

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



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OVERALL VISION:

A collective voice of European NGOs promoting principled and people-centred humanitarian aid.

MISSION (Art 4 VOICE Statutes)

VOICE's aim is to improve the general quality and effectiveness of humanitarian aid notably that of the European Union and its Member States as well as of the wider humanitarian community. The network also promotes the added value of NGOs given their key role as humanitarian deliverers and as an expression of EU public solidarity.

STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVES 2019-2023

- Shape EU policies and practices affecting the delivery of principled humanitarian assistance worldwide, building on NGOs' operational expertise
- Build on effective partnerships to advocate for predictable, timely and increased resourcing at EU level for quality and accountable humanitarian aid
- 3. Promote an enabling environment in which European NGOs are able to advocate for and deliver effective humanitarian aid
- Enhance the effectiveness and recognition of VOICE as the main NGO interlocutor on EU humanitarian aid.



ED/TOR/AL

2021 was a year of changes and challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic - combined with the effects of conflicts and climate change (the '3Cs') - drove humanitarian needs to record levels, bringing 274 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2022 (GHO 2022). Millions more people are now in need of humanitarian aid due to the conflict in northern Ethiopia. From August 2021 onwards, the situation in Afghanistan deteriorated further – sending needs spiralling and threatening the rights of women and girls. Conflicts remain intense in parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Syria, Yemen and in Myanmar. And now in Ukraine too.

At the time of writing this editorial, the conflict in Ukraine has been raging for over a month. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR), currently more than a quarter of the population of Ukraine has been forced to flee their homes. More than 4.3 million refugees have fled Ukraine, making this the fastest growing refugee crisis since World War II. In addition, 7.1 million people have been displaced internally. As always when a crisis happens, humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been at the frontline. They have been rapidly mobilising funding and support to deliver humanitarian aid in Ukraine and in the neighbouring countries, despite the difficult humanitarian access and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) violations. As highlighted on our website "Ukraine Humanitarian Crisis: VOICE Members' response", our members have been supporting the most vulnerable in the country – delivering food, assisting internally displaced people, protecting women and children on the move and carrying out other vitally needed humanitarian actions.

The conflict in Ukraine has had a knock-on impact on humanitarian needs worldwide and has contributed to rising global food prices and economic instability. With the increasing funding gap and the growing needs, our joint efforts at European and national levels to advocate for principled humanitarian aid have been more relevant than ever.

In this challenging context, it has been vital to maintain the highest level of collaboration between VOICE and the EU institutions – namely the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operation (DG ECHO) and the European Parliament – to make sure our combined and inclusive voices and more importantly, the voices of the most affected communities, are heard. As the newly appointed VOICE Director in 2021, I am proud to continue the vital work of this network of European NGOs that have been delivering humanitarian aid around the world for the past 30 years.

As you will read within these pages, our engagement in the first European Humanitarian Forum (EHF) has been sustained to influence key decision-makers. Set in motion by the EC's Communication on Humanitarian Action, the Forum was held from 21 March to 23 March. Organised by the European Commission and the French Presidency of the Council of the EU, the Forum was designed to identify common solutions to humanitarian challenges and to provide a platform for discussions between the European Union, its Member States and the wider humanitarian community.

In the run up to the meeting, VOICE launched the "VOICE Statement ahead of the European Humanitarian Forum" calling on the EU and Member States to use the Forum as an opportunity to address the challenges of increasing humanitarian needs, to identify solutions to preserve humanitarian space and to ensure the delivery of principled humanitarian aid.

We also called on the EU and Member States to stand by their commitments and, while supporting the needs of the conflict-affected people of Ukraine, not to forget the most vulnerable and marginalised populations in many other parts of the world.

Now more than ever, it is important to raise awareness of the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, and to advocate for the respect for IHL to ensure that aid reaches those who are most in need around the globe.

In 2022, we will continue to champion humanitarian NGOs' perspectives on nexus and climate at the EU level. We will further disseminate the key messages included in our position paper "The humanitarian NGOs' perspective on climate resilience" and in the latest VOICE out loud "The EU Member States' implementation of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus".

We will monitor the implementation of DG ECHO's 2022 humanitarian budget, with particular attention to the Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve (SEAR), and we will continue our efforts to ensure predictable, timely and increased funding for humanitarian aid in 2023.

Thanks to the commitment of our members, our engaged Board of Directors, our dedicated Secretariat Team and our valued partners, we will continue our engagement to contribute to the delivery of principled humanitarian aid worldwide.

