

Throughout 2015 consultations have been building towards the World Humanitarian Summit, to be held in 2016. All over the world, and in EU Member States, consultations and debates have taken place between humanitarian NGOs, governments, UN agencies, the Red Cross, affected people, private sector organisations and other civil society actors. VOICE members have been heavily involved in this process. They have taken stock of where the humanitarian sector is at and identified what changes they would prioritise to best respond to the needs of people affected by crisis in the future. At EU level so far this has resulted in the European Commission adopting a policy focussed on 'a global partnership towards principled and effective humanitarian action'. We have invited our contributors to reflect further on some key advocacy issues for them on the agenda of the World Humanitarian Summit and to give a flavour of some national level debates across Europe to prepare this Summit.

Kicking off this issue of VOICE out loud, Oxfam GB reflects on years of efforts to improve the sector and the unfinished business of humanitarian reform. CAFOD highlights some key recommendations from NGOs in relation to humanitarian financing and Trócaire, ICCO Cooperation/ACT Alliance, and Johanniter International Assistance give us a flavour of the debates that took place at national level and the outcomes of the Irish, Dutch and German humanitarian community preparations for the World Humanitarian Summit. We are also happy to hear from Lisa Reilly (European Interagency Security Forum) on key issues for humanitarian organisations' security and risk management.

In the 'View on the EU' section Save the Children gives us an overview of the importance of building greater commitment to supporting education in emergencies, the EU's response and its vital relevance for the children affected by crisis.

In the context of the increased flow of refugees and migrants into Europe, the 'field focus' written by Médecins du Monde, looks at the philosophy behind and practical advantages to working both in Europe and abroad – building its humanitarian response wherever people are in need.

VOICE

VOICE stands for 'Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies'. VOICE is a network of 84 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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FROM THE VOICE PRESIDENT



The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) is the last of several international summits and will take place in Istanbul in May next year. VOICE members have been strongly engaged throughout the process so far; many participated in the regional consultation in Budapest and gave input to the EU Communication on the WHS released in September. I have just returned from the Global Consultation in Geneva, the last gathering of States and other stakeholders including NGOs before the UN Secretary General (UNSG) will launch his WHS report. With more than 23.000 people globally consulted, the process cannot be criticized for lack of outreach. Does the resulting 139-page report set a clear course? My fear is that it doesn't.

In Geneva the link between humanitarian aid and development as well as the need for finance featured prominently on the agenda. In order to really satisfy basic humanitarian needs, we need more clarity of roles with the development sector, including on whose primary responsibility it is to achieve resilience, and to provide the corresponding resources. A bigger investment is required in prevention and preparedness. The NGO voice advocating for the importance of localization was clearly heard and hopefully also taken on board. It would nevertheless be a mistake to believe that localization is a universal cure in all circumstances. In thoroughly insecure circumstances, it may all too easily imperil those it precisely wishes to see center stage. We must of course have our antennae very close to the ground and listen very carefully. But localization must not imply legitimizing the localization of risk.

We welcome the reaffirmation of the humanitarian principles but more effort is still required by States to uphold the principles, and by humanitarian organizations to strengthen implementation.

One of the main challenges for humanitarians is conflict. 80% of humanitarian aid goes to populations in conflict whose access to aid is becoming ever more difficult. Humanitarian workers and especially national staff are often seen as soft targets and the price is too often paid with their lives. Since my first election to the presidency in 2012, at least 37 staff of VOICE members have been killed. Does not such a staggering figure signal in itself that breach of International Humanitarian Law is becoming the norm rather than the exception? Already at the regional consultation in Budapest in February our sense was that while conflict and security issues overwhelmingly shape our work, this was insufficiently taken into account. Despite numerous participants adhering to these views, they were not reflected in the ensuing report and even less reflected in the overall agenda and discussions of the 'Global Consultations' in Geneva. This imbalance needs urgently to be addressed. The UNSG's report is now the very last opportunity to do so and to ensure that the Istanbul agenda correspondingly reflects the primacy of conflict situations.

Another issue barely addressed relates to the UN and its need for reform. We expect at the very least that the full roll-out of the Transformative Agenda is something the UN itself pushes for. 10 years of humanitarian reform have delivered some changes – crucial for those working with each other on the ground – but the UN reform efforts are incomplete: leadership, coordination, accountability and partnership require a bigger effort – and as underlined by many of our members, much further transformation is required with regard to how the local and national perspective is reflected in our work.

The underlying thread is that the 'system is broken' and thus that humanitarians are collectively failing. The reality is that a lot is being achieved, but that needs are increasing faster than resources, and that the political and operating environment is rapidly changing. As proven by the flows of refugees in Europe, humanitarian aid cannot address root causes. Crucially, conflicts which cause so much suffering cannot and should not be solved by humanitarians. Political solutions are urgently needed.

My hope is that the discussions towards the Summit help make the scale and complexity of humanitarian crises highly tangible for global political leaders – and that this sparks a determination, with the corresponding initiatives, to curb the worst excesses of war and restore the respect and space for humanitarians to work.

When it comes to the EU, it was a relief to see that States were intensely engaging in Geneva. We were left with the impression that they hoped for clearer priorities to result from the global consultation meeting. We agree that the momentum from national, regional and global consultations should now be maintained and expect the EU will make its voice heard in the next months, continuing its engagement with other donors and strengthening the dialogue for a shared understanding of the humanitarian principles and of needs based humanitarian aid.


In the wake of the Global Consultation, clear priorities are now the burning need and we expect them in the Secretary General's report.

