

**VOICE Grand Bargain Task Force:  
Recommendations for GPPI's annual report on the Grand Bargain**

***The Grand Bargain: between opportunities and challenges***

The Grand Bargain process is perceived as a great opportunity for all humanitarian actors to jointly improve the humanitarian system and address some long time identified weaknesses. It raises high expectations in the NGO community which is hoping to see concrete and positive changes inside the humanitarian system, resulting in substantial impact on the delivery of aid on the ground. Many NGOs have already confirmed their engagement by signing up to the Grand Bargain and many others are joining the effort by engaging in initiatives, through networks like VOICE, contributing at implementing the Grand Bargain or more specifically taking forward some of the commitments under defined work streams.

The first annual report and the first official meeting of all GB signatories in June are major opportunities for addressing the challenge of the timeline for implementing the Grand Bargain. It is becoming critical for the Grand Bargain co-conveners and the facilitation group to agree on a suitable sequencing in the implementation of the different commitments that may prove to be necessary to avoid duplication of work but also because there are some concerns emerging on actors working in contradictory approaches which should be prevented.

While it is too early for NGOs to feel any tangible benefits or improvements related to the Grand Bargain, it has at the very least generated numerous and critical debates and opportunities for dialogue and consultations, including with NGOs, that are highly valuable. However, despite the enthusiasm these discussions generate, many NGOs feel that it is becoming more and more challenging to keep up with all the emerging and simultaneous developments linked to the Grand Bargain. Under most of the work stream, co-conveners have been quite active in engaging with the community and launching different consultations, such as workshops, work plans, etc; often with the possibility for providing input. Many consultancies have been commissioned to undertake various studies (in which NGOs also have the possibility to get involved). While in parallel fora like the IASC, the GHD and at regional and national levels, donors have also engaged in dialogue with their partners with the view of translating the Grand Bargain commitments in their partnerships or contractual agreements and/or developing or adapting their policies.

Offering a clear timeline of implementation would surely facilitate the overall coordination among all these different activities and the engagement of NGOs in the process who may then be able to dedicate the appropriate resources to it.

***NGO specific concerns on the different work streams***

As stated above, some donors are going ahead with the implementation of the Grand Bargain at their "own" level. In a few cases, donors were reported modifying their funding conditions, and framing this under the Grand Bargain (e.g. decrease of indirect costs for NGOs); even though the relevant work stream has not yet finalized its recommendations. Recently some donors have also decided to test out a new model for the provision of cash to affected people, focusing on a single in-country cash provider. To our knowledge this decision was not taken within the relevant Grand Bargain work stream and while this might bring some efficiency gains in terms of management, it may also undermine implementation of other

Grand Bargain commitments, such as those related to localization of aid. It will also have implications for the existing diversity of the humanitarian eco-system that was promoted in Istanbul.

The NGO community has high expectations regarding the **harmonized and simplified reporting work stream**, potentially contributing to a reduction of the overall administrative burden for implementers. Nevertheless, it is felt that the other work stream commitments might in the end result in too many reporting requirements, such as the IATI data standard, the updated FTS platform, the new Centre for Humanitarian Data, report on their cash interventions, etc. This raises the question of the contradiction in the approach and the lack of overview over the different work stream objectives and implementation.

The work stream on **local and national responders** is also moving forward. Many EU member states have launched specific dialogues on this work stream with their partners. There was also very active participation from the humanitarian community in the consultation for the IASC definition paper for a localization marker. However, at this stage NGOs realize that field actors are mostly unaware and insufficiently involved in the Grand Bargain process.

### ***Key recommendations***

Based on the above, VOICE would like to share with GPPI and with co-conveners of the different work streams and the facilitation group the following recommendations:

- Jointly develop a timeline for implementation highlighting the necessary sequencing and interlinkages between the different commitments
- Offer a public space for information sharing where interested stakeholders can find relevant information on progress and opportunities for engagement
- Maintain the spirit of the Grand Bargain where donors, UN agencies, Red Cross Red Crescent family and NGOs jointly agree on a deal and should therefore work in a collaborative manner on its implementation
- Maintain the focus on improving the delivery of aid on the ground, encourage pilots in the field and promote engagement of local and national actors in the process.

Finally, the overarching goal of the High-level panel on humanitarian financing remains firstly to address the humanitarian financing gap and leave no one behind. This urgently needs to be given high priority and the current focus on efficiency and effectiveness should not be at the expense of quality in the assistance to affected populations. The Grand Bargain only represents one out of three recommendations from the High Level Panel's Humanitarian financing report. Thus, even if it is an important part of the report, it is critical to understand how the two others suggested areas for improvement: "Shrink the need: a shared responsibility" and "Deepen and broaden the resource base for humanitarian action" are being implemented by the relevant policy makers.