

FOCUS Towards the World Humanitarian Summit:
an inclusive process ?

In a context of unprecedented humanitarian needs, the UN Secretary General has called for a **World Humanitarian Summit** (WHS) to take place in Istanbul in 2016 and European preparations for the summit are getting underway. This issue of our newsletter invites NGOs to highlight what for them are key questions on each of the main themes in the Summit. It takes a look at the relevance of the process for the community of European humanitarian NGOs and asks how the EU might contribute.

Kicking off this issue of VOICE Out Loud, we give an overview of what can be expected from the consultations process for the WHS, in particular in the European region. Our members each take a specific perspective on the four themes in the Summit. Looking towards a more **effective humanitarian response**, CARE explains how ensuring that gender and women are taken into consideration is a necessary precondition for this. Oxfam Novib challenges the WHS to ensure that lessons are learned from previous experiences so that the humanitarian system engages differently with local partners for better **management of risk and reduction of vulnerability**. World Vision highlights the benefits of investing in **innovation** to improve the response to humanitarian needs. In order to **serve the needs of people in conflict**, Action Contre la Faim-France underlines that the humanitarian principles and the security of humanitarian aid workers are more crucial than ever.

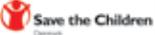
In the 'View on the EU' section we are happy to hear from Ms. Florika Fink-Hooijer, **DG ECHO Director of Strategy, Policy and International Cooperation**, who takes a look ahead to the Commission's main priorities for 2015, and shares her perspective on some of the main challenges for humanitarian assistance at the moment and about ECHO's progress in bridging humanitarian policy and practice.

In the 'field focus', three VOICE members – International Medical Corps, Médicos del Mundo, and Welthungerhilfe – outline their responses to the **Ebola outbreak** in West Africa beyond medical treatment, reporting on the different aspects of Ebola response and at broader consequences for communities.

VOICE

VOICE stands for 'Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies'. VOICE is a network of 82 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in humanitarian aid worldwide. VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor on EU humanitarian affairs and disaster risk reduction and it promotes the values of humanitarian NGOs.

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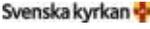
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FROM THE VOICE PRESIDENT

Nicolas Borsinger, President VOICE page 4

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FIELD FOCUS

NGOs responding to Ebola – three approaches
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VOICE AT WORK

..... BACK COVER



EDITORIAL

Against the backdrop of four crises being declared 'L3' emergencies, the Ebola outbreak in West Africa and continuous protracted crisis situations, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has called for the first World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) to take place in 2016.

As humanitarian actors face needs on an unprecedented scale since decades, this initiative may be a precious prospect for them. NGOs, as main deliverers of humanitarian action, should grasp this opportunity to engage in the process by putting forward their own recommendations and bringing their experiences and expertise to the table. The Summit will also raise awareness of humanitarian issues to a wider audience. Through engagement in this long process, various stakeholders can profile their work. For the first time, affected populations, UN agencies, NGOs and other actors will be brought together. This can create synergies and new ideas and as such, the WHS is a great opportunity to capitalise on them.

The preparation process – which includes regional and thematic consultations – is bringing together NGOs and other stakeholders to agree on common priorities to take forward. Southern NGOs and platforms are participating worldwide to make their voices heard. So far the question of local partners seems already to be an issue which will feature as a major theme for NGOs. Because this Summit is also a chance to highlight approaches which have proven their strength, NGOs are looking to revive the so-called Principles of Partnership¹ that still remain highly relevant for work between UN agencies and non-UN actors.

However, doubts exist: the consultations are big and numerous and expectations as to the extent to which NGO input will be reflected in outcomes should be cautious. At this stage it is still unclear to the majority of stakeholders what will come out of the Summit, prompting questions about how much effort to put into it. After all, not all UN member states intend to participate. Whether NGOs will be heard and represented in Istanbul in a measure which reflects their role in the field is a question. Despite the current engagement of many NGOs in this process, given its heavy requirements in time and resources, many might not stick with it. Some also fear that the Summit will sideline the humanitarian principles or focus its attention on areas of easy agreement – neglecting to tackle the more difficult issues. There is a danger that expectations of what the WHS can actually achieve could be too high; can it really generate a clear pathway towards more effective humanitarian assistance: ultimately ensuring more people in need are reached?

