wording of the strategic objective gives the political orientation of the Grand Bargain purpose. High-level political goals (2 or 3) will be defined to capture the impact on the ground. The objective consists of the following components:

- “Better humanitarian outcomes”: *affected populations are better served, suffering is avoided or reduced*
- “affected populations”: *appropriate design ensuring participation of affected people and a more locally-led humanitarian response.*
- accountability: *accountability to affected populations, to taxpayers, to donors, to agencies, to humanitarian workers on the ground, etc.*

The Grand Bargain 2.0 would be articulated around exchanges and discussions between the Principals, focused on high-level political directions of change that are defined in strategic and specific objectives for the Grand Bargain. Principals would be brought closer to the process by engaging with the Eminent Person, and with their peers in bilateral or multilateral meetings (*in line with the concept of coalition of the willing outlined below, concerned actors consult each other in informal task groups with a specific focus. The Eminent Person, or Facilitation Group Principals and Sherpas, would also reach out to their counterparts to discuss progress and challenges*).

Suggested decision/action point for the Principals:

- Recognise the unique added value and the important achievements of the Grand Bargain. Reaffirm the commitment to continue working together, evolving towards a Grand Bargain 2.0, as equal peers, on the basis of *quid pro quo*, on issues of strategic importance for a more efficient and effective humanitarian response.
- Confirm the political direction defined in the **strategic objective**.

**b. Narrow the focus**

Recognising progress already achieved and acknowledging a changed context, the following transformational enabling priorities have been identified as means to achieve the strategic objective and encompassing the ‘bargain’ (quid pro quo) component:

**Enabling priority 1:** “A critical mass of quality funding is reached that allows an effective and efficient response, ensuring visibility and accountability.”

- "Critical mass": *Having "funding" is not enough to allow an efficient response, there needs to be a critical mass both of funding and within that, a sufficient proportion of funds that is less or un-earmarked, timely and multi-annual.*
- "Effective and efficient response": *Quality funding is not an end in se, it must translate into better design of operations and better delivery (efficiency), leading to improved humanitarian outcomes for affected populations.*
- "Visibility": *greater visibility of various humanitarian actors along the supply chain, from donors all the way to local actors*

**Enabling priority 2:** *"Greater support is provided for the leadership, delivery and capacity of local responders and the participation of affected communities in addressing humanitarian needs."*

- "Greater support is provided...": *Increased and better targeted support for the capacity needs identified by local responders and a shift away from sub-contracting and toward more genuine partnerships between international and local actors.*
- "Participation of affected communities in addressing humanitarian needs": *Ensuring that agencies and donors have sufficient flexibility to design or rapidly change the manner or type of aid they provide in response to the preferences of affected communities*

As formulated, these enabling priorities contribute to the realisation of the strategic objective and provide further details for the direction of system-wide reforms.

Sherpas would be invited to steer their services towards achieving **outputs** relevant for the fulfilment of the objectives, through progress in a variety of fora (not exclusively Grand Bargain but also using results from other initiatives). The outputs should be defined in February and March 2021 in line with the quid pro quo elements deemed important by all constituencies, such as prioritisation (needs assessment), risk sharing, reduced management costs, transparency, reporting, and others, as recognized by the various constituencies. Concrete aspects that are relevant for the enabling priorities would be defined, as described below, by the workstreams.

Suggested decision/action point for the Principals:

- Agree on the formulation of the enabling priorities reaffirming the ambitions of the Grand Bargain in terms of concrete, tangible impacts.
- Initiate a high-level a consultation process on how to achieve these ambitions in a spirit of *quid pro quo*.

### **c. Institute a nimbler innovative approach, stripping away the bureaucracy**

As recommended by the ODI report, the role of the Sherpas will be reinforced in order to ensure sufficient that progress feeds into the political level, and provide a consistent steer to technical services. This will be articulated by prioritising the outstanding work where the Grand Bargain has added value, limiting the focus to a definite set of priorities from the existing commitments or, recognizing the evolution of the Grand Bargain, including new important elements such as risk sharing, visibility, or revision of contractual terms and conditions for local actors and cascading funding.

The workstreams have played an important role in the Grand Bargain, where problems are analysed and solutions shaped and further processed for the endorsement of decision makers. The workstreams are therefore best placed to detail progress achieved and single out what key deliverables remain outstanding for the Grand Bargain 2.0, while identifying the opportunities to build bridges with other initiatives that contribute to joint objectives (IASC, FTS, GHD, etc.).

Steered by the Facilitation Group (FG), the existing workstreams should therefore, in February and March 2021, assess and decide at Sherpa level which key elements to maintain in the Grand Bargain 2.0 and bring forward to the political level, and how they wish to pursue their work (continue, close down or alternatively shift the technical level work to other fora if relevant, ensuring thus synergies and reducing duplication).

Suggested decision/action point for the Principals:

- Task the FG to invite workstreams to define and decide at Sherpa level their exit/transformation strategies, and their tasks for the period until 2023.

## 2. COORDINATION STRUCTURE

The Grand Bargain 2.0 will maintain current support structures, including FG to support the process, a high-profile Eminent Person to ensure regular follow-up at Principals level throughout the process, a Sherpa group with sufficient seniority and power to both drive change within the humanitarian ecosystem and influence decisions outside it, and a Secretariat to support the coordination and communication function to these structures.

The FG will include one additional seat for a local civil society responder keeping it small enough to be effective, but more representative of those delivering assistance on the front line. In addition, at least one member of the FG, in addition to their constituency role, will undertake to represent the Friends of Gender group and will commit to regularly liaising with them to ensure gender is reflected across the Grand Bargain.

Suggested decision/action point for the Principals:

- Confirm the support structure for the Grand Bargain 2.0.

## 3. ACCOUNTABILITY

The annual self-reporting mechanism will be maintained but simplified to focus on the strategic objective and enabling priorities, based on a reduced set of core commitments.

The FG will further work out the details on how to bring the Grand Bargain 2.0 closer to the operational level, including by assessing the proposal to create reference groups at local level, which could enhance local representation in the Humanitarian Country Teams with a particular focus on gender and disability. Keeping in mind existing mechanisms, details of such reference groups will be detailed and decided upon in February and March 2021.