



VOICE ASBL

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INTRODUCTION

Looking back to 2006. The humanitarian community has continued to develop the lessons learned from the Tsunami especially through the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition and the NGO Impact Initiative launched by the Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, Mr. Bill Clinton. NGOs have been actively involved in this process constantly seeking to improve their professionalism and quality of their work to the benefit of crises affected populations. However, it is of utmost importance that the ongoing reform process of the global humanitarian system, not only reduces the process to merely questions of technical challenges and practical coordination. In order for the humanitarian sector to be more efficient and save more lives, it is essential that governments guarantee access to vulnerable populations, and respect the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality as enshrined in International Humanitarian Law.

The humanitarian space is shrinking. Civilian humanitarian actors such as NGOs, the Red Cross movement and humanitarian UN agencies all have witnessed that their work gets ever more difficult, and that access to populations in need is very often hampered or even denied by governments and parties involved in conflicts. Unfortunately the security situation for aid workers all over the world has further deteriorated and the blurring of the lines between political military involvement and civilian humanitarian interventions in many of the countries affected by conflict is continuing and impacting the work of professional humanitarians. The independency and impartiality of NGOs have therefore been crucial issues to defend both at EU and at global level.

2006 saw the establishment of the Global Humanitarian Platform, which aims to bring together on an equal footing the three pillars of civilian humanitarian action, the NGOs, the Red Cross movement and the relevant humanitarian UN agencies. NGOs have been bringing their experiences to the table in the ongoing reform process of the global humanitarian apparatus

and remain committed to strengthen partnership, complementarity and collaboration with the UN.

At EU level VOICE has been witnessing the increased involvement of state actors in the humanitarian field such as the military and EU Civil Protection units. These developments pose the question whether these bodies can deliver needs based assistance in an independent and impartial manner to crises affected populations. This question is especially pertinent when it comes to humanitarian interventions in zones of armed conflict. Without doubt there are situations in natural disasters when these actors should complement the humanitarian work of civilian actors such as the Red Cross movement, NGOs and the UN humanitarian agencies. But there is an urgent need to clarify the roles and mandates of these actors in order to ensure complementarity and avoid overlap and competition between the different EC mechanisms in the field of humanitarian intervention.

Looking forwards towards 2007. It therefore has to be welcomed that the EC is preparing a Communication on the future EU humanitarian Aid policy. This is a unique opportunity for the EU to reconfirm its commitment to the protection of the humanitarian space, the humanitarian principles and needs based EU Humanitarian Aid implemented through a diversity of professional humanitarian non-state actors and the humanitarian principles. VOICE members have already engaged strongly in the consultation process leading up to the Communication and will follow the process closely through advocacy and lobby both towards EU member states and the EU institutions.



Paul Grossrieder
VOICE President



Kathrin Schick
VOICE Director

1 - INCREASING THE RELEVANCE TO VOICE MEMBERS

VOICE has played an important role as facilitator for ECHO partner NGOs in relation to the ECHO Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA). Throughout the year, VOICE has supported the FPA Watch Group and its Task Force in the consultation process with ECHO. As a result, the perspectives and concerns of the NGOs have been heard, and recommendations and proposals have been made to ECHO concerning the implementation of the FPA.

The network is committed to contributing to increasing the professionalism and quality of the NGO sector. A series of workshops and discussion forums were provided on quality instruments, the FPA, and on human resources aspects in the humanitarian sector.

VOICE remains the main interlocutor between European humanitarian NGOs and the European Institutions – principally the Parliament, the Commission, and ECHO in particular. In 2006, VOICE implemented its first ECHO Grant Facility Project, focusing on NGO capacity building activities. It was able to ensure another project for 2007 to further enhance the capacities of European humanitarian NGOs and, consequently, to strengthen the whole network.

1. Monitoring the implementation of the ECHO Framework Partnership Agreement

Throughout 2006, the 30 NGO members of the FPA Watch Group (WG) have been sharing their expertise and experiences on a regular basis, and have been monitoring the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA). In the annual work programme they identified the main concerns humanitarian NGOs encounter in their operational work. The Task Force (TF), which is a group of very dedicated WG members, elaborated proposals and other relevant materials. The VOICE secretariat was facilitating and supporting the WG and the TF throughout all of their activities.

In the first half of the year, the main focus was put on the rules for procurement. ECHO consulted the WG in relation to the revision of the Annex V. The Group provided regular inputs and several proposals for changes to Annex V which were submitted to and discussed with ECHO.

The Task Force (TF) - with the support of VOICE - launched two questionnaires on internal procurement procedures and the start-up of operations (project approval), which were addressed to the FPA WG and the wider membership of the VOICE network. On the basis of the outcomes of these questionnaires, a document was drafted and presented to ECHO. This document built on the 13 recommendations of the 2005 FPA WG Paper¹. Correspondingly, it presented the current views of the WG on key issues such as the clarity of reporting expectations, and the recognition of NGOs' internal procurement procedures. Earlier in the year, the WG met with ECHO to discuss the above-mentioned recommendations. The attendance of ECHO Director General, Mr. Cavaco, at this meeting – a “première” in the long standing history of the FPA consultation process – has to be seen as an important recognition of the quality and relevance of the continuous work done by the FPA WG and VOICE. In total, the Watch Group and the Task Force met ten times in 2006, of which four times with DG ECHO.

The internal reorganisation of ECHO, which took place in May 2006, created a new Unit (B2), dealing with both financial management and legal and procedural affairs. It has been a very positive development for the overall FPA consultation process with partners so far.

In recent years, the FPA WG and VOICE have regularly stressed the importance of ECHO ensuring consistency and coherence in interpreting procedures that come from ECHO field offices and ECHO units in headquarters. Therefore, it was welcomed that in December ECHO launched new supporting documents – “fact sheets” – aiming at presenting a consistent and coherent interpretation of the financial and legal framework related to the FPA. These fact sheets (adopted in May 2007) also represent a further recognition of the highly technical work done by the FPA WG, as the constructive spirit of the consultation process resulted in a number of changes in the ECHO documents to the benefit of all ECHO NGO partners.

The efforts of the FPA WG have been rewarded by improvements in the draft Annex V and the contents of the fact sheets. VOICE has continued to play a crucial role as facilitator of the consultation process and interlocutor with DG ECHO and its partners.

¹ “ECHO-NGOs Framework Partnership Agreement – Towards a strengthened partnership”, November 2005.

2. Organising FPA and Sphere training for ECHO NGO partners

VOICE is actively supporting the drive towards increased professionalism that exists within the humanitarian NGO sector. The FPA and Sphere workshops are designed to meet the day-to-day needs of NGO staff responsible for developing and implementing humanitarian interventions, both in the field and headquarters. In the framework of the ECHO co-financed 2005 Grant Facility project (see below), VOICE - in collaboration with the association punto.sud - organised two training sessions on the ECHO FPA. These sessions sought to increase the understanding of ECHO's rules and procedures for financial and operational NGO staff, and represented one of the main pillars of the 2005 Grant Facility project which VOICE implemented throughout most of 2006.

In April, VOICE organised a three-day workshop on the Sphere project. The objective was to help NGO practitioners improve their knowledge of the Humanitarian Charter and the use of Sphere standards and indicators in their work. This training – hosted by ECHO - was part of the 2005 Grant Facility project and was attended by 34 people from 21 different European humanitarian NGOs. Throughout the year VOICE also continued as an active member on the Sphere Management Committee.

VOICE workshops have proven to be very relevant to humanitarian NGOs. Feedback on the sessions has been extremely positive. In 2006, a total of 86 NGO personnel attended VOICE trainings.

