

## Concept Note: VOICE Event

### Funding imbalances: How uneven prioritisation and insufficient funding affect humanitarian aid

**Tuesday 21 May 2022**

*L42 Business Center, Brussels*

*18:00 – 20:00 (followed by networking moment until 21:00)*

#### Speakers

- **Mr Vince Chadwick**, Devex, Brussels Correspondent.
- **Mr Arnaud Dupont**, European Commission Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), Head of the Unit Programming, Control and Reporting (E.2)
- **Ms Céline Mias**, CARE International, EU Representative and Head of EU Office.
- **Mr Milward Mwamvani**, Läkarmissionen International, Global Head of Triple Nexus and Humanitarian Unit.
- **Dr Martin Scott**, University of East Anglia School of International Development, Associate Professor in Media & Development.

Moderator: **Ms Maria Groenewald**, VOICE Director

#### Background

According to OCHA's [Global Humanitarian Overview 2022](#), 303 million people worldwide need humanitarian assistance. This number has risen steadily in recent years, and with it the need for more funding. While global funding needs for 2021 were \$37.7 billion, humanitarian organisations were only afforded 70% (or \$26.4 billion) of that amount. In 2020, the figure was as low as 66%.

Because of this large gap in humanitarian funding, humanitarian organisations are forced to prioritise heavily and make significant cutbacks in many areas, often allowing them to target only the most vulnerable groups. In addition to the numerous protracted crises, such as in Syria (now in the 11<sup>th</sup> year of conflict) and Somalia (over 20 years of conflict), there have been several new humanitarian crises and emergencies in recent years. These include, among others, the severe health and socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to a global crisis on top of many existing humanitarian crises, the takeover of the Taliban in Afghanistan (resulting in an even more severe humanitarian situation in addition to the protracted crisis in the country), and most recently, the Ukraine crisis. However, there is a risk that existing crises, which have been underfunded for years, will be further impacted by funding cuts or the diversion of funds to emergency situations that are perceived as more urgent.

This panel discussion will explore how:

- (i) some crises attract substantially more funding than other crises where needs are similar, to be discussed whether it is possibly in part due to extremely high media visibility and political impact, and
- (ii) how this creates a major challenge for humanitarian organisations in managing ongoing humanitarian crises, leading to serious hardships for people in need.

In this context, funding decisions of donors, prioritisation efforts of humanitarian organisations, and the role of media will be analysed, as [recent research](#) shows that news coverage can have an impact on levels and earmarking of funding allocations from public and private donors.

### Outline of the panel discussion

#### 1) Funding of humanitarian aid

A representative from the donor community, Mr Arnaud Dupont (DG ECHO), will provide more insights on how funding decisions are being taken, and how coordination among donors but also parliament, government, etc. takes place in this regard.

#### 2) Implementation of humanitarian aid

Representatives from humanitarian organisations, VOICE members CARE International and Läkarmissionen International, respectively represented by Ms Céline Mias and Mr Milward Mwamvani, will reflect on some of the practical challenges that come with the diversion of funds, e.g., by providing some concrete examples of underfunded situations, while at the same time highlighting the limitations of responding at large scale to sudden-onset crises that are particularly prominent in the public debate.

#### 3) Media coverage of humanitarian aid

A media representative, Mr Vince Chadwick (Devex), will share insights on how humanitarian crises are covered in (social) media and why some crises are more in the spotlight than others, and what the humanitarian community can do together with journalists to shift the discourse to forgotten/protracted crises.

#### 4) Research on humanitarian aid

A representative of academia, Dr Martin Scott (University of East Anglia), will shed light on research about public perceptions of humanitarian aid, what impact the media's focus on a few, but particularly acute, crises have on decision makers.



Funded by  
European Union  
Humanitarian Aid  
and Civil Protection

*This event is supported by the European Commission through its Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department*