

Report: “From words to action – Promoting gender equality and transformative action through the Grand Bargain: Role of the Friends of Gender Group (FoGG)”

Geneva, 13 December 2019



**I. Outcome: FoGG priority action points for 2020**

*The following priority actions points for the FoGG in 2020 were agreed upon:*

- **Initiate a dialogue with donors and UN agencies in the Friends of Gender Group around the issue of funding for local WLOs and WROs** to explore current challenges and opportunities, in terms of: quality and tracking of funding, accountability of Grand Bargain signatories and increased core funding for local women’s

organizations (e.g. through country based pooled funds); <sup>1</sup> as well as enhancing programmatic financing for women’s leadership.

- **Share information on the Grand Bargain commitments** with local organizations at country level.
- **Engage strategically in funding discussions at global level** to influence institutional policies and practices; as well as strategic processes at country level to encourage increased support WLOs and WROs through country-based pooled funding mechanisms and bilateral donor funding.
- **Advocate and provide evidence on how gender-responsive programming can result in more effective humanitarian responses** by highlighting the role of women and local women’s organizations in their role as first and local/national responders in humanitarian settings. Link such initiatives with broader discussions on quality and enhanced funding for GEEWG along the Humanitarian-Development Nexus (using different funding sources).
- **Identify 2-3 priority countries where Grand Bargain roadmaps are being developed (as part of the Charter4Change work<sup>2</sup>)** as follow up to the Regional Localization workshops recommendations<sup>3</sup> and action points and where commitments to GEEWG could be put into practice.
- **Consider linking FoGG initiatives to the six EU Humanitarian-Development Nexus pilot countries<sup>4</sup>.**
- Consider how to include national and local governments in the follow up on

<sup>1</sup> **FoGG to approach the Netherlands** on the ongoing risk study as a central element of a funding barrier. Post Script: in January 2020 the paper was circulated to all participants for comments.

<sup>2</sup> <https://charter4change.org/>

<sup>3</sup>

[http://media.ifrc.org/grand\\_bargain\\_localisatio](http://media.ifrc.org/grand_bargain_localisatio)

<n/grand-bargain-localisation-workstream/global-conference/>

<sup>4</sup>

[https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu\\_nexus\\_action\\_plan.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu_nexus_action_plan.pdf)

<https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/tanzania/58485/eu-humanitarian-and-development-nexus-action-plan-is>

the implementation of commitments to gender responsive localization.

- **Promote the leadership and meaningful engagement of local women leaders of affected populations and WLOs/WROs** in various platforms, including in clusters and HCTs, where individual FoGG members are represented.<sup>5</sup>
- **Engage in strategic dialogue with Workstream 5 co-conveners** on ongoing initiatives on joint and impartial humanitarian needs assessments to ensure sufficient investment and accessibility of gender statistics, SADD and gender analysis, including the updating of the [IASC Operational Guidance on Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises](#) and the provision of inputs in the HPC Multi-partner Review Survey.
- **Strengthen the links between the FoGG and the Participation Revolution workstream to scale up commitments to the establishment of gender responsive accountability mechanisms for crisis affected women and girls, men and boys in humanitarian settings.**
- **Look into the various workstreams and their workplans** and find avenues to influence 2020 workplans and to integrate strong commitments to scale up interventions.

## II. Objectives

On 13 December 2019, UN Women and the Grand Bargain Friends of Gender Group (FoGG) organized a global consultation in Geneva to enable dialogue among the Grand Bargain (GB) Facilitation Group, Workstream co-conveners, signatories, and representatives of local

women-led and women’s rights organizations (WLOs and WROs) on results to date and priorities for 2020. This consultation event was the culmination of three regional consultations with local WLOs and WROs in Addis Ababa, Jakarta and Amman (between July and August 2019) and led to the formulation of a roadmap of priority actions for the FoGG for 2020.