VOICE is grateful to the Italian organisation punto.sud for its support in these activities.

3. Promoting quality in humanitarian aid

In July, VOICE - together with the NGO network People In Aid - organised a seminar entitled "*Strategic Resourcing in Humanitarian NGOs: Towards the Coexistence of Professionalism and Voluntarism?*". The objective of the seminar was to raise awareness of the main issues relating to professionalism and voluntarism in the humanitarian community, and to debate the role that voluntarism can play in filling the human resources gap in the humanitarian sector. The seminar offered participants the opportunity to consider how and to what extent volunteers can contribute to the pool of human resources in humanitarian aid. The seminar also provided a platform for an exchange of best practices in relation to human resource

management in the humanitarian field. 27 different organisations were represented at the seminar. This event was organised in the framework of the 2005 Grant Facility project.

In the press: Humanitarian Volunteering

VOICE's position on humanitarian volunteering, as well as practical examples on how three VOICE NGO members address the issue of volunteers, were the subject of a press article published in the Brussels weekly *European Voice* (Vol. 12 No. 44 : 30 November 2006). This article was part of their five-page Special Report on Volunteering, and was an opportunity to inform European stakeholders in Brussels about the specificity of volunteering in humanitarian NGOs.

4. ECHO Grant Facility projects

2006 saw the successful closure of the ECHO 2005 Grant Facility project "*Enhancing the Network*". This project, started in September 2005, aimed at contributing to increased performance capacities of humanitarian NGOs. NGOs benefited from various workshops and other networking and advocacy activities aiming at fostering the debate over the current humanitarian context at the EU level.

As soon as the work planned under this grant had been completed, VOICE was able to ensure a new project under the 2006 Grant Facility, which started in November 2006 and will run throughout 2007. Following on from the previous project, the objective of the project is to contribute to enhancing the knowledge and expertise of humanitarian agencies and professional staff. In the framework of the new project - "*Strengthening quality and synergy in humanitarian aid: networking, training and advocacy for humanitarian organisations*" - VOICE will provide its members and other ECHO partners with workshops, round tables, and seminars, and will be consolidating its networking, policy making and institutional capacity. The project also proposes an external evaluation of the network against its current Strategic Plan 2005 - 2008. The project will last for 14 months and will end in December 2007.

The current humanitarian context is subject to major political developments and important operational implications. Against this background, the Grant Facility projects aim to improve the performance of the humanitarian response system and strengthen the representation capacity and the advocacy role of European networks. By supporting the institutional capacity of VOICE as a network, through the Grant Facility action, ECHO recognises the crucial role VOICE plays, in relation to both policy and technical issues, as the main interlocutor and key interface between ECHO NGO partners and the European Commission.

2 – INFLUENCING PRACTICES AND POLICIES OF EU HUMANITARIAN AID

VOICE has strengthened its role in advocacy on EU humanitarian aid policies through its continuous dialogue with the European Commission (EC) and the European Parliament (EP). In the EC the collaboration with DG ECHO has been consolidated, while in the European Parliament, VOICE has established a good working relationship with the Rapporteur on Humanitarian Aid in the Development Committee.

In addition, VOICE has established its position as the NGO representative in the EU's bi-annual informal Humanitarian Affairs Committee (HAC) meetings which brings together EU member states' officials responsible for humanitarian aid in discussions on key issues facing the humanitarian sector. These meetings have given a first hand opportunity for VOICE to present its members' positions to the national authorities.

VOICE was also active in promoting and advocating a number of important humanitarian policy issues such as the developments in EU crisis capabilities and the impact these might have on EU humanitarian aid policy and delivery.

1. VOICE and the European Commission's Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid (ECHO)

1.1 Strategic dialogue with ECHO

Throughout the year, VOICE has been a proactive interlocutor with ECHO in strategic dialogue at both operational and policy levels – up to the level of the EC Commissioner in charge of Development and Humanitarian Aid, Mr. Louis Michel.

April 2006 saw the first face-to-face meeting between VOICE President, Mr. Paul Grossrieder, and ECHO Director General Mr. Antonio Cavaco. This meeting provided an excellent opportunity for VOICE to re-iterate the need to further strengthen the partnership and the collaboration between ECHO and its NGOs partners in order to enhance mutual trust and understanding.

Exchange on ECHO Policy. In May, prior to the General Assembly 2006, VOICE invited Commissioner Michel to make a presentation

on the future challenges of EU humanitarian aid and the role of NGOs. Although Commissioner Michel had to cancel at the very last moment, the event was very successful. ECHO Director General, Antonio Cavaco, presented the Commissioner's speech. A very interesting debate followed involving Mr. Cavaco, Mr. Delphin, a member of the Commissioner's Cabinet, and some 100 participants from VOICE member organisations and other ECHO NGO partners, the European Institutions and other stakeholders within the humanitarian community.

Strategic programming. In November, the VOICE SCHA met with ECHO for the yearly ECHO Strategic Dialogue Meeting (SDM). VOICE gave its comments to the draft ECHO Strategy for 2007. Other issues which the SCHA brought up for discussion included the role of NGOs in food aid delivery, the impact of the UN humanitarian reform on NGO work in the field, EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict, quality assurances of medicines and medical supplies, and ECHO's requirements in relation to visibility. This meeting was characterised by true dialogue, even though its impact on the content of the ECHO annual strategy was rather limited. More importantly, VOICE and ECHO agreed on meeting earlier during the drafting process of the next ECHO Strategy (summer 2007). This was an important outcome given that VOICE will then be able to give genuine input to ECHO before the 2008 Strategy is finalised.

ECHO annual partner meeting. VOICE was an active participant at the Annual Conference of Humanitarian Aid Partners organised by ECHO in Brussels in December under the title "*Strengthening Quality of Humanitarian Aid*". While the previous year saw the first ever formal presentation by the network in this context, year 2006 established the practice that VOICE presents the NGO perspective. VOICE President, Paul Grossrieder, gave a speech emphasising the importance of the respect for and commitment to International Humanitarian Law, humanitarian principles and humanitarian space, as well as the importance of quality, professionalism and accountability. While welcoming the invitation to present to the conference in this manner, VOICE feels that the opportunity to express the partners' concerns in a formal manner is long overdue. The network represents almost half of ECHO's NGO partners and plays an important role as the main interlocutor for EU humanitarian aid with ECHO.

The ECHO partner meeting was also a good opportunity to profile the network to all ECHO NGO partners and potential new members, via the VOICE information stand. The latest VOICE information material, such as the fourth edition of the *VOICE OUT LOUD* Newsletter and the VOICE Briefing Paper "*The Strengthening of EU crisis capabilities. What impact on humanitarian aid?*" (see more below), were widely distributed among participants.

1.2 Monitoring of EU humanitarian aid funding

2006 was an important year in relation to the funding of humanitarian aid, as the EU's Financial Perspectives for the period 2007-2013 were discussed. VOICE monitored the process closely, assessing the impact of the discussions – which closed in April - on the annual budget of ECHO, the access to the emergency aid reserve (which is no longer ring fenced), and the inclusion of other humanitarian activities under the responsibility of ECHO (food aid and humanitarian aspects of aid to uprooted people). Despite NGO concerns, the outcome concerning the Financial Perspectives resulted in no significant increase in EU funding for humanitarian aid and the NGOs for the next 5 years.

Further pressure on ECHO's annual budget came from Member States who lobbied the EC to put funds to the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), a process seen to disproportionately favour the UN above ECHO's preferred strategy of keeping a balance in its respective funding to NGOs, the Red Cross family and UN agencies. In May, VOICE was approached by Commissioner Michel to express its position on this matter. Consequently, VOICE produced a paper outlining NGO recommendations concerning the CERF and the EU.

