



VOICE (*Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies*) is a network representing 82 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in humanitarian aid worldwide, which are based in 19 European countries. 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.

January 2015

## VOICE Briefing to EU Member States in view of the Europe & Others regional consultation for the World Humanitarian Summit

### Recommendations

VOICE expects the EU institutions and the Member States to **play a crucial role** throughout the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) process, using the *European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid* to guide their input, and seeking to ensure that the agenda and outcomes are driven by the humanitarian principles and the needs of the beneficiaries.

VOICE also expects the EU Member States and institutions to continue to emphasize the **essential role of NGOs** and to make sure that NGOs' views are taken into consideration throughout the WHS process and for them to be appropriately included in the outcomes of the Summit.

#### ❖ Key issues:

VOICE calls on EU Member States to see the WHS as an opportunity to promote and support the revival of the **Principles of Partnership**, improving the effectiveness of coordination mechanisms between implementing partners on the ground.

VOICE stresses the need for humanitarian donors to provide **timely and predictable funding** to support responses from the humanitarian community which reflect the identified needs on the ground.

VOICE calls on all donors to continuously re-assess the **effectiveness of their funding allocations** among implementing partners to ensure that the most effective implementing partners are being funded.

VOICE advises the EU institutions and Member States to continue dialogue and share experience, including within the **Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative**, with new and emerging donors.

VOICE expects the discussions in the Summit and the Europe and Others Group consultation under each of the four pillars to reflect the concern of many NGOs regarding the **role of local actors in the humanitarian system**. Ensuring their inclusion and full participation in decision-making for humanitarian aid should ground the discussions and reinforce the link between field and policy.

VOICE expects EU Member States and institutions to push for the WHS discussions to result in actions towards ensuring that the **most vulnerable crisis affected people** have access to appropriate assistance and the relevant decision-making processes.

#### ❖ Theme 1: Humanitarian Effectiveness

VOICE calls on the EU and its Member States to use the opportunity of the WHS discussions to further raise the critical issues from previous and current reform processes with regard to **coordination, leadership, accountability and partnership** in the humanitarian system.

VOICE expects the outcome of the WHS to highlight the fundamental centrality of a **needs-based approach** which provides the basis for humanitarian aid and the importance of further developing coordinated needs-assessments.

VOICE expects the EU to promote a **gender-sensitive approach to humanitarian response** throughout the WHS discussions, that it is reflected in the final outcomes and in the implementation steps that will follow the WHS.

### ❖ **Theme 2 : Reducing Vulnerability Managing Risk**

VOICE expects the humanitarian community to use the opportunity of the WHS to further promote the **LRRD approach** to ensure that programming and funding requirements better consider this approach in a more consistent manner.

While NGOs expect the outcomes of the WHS to recognise and complement the undertakings in the post-Hyogo Framework, strong advocacy by humanitarian actors remains necessary to make sure funding for **DRR and resilience** is increased and incorporated **into development** portfolios.

### ❖ **Theme 3: Transformation through Innovation**

Given that innovations which fail can have financial consequences, for the WHS process to encourage innovation, it will need to address and find solutions to the (often legitimate) **risk aversion** of donors, NGOs and other actors within the system. Donor requirements should be flexible enough to **support innovation** to ensure that the humanitarian system is better able to serve populations in need.

From a humanitarian aid perspective, **public/private partnership cannot be seen as an end in itself**, but as a means to supporting the humanitarian system and its actors to provide efficient and quality aid.

### ❖ **Theme 4: Serving the needs of people in conflict**

VOICE calls on the EU institutions, Member States and NGOs to reaffirm the humanitarian principles as the basis of humanitarian aid and recognise the need for these to be central to funding and programming discussions. We should all work toward a **shared understanding of the humanitarian principles** among relevant donors and stakeholders during the preparations for and during the Summit itself.

VOICE calls on the EU to continue using its role in the international system, including dialogue on the importance of IHL, to **support humanitarian access** to crisis-affected people.

Preserving **independent humanitarian decision-making** is necessary. The WHS is an important opportunity to have a discussion on the **roles, mandates and the desirable limits of 'integrated approaches'**.

