



VOICE

ACTIVITY REPORT 2013

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VOICE

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Cooperation in Emergencies**

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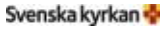

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ACRONYMS

CBHA	Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies
COHAFA	Council working party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid
CONCORD	European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development
DEVE	Committee on Development (European Parliament)
DG	Directorate General (European Commission Department)
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EC	European Commission
ECHO	European Commission Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection
EEAS	European External Action Service
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
FPA	Framework Partnership Agreement
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organisations
JSI	Joint Standards Initiative
LRRD	Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MFF	Multi-Annual Financial Framework
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOHA	Network on Humanitarian Action
PHAP	Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection
SCHR	Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response
TF	Task Force
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees – the UN Refugee Agency
UNISDR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNOCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
VOICE	Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies
WG	VOICE Working Group

INTRODUCTION



The EU as a major global donor and the humanitarian community face ever increasing humanitarian needs, as seen in 2013 with the Syria crisis, the typhoon in the Philippines and the conflict in the Central African Republic.

In the EU, 2013 was an important year with policy processes starting which will influence the EU humanitarian agenda for several years to come:

One of the biggest achievements in this regard was the outcome of the collective advocacy campaign for maintaining the EU budget for the next seven years (Multi-Annual Financial Framework). VOICE members in many EU member states sent several letters to their governments, spoke out in the media for humanitarian funding and worked closely together with other networks and humanitarian actors. After many months of political discussions between member states and the European Parliament, ECHO will maintain its level of funding from the previous financial framework. This is of utmost importance given that humanitarian needs are expected to continuously increase over the coming years. This achievement was against the background of the network's increasing concern over the liquidity shortfall faced by DG ECHO in the second half of the year. VOICE Board engaged regularly with DG ECHO to ensure that the impact this was having on members was taken into account and that partners were duly informed about the situation.

When it comes to EU humanitarian policy and practice, the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid remains the cornerstone for the EU institutions and member states. In May 2013 the corresponding Action Plan ended and the Commission embarked on an evaluation of its impact. VOICE members engaged very actively in the process and began to advocate for a follow-up mechanism towards the EU institutions, including Member States.

In parallel, DG ECHO launched a consultation on the challenges related to EU humanitarian aid which should inform future policy developments. Given the consultation's importance, the network developed a comprehensive consolidated response based on members' feedback. VOICE will continue to monitor how this input is applied in upcoming Commission initiatives.

The EU also gained pace in their development of a communication on the EU Comprehensive approach to external conflicts and crises. Raising the awareness of the principled and needs-based nature of humanitarian aid and the importance of coordination rather than integration became a high priority for the network. Similar concerns were also reflected in the common press release launched by the three NGO networks Interaction, ICVA and VOICE when the Security Council decided to have an integrated approach in Somalia.

Much time and effort was invested by members and other ECHO NGO partners to ensure that the new Framework Partnership Agreement for the next five years would really reduce the administrative burden, something which was strongly supported by Ms. Georgieva, Commissioner for humanitarian aid and civil protection. The resulting FPA contains a number of important simplifications for NGO partners. The diversity of ECHO partners was preserved with the majority of previous FPA holders renewing their partnership with DG ECHO.

Humanitarian NGOs have always been very active in developing quality initiatives and standards related to their work. Last year saw them embarking on the development of a common standard and the SCHR certification project. The diversity of the NGO sector is also reflected in the many different opinions concerning these matters among VOICE members. However, should a certification model be put in place in the future, it could potentially have a strong impact on the humanitarian community. VOICE therefore followed this project closely and committed to engage its members actively in the process. This led to several national NGO positions being developed which fed into the drafting of a potential certification model.

2013 was also a significant year for Disaster Risk Reduction; the Global Platform in the spring was a landmark meeting in the development of a post-2015 framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. VOICE shared NGO positions and experiences via the widespread dissemination of its DRR paper series. This set of publications was welcomed by UNISDR as the key EU civil society contribution to their 2013 consultation process.

2014 will be an important year for Europe. Not only will we see a new European Commission and a new Commissioner, but elections for the next European Parliament will also take place mid-2014. In brief, the EU policy processes ongoing last year will serve as an important legacy for the new European institutions. VOICE will continue to influence and shape these processes and plans to promote the added value and expertise of humanitarian NGOs to the new European decision makers once they have taken up office.

Kathrin Schick
Director VOICE

1. ENSURING POLICY, PRACTICE AND FUNDING ARE INCREASINGLY ADHERENT TO CORE HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES AND GOOD PRACTICE

1.1 IS THE EUROPEAN CONSENSUS ON HUMANITARIAN AID PUT INTO PRACTICE?

The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid is the main policy framework for EU humanitarian aid. It was signed in 2007 by the Member States, the European Commission (EC) and the European Parliament (EP). It was complemented by an action plan which came to an end in 2013. The EC-commissioned an evaluation of the implementation of the Consensus, and launched a stakeholder consultation on the future of EU humanitarian aid. These initiatives became a priority for the network.

In anticipation of the evaluation, a **VOICE Consensus Task Force** (TF), consisting of 17 member organisations from across Europe, was created at the end of 2012. The objective was to influence the **evaluation**, and to advocate for a new, workable **Action Plan** focusing especially on EU Member States. Members succeeded in shaping the terms of reference for the evaluation, and gave substantial input to the evaluators, through meetings at national level and a workshop. In addition, a Consensus briefing paper was developed to assist VOICE members in their advocacy work. The final evaluation report is expected after Easter in 2014, after which discussions on a future implementation mechanism will start.

In parallel, VOICE commissioned a **study on 'The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid: an NGO perspective'** which was carried out by DARA and will be launched in 2014. The report aims to give renewed visibility to the Consensus and to serve as an advocacy tool for the network, influencing EU governments' humanitarian policies and practice. It will make recommendations on the key elements of the Consensus which require further attention in national and EU policy discussions. The study focuses on VOICE members' policy priorities, including humanitarian principles, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD), funding to humanitarian NGOs and the administrative burden of institutional donor requirements.

In order to look at the current challenges for EU humanitarian aid and best ways forward, the European Commission department for humanitarian aid and civil protection (DG ECHO) launched a consultation: **'EU humanitarian aid: fit for purpose?'** VOICE members contributed to an extensive consolidated reply, commenting on topics such as the importance of the humanitarian principles, the usefulness of resilience, the role of the private sector in humanitarian aid, or improvements to be made to the international humanitarian system.

DG ECHO deepened the consultation further when it brought together Member States and ECHO partners for a consultation meeting on 25 June, at which VOICE members were very active. All partners stressed that future policy initiatives should look at how the EU can improve its humanitarian aid delivery and that it should further reinforce the Consensus. The results of the consultation should first and foremost serve to strengthen EU humanitarian aid policy and practice. External opportunities, such as the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, should then be used to promote the Consensus and its partnership approach.

1.2 OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF THE EU COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO EXTERNAL CONFLICTS AND CRISES

The Lisbon Treaty and the subsequent establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) created opportunities for the EU to strengthen its foreign policy. The EU started developing a 'Comprehensive Approach to crises' aimed at bringing together diverse elements of its external engagement under one joint umbrella. This approach seeks to improve the effectiveness and coherence of external policies, using multiple tools to advance political and/or security objectives.