The VOICE Statement - disseminated widely throughout the EU institutions and the member states – calls for the allocation of additional funds, should the EU and its Member States decide for the EC to support the CERF financially. Replying to the VOICE Statement in July, Commissioner Michel wrote that he had "*some doubts about the added value of a financial contribution from the Commission to the CERF*". He also shared VOICE's views that "*in order to achieve its stated objectives,*

the CERF should draw on additional funds from donors and not divert funds from ongoing crises".

1.3 Participation in ECHO reviews

Throughout 2006, VOICE has sought to be involved in relation to the reviews which the Evaluation Sector of ECHO is producing on specific topics, so as to ensure that these reviews took the experience and concerns of NGOs into account.

While VOICE now is regularly mentioned in the Terms of Reference of the reviews, NGO involvement with the responsible consultants has varied widely. One of the reasons being that the topics so far are chosen by ECHO without any consultation with NGOs, and therefore often lack the ownership from the NGO side. However, the VOICE Secretariat met with several consultants and facilitated contacts with members whose field experience and good practices are likely to be an added value to the reviews.

VOICE welcomed the second review concerning **security management**, since it seeks to provide further assistance to NGOs in their security management. At the same time, it stressed the need to look at aid workers' security not only as a technical matter, but also to include reference to other issues such as perception of NGOs. On the **quality assurance of drugs and medical supplies** review, VOICE members participated in a round-table and to the debriefing session where the draft findings were presented. The review conclusions were finally presented to the NGOs at the ECHO Annual Partner Meeting in December.

The review of the **European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps (EVHAC)** constitutes a good example of how VOICE members can be actively involved in an ECHO review, its theme being of high relevance to the NGO sector. The VOICE network established an *ad hoc* working group in 2005 to bring together the different experiences and give substantial input to the consultant. In March, the consultant presented his draft recommendations and conclusions to the members of the VOICE Working Group (for more, see VOICE Annual Report 2005). This presentation was the final step in the consultation process with the NGO stakeholders on this issue.

VOICE members consider that volunteers have to be professional and that, generally, they have a role to play in NGO headquarters rather than being sent into highly complex and often dangerous crises. The network therefore welcomed the fact that the study had taken NGOs' concerns on board.

The review, which was finalised in October, concluded that though the EVHAC initiative, as formulated in the EU Constitutional Treaty, appears well intentioned, it is more politically (or supply) driven than field driven. As a result, the review recommended that no EVHAC should be set up for the moment.

The ECHO Director General thanked VOICE and its members for their assistance to the consultants engaged for this study. This advocacy process – and thus the general NGO concerns about the EVHAC – can be considered as successful.

Operational planning. VOICE attended Global Plan meetings organised by ECHO in the framework of its programming for 2007 (for Burundi, the DRC, Sudan and Afghanistan) and informed the network accordingly of the discussions.

1.4 Contributing to the ECHO evaluation

Being the main interlocutor to, and working regularly with DG ECHO, VOICE welcomed the opportunity to be actively involved in the evaluation of ECHO carried out in 2006. This evaluation - the third major evaluation of ECHO since its creation in 1992 - covered the years 2000-2005. There were two in-depth exchanges with the consultants who considered essential issues, such as the current position of ECHO at a time when it is facing a number of strategic and operational challenges, the application of the Maastricht Treaty's criteria of coherence, complementarity and coordination (also called the '3Cs issue'), and the application of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria.

ECHO presented the evaluation at the Annual Partner Meeting, where VOICE made a number of key comments, including those in relation to VOICE's main disappointment with the evaluation report – i.e. that it gave so little attention to the important role that professional humanitarian NGOs play in the delivery of EU humanitarian aid.

1.5 Food aid and food security

In 2006, VOICE followed closely the changes within the EC management policy of food aid and food security. While long-term food security would be managed by DG Development and AidCo, food aid for acute food crises would be managed by ECHO. VOICE drew the attention of its members to the fact that this decision meant in effect the fragmentation of EU food aid and food security efforts over three EC bodies.

Relations and regular exchange between VOICE and EuronAid – the network specialized on food aid and food security - continued over 2006. In May, the two networks participated in each other's General Assemblies. VOICE also welcomed the EC decision of recognising EuronAid as a Humanitarian Procurement Centre.

1.6 Humanitarian transport

Humanitarian transport has become an important issue since the Pakistan earthquake of winter 2005. Within the EU, NGOs - but also other actors such as the military and civil protection - are looking for ways to coordinate relief transport and are looking for funds for this purpose. In June, VOICE member organisations gave ECHO information on topics such as how NGOs currently organise humanitarian transport, and how they do the cost-benefit analysis to identify and decide on the transport means. They also gave comments on the civil transport capacity versus the use of military assets. This input was much appreciated as it showed that humanitarian NGOs organise and finance their transport in such a way as to reduce transport costs, purchase goods locally as far as possible in order to contribute to the local economy, and look for alternatives before using military transport.

Following the evolution that has occurred in previous years, the partnership with ECHO has been considerably strengthened through two projects under the Grant Facility action, regular updates on strategic policy issues, such as the budget and the UN reforms, and opportunities for speaking engagements. There are signals that the Strategic Dialogue will become more fruitful, and more punctual exchange with ECHO desk officers has taken place. The FPA consultation process has had a considerable impact. It also has to be welcomed that the Commissioner is requesting the expertise of the network.

2. VOICE and the European Parliament (EP)

2.1 Networking with the EP Standing Rapporteur on Humanitarian Aid

Over the last years, VOICE has been one of the actors in the humanitarian community stressing the need for more formal discussion forums for EU humanitarian aid issues. Therefore, the creation in May by the Development Committee of the post of a Standing Rapporteur on Humanitarian Aid was widely welcomed. This initiative should strengthen awareness of humanitarian aid in the parliamentary debates and will, hopefully, provide more lobbying opportunities for humanitarian NGOs.

Informally, VOICE shared its opinion with the Committee's Secretariat on the profile for the Rapporteur. In July, Mr. Thierry Cornillet, a French member of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, was appointed to this post. The responsibilities of the Rapporteur include the production of an annual report from the Committee, as a response to the Annual Activity Report produced by ECHO. VOICE organised two meetings with the Rapporteur, focusing on the added value and specificity of European NGOs (notably in comparison to civil protection). He was briefed on key humanitarian crises and the importance of the humanitarian principles for access and security in the field. VOICE also invited Mr. Cornillet to the UN presentation on the Central African Republic (CAR) in November. The Rapporteur subsequently put forward an emergency resolution on CAR to the EP. The EP Plenary Session in Strasbourg however opted for another humanitarian subject: the sexual abuse of girls and women by UN peace keeping forces in Haiti.

2.2 Civil Protection discussion in the EP Committee on Development

In mid-June, VOICE was invited to the EP Committee on Development to give comments on the proposal for a Council decision establishing a Community civil protection mechanism (recast). The EP is discussing this proposal under the "lead" of the Committee on Environment, as the Community civil protection mechanism comes under the responsibility of the European Commission's DG Environment. The Development Committee however decided to elaborate an opinion on the text, looking specifically at the

implications of the proposal on the EU's humanitarian work and EU - UN relations. The meeting was initiated by the Office of UK MEP Glenys Kinnock, a member of the Committee on Development. VOICE indicated that the text lacked clarifications on the scope of the civil protection mechanisms in the overall Community and international humanitarian response. VOICE also questioned the consistency of civil protection mechanisms with humanitarian principles. Finally, the coordination with the military (and, specifically, the use of military assets) was another issue which needed attention.

