

**Grand Bargain in 2020:**  
**Annual Self Report – Narrative Summary**

**Name of Institution: International Labour Organization (ILO)**

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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?**

**Transparency.** Inspired by GB commitments amongst others, ILO's commitment towards increased transparency and accountability reached an important milestone in 2020, which paved the way to full [IATI membership](#). A new full-time transparency officer position was created to support the process of automation, enrichment and comprehensiveness of IATI-compliant organization-wide data. ILO continued to publish information on voluntary funds in IATI standard, where possible harmonized with the UN Data Cube standard for UN system-wide reporting in line with the UN Funding Compact. ILO further expanded the sharing of financial data with OCHA FTS. Overall the transparency push has equipped ILO to more effectively partner with other Grand Bargain members, including under relevant appeals.

**Cash-based programming.** In response to the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labour market and the world of work in general, ILO rapidly supported its member States without comprehensive social protection systems in place to implement ad hoc mechanisms to deliver emergency cash transfers, targeting primarily vulnerable groups. In developing these the ILO engaged strongly with GB partners working on cash programming.

In Uganda for instance, ILO supported the design of the COVID-19 Urban Cash Intervention (CUCI), including on its selection criteria and targeting mechanisms. Income support will benefit 14 urban centres and 16 flood-affected districts with a gender balance distribution and 20 percent inclusion of refugees among beneficiaries.

In Mozambique, together with the World Bank, UNICEF, WFP, UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and the Swedish Embassy, ILO provided technical support to the Mozambican Government's Social Protection Response to Covid-19. The plan included a new cash transfer facility for nearly 1 million beneficiaries from vulnerable households not previously covered by social assistance programmes.

To assist the workforce in the global garment sector, the ILO facilitated the Call to Action and created emergency delivery mechanisms to disburse cash to laid-off workers. With support by the Government of Germany, 13.4 million USD will be distributed to approximately 275,000 workers in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Ethiopia and Lao PDR.

All these emergency interventions took into consideration ILO's principles on social protection and have the explicit aim of connecting to and strengthening sustainable long-term social protection schemes such as unemployment insurance, protecting dismissed workers with income support, providing wage subsidies to employers that retain their employees etc.

**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.

**Responding to women's needs and securing livelihoods.** In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ILO specifically assessed the impact of the crisis on gender & employment in specific sectors and occupations. ILO worked for instance with organizations of domestic workers on health risks and livelihoods of domestic workers, mostly women, during the pandemic. The ILO increased joint work with UN Women in humanitarian responses centred on longer term social and economic recovery and livelihood opportunities. See recent [UN Women- ILO Joint Programme](#) on implementing gender-sensitive policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis and recovery phase. As a country-level example, ILO's work with Syrian refugees and host communities offered dedicated employment services to female refugees in order to facilitate their entry in the formal labour market through job creation, language courses and skills training.

**Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.** ILO conducted training programmes for local and national partners aimed at strengthening the advocacy capacity of women organizations to increase women livelihood opportunities in humanitarian settings. These training include gender discrimination and promote social change. During the early phase of the COVID-19 response, ILO supported migrant domestic workers - the vast majority of which are women - through partnerships with local civil society organisations that provide cash assistance, legal aid, referral services and mental health support.

ILO also partnered with other Grand Bargain signatories to implement gender-sensitive policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. An ILO-UN WOMEN-UNHCR study on gender, livelihoods and protection for Syrian refugees identified SGBV risks that Syrian refugee women face when seeking livelihood opportunities, at their workplaces and at home, such as patriarchal gender norms, unequal power relations, displacement status, and regulatory environments. Recommendations serve as pathways for future programming and women's empowerment over the long-term.

