

VOICE
Activity Report

2018

BRUSSELS, APRIL 2019



**Voluntary Organisations in
Cooperation in Emergencies**

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I am really proud to share with you many of the important achievements for VOICE in 2018.

Internationally, the so called Grand Bargain brings together donors and humanitarian agencies to work for more effective humanitarian aid and financing. Our work at global level was recognised as helping shape the Grand Bargain so that it reflects the real challenges faced by operational NGOs. Throughout 2018 it was a priority for VOICE to bring the Grand Bargain to frontline responders in the field so that they can have a say in its implementation, including at highly appreciated workshops in Somalia and Lebanon.

For the EU, developing the next Multi-Year Financial Framework for the next financial period is a long process which eventually will be decided after a new European Parliament takes place in 2019. VOICE members all over Europe successfully mobilised for more funds for the EU to cover ever increasing humanitarian needs and for a separate budget line for EU humanitarian aid.

We saw the culmination of years of collective humanitarian effort in the EU's position on an Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises which appropriately recognised the specificities, values and principles of humanitarian aid. Now it will be important to monitor the impact it might have on EU operations in the field.

For many years, NGOs have worked in the framework of linking relief, recovery and development. It was therefore only natural that VOICE members embraced the momentum when the EU launched the six country pilots for the humanitarian-development nexus. Meanwhile, the debates on the nexus have continued and VOICE members have definitively made it clear that NGOs are a part of them. They have significant operational expertise and experience to bring to the table on how the gap between humanitarian and development efforts can best be reduced.

Finally, the huge collective effort to invest in ensuring a new partnership arrangement under the next Framework Partnership Agreement led to a big success, with the Commission announcing an extension of the current arrangements to ensure a better transition. A huge thanks goes to all our members for their tenacity in following these sometimes bureaucratic processes. Our success depends on this.

The EU has a longstanding commitment to support and foster civil society as an important part of our democratic societies. The EU is recognised as a major global aid donor and works in close partnership with a diversity of NGOs, while EU citizens remain in strong support of humanitarian aid through NGOs. Nonetheless, I see that the environment for NGOs is becoming more challenging. Access to populations in need becomes ever more difficult, the impact of new restrictive measures linked to counter-terrorism legislation and sanctions is growing and legal restrictions on freedom of association are becoming more common all over the world.

The VOICE Board took a strong stance on last year's scandal on abuse, exploitation and misconduct in the aid world. The highly public and political scrutiny on the NGO sector, which followed in some member states, prompted soul-searching and housecleaning. But these are also moments to re-evaluate and improve. They are opportunities to reiterate and prove the value of an independent civil society, its attachment to transparency and the importance of accountability, solidarity and humanity for the most vulnerable and in need. I still believe our members and their work represent the best of what Europe has to offer, in all its diversity.

At EU level, the extended uncertainty around Brexit has its effect at all levels. There are questions about the impact and significance of political shifts in the EU institutions in the years to come. Globally, the humanitarian situation only gets bleaker, making holding the course to get the promise of return on the Grand Bargain ever more important. If we can't respond to all needs, and it is not our job to solve the crises, at least we know we have taken on our responsibilities and tried to make our resources stretch as far and well as they can. This makes it even more important that Member States, the European Parliament and EU citizens also maintain their support for EU humanitarian aid.

It is against this backdrop that we have been working on the next Strategic Plan for the network. Our task is to have a vision for this uncertain future and try to equip the network for it. Our aim is to be predictable in this context and maintain a steadfast support to our members.

Kathrin Schick
VOICE Director

VOICE 2018 Facts and Figures





LIST OF ACRONYMS

BREXIT	the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union
CODEV	Council Working Group on Development Cooperation
COHAFA	Council Working Group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid
CONCORD	European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development
DG	Director or Directorate General
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EC	European Commission
ECHO	the European Commission's Department for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Operations
EP	European Parliament
EPLO	European Peacebuilding Liaison Office
EU	European Union
Excom	Executive Committee of the VOICE Board
FPA	Framework Partnership Agreement
GB	Grand Bargain
GNDR	Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction
HRDN	Human Rights and Democracy Network
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross/Red Crescent
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IECAH	Institute of Studies on Conflicts and Humanitarian Action
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
LRRD	linking relief, rehabilitation and development
MFF	EU's multiannual financial framework – a multiannual framework budget
MSF	Médecins sans Frontières
NGO(s)	non-governmental organisation(s)
NNGO	national non-governmental organisation
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
SCHR	Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations

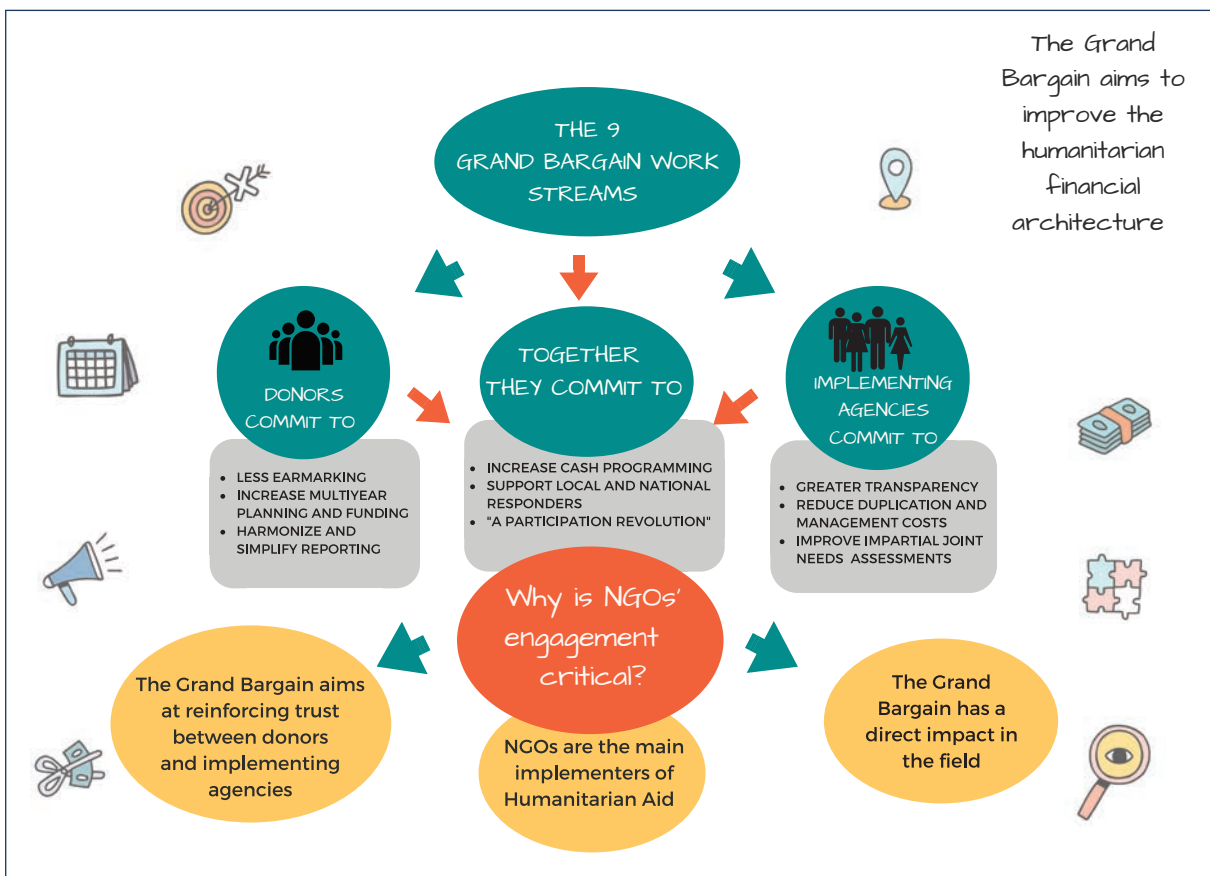
1. Making the Grand Bargain work for frontline responders



VOICE members represent a diversity of NGOs active in different sectors and responding to a wide range of needs in the field

It is the wider humanitarian community's responsibility to make the most of available resources to reach vulnerable crisis-affected people, address their most pressing basic needs and contribute to their protection. The Grand Bargain (GB) is an initiative between donors and implementing agencies that has prioritised a number of commitments between donors and aid organisations to address inefficiencies in the system and be more effective. VOICE wants to ensure non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and frontline responders are part of the process and experience its benefits. Therefore, the network is using its position to encourage the European Commission's Department for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Operations (DG ECHO) to make changes in line with the Bargain's commitments. VOICE does this through a dedicated members' task force and the Grand Bargain for NGOs project.

THE GRAND BARGAIN What is it?



FRONTLINE RESPONDERS HAVE THEIR SAY ON THE GRAND BARGAIN IN SOMALIA AND LEBANON

For the Grand Bargain to work, the voice of frontline responders needs to be heard in the implementation process and it needs to have a noticeable impact in the field. Through new partnerships with the Somali NGO Consortium and the Lebanese INGO and NNGO fora, VOICE organised workshops in Mogadishu and Beirut to help unpack the Grand Bargain for frontline responders and develop recommendations towards implementing agencies and donors in those countries. Those partnerships will be maintained in 2019 with a third country joining in soon.



Snapshot of the Lebanon workshop 2018

COLLECTING AND SHOWCASING GRAND BARGAIN INITIATIVES FOR AND FROM NGOs



The Grand Bargain for NGOs website
www.GrandBargain4NGOs.org

So far the Grand Bargain is a top-down process mostly driven by the largest actors in the humanitarian system who have signed up to the Grand Bargain. In 2018 VOICE made the significant contributions of NGOs more visible through a website (www.GrandBargain4NGOs.org) and made the process accessible to a wider range of actors. The website explains the work streams and crowdsources and showcases initiatives all over the world that are driven by NGOs and contributing to change in the system.

SAVING MORE LIVES: A THEMATIC FOCUS ON THE USE OF CASH AND REDUCING THE PAPERWORK

The use of multi-purpose cash in humanitarian aid is not new and has been promoted by NGOs since 2012. DG ECHO and the Grand Bargain signatories have embraced cash as a useful tool to support people in a more dignified manner and a good way of spending less while reaching more crisis affected people. However, shifting to large scale cash operations can present technical challenges for both donors and their NGO partners, such as ensuring appropriate targeting of the most vulnerable or monitoring the use of cash. VOICE organised a workshop in Brussels which explored the role and added value of NGOs in large scale cash transfer programmes throughout the programme cycle from needs-assessment to monitoring and coordination.

The workshop: 1) found that more lessons should be captured from large-scale cash programmes, 2) advised that donors and agencies should mind the costs, as the money, time and resources to set up cash programmes is often underestimated, 3) identified that NGOs' expertise and proximity to vulnerable people makes them essential actors, and 4) made recommendations for inclusive and accountable coordination within the cluster system.



The European Commission (EC) is often a complicated and demanding donor. Reducing the paperwork is a significant way of ensuring the focus of humanitarian NGOs and agencies can remain on life-saving activities. Being an important part of the Grand Bargain agenda and a long-standing concern of the VOICE network, a workshop on simplification was organised in Paris. It brought together NGOs to identify concrete steps that can be taken to simplify the administrative requirements associated with humanitarian aid. Participants discussed existing initiatives to harmonise reporting and examined priorities in that context. For VOICE members, simplification is also a necessary precondition for taking the localisation agenda forward with the European Union (EU) and has great potential to increase accountability and transparency.

