


VOICE out loud

Issue 1, October 2004

... A message from the Secretariat ...

It is with great pleasure that VOICE welcomes you to the first edition of “**VOICE Out Loud**”. This periodical publication is a new concept for the VOICE network: it’s foremost intended to bring forward some of the work of its member NGOs. Through it, we seek to communicate some of the professional challenges of humanitarian NGOs, to the European institutions and those beyond the humanitarian community. It’s also an opportunity to share some of VOICE’s recent achievements. **VOICE Out Loud** is designed to shed further light on one of the most important parts of the VOICE network: its members.

This first issue includes a Thematic Section on HIV/AIDS in Emergencies. We chose this challenging topic because a third of our member NGOs are giving special attention to this issue. There have also been a number of recent initiatives to review the role humanitarian aid can play in the fight against AIDS—a struggle often seen as the remit of longer-term development programming. Other contributions include field notes from the crisis in Darfur, Sudan, now seen

as one of today’s direst humanitarian emergencies, as well as comments on the new contractual arrangements between the European Commission’s humanitarian office (ECHO) and its NGO partners—from the NGO side of course. An interview with MEP Max van den Berg, Vice-Chair of the European Parliament’s Committee on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, reflects on the changes taking place in the EU institutions in 2004, some of them creating new challenges for the EP as well as for NGOs.

VOICE, the only NGO network focused on humanitarian aid and the European Union, currently counts 90 members from 16 different countries. Founded in 1992, VOICE became an independent network in 2001, financed by its members. Since then, VOICE has accomplished a great deal as an interface between NGOs and the EU institutions, following closely our five strategic priorities.

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10 Years of the Code of Conduct

2004 marks the tenth anniversary of the Red Cross/NGO Code of Conduct, which comes at a time when some are noting a certain “malaise” in humanitarianism, triggered by the crises in Afghanistan and Iraq. Taking advantage of the Dutch EU presidency (and, in part, its financial assistance), NGOs and the Red Cross organised an international conference on Monday, 20 September in the Hague, to celebrate this important occasion with some of the Code’s 307 signatories.

“Ten Years Code of Conduct: Principles in Practice” was organised by the Netherlands

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Too little too slow

By Marianne L. Vik, Advisor, Norwegian Refugee Council

I am in Kalma camp outside Nyala in South Darfur, a temporary home for somewhere between 50,000 and 70,000 people who have fled from attacks on their villages and sought refugee here on a large, open piece of land, consisting mainly of hard-packed clay and with very few trees.

There are people everywhere. It takes ages to walk a hundred metres – every few steps, another question. “It is raining ma’am, and we have no plastic sheeting. We sleep outside and get wet and then sick.”

“We have had nothing to eat for three days now. We’re eating grass, ma’am. Look, this is what we eat, how can we get registered and get food?”

Over the past few months, a lot has been said and written about the Darfur crisis, and by now the world should be well aware that the humanitarian situation is serious, and that the response from the international community by far fall short of the needs.

I spent five weeks in South Darfur around the month of July for the Norwegian Refugee Council. In Kalma camp I did not encounter the most destitute, because the most needy are not to be found in camps. They have not been able to get to the camps due to the conflict and the rainy season, and cannot be reached by humanitarian assistance on a regular basis – or in many cases not at all. At least the residents in Kalma camp receive attention and some assistance, although everyone working in the camp would agree that the response by the international community has been inadequate and too slow. There were examples of people who have stayed in Kalma for more than three weeks without receiving any food or non-food items. When I was there, there was hardly any medical assistance provided in a camp the size of a small town because the agencies that would normally take on this responsibility were busy with life saving measures, i.e. trying to prevent severely malnourished children from dying. Many of the diseases encountered in emergencies, that often affects children, had to wait, together with more Darfur-specific injuries such as bullet wound, cuts and burns – unless it was acute. By mid-July, in the midst of an emergency and the rainy season, with many new arrivals every day the camps in South Darfur run out of plastic sheeting for the displaced.

It is always hard to work in a conflict situation. This also counts for South Darfur where one gets the feeling of moving uphill all the time. The main reason for this feeling is that it is difficult to see signs of the situation improving. Despite all the high-level talks and delegations, meetings and agreements – the situation has been getting worse with continuous attacks and fighting in all the three Darfur States. The number of people in need is increasing, but the deteriorating security situation in some areas makes it

more difficult to respond to the needs. In the field, we often feared that the reality on the ground would be overlooked in the high-level discussions and the rhetoric, which focuses mainly on the larger picture; that funds would not be forthcoming during periods when pressure would be released. With the presence of the AU mission in the area, at least it is possible to get confirmation on some of the attacks and abuses – one way letting the world know that the conflict is not yet over and that pressure should be kept up.

Also the implementing capacity on the ground is too limited to respond to the needs, even in the accessible areas. Most humanitarian actors feel they should do much more, and faster, in the areas where they are operating. They are also painfully aware that the situation is a lot worse in areas where one is not working. However, the lack of security, the rainy season and inadequate infrastructure prevents expansion into new areas. The fact is also that many organisations and agencies can hardly cope with the needs where they are currently operating. Lack of personnel is a key problem. It is time-consuming to employ people locally due to complicated bureaucratic procedures. And it is a challenge to find workers with relevant experience that speak English, and very few of the international humanitarian aid workers speak Arabic. In general, for Darfur it seems that expatriate personnel are in high demand. The OCHA principle on “protection in presence” implies that expatriate workers should be placed at as many sites as possible in the Darfur States. The displaced populations prefer expatriate personnel in the camps because of lack of trust with Government representatives. In early August it was evident that there was too few international aid workers to cover the vast areas of the Darfur, and most agencies chose to operate around the provincial capitals. Provided the security situation allows for expansion, more experienced humanitarian personnel are required, and most importantly, the international pressure and focus on the situation in western Sudan must be sustained.