## VOICE Briefing to EU Member States in view of the Europe & Others regional consultation for the World Humanitarian Summit<sup>1</sup>

### ❖ Introduction

As NGOs deliver the majority of humanitarian assistance to crisis affected populations worldwide<sup>2</sup>, they are inherently affected by any initiatives and discussions aiming to improve assistance to populations in need. They have a wealth of professional, diverse and specialised expertise, and work in close partnership with affected communities and local civil society organisations. NGOs constantly seek to improve the quality of their work and are committed to mobilising rapidly and in a flexible and cost-effective manner in response to emergencies. They are supported by citizens in their own countries across the European Union and are a direct expression of active European solidarity with disaster-affected populations. They work operationally in the field, and on protection and advocacy. They have engaged in numerous processes aimed at ensuring the effectiveness of the sector, including the UN-led humanitarian reform process and the Transformative Agenda, and are continuing that engagement in the lead-up to the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.

*“NGOs are essential to the humanitarian response as they deliver the majority of international aid due to their field-presence and flexibility, often with a high-level of specialisation.” (art 49).*

*European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (2008)*

The European Union including its Member States is the world’s biggest humanitarian donor and plays a lead role in safeguarding principled humanitarian aid delivery and improving its effectiveness, accountability and transparency. In the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative and the OECD-DAC committee, the EU has an important role in promoting principled and needs-based humanitarian assistance, including with emerging donors. The EU humanitarian policy framework is the European *Consensus on Humanitarian Aid* (hereafter called ‘the Consensus’).

The Consensus has led to many concrete steps in improving EU Humanitarian Aid, supporting the European Commission and the Member States to develop a common understanding of being principled and needs-based donors<sup>3</sup>. The Consensus should be promoted and shared with emerging donors and the wider humanitarian community as an example of building broader regional consensus and identifying priorities for joint work on humanitarian issues.

*The European Union commits to “contribute to shaping the international humanitarian agenda, and work together in international fora” (art.29).*

*In addition, “the EU reiterates its strong support for humanitarian system reform with the aim of ensuring a better response to those in need” (art.67)*

*European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (2008)*

**VOICE expects the EU institutions and the Member States to play a crucial role throughout the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) process, using the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid**

<sup>1</sup> The briefing includes the recommendations. This paper has been developed by the VOICE secretariat, based primarily on existing VOICE positions, members’ input and members’ positions prepared for the Regional Consultation in Budapest in February 2015. A list of VOICE members’ papers is annexed.

<sup>2</sup> ALNAP ‘State of the System’ pilot report, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Evaluation of the implementation of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid Final Report, ADE and Humanitarian Futures Programme, June 2014, and VOICE study ‘The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid: an NGO perspective’ May 2014.

to guide their input, and seeking to ensure that the agenda and outcomes are driven by the humanitarian principles and the needs of the beneficiaries.

VOICE also expects the EU Member States and institutions to continue to emphasize the essential role of NGOs and to make sure that NGOs' views are taken into consideration throughout the WHS process and for them to be appropriately included in the outcomes of the Summit.

### ❖ **Key issues:**

VOICE considers partnerships, funding and the role of national and local NGOs and the inclusion of vulnerable people to be key elements, each to be considered in the discussions under the four themes of the WHS.

#### 1. Partnerships: revive the Principles of Partnership

*The EU believes that efforts to improve the global coordination of humanitarian response "should be broadly inclusive of all humanitarian actors". (art 70).*

*The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (2008)*

Partnership was included in UN led reform of the humanitarian system subsequent to adoption of the Principles of Partnership (PoP) by the Global Humanitarian Platform in 2007<sup>4</sup>. When these principles are implemented they have the potential to substantially improve the effectiveness and quality of humanitarian action, and could therefore be considered to guide other partnerships, including those with local and national actors<sup>5</sup>.

**VOICE calls on EU Member States to see the WHS as an opportunity to promote and support the revival of the Principles of Partnership, improving the effectiveness of coordination mechanisms between implementing partners on the ground.**

#### 2. Timely and predictable funding

*"The EU will ensure that humanitarian aid pledges are transformed into commitments and disbursements in a timely way and clearly linked to needs assessments..."(art 36)*

*"...all EU donors commit themselves to the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) Principles and undertake to work together, and with others, to seek to apply donor best practice." (art 18)*

*The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (2008).*

Often, project funding can be affected by short time frames, too little flexibility to adapt to changing needs, delays in payments and difficult or overly burdensome reporting systems – all of which can undermine effective and principled responses<sup>6</sup>.

