

Grand Bargain Ambassadors and Facilitation Group Sherpa meeting

Geneva, 5 and 6 September 2023

Public Summary Note

The Grand Bargain Ambassadors Jemilah Mahmood, Manuel Bessler, Michael Köhler met with the Facilitation Group (FG) Sherpas of the incoming/remaining and outgoing members (A4EP, ICVA, ICRC, UNHCR) on 5 September 2023 in Geneva chaired by A4EP, followed by a meeting of the new Facilitation Group (EU/DG ECHO, Germany, OCHA, UNICEF, IFRC, InterAction, NEAR) on 6 September 2023.

The Ambassadors and the Sherpas agreed that they were inspired by the optimism and energy demonstrated by the Signatories at the Annual Meeting in June 2023, which provides an opportunity to turn the page in next three years: this might be the last chance for the humanitarian sector to reform and become fit to the challenges it is facing today. The participants discussed the priorities and working modalities for the coming year. They agreed to work hand in hand to advance the progress of the Grand Bargain – the Ambassadors often referred to the FG members as a group of champions, working together for a common cause. Participants underlined that much work has already been done and that it was important to a) ensure implementation by Signatories of what has been decided and b) use the documents (timeline, priorities, previous workstreams outcomes etc.) that already exist.

How will the Ambassadors work with the FG Sherpas?

The participants reiterated the agreement endorsed by the Signatories in June 2023, whereby the FG will be elevated to Sherpa level in this iteration of the process. This means that FG Sherpas will have quarterly meetings and interact regularly. This should cut down some of the layers of process and ensure a focus on results, as well as a continuous high-level engagement. While the role of focal points remains important to support the Sherpas, particularly ahead of the strategic quarterly meetings, the strengthened Secretariat will take on a lot of the day-to-day work. The Secretariat is expected to be strengthened from January 2024 on, with roles as per the agreed Terms of Reference (see Annex I).

The Ambassadors and Sherpas will make sure to use existing opportunities throughout the year, such as UN General Assembly, Global Refugee Forum, ECOSOC, to meet in person, but also to convene smaller meetings with key stakeholders to advance on specific issues of the Grand Bargain. Meetings and visits to the country level will also be encouraged to support the country-level engagement of Signatories to deliver on their commitments and meet local actors and their representatives.

The Ambassadors and the FG agreed that the Sherpas should lead by example with their institutions, to share the burden of advancing progress.

What will the Ambassadors and the FG prioritise?

To align expectations, it will be important to **define the impact** we want to achieve by 2026 and how to measure it. As per the agreement in the Grand Bargain 2023-2026 framework and with the support of the Grand Bargain Secretariat, the revision of self-reporting will be a good opportunity to agree together with the Signatories what is possible to achieve together. This should include a focus on country level implementation to ensure the same momentum and that multi-stakeholder conversations, co-led by local actors, are happening at country level. The reporting revision exercise should start in autumn 2023 and continue in spring 2024, ahead of the Annual Meeting in October 2024.

Ambassadors and the FG agreed that to advance **quality funding**, we need to update our existing catalogue of quality practices, including by adding locally-led funds, and use the catalogue as a starting point to scale up good practices. A group of donors should come together and look at real barriers to quality funding, and exchange with donors who have been overcoming them, but also with implementation partners. Engaging with local actors, who are usually at the bottom of the chain, would be a critical part to understand the difference between commitments made by donors and impact on local actors. Work on quality funding should be based on the existing definitions on quality funding developed by the workstream in 2020 and the outcomes of the quality funding caucus. Ambassador Köhler suggested also to work on logistics, particularly focusing on more joint procurement and sharing resources between humanitarian actors, to contribute to improved funding and enhanced efficiency.

On **localisation**, Ambassador Bessler and FG Sherpas had an honest discussion with local actor Sherpas on what localisation actually means for local actors, and how respect and recognition of the key role of local actors, the need for the shift of gravity centre of the conversation should be ensured by securing local actors and their representatives' participation throughout the Grand Bargain process and to ensure resources so they can play their role in dignity. There was also an honest and open discussion about being courageous to deal with most persistent problems like staff poaching and draining capacities of local actors. It was agreed that different approaches need to be tried out to deal with this issue. Despite achievements on localisation being showcased at the Annual Meeting in June 2023, the Ambassadors and Sherpas agreed that we often report different things when it comes to localisation and there is still a crucial lack of impact on local actors and communities: moving forward, Ambassador Bessler will ensure that we build on what has already been agreed upon (eg. the guidance produced by the Grand Bargain workstream and IASC, outcomes of the caucuses on the role of intermediaries and funding for localisation) to ensure transparency and accurate data. Ambassador Bessler noted that these agreements should be our "10 commandments of localisation". Ambassadors and Sherpas also discussed the need to gather evidence of the economic impact of localisation.