VOICE also helped to ensure that the needs-assessment workstream had an NGO co-champion. At the annual meeting of GB signatories, the NGO networks put together a joint statement stressing the importance of sustaining the political commitment to the GB to ensure the transformative changes it calls for happen and that sufficient time and resources are made available for them to take effect. In a VOICE-VENRO organised roundtable in Berlin, members helped identify key priorities for making progress on the localisation agenda.

Thanks to our donor the Belgian Development Cooperation, to our project steering committee members Acción contra el hambre, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Norwegian Refugee Council, SCHR, and the Dutch and French Foreign Ministries, to our members engaged through the task force and to our partners in Somalia, the Somalia NGO Consortium, Caritas Lebanon, the Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum and the Lebanon NGOs Forum and the cooperation with ICVA and Coordination Sud, for driving this work forward.



A VOICE TASK FORCE THAT WORKS TOGETHER TO INFLUENCE CHANGE IN NEW YORK, BRUSSELS AND BERLIN

A dynamic task force of VOICE members is driving the network's engagement in the GB process. More than 20 NGOs bring their expertise and time to the table. On the invitation of the Austrian EU Presidency, they shared best practices from different EU member states with the Council Working Group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA), which brings together representatives from the EU member states. They also developed joint messages with other humanitarian NGO networks (SCHR, ICVA, InterAction) which were reflected in the global progress report by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) for the second year of implementation of the Grand Bargain.

2. Towards a better Framework Partnership Agreement

NGOs bring added value through high quality standards of professionalism, expertise, field presence and adaptability

The Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) between the European Commission and its humanitarian NGO partners is a key tool in ensuring predictable, timely and relevant humanitarian assistance to populations in need – enabling the quick disbursement of funds to partner NGOs to implement programmes in the field. VOICE facilitates the Watch Group, and its task force, to lead the dialogue with the European Commission on behalf of all FPA holders. In 2018 the European Commission and VOICE intensified discussions on the next FPA, which was due for adoption in 2019. The extensive collective investment of the network, from President through to task force, which the secretariat estimates so far at approximately 2700 hours, demonstrates the importance of the FPA!



 The FPA Task Force at work

SECURING A 2-YEAR EXTENSION OF THE CURRENT FPA TO ENSURE A SMOOTH TRANSITION TO AN IMPROVED FPA

The last FPA ended in December 2018. A short transition period was foreseen by DG ECHO to develop a new FPA taking into account new developments in the sector. The FPA Watch Group considered that more time was needed to finalise discussions to ensure a better and more effective new FPA and for the required changes in NGOs' and ECHO's management systems to take place before the signing of the new FPA. The VOICE President raised the issue with Commissioner Stylianides and ECHO Director General Pariat. In December FPA partners were informed that their FPAs were extended for two years. This extension was most welcomed by NGO partners in terms of ensuring predictable and timely support for humanitarian assistance through NGOs.

SUPPORTING MEMBERS IN THE CONTEXT OF BREXIT

Over the last two years, the potential impact of the United Kingdom (UK)'s decision to leave the European Union (Brexit) on the UK members of the network and on the future humanitarian budget of the EU has been given considerable attention by the VOICE Board. VOICE brokered several meetings between UK NGO partners and ECHO and remains committed to supporting them throughout the Brexit negotiation period and beyond. In December, all Swiss FPA holders were informed by DG ECHO of the seemingly sudden decision by the European Commission to exclude Swiss NGOs from direct EC humanitarian funding. VOICE is committed to support its Swiss members, as required, in order to find practical alternatives in the short, medium and long term.

WHAT NGOs WANT FROM THE NEXT FPA

In the consultations between the FPA Watch Group and DG ECHO regarding the next FPA a number of key issues for an improved partnership between the EC and its humanitarian NGO partners have been identified. Several of them are a reflection of priorities in the Grand Bargain.

- 1. Promoting diversity through differentiated partnerships:** to be better equipped to respond in the future, differentiated forms of partnership are under discussion, including consortia (or multi-party grants), support to local actors and programmatic partnerships. The objective is to make changes that make good on the opportunities provided by these differentiated partnerships for more effective humanitarian assistance, while mitigating the risks for both the European Commission and its NGO partners.
- 2. A focus on the funding cycle:** the reality of prolonged humanitarian assistance in many of today's crises requires improvements in the annual funding cycle, such as moving the EU towards multi-year planning and funding mechanisms for NGO partners.
- 3. Risk sharing:** in volatile humanitarian contexts and when a donor asks its partners to ensure they are reaching the most vulnerable and hardest to reach, there needs to be an acknowledgement that while everyone will do their utmost to get the agreed results, the risk that they do not reach them due to the circumstances, belongs to both the donor and its partners.
- 4. Simplification:** the new EC Financial Regulation gives room to simplify the FPA so NGOs can spend more time on life-saving activities and less on paperwork. However, NGOs and the EC need to be accountable for what the money is spent on and how. This is important to ensure the quality of support to crisis-affected populations and to maintain the trust of the EU taxpayer. Getting the balance right should be a key aim for the next FPA.



PREVENTION OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

A subject high on the agenda in 2018 was sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector. The VOICE Board issued a statement on 'individual misconduct and collective learning' on 20 February strongly condemning any form of abuse, exploitation and misconduct. NGOs across the continent engaged actively and are working continuously to improve and implement systems to better prevent and address sexual exploitation and abuse in the sector. In some EU member states NGOs came under public pressure to explain and address the issue. VOICE supported members to stay abreast of the EU's response and to plug into global initiatives and dialogues around efforts to improve accountability and protection in the sector.

VOICE would like to thank DG ECHO for the constructive spirit of these consultations and thanks the members of the FPA watch group and in particular its task force (Care, COOPI, EU CORD, International Rescue Committee, Médecins Du Monde, NRC, Oxfam, Save the Children) for their firm commitment on behalf of all NGO partners to making a success of the next FPA.