A significant percentage of Member States funding is now being channelled through the UN and the pooled fund mechanisms; both the timeliness of the release of funds from the mechanisms, and access to them are problematic for NGOs. Ensuring timely and predictable funding remains a vital component for quality humanitarian response. The volume of bilateral funding available for NGOs

<sup>4</sup> The five PoP are: equality (mutual respect between partners, irrespective of size and power), transparency (dialogue, information sharing, financial transparency), results-oriented approach (effective, reality-based and action-oriented), responsibility (ethics, integrity, prevention of abuse, competency to deliver on commitments) and complementarity (comparative advantages, local capacity as asset). They were developed to guide UN and non-UN actors' relations especially in the field and to further coordination, coherence and complementarity of actions. For more information, please consult: [www.globalhumanitarianplatform.org/doc00002628.doc](http://www.globalhumanitarianplatform.org/doc00002628.doc).

<sup>5</sup> ACT Alliance, Humanitarian Policy and Practice Advisory Group, 'The World Humanitarian Summit: putting people at the centre', January 2015.

<sup>6</sup> NRC, 'Tools for the Job: Supporting Principled Humanitarian Action', 2012.

has reduced<sup>7</sup>, leading to unpredictability and uncertainty of funding. Ensuring funding is allocated directly to a diversity of implementing partners, including NGOs, could ensure more effective humanitarian responses. Where UN administered funds are accessible to NGOs, they are not always timely or predictable and the financial and administrative requirements can effectively exclude smaller and national or local NGOs<sup>8</sup>.

**VOICE stresses the need for humanitarian donors to provide timely and predictable funding to support responses from the humanitarian community which reflect the identified needs on the ground.**

**VOICE calls on all donors to continuously re-assess the effectiveness of their funding allocations among implementing partners to ensure that the most effective implementing partners are being funded.**

**VOICE advises the EU institutions and Member States to continue dialogue and share experience, including within the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative, with new and emerging donors.**

### 3. Local actors

*"...Local actors are on the front line when disaster strikes suddenly and increasingly also at the core of the humanitarian response in complex emergencies...." (art. 53)*

*European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (2008)*

The role of local partners and Southern civil society is critical. The WHS commitment to ensure a voice for affected people is a step in this direction. They are frequently at the forefront of humanitarian response and they should be at the forefront of changes to the system that supports their local management of hazards and disasters. They often have the most in-depth knowledge of the context, their involvement is important to build trust and community acceptance as well as to ensure ownership by affected communities. The more the humanitarian space is restrained, the more effective partnerships with local NGOs can be pivotal to reach the people in need. This does not mean that it is always easy. For example, in conflict situation the risks faced by aid workers can be very high and finding partners that accept and can work within the framework provided by the principle of neutrality can also be a challenge<sup>9</sup>.

Many NGOs have focussed their attention for the WHS on the role of local and national actors and this is a key issue emerging from consultations. Numerous NGOs are also seeking to ensure that local partners and affected communities, including women's groups, have a meaningful say in the WHS process and the changes to the global humanitarian system that emerge from it.<sup>10</sup>

Local actors' capacity should be built in terms of their technical skills in assistance, their ability to access funding for emergency and disaster work but also in terms of their ability to influence the

<sup>7</sup> Development Initiatives, 'Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2014', p.58.

<sup>8</sup> CAFOD, 'Funding at the Sharp End', July 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Médecins du Monde, submission to WHS on Serving the needs of people in conflict.

<sup>10</sup> World Humanitarian Summit - German Consultation, 03.12.14, 'Synthesis of insights and recommendations from 22 examples of best practice documentations of cooperation by German humanitarian actors with local actors' (Dr. Inez Kipfer-Didavi), VOICE event report 'WHS, What's in it for NGOs?', November 2014, VOICE Out Loud 20, 'Sex Matters: why gender is key for humanitarian effectiveness', Celine Mias and Inge Brees, CARE International, and 'Create Space for Local Actors', Tilleke Kiewied, Oxfam Novib, November 2014, ACT Alliance, Humanitarian Policy and Practice Advisory Group, 'The World Humanitarian Summit: putting people at the centre', January 2015, Christian Aid, 'Making the World Humanitarian Summit worth the climb', December 2014.

system. Ongoing efforts to ensure accountability to vulnerable and disaster-affected communities should also be central to efforts to improve the humanitarian system<sup>11</sup>.