“Okay! Okay! Okay!” We have all been renamed Mr or Ms Okay by the kids who always run towards the car to greet us as we arrive in the camp. Nobody knows exactly where this ‘okay’ came from. It may have originated from the time when the first MSF-H staff arrived in the Kalma area, and we all have to admit that we DO say ‘okay’ a lot when we move around in the camp. We are joking and saying that in the future we can use this as a targeting criteria as the displaced kids in the camp say ‘okay,’ but in Nyala town the kids greet us with ‘how are you’. Also the adults seems pleased to see us, they are smiling and waving at us every day. Thus, despite the feeling of inadequacy, we must be doing something right.

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**Humanitarian aid and the European Parliament –
Interview with MEP Max van den Berg,
Vice-Chair of the EP Committee on Development Cooperation**

VOICE: In 2004, there's a new Parliament, a new Commission, 10 new member states and a new Constitution. Where do you see the challenges?

MvdB: The challenge for us is that our citizens expect us to act with one voice: this became very clear on the Iraq issue. Citizens' opinions supported our approach to Afghanistan and the Balkans where we delivered aid very effectively by not creating bureaucracies but by working with NGO structures that were already working there. That was appreciated a lot.

Another challenge is that the big ongoing conflicts, like in Congo and Burundi, need comprehensive action, in the political sphere, trade, aid, emergency, and institution building. If humanitarian aid is only used because you are not acting, or acting negatively, in other sectors

to protect your own welfare, then you end up with big walls around Europe. Then you end up with Buttiglione's shooting at the boats filled with refugees and with violating the Geneva Conventions. Then you end up with big camps in Africa to keep them there.

If you talk with parliamentarians and citizens from the ten new EU member states about development or emergencies they are much more directed towards themselves. People from the new countries will mainly connect words like humanitarian suffering, good governance or conflict prevention to places much closer to home, like the Ukraine or Georgia. It is more in the area of "New Neighbour"



MEP Max van den Berg

policy than in worldwide policies. I therefore think that we have to have a very good New Neighbourhood policy, as well as a social cohesion policy inside Europe, for sustainability. But this cannot be at the cost of our contribution in the wider world.

VOICE: The Development Committee is very positive to NGOs. Now, more and more, we find issues in the Foreign Affairs Committee that are relevant for humanitarian aid. Do you see a tension here?

MvdB: My own view is that humanitarian aid is a very essential part of the Development Committee remit. We have done quite a lot of homework over the last year and a half, to make sure that in the Constitution humanitarian aid is seen as independent and not an instrument of external

relationships and that it can be given in an impartial and professional way. I think we won that battle. There is no doubt that in the end also Commissioner Chris Patten [External Relations] supported that clearly and understood it very well.

If you look to what we did over the last few months in the Parliament, since starting in July: we went with our Committee to Darfur, we had a resolution in the plenary, and we had hearings on Palestine/Israel and another on cluster bombs. And it is also in this way that we are very directly active on humanitarian disasters. We do give our opinions on Iraq. But even for Iraq, if it goes to Foreign Affairs first, they will respect that the developmental part will be in our remit. I am not interested in a fight between these Committees as long as we both take the goals and objectives seriously.

VOICE: Do many other MEPs share your views about priorities?

MvdB: My feeling is that there is a majority in the Parliament, even in this new Parliament, who will support this line. I doubt if people will say, "Let's do extra in Iraq and take the money out of Latin America or Africa". The European Parliament is interesting: you do get the sense that although you have people coming from different countries there is a kind of supranational feeling. They are able to stand a little bit above national politics.

A short guide to humanitarian NGO jargon

- **VOICE** – Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies
- **NGO** – Non-Governmental Organisation
- **ECHO** – European Commission Humanitarian Office
- **FPA** – Framework Partnership Agreement (contractual arrangement with ECHO)
- **EU** – European Union
- **EP** – European Parliament
- **MEP** – Member of the European Parliament
- **UN-OCHA** – UN office for the coordination of humanitarian assistance
- **NOHA** – Network on Humanitarian Assistance (European university network)

VOICE: NGOs are concerned about the presence of other actors trying to carry out humanitarian activities, including the military. Who should be doing humanitarian aid?

MvdB: In a broad sense, development cooperation as such is a body of knowledge, and so you have professionals. Those who are in the emergency branch are even very different from those who are in the structural development branch. It doesn't mean they should not work very well together. It is a different rhythm, a different style of doing things, different aims and goals, and that's fine, even in terms of logistics.

The same counts for the military. If a soldier goes in as a peace keeper sometimes he needs to offer help in other ways. The military could of course be there to give a little help. For example in Mozambique, during the civil war, a little help was needed to let the train come through, so you were sure that the emergency aid could come. The soldiers had a very clear mandate under the UN Security Council to protect. That's fine, they were the soldiers. Others were into logistics or food. But if you mix up those things, it's not just a financial problem, it's also professional. If you ask people to do jobs they are not trained for, you end up in a very dangerous situation.

VOICE: How much should the EU work with NGOs on humanitarian aid, and how much with other actors, such as the UN?