VOICE has created good working relations with some key contacts on humanitarian issues in the European Parliament and has become their point of reference concerning NGO positions on these matters.

3. VOICE and the EU Member States

3.1 Informal EU Humanitarian Affairs Committee meetings (HAC)

Depending on the member state holding the EU presidency, VOICE has been participating in several Humanitarian Affairs Committee meetings (HAC) over the years. In 2006, VOICE was invited to attend both informal HAC meetings and to give a presentation at these. These meetings are held during each EU Presidency and bring together representatives of all EU Member States to discuss humanitarian policy issues. The Austrian presidency focused on "Improving Humanitarian Response in Emergencies" as the main theme for discussion. VOICE, together with its Austrian members, was invited as one of the external contributors. VOICE expressed the NGOs' concerns in relation to the future role of EU civil protection in humanitarian aid delivery, and the danger with current developments in EU crises management. These prospects could lead to high level emergencies being taken care of by civil protection and the military, whilst DG ECHO and its partners could end up mainly dealing with forgotten emergencies. It also commented on the outcome of the EU's Financial Perspectives.

In the autumn, VOICE attended the Informal HAC meeting under the Finnish Presidency (Helsinki, October). The meeting's main topic was donors' financing decisions, while the sub-

issue was the reform of the humanitarian system (CERF, the Cluster approach, the Humanitarian Coordinators' system and Pooled funding). VOICE shared its position on the CERF and gave an overview on the concerns many members have in relation to the ongoing UN reforms, and how especially they impact on the work in the field.

VOICE was also active in the preparation of the EU German Presidency (for the first half of 2007). In September, VOICE participated in two consecutive meetings organised respectively in Stuttgart and Bonn. VOICE took the opportunity to draw the attention of its German members and other humanitarian NGOs to the need for active lobbying concerning the ongoing EU developments in relation to humanitarian aid and the increasing activities of State actors in the field of emergency relief.

The humanitarian working group of the German NGO Platform (VENRO) later developed a common position taking on board many of the concerns of the VOICE network and presenting it to the Foreign Ministry. It can also be said that the discussions in the German Humanitarian Aid Coordinating Committee (which includes relevant Ministries) in Stuttgart, gave further impetus to the idea of an EU Policy Statement on Humanitarian Aid.

3.2 NGO networking in EU Member States

In 2006, VOICE organised two Round Tables in London (February) and in Madrid (June). Both meetings were organised under the framework of the ECHO co-financed 2005 Grant Facility project. The objective was to engage the VOICE SCHA, VOICE member organisations and other relevant humanitarian actors in a dialogue on relevant policy issues related to EU humanitarian aid, with a special emphasis on the national NGO environment.

Under the headings "*Civil military relations and civil protection*" and "*Conclusions from the UK Presidency of the EU and the future Peace and Security Agenda*", the meeting, co-organised with Save the Children – UK, was a good opportunity to familiarize the Board with British NGO concerns and for informal networking with VOICE members and the wider UK humanitarian NGO community.

The meeting in Madrid was co-organised in cooperation with Coordinadora (the Spanish

platform of aid NGOs) and included two round tables on new actors in the humanitarian field and on protection of civilians in armed conflicts. This meeting was rather timely as the Spanish Government was preparing a position paper on Humanitarian aid at that time.

Both meetings included presentations by VOICE President Paul Grossrieder, relevant British and Spanish speakers, as well as ECHO Heads of Unit. Attendance at both events was high.

3.3 Contribution to UK Parliament inquiry on natural disasters response

In June, VOICE was invited by the International Development Committee (IDC) of the UK House of Commons to submit evidence to their inquiry on *Humanitarian Response to Natural Disasters*. The IDC wanted to focus on the role of the Department for International Development (DFID) and that of the UK Government more broadly. The inquiry also examined the roles played by NGOs, the Red Cross movement, the UN, the EC, other multilateral donors and the governments of disaster affected countries.

VOICE provided the IDC with a number of comments and recommendations on the EU humanitarian responses to natural disasters and the impact of Civil Protection on Humanitarian Aid. Among other things, VOICE recommended that the mandate of civil protection vis-à-vis humanitarian aid should be clear in order to avoid any confusion in roles, specificities and remits. The IDC expressed its gratitude for the input provided by the network.

VOICE is now regularly invited to the informal HAC meetings to present the NGO perspective. These meetings are an excellent opportunity for the network to promote the positions of the European NGOs to the Member States. It is also an occasion to gauge the trends within the Member States regarding their relations with NGOs.

The round tables have proven very valuable in sharing EU policy issues related to humanitarian aid with relevant actors at member state level. They have been an opportunity for exchange between NGOs from all over the EU, showing that funding practices and lobby focuses vary widely between member states. These events have also increased the understanding of the importance and relevance of VOICE work at EU level.

4. Other advocacy activities

4.1 Raising awareness on the impact of EU crisis response capabilities on humanitarian aid

VOICE has been following closely the development of the EU initiatives related to emergency aid and crisis responses. In 2006, VOICE produced a briefing entitled *"The strengthening of EU crisis capabilities. What impact on humanitarian aid?"*. This briefing is a consolidated update of the VOICE briefing paper on EU Crisis Management produced in 2004 and gives a much needed overview of all the different tools and mechanisms the EU has at its disposal concerning crises. It focuses on a number of new developments related to the strengthening of EU crisis response capabilities - especially those that followed the 2004 tsunami - and seeks to address how these instruments and mechanisms might have an impact on EU humanitarian aid.

The briefing is the result of a process of debate, reflection and discussions inside the network. It has been enhanced by the field experience of a number of VOICE member organisations, as well as an extensive dialogue with EU institutions and other humanitarian stakeholders. While it seeks to shed light on important institutional developments inside the EU from a humanitarian perspective, it also comes up with a set of recommendations to the EU institutions and Member States.

The briefing has been disseminated widely, was distributed at the ECHO Annual partner Meeting and subsequently to the Member States and the UN, as well as having been posted on relevant websites (Reliefweb, ECHO Intranet, and the VOICE web site).

The VOICE briefing was a timely reflection of the humanitarian NGO perspective on the development of the EU's crisis capabilities. In particular, the report of former French Minister for Foreign Affairs and former Member of the European Commission, Michel Barnier, entitled *"For a European civil protection force: Europe aid"*, gave a boost to the discussions around civil protection interventions outside the EU. Also, the briefing proved to be a very useful tool for VOICE and its members to answer the ECHO questionnaire, sent out in December, on the EC Communication on Humanitarian Aid Policy.

4.2 Monitoring trends in military - humanitarian relations

VOICE followed up the trends concerning the relations between the military and relief workers. A specific session on this topic was organised during the 2006 General Assembly in order to update VOICE member organisations with new findings and recent developments. This debate included key speakers from the recently established Civil-Military Cell of the European Council and of the Humanitarian Policy Group (Overseas Development Institute).

In October, VOICE also participated in a workshop which was organised jointly by NATO and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation on *"The Challenge of Stabilisation and Reconstruction. How to improve international cooperation?"*. During this meeting, VOICE, along with its members Care and Oxfam, reiterated the necessity to preserve humanitarian space and to be wary of the blurring of lines between the military and relief workers, particularly in complex emergencies.

Finally, VOICE conveyed a similar message in the framework of the NOHA Interdisciplinary seminar on international humanitarian action *"Relations between the military and humanitarians"* organised at the University of Louvain, Belgium, in November. During this workshop, VOICE presented to the NOHA students and representatives of the Belgian Ministry of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Justice, key points of the NGO position in relation to the military.

