



VOICE

ACTIVITY REPORT 2012

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VOICE

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Cooperation in Emergencies**

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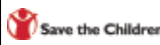


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ACRONYMS

COHAFA	Council working party On Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid
CONCORD	European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development
DEVE	Committee on Development (European Parliament)
DEVCO	European Commission department for Development and Cooperation- EuropeAid
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DG	Directorate General (European Commission Department)
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EC	European Commission
ECHO	European Commission department for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection
EEAS	European External Action Service
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
FPA	Framework Partnership Agreement
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
JSI	Joint Standards Initiative
LRRD	Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development
MCDA	Military and Civil Defence Assets
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MFF	Multi-Annual Financial Framework
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOHA	Network on Humanitarian Action
Q & A	Quality and Accountability
SCHR	Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
UN	United Nations
UNOCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
VOICE	Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies
WG	VOICE Working Group

INTRODUCTION

 In 2012 VOICE celebrated its 20th birthday, looking back on its achievements and planning for the next 5 years ahead. We have come a long way since 1992 when seven NGO members of CLONG created VOICE as a relatively autonomous structure working on humanitarian matters inside the platform. In 2001 the General Assembly decided to create an independent network of humanitarian NGOs. A milestone in the network's history was the engagement of members in the process which led to the signing of the European Consensus on humanitarian aid by the European institutions and member states in 2007. With increasing needs in the field, the EU humanitarian architecture also grew and with that opportunities for influencing EU humanitarian aid policies. VOICE is today a recognized and trusted body for humanitarian advocacy and lobbying. The operational expertise and experience of its 84 NGO members from 18 European countries, is regularly sought by member states, the European Commission and the European Parliament.

After 20 years of EU humanitarian aid, (DG ECHO also had its 20th birthday), VOICE members welcome that EU citizens continue to support their work: Every two years a large survey is done by the EU (Eurobarometer) to measure the support for EU policies by EU citizens and get their views. The results from the June 2012 Eurobarometer on humanitarian aid reveal that 88% of the EU population considers it important for the EU to fund humanitarian aid (up from 79% in 2010). Moreover, 84% agree that the EU should continue to fund humanitarian aid in spite of the current economic crisis, demonstrating EU solidarity with crises-affected populations.

Looking ahead, much work was invested by VOICE members during 2012 in the development of the next strategic plan 2013 – 2017. The importance of needs-based principled humanitarian aid, explaining the added value of professional humanitarian NGOs and further developing collective action will feature as the main priorities of the network over the next five years. This should be complemented by building alliances with other humanitarian actors and with the development sector.

2012 represented a transition period from the last Strategic Plan to the new one: continued advocacy for needs-based and principled EU humanitarian action as well as for sufficient funding were key priorities. Several members focused on the importance of the humanitarian principles and the European Consensus for humanitarian aid through reports and conferences which reached out widely in the humanitarian community and beyond. VOICE, together with the ICVA network and the Humanitarian Forum, issued a statement pressing for access for humanitarians in Syria. Extensive collective action took place at national level, lobbying for maintaining the current level of EU humanitarian funding for the next seven years' framework.

The network invested in building bridges between humanitarian and development matters; over the years, VOICE has stressed the importance of Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and development (LRRD) in order to contribute to the sustainability of humanitarian action. Welcoming a renewed EU focus on the issue, VOICE and CONCORD brought together humanitarian and development NGOs for common positioning. LRRD and Disaster Risk Reduction, another topic VOICE works on, have to be important building blocks in the striving towards community resilience.

Committed to promoting the professionalisation of its members, the network together with Brussels-based humanitarian actors developed messages to be taken into account in the discussions towards legislation for the EU Aid Volunteers (former EVHAC). On a related issue of quality, two new initiatives were launched by humanitarians: the Joint Standards Initiative (NGOs) and the SCHR Certification project. Engaging members from the start in what could lead to important developments in the sector, was also close to our heart.

2012 also saw the election of a new president for the network. We would like to thank Mr. Eberwein for his valuable contributions over the last four years. We welcome Mr. Borsinger, who has a background from the ICRC and the foundation world.

2013 will see a decision by member states on the funds the Commission will have available for humanitarian aid in the years to come. The EEAS and the Commission will develop the concept of an EU Comprehensive Approach; avoiding the politicization of needs-based, principled EU humanitarian aid will be a challenge in that process. A new Framework Partnership Agreement which defines the legal obligations NGOs and other partners have, when being funded by the EC will also be put in place. We look forward to another year of increasing collective action and advocacy at national and EU level!

Kathrin Schick
Director VOICE

1. ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

In the context of the economic crisis and a climate of austerity, the EU engaged in major discussions around its budget priorities for 2014-2020. New mechanisms established under the Lisbon Treaty were put to the test, in particular with regards the increased power of the European Parliament in budgetary matters. The result was difficult debates between Member States, the European Parliament and the European Commission on both the long-term budgetary framework and the 2013 budget.

EU humanitarian actors were occupied by major crises, such as in the Sahel and in Syria, as well as by forgotten crises such as in Pakistan. At the same time draft legislation was developed on EU Aid Volunteers and resilience, and the EU embarked on developing an EU comprehensive approach. Humanitarians followed and engaged actively in relevant debates and advocacy, to raise awareness of the specificity of humanitarian aid and to ensure principled and needs-based EU humanitarian aid.

1.1 ADVOCATING FOR HUMANITARIAN FUNDING

After the Commission released its proposal for the **Multi-Annual Financial Framework** (MFF, the multi-year spending plan for 2014-2020 reflecting the EU's policy priorities) in 2011, the discussion in 2012 took place mostly within and among Member States. The debate focused mainly on how much Member States wanted to contribute overall to the EU institutions in the current economic climate. During this phase of preparation under the Danish and Cypriot presidency of the EU, VOICE members brought the importance of EU humanitarian aid to the attention of their governments through meetings with Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Development and Finance.

As of November, European Council President Van Rompuy took over the lead of the negotiations. Anticipating a major MFF summit in November, VOICE members campaigned widely at national level and in the media (e.g. in UK, Germany, France, Ireland, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Finland). In an effort to safeguard funding for the most vulnerable populations, VOICE and CONCORD (the European umbrella organisation for development NGOs) worked in alliance to lobby at EU institutional level as well as Member State level. A letter was sent to Heads of State which called for the formation of a 'Group of Friends of Development and Humanitarian Aid'. Eventually, no agreement was reached at the summit, so advocacy efforts continued in 2013.

During the MFF discussions in the summer of 2012, the potential threat to humanitarian funding became clear when Member States proposed not only to cut humanitarian funding, but also to cut all payments to the Emergency Aid Reserve in the **2013 budget**. In advance of the decisive negotiations between the European Parliament (EP) and Council, VOICE issued a position paper explaining the importance of EU humanitarian aid for affected populations worldwide, as well as the importance of the Emergency Aid Reserve. The Reserve is crucial for the EU's ability to respond to unforeseen humanitarian needs and emergencies such as the Haiti earthquake. With humanitarian needs increasing, it is not a question of whether the Reserve is needed, but when.

The widespread campaigning of the VOICE network across the EU contributed to an EU agreement to reinstate payments for the Reserve. In general though, the negotiations were very difficult and the resulting compromise shows a big split between commitments (promises to pay) and payments (lower figure which Member States expect to pay in practice). As the payments are not set at a realistic level, major payment problems for the European Commission, including for humanitarian aid, might be the consequence as of autumn 2013.

1.2 SAFEGUARDING PRINCIPLED EU HUMANITARIAN AID

1.2.1 Putting the Humanitarian Consensus into practice

The *European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid* is the main policy document on EU humanitarian aid, which is signed by the Member States, the European Commission and the European Parliament. VOICE views as very positive the fact that across the EU an increasing number of Member States are developing or revising humanitarian strategies with reference to the Consensus. In several places VOICE members have been actively engaged in the process.