Nicolas Borsinger
VOICE President

THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF HUMANITARIAN REFORM

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'...to the men, women and children struggling in humanitarian crises, a failed state is one that fails to fulfil its responsibility to ensure its citizens' access to aid and protection.'

 Tens of millions of people receive vital humanitarian aid every year. Oxfam alone helped more than 8 million people in 2014, and in June 2015 the UN was appealing for funds to reach 78.9 million people across 37 countries. However, millions suffer without adequate help or protection, and the number of people exposed to crises seems to relentlessly increase.

That is the challenge we face every day, and that the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016 is meant to address. But it is a challenge posed after a generation of humanitarian reforms have already been made, since the UN set up what has become OCHA (the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) in the aftermath of the 'Fist Gulf War' in Iraq in 1991. Since then, countless reforms have been made – often in response to one traumatic crisis after another – up to the UN's 'Transformative Agenda' of recent years and the Core Humanitarian Standard¹ unveiled by NGOs at the end of 2014.

So after twenty-five years of reforms, the millions of people affected by humanitarian crises have a right to ask: why hasn't it all been sorted out already?

For Oxfam, there are two parts to the answer. Firstly, even after years of reform, there is still an enormous amount of 'unfinished business' to do. And secondly, too much has been expected of humanitarian reform, indeed of the 'humanitarian system' altogether – while some governments treat *their* responsibilities to tackle and prevent humanitarian crises with contempt.

Let's look at that 'unfinished business' first. In 2014, the response to Ebola in West Africa was lethally slow. This followed close on the world's tragically late response to the 2011 famine in the Horn of Africa, exposed in Oxfam and Save the Children's scathing critique, *Dangerous Delay*, of our own and the world's failure to act swiftly upon the first warnings of disaster. In one crisis after another, governments, NGOs and others have failed to change plans rapidly enough in response to unforeseen events. And today, how many are playing catch-up again in response to the extraordinary increase in the numbers of people seeking refuge in Europe?

Yet in other ways, humanitarian action has certainly improved as a result of years of reforms, many of them led by NGOs, from the Sphere Project first established in 1997, to the new Core Humanitarian Standard that brings together common elements of several initiatives of the past twenty years, and by so doing makes it simpler for humanitarian actors to be held to account by the communities they serve.

The UN of course has also initiated one series of reforms after another. Since 2011, its 'Transformative Agenda' has built on the past, including the Humanitarian Response Review driven by the world's response to the terrible conflict in Darfur. The 'cluster' system of coordination, new pooled funds, and more recently the effort to concentrate resources in the 'L3' gravest emergencies are some of the tangible results of these reforms.

Yet while these reforms have improved coordination between international agencies, they have often failed to engage with local actors as real partners, or to make humanitarian aid fundamentally more accountable to the people affected by different crises. Typhoon *Haiyan* in the Philippines in 2013, for example, was one of the first crises the UN designated 'L3' as a sign of the scale of the needs, and the priority given to the international response. But it was also a crisis where local partnerships were often 'deprioritised, overlooked or ignored', as a report, *'Missed Again'* by Oxfam and other NGOs revealed a year later.

At the same time, the European Union and its members have not only been – collectively – the world's largest humanitarian donor, but have pioneered ideas such as the European Commission's Forgotten Crisis Assessments that seek to tackle some of the enduring injustices of humanitarian aid – including the vast inequality in aid between high-profile and neglected emergencies. Yet all these efforts together – NGO, UN and other – have delivered incremental not transformational changes, and what has not changed is as much as what has.

Humanitarian aid has not yet been 'turned on its head', to paraphrase [a new report from my colleagues in Oxfam America](#), which argues that the World Humanitarian Summit must set

1. The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) was launched in 2014. It was spearheaded by HAP International, People In Aid and the Sphere Project with the assistance of Groupe URD. It sets out nine commitments that organisations and individuals involved in humanitarian response can use to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide. It also facilitates greater accountability to communities and people affected by crisis: knowing what humanitarian organisations have committed to will enable them to hold those organisations to account.

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out new ways to support local actors – in the spirit of a ‘subsidiarity’ which values the roles of local, national, regional and international organisations, and says that, whenever possible, they should support the efforts of affected people themselves to cope and recover from crises.

Not surprisingly, this is a principle that the European Commission well understands, and is set out in its recent Communication on the World Humanitarian Summit. But as with every good idea, its value is in practical change, which is why Oxfam argues that every donor dedicates, by 2020, at least 10 percent of their global humanitarian funding to strengthen local capacity – and that the European Commission, for example, might rethink its regulations that restrict direct funding to local organisations.

Nor does humanitarian aid – or development aid – focus nearly enough on reducing the risk of future disasters. In the three decades to 2010, only 0.4 percent of total aid was spent on that purpose. And in so many other ways too – accountability, gender equality, early action – the gap between the reality and vision of excellent humanitarian aid remains. Though, to be fair, in a world in which humanitarian agencies can feel overwhelmed by the rising tide of disasters and new conflicts, and in which humanitarian donors have, in general, significantly increased their humanitarian aid. (That said, EU member states have been very varied; between 2013 and 2014, Denmark, The Netherlands and the UK all increased their humanitarian aid by more than 20 percent, while Belgium, for example, cut it by 2 percent.)

But it would be wrong to focus on such ‘unfinished business’ without being honest about the limits of humanitarian action. Millions of people do not face atrocities or hunger because the humanitarian system is failing, but because too many states and armed groups ride roughshod over peoples’ rights to assistance and protection; and too many others – including in Europe – seem incapable of agreeing common strategies to tackle the world’s greatest humanitarian challenges – including, right now, the devastating plight of those seeking refuge in Europe from conflicts that the world seems unable to resolve.