One of the first steps to move forward on **participation** will be to start documenting good practices, including on the donor side to encourage participatory approaches; and convene a group of Signatories to champion a new way of doing things. Efforts will have to be aligned with the existing fora, such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and their work on accountability to affected populations. Furthermore, Ambassador Mahmood emphasised that

we would have to get out of comfort zones, to innovate, to learn new ways to effectively engage and listen to communities. To do that, there needs to be an appetite to be radical – and there needs to be an appetite for risk.

On the **new focus area**, a group of interested Signatories is already working to advance **anticipatory action**, in collaboration with Anticipation Hub. Linkages with the upcoming COP28 should be ensured as well. On the **nexus**, Ambassador Köhler would like to convene a new dialogue between the Grand Bargain and development actors, with specific emphasis on including the World Bank, a Grand Bargain Signatory. Other stakeholders that should be involved include donors with joined humanitarian and development administration. On implementing side, the humanitarian partners need to be ready to side with development actors, followed by humanitarian and development donors coming together to see how we can advance together, in consultation with local and national actors and their representatives in the given contexts – this could start with 1-2 pilots. On **innovative financing**, Ambassador Köhler plans to use Grand Bargain for matchmaking: to bring together those organisations who had experience in this work and report on what works and what doesn't, and afterwards meet with financial actors. Ambassador is also keen to reach out to new and emerging donors, to discuss their views on the Grand Bargain commitments.

Overall, the Ambassadors and the FG would like to **see accountability in implementing the caucus outcomes** that were already agreed and endorsed (quality funding, role of intermediaries, funding for localisation). They would also like to ensure a bigger role for the caucus champions and members in the upcoming meetings to ensure appropriate information sharing and exchange in existing good practices and lessons in implementation of the outcomes.

Finally, the Ambassadors and Sherpas agreed that it is important to **expand the group of allies and champions** beyond the Grand Bargain Signatories, namely the political decision makers, parliamentarians, and non-traditional donors. There was a specific interest shared by a few Sherpas and Ambassadors to work on an inter-parliamentarians' group to support influencing work with donors, especially on quality funding and localisation.

On the margins of the meetings, the Ambassadors also met with the **IASC** Secretariat, with whom they agreed that a joint vision between the Grand Bargain and IASC is necessary in order to move gears and achieve the transformation that is needed.

Ambassadors Bessler and Mahmood met with **local and national actors and their representatives** from A4EP, NEAR, and C4C endorsers, and spoke of the need to change the narrative and showcase success stories – contexts where localisation is working well and commitments are being translated into practice, to demonstrate that it can be done. Ambassadors also reiterated the need to be honest and realistic about the expectations, we all want more impact but it might take time. Commitments taken by international actors and donors are transformational and therefore require step by step actions. It was acknowledged that it can be frustrating to still wait to see the impact: it is a marathon where change does not happen overnight, but we need to patiently continue to the finish line. Moving forward, Ambassadors Bessler and Mahmood will ensure a regular interaction with local and national actors, and focus to ensure that Signatories are implementing their commitments at national

and local level and engaging on fair and balanced dialogues with local actors and their representatives. A stronger link has to be made particularly between the donor constituency and the local and national actors and their representatives, to increase the mutual understanding of barriers, needs, and challenges.

In order to move forward on country level engagement of the Signatories, the new FG members also agreed that there should be an updated mapping of coordination mechanisms at country level and what role of local actors are able to play in them. Based on this, there would be an analysis on a few contexts to draw learnings and recommendations to move forward faster and more inclusively. In parallel, signatories are encouraged to engage with national initiatives such as National Reference Groups.

The new Facilitation Group discussed with the Secretariat the need to strengthen the **communications and advocacy strategy** within the new iteration of the Grand Bargain. They agreed that the Secretariat will evaluate the current plans in consultation and introduce new approaches as relevant.

What is expected from the Signatories?

Each and every Signatory is responsible for playing an active role in the Grand Bargain – success can only be achieved together. This responsibility includes implementing the commitments and reporting on successes and challenges, reaching out to other constituencies when necessary and seeking support from the FG and Ambassadors when needed.

