

<p style="text-align: center;">VOICE STATEMENT ON LRRD NGDO MEETING WITH COMMISSIONER NIELSON 22-11-02</p>

Over the last years VOICE, the European NGO network of Humanitarian organisations, has placed great emphasis on its advocacy and research activities regarding the link between relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD). The issue is crucial in order to achieve sustainable development through the different interventions in emergency or conflict areas. VOICE members have given high priority to this work and have actively participated in the process.

Brussels based NGDO networks recognize the importance of LRRD in order to achieve sustainable development and therefore have proposed the LRRD issue as a main topic for a meeting with Commissioner Nielson. We welcome this opportunity to present this initial statement and look forward to discussing the issue more in depth at a later occasion.

Poverty and conflict are interlinked. On one side, poverty causes vulnerability, which makes it more difficult for societies to deal constructively with the consequences of conflict and/or natural disasters. On the other hand, conflict and natural disasters cause in-depth changes in the social, economical and political context in which development has to take place. Therefore sustainable development policies should be oriented towards a balanced reduction of poverty and we support the importance given to poverty reduction in EU development policies.

Following the EC's communication on LRRD last year, we appreciate the focus the EC is seeking to give to LRRD in its development policies. NGOs consider LRRD as one of the most crucial strategies in order to achieve sustainable development. Long-term development strategies have to include prevention and preparedness activities concerning conflict and natural disasters in order to reduce vulnerability to emergencies. Experience shows that if enough attention is given to prevention measures, the costs of humanitarian activities are reduced, and the loss in terms of human lives and infrastructure is reduced.

When natural or man-made disasters arise, humanitarian interventions have to be carried out with a long-term view, integrating both rehabilitation and development perspectives. This is also a crucial factor in order to reduce dependency on Humanitarian aid.

A number of "success stories" show that linkages between relief, rehabilitation and development can function and have given good results in the field. Case studies have the following three common characteristics:

- (i) a high level of involvement of local NGOs and associations in the phases of planning and implementation;
- (ii) a strong focus on capacity building of local institutions and organisations;
- (iii) an approach oriented towards immediate solution of the emergency, that at the same time bears in mind the long-term recovery strategy.

These findings show also that activities realized through the involvement of Northern and Southern NGOs at all stages in LRRD strengthen civil society which is an important element for democracy.

The major limitation of the LRRD methodology as promoted by the EC is the lack of an overall implementation plan in order to use the existing instruments and mechanisms in the different EC services.

On one hand we welcome the focus ECHO has given to an LRRD approach in its exit strategies and recent Global Plan meetings (e.g. Angola). These are good examples of bringing together different EU services involved in development efforts in a given country. On the other hand, development strategies as recently established in the Country Strategy Papers are another important step in EC planning for sustainable development. The challenge for the EC is now how to link these two instruments in order to make the LRRD concept work at the operational level.

Funding mechanisms are in place both for emergency and for development, but the few existing resources and appropriate measures for rehabilitation are constantly under threat of being eliminated or integrated into other budget lines.

Recommendations:

- 1. Improve the operational implementation of LRRD in EU development policy;**
- 2. Integrate disaster preparedness and conflict prevention objectives into the country strategy papers;**
- 3. Link ECHO and DG DEV/AIDCO instruments in a flexible manner in order to fill the gap between relief and development;**
- 4. Strengthen the rehabilitation strategy and instruments (financial, procedural) in order to give them the same importance as relief and development;**
- 5. Take into account the already-existing recommendations on LRRD from NGOs and open channels for future discussion.**

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