

Briefing note

The Grand Bargain: Perspectives from the field

Key findings

Affected people:

- Are appreciative of aid providers and feel treated with respect.
- Say they are poorly informed about what to expect from aid agencies and how to access support.
- Feel unable to participate in decisions that affect them.
- Criticise the quality and relevance of aid and do not feel the aid they currently receive will help them to become self-reliant in the future.

Staff of aid agencies:

- Assess their own performance quite positively and do not share the views of affected people about shortcomings in the aid system.
- See programming as rather flexible, with aid going where it is most needed.

Local organisations currently working with international partners:

- Feel treated with respect by their international counterparts and consider the latter as knowledgeable about the context in which they work.
- Want more long-term capacity strengthening and more core funding.

Acknowledgments

Ground Truth Solutions would like to thank all contributors to the research process, particularly the people who took time to share their feedback in our surveys. We also thank Julia Steets from the Global Public Policy Institute as well as Wendy Fenton and Victoria Metcalfe-Hough from the Humanitarian Policy Group for comments on early drafts of this note. Responsibility for the content of this note and any errors or omissions lies entirely with its authors.

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Introduction

The Grand Bargain struck by more than 30 humanitarian donors and aid agencies at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit set out to reform the aid system so it is better prepared for tackling the emergency needs of people affected by crises worldwide.¹

Since then, Ground Truth Solutions and the OECD, with support from the German Federal Foreign Office, have endeavoured to set a baseline for tracking the impact of the Grand Bargain at the country level through the experience of affected people and aid providers.

This briefing note summarises the main findings from surveys we conducted in late 2016 and 2017 in Afghanistan, Iraq, Haiti, Lebanon, Somalia, and northern Uganda. In each country, three distinct surveys were carried out to gather views of affected people, field staff of aid agencies, and local partners of international organisations. The resulting research complements the Grand Bargain Annual Report and other monitoring initiatives by providing an in-depth analysis of key actors' views on Grand Bargain commitments towards localisation, cash-based programming, the participation revolution, and the transition to self-reliance.²

Approach

People affected by crisis view the humanitarian system solely in terms of how it works for them and how they are treated by humanitarian responders. That is why our approach, to try to see things through their eyes, aligns with the spirit and goals of the World Humanitarian Summit.

We look at whether there is a shift from what the Grand Bargain describes as a supply-driven model dominated by aid providers to one that is more demand-driven, with the aid system becoming more responsive to the people it sets out to serve.³ We also probe people's views on whether they see progress in going beyond meeting basic needs to creating self-reliance and restoring opportunity⁴, especially in the context of protracted crises and recurring vulnerabilities. Finally, we ask national and local organisations – those crucial links in the humanitarian supply chain – about their views on the support provided by the international intermediary agencies.

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- 1 "The Grand Bargain – A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need". Istanbul, Turkey, 23 May 2016. P.2
 - 2 GPPI (2017): Independent Grand Bargain Report. PACT reporting process <https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/initiatives/3861>. Self-reporting by the signatories <https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/explore-commitments/report-search>. ODI (2018): Grand Bargain Annual Independent Report 2018.
 - 3 "The Grand Bargain – A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need". Istanbul, Turkey, 23 May 2016. P.2
 - 4 Ibid

Affected people feel respected by aid providers but do not know enough about aid

Asked about their experience with providers of humanitarian aid, most people in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Somalia, and Uganda say they feel treated with respect. However, in Haiti two-thirds of respondents disagree.

