Grand Bargain annual self-reporting exercise:

United States of America

Overview

The United States Government (USG) is the largest humanitarian donor in the world. In FY 2016, the USG provided more than $7 billion in humanitarian assistance funds to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations agencies and offices, and other international organizations. The Grand Bargain commitments reflect best practices in humanitarian assistance, and aim to maximize effectiveness, efficiency and accountability. By joining with other donors and humanitarian organizations in these commitments, the USG seeks to improve global practice to promote better outcomes and a higher standard of accountability. This realignment will support our collective efforts to encourage other actors to mobilize additional resources to fill the widening humanitarian financing gap.

For the USG, there are three tracks to the implementation of the Grand Bargain. The first track is internal, where each of the main USG humanitarian donors (USAID and State/PRM) is implementing internal changes against Grand Bargain commitments. The second track is in the U.S. interagency, where the main USG donors are coordinating to align these internal efforts. The third track is international, where the USG is working with UN agencies, other donors and NGOs to ensure that all parties are implementing their commitments. The USG is also taking an active role of co-convener of one of the Grand Bargain workstreams.

The Grand Bargain remains the most relevant framework to advance humanitarian reform, and advance effectiveness and efficiencies in current humanitarian response.

Work stream 1 - Transparency

The USG currently reports all humanitarian funding through the USG's website www.foreignassistance.gov, the OECD Creditor Reporting System, the UN Financial Tracking Service (FTS), and published to IATI. USG agencies regularly report to FTS and we are improving our reporting to that standard. In order to increase the inter-operability between FTS and the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), USAID funded OCHA to strengthen FTS and bring it in line with IATI. We continue to work with OCHA to ensure that FTS reporting accommodates and appropriately reflects USG funding contributions.

Work stream 2 - Localization

The USG has a variety of mechanisms through which funding flows to local organizations. For USAID this often takes the form of substantial sub-awards passed through international NGO's. In addition, USAID has a number of capacity building initiatives to strengthen local response capacities. For instance, the USG has provided advanced training in disaster response to urban search-and-rescue (USAR) teams across Latin America, including teams that deployed to assist with the April 2016 Ecuador earthquake response. Consistent with such practices the USG has continued to build the capacity of local and national responders for disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response. Similarly, USAID has worked to strengthen National Disaster Management Agencies throughout the world.

To facilitate more funds to local responders USAID has, on a pilot basis, contributed to humanitarian Country-Based Pooled Funds (CBPFs) in Iraq and Ethiopia.

In Fiscal Year 2017 to Fiscal Year 2018, USAID staff aim to begin more systematically tracking the proportion of funding that goes to local agencies, both directly and through sub-awards, in order to establish its baseline. USAID aims to make necessary adjustments to internal data systems to allow for better tracking on the proportion of its funding to local NGOs. It is important to note, however, that there will be limitations on this data, until public international organizations (PIOs) begin to provide details on sub-awards provided to local partners.

USAID is working with WFP to ensure that 25 percent of funds go directly to local NGOs. Additionally USAID is working with WFP to prioritize local stakeholders in the design of new Country Strategic Plans (CSPs).

State/PRM has received a concept note from the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies seeking funding for the development of a Secretariat to organize and lead its Movement National Society Investment Mechanism (NISM). The NISM will invest in long-term development and innovation of Red Cross/Red Crescent national societies through financial and technical support, especially with regard to governance, compliance, oversight, donor engagement, reporting and communications. Although no final decision has been made, we remain in active discussion with IFRC to create a formatted appeal for this initiative that we will be able to consider funding, and have engaged in discussion with other donors on hot to provide longer-term support to the NISM.

Work stream 3 - Cash
The USG generally provides implementing agencies, in particular contribution to international organizations, significant flexibility to determine the most effective, empowering methods of delivering humanitarian aid. The USG supports the most appropriate assistance modality for each context, including the provision of commodities, services, vouchers, cash-based assistance, and combinations thereof. We will continue to implement best practices in the use of cash-based assistance, including coordination, risk mitigation, oversight and accountability and taking into account protection concerns of recipients. This assistance will continue to be provided within existing policies, regulations and legislative authorities.