3. Ensuring more and better EU funding for humanitarian assistance

Globally, there is an increasing gap between humanitarian needs and funding for humanitarian aid. This can be the difference between life and death.

WHAT IS THE MFF AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The EU Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) is an agreement made between the EU member states with the consent of the European Parliament on the EU's financing for at least five years. It defines where the EU can get income from (mostly the EU member states) and how it can be spent.

Currently, for each budget item, including humanitarian aid, an indicative maximum 'commitment' per year, and a total for a seven-year period is fixed. It defines the maximum parameters for the annual budget negotiations, and should reflect the ambitions and priorities of the EU.

The next MFF is likely to run from 2021-2027. The European Commission then needs the so-called 'legal instruments' defining how each category of expenditure, including aid, is spent – some of these are renegotiated with each MFF and others when appropriate, like the Humanitarian Aid Regulation.

Invest in humanity. VOICE engagement on the next MFF



VOICE Members' engagement



Influencing the European Commission



Input to European Parliament and EU Member States



VOICE President letter



2 Position papers



Joint letter with Concord, EPLO, HRDN, EuroDad, CAN



- Keep a separate humanitarian aid instrument
- Increase the humanitarian aid allocation to answer growing needs (12,5 billion)
- Priority access to the Emergency Aid Reserve
- Ensure funding and concrete progress towards Disaster Risk Reduction and Preparedness
- Include funding and flexibility for LRRD and the humanitarian-development nexus



Commission proposal supports separate humanitarian instrument



Commission proposes humanitarian aid budget increased to 11 billion

to be continued

to 2021...



AFTER VOICE'S FIRST ADVOCACY SUCCESSES

Developing and agreeing the MFF is a long process that runs primarily at the highest political level. Key questions are dealt with like how much money are the wealthier member states going to pay into a big pot that ultimately benefits less wealthy states more? Or how or should the EU member states cover the gap left by the UK's absence in the next budget? VOICE members identified a number of messages in 2017 for the whole MFF process but ensuring that humanitarian concerns are heard throughout the process is not an easy task. 2019 brings institutional change across the Commission, European Parliament and elections in a number of EU member states, meaning that the network's first successes are not secured.

ON THE ROAD TO 2021 - MOBILISING MEMBERS FROM ROME TO HELSINKI, VIA PRAGUE, PARIS, BERLIN, WARSAW AND DUBLIN

On the long road to agreement on the MFF, VOICE members convey the collective messages with all relevant decision makers, and repeat them, for the several years it takes to get agreement. Reaching out at member state level is essential, alongside the online mobilisation and it is supported by effective work in Brussels with the European Parliament and the Council. The network has invested strongly in supporting members in their advocacy for an own budget line for humanitarian aid and more funding to cover increasing humanitarian needs. VOICE also briefed the Council Working Group on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid on priorities in 2018, in particular the MFF. Building alliances with like-minded networks, ensuring our messages are complementary and are even more widely shared, remains another priority.

WHAT ABOUT FUNDING FROM THE EU BUDGET FOR HUMANITARIAN NEEDS IN 2019?

The 2019 budget discussions were more fraught than usual. How much of the EU commitment to assistance to Turkey's support for refugees and their host communities should be contributed by member states directly, and how much should come out of the EU budget, became a hot potato in the negotiations. As a consequence, there was a risk that the humanitarian aid budget line would get overshadowed by that commitment. In support of others' actions, VOICE members mobilised at national level, and with particular support from the European Parliament's budget committee, succeeded in ensuring that the outcome meant that the bulk of the deal with Turkey was additional to the agreed MFF level for humanitarian assistance under the current MFF.

SCRUTINY OF EUROPEAN COMMISSION FUNDING TO NGOS

In 2018 the European Court of Auditors published a report on 'Transparency of EU funds implemented by NGOs'. Keen to ensure accurate representation of how NGOs operate and partner with the European Commission, VOICE worked with Civil Society Europe (an umbrella organisation) to reach out to the European Court of Auditors, and to the European Parliament's Budget Control Committee which had commissioned the report. VOICE also supported its members to prepare for follow-up to the report.

VOICE MEMBERS ARE ACTIVE IN THE EU AID VOLUNTEERS SCHEME

Most NGOs are built on voluntary engagement. The European Union has been reforming its EU Aid Volunteers scheme and its EU Solidarity Corps proposal for the next MFF. VOICE members who are part of the EU Aid Volunteers programme have been engaged, with the support of the network, with member states through the COHAFAs and the European Parliament. They pushed, inter alia, for the specific features of the humanitarian strand of the programme to be retained and that it should focus better on disaster risk reduction (DRR), resilience and capacity building.

4. Supporting members for an enabling environment to deliver humanitarian aid

VOICE members have collective positions rooted in field operations and expertise with crises affected people

VOICE aims to support its members to deliver humanitarian assistance as the environment around us is constantly changing. The basis of the network's advocacy in many areas, and in line with VOICE's first strategic objective, is ensuring EU humanitarian aid is based on humanitarian principles and good practice. The EU's commitment to these is rooted in, inter alia, the EU treaty, International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, the Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles and the EU's commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit.



 VOICE Board and Secretariat in the European Parliament

Over the past years, with the adoption of the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy a number of initiatives that touch upon the relationship between the EU's humanitarian assistance and foreign policy have been developed, notably the EU Integrated Approach to Conflict and Crisis, the EU's Communication on State and Societal Resilience and its implementation through the nexus pilots. These are developments that challenge us but in most cases reflect NGOs' input and are important for our work. They follow up and embed the 'Agenda for Humanity' and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the EU's work. They also reflect a collective effort of those committed to the humanitarian cause and will require continuous engagement to monitor and shape their implementation. We see that EU member states' individual policies that are being redeveloped following the SDGs and World Humanitarian Summit reflect a similar direction and impact of our members' work at national level.