Maria Groenewald VOICE Director

April 2022

VOICE FACTS AND FIGURES 2021

LIST OF ACRONYMS

80 members in 18 EU countries

828 people participating in VOICE activities

22 working group meetings

7 VOICE events and meetings organised by VOICE

VOICE Members' Meeting with DG ECHO's Director General Ms Paraskevi Michou

VOICE Members' Meeting with DG ECHO's Deputy Director General Mr. Köhler

VOICE members' meeting with ACBAR Director Lisa Piper on the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan

Tackling the humanitarian consequences of climate change: Scaling up anticipatory action: A webinar organised by VOICE, DG ECHO in partnership with France, Anticipation Hub

Climate crisis: VOICE members in action: A dedicated webpage with reports and news from members work on climate change

FOR MEMBERS:

9 Flash newsletters

A dedicated area of the website with exclusive advocacy news and briefings

VOICE PUBLICATIONS:

VOICE out loud 31 Special edition: The value of NGOs humanitarian action in the era of COVID-19

VOICE out loud 32: The EU Member States' implementation of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus

Survey report: Adding to the evidence: the impact of sanctions and restrictive measures on humanitarian action

Position Paper: The humanitarian NGOs' perspective on climate resilience

Policy Resolution: Grand Bargain 2.0: let's make it a turning point in the global humanitarian aid system

ACBAR

Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development

Brexi

The United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union

COHAFA

Council working group on humanitarian aid and food assistance

CONCORD

European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development

CT

Counter-terrorism

DAC

Development Assistance Committee

DEVE Committee

Committee on Development

DG

Director or Directorate-General

DRF

Disaster Risk Reduction

EC

European Commission

ECHO

European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

FHI

European Humanitarian Forum

EHRC

European Humanitarian Response Capacity

.

European Parliament

EDI C

European Peacebuilding Liaison Office

FU

European Union

FΡΔ

Framework Partnership Agreement

GE

Grand Bargain

HP

Humanitarian Partnership

ICVA

A Global NGO Network For Principled and Effective Humanitarian Action

IHI

International Humanitarian Law

IRC

International Rescue Committee

MFPc

Member of the European Parliament

JGO(s)

Non-Governmental Organisation(s)

OECD

Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development

RESCEU

Reconciling Economic and Social Europe

'

SEAH

Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment

SEAR

Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve

TF

Task Force

UK

United Kingdom

WG

Watch Group





VOICE members meeting with DG ECHO's Director General Ms Paraskevi Michou

A KEY INTERLOCUTOR ON HUMANITARIAN AID FOR EU STAKEHOLDERS

2021 was pivotal for the VOICE Secretariat in terms of consolidating good existing working relationships and establishing new connections with crucial actors in the European Union (EU) humanitarian landscape.

Throughout the year, the newly launched European Commission (EC) Communication on the "EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles" and its main outcomes were at the heart of the intense exchange between VOICE and key stakeholders in the three European institutions. The long-awaited Communication set out several key objectives to address growing humanitarian needs and support a more enabling environment for the delivery of principled humanitarian aid. This was followed by Council Conclusions, approved under the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union and a European Parliament (EP) report in December.

In the second half of the year, VOICE President Dominic Crowley and then interim VOICE

Director Maria Groenewald met with the General Affairs Director of the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operation (DG ECHO) Bernadette Frederick. They discussed the Humanitarian Partnership, the overall collaboration between VOICE and DG ECHO, the European Humanitarian Forum (EHF) and the exchange organised for the second consecutive year between VOICE members and DG ECHO Director-General Paraskevi Michou.

The VOICE Secretariat was very pleased to organise this exchange with the Director-General on 21 September. The virtual meeting brought together more than 100 participants from nearly all of VOICE's 86 member organisations and enabled a lively debate about the EC communication on the EU's humanitarian action, the Grand Bargain 2.0 and the new Humanitarian Partnership (former FPA – Framework Partnership Agreement). This kind of opportunity is crucial to ensure that the voices of the members of the network – and indirectly, of the most affected and vulnerable people in humanitarian settings – are heard.

As a follow-up to the meeting, VOICE President Dominic Crowley and the newly appointed

9

Promoting

of NGOs

at EU level

humanitarian

principles and

the added value

Director of VOICE, Maria Groenewald, had the pleasure of meeting with the Deputy Head of the Commissioner's Cabinet Kim Eling and then with the Director-General of DG ECHO Paraskevi Michou to discuss and foster NGO participation in the European Humanitarian Forum (EHF). This was a strategic moment to promote the added value of humanitarian NGOs in the delivery of principled humanitarian aid. With the same aim in mind, the VOICE Secretariat also managed to organise a meeting between members and DG ECHO Deputy Director-General

Later in the year, VOICE engaged in a direct exchange with colleagues at DG ECHO A2 Unit (working on capacities and operational support under the emergency management and RESCEU pillar) on DG ECHO's proposal to set up a new European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC). In a letter sent to DG ECHO in December 2021, VOICE briefly outlined some key humanitarian NGOs' concerns on the EHRC. In particular, these concerns related to the need not to overlap with the work that humanitarian implementing organisations already do as well as the need to avoid EHRC's funding being made at the expense of other humanitarian funding priorities. The letter was well received by DG ECHO. Discussions are ongoing and VOICE will continue to monitor this topic in 2022.

STRONG ADVOCACY ENGAGEMENT TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF THE EU POLICY ON HUMANITARIAN AID

The EC Communication on the "EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles", was launched on 10 March. VOICE was pleased to see some of the main points raised in its initial contribution to DG ECHO reflected in this Communication, including:

- > the reiteration of the strong commitment to principled EU humanitarian aid
- > the need to increase global humanitarian
- > the importance of NGOs as one of the EC's key partners
- > the central role of the Grand Bargain.