MvdB: By the end of his period Commissioner Nielson [Development and Humanitarian Aid] became much more NGO-friendly, and had very good contacts and cooperation. I am coming from the NGO world, therefore I'm comfortable working together with them. I try to explain to my colleagues that you can find both good and bad NGOs: it depends on their views and from where they operate.

Like you have differences here in the Parliament: that's variety, you can't try to get it all into one form. Louis Michel

[Development and Humanitarian Aid Commissioner-designate] expressed it in this way: let the NGOs work but you can sometimes be critical. To be critical is fine, but Michel has to learn that some NGOs are really professional and that ECHO could not work without those NGOs.

NGOs and the UN are all working on the same Darfur or on the same Afghanistan; it does not help to just play your own games. But I disagree if it comes to giving the money to the UN and then they have to implement it through NGOs, instead of ECHO directly working with NGOs. Instead of subcontracting

I think we should directly work with those NGOs and not to move the money away from them to more abstract levels.

I would like to see our work as doing it from the heart but with a lot of professionalism. And that's for example, what ECHO really makes attractive. I would say ECHO has one thing that really differs from the rest of the development aid at EU level: it's that they act without this whole image of bureaucracy.

I doubt if people will say,
 "Let's do extra in Iraq and take the money
 out of Latin America or Africa".

VOICE: What can humanitarian aid NGOs do to lobby the European Parliament and make sure MEPs

are aware of humanitarian principles, issues of access to vulnerable populations, security for humanitarian aid workers?

MvdB: I would say the popular campaigning you do to the public, partially also for fund-raising, where you explain the results, can help in this if you show loyalty to the EU by telling the public that you get money from them. You always have to somehow be clear about with whom you are working. It would help if organizations are fairly open about being happy with the work they do, and especially with their cooperation with ECHO.

What NGOs and ECHO could do is to make an announcement to explain what they are doing, and to say that you get results for your money. Not just in the smaller circles but also among the broader public. We need the support of the public, otherwise people can push humanitarian aid away for other interests. Humanitarian aid is a good use of taxpayers' money, and that should be said. I will do it from a solidarity point of view, but you can also do it from a more rational point of view.

A big part of the new Parliament comes from the ten new countries. So it would be a good idea to

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deliver the basic principles of humanitarian aid in a nice smart card to all of them. Show that you are going to talk to them, that if

they need information, there are joint websites where they can go, where they can put questions if they want.

Show them that you are a network: give it a face, not too abstract, but with faces from the different national sides. This way, in the capitals as well as at European level, people understand who the NGOs are and use national links. It's important to connect national parliamentarians with the European level to get support. Otherwise it is something up in the air here, supported by all the networks here but not by the people. What you and we need is support from the people.

Thematic Section: HIV/AIDS in Emergencies

Traditionally HIV/AIDS has always been approached as a development issue. However, in many emergencies HIV/AIDS considerably influences the impact of humanitarian assistance and can therefore not be ignored by humanitarians. Fortunately nowadays more and more organisations and donors are realising this fact and are starting to consider the issue of HIV/AIDS in humanitarian programming.

HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe and Liberia

Like 19,999 other people I recently participated in the International AIDS Conference in Bangkok. There was an amazing amount of information in the form of workshops, plenaries, lectures, and networking—some of it new and some of it not so new. One of the disappointments of the conference was the lack of information and discussion on HIV/AIDS in humanitarian situations. However there was some discussion around mobile populations and HIV/AIDS, primarily in the Asian migrant worker context. This made me reflect about the work that I do with HIV/AIDS in humanitarian settings and what type of issues need to be addressed as we enter into the new realm of HIV/AIDS in humanitarian situations.

In Oxfam's Humanitarian Department we do not directly implement HIV/AIDS projects, but do mainstream and integrate it into our existing work, either operationally or through local partners. This can take many forms and include a variety of activities. We try to reflect on the work we have done and how we can move forward in mainstreaming HIV/AIDS. Through the documentation of experiences and cases, best practices, and lessons learned, we are revising Oxfam's manual on 'Integration and mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS into Humanitarian Situations' to transform it into a working field document.

Asking what has been done, what needs to be done, and what are the existing gaps is so thought provoking it could be a conference in itself. Every situation is different and each country is different. In Southern Africa, the humanitarian disaster is caused by nature (drought and crop failure) but worsened by economic and political disturbances. Some hypothesise that HIV/AIDS is the primary issue causing the humanitarian situation. This varies a great deal from countries in West Africa, such as Liberia, which are coming out of the 'third war' (local terminology for the conflicts since 1986) in

which ethnic conflict, IDPs, and transitional government are the major problems.

In the case of Zimbabwe HIV/AIDS is striking; you cannot move without seeing a poster, a red ribbon, or a funeral. The exceptions are in the rural areas, which depending on the area have varying degrees of activity and information. But in Liberia, HIV/AIDS is a marginal issue in the minds of the population, the government, and the humanitarian community who are principally concerned with survival.

In the case of Zimbabwe HIV/AIDS is striking; you cannot move without seeing a poster, a red ribbon, or a funeral.

It is difficult to take the decision to address HIV in an emergency when just providing basic services to the population is itself almost impossible. However the questions I have been trying to answer in my missions over the past eight months are whether we should address HIV/AIDS in a crisis situation? What is the effect of HIV/AIDS on the effected population, particularly in respect to the crisis? And if you respond, when should you start and what are the key activities to do in terms of HIV AIDS prevention?