USAID continues to support cash programming, where appropriate, and efforts to improve the coordination of cash programming. USAID is increasing collaboration on cash assistance with UN and donors on common cash position and messaging. USAID joined the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) and its technical advisory group in order to work with other donors and partners on cash policy and tools. USAID is participating as a peer review group member for an initiative on the Basic Needs Response Analysis Framework and Toolkit which is led by Save the Children, funded by ECHO and comprised of CaLP, DRC, Mercy Corps, and OCHA.

USAID continues to work on digital finance delivery options and since 2014 has required the use of electronic payments in most instances. As a result, USAID recently awarded grants for cash and e-payment preparedness to two NGOs working in Mali, DRC, and Somalia. USAID/FFP has developed a Modality Decision Tool which provides partners with guidance on how cash transfers (as well as other resources) should be considered and evaluated during response analysis. USAID/OFDA is in the middle of updating its technical requirements, including for cash programming.

State/PRM is working toward an official cash policy that is aligned within the USG and supports State/PRM's partners with the increased use of cash under the Grand Bargain. The aim

is to develop internal capacity to enable program officers to support partners in the appropriate, effective, and efficient use of the cash modalities, which enable beneficiary empowerment and improve outcomes. State/PRM engaged with UNHCR's cash team following the release of its new policy to double cash by 2020 and is engaging with CaLP for training initiatives and partnerships to help State/PRM's partners build technical capacity to support their objectives of increasing the use of cash-based initiatives.

Work stream 4 – Management Costs
The USG will continue to participate with donors and humanitarian agencies in joint reviews of humanitarian organizations' performance, such as the Haiti Hurricane Matthew Real Time Evaluation commissioned by DFID in November 2016. The USG has supported measures promoting greater transparency in cost structures within UN agencies through our participation in governing boards.

The USG supports the UN's use of biometric registration and digital identification in order to better target populations and reduce duplication.

Work stream 5 – Needs Assessment
The USG supports joint needs analysis, and prioritized, comprehensive humanitarian appeals as well as planning mechanisms that promote the reduction of humanitarian need and more coherent programming between humanitarian and development assistance, particularly in situations of cyclical crises or protracted displacement and where resilience can be increased or protracted displacement addressed. While this commitment primarily falls to the UN agencies and NGOs to implement, the USG continues to support and work with agencies at all levels to advance this work.

Work stream 6 – Participation Revolution
This commitment represents an important opportunity for the humanitarian community to translate our collective policy commitments into practical actions for humanitarian actors by reinforcing people-centred approaches in existing coordination systems, mechanisms, and program design. As such, the USG is co-leading the work stream on Participation Revolution with the Steering Committee on Humanitarian Response (SCHR) Together we have produced a set of documents to guide Grand Bargain signatories to implement commitments, including a set of detailed recommendations aimed at incentivizing good practice in this area.

Through our programs we promote accountability toward affected populations (AAP), and are committed to supporting partner organization efforts to incorporate Accountability to Affected Populations into their programming. The USG requires our partners to ensure that people receiving assistance participate in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of programs that affect them. We will continue to support our partners' capacity to involve affected people in decisions about the assistance they receive.

State/PRM is supporting the International Rescue Committee to do research to identify ways to assist humanitarian actors to more systematically and deliberately use beneficiary feedback as a source of management information in program decision-making. Objectives of the research are to identify simple, effective and replicable processes for interpreting beneficiary feedback in order to inform program decision-making by key humanitarian agency staff and to identify effective strategies to increase the motivation of key humanitarian agency staff to use beneficiary feedback in program decision-making. This topic is of great interest to State/PRM,

and this is exactly the kind of research needed to build the evidence base for the USG and our partners as we are concurrently requesting more reporting on AAP frameworks.

Although individual agencies have taken steps to more systematically integrate AAP into their programing, there is a lack of tools to monitor, evaluate, or standardize these approaches. As such, through UNICEF, USAID is supporting a project to integrate AAP into humanitarian responses via global and country-level coordination mechanisms. USAID is also supporting the Women's Refugee Commission to develop and pilot a real-time monitoring tool to track adolescent girls' access to services in Mali.

To improve service delivery to affected people, USAID/FFP is piloting a Refine and Implement model of programing in order to ensure more people-centered approaches that build on existing capacities and refine partners' strategic approaches based on deeper engagement with an understanding of community needs. USAID is supporting AAP though NGO proposal guidelines and monitoring and evaluation work and continuing to enhance third-party monitoring. USAID also supports AAP through funding to WFP.

