

4 We are seeing limited improvements to the system

The project reveals improvements in the way aid is delivered. Some of the Grand Bargain commitments, such as multiyear frameworks and joint needs assessments, are starting to deliver positive initiatives that now need to be systematised. Building on years of practice, the cash agenda is becoming more widespread. Support to education in crises has also become a key issue for donors, showing that humanitarian-development silos can be overcome, resulting in positive outcomes and better responses. Some serious challenges remain however. The localisation agenda is progressing too slowly, mainly because donors' architecture is designed to favour direct contracts to trusted partners rather than to a dense network of local civil society organisations active in the field. The participation revolution has not happened either. The humanitarian system is still driven by international organisations' mandates and programmes, rather than by the affected people at the centre of the response.

Key messages

- Some key improvements are starting to deliver better support for people affected by crises, such as education and cash transfers.
- Critical challenges remain, and shifting from a supply- to a customer-driven approach to aid delivery is necessary to genuinely put affected people at the centre of the response.
- The international humanitarian architecture is not designed to encourage the localisation of aid. Striking a balance between international capacity and local ability requires a granular understanding of each particular situation.

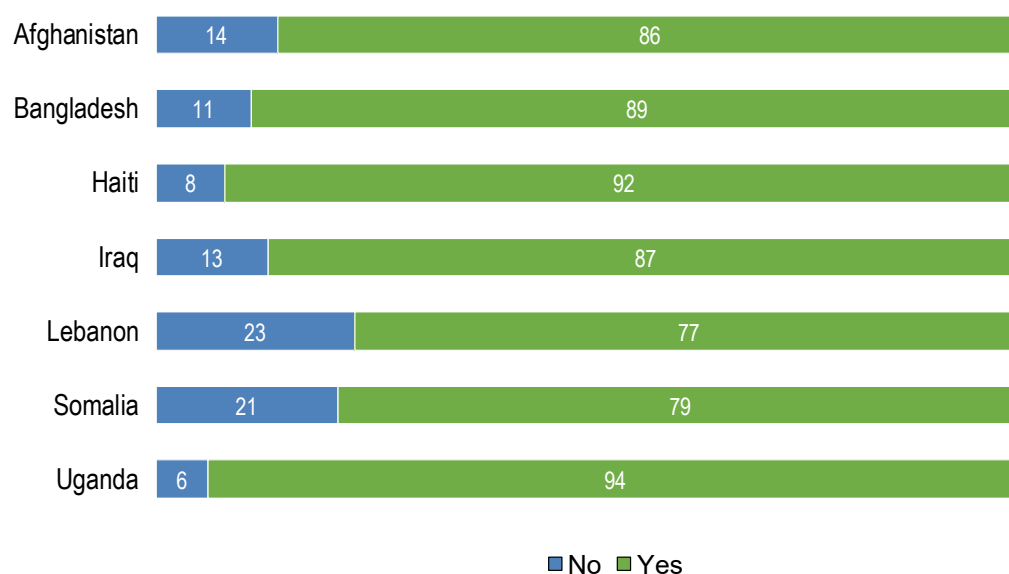
Supporting education in crises is showing results

Sending children to school and ensuring a better future for them is a priority for people affected by crisis, including refugees. Some respondents explained that a better education for their children would make them feel more optimistic about the future. While many adults accept low wages and informal occupations for themselves to feed their family, they do want more for their children. Many believe however that a better future will be hard to achieve given the limited educational opportunities existing in some host countries (Barbelet and Wake, 2017^[1]).

Integrating education into the crisis response system is having clear results: most survey respondents send their children to some kind of education, even in emergency situations or protracted crises (Figure 4.1). This is encouraging, given that crises all over the world are disrupting the education of 75 million children between the ages of 3 and 18. Prioritising education also has a gender and a protection impact: while 25% of world's out-of-school children live in crisis-affected countries, girls are 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than boys (UNICEF, 2017^[2]).

Those who are not sending their children to any sort of education blamed their inability to pay school fees and other associated costs (school equipment, transport, etc.). Other concerns vary according to the context, but are linked to poor quality teaching, overcrowded classes, school access difficulties or denial of education. Undocumented people also have less capacity to send their children to school, as seen in the survey in Afghanistan (OECD, 2019^[3]).

Figure 4.1 Do you send your children to any education classes?



Note: Figures reflect respondents' perceptions in survey round 2 (2017-2018).

Source: (OECD, 2019^[3]), Ground Truth Solutions, humanitarian perception survey, round 2 (2017-2018).

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Education in crisis situations has long been a neglected priority. It was seen as too long-term for humanitarian funding, but too crisis-oriented for development funding. This gap has left generations of displaced people and refugees without access to proper education over the years. Recently, aside from the emergence of many individual initiatives and projects, key donors – such as the European Commission Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) – have started to prioritise education in crisis, increasing the share of its humanitarian funding dedicated to education from 1 to 10% between 2015 and 2019 (European Commission, 2019^[4]). This relatively fresh look at education in crises culminated with the creation of the Education Cannot Wait fund at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, which has already attracted USD 172 million from donors, almost exclusively Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members (ECW Secretariat, 2018^[5]).

