

Getting gender into the Grand Bargain
ActionAid Discussion Paper
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Summary and key recommendations

Gender equality and women’s rights became priority issues at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), where two thirds of the donor signatories to the Grand Bargain agreement committed to “empower and protect women and girls in emergencies”.

The Grand Bargain has strong buy-in from signatories and has created important momentum for change in humanitarian action. This change should include putting women and girls at the centre of emergency preparedness and responses. To achieve this, all humanitarian stakeholders prioritising gender and women’s rights in emergencies, and Grand Bargain signatories engaged in its gender mainstreaming should act at three levels in the Grand Bargain agreement:

- **Level 1 – External communication on gender:** Make public statements during the Grand Bargain annual meeting and the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Humanitarian Affairs Segment (HAS) in June 2017 on the contribution of the Grand Bargain to the women and girls’ humanitarian agenda.
- **Level 2 – Process and monitoring of gender:** Make sure that the ‘Eminent Person’ selected to maintain high-level political engagement with signatories is a gender champion; that there is a gender focal person at the Secretariat; that at least 50% of Facilitation Group members and work stream co-conveners are women; and that there are external civil society initiatives that monitor progress of gender in relation to the Grand Bargain.
- **Level 3 – Implementation of gender mainstreaming at field level:** Consider and facilitate the participation of women and women’s organisations from crisis-affected countries in the implementation and pilot projects of the Grand Bargain in 2017-2018 – in particular in work streams that have progressed the most and can have a multiplier effect on gender mainstreaming, for example localisation, participation, reporting and cash (see section 5).

Acronyms

ECHO	Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department of the European Commission
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PACT	Platform for Action, Commitments, and Transformations
SCHR	Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
UK	United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WFP	World Food Programme
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit

0. Introduction

The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in Istanbul in May 2016 provided a unique opportunity to set an ambitious agenda for empowering and protecting women and girls in emergencies. Twenty per cent of all commitments made by donors, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and United Nations agencies at the WHS addressed gender issues. The High Level Round Table on Women and Girls: Catalysing Action to Achieve Gender Equality resulted in 446 commitments that include targeted actions for gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment and protection. A considerable effort was also made to increase the number of stakeholders endorsing the Call to Action on Protection from Gender based Violence (GBV) in Emergencies – a call initiated by the UK and Swedish governments in 2013 and which is transforming the way GBV is addressed in humanitarian operations by bringing political leadership and operational frameworks together to ensure commitments turn into action on the ground.

During the WHS, major humanitarian donors and aid organisations also agreed to the Grand Bargain – an agreement consisting of 51 commitments divided into 10 work streams, with the goal of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian action (see Box 1). The Grand Bargain originally omitted any specific commitments to women and local women’s organisations. However, in September 2016, an informal “Friends of Gender” group for the Grand Bargain was created that produced an *‘aide memoire’* to assist Grand Bargain partners in identifying gender equality and women’s empowerment outcomes in the context of the agreement. Around a quarter of the 52 Grand Bargain signatories are now members of the Friends of Gender group.

1. Purpose of the discussion paper

The Grand Bargain can help advance the empowerment and protection of women and girls in emergencies. It can also galvanise implementation of the varied but strong commitments made by different stakeholders relating to women’s and girls’ rights at the WHS. A greater involvement of women and women’s organisations in emergency responses – and consideration of gender equality and women’s rights in that response – can also contribute the Grand Bargain’s overall aim “to work together efficiently, transparently and harmoniously with new and existing partners”.

Box 1: The Grand Bargain

The Grand Bargain is an agreement among more than 30 of the biggest donors and aid providers, which aims to put more resources into the hands of people in need. It includes a series of changes in the working practices of donors and aid organisations that would deliver an extra billion dollars over five years for people in need of humanitarian aid, including by gearing up cash programming; greater funding for national and local responders; and cutting bureaucracy through harmonised reporting requirements.

The Grand Bargain commits donors and aid organizations to providing 25 per cent of global humanitarian funding to local and national responders by 2020, along with more un-earmarked money, and increased multi-year funding to ensure greater predictability and continuity in humanitarian response, among other commitments.

This paper aims to open up discussion among humanitarian actors about this possibility, beyond the informal Friends of Gender group. The first section addresses the current momentum of the Grand Bargain and its links with the Agenda for Humanity, in particular the empowerment and protection of women and girls. The second section covers tensions created by bringing this dimension into the process. The third section identifies the Grand Bargain work streams with most potential to advance

the women's and girls' agenda. The fourth section includes suggestions on how to take forward the gender equality and women's rights agenda in the Grand Bargain, and makes recommendations.

This document has been produced by ActionAid, after interviewing (in April and May 2017) three staff from United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) and UN Women and European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) involved in the Grand Bargain process.