**VOICE expects the discussions in the Summit and the Europe and Others Group consultation under each of the four pillars to reflect the concern of many NGOs regarding the role of local actors in the humanitarian system. Ensuring their inclusion and full participation in decision-making for humanitarian aid should ground the discussions and reinforce the link between field and policy.**

#### 4. Inclusion of the most vulnerable crisis-affected people in humanitarian response

*“Humanitarian crises include both man-made and natural disasters. Their impact is increasingly severe....The main victims are civilians, often the poorest and most vulnerable among them, mainly living in developing countries” (art 2)*

*“In responding to humanitarian need particular vulnerabilities must be taken into account. In this context, the EU will pay special attention to women, children, the elderly, sick and disabled people, and to addressing their specific needs.”(art. 39)*

*European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (2008)*

While inclusion of the most vulnerable in humanitarian aid is a component of a principled humanitarian response, to date humanitarian response, policies and framework have not yet always been inclusive of the most vulnerable people. Our commitment to the principles of impartiality and humanity means further work is required on this. People with disabilities, children, women, injured people, older people and those suffering from chronic diseases can face significant difficulties in accessing appropriate humanitarian aid. These groups are often neglected in the assessment, preparedness, design and delivery of humanitarian relief, making them ‘invisible’ to relief operations. This *de facto* exclusion of the most vulnerable from the humanitarian response worsens the long term impact of the crisis on people and on communities. This situation has a great impact on the survival, safety and protection of the most vulnerable. Basic needs of crisis-affected people are thus not always addressed and their specific needs are further neglected.

**VOICE expects EU Member States and institutions to push for the WHS discussions to result in actions towards ensuring that the most vulnerable crisis affected people have access to appropriate assistance and the relevant decision-making processes.**

### **❖ Theme 1: Humanitarian Effectiveness**

Under the theme humanitarian effectiveness, we identify continued work on key issues in the UN humanitarian system, needs-based responses and a gender-sensitive approach as important to the WHS outcomes.

#### 1. Improving the international humanitarian system

*“...improving the global response to humanitarian crisis is the attempt to ensure better coherence and coordination of the various actors, and a clear prioritisation and identification of response gaps through the application of the ‘cluster approach’ and the strengthening of the Humanitarian Coordinator system. The EU fully supports these efforts, recalling that they should be broadly inclusive of all humanitarian actors and should serve the purpose of improving humanitarian aid delivery on the ground to those most in need”. (art 70)*

*The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (2008).*

<sup>11</sup> Commitment 4 “ communities and people affected by crisis have access to information and participate in decisions that affect them”, Core Humanitarian Standards, 2014.

Many NGOs and VOICE members have engaged in the important efforts to reform the UN humanitarian system over the last ten years. Recognising that much progress has been made under the UN humanitarian reform and the Transformative Agenda, VOICE sees the World Humanitarian Summit preparation processes as a continuation of this work and a new phase in these efforts to improve the collective work and ability of the global humanitarian system to respond to evolving humanitarian needs. Current and previous reform efforts have looked at coordination, leadership and accountability; however inclusion of local partners in these remains critical. The work that has been done so far on the UN system should continue to be based on those elements identified in evaluations and reviews as requiring further implementation<sup>12</sup>. The recent challenges Ebola posed to the humanitarian system highlight the importance of timely coordination<sup>13</sup> and leadership in the humanitarian system.