A generation ago, one woman said that bluntly. As UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata struggled to cope with the human misery caused by the genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia, she said that ‘there are no humanitarian solutions to humanitarian problems’. That truth has been almost completely forgotten in the preparations for the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, as [Oxfam’s paper ahead of the Summit, *For Human Dignity*](#), makes clear. Millions of words have been written about how to make further administrative changes to international aid, to find new ways to increase funding, and make every aspect of humanitarian aid transparent.

All that is vital. But these simple truths have been largely forgotten: that to the men, women and children struggling in humanitarian crises, a failed state is one that fails to fulfil its responsibility to ensure its citizens’ access to aid and protection. And that to the men, women and children who have just survived this year’s typhoon, flood or other disaster, a failed world is one that allows climate change to overwhelm the world’s most vulnerable people.

Humanitarians must not only complete the reforms they have promised for years. They must challenge the world to tackle the drivers of humanitarian crises, and rekindle outrage at the atrocities and obstacles that stop vulnerable people reaching the aid they urgently need. And perhaps most of all, they must help give a voice to the millions of people struggling in humanitarian crises, forced from their homes within and beyond their own countries, and, increasingly, taking dangerous journeys to seek refuge in Europe.

Edmund Cairns
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FLEXIBLE, TRANSPARENT AND LOCALISED HUMANITARIAN FINANCING AT THE HEART OF EFFECTIVE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

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‘...for all actors to transparently publish how much money they pass to national actors...’

★ Since the World Humanitarian Summit was first announced back in 2013, the issue of humanitarian financing has assumed growing importance. At the root of this is that with increasing humanitarian needs, so the shortfall in funding is growing. In 2014, UN appeals reached a record \$24.5 billion, but faced the biggest shortfall ever at 38% of identified needs.¹

In April the UN Secretary General announced the formation of a High Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, currently due to report in January 2016, and in May, as part of their membership of the IASC Task Team on Humanitarian Financing, CAFOD, FAO and World Vision published a report, *Looking Beyond the Crisis: Future Humanitarian Financing*, examining what financing should look like in the future.²

The Future Humanitarian Financing process identified three major transformational changes needed to recast the humanitarian business model:

- re-balancing the division of labour, establishing clear limits to humanitarian action and introducing more appropriate funding modalities for protracted crises, which now consume up to 80% of humanitarian funding;
- localising humanitarian financing through prioritising nationally-led responses by investing in national capacity and removing barriers which prevent national and local actors accessing humanitarian financing;
- the ‘international humanitarian system’ must embrace the growing diversity of humanitarian actors.

The research also proposed a series of ‘systems upgrades’ to improve efficiency, planning, and reduce transaction costs.

★ ON FINANCING FOR LOCAL ACTORS

The Local2Global Project's analysis of funding allocations within the international humanitarian system also starkly demonstrated the power imbalance of access to funding by Southern actors. The largest 4% of UN agencies and INGOs get 85% of humanitarian funds, whilst southern NGOs get less than 0.6% in direct funding.³ Previous research published by CAFOD in 2013 showed that UN managed pooled funds, Emergency Relief Funds (ERF) and Common Humanitarian Funds, provide the largest amount of traceable direct funding for national organisations, standing at 7.5% of all ERF funding in 2014.⁴ In addition, only an estimated 3.1% of

funding recorded by the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) is channelled directly through governments of affected states.⁵

Clearly Southern NGOs do receive far more than 0.6% of humanitarian funding, however, because reporting on what international actors pass through to them is so sketchy, it is impossible to analyse what local actors do receive. An important first step towards ensuring more direct funding for Southern NGOs is for all actors to transparently publish how much money they pass to national actors according to IATI/GHA standards⁶; and publish what they spend on Southern NGO capacity-building. This is recommended in the Charter4Change, a series of eight commitments for INGOs on working more closely with national actors.⁷

★ ON DONOR CONDITIONS

Another area of key concern is donor conditionality. NGOs and UN agencies have produced compelling case studies of how conditions imposed by donors are adversely affecting delivery of timely and principled humanitarian aid. Dialogue is currently on-going through the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative and with individual donors to explore how restrictive conditionalities could be eased.

★ THE WORK OF THE HIGH LEVEL PANEL

As the High Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing continues its deliberations, it appears likely that it will try to promote some kind of ‘Grand Bargain’ between big humanitarian agencies, possibly including some large INGOs and donors, designed to secure greater flexibility in funding and harmonisation of reporting by donors, in exchange for greater efficiency and transparency. The Panel are also working to cut costs and remove obstacles to the flow of remittances during and in the aftermath of crises.


Between now and May 2016, NGOs still have a huge amount to do to ensure that changes in the way humanitarian needs are financed shift the system towards a more dignified, cost effective, transparent and localised response which places affected people at its centre and wherein local actors are enabled to play a central role in the delivery of life-saving humanitarian aid.

