



## **VOICE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Disaster Risk Reduction in EU Humanitarian and Development Aid Policy**

*– July 2007 –*

VOICE (Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies) is a network representing some 90 European NGOs active in humanitarian aid worldwide. VOICE Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group involves agencies among the leading ECHO partners in the field of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) from across the European Union. The following recommendations are based on the work of the working group.

The current process of forming the consensus on the EU humanitarian aid policy is a key opportunity to improve EU policy and practice on disaster risk reduction within the context of the Hyogo Framework for Action<sup>1</sup>.

#### **Context**

The VOICE members are deeply concerned about the upward global trend in 'natural' disasters and associated human and economic losses. Climate change is increasing the number and severity of extreme events such as floods and droughts. In addition, there are various other factors that lead to increasing disaster risks at all levels in developing countries: rampant development of free markets, ambiguous democratization/de-concentration efforts, conflicts/tensions, corruption, eroding social structures, loss of traditional knowledge, environmental degradation, among others. These trends have made the international community realize how urgent it is to significantly increase national, local and community action to reduce risk and vulnerabilities and prevent further disasters. The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN-ISDR) anticipates that the global cost of disasters could exceed \$300 billion annually by the year 2050.

In recent years a number of EU Member States have taken significant steps to reduce the impact of disasters on vulnerable populations through integrating DRR into their development processes and practice. However, the European Community has not led the way. The EC needs to make significantly more progress with systematically integrating – or 'mainstreaming' – DRR into its development policy and programming. Within the European Commission, DG ECHO has taken steps to integrate DRR into its humanitarian operations. However, DG RELEX and DG DEV are less advanced in adopting a systematic approach to reducing disaster risks. These services would benefit from having a strategy and dedicated capacity to further coordinate their efforts and to enable them to integrate pro-poor DRR into all development programmes and instruments in disaster-prone areas.

#### **Recommendations**

Taking also into account previous publications of the VOICE network on LRRD and in particular the VOICE Resolution on LRRD<sup>2</sup> and the VOICE Statement on LRRD<sup>3</sup>, both of 2002, VOICE makes the following recommendations based on the experience of working in partnerships and collaboration with Southern communities and community-based organizations:

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unisdr.org/eng/hfa/docs/Hyogo-framework-for-action-english.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [http://60gp.ovh.net/~ngovoice/documents/VOICE\\_LRRD\\_resolution.pdf](http://60gp.ovh.net/~ngovoice/documents/VOICE_LRRD_resolution.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://60gp.ovh.net/~ngovoice/documents/VOICEStatementNielson2211021.pdf>

## **1. DRR mainstreaming**

**A comprehensive, time-bound EC strategy for mainstreaming DRR is crucial to ensure that all EC development programmes and projects are designed with evident consideration for potential disaster risks and to resist hazard impact, and do not inadvertently increase vulnerability to disaster. The EC strategy should also ensure that all EC disaster relief and rehabilitation programmes are designed to contribute to developmental aims and to reduce future disaster risk.**

Disaster Risk Reduction is an issue for both humanitarian and development interventions. Disasters should not be the starting point for DRR responses. Instead, risk reduction interventions must be seen as an integral part of development interventions in disaster-prone countries which frequently suffer from droughts, floods, earthquakes, conflicts, corruption, structural environmental degradation, etc. The EU should develop an overall common policy framework on disaster risk reduction. The Hyogo Framework for Action should guide the European Commission in mainstreaming DRR into its humanitarian and development policy and programming. The EC should also ensure that the Hyogo Framework becomes a document that informs the development practice of the Member States.

## **2. Support community-based measures**

**The EC should ensure that its 'disaster preparedness' activities incorporate community-based measures (such as evacuation training and community based hazard mapping), which help to reduce a community's dependence on external assistance.**

Disaster preparedness and mitigation strengthens communities, protects them in difficult situations, and avoids depletion of productive assets, especially for already stressed rural households. This is crucial, as most lives are saved in the first few hours of a disaster, and very often emergency relief aid from the international community does not arrive until a few days later.

## **3. Longer time frames**

**DG ECHO's DIPECHO funding mechanism and disaster preparedness (pilot) programme should be built on to support longer-term disaster risk reduction programming.**

Instead of the current maximum fifteen months, a timeframe of five years should be considered in order to enable more long-term programmatic approaches to working with local communities and authorities to address vulnerability to disasters and an integrated approach to rehabilitation and recovery.

## **4. DRR funding**

**The EC and EU member states should allocate at least 10 per cent of additional new funding to humanitarian assistance budgets to reducing disaster risks and should significantly increase resources for DRR within development aid budgets.**

High risk areas should receive substantially greater investment in disaster preparedness (including early warning systems).

## **5. Climate change**

**The EC should coordinate its approach to these issues, ensuring that climate change is accounted for in DRR processes and DRR is integral to adaptation interventions.**

The risk of disasters is increasing with climate change. DRR interventions aimed at reducing the causes of vulnerability have significant overlaps with climate change adaptation.

*Brussels, July 2007*

### ***VOICE (Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies)***

is a network representing some 90 European NGOs active in humanitarian aid worldwide.

Seeking to involve its members in information, training, advocacy and lobbying,

VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor with the EU on emergency aid, relief, rehabilitation and disaster preparedness and promotes the values of humanitarian NGOs.

Contact: +32-2-541.13.60 / e-mail: [information@ngovoice.org](mailto:information@ngovoice.org)