**VOICE calls on the EU and Member States to use the opportunity of the WHS discussions to further raise the critical issues from previous and current reform processes with regard to coordination, leadership, accountability and partnership in the humanitarian system.**

## 2. Needs- based approaches

*“Humanitarian aid should be transparently allocated on the basis of identified needs and the degree of vulnerability”(art. 31)*

*The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (2008)*

Too little is done to identify and respond to the specific needs of the most vulnerable in humanitarian responses and to provide them the chance to be heard, placing them further at risk. In order to substantially improve effectiveness of humanitarian action, it is crucial that the affected population is represented in humanitarian responses and disaster preparedness<sup>14</sup>. The emphasis in the ‘Consensus’ on needs-based approaches is in line with NGOs’ professional approach and expectations<sup>15</sup>. The European Commission’s policy on forgotten crises is also helpful in ensuring that the needs of those in less visible crises can be addressed by humanitarian actors. Impartial needs-assessment helps to ensure transparent funding allocations, and efficient, timely and appropriate responses.

**VOICE expects the outcome of the WHS to highlight the fundamental centrality of a needs-based approach which provides the basis for humanitarian aid and the importance of further developing coordinated needs-assessments.**

## 3. A Gender approach

*“Recognising the different needs, capacities and contributions of women, girls, boys and men, the EU highlights the importance of integrating gender considerations into humanitarian aid.” (art 23)*

*The EU recognises that the active participation of women in humanitarian aid is essential, and commits to promoting that involvement”. (art.24)*

*The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (2008).*

<sup>12</sup> Eg. ACF International, ‘ACF International and the Transformative agenda, May 2014

<sup>13</sup> The UN resolution was adopted in September 2014 while the first Ebola case was identified in March.

<sup>14</sup> HelpAge and Handicap International, ‘A study of humanitarian financing for older people and people with disabilities’, 2012, and, Christian Aid, ‘Making the World Humanitarian Summit worth the climb’, December 2014.

<sup>15</sup> Evaluation of the implementation of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid Final Report, ADE and Humanitarian Futures Programme, June 2014, and VOICE study ‘The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid: an NGO perspective’ May 2014.

Crises impact differently on men, women, boys and girls, which implies that response has to be differentiated to answer to their particular needs. While rhetorically there is support for attention to gender in humanitarian assistance, in practice many donors and other humanitarian actors are still working gender-blind. Without responding to gender needs, operations are simply less effective. NGOs expect the EU, building on its own experience with the gender marker, to take strong leadership on gender in emergencies and ensure that the follow up to the Summit reflects that this is critical in humanitarian response<sup>16</sup>.

**VOICE expects the EU to promote a gender-sensitive approach to humanitarian response throughout the WHS discussions, that it is reflected in the final outcomes and in the implementation steps that will follow the WHS.**

## ❖ **Theme 2 : Reducing Vulnerability Managing Risk**

In relation to reducing risk and managing vulnerability that VOICE would like to highlight: making development and humanitarian aid approaches to addressing the underlying causes of risk and vulnerability complementary and greater investment in Disaster Risk Reduction.

### 1. Making Humanitarian and Development Aid complementary

*“... it is important to ensure that humanitarian, development and other relevant aid instruments work better together, in particular in situations of fragility and where communities are seeking to recover from the effects of crisis. Achieving better linkage between Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) requires humanitarian and development actors to coordinate from the earliest phases of a crisis response to act in parallel with a view to ensuring a smooth transition”(art.77)*

*The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (2008).*

Improved Linking of Relief Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD) aims at ensuring that resilience, prevention and risk reduction measures which are increasingly taken in humanitarian aid operations are also effectively carried through into development programmes<sup>17</sup>, and that development programmes are better able to support capacity building and risk management activities. To effectively reduce risk and vulnerability it is critical to ensure that the structures, funding and actors of both the development and humanitarian sectors are not creating unnecessary obstacles to serving the needs of people<sup>18</sup>. Humanitarian actors should remain focussed on responding quickly to the needs. Protracted crises, in principle, allow for a more developmental mode of working. Effective risk, vulnerability and capacity analysis needs to be done for all development programmes, to ensure that good DRR/LRRD interventions are built in from the start to reduce the frequency, severity or impact of predictable disasters, and that capacity building/emergency preparedness work is undertaken with communities. Funding mechanisms do not currently sufficiently allow for a shift in programming towards rehabilitation and development, and back to humanitarian aid if necessary. Strong advocacy work is required by humanitarian actors so that donors make sure there is coherence and funding for building the resilience of crisis-prone communities.

