

Unprecedented humanitarian needs must shock Grand Bargain signatories into action

As we launch the 2023 Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO) with historically high levels of need¹, the recommendations of the High-Level Panel (HLP) on Humanitarian Financing's Too Important to Fail report², on which the Grand Bargain was built, resonate more than ever. Sixty-four NGOs and NGO networks see the continuation and strengthening of the Grand Bargain – the process to make the humanitarian system more efficient – as crucial and call for renewed commitment to shrink needs, deepen the resource base and invest in gender equality and empowerment of women and girls.

This record appeal must be a wake-up call to Grand Bargain signatories and other relevant stakeholders to reform the system and engage actors far beyond the humanitarian sector alone. At the beginning of 2022, 274 million people needed humanitarian assistance. In 2023, it is 339 million people. This is an increase of nearly 24 per cent, or 65 million people. It means that today, one in every 23 people on the planet needs humanitarian assistance. The 2023 GHO size is just a taste of what is to come as the effects of conflict, COVID-19 and climate change continue to magnify other drivers of humanitarian needs in years to come, amplifying existing and intersecting forms of inequalities and injustices, including gender inequality, experienced by marginalised groups.

Time to revisit the broader reform agenda & engage others

Clearly, [the job will not be done](#) by July 2023, when the Grand Bargain 2.0 is planned to end. While there has been significant progress³, such as increasing the number and diversity of signatories and increasing flexible funding in 2021, we must go back to the initial intent of the Grand Bargain and the High Level Panel on Humanitarian Finance to embark on a broader reform process built around our “shared responsibility” to shrink the needs, to deepen and broaden the resource base for humanitarian action and invest in gender equality and the empowerment of crisis affected women and girls (as recommended at the 2016 WHS & by the Grand Bargain Friends of Gender Group), alongside a refocusing in equitable partnerships and localisation.

Humanitarian actors alone cannot tackle the expanding gap between humanitarian needs and resources. Innovative, bold and more equitable partnerships across a diversity of actors are needed.

¹ At the beginning of 2022, 274 million people needed humanitarian assistance. For 2023, it is 339 million people. This is an increase of nearly 24 per cent, or 65 million people. It represents one in every 23 people on the planet. The GHO 2023 sets out how to support 230 million of the most vulnerable in 68 countries. The funding needed is US\$51.5 billion – 25 per cent more compared to 2022's GHO.

² <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/high-level-panel-humanitarian-financing-report-secretary-general-too-important-fail>

³ <https://odi.org/en/publications/the-grand-bargain-in-2021-an-independent-review/> and <https://sohs.alnap.org/>

Push transformative aims & accountability of the Grand Bargain

The impact of Grand Bargain efforts so far has not been sufficiently felt at the country level. We must accelerate change and remain focussed on the most transformational priorities that will achieve greater aid effectiveness and efficiency, particularly:

- A critical mass of quality funding, especially to national and local actors, including to women-led, women rights and crises-affected people-led organisations;
- leadership and meaningful participation of diverse local actors, and
- participation of and accountability to affected people.

National and local governments bear the primary responsibility to prevent and respond to disasters and protect their populations. In line with the [Charter for Change](#) and [Principles of Partnership](#) commitments, the Grand Bargain must engage responsible government actors.

Connect to Agenda 2030 & the SDGs, especially on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls

We knew in 2016 that change would take time and is complex. Given this and the scale of needs, it is critical to embrace this complexity and take a long-term view. We recommend aligning the Grand Bargain's next phase with Agenda 2030, with specific and ambitious milestones that will link our reform goals to a process that advances the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in fragile settings.

Globally, 388 million women and girls live in extreme poverty (more than men and boys) and many face gender-based violence. The 2023 GHO says that it will now take four generations – or 132 years – to achieve global gender parity. Yet, gender-relevant humanitarian funding still accounts for just 3.4% of total international humanitarian assistance⁴ and the proportion of gender-specific funding directly provided to local and national actors reduced from 4.8% in 2018 to 3.1% in 2020⁵. Women Led and Women Rights Organizations (WLOs / WROs) find it particularly difficult to access funding, which is paramount to deliver greater efficiency and impact on all crisis-affected people, including on women and girls⁶.