As the Action Plan attached to the Consensus ends in late spring 2013, several VOICE members reflected on progress made over the last years and challenges ahead. Caritas Europa launched a report on '*Bridging the gap between policy and practice*', using the Consensus as a policy framework for measuring adherence to humanitarian principles. The report was presented to Member States, stressing the need for an independent annual review of EU States' commitments under the Consensus as well as the importance of an independent end-of-phase evaluation of the impact of the Consensus and its Action Plan.

In advance of the Irish presidency of the EU, former VOICE President Dr. Eberwein spoke at an event organised by member Trócaire in Dublin on Ireland's role in safeguarding the EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. With government and military representatives in the audience, he raised issues such as:

- There is no shortage of norms, principles and concepts for principled humanitarian action, but a lack of willingness to take them seriously. More forceful advocacy at national level to ensure respect for the principles of the Consensus is crucial
- Humanitarian aid is intended to save lives and should not be mixed with security or political objectives. The causes of a crisis should be addressed by political solutions
- There is a need for a new Action Plan which does not water down the commitments made in the Consensus

VOICE member Norwegian Refugee Council focused on how to apply the humanitarian principles in practice, which resulted in a report '*Tools for the job: supporting principled humanitarian action*'. Based on case studies conducted in Afghanistan, DRC, Pakistan and South Sudan, the report analyses some of the challenges to principled humanitarian action and funding from the perspectives of NGOs and donors. It examines hurdles and opportunities that humanitarian organisations face when trying to adhere to the humanitarian principles. The project culminated in a high-level conference in Brussels on December 4th: '*Principles in Practice: Safeguarding Humanitarian Action*'. At this conference, the VOICE President chaired a panel focusing on the role of donors in funding principled action.

Building on these initiatives, a VOICE Consensus Task Force was set up by the end of the year to engage members in the upcoming evaluation of the Consensus and to pursue and influence a new Action Plan for Member States and the EU institutions.

1.2.2 EU Comprehensive approach

Halfway through 2012, the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) started working on a forthcoming Communication on the EU Comprehensive Approach. The Comprehensive Approach aims to achieve integrated strategies for external action and crisis management, bringing together political, security and development pillars. Improved information sharing, analysis, dialogue and coordination are important to strengthen EU external action especially in fragile states.



At the same time, continuing principled and needs-based EU humanitarian aid to crisis-affected populations requires decision making independent of political interests. For humanitarian actors, access to crisis-affected populations in conflict depends on how they are perceived on the ground. Politicising humanitarian aid would thus not only contradict the Lisbon Treaty and the European Consensus on Humanitarian aid, which states that EU humanitarian aid is not a crisis management tool; it also could reduce the ability of humanitarians to achieve their objective of saving lives.

In order to raise awareness and understanding among relevant policy makers and non-humanitarian civil society actors of what humanitarian aid is all about, VOICE members and the Secretariat engaged actively in a number of high-level meetings contributing to the preparation of the EC Communication. The final outcomes of these meetings include solid reference to humanitarian concerns and state that more discussions are needed to clarify how EU humanitarian aid will relate to the EU Comprehensive Approach. Efforts to ensure the humanitarian perspective is taken into account will continue throughout the Communication development process in 2013.

1.3 INFLUENCING EU POLICY IN SPECIFIC HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

In 2012, the VOICE network engaged in advocacy on emergency situations, particularly on the large scale crises in Syria and the Sahel.

The strongly deteriorating human conditions in **Syria** and the need for access by humanitarian organisations led the VOICE network to develop a joint statement in February with NGO network ICVA and the Humanitarian Forum (*bringing together humanitarian and development organisations from Muslim donor and recipient countries, the West and the multilateral system*). In the statement, the networks called for unhindered access of impartial humanitarian agencies to Syria, and all parties to the conflict were urged to comply with international humanitarian law and to recognize and honour the independence of humanitarian action. The statement served as input for the Member States in advance of their discussions on Syria at the Foreign Affairs Council. In addition, it was used as a basis for a common statement by The Humanitarian Forum, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and League of Arab States.

On June 18, Commissioners Georgieva and Piebalgs jointly hosted a high-level conference on the **Sahel** crisis. The conference was attended by representatives from several countries of the Sahel, donor governments and UN agencies. VOICE was represented by Oxfam, Save the Children, World Vision and Action Contre la Faim and CARE, also representing CONCORD. Some of the key points raised by NGOs were:

- There is a need to look at vulnerabilities of people, rather than dividing between humanitarian aid and development
- Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) is essential to reach better resilience of populations
- Emergency funding is required across all sectors
- Dialogue has to be established between donors, affected states and civil society organisations, when starting programming, but also during implementation, to make sure resilience is really improved for the affected populations and vulnerable groups
- It is important to support the plans developed by the national governments and work with them and local government and NGOs

NGOs managed to negotiate a reference to the key role of civil society and the importance of Disaster Risk Reduction into the Joint Statement of the meeting, in which participants agreed to launch a Partnership for resilience through a multi-stakeholder initiative (*AGIR – Alliance Globale pour l'Initiative Résilience*).

On the initiative of DG ECHO, a donor coordination meeting on **Mali** was called on December 3rd to discuss coordination, surge capacity and security. VOICE members MdM Belgium, Oxfam and CARE France participated. The VOICE President raised members' concerns around pressure by some Member States on NGOs not to get involved for security reasons and said that NGOs are very conscious about security implications and seek to manage risk, not to avoid it. Other concerns shared were around the functioning of clusters, needs assessments and access.

Throughout the year the VOICE network regularly briefed decision makers on the situation in disaster-affected countries, either through speaking engagements or by providing written input received from members through a privileged contact with Emergency Directors and advocacy staff. During the Danish and Cypriot EU presidencies, the network shared NGO concerns from the field with the Council Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid to inform Member States' discussions on particular emergencies on the agenda (Syria, Sahel, Somalia, Sudan, DRC) and on policy issues (for example DRR, civil-military relations, Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative). VOICE members also briefed MEPs in advance of their mission to Haiti (*see below*).

1.4 INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EU AID VOLUNTEERS

The Lisbon Treaty foresees the establishment of a '*European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps*'- now rebranded '*EU Aid Volunteers*'. The idea is to provide a framework by which young Europeans could show their solidarity by contributing to humanitarian aid operations of the EU. In light of the financial crisis and increasing humanitarian needs, VOICE consistently stressed the importance of real added value of this Corps in the humanitarian endeavour.

In September the Commission released its draft proposal for a **Regulation for establishing the European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps**. Given that the Council and the European Parliament (EP) will have to agree the regulation, VOICE shared a number of recommendations with the Cypriot presidency of the EU in advance of Member States' discussion of the legislation in November. At their next meeting in December the COHAFA invited several VOICE members who had been implementing pilot projects. Save the Children UK shared their experiences, pointing out lessons learnt in relation to the various areas which will be defined by the legislation, including selection of volunteers, training, deployment and capacity building of local host organisations.

Master messages which had been developed together with the Red Cross movement and UNOCHA were also shared with the Standing Humanitarian Rapporteur of the European Parliament, who organised a consultation in December in preparation of the EP report.

MASTER MESSAGES

- By focusing on disaster preparedness, DRR and LRRD, the EU Aid volunteers could make a further EU contribution to the building of community resilience
- In keeping with security concerns, volunteer deployments should be limited to pre-disaster preparedness and post disaster recovery activities
- Ensuring coherence and complementarity with existing humanitarian activities is a key for the impact of the EU Aid Volunteers
- Effectiveness and efficiency should be optimised by using simple structures and processes

By the end of the year, the EP was largely supportive of the concept, while Member States raised questions concerning the scope of the proposal, as well as the size of the budget and the real added value of the Corps- in line with VOICE concerns.