Despite increased funds available for education in emergencies, detailed survey analysis per country calls for donors to continue their push for universal enrolment in crises contexts. In many countries, access to school is also curtailed by child labour, or by enrolment requirements, language difficulties, or transportation issues. Children with disabilities and those of secondary school age are at particular risk. In Lebanon, only half of school-age refugee children are enrolled in spite of the RACE 2 programme, which aims at universal enrolment (Human Rights Watch, 2018^[6]). In Bangladesh, Rohingya refugees cannot enrol in the formal education system, and children can only attend informal learning centres in the camps, with their level of education varying greatly according to the organisation running them (UNICEF, 2018^[7]).

The perception of instability from being displaced abroad or in a different region can also make it difficult to engage in the education system, even where it is accessible. Moreover, most humanitarian efforts in education focus on primary education, leaving higher education less accessible. Higher education can also be regarded as less important by refugees, especially when the prospects for employment in the host country are extremely limited. The combination of the lack of access to higher education and to a decent

job for people stranded in a migration situation is a powerful push factor for secondary migration (Kvittingen et al., 2019^[8]).

Globally, positive surveys results about education in crises show that humanitarian and development silos can be overcome, resulting in positive outcomes for people affected by crises. Supporting education in fragile or crisis settings, notably through development funds, is a good way to operationalise the nexus between humanitarian assistance, development co-operation and peace. In Lebanon, for example, international support to the public education system for Syrian refugees strengthened a weak public education sector, including increasing wages for the Lebanese teachers mobilised on the afternoon shift for refugees. This also has a stabilising effect given that over half of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon are school-aged children (McCarter et al., 2018^[9]).

While the right blend of emergency and long-term funding is required in crisis contexts, not all problems can be solved by finance. A political dialogue with partner countries and long-term support to the education sector is also necessary to help remove obstacles to enrolment and view education for refugees as both necessity and opportunity.

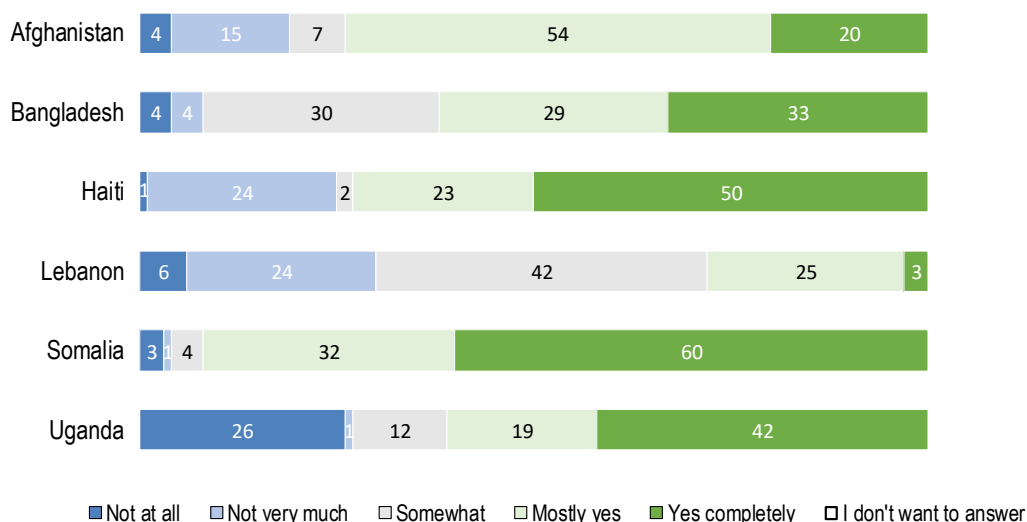
The Grand Bargain is delivering in some sectors

Three years after its launch, the Grand Bargain policy initiative is maintaining good momentum for action, notably because of its reporting mechanism. As it links donors and humanitarian operators, the Grand Bargain has become a key reference in DAC members' humanitarian and development policies, and 22 out of 24 donors that are Grand Bargain signatories are DAC members (IASC, 2018^[10]). Several provisions of the Grand Bargain have started to bear fruit, though some serious challenges remain in some sectors. Some of the Grand Bargain provisions are discussed in turn below.

Cash-based responses are growing

Providing cash as a complement to or in place of in-kind assistance is an increasingly regular practice, building on years of research, pilots and experience (ODI, 2015^[11]). The cash agenda was already well advanced before the Grand Bargain, but the Grand Bargain gave additional policy support to this fundamental move. Crises in the Middle East provided one of the first opportunities to implement a cash response at a very large scale, notably in Turkey and Lebanon (Bailey and Harvey, 2017^[12]). Across countries, the surveys indicate that beneficiaries are mostly satisfied with the cash assistance they receive (Figure 4.2). In Bangladesh, where the government is imposing restrictions on cash distribution and the delivery of SIM cards that would allow mobile transfer, the survey shows that 44% of refugees sell some of the in-kind assistance they receive to get cash to allow them to purchase urgent needs, notably food and energy.