When developing an EU comprehensive approach, key questions include how broadly it is defined and whether- and where- humanitarian aid fits in. Linking humanitarian aid to political goals through an EU comprehensive approach is an issue of concern to the humanitarian community, particularly in conflict areas, where access to crisis-affected populations very much depends on how humanitarian actors are perceived on the ground. According to the Lisbon Treaty, humanitarian aid needs to be neutral, impartial, non-discriminatory and based on the principles of international law. In addition, the European Consensus says that "*humanitarian aid is not a crisis management tool*". In anticipation of the Joint EC and EEAS Communication on the 'Comprehensive Approach', VOICE participated in numerous conferences, consultations and bilateral meetings to raise awareness of the specificity of humanitarian aid among EU policy and decision makers. Strong participation of humanitarian actors in the 2012 Wilton Park conference and in the civil society consultation resulted in references to humanitarian concerns in the final reports. Several VOICE members (Concern Worldwide, CARE and NRC) presented NGO perspectives to member states, organized debates and wrote in the VOICE newsletter.

A **resolution** on 'Humanitarian Aid and the EU Comprehensive Approach' was adopted at the 2013 VOICE **General Assembly**, stating that:

- The EU Comprehensive Approach should respect Lisbon Treaty roles and competences
- The Communication on the Comprehensive Approach should reference the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid
- It is important that coordination does not lead to integration (in policy or practice) of EU humanitarian aid ('coordination with', rather than 'coordination by')
- Humanitarians should be included in the analysis from the start of common planning. Any strategy must be adapted to the crisis context (i.e. no 'one size fits all')
- EU communications on external action should respect the specificity of humanitarian aid

Our collective efforts yielded results; most of our messages on humanitarian aid were reflected in the EC-EEAS Communication which was finally published in December 2013. They were also fed into the forthcoming report of the European Parliament on the EU Comprehensive Approach. The next step for the network will be to monitor the practical implementation of the Communication's recommendations both at EU institutional level and in the field through its members.

1.3 PUTTING THE SPOTLIGHT ON HUMANITARIAN DONORS: POLICY VERSUS PRACTICE

VOICE's core mandate is to influence EU humanitarian policy and practice, which includes looking at EU funding practices. How funding modalities function is crucial to ensuring quality humanitarian aid. The focus of **VOICE Out Loud** newsletter 17 was on institutional **donors**, as key actors in the



humanitarian system. It looked not only at their policy, but more importantly also at their practice. Topics varied from donors' standards and decision making on funding allocations, to the challenges experienced by humanitarian NGOs when working with the EC, US and UN, and when fundraising from a multitude of donors. The newsletter is widely read and gained further international readership via Alertnet and the website of the Consortium of British Humanitarian Agencies (CBHA).

While many EU Member States have formalized their humanitarian policies, in practice other areas of policy may possibly have a negative impact on humanitarian action. On 4 November, VOICE, with the support of its member Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), organised an event to raise awareness among NGOs about the NRC-OCHA report on the **impact of donor counter-terrorism measures on principled humanitarian action**¹. In the aftermath of the attacks on the United States in 2001, a number of countries embarked on the development of expansive counter-terrorism laws and policies. However, these have had an impact on the funding, planning and delivery of protection activities and humanitarian assistance to people in need. Working in complex crises, humanitarians are by nature most exposed to the consequences of counter-terrorism measures, and can experience tensions between the humanitarian principles and donor requirements. Many humanitarians are concerned that these measures may prevent them from doing their job.

1.4 RAISING NGO CONCERNS IN PARTICULAR EMERGENCIES

In March 2013, VOICE and two other NGO networks, InterAction and ICVA, issued a **joint press release** following the UN Security Council's decision for all UN functions in **Somalia** to be integrated under one UN umbrella. The NGO networks believe that by requiring UN humanitarian coordination to fall under the political mandate of the new UN peace-building mission in Somalia, the neutrality, impartiality and independence of humanitarian action will be compromised. It may have negative consequences for the security of all humanitarian workers and their access to affected populations. The statement was strongly welcomed by other actors of the humanitarian community. However, it is hoped that politicians will seek and take into account lessons learnt for any future decisions on UN integration in conflicts.

The magnitude and complexity of the **Syria crisis** continued to challenge the entire international community, including humanitarian workers, who struggled with access and witnessed the consequences of the conflict first-hand. Numerous meetings were held to discuss dealing with the needs and challenges in this massive crisis. VOICE regularly gave NGO input to the Chair of the Council Working Party of Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA). This group, which gathers Member States' humanitarian experts on a monthly basis, had Syria as a standing item on its agenda. Members' concerns were also raised in regular NGO meetings with Mr. John Ging, the Director of Operations of UNOCHA as well as at specific meetings with other relevant UN officials and agencies. Moreover, the Secretariat facilitated exchanges between members and DG ECHO, for example in advance of the donors' conference in Kuwait. VOICE members in the UK, France and in Germany carried out extensive advocacy for access, funding, as well as for NGO registration in Turkey.

Members were also given support to strengthen coordination and learning between NGOs. For example, on 6 June, VOICE co-organised a briefing together with its members Save the Children and NRC at the request of SNAP (Syrian Needs Analysis Project). The outcome of their needs assessment in Northern Syria, an area difficult to access, proved very useful to members planning their operations. VOICE maintained regular exchanges with the regional NGO Forum in Amman, while EU documents on Syria were shared through a dedicated page on the extranet; a web-space for VOICE members only. Throughout the year humanitarians at all levels continued to assert the need for better access and respect of International Humanitarian Law, but most of all for a political solution which humanitarian aid cannot and should not deliver.

Other countries were also kept high on the network's agenda, such as the humanitarian crisis in **Mali**.

¹ Event report is available at: <http://www.ngovoice.org/index.php?page=3185>

On the request of UNOCHA, the VOICE Secretariat facilitated a mutually beneficial exchange between members and the Head of the UN in Mali. NGOs raised concerns about the security situation, the mandate of the UN (military) mission and its potential impact on humanitarian space, and the return of populations and life-saving services. Advocacy towards the EU was also discussed. NGO input was shared with the Standing Humanitarian Rapporteur of the European Parliament in advance of her mission to Mali.



The **VOICE event** held in May on the use of **military or armed escorts in humanitarian convoys**² was relevant to many conflict contexts. As the fundamental underpinning of humanitarian action, the principle of humanity is to save lives and alleviate suffering wherever needed. To achieve this, access to populations in need is imperative. However, multiple constraints can limit access and in many places around the world it is becoming increasingly difficult to operate due to insecurity. Humanitarian actors then face a difficult choice of whether to leave these areas, or operate differently and perhaps use armed escorts to continue to reach affected populations. The event aimed to give participants a better understanding of the updated guidelines on use of military or armed escorts from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and how to use them. Firstly, the guidelines provide humanitarian organisations with a framework for determining *if* and *when* to use armed escorts and, secondly, how to do so effectively.

2. TO INCREASE THE RECOGNITION OF NGOS AS KEY ACTORS IN THE DELIVERY OF HUMANITARIAN AID

Globally, NGOs deliver the majority of humanitarian aid, bringing comparative advantages which include close links to affected populations, flexibility, working with local partners, and technical expertise. However, there is not enough awareness among many politicians and policy makers about the specificity of humanitarian aid and how NGOs work. Therefore increasing the recognition of NGOs as key actors in the delivery of humanitarian aid is a key objective of the VOICE network.

2.1 ADVOCATING FOR HUMANITARIAN FUNDING

2013 was the final year of negotiations on the Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF, the multi-year budgetary framework for 2014-2020 reflecting the EU's policy priorities). With the background of the financial crisis, the MFF negotiations became painstakingly difficult and linked to discussions on top-ups for the 2013 EU budget and the forthcoming annual 2014 budget. In addition, the legislation for over 80 policy areas, including development aid, had to be finalized by the end of the year.