Nevertheless, VOICE identified points that need to be clarified and investigated further. With this

in mind, the Secretariat shared its own analysis with key stakeholders and, together with its members and other humanitarian organisations, gathered additional clarifications on some of the issues referred to in the Communication, especially in terms of EU funding, the added value of humanitarian NGOs, localisation, sanctions regimes and quality funding.

Together with other humanitarian organisations, VOICE had a fruitful exchange with Paraskevi Michou in April and established direct contact with the rapporteur of the EP report on the EC communication, Norbert Neuser – who was then Standing Rapporteur for Humanitarian Aid. Thanks to this, VOICE managed to influence the EP's own-initiative report on new orientations for the EU's humanitarian action, which was finally approved in the plenary in December. Among VOICE key recommendations included in the final report:

- the need for increased, flexible, predictable and timely humanitarian funding that is suited to local contexts, needs-based and people-centred
- the enhancement of harmonisation and simplification of donor proposal and reporting requirements for NGOs
- > the development of an ambitious European localisation policy, notably supporting women-led initiatives
- > the need to ensure the respect of humanitarian principles when implementing the nexus approach, which should strengthen resilience, promote sustainable responses and build on NGOs' practical experience.

In addition to its involvement in this paper, VOICE contributed to the <u>EP's policy department for external relations' analysis of the Communication</u>.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON HUMANITARIAN-RELATED TOPICS

In the first half of the year, VOICE continued its active engagement within the EP on humanitarian-related topics by advocating for the approval of the two reports the network had contributed to in 2020:

- "The role of the EU's development cooperation and humanitarian assistance in addressing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic", led by the EP's Standing Rapporteur for Humanitarian Aid Norbert Neuser.
- "The impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations in developing countries", led by MEP Mónica

The former was approved in the EP plenary. The report includes a reference to the EU Consensus on humanitarian aid, a call for increased and flexible funding, as well as for the EU to support humanitarian NGOs in building resilience, and the added value of working with a nexus approach. Despite the rejection of the latter report, this intense advocacy activity allowed VOICE to establish good working relationships within the EP's Committee on Development (DEVE) and opened doors for new collaborations in view of the above-mentioned EP response to the EC Communication on humanitarian aid.

SHAPING THE FORTHCOMING EUROPEAN HUMANITARIAN FORUM AGENDA

The European Humanitarian Forum (EHF), suggested by the <u>EC Communication on Humanitarian Action</u>, was initially planned from 24 to 26 January 2022 in Brussels and was then postponed to the end of March due to the pandemic. The Forum aims to serve as a platform for EU political decision-makers and the wider humanitarian community to identify solutions and improve modalities of action.

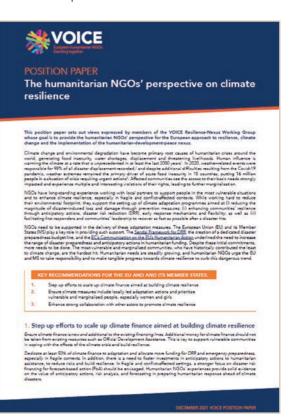


Banner of the European Humanitarian Forum 2022

From the beginning, VOICE was in close contact with DG ECHO to ensure the involvement of NGO partners in the Forum. The network man-

aged to include the topic 'Conflict and hunger' in the agenda of the EHF, facilitated members' exchange to develop a concept note on it and secured a speaker seat for one VOICE Board member, Vincent Stehli.

Moreover, VOICE was extremely engaged in the EHF preparatory webinars organised at the end of the year. More specifically, VOICE successfully influenced the shaping of the Partnership 2021 Webinar and agenda by representing NGOs' perspectives during the event. More than 250 participants attended the event, where VOICE President Dominic Crowley, as well as VOICE Director Maria Groenewald, participated in opening and closing remarks together with DG ECHO's Director-General. Humanitarian Partnership, Pilot Programmatic Partnerships and the environmental requirements were among the discussed topics.



VOICE Position paper on climate resilience

In addition to the Partnership webinar, VOICE co-organised – together with DG ECHO, the French presidency and Anticipation Hub – the EHF warm-up webinar on climate, held on 14 December. The event brought together more than 200 people and was partially moderated by VOICE's Senior Advocacy Officer Francesca

Giubilo. The event was a great opportunity to officially launch the VOICE position paper on climate resilience and its key recommendations towards the EU and its Member States. The paper was collectively endorsed by the VOICE Resilience-Nexus Working Group and presented by a VOICE Board member, Fie Lauritzen, during the event. A final report summarising the main takeaways from the event was jointly produced by the organisers and published on the EHF website.

On an additional note, VOICE agreed to co-organise a pre-event "Connecting the dots", with the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) and its member organisation War Child, to inform, be informed and share reactions on the opportunities offered by the Forum.

In order to facilitate information flow between members and to coordinate activities around the EHF, VOICE established an internal ad hoc working group on the EHF and organised regular informal meetings with the Brussels-based directors as well as the communications colleagues of VOICE members.

A CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT WITH EU PRESIDENCIES

Considering the crucial role that Member States play in the decision-making process of the EU, VOICE has always dedicated significant advocacy efforts directly in Brussels and via its members at national level to establish a good relationship with the Member State holding the six-month Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Throughout 2021, the network continued its engagement with the EU Presidencies of Portugal and Slovenia. Despite the absence of national members in the countries holding the Presidency, VOICE managed to work closely with the national platforms and members' affiliates to bring forward its collective messages around principled and needs-based humanitarian aid. More specifically, VOICE established a good working relationship with the Portuguese presidency of the Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) in the first semester, especially in view of the Council conclusions on the EC Communication on Humanitarian aid approved in May 2021.



Logo of the Portugal Presidency of the EU Council

Under the Slovenian Presidency, interim VOICE Director Maria Groenewald was invited to intervene in the COHAFA meeting of September to exchange on "The importance of the triple nexus in the era of climate change: challenges in food security and water supply". On this occasion, VOICE particularly emphasised the deep interconnection between climate change, food insecurity and water supply shortage and highlighted the humanitarian NGOs' expectations and concerns regarding the triple nexus, especially in terms of the risk of politicisation of humanitarian aid and need for the EU and Member States to promote a nexus approach in line with humanitarian principles.



Logo of the Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council

RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT HUMANITARIAN AID BEYOND THE EU

Throughout the year, VOICE had the opportunity to establish contacts with some national humanitarian aid representatives, notably in the UK. At the specific request of Nick Dyer, UK special envoy for famine, prevention and humanitarian affairs, VOICE liaised with the network members based in Brussels for a meeting with

the UK representative, to hear about the current state of play of the UK's humanitarian work following the Call to Action on famine and food security and exchange on the respective key humanitarian aid priorities.

In the light of the skyrocketing humanitarian crisis facing Afghanistan over the summer, VOICE gathered information from those members that were active in the country and identified some key advocacy messages towards DG ECHO and EU Member States. VOICE closely monitored the deployment of additional funding for Afghanistan and neighbouring countries made available for the year 2021, also through the establishment of a direct contact with the DG ECHO Desk Officer for the country. Moreover, VOICE organised a dedicated exchange between Brussels-based members active in Afghanistan and Lisa Piper, Director of the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR) to share more information on the local context and the concerns of local NGOs while she was visiting Brussels.

A call on the EU and its Member States to increase their commitment towards climate resilience

In 2021, VOICE strengthened its engagement towards shaping climate policy, with the overall objective of calling on the EU and its Member States to step up their commitments towards climate resilience. The Disaster Risk Reduction-Resilience Working Group became the Resilience-Nexus Working Group, after some revisions were made to the Terms of Reference, giving the group a wider focus on nexus, resilience and climate change to make it fit for purpose.

THE HUMANITARIAN PERSPECTIVE ON CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Upon the announcement of the European Humanitarian Forum (EHF), and thanks to the strong engagement of members of the Resilience-Nexus Working Group, VOICE secured the opportunity to co-organise the forum's Preparatory Webinar on Climate. The group therefore had the chance to share their inputs for the webinar, including concrete regional case studies and expertise on the implementation of anticipatory actions, and prepared a joint position paper presenting "The humanitarian NGOs' perspective on climate resilience". The paper presents recommendations on how the EU and its Member States should address the impact of climate change on humanitarian crises, focussing on climate adaptation, and Loss and Damage.

As mentioned above, the paper was officially launched during the <u>EHF preparatory webinar on climate</u> co-organised by VOICE, DG ECHO, Anticipation Hub and the French presidency.

VOICE's Position paper on climate resilience

The paper highlights the need to scale up climate finance, as well as the added value of locally led adaptation actions and the importance of enhancing collaboration between different actors to promote climate resilience. The three main recommendations of the paper are as follows:

- > 1. Step up efforts to scale up climate finance aimed at building climate resilience.
- 2. Ensure climate measures include locally led adaptation actions and prioritise vulnerable and marginalised people, especially women and girls
- 3. Enhance strong collaboration with other actors to promote climate resilience.

Finally, information sharing on climate policy between members was facilitated through the creation of a VOICE web page on climate resilience, gathering field-based opinions and case studies on the impact of climate change on humanitarian work, notably concerning its impact on communities' access to shelter, food, and water, often leading to displacement.





VOICE out loud 32: FCA's country case in Uganda (Triple Nexus). Photo credit: Finn Church Aid/Hugh Rutherford

Throughout 2021, VOICE continued to take part in European discussions on the humanitarian-development-peace (triple) nexus, shedding light on its recommendations from the 2019 VOICE report "NGO Perspectives on the EU's Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus" while engaging in governmental and non-governmental nexus policy initiatives and reports, and later, orientating its focus on the EU Member States' understanding and implementation of nexus approaches.

In different fora and publications, VOICE consistently underlined the need for triple nexus approaches to respect the core principles of humanitarian aid – humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence – considering the risk of instrumentalisation of humanitarian aid for foreign policy purposes.

VOICE secured an opportunity to participate in the EU Council's Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid, to exchange on "The importance of the triple nexus in the era of climate change: challenges in food security and water supply". On this occasion, VOICE highlighted the humanitarian NGOs' hopes and concerns regarding the triple nexus. While the

nexus approach could offer a unique opportunity to develop prevention measures, enhance response capacity, support early recovery, build self-reliance and reduce risks at community level, there needs to be more transparency regarding how the EU and Member States are concretely working towards operationalising this approach. In fact, humanitarian NGOs are concerned about the increasing risk of instrumentalisation and politicisation of humanitarian aid and are strongly calling on the EU and Member States to promote a nexus approach in line with the humanitarian principles.