In Zimbabwe the main humanitarian challenge is food security, however there are many confounding factors. The rate of HIV/AIDS was already one of the highest in the world (in 2001 HIV affected 34% of the adult population) before the food crisis came about, and decreases the amount of labour to produce food. So the question remains: is HIV a contributing factor? And how do we address it in relation to the food crisis, which is considered the

Why is HIV/AIDS a humanitarian concern?

There are a number of reasons why HIV/AIDS must concern humanitarian actors:

- The mortality and suffering created by HIV/AIDS is clearly a humanitarian concern in its own right. The impact of the epidemic is growing, and will be felt for decades.
- HIV/AIDS is increasing the food insecurity of significant numbers of households, adding another burden to communities already vulnerable to other shocks, such as drought or conflict.
- HIV/AIDS has particular characteristics that may create new types of vulnerabilities, or exacerbate existing ones. HIV/AIDS kills predominantly prime-age adults, clusters in households, has a gender-specific impact and interacts with malnutrition. These are all factors that must be understood and taken into account in providing humanitarian relief in the context of an HIV/AIDS epidemic.
- Emergency situations may increase people's susceptibility to HIV/AIDS, further fuelling the epidemic.

Source: HPG Briefing Paper 14, April 2004: "HIV/AIDS and humanitarian action" by Paul Harvey.

primary problem? In terms of Oxfam programming it was necessary to look at mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into livelihoods and public health programmes. Activities included staff and partner awareness and training, information education and communication for the beneficiary community, community garden projects and support to local NGOs working with orphans in the target communities.

Liberia is a completely different story: 14 years of civil war, destroyed infrastructure, 70% illiteracy rate, 80% unemployment, ex-combatants, IDPs living in camps, mobility from neighbouring countries, and the majority of the population living in the overcrowded capital of Monrovia. Peace has been secured for the moment and activities are commencing to restore 'normal' life of the population. However the fact that Liberia has been considered a low prevalence country for HIV/AIDS has for the most part kept it a low priority for most key actors. Discussions HIV/AIDS specialists indicate that the rate is most probably closer to 10-12% rather than the reported 8.2%, on top of 14 years of war that included rape, abduction, forced conscription, and sexual assault, as well as cross-border movements.

The issue at hand is whether we should address HIV/AIDS in this post conflict situation. My feeling is yes, we should, but the key is how to do it and still address the basic needs of the population. It is necessary to have effective coordination among the NGO community, the UN, and the government to address HIV awareness among key actors in the reconstruction of the country and resettlement of the population. Knowledge about the current situation is

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low and so is basic knowledge about HIV/AIDS among the population. For the most part, denial and stigma discourage people from talking about HIV/AIDS and there is a lack of resources: services are limited and only available in Monrovia.

The upcoming resettlement and reintegration of IDPs and refugees should have a strong focus on mitigation of vulnerability to HIV transmission. As populations move back to their homes, issues of HIV/AIDS and mobility need to be addressed. People will be returning not only from the camps but also from refuge in neighbouring Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Ivory Coast where rates of HIV are higher. Exit and entry points are key sites for information and condom distribution for returnees. As populations move, they are more at risk of attack and rape. Advocating for adequate protection in the relocation process is crucial for minimizing risk of exposure to HIV. Problems of resources, food security, and livelihoods may force people into behaviours such as commercial sex work in order to cope.

Oxfam's work in mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into humanitarian situations is still in an early stage. Some main constraints have included a lack of rapid decision making as to the best time to act and the lack of HIV/AIDS information gathering in assessments. On the other hand as we learn more lessons from our experiences in the field in all phases of emergencies we will be better prepared to address HIV/AIDS in humanitarian situations.

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Addressing the Silent Emergency: HIV and AIDS and the Darfur Crisis

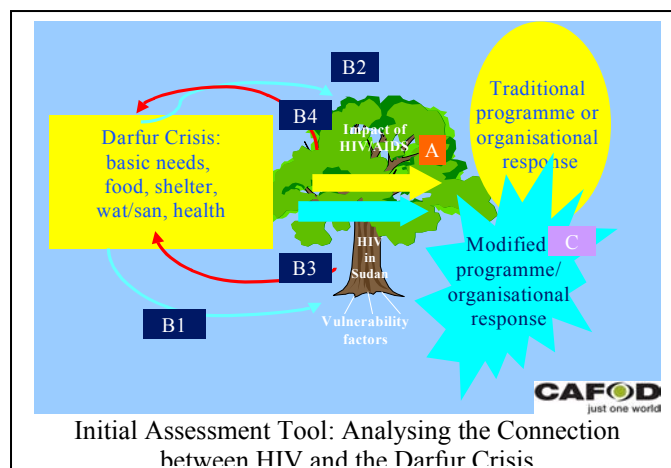
by Ann Smith & Jo Maher, CAFOD

CAFOD is developing a resource intended for those involved in the ACT/Caritas response to the Darfur crisis. It offers guidance on how the issues raised by the reality of HIV and AIDS can be factored into the core work of humanitarian agencies active in Darfur.

workers need to ask how their core work might unwittingly exacerbate the HIV pandemic by increasing the vulnerability to HIV of affected communities and of their own staff and volunteers, by damaging or stigmatising people living with HIV, or by being ineffective because the core work does not take into account the changed capacities of communities affected by HIV. Failure to ask these questions may mean that humanitarian agencies become part of the problem rather than the solution.

Why Consider HIV and AIDS?