With a backdrop of this heavy agenda, VOICE focused on raising awareness of the **importance of external action** for the EU, and particularly of the **added value of EU humanitarian aid** which is part of that budgetary chapter. In advance of the decisive European Council meeting on 7-8 February,

² Event report is available at www.ngovoice.org/index.php?page=2963

VOICE members all over Europe campaigned, arguing to their governments that the proposed cuts to external action were disproportionate and requesting that given the increasing number of disasters the humanitarian budget and the emergency aid reserve should not be reduced. In addition, the VOICE President alerted politicians through the European Voice newspaper that: *"The EU negotiations should not affect the most vulnerable people throughout the world who are unable to make themselves heard in these budgetary debates. With only 0.62% of the total EU budget, 150 million people are helped annually by EU humanitarian aid"*. VOICE members Oxfam and Plan raised further media attention through complementary press articles.

In the final MFF, the **amount allocated for humanitarian aid is slightly increased by 2.9%** compared to 2007-2013. The Emergency Aid Reserve- which is crucial for the EU to be able to respond to unforeseen crises- was substantially increased, and will still go *first and foremost* to humanitarian aid. In the current financial context, this result is an important achievement.

For the first time in history the European Council decided on a total EU budget for the seven years to follow which is lower than in the previous financial period. It was thus clear that the Commission needed to cut its proposal, including in Heading 4 on external action. In order to influence those discussions, VOICE joined the European development network CONCORD and other Civil Society Organisations in discussing the best distribution of that Heading among sectors. Despite having varying interests, a common position was found, which was shared with the key negotiators in the European Commission, Parliament, Council and EEAS. VOICE, CONCORD, Fair Trade Advocacy Office, the European Network of Political Foundations and the Human Rights and Democracy Network all stressed that the instruments to be prioritized should be those that qualify as Official Development Assistance and benefit civil society in developing countries; a demand which was taken into account. Moreover, in accordance with that letter, **10% of external action funding was allocated to humanitarian aid**. At the VOICE-NOHA (Network on Humanitarian Action) event in Ireland, ECHO Director-General Sorensen thanked NGOs for the strong campaigning support on the MFF, as that support was crucial for DG ECHO to ensure humanitarian funding; a message which was stressed repeatedly throughout the year.

An issue that came very much to the forefront by July was the impact of the split in the EU budget between commitments (*promises to pay*) and payments (*lower figure which Member States pay in practice*) on ECHO's cash flow for operations, confirming the concerns we had already expressed at the end of 2012 when similar problems arose (*see annual report 2012*). The cash flow problems had a negative impact on many ECHO partners and humanitarian operations all over the globe were affected, as the evidence put forward by the VOICE Board to ECHO pointed out. That DG ECHO and its partners experience these problems is due particularly to the nature of humanitarian aid based on short term contracts, which require quick payments. A temporary solution was found in November due to additional cash transfers, but the problem persists. The 2014 budget has an even bigger payments-commitments split than the 2013 one and a backlog from 2013 remains. While seemingly a very technical discussion, to VOICE members and the people they aim to help, it is not. **The consequences of the increasing gap between commitments and payments could have a devastating impact on EU humanitarian aid**. In order to solve this problem in the long term, payments should in the future be put up to a level equal to commitments for humanitarian aid.

2.2 PROMOTING QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

VOICE has a long term commitment to high quality standards in humanitarian aid. Therefore much of our attention in 2013 was devoted to ensuring VOICE members were aware of ongoing developments which may have a significant impact on the future of the humanitarian aid sector: the **Joint Standards Initiative (JSI)** and the certification project of the **SCHR (Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response)**. In addition, the network continued to be involved in discussions around the EU Aid Volunteers initiative.

2.2.1 Engaging members in consultation on humanitarian standards

The JSI was launched in 2012 to explore possibilities for increasing coherence between key humanitarian standards: the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP), People in Aid and the Sphere Project. This was in response to the perceived problem of the proliferation of quality and accountability standards in the sector. However, as raised by many VOICE members during two workshops with the JSI consultants as well as in the Humanitarian Standards Forum in Geneva, not all agree that there is a problem; the assumption that many standards create confusion may not be true. Moreover, external standards are not the only means of humanitarian quality assurance.

VOICE engagement with JSI sought to ensure that members had full opportunity to have their concerns and suggestions heard in the consultation process. In January, together with two NGO networks ICVA and InterAction, VOICE formulated a set of guiding principles to be taken into consideration throughout the process and shared these with JSI through a letter:

- The involvement of local civil society and governments in countries affected by conflict or disasters is essential if the resulting standards are to support the aim of strengthening local emergency response capacity.
- The results of the initiative should aim to strengthen professionalism and ensure diversity while avoiding additional administrative burden on participating organisations.
- The process should be open and decision-making transparent in order to avoid inaccurate perceptions of what drives the process.
- The bedrock of humanitarian action can be found in the humanitarian principles. Strengthening quality and accountability of humanitarian response depends, therefore, on the rigorous and consistent application of these principles
- Links are needed between the JSI initiative and other ongoing processes related to quality in the humanitarian sector.

VOICE hosted a JSI focus group discussion in February 2013, and participated in key consultation events in Copenhagen and Geneva (the Humanitarian Standards Forum).

In November 2013 the JSI came to a close. The next stage of work will be taken forward by HAP and People in Aid in the form of the 'Core Humanitarian Standards' (CHS). Many of the concerns raised by VOICE members appear to have been integrated into the CHS approach. VOICE will continue to support member engagement with this project in 2014.

2.2.2 Preserving professional NGO diversity in certification debates

The Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) brings together nine major humanitarian organisations (ACT Alliance, CARE, Caritas, ICRC, IFRC, Lutheran World Federation, Oxfam, Save the Children and World Vision). SCHR has embarked upon a project to explore whether a (mandatory) certification system for humanitarian organisations could support greater quality of programmes and accountability to crisis-affected populations. Engagement with the SCHR Certification project has been a priority for VOICE, seeking to involve members in the discussion. It is important that the diversity of humanitarian NGOs, which are an expression of civil society, is not threatened by the creation of an exclusive certification model that is not accessible for smaller or local organizations.

Throughout the year, VOICE members participated actively in project consultations, including during an exchange with the SCHR Project Coordinator organised during the 2013 VOICE General Assembly. In addition, the VOICE Board sent a letter to the project's Steering Group in October, commenting

on the draft certification model. The Board reiterated the importance of all humanitarian principles; the draft model had promoted the principles of humanity and impartiality over the principles of independence and neutrality. The challenge of maintaining diversity under the draft model and concerns that it might increase the administrative burden for NGOs were raised by the Board who also requested an extended consultation period. As a result of VOICE and other NGOs' input, the SCHR included all the humanitarian principles in the updated draft certification model. The consultation period was also extended, making it easier for NGOs to give meaningful feedback.

While there are still a lot of questions around the project, in 2014 the draft model will be piloted in the field by a number of NGOs to help understand the practical implications of certification for organisations and generate more information on how certification can contribute (or not) to improving humanitarian action.

2.2.3 Influencing the legislation on EU Aid Volunteers

The Lisbon Treaty foresaw the establishment of a 'European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps', which was re-branded during the course of its development and is now known as 'EU Aid Volunteers'. VOICE has actively participated in the consultation processes on its creation, while continuing to repeat our concerns on the added value of the initiative and whether it should be prioritised in the current difficult financial context. Following the delivery in early 2013 of common master messages, and seeking to be constructive, VOICE, OCHA, ICRC and IFRC met with Ms. Fink-Hooijer (ECHO Policy Director) for a high-level exchange in mid-March.

In September 2013, VOICE members and Secretariat participated in the '*EU Aid Volunteers back to base: Lessons learnt and way forward*' conference. The event provided feedback from volunteers that took part in pilot projects: reporting back on their experience. These first users of the scheme had as many questions regarding its overall purpose and direction as other stakeholders.