Figure 4.2 Are you satisfied with the cash support you receive?



Note: Figures reflect respondents' perceptions in survey round 2 (2017-2018). Some numbers cannot be added up to exactly 100%, as graphs show rounded percentages without decimals, therefore distorting the relative frequencies between answer options.

Source: (OECD, 2019^[3]), Ground Truth Solutions, humanitarian perception survey, round 2 (2017-2018).

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While cash transfer programmes are becoming standard components of humanitarian responses, the vulnerability analysis that underpins cash transfer programming should also take into account the risks associated with cash delivery.

Providing cash to affected people instead of in-kind assistance of the same value can be perceived badly by host populations and authorities. It can be seen as promoting dependency and inequality, especially when selection criteria are more inclusive than the social safety net for the most vulnerable amongst the host community (Ulrichs, Hagen-Zanker and Holmes, 2017^[13]). Humanitarian actors often assess the impact of cash transfer on the local economy, and this assessment should be extended to cash transfers' social impact. There is a role for donors to help align selection criteria with existing safety nets while strengthening national safety nets, so as to enhance perceptions of fairness. Doing so can also reduce competition amongst humanitarian providers over an activity for which their comparative advantage is not clear in all contexts in relation to non-humanitarian actors such as national governments or banks.

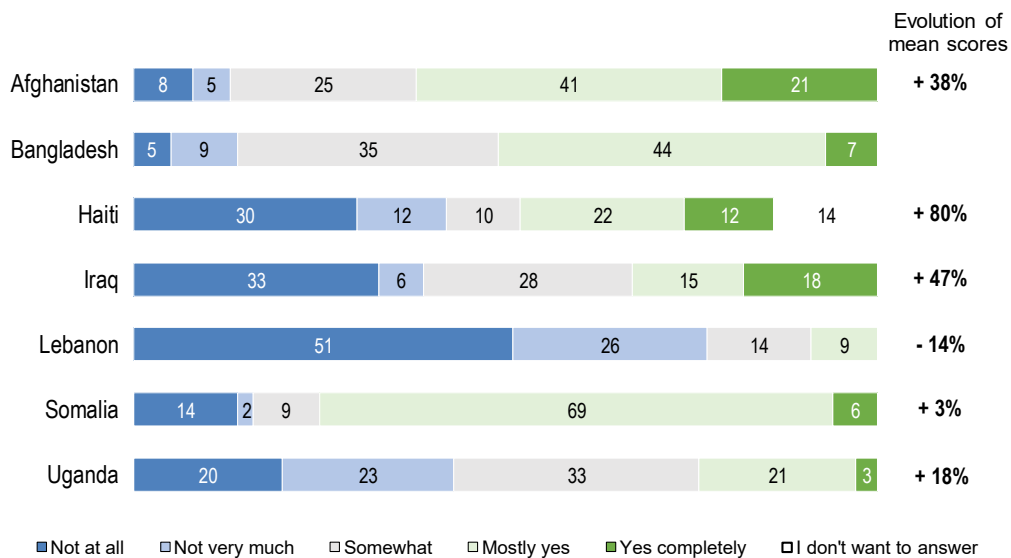
In addition, the surveys show that people in Lebanon – where large-scale cash transfers are in place – are the least satisfied with the cash support they receive (Figure 4.2). Yet 74% of participants also responded they would prefer a cash-only type of assistance. This apparent contradiction suggests that, because humanitarian aid assistance is insufficient to cover some of the most important needs, including food, cash assistance is used mainly to help repay debts, gradually diminishing beneficiaries' capacity to purchase food in shops, and increasing level of indebtedness over the month (UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, 2018^[14]).

The most vulnerable people often have needs that cannot always be met by cash transfers. Humanitarian actors have a role in linking complementary and tailored interventions to avoid people resorting to negative coping mechanisms, ensuring they continue to access food and send their children to school, for example. Interventions should be designed with the recipient's long-term situation in mind, even when this means donors accepting higher transfer costs, for example, when electronic cash provision is not the optimal response.

The participation revolution is shifting from a supply- to a customer-driven approach to aid delivery

The participation revolution, i.e. including people receiving aid in making the decisions that affect their lives, is one of the commitments under the Grand Bargain. The surveys reflect a positive evolution in people's perceptions about the degree to which their opinions are taken into account, except in Lebanon, where the overall sense of the humanitarian response is negative (Figure 4.3). This evolution reflects an effort to take people's views into consideration. However, much remains to be done in this area – because it was designed to respond to emergencies and meet survival needs, the humanitarian sector is still very much supply driven.

Figure 4.3. Do you feel assistance providers take your opinion into account when providing assistance?