Anne Street
Head of Humanitarian Policy
CAFOD

1. <http://devinit.org/%23%21/post/global-humanitarian-assistance-report-2015-2#/post/global-humanitarian-assistance-report-2015-2>
2. *Looking beyond the Crisis: Future Humanitarian Financing*, Lydia Poole, CAFOD, FAO, WVI May 2015 <http://www.cafod.org.uk/content/download/24944/179227/version/2/file/Future%20Humanitarian%20Financing%20Looking%20Beyond%20the%20Crisis%20Report.pdf>
3. *Funding of local and national humanitarian actors*, Christian Els and Nils Carstensen, Dan Church Aid, May 2015 http://www.local2global.info/wp-content/uploads/12ep_local_funding_final_250515.pdf
4. *Funding at the Sharp End*, Lydia Poole 2013 <http://www.cafod.org.uk/content/download/24369/175018/version/2/file/Funding%20at%20the%20sharp%20end.pdf>
5. *Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2015* <http://devinit.org/%23%21/post/global-humanitarian-assistance-report-2015-2#/post/global-humanitarian-assistance-report-2015-2>
6. *International Aid Transparency Initiative and Global Humanitarian Assistance Report*
7. *The Charter already has 15 INGO signatories and the endorsement of over 90 national and local humanitarian NGOs* www.charter4change.org

THE IRISH HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

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 In advance of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016, the Irish Government in cooperation with the Centre for Humanitarian Action at University College Dublin convened the Irish Humanitarian Summit. The Summit was preceded by an extensive period of consultation with public and private sector, non-governmental organisations, diaspora from disaster and conflict-affected countries and academia to critique the humanitarian system and think about new ways of working together to reach out to disaster and crisis-affected people. A cross-sectoral Steering Committee was established to coordinate consultations, analyse emerging themes and hammer out recommendations from diverse and sometimes contradictory opinions.

As a small country with a troubled history, Irish people continuously demonstrate support for humanitarian aid, placing a great deal of importance on Ireland's role as a neutral voice in Europe and cohesive overseas aid policies. Engaging with civil society groups in Ireland that are not provided with an opportunity to consistently contribute to debate on humanitarian assistance was an important aspect of consultation. A large and diverse diaspora engaged, contributing perspectives generally overlooked by humanitarian agencies. The process provided an opportunity to reflect and critique not just the system but the role of each agency within it.

The key message that emerged from the Irish consultations is that 'affected people should be at the centre – and humanitarian action should support affected people to be actors in shaping their own survival and recovery'. Much as we hate to admit it, the message implies that humanitarian actors are not working with affected people as actors but still as passive recipients. An additional reflection was our collective weakness in considering gender in our work. One Summit participant spoke of the lack of urgency in the Irish Submission around sexual and gender-based violence.

Ireland's consultation process has been a useful assessment of the performance of Irish agencies as contributors to the global humanitarian system, examining our place in 2015 and how our work needs to change, our thinking needs to expand and our efforts to innovate, need to be accelerated. Thus, in addition to endorsing a set of recommendations to the WHS, the Summit endorsed a series of commitments for agencies and actors in Ireland to take forward – 'putting a little of our money where our mouth is'. This aspect was a unique element of the Irish consultation process, a commitment to change

from agency headquarters, civil servants and policy makers. These recommendations have been mapped and allocated, and we will need to act on our commitments, outlining plans before the end of 2015. Those who were consulted and engaged in the Summit will meet again after the WHS to review the outcomes and amend plans, if necessary, to build collective accountability, to ensure this process goes beyond a talk-shop.

Additional outcomes from the consultations included calls for better targeted funding, the need for enhanced global response capacity, and a (re)alignment and more investment in Disaster Risk Reduction and early warning/early response processes. While these recommendations may not be very unique they do place greater emphasis on strengthening preparedness systems and adopting more innovative response mechanisms.

A truly valuable outcome from the Irish Summit is a sense of shared responsibility and some honest debate on the pressure being placed on the Humanitarian System. Government representatives fully agreed with findings that the system is creaking; that humanitarian aid is being used as a conflict-management tool in many contexts and that political will to effectively address conflict around the world is at an all-time low. Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland, spoke of humanity losing ground due to a deficit of humanity in political decision-making. John Ging, UNOCHA Operations Director explored global solidarity and asked whether in 2015 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would be adopted or the European Union would be established.

The WHS and the extensive consultations across the globe are a unique opportunity, not just for the humanitarian community, but ultimately for affected communities entitled to assistance that is principled and needs-based. Consultation and collaboration between government departments, humanitarian actors, academics and civil society can and must achieve change in the humanitarian system. The WHS is our opportunity to take stock and pool our energies to bring about meaningful change. As a sector, we must maintain momentum generated during the global consultation process before and after Istanbul to reduce the growing deficit of humanity.

Réiseal Ní Chéilleachair
Humanitarian Advocacy and Policy Adviser
Trócaire

'Ireland's consultation process has been a useful assessment of the performance of Irish agencies as contributors to the global humanitarian system, examining our place in 2015 and how our work needs to change, our thinking needs to expand and our efforts to innovate, need to be accelerated.'

THE DUTCH AND GERMAN ROADS TO THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

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★ PREPARING THE DUTCH HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

In 2012 a couple of Dutch organisations came together with the idea to discuss challenges in our humanitarian work. We invited well-known persons to talk about humanitarian aid in protracted conflict, new actors in the humanitarian field and other subjects. The short series had as an additional objective for Dutch humanitarian organisations to learn from each other. Afterwards we thought the aspect of applying lessons to ourselves could get even more attention. Then the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) appeared on the horizon and more actors joined the initiative which became the Dutch Humanitarian Summit (DHS) in February 2015. Thea Hilhorst, a professor of humanitarian aid and reconstruction, interviewed the participating organisations on the challenges and opportunities of our humanitarian work. This often led the NGOs she had visited to some further internal discussions and lessons.