<sup>16</sup> VOICE Out Loud 20 –‘Sex Matters: why gender is key for humanitarian effectiveness’, Celine Mias and Inge Brees, CARE International, November 2014, Christian Aid, ‘Making the World Humanitarian Summit worth the climb’, December 2014.

<sup>17</sup> EC Communication on Resilience (2013) and systematic inclusion of resilience in ECHO Humanitarian Implementation Programmes.

<sup>18</sup> Action Aid, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Tearfund, ‘Missed Opportunities, the Case for strengthening National and Local Partnership-based humanitarian responses’, October 2013.



**VOICE expects the humanitarian community to use the opportunity of the WHS for further promoting the LRRD approach in order to ensure programming and funding requirements can be better translated into this approach on the ground.**

## 2. Disaster Risk Reduction = an investment to reduce the likelihood and impact of disasters

*“The EU recognises that reducing risk and vulnerability through enhanced preparedness is essential to preserving life, especially in zones vulnerable to natural disasters and climatic change. (art 75)*

*The EU will support community-based preparedness activities in humanitarian operations and mainstream DRR in its development policy based on ownership and national strategies of disaster prone countries”. (art.76)*

*The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (2008)*

Effective DRR reduces disaster losses, preserving the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and populations and reduces the need for costly disaster response and recovery measures. Engaging a range of stakeholders, DRR is also linked to promoting the good governance essential for sustainable development.

DRR has largely been led by humanitarian actors. However, a long-term approach is essential to build capacities and embed mitigation measures. Community resilience is best supported by making risk reduction an integral part of development programming.

DRR is a key pillar in building the resilience of disaster-affected communities. Natural disasters are expected to increase. The largest human cost will be borne by populations already disadvantaged by poverty, with existing inequalities making women disproportionately affected by disaster. The increased acceptance of community resilience as a goal for development presents an opportunity to make the necessary investments in DRR.

**While NGOs expect the outcomes of the WHS to recognise and complement the undertakings in the post-Hyogo Framework, strong advocacy by humanitarian actors remains necessary to ensure funding for DRR and resilience is increased and incorporated into development portfolios.**

### **❖ Theme 3: Transformation through Innovation:**

Under this theme, VOICE sees the critical issues for discussion being: the culture required for innovation and the role of business.

#### 1. Culture of innovation - Transformation or improvement?

In line with VOICE comments under the effectiveness theme, VOICE sees the WHS as being part of a continuum in efforts to address weaknesses within the humanitarian system. However, whether a thorough transformation is required, and whether this will be achieved through innovation is questionable. Ensuring a culture of innovation in humanitarian aid is challenging.<sup>19</sup> Testing innovation in emergencies could potentially cost lives, when known and effective approaches exist. On the other hand, the humanitarian system’s limits are being tested. If innovative approaches can be shown to ensure more crisis-affected people receive assistance, there is a responsibility within the humanitarian community, to consider implementing those approaches<sup>20</sup>. VOICE sees the primary means to achieving this through continued work on the cross-cutting issues and strands of

<sup>19</sup> VOICE Out Loud 20, ‘The Challenge of Innovation’, Julian Srodecki, WorldVision International, November 2014, Médecins du Monde, submission to WHS on Transformation through Innovation, and Christian Aid, ‘Making the World Humanitarian Summit worth the climb’, December 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Médecins du Monde, submission to WHS on Transformation through Innovation.

effectiveness. However, a certain degree of ingenuity is inherent to the sector as it deals with delivering on the needs of people in complex and constrained environments. Humanitarian NGOs have found innovative solutions, for example when working to improve access or using technology to improve monitoring. Harnessing the potential of new technologies and encouraging the sector to innovate solutions is to be encouraged<sup>21</sup>. Nonetheless, investment in innovation requires innovators to be able to take on and absorb the risk of failure. Currently, both donors and the culture of humanitarian organisations can be risk averse when it comes to use of funds. Failure can have a big impact on funding<sup>22</sup>.

