

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

Name of Institution: UNICEF

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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 improving its commitment to **transparency**, UNICEF was recognized as a "model agency" for transparent and accurate reporting on humanitarian financing and funding being provided to implementing partners, through the financial tracking system (FTS), and other real-time external platforms. UNICEF produced reports that enhanced the visibility of flexible funding: the [Annual Regular Resources Report](#), the [Annual Results Report on Humanitarian Action](#) which includes a specific annex focusing on the visibility of Global Humanitarian [Thematic Funding](#) (GHTF) and of those that support it. UNICEF also issued a [special report on the use of flexible funding for COVID-19 response](#).

UNICEF preliminary financial data indicates that the 2020 humanitarian funding commitments (\$2.4BN Other Resources-Emergency) are higher than in 2019 (2.1BN Other Resources-Emergency); however, the **quality of funding** continues to be a concern. This extraordinary growth in 2020 commitments is mostly driven by funding for COVID-19 response, and UNICEF applauds donors' strong and increased flexible support against the global pandemic. Provisional figures indicate stagnation in thematic (flexible) humanitarian funding (concerning the low level of below 10%) and decline in multi-year commitments compared to previous years (from \$513M in 2019 to \$368M in 2020). On the other hand, 32 UNICEF Country Offices had some form of **Multi-Year Plans** (MYP) last year compared to 18 country offices in 2019: Multi-Year Humanitarian response plans, multi-year Covid-19 response plans, rolling multi-year plans, including agreements with implementing partners. On funding, UNICEF transferred 36% of humanitarian multi-year funding to implementing partners.

UNICEF enshrined its humanitarian action commitment into the revised [Core Commitments for Children](#) (CCCs) to operationalize Grand Bargain commitments. For example, the CCCs has an explicit benchmark on localization and set a clear benchmark to mobilize multi-year, predictable and flexible funding to reduce the gap between humanitarian needs and the resources available to meet them.

UNICEF transferred over US\$ 2 Billion to 8,600 implementing partners both for humanitarian and development programming. UNICEF offices adapted their implementation approaches with cash funds transfers to implementing partners (IPs) remaining the main programme implementation modality and accounting for 40% of UNICEF's overall expenditures. In this broader picture environment, UNICEF continued to advance its commitment to transfer funds to local partners in humanitarian context: overall 28.4% of ORE (USD 2.4 Billion) funds were transferred in cash to local partners. At the country level, 58% of all UNICEF country offices had at least 25% of all their humanitarian funding transferred to local/national responders. For COVID-19

response, 49.5% went to CSOs (incl. 31.5% for national NGOs and community-based organization), and 50.5% went to governments partners”.

UNICEF conducted its “Internal Assessment on Cascading of Quality Funding to Implementing Partners” with key recommendations which provide an opportunity to advance this agenda further. During the COVID-19 pandemic measures, implementing partnership management presented UNICEF with an opportunity to operationalize the principles of budget flexibility, adaptive programming, meaningful partner interaction, and partnership simplifications in emergency contexts, amongst others.

The use of **humanitarian cash transfers**¹ was accelerated with 47%² of UNICEF country offices, a proportional increase of 16% from 2019.³ Overall, UNICEF's humanitarian cash transfer programmes reached 48 million households, covering 81 million children in 71 countries. Of these, 45.5 million households were reached by providing technical assistance to scale up government social protection programs to address COVID-19 affected households' needs, and a total of 2.5 million households in 50 countries were reached through UNICEF funded humanitarian cash transfers programmes with a total of USD 245 million being transferred directly to them.

Question 2: How has your institution contributed to the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment⁴ 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.

UNICEF gender equality and women empowerment contribute to ending gender-based violence; ensuring that adolescents girls, women and their respective organizations are actively engaged in the design and delivery of humanitarian programmes; and ensuring that analyses, needs assessments, programming and enabling environments to respond to distinct needs and experiences of girls, women, boys, and men. These are further operationalized through local civil society organizations' engagement in advancing women and girls' rights in humanitarian action.

UNICEF investment in gender-transformative results in 2020 was 19.6 per cent, which is a significant improvement from 14.1 per cent in 2019. In the COVID-19 context,

¹ A detailed report on 2020 progress towards Grand Bargain commitments on UNICEF Humanitarian Cash Transfers can be found on this [LINK](#).

² Total of 71 countries out of 152 countries responding to a humanitarian response.

³ In 2019 31% of COs used the cash modality as part of their humanitarian response: A total of 30 countries; Indonesia, Myanmar, Turkey, Ukraine, Comoros, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Malawi, Republic of Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan, Zambia, Ecuador, Guyana, Panama, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, State of Palestine, Syria, Sudan, Yemen, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali. Out of 96 UNICEF country offices responding to a humanitarian crisis that same year.

⁴ Refer to the IASC definitions of gender equality and women empowerment, available [here](#).

using a combination of gender tags at the activity level and a COVID-tag, UNICEF was able to calculate the expenditure on gender-related COVID-19 activities. It is estimated that UNICEF spent USD 128 million or 17.1% on gender-related COVID-19 activities.

