

Grand Bargain in 2020:
Annual Self Report – Narrative Summary

Name of Institution: Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)

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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?

Australia has focused our humanitarian reform efforts on **localisation**. Drawing on the foundations set in the preceding years, our partners have made notable strides in localising their assistance using Australian funding in the Indo-Pacific region.

Example 1: The Australian Humanitarian Partnership

The Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) – a consortium of six NGOs (CARE, Oxfam, World Vision, Plan, Caritas and Save the Children) –has developed in-country committee governance structures comprised of different combinations of representatives from Australian NGO local branches and/ or local partners. In Fiji, local partners make up the majority of committee representatives.

In 2020, in response to **Tropical Cyclone Harold** (Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu) and **COVID-19** (Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, PNG and Timor-Leste), decision making was decentralised to the in-country committees. Proposals were designed and managed directly by the committees, localising decision making around response planning and funding [e.g. Australia's response to TC Harold in Vanuatu provided 47.5 per cent (AUD3.8m) of the total (AUD8m) to local and national responders]. We anticipate this localised decision making will be the norm for the AHP mechanism moving forward.

Example 2: Multi-year humanitarian assistance to meet needs in Bangladesh and Myanmar

Australia sustained humanitarian assistance in Bangladesh and Myanmar to respond to the needs of crisis affected communities, including Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar. Australia's Grand Bargain commitments on localisation and accountability to affected populations were embedded into the program logic, and new clauses and reporting requirements were inserted into multi-year funding agreements with multilateral and NGO partners.

We require all partners to submit localisation plans that outline how they intend to strengthen the capacity and influence of their downstream partners over the course of the multi-year agreement. We have contractually mandated the use of the 8+3 template and require partners to report to DFAT if/ how local and national partners are increasingly influencing decision making in the partnership. We encourage intermediaries to pass down an appropriate portion of the overhead costs to local/ national partners to support institutional strengthening.

Question 2: How has your institution contributed to the advancement of gender equality and women’s empowerment¹ 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).

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls remains a key priority for Australia’s humanitarian policy and programming.

Australia has made continual efforts to improve the collection of disaggregated data, by gender, across our investments.

In Bangladesh and Myanmar, clauses have been introduced into funding agreements with multilateral and INGO partners which require partners to develop ‘Action Plans’ for Gender and Disability Inclusion. In Myanmar specifically, we partner with aid organisations to support women and child friendly spaces that provide protection, health, and counselling services, and establish livelihoods support and cash for work opportunities for women.

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

Australia is committed to working more coherently across the humanitarian – development nexus. We are making institutional progress on engaging with partners in a less siloed way across the breadth of our humanitarian and development investments.

Example 1: Greater collaboration and cohesion across our flagship humanitarian and development NGO programs

In response to **COVID-19**, specific indicators were developed that are being applied consistently across our flagship NGO programs. These indicators will support consolidated reporting to DFAT’s Humanitarian, Partnerships and NGO Division.

In November 2020, Australia convened a workshop on **localisation** with our NGO partners working across our humanitarian and development mechanisms. The workshop allowed NGO representatives to share their experiences operationalising localisation, including:

- a. how to maximise complementarity in partnerships with local/ national actors; and
- b. ways to strengthen capacity (human and institutional) and build local leadership over time.

We will continue to embed this new way of working in our interactions with Australia’s NGO sector – finding opportunities for collaboration and greater cohesion across all aspects of the program cycle (design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and learning).

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

Example 2: Providing partners with flexibility to respond to needs as they arise across the humanitarian – development continuum

Where possible, Australia supports in-built flexibility into program design and implementation to allow partners to respond to needs as they arise. The flexible nature of the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) supported the adaptation of existing projects to ensure governments and communities could prepare for and respond to the impacts of **COVID-19**.

In total, 60 per cent of all ANCP projects were redirected to support COVID preparedness and response activities. In Vietnam, CBM Australia ensured that people with disabilities could equitably access healthcare, hygiene information and hygiene kits. In Vanuatu, World Vision Australia trained faith and community leaders to respond and refer to incidence of violence and share accurate health and hygiene messages.

Australia's **multi-year packages** take a nexus approach in the way they are designed and implemented. For example, our funding package in Iraq (2017-2020) combined humanitarian, stabilisation and social cohesion activities to support durable solutions to affected communities. An independent review of the Iraq package found that "the Package logic reflects a coherent approach leveraging a range of appropriately mandated and skilled partners, and well-considered activities designed to progress and address high priority needs across the HDP continuum."

Similarly, Australia's multi-year assistance in Bangladesh and Myanmar is addressing immediate humanitarian needs and providing longer-term support to build resilience amongst crisis affected communities, include the Rohingya.

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?

Key achievement 1: Embedding localisation into our humanitarian and development policy and programming

Since Australia became a signatory to the Grand Bargain in 2016, partners in the Indo-Pacific region have looked to DFAT to play a leadership role on operationalising our shared localisation commitments. Australia was an active participant in the Localisation Demonstrator Mission to Bangladesh in 2018 and we have played an ongoing role in the localisation workstream, bringing an Indo-Pacific focus to global policy discussions.

In the past year, we have made considerable gains embedding localisation into our humanitarian and development policy and programming. DFAT's Humanitarian, NGOs and Partnerships Division released a policy note and work plan to guide

internal program and partnership managers to go further on localisation and a localisation symposium provided an opportunity for reflection and discussion.

DFAT's aid and contracting management division has led the development of a localisation practice note (in draft) that explores the entry points for localisation across Australia's aid program. We recognise that opportunities exist in design, contracting, procurement and working differently through intermediary arrangements (including managing contractors).

Key achievement 2: Taking a multi-year approach to protracted crises in our region and beyond

Since 2016, Australia has successfully implemented multi-year responses to protracted crises including to the Syria regional response, Iraq, Bangladesh and Myanmar. We have embedded our humanitarian reform commitments into these packages, pushing partners to work as collectively, locally, efficiently and effectively as possible.

A hallmark feature of Australia's multi-year packages is the in-built flexibility that allows partners to respond to needs and risks as they arise across the humanitarian – development – peace nexus.

Question 5: What, in your institutional view, have been the main achievements of the Grand Bargain signatories, as a collective, since 2016?

1. The Grand Bargain has provided a set of shared objectives to drive reform of the global humanitarian system. Signatories now have a global policy dialogue that has brought accountability for improvement to the various stakeholder groups (donors, UN, NGOs).
2. The localisation work stream has been a standout example of driving a common change agenda at the global, regional and local level across stakeholder groups. The localisation workstream has managed to support global standard setting (e.g. drafting and releasing guidance notes for signatories), regional dialogue (e.g. regional conferences on localisation) and local action (e.g. Bangladesh demonstrator mission and the localisation roadmap that has eventuated). The workstream presents a model for success for the future to ensure global reform is meaningfully translated down to action at the country and local level.
3. Collectively, we have increased the routine use of cash, where appropriate, alongside other tools. Australia continues to expand the use of cash based programs and cash has been critical in Australia's response to COVID-19.

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 remains focused at the global level with headquarter representatives forming the majority in workstream discussions and annual meetings. The governance of the Grand Bargain needs to be less focused on headquarter-based discussions and better connected with local and national dialogue and reform.

As a consequence, we are still not witnessing widespread reform at a country level for many Grand Bargain commitments. We need to find a way to translate the global reform agenda into meaningful action for local/ national actors.