Beyond its work on the EU's approach to the nexus, another objective of the Resilience-Nexus Working Group was the development of intelligence and analysis around the EU Member States' approach on nexus. Thanks to the strong involvement of members, VOICE issued the 32nd edition of the VOICE out loud, VOICE's bi-annual magazine, entitled: "The EU Member States' implementation of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus". On this issue, VOICE members based in Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy and Sweden shared their views on how their respective governments are approaching the implementation of nexus programmes, building

on the four recommendations highlighted in the above-mentioned 2019 VOICE report:

- > 1. Ensure a nexus approach, in line with humanitarian principles
- > 2. Build on NGOs' experiences and learn lessons
- > 3. Adapt financial frameworks and tools towards a nexus approach
- > 4. All relevant actors need to work towards a culture shift.

Furthermore, the issue features an interview with the Director of the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) on the peace aspect of the nexus and an article from ACBAR on Afghanistan and the challenges facing NGOs in the delivery of aid.

Members also had the chance to exchange with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on the implementation of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) 2019 nexus recommendation.

Finally, to coordinate and align messages with other nexus actors, VOICE maintained its relations with other networks, such as the European confederation of relief and development NGOs (CONCORD) and the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO), respectively working on development and peace policy; as well as with the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA).

The first year of the Humanitarian Partnership: progress so far

2021 was a key transition year for the NGO certified partners of DG ECHO's, as the new EU Humanitarian Partnership (HP) entered into force. Bringing changes and new challenges to the way NGOs and DG ECHO are working together, it has been essential for VOICE, the Humanitarian Partnership Watch Group and Task Force to monitor, assess and influence novelties around the new partnership framework. As new tools and templates were implemented for the first time across the project cycle, VOICE launched different surveys to collect NGOs' experiences of working in this new environment, with the aim of identifying successful changes and remaining difficulties. The analyses of these surveys were key when it came to engaging in evidence-based and constructive discussions with DG ECHO, in a partnership spirit. In addition, ensuring clarity and quality guidance during the first year of the EU Humanitarian Partnership was key for VOICE members. Hence, in the first quarter of the year, the Watch Group collected key remaining questions and issues, leading to the publication of an additional Q&A with DG ECHO on the new modalities of the partnership.

THE ADDED VALUE OF HUMANITARIAN NGOs' EXPERTISE

As well as new developments around the Model Grant Agreement and e-single form, 2021 also brought new guidelines, requirements and related consultations, notably on cash, logistics, environmental requirements and sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH) reporting. Sharing humanitarian NGOs' expertise on those topics was essential to make sure their voices were heard during the development of these guidelines and requirements. Throughout the year, VOICE, the Watch Group (WG) and its Task Force (TF) raised the importance of them being suitable to the operational reality, advocating for a reduced administrative burden and for inclusive, transparent and open consultation processes. In particular, VOICE and the Humanitarian Partnership TF worked intensely to influence the design of the new SEAH annual reporting template, calling on additional guidance and clarity on the template, as well as on the importance for it to follow a survivor-centred approach.

A VERY COMMITTED AND ENGAGED HUMANITARIAN PARTNERSHIP WATCH GROUP AND TASK FORCE

Maintaining a continuous dialogue with DG ECHO is key to maintaining a lively partnership. Two HP WG meetings took place, bringing together a substantial number of NGOs representing the wider community and DG ECHO staff, ensuring a stronger link between operational issues and donors' practices. In addition, the HP TF, representing the WG, held seven discussion meetings with DG ECHO and met internally to discuss issues on a monthly basis. Key topics discussed included advocacy messages to highlight concerns about the missing Annotated Grant Agreement, the importance of the partnership spirit, of inclusive and transparent consultations and the new authorising decisions on staff costs.

DG ECHO PARTNERSHIP WEBINAR 2021

After two years without any Partners' Conference, VOICE and the HP TF successfully advocated for DG ECHO's Partnership 2021 webinar to take place. This webinar was key to come together and reflect on the first year of the new partnership and ensure an open exchange with DG ECHO. VOICE and the HPTF had the opportunity to share lessons learned and key recommendations with regards to the partnership, and a Q&A session allowed the wider community to make their concerns directly heard by DG ECHO staff. Despite the fruitful exchange with DG ECHO, the one-day event was considered insufficient for VOICE to address all relevant topics. Therefore, the network continues its advocacy activity for a revived annual Partnership Conference.

Advocating for additional, predictable, timely humanitarian funding

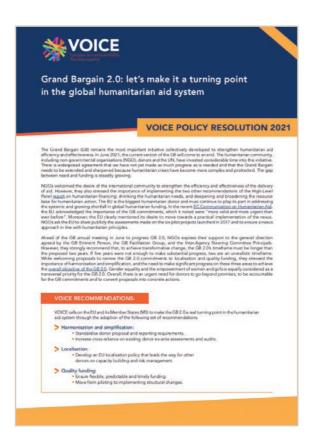
LEADING DISCUSSIONS ON HUMANITARIAN AID IN THE GERMAN PARLIAMENT

On 3 March, former VOICE Director Kathrin Schick was invited to participate in a hearing at the German Bundestag on the fifth anniversary of the World Humanitarian Summit and the Grand Bargain. She was part of a group of seven experts invited by the Committee for Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid. Bettina Iseli, Programme Director of Welthungerhilfe, a VOICE member, was also among the experts sharing a national NGO perspective.