**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.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, ILO invested in policy and operational responses that bridge the gap between immediate needs and long-term recovery. The pandemic forced ILO and all aid providers to significantly alter their way of working, relying more strongly on local responders, on the use of digital solutions

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

and on cash assistance, bringing closer humanitarian and development actors. In this context, new partnerships along the nexus were forged with UNDP, FAO, IOM. A collaboration with PBSO, WHO and Interpeace led to a [joint perspective](#) on responding to the health, employment and peacebuilding challenges in times of COVID-19. In addition, the ILO strongly contributed in the development of the UN Socio-economic response Framework to COVID-19 and became a partner in about 80 socioeconomic recovery plans from COVID-19 (SERPs).

Under the PROSPECTS partnership (Netherlands funding) with UNHCR, UNICEF, World Bank and IFC, the ILO joined efforts to foster economic recovery, social protection and basic services and supported rapid assessments in displacement contexts. Engaging with Grand Bargain partners focused on the expansion and strengthening of national social protection systems. ILO provided partners certifications on 'Approach to Inclusive Market Systems (AIMS)' to enhance local capacities enabling market assessments, and the improved use of local resource based technology in reconstruction infrastructure interventions.

In addition, ILO participated in Flash Appeals and Response Plans (i.e. Beirut blast, Syria 3RP, Venezuela RMPRP) to provide a decent work approach for recovery and livelihood creation.

### **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.

**Transparency.** Since 2016 and driven by its GB commitments amongst others, LO improved its systems and procedures to capture and disseminate data on results achieved and funds spent, in line with IATI criteria. The ILO transparency portal and dashboard have been expanded with more detailed information. An internal system provides managers with more refined real-time figures on project performance, staffing arrangements, country results, etc. thus facilitating strategic and data-driven decision-making.

**Humanitarian-Development Nexus.** Although not being a humanitarian agency, the ILO increased its engagement with UN country teams in response to crises on the back of Grand Bargain commitments. In this light, the ILO has been echoing Grand Bargain's principles in its [2020-2025 Development Cooperation Strategy](#) and adapting its approach to crises contexts accordingly. The ILO's approach to bridge immediate relief with early recovery builds is guided by [Recommendation No.205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience](#) (2017). The ILO considerably expanded partnerships and deepened the relationship with UNHCR and the UNDP Crisis Bureau. New SOPs were developed and joint risk analysis have become increasingly the norm in protracted refugee crises, emergency responses to disasters (e.g. Idai cyclone, Beirut blast), and in SERPs. ILO participated in the Grand Bargain Sub-Group on Linking Cash Transfers and

Social Protection and developed a paper and a joint statement, and continued its engagement in the IASC RG4 and regional issue-based coalitions.

**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.

**Transparency.** A high share of signatories made efforts to institute greater transparency in the publication of funding and activity data following IATI standards. The ILO also follows this trend, evidencing a strong commitment among signatories to enhancing collaboration between humanitarian and development actors. Continued collective investment from the UN system and partners develops better-quality joint humanitarian and development analyses and plans at country level significantly.

**Linkages between cash-based assistance and social protection.** The promotion of the use of cash in a way that reinforces social protection systems (including through public works) demonstrated advances in terms of common conceptualization and joint efforts in assessment of needs and coordinated implementation. This is a promising area of collaboration between humanitarian and development actors, which became even more evident in 2020. The [UN Common Cash Statement \(UNCCS\)](#) launched in 2018 represents an important step towards improved complementarities in interventions and the importance of governments in supporting vulnerable populations and building long-term solutions. The Grand Bargain Cash Work Stream Sub-Group on Linking Humanitarian Cash and Social Protection reflects the rationale of the nexus in a [paper](#) co-authored by the ILO recommending governments and the aid community to increase the provision of cash assistance, where appropriate, to help populations directly or indirectly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**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.

**Quality of funding.** Despite substantial progress in providing funding directly to local actors or pooled funds, Grand Bargain signatories should increase investments in local actors' capacities and enable them to absorb more international funds. The improvement of the quality of funding is essential for significant progress in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Signatories should reduce ad hoc interventions, segmented funds and enhance the focus on longer-term development and resilience gains in interventions.