2. What momentum has the Grand Bargain brought to transforming the humanitarian system?

The Grand Bargain was a key outcome from Istanbul and has three inter-related mechanisms to create momentum for change: a set of ten work streams (see Table 1) with co-conveners; the demands and concessions made by each group on those ten issues; and the reports of each signatory and an independent annual progress report.

The Facilitation Group, which was established in October 2016 to maintain an overview of all work related to the agreement, has brought new impetus to the process. An Eminent Person in charge of the Grand Bargain would help mobilise signatories and make more progress and build on synergies between commitments made by signatories relating to women and girls and the ones in the Grand Bargain.

3. What tensions could arise when introducing gender in the Grand Bargain?

While Grand Bargain signatories welcome the comparatively 'light touch' approach of the agreement, some may use it to resist the incorporation of gender elements in the work streams.

Gender therefore needs to be presented as a necessary criterion that makes humanitarian aid more effective because (as indicated in the *'aide memoire'*) humanitarian partners' efforts will be less effective and efficient if they lack clear knowledge and evidence-based understanding of the gender-dynamics that affect and influence the success of interventions and response.

There could also be specific tensions in some of the work streams. For example, while the work stream on harmonized and simplified reporting aims to streamline report content, this could result in gender work and progress being neglected if it is not included as one of the areas to be monitored and reported on.

4. Which of the ten work streams are the most important to advance gender equality and women's leadership and protection in humanitarian action?

The *aide memoire* on gender mainstreaming in the Grand Bargain identifies a number of cross-cutting issues relating to gender mainstreaming that impact all Grand Bargain work streams. These include having adequate resources to make gender equality commitments a reality; increasing partners' capacity and technical expertise on gender; and eliminating barriers to women's and girls' participation and leadership in humanitarian action. It also points out the importance (see next section) of Grand Bargain partners being accountable and making publicly available progress and commitments made on gender.

Table 1: Grand Bargain work streams, donors and agencies

Work streams / co-conveners during Grand Bargain Implementation	Donors	Agencies
1. Transparency	1. Netherlands	1. World Bank
2. Localisation / Frontline responders	2. Switzerland	2. IFRC
3. Increased use and coordination of cash-based programming	3. UK	3. WFP
4. Reduce management costs	4. Japan	4. UNHCR
5. More joint and impartial needs assessments	5. ECHO	5. OCHA
6. Participation revolution (inclusion of aid recipients in decision-making)	6. US	6. SCHR
7. More multi-year humanitarian funding	7. Canada	7. UNICEF
8. Reduce the earmarking of donor contributions	8. Sweden	8. ICRC
9. Harmonised/simplified reporting requirements	9. Germany	9. ICVA
10. Strengthening engagement between humanitarian and development actors	10. Denmark	10. UNDP

The five most important work streams for gender mainstreaming are indicated below. The importance of the work streams is based on whether they have already made commitments (presented as ‘enabling actions’ in the agreement) or could establish new actions during their implementation phases that could advance gender equality and women’s leadership and protection in humanitarian action.

- Work stream 2 – Localisation / Frontline responders.** Localisation is crucial. The real impact on gender equality and women’s leadership and protection will come when there are specific measures and plans for its implementation, which could include a target percentage for local women’s organisations involved in humanitarian action. This might, however, create tensions and open discussion among signatories about including funding quotas for local and national organisations working with children, disabled or elderly people. To counter this, an alternative proposal is to approach the funding of local and national women’s organisations via a strong commitment to have more women and women’s organisations participating in decision-making around humanitarian action (work stream 6) instead of setting a target percentage.
- Work stream 3 – Increase the use and coordination of cash-based programming.** It would be beneficial to introduce guiding principles for cash-based programming. The *aide memoire* gives indications as to what these principles could be. For example, they should ensure that partners have an evidence-base on the gender dynamics of cash assistance and capacity to respond to these dynamics (both in terms of empowering women or placing them at increased risk of violence where programmes are not properly designed); and that women and women’s organisations, as well as others, have an appropriate and equal say in the design, management and evaluation of cash-based interventions.

- **Work stream 5 – More joint and impartial needs assessments.** The gender dimension of work stream 5 implementation should ensure inclusion of quantitative inputs, including sex and age disaggregated data, but also proper analysis of gender dynamics.
- **Work stream 6 – Participation revolution: include aid recipients in decision-making.** Co-conveners are defining a coordinated approach for community engagement and participation and scope. Only once this is done, can opportunities and mechanisms for having women’s and girls’ voices adequately represented be identified.
- **Work stream 9 – Harmonized and simplified reporting requirements.** This work stream is also essential to progress on gender mainstreaming in the Grand Bargain. The new reporting format should give information about progress on gender equality and women’s rights, and include disaggregated data.

5. What next steps are needed to advance gender equality and women’s leadership and protection in Grand Bargain implementation?

The first Grand Bargain annual meeting will take place in Geneva on 20 June 2017. Grand Bargain signatories will assess progress made in the different work streams and also present the first independent Grand Bargain annual report. The aim of the report is “to provide a qualitative trend analysis to see whether the ‘humanitarian system’ is on track to deliver the bargain in the different work stream areas”.