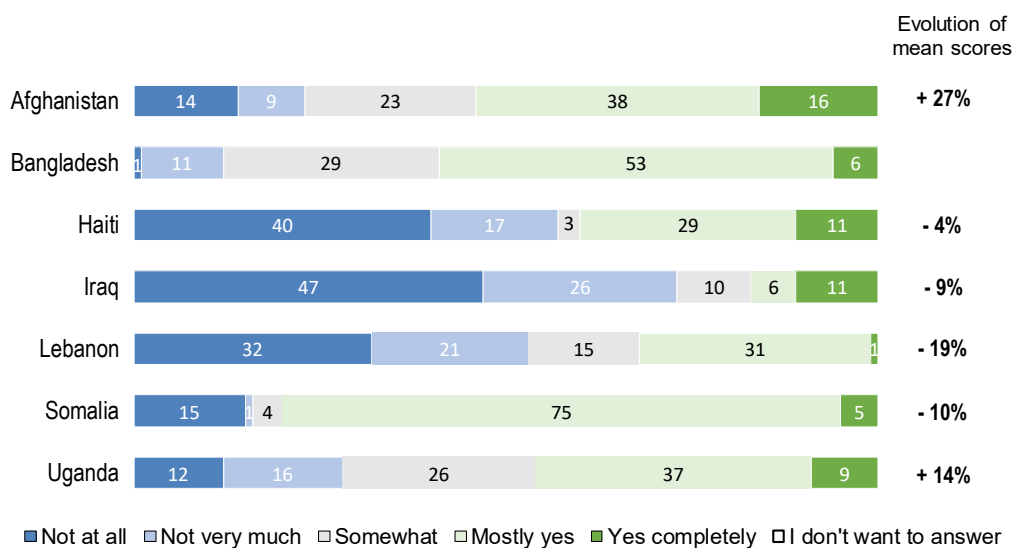
Note: Figures reflect respondents' perceptions in survey round 2 (2017-2018). The bar charts show the percentage of respondents who selected each answer option. The mean scores are calculated based on reported responses using a Likert scale from 1 to 5. The evolution of mean scores reflects a negative or positive evolution since round 1 (2016-2017). Some numbers cannot be added up to exactly 100%, as graphs show rounded percentages without decimals, therefore distorting the relative frequencies between answer options.

Source: (OECD, 2019^[3]), Ground Truth Solutions, humanitarian perception survey, round 1 (2016-2017) and round 2 (2017-2018) <http://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/humanitarian-financing/>.

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Although people's opinions are often taken into account while implementing programme, this does not always result in better assistance (Konyndyk, 2018^[15]). Not only are people badly informed about the assistance that is available to them, especially outside camps (Figure 4.4), they also do not fully understand the selection criteria. Multiple assistance streams and assistance actors make it complex for people affected by crises to fully grasp what assistance is coming and where from. In a survey in Iraq and Kenya, around two-thirds of respondents did not know how long they would continue to receive cash transfers (Sagmeister et al., 2018^[16]). In Iraq, up to 94% of respondents did not know how assistance agencies decide who receives cash assistance and who does not. On top of creating anxiety about the future, such uncertainty also prevents beneficiaries from factoring assistance into the household economy, limiting its potential for building livelihoods and resilience.

Figure 4.4. Are you aware of the assistance available to you?



Note: Figures reflect respondents' perceptions in survey round 2 (2017-2018). The bar charts show the percentage of respondents who selected each answer option. The mean scores are calculated based on reported responses using a Likert scale from 1 to 5. The evolution of mean scores reflects a negative or positive evolution since round 1 (2016-2017). Some numbers cannot be added up to exactly 100%, as graphs show rounded percentages without decimals, therefore distorting the relative frequencies between answer options.

Source: (OECD, 2019^[3]), Ground Truth Solutions, humanitarian perception survey, round 1 (2016-2017) and round 2 (2017-2018).