4.3 EU Humanitarian Aid Policy consultation process

At the ECHO Annual Partner conference, Commissioner Michel launched the EC's intention to issue a Communication in spring 2007 on the EU's humanitarian aid policy. In order to have the inputs from its partners, ECHO sent a questionnaire to all its partner organisations as well as to the Member States.

The VOICE network, being the main ECHO interlocutor for humanitarian NGOs, became the main partner for ECHO throughout the consultation process.

VOICE called upon all members to participate actively in the process and to share their opinions and experiences through the questionnaire. The secretariat then produced a consolidated VOICE reply to the questionnaire.

The commitment shown by the NGOs, as well as the quality of the content of their responses to the questionnaire, was highly appreciated by ECHO.

The ECHO questionnaire was a unique opportunity for humanitarian NGOs to influence and shape the future of EU humanitarian aid policy. It provided the network with the opportunity to consolidate its policies, to strengthen the base of its advocacy work and to ensure the direct input from all members.

At the time of writing (April 2007), it can be said that VOICE members participated very actively in response to the questionnaire – as well as to the other aspects of the consultation process. This consolidated approach towards ECHO ensured that the NGO position was taken into account in the overall process.

4.4 Humanitarian space

The protection of the humanitarian space, the importance of humanitarian principles in order to guarantee the access to crisis-affected populations, and the important role that NGOs play in the delivery of EC humanitarian aid, are the main principles the VOICE network is advocating for.

Throughout the year, the operating space available to VOICE members was undermined by a series of challenges ranging from ever-stricter legal restrictions - often established by national governments - to ever-deteriorating security conditions, especially for local staff. The killing of 17 national staff of the French NGO Action Contre la Faim in Sri Lanka being one of the worst and shocking examples of this.

Linking political demands with the operational reality of its members in the field is therefore one of the priorities of VOICE. This resulted in several lobby initiatives with a lot of support to advocacy from its members.

Country-specific advocacy

Russia

In March, VOICE sent a statement out to EU decision makers to draw their attention to the consequences of the new Russian Federal Law on Non-Governmental and Non-for-profit Organizations. It is felt that this law will have a negative impact on the delivery of humanitarian aid to crisis-affected populations in the Northern Caucasus.

The Cabinet of the European Commission's External Relations Commissioner, Ms. Ferrero-Waldner, replied to VOICE stating that the EU would be closely monitoring the implementation of this law.

Sri Lanka

On 6 August 2006, 17 members of Action Contre la Faim (ACF) were found dead. They had been shot in the head in the ACF base in Muttur, north-east of Sri Lanka. These employees - 13 men and four women, aged 23 to 54 years – were essentially water and sanitation specialists, agricultural engineers and project managers.

In September, the VOICE SCHA supported the initiative from a number of VOICE members for an international statement appealing for access to populations affected by war and respect relief workers in Sri Lanka.

As the Sri Lanka situation was a dramatic reflection of the issues of security, access and humanitarian principles, the entire network was approached for support.

31 NGOs (including 7 non VOICE members) signed up to it. The statement was sent to key persons within the EC, used widely in different member states, and posted on the VOICE website.

ECHO Operational Director, Stefan Steenberg, responded to VOICE and indicated that ECHO "shares the concerns outlined in (the) Statement and is extremely worried about the escalation of the crisis in recent months and the negative impact on the humanitarian situation".

VOICE President reacts to Muttur massacre

"In the name of VOICE, I would like to express my deep condolences to the families of the victims and share the grief with all our colleagues at ACF", said VOICE President Paul Grossrieder. "Beyond this specific human drama, we are extremely worried about the impact increased insecurity in the field has on access to vulnerable population affected by war and violence", he adds.

For the VOICE President, *"there are more and more frequent and serious threats on aid workers, not only in the north of Sri Lanka, but also in other parts of the world such as South Lebanon, Darfur, Afghanistan, Eastern DRC, and Chechnya. In a shocking way, the Muttur massacre brings up the whole issue of security and access once again", Mr. Grossrieder concluded.*

Northern Uganda

VOICE has also been active in other contexts where some of its members were advocating. In October, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) organised a public hearing in the EP on the situation in Northern Uganda, co-hosted by MEPs Glenys Kinnock and Luisa Morgantini.

The day after this hearing, VOICE hosted a meeting gathering European NGOs involved in advocacy on Northern Uganda. The objective of this inter-NGO consultation was to explore whether concerted NGO advocacy could be undertaken vis-à-vis EU institutions, and how the various national initiatives could be brought together.

Iraq

The worsening humanitarian crisis in Iraq has been another issue of concern to the humanitarian community. In November, 12 VOICE member NGOs – along with other humanitarian NGOs working in Iraq - called on ECHO to make adequate funding available for humanitarian aid. They also called on ECHO to consider supporting a system of 'remote-control' programme management. The VOICE Board later brought up the issue again when meeting with ECHO for the annual Strategic Dialogue.

Humanitarian workers are working in some of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. They witness directly the plights of crisis-affected populations and experience daily that their work is getting ever more difficult. In response to this, there has been an increase in the level of advocacy work undertaken by humanitarian NGOs and VOICE members both at the national and EU level in 2006.

3 – BEING AN ACTIVE PARTNER IN THE WIDER HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY

VOICE further established contacts with key non-NGO, non-state humanitarian actors. This strengthened its position as the main interlocutor between NGOs and other actors in the humanitarian sector.

Following several years of fruitful exchange with the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), this year VOICE initiated a dialogue with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to discuss important issues such as the preservation of humanitarian space, and the impact of EU crisis management on humanitarian aid.

VOICE has continued to be very active - in close collaboration with UNOCHA - on the UN humanitarian reform process, the promotion of the Oslo Guidelines, and on specific humanitarian crises; all these being of vital importance to VOICE members.

1. Strengthening contacts with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

For many years, VOICE has been in exchange with the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) on technical issues such as the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) by virtue of the fact that the IFRC's EU Office holds observer status in the FPA Watch Group. The relationship with the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement was enhanced last year through a meeting and increased association with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Geneva, which is the international guardian of the Geneva Conventions.

In January, VOICE President, Paul Grossrieder, and VOICE Director, Kathrin Schick, met with ICRC President, Mr. Kellenberger, and Director General, Mr. Gnaedinger, initiating a closer dialogue between the VOICE network and the ICRC. The outcome of the meeting was a day-long meeting in March in Geneva during which the VOICE SCHA and ICRC senior management exchanged views on key humanitarian topics of concern for the ICRC and European humanitarian NGOs. The meeting addressed two main topics: the threats to humanitarian space, independence and neutrality, and the impact of EU crisis management on humanitarian aid.

At the EU level, contacts were then followed up resulting in a first joint VOICE - ICRC event, a round table on *Current Challenges to Today's Humanitarian Action: Legitimacy, Access, Security*. Speakers included representatives from Care International, Mediciens du Monde France and the ICRC. Over 70 people – including NGO, ICRC and ECHO representatives – participated in this event held in Brussels on the eve of the ECHO Annual Partner Conference in December.

2. Relations with the United Nations

In 2006, VOICE continued its collaboration with UNOCHA in Geneva on issues relevant to EU humanitarian aid policies, such as the UN humanitarian reform process, the Guidelines for the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets (MCDA), the Oslo Guidelines, and in response to specific humanitarian crises.

VOICE has been a player in the **dialogue between UN and non UN humanitarian organisations**. In July, VOICE president Paul Grossrieder participated in a high level dialogue meeting to explore ways of enhancing the effectiveness of humanitarian response. This meeting brought together 40 leaders of UN humanitarian organisations, major NGOs (of which most were VOICE members) and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement.