Figure 1: Are you treated with respect by the aid providers?⁵

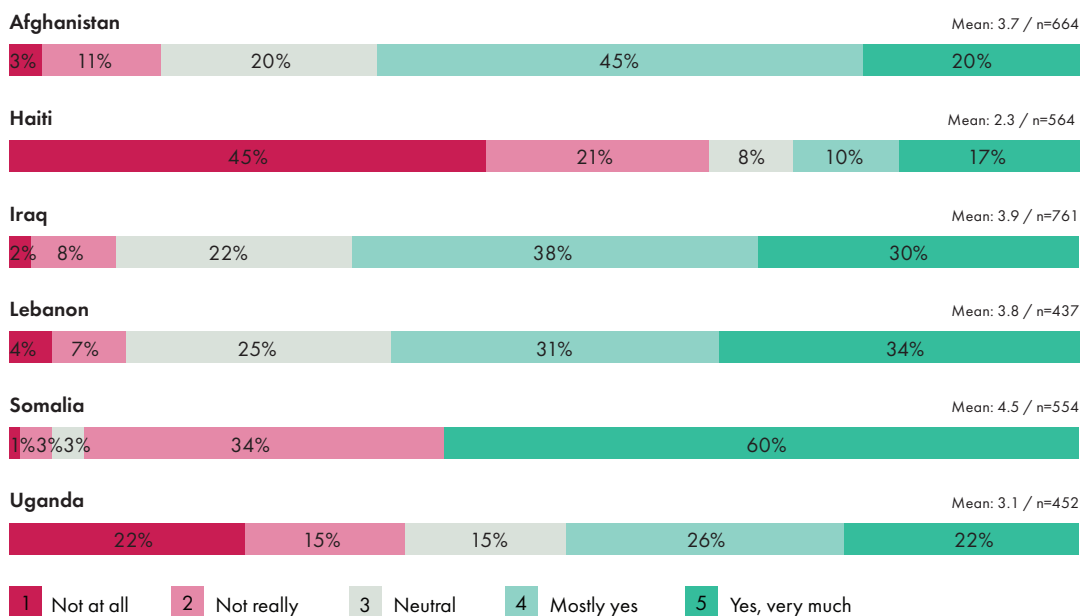
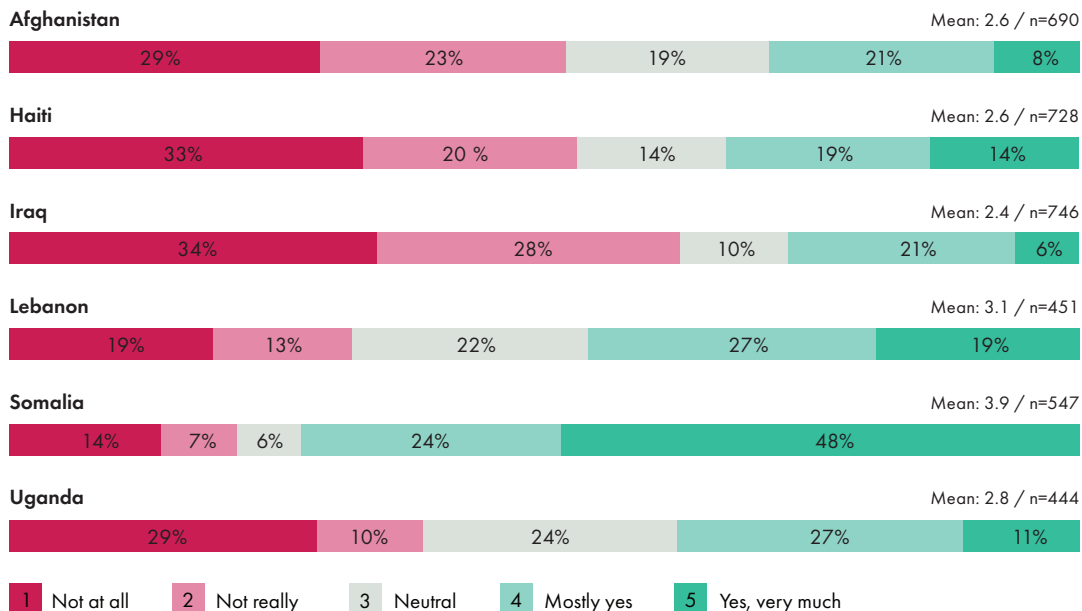


Figure 2: Do you feel informed about the kind of aid available to you?



⁵ Our survey instruments use closed questions with a five-point scale and open-ended questions to explore responses further. Responses to closed questions are reported using a Likert scale from 1 to 5. Mean scores above three indicate a tendency towards positivity; mean scores below three suggest a tendency towards negativity.

More broadly, people mostly do not know much about the provision of aid. Those surveyed lack basic information about the kind of services available and accurate and timely information on the location of distribution (see **Figure 2**).

Other basic aspects of aid programming are little understood. For example, in additional surveys specifically focused on cash-based programmes, most recipients did not know why they were eligible: In Kenya, some 88 percent of people receiving cash transfers said they were unaware of how recipients were selected. Similarly in Afghanistan and Dominica more than 85 percent of respondents were unaware of eligibility criteria while in Turkey the corresponding figure was 61 percent.⁶ Majorities of people in all four countries, meanwhile, said they did not know how long they would remain eligible. This underscores the importance of information in the process of aid delivery, in terms of helping people affected by crisis make the right decisions to improve their situations. In contrast, where people are not sufficiently informed, they cannot optimise their decisions to make the most out of the limited support they receive.