At the cluster level, UNICEF-led nutrition cluster made significant results for Gender-Based Violence (GBV) risk mitigation integration into Nutrition core tools and resources to make nutrition response in humanitarian situations safer and more accessible for women and children. Some key achievements include developing the first gender and GBV responsive nutrition training module jointly with UNICEF's partner Action Against Hunger Canada. Nutrition cluster made a deliberate effort to include disability and GBV into the humanitarian programme cycle (HPC) 2021 through its webinars and tools which should result in increased reflection of disabilities and GBV in Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2021. On the other hand, 98% of UNICEF 2021 Humanitarian Appeals for Children have a Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies (GBViE) programme indicator and clear funding ask of over USD 120 million.

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.

UNICEF continued to implement actions set out in its revised Core Commitments to Children (CCCs) in Humanitarian Action and the 2019 Procedure on linking humanitarian, development and peacebuilding action across UNICEF programmes. Seven main strategies were advanced: strengthening systems and localizing humanitarian and development programming; Risk-informed programming; Strengthening participation of affected populations; Strengthening social protection systems to scale up cash transfers in emergencies; and emergency preparedness. This has resulted in 41% of UNICEF country offices fulfilling organizational benchmarks on implementing risk-informed programming, while 30% of country offices met benchmarks on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies.

UNICEF initiated a review and evaluation of how it has advanced linking humanitarian and development (LHD) in its top 10 humanitarian emergencies. Additionally, UNICEF assessed its procedures and capacities to provide effective and timely responses to humanitarian crises as part of "humanitarian review" process.

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.

For the period 2016-2020, UNICEF was a game-changer in enhancing **quality reporting**, accountability, increased **transparency**, visibility and recognition for donors supporting humanitarian action through different strategies, including real-time and regular reporting addressing donors concerns and visibility products.

Since 2016, UNICEF nearly tripled the number of countries implementing **cash transfer** programmes, from 11 UNICEF country offices in 2016 to 71 in 2020. In terms of beneficiaries assisted, UNICEF-funded HCT programs went from 2.4 million households (6 million children) in 2018 to 2.8 million households in 2019. 2020 saw a decrease in beneficiary caseload to 2.5 million households reached throughout the year. Although the number of recipients decreased in 2020, there was a significant increase in UNICEF-funded small-scale cash transfer programs as part of humanitarian responses across 50 countries⁵.

Whilst UNICEF was supporting inter-agency collaboration to promote greater collective accountability, there wasn't capacity to strengthen its **accountability to affected populations (AAP)** mechanisms. Building on the AAP framework developed in 2017 and the roadmap for scaling up AAP endorsed by regional and HQ directors in 2018, and with the evidence provided by the independent benchmarking exercise conducted by HQAI in 2019, UNICEF has made significant progress in terms of ensuring consistent AAP approaches at country level, thanks to dedicated technical support and guidance.

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.

The workstreams on **localization, Cash, and participation revolution** had evidence of collective initiatives in advancing commitments.

In **cash workstream**, for example, there was momentum and increased visibility around humanitarian cash transfers since 2016. It provided platforms for some humanitarian cash transfers stakeholders (mainly UN, INGOs, donors) to inclusively share experiences and concerns around increasing the routine consideration and use of cash transfers.

The **localization workstream** advanced the agenda by developing guidance notes in a consultative manner involving signatories and leveraging Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) to advocate for the guidance system-wide rollout. The push on involving and working with local women rights organization was visible from the friends of gender group's efforts.

The operationalization of **participation revolution** recommendations by humanitarian agencies ensured that participation revolution commitments are embedded within the critical humanitarian programming processes. These have contributed to IASC putting an AAP common service in place to strengthen AAP programming at the country level.

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,

⁵ Up from 26 in 2019.

thematic or cross-cutting issues or workstreams where you think there remain key gaps or obstacles.

Despite the vast amounts of evidence on **quality funding**, enhanced planning, risk management, localization, results reporting and other issues, the quality funding did not reach the critical mass needed to truly enable transformative change, resulting in several limitations to ensure most efficient and effective response, including on cascading flexibility to implementing partners. Lack of political will and collective ownership is perceived as the key challenge in this regard.

Repeated demands from some of the Grand Bargain **cash workstream** signatories, the cash workstream experienced significant challenges in addressing the cash coordination challenge. The ambitious expectation of identifying a relevant consultative and inclusive process to establish predictable and reliable humanitarian cash coordination has proven too complex to implement. As a result, the Grand Bargain cash workstream did not manage to support the integration of cash coordination within the current humanitarian coordination system and the existing architecture of sectors/ clusters.

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?

- UNICEF is increasingly being challenged by requests from donors to add special provisions to template agreements and requests for additional information on risk mitigation measures in the proposal approval process or during implementation.
- Most of these requests are in conflict-affected contexts (often included in UN, regional, or national designated sanctions lists).
- These requests challenge UNICEF's ability to effectively and efficiently deliver results for all children, specifically for the most vulnerable and excluded populations in need.
- Planning or implementing programmes based on donors' conditions can also impact UNICEF's ability to adhere to the CRC principles of non-discrimination and the child's best interest.

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

- UNICEF has sought to mitigate these risks by engaging in discussions with public partners through different opportunities (international forum, annual consultations, bilateral meetings) to foster more in-depth and open dialogue with donors on the concept of risk-sharing and good "humanitarian partnership."
- While there has been considerable progress about understanding the concept of risk in humanitarian action in recent years, notably through the Grand-Bargain, the current international context, also taking into account the impact of COVID-19 on UNICEF humanitarian emergency response, calls for these discussions to be further elaborated and for concrete action plans and commitments from both donors and UN agency to be agreed upon.