The **objectives** of the workshop were:

- Take stock of the progress in incorporating gender equality and empowerment of women and girls (GEEWG) in the Grand Bargain (GB), including by hearing from women-led and women’s rights organizations, and identify what efforts have worked well and why.
- Identify priority areas of focus for the FoGG in 2020.

### Introduction

In her introductory remarks, Ms **Hiba Qasas**, of UN Women, highlighted that the GB, in its initial phases, had been largely gender blind. As a result, UN Women and other signatories came together to form the Friends of Gender Group with the goal to advocate for increased attention to gender equality throughout the Grand Bargain and to put the issue of increased, quality and sustainable funding for local women’s organizations at the center of discussions. Even though some progress has been made in the area of reporting on commitments, there has been uneven progress across the workstreams and the commitments had not necessarily been translated into practice, as seen in the GB Annual Report 2019 and in the [2018 IASC Gender Accountability Framework Report](#). Gender responsiveness of humanitarian action is not only a rights issue but a matter of humanitarian effectiveness. A paradigm shift is

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<sup>5</sup> Also in line with the IASC Gender Accountability Framework.

required to move from a victimhood approach to recognizing women’s leadership in humanitarian contexts.



**III. Panel: Progress in global processes with regards to gender responsive humanitarian action and crisis response**

Ms **Marie-Helene Kyprianou** of the World Food Programme and the GB Facilitation Group noted that the impact of the FoGG had primarily been seen through the self-reports of the signatories. Work done by the Friends of Gender Group and the Facilitation Group has been key in having a clear focus and a coordination of efforts to use the Grand Bargain to deliver on long-standing promises to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment, including through the adoption of gender indicators by some workstreams. The self-reporting process improved the reporting process, which resulted in a substantial increase of the reporting rate on gender equality and women’s empowerment. However, better coordination is still required between country offices and headquarters of all signatories to make changes at the country level a reality: a priority for the Facilitation Group. There is strong momentum with the new Eminent Person, Ms Sigrid Kaag. The GB is the only

humanitarian forum where donors, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movements, UN agencies, and international NGOs (INGOs) strategize together and where they are all accountable for progress.

Ms **Vicki Metcalfe-Hough** of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) concurred on the importance of the self-reporting by 52 out of 59 signatories over 2018 and the significant progress made on indicators by the Localization, Cash, and Needs Assessment Workstreams. However, the quality of reporting varied greatly. While some signatories had adopted a feminist approach, others only provided minimal information, with no disaggregation of data. Messaging around GEEWG should be framed around humanitarian aid effectiveness. Tracking progress and results after such a short period of time is difficult so it could be beneficial to review progress after five years.



Mr. **David Fisher** of the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) emphasized that the FoGG had been effective at bringing about change through working in a cooperative way, although progress in the area of direct funding to local organizations remains a challenge. Changes at country and regional levels are key. There is a need to think strategically about how to complement different commitments through a gender lens to make progress. He noted that a 1.5-year

timeframe – before the reviewing of progress on the GB – is difficult for measurement. Generally, it has been difficult for organizations to change measurement practices. It is important to strategically balance GB accountability tools, without losing credibility.



### Country case studies

#### Yemen

Women and youth are engaging in humanitarian work as first responders, with outreach and impact in Yemen. Those organizations are excluded from the cluster system, due to the minimum budget set as a threshold to qualify for funding. Ms **Muna Luqman** of the Food4Humanity Foundation and the Women Solidarity Network in Yemen noted that [a 2019 side event organized by UN Women](#) in the margins of the High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen was one of the first occasions where she had seen progress on recognizing the importance of GEEWG. Consultations with local women’s organizations held by UN Women and the Friends of Gender Group fed into the development of the technical guidance notes and the global advocacy-strategic engagement on key issues. It was key to engage WLOs and WROs from the initial assessment stages and throughout needs assessment processes. Sometimes, when WLOs and WROs are consulted, they are left out during the humanitarian planning

processes. She called for the expansion of modalities that work well for women’s organizations, like MADRE and ICAN.

