



VOICE (Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies) is a network representing 84 European NGOs active in humanitarian aid worldwide. VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor with the European Union on emergency aid and disaster risk reduction and it promotes the values of humanitarian NGOs.

VOICE DRR WORKING GROUP POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
for EC's Staff Working Paper following
the adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

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The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) saw more countries involved in the process and an increased level of ownership (adoption by 187 member states, compared to HFA's 167). The focus given to vulnerable groups, small scale disasters and the enhanced multi-stakeholder engagement throughout the document is welcomed by civil society. Overall this framework is perceived as a positive development after the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA).

The single position taken by the European Union was appreciated by civil society who pursued a persistent message for an ambitious framework. The consultations held during the negotiation process supported the identification of joint priorities both for the EU institutions and implementing actors. The VOICE DRR Working Group is now looking forward to further exchange about the implementation and monitoring of the SFDRR. Civil society organisations are playing a major role in implementing DRR in the field and in building capacity of local communities, and the VOICE DRR Working Group is committed to help connect this work with that of the EU towards achieving the framework's goals.

This paper, based on the critical review of the SFDRR published by the Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR), aims at highlighting key priorities to be considered by the European Commission when developing its Staff Working Paper, following the adoption of the SFDRR, and ways the VOICE DRR Working Group can specifically contribute.

Priority 1: Understanding disaster risk

The SFDRR makes great references to investments in knowledge and information management capabilities. We support the Commission's focus on evidence-based actions, and would like to emphasise the importance of local expertise and knowledge in this evidence collection. Understanding disaster risk and the underlying causes of vulnerability from the perspectives of the *primary bearers of risk*, i.e. affected populations, is an essential step to define sustainable solutions and building long-term resilience.

The Commission's Staff Working Paper should therefore include the action:

- **Invest in systematic pre- and post-disaster learning processes that gather experience and perspectives from those members of civil society on the ground.**

The VOICE DRR Working Group is committed to capturing field experience and expertise to feed into the development and monitoring of EU policies related to DRR, and has various mechanisms and tools that could be shared with the Commission.

Priority 2: Strengthen disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk

The VOICE DRR Working Group supports the strong emphasis the SFDRR makes on governance and the recommendation for establishing national and local legal frameworks. Thanks to its field presence and expertise on DRR, the EU has an important role to play to support the implementation of this priority area, especially in relation to compliance and enforcement of regulations, and building resilience where state institutions are weak. After all, it is in these areas where disaster losses are disproportionately higher.

The Commission's Staff Working Paper should therefore include the following action:

- **Include fragile states in the EU's geographic targets for resilience building.**

Many members of the VOICE DRR Working Group aim to build resilience in such complex contexts and could share lessons learnt around successful approaches.

Promoting the role of civil society in policy development, implementation and monitoring is essential to understand the local context, ensure the appropriateness and effectiveness of resilience building initiatives, and to build on existing capacities. An all of society approach is required, where mechanisms for inclusive and empowering consultation are embedded within policies and practice. We welcome the focus taken by the Commission to ensure an inclusive and transparent implementation process of the SFDRR, particularly including the most vulnerable groups. To achieve this, the VOICE DRR Working Group believes it is crucial to recognize vulnerable groups such as children and youth, women, persons with disabilities and indigenous people as key actors in their own development and to regard participation as both a means and an end in and of itself.

Towards this the following specific actions are required and should be included in the Commission's Staff Working Paper:

- **Develop SMART indicators and collect disaggregated data** (disaggregated by age, gender, disability, ethnicity, and locality) to measure the real impact of the implementation of the SFDRR so as to ensure accountability to the most vulnerable and ensure no one gets left behind.
- **Establish systematic mechanisms to collaborate with civil society groups, and specifically those representing marginalised groups, in the development of policies and practice.** Further,

implement strategies that empower these groups under an overarching common accountability framework to highlight gaps and weaknesses.

The VOICE DRR Working Group is keen to work with the EU to identify the kinds of data relevant to measure real impact on the ground, and to bring the voices of the most vulnerable at the EU level and feed in their recommendations in a coordinated, inclusive and transparent approach leveraging on the work of our grassroots partner organisations.

Priority 3: Invest in DRR for resilience

Many of the actions in this priority area are similar to actions identified in the HFA Priority Area 4 'Underlying Risk Factors' – where least progress was made according to the Global Assessment Report 2015. To achieve this objective, developing integrated approaches will be required, based on a more holistic perspective. The Commission should consider the development of this Staff Working Paper as an opportunity to further strengthen policy coherence and linkages between the SFDRR with other post 2015 frameworks, including the Sustainable Development Goals, the Finance for Development Addis Ababa Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit.

The following actions are therefore considered essential to be included in the Commission's Staff Working Paper:

- Establish systematic mechanisms to **facilitate communication and collaboration between different actors from DG ECHO, DG DEVCO, the EC delegations and DG CLIMA.**
- **Harmonise goals, targets, proposed interventions and monitoring frameworks across development, DRR and climate change initiatives** for effective and complementary action.
- **Roll out and regularly monitor the use of ECHO's resilience marker** to ensure humanitarian projects consider risk reduction. In line with the requirements of the Paris Agreement, the DRR Working group would like to see all EU development projects to be risk smart through the inclusion of risk and context analysis.
- The European Union and its member states should **adopt frameworks such as the Comprehensive School Safety Framework** that provides uninterrupted learning in safe environments for children, while maintaining sensitivity to children of different genders, age, and abilities.
- **Increase investment and funding for DRR** activities in order to translate the EC commitments made when adopting the SFDRR into action.

The members of the VOICE DRR Working Group are keen to share their thoughts and tools with the Commission on how initiatives and indicators could be aligned to best support the lives and livelihoods of the most vulnerable groups.

Priority 4: Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to “Build Back Better” in recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction

The SFDRR has a strong emphasis on the importance of preparing and planning for the recovery and reconstruction phase ahead of a disaster event. It also strengthens the existing potential during the recovery phase to “build back better”. Whilst we support the Commission’s priorities of resilient construction, we feel there is a need for a broader look at this priority that takes into account the reality that the majority of disasters are small scale, with a substantial proportion of disaster losses occurring in areas of informality, fragility and insecurity. As such “building back better” may face challenges of a lack of building codes or weak enforcement, little access to building resources, and the threats of violence.

Towards this the following action should be incorporated in the Commission’s Staff Working Paper:

- **Invest in community preparedness initiatives** that incorporate cross-sectoral approaches including education, health, water, sanitation, shelter etc., and are based on thorough analysis of the complex contexts.

The VOICE DRR Working Group would be keen to meet with the Commission, and establish regular communication opportunities, to input into the design and implementation of community preparedness initiatives. Our connections with local partners can help ensure Commission policies and programmes are effective and appropriate.

Background documents

[Children in a Changing Climate Implementation Guidelines](#)

[Comprehensive School Safety Framework](#)

[GNDR’s Civil Society Implementation Plan: Reality Check – Impact at the Frontline](#)

[GNDR’s Critique of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#)