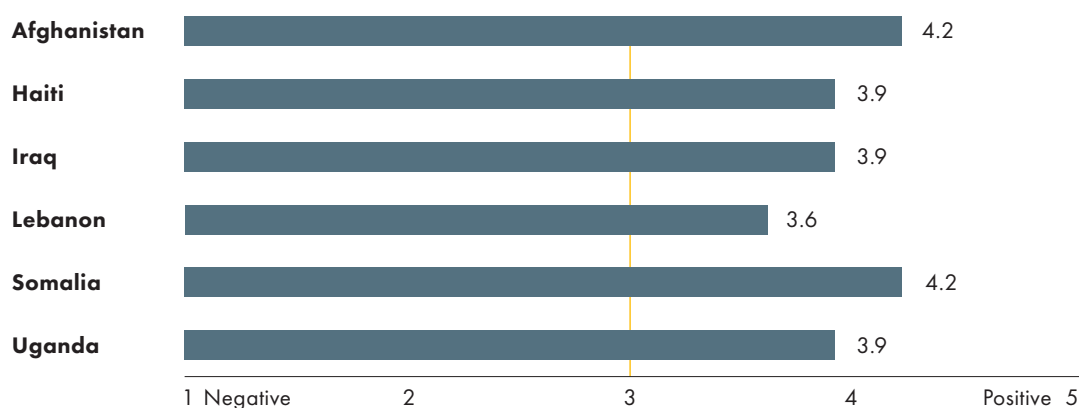
Respondents indicate they need more information about types of aid available, as well as information about their rights and entitlements. As the most suitable channels for communication vary across contexts, aid agencies should share information and communicate through channels that they have determined affected people are most comfortable with.

Our data suggests that the possibilities offered by new communication methods are not sufficiently exploited, and that good practice for community engagement⁷ and two-way communication as stipulated under the participation revolution of the Grand Bargain are not being used effectively or enough. Common feedback mechanisms are still the exception in humanitarian responses. Analysis and consideration of inputs from affected communities remains shallow, and doesn't influence humanitarian response plans and their monitoring in a systematic way. Engagement with and accountability to people affected by crises remains fragmented, when systematic engagement at the humanitarian country team and cluster or sector level could greatly improve people's sense of awareness and participation.

Field staff believe they understand how affected people see aid programmes

Affected people's sense that they do not have enough information and need more opportunities to provide feedback is not a view shared by field staff of aid agencies. Most consider they have enough information about how affected people see aid programmes. To help close the perceptions gap between aid staff and those they are trying to help, agencies must put in place the right incentives – from including client-centredness and demand orientation in staff appraisals to encouraging staff to adjust projects based on the feedback they receive. Responsiveness also requires more flexible planning, e.g. with inception phases where the scope of projects can be refined before scaling up activities, or contingency budget lines that can be used to react to changing needs and demands.

Figure 3: Do field staff have enough information about the way affected people see aid?



⁶ For more information see www.cashbarometer.org and <http://groundtruthsolutions.org/our-work/monitoring-the-hurricane-response-caribbean/>

⁷ See for example recent experiences presented in a CDAC webinar on eliminating barriers to meaningful participation, documented here: <http://www.cdacnetwork.org/i/20180523113838-80p5y/>

Affected people do not see aid going to those who need it most, while aid providers are more positive

Our surveys aimed to gauge whether people perceive aid as being demand-driven. It should be noted that all respondents had received some type of aid, which means we do not have data about areas where needs may be high but aid agencies are not present. Rather, we asked whether existing services and support are going to those most in need. Again, affected people and aid agency staff differ in their assessments, with humanitarian field staff notably more positive.