ASSESSING EU HUMANITARIAN AID

In 2018 three large-scale evaluations of EU aid came to a close: the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) donors group EU peer review, the European Parliament mid-term evaluation of external funding instruments, and an independent evaluation contracted by the European Commission of its humanitarian funding allocations between 2012-2016. All came to the conclusion that the EC's humanitarian assistance and the corresponding legal basis are largely fit for purpose. The VOICE network ensured that the Commission's humanitarian NGO partners were consulted and heard in these evaluations. This was reflected in the broadly positive conclusions regarding ECHO's role as a principled global donor. The evaluations also highlighted a number of concerns, such as those regarding the importance of a diversity of partners, more flexibility, long-term funding and linking with development aid, the perception of increasing risks of instrumentalisation of humanitarian aid and that efficiency gains could be made through allocating a bigger budget at the beginning of each year.

STRENGTHENING THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE NETWORK AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

In November, the VOICE Board and European Parliament (EP) Development Committee held a public exchange on humanitarian aid inspired by the EU's implementation of its commitments under the 'Agenda for Humanity'. The Board discussed the progress on ensuring aid is as 'local as possible, as international as necessary', the momentum to better address the gaps between development and humanitarian assistance in protracted crises and on the importance of having the right tools for the job when supporting people in crises – be it cash or in-kind assistance, and the increasing challenges for operational humanitarian actors in a context of a growing body of European and global counter-terrorist measures.

Following the event, the Chair of the Development Committee has been reflecting the discussion with the VOICE Board in her dialogues with Commissioner Stylianides and with the EP's budgetary control committee.



VOICE President Dominic Crowley with Chair of the European Parliament Development Committee, Linda McAvan

CHALLENGES IN THE CONTEXT OF A GROWING BODY OF COUNTER-TERRORISM MEASURES

Many humanitarian actors, including NGOs, face challenges in transferring funds to countries subject to sanctions (restrictive measures) or where money could be diverted for terrorist or money laundering purposes. Humanitarian NGOs working in war and volatile conflicts are already keenly aware of the risks to affected populations and themselves when in an environment affected by all kinds of violence. This was also a theme that members welcomed in the annual dialogue with DG ECHO at its Partners' Conference in November. VOICE was able to follow up on this interest in the civil society consultations with the Commission's DG Justice regarding its risk assessment being held under the 4th anti-money laundering directive. Stressing that humanitarian organisations are funded by the EC to operate in so-called 'risky areas' in line with the humanitarian principles, only after the Commission itself has assessed them as having strong organisational capacities and processes for risk management and mitigation in place, is an important part of supporting NGOs to be able to continue to operate in the current political environment.

5. Building community resilience through a nexus approach

As a follow up to the World Humanitarian Summit, linking humanitarian aid and development efforts better, especially in protracted crises, has gained a strong interest from the entire aid sector. In 2017 the EU broadened its understanding of resilience to encompass 'state and societal resilience' and decided to operationalise this through a 'humanitarian-development' nexus. For many years VOICE members have sought to conduct their programmes in the framework of the so-called linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) approach. Therefore, they welcomed the EU's current engagement. During 2018 EU member states broadened the 'double nexus' through incorporating 'peace' to become a triple nexus. Humanitarian NGOs and other humanitarian actors are concerned that the inclusion of peace might have consequences regarding the principled and needs-based nature of humanitarian aid. In accordance with the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, the instrumentalisation of humanitarian aid for the EU's political and security interests has by all means to be avoided. Therefore, VOICE members are strongly engaged in the operational development of the nexus so that it truly can contribute to address operational needs, such as too slow responses or short-term funding, and reduce the very frequent gap between humanitarian aid and development assistance.

VOICE MEMBERS' PERSPECTIVE: ENSURING PEOPLE'S NEEDS ARE AT THE HEART OF THE NEXUS APPROACH

The VOICE DRR to Resilience working group brings together more than 20 of VOICE's members to channel the operational expertise of the network on DRR and resilience into relevant policy and practice developments at EU level. The main focus of the group in 2018 was the ongoing dialogue with the EU institutions regarding the development of the nexus policy and NGO participation in the six nexus country pilots the EU is currently implementing. The group also reached out to academics working on disasters in conflicts, explored the opportunities and limits of disaster risk insurance and exchanged on early warning/early action models.

The 2018 VOICE General Assembly adopted strong messages on the nexus through its annual general policy resolution, based on VOICE members' operational experiences.

As NGOs' interest in the topic is high, VOICE commissioned a study on NGO perspectives on the nexus with the aim to showcase their contribution and operational experience. The report should identify requirements for an enabling environment for a nexus approach and key recommendations to NGOs, the EU and member states will also be included. NGOs consider it of utmost importance that the nexus has an impact in the field. Based on exchanges with the DRR to Resilience working group, in 2018 the consultant conducted a desk review, collected case studies and began the interview process for the study. In 2019 the report will be finalised.

Successfully implementing the humanitarian- development nexus implies:

- ▶ ensuring people's needs are at the centre of the process, including through involvement of NGOs at field level
- ▶ more multi-year planning and funding in humanitarian activities and the systematic introduction of crisis modifiers in development activities
- ▶ conducting lessons-learned to ensure the further development of the nexus approach and a commitment to it in the long term
- ▶ using the opportunity to enhance a community resilience approach
- ▶ respecting and promoting IHL and humanitarian principles

FUTURE EU FUNDING FOR BRIDGING THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT GAP

Ensuring development funding is risk informed, more flexible and there are longer-term responses possible from the outset of a crisis are some of the keys to unlocking a response that better reduces risk and responds to people's needs in a way that builds resilience. In 2018, the European Commission proposed to combine 11 existing funding instruments for EU development aid and assistance in the EU's neighbourhood, into one single instrument. The changes to development aid instruments provided an opportunity for the working group to strengthen how the EU funds DRR and resilience in the future, working with other relevant NGO networks in broader advocacy with the European Parliament and member states.