1.5 BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN HUMANITARIAN AID AND DEVELOPMENT

VOICE has a longstanding experience in Disaster Risk Reduction and Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development, with a first publication on the latter issue in 2001. This work became very prominent and visible again in 2012 due to the discussions on the Multi-Annual Financial Framework, as well as the EU's work around resilience.

1.5.1 Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development

After having consistently lobbied the institutions on the need for real progress in this area, Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) was finally on the 2012 work programme of DG ECHO, the development committee of the EP and the EU presidency. Given these positive developments and on the background of the EU budget discussions, this was an ideal moment for VOICE and CONCORD to develop a common position paper on '**Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development: Towards a more joined up approach enhancing resilience and impact**'. Key recommendations included:

- Ensure sustained political commitment for LRRD, developing an Action Plan which includes clear definitions and makes EU LRRD efforts transparent and progress measurable
- Ensure that LRRD, disaster risk reduction and risk management are integrated in development programming in disaster prone countries and protracted crises, and that the programmes are developed in consultation with civil society
- Establish concrete linkages between humanitarian aid and development cooperation programmes to ensure LRRD while preserving their specific comparative advantages, ensuring efficient use of funding with highest possible impact
- Improve donor coordination between humanitarian and development actors at all levels
- Ensure adequate funding for LRRD and funding mechanisms that are timely, predictable and flexible, using the different financial instruments available in a balanced way

The paper was launched at the **Parliament's Hearing on LRRD** on September 3rd, which was held at the request of VOICE. At the Hearing, Südwind Institute presented the results of their study on "*Strengthening LRRD in the EU's financing instruments for development and humanitarian aid under the MFF 2014-2020*", which was commissioned by the EP. The study took into account the main VOICE messages which were shared with the consultants before the summer.

VOICE members also presented the main messages to **Mr. Gressly, the regional Humanitarian Coordinator for Sahel**. VOICE members stressed the importance of ensuring that DEVCO and the EU delegations are fully supportive of LRRD at all levels.

At the same time, VOICE members and Secretariat were requested to give input to an EP consultation on the next **Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI)**. Several points were raised, including that the main challenge with regards to LRRD funding is that short term funding cycles lack sustainability and long term ones lack flexibility, and that development programmes cannot be adapted to a new

situation after a disaster. Several ideas on how to overcome this gap were shared, such as including an envelope with flexible non-programmed funding in the DCI, which can be used for LRRD.

Given the large-scale attention to LRRD in 2012, VOICE devoted its May edition of the **VOICE Out Loud** newsletter to the topic. Members wrote about LRRD in Haiti, Afghanistan and Liberia, while more conceptual articles discussed the evolution in the thinking around LRRD and the link with the concept of 'resilience'. This was complemented by Member States' perspective on LRRD (Ireland and Sweden).

The year-long campaigning around LRRD also fed into other policy processes in the autumn, when the EC launched its **Communication on the EU Approach to Resilience**. Given that better community resilience is a shared goal between humanitarian and development actors, VOICE continuously stresses the need for LRRD and Disaster Risk Reduction as concrete elements of the resilience agenda.

1.5.2 Disaster Risk Reduction

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) aims to minimize vulnerabilities and disaster risks throughout a society, to avoid (prevention) or to limit (mitigation and preparedness) the adverse impacts of natural hazards. Time and again evidence shows that DRR pays off, in terms of saving people's lives and livelihoods, and in diminishing the future need for humanitarian aid. VOICE thus continues to raise awareness of the need for DRR, particularly through its specialized working group (WG). This WG is the main NGO reference point on DRR for EU institutions and acts as an active forum for information sharing between NGO DRR experts across Europe, as well as with other actors such as the Red Cross and the US-based NGO network InterAction.

In the beginning of 2012 DG ECHO shared with the WG an 'Issues Paper on DRR', as a first step towards the development of an ECHO DRR policy. The WG highlighted in particular the need to develop links and coherence between DRR actions of DG ECHO and DG DEVCO as well as of other development actors. Later in the year, VOICE again gave input to the draft **ECHO DRR policy**.

VOICE also kept monitoring the **Implementation Plan for the EU Strategy on DRR for Developing Countries**. In advance of a related Council meeting in June, VOICE however had to emphasize the lack of any visible progress in the implementation of this plan due to lack of engagement by both the EU institutions and Member States. In general, DRR is still too little included in development policy.

On the occasion of the International Day for DRR, 13 October, and linking up with the EC Communication on resilience, VOICE launched a statement entitled '**Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) - a fundamental element of building resilience**'.

- DRR should be prioritized in development programming
- A focus on risk will lead to more effective assistance for vulnerable populations
- Better coordination and an LRRD approach are needed for efficiency and effectiveness
- A concerted global approach to building resilience can be supported by post-2015 frameworks
- DRR should be adequately funded under EU and Member State development budget lines
- Funding for DRR should reflect real risks
- DRR funding should be accessible to NGOs as development and humanitarian actors for programmes at local, national and international level

In November, VOICE members CARE Netherlands, ICCO and Cordaid organised a **learning event** on the linkages between LRRD, Resilience and DRR in The Hague. The event provided an opportunity to discuss the policy implications of the concept of 'resilience' and the possibilities and challenges of linking development and emergency aid work, from the viewpoint of promoting DRR and Resilience.

While the WG is primarily focused on EU policy relevant to DRR, WG members also engaged in wider relevant policy debates, for example around the Rio+20 conference, which recognised that DRR must be integrated further in the post-2015 development agenda (post-MDGs). In order to make policy makers aware of the importance of DRR in post-2015 frameworks, including a strong successor for the Hyogo framework on DRR, the DRR WG will develop a series of DRR publications for dissemination in the build-up to the 2013 Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction.

2. STRENGTHENING VOICE MEMBERS' COLLECTIVE INFLUENCES

As a cornerstone throughout the work of VOICE, the role and added value of NGOs is stressed. 2012 was special for the network, as we celebrated our 20th birthday. This received attention throughout the year, including a **high-level birthday event** on the eve of the VOICE General Assembly around the role of humanitarian NGOs past and future. The event was chaired by outgoing VOICE President Dr. Eberwein and welcomed three panellists selected from outside the NGO sector to critically reflect on the NGO sector. Dr. Fink-Hooijer (Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Georgieva) focused on the achievements of DG ECHO over the last two decades and its plans as it prepares for the challenges in the future. Prof. Hilhorst (Wageningen University) considered that the humanitarian community had made great progress in saving lives, but now needed to become better at saving livelihoods and societies. Dr. Slim (University of Oxford) reflected on the role of NGOs as a crucial expression of civil society, able to facilitate local voices in global debates. In his view, some of the main achievements in the sector were the increasingly global coverage of humanitarian needs and increased professionalization.

In order to increase understanding of the work of NGOs among politicians and the wider public, the 2012 VOICE General Assembly, approved a resolution outlining NGO added value:

'What humanitarian NGOs are all about' (summary):

- NGOs are the main deliverers of humanitarian aid
- NGOs provide principled aid
- NGOs are able to deliver humanitarian aid where it is most needed
- NGOs have a wealth of specialised expertise
- NGOs work in close partnership with national and local civil society
- NGOs are well equipped to build resilience of crisis-affected populations
- NGOs seek to constantly improve the quality of their work

After 20 years, VOICE is a strong and active network. Preparation for the future was particularly focused on a new **Strategic Plan for 2013 – 2017** structured around the following objectives:

1. To ensure the policies, practices and funding of EU and Member State institutions relevant to humanitarian aid are increasingly adherent to core humanitarian principles and good practice
2. To increase the recognition of NGOs as key actors in the delivery of humanitarian aid, by EU, Member States and other relevant stakeholders
3. To increase the effectiveness of VOICE collective action in pursuit of quality humanitarian aid
4. To increase the capability of the VOICE network to meet the needs of the current and future operating environment

Through information sharing and collaboration in working groups and task forces, the VOICE network builds positions which are brought to the attention of EU decision makers, both at Member State level and in Brussels. Long established relations with these bodies facilitate exchange on common areas of concern. The sections below highlight the main issues addressed with different interlocutors in 2012.