USAID and State/PRM continue to implement Call to Action and "Safe from the Start" commitments. USAID's Refine and Implement pilot is starting in 2017 in the DRC and Liberia and is scheduled to last five years.

Work stream 7 - Multi-year planning and funding
The USG funds our partners reliably and in a timely manner, including through multi-year agreements. An estimated 34 percent of Fiscal Year 2015 USG humanitarian awards to NGO partners were in multi-year awards and we commit to increasingly solicit and fund multi-year proposals, and collaborate with our partners to increase the effectiveness and flexibility of our multiyear mechanisms. The USG is exploring ways to facilitate multi-year planning and programming and we plan to collaborate with our partners to increase the effectiveness and flexibility of our multi-year mechanisms. For example, USAID has been heavily engaged with WFP's move toward five-year Country Strategic Plans (CSPs).

Work stream 8 - Earmarking/flexibility
USAID and the State Department use various practices to direct funding to humanitarian partners. As it has in recent years, the USG is providing multiple UN agencies with core funding in FY 2017, in addition to funding directed to specific purposes and responses. Contingent upon humanitarian organizations and successfully carrying out strategic plans of sufficient rigor, transparency, and accountability, the USG will pilot adjustments to allow greater flexibility for recipients of USG funding to direct USG humanitarian funds to the most urgent needs in each crisis, consistent with existing statutory requirements, concomitant federal regulations, and Congressional intent. In FY16, USAID continued to support the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund, and provided new support to country-based pooled funds (CBPFs). USAID contributed $11.5 million to CBPFs in Iraq and Ethiopia in FY16. Further increases in the flexibility of funding practices will be linked to the related commitments on transparency and improved needs assessments. Any shift towards increased flexibility will need to be balanced carefully against calls for greater accountability and scrutiny on use of funds, particularly in non-permissive operating environments, and be consistent with Congressional intent.

Work stream 9 – Reporting requirements

The USG is working with our donor and agency colleagues to harmonize, as appropriate, our programmatic reporting requirements, and we are working to reduce some programmatic reporting requirements for NGO partners. This year the USG is the co-lead of the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative work stream on harmonized reporting where efforts will be focused on identifying what reporting practices can be harmonized across a larger number of humanitarian donors.

USAID/FFP has revisited their reporting requirements for international organizations in order to streamline some requirements and decrease the frequency of reporting. USAID/FFP is working with WFP on new reporting templates that remove any superfluous reporting. USAID/OFDA reduced NGO narrative reporting requirements to twice annually effective October 1, 2016. State/PRM is currently considering how it, too, can streamline reporting requirements.

The USG will ensure that any changes to reporting requirements will not impact the quality of information received from our partners and provided to Congress and the American public.

Work stream 10 – Humanitarian – Development Engagement
The USG has funded early warning, resilience, and adaptive interventions, stabilization, peacebuilding and other efforts to mitigate the risk of humanitarian suffering by conflict and vulnerability to natural hazards. We plan to continue to support joint humanitarian and development planning in our budgeting process, in appropriate situations such as those where there is recurring or protracted crises, and to re-orient assistance as necessary.

In December, USAID held the first internal Crisis Programming Review Meeting (CPRM) to review USAID programming and engagement in two situations of chronic crisis. Based on the initial December 8 meeting, USAID will further refine the process and format for the CPRM for future iterations and include participation from relevant and interested interagency partners, as appropriate.

USAID/FFP has just released its 10-year strategy with a strong focus on relief to development and resilience. USAID is piloting a "graduation approach" program in Uganda to transition beneficiaries off of emergency food assistance by investing in their livelihoods and self-reliance. Similarly, State/PRM is supporting an NGO-UNHCR partnership to adapt and expand the graduation approach to refugees and host communities across regions.

State and USAID contributed to the design and donor outreach of the World Bank's new financing mechanisms to support refugee-hosting countries: the Global Concessional Financing Facility (GCFF) for middle-income countries and the International Development Association (IDA) regional sub-window. The GCFF was launched at the Leaders' Summit on Refugees at the United Nations on September 20, 2016. To date, three GCFF projects in Jordan and one in Lebanon have been approved. The IDA sub-window received strong support from donors as part of the IDA final donor pledging conference December 14-15, 2016.