BRINGING EXPERTISE ON EU TRUST FUNDS TO THE TABLE

VOICE's views on the nexus are inherently linked to members' experiences working with the EU trust funds. These newer funding instruments have been seen as filling a gap between development and humanitarian aid and crucially supporting some resilience programmes that members believe would not otherwise have attracted EU funding. Nonetheless, NGOs' experiences with the trust funds continue to be mixed as VOICE discovered in a 2018 update done to a survey from 2016. The network's expertise on these matters is regularly solicited and gladly shared with other stakeholders such as other NGO networks and think-tanks.

IN THE CONTEXT OF A 'TRIPLE NEXUS' DO WE NEED TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES?

A big achievement for the VOICE network was related to the EU's new 'Integrated Approach to Conflict and Crises' which was adopted by the member states in January 2018. It reflected the steady investment from across the Brussels humanitarian community to better articulate the distinction between the EU's humanitarian aid and its crisis management toolbox. In the member states' position on the integrated approach they clearly recognised the importance of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, the humanitarian principles and in particular the need for humanitarian assistance not to be seen as a crisis management tool.

The nexus, from an NGO perspective, is still seen as an opportunity to challenge inflexible donor practices. The network wants the nexus to be an operational response to community's needs and a strive for resilience at that level, rather than something more aligned to political interests in peace and stabilisation. There are concerns about the triple nexus at EU level and what the 'peace' part of the nexus means for humanitarian assistance.

In May VOICE organised an event supporting exchange between peace building organisations and humanitarians on what improvements, if any, humanitarians can make in building on 'do no harm' approaches to be more conflict sensitive. VOICE was also happy to contribute to the European Interagency Security Forum (a network of security/risk experts in the aid sector) General Assembly discussions with some questions on the nexus' potential longer term impact in the field regarding clarity of roles and mandates and the perception of humanitarian actors.

NEXUS – A POPULAR TOPIC ACROSS EUROPE

The network was also represented at the informal COHAFA/CODEV discussion under the Bulgarian Presidency by VOICE members People in Need and CARE International. The nexus was a popular topic across Europe with, for example, VOICE being invited to speak in Madrid by the Institute of Studies on Conflicts and Humanitarian Action (IECAH) and it became a core subject at a VOICE European Humanitarian Roundtable with the German NGO platform, VENRO, in Berlin. Across Europe the discussions are ongoing over concerns about the political dimension of the nexus and enthusiasm for the opportunity to bridge the gaps between humanitarian aid and development.



Vincent Stehli - VOICE Board and Director of Operations, Acción Contra el Hambre; **Birte Hald** - Brussels Representative, Danish Refugee Council (DRC); **Peter Felten** - Head of Division for Humanitarian Assistance, German Foreign Ministry; **Mathias Mogge** - Secretary General/CEO, Deutsche Welthungerhilfe



Kathrin Schick - Director, VOICE; **Michael Ahrens** - Deputy Head of Humanitarian Assistance, German Foreign Ministry; **Ines Kipfer-Didavi** - Vice Chair, VENRO; **Chiara Gariazzo** - Director, DG ECHO; **Dominic Crowley** - President, VOICE

Thanks to the more than 20 VOICE members engaged through the DRR-Resilience working group, the VENRO platform, IECAH, ECDPM, University of Rotterdam, ODI, the Chairs of the COHAFA Council working group, DG ECHO and the EEAS for the dialogue and contributions during the year.

6. The life of the network

VOICE has 86 members in 19 countries representing 80% of NGOs receiving EU funding for humanitarian aid

INCREASING VOICE VISIBILITY AND REBRANDING

In the last year the VOICE Secretariat made significant progress in increasing the network's visibility and outreach thanks to the implementation of its communication strategy and a systematic investment in communication.

In 2018, VOICE embarked on the process of renewing the network's visual identity to better support the ever increasing level of visibility, activities, outreach and reputation it has gained.

After many years with the same brand identity, the network decided to develop a new recognisable and distinctive image to reflect its identity and membership.

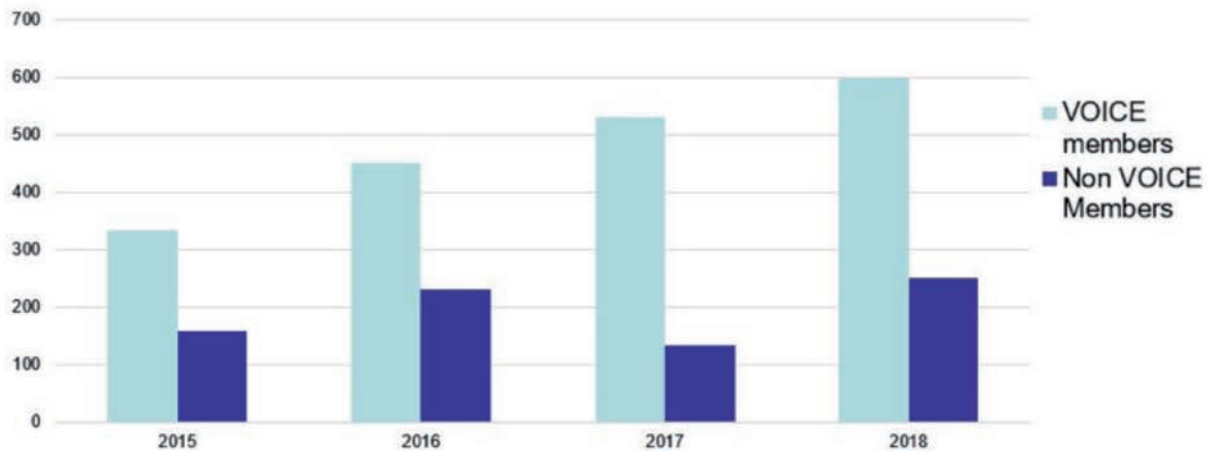
With more frequent updates, the VOICE website and Members Room have become a major portal for VOICE members and the wider public. The increasing use of twitter has contributed to making the network more visible and VOICE messages shared more widely, engaging relevant stakeholders in our advocacy efforts. The twitter account has increased the number of its followers by 53% in 2018. The efforts around the MFF and the EU Budget 2019 were very successful, generating a strong mobilisation from our member in many EU member states and contributing to achieving our advocacy goals. To support the campaign a video on the importance of #InvestInHumanity was developed, reaching more than 750 visualisations in one week.