One of the outcomes of the meeting - co-chaired by the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) and Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland, was the establishment of The Global Humanitarian Platform (GHP). It was set up as a flexible, *ad hoc* and time-bound forum for strategic dialogue on urgent humanitarian issues.

A Steering Committee was established to take the process forward consisting of UNOCHA, the four NGO networks - including VOICE - and the Red Cross/Red Crescent Family. The proposal to also include VOICE should be considered as recognition of the importance of its membership in the humanitarian community and the role the network plays in relation to the EU's humanitarian policy.

In November, VOICE was convened to a high-level event "re-launching" the updated **Oslo Guidelines** for the use of civil and military defence assets in natural disasters, originally endorsed in 1994. This event was co-organised by the Norwegian Ministry of

Foreign Affairs and OCHA. VOICE shared the NGO perspective on these Guidelines and drew attention to the fact that NGOs were concerned when there is military presence in local communities *per se*, and the effects it may have for the work of the aid community.

The audience (some 100 participants from both civilian and military parts of Member States and organisations) supported the point made by VOICE, agreeing that separating natural and man-made disasters was somewhat artificial, and that it was important to promote both the Oslo Guidelines and the MCDA guidelines together.

VOICE has met with high level UN representatives to exchange views on **country-specific situations**. The fact that these meetings were initiated by the UN indicates the recognition of VOICE as a crucial NGO interlocutor at European level.

In July, VOICE met with Mr. Ross Mountain, the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (DSRSG) for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for the DRC. VOICE members raised their concerns on the still volatile security situation in parts of the DRC and the protection of civilians. VOICE also pointed out that the DRC was a bit of a "test field" for the UN, with new humanitarian mechanisms such as the cluster system and the Action Plan being implemented there.

In November, VOICE hosted a meeting on the situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) at which the conclusions of an UN multi-disciplinary mission were presented. This mission to CAR took place in the course of November and was headed by Mr. Ibrahim D. Fall, the former DSRSG in Burundi, and included representatives of UN agencies (UNHCR, UNOCHA, ...), NGO network ICVA, and donor country Sweden.

At both meetings, the VOICE Secretariat was joined by member organizations which are active in the countries discussed, offering them the opportunity for a direct exchange with UN actors.

As a follow up to the work that VOICE and CONCORD did on the **tsunami** in 2005, VOICE became involved in the NGO Impact Initiative launched from the Office of the **UN Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery (OSE)**. Together with other NGO networks, VOICE

participated actively in the process to develop the recommendations. However, while the VOICE SCHA welcomed the so-called Clinton Initiative in principle, it decided not to commit its members to the final outcome.

3. Relations with NOHA (Network on Humanitarian Assistance)

In 2006 VOICE continued its collaboration with the European Masters in International Humanitarian Action, NOHA. VOICE Director Kathrin Schick made an intervention on EU crises management at a conference titled "*The European Union's Crisis Management Capabilities and the Role of Humanitarian Assistance*" in Brussels on 20th May. Some 50 NOHA students attended this event. Later in the year VOICE Communication and Advocacy Officer, Gilles Van Moortel, gave a speech on civil-military relations at an interdisciplinary seminar organised by the University of Louvain.

4. Relations with other NGOs / NGO bodies

Throughout the year, VOICE continued the exchange with the two Geneva-based NGO networks, ICVA (International Council for Voluntary Organisations) and SCHR (Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response). In January, the VOICE President and Director met with their counterparts in ICVA for an exchange of views on the UN reforms and their respective work priorities in order to explore possible synergies. They also met with the new Executive Secretary of the SCHR, Eva von Oelreich. In October, the VOICE Director delivered a much appreciated intervention on EU crisis capabilities and humanitarian aid to the members of the policy working group of SCHR.

At the end of March, the VOICE SCHA met with MSF representatives in Geneva to discuss a lawsuit between the State of the Netherlands and MSF. This lawsuit is related to the involvement of the Dutch government in 2004 to free a MSF volunteer kidnapped in Dagestan in 2002. MSF initiated the meeting with VOICE in an effort to inform other stakeholders within the humanitarian community on the threat which, according to MSF, this court case could represent for humanitarian assistance. MSF has also continued to be a very active member in the FPA Watch Group.

4 – ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS OF THE NETWORK

VOICE General Assembly (Forum) was the main annual event bringing together the majority of VOICE member organisations.

It was also an occasion for the members to express how the network has served them, and to state which policy issues and activities they want the network to focus on during the coming year.

In the field of communication, the main achievement related to external visibility was the face-lift of the VOICE website.

The now well-established communication tools, the Newsletter *VOICE Out Loud* and the *VOICE Flash* (for members only), continued to fulfil their missions in sharing the professional experience of humanitarian NGOs with the wider public and informing members in a timely manner about the latest developments in the humanitarian sector.

1. VOICE General Assembly (Forum)

Through individual membership and family representation, a total of 66 VOICE member organisations were represented at the GA; this represents 76% of the total membership of the network. During the GA, 51 people voted on activities of the network carried out by both the VOICE Secretariat and the SCHA over the past year. The morning session of the GA was dedicated to administrative and organisational issues, and members agreed to a number of key decisions linked to the future of VOICE.

VOICE members agreed on a General Policy Resolution which identifies the current key humanitarian issues that the network wishes to bring to the attention of the EU institutions and Member States over the next few months.

Mr. Antonio Cavaco, Director-General of DG Humanitarian Aid, presented VOICE members with the ECHO 2006 Strategy, the impact of the 2007-2013 Financial Perspectives for ECHO/humanitarian aid, and ECHO's new organisational chart (organigram), which came into force as of 15 May 2006. A question and answer session around these issues followed the presentation.

2. VOICE communication

2.1 New VOICE website

After four years of the original lay-out, an update of the website of the network was needed. The redesign process focused both on the graphic design and on the general architecture of the site. The VOICE website was given a complete “face lift” and redesigned both graphically and navigation-wise.

It is thus hoped that it will increase the visibility of VOICE activities and facilitate the access to information related to the network and EU humanitarian aid related issues. Please note that the “members’ section” has been enhanced. Feedback from our members has been very positive and the web site should now be clearer and more user-friendly.

2.2 Issues of VOICE OUT LOUD

VOICE OUT LOUD is intended to contribute to the understanding of the professional reality of humanitarian NGOs. It is addressed to European decision makers and other stakeholders in the humanitarian community, while giving an insight into relevant humanitarian issues, relying upon the experience and input of VOICE members. The newsletter has become a valuable tool to show the diversity of experience in the network and gives members increased visibility at EU level.

The May 2006 edition of *VOICE OUT LOUD* focused on the various dilemmas humanitarians face when working in an increasingly changing, complex and challenging context. Complex emergencies, NGO perception by local populations, security and legal constraints, humanitarian reforms, relations with the military, instrumentalisation of aid, to mention but a few, are all aspects that constitute continuous challenges to humanitarian NGOs.

The December edition focused on the issue of Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD). In this edition of *VOICE OUT LOUD*,

members shared their views on LRRD in a humanitarian context and their experience in putting this complex concept into practise. Different aspects were touched upon, such as food aid, education, role of local communities, disaster risk reduction, and exit strategies.

2.3 VOICE Flash

The electronic *VOICE Flash* news bulletin is the main vehicle to disseminate information within the network. It provides VOICE members with the latest update on humanitarian affairs issues within the EU institutional framework, recent activities of the VOICE secretariat and with other relevant information from the humanitarian community. In 2006, eight Flash editions were sent. The *VOICE Flash* has become very popular among members, and is widely read in each organisation.

