



LESS PAPER MORE AID

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

What is it?

Less paper more aid is an initiative carried out by NGOs¹ to reduce the burden of donor conditions on aid agencies and thereby improve the efficiency of humanitarian action. We started focusing on donor reporting, due diligence and audit.

Why are we doing it?

We want to demonstrate to donors the negative impact of excessive donor requirements and provide concrete recommendations, like ways to harmonize and simplify reporting procedures and formats.

Why it is important for NGOs now

Major donors have indicated a willingness to look at ways to improve efficiency in the use of humanitarian funding. A recent report commissioned by the UN Secretary General² to look, amongst other things, into how to ensure resources are managed most efficiently, suggested harmonization and simplification of reporting requirements as a way forward to save time and resources and at the same time increase transparency. Major donors and UN agencies are soon to discuss a Grand Bargain³ to reduce inefficiencies in humanitarian action and embrace best practices. This will culminate in commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit in May. We want NGOs to articulate key challenges and potential solutions to be considered as part of the Grand Bargain.

How we do it

We have started by gathering evidence of the impact of donor reporting in the field in Lebanon and in West Africa. We asked NGOs to fill in a questionnaire and invited them to attend a round-table discussion to elaborate on the initial findings and make suggestions for improvement. We are now analyzing more in depth the qualitative data collected and we plan to reach out to a larger group of NGOs in other 2 countries - enlarging the research to due diligence and audit- through a questionnaire, structured interviews with key actors and round-table discussions. Once data is collected and analyzed we will validate it with NGO focal points at HQ level. Then we will present to donors the key findings and practical suggestions for improvement.

What we want to know:

- Is the current donor reporting system efficient for both NGOs and donors? Bring up examples
- How much time of your time is spent in writing/compiling reports and how much does it cost?
- Which are your main challenges related to Partner Capacity Assessments

¹ ICVA together with a group of engaged NGOs and networks (NRC, CARE, DRC, Intersos, ICMC, Oxfam, Handicap International, World Vision, Voice and CHS Alliance) launched this project in December 2015 building on activities carried out within the IASC Humanitarian Financing Task Team.

² "Too important to fail – addressing the humanitarian financing gap." High Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing (January 2016)

³ From the HLP Report: **Donors to commit to:** Less earmarking, More multi-year funding, More harmonized & simplified reporting requirements. **Recipients commit to:** Reduce duplication & management costs; Periodic functional expenditure reviews; Harmonised cost structures, especially on overheads; More joint & impartial needs assessments; Incorporate beneficiary feedback.

- How many PCA your organization has to fill in for different donors?
- How many audits?
- Quantify duplication and inefficiencies related to frequency
- Make suggestions for improvements building on best practices (e.g. harmonization)

How you can engage

As an NGO you can contribute to this initiative by: (a) filling in the questionnaire on donor reporting due diligence and audit if you are in Niger and Jordan; (b) volunteering for a semi-structured interview as a follow-up to questionnaires submitted if you are in the HQ of your organization; and (c) joining the NGO Task Force created to oversee the implementation of this initiative.

The bigger picture

This exercise fits into a bigger strategy to improve efficiency in humanitarian financing. Next steps will include:

- Reviewing UN agreements with NGOs focusing on donor reporting, compliance and due diligence aspects, gather evidence of the impact of burdensome procedures related to these conditions, identify best practices and promote improvements.

Milestones:

- **22 February** – Dissemination of the questionnaire on donor reporting, PCA and audit to Niger and Jordan NGOs
- **29 February** - Deadline for submission of the questionnaire
- **03 March** – Next Task Force meeting
- **08 March** – Round table discussion in Amman inviting country and regional donors to last session
- **18 March** – Updated matrix comparing UN partnership agreements (focus on DR, PCA and audit) + Key advocacy messages on additional conditions imposed by UN
- **08 April** - Round Table discussion in Geneva to validate findings of the field research
- **18 April** – Final Report ready