#### South Sudan

Ms **Angelina Nyajima**, Founder and Director of Hope Restoration South Sudan underscored her reservations regarding the results at the country level of the GB commitments. In South Sudan, 30 signatories are active, but there is no coordination to deliver the GB commitments as yet. For NGOs to qualify for HCT membership, they need a minimum of two years’ experience of implementing programs, while volunteering was not taken into account. Several women’s organizations are now fulfilling those criteria. There are examples of larger organizations mentoring smaller ones. For example, CARE International provides (financial) support through a women’s leadership program to further develop institutional capacities in key areas. Multi-year financing is essential for WLOs/WROs, and access to country-based pooled funds (CBPFs) are key.

Country-level plans to advance localization were a priority also in the context of NGO commitments on Localization in the [Charter for Change](#). Understanding how WLOs and WROs are engaging in the country level initiatives to shape strategic priorities and direction would contribute to scaling up institutional commitments and strengthening practices in relation to gender responsive localization and other areas of work.

Many signatories that made commitments in the context of the GB had not extended those commitments to internal practices. The different processes could be better synchronized internally. Gender commitments already agreed in other international frameworks, including the 2017 IASC Gender Policy and Accountability Framework should also inform FoGG’s advocacy.

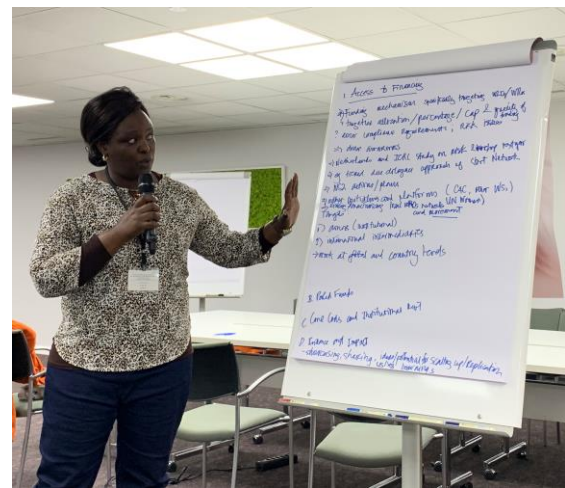
**IV. Panel: Good practices across the priority workstreams: global, regional and country perspectives**



Ms **Maria Karadenizli** of UN Women noted that, based on an analysis of the various recommendations of the technical guidance notes and engagement with the workstreams, the priorities across the workstreams included: dedicated funding to WLOs, including quality, sustainable core funding and funding for capacity strengthening; increased availability and accessibility of sex and age disaggregated data (SADD) and gender statistics; meaningful and inclusive engagement of WLOs and WROs at country level and recognition of women’s leadership in humanitarian settings; and scaling up of programmatic interventions and financing on GEEWG.

On scaling up programmatic interventions on women’s leadership, Ms **Marjolein Roelandt** of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) presented the [Women in Displacement](#) project with the Women’s Refugee Commission as a good practice example of working with affected communities. The project presented a concrete methodology for community engagement in three country contexts: Bangladesh, Nigeria, and South Sudan. Ms Roelandt also presented an example from Wau, South Sudan where a framework with limited indicators was created based on [Oxfam’s women’s empowerment index](#). The framework allowed WLOs, WROs, and other humanitarian staff to report on their activities more easily.

Ms **Theresia Thylin** of UN Women presented the work of the Cash and Voucher Assistance Workstream. The technical guidance note is a practical tool primarily focused on program design. Priorities of the sub-workstream in the coming year are to develop a roll-out strategy; continue building evidence; explore actions with gender transformative potential; and look into SADD and indicators. Many actors are advancing in this area and there is new evidence of the impact of cash and voucher assistance on GEEWG. It is key to make the case for complementary programming.