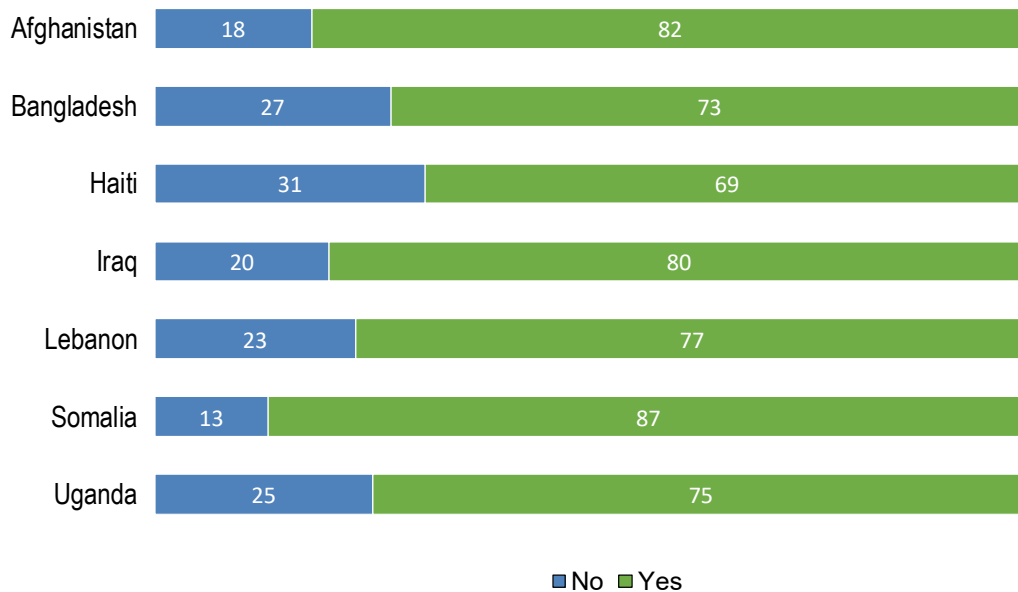
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The next step in the participation revolution would be to take people's opinions on board in designing a tailored response for them. Considering that the majority of crises are protracted, an individual and customer approach should prevail and become the norm in protracted crises, given that each household is a particular case, with different types of vulnerability and sources of livelihood (Sagmeister, Folke and Aziz, 2018^[17]). Multi-purpose cash-based responses using electronic and mobile technology can help customise assistance delivery to the point where beneficiaries could receive assistance from a single operator, not necessarily a humanitarian actor. By creating a more systemic link between aid provider and aid receiver, such a customer-oriented approach could provide more clarity over assistance timings and any potential disruption.

Multi-year planning and funding are becoming common features

While complex to measure, multiyear funding frameworks are an increasing feature of donors' humanitarian assistance architecture. DAC peer reviews show that many DAC members are now able to provide either multiyear funding or, more often, can set multi-annual funding frameworks with annual disbursements (OECD, 2019^[18]). Field staff surveys reflect a high number of organisations receiving multi-annual funds (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5. Does your organisation obtain multi-year funding?



Note: Figures reflect respondents' perceptions in survey round 2 (2017-2018).

Source: (OECD, 2019^[3]), Ground Truth Solutions, humanitarian perception survey, round 2 (2017-2018).

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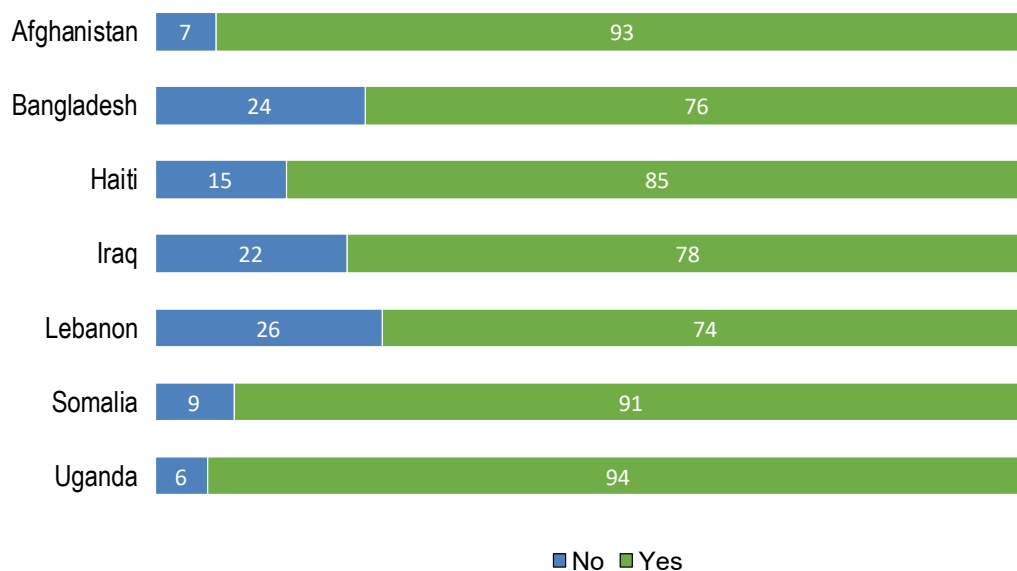
Multiyear funding can decrease costs, for instance through reduced procurement and transport costs, savings on proposal writing, and reduced currency risk. It aids an early response when it is combined with greater flexibility – agencies can react more appropriately, resulting in reduced caseloads, levels of need, and loss of life. When multiyear funding is provided directly or indirectly to local partners, they can invest in staff, training and equipment, building local capacity. It also allows them to be better prepared to respond efficiently and at scale when a crisis hits. For example, a local emergency response agency working under a multiyear partnership is likely to have been able to prepare and train its staff, which would significantly improve the quality and swiftness of its crisis response (Fabre and Cabot Venton, 2017^[19]).

It should be noted, however, that while humanitarian multiyear planning and funding have advantages, a regular assessment should be made of whether the supported activities remain under the humanitarian remit and mandate, or if longer-term financial tools would be more appropriate to support the activity and achieve better development outcomes.