**Given that innovations which fail can have financial consequences, for the WHS process to encourage innovation, it will need to address and find solutions to the (often legitimate) risk aversion of donors, NGOs and other actors within the system. Donor requirements should be flexible enough to support innovation to ensure the humanitarian system is better able to serve populations in need.**

## 2. The role of business

The humanitarian sector can certainly learn from the business sector in gaining knowledge of cultures of innovation for improved effectiveness and in developing new methodologies and technologies. The business sector can potentially also be a source of extra revenue for the humanitarian system. Insurance companies potentially present an added-value in DRR, supporting local authorities in risk analysis.

Private business involvement should be a means to improving humanitarian response to crises-affected populations. Public/private partnerships should not become an end in themselves. Due to the core nature of business, careful consideration should be given to when and where business is of added-value in humanitarian response. If specific conditions are fulfilled the private sector could be considered as a provider of resources in certain niche areas: communications, data processing, logistics, cash and voucher transfer, transportation, infrastructure, etc. Existing OCHA guidelines on public-private cooperation for humanitarian aid could be updated and further disseminated as they are little known.

**From a humanitarian aid perspective, public/private partnership cannot be seen as an end in itself, but as a means to supporting the humanitarian system and its actors to provide efficient and quality aid.**

## **❖ Theme 4: Serving the needs of people in conflict**

Serving the needs of people in conflict and the security of aid workers are two critical issues that go hand in hand. Under this theme, NGOs highlight the importance of the humanitarian principles, to guide international responses to conflict and maintain access to crisis affected persons as well as the risks of integrated approaches and instrumentalisation of aid for non-humanitarian purposes.

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<sup>21</sup> IRC 'Humanitarian action in an Urban World', recommendation 8, 2015

<sup>22</sup> ACT Alliance, Humanitarian Policy and Practice Advisory Group, 'The World Humanitarian Summit: putting people at the centre', January 2015, Christian Aid, 'Making the World Humanitarian Summit worth the climb', December 2014. VOICE Out Loud 20, 'The Challenge of Innovation', Julian Srodecki, WorldVision International, November 2014, Médecins du Monde, submission to WHS on Serving the needs of people in conflict.

1. It is essential to further a shared understanding of humanitarian principles in policy and on the ground

*“The EU is firmly committed to upholding and promoting the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.”(art.10)*

*The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (2008).*

Humanitarian aid is provided based on the fundamental humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Abiding by these principles enables NGOs to provide support in sensitive operating environments, including in conflict situations, making them an essential tool in increasing the security of aid workers. Human suffering should be addressed wherever it is found, solely on the basis of need, without discrimination between or within affected populations. Moreover, aid needs to be provided without favouring any side in an armed conflict and with no other (political, economic or military) objectives in mind. These principles are set out in the Red Cross Code of Conduct which VOICE members and most professional NGOs adhere to. As new actors engage in humanitarian responses, it is essential for a shared understanding of the principles to be further developed. The WHS is an important opportunity to work on this.

**VOICE calls on the EU institutions, Member States and NGOs to reaffirm the humanitarian principles as the basis of humanitarian aid and recognise the need for these to be central to funding and programming discussions. We should all work toward a shared understanding of the humanitarian principles among relevant donors and stakeholders during the preparations for and during the Summit itself.**

2. Challenges to the perception of humanitarian assistance in conflict situations

*“This principled approach is essential to the acceptance and ability of the EU, and humanitarian actors in general, to operate on the ground in often complex political and security contexts.”(art 10)*

*“The EU will advocate strongly and consistently for the respect of International Law, including International Humanitarian Law, Human Rights Law and Refugee Law.” (art 14)*

*“Respect for independence means the autonomy of humanitarian objectives from political, economic, military or other objectives and serves to ensure that the sole purpose of humanitarian aid remains to relieve and prevent the suffering of victims of humanitarian crises.” (art 15)*

*“EU humanitarian aid is not a crisis management tool.” (art 16)*

*The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid (2008).*

NGOs and aid workers often work where few others will go. Considering the unprecedented scale of humanitarian crises, the necessity for humanitarians to operate in active conflicts or in volatile post conflict environments is high. The immense needs of populations require that despite the degraded security environment in complex emergencies, humanitarian personnel must be able to access and carry out life-saving activities in dangerous areas. This exposes them to threats whose nature and scale are exceptional and growing. The observance of humanitarian principles is both a matter of professional duty and a practical necessity as they may enable humanitarian NGOs to negotiate access to populations in need and to gain acceptance. Past years have marked high casualties of aid workers. Addressing staff security requires a strengthened commitment to principled humanitarian action. There is also a role for international actors to increase awareness and understanding of IHL among conflict parties.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup>ACT Alliance, Humanitarian Policy and Practice Advisory Group, ‘The World Humanitarian Summit: putting people at the centre’, January 2015. VOICE Out Loud 20: ‘WHS: an opportunity to put respect for humanitarians back at the heart of