Despite sparse detailed data, it is agreed that HIV incidence is significant and increasing in Sudan and neighbouring countries generally, and within the areas most immediately affected by the Darfur crisis. Humanitarian response



What are the implications for considering HIV and AIDS in planning a response to the Darfur crisis?

The implications are NOT about asking NGOs to undertake HIV-specific work alongside their core humanitarian response. Nor is it about needing to identify individuals who have HIV or AIDS, or families affected by the virus. However, it IS about recognising that the core humanitarian aid responses can unwittingly heighten people's vulnerability to HIV, the impact of the crisis on people already living with HIV and the impact of HIV/AIDS on the crisis. Agencies need to identify what, in these core responses, may need to change

or be modified to take the reality of HIV into account. Issues raised by HIV in the context of the Darfur crisis affect the core work of *everyone* engaged in any aspect of NGO responses and cannot be confined to those who "do HIV work" or to health care practitioners

The diagram captures the connections schematically. Traditionally, a crisis such as Darfur would draw a humanitarian response aimed at providing the basic needs of shelter, food, water, sanitation and health care for people affected. This is still the core work of humanitarian response agencies. However, HIV and AIDS (depicted as a tree with causes attributed to the roots and impact allocated in the branches) are an ever-present backdrop to current emergencies. Analysis of the reciprocal effects of the pandemic and the crisis (B1–B4, see below) highlights concerns that must be addressed within the core response of humanitarian agencies: Agencies will still endeavour to provide for the basic needs of food, shelter etc but in a manner that has been modified to take account of the concerns emerging from this analysis.

The analysis is carried out in three stages:

Stage A: Identification of Vulnerability and Impact factors

It is important to recognize that the consequences of the crisis increase people's powerlessness and therefore their vulnerability to HIV. Such consequences include displacement, loss of basic amenities, income and livelihood, breakdown in social structures and cultural norms, increases in injury and illness, increased numbers of unaccompanied children, local and imported military presence as combatants, monitors etc.

It is also crucial to recognize that the impact of AIDS on local communities will have already affected the health, economic circumstances, available skills and resources and consequent ability to cope with and recover from disasters and crises.

The core humanitarian aid responses can unwittingly heighten people's vulnerability to HIV, the impact of the crisis on people already living with HIV and the impact of HIV/AIDS on the crisis.

Stage B: Application of Analytical Questions relating to the Crisis and HIV

B1. How is the crisis situation affecting people's vulnerability to HIV infection?

Key points may be, for example, unsafe medical practices, sexual violence or rape as a weapon of war, transactional sex, breakdown of social norms, consensual sex as a coping mechanism, etc.

B2. How is the crisis affecting people already infected with HIV and families affected?

The following factors will lead to accelerated and more severe health deterioration of people with HIV: hunger/loss of nutrition; loss of rudimentary health care; poorer sanitation

and lower quality of drinking water. Families affected by AIDS may have already depleted any food or monetary reserves so will be disproportionately affected by the crisis.

B3. How does vulnerability to HIV affect the crisis?

People fearing sexual attack/abuses will be less able to cope. They may also be less willing to avail of humanitarian aid if this makes them targets for such attacks.

B4 How does the pre-existing impact of HIV affect the humanitarian crisis?

Families with sick members will not only have reduced mobility, but will also have a reduced ability to undertake strenuous work (e.g. construction of shelters, latrines etc or to carry heavy loads). Communities affected in these ways by AIDS will be less able to undertake recovery measures, thus dependency may be greater for longer.

Stage C: What modifications are required to the core work of humanitarian response agencies because of the points emerging from A and B?

Analysis of critical questions B1-B4 should identify practical considerations to be addressed when planning a programmatic response. Those points that apply to the programmatic sectors addressed by NGOs should be identified in order to indicate the areas of programme planning that may need to be reviewed or modified.

The IASC-based matrix and action sheets are accompanied by this initial assessment tool and the Silent Emergency leaflet, a practical resource to prompt practitioners to consider HIV and AIDS in responding to humanitarian situations. The resource is a work in progress and will continue to be developed based on the experiences of colleagues working in Darfur among other places. The Silent Emergency leaflet is however available from CAFOD in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese and is free of charge (email hiv@cafod.org.uk).

ECHO Reviews its Approach to AIDS

The European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO) has recently commissioned a review of its approach to HIV/AIDS. The following excerpts from the project description explain the rationale for this new attention to the issue:

“When responding to natural and man-made crises, humanitarian organisations, including ECHO are increasingly being confronted by the growing impact of HIV/AIDS on the populations targeted by emergency and/or protracted crisis operations.

In emergency, protracted crisis situations, or in the transition phase from humanitarian crisis to post-crisis situation, the interplay between HIV/AIDS and other crises poses an additional challenge for both the affected communities and humanitarian agencies. This complex relationship and its effects on coping capacities necessitates further reflection and action by the humanitarian community in terms of the responses to the various phases of an emergency or protracted crisis situations and also regarding the linkage between development aid and humanitarian assistance.

This had led ECHO to embark on a review of its current approach to HIV/AIDS. The purpose of this review is to independently assess ECHO’s strategic and operational approaches to HIV/AIDS in emergencies, and to establish which activities related to HIV/AIDS would be most appropriate for ECHO to support financially in emergency and relief situations and in the LRRD process, whilst respecting ECHO’s legal base.

ECHO’s strategy and procedures are focussed on preserving life and alleviating suffering in periods of disruptions, which are seen as temporary situations. With a limited budget ECHO has to work to ensure that short term rehabilitation activities remain short-term. Therefore ECHO is not positioned as a “front line” donor in the HIV/AIDS struggle, but considers that in emergency settings some basic core elements have to be addressed. The emergency setting lends

itself more easily to spread the virus and ECHO considers that it should take the necessary measures to minimise that danger.

