

Grand Bargain in 2020:

Annual Self-Report – Narrative Summary

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Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland

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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?

In 2020 Ireland continued to enhance the *quality of its funding* – providing substantial and increasing amounts of multi-year funding and unearmarked/softly earmarked funding to its partners. 2019 data shows 53% of total humanitarian spend was multi-year, up from 46% in 2018. Ireland's unearmarked and lightly earmarked funding also increased – reaching 91% in 2019. It is expected that figures for 2020 will be similar.

As well as significant quantitative progress towards commitments on unearmarked and multi-year funding, the predictability and flexibility of Ireland's humanitarian funding is a key strength. The 2020 OECD DAC review highlighted this progressive way of working. The predictability allows our partners to plan effectively, while the flexibility enables them to respond rapidly to changing needs on the ground. In 2020 this was particularly evident when our NGO partners were able to quickly pivot funding towards the COVID-19 response, responding to urgent needs as they arose. In Afghanistan for example, Concern repurposed funding from its WASH programme to procure and install handwashing facilities and promote public health messaging in Taloqan and Faizabad.

Ireland's ability to nimbly re-allocate funding across budget lines is also a significant advantage that increases the quality of our funding. Again, in 2020 this played out to great benefit. As the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, Ireland was able to quickly re-allocate funding and was the first donor to support WHO. More recently, Ireland was able to rapidly re-allocate funding from HQ to our mission in Addis Ababa to respond to the crises in Tigray. This funding helped our partners on the ground to preposition life-saving supplies and services, and kick-start a response before funding from pooled funds and other partners was released. This initial support was then able to leverage additional funding from other donors including the EU.

In 2020 Ireland also made significant progress on *cash based programming* – particularly on adaptive/shock responsive social protection programming in response to shocks and stresses in fragile contexts. The majority of this work was in our partner countries – in Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia. We also developed a partnership with the World Bank and are soon to begin a partnership with UNICEF. We have also contributed to best practice and learning in this area, by linking up with IDS to document learning in Malawi, Ethiopia and Uganda. The paper 'Integrating Social Protection in Humanitarian Response' was shared with the Community of Practice and a wide range of partners.

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).

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

Gender equality and women's empowerment is at the core of Ireland's work in humanitarian settings and fragile contexts. Our commitment to supporting women and girls is central to 'A Better World', our international development policy. Ireland's Third National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (launched in 2019) also sets out an ambitious agenda for Ireland as a champion for the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Ireland has maintained our strong commitment to the Call2Action on Protection from Gender Based Violence (GBV) in Emergencies. We actively engage with the States and Donors Working Group and in 2020, worked with others to shape the new Roadmap for the next phase 2021–2025. We reaffirmed our commitments under the new Roadmap and continue advocacy at the highest levels.

Ireland used its co-Chairing role of the ICRC Donor Support Group to advocate for a 'gender-sensitive approach to humanitarian action'. This took the form of a policy form in Dublin and a focus on 'gender in humanitarian action' during the donor mission to South Sudan, both in 2020.

Our humanitarian NGO funding has as strong focus on gender, targeting women and girls in conflict and protracted crises. Programmes prioritise protection, gender mainstreaming, and prevention and response to GBV. Our partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) provides dedicated multi-year funding for transformative GBV standard-setting programming. At the end of 2020, additional funding was provided to IRC to respond to significant gaps in the humanitarian response in Burundi and more recently to support women and girls arriving in Tunaydbah camp in the east of Sudan from the Tigray region.

In 2019, more than 75 percent of Ireland's bilateral allocable aid targeted gender equality (2020 is expected to be similar). Our partner countries, many of which are fragile contexts, focus on a number of areas that impact directly on women and girls. These include education for girls, sexual and reproductive health and rights, GBV, social protection, women's economic empowerment and the relationship of women to armed conflict.

Ireland has put women and girls at the heart of our work to prevent and resolve conflict. The peacebuilding efforts in Northern Ireland gave us a valuable insight into the impact of conflict on women and girls, and the contribution they can make to peace. Our cross-Departmental Stability Fund supports conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts to support the implementation of Ireland's NAP in fragile contexts, including several women led organisations. The aim is to give women a stronger voice in their communities, in political decision-making and international peacebuilding. The Stability Fund has increased steadily over the years.

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

Ireland's institutional approach to the nexus is supported by a common policy framework 'A Better World' that captures the full range of policy and programmatic tools available for humanitarian, development and peacebuilding initiatives in a protracted crises. The policy priority of 'Reducing Humanitarian

Need' marks an important shift that has a much stronger focus on prevention and preparedness.

Ireland's commitment to flexible and multi-year funding is an important way of mainstreaming the implementation of the nexus. This allows our partners, many of whom are multidimensional, to respond in the manner most appropriate to the context. In fragile contexts, this includes an increasing focus on prevention and preparedness, on durable solutions, as well as development and peace actions over a period of several years. It also supports our partners to develop meaningful partnerships with local actors, who are often best placed to work across the nexus. More recently, we have also very deliberately prioritised funding mechanisms that support early action (CERF, DREF, Start Fund, ERFS).

Ireland's core funding has supported our partners to significantly increase the level of cash in humanitarian programming. We have also worked with partners and across our partner countries to support and scale-up adaptive/shock responsive social protection programming – often linking up with humanitarian programmes. This is an excellent way of supporting a nexus approach framed from the perspective of human needs, and moving away from a siloed approach.

