

Grand Bargain in 2020:
Annual Self Report – Narrative Summary

Name of Institution:

International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)

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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?

As a non-operational NGO network, the most relevant role for ICVA involves direct advocacy with signatories for increased implementation of commitments, as well as representing the broader NGO voice in Grand Bargain workstream discussions. Notably, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 provided an opportunity to enhance the focus on the implementation of certain Grand Bargain workstreams. Similar to previous years, the primary focus areas for ICVA in 2020 included harmonized reporting, localization, and quality funding.

The main outcome achieved in Workstream 9 in 2020 has been a further uptake of the 8+3 Template by additional Grand Bargain (GB) signatories. After the 8+3 Template had been finalized in 2019 after a successful conclusion of the pilot phase, the Co-Conveners (ICVA and Germany) mostly focused on further advocacy for implementation of the 8+3 Template by donors and by UN organisations in their de-facto donor-role towards their downstream partners. Several new donors decided to use or start introducing the 8+3 Template in 2020. According to the Co-Conveners' count, almost half of the signatories with a grant-giving role have introduced or committed to introduce the template.

The Co-Conveners supported the call by the IASC in 2020 to improve the efficiency of funding flows through the humanitarian system as part of the response to COVID-19. The challenges imposed by the pandemic made it even more important that humanitarian organisations spend less time with bureaucracy and more on their core tasks. Through engagement with the IASC Humanitarian Finance Results Group, the IASC Proposal for a Harmonized Approach to Funding Flexibility in the Context of COVID-19, issued in June 2020, specifically encouraged NGOs, donors, and UN agencies to use the 8+3 template as one of 9 measures to increase flexibility of funding and reduce administrative burdens.

The membership of ICVA includes local and national NGOs, and localization remains a theme of high importance to the members. The pressures put on the humanitarian system due to COVID-19 in 2020 highlighted the importance of improved reliance on localization in humanitarian response. ICVA engaged closely in the development of the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) for COVID-19, with a particular interest in emphasizing the need to link to local partners in the response. These efforts helped to clearly frame the need for localization within the GHRP, including the need to channel funds to local partners as directly as possible.

Through the IASC, ICVA also worked with other IASC members to support the development of a series of guidance notes on localization in May 2020 that built on experiences over the previous 2 years (available [here](#)). Internally, ICVA commissioned a research project in 2020 to map and document the extent of effective national NGO engagement in international humanitarian coordination structures. Specifically focusing on the MENA region, the research explored national NGOs engagement in Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs), Country-Based Pooled Fund (CBPF) Advisory Boards, and sector or cluster coordination platforms. The contexts covered are Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, the occupied Palestinian territories, Syria (Damascus and Turkey-based operations as well as the whole of Syria response), and Yemen.

ICVA engaged more directly in the quality funding workstream than in past years through support for the development of funding flexibility guidance. Created as part of the work of IASC RG5 under COVID-19 response, ICVA and OCHA coordinated the development of a “Proposal for a Harmonized Approach to Funding Flexibility in the Context of COVID-19” outlining 9 measures to harmonize flexibility in funding agreements across UN agencies. ICVA and OCHA as RG5 co-chairs also started a dialogue directly with the Grand Bargain Quality Funding co-conveners to improve coordination between the IASC and the Grand Bargain workstream.

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). Please refer to the Guidelines for definitions of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, which are included in this self-report template package.

Because ICVA operates as a non-operational network of humanitarian NGOs, it is not engaged directly with incorporation of gender equality and women’s empowerment in implementation of humanitarian operations in the field. As part of a focus on global humanitarian policy and coordination issues, ICVA does still maintain a significant focus on gender issues.

Linked to the broader theme of gender equality, in February 2020, UNHCR and ICVA partnered in order to establish the [PSEA Community Outreach and Communications Fund](#) as one of the High Commissioner’s deliverables as [IASC Champion on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(PSEA\) and Sexual Harassment](#). The Fund aimed to support the work of NGOs in preventing situations of sexual exploitation and abuse by ensuring all affected people know that humanitarian assistance is never conditional on transactions or exchanges of any kind. Moreover, the Fund invested in community-led efforts to ensure that communities and SEA survivors know how and where to safely report allegations of sexual abuse and exploitation, in line with established IASC priorities. By the end of 2020 projects were supported in communities in 19 countries focused on awareness raising on the non-conditionality of humanitarian aid, the

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

commitment of the sector to address impunity for sexual abuse and exploitation, and the existing possibilities to report any SEA allegation.