ECHO recognises that the impact of HIV/AIDS is more than just a health aspect; it involves every facet of life being it social, economic, food security and labour, training and education, etc. ECHO believes that a stronger emphasis than hitherto on mainstreaming HIV/AIDS considerations in humanitarian activities is needed. However, it also maintains that HIV/AIDS needs longer-term commitment and demands a development approach.

By “mainstreaming HIV/AIDS considerations in ECHO funded activities”, is understood that when and where it is relevant (e.g. when HIV/AIDS has an impact on the planned activities and results of a humanitarian intervention) and practically feasible (e.g. this might not be possible in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster, areas difficult to access, or due to logistical reasons or other similar situations) HIV/AIDS related activities should be taken into consideration fully and incorporated at each stage in the project management cycle, be it in the overall health, food, nutrition, shelter and/or other relevant sectors’ activities supported by ECHO.

It is important to note that ECHO does not consider it to be within its mandate to support vertical programmes focused particularly and specifically on HIV/AIDS control activities and will not favour the funding of global HIV/AIDS programmes....”

Source: Terms of Reference for a review of ECHO's approach to HIV/AIDS

For further reading:

- The Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) has just published a new Research Report entitled “HIV/AIDS and humanitarian action” (HPG Report 16). The full report can be found on the internet at: www.odi.org.uk/hpg/papers/hpgreport16.pdf
- Ann Smith wrote a 2002 report on HIV/AIDS in emergencies for the same Humanitarian Policy Group. [HIV/AIDS and emergencies: Analysis and recommendations for practice](http://www.odihpn.org/pdfbin/networkpaper038.pdf), is available at: <http://www.odihpn.org/pdfbin/networkpaper038.pdf>
- The UN Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) recently issued: “HIV/AIDS and emergencies: Analysis and recommendations for practice2004”. This report can be found at: http://www.unaids.org/html/pub/publications/external-documents/iasc_guidelines-emergency-settings_en_pdf.pdf
- In the 3 September 2004 issue of the journal *Disasters* one can find the article: “HIV/AIDS among Conflict-affected and Displaced Populations: Dispelling Myths and Taking Action”, by Paul B. Spiegel.

European Humanitarian NGOs: The Prolonged Arm of Western Values? Brussels, Spring 2004

On the occasion of our General Assembly, VOICE organised a roundtable debate in May this year. During this fruitful and wide debate, five excellent speakers presented their views on the question whether Western humanitarian NGOs are co-opted by Western political and strategic interests. The following gives an impression of this interesting debate.

➤ Jon Greenwald (*International Crisis Group*)

A new kind of conflict is taking place today where humanitarian NGOs have become part of the conflict and where chaos is used to advance political causes. What can NGOs do in face of this greater insecurity, should they ascertain their independence or on the contrary, should they openly associate themselves with one side to ensure a better protection? There is a certain political logic to the attacks carried out, they are what one could call the 'rationale of an asymmetrical conflict'. Again, what should NGOs do, bolster their security to maintain their independence or simply avoid going into such areas?

➤ Jamie Shea (*NATO*)

Because NATO transformed from being a defence to a security organisation its activities have become closer to the ones carried out by NGO's. This enables NGOs and NATO to have better and further reaching contact among each other but it also creates friction at times. Therefore NGOs should engage into a dialogue with NATO and not just on terms of operations but also on a political/strategic level. NGOs can do this (for example) by scrutinising NATO, by exchanging research, views and reports, or by mutual education and the establishment of common projects. Instead of avoiding each other NATO and NGOs should engage in a transparent and proactive dialogue.

➤ Marc Luyckx-Ghisi (*Vision 2020*)

Western confrontational values will not be the ones that will save us in the 21st century and therefore there is a need to open new approaches. NGOs have a vital role to play in this matter. Because they are able to innovate they are the catalysers of global transformations. In search of this change there is an inevitable tension between the principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence on the one side and 'pragmatism' at the other. In case one decides not to remain neutral or impartial in face of war, there is the danger of becoming part of the conflict. Therefore it is time for reflection and dialogue, not only among us but also with other parts of the world. We have to value the viewpoints of others in order for us to gain their trust and be able to keep up the fight for humanity.

➤ Sarah Rycklief (*Labour Research Service*)

The particular political environment that we know today has pushed humanitarian NGOs to become self-conscious about their image and concerned about security issues. For this reason NGOs should ask themselves whether they *unknowingly* promote their particular values. The answer to that question, is yes, of course they do which is why they are often viewed with suspicion in the countries in which they operate. They come from the West with funds from Western countries (bearing in mind that this plays a huge role). Therefore, there is an urgent need for NGOs to make an ethical basis for entry into a given situation while also considering the balance of their aid in the larger picture.

➤ Hany El-Banna (*Islamic Relief*)

While terrorist activities have targeted many Western NGOs, various Muslim charities have been closed down as governments are afraid that the decisions are being made elsewhere. Yet, charity work is a god given right, and European NGOs should take a leading role in allowing Southern NGOs to function. Furthermore, the ethnic/religious diversity and plurality that are at the heart of modern Europe could help bring our culture to meet other cultures. Finally, the role of NGOs should be to question what we mean by democracy, participation and freedom for all. NGOs do not have agendas, they should not negotiate the conflict. NGOs should try to solve problems, not impose ideologies.

