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**Progress toward implementing the “grand  
bargain” commitments**

*Summary*

This conference room paper summarizes the progress made in implementing UNHCR's commitments under the “grand bargain” and should be read in conjunction with the earlier informal update which was prepared for the sixty-eighth meeting of the Standing Committee in March 2017. Financial figures in the report have been updated, following the closure of the 2016 accounts.

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## I. Introduction

1. All grand bargain signatories have committed to undertaking an annual self-reporting exercise on their implementation status. UNHCR's update on its first year of implementation, which provides further detail beyond this paper including next steps, is available on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) grand bargain portal<sup>1</sup>. UNHCR also contributed to the preparation of an independent report<sup>2</sup>, prepared by the Global Public Policy Institute, which provides a collective analysis of the progress made under each workstream and on the grand bargain as a whole.

2. As of September 2017, for a one-year period, UNHCR will be part of the grand bargain facilitation group. The composition of the group for 2017-2018 will be as follows: Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as donor representatives; UNHCR and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as representatives of the United Nations; the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as a representative of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement; and InterAction as a representative of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The group will work with the grand bargain signatories to support activities across the 10 different workstreams and encourage coherence.

## II. Summary of grand bargain implementation by workstream

### A. Greater transparency

3. UNHCR, ICRC and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) have been working with the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) to modify the existing standards, which were originally designed to track development funding. The three organizations have developed a common position paper on the issue and will now work with the IATI Secretariat, OCHA's Financial Tracking Service team and the two co-conveners of the workstream (the Netherlands and the World Bank) on how best to modify the current IATI standards to meet the requirements.

### B. More support and funding tools for local and national responders

*UNHCR's commitment: transfer at least 25 per cent of programme expenditures to local and national responders by 2020.*

4. In 2016, 20 per cent of programme expenditure (17 per cent of total UNHCR expenditure) was provided to local and national partners, an increase of \$136 million from the previous year. In 2016, 995 partners received \$1.4 billion; of this amount, \$ 670 million was provided to 771 national partners, including \$490 million to national/local NGOs. UNHCR offices in the field are being encouraged to look at local implementation capacities and to increasingly engage local and national partners to meet the commitment target.

*UNHCR's commitment: expand investment in institutional capacity-building for national partners to support effective emergency preparedness.*

5. UNHCR works closely with national and local governments and local NGOs on preparedness measures and emergency response. The comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF) and UNHCR's revised policy on emergency preparedness and response<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-hosted-iasc/documents/office-un-high-commissioner-refugees-unhcr-self-report>.

<sup>2</sup> See [https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/nn\\_-\\_grand\\_bargain\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/nn_-_grand_bargain_report_final.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Available from <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/124202/policy-on-emergency-preparedness-and-response>.

(issued in July 2017) highlight the key principle of partnership, including with governments, civil society and local NGOs. This principle is activated at the early stages of emergency preparedness by engaging with local actors in mapping emergency capacities, identifying potential gaps and ensuring support to build and strengthen local capacities for emergency response. Over the past year, UNHCR has undertaken a number of initiatives with local governments and local NGOs to prepare and respond to emergencies, including in Angola, Brazil, Colombia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, and in a number of European countries such as Greece and Italy. In the first eight months of 2017, UNHCR conducted eight preparedness and contingency planning workshops in Dubai involving government and national actors from a number of regions. An IASC Emergency Team Leadership Programme was also organized in Montreux, with participation from local partners from Nicaragua and Yemen.

### **C. Increase the use and coordination of cash-based programming**

*UNHCR's commitment: double the amount of funds programmed for cash-based interventions (CBI) by the end of 2020 as a proportion of its overall assistance.*

6. UNHCR has already achieved its commitment made on cash-based programming at the World Humanitarian Summit. In 2016, \$688 million was spent on cash-based interventions (CBIs), representing a significant increase from \$325 million in 2015. Reaching 2.5 million refugees and other persons of concern in more than 60 operations, cash assistance exceeded in-kind assistance for the first time.

7. Cash was used to meet a wide range of needs, including basic supplies, education, shelter, health and livelihood support. The majority of CBIs took the form of multi-purpose cash grants, providing people with the dignity of choice. The use of cash reduced logistical costs for in-kind assistance, while also ensuring that returnees could make their own choices and stimulate the local economy in their areas of return. UNHCR also implemented cash assistance to meet specific protection needs in more than 30 field operations.