2.1 THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION: DG ECHO

In 2012, VOICE reasserted its position as the main NGO interlocutor with the European Commission on humanitarian aid issues. The relevance of the network as a focal point and facilitator of collective NGO action was also reconfirmed by DG ECHO through renewed financial support towards some of the network's activities.

Exchange with DG ECHO took place at several levels. In March 2012 the VOICE Board met for a high-level dialogue with the **ECHO Director General, Mr. Sørensen**. Issues discussed included the FPA, consortia, the Humanitarian Consensus, the EU Comprehensive Approach, LRRD and Civil Protection. At the VOICE General Assembly in May, the ECHO Director for Resources, Partnerships and Operational Support, Mr. Schwarzenbrunner, discussed with VOICE members the crisis in the Sahel, the EU Aid Volunteers, the Emergency Response Centre and the FPA. In addition, the VOICE Secretariat regularly exchanges with staff in the three directorates of ECHO.

On March 20th, more than 600 people gathered to celebrate the **20th birthday of DG ECHO** and to discuss the challenges of humanitarian aid in the 21st century. The VOICE President Wolf Eberwein participated in the **high-level discussion panel** including Commissioner Georgieva, the first Humanitarian Commissioner, the President of ICRC, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Secretary General of VOICE member NRC. The President stressed the importance of the humanitarian principles and reflected on the difficult trade-off that organisations have to make between access to populations, security and speaking out on abuses by conflict parties. In addition, he applauded ECHO for being one of the most principled donors and highlighted the importance of keeping a distinction between political objectives and the objective of humanitarian aid: saving lives and reducing suffering.

In October, the newly elected VOICE President Nicolas Borsinger met with **Commissioner Georgieva**, discussing the necessity of a new Consensus Action Plan and emphasizing the need for further clarifications of the EU Aid Volunteers' Regulation. Regarding the FPA revision process, VOICE stressed the importance of working with incentives rather than sanctions and the need for more simplification, as well as the fact that visibility of EU humanitarian aid should be a shared responsibility between partners and DG ECHO.

As ECHO is continuing to develop sectoral policies, VOICE members have been sharing their expertise. VOICE members very much welcomed **ECHO's draft gender policy**, which in principle will be supported by an Action Plan that introduces a gender marker as one of the tools to implement the policy. Members stressed the need to match both the policy and the marker with adequate gender capacities in ECHO and not to forget the principle of simplification when creating new policies. Moreover, while a gender market can be useful, a general gender analysis is more important, making sure it does not become a 'tick-box' exercise.

VOICE also gave input to a number of **ECHO-commissioned studies**, such as the evaluation and review of humanitarian access strategies. It aimed at showing what DG ECHO, its partners and other humanitarian actors have done to enhance access in a wide range of crisis contexts as well as producing recommendations for ECHO. Other studies focused on the "potential effectiveness and efficiency gains of working directly with local NGOs in ECHO's humanitarian interventions" and on under-nutrition in emergencies.

change to the e-tool system. Towards the end of the year, the group's interaction with ECHO began to focus on the revision of the FPA, and this will be the key area of work for 2012.

2.1.1 Ensuring a workable Framework Partnership Agreement

The Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) governs the contractual relations between ECHO and its NGO partners. The FPA Watch Group, facilitated by VOICE, represents all ECHO NGO partners in the monitoring, review and consultation of the FPA. It remains a cornerstone of VOICE work and has strong engagement from NGOs.

In mid-2012 the Watch Group underwent its periodic renewal. The reconstituted Watch Group has 37 member organisations, representing a total of 77 FPA partners from 17 countries. The Watch Group is led by a Task Force (TF) which since the renewal consists of Médecins du Monde, Action Contre la Faim, Handicap International, CARE, COOPI, Oxfam, Save the Children, Cordaid and the International Rescue Committee.

The current FPA dates from 2008 and will come to an end in December 2013. The evaluation of the current FPA and preparation of the new FPA were thus key areas of work in 2012. It resulted in a particularly intense year, with eight meetings of the Watch Group and/or Task Force, and three additional 'brainstorming' meetings with ECHO to discuss the FPA concept.

February-March: For the first time ECHO commissioned an external evaluation of the FPA. VOICE highlighted the importance of simplification and reducing the administrative burden of ECHO reporting, and encouraged the consultants to look at the concept of partnership in a wider sense beyond technicalities. The final report broadly reflects key NGO messages.

April- May: The WG participated in three brainstorming sessions organised by ECHO on the results-based approach, performance, accountability, partner differentiation and grouping

July: The WG exchanged with ECHO about e-tools, Humanitarian Implementation Plans and liquidation

September-October: The Watch Group noted the draft FPA concept note from ECHO included recommendations and suggestions from the group. Key messages were developed and shared with other VOICE members in preparation for the ECHO annual partner conference in October, which focused primarily on the FPA.

November: The Watch Group began discussion with ECHO on how the concept note might translate into development of FPA texts, which will continue in 2013.

As the FPA revision will also have implications for other partners of DG ECHO, VOICE has shared NGO concerns with UN agencies and the IFRC, and will continue this interaction.

Based on lessons learnt from working with the FPA, and in the long-term perspective of seeking both simplified reporting and transparency in funding flows, VOICE gave input to a working group of the 'International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions' on accountability of humanitarian aid. Several member organisations engaged with a pilot project to explore a proposed framework for reporting humanitarian funding flows.

2.1.2 Civil Protection

Civil protection became a part of the portfolio of DG ECHO in 2010, and is increasingly involved in disaster response outside the EU. The network is monitoring this integration, looking at how synergies and complementarity with humanitarian aid- which has a separate legislation- is developing.

At the end of 2011, the European Commission launched its **legislative proposal for EU civil protection**. Several VOICE recommendations were taken into account, including a reference to the Oslo and MCDA guidelines for the use of military and civil defense assets in natural disasters and conflict situations, and the importance of humanitarian needs assessments as the basis for decision making on the use of civil protection assets. While the Consensus states that *"in complex emergencies recourse to civil protection assets should rather be the exception"*, this VOICE message was not reflected in the Commission text, but it was included in the report of the responsible Environment Committee in the European Parliament. Given the governmental nature of civil protection, its engagement in conflict situations may pose challenges to humanitarian actors. Negotiations around the legislative proposal with the Member States are still ongoing.

On the same topic, VOICE President Nicolas Borsinger gave a speech at a conference on 'EU Governance of Global Emergencies', stressing the importance of clear roles and mandates for the various actors engaged in humanitarian settings and the need for civil protection to be complementary to humanitarian aid.

2.2 BRINGING VOICE MESSAGES TO MEMBER STATES

2.2.1 At national level

At Member State level, VOICE members play a key role in ensuring that VOICE messages are known by the relevant representatives in their government and national parliament. VOICE Board members facilitate these efforts and have often been crucial in the strengthening of humanitarian discussions at national level, including by creating specialised fora. Activities at national level are assisted by the VOICE Secretariat, both through information sharing and face-to-face meetings. The work on the long term EU budget (MFF) activated member organisations particularly strongly in 2012, triggering new meetings and events, and leading to an increase of invitations to the VOICE Secretariat to explain this and other EU processes.