There are more joint needs assessments

Joint needs assessment involving donors and operational actors is a good way to implement the DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus, which aims to promote more coherent action among the world's leading donors of humanitarian, development and peace programmes in fragile and conflict contexts (OECD, 2019^[20]). As it helps create a consensus around the different dimensions of a crisis, it also favours efficient labour division and coherence amongst actors. Many aid organisations have reported conducting joint needs assessments (Figure 4.6). For example the Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is referred to as a positive annual multi-agency collaboration to share understanding, expectations and commitment and help decision making (UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, 2018^[21]).

Figure 4.6. Does your organisation regularly conduct joint need assessments with other organisations?



Note: Figures reflect respondents' perceptions in survey round 2 (2017-2018).

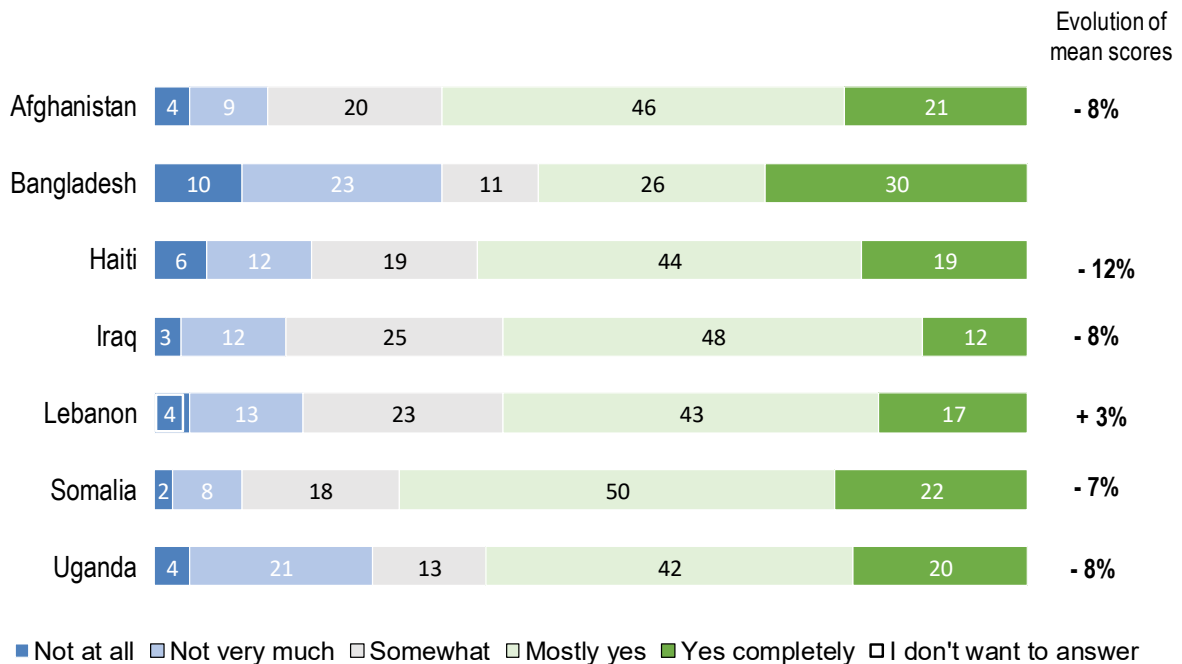
Source: (OECD, 2019^[3]), Ground Truth Solutions, humanitarian perception survey, round 2 (2017-2018).

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Reporting requirements are appropriate, but harmonisation can still improve

Since the surveys started in 2016, humanitarian workers in the field are globally positive about the time they spend on reporting across countries (Figure 4.7). The longer the crisis the more positive the respondents are, suggesting that humanitarian partners are building reporting capacity over time, whereas staff in more recent crises are less accustomed to specific reporting requirements. The relatively positive answers show that although reporting requirements remain high, they are not detrimental to operations.

Figure 4.7. Do you feel the amount of time you spend on reporting is appropriate?



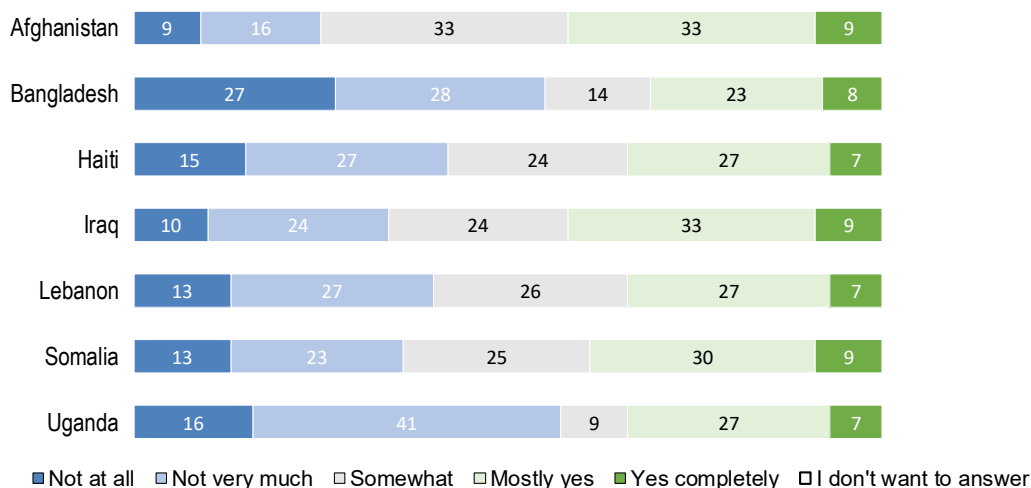
Note: Figures reflect respondents' perceptions in survey round 2 (2017-2018). The bar charts show the percentage of respondents who selected each answer option. The mean scores are calculated based on reported responses using a Likert scale from 1 to 5. The evolution of mean scores reflects a negative or positive evolution since round 1 (2016-2017). Some numbers cannot be added up to exactly 100%, as graphs show rounded percentages without decimals, therefore distorting the relative frequencies between answer options.