8. Since 2016, UNHCR has trained some 2,000 staff and partners on cash programming and developed tools and systems to facilitate CBIs, which have also been made available to the broader humanitarian community. Through the common cash delivery approach, UNHCR negotiates and establishes cash transfer services that are managed by the private sector but which are available to all partners on the same terms and conditions. UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) have signed an addendum to the two agencies' memorandum of understanding (MOU) on the provision of cash assistance.

### **D. Reduce duplication and management costs with periodic functional reviews**

*UNHCR's commitment: reduce the cost of procurement and logistics by 10 per cent by the end of 2020 through the use of shared services with partner agencies.*

9. In March 2017, UNHCR and the Government of Japan organized a technical workshop in Geneva to review collectively the five components under this workstream:<sup>4</sup>

#### Reduce costs and measure the efficiency gain with technology and innovation

At the World Humanitarian Summit, UNHCR committed to expanding the use of biometrics for refugee registration to a total of 75 country operations by 2020. Since the March 2017 reporting round, UNHCR has deployed its Biometrics Identity Management System (BIMS)

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<sup>4</sup> A detailed summary note of the workshop is available from <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-hosted-iasc/documents/reduce-duplication-and-management-costs-technical-workshop>.

to a further 9 countries, bringing the total number of UNHCR operations using biometrics (not including State systems) to 48<sup>5</sup>. UNHCR is on track to meet its commitment ahead of the 2020 deadline.

#### Harmonize partnership agreements

UNHCR continued to work with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and WFP to harmonize partnership arrangements, including due diligence measures and auditing. The three agencies are also looking at expanding UNHCR's partner portal and transforming it into a common platform for information-sharing by mid-2018.

#### Provide transparent and comparable cost structures

Different cost structures currently used by aid organizations make cost comparisons challenging. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) has undertaken a mapping exercise, which is being discussed with other international NGOs. UNHCR and other partners are considering how best to align the current cost structures into a common one for all humanitarian actors, including United Nations agencies and NGOs.

#### Undertake joint logistics and procurement

Steady progress in this area is being made by UNHCR's procurement team in Budapest, which is also conducting efforts on behalf of the United Nations Procurement Network. Joint procurement opportunities have already been identified, focusing on the 10 most purchased items, and joint vendor opportunities are also being analysed. The Procurement Network will discuss next steps at its October meeting to agree on the items to be collaboratively procured and the operational timelines that will be followed. A methodology of measuring and recording collaborative procurement savings will also be developed for collective adoption in 2018.

#### Reduce individual donor assessment

A report prepared by the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit earlier this year<sup>6</sup> focused on donor assessments of the United Nations systems organizations. The report pointed to a proliferation and multiplicity of donor reviews, with some agencies being assessed more than 100 times between 2011 and 2016, despite also being assessed by the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN). In order to track and reduce the number of individual donor-led assessments, there is a consensus among the grand bargain donor signatories to report on the number of official assessments they conduct per year through the self-reporting exercise.

### **E. Improve joint and impartial needs assessment**

10. UNHCR recently issued a needs assessment handbook, which contains practical tools and templates<sup>7</sup>, covering qualitative and quantitative assessment methods and practices for all situations and populations. With the launch of the handbook, joint needs assessments and joint analysis is now the standard for assessment in all UNHCR operations. The handbook is also the basis for a series of learning programmes aimed at skills development in this area.

11. Under the co-conveners of this workstream, the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and OCHA, UNHCR is engaged with all five thematic working groups. In particular, UNHCR is leading the development of a set of common principles to guide agencies, donors and affected communities in the assessment process, including the sharing and use of assessment results and data.

<sup>5</sup> The 63 reported in the March update to the Standing Committee included State systems.

<sup>6</sup> See [https://www.unjiu.org/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU\\_REP\\_2017\\_2\\_English.pdf](https://www.unjiu.org/en/reports-notes/JIU%20Products/JIU_REP_2017_2_English.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Available from [needsassessment.unhcr.org](https://needsassessment.unhcr.org).

## **F. Participation revolution**

*UNHCR's commitment: ensuring equal (50 per cent) and meaningful participation of women and adolescent girls in all decision-making processes and structures in forced displacement contexts by 2020.*

12. UNHCR remains committed to meaningful participation, placing people of concern at the center of programming and strengthening accountability measures. UNHCR's Strategic Directions 2017-2021 establish "putting people first" as a key commitment for the Office, prioritizing the inclusion and empowerment of persons of concern in all interventions, including through feedback mechanisms and innovative communications channels to amplify community voices.

