



**LESS PAPER  
MORE AID**

Reducing the burden of donor conditions  
to improve the efficiency of humanitarian action.

# Less Paper More Aid

Geneva, 11 April 2016

# Less Paper More Aid – What is it?

An initiative carried out by NGOs to reduce the burden of donor conditions on aid agencies and thereby improve the efficiency of humanitarian action. We started by focusing on donor reporting, due diligence and audit.

[LessPaperMoreAid.org](http://LessPaperMoreAid.org)

# Preliminary Findings



# Methodology

## Field Research

- Questionnaires – 44 NGOs
- Round Table discussions (Beirut, Amman and Geneva)
- Interviews – 10
- Case studies – 7

## UN/Institutional donors Comparison review

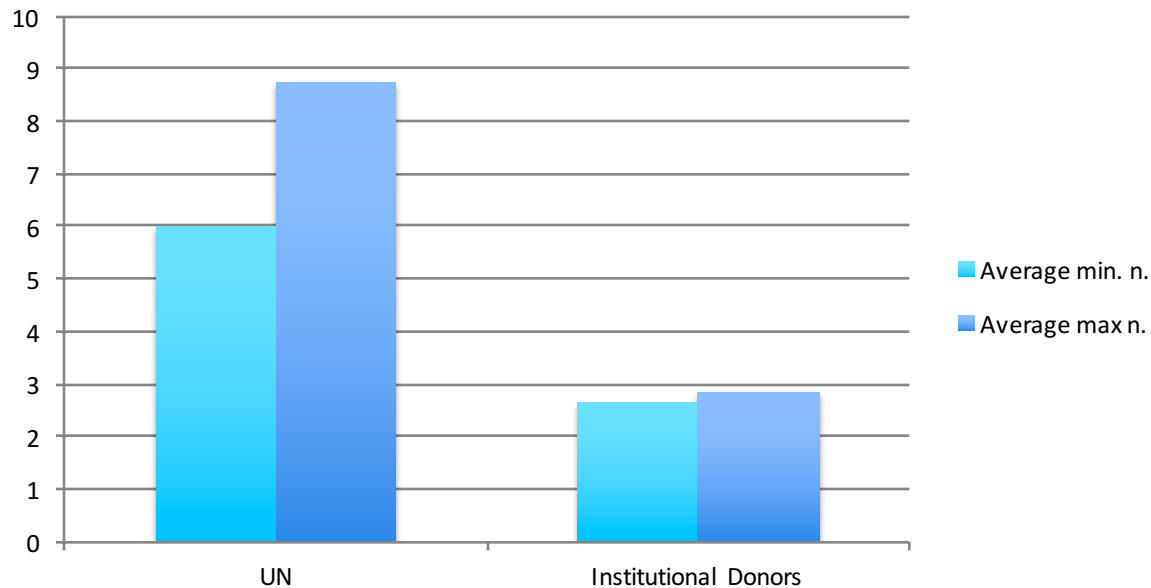
- UN: OCHA, UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF
- Institutional donors: Canada, Denmark, ECHO, Germany, DFID, US (PRM, OFDA, FFP)
- 120 documents including studies, guidelines, contracts and formats

# Preliminary findings UN/Donors— General

- Difficulty in accessing information (particularly audit and PCA), or extreme complexity of information available
- Challenges in comparing conditions. Donors/countries, organisations, approach (risk management)
- Convergences in content of reports, PCA, audit
- Divergences in procedures, terminology, volume of documents requested.
- Higher amount of reporting requested by UN
- *More assurance activities (including audit and spot checks) undertaken by UN*

# Preliminary findings UN/Donors Reporting

Higher volume of reporting requested by UN



# Preliminary findings UN/Donors Reporting

Written guidance and format may be deceiving for both UN and Institutional Donors

- Additional reports/info may be requested
  - Indicated in the guidelines
  - Grant agreement
- Margin of flexibility
  - Language (at least, minimum, generally...)
  - Number of reports indicated in the grant agreement

# Preliminary findings UN/Donors Reporting

## Duplication of work

- Similar format (word, 10- 20 questions)
- Same type of information
  - Program and context
  - Changes expected/realised outputs
  - Outcomes/impacts
  - Management issues (risk, security, procurement etc..)
  - Financial updates or summary
  - Coordination
  - Cross cutting issues
  - Lessons learned
  - Log frame



# Preliminary findings UN/Donors Reporting

## **Convergences** UN – Institutional donors:

- Achievements, financial information, changes in implementation, logframes/indicators.

## **Divergences** UN – Institutional donors:

- Institutional donors more focus on lessons learnt, assumptions and risks, crosscutting issues, and technical issues
- Different terminology (example lessons learnt, achievements)

# Reporting / Field

## Working Findings

Excessive requirements

Duplication

Resource and Time Consuming

### *Volume of Reporting*

- 'Excessive', 'crazy', 'too much' NGOs as 'reporting machines'
- Cumulative effects in terms of funding portfolios / earmarked
- Additional/ad hoc reports - reporting more than is scheduled in the contract.
- Frequency of reporting (weekly, monthly, quarterly) / co-funding
- Quantity versus quality
- Financial reporting required for activities

### *Timing of Reporting*

- Different narrative and financial reporting deadlines
- *Deadlines being changed*
- *Donors not meeting their own deadlines*

### *Report Formats and Duplication*

- Differences in templates
- So very similar, but not quite the same, meaning documents have to be reworked
- The number of annexes
- Adapting systems to donor changes in templates
- Duplication with coordination reporting mechanism and host government reporting - cluster coordinator/host government/donor reporting

### *Resources and Time*

- Range of departments and staff involved – on top of their regular duties
- Training / consultancies
- Guidance, support to colleagues, tracking/monitoring of changes to donor formats or guidance documents (how long they stay the same for).

### *Engagement*

- Who reads the reports?
- Types of feedback that is received (compliance vs. best practice)
- Questions around the purposes that reports serve for donors
- *Accountability (upwards to donors and downwards to beneficiaries)*
- Measures other than reporting that could be used

# Practical Way Forward -Proportionality

- Commit to review reporting requirements and reduce the number and volume of reports whenever possible by:
  - Adapting reporting requirements to the context and length of programs, reducing formal reporting requirements in emergency settings in order to give priority to the action on the ground;
  - Removing interim reporting requirements for short term projects (less than 10 months) – reference to good practices: one interim report only if the action exceeds 10 months;
  - Asking for reports that recipients are able to read and absorb and that serve to enhance accountability at all levels.

# Practical Way Forward -Harmonisation

- Commit to the idea of harmonizing reporting requirements making efforts to standardize formats and indicators;
- Streamline reporting required by various coordination mechanisms with donor reporting avoiding duplication and promoting standardized output/outcome indicators;
- Share “best practices” between donors and encourage others to adopt such models of good reporting.

# Practical Ways Forward -Simplification

- Respect contractual reporting requirements and agreed deadlines and not ask for additional ad-hoc reports;
- Allow for reasonable time between end of project and reporting due date – reference to good practice: up to 3 months after the end date;
- Avoid financial reporting per activity;
- Align financial reports deadlines with narrative ones;
- Use simplified *electronic formats*;
- Allow the use of NGOs' own reporting formats in co-funded programs and move away from project-based reporting;
- Consider alternative ways to reporting: joint reviews, visits, exchnages.

# Next planned steps



# Thank you !

.... And don't forget to check our  
website as of the 25 April 😊

[lesspapermoreaid.org](http://lesspapermoreaid.org)