INCREASED MEMBERS' ENGAGEMENT

The ever growing commitment and active engagement of VOICE members in working groups, advocacy efforts, networking and events again confirms the relevance of the networks priorities and objectives for NGOs working in humanitarian aid worldwide. As a result, members' participation in VOICE activities has increased consistently over the years and the Secretariat and Board members are frequently invited to speak at events and activities organised by members at national level. Members are also supporting the network through stressing collective messaging in relevant fora at global, regional and national level as well as in the field. VOICE has become a vibrant network which is much respected because of the expertise and professionalism of its membership when it comes to humanitarian policy and practice.

Number of participants to VOICE meetings / events / WG



NEW VOICE MEMBERS

Two new members were welcomed during the General Assembly 2018, **La Chaîne de l'Espoir** from France and **Save the Children Norway** (Redd Barna).

La Chaîne de l'Espoir, founded in 1994, aims to make every effort to facilitate the access to care and education of impoverished children, their families and their communities. La Chaîne de l'Espoir focuses its actions in three major geographical areas: Asia and South-East Asia, West Africa and the Near and Middle East.

One of the strategic priorities of La Chaîne de l'Espoir for 2017-2021 is to increase its influence with a focus on improving access to care, particularly surgery, as well as the rights of the child. The organisation holds an FPA since 2013.



Save the Children Norway's (SCN) mission is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives across the relief to development continuum. SCN has a strong background in participatory approaches to working with local partners in the regions of intervention. Save the Children Norway leads Save the Children's global initiative on education to ensure children learn in safe, inclusive and protective environments.

Realising children's rights in humanitarian crises with an emphasis on education in emergencies and on protection is its key advocacy objective. The organisation has an FPA since 2010.



A NEW VOICE PRESIDENT

The General Assembly represents an exciting opportunity for the diverse membership to meet for exchange and decide together the important milestones for the next year.

The General Assembly 2018 saw a change of guard in our VOICE Board of Directors.

Dominic Crowley, Emergency Response Director from CONCERN Worldwide was elected new VOICE President by the members. Dominic brings many years of operational and policy experience in the humanitarian sector to the position, as well as a solid knowledge of the VOICE network and the EU institutions. After six years with a strong commitment for the network, President Nicolas Borsinger passed the baton to a worthy successor.



Chiara Gariazzo, DG ECHO Head of Directorate D at the General Assembly 2018

The entire membership thanked Nicolas Borsinger warmly for his years invested in the VOICE Presidency: his tireless leadership and steady guidance of the network through thick and thin. During Nicolas' tenure the network has substantially strengthened its relevance, expertise and credibility.

Another highlight of the General Assembly for members was the exchange with Ms Gariazzo, Head of Directorate D of DG ECHO. Among the topics discussed were the impact of Brexit, the annual and long term budgets for EU humanitarian aid, ECHO's commitment to implementing the Grand Bargain and the European Court of Auditors' work on EU humanitarian aid. During the day members also supported the Board to shape the next VOICE Strategic Plan.



Dominic Crowley and Nicolas Borsinger

During the autumn the new VOICE President held meetings with both the Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Operations, Christos Stylianides, and Ms Pariat (Director General of DG ECHO) and spoke to the European Development Committee.



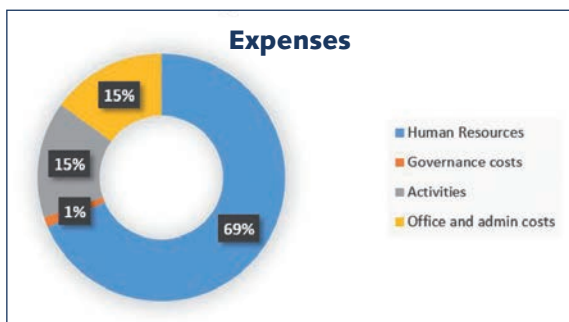
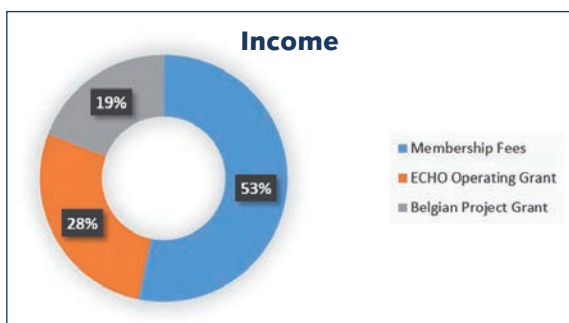
Dominic Crowley and Commissioner Stylianides

ALLIANCES

Our successes are shared with many other organisations in different formal and informal alliances. VOICE would in particular like to recognise the following for the many fruitful and informative exchanges and occasional joint initiatives in 2018: ICVA, SCHR, InterAction, CONCORD, EPLO, HRDN, Civil Society Europe, GNDR, VENRO, Coordination Sud, VENRO, Red Cross EU Office, ICRC, MSF and relevant UN agencies.