➤ *Concluding Remarks: Kathrin Schick (VOICE)*

Western NGOs are indeed the prolonged arm of western values. Hence, we need to focus more on ethics than politics yet this is a very difficult task, and ethics are not necessarily universal. Furthermore, it seems that the rule of law and the idea of back to basics are gaining strength but the question is who should implement this? In this context, mutual recognition and practical cooperation is necessary. Finally, it is important not to forget that certain issues are not recent. Indeed the questions of civil military relations and security have been there for years.

Marc Luyckx-Ghisi's speaking points are available on request from the VOICE Secretariat.

A continuous learning process: the opportunities of the new FPA

The Framework Partnership Agreement codifies the contractual relationship between ECHO and its implementing partners. It is therefore one of the main concerns of humanitarian NGOs working with the European Commission. Below, COOPI, a VOICE member and one of the NGOs most involved in training activities, together with Punto.Sud gives its constructive view on the new contractual arrangements that have been in place since November 2003.

The transition marked by ECHO's adoption of the 2003 Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) should not only be seen as a procedural adjustment stemming from the introduction of a new EU Financial Regulation (January 2003). In fact, signing this contract ushers us into a new phase, and not only because of the new definition of procedures and norms. Instead, the FPA an opportunity in itself, but what we can get out of it remains for us to identify.

This change didn't happen by accident. By now it is clear that humanitarian aid (emergency) activities no longer consist only of *ad hoc* interventions, limited to helping populations in momentary states of need. The actions of NGOs – and indirectly, of ECHO – take place more and more at the centre of contexts where the emergency is structural, and determined by a number of variables, among which state failure or malfunctioning can be decisive.

Today's emergency contexts reveal new problems and call for new necessities. In areas dominated by interethnic and religious conflicts, it becomes increasingly important to guarantee "neutral" responses, referring to concrete outcomes rather than to transcendent values such as nationalism, or to destructive sectarian identities. We are no longer talking just about carrying out targeted and "well done" interventions. In order to guarantee transparency and a full assumption of the responsibilities at stake, we also have to strive towards specialised professionalism.

We need to continue to develop our know-how, but it becomes continually more important to understand how to demonstrate what we've done, why we've done it, how the final beneficiaries were identified and what context we intend to leave at the end of the operations.

In this framework, the FPA that the NGOs have begun to sign in November 2003 should represent a turning point in relations between ECHO and NGOs. ECHO's role as guarantor of "neutrality" (and its related needs for transparency and quality) corresponds perfectly with its full recognition of the distinct identity of NGOs. At the end of the day, it is the NGOs that implement the EU's politics of solidarity.

That said, one wouldn't want to claim that the new FPA is perfect. Looking more closely at the issue that concerns us here – the relations between NGOs and ECHO – there certainly exist in the new FPA a number of clear elements of compromise (some decisively unsatisfactory, such as the rules of nationality and of origin in procurement). Many of the problems cannot be ascribed to ECHO alone. These difficulties remain despite the tough negotiation that ECHO went through in order to find a solution between field realities and the European Commission's complex normative system.

Notwithstanding this, two aspects of the new FPA seem significant. Firstly, there is the importance assigned to "quality", meaning the capacity to guarantee services and to obtain adequate outcomes of identified problems. An objective conception of quality, therefore: measurable, monitorable and, at the end of the day, valuable. Secondly, the new



FPA puts accountability and respect for the rules at its centre. The accent is placed on the use of community funds, which represent public moneys. These two aspects are well synthesised in the formulation, "more flexibility in the inputs, more focus on the outcomes". At least theoretically, this seems to create a novel conception of the project and of management work, aimed at making the most of competences and innovations.

Greater flexibility in the inputs does not necessarily imply less technical or more makeshift methods. Instead, ECHO considers the project planning and management of emergency interventions as much more complex than for long-term development interventions, and particularly emphasises the need to obtain quantifiable and demonstrable results. Once again, interpreting this message correctly, one cannot but agree.

At this point, since the introduction of the new FPA, what scenario do NGO field staff find themselves confronting? There are undoubtedly opportunities, but there are also risks.

Assuming that common sense guides this process, each actor could give more attention to the final objectives of his work. NGOs could employ resources in the best way possible, with an eye to a

continuous development of their own intervention capacities and those of partner organisations, and guaranteeing a positive impact on the final beneficiaries of the whole FPA system. At the same time we are aware that the considerable amount of rules might be seen independently from the rationale at their base. In this case the FPA system turns into a mere bureaucracy, seen as a serious obstacle that will occupy administrative staff and hinder others.

In conclusion therefore, the new scenario requires a deeper understanding of the reference system in which we are operating. The professionalisation of the actors and the creation of training and information materials could certainly help. For this reason, the SOLINT project has concentrated its efforts not only on training NGO staff and management about the new norms of the 2003 FPA. It has also created a set of practical, easy-to-use tools (in particular, the "Trenino" and a series of self-learning training modules), with the objective of facilitating the planning and management of resources for ECHO projects.

Aside from these efforts, it is clear that this new phase requires – and will continue to require – at

least two further elements: First, a qualitative strengthening of the communication between the two parties (ECHO and its NGO partners). Second, that NGOs give special attention to *demonstrating* their know-how and capacity in their work.

On ECHO's side, the challenge will be about coherence. In order for the FPA system to work, ECHO will need to be coherent with the approach expressed in the first few documents of the FPA (Preamble and Provisions). Only in this way can all the juridical instruments introduced through the FPA be really effective in guaranteeing services to the final beneficiaries.