13. The participation of women in leadership structures improved in 66 per cent of the 58 situations that reported on the relevant indicator. In line with the age, gender and diversity policy, UNHCR operations followed a community-based approach to encourage women's participation in decision-making. However, challenges to active female participation remain, as evidenced by the percentage of situations that require improvement (27 per cent) and those that are currently considered unsatisfactory (7 per cent). Domestic and caretaking responsibilities remain a challenge to participation for many women, who would otherwise be willing and motivated. Participation is also impeded by social attitudes in some societies. UNHCR operations are working to address the barriers hindering female participation, building on the positive work being done in some operations.

14. In Cameroon, for example, UNHCR tried to overcome such social barriers by conducting community awareness-raising campaigns. In Kenya, UNHCR provided training to 77 community leaders on addressing the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence in their communities: 74 per cent of those trained were women. Furthermore, this exercise identified 2,000 female leaders from all camps to work as mentors to girls living in the camps. In Lebanon, UNHCR supported the formation of 230 community groups, involving approximately 3,000 persons of concern, including women of differing ages (65 per cent), as well as youth, older persons and others with specific needs. The community groups share information about available services for the community and mobilize individuals to participate in outreach activities.

## **G. Increase collaborative humanitarian multi-year planning and funding**

15. By 2020, all UNHCR operations will be using a multi-year, multi-partner planning (MYMP) approach, with progress already being achieved. In addition to the six operations (Costa Rica, Ecuador, Ghana, Senegal, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania) that began piloting the MYMP approach in 2017, a number of additional operations (Algeria, Brazil, Cameroon, Chad, Colombia, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico Niger, Rwanda and Ukraine), as well as UNHCR's Regional Office in Stockholm<sup>8</sup>, will be using it from the 2018 planning cycle.

16. UNHCR has initiated a process to collect information that will allow the Office to demonstrate the positive impact that multi-year planning and funding brings to its operations. The aim is to use this information to advocate increased multi-year financial contributions.

## **H. Reduce the earmarking of donor contributions**

17. In 2016, UNHCR received, \$562.6 million in unearmarked funding and \$786.1 million in "softly" earmarked funding, representing 14 per cent and 20 per cent,

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<sup>8</sup> UNHCR's Regional Office in Stockholm covers Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden.

respectively, of the total contributions received. UNHCR has issued a report on its use of unearmarked funding<sup>9</sup> in order for donors to be able to justify maintaining and increasing flexible funding. UNHCR will continue to enhance its reporting on the use of unearmarked funding and welcomes feedback in this regard.

## **I. Harmonize and simplify reporting requirements**

18. UNHCR is involved in a pilot project led by Germany and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), the two co-conveners of the workstream, aimed at testing a common reporting template. As of August 2017, 7 donor countries, 6 United Nations organizations and 13 NGOs have agreed to participate in the pilot project. UNHCR will participate in the pilot project, both as a recipient of donor funds and as a provider of funds to partners. The initial pilot operations are Iraq, Myanmar and Somalia.

19. UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF are working on harmonized and simplified reporting templates for partners.

## **J. Enhance engagement between humanitarian and development actors**

20. During the first half of 2017, UNHCR and the World Bank conducted joint field missions to a number of major refugee hosting countries, including Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. The results will feed into the funding allocation and project identification process for the Bank's International Development Association (IDA) 2017-2020 sub-window for refugees and host communities.

21. Following the revision of the MOU between UNHCR and the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Labor Conference adopted recommendation 205 on employment and decent work for peace and resilience, emphasizing the need for action to allow displaced communities to gain access to safe and dignified work.

22. Following the establishment of the \$15 million partial Credit Guarantee Facility established in 2016, on February 2017 the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and UNHCR selected Grameen Agricole as the microfinance fund partner that will finance 3 to 5 financial service providers (FSPs) targeting refugees in the Middle East and North Africa region and in sub-Saharan Africa. The selected FSPs will receive debt funding and technical assistance to start lending operations in early fall 2017.

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<sup>9</sup> Available from  
<http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Use%20of%20Unearmarked%20Funding%20in%202016%20Report.pdf>.