In preparation of the French government's plan to develop a humanitarian strategy, '**Le Forum Espace Humanitaire**' was organized for the third time in January 2012. It brought together the Presidents and Directors of all French humanitarian NGOs with representatives of government, the EU, media and the wider humanitarian community for informal discussions on humanitarian trends and challenges. The VOICE perspective was presented by the President and the Director. The VOICE Director also spoke at several events organized by French members, making the link between national and EU humanitarian policy. In addition, VOICE has been visible in the French media, when national daily newspaper 'Les Echos' (about 120.000 readers) wanted to include an EU perspective in their story on multinational NGOs '*Les ong, des entreprises presque comme les autres*', by interviewing VOICE and CONCORD.

On the occasion of the **Danish presidency of the EU**, the VOICE Secretariat briefed Danish VOICE members on EU humanitarian concerns, after which a fruitful and open exchange took place between the NGOs and the presidency's leading representative on humanitarian aid. The VOICE Director, together with ODI and ICRC, spoke at a workshop on "*Humanitarian Space and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid*", at a conference organised by CONCORD Denmark. The conference resulted in a number of messages to EU decision makers: the importance of investing more in local capacity building, of ensuring flexibility in funding mechanisms, of supporting DRR and building local resilience to shocks, and the need for EU institutions and Member States to respect the Consensus. The separation of humanitarian aid from political objectives was a topic in the debate between participants and Mr. Pierre Vimont, Secretary General of the EEAS.

NGO briefings were also organised for members at national level, for example in the Netherlands, where a new humanitarian working group was established and in Italy, where the VOICE network gained strength through new members and where a new national NGO platform was established in 2012. In addition, the President and secretariat have spoken at numerous **events**, strengthening the visibility of the network at national level, particularly in France and Germany who have both developed a new humanitarian strategy in 2012. For example, the VOICE President was rapporteur of a conference organised in Berlin by VOICE members Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe and Caritas Germany together with the Red Cross and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on '*The humanitarian dilemma: neutrality of humanitarian aid in conflict*'.

2.2.2 Through the rotating presidencies of the Council of the European Union

Another way of influencing Member States' policy is through building up a strong line of contact with the **Council Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA)**. The COHAFA brings together the humanitarian experts of the Member States. In 2012 a number of VOICE members actively engaged with the COHAFA, bringing their expertise to the meetings. The secretariat developed good working relationships with the rotating chairs, informing the COHAFA's discussions on specific country situations, building on members concerns and observations in the field. VOICE position papers are also widely shared with COHAFA members.

Denmark's presidency aimed to make the work of COHAFA more relevant and visible, organising two events bringing together Member States, other donors, UN humanitarian actors and NGOs. On February 8, a high-level meeting on the food crisis in the Sahel was organized. VOICE member Oxfam highlighted the importance of acting more swiftly to save lives, reacting quicker to early warnings, and managing the risk of a high probability-high impact crisis rather than managing the crisis when it has already hit. The VOICE Director stressed the need to strengthen preparedness and early response, as well as the need for a regional DRR strategy.

On February 29, UN integration and humanitarian space was discussed. VOICE member NRC explained why UN integration matters to NGOs, and strongly stressed that if the UN is aligned to one side in a conflict, there should be no integration of humanitarian aid with the political and/or military mission. Also the risk of decreasing humanitarian coordination as a result of tensions around UN integration was emphasized. In the COHAFA meeting in May, VOICE member DanChurchAid addressed the EU Member States on the situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

In July, **Cyprus** took over the **presidency** of the EU, focusing on the draft Regulation on the European Aid Volunteers (see above), food and nutrition. With regard to the latter, the Cypriots held a workshop on "Cash Transfer Programming in Emergencies" on July 11th. VOICE member Save the Children gave a presentation on the effects emergencies have on nutrition and provided evidence on responding to nutritional problems with cash transfers. In advance of the COHAFA retreat in November which focused on EU Aid Volunteers, VOICE shared key messages with the Chair.

2.3 WORKING WITH THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

During 2012, VOICE upheld its strong working relationship with the **Development Committee** in the European Parliament (EP), briefing MEPs, advisors of the political parties and the secretariat on its priorities. The good connection with the **Standing Humanitarian Rapporteur of the European Parliament**, Mrs. Striffler, resulted in meetings on civil protection, DRR and the EU Aid Volunteers. VOICE was also visible in the European Parliament on several occasions, such as the EP Hearing on Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development (*see above*).

Building on the work started in 2011, VOICE strengthened its network also beyond traditional humanitarian contacts. For example, VOICE was invited to **brief the Budgetary Control Committee** on February 7th, in advance of their visit to **Haiti**, which served to look into the spending of EU aid funding after the 2010 earthquake. VOICE members World Vision, Plan International, Médecins du Monde and ADRA, together with the Secretariat, briefed MEPs on the situation on the ground. Messages were shared with regards to access to education and health care, child protection, sexual and gender-based violence as well as land ownership. Also the importance of DRR and LRRD was stressed.

Links with the **Foreign Affairs Committee** (AFET) were also strengthened. VOICE participated in an NGO delegation who met with the Chair MEP Brok, raising concerns around the EU civil protection legislation, the MFF and the EU's approach in Somalia and Libya. Similar issues were discussed with MEP Brantner. In mid-2012, the AFET-subcommittee on **Security and Defence** drafted a report on the role of security and defence policy in climate-driven crises and natural disasters. The aim of the report was an increased use of EU military and of civilian crisis management in natural disasters, but the report initially did not take into account existing practices. A concerted advocacy effort by the VOICE Secretariat and other humanitarian actors successfully led to the inclusion of important humanitarian concerns:

- Reference to Oslo and MCDA guidelines and European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid
- Confirmation that the humanitarian mandate and the humanitarian principles as set out in the Lisbon Treaty must be respected
- The need to avoid any duplication with existing instruments for humanitarian aid and civil protection
- Recognition of the role of UNOCHA in crises outside the EU
- Recognition of the importance of Disaster Risk Reduction to reduce the impact of crises on affected populations

2.4 HOW WE WORK

The main objective of VOICE is to influence EU humanitarian policy, by raising awareness, but also by influencing the relevant documents through giving concrete, detailed input. In order to achieve that aim, VOICE engages extensively in outreach, establishing contacts, attending meetings and networking in order to build trust and gather intelligence. The main target groups remain the relevant ministries in Member States, the European Parliament and Commission.

The internal newsletter, '**VOICE Flash**', is the main means of sharing information inside the VOICE network and is much appreciated by members. The Flash is produced by the Secretariat to give members an update on policy processes, advocacy opportunities and activities of the network. In 2012, six Flashes were produced, as well as three special Advocacy Flashes, which sought to prepare members for important meetings (e.g. the ECHO Annual Partners Conference). These Flashes reached 419 readers per issue by the end of 2012, representing a 13% increase since last year.

As an example, the box demonstrates the progression of information shared on Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) in the Flash throughout the year.

March: Results of member questionnaire indicate that VOICE members consider LRRD as the highest priority to influence in terms of sectoral policy area.

April: Presentation of VOICE and CONCORD's initiative to establish a common position on LRRD. Sharing of key LRRD messages put forward in a closed meeting called by the EP on the next Development Cooperation Instrument.