The trilogue negotiations between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on the proposed legislation for the EU Aid Volunteers started in September. VOICE, together with IFRC and ICRC, subsequently sent a letter to the negotiating parties, reaffirming previous messages concerning the initiative, in particular the importance of not exposing volunteers to high security risks via deployment in insecure contexts. VOICE also discussed the initiative with representatives of the Economic and Social Committee. In December 2013 the trilogue negotiations were concluded, integrating many VOICE key messages into the final legislation.

VOICE members engaged in the piloting phase of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative. In 2012-2013 International Medical Corps (UK), Save the Children (UK & Denmark), ICCO (Netherlands) and FinnChurch Aid (Finland) participated in two pilot projects. In 2013-2014 GVC (Italy), Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (Germany) and Save the Children (UK) contributed to another three pilot projects.

3. COLLECTIVE ACTION IN PURSUIT OF QUALITY HUMANITARIAN AID

As a network, a core function for VOICE is to strengthen NGO positioning through joint advocacy action. Given the diversity of the NGO world, VOICE provides a platform for building consensus on issues of common concern to NGOs active in humanitarian aid.

3.1 REVISING THE FPA

The Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) governs the contractual relations between DG ECHO and its NGO partners. The FPA Watch Group, facilitated by VOICE, represents all ECHO NGO partners in monitoring, reviewing and consulting on the FPA. It remains a cornerstone of VOICE work and has strong engagement from its members:

- 37 organisations from 17 countries make up the FPA WG, which represents the ECHO NGO partner community
- Led by a Task Force consisting of Médecins du Monde, Action Contre la Faim, Handicap International, CARE, COOPI, Oxfam, Save the Children and Cordaid
- 3 Watch Group meetings and 11 Task Force meetings in 2013

2013 was a crucial year as the periodic revision of the FPA had to be finalised. It was an intensive year of work for VOICE, particularly for the FPA Watch Group and its Task Force. Three Watch Group meetings and eleven Task Force meetings were held, and most of them included extensive exchanges with ECHO staff to discuss the process or review draft FPA documents. This intense level of collaboration was much appreciated by the partners. The final FPA package was presented in November at the ECHO Partners Conference and it answered many concerns raised by the Watch Group:

- **Simplification** of the procurement and reporting requirements (including fewer annexes), and removal of means and costs from the Single Form
- **Flexibility** in the project amendments and budget adjustments, and use of NGOs' own budget templates and own rules for procurement and depreciation
- **Predictability** with clearer deadlines specified, including for the liquidation period
- Commitment to **diversity** of NGOs maintained as most of the Partners are invited to re-sign an FPA

In keeping with its mandate, the Watch Group also continued to monitor and evaluate elements of the current FPA application and share NGO concerns with ECHO. The need for clear communication between ECHO and partners as well as for a flexible transition period for the next FPA, allowing both NGOs and ECHO staff to adapt to the new requirements, were key issues raised by the Watch Group. Most partners were asked to renew their FPA with ECHO at the end of 2013, which is in line with VOICE demands to preserve a diversity of partners to be able to fulfil the diverse needs of crisis-affected populations. The new FPA will last until the end of 2018. Work on the development of the guidelines for the implementation of the new FPA will be an important focus of work in the first part of 2014.

3.2 BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN HUMANITARIAN AID AND DEVELOPMENT

3.2.1 Disaster Risk Reduction

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) involves analysing and managing hazards to avoid (*prevention*) or reduce (*mitigation and preparedness*) vulnerability to disasters. Effective DRR reduces disaster losses, preserving the social, economic and environmental assets of communities and populations. As such, it reduces the need for costly disaster response and subsequent recovery measures. In 2013 VOICE continued to advocate for better EU policy and practice on DRR, particularly through its working group (WG). The group gathers DRR experts from 28 VOICE member organisations.

For the **Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction**, 19-23 May, the group shared key recommendations for a post-2015 DRR framework. Three central messages were developed commonly with the Global Network for Disaster Reduction, InterAction (US NGO network), BOND (network of UK based international development NGOs) and JANIC (Japan NGO Centre for International Cooperation):

- Address the underlying causes of people's vulnerability to disaster
- Recognise the impact of everyday disasters on lives, livelihoods and assets
- Prioritise the most at risk, poorest and marginalized people

In addition, WG members held side events during the Platform which brought different aspects of DRR to the audience. This increased visibility from civil society was reflected in the Chair's summary. Nonetheless, participants felt that too little was confirmed of what will be included in the next Hyogo Framework for Action, and that the consultation process ahead was not clear.

The WG also disseminated a **VOICE publication series on DRR** to raise the awareness of politicians and policymakers on DRR issues, including in the European Parliament and at national level. The series is composed of six issues which explain the essence of DRR and highlight the importance of integrating it in development policies. The value of the series was confirmed by UNISDR, which welcomed it as a key European civil society contribution to the 2013 consultation on the **post-2015 Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA2)**. Moreover, thanks to VOICE member Secours Catholique, the series is now also available in French.

In order to influence the forthcoming EC Communication on the post-2015 Hyogo Framework, members of the WG put forward updated messages at the stakeholder consultation meeting in December:

In order to ensure a real improvement in disaster risk management at local level, HFA2 should address the following:

- Focus on local and community-based resilience;
- Address underlying causes that make communities and individuals vulnerable and target resources where most needed;
- Emphasise mainstreaming DRR in development programmes;
- Be based on strong action plans with measurable targets and clear indicators which will allow for the establishment of accountability and monitoring mechanisms;
- Ensure financial commitments and funding channels for DRR;
- Place civil society at the core of the development and implementation of a successor framework.

As a follow-up to the EC's work in 2012 on 'resilience', the Development Committee of the European Parliament initiated a report on the EU approach to resilience in developing countries. VOICE delivered substantial input to the document, which was strongly reflected in the final EP resolution on the topic, including its specific treatment of DRR as an essential element of resilience work.

3.2.2 Resilience and Linking Relief Resilience and Development (LRRD)

After having given input to the EC Communication on resilience in 2012, the focus in 2013 was on how this policy would be implemented, through the development of the action plan. In April, VOICE organized a roundtable in Ireland, together with NOHA, where VOICE members Save the Children UK and Concern Worldwide put forward their experience with resilience projects and recommendations

for the EU. Later that month, members of the VOICE-CONCORD LRRD Task Force and VOICE DRR WG agreed on key points for the EU's resilience action plan, which were presented at the consultation meeting with the EC and Member States, including:

- Resilience is a long-term approach, which contrasts with the early results expected from the action plan, so realistic expectations should be ensured.
- Ownership of the plan is not straightforward and responsibilities not allocated. Funding modalities are also missing as are milestones for measuring progress in the period 2013-2020.
- NGOs and civil society are very important actors for achieving community resilience but this is not emphasised. More emphasis should be placed on supporting actions at local level for effective community resilience.
- There is no reference to LRRD. LRRD should contribute significantly to improved development-humanitarian linkages which are essential for building resilience.
- Like the EC Communication, the action plan fails to address barriers to resilience.

The final resilience action plan reflects a few of these recommendations but many crucial ones, such as the milestones for measuring progress, have not been picked up. It remains to be seen how this ambitious large-scale plan will progress.

However, improvements in cooperation between the humanitarian and development departments in the European Commission as a result of these resilience discussions are visible; for example in Côte d'Ivoire there are new innovative forms of **Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD)**. In addition, the new generation of development instruments for 2014-2020 foresees the possibility of flexible enough funding to ensure LRRD. Actual funding will depend on the final outcome of the 2014 development programming cycle, and whether or not priority sectors are chosen that allow for a link with humanitarian aid. VOICE members would like to see more attention to DRR and LRRD in development programming.

4. FOCUS ON THE EU

As a network, a core function for VOICE is to strengthen NGO positioning through joint advocacy action. Given the diversity of the NGO world, VOICE provides a platform for building consensus on issues of common concern to NGOs active in humanitarian aid.