In spite of the efforts of the Eminent Person and the facilitation group, the Grand Bargain has struggled to receive the political buy-in needed to effectively drive policy agendas. Instead, it has remained a largely working-level forum, with

limited engagement both at senior and field level. This has hampered progress, in spite of the considerable time and work invested in the definition of objectives, coordination and implementation of the commitments.

The mainstreaming of the former work-stream 10 has only marginally been successful, as nexus considerations were not given consistently attention in the various work streams. On the one hand, attempts to coordinate approaches via, for instance, increased use of multi-year planning and adopting common transparency standards (IATI) have brought some benefits. On the other hand, the persistent separation between humanitarian and recovery needs assessment, the different programming cycles and reporting metrics, as well as the continued segregation of funding mechanisms and increased competition in accessing them, have caused progress to remain limited to the “Humanitarian” pillar of the nexus, with limited “quid pro quo” for the “Development” one.

Signatories lack collective efforts towards in some processes, especially in needs assessments, accountability and inclusion of beneficiaries in decision processes. There is a need for more system-thinking and synergies across the nexus, simplifying processes and avoiding duplicates. The Grand Bargain needs to improve communication with local actors and better include them in decision making processes and implementation.

### **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?**

ILO’s approach towards risk-taking is primarily based on ensuring that the organization can deliver on its commitments, prioritizing in its engagement in humanitarian contexts the medium and long-term approaches and resilience-building. ILO is not a humanitarian agency, although it is strongly committed to approaches aimed at bridging across the triple nexus. Reputational considerations have therefore induced a continuous assessment of which work streams would have been relevant and realistic to achieve.

Concerning financial risks, appetite has been relatively low: as ILO does not engage in pre-financing, risks exist in case of delays in the receipt of funds. At the same time, adaptations needed to deliver on commitments under work streams 1, 3, 4 and 7+8 had to be gauged against financial risks considerations and costs/benefit analyses on necessary system changes.

In countries where ILO is a non-resident agency, limited in-country presence has created additional operational challenges. At the same time, this has triggered stronger reliance on implementing and UN partners when engaging in humanitarian crises.

In some cases, difficulties in aligning priorities, vocabulary, approaches and response cycles across different frameworks and with humanitarian partners, as well as persistent competition for funding have created challenges in the planning of inclusive and effective nexus approaches, as well as in the development of clear

theories of change and identification of risks. The lack of a common understanding had implications for perceptions of relevance, efficiency (i.e. everyone may not have been working towards the same goal), effectiveness (i.e. working together, more could have been achieved) and sustainability.

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

Through a continuous assessment of commitments' relevance for the work of ILO, the feasibility of their implementation and their potential efficiency gains, the ILO has prioritized a number of core commitments under each work stream. The ILO has also increased engagement at working level with Grand Bargain signatories, HQ units have raised awareness on Grand Bargain commitments with field and project offices, and embedded its key principles in its programming and operational priorities.

With a focus on resource efficiency, and in response to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ILO has been notably more practical and flexible in repurposing funds and redesigning strategic objectives of programs, rapidly re-programming policy advisory activities into emergency response and recovery support ones.

ILO has strengthened and expanded partnerships with partners to reduce and manage risks. The ILO has conducted with or enhanced capacities of partners and local stakeholders to provide cross-sectoral risk assessments and working as much as possible through and with partners to avoid duplications.

To compensate for non-residency, ILO's presence in some countries has become more innovative, for instance by out-posting technical specialists where they are most needed. A coordination office has been opened in Baghdad in 2020.

Efforts have been undertaken, both at field and HQ level, to better align vocabulary, approaches and response cycles with existing humanitarian frameworks and partners, as well as to strengthen the capacity of staff in this regard. Notwithstanding, the operational, programmatic and structural divides between humanitarian and development actors remain a main obstacle, further exacerbated by increasing competition for limited funds and increasingly overlapping mandates.