We believe, finally, that everyone can learn from the new FPA if we see it as an area of permanent inquiry aimed at continuing the development of practices, methods and techniques that can provide more adequate responses to today's emergency scenarios. As things evolve, there might always be time to change opinions.

*By Davide Martina (COOPI), Fabrizio Alberizzi & Federico Bastia (Associazione punto.sud).
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Red Cross, VOICE member NOVIB/ Oxfam Netherlands, PSO and Disaster Studies Wageningen, in co-operation with VOICE members Care Netherlands, Cordaid, and World Vision Netherlands. The project is organised in tandem with a project run by NGO networks ICVA and SCHR, entitled "The Red Cross /NGO Code of Conduct at 10: The Challenges of Putting Principles into Action".

The Conference featured a keynote speech by Code drafter Peter Walker. He raised some shortcomings of the Code, such as the difficulties with committing to neutrality. For the future, he asked how the Code could be better adapted to situations of conflict. Comments from the floor called for a reactivation of the code. Is the Code just an overarching set of principles, or can it also be used as a management tool?

The conclusions from seven rotating workshops brought similar messages: no, the Code should not be rewritten, since it would risk being lost. But the Code does need some revitalising, and strategies for making practical use of the Code need to be explored further. Some suggested an accompanying commentary for the Code which would include guidelines for implementation, and could fill some identified gaps such as protection, gender issues, and security. Others emphasised the need for a "guardian" of the Code – a body which could follow up signatories and hold them accountable to it. Many Conference participants acknowledged the need for NGOs to use the Code in

The Code of Conduct

Principles of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response Programmes

1. The Humanitarian imperative comes first
2. Aid is given regardless of the race, creed or nationality of the recipients and without adverse distinction of any kind. Aid priorities are calculated on the basis of need alone
3. Aid will not be used to further a particular political or religious standpoint
4. We shall endeavour not to act as instruments of government foreign policy
5. We shall respect culture and custom
6. We shall attempt to build disaster response on local capacities
7. Ways shall be found to involve programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid
8. Relief aid must strive to reduce future vulnerabilities to disaster as well as meeting basic needs
9. We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources
10. In our information, publicity and advertising activities, we shall recognise disaster victims as dignified humans, not hopeless objects

advocacy work to defend humanitarian space and influence the working environment.

A prior study carried out by Disaster Studies Wageningen will, together with the conference proceedings, result in a booklet that reflects on the experiences with the Code in the past and the road ahead.

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An example is the consultation process on the Framework Partnership Agreement with ECHO, where VOICE facilitated the work of some 180 Partner NGOs through the FPA Watch Group. VOICE has established a regular consultation base with the different units of ECHO, and has given input on annual processes like the audit cycle and strategic programming. Vis-à-vis the European Parliament, VOICE has established good relations with influential MEPs and officials—a move which has resulted in opportunities to give expert input on policy documents, discussions and hearings (including the Commissioners-designate this Fall) by bringing forward the concerns of humanitarian NGOs. The EU Council has heard from VOICE as well, most notably in discussions about Civil-Military relations and Crisis Management, where VOICE was seen side-by-side with UN-OCHA and ECHO as relevant interlocutors. Looking also at European humanitarian aid in the larger picture, VOICE made effective efforts to influence the drafting of humanitarian aspects of the European Constitution.

VOICE is also active in encouraging exchange between members of the humanitarian community, as well as moves towards quality in humanitarian aid, higher standards, and better communication between actors. In the last few years VOICE has organized conferences on such topics as child soldiers and the future of humanitarian aid. We have offered our members training opportunities, for example through the Aid in Conflict/Conflict in Aid project, as well as through collaboration with the Sphere Project. In order to further their initiatives, VOICE also organises joint events with its members. But also with other humanitarian actors, including a

series of Round Table meetings to accompany the UN's annual CAP launches. VOICE has made a point of collaborating with other NGO networks, such as CONCORD, and with academic institutions, such as NOHA, where relevant. And during the height of the crisis in Iraq, VOICE provided a special information service to assist member organizations in planning and coordination.

For the future, VOICE is looking at a number of challenges that now face the humanitarian community and working on the best strategy for addressing their specific European manifestations.

Many of the issues that we see on the horizon involve the preservation of "humanitarian space". New actors are appearing which often call themselves humanitarian: both within and outside the EU this includes the military, private companies, and in some

cases, civil protection organizations. This may have an impact on the security and efficiency of the work of humanitarian NGOs. VOICE is also looking to preserve the long experience and strong relationship between EU institutions and NGOs, which is put under pressure by the new bureaucratic and judicial constraints in the European Commission, as well as by competing interests.

We hope that you will enjoy this first edition of **VOICE Out Loud**. Please let us know what you think of it—and what you would like to see in its pages next time. If you would like further copies of VOICE Out Loud, they can be downloaded from www.ngovoice.org: please distribute this to anyone you think could use it. And for any information, please do not hesitate to contact the VOICE Secretariat.

**Strategic Guidelines
From VOICE Strategic Plan 2002-2004**

1. Build partnership with ECHO
2. Strengthen relations with the European Parliament
3. Pursue coherence of EU humanitarian policies
4. Strengthen the VOICE network
5. Promote quality and standards

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Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies (VOICE) is a network representing 90 European NGOs active in humanitarian aid worldwide. VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor with the EU for humanitarian affairs, including emergency aid, relief, rehabilitation and disaster preparedness.