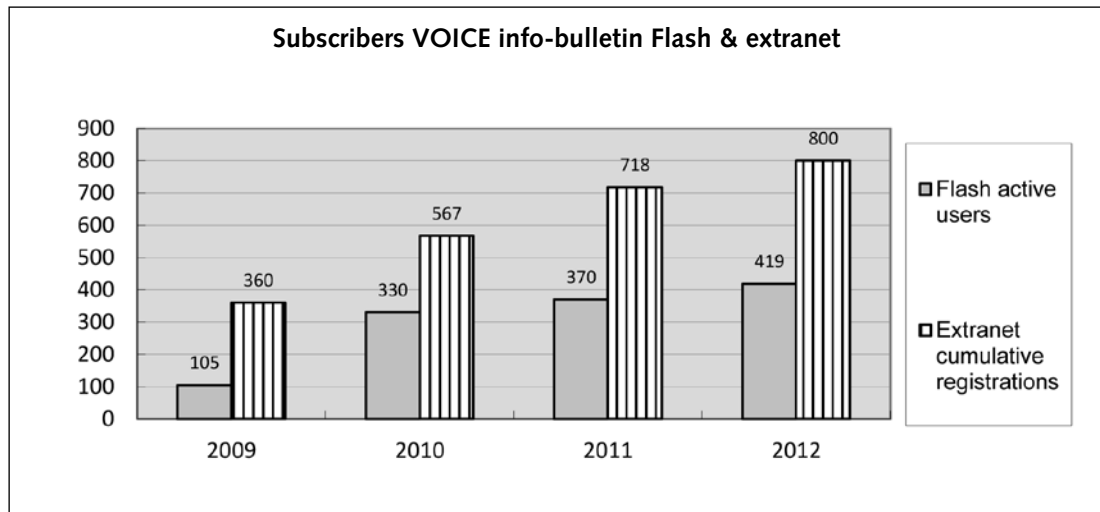
June: Sharing information on the on-going debates on resilience where LRRD messages were promoted, especially regarding the forthcoming EC communication on resilience. Explanation of this process and how to give input.

August: Presentation of the VOICE-CONCORD position paper and forthcoming VOICE advocacy activities for EP hearing and study. Identifying key actors to lobby.

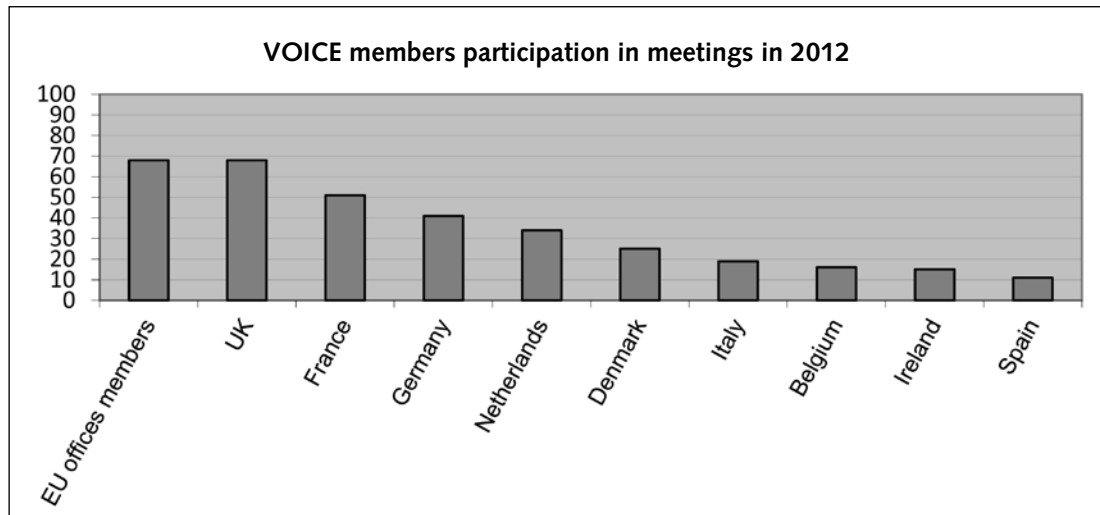
October: Presentation of outcome of EP Hearing and outline of feedback on the position paper, as well as follow-up actions.

December: Feedback from the comments raised on the EC communication on resilience by VOICE president during his meeting with Commissioner Georgieva. Analysis of HIP meetings and identification of LRRD trends in ECHO programming.

In between Flashes, the **extranet** - an internal website for members only - serves as a key reference tool and archive. It includes sections on VOICE advocacy priorities, VOICE governance documents, sections from working groups as well as sections with key EU documents related to ongoing emergencies (e.g. Syria, Sahel, Somalia).



Positioning builds on mutual information sharing, but also **working groups and task forces** are crucial to capitalise on the wealth of professional experience and expertise which VOICE members have. In 2012, 43 % of VOICE member organisations participated in working group or task force meetings, with a total number of 178 individual participations.



Note: the figures are counted as participations in meetings of working groups, task forces, events and Board of Directors. These statistics reflect the number of members at national level (most members in UK, France and Germany and about 15 members have EU offices in Brussels).

Some of the most active members in 2012 (*counted as participation in meetings*) were Action Contre la Faim, Norwegian Refugee Council, ICCO, Handicap International France, Save the Children EU, International Rescue Committee, Médecins du Monde France, CARE International EU, Concern Worldwide and Danish Refugee Council. In addition, there are of course other ways to be active in the network, such as by giving written input for consultations and questionnaires. Members also increasingly request feedback from the Secretariat, either in the form of advice on particular publications or advocacy processes, or through face-to-face meetings. In 2012 we have met with over 30 member organisations. New in 2012 was the development of country-specific advocacy messages by members for the EU presidencies. The Secretariat for its part is now regularly facilitating members' participation in meetings with high-level visitors or consultants.

All of these activities together support the building of a vibrant network.

3. OUTREACH AND VISIBILITY WITHIN AND BEYOND THE HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

3.1 COLLABORATION WITH HUMANITARIAN ACTORS

In the EU 'capital' Brussels, VOICE continued its dialogue with other key humanitarian actors such as the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). Common messages were developed on the EU Aid Volunteers initiative (*see above*) and perspectives were shared with regards to political and institutional developments.

In 2012 the contact was particularly strong with **UNOCHA**, as the Brussels office facilitated several exchanges between VOICE members and high-level OCHA visitors. VOICE members exchanged with the Regional Coordination for Sahel on LRRD (*see above*) as well as with the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, talking about operations, EU policy on Somalia and advocacy towards the EU. On October 2nd, VOICE members had the opportunity to meet with Catherine Bragg, the Deputy Head of UNOCHA, who focused on how to improve the inclusivity of the humanitarian system. Participants stressed the need to look at the functioning of the transformative agenda in 'normal' humanitarian settings, rather than only focusing on large scale (L3) crises. VOICE also participated in the monthly exchanges between the OCHA Director of Operations, John Ging, and NGOs, sharing concerns from members with regards to particular emergencies. Lastly, input was given to an OCHA study on accountability to affected populations.

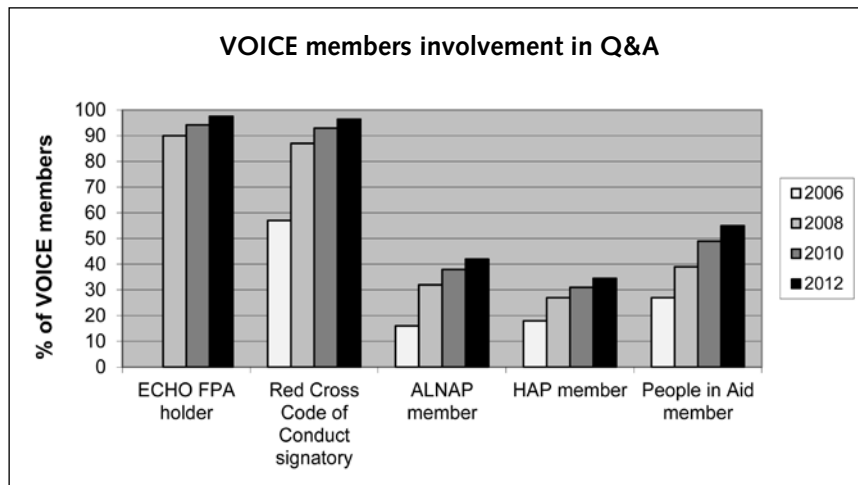
Outside Brussels, VOICE exchanges regularly with NGO consortium **ICVA**, based in Geneva to multiply each other's messages and ensure complementarity of each other's work. In 2012, ICVA and VOICE issued a common statement on Syria (*see above*), promoted the World Humanitarian Day together and participated in each other's General Assemblies. Together with **InterAction** in the US, the two networks made recommendations to the Joint Standards Initiative (*see below*).

