

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

Name of Institution: UNRWA

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Date of Submission: 16 February 2021

(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, UNRWA made significant progresses in relation to work stream 1 – Transparency, in particular in relation to publishing in IATI. Despite the lack of dedicated resources, in March/April 2020 UNRWA was able to publish for the first time in IATI by providing information on 2019 and 2020 budget data. Since then, UNRWA has continued to publish in IATI on a quarterly basis, providing information on the different Agency's funding streams (programme budget, emergency appeals and projects).

In 2020, cash-based programming remained a priority for UNRWA, with 155,000 beneficiaries reached through cash-based social protection every quarter in Jordan, Lebanon and the West Bank. In 2020, UNRWA expanded its social safety net programme (SSNP) to 134,995 most vulnerable refugees in Syria, who received US\$ 14 per person per month. SSN beneficiaries were identified based on vulnerability criteria prioritizing households headed by females, persons with disabilities, older persons and unaccompanied minors (orphans). Additional 280,000 Palestine refugees in Syria (non-SSN) continued to receive a basic cash allowance of about US\$ 9 per person per month. Resources for the Syria cash-based programme mainly came from UNRWA's emergency appeal, as the Agency's programme budget still faces severe shortfalls. In response to additional hardship caused by COVID-19, UNRWA also provided emergency cash assistance to more than 250,000 Palestine refugees in Lebanon and some 141,000 Palestine refugees (ex-Gazan) and Palestine refugees from Iraq in Jordan. A top up cash assistance was also provided to 410,000 Palestine refugees in Syria, 43,000 refugees in Gaza, 27,700 Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS) in Lebanon and 17,800 PRS in Jordan.

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.

UNRWA's commitment to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment is enshrined in its Gender Equality Policy (2007) and the Gender

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

Equality Strategy 2016-2021 (GES). In 2020, the Agency's advances on the implementation of the GES continued to be limited because of the scarcity of resources. Individual field office gender action plans continued: (i) supporting gender parity and women's access to senior positions; and (ii) promoting gender-sensitive programming through different initiatives, including the incorporation of a gender perspective in relation to the rehabilitation of shelters, Agency's schools, and Health Centres; involving men in preconception care and family planning; addressing child marriage through awareness-raising sessions; and promoting female economic participation through vocational training and access to microfinance products.

In 2020, UNRWA worked on ensuring that gender was fully mainstreamed into the COVID-19 response. Guidance was issued to the fields and programmes defining possible gendered vulnerabilities generated by the pandemic and ways to address them. A gender perspective was also included in the rapid assessments on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, conducted by UNRWA Jordan and Syria field offices.

During the reporting period, UNRWA continued to build awareness and knowledge around gender equality. A mandatory Gender Awareness E-learning Course for all the Agency's staff was launched in July 2020, aimed at developing awareness of basic concepts of gender equality, gender analysis and promoting behavioural change to build a more gender-sensitive organizational culture.

In 2020, UNRWA reported on its 2019 performance under the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP). UNRWA was able to improve its performance despite the little resources dedicated to gender equality and met or exceeded the requirements for 10 performance indicators out of 16 applicable, a significant improvement from the 2018 results. In the assessment of the Agency's performance against the UN-SWAP 2.0 indicators, UNRWA improved performance on three indicators that were previously missing requirements: Strategic Planning and Reporting on Gender-Related SDG Results now approaching and exceeding requirements, respectively, and Capacity Assessment, now meeting requirements. Furthermore, UNRWA is now meeting requirements for Gender Architecture. However, UN Women encouraged UNRWA to prioritize Financial Resource Allocation, the only indicator missing requirements, and the five indicators approaching requirements, particularly the Equal Representation of Women in senior positions.

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.