VOICE is reflecting on what Europe could bring to these discussions. The EU through the Commission and Member States, is an important global player and donor in humanitarian aid. Equally, the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid is a policy framework of which we, Europeans, can be proud and has led to many concrete steps in improving EU humanitarian aid. This deserves to be shared with emerging donors and the wider humanitarian community. Conversely, areas where the Consensus has proved a struggle to implement, such as reduction of the administrative burden or quality of dialogue between donors and NGOs, could be important areas to develop in a more global discussion. The EU's commitment to a principled and needs-based approach should be shared widely. Should ECHO not also use this opportunity to engage with newer actors on why it has chosen to work with a diversity of partners and why it has retained a focus on forgotten crises? The opportunity to promote these approaches vigorously on the global humanitarian scene should not be lost.

The EU's own workings have been in a period of change too. President Juncker has re-organised the Commission aiming for Commissioners' tasks to be better coordinated. VOICE hopes this will mean further progress on linking relief, rehabilitation and development, and not that humanitarian aid is instrumentalised as a foreign policy instrument in conflict and crisis management. This year's European elections saw the European public more doubtful about the EU than ever. Successfully addressing the EU's many current challenges, including the EU budgetary row and its severe effects on the funding for humanitarian aid, is all the more important.

Ending this year of institutional changes, we welcome the appointment of the new Commissioner, Mr. Stylianides, and the new standing rapporteur on humanitarian aid in the European Parliament, Mr. Guerrero Salom and look forward to working with them on the WHS and other essential topics of mutual concern.

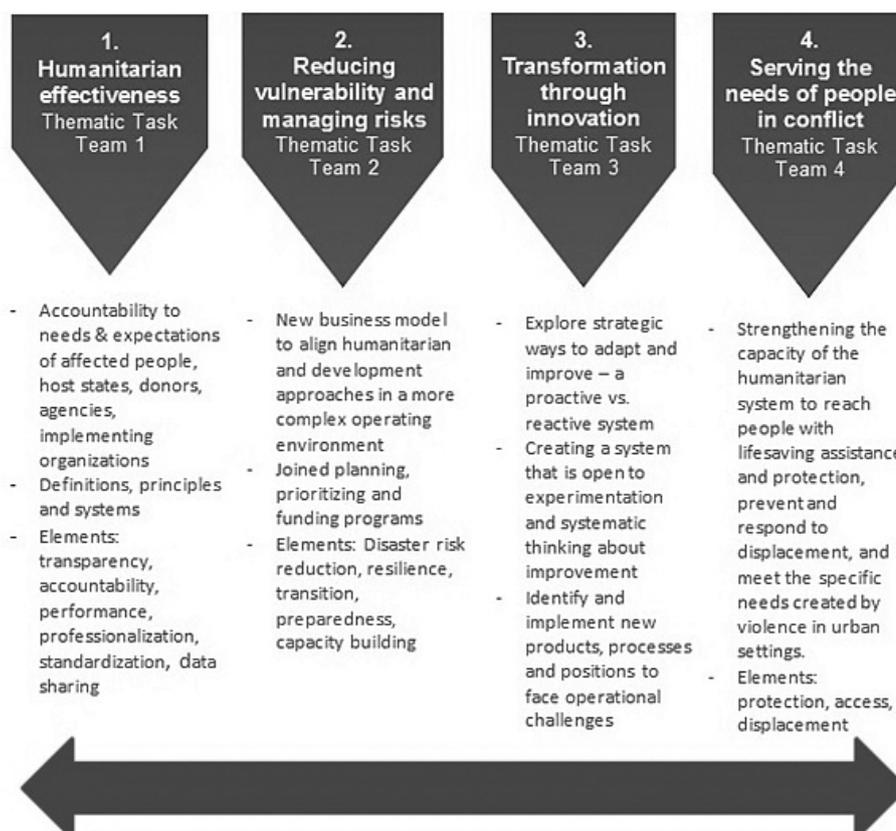
1. In order to help ensure that there is a common understanding of the concept of partnership between the UN and non-UN actors, Principles of Partnership were endorsed at the July 2007 Global Humanitarian Platform (GHP) meeting.

THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT: AN OVERVIEW OF THE EUROPEAN PROCESS

THE ISSUE – TOWARDS THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT: AN INCLUSIVE PROCESS ?

★ The UN Secretary-General has called for the first-ever global humanitarian summit in Istanbul in May 2016. The goal is to find new ways to tackle humanitarian needs in this fast-changing world and set a new agenda for global humanitarian action. The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) is managed by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Valerie Amos, OCHA Emergency Coordinator, stated that the focus should be on preparedness, humanitarian principles and risk management as well as stronger collaboration with development actors, the private sector and local partners.