But there is still limited political prioritisation of Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls' (GEEWG) in the Grand Bargain⁷ and limited collective progress against SDG5 on Gender Equality and against various GEEWG commitments.

Suggestions for discussion:

We are calling for a **substantive discussion on the future of the Grand Bargain** to be held as soon as possible (at least prior to April 2023) to inform the next phase of the GB and consider the following propositions from this collective of NGOs and NGO networks.

1. **Align the timeline of the next phase of the Grand Bargain with the SDGs**, till 2030, but with specific and measurable milestones, including on GEEWG.

⁴ Development Initiatives' 2021 humanitarian assistance report

⁵ [Funding for gender-relevant humanitarian response | Summary - Development Initiatives \(devinit.org\)](#)

⁶ ActionAid, 2021, Bargaining for Better: Bringing a Feminist Lens to the Grand Bargain 2.0: <https://actionaid.org/publications/2021/bargaining-better-bringing-feminist-lens-grand-bargain-20>

⁷ [Friends of Gender Group - Statement 2022.pdf \(interagencystandingcommittee.org\)](#)

2. **Recommit explicitly to GEEWG in the Grand Bargain, according to our promise under the SDGs’ transformational agenda to “Leave no one behind (LNOB)”**

Enhanced political prioritisation of and accountability on GEEWG is required within GB3.0. Grand Bargain signatories should proactively seek out opportunities to meaningfully engage and partner with local actors, including diverse women-led and women rights’ organisations. The GB and its signatories should also do much more to enhance accountability of duty bearers on GEEWG and to shift resources and decision-making power to women’s organisations as leading actors across all stages of the humanitarian cycle⁸. We urge a rights-based approach that supports women’s meaningful participation, voice and leadership in decisions that affect them in all contexts under all pillars of the humanitarian, development and peace nexus as a platform for realisation of the SDGs, including in Grand Bargain structures.

3. **Ensure the Grand Bargain governance and accountability structures are robust** and reflect the values and intentions of the Grand Bargain, including:

- Discussing options for a more equally distributed co-leadership model, for example pairing one international with one national or local actor (e.g. two co-convenors or eminent people) with similar decision making powers or having a rotation system between an international eminent person and a national eminent person; and bringing local and national actors, including WLO/WROs, into co-leadership roles in all Grand Bargain spaces
- Create a Grand Bargain Advisory Council composed of responsible aid recipient governments who can advise whether aid efficiency gains are being delivered.
- National Reference Groups (NRGs) could evolve over time to include honest reviews on the various signatory’s performance at the national level. Such reviews, while initially in the form of honest discussions, could complement Grand Bargain self-reporting with robust feedback from local actors over time. This would allow for those closest to the crisis, through their organisations, to have a greater role by leading and co-leading response efforts, including in holding international actors and Grand Bargain signatories to account. This will likely involve mobilising resources for National Reference Groups.
- Greater coordination and transparency internally between the various Grand Bargain governance bodies and more consultation of the larger Grand Bargain membership and NRGs;
- Address data transparency on funding, as a critical piece of accountability. The disparity in data on humanitarian funding to local actors and the dearth of data on funding to WLOs / WROs urgently need to be addressed⁹. Whilst it is only one indicator of localisation, it is an important one. Consistent with principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship and accountability to crisis affected communities as envisaged under the Grand Bargain, ALL Grand Bargain signatories (Donors, UN agencies and INGOs) should present timely, complete and transparent reporting on funding to local humanitarian actors including to WLOs / WROs.
- Agree on a system to monitor implementation of the caucus decisions by signatories, with signatories officially committing to endorse and deliver on commitments, adding indicators to their annual reporting.