During the reporting period, UNRWA continued to provide emergency assistance in parallel with human development activities, adapting its human development services to meet the needs of those affected by crisis. Building on its existing programmes and infrastructure, UNRWA was able to rapidly adjust its services to the new humanitarian needs and challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic,

ensuring the continued availability of essential services in all of its fields of operation. UNRWA Education in Emergencies approach was reconceptualised to adjust to the new challenges posed by the pandemic, with a focus on five key areas: Continuity of Learning, Psychosocial Support (PSS), Safety and Security – Health and Hygiene issues, Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). With the start of the new school year 2020/2021, UNRWA continued to ensure the continuity of learning for some 540,000 students in its schools across five fields, through face-to-face, blended and fully remote education modalities.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNRWA was also able to ensure continuity of essential health services for Palestine refugees. Increased prevention measures were implemented in the 141 Agency's health centres, including the introduction of a triage system to screen safely patients with respiratory symptoms. Telemedicine services and home deliveries of essential medications to Non-Communicable disease patients were also implemented to reduce congestion at health facilities. All UNRWA frontline workers were regularly provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

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.

- Since 2016, UNRWA has strengthened its cash based programming, rolling it out in Jordan, Lebanon, West Bank and Syria and, in 2020, on a pilot basis in Gaza as part of the COVID response. UNRWA has continued to monitor the impact and effectiveness of its cash operations through ad hoc evaluations and post-distribution monitoring exercises. In 2019, UNRWA decided to increase the value of the social transfer to SSNP population in Lebanon, Jordan and the West Bank according to changes in consumer price indices. In addition, a targeted approach to the provision of cash assistance, prioritizing the most vulnerable with a higher cash transfer was introduced in Syria and in Jordan in relation to Palestinian refugees from Syria (PRS). In Gaza, UNRWA continued to provide emergency food assistance to more than one million refugees. The decision to continue to provide in-kind food assistance was based on a study commissioned by UNRWA in 2018 that identified a number of factors that may pose significant risks with regards to any transitioning of UNRWA's food operation to cash based transfer schemes.
- In 2020, UNRWA started publishing in IATI, making significant progresses towards increased transparency and sharing of information on common platforms.
- Since 2016, UNRWA has taken significant steps to increase its cost effectiveness and reduce management costs, a central element of UNRWA's Medium Term Strategy 2016 – 2021, extended until 2022. Some of these measures have included the roll out and use of electronic management information systems for

the Agency's two main programmes (education - EMIS, and health - eHealth). Moreover, in October 2018, UNRWA completed a review and reform of its administrative services functions to ensure continued efficient, effective and high - quality support for substantive programmes in Headquarters and Field Offices in the areas of procurement, travel management and other general administrative services. Additional cost effective measures were rolled out in 2020, including the use of Inspira for HR and recruitment processes.

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.

- Promoting increased transparency and broader sharing of financial and programmatic data through the use of platforms such as IATI.
- Putting an increased emphasis on cash based programming and allowing for information sharing and collective discussion.
- Supporting the relevance of multilateralism and value added of collective outcomes.

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.

- Predictable, sustainable and multi-year funding remains a challenge, with many donors still pledging their contribution on yearly basis.
- Progresses towards fully unearmarked humanitarian funding also remain limited (e.g in 2020 only 2 per cent of humanitarian funding received by UNRWA was fully unearmarked), hindering flexibility and allocation of funds based on needs.
- While initiative such as IATI have promoted greater transparency and standardization of reporting processes, Agencies are still often requested to upload the same information on different platforms not communicating to each other, or are often overburden with multiple reporting requirements from individual donors, in additional to the obligation to report on shared portals.

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?

Financial constraints, and in particular the severe funding shortfall faced by UNRWA since 2018, have limited the Agency's ability to make the necessary investments towards some of the objectives and reforms stated in its Medium Term strategy. This has also negatively impacted on the ability to make progresses against some Grand Bargain commitments or has delayed their implementation.

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

UNRWA has taken a number of cost control, prioritization and efficiency measures that have allowed for essential operations to continue even at a reduced budget. Additional fundraising efforts and strengthened donor engagement have also been put in place to ensure sufficient funding to core and essential services. In order to make the most efficient use of scarce resources, UNRWA was forced to prioritize some core services and functions, while other interventions or areas were scaled down/put on hold. Unfortunately, prioritization of needs, resulting in some overall reduction in financial requirements, may have contributed to decreased levels of contribution from some donors.

However, the funding shortfall faced by UNRWA under all its funding streams still continue to put at risk the continuation and sustainability of the services provided by the Agency.