Four discussion themes have been identified:



Source: CARE International

★ WORLDWIDE INPUT

In the lead up to the Summit, a series of Regional Consultations are bringing together Member States, humanitarian organisations, affected populations and other relevant partners (private sector, diaspora, military, etc.), giving them a forum to identify humanitarian challenges and promote solutions. Afterwards, a Global Consultation meeting will be organised in Switzerland in October 2015.

At the same time, four Thematic Groups are organised which consist of teams of experts set up to guide, facilitate, and organize a knowledge base for the WHS agenda on each of the four themes. They come from different regions, areas of expertise and organisations involved in humanitarian action, and are supposed to engage in each consultation to bring in a wide knowledge and expertise. A common meeting will take place in Germany in September 2015.

The fourth consultation brings together the 'Europe and Others' group which includes among others Europe, United States, Canada and Israel. It is the biggest group among the regional consultations, as it comprises the largest number of Member States – many of them major donors – and the most influential aid agencies. This implies that this consultation should not only look at challenges in the region, but also at its role in other crisis affected places.

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Source: WHS Website



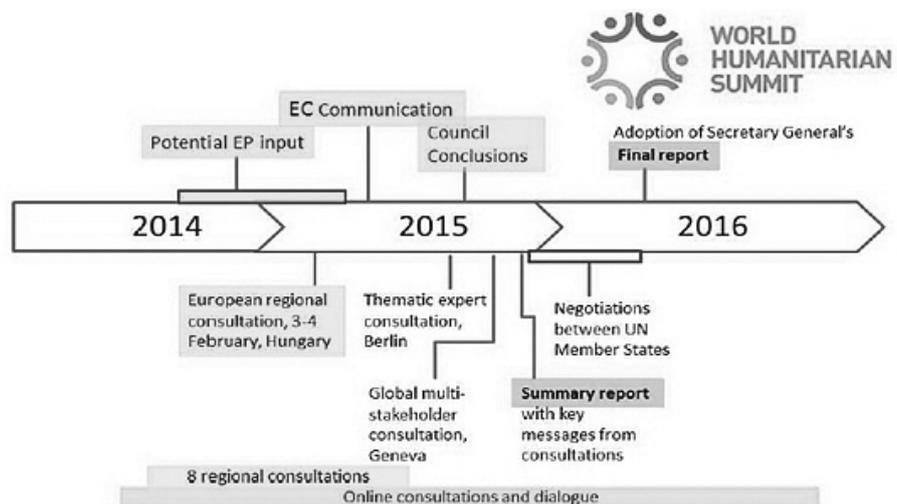
This Regional Steering Group (RSG) is hosted by Hungary and Finland and co-chaired by DG ECHO and OCHA. It brings together Member States, UN agencies, private sector, academia and representatives of civil society organisations and NGOs. The main tasks of the RSG consist in the management of the preparation and follow-up of the Europe and Others consultation which will take place in Hungary on 3-4 February 2015.

The European Union is one of the major global donors and actors concerning humanitarian aid and as such should play a crucial role in the summit. The graph below highlights the role the EU institutions (including Member States represented by the Council) can play during the process, which will also be shaped by a number of consultations at national level in Europe.

★ THE ROLE OF NGOS

NGOs are currently the main implementers on the ground. The VOICE network – as the main NGO interlocutor with the European Union on humanitarian policy and practice – brings together a considerable number of operational NGOs, the majority being DG ECHO partners. Representatives of the VOICE and Interaction networks are members of the Regional Steering Group on behalf NGOs.

In 2007 the network participated in the Global Humanitarian Platform, which brought together the UN and non-UN actors. It resulted in the 'Principles of Partnership' which NGOs are currently looking to revive through the WHS. In 2010, VOICE members also developed a position paper on the UN-led Humanitarian Reform Process. Given the importance the outcome of the Summit might have for the humanitarian community, VOICE seeks to play an active role both in the regional discussions and towards the WHS. VOICE looks forward to supporting members' engagement in the process and multiply their messages. Together with other humanitarian NGO networks such as ICVA, Interaction and SCHR, VOICE aims at strengthening the overall visibility and representation of NGOs. Given NGOs' experience and expertise in the humanitarian endeavour, it should be no question that they are heard and taken into account in these consultations.



Source: Policy Department, DG EXPO, European Parliament

THE CHALLENGE OF INNOVATION

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‘We need to work together to ensure that the Summit reflects the needs of implementers and delivers a practical and game changing outcome for the whole sector.’