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.

As was reported in 2020, ICVA continued to focus on support for implementation of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN) serving as co-lead of the Nexus Community of Practice with WFP, which is organized under the IASC Nexus Results Group (RG4). The work of this group is intended to ensure that HDPN global policy and guidance is appropriately linked to humanitarian practice in action, including linking to issues such as localization.

The Nexus also continues to feature in ICVA's work on the IASC Humanitarian Finance Results Group (RG5) which it co-chairs with OCHA. The work of RG5 in 2020 included a series of field studies in Somalia, Cameroon, and Bangladesh designed to highlight how development actors can adjust approaches to better meet needs in HDPN/crisis contexts.

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.

Over the lifespan of the Grand Bargain from 2016-2020, ICVA has seen the most progress in the areas of harmonized reporting and localization. As previously described, ICVA's role as a non-operational network is generally to advocate for change and to develop policy for implementation by operational organizations.

Working with Germany as a co-convenor of WS9, ICVA participated in the development of the 8+3 reporting template from development, through piloting, and into implementation. Beginning in 2016, this work involved heavy engagement with donors, UN agencies, and NGO partners, resulting in a successful pilot in Iraq, Myanmar, and Somalia. Pilot work ended in 2019, and work in 2020 focused on broadening the donors and agencies committed to using the 8+3 template.

The ICVA network includes a large number of local humanitarian NGOs, resulting in the strong interest in localization issues. Although ICVA has little control of direct funding flows, it has put significant effort into highlighting the need to improve localization in the humanitarian system and advocated with a range of stakeholders to take action. ICVA's annual self-reports detail specific actions taken or supported each year.

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.

Overall, the Grand Bargain remains an important framework for bringing together NGOs, the Red Cross Movement, UN agencies, and donors in a single forum that does not currently exist elsewhere. The value of this element of the Grand Bargain should not be underestimated.

As a collective, improved implementation of the commitments to localization (as identified above) is certainly among the most important developments. Localization was a contentious discussion early in the Grand Bargain, with dialogue often stuck on definitions. Despite clear weaknesses that remain in the amount of funding flowing directly to local partners, localization now is a central issue in thinking about the future of the humanitarian system.

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.

Five years into the Grand Bargain, we are still struggling to achieve widespread implementation of a large number of the original (and now prioritized core) commitments. Following the original language of the Grand Bargain agreement, many commitments included time-bound targets that are now 2 or more years past. While it is not unexpected that it will take longer than originally planned to achieve implementation of commitments, an increased call for accountability to either implement individual commitments or provide a statement as to why not would help to clarify where there are obstacles to fulfilling the Grand Bargain.

Among the workstreams, workstream 4 on reducing duplication and management costs, stands out in recent years as an area that is both difficult due to its broad commitments yet also critical in the connection to simplification and harmonization of systems – a core objective of the original Grand Bargain. While some individual simplification action has been noted, more system wide commitments to harmonize cost structures, harmonize partnership agreements, share monitoring information, and reduce the burdens of donor assessments and oversight have not been significantly acted upon – despite the development of potential pilot opportunities (such as Money Where It Counts).

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?

Risk and the management of risk is a critical element of all operational aspects of a humanitarian NGO. As such, there will be a broad range of ways in which risk affects all elements of implementation of Grand Bargain commitments – more than can be summarized in the report here. ICVA does see risk management as a critical consideration in establishing a healthy relationship between donors, granting agencies, and NGOs. As such, the core issue of improving trust between donors and partners that is foundational to the Grand Bargain can be linked to how well different actors identify and manage risk.

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

Beginning in 2019, ICVA initiated a series of briefing papers and webinars to help humanitarian NGOs better understand key elements of risk management and how to apply these to specific organizational challenges – often relevant to implementation of Grand Bargain commitments. To date, this series has included discussions on organizational culture, risk appetite and tolerance, security risk management, and improved staff care, and will continue into 2021.