4.1 WORKING WITH THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The VOICE network remains the European Commission's main NGO interlocutor on humanitarian aid and work with the humanitarian aid and civil protection department, DG ECHO is therefore of particularly importance.

DG ECHO's main event each year is the **annual Partner Conference**, which took place on 5-6 November. The VOICE Board noted the strong recognition that the network received from the Commissioner, ECHO and members throughout the two days. In his address to partners, the VOICE President expressed his appreciation for the solid working relationship that the NGO community, and especially

VOICE, has been cultivating with DG ECHO over the past years. He noted the need for predictability of funding and open communication with NGOs concerning common challenges. The President expressed the hope that the new FPA would be a step towards reducing the administrative burden for NGOs. He also stressed that a renewed collective effort was needed to reaffirm the relevance of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid through a follow-up to the original Action Plan.

In 2013, the VOICE Board met several times with **ECHO Director-General and ECHO Directors for Operations and Operational Support** for bilateral meetings. In his meeting with the Director-General in July, the VOICE President expressed concerns about policy issues being incorporated into the FPA and referred to the newly introduced indicators in this respect. The President recognized ECHO's efforts concerning LRRD and there was consensus on the necessity to get more involvement of development actors in LRRD. Moreover, as ECHO had started co-chairing the UNOCHA donor support group, the President raised the issue of indirect costs sharing and the need for more information concerning UN funding going to NGOs as sub-contractors.

VOICE also refreshed its good working relationship with **ECHO's policy pillar**. This included a comprehensive exchange with the ECHO Director of Policy and the heads of the various policy units. As well as these formal exchanges, there are of course multiple informal exchanges with staff in the three ECHO directorates. Lastly, VOICE contributed to numerous evaluations and consultations organized by the EC, such as the 'Fit For Purpose' consultation, an evaluation of ECHO advocacy in Occupied Palestinian Territories, and a study on ECHO's Shelter policy.

To mark the one year anniversary of the EU receiving the **Nobel Peace Prize**, ECHO organised an event on 20 November. Nine new partner organizations of the 'Children of Peace' initiative were announced, including five VOICE member organisations: CESVI, Triangle, Danish Refugee Council, Concern Worldwide and Finn Church Aid. This is a great recognition of the quality of VOICE members' work. Other VOICE members, ACTED, Save the Children and Norwegian Refugee Council had already received funding for activities in the first year of the initiative.

In addition to the partnership with DG ECHO, VOICE also had exchanges with **DG Budget and DG DEVCO**; the latter with regards to its approaches to DRR, LRRD, resilience and the Comprehensive Approach (see sections 3.2.2, 3.2.1 and 1.2 above). In that light, VOICE members gave specific input to a study commissioned by DG DEVCO on '*Enhancing the contribution of external assistance to addressing the security-fragility-development nexus*'.

4.2 BRINGING VOICE MESSAGES TO MEMBER STATES

4.2.1 At national level

Within Member States, VOICE members are the main actors to ensure that VOICE positions are known by the relevant representatives in their government. VOICE Board members facilitate these efforts, and the Secretariat supports these activities through information sharing and face-to-face meetings.

During the **Irish Presidency** of the EU, VOICE and NOHA organised a roundtable in Dublin with the support of the Irish NGO Platform Dóchas³. In the presence of representatives of the Irish Presidency, the ECHO Director-General as well as representatives from EU Member States, participants discussed three pertinent EU policy topics, namely the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, resilience and the EU Aid Volunteers. These issues were looked at from both the Irish and the EU perspective, as well as from the policy and the operational viewpoint. The event was well received and gave food for thought in advance of Member States' related discussions in the subsequent days.

³ The event report is available at www.ngovoice.org/index.php?page=2887

On 17-18 June, the VOICE Director participated in the **German** humanitarian NGOs' annual retreat, organised jointly with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The event focused on forgotten crises and developed recommendations for an MFA event. The VOICE Director stressed the necessity for humanitarian actors to act collectively to raise awareness about forgotten crises and to bring such discussion also to the COHAFA. Later in the year the Director addressed an event organised by VENRO, the German NGO platform, on multi-mandated organisations and humanitarian aid. In addition, the Secretariat gave input to a study for the German MFA on quality management in humanitarian aid.

In **France**, humanitarian NGO Directors gather periodically in Annecy for a 'Forum Espace Humanitaire'. The VOICE President and Director participated, adding an EU perspective to the discussions. Other less formal engagement with French national-level discussions in 2013 included a June meeting on the Comprehensive Approach with VOICE members and other humanitarian actors in Paris.

In October, **Czech** humanitarian NGOs, including VOICE members People in Need and ADRA, organised a Humanitarian Congress in Olomouc, entering into a discussion with students, future aid workers and journalists about the dilemmas in humanitarian action. The VOICE Advocacy and Communication Officer spoke on the EU panel, giving an overview of the main actors in EU humanitarian aid and current challenges to the sector.

For the **Lithuanian Presidency** of the EU, the VOICE Secretariat was invited to speak at an event organized by NOHA on '*Understanding humanitarian action: finding the space*' in November in Vilnius. The VOICE Programme Coordinator presented the challenges for NGOs in terms of policy and operations when working with institutional donors.

In addition, the Secretariat participated in a number of events in the **UK**, including '*Between Humanity and Catastrophe: The Future of Humanitarianism*', an event organised in the House of Commons by CAFOD. The discussion focused on changes that the sector has undergone over the last 10 years and ways that the humanitarian system could evolve in order to effectively respond to future challenges.

4.2.2 Through the rotating presidencies of the Council of the European Union

In the European Union, the main body which deals with humanitarian aid from the Member States' side is the COHAFA; the **Council Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid**. The COHAFA brings together the humanitarian representatives of the Member States, and provides technical input to prepare meetings of the Council of the EU (Ministers).

In 2013, the Secretariat continued to develop good working relationships with the rotating COHAFA Chairs from **Ireland and Lithuania**, informing Member States' discussions on particular policy themes (EU Aid Volunteers, evaluation of Consensus implementation, DRR & resilience, EU humanitarian budget,...) and on specific emergencies through timely field input from VOICE members (including on Syria, Pakistan, Mali, Saharawi refugees, South Sudan, CAR, Burma/Myanmar, DRC).

A number of VOICE members actively engaged with the COHAFA, briefing national representatives in advance of the meetings. On 9 January, VOICE member NRC presented its report "***Tools for the Job: Supporting Principled Humanitarian Action***" to the COHAFA. The main themes raised during the discussion were: 1) the role of new actors, 2) the difficulty of selling principled action to the public and also to explain why principles are important, 3) how to improve adherence to humanitarian principles while also improving the links to development as both do not rely on the same principles and finally 4) how to make monitoring of adherence to principles more concrete – both for donors vis-à-vis indicators and for their implementing partners in reporting and evaluation. Later in the year, NRC briefed the COHAFA on the evaluation of their education project implemented in DRC under the EU Children of Peace initiative, and in April Christian Aid had an exchange with the Member States on the situation in **DRC**. Concern Worldwide put forward an NGO perspective on the EU **Comprehensive Approach** during the informal COHAFA in April.

After VOICE repeatedly signalled the problems of registration procedures for NGOs in **Pakistan** to the COHAFA, the EU agreed to issue a joint EU démarche through the EU delegation in Pakistan. Easing registration procedures should have a knock-on effect, improving the conditions under which INGOs provide humanitarian assistance in the country.

In addition to members' work and the exchanges with the countries holding the Presidency, the VOICE Secretariat assisted in linking EU and national level discussions, by holding meetings with many COHAFA representatives (including Germany, France, Denmark, Poland, Hungary, UK and Spain), as well as with the Mission of Switzerland to the EU.