Through events and activities, VOICE brings together NGOs and humanitarian stakeholders beyond the network's membership. Over 2011 and 2012, VOICE activities facilitated exchange between a total of 126 humanitarian NGOs and 34 other humanitarian stakeholders (including UN, International Organisations, networks, platforms and think tanks). VOICE also participated in numerous events and exchanges to network, to present the NGO perspective, and to keep abreast of wider developments which have an impact on the sector. To name but a few:

- IASC Task Force on Humanitarian Space, Integration and Civil-military relations
- European Development Days
- Aidex Conference
- Annual MSF congress in Berlin
- Workshop by MSI on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Emergencies
- ICRC-EUISS Colloquium on "Urban Violence and Humanitarian Challenges"
- Exchanges with Groupe URD, GPPI, Channel Research, OECD-DAC, European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), Humanitarian Forum, CONCORD FDR working group on funding,...

3.2 PROMOTING QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

VOICE has a longstanding engagement to **quality and accountability (Q&A) initiatives**.



Note: These are the Q&A initiatives to which an organisation subscribes, but on top of that there are numerous others, such as the Sphere standards, which VOICE members use but cannot subscribe to.

In 2012, two initiatives related to quality and standards emerged, which could have a significant impact on the future of the humanitarian aid sector: the Joint Standard Initiative (JSI) and the SCHR certification project. The **SCHR certification project** aims to develop a certification system for humanitarian organisations. The **Joint Standards Initiative (JSI)** project is a collaboration between the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP), People In Aid and the Sphere Project, and aims to achieve greater coherence for stakeholders and users of humanitarian standards. In order to ensure members' voice in the process, the secretariat organised an event in October: *"Standards Convergence and Certification: the future of quality in humanitarian aid or a threat to diversity?"*

The event aimed to provide an introduction to both initiatives and enable a better understanding of their respective aims and potential implications, through discussions with representatives from both projects. As a follow-up step, VOICE, together with NGO networks ICVA and InterAction, wrote a letter to the JSI, laying down some key principles to be observed in the process.

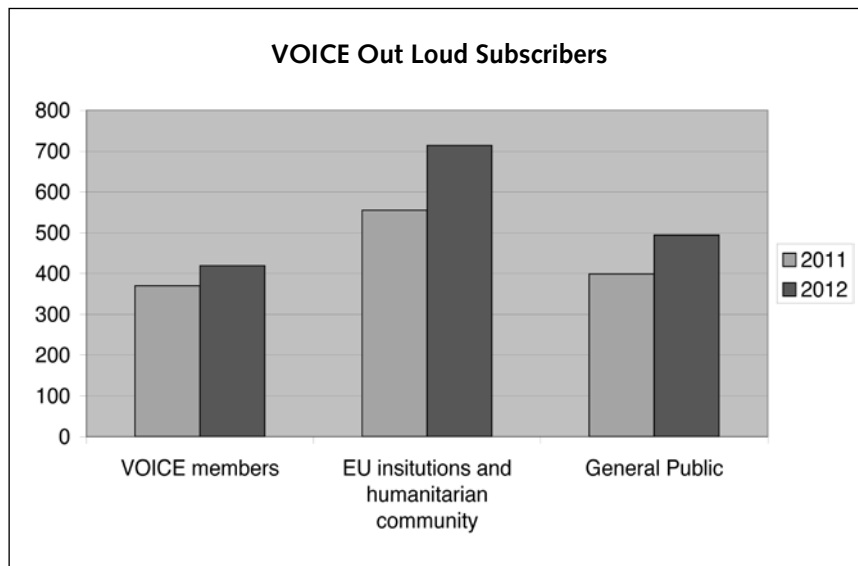
In line with the importance of this topic in 2012, the second **VOICE Out Loud** newsletter of the year focused on **"What is accountability in the humanitarian sector?"** In the search for quality humanitarian aid, the word 'accountability' is often mentioned in the same breath as 'effectiveness' and 'efficiency'. But what does it really mean? In this issue, VOICE members reflected on what it means to be accountable to donors, affected populations, staff, the wider public and across the sector.

In addition, VOICE maintains a good relationship with the **NOHA network**, which brings together European universities for a master's degree programme in humanitarian aid. The VOICE Secretariat participated in panels in the NOHA Intensive Programme in Warsaw on networks and partnership and in the Fall School in Brussels on fundraising and donors. Numerous lectures were also given to students visiting Brussels to get to know the political functioning of the EU better. Raising awareness of principled humanitarian action especially among young people - the decision makers of tomorrow - is an important task.

VOICE also stayed engaged with other initiatives aiming to improve quality in the sector, such as DARA, the Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) project and the "Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance" (ELRHA) initiative around professionalization. VOICE continued to be a full member of ALNAP and an Associate Member of People in Aid and promotes their activities among members.

3.2 VOICE VISIBILITY THROUGH WEBSITE, VOICE OUT LOUD AND MEDIA

The most widely disseminated product of the VOICE network is the twice-yearly **newsletter VOICE Out Loud**. Linking up with pertinent ongoing discussions, the first issue of the year (Vol. 15) focused on Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) and was released in May, while the second issue (Vol.16), released in October, looked at accountability (see above). VOICE Out Loud is written by members to showcase the NGO field reality to a wider public, and in 2012 it increased its relevance even further by adding the perspective of EU Member States and other relevant external people. Interviews have for example appeared with Commissioner Georgieva, ECHO Director-General Sørensen, EP Humanitarian Rapporteur Michèle Striffler and DARA Director-General Ross Mountain. VOICE Out Loud is distributed both electronically and as print copies to over 1600 people. The newsletter is also freely downloadable on the VOICE website, increasing the number of readers per issue even further. Outreach, including far beyond the EU context, has increased substantially, with almost daily subscriptions via the VOICE website.



In 2012 the **VOICE website** continued to serve as an important platform for knowledge sharing to a wide number of stakeholders seeking to better understand the role, realities and advocacy work of NGOs in European humanitarian assistance. The website acts as a multiplier to ongoing advocacy and information activities. Through the news items, readers were able to deepen their knowledge on diverse issues such as VOICE members' recommendations to decision makers on the Sahel crisis, priorities for action in Mali and the selection of VOICE members' projects for funding by the EU Nobel Peace Prize. An RSS feed was added to the website to assist interested readers.

4. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS OF THE NETWORK

4.1 VOICE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Through individual and family representations, a total of 70 VOICE member organisations participated in the 2012 General Assembly, representing 83% of the total membership of the network. The GA also saw the participation of ICVA, MSF and SCHR as observers.

The General Assembly thanked Dr. Wolf Eberwein for his strong commitment and leadership of the network in the last four years. Members **elected** Mr. Nicolas Borsinger to lead the network as President for the next three years. After working for 14 years for the ICRC, both in the field and at headquarters, Mr. Borsinger has been the Executive Director of the Foundation "Pro Victimis" since March 2000. Two new Board members were also elected: Nicholas Martlew (Save the Children UK) and Peter Runge (CARE Deutschland Luxemburg e.V.). The members also approved the **VOICE Strategic Plan 2013 – 2017 and VOICE 2012 resolution** (see above).

4.2 VOICE NETWORK MEMBERS IN 2012

VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor with the European Union on emergency aid and disaster risk reduction and it promotes the values of humanitarian NGOs. In 2012, the network was composed of 84 operational European NGOs active in humanitarian aid worldwide, which are based in 18 European countries. The network's Secretariat is based in Brussels. VOICE, unlike its members, is not operational in emergencies.

