

Informal Friends of Gender group for the Grand Bargain: Aide-Memoire on Gender Mainstreaming in the Grand Bargain

Background: While the majority of Grand Bargain partners have more or less explicit stated commitments to integrating gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment outcomes into their work, the Grand Bargain itself is not explicit on the issue. As a result, a number of Grand Bargain partners are interested in informal collaboration to promote the issue and ensure that principles such as, but not limited to, equitable access to services and assistance to all gender and age groups, attention to the specific needs of women and girls including protection, women's and women's groups' participation and leadership, and sex and age disaggregated data, are reflected across the Grand Bargain's workstreams.

At the Grand Bargain Sherpa Meeting in Bonn, 5-6 September 2016, an informal Friends of Gender group for the Grand Bargain was created. The group agreed to connect and share ideas and issues, cover the different workstreams amongst the group and share gender equality considerations within them. The group also agreed to produce this short "aide-memoire" to assist Grand Bargain partners in identifying gender equality and women's empowerment outcomes in the context of the Grand Bargain.

Key issues: There are a number of cross-cutting issues relating to gender mainstreaming which impact all Grand Bargain workstreams. These include:

Resources: In order to ensure commitments to gender equality are translated into reality, partners need to allocate adequate resources to gender mainstreaming and to specifically targeting the needs of different gender and age groups and institute tracking and monitoring systems to monitor those resources.

Capacity: The capacity of partners, including through dedicated technical expertise, to understand and address gender dynamics and the differential impacts of crisis and displacement, and the capacitation of women and girls themselves to be actors for sustainable solutions, are prerequisites for success across the workstreams.

Evidence and data: Partners efforts will be less effective and efficient without a clear knowledge and evidence-based understanding of the gender-dynamics that affect and influence the success of interventions and response.

Participation: Women and girls as well as other vulnerable gender and age groups must have meaningful, dignified and equal say in and access to opportunities, services and support to advance and reach their potential and aspirations. Since women and girls consistently face structural barriers and increased risks to doing so in humanitarian contexts, this requires specific efforts and investment.

Leadership: Women and women's organizations and other representative of gender and age vulnerable groups must have equal access to and say in decision making. Since women and women's organizations often face barriers to doing so, this requires collective attention in eliminating the barriers to leadership.

Accountability: As Grand Bargain partners hold themselves accountable for delivering on its commitments, this accountability must extend to ensuring that their efforts work equally for the different gender and age groups. In line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) policy statement on Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action and the World Humanitarian Summit Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformation (WHS PACT), information on progress towards achieving commitments on gender equality should be publicly available.

Communication: Since Grand Bargain partners' commitments to gender equality, women's empowerment and protection from gender based violence in humanitarian action are an important element in achieving the objectives of the Grand Bargain overall, it is important that these are also publicly available.

Key issues in selected workstreams: The above issues manifest in specific ways in the different Grand Bargain workstreams. For example:

Workstream 2 – Localisation: Increasing support and funding tools for local and national responders to become the central actors in humanitarian action is at the heart of the Grand Bargain, and was a key theme of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS). This workstream’s success depends in part on successful engagement with and investment in women and women’s organizations as local and first responders, given the reality of women’s leadership in local response. This is well articulated in, for example, the Sendai Framework which states that, “women and their participation are critical to effectively managing disaster risk and designing, resourcing and implementing gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction policies, plans and programmes”.

The imperative of ensuring attention to women’s institutions, organisations and capacities in the work on localisation will require outreach to local women’s groups and appropriate local government agencies, such as ministries of women. The Global Acceleration Instrument on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action (GAI) may be considered as a pilot mechanism to increase direct local funding. In view of the vast and destructive scope of gender-based violence, the Road Map of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies that has already been endorsed by a number of the signatories of the Grand Bargain also provides a valuable reference point.¹

Workstream 3 – Cash: The Grand Bargain’s commitment to scale and maximize impact of cash-based interventions requires proper incorporation of gender perspectives. Cash-based programming does not automatically benefit women.² Cash transfers targeted at women can even place women at increased risk of violence where not properly designed.³ At the same time, giving women equal access to cash assistance is proven to have greater impacts on overall family well-being, since women generally channel more resources to expenditures for their families. Given this, it will be important in this workstream to ensure that the evidence-base on the gender dynamics of cash assistance is clear and available to partners, that capacities are in place in cash-based interventions to address both the threats, including sexual and gender based violence, and opportunities generated by gender dynamics in affected populations, 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.

Workstream 5 - Needs Assessments: The Grand Bargain’s discussion of “joint and impartial needs assessments” which are “unbiased, comprehensive, context-sensitive, timely and up-to-date” requires both quantitative inputs including sex and age disaggregated data, and qualitative inputs that incorporate proper analysis of gender dynamics and their impacts on affected populations to ensure holistic gender analysis in humanitarian response.

Workstream 6 - Participation Revolution: Effective engagement of people can only be achieved through targeted efforts to enable the engagement and participation of women, men, girls and boys. The Grand Bargain’s goal to ensure that “voices of the most vulnerable groups considering gender, age, ethnicity, language and special needs are heard and acted upon” will require this workstream to identify ways to target the different gender and age groups to ensure their voice and engagement, through approaches such as distinct spaces and opportunities for women and girls to voice needs, concerns, and opinions adequately and comfortably.

¹ <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Call-to-Action-Roadmap.pdf>. Accessed November 2016

² Progress of the World’s Women 2015-16. UN Women. http://progress.unwomen.org/en/2015/pdf/UNW_progressreport.pdf

³ Guide for Protection in Cash-Based Interventions. <http://www.cashlearning.org/downloads/erc-guide-for-protection-in-cash-based-interventions-web.pdf>

Workstream 7 – Multi-year planning: Gender equality and women’s empowerment demands a change in social norms and mindsets and by its very nature requires long-term planning that takes into account gender dynamics and aims to change them. Collaborative multi-year planning and funding is an ideal opportunity to make progress towards gender equitable humanitarian action.

Workstream 10 - Humanitarian-Development Nexus: Women and girls are at the heart of the transition from crisis to stability at the family, community and national levels. Women and women’s groups’ have a unique ability to contribute to humanitarian and development work. Investments in women’s empowerment and in their capacity in crisis to lead, and to develop skills and employment opportunities can provide the foundation for families to have durable sources of income and livelihoods. Gender equality and women’s empowerment is an issue which cuts across all contexts, and has the potential to bind efforts at all points on the humanitarian-development nexus.