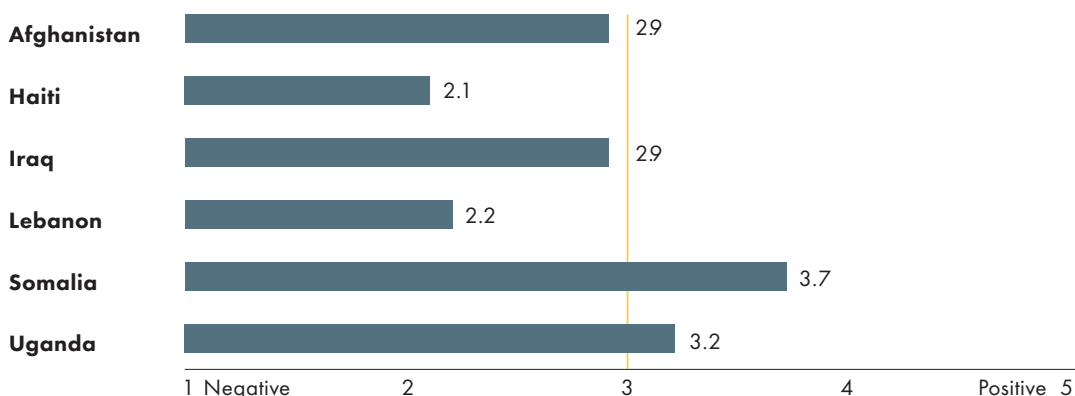
The disconnect between the views of affected people and those of humanitarian workers suggests a different understanding of who is most vulnerable, or how well current targeting mechanisms are functioning (see Figures 4 and 5). Community-based targeting provides one way to align the two perspectives, but it is applied in only a few projects.

More common are assessments based on criteria defined by aid agencies or proxy means tests, or in some cases categorisations like legal status – for refugees or internally displaced persons – and demographic factors such as the number of children.

Affected people in all six countries said that weak and poor people, notably the elderly, those with disabilities, and orphans are often excluded from or have difficulties accessing aid. Communities in remote areas as well as people with special needs are also widely seen as lacking the humanitarian support they need.

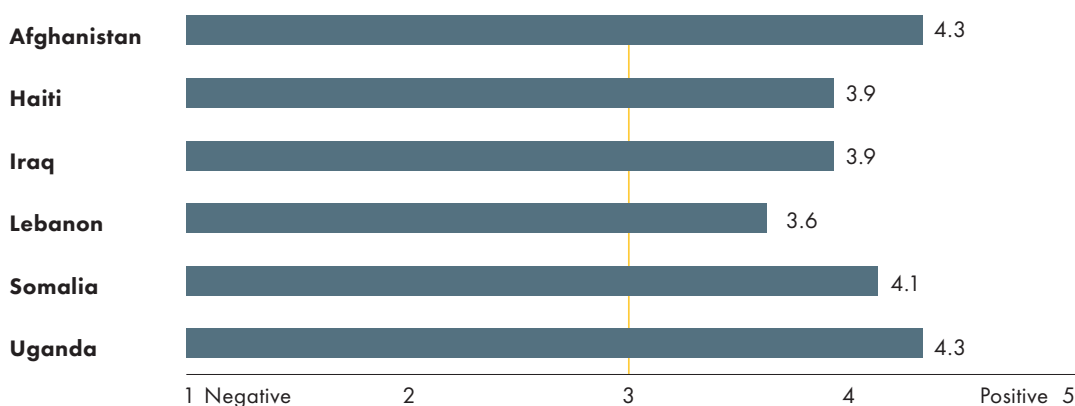
AFFECTED PEOPLE SURVEY

Figure 4: Does aid go to those who need it most?



FIELD STAFF SURVEY

Figure 5: Do you feel aid funds go where they are most needed?



Basic needs not met and self-reliance remains elusive

For aid recipients, unmet needs are significant, spanning both humanitarian and development sectors, as Figures 6 and 6.1 show.

Food was mentioned as an unmet need in all contexts, but affected people also say they lack health services, educational opportunities, cash transfers and other forms of financial support, shelter or housing, and electricity.

In all countries except Somalia, people do not feel the aid they receive will allow them to live without support in the future (see Figure 7). The goal of self-reliance has traditionally been considered to go beyond the typical mandate of humanitarian aid. But in light of Grand Bargain commitments, aid is expected to at

least contribute to more self-reliance and “restore opportunities.”⁸ Our data indicates most respondents do not receive sufficient or the right support to put them on a path to self-reliance. Many cite longer-term needs related to political, economic, and social factors that prevent them from living without aid in the future.

Figure 6: Does the aid you currently receive cover your basic needs?

