

Grand Bargain - Think-Piece: A strategic foresight analysis of humanitarian reform initiatives

Terms of Reference for Consultancy

A. Overview and Background

The Grand Bargain was negotiated between the 15 biggest donors and 15 biggest aid organisations in 2016 in response to the UN's High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing report *Too Important to Fail: Addressing the Humanitarian Financing Gap*. The Bargain includes a set of specific commitments for donors and aid organisations to make humanitarian assistance more effective and efficient. The number of Signatories has grown to 68 and now includes Local and National Actors alongside donors, UN agencies, the ICRC/IFRC and INGOs. It is the most inclusive platform of the humanitarian community. Its current iteration, the Grand Bargain 3.0, complemented by its Implementation Agenda, has been agreed until 2026. It thereby contributes to addressing the increasing funding gap between humanitarian needs and available humanitarian funding. Since its inception, annual independent reports have measured progress of the Grand Bargain Signatories against the initial commitments from 2016.

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), on behalf of the Grand Bargain Ambassadors, is seeking an external consultant to write a Think-Piece that will provide a strategic foresight perspective on the humanitarian system, as well as an analysis of key reform proposals and additional transformations that may be required. This paper will inform reflections on the future of the Grand Bargain process and its platform.

B. Objective

This Think-Piece will assess the current international humanitarian system, specifically in humanitarian financing, leveraging existing research. It will aim to foresee the impact of strategic decisions and evaluate the relevance of ongoing reform efforts and proposals in the sector in the medium to long term. This should include the 2016 High-Level Panel's recommendations on addressing the humanitarian financing gap. Based on this analysis, the paper will also identify additional systemic transformations that may be required to allow the international system to better address the needs of people affected by crisis.

C. Major tasks and responsibilities

- In consultation with the Grand Bargain Secretariat, further adjust the proposed approach, refine the methodology and develop a list of individuals to interview.
- Carry out a desk review of relevant literature, reports and analytical papers on the changing aid financing environment, reform proposals, and recent initiatives to foster structural transformations within the sector.
- Assess the relevance of past reform efforts in the current context, particularly the 2016 High-Level Panel's recommendations on addressing the humanitarian financing gap.

- Based on these reviews and assessment, provide an analysis of systemic issues that will need to be addressed to maintain the international system's ability to respond to peoples' needs in crisis- affected contexts.

D. Methodology

The independent expert should propose a methodology that they consider suitable to the scope of work, within the constraints of the available budget, timeframe and available data, but it is expected to include the following:

- Desk study and reflection:
 - Drawing on various sources and analysis of the current humanitarian system, including how it is situated in the wider international development and peace system.
 - Drawing on various proposals for system reform and priorities.
- Interviews (to be discussed):
 - A number of interviews with key stakeholders could be considered.

The methodology, materials to consult and a list of individuals to interview will be further refined with the Secretariat once a consultant is selected.

E. Expected outputs

An Inception Note and an analytical Think-Piece.

F. Preferable Arrangements

We aim to partner with a team of consultants (2 at a minimum), ideally representing different geographical regions. Interested parties are invited to submit one proposal on behalf of the team. Alternatively, if you are applying individually, we may ask you to team up with another selected consultant.

G. Deliverables Timeline

The Grand Bargain Secretariat has tentatively allocated 30 days in total for this project, subject to further discussion. The final Think-Piece needs to be received no later than 8 June.

An indicative timeline is laid out in the table below:

Activity	Description	Preliminary timeframe
Contract finalised	Contract signed between NRC and the chosen supplier	End March 2025
Chosen supplier /Secretariat discussion	Chosen supplier and Secretariat discuss main objectives	End March/Early April 2025
Inception Note	Inception note outlining agreed methodology and sources, prepared by the chosen supplier	8 April 2025
First draft report	First draft of the Think-Piece shared with GB Ambassadors and GB Secretariat for feedback	22 May 2025
Final report	Final Think-Piece submitted to GB Ambassadors	8 June 2025

The timeline is indicative and will be reviewed and refined with the selected consultant. However, the final Think-Piece must be submitted before 8 June 2025.

H. Qualifications and competencies

Candidates must be a widely recognised expert in humanitarian affairs with an extensive track record in the sector, including an in-depth knowledge of humanitarian policy, financing, and reform as well as robust portfolio of publications, presentations, and advisory roles.

The required qualifications and competencies include:

- A solid understanding and experience in the aid sector, particularly in humanitarian assistance and reform, financing, and trends.
- Clear understanding of the different actors in the humanitarian system and their interests.
- Strong analytical skills and knowledge of system thinking. Ability to process large volumes of information, to analyse and to synthesis potentially diverging sets of inputs and ideas.
- Demonstrable experience carrying out similar (foresight) research and analysis.
- Ability to work independently, but within a team, and remotely while adhering to tight deadlines.
- Strong interpersonal communication skills to ensure a smooth flow of information with the team and the Secretariat.
- Experience in co-writing and collaborating on research papers with another consultant.
- Excellent drafting skills and command of the English language.
- Registration as a consultant in the country of residence (or as an employee within a consultancy company) is required.

I. Focal Point within NRC/Grand Bargain Secretariat

The consultancy will be managed directly by the Grand Bargain Secretariat, together with NRC.

Contact: Grand Bargain Secretariat: gbsecretariat@un.org

Application process

Consultants who meet the above requirements are invited to submit to the Grand Bargain Secretariat gbsecretariat@un.org an expression of interest and include the following as part of their application:

- Cover letter, including a short motivation for this consultancy including rough outline on how to approach the Think-Piece
- (Link to) Curriculum Vitae / LinkedIn Profile
- Links to past research papers or similar publications demonstrating experience in conducting comparable research and analysis.
- Rates: daily consultancy rate in CHF or EUR, inclusive of all costs, VAT and charges.
- Proof of registration as a consultant/sole trader/proprietor or a company in country of residence as required

Payment will be based on the successful completion of deliverables to the required standard.

Please note: All service providers/consultants working with NRC should maintain high standards on ethical issues, respect and apply basic human and social rights, ensure non-exploitation of child labour, and give fair working conditions to their staff. NRC reserves the right to reject quotations provided by suppliers not meeting these standards. Consultants doing business with NRC will be screened on anti-corruption due diligence before NRC confirms a contract.