4.3 WORKING WITH THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

During 2013, VOICE continued liaising with the Development Committee (DEVE) in the European Parliament. The VOICE Secretariat held regular exchanges with the **Standing Humanitarian Rapporteur of the European Parliament**, Ms. Michèle Striffler MEP. The Rapporteur was enthusiastic to get the Parliament on board for the discussions around the post-2015 Hyogo framework for DRR and agreed on the need for a new Consensus Action Plan. Discussions were also held on the EU Aid Volunteers and the EU Comprehensive Approach. In advance of her visit to Mali, the VOICE Secretariat shared concerns from VOICE members and encouraged her to meet with NGOs in the field.

VOICE also met with Mr. Cortés-Lastra MEP, the coordinator of the Socialists and Democrats in DEVE, to discuss LRRD, DRR/Resilience and the EU humanitarian budget, as Mr. Cortés-Lastra was the **Rapporteur for the DEVE opinion on the 2014 budget**.

Other achievements were inputs taken into account in EP reports: in DEVE, such as Mr. Mitchell MEP's report on DRR & resilience (see above), and in **Foreign Affairs Committee (AFET)**, such as in the report on the review of the EEAS. VOICE secretariat was concerned by an amendment which mentioned that humanitarian aid should be in the 'whole of EU approach' and successfully lobbied DEVE and AFET MEPs to take it out. The opinion of DEVE for this report also *"insists that EU humanitarian aid is not a crisis management tool, and reminds the EEAS of its commitment to promote the fulfilment of the objectives of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid"*.

5. HOW WE WORK

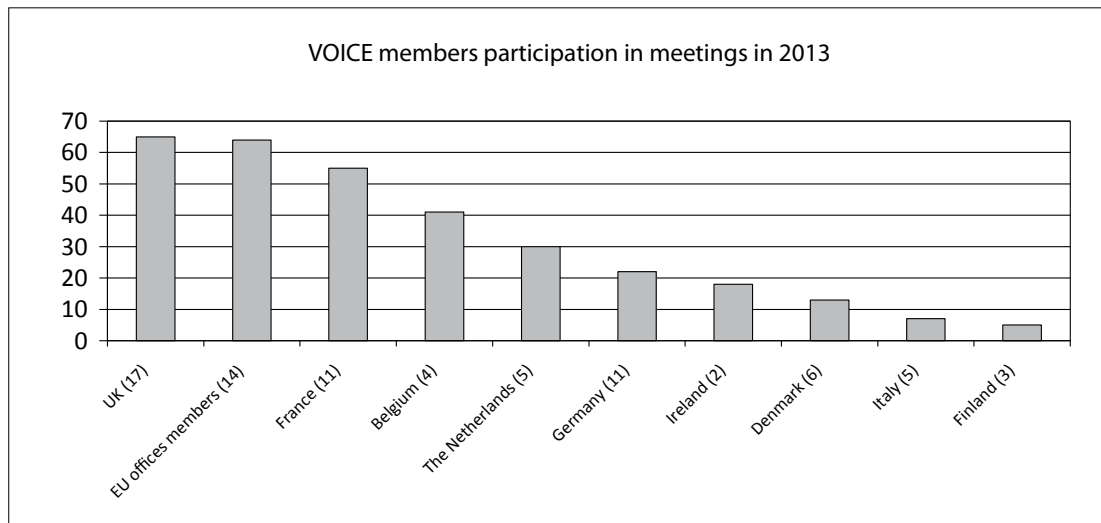
5.1 A VIBRANT NETWORK

VOICE in figures: the year 2013

- **220 people** from **85 NGOs** participated in 3 VOICE events.
- **191 people** from **49 NGOs** in 20 Working Group/Task Force meetings.
- The **VOICE Secretariat** participated in **55 meetings** with representatives from EU institutions and Member States to give input to their positions, reports, etc.
- **2 VOICE Out Loud** newsletters were published, reaching **1900 readers** each.
- **8 issues of Flash** bulletin for members were published, with about **500 readers** each.
- The **VOICE Secretariat** participated in **90 meetings** and events with other humanitarian stakeholders.

In line with the new Strategic Plan which started in 2013, VOICE aims to become an even more vibrant network, enhancing members' ownership, common positioning and engagement. A number of activities feed into that, such as the working groups where members meet to share information, develop positions and advocacy strategies. In 2013, there were VOICE working groups on the FPA and DRR, as well as Task Forces on the Consensus, LRRD and the MFF.

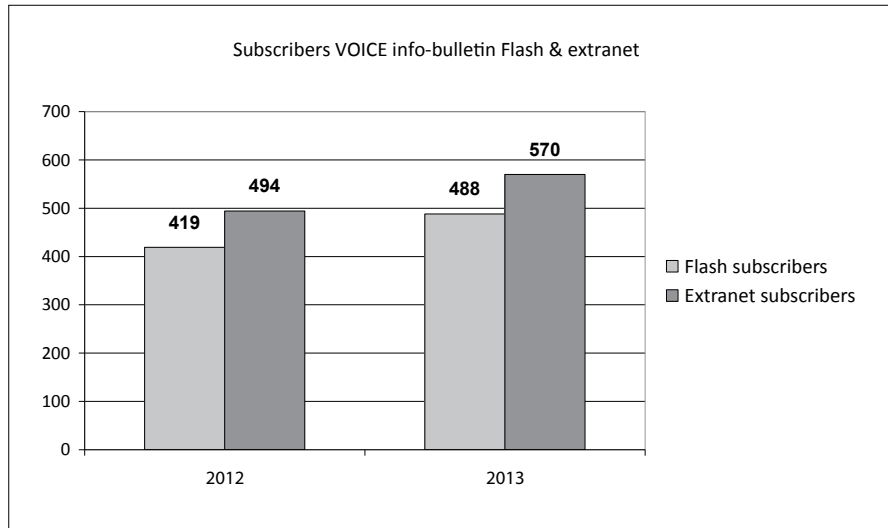
Other means of bringing members together for discussion is through events and roundtables in Member States, as well as through the annual General Assembly. In addition, two trainings for VOICE members were organized in 2013, namely a very successful EU advocacy training, which brought together 17 VOICE members, and a training by UNOCHA on the Financial Tracking Service. Moreover, briefings by the Secretariat were organised for members at national level, for example in Spain, France and the Netherlands, as well as during member organisations' General Assemblies or Directors' meetings. Lastly, links are obviously also built through bilateral meetings and informal contacts, with the Secretariat regularly giving targeted advice to member organisations in their dealings with EU institutions. In 2013, the Secretariat met bilaterally with 30 member organisations.



These figures are counted as participations in meetings of working groups, task forces, events, training and Board of Directors. (These statistics reflect the number of members at national level)

In 2013, some of the most active members (*counted as participation in meetings*) were Save the Children, Médecins du Monde France, Oxfam GB, World Vision, Action Contre la Faim, Cordaid, Norwegian Refugee Council, EU-CORD, Handicap International Belgium, Concern Worldwide and ICCO. Many members are of course also active in other ways, such as by giving input for consultations and questionnaires, or by organizing events where an EU perspective is added to the theme under discussion.

Evidently any positioning needs to build on regular, two-way information sharing. In order to ensure regular information flow from the Secretariat to members, the **VOICE Flash** regular newsletter gives members an update on policy processes, upcoming lobby opportunities and activities of the network. Special Flashes are also produced to assist members in preparation for upcoming important meetings, such as the ECHO Annual Partners Conference. In between Flashes, and as a library of built up knowledge, the **VOICE extranet** provides a web-based resource for members only. As shown by the graphs below, the number of readers continues to increase each year, signalling recognition by members of the quality and usefulness of these tools for their work.