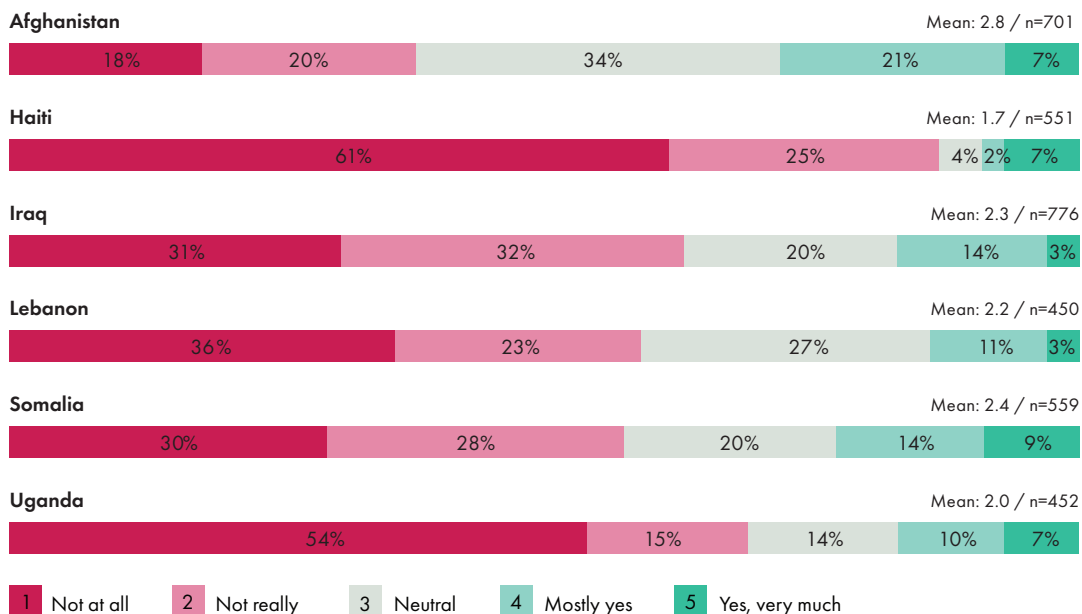


Figure 7: Do you feel the support you receive prepares you to live without aid in the future?