After the Geneva meeting, an implementation phase and pilot testing different commitments should start, which will be gradually extended to different countries. There will be a Grand Bargain work plan with indicators, making it easier to monitor progress of the agreement.

In terms of how to make progress on gender equality and women’s leadership and protection in the next phase of the Grand Bargain, there are two possible (and not mutually exclusive) routes:

- **Get all signatories to agree that gender and women’s and girls’ protection and empowerment is a priority that needs to be mainstreamed in the ten work streams of the Grand Bargain.** After this, all signatories should commit to including progress on gender mainstreaming in their next year’s self-reporting and agree to have a section on gender in the general overall progress report.
- **Take small steps and create opt-ins for signatories to advance gender mainstreaming in the Grand Bargain work streams.** Anything that is compulsory or even suggested as compulsory will likely be rejected.

In either case, the best way to ensure gender commitments advance over the next year is to have an internal focal gender person and gender champion at the Grand Bargain Secretariat, and among co-conveners and the Eminent Person.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

ActionAid welcomed the Grand Bargain agreement as an instrument to hold the UN, NGOs and donors accountable for shifting power, decision-making and resources to local and national NGOs. However, it also highlighted (when it was approved in May 2016) that it was a missed opportunity to ensure support for women and girls in disasters. A lot of progress has been made since then. On the

whole, signatories have shown strong buy-in to the Grand Bargain. The Grand Bargain already has different initiatives and specific pilot proposals that could contribute to progress on the women's and girls' agenda that was overwhelmingly agreed at the WHS in Istanbul in 2016.

This discussion paper has identified which work streams are the most important and relevant to progress the women's and girls' agenda in the Grand Bargain. Special attention and priority should be given to those work streams that have the biggest multiplier effect and those that are progressing most. The independent Grand Bargain Report indicates that the most active work streams have been those "concerning localisation, cash, and reporting requirements, with over 45% of relevant signatories reporting activities".

ActionAid considers that all humanitarian stakeholders prioritising gender and women's rights in emergencies, and those Grand Bargain signatories more engaged in its gender mainstreaming, should jointly advance the women's and girls' agenda in emergencies by working at three levels in the Grand Bargain agreement.

Level 1 – External communication on gender: They should **communicate to other signatories and externally the contribution of the Grand Bargain to the women's and girls' humanitarian agenda and ask them to make statements and commitments.** In particular, they should:

- Remind all Grand Bargain donor signatories that two thirds of them made WHS individual commitments to "empower and protect women and girls in emergencies".
- Explain to all Grand Bargain signatories that gender mainstreaming will improve the integration of their Grand Bargain reporting with the annual PACT (Platform for Action, Commitments, and Transformations) reporting on the overall follow-up to the World Humanitarian Summit commitments related to the core responsibility "Leave No One Behind", and contributing to "empower and protect women and girls".
- Ask all Grand Bargain signatories to include a statement on their commitment to advance women's and girls' empowerment and protection in the communique and report that will be produced after the first Grand Bargain annual meeting, 20 June 2017, Geneva.
- Request the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment taking place in Geneva from 21-23 June 2017 to mention the Grand Bargain and gender in their resolutions or communications.

Level 2 – Process and Monitoring of gender: They should also make sure that that **the process and structures that will monitor, implement and govern the progress of the Grand Bargain in 2017-2018 are inclusive, attain gender equality and prioritise women and girls in emergencies.** In particular, they should:

- Nominate a Grand Bargain Eminent Person who maintains high-level signatory engagement and is a gender champion.
- Designate a gender focal person in the Grand Bargain Secretariat in Geneva who ensures reporting on progress and challenges in advancing the women's and girls' agenda as part of implementing the agreement.
- Ensure that at least 50% of the members of the Facilitation Group and work stream co-conveners are women.
- Support civil society initiatives that monitor progress of the Grand Bargain and gender.

Level 3 – Implementation at field level of gender mainstreaming: Finally, the attention of signatories will shift in 2017-2018 to implementing the Grand Bargain in the field. In the **implementation phase it is important that the signatories consider and facilitate the participation and engagement of women and women's organisations from crisis-affected countries.** In particular, they should:

- Make sure that Grand Bargain signatories and co-conveners facilitate and support the engagement of national and local responders, particularly women's groups and organisations, in discussions and meetings about the Grand Bargain.
- Involve women and women's organisations in the implementation phase and pilot projects of the work streams identified in this discussion paper, in particular those that are making more progress and can have a bigger multiplier effect on gender mainstreaming (e.g. in localisation, reporting, cash and participation).
- Have specific monitoring mechanisms and transparent data on how much funding goes to women's organisations as part of the 25% of humanitarian funding allocated to local and national responders, and how many local and national women's organisations participate in coordination mechanisms during emergencies.

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