At the institutional level, Ireland has also been engaging with development partners such as the World Bank and UNDP. Ireland believes that the presence of development actors and development funding in fragile contexts is essential for the implementation of the nexus to take hold at country level. We actively engaged in the development of the World Bank's Strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence and are engaging with UNDP in the development of its Framework: Development Solutions for Crises and Fragile Settings.

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?

Improving the **quality of funding** has been a key achievement for Ireland since 2016. Against the backdrop of increasing levels of ODA we have; (i) increased the number of multi-year partnership agreements from one to 13; (ii) increased core funding from 30% to 49%; (iii) increased unearmarked and softly earmarked funding from 63% to 91%; (iv) improved processes to support early release of funding; (v) strengthened linkages across NGO funding for humanitarian and development; (vi) built increased flexibility into our funding partnerships and across budget lines; (vii) included humanitarian programming as an integral part of planning in partner countries.

Ireland has also made important progress on **working across the nexus**, particularly in fragile contexts. Since 2016 we have built on our strong resilience programming and expanded that into an approach that focuses on the nexus of interactions with humanitarian, development and peace processes. We have transformed our Conflict and Fragility Working Group into a cross Departmental Conflict and Stability Mechanism that brings together all Government actors engaged in fragile contexts.

Ireland has also increased funding mechanisms that support a strong nexus approach. Our multi-year humanitarian funding for NGOs has increased by 14%

between 2016 and 2020. In NGO monitoring visits we have seen many excellent examples of partners using our humanitarian and development funding to support acute and chronic needs in protracted crises, contributing towards shared outcomes. In a deliberate effort to strengthen the peace part of our nexus approach, the Stability Fund increased by 87% between 2016 and 2020.

These improved structures and increasing resources have translated into a more coherent approach across Government and on the ground. The 2020 OECD DAC Peer Review recognised Ireland's high allocation of ODA to fragile contexts and Ireland's unique approach to crises and fragility that includes a mix of ODA and non-ODA diplomatic, development peace and humanitarian tools.

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

Progress across the workstreams has varied considerably by groups of signatories. Even within workstreams, collective progress has varied across the commitments. As a collective, most progress has probably been made on the cash workstream (although this was mainly on the use of cash - see below).

There have also been notable achievements on the quality of funding. However, the challenge is that this seems to be limited to a relatively small number of donors. For this to be truly transformative, higher levels of core and multi-year funding is required.

In terms of technical progress within workstreams, Ireland believes that there was excellent work undertaken in the needs assessment workstream. This provided a strong basis for the increase in multi-sectoral needs assessments and OCHA's Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework.

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?

A few observations on where obstacles, gaps and challenges remain; (i) Transparency – progress on reporting expenditure, less progress on reporting planned expenditure. (ii) Localisation – focus now should be on pass on of multi-year funding to local partners where appropriate. Also the nature of the partnerships, and the extent to which sustainable institutional capacity is built to ensure a stronger local response over the long-term. (iii) Cash – issue of cash coordination still a challenge, as is the effective linking of humanitarian cash transfers and adaptive/shock responsive social protection programmes. (iv) Joint and impartial needs assessments – challenge is to make coordinated multi-sectoral needs assessments the norm. Agency mandates often make this difficult at country level. (v) Quality funding – the improvements are significant, but not sufficient to be truly transformative for the system. (vi) Harmonise and simplify reporting requirements - the 8+3 reporting format is suitable for project type humanitarian interventions. It is not designed for longer-term programmes or pooled funding. (vii) Humanitarian and development engagement – a challenge to delivering on this commitment is often the lack of funding for development in fragile contexts. Humanitarian are actors often over-stretched. In addition, donor

funding mechanisms for humanitarian and development in many cases still don't provide sufficient flexibility for a more joined up approach.

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?

The issue of risk has impacted to a greater or lesser extent across the range of Grand Bargain commitments. For Ireland, the commitments most relevant to this discussion are quality funding and localisation. On quality funding, we have made good progress towards increasing our multi-year partnerships, but we have to balance that with the ability to maintain sufficient flexibility to respond to sudden humanitarian emergencies as they arise. As we increase our levels of core funding, we are also balancing the need for visibility for Ireland's humanitarian support and a clear articulation of results for our funding.

Ireland's progress on localisation is informed by our approach to risk. We accept that supporting the most fragile contexts and reaching the furthest behind first implies a certain level of risk. In our partner countries, we are strengthening engagement with local humanitarian partners. However, our limited footprint in many of the most fragile contexts means that we do not have sufficient capacity to support or oversee local partnerships. In these contexts, our approach to localisation is through international partners (including pooled funds), who in turn work closely with local actors. We are very clear however that this does not mean no risk and our approach is to share risk with our partners. For example, when the Somalia Humanitarian Fund experienced challenging times in 2013, Ireland maintained funding and subsequently (as Chair of the Pooled Fund Working Group) worked with OCHA to strengthen systems.

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

Ireland works closely with partners in receipt of core funding to ensure that common reporting provides visibility and clearly articulates results. We have also received tailored social media products and this approach has been very successful. Within donor working groups (such as the results working group of the Pooled Fund Working Group) we work to strengthen reporting.

We try to strike an appropriate balance between committing to multi-year agreements with our humanitarian partners, and maintaining a certain amount of unallocated funding in our budget to respond to unforeseen needs. We also ensure that our existing partnerships have sufficient in-built flexibility to respond to urgent needs as they arise.

Ireland makes very deliberate choices around partners to advance our commitment on localisation (Start Fund, CBPFs, IFRC). We also appraise our Irish NGO partners on their commitment and actions to support localisation (including institutional capacity building). Strengthening local capacity is an important part of our programmes in partner countries.