VOICE members are dedicated to saving lives, preventing suffering, and bringing swift humanitarian relief to the most vulnerable groups. They base their work on the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality. They are committed to follow relevant codes of conduct including the "*Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in disaster relief*". They seek to include a participatory approach with their local partners and to link relief, rehabilitation and development in order to ensure the sustainability of their interventions. Most VOICE members had a Framework Partnership Agreement with DG ECHO in 2012.

4.3 VOICE BOARD

The role of the VOICE Board is to ensure that VOICE adheres to its purpose and statutes. It decides on strategic directions and policies, provides governance and accountability, and ensures proper management of the network. The Board members contribute their professional experience on a voluntary basis, and as such represent the broader membership of the VOICE network.

The Board met six times in 2012, with several additional teleconferences. Much attention was devoted to the preparation of the forthcoming strategic plan, based on consultations with members and external stakeholders and through discussing achievements of the current strategic plan (2008-2012). Also ongoing was the monitoring of trends and some discussion on main network priorities such as the FPA, the 2013 humanitarian budget and the MFF, and the comprehensive approach communication. In addition, the Board had high-level interactions with the European Commissioner and the Director General of DG ECHO, and interviewed applicant member organisations.

At the end of 2012, the VOICE Board was comprised of (on picture from left to right): Brian Ingle (Plan UK), Youri Saadallah (Norwegian Refugee Council), Evert Van Bodegom (ICCO, Netherlands), Nicolas Borsinger (VOICE President), Dominic Crowley (Concern Worldwide, Ireland), Nicholas Martlew (Save the Children UK), Peter Runge (CARE Deutschland-Luxemburg), Sandrine Chopin (Handicap International France), Jean-Michel Grand (Action Against Hunger UK) and Marek Stys (People in Need, Czech Republic)- co-opted in October 2012 (*not in the picture*).



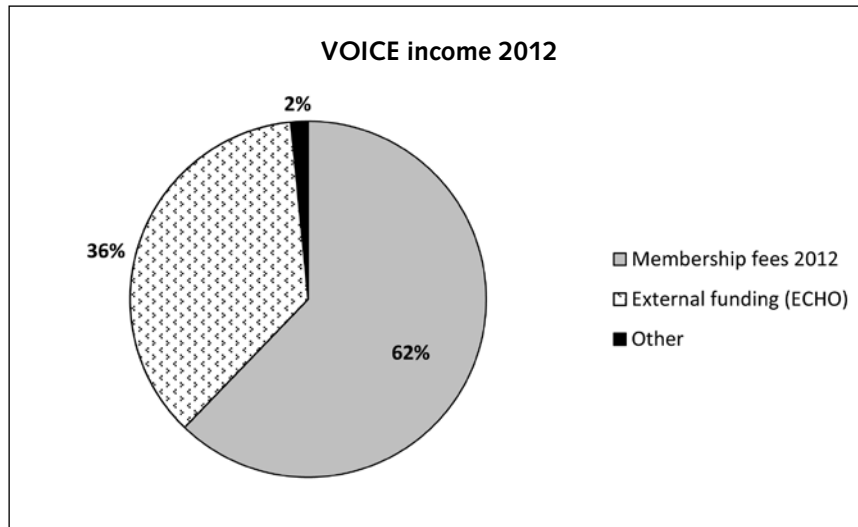
The Executive Committee (ExCom) oversees the functioning of the Secretariat and guarantees the financial and legal accountability of VOICE on behalf of the Board. 2012 saw some changes in the composition of the ExCom. New President Nicolas Borsinger took over from outgoing President Wolf-Dieter Eberwein, while the Treasurer position went from Sid Peruvemba to Jean-Michel Grand. Evert Van Bodegom was Secretary throughout the year. The Director of the VOICE Secretariat (Kathrin Schick) is part of the ExCom without a vote. The ExCom met three times in 2012.

4.4 VOICE SECRETARIAT

The VOICE Secretariat is responsible for facilitating the activities indicated in the Annual Work Programme and Strategic Plan. It is also in charge of the financial management of the association, under the supervision and general control of the VOICE Board.

The staff of the VOICE Secretariat in 2012 included the Director (Kathrin Schick), Programme Coordinator (Mags Bird), Advocacy and Communication Officer (Inge Brees) and Office Administrator (Guillaume Brouillet). A Policy and Communication Assistant (Veera Haapaniemi) supported the work of the Secretariat until September. We would also like to thank all the other persons who supported the work of the Secretariat throughout the year, including Miguel Mateos and Ludivine Cottin.

4.5 FINANCES



Financial independence is of ongoing importance to the network. In 2012, the turnover of the VOICE network as administered by the Secretariat totalled € 516,847. 62% of this was made up of membership fees (48% of this comes from individual members and 52% from families) and 38% from other funding sources. In 2011, VOICE received a two-year ECHO operating grant as co-financing for '*Strengthening NGO networking through VOICE – enhanced cooperation for collective influence towards improved quality and effectiveness of humanitarian aid*'. This provided resources for additional activities and services to members and DG ECHO partners, and enabled the network to increase its outreach and support to collective advocacy.

84 VOICE MEMBERS IN 2012

AUSTRIA

CARE Österreich
Caritas Österreich
Hilfswerk Österreich
SOS Kinderdorf International
World Vision Österreich

BELGIUM

Caritas Secours International Belgium
Handicap International Belgium
Médecins du Monde Belgium
Oxfam Solidarité - Solidariteit

CZECH REPUBLIC

People in Need (PIN)

DENMARK

ADRA Denmark - Nødhjælp og udvikling
ASF Dansk Folkehjælp
DanChurchAid (DCA)
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
Mission East - Mission Øst
Save the Children Denmark

FINLAND

FIDA International
Finn Church Aid
World Vision Finland

FRANCE

Action Contre la Faim
ACTED - Agence d'Aide à la Coopération
Technique et au Développement
CARE France
Handicap International France
Médecins du Monde France
Secours Catholique - Réseau Mondial
Caritas
Secours Islamique France
Secours Populaire Français
Solidarités International
Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF)
Triangle Génération Humanitaire

GERMANY

ADRA Deutschland e.V
Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB)
Deutschland
CARE Deutschland - Luxemburg e.V
Deutscher Caritasverband e.V (Caritas
Germany)
Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe
Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe e.V.
Malteser International
Medico International
Plan International Germany
Welthungerhilfe
World Vision Germany

GREECE

Médecins du Monde - Greece

IRELAND

Concern Worldwide
Trócaire

ITALY

Caritas Italiana
CESVI
CISP - Comitato Internazionale per lo
Sviluppo dei Popoli
GVC - Gruppo di Volontariato Civile
INTERSOS- Organizzazione Umanitaria
Onlus

LUXEMBOURG

Caritas Luxembourg

THE NETHERLANDS

CARE Nederland
Cordaid
ICCO
Oxfam Novib
World Vision Nederland
ZOA

NORWAY

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

PORTUGAL

Medicos do Mundo

SPAIN

Acción Contra el Hambre
Caritas Española
Intermón Oxfam
Médicos del Mundo

SWEDEN

Church of Sweden - Svenska kyrkan
International Aid Services (IAS)
PMU Interlife

SWITZERLAND

Medair

UNITED KINGDOM

Action Against Hunger
ActionAid
ADRA UK - Adventist Development and
Relief Agency
CARE International UK
CAFOD
Christian Aid
HelpAge International
International Medical Corps UK
International Rescue Committee (IRC UK)
Islamic Relief Worldwide
Marie Stopes International
Mercy Corps
Merlin
Oxfam GB
Plan International UK
Save the Children UK
Tearfund
World Vision UK

VOICE

VOICE stands for 'Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies'. It is a network representing 82 European non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in humanitarian aid worldwide. VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor with the European Union on emergency aid, relief, rehabilitation and disaster risk reduction. As a European network, it represents and promotes the values and specificities of humanitarian NGOs, in collaboration with other humanitarian actors.