Ahead of the meeting, VOICE submitted a Position Paper on the Grand Bargain and the humanitarian-development-peace (triple) nexus, which was also translated into English. In her speech, the former VOICE Director called for the importance of renewing the commitment to the Grand Bargain, underlining how the increasing needs due to the pandemic have made aid efficiency more relevant than ever. The need to increase funding for programmes under the triple nexus was also one of the key points, as well as the importance of principled humanitarian aid, International Humanitarian Laws' protection.

GRAND BARGAIN 2.0: A CALL TO MAKE IT A TURNING POINT IN THE GLOBAL HUMANITARIAN AID SYSTEM

In the first semester of the year, VOICE engaged vigorously in the discussions around the future of the Grand Bargain. In May, the VOICE General Assembly adopted a Policy Resolution "Grand Bargain 2.0: let's make it a turning point in the global humanitarian aid system" calling on the EU and its Member States to make tangible progress in the next few years on the following Grand Bargain (GB) priorities and themes: localisation, harmonisation, and simplification and quality funding. After the GB 2.0 was officially launched during the GB Annual Meeting on 15-17 June 2021, VOICE was particularly pleased to see that the two enabling priorities were aligned with its recommendations for further engagement for localisation and quality funding.



VOICE policy resolution 2021

To follow up on GB 2.0 EU and Member States' commitments, the previous GB working group was transformed into the GB 2.0 working group.

A REMARKABLE INCREASE OF THE EU BUDGET 2022 ON HUMANITARIAN AID

In June 2021, the European Commission published the <u>draft EU budget for 2022</u>, proposing €1.6 billion for humanitarian aid and €1.2 billion for the Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve (SEAR). From this key moment, VOICE member organisations and the Secretariat engaged in lengthy and sustained efforts to influence – both at the European and national levels – the co-decision process on the 2022 EU Budget, with the overall objective of stressing the importance to support increased, predictable, timely and flexible funding for humanitarian aid.

VOICE particularly engaged with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), pushing for the adoption of a \leqslant 301 million increase of the humanitarian aid budget line – bringing the EP's final proposal for humanitarian aid to \leqslant 1.9 billion.

As the crucial step of the Conciliation was unfolding, VOICE member organisations and the Secretariat joined efforts to simultaneously pursue advocacy at European and national levels, by asking for an increase in the humanitarian aid budget line and for a level of payments that are equal to commitments, to help ensure timely and predictable funding. Member engagement in this important step was particularly fruitful. On 15 November 2021, VOICE was pleased to see its advocacy efforts pay off as the Council and the European Parliament finally agreed on the EU's annual budget for 2022, paving the way for a historical increase of €211 million for the humanitarian budget line, bringing the overall amount for humanitarian aid to €1.8 billion for 2022.

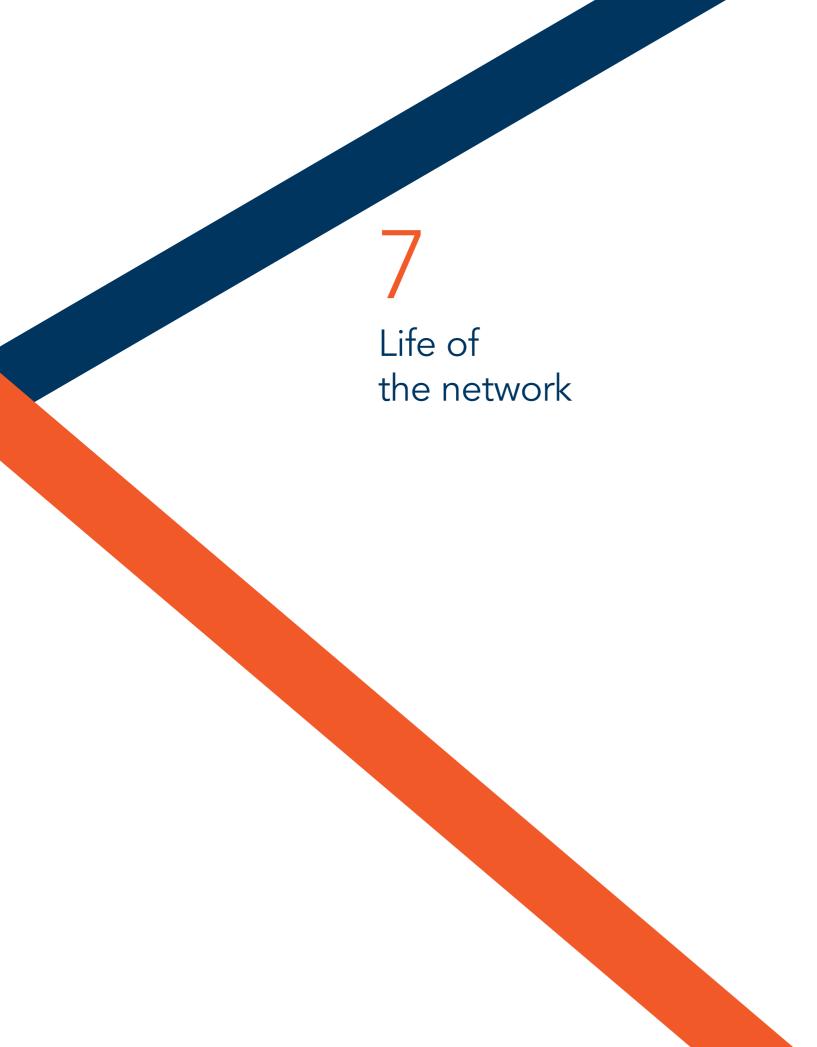
Gathering evidence on the impact of EU restrictive measures on Humanitarian Action