The resulting report was discussed with the CEOs of the participating organisations and five subjects for discussion at the DHS were chosen: Local and International Capacity; Different Roles of the UN; From Emergency Aid to Development (LRRD); Urban Refugees; and Innovation in Emergencies. Groups were formed to prepare these subjects for the DHS. Gender Based Violence in conflicts was a cross-cutting issue. Further groups were created to work on psychosocial care, religion and humanitarian aid.

★ THE DUTCH SUMMIT AND BEYOND

The Summit was a success. Evaluations showed that it was well attended, including by young people (e.g. students) and the programme was appreciated by the visitors. Press coverage was good. To pay for this, a considerable part of the budget was taken care of by NGOs with further support for the process from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One World provided support in the field of media and communication. Humanity House took care of logistics and provided the venue for the DHS.

On the basis of the DHS outcomes, NGOs have continued the dialogue with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the process for the World Summit, providing input where we can, from our national parliament to the European Commission.

The DHS organizing committee will continue to organize in-depth thematic meetings within the sector until May 2016 when the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul takes place.

(Participating agencies are: CARE, Cordaid, Healthnet TPO, Humanity House, ICCO, Kerk in Actie, Dutch Red Cross, Oxfam Novib, One World, Save the Children, Stichting Vluchteling, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, Warchild, ZOA)

Evert van Bodegom
Global Programme Coordinator Disaster Management
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★ GERMAN HUMANITARIANS AIM TO 'STRENGTHEN LOCAL PARTNERS AND THE ROLE OF LOCAL ACTORS IN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE'

During workshops organized in 2014 - 2015 by the German Development NGOs platform (VENRO) and the German Foreign Office, and comprised representatives of German NGOs, government agencies and the Foreign Office, and later involving local partner NGOs, agreed a vision. This vision of a bottom-up humanitarian approach, based on subsidiarity, principles of partnership, and capacity strengthening was elaborated. Four key recommendations were distilled and submitted to the WHS consultations:

- 1) Reduce bureaucracy for increased effectiveness, efficiency and participation of local actors.
- 2) Provide better access to funding and funds for local actors.
- 3) Recognize role of local actors as professional and effective providers of humanitarian assistance.
- 4) Strengthen capacity-building of local actors to allow for sustainable and impactful partnerships.

The good news is that the broad civil society voices in the WHS process – to which we actively contributed – succeeded in having this focus on localizing resources, decision-making and coordination powers for humanitarian action prominently in the Synthesis Report of the WHS Consultation Process.

Furthermore, participating NGOs started to discuss and review their internal partnership approaches and policies. NGOs also submitted a list of specific recommendations to the German

Foreign Office regarding changes to its administrative requirements for its own humanitarian funds (proposal templates, reporting requirements, etc.).

Both NGOs and the Foreign Office are now using their respective voices in meetings with various actors and fora nationally and internationally.

During the **WHS Global Consultation** (held in Geneva in October 2015) Southern NGOs, led by Nairobi based ADESO, and several INGOs were advocating for a new pooled fund managed by Southern NGOs (SNGOs) with country-based allocation mechanisms, but governments seem to be reluctant or rather willing to work towards increasing Southern NGOs' access to existing pooled funds and consortia.

Independently from the funding set-up, INGOs and SNGOs urge to focus on improving the partnership quality between international agencies (UN/INGOs) and local organizations, which should include local leadership and funding for overheads, organizational development and capacity building in accordance with local actors' own perceptions of needs.

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AID WORKER SECURITY ON THE AGENDA

Interview with Lisa Reilly, Executive Coordinator,
European Interagency Security Forum¹

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Major attacks against aid workers have increased over the past decade. Around 80% of humanitarian aid goes to populations in conflicts. There were 329 victims of incidents in 2014. 297 were national staff. The European Interagency Security Forum (EISF - www.eisf.eu) is an independent network of Security Focal Points who represent European-based humanitarian NGOs operating internationally, playing a role in supporting NGOs' work in complex emergencies.



The past decade has seen a rise in violent incidents against aid workers. What do you think lies behind this? What role does EISF have in supporting humanitarian agencies to keep their staff safe?

The context is changing. A number of years ago only a handful of organisations were working in conflict and post-conflict crises. Now a high number of complex emergencies have been going on for many years, with a multitude of actors on the ground. The lines between development and humanitarian actors become blurred. Afghanistan, for example, is not considered by many as a humanitarian setting and yet it is one of the most dangerous places in the world to work. We also have to accept that with growing global media coverage and competition for funds, agencies need to be seen to be working on the front-lines. Yet, with money tight, organisations struggle to maintain a big enough pool of highly trained people to work in complex emergencies.

EISF helps organisations share good practice and experiences. We support organisations in understanding and developing their own security risk management, building links between their security focal points. Unfortunately, the catalyst is often a serious incident involving a staff member. EISF can 'sanitise' experiences to facilitate learning and information sharing between members so that the mistakes of individual organisations are less exposed. We are involved in civ-mil coordination and counterterrorism legislation discussions. We provide links to the private sector and academia and help ensure no one reinvents the wheel.

Have you seen a shift in the security culture of organisations to ensure that crisis-affected populations have access to assistance from humanitarian organisations? 'Remote management' is one response to environments that are very difficult to access.

If organisations are going to have sustainable access to crisis affected populations, part of it is that they need to shift culture from 'security' to 'risk management'. At times we seem to be making advances. It's not about barbed wire and armed patrols - or financial risk management - but rather about acknowledging the existence of risks, deciding which risks are acceptable to the organisation and developing strategies to manage them. An interesting example cropped up recently where an organisation only saw staff and senior management follow through on the training requirements in their own policy, when a new

CEO came in and set the example by attending a security training course.