Source: (OECD, 2019^[3]), Ground Truth Solutions, humanitarian perception survey, round 1 (2016-2017) and round 2 (2017-2018).

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While the reporting time is not questioned too much by operational humanitarian staff, harmonisation remains a concern (Figure 4.8). Overlaps in reporting format and timelines for different donors remain problematic. As one respondent put it, “donors ask us to co-ordinate, but they don’t seem to co-ordinate themselves”.

Figure 4.8. Do you feel the reporting requirements from different donors are sufficiently harmonised?



Note: Figures reflect respondents' perceptions in survey round 2 (2017-2018). The bar charts show the percentage of respondents who selected each answer option. Some numbers cannot be added up to exactly 100%, as graphs show rounded percentages without decimals, therefore distorting the relative frequencies between answer options.

Source: (OECD, 2019^[3]), Ground Truth Solutions, humanitarian perception survey, round 2 (2017-2018).

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Most notably, the link between heavier reporting requirements and improvement in response effectiveness is unclear to humanitarian workers. There is no real clarity for humanitarian staff as to how the significant amount of resources devoted to reporting is used, given that reporting management costs are not accounted for. Heavy reporting also diverts time and resources away from monitoring. Moreover, some secondary donors, such as UN agencies, impose stricter reporting requirements than those imposed by their own donors, which in certain cases or during emergencies risks leading to inaccurate reporting data.

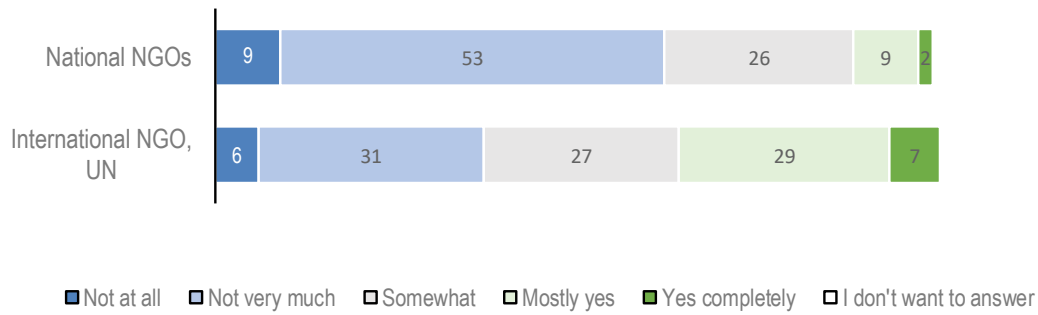
Humanitarian staff concerns about reporting mainly revolve around the need for a joint reporting framework or unified regulations for reporting. In that respect, co-funding operations in particular represent a challenge for humanitarian staff in charge of reporting. Respondents suggested using harmonised indicators as a basis to write reports, as well as creating an online database that collates and cumulates reports.

The Harmonizing Reporting Pilot is testing a standardised template in three pilot countries, including Myanmar, Iraq and Somalia. While the initial results seem encouraging (Gaus, 2018^[22]) the surveys do not yet show a clear difference between perceptions on reporting in these pilot countries and others.

The localisation promise is not happening

One of the most complex commitments in the Grand Bargain is the localisation of aid, i.e. supporting local humanitarian responders as directly as possible. Humanitarian staff perceptions about whether local organisations are sufficiently supported vary according to the context (Figure 4.9), but also mask some disparities between local and international responders.

Figure 4.9. Are local organisations sufficiently supported?



Note: Figures reflect respondents' perceptions in survey round 2 (2017-2018). The bar charts show the percentage of respondents who selected each answer option. The mean scores are calculated based on reported responses using a Likert scale from 1 to 5. The evolution of mean scores reflects a negative or positive evolution since round 1 (2016-2017). Some numbers cannot be added up to exactly 100%, as graphs show rounded percentages without decimals, therefore distorting the relative frequencies between answer options.

Source: (OECD, 2019^[3]), Ground Truth Solutions, humanitarian perception survey, round 2 (2017-2018).

