



Debriefing of the Grand Bargain Annual Meeting 2023

26 June 2023, Online

Summary report

On 19 and 20 June 2023, the signatories of the Grand Bargain gathered in Geneva to mark the end of the Grand Bargain 2.0 and review the progress made. The Grand Bargain's overarching objective is to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability. This is very important in times of growing humanitarian needs due to climate change and (ongoing) conflict. In 2021, after the Grand Bargain's initial five years, signatories (re)defined the overall goal, enabling priorities and outcome pillars. A key goal of the Grand Bargain 2.0 was to get local organisations more involved.

In 2023 it is time to take stock and to create an agenda for the next three-year extension of the Grand Bargain 2.0. To obtain a preliminary impression of how the Grand Bargain Annual Meeting went and what was discussed, KUNO organised a debrief inviting speakers from the various participating parties. They were asked to provide their reflections on the following questions. What is - in retrospective - your overall 'feeling' of the Annual Meeting? Were partners constructive, open and friendly? Was the atmosphere positive or negative? What results did the Annual Meeting produce and what are the steps forward? What did the Annual Meeting *not* bring? What follow up is needed? Additionally there was a lively discussion in the chat which is also included in this summary.

Speakers:

- **Nanette Antequisa**, ECOWEB, Philippines, Principal of the Alliance for Empowering Partnership (A4EP) to the Grand Bargain.
- **Marjolijn Luchtmeijer**, incoming Sherpa of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Grand Bargain .
- **Renet van der Waals**, outgoing Sherpa of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Grand Bargain .
- **Joanne van der Schee**, Head of institutional relations, ZOA Netherlands.

The debrief was under 'Chatham House Rule', so in this report speakers are not quoted. Furthermore, this summary reflects both input of the panellists as of the other participants (over 30 humanitarian professionals from around the globe) participating via the chat.

Atmosphere and professionalism

All the speakers experienced the overall atmosphere at the Grand Bargain Annual Meeting as very positive. They valued the broad representation of different groups since it provided an opportunity to network with various parties. During the discussions, everyone was nice and open. While all speakers praised the high level of professionalism of all the parties present, they also expressed how big and important the informal function of the event is. They had the opportunity to meet many of the same people at different sessions during the Annual Meeting, and to continue the conversation informally afterwards. However, it was also noted that the success of the annual meeting is not determined by how good the atmosphere was, nor what was substantially discussed, but how it affects the lives of people in need.

Energy instead of Grand Bargain fatigue

A common question was whether there was any concern about Grand Bargain fatigue. Although the speakers recognised this concern within their own organisations and expected it to some extent, there was hardly any sign of this throughout the two days. The Grand Bargain is still very much alive and kicking and more needed than ever. It was also mentioned that Grand Bargain fatigue might be a self-fulfilling prophecy, something to be aware of. Thus, although it was emphasised that after six years, quite a lot of challenges remain and new ones have arisen, spirits remain positive regarding the Grand Bargain as it is also seen as an opportunity to participate and engage in the discussion at the global level.

An important element of the Grand Bargain is the accountability built into the process through the self-reporting and especially through the independent reporting on progress made, and lack thereof, and on enablers and obstacles for progress. ODI did a thorough job again, in preparing this report for the AM 2023, which can be found [here](#).

Stronger push from paper to practices

As one of the key objectives of the Grand Bargain 2.0 was to get local actors more involved, there was a big push for more local actors present at the Grand Bargain Annual Meeting. This was successful as there were many local representatives which was experienced as very positive. However, we are still far from fully achieving the Grand Bargain commitments. While it is acknowledged that at global level efforts have been made over the last 6 years to implement the commitments both individually and in a collaborative way, it does not yet transfer to national/local level in a consistent way.

Some participants stressed the need to bring the Grand Bargain from paper to practice: there has been ad hoc progress with pilots to some degree, but Grand Bargain has not scaled up sufficiently to systematically transfer from paper to practices at country level. Others underlined how important the Grand Bargain has been to initiate change, but that the change is not satisfactory yet, and we all need to push further to attain real change for people in need. Therefore, it was expressed that efforts should be made to address political blockages and that more Grand Bargain-related action was needed at the country level to scale up the change that is necessary.

Were the right things discussed?

Although the Grand Bargain Annual Meeting was perceived as very positive, there were some concerns about whether the right things were being discussed. While there is little doubt that the Grand Bargain is working on the right things in the period between the Annual Meetings, the Annual Meeting itself is rather declarative. For example, it was mentioned that sometimes it seemed like a bit of a good weather show; the discrepancy between how the parties presented their work and how it is experienced in reality was not addressed during the formal meetings, even though the informal meetings *en marge* provide very useful space for this. Furthermore, some concreteness was missed and so was the discussion on the Nexus. The needs in today's world are high meaning the humanitarian sector cannot do it alone. The nexus approach (from a humanitarian angle) to increase the impact of effective anticipatory action and early recovery has now explicitly been added to the priorities of Grand Bargain 3.0, even if some parties expressed concern that the Grand Bargain is not the right forum. As before, the Grand Bargain will focus on a selected number of enabling priorities, all found in [this overview](#).

Risk sharing

One element on which progress at the global level at the Annual Meeting was coupled by new commitments for practical action at crisis level, was risk sharing. A tool (a [Risk Sharing Framework](#) with a [documentation template](#)) was presented which aims to help actors throughout a humanitarian delivery chain to *jointly* assess and weigh potential risks for anyone anywhere in the chain, to discuss

mitigation measures and agree about responsibilities with regards to those and to discuss which action is needed by whom if a risk materialises. This can lead to a more equitable dialogue on cooperation throughout the delivery chain, as well as to a reasonable sharing of the burden of mitigating risks as well as of the responsibility for materialising risks. The Framework was developed with a multistakeholder Risk Sharing Platform and on the basis of previous work and experience, among others to be found in the Report [Risk Sharing in practice: success stories, enablers and barriers to risk sharing in the humanitarian sector](#). Several actors at the Annual Meeting announced that they will start testing the Framework and will bring together the experience to feed into next Annual Meetings.

Follow-up

Regarding the follow-up needed after this annual meeting of the Grand Bargain, it was pointed out that terminology such as localisation should be more clearly defined because a different interpretation of a concept should not be an excuse for inactiveness on the Grand Bargain. Furthermore, very concrete next steps need to be defined in which the input of national reference groups should be crucial. While it is very good that this Grand Bargain discussion is held at a global level, it should also be held at the country level with NGOs, governments, civil society organisations and affected people. In line with the latter, it is necessary to ensure that local actors have a voice and that political actors also commit to the Grand Bargain to make it a reality. Finally, in the new iteration for the next three years of the Grand Bargain, three new ambassadors will take over the work of Jan Egeland as Eminent Person. The three new Grand Bargain Ambassadors: Jemilah Mahmood, Manuel Bessler, and Michael Köhler will oversee the advancement of the Grand Bargain commitments as well be responsible for specific issues each (advancement of progress on participation of affected people, localisation and quality funding, and quality funding the nexus approach, enlarging the donor base and innovation approaches). It is hoped that instead of one eminent person, the three new ambassadors will provide collective leadership to further strengthen the commitments and, consequently, ensure collective accountability.