

COVID-19 Crisis: VOICE key messages

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COVID-19 is an unprecedented crisis globally. Humanitarian NGOs are present and active in most protracted and sudden onset crises to support affected people. With their experience delivering life-saving aid, VOICE members and humanitarian organisations are engaged in this fight in Europe and abroad, but COVID-19 is testing society, governments and humanitarian organisations to the limit.

VOICE is the network of 85 European NGOs promoting principled and people-centred humanitarian aid. Confronted with the new challenges brought by the current pandemic, VOICE members are reacting to the exceptional circumstances, and their current priorities include:

- Ensuring staff, partners and crisis affected people's security and safety
- Assessing all programmes with the view of maintaining critical humanitarian operations (including life-saving activities and humanitarian protection) and adapting to new needs
- Working within EU societies to help where they can

Imposed COVID-19 restrictions should not affect the delivery of life saving operations (e.g. travel bans, movement restrictions, etc.). Exemptions from movement restrictions are needed so that humanitarian NGOs can continue to reach the most vulnerable populations and address their needs in accordance with the humanitarian principles. Humanitarians are essential workers in the fight against COVID-19.

Maintaining the global supply chains to enable humanitarian activities is critical. This includes delivery of essential drugs, medical equipment, food assistance, hygiene kits and other key non-food items and normal supply chains may need to be supplemented with additional transport systems such as humanitarian hubs and flights.

Flexibility and adaptation of programmes in the field is needed to ensure a context specific response in a rapidly evolving situation. VOICE members expect donors' cooperation and support to ensure the capacity both to adapt quickly, maintain activities and to resume them where suspension is unavoidable. A number of donors are trying to reduce the administrative burden linked to implementation and adaptation of grants to ensure operations can continue.

Both development and humanitarian aid donors should support their partners to play an active role in addressing this crisis by using the lessons that need to be learned from previous crises and humanitarian-development nexus pilots (e.g. on the use of crisis modifiers).

Additional funding is urgently needed to combat COVID-19: for action aimed at limiting the spread of the virus and providing health care services as the crisis extends across the globe.

Humanitarian organisations are crucial actors in the global effort to save lives in the context of this pandemic. They and their partners are present in the most vulnerable and marginalised communities around the world and have the experience needed to respond effectively to emerging needs.

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