While the Ambassadors with the support of FG Sherpas will initiate some collective efforts to unlock the challenges, the **Signatories are encouraged to feel empowered to initiate actions**, to have conversations, and to make things happen – using whatever tools available. We are keen to keep the structures light and flexible – form follows function – so the Signatories should not be dissuaded by having to fit into a certain box. An initiative does not have to be a Community of Practice or a caucus, it can start as a conversation of interested Signatories. What is key is to ensure information sharing through the Secretariat and that Signatories feel closely linked to the work undertaken in the Caucuses, Communities of Practice, FG, and others.

Caucuses remain the main tool for addressing political bottlenecks. The Secretariat will share a light guidance on Communities of Practice, which will be based on key principles of flexibility and agility. The communities can be self-organised by Signatories, or started by Ambassadors and Sherpas, when working-level conversations are needed to exchange good practices and lessons learnt on implementation.

Next steps and timeline:

GRAND BARGAIN 2023-2026

TIMELINE	Q4 2023		Q1 2024	Q2 2024	Q4 2024
	Virtual Signatories meeting	Develop and share with Signatories a light guidance on Communities of Practice	January 2024: Strengthen Secretariat	Self-reporting submission	October 2024: Grand Bargain Annual Meeting
	Ambassador Mahmood and IASC meeting on participation	Consult with ODI and Development Initiatives based on their experience with existing GB data, on what are the possible next steps in revising the self-reporting	Bi-annual Grand Bargain virtual meeting	June 2024: Ambassadors and FG meeting on the margins of the ECOSOC	
	Ambassadors convene dialogue with non-traditional donors	FTS/IATI joint meeting for FG	March 2024: Ambassadors and FG Sherpa meeting on the margins of the EHF		
	October 2023: IASC OPAG meeting with Ambassadors	Develop a communications and advocacy strategy			
	Anticipatory Action: group of Signatories defining a problem statement and next steps				
December 2023: Ambassadors and FG meeting on margins of GRF					
	Self-reporting revision				
ACTIONS	QUALITY FUNDING	LOCALISATION	PARTICIPATION	FOCUS AREA 2	CROSS-CUTTING
	<p>Update the catalogue of good practices on quality funding. (NRC)</p> <p>Look with a few NGOs how to pilot improving data and reporting. (ICVA)</p> <p>Convene donors to look at real barriers to scaling up quality funding. (Amb. Köhler/GBS)</p>	<p>Ensure implementation of existing caucus outcomes by convening caucus members to share best practices and lessons learnt in implementation. (Amb. Bessler/GBS)</p> <p>Updated mapping on coordination mechanisms at country level and the role of local actors in them; followed by a focus on a few contexts to do a comparison what works best, followed by a focus on a few contexts to do a comparison what works best, and an identification of possible actions. (OCHA/NEAR)</p> <p>Document good partnership practices from local actor perspectives. (A4EP)</p>	<p>Strategic conversation on linkages between accountability to affected populations and participation with IASC. (Amb. Mahmood/GBS)</p> <p>Collect good practices on participation. (Amb. Mahmood/GBS)</p> <p>Convene a group of Signatories and local and national actors to discuss how to scale up good practices. (Amb. Mahmood/GBS)</p>	<p>Convene a group of Signatories who have experience with innovative financing to exchange lessons learnt.</p> <p>Convene a dialogue between the group of Signatories with financial actors.</p> <p>Convene a dialogue between humanitarian and development actors, including donors with joint humanitarian and development administration, to share best practices, including in overcoming institutional barriers and adapting internal systems.</p> <p>Support the Signatory group on anticipatory action to ensure agreement is reached on how to scale up anticipatory action by Annual Meeting in October 2024. (Amb. Köhler/GBS)</p>	<p>Gender – ensure linkages with Friends of Gender Group. (GBS)</p> <p>Risk sharing – ensure accountability for initiatives suggested at the Annual Meeting 2023. (GBS)</p>

Participants:

- Grand Bargain Ambassadors Jemilah Mahmood, Manuel Bessler, Michael Köhler
- Facilitation Group Sherpas: A4EP, EU/DG ECHO, Germany, ICRC, ICVA, IFRC, Interaction, NEAR, OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF

Annex I: Terms of Reference; Ambassadors, Facilitation Group, Secretariat [*separate pdf*]