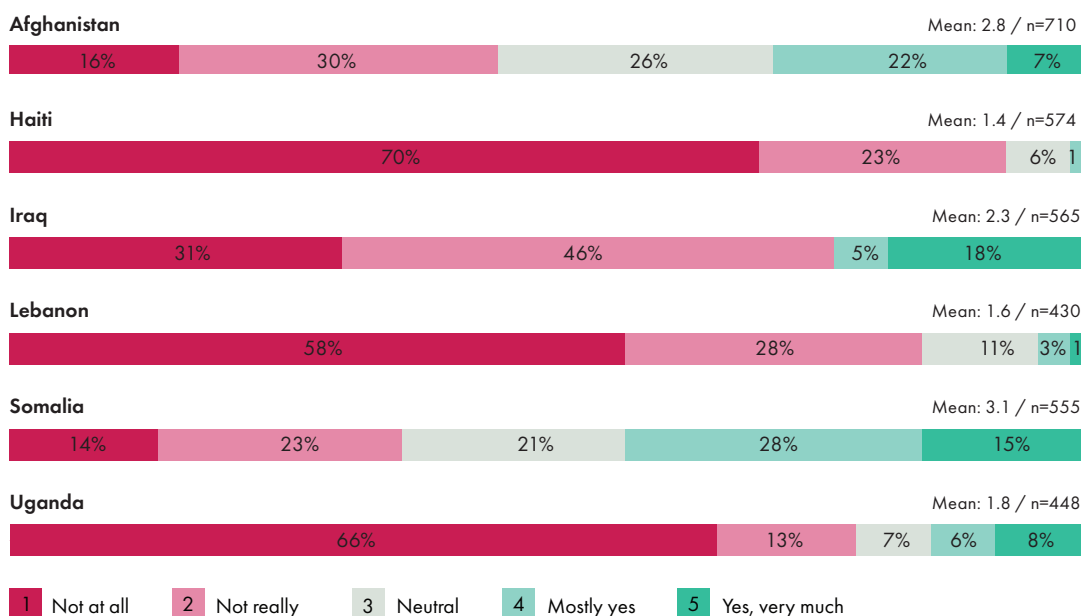


Figure 6.1: Main unmet needs in countries surveyed

Afghanistan: housing, electricity, food

Haiti: housing, financial aid, food

Iraq: cash, food, employment

Lebanon: food, housing, healthcare

Somalia: healthcare, education, food

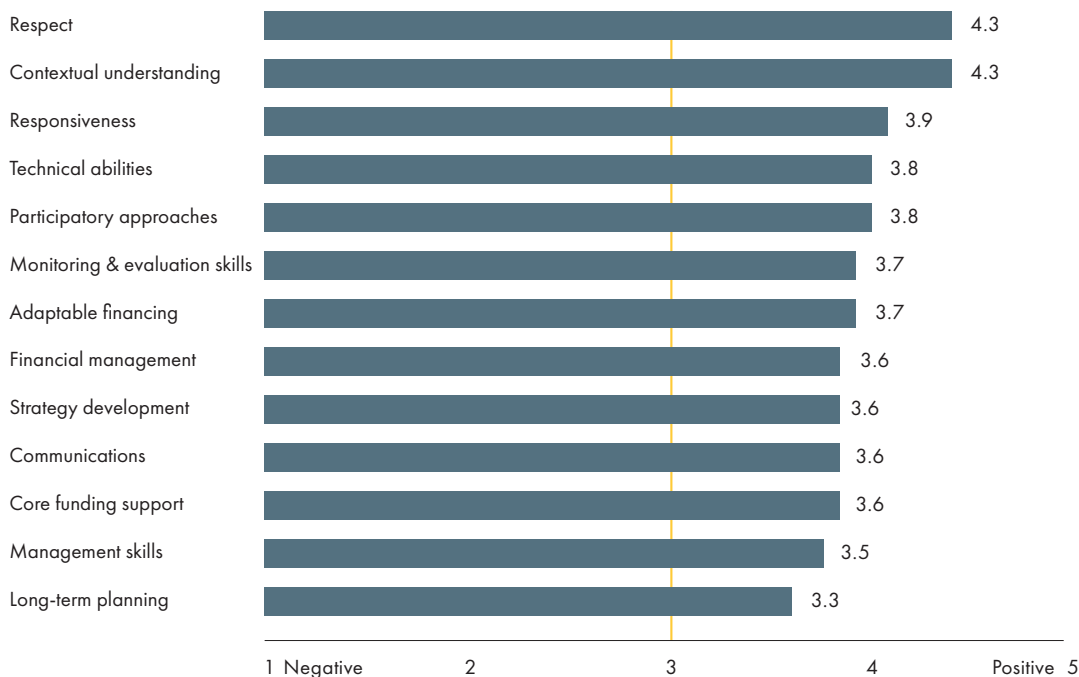
Uganda: food/water, housing, cash

⁸ “The Grand Bargain – A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need”. Istanbul, Turkey, 23 May 2016. P.2

Localisation requires capacity strengthening and more direct funding

Local organisations generally feel that their international partners are responsive to their questions and concerns, treat them with respect and understand the context in which they work (see Figure 8.) Results are similar across all six countries. The local organisations surveyed – all of which currently receive funding through international aid agencies – also feel that the financial support they receive is sufficiently flexible and adequately covers project-related costs.⁹

Figure 8: Mean ratings from local organisations about the quality of their partnerships with international agencies.



The same local partners are also mostly positive about the role of international organizations in helping them strengthen their capacity, but would like more support on long-term planning, management and leadership, and financial skills.

The difficulty in directly accessing international funding was a common concern across the organisations surveyed while all local and national organizations also emphasised the need for continuity in their relationships with international partners, including more core funding.

⁹ International partners shared the survey link with their focal points. Even though the surveys themselves were anonymous, this sampling approach may have introduced a bias that we will examine during surveys in 2018 that will be shared directly with national organisations.

Key takeaways

1. **Communicating with communities remains the Achilles heel of humanitarian action.** Greater effort is needed to introduce feedback mechanisms and increase their effectiveness. Providers of aid must reach out to affected communities more broadly and more systematically, to avoid the bias of passive hotlines or only going through community representatives.

Effective communication activities must be implemented and managed in a more systematic manner, including through critical assessments of communication outcomes. Do people know how to access aid? Do they know who is eligible for different forms of assistance and why? Rather than adding additional layers of monitoring, this should be combined with ongoing monitoring activities at the project, sector, and response-wide level.