★ Innovation in the humanitarian sector is critical for three reasons. According to OCHA¹, the number of disaster affected people has doubled in the last decade putting the system under unprecedented pressure. Coping with growing demand requires NGOs to be more innovative since the usual ways of working are stretched to breaking point. In addition to this, as humanitarians we have a moral duty to work better, smarter and more efficiently and increase our capability to help assist affected populations. Finally the world has changed significantly over the last ten years but the community has not always kept pace. Factors like the maturing of local business, spread of new technologies and re-emergence of non-western donors create a whole set of opportunities that the sector can seize through innovation.

★ WHS: SEIZING AN OPPORTUNITY

The World Humanitarian Summit has the potential to change the underlying structure and assumptions of the current humanitarian system. Done well this could generate a unique set of opportunities to improve how implementing agencies and affected communities do disaster management in the future. NGOs have an important role to play to ensure that the Summit reflects the needs and concerns of affected populations and those who do the bulk of implementation on the ground. Through developing innovations like World Vision (WV)'s Last Mile Mobile Solution and the Buster Early Warning Index (see box), we have learnt that a short term or "pilot" project can generate exciting innovation. However, taking them to scale is more about the strength of the organization itself that will allow organizational preparedness and learning between disaster events. This remains a challenge when the vast majority of humanitarian funding is tied to specific disaster events and cannot be used to help organisations prepare for next time. This leads to delays, inefficiencies and loss of institutional memory and

capability. At national level, this cycle of boom and bust can be really disruptive to maintaining capacity and mainstreaming innovation. A proper funding scheme is thus essential for innovation.

★ THE EU AND INNOVATION

As one of the largest humanitarian donors, the EU has a critical role to play in supporting innovative approaches and helping to change the way the sector is funded so that organisations are more capable of mainstreaming innovations in their work. Grant funding for innovative projects normally has an assumption that the innovation will succeed. However, many ground breaking innovations build on the experience of other less successful attempts. For example Skype has revolutionised NGO communications but a lot of development went into other systems like Crystal Voice, Microsoft Messenger, etc. The success of two or three will make up for the investment in a larger number. In addition the EU could start a debate among donors about how to support the capability of organisations to maintain systems and innovations between emergencies. As innovation implies taking risks, the WHS is a chance to change the paradigm on this question.

★ THE CONTRIBUTION OF NGOS

WV is contributing to the WHS through participation in global theme teams and contributing thinking into various processes. For example, WV is co-leading a piece of work with CAFOD and FAO for the Interagency Standing Committee to develop new thinking on funding models for the humanitarian sector (to learn more about this go to <http://futurehumanitarianfinancing.org/>). The Summit can open new perspectives at regional and global levels and NGOs bring tangible, practical field focused recommendations to the table. The role of local partners and southern civil society is critical as they should be at the forefront of changes to the system that supports their local management of hazards and disasters. Northern NGOs should play a complementary role with advocacy targeted to donors, governments and the private sector in their respective countries. National entities of large NGO federations also have an important role in making sure that these organizations reflect "southern" concerns in their engagement on the big issues facing the sector. We need to work together to ensure that the Summit reflects the needs of implementers and delivers a practical and game changing outcome for the whole sector.

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1. United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Strategic Plan 2014-2017.

Last Mile Mobile Solutions (LMMS) is a software system – developed by and for aid-workers – that enables staff to register people affected by disasters and better manage services offered to them.

"A lot of time used to be taken up with transforming report data into a computer back at the office. Using LMMS means we have more time to focus on results," a World Vision field monitor said. The tool is used by World Vision in eight countries in Africa as well as in Haiti and Pakistan.

The Early Warning for Early Action index is an intuitive and simple-to-use app that World Vision has been using across 14 countries in Africa. It gathers field data, summarises it into an index, makes projections six months in advance and automatically suggests management and programmatic actions.



SEX MATTERS: WHY GENDER IS KEY FOR HUMANITARIAN EFFECTIVENESS

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'A gender-sensitive approach saves lives.'

 The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) will be a seminal event that could have long term implications on how the humanitarian architecture is configured in the decade ahead as well as where investments are made globally for preparedness and response.

Discussions for the Summit are structured around four broad pillars, one of which is on how humanitarian needs of people affected by crises can be most effectively met.

The first question we should then ask ourselves is: *Whose needs are we aiming to meet ?* Conflicts and natural disasters are life-changing events. They impact differently on men, women, boys and girls, which implies that response has to be differentiated to answer to their particular needs. Indeed, as Feinstein's 2011 research demonstrated, without responding to gender needs, operations are simply less effective. While rhetorically there is support for attention to gender in humanitarian assistance, in practice many donors and other humanitarian actors are still working gender-blind. For 9 out of 10 top humanitarian donors in 2014, more than 50% of funding reported through UNOCHA's Financial Tracking Service was uncoded or unspecified in terms of how projects address genderⁱ. Even in DRC, where so much (media) attention has gone to the issue of gender-based violence, 54% of projects are gender blindⁱⁱ. This is unacceptable. If we truly want to be effective, and live up to the humanitarian principle of impartiality^{iv}, a gender-sensitive approach must feature through-out the thematic discussions at the Summit and, most importantly, as a key element of humanitarian response. The reason is simple: a gender-sensitive approach saves lives.