⁸ ActionAid, 2021, Bargaining for Better: Bringing a Feminist Lens to the Grand Bargain 2.0: <https://actionaid.org/publications/2021/bargaining-better-bringing-feminist-lens-grand-bargain-20>

⁹ Only five GB signatories reported on funding to local WROs/WLOs in the GB’s 2021 self-reporting exercise. DI’s research found direct funding to be 1.2% of overall humanitarian funding

4. Take on the broader reform agenda and diversify / broaden the resource base, including:

- Demonstrate greater political will to tackle pillars one (to shrink the needs) and two (to deepen and broaden the resource base for humanitarian action) of the High Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing and to link this to the Grand Bargain.
- Collectively and actively strategize and design proposals to mobilise development, peacebuilding, climate finance – for adaptation and mitigation - as well as loss and damage. Plans for robust engagement with stakeholders outside the typical humanitarian sector, such as development and peace donors and actors, non-traditional donors, philanthropists, citizens, media, academia, private sector, development banks, etc looking into innovative responsible finance at scale are urgently needed. This is critical to ensure Grand Bargain signatories and other key stakeholders can massively step up their investments in fragile contexts, to tackle the root causes of and to respond to humanitarian crises.
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Signed by:

Networks:

1. ICVA
2. Feminist Humanitarian Network

International NGOs:

3. ActionAid
4. CARE International
5. CBM Global Disability Inclusion
6. Christian Aid
7. Danish Church Aid (DCA)
8. Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
9. International Rescue Committee (IRC)
10. INTERSOS
11. Jesuit Refugee Service
12. Lutheran World Federation (LWF)
13. Norwegian People's Aid
14. Oxfam
15. Welthungerhilfe

Local and National NGOs and NGO networks:

16. HAI (Humanitarian Aid International)
17. Community Healthcare Initiative (CHI)
18. Taakulo
19. Garib Unnayan Sangstha
20. Child's Destiny and Development Organization (CHIDDO)
21. Nkafamiya Rescue Mission-NRM
22. COAST Foundation
23. Barokupot Ganochetona Foundation-BGF
24. Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church Child and Family Affairs organisation
25. Turkana Pastoralist Development Organization
26. Organization of African Youth-Kenya

27. Citizen Voice of Action Initiatives (CVAI)
28. Community Agenda Support (CAS)
29. Community Empowerment Network (CENET)
30. Tinada Youth Organization (TiYO)
31. Bureau Oecuménique d'Appui au Développement (BOAD)
32. Tamdeen Youth Foundation (TYF) Yemen
33. Down Syndrome Foundation Uganda
34. PHALS (Programme for Helpless And Lagged Societies) Bangladesh
35. JAGO NARI
36. YOUTH UP FOUNDATION (YUF)
37. The National Initiative by CSOs for Localization and Optimization of Response Mechanisms in Yemen (40 members of CSOs in Yemen)
38. Democracy School (NGO-Yemen)
39. Nabd Development and Evolution Organization (NDEO) Yemen
40. Similar Ground (SIMG)
41. African Women and Youth Action for Development (AWYAD)
42. Medical Mercy Foundation (MMF)
43. Ecosystems Work for Essential Benefits (ECOWEB), Inc.
44. PEOPLE FOR PEACE AND DEFENCE OF RIGHTS (PPDR)
45. ACTIONS PAYSANNES POUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT ET LA CONSERVATION DE LA NATURE (APDCN Asbl)
46. West Nile Youth Empowerment Centre
47. 73rd Parliament Charity Organization
48. Community empowerment for Transformation Action west Nile CEFTRA-WN
49. HIMAYA DAEEM AATAA(HDA)
50. Engineering Association for Development and Environment-EADE
51. Kukumbi- Rural Development Organisation
52. Nedaa Foundation For Development
53. (NFD) Yemen
54. Rural Community Development Society (Pakistan)
55. Gyanbodh Research and Development Services
56. Comité d'action pour le développement integral, CADI ong-asbl
57. Abs Development Organization (ADO) Yemen
58. Empowerment for Development (ED)
59. Hope Revival Organization
60. Gusoor for Peace and Coexistence
61. Reliable Refugee Stories Association
62. Forum for Awareness and Youth Activity Nepal (FAYA Nepal)

63. Wadi Alain Social Development org

64. Agency for Women and Children Development (AWACD)