**Country case studies**

**Lebanon/Syria**

Ms **Rouba Mhaissen** of the Sawa Foundation for Development and Aid, a Syrian-led humanitarian organization, emphasized that major challenges persisted after eight years of the Syrian refugee response, despite the GB. Her recommendations included: exploring ways to reduce the barriers for the participation of local organizations to attend various coordination mechanisms (e.g. interpretation into Arabic); encourage donors to dedicate enough local staff time for coordination; put more efforts into gender mainstreaming; attract funding to WLOs and WROs; increase long-term and flexible funding; and increase opportunities for coaching and mentoring for women who lead local organizations, including on strategy and

management, as most initiatives focus on technical capacity strengthening.

### Liberia

Ms **Naomi Tulay Solanke** of the Community Healthcare Initiative and Feminist Humanitarian Network in Liberia noted that it was important to have enough dedicated staff time for coordination activities. Many GB commitments had not necessarily been implemented in Liberia and women were still not identified as first responders. WLOs and WROs had limited access to funding and funding was often short-term, which had led to the departure of skilled local personnel to INGOs. The experiences of the Feminist Humanitarian Network in Liberia had highlighted the importance of investing in similar networks. Localization should happen at the community level to ensure that accountability to affected populations (AAP) efforts include women and girls.

### Nepal

Ms **Lily Thapa** of Sankalpa, Women’s Alliance for Peace, Justice and Democracy, a Nepalese alliance of women’s organizations, noted that Nepal was among the 20 most disaster-prone countries in the world. Much progress has been made in Nepal, despite remaining challenges and dozens of new policies and legislative initiatives on disaster risk reduction (DRR) and gender equality, including as part of the federalization process. The new constitution of Nepal mentions DRR and a new Disaster Management Act was introduced in 2017, both showing what can be achieved if issues are addressed collectively in affected communities. For example, hundreds of local immediate response teams now include 50% women. Dissemination of information on the Grand Bargain is necessary, as many local groups were still unaware of the GB process and commitments.

During the discussion, a good example from the Venezuela refugee response in Brazil was

mentioned, with men and boys being locally engaged in the response. The Localization Workstream co-conveners noted the extensive conversations on gender and localization in the workstream, including during the concluding discussions in Brussels. While the workstream had not yet managed to set a workplan moving forward, the aim is to turn policy into practice – particularly at the country level. The co-conveners noted that UN Women and the FoGG had been very active in the workstream and that next year should be devoted to making the various ideas concrete. It is important for the entire process to be owned by local actors, including WLOs and WROs.

## **V. Working group discussions**



Participants met in working groups on: 1) institutional strengthening and financing of WLOs and WROs; 2) women’s participation and leadership; and 3) data and coordinated needs assessments. The humanitarian-peace-development nexus was discussed as a cross-cutting issue by the three groups.

### *1) The working group on **institutional strengthening and financing of WLOs and WROs** recommended the following:*

- Explore ways to hold GB signatories accountable and track funding to WLOs and WROs;
- Focus on the quantity and quality of funding to WLOs and WROs;

- Engage with the ICRC and The Netherlands on their ongoing study on risk-sharing/risks transfer and its relevance for women’s organizations;
- Ensure country-based pooled funding mechanisms to include funding to cover core costs and the institutional strengthening of WLOs and WROs. This support requires looking more in-depth into the partner selection criteria and governance mechanisms for CBPFs as one concrete example; and
- Recognize that women’s organizations often work along the humanitarian-peace-development nexus: explore funding opportunities across the nexus.