There are very different understandings of 'remote management'. It can be about international staff, or partner organisations, it can be a programme strategy or a security strategy to build acceptance. The advantages can be that you can access places you may not be able to access with high profile actors (e.g. foreigners). The cost of course is that if you transfer risk, to act ethically, you also have to transfer the capacity to manage risk. Remote management can have an impact on both perceptions of risks and actual risks. They don't go away with remote management. They change.

The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) consultations have consistently named conflict and complex emergencies as areas requiring attention – yet we have seen relatively few concrete recommendations on what could be done in these areas. How do you think the WHS could help increase security?

Security and risk management have been mentioned under almost every topic and consultation for the WHS. However, it is never the highest priority so seems to get lost in the discussion. The WHS seems to be encouraging a shift in approach to transfer responsibilities and funding to local, national, Southern organisations. They will face risks too. The WHS should call on all organisations to consider their own risk management needs.

What more could the EU and donors do in this field?

ECHO demands a risk assessment and security plan as part of their proposals, which is good. But they could do more, like facilitate exchanges that build the visibility and influence of security focal points and promote global debate on security risk management. ECHO supports essential security coordination mechanisms at country level, but for culture change more coordination and support is required at strategic i.e. headquarters level.


Responsibility is with us and with donors. We need to explain to donors that working in high risk environments has a cost. Often money filtering through the UN leaves NGOs on the frontline with less money to manage their risks. Donors need to match their call for proximity with the resources to achieve it. Organisations' proposal writers also need to explain these costs to donors. If they are presented as an arbitrary percentage overhead cost they won't pay. But, if they are built into the log frame and narrative – they become direct costs.

1. Interview conducted 2 October 2015 by Celia Cranfield (VOICE Secretariat).

WHY CHILDREN'S VOICES MATTER AND HOW THE EU IS LISTENING

A VIEW ON THE EU

1. It is estimated that 403 million school-aged children live in 35 crisis-affected countries – one-third of the 1.5 billion people who live in fragile and crisis-affected contexts. The proportion of children living in crisis is likely to be much higher though if we consider that children make up 50% of populations in 17 of the world's developing countries and that 51% of the 19.5 million refugees worldwide are under 18 years old. See http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/What_Do_Children_Want1.pdf
2. Save the Children, 2014. *Futures Under Threat: the Impact of the Education Crisis on Syria's Children*. See http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/Futures_under_Threat1.pdf
3. Global Education Cluster, 2014. *Education Cannot Wait: Financing Education in Emergencies – Challenges and Opportunities*.
4. Save the Children, 2015. *More and Better: Global action to improve funding, support and collaboration for education in emergencies*. See http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/More_and_better_V2.pdf
5. EU Children of Peace project http://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/children-of-peace_en
6. Save the Children, 2014. *Hear it from the Children: why education in emergencies is critical – A study of the role of education for conflict-affected communities in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia*
7. EU Press release http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-5315_en.htm
8. Save the Children, 2015. *What do Children Want in Time of Emergency and Crisis? They Want an Education*. See http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/What_Do_Children_Want1.pdf
9. Save the Children, 2015. *Education in emergencies position paper for World Humanitarian Summit 2016: Why Education Should Be at the centre of future Humanitarian Action*. See <https://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/fr/file/503319/download/548398>

 The largest and most vulnerable group in almost every crisis - children¹, tell us time and time again that what they want in an emergency is to continue their education. Yet in sudden onset emergencies, conflict or chronic crises education continues to be neglected, under-funded or is the last sector to be mobilised, by which time children have missed months if not years of education. Today, this is the sad reality for over 3 million Syrian children who are still out of school².

On average, education receives less than 2% of total humanitarian aid committed through appeals and the education sector routinely receives less than half of the funding requested to meet children's education needs³. Donors have had to be convinced that education should be included as a fundamental part of humanitarian response and that this cannot be done without additional, more timely, predictable and flexible funding⁴.

The EU is one of the largest humanitarian donors which has started listening to the voices of children by investing in education and committing to ensure that 4% of humanitarian financing goes towards education in emergencies.

In 2012, the EU received the Nobel Prize for Peace and strategically decided to use the prize money to create a lasting legacy in the form of the EU Children of Peace initiative⁵. Through this initiative, the EU has committed sustained funding and resources to support children caught up in emergencies with a quality education; offering hope, peace and a chance for the future.

Save the Children and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) received one of the first allocations of this prize money and helped provide quality basic education to children in Ethiopia and in the Democratic Republic of Congo. As part of the project, Save the Children and NRC were able to highlight children's voices through the 'Hear it from the Children' research⁶. By the end of this year, more than 4 million children will have benefited from the EU Children of Peace initiative in 26 countries.

At the recent Oslo Summit on Education for Development, organised by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UN Special Envoy for Global Education, Gordon Brown, the European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid

and Crisis Management, Christos Stylianides, announced his objective to dedicate 4% of the EU's humanitarian aid budget to education for children in emergency situations⁷. This is a crucial step in mobilising new political commitment to reach the 33.8 million children who are out of school in conflict-affected countries. It will have a huge impact on the ability of NGOs to ensure education in emergency operations.

The EU has led the way in supporting more and better funding for education in emergencies. More donors need to follow the Commission's lead and commit substantially more funding for education in emergencies to ensure that all children caught up in humanitarian situations receive continuous access to a quality and protective education.