2. **Participation needs to be made a requirement, not an add-on.** Affected people currently do not feel they can influence decisions that affect them. To change this, agencies need to foster a more demand-driven culture, e.g. by providing incentives to encourage staff to seek out feedback and act on it.

At an organisational level, funding could be linked to agencies' understanding of beneficiary satisfaction and the efforts they make to include people in decision-making, mindful of context-specific constraints.

At the level of humanitarian responses, the perspective of affected people should be included as a performance metric in Humanitarian Response Plans and their monitoring.¹⁰

3. **The perception among affected people that the aid received lacks relevance and fails the most vulnerable raises doubts about whether the goal of shrinking needs is a realistic priority.** How people perceive the relevance of aid received and issues of dependency should be monitored closely in the future to inform the division of labour between international, national, humanitarian, and development actors. This can help find the right balance between narrower humanitarian mandates and providing longer-term, systemic solutions.¹¹
4. **Effective localisation is as much about strengthening institutional capacity as providing more finance directly to national organisations.** Strategic partnerships with international players would help national actors if they are based on the premise that local organisations build capacity best when they design and manage programmes themselves.

Next steps

Ground Truth Solutions and the OECD will conduct a second round of surveys with affected people, field staff, and local partner organisations in 2018, with support from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID). In addition to the six countries covered in the first round of surveys, the project will be expanded to include Bangladesh. We invite all interested organisations working in these countries to participate in our surveys.

Comments and feedback are welcome and can be forwarded to: info@groundtruthsolutions.org

¹⁰ This is now the case in Chad, where the Humanitarian Country Team has included the perceptions of affected people as a metric in monitoring implementation of the Humanitarian Response Plan for 2018.

¹¹ Some experts argue for a more narrowly focused "back-to basics" approach to humanitarian work, making sure the sector meets urgent needs, and saves and protects lives (Du Bois, M. (2018): The new humanitarian basics.) On the other hand, Grand Bargain signatories have called for expanding the scope of humanitarian assistance and better linking it to development interventions, to better address longer-term, systemic problems people face.

Note on methodology

Going beyond individual Grand Bargain commitments, Ground Truth Solutions seeks to track system-wide performance through the eyes of those receiving aid and those providing it. The findings are based on three survey instruments:

- **The survey of affected people** included face-to-face interviews with 3,697 individuals in countries surveyed. It focused on the relevance and fairness of humanitarian assistance, people's sense of self-reliance and safety, and the degree of their participation in the design and implementation of aid programmes. In Uganda, the survey instrument was adapted slightly to align with the goals of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. In Somalia, data was collected from aid recipients via phone and social media.
- **The staff survey**, completed by 1,942 humanitarian workers in the six countries, looked at the views of field staff of aid agencies working in those countries, and their assessment of the quality of humanitarian aid as well as the level of engagement with affected populations.
- **The partner survey** polled 340 managers of local or national aid organisations working with UN agencies and INGOs about the quality of their partnerships, perceptions of financial support, and capacity strengthening efforts. The partner survey covered the same six countries as the other survey instruments. The results provide a baseline for tracking performance in the years to come.¹²

Country	Affected people surveys	Field staff surveys	Local partner surveys	
Afghanistan	783	410	63	1,256
Haiti	599	75	17	691
Iraq	849	385	83	1,317
Lebanon	452	244	42	738
Somalia	560	609	114	1,283
Uganda	454	219	21	694
	3,697	1,942	340	

All surveys were conducted between November 2016 and December 2017. In each country sampling frames for affected populations were developed with the objective of having robust samples for the most affected regions, different groups of affected people in the country, and a balanced gender ratio. Participants were randomly selected. Face-to-face interviews took place in their place of residence, in public places, on the street, in camps, and/or in social gatherings.

The Somalia data is more positive than in the other five countries covered in this research. This may be partly due to the fact that the data was collected through a call centre with interviewees selected randomly from a large beneficiary database. In the other countries data was collected face-to-face. The differences are quite marked and may be linked to the different data-collection methodology used in Somalia.

For all six countries, we explored the difference in perceptions of different demographic groups and included them in the country reports, which include more details on sampling and the methods used.

¹² For more details on the methodology and samples, please see individual country reports available at <http://groundtruthsolutions.org/our-work/tracking-the-grand-bargain-from-a-field-perspective>



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