The actual and perceived neutrality, impartiality, and independence of humanitarian operations are important. Challenges to these can occur when the UN and parties to a conflict (e.g. in South Sudan and Mali) are closely aligned in integrated settings and where humanitarians are considered part of the peacekeeping effort. They can occur when humanitarian action is included or imitated within a single approach with other security objectives<sup>24</sup>. They can also occur when the UN has various roles, including a military one. Given the critical importance of access to populations, operational NGOs may be cautious in being too closely linked to the UN in sensitive security contexts. This works to the detriment of coordination. EU Member States participating in international military forces in humanitarian crises must ensure that the foundation of all humanitarian action is respect for the humanitarian principles. They should ensure that their military forces are familiar with and adhere to international guidelines on humanitarian-military relations.

All of these challenges to the perception of humanitarian assistance may also increase risks to the safety of both staff and recipients. Aid workers (international and national) are increasingly seen as a legitimate target by parties to conflict. There is a responsibility of the international community, the EU, the UN to ensure that systems and structures preserve a clear distinction between the humanitarian response to a crisis and the political/military response<sup>25</sup>. Any strategy must be adapted to the crisis context and communications on external action should respect the specificity of humanitarian aid<sup>26</sup>. Increasing international trends towards a whole-of-government approach and/or the comprehensive (EU) or integrated (UN) approaches, can be detrimental to the security of aid workers and their ability to reach people in need. NGOs expect that humanitarian aid is not instrumentalised as a foreign policy instrument in conflict and crisis management<sup>27</sup>.

**VOICE calls on the EU to continue using its role in the international system, including dialogue on the importance of IHL, to support humanitarian access to crisis-affected people.**

**Preserving independent humanitarian decision-making is necessary. The WHS is an important opportunity to discuss the roles, mandates and the desirable limits of 'integrated approaches'.**

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humanitarian aid?' Pauline Chetcuti, Action Contre la Faim, France, November 2014, VOICE 2013 General Assembly Resolution: Recommendations on Humanitarian Aid and the EU Comprehensive Approach.

<sup>24</sup> As occurred in Afghanistan, 'Aid and Civil Military relations in Afghanistan', ENNA and BAAG, 2008.

<sup>25</sup> VOICE 2013 General Assembly Resolution: Recommendations on Humanitarian Aid and the EU Comprehensive Approach

<sup>26</sup> VOICE 2013 General Assembly Resolution: Recommendations on Humanitarian Aid and the EU Comprehensive Approach

<sup>27</sup> ACF International, 'Humanitarian Principles in Conflict', December 2013.

### **Members' papers for the WHS:**

- Médecins du Monde, submission to WHS on [Transformation through Innovation](#).
- Médecins du Monde, submission to WHS on [Serving the needs of people in conflict](#).
- ACF International, '[Humanitarian Principles in Conflict](#)', December 2013.
- Christian Aid, '[Making the World Humanitarian Summit worth the climb](#)', December 2014.
- ACT Alliance, Humanitarian Policy and Practice Advisory Group, '[The World Humanitarian Summit: putting people at the centre](#)', January 2015.
- DKH conference '[Changing Patterns of Humanitarian Aid - Putting it back on its feet](#)', September 2014.
- World Humanitarian Summit - German Consultation, 'Synthesis of insights and recommendations from 22 examples of best practice documentations of cooperation by German humanitarian actors with local actors' (Dr. Inez Kipfer-Didavi), December 2014
- Save the Children '[Education in Emergencies, a community's need, a child's right](#)', October 2014
- CARE International UK: '[A call to action on Violence against Women and Girls in Emergencies to the World Humanitarian Summit](#)', September 2014.
- IRC 'Humanitarian Action in a New Urban World' – paper for Europe and Others Group WHS consultation, 2015.