Children continue to tell us that education is the key to their futures, their protection, their happiness and their health, and that it cannot be delayed. According to 16 studies from eight organisations, covering 17 different emergencies – ranging from conflicts and protracted crises through to epidemics and disasters – when 8,749 crisis-affected children were asked what they prioritise in times of crisis, 99% said 'our education'⁸.

As the international community gears up towards the World Humanitarian Summit in May, tabling a proposal on education in emergencies should be a priority. A key outcome from the summit must be a resolute commitment by the international community to be accountable to children; to listen to what children want; and to recognise the transformative role education can play in achieving greater humanitarian effectiveness, reducing children's vulnerabilities and managing risks to their protection and development before, during and following crisis. Putting education at the centre of humanitarian responses can have a catalytic effect to strengthen humanitarian effectiveness⁹.

Given that education protects and promotes resilience, development and humanitarian actors must work closely together to deliver on education in emergencies. This can only be achieved by fully funding and prioritising education from the outset of humanitarian responses.

Charlotte Balfour-Poole
Senior Humanitarian Education Advisor
Save the Children UK

WORKING HERE AT HOME JUST LIKE OVER THERE ABROAD

FIELD FOCUS

★ Médecins du Monde began to develop its domestic activities when doctors returning from humanitarian contexts in the field were confronted with cases of healthcare exclusions in France. At the time - 30 years ago - the official line was that France had the best healthcare system in the world. The opening in Paris and some major French cities of so-called 'low-threshold' clinics, those dealing with anyone who turned up regardless of any notion of the right to access health, revealed that more than 8% of the general population in France was excluded from healthcare. The idea of working 'over here' at home (*l'action ici*) was born.

Médecins du Monde (MdM) has been working for 30 years, providing care to the most vulnerable populations, victims of armed conflicts, natural disasters, those the world forgets. As an international solidarity charity, MdM's action rests upon the commitment of volunteers, logisticians, doctors, nurses, midwives, etc. As an independent charity, MdM's action spreads beyond medical aid. It denounces breaches to human dignity and rights and fights to improve the populations' situations. Médecins du Monde works around the world: with 67 humanitarian programmes in 46 countries and in France, nationally, including for the past several years in Dunkerque and Calais. In this article, Dr. Gilbert Potier reflects on the advantages for MdM France that this approach of working both at home and abroad can bring.

★ **All health systems generate exclusions.** Working on the basis of its action over here at home, Médecins du Monde successfully legitimised its international vision and mission. We were able to show that supposedly perfect healthcare systems excluded individuals from access to healthcare, and so were able, as a result of partnerships with civil society organisations in the countries where we work, to pursue the same vision there.

The contexts are different but the values which guide our actions do not change: independence from any authority and from political, religious or financial interests. This independence means we can respond rapidly and choose our partners freely wherever we intervene. Our actions are guided by impartiality but situations of vulnerability direct our efforts, wherever it has become impossible to exercise the right to access healthcare. For Médecins du Monde, aid and care are inconceivable without the notion of

social justice: satisfying basic health needs while condemning injustices or legal infringements is fundamental to our actions.

★ **The right to health is as important as care.** This idea broadens Médecins du Monde's field of action and advocacy. Social justice means that all individuals can contribute to the present and future of the society in which they live.

Having set out these principles, how can these actions provide a better understanding of the contribution made by the humanitarian way of operating to our work in high-income countries? We test this action 'on the margins' of our national systems, which create inequalities in access to healthcare, in over twelve European countries (UK, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Spain, France, etc.). These national programmes comprehensively demonstrate that in almost 90% of cases our healthcare centres deal with people having irregular immigration status, mainly migrants.

The current political crisis concerning refugees, migrants and migratory movements brings together our work 'over here at home' and 'over there abroad' (*Ici, comme là-bas*). As a result of these actions internationally and in Europe, Médecins du Monde is positioned along the trajectory of migratory movements. We have activities throughout the Sahel region, with the MdM network recently reinforcing its presence in Algeria, all the way to Calais and Dunkerque. Our analysis of the various situations shows us that the same ways of operating can be used when access to healthcare is disrupted, here, there or along the way. The context is not the same in a high- or middle-income country, but the inadequacy of the response can be analysed using the same lens.

★ **What lessons can be learned?** The way in which international humanitarian action is conducted enables us to take more effective action in our national programmes and vice versa. The key is the community health approach, focusing on work with and by populations to determine needs rather than focusing on systems. Independence and humanitarian approach that focuses on humanitarian access to reach all those in need of healthcare have taught us to secure cooperation from services and players who, without us, would not have come together. And yet this approach is not especially

FIELD FOCUS

original. For this reason, our healthcare-based action is inconceivable unless accompanied by MdM bearing witness. This summer, with three other French humanitarian NGOs our activities in Calais were reinforced and we intensified our joint advocacy to condemn the deteriorating situation in France. Dispensing care provides the basis for advocacy and for building the desire for social change within the very societies of the countries where we work.

Médecins du Monde favours action targeted at situations of vulnerability featuring several geographical, population or thematic entry-points.

As well as providing healthcare to individuals on their migration route, we also take a more specifically thematic approach to our interventions, such as sexual and reproductive health and harm reduction (with intravenous drug users to prevent the Hepatitis C epidemic spreading further). In emergency situations, the approach remains the same: countering the disruption to healthcare provision where the population no longer has access to a minimum package of care. For civilian populations, the disappearance of healthcare provision is as acute as the violence of natural disasters or conflicts.