5.2 COLLABORATION WITH OTHER HUMANITARIAN ACTORS AND ALLIES

2013 saw a strengthened exchange among humanitarian NGO networks through the **increased collaboration** between VOICE, Geneva-based NGO network ICVA, US-based NGO network InterAction and SCHR. Regular meetings were held between the Directors, ensuring strategic exchanges on topics of concern to the global NGO community.

With the joint press release against UN integration in Somalia in early 2013 (*see above*), the NGO networks took a common public position for the first time, followed by a common positioning on the Joint Standards Initiative. There were also fruitful debates on the SCHR certification project. In addition, the 4 NGO networks met with NATO, seeking to better structure the relationship between NATO and NGOs beyond ad hoc exchanges. The VOICE secretariat also joined members and some of the networks in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Task Force on humanitarian space, integration and civil-military relations.

Within the EU capital, Brussels, quarterly informal meetings between the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and VOICE continued. As well as common positioning, for example on the EU Aid Volunteers initiative, this strengthened links between VOICE and other humanitarian actors. On 29 October, the VOICE President participated in a high-level event '**Partners in Dialogue. 150 years of Humanitarian Action – Addressing today's challenges**' organised by the Mission of Switzerland to the EU to celebrate the anniversary of the 1863 Geneva Convention. The President joined the European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid, the President of the ICRC and the Director UNOCHA Geneva on the panel.

On 4 June, VOICE participated in a **workshop on Disaster Response Law**, targeted at EU institutions, Member States and NATO. This initiative convened by the IFRC, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, ICVA and OCHA, aimed to raise awareness on the importance of Disaster Response Law for efficient humanitarian operations. The VOICE Programme Coordinator gave a presentation on quality and accountability standards in humanitarian assistance, demonstrating NGOs' role in quality humanitarian aid.

VOICE also engaged with other humanitarian actors in Brussels, such as UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, PHAP, and others reaching beyond Brussels, including the **NOHA**. NOHA celebrated its 20th anniversary this year, and the VOICE network was well represented at the event with speakers from Médecins du Monde, Solidarités International and ACTED. In one of the panels the VOICE Director emphasized the need to respect the humanitarian principles and the added value of NGOs. In addition, VOICE and NOHA organized a common event in Dublin (see above), and the VOICE Secretariat gave presentations at the NOHA intensive seminar in Poland, the NOHA event in Lithuania and the NOHA Fall School in Belgium.

2013 also saw continued collaboration with EU development NGO network **CONCORD** on issues of common concern to members, such as mutual briefing and joint positioning on funding for EU external action (see section 2.1 above), and on DRR, LRRD and resilience (see section 3.2 above). In addition VOICE DRR WG gave input to the CONCORD position on the EC's 'Decent Life for all' Communication (EU position for the post-2015 development agenda) to ensure the link between relief, rehabilitation and development and VOICE messages on DRR were included in CONCORD's Beyond 2015 report. Meetings also took place between the Presidents and Directors, and both networks participated in the CSO Group on International Development.

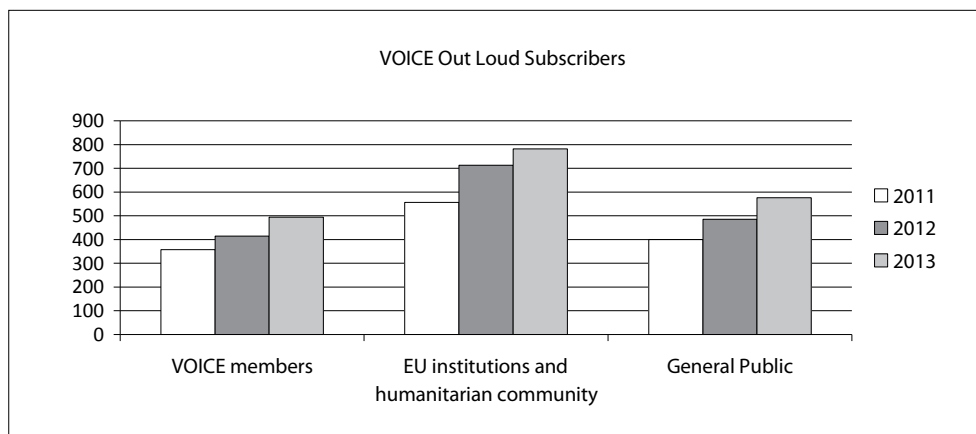
5.3 VOICE VISIBILITY THROUGH VOICE OUT LOUD, WEBSITE, AND MEDIA

The main objective of VOICE is to influence EU humanitarian policy, and to achieve that aim VOICE engages extensively in outreach, establishing contacts, attending meetings and networking in order to build trust and gather information.

Twice a year VOICE publishes a public newsletter, **VOICE Out Loud**, showcasing members' work and analysis to stakeholders in EU institutions and interested public worldwide. It is the most widely disseminated publication of the network, reaching over 1900 people, and is freely downloadable on the website. The first VOICE Out Loud in 2013, n°17, looked at '*Humanitarian donors' policy and practice*' (see above). This newsletter was also showcased by Alertnet in an article on new donors. VOICE Out Loud n° 18 '*Whose emergency is it anyway? The role of local actors*', launched at the ECHO partners conference in October, looked into the benefits but also the challenges that European NGOs and donors encounter when aiming to work with local partners.

The following members wrote in the VOICE Out Loud in 2013:

Save the Children, Médecins du Monde, Oxfam GB, Cordaid, CARE Nederland, Helpage International, ACTED, Norwegian Refugee Council, CESVI, Christian Aid, Tearfund, Action Contre la Faim France, CAFOD, FinnChurchAid, Gruppo di Volontariato Civile, International Medical Corps



VOICE also has a **website** which continues to serve as an important platform for knowledge sharing to a wide number of stakeholders seeking to better understand the role, realities and advocacy work of NGOs in European humanitarian aid. Through regular news items, readers were informed about diverse issues such as the EU comprehensive approach, VOICE members' activities on International DRR day, the UN appeal for Syria, EU budget negotiations and World Humanitarian Day.

The network also made itself visible through events and roundtables, via briefings to the wider public (for example to the students of College of Europe) and also through **media**, with e.g. an op-ed in the newspaper European Voice on the EU budget negotiations. VOICE publications were also increasingly multiplied through online fora. For example the DRR publication series was disseminated further by Alertnet in anticipation of the Global Platform on DRR, while these and a number of other publications were showcased on the website of the European Development Days and for the ECHO Partners Conference.

6. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS OF THE NETWORK

6.1 VOICE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The VOICE 2013 General Assembly took place on 29 May in Brussels. Through individual and family representations, a total of 67 VOICE member organisations took part in the gathering, representing 82% of the total membership. The General Assembly (GA) also saw participation representatives of ICRC and IFRC as observers.

Two new **Board** members were elected: Florence Daunis (Handicap International, France) and Marek Stys (People in Need, Czech Republic). Dominic Crowley (Concern Worldwide, Ireland) was re-elected for a second term. **ADRA Czech Republic** was voted in as the newest member of the network. The GA also approved the **VOICE 2013 resolution on 'Humanitarian Aid and the EU Comprehensive Approach'** (see above). During the day, the members had the opportunity to network, and to engage in a direct discussion with ECHO Director-General Sorensen, and with Mr. Tamminga, the Project Coordinator of the SCHR certification project (see above).

6.2 VOICE NETWORK MEMBERS IN 2013

VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor with the EU on emergency aid and DRR and it promotes the values of humanitarian NGOs. In 2013, the network was composed of 83 operational European NGOs active in humanitarian aid worldwide. VOICE members are based in 18 European countries, and the network's Secretariat is in Brussels. VOICE, unlike its members, is not operational in emergencies.