3. Contacts with other partners

At the end of March, VOICE's Advocacy and Communications Officer, met with humanitarian aid stakeholders based in Geneva: ICVA, SPHERE, and ReliefWeb. The main outcome of these meetings has been an increased understanding of the workings of the above-mentioned organisations, particularly on the issue of information exchange and dissemination (e.g. web, e-tools, etc.). Direct networking with contact people within these organisations has been established, and VOICE's presence on their respective websites has been ensured.

Ten years after the creation of ReliefWeb, UNOCHA decided to evaluate its past and current performance as well as future challenges. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess whether ReliefWeb is efficient and effective, and to provide accountability to donors, OCHA management and users. In this context, VOICE (and VOICE Member Norwegian Refugee Council) were invited to give their comments to the consultant in charge of the evaluation.

5 – VOICE STRUCTURE AND STATISTICS

1. The VOICE network

The VOICE network is made up of operational NGOs active in humanitarian aid worldwide. It is the only European network focusing on the specificity of humanitarian aid, and therefore the main NGO interlocutor with the European Union on emergency aid, relief, rehabilitation and disaster preparedness. Unlike its members, VOICE is not operational.

During the past couple of years, the number of member organisations has remained very stable with some new members joining each year. At the end of the year, 85 organisations were members of VOICE.

The members represent the diversity of the NGO sector. The 'top five' fields of activity of VOICE members are (in order of importance) health, shelter, food and nutrition, water and sanitation, and, as horizontal issues, children and LRRD. VOICE members are from 15 EU Member States (as well as Norway and Switzerland). The vast majority of the VOICE members are ECHO partners.

VOICE members are dedicated to saving lives and preventing suffering, and bringing swift humanitarian relief to the most vulnerable groups. They base their work - as enshrined in International Humanitarian Law – on humanitarian principles, such as humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality. They are committed to following Codes of Conduct and set high quality standards of professionalism and expertise. Where possible, their interventions include a participative approach with their local partners and they seek to link relief, rehabilitation and development in order to ensure the sustainability of their interventions.

2. The VOICE Board

The Board of VOICE is called the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Aid (SCHA). Its role is to ensure that VOICE adheres to its purpose and statutes. It decides on strategic directions and policies, provides accountability

and ensures proper management of the network. Board members contribute their professional experience, on a voluntary basis, and as such represent the broader membership of the VOICE network.

At the 2005 VOICE General Assembly (GA), VOICE members elected a new President for the network. Paul Grossrieder is the former Director General of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and has long-standing field experience. He holds a degree in theology and a PhD in international politics and has written numerous articles on humanitarian affairs. Mr. Grossrieder is Swiss.

The 2006 GA did not vote upon any new members to the SCHA.

At the end of 2006, the VOICE SCHA was composed of Paul Grossrieder (VOICE President), Benoît Miribel (Action Contre la Faim), Dominic Crowley (Concern Worldwide), Will De Wolf (Cordaid), Rainer Lucht (Diakonie Emergency Aid), Angelo Simonazzi (Handicap International), Jean Saslawsky (Médecins du Monde France), Anna Jefferys (Save the Children UK), and Jane Backhurst (World Vision).

In 2006, the SCHA has continued to organise its meetings in EU member states, bringing the SCHA closer to its members at national level, enabling them to learn more about the concerns of its members, raising awareness of EU humanitarian policy issues, engaging in debate with the wider humanitarian community, and actively promoting the network. Altogether, the SCHA met six times over the last year.

The 'Bureau' is the executive body of the SCHA for administrative tasks and guarantees the financial and legal accountability of VOICE. The Bureau consists of Paul Grossrieder (President), Jean Saslawsky (Treasurer), Will De Wolf (Secretary) and the Director (without a vote). The Bureau met five times in 2006.

3. The VOICE Secretariat

The VOICE Secretariat is in charge of implementing all the activities related to the VOICE Annual Work Programme – in line with the Strategic Objectives. It is also in charge of the financial management of the association, under supervision and general control of the VOICE SCHA.

The core staff of the VOICE Secretariat comprises the Director (Kathrin Schick), the Communication and Advocacy Officer (Gilles Van Moortel) and the Administration Officer (Kenan Hadzimusic). A Project Coordinator (Sonia Giannone) has been implementing an ECHO co-financed project of capacity building actions for the benefit of ECHO Partners. During the year the team was supported by several very capable interns.

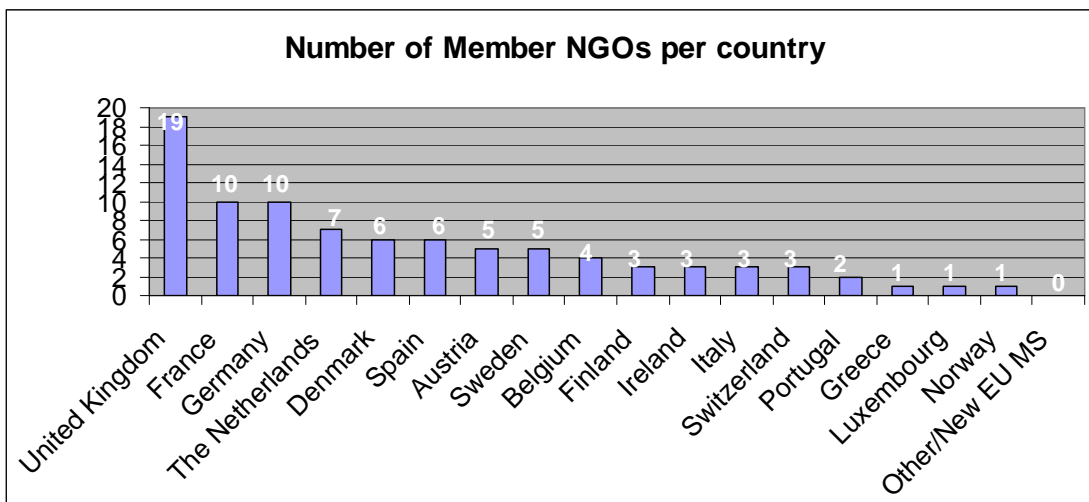
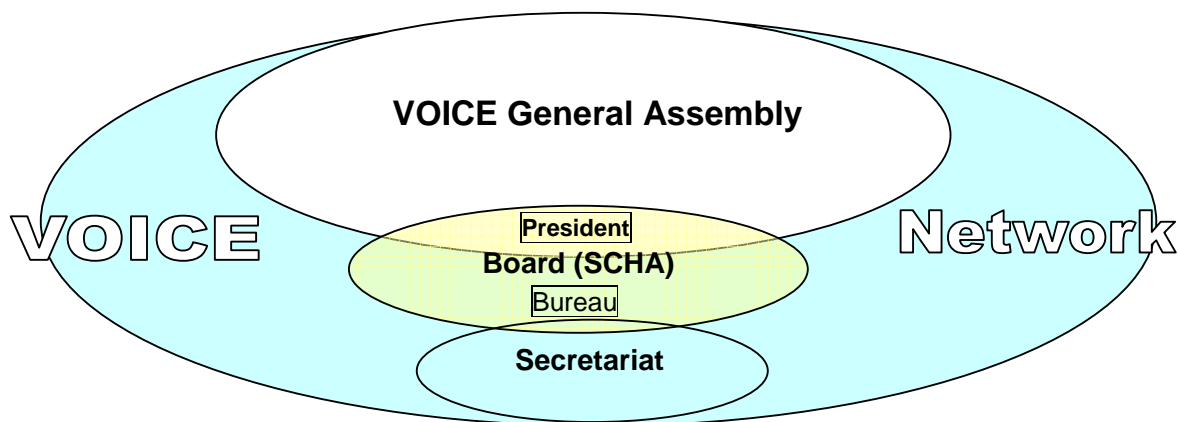
the membership fees as of 2007, and 70 % of the members made a voluntary contribution for 2006.

