

Report: Grand Bargain Annual Meeting Debriefing by Christine Pirenne (MFA) and Ane de Vos (ZOA)

An initiative of the [DRA](#) (Dutch Relief Alliance) and [KUNO](#) (Platform for Humanitarian Knowledge Exchange in the Netherlands); 3 July 2020

Attended by CARE Netherlands, Cedds (South Sudan), Cordaid, ICCO, JDF Global (Nigeria), Kerk in Actie, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Oxfam Novib, Plan International Netherlands, Save the Children Netherlands, ZOA.

Speakers:

- Christine Pirenne, Head of Humanitarian Aid, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ane de Vos, Manager Institutional Relations of ZOA
- Moderated by: Peter Heintze (KUNO)

During the Annual Meeting on the 25th and 26th of June the signatories of the Grand Bargain met online to discuss the proceedings over the last year, and needed next steps for the near future. KUNO together with DRA organized an online debriefing of this meeting for their members. Sherpa's Christine Pirenne (MFA) and Ane de Vos (ZOA) shared their take-aways of the annual meeting.

Christine Pirenne – Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Grand Bargain annual meeting always serves as a moment to ensure the Grand Bargain stays on the agenda, and to make sure everyone sticks to their commitments. Good practices that were identified during this meeting were: Joint country level assessments, the transparency agenda (IATI), (joint) humanitarian needs overview and cash programming. Challenges are: Volume really matters (eg. The amount of data in IATI is growing, but can still be expanded), scale also matters in terms of transformative changes (eg. 8+3 uptake is still limited), flexible funding (call for NGOs to develop targets on this commitment) and political leadership is widely requested (also ownership and leadership within Grand Bargain institution).

The first session of the annual meeting was on risk sharing. Participants engagement showed the relevance of this topic, and the emphasis was put on risk-*sharing* instead of risk-*transferring*. In this session HERE-Geneva presented a paper which was drafted upon the request by the Dutch government and ICRC.

Another main topic discussed was localisation. Key messages were: shifting the power (political), the future DRA pilot was highlighted, the interlinkages between localisation, risk-sharing, nexus and due diligence were discussed.

A comment made in the *chatbox* during the Annual meeting referred to zero tolerance for not acting local: Working local should be default, and if you don't, *then* you should explain. Instead of the other way around.

Call by the eminent person (Sigrid Kaag): If you talk about all these topics, try to be specific, try to be concrete and try to pin down the difficulties, so we can work on them.

On the future of the Grand Bargain: ODI presented its think piece. A request to the GB-facilitation group was made to come up with a proposal/ideas by December. Inclusivity was also discussed regarding the future.

When it comes to the next 12 months the message was to be pro-active, promote initiatives that are there and enhance their scope (like 8+3 template, IATI etc.).

Questions/discussion:

Wider political leadership: the ODI think piece shared examples like dual or triple leadership. All food for thought for the next 6 months. Leadership comes from many different angles. Push for ownership within the institution.

In what way are local organisations involved in the GB structure/annual meeting: Officially, around 60 signatories, and NGOs are mainly represented by the consortia (ICVA, SCHR) so it's also their responsibility to be vocal points for the local organizations they work with.

Reference to recent issues like Covid and Racism in humanitarian aid:

- *Racism:* Not very much, the only comment that came near to this discussion by SCHR (Gareth) who was using the wording colonialism when referring to humanitarian aid. There was however a very rich discussion via the chat.
- *Covid:* Yes of course it was discussed, for us it only underlines the commitments of the GB and the relevance of localisation, AAP etc.

Ane de Vos – ZOA

It was hard to feel consensus amongst the participants in the room, maybe also because this event needed to be online. There were some local NGO signatories, who were present in the main room. More were present in the other livestream. Also, INGOs were representing local NGOs through Charter4Change and other networks. However, in the chat it was mentioned that there is a broader request for local voices in these meetings.

The risk-sharing discussion was mentioned quite a few times during the sessions. If we could tackle the risk-sharing issue other major topics/challenges will probably be unlocked as well. The first question however is 'what does risk-sharing mean for everyone?'. Multiple papers and think pieces use different definitions now. There is a consensus on the shift from risk-transfer to risk-sharing, but how this should be done remains the question.

Two quotes from Sigrid Kaag (EP) were:

"Risk for one is risk aversion for the other" & "risk sharing is key to unlock the other commitments".

The collaboration between the different work streams could be better. What was also mentioned by the ODI think piece, there is a general consensus that the Grand Bargain is an unique commitment, and most signatories do want to continue this collaboration, again the question is how we want to do this?

Political will was also mentioned by Ane de Vos, if you look at most people in the discussion they are technocrats, not the senior political leaders. To make changes, this leadership is needed though.

Questions/Discussion:

Why is local funding more difficult in a protracted crisis setting/humanitarian setting than in a development setting?

- Chain of cascading donor-beneficiary relations (MFA – DRA – Local Partners etc.)
- Humanitarian budget is needs-based budget, so not delegated to embassies. If we cut the budget and delegate it to embassies, we need to have an agenda in mind. A principled decision was made on keeping a centralized budget.
- Coordinated response, with collaboration. Humanitarian sector has its own structure and coordination structure. Living up to humanitarian principles, it is a profession to deliver humanitarian aid. Strong believe in 'volume matters', if needs change you have to have the flexibility to move, to scale up or to make sure you have sufficient buffers in your accounts. This can only be done if you work within the larger system of humanitarian aid. It should however be as direct as possible, as long as you can also stay accountable.

Take-aways of Ane de Vos (ZOA):

- Stamina is very important. We already made some progress, now we get to the more difficult topics.
- Risk-sharing practices should be learned by doing. Make it practical, so all signatories and stakeholders can also learn from each other's good examples. And the fear will be taken away.
- Senior political engagement is needed, not just from donors but also UN and INGOs.

Take-aways of Christine Pirenne (MFA):

- We need to not just discuss but also do, therefore pilots could help.
- In risk-sharing discussions managers of country based pooled funds should be available.

Top 3 priorities for the Eminent person in the upcoming months (by Christine Pirenne):

- Risk sharing will stay on top of the agenda, make sure that everyone is talking about the same thing, working on one definition.
- Keep looking through the *Localisation Lens*.
- Stamina. We have made these commitments, we have done quite a few things that have shown that what we've done has worked, so we also must keep doing them.