VOICE members are on the forefront of humanitarian emergencies, dedicated to saving lives, preventing suffering, and bringing humanitarian relief to the most vulnerable groups. They base their work on the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality, and are committed to following relevant codes of conduct including the 'Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in disaster relief'. They seek to work based on a participatory approach and to link relief, rehabilitation and development in order to ensure the sustainability of their interventions. The great majority of VOICE members (96% in 2013) hold a Framework Partnership Agreement with DG ECHO.

6.3 VOICE BOARD

The role of the VOICE Board is to ensure that VOICE adheres to its purpose and statutes. It decides on strategic directions and policies, provides governance and accountability, and ensures proper management of the network. The Board agrees the annual work programme and the budget and meets with applicant member organisations. The Board members contribute their professional experience on a voluntary basis, and as such represent the broader membership of the VOICE network.

The Board met five times in 2013. Its attention was focussed on the implementation of the new 2013 – 2017 Strategic Plan, monitoring the EU humanitarian aid budget, the FPA and the Comprehensive Approach and the SCHR certification project. In addition, the Board met the Director General of DG ECHO several times.



In 2013 the VOICE Board of Directors was composed of the following members (*here pictured at their retreat*): Nick Martlew (Save the Children UK), Youri Saadallah (Norwegian Refugee Council Europe), Jean-Michel Grand (Action Against Hunger UK), Nicolas Borsinger (VOICE President), Dominic Crowley (Concern Worldwide, Ireland), Florence Daunis (Handicap International, France), Marek Stys (People in Need, Czech Republic), Brian Ingle (Plan UK), and Peter Runge (CARE Deutschland – Luxemburg, *not on the picture*).

The VOICE network would like to thank Evert Van Bodegom (*ICCO, Netherlands, Board member and Secretary until May*), Sandrine Chopin (*Handicap International, France, Board member until May*) and Brian Ingle (*Plan UK, Board member until July*) for their longstanding commitment to the Board. In November, the Board decided to co-opt Anne Street (*CAFOD, UK, not on the picture*) onto the Board until the next General Assembly.

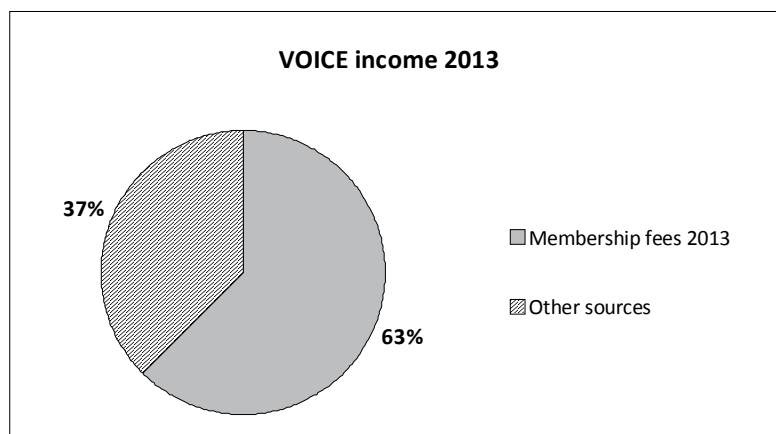
The Executive Committee (ExCom) is the executive body of the Board which oversees the functioning of the Secretariat and guarantees the financial and legal accountability of VOICE. The ExCom is elected among the members of the VOICE board. The 2013 ExCom consisted of the President (Nicolas Borsinger), the Treasurer (Jean-Michel Grand from Action Against Hunger UK), the Secretary (Evert Van Bodegom from ICCO who was replaced by Youri Saadallah from NRC Europe in October) and the Director of the VOICE Secretariat (Kathrin Schick), who is part of the ExCom without a vote. The ExCom met 3 times in 2013.

6.4 VOICE SECRETARIAT

The VOICE Secretariat is responsible for facilitating the activities indicated in the Annual Work Programme and Strategic Plan. It is also in charge of the financial management of the organisation under the supervision and general control of the VOICE Board.

The staff of the VOICE Secretariat in 2013 included the Director (Kathrin Schick), Programme Coordinator (Mags Bird), Advocacy and Communication Officer (Inge Brees), Policy and Communication Assistant (Carolina Morgado) and Office Administrator (Guillaume Brouillet). The work of the VOICE Secretariat was also supported throughout the year by two interns (Ludivine Cottin and Michał Józwiak).

6.5 FINANCES



In 2013, the turnover of the VOICE network as administered by the Secretariat totalled € 520.243. As in previous years, the majority of this (63%) was made up of membership fees. Following the success of the previous two-year project, VOICE was granted a new two-year ECHO operating grant in 2013 under the project '*Reinforcing networking between humanitarian NGOs via the VOICE network*'. This provided resources for additional activities and services to members and DG ECHO partners, and enabled the network to increase its outreach and support to collective advocacy.

83 VOICE MEMBERS IN 2012

AUSTRIA

CARE Österreich
Caritas Österreich
Hilfswerk Österreich
SOS Kinderdorf International
World Vision Österreich

BELGIUM

Caritas Secours International Belgium
Handicap International Belgium
Médecins du Monde Belgium
Oxfam Solidarité - Solidariteit

CZECH REPUBLIC

ADRA Czech Republic
People in Need (PIN)

DENMARK

ADRA Denmark - Nødhjælp og udvikling
ASF Dansk Folkehjælp
DanChurchAid (DCA)
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
Mission East - Mission Øst
Save the Children Denmark

FINLAND

FIDA International
Finn Church Aid
World Vision Finland

FRANCE

Action Contre la Faim
ACTED - Agence d'Aide à la Coopération
Technique et au Développement
CARE France
Handicap International France
Médecins du Monde France
Secours Catholique - Réseau Mondial
Caritas
Secours Islamique France
Secours Populaire Français
Solidarités International
Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF)
Triangle Génération Humanitaire

GERMANY

ADRA Deutschland e.V.
Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB)
Deutschland
CARE Deutschland - Luxemburg e.V.
Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e.V.
Deutscher Caritasverband e.V (Caritas
Germany)
Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe
Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe e.V.
Malteser International
Medico International
Plan International Germany
World Vision Germany

GREECE

Médecins du Monde - Greece

IRELAND

Concern Worldwide
Trócaire

ITALY

Caritas Italiana
CESVI - Cooperazione e Sviluppo
CISP - Comitato Internazionale per lo
Sviluppo dei Popoli
GVC - Gruppo Volontariato Civile
INTERSOS - Organizzazione Umanitaria
Onlus

LUXEMBOURG

Caritas Luxembourg

THE NETHERLANDS

CARE Nederland
Cordaid
ICCO (Dutch Interchurch Aid)
Oxfam Novib
ZOA

NORWAY

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

PORTUGAL

Medicos do Mundo

SPAIN

Acción Contra el Hambre
Caritas Española
Oxfam Intermón
Médicos del Mundo

SWEDEN

Church of Sweden — Svenska kyrkan
International Aid Services (IAS)
PMU Interlife

SWITZERLAND

Medair

UNITED KINGDOM

Action Against Hunger
ActionAid
ADRA UK - Adventist Development and
Relief Agency
CAFOD
CARE International UK
Christian Aid
HelpAge International
International Medical Corps UK
International Rescue Committee (IRC UK)
Islamic Relief Worldwide
Mercy Corps
Merlin
Oxfam GB
Plan International UK
Save the Children UK
Tearfund
World Vision UK

VOICE

VOICE stands for 'Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies'. It is a network representing 83 European non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in humanitarian aid worldwide. VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor with the European Union on emergency aid, relief, rehabilitation and disaster risk reduction. As a European network, it represents and promotes the values and specificities of humanitarian NGOs, in collaboration with other humanitarian actors.