VOICE has raised awareness about the impacts of EU sanctions and counter-terrorism measures over the past few years, as these have increasingly been perceived as a key issue by members. Challenges faced by NGOs include: difficulties accessing financial services; the risks of criminal and civil liability; the increased financial and administrative burden; procurement and logistical difficulties; and reduced flexibility in programming.

In 2021, VOICE published the report "Adding to the evidence, the impact of sanctions and restrictive measures on humanitarian action", which captures the findings of a survey on the impacts of sanctions and counter-terrorism measures on VOICE members, as well as the main outcome of the VOICE Webinar on EU Restrictive Measures and Humanitarian Aid: Between a principled view for exemptions and a pragmatic approach for an effective derogation process (December 2020). This report complements the **VOICE** 2019 workshop report and its recommendations on the importance of maintaining a high level of engagement with the EU and Members States so that counter-terrorism measures and sanctions respect IHL and the delivery of principled, needs-based humanitarian aid.



VOICE survey report: Adding to the evidence



A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION WITHIN THE SECRETARIAT

In June, after almost 20 years of dedication to the network, Kathrin Schick stepped down as Director of VOICE. Maria Groenewald, who had been recruited as Programme Coordinator in February 2021, agreed to become the interim Director while the VOICE Board of Directors undertook a thorough recruitment process. Under her guidance, the Secretariat managed a smooth transition and her appointment in November as the new Director of the VOICE network was welcomed.

Maria's dynamism and strategic outlook has already brought a very fruitful cohesion and complementarity between the VOICE Board and the highly committed Secretariat Team.

The new Director demonstrated from the beginning her engagement and determination to maintain the highest level of collaboration between VOICE and the EU institutions, to make sure the efficient and effective work of NGOs delivering principled humanitarian aid is well recognised.

In 2021, the Secretariat was composed of:

Kathrin Schick, Director until 25 June 2021

Maria Groenewald, Programme Coordinator from February to July, interim Director from July to October and Director from November onwards

Francesca Giubilo, Advocacy Officer and promoted Senior Advocacy Officer at the end of October

Roberta Fadda, Communication Officer

Cécile Muller, Administrative and Finance Officer

Tarita Baldan, Junior Advocacy Officer up to August

Julia Foulon, Funding and Advocacy Assistant up to March

Marion Granger, Funding and Advocacy Assistant from May onwards

Suzanne Dominguez, Advocacy Assistant from mid-September onwards



Maria Groenewald Director



Francesca Giubilo Senior Advocacy Officer



Roberta Fadda Communication Officer



Cécile Muller Administration & Finance Officer



Suzanne Dominguez Advocacy Assistant



Marion Granger Funding and Advocacy Assistant

Secretariat team as of December 2021

THE STRONG ENGAGEMENT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The VOICE online General Assembly held on 27 May, bringing together 91% of the VOICE membership, re-elected Dominic Crowley from Concern Worldwide for his second mandate as VOICE President. This was a well-deserved recognition of his dedication and commitment to the network and acknowledgement of his excellent work as a VOICE ambassador.

Continued their first mandate:

Jean-Pierre Delomier, Operations Deputy Director, Fédération Handicap International/ Humanity & Inclusion

Michael Kühn, Operations Deputy Director, Welthungerhilfe

Fie Lauritzen, Senior Humanitarian Policy Lead, DanChurchAid

Edouard Rodier, Director International Programmes, Norwegian Refugee Council Europe.

Silvia Sinibaldi, Humanitarian Director, Caritas Europa

Continued their second mandate:

Michael Mosselmans, Head of Humanitarian Policy, Practice and Advocacy, Christian Aid UK

Vincent Stehli, Director of Operations, Acción Contra el Hambre Spain

Joined the Board:

Annelies Claessens, Director of International Programmes at War Child



Dominic Crowley
Concern Worldwide



Jean-Pierre Delomier Fédération Handicap International/Humanity



Michael Kühn Welthungerhilfe



Fie Lauritzen DanChurchAid



Edouard Rodier Norwegian Refugee Council Europe



Silvia Sinibaldi Caritas Europa



Michael Mosselmans Christian Aid UK



Vincent Stehli Acción Contra el Hambre Spain



Annelies ClaessensDirector of International
Programmes at War Child

BOARD MEETINGS IN 2021: FIVE VIRTUAL AND ONE FACE TO FACE

The Board held six meetings throughout the year and the Executive Committee met numerous times, supervising closely the transition and recruitment process of the new VOICE Director.