During the plenary discussion, there were contradictory ideas on whether to track progress of funding for WROs and WLOs, as many systems are not set up to do so and such a request goes against years of advocacy with donors to give more unearmarked funding. Voice Amplified recently conducted a study on funding to local WLOs and WROs, which could provide some lessons. There are also already many practical examples, for example the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis had committed to ensuring that gender-based violence (GBV) issues were integrated into protection. It is also important to share information between the Gender-based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR) under the Protection Cluster and the FoGG, as OCHA had agreed to track some of the indicators proposed by the GBV AoR. Some local WLOs and WROs mentioned that OCHA and the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) had committed to a separate fund for WLOs and WROs in Somalia.

2) *The working group on **women’s participation and leadership** recommended the following:*

- Increase information on the GB at the country level and among local WLOs and WROs, including through UN agencies;
- Identify existing networks and key stakeholders at the country-level to advance GEEWG in the context of the GB, especially regarding gender in accountability to affected populations’ (AAP) related mechanisms and initiatives;
- Build on the regional FoGG workshops at the country-level to support operationalization and scaling-up of signatory commitments in this area;
- Ensure that women’s participation and leadership is on the agenda of the June 2020 Annual GB meeting;
- Recognize that a uniform approach across all countries may not be effective and country-context specific approaches are required to promote women’s leadership in humanitarian settings; and
- Scale-up programmatic interventions and partnerships on women’s leadership in humanitarian settings, including refugee and IDP camps/settlements and host communities.



Participants noted that the concrete role of the Facilitation Group in terms of communication needed to be defined. In some country contexts, UN Women had been the only actor

making references to the GB, but it is key for other organizations and signatories to also prioritize the GB. Others emphasized the need for the FoGG to work with the various workstreams and ensure that the signatories engaged their country offices and existing networks. Many changes required internal systemic changes among signatories and would take time. Country-based staff are already asked to do a lot of reporting and it was not always clear for them why they should prioritize the GB vis-à-vis other initiatives and normative frameworks.

3) *The working group on **data and coordinated needs assessments** recommended the following:*

- Engage in discussions with the co-conveners of the workstream on Joint and Impartial Needs Assessments around their 2020 work planning to encourage the incorporation of GEEWG;
- Engage in a broader discussion on the quality assessment criteria applied in needs assessments to analyze whether the methodologies work to assess the quality of SADD and gender analysis;
- Explore ways of making data collection more inclusive of women;
- Target the [Humanitarian Program Cycle Steering Group](#); [Information Management Working Group](#); [IASC Results Groups](#); [OCHA Needs and Response Analysis Section \(NAAS\)](#) within the [Assessment Planning and Monitoring Branch \(APMB\)](#); [Good Humanitarian Donorship Working Group](#); and the [HNO focal points at country level](#) for advocacy on promoting GEEWG through harmonized and coordinated

humanitarian needs assessments and analysis;

- Ensure participation of WLOs and WROs in the different stages of the Humanitarian Planning Cycle under the leadership of HCTs, HCs and Cluster lead agencies
- Advocate vis-à-vis donors at the global and country levels and the IASC on the implementation of its [Gender Policy](#); and
- Plan ahead for the annual reporting by GB signatories in February 2020 by encouraging them to report on initiatives that promote gender responsive needs assessments and data collection, dissemination, and gender analysis.

Participants highlighted the importance of engaging with the IASC Operational Guidance on Coordinated Assessments in Humanitarian Crises as part of the work of Grand Bargain Workstream 5 on Improving joint and impartial needs assessments and the HPC 2020 Multi-partner Review process for which the survey would go out during the last weeks of 2019. Particular emphasis should be given to the participation of WLOs/WROs in partial and joint needs assessments, including through reaching out to grassroots organizations by using modern technology.