The ECHO co-financed project *“Enhancing the Network”* (Grant Facility 2005), started in September 2005 and continued until July 2006. In November 2006, VOICE was successful in ensuring a new Grant Facility for the project *“Strengthening quality and synergy in humanitarian aid: networking, training and advocacy for humanitarian organisations”*. Both projects contribute to some of the core costs of the budget in addition to covering specific project activities.

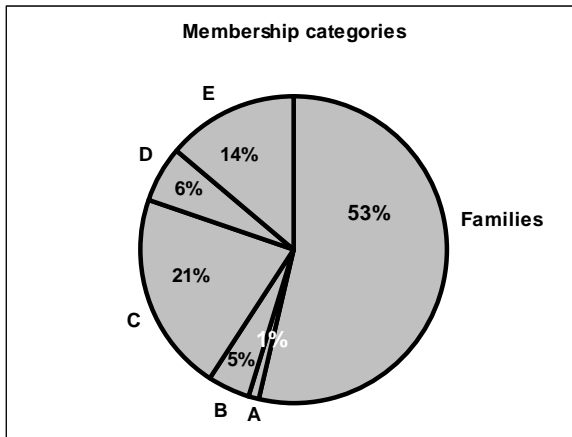
4. Finances

Financial independence has always been of importance to the network. The core structure of three staff is therefore foreseen to be mainly financed through the membership fees of its members. In 2006, the GA voted to increase

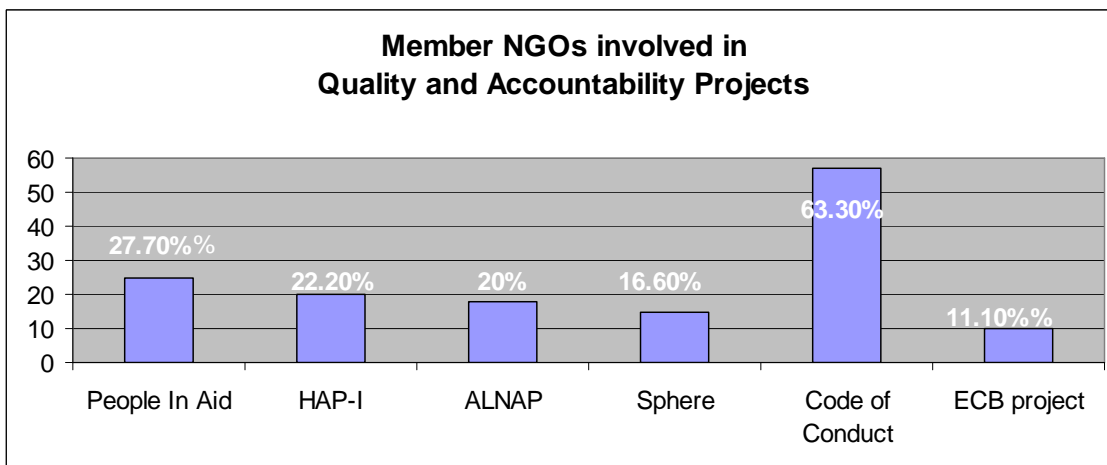
In 2006, the total budget of the core costs of the VOICE Secretariat was 264,848€. This amount was made up of 81% membership fees and of 19% from other sources.



Indicators and figures on VOICE member NGOs - year 2006



Group	Turnover MEuro
A	0.1 - 1.5
B	1.6 - 4.0
C	4.1 - 20.0
D	20.1 - 40.0
E	>40.0
Families	International Networks of NGOs



This information is based on data taken from the websites of these Projects.

Involvement of members in VOICE activities and events

2006 main activities

- Round Tables in EU Member States
- Trainings on the Framework Partnership Agreement
- Trainings on the Sphere project and handbook
- FPA Watch Group and Task Force
- July 2006 Seminar on "Strategic Resourcing in Humanitarian NGOs: Towards the coexistence of Professionalism and Voluntarism?"
- Newsletter *VOICE OUT LOUD*
- SCHA representation

Participation

30% of VOICE members involved in the **FPA Watch Group/Task Force** (27 NGOs)

58% of member NGOs have taken part in at least 1 activity (52 NGOs)

33% of member NGOs have taken part in at least 2 activities (29 NGOs)

42% of member NGOs have not taken part in any activity (38 NGOs)

The **6 most active** NGOs are

7 activities: Save the Children, UK

6 activities: Action Contre la Faim, France

5 activities : DWHH/GermanAgroAction

Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe e.V., Germany

Médecins Du Monde, France

International Rescue Committee, UK

6 - VOICE MEMBERS 2006

Austria

- CARE Österreich
- CARITAS Österreich
- Hilfswerk Austria
- SOS Kinderdorf International
- World Vision Österreich

Belgium

- CARITAS Secours International Belgium
- Handicap International Belgium
- OXFAM Solidarité – Solidariteit Belgium
- Médecins du Monde Belgium

Denmark

- ADRA Denmark
- ASF Dansk Folkehjælp
- Dansk CARITAS
- DanChurchAid – Folkekirkens Nødhjælp
- Danish Refugee Council – Dansk Flygtningehjælp
- Mission East – Mission Øst

Finland

- FIDA International
- FinnChurchAid
- World Vision Finland

France

- ACF – Action Contre la Faim
- ACTED – Agence d'Aide à la Coopération Technique et au Développement
- CARE France
- CARITAS France (Secours Catholique)
- Handicap International France
- MDM – Médecins du Monde France
- Première Urgence
- Secours Populaire Français
- Solidarités
- Triangle "Génération Humanitaire"
- TSF – Télécoms sans Frontières

Germany

- ADRA – Adventist Development and Relief Agency Germany
- ASB – Arbeiter Samariter Bund Deutschland
- CARE Germany
- CARITAS Germany
- DWHH – GermanAgroAction
- Diakonie Emergency Aid – Diakonisches Werk der EKD
- Johanniter Unfall Hilfe Bundesgeschäftsstelle
- Malteser Hilfsdienst
- Medico International
- World Vision Germany

Greece

- Médecins du Monde - Greece

Ireland

- CONCERN Worldwide
- Trocaire
- World Vision Ireland

Italy

- CARITAS Italia
- CESVI – Cooperazione e Sviluppo
- CISP – Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli

Luxembourg

- CARITAS Luxembourg

The Netherlands

- Cordaid
- CARE Nederland
- HealthNet – TPO
- ICCO
- NOVIB – Oxfam Netherlands
- World Vision Nederland
- ZOA Refugee Care

Norway

- Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)

Portugal

- Medicos do Mundo – Portugal
- Assistência Médica Internacional – Portugal

Spain

- Acción contra el Hambre
- CARITAS Spain
- Intermón-Oxfam
- Medicos del Mundo
- MPDL – Movimiento Por La Paz, El Desarme y la Libertad

Sweden

- CARITAS Sverige
- Church of Sweden Aid – Lutherhjälpen
- IAS–International Aid Services Sweden
- PMU Interlife Sverige
- Star of Hope International

Switzerland

- ACT– Action by Churches Together
- Lutheran World Federation
- MEDAIR

United Kingdom

- Action Against Hunger
- ActionAid UK
- ADRA UK
- CAFOD – Catholic Fund For Overseas Development
- CARE UK
- Christian Aid UK
- CORD
- Health Unlimited
- IRC UK – International Rescue Committee UK
- Mercy Corps Scotland
- Merlin
- Oxfam GB
- Plan International UK
- Save The Children UK
- Tear Fund
- World Vision UK