VOICE President Dominic Crowley thanked Board members for their essential commitment to the network, their engagement in the discussion about the new Humanitarian Partnership and the constant promotion of the added value of humanitarian NGOs. The President particularly underlined the dedication of the Executive Committee throughout this specific year, marked by the recruitment of the new Director.

On 4 and 5 November, the VOICE Board of Directors and Secretariat held their first ever joint Retreat in Brussels. It was a very timely gathering just after the appointment of the new Director. It aimed to develop new ways of working between the Board and the Secretariat's Team members. The agenda included diverse issues, from membership criteria to humanitarian trends, and focused on advocacy priorities for the year ahead. The discussions also supported the drafting of the work plan for 2022, the last year of the current strategic plan.

A WELL ENGAGED NETWORK

Despite the impact of Brexit on VOICE membership in the UK and Switzerland, VOICE was proud to welcome five new members to the network: CARE Denmark, CARE Norway, Caritas Czech Republic, Jesuit Refugee Service – Italy, and Oxfam Italy.

Seven members have left the network: CARE UK, International Rescue Committee (IRC UK), Islamic Relief Worldwide UK, Lutheran World Federation – Switzerland, Mercy Corps Scotland, Oxfam GB and Tearfund UK.

The total number of VOICE members was 86 at the end of 2021.



VOICE out loud 31. Plan International ensures girls, young women, children and vulnerable groups are protected and supported as the COVID-19 crisis unfolds. © Fiorella Ramos Plan International

VOICE COMMUNICATION

In 2021, VOICE launched a special edition of the VOICE out loud "The value of NGOs' humanitarian action in the era of COVID-19" dedicated to the expertise and professionalism NGOs have demonstrated in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. This issue brings together examples from VOICE members' projects in response to the pandemic. It merges desk research with member interviews and highlights the relevance of NGOs in times of crisis, and the importance of the humanitarian principles for these NGOs in their responses.

The work of members on the triple nexus was also gathered in the VOICE out loud 32 "The EU Member States' implementation of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus" as well as on the website page dedicated to the work of VOICE members on climate: "Climate crisis: VOICE members in action".

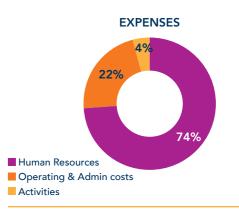
VOICE communication consolidated its social media presence on LinkedIn and Twitter, with a steady increase in followers and engagement on both channels.

VOICE FINANCES

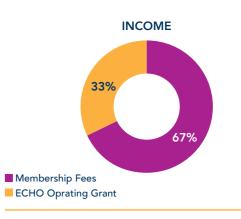
The total turnover for VOICE in 2021 was €785,276. This is higher than the €592,208 foreseen in the budget, due largely to the change of leadership at the Director level. The result carried forward by VOICE from 2020 was used to cover the unforeseen costs without affecting the network's effectiveness or its financial reserves. The financial basis of the network remains sound and guarantees a smooth functioning in the future.

The allocation of expenses is very similar to the previous year, with very limited travel or in-person meeting costs due to COVID-19 restrictions. Nevertheless, the overall level of activities remained high and numerous virtual working groups and meetings were organised throughout the year.

On the income side, the situation is also similar to the previous year, with membership fees representing two thirds of VOICE income. As the usual indexation of the membership fees was not applied in 2021 due to the yet unknown impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and with the DG ECHO Grant at the same level than over the last years, the total income is close to 2019 levels.



VOICE Expenses 2021.



VOICE Income 2021.

VOICE MEMBERS 2021

AUSTRIA CARE Österreich Caritas Österreich **Caritas** SOS Kinderdorf International **BELGIUM** Caritas caritas International Belgium Médecins du Monde (MDM) Belgium 8 Oxfam Solidarité OXFAM @ PLAN Plan Belgium CZECH REPUBLIC ADRA Czech Republic **ADRA** Czech Republic Czech Republic People in Need DENMARK ADRA Denmark ***ADRA Nødhjælp og udvikling Care CARE Denmark Dansk Folkehjælp Danish People's Aid DanChurchAid 0 (DCA) Danish Refugee Council (DRC) Mission East Mission Øst Mission East Save the Children Denmark ITALY Caritas Italiana Caritas Cooperazione e Sviluppo COOPERAZIONE NITERNAZIONALE COOPI INTERSOS INTERS S Organizzazione Umanitaria Onlus Jesuit Refugee **≨**,JRS

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OXFAM

GVC Onlus





International

Germany

Medico

World Vision Germany

International

Plan International

Welthungerhilfe

Rescue Committee



80 members 18 countries

Oxfam

Intermón

OXFAM





VOICE is the network of 80 European NGOs promoting principled and people-centred humanitarian aid. Collectively, VOICE aims to improve the quality and effectiveness of the European Union and its Member States' humanitarian aid. The network promotes the added value of NGOs as key humanitarian actors.

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