**VI. Key dates in 2020, for FoGG action, analysis, and advocacy**



- **January/February 2020:** annual reporting of GB signatories to Secretariat and self-reporting of FoGG
- **March 2020:** Commission on the Status of Women (CSW in New York, also key for Beijing + 25 outcomes)
- **May:** Workstream co-conveners meeting
- **Spring 2020:** Annual Meeting of FoGG
- **June:** GB Annual Meeting and ECOSOC Humanitarian Segment
- **June 20:** World Refugee Day
- **July:** 2021 Humanitarian Planning workshops

### **Concluding reflections**

Ms Wesal Abdullah of the Arab Women Organization of Jordan (AWO) highlighted that it was exceptional for local organizations to have space to participate in policy-level discussions: the number of local organizations at the global consultation had been remarkably high. Different local WLOs and WROs face similar challenges and need the support of UN agencies, INGOs, and donors to overcome these obstacles, with interventions tailored to the country context. It is essential to continue local discussions, as many women cannot get to capitals due to travel or visa restrictions.

Mr. **Gianmaria Pinto** of the GB Secretariat stated that the global consultation had been an exceptional event in the realm of the GB due to its thematic focus, the level of participation, and the number of concrete actions arising from the discussions. 2020 would be a key year for the GB and Mr. Pinto looked forward to moving from process to action. He reminded the FoGG that a lot of pilot initiatives are ongoing with which the FoGG could link up to, such as the 3 country pilots of the Workstream on simplifying reporting. He further emphasized that communication was key and encouraged the FoGG to communicate its activities to the Secretariat so they could be

showcased. Communication at the regional and country levels was also essential.

In closing the event, Ms **Maria Karadenizli** of UN Women and technical coordinator of the FoGG thanked all participants for their active participation – both during the global event and throughout the process – and highlighted the need for a sharper and more focused advocacy agenda. The focus on accountability and operationalization of GB commitments remains key. Enhanced engagement and partnerships with local WLOs and WROs are critical to advancing the discussions at the country level. A draft report of the global consultation would be shared with the participants and FoGG for comments first. More dedicated discussions on the priority actions would follow in early 2020, particularly given that a number of FoGG members from States could not participate in the event.

### Annex: Participants

First Name	Last Name	Organisation
Manisha	Thomas	WRC
Kimberly	Lietz	OCHA
Joe	Read	CARE
Joelle	Rousset	Canada Mission Geneva
Yuuka	Tazawa	Japan Mission Geneva
Coree	Steadman	IFRC
Regina	Gujan	SDC
David	Fisher	IFRC
Marjolein	Roelandt	IOM
Paola	Gestoso-Martinez	IOM
Tamara	Kajtazovic	Grand Bargain Secretariat
Gianmaria	Pinto	Grand Bargain Secretariat
Marie Helene	Kyprianou	WFP
Aishwarya	Raghuraman	WFP
Anssi	Anonen	Finland Mission Geneva
Philimon	Majwa	UNICEF
Jennifer	Chase	UNFPA
Magnus	Forberg Andersen	Norway Mission Geneva
Vicki	Metcalfe	ODI , UK
Lily	Thapa	Sankalpa, Nepal

Angelina	Nyajima	Hope Restoration Organization, South Sudan
Sandra	Tumwesigye	Isis-WICCE, Uganda
Fatima	Imam	REBHI, Nigeria
Muna	Luqman	Women's Solidarity Network, Food For Humanity Foundation (Yemen/Egypt)
Naomi Tulay	Solanke	Community Healthcare Initiative Inc , Liberia
Veronica	Ngum Ndi	Association of Women with Disabilities, Cameroon
David	Kangethe	Danish Refugee Council, Kenya
Ziad	Hakim	SAWA Foundation, Lebanon
Wesal	Abdullah	Arab Women Organization of Jordan (AWO), Jordan
Flavia	Moura Rocha Parente Muniz	UN Women Brazil
Safa	Karataş	MUDEM, Turkey
Iris Bjorg	Kristjansdottir	UN Women, ECARO, Turkey
Ann Louise	Klit	Denmark Mission Geneva
Gisela	Duetting	UN Women
Maria	Karadenizli	UN Women
Hiba	Qasas	UN Women
Cecilia	Pellosniemi	UN Women
Natalia	Pardo	UN Women