VOICE FINANCES

In 2018 the turnover administered by the VOICE Secretariat totaled €727,555. It was a 25% increase compared to the year before, mainly due to a new grant from the Belgian Government Development Cooperation dedicated to the Grand Bargain. This project supported the organisation of several workshops in the field, facilitating the experience of frontline responders to inform and shape the Grand Bargain. Other VOICE income components remained similar to previous years. As in previous years, the majority (53%) was made up of membership fees.



VOICE BOARD

As of the General Assembly, the VOICE Board was composed of Dominic Crowley (*President*, Concern Worldwide), Florence Daunis (*Treasurer*, Humanity



VOICE Board members

and Inclusion/HI), Rikke Friis (Danish Refugee Council), Michael Mosselmanns (Christian Aid), Anne Street (CAFOD), Marek Stys (*Secretary*, People in Need), Daniel Zetterlund (International Aid Services) and Ester Asin (Save the Children- *not pictured*).

In addition to the Board's engagement in VOICE events, roundtables and the strategic exchange with the European Parliament Development Committee, the Board met four times in 2018 supported by the work of the Executive Committee of the VOICE Board (ExCom) which also met four times. The main work of the Board was in the development of the next Strategic Plan. We would like to thank the Board for their time and commitment to the VOICE network.

A COMMITTED SECRETARIAT



VOICE Secretariat

The VOICE Secretariat is in charge of implementing the activities of the network as indicated in the annual work programme and in the VOICE Strategic Plan, supervised by the Board of Directors.

The staff of the Secretariat in 2018 included (from right to left) Kathrin Schick (Director), Michelle Paim (Intern), Marjorie Tonnelier (Junior Funding and Policy Officer), Magali Mourlon (Programme Coordinator), Cécile Muller (Administrative and Finance Officer), Celia Cranfield (Senior Advocacy Officer), Julie Changivy (Advocacy Officer) and Roberta Fadda (Communication Officer).

The Secretariat would like to thank Marjorie for her dedication and commitment to the team and her important role supporting the work of the Grand Bargain Task Force and the FPA Watch Group.

VOICE would like also to thank Lawrence Holmes and Michelle Paim who supported the Secretariat team in 2018.

VOICE HIGHLIGHTS 2018

THE GRAND BARGAIN PROJECT

A new website to engage frontline responders in the Grand Bargain
www.GrandBargain4ngos.org

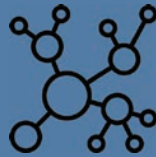


2 field workshops for national NGOs in Somalia and Lebanon

workshops on Cash and Simplification at EU level

VOICE-ICVA common messages on the annual assessment of the Grand Bargain (ODI report)

THE EU MULTIANNUL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK



Strong and consistent engagement of VOICE members and advocacy with other networks



- separate budget line for humanitarian aid maintained
- Increased humanitarian aid budget
- Input to NDICI (Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument)

THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS



VOICE nexus resolution feeds into Council discussions and MFF position



DRR to resilience working group strongly engaged with ECHO and the EEAS on development of the nexus approach

THE FRAMEWORK PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT



year extension!



constructive NGOs engagement in the process

500

secretariat hours leveraging 2000 hours by network!



Towards a predictable, effective and efficient FPA



President Dominic Crowley from our member Concern Worldwide



Red Barna and Chaîne de l'Espoir joined the network

High level meetings with Commissioner Stylianides and ECHO Director-General M. Pariat

86 MEMBERS IN 2018

AUSTRIA

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

BELGIUM

Caritas Secours International
 Belgium
 Médecins du Monde Belgium
 Oxfam Solidarité – Solidariteit
 Plan Belgique - België

CZECH REPUBLIC

ADRA 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 - Red Barnet Denmark

FINLAND

Finn Church Aid
 World Vision Finland

FRANCE

Action Contre la Faim
 ACTED – Agence d'Aide à la Coopération Technique et au Développement
 CARE France
 Fédération Handicap International
 La Chaîne de l'espoir
 Médecins du Monde France
 Secours Catholique - Réseau Mondial Caritas
 Secours Islamique France
 Secours Populaire Français
 Solidarités International
 Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF)

GERMANY

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

GREECE

Médecins du Monde – Greece

IRELAND

Concern Worldwide
 Trócaire

ITALY

Caritas Italiana
 CESVI - Cooperazione e Sviluppo
 COOPI
 GVC - Gruppo Volontariato Civile
 INTERSOS – Organizzazione Umanitaria Onlus

LUXEMBOURG

Caritas Luxembourg

THE NETHERLANDS

CARE Nederland
 Cordaid
 ICCO (Dutch Interchurch Aid)
 Oxfam Novib
 Save the Children Netherlands
 ZOA

NORWAY

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
 Norwegian Church Aid
 Save the children – Redd Barna

POLAND

Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH)

SLOVAKIA

Habitat for Humanity International

SPAIN

Acción Contra el Hambre
 Caritas Española
 Oxfam Intermón
 Médicos del Mundo

SWEDEN

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

SWITZERLAND

Medair
 Terre des Hommes
 The Lutheran World Federation

UNITED KINGDOM

Action Against Hunger
 ActionAid
 CAFOD
 CARE International UK
 Christian Aid
 HelpAge International
 International Medical Corps UK
 International Rescue Committee (IRC UK)
 Islamic Relief Worldwide
 Mercy Corps
 Oxfam GB
 Plan International UK
 Save the Children UK
 Tearfund
 World Vision UK



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European Union
Humanitarian Aid

VOICE

VOICE stands for 'Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies'. VOICE is a network of 86 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in humanitarian aid worldwide. VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor on EU humanitarian affairs and disaster risk reduction and it promotes the values of humanitarian NGOs.

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