For example, twenty years ago, 'shooting/injection centres' were first trialled in Burma, leading in the years that followed to consumption rooms for intravenous drug users in the UK as well as in what is today Myanmar. Similarly, our ongoing review of and feedback on trialling peer education has been enriched by our own experiences nationally. Again, it is the expertise we have built up both internationally and, initially in France, and then the rest of Europe, that gives a foundation for and legitimacy to our advocacy action. The harm-reduction approach to people who use drugs has finally made it possible to provide care to these individuals as part of their legal right to health.

This form of dual care/advocacy action based on experience both internationally and in our own countries has enabled us to gradually put together a more relevant approach that comes closest to our ambition of empowering stakeholders in relation to their own health.

For us this is also about fighting an 'over here at home' and 'over there abroad' battle on a

global level, by avoiding putting international aid on the one hand and national and European programmes on the other, in opposition to each other.

★ **Here at home, just like over there abroad**
What lessons can be learnt from this for other humanitarian actors or European actors who want to broaden their approach? What different skills and training do they need to have?

I fundamentally believe that differences do not exist. But I do believe that this supportive approach, when it is developed from the outset by an international NGO and combines a logistical and a more programmatic and contextual element, helps us achieve greater openness towards others. The need to form alliances and develop programmes that are sustainable and the power that stakeholders have to analyse their own demands are both concepts which enrich the work carried out in domestic as well as international projects with the same theme. Such concepts force us to look at the global dimension of the struggle, even if our activities are local or regional.

Being a part of French civil society both in leading programmes and in pushing for social change through advocacy builds our position as a legitimate and relevant player in France.

It is this very same legitimacy that we are trying to build at an international level, where we are primarily perceived as foreign, by seeking legitimate local partners with whom we can move together to advance humanity.

Ici, comme là-bas.

Dr. Gilbert Potier
Chief Executive Officer International
Operations
Médecins du Monde France

HUMANITARIAN ISSUES AT EU LEVEL

VOICE AT WORK

★ VOICE influencing international humanitarian financing policy

In preparation for the World Humanitarian Summit and acknowledging the growing gap between increasing humanitarian needs and the resources to provide relief, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has appointed a High-Level Panel to identify ways of closing this gap and to come up with recommendations to strengthen humanitarian finances and achieve more timely and predictable funding.

In order to ensure NGO views were included in the panel discussion, VOICE members came together to discuss priorities. Subsequently, two meetings with members of the panel, including with co-chair of the panel Kristalina Georgieva, were held. In a fruitful and frank discussion, donors administrative requirements; the restrictive impacts counter terrorism measures might have on principled humanitarian action; impact of different financing instruments on local actors and the need for more transparent reporting on the costs and benefits of whole transaction chains from original donor to implementing partner were discussed.

VOICE is contributing to international discussions on donor conditions in humanitarian funding through a study with a specific focus on Germany, Denmark, France and the European Commission.

★ Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in international frameworks

Since the adoption of the new Sendai Framework for DRR in March, the VOICE DRR Working Group has been promoting making linkages between Sendai and other policy frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Climate Change. More than 80 participants took part in a VOICE network organised debate on *DRR, Resilience, Climate Change Adaptation: Joining the Dots for Sustainable Development* during the European Development Days on 3 June. High-level participants greatly appreciated the discussion between the European Parliament Standing Rapporteur on humanitarian assistance and representatives of DG ECHO, the global NGO network GNDR and World Vision Somalia.

Later in July, VOICE signed a joint CSO paper to promote the institutionalization of DRR Funding in the Finance for Development Agreement in Addis Ababa. The vision and ambition of the recently adopted SDGs, in framing resilience as a cross-cutting issue and development challenge, is also welcome. These milestone frameworks provide great opportunities to develop policies with substantial and measurable targets. VOICE continues to work to influence ECHO's upcoming Staff Working Document on implementation of the Sendai Framework.

★ Humanitarian aid and the EU Comprehensive Approach – GA resolution and VOICE event

Since November 2014, the EU High Representative/Vice President, as head of the European External Action Service (EEAS), works more closely within the European Commission and leads a team of external relations Commissioners, including Commissioner Stylianides responsible for humanitarian aid and crisis management. While the pursuit of a more coherent functioning of the EU is welcomed by many, from a humanitarian perspective it is vital to maintain the needs based approach in operations, to respect the humanitarian principles and to reiterate that humanitarian assistance is not a crisis management tool. At its General Assembly in May, VOICE adopted a resolution on *'Recommendations on EU humanitarian aid in the new institutional setting'*.

To shed further light on the implications and challenges of the EU Comprehensive Approach to conflicts and crises from a humanitarian perspective, VOICE organised an event in May which brought together around 90 participants. The need for humanitarians to be better heard within the foreign policy discussions in Council was discussed, since a large proportion of the EU's humanitarian assistance goes to man-made crises where political solutions are needed.

★ Welcoming 3 new members to the VOICE family

The network is happy to welcome Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), Plan Belgium and Save the Children Netherlands as its newest members. Member of the Act Alliance, NCA provides emergency assistance in disasters and works for long-term development in local communities. Plan Belgium is specialised in child-centred community development, disaster risk management, climate change adaptation and emergency response globally. Save the Children Netherlands has expertise in DRR, rehabilitation and LRRD, reconstruction programs, education in development, protection, sexual reproductive health and rights & care for women and youth, food security and nutrition security. The following reports reflect the expertise of our new members:

- [NCA: Working to uphold human dignity](#)
- [Plan Belgium: Disaster Risk Management Capacity Statement](#)
- [Save the Children Netherlands: Education under attack](#)

VOICE out loud

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