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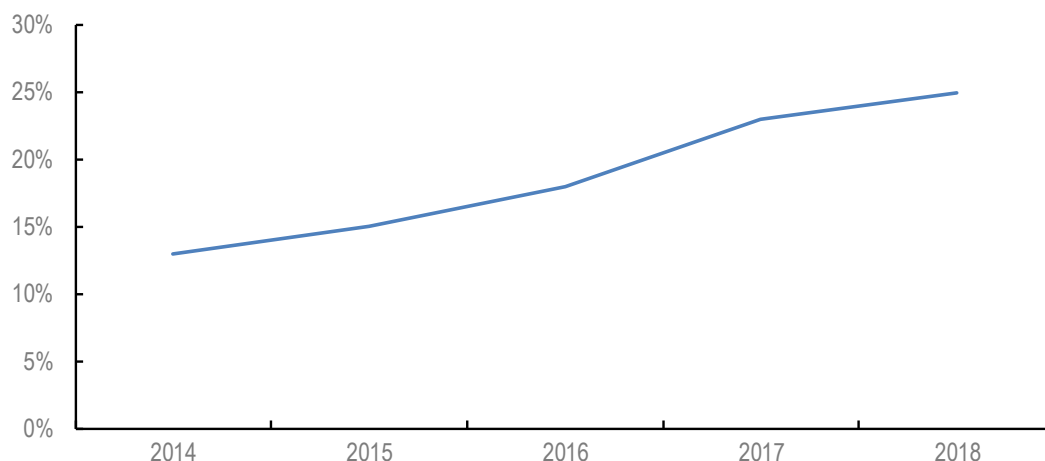
Localisation in the sense of more direct support from donors to local actors is not happening because the international humanitarian architecture is not designed to encourage it. Humanitarian funding and decision-making is highly centralised, managed by ministries or development agencies who have seen their humanitarian budget increasing over the last decade,¹ while global pressure for decreasing public expenditures does not allow for the human resources required to manage a great number of small NGO projects. In addition, strict legislation to prevent terrorism financing makes direct financing to the most complex areas, where financial tracking is complex, virtually impossible.

Donors cannot keep up with the proliferation of civil society initiatives in countries of intervention. As a result, their administrations are designed to favour large projects and trusted partners, and most of the humanitarian funding is channelled through the UN agencies or a few big international NGOs, making the humanitarian sector highly concentrated (Konyndyk, 2018^[23]). The share of direct funding in total humanitarian funding rose only from 2.3% in 2015 to 3.6% in 2017 (as reported to the UN Financial Tracking Service) (ALNAP, 2018^[24]).

When asked from whom they would prefer to receive assistance, respondents across the surveys did not express a marked preference for local actors over international actors. Instead they preferred a combination of the two. This suggests that localisation should be thought through carefully. International actors provide assistance following quality standards built over decades, and their logistical means make them indispensable providers, notably in emergencies. When assistance requires a more contextual approach, only local actors can bring the cultural knowledge that is required, however. Also, because local humanitarian responders are often primarily development actors, they can be an important resource when assessing vulnerabilities across affected populations, including host communities, during a crisis. Some long-term funding and partnerships in development sectors such as in food security could easily encompass some emergency capacity building. Crisis modifiers in contracts could be interesting ways to allow local responders to take operational responsibilities during crisis contexts.

Striking the balance between international capacity and local ability requires a granular understanding of each particular situation – something that is out of reach of most humanitarian donors. In such cases, the UN Country-Based Pooled Funds (UN CBPF) have shown their ability to give local NGOs access to humanitarian funding and represent a good alternative when direct funding is not an option (Figure 4.10).

Figure 4.10. The growth in UN Country-Based Pooled Fund allocations to local organisations



Source: (OCHA, 2019^[25]) *Country Based Pooled Funds*, database, <https://qms.unocha.org/content/cbpf-allocations> (accessed on 30 April 2019).

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For donors, localising humanitarian assistance should be about more than just allocating more money to local humanitarian responders. Instead, supporting local humanitarian responders should lead to changes in how crises are managed, optimising existing partnerships and strengthening the voice of affected populations (Fabre, 2016^[26]). National government disaster management agencies and other relevant ministries, local humanitarian responders, NGOs, and Red Cross or Red Crescent societies should be seen as key pillars in an overall humanitarian response. Support to these local humanitarian responders, when possible and relevant, should therefore be seen as a natural evolution of humanitarian assistance, as reflected in the High Level Panel report to the Secretary General: *Too Important to Fail - Addressing the Humanitarian Financing Gap* (High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, 2016^[27]).

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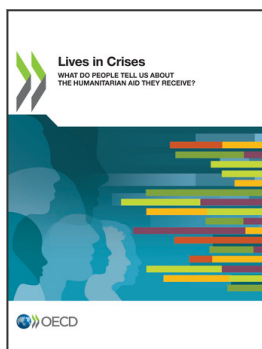
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Notes

¹ DAC members' humanitarian funding rose from USD 11 billion in 2009 to USD 28 billion in 2017, representing a 155% increase during the period.



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