A useful tool to achieve real mainstreaming of gender in emergencies is a gender marker. CARE is piloting the use of an innovative gender marker in the Syria response and Mali, to ensure our activities take gender into account at every stage, but also contribute to gender equality. Preliminary results indicate that it is a valuable tool and can be applied through-out the project cycle, including in rapid on-set emergencies. CARE has also found that as important as the tool itself is the deployment of technical gender advisers, who can assist emergency staff in developing gender-sensitive programming. If

we are talking about innovation, why not for example consider a regional gender-adviser roster, consisting of local gender experts ready to be deployed in UN agencies and NGOs for humanitarian assistance and protection work ? Differential gender- and age needs have to be taken into account in situation analysis and to set up programmes, *from the start*, and local experts have the best knowledge of prevailing norms and sensitivities. This is not an 'add-on' which can wait until five months later, as by then the opportunity will have been missed to ensure for example that a refugee camp is set up in a way that services are safely accessible to women and girls, or that health services are capable of addressing the immediate needs of victims of gender-based violence. Involving affected populations, including women, in the planning and implementation of humanitarian responses is crucial, yet demands flexibility from both implementing agencies and donors to adapt projects as a result of consultations. Currently this level of flexibility is rarely guaranteed by donors.

At EU-level, recent steps have been taken to address the needs of women and girls in humanitarian programming. In 2013, ECHO developed a Staff Working Paper on Gender in Humanitarian Assistance, which led to the welcome adoption in early 2014 of the ECHO gender-age marker, a relatively loose tool that attempts to track gender and age-sensitive approaches throughout the project cycle. A number of European governments, led by the UK, have also made commitments at the Call to Action on Violence Against Women and Girls in Emergencies (November 2013) and the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict (June 2014). It is therefore our hope and expectation that at the WHS, the EU will take strong leadership on the issue of gender in emergencies, building on ECHO and other partners' work to promote the use of a comprehensive gender marker across the humanitarian sector and in general gender-sensitivity through-out the response as essential for humanitarian effectiveness and accountability.

But humanitarian effectiveness also implies strong accountability, not just to donors and taxpayers who tend to receive the bulk of political attention, but also to the people we are aiming to assist. Are we really delivering what

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‘In contexts of restrained humanitarian space such as in Syria or Somalia, effective partnerships with local NGOs can even be pivotal to reach the people in need.’

they need, in the way they want to receive it, so they can best recover from the crisis and improve their resilience and well-being ? How can we better improve cooperation with local authorities and local organisations – including women’s organisations – who are often the first ones to respond when a crisis hits ? Local partners have the most in-depth knowledge of the context, which is critical to take into account for an effective response. Their involvement is important, not only to build trust and community acceptance, but also to ensure ownership by affected communities and governments. In contexts of restrained humanitarian space such as in Syria or Somalia, effective partnerships with local NGOs can even be pivotal to reach the people in need. Particularly in those contexts but also elsewhere, it is essential to create a shared understanding of humanitarian principles and what constitutes an effective response (including professional standards, transparency on use of funds etc.). Therefore, trust-building with local authorities, as well as capacity building with communities, women and men, are key BEFORE a crisis hits. The question then remains whether such capacity building should be financed from humanitarian or development budget lines, which fits squarely into the discussions on resilience and Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD).

As one of the largest humanitarian NGOs working across the globe, CARE is seeking ways to be accountable ourselves, both in our operations, but also in the run up to the Summit. Rather than only talking about it in high level consultations, we should all seek to be accountable. For us, the process towards the Summit is thus as important as the outcome. Therefore we are seeking to ensure that local partners and affected communities, including women’s groups, have a meaningful say in the debate around the Summit by organising consultations and focus group discussions. Despite the WHS objective of bringing four major constituencies together (states, humanitarian organisations, associated partners and affected populations), our experience so far has been that discussions at regional consultations are rather dominated by states, missing an operational and gender-sensitive perspective, which NGOs could bring to the table. This is a lost opportunity to ensure

ownership of this process and build legitimacy for the eventual outcomes of the Summit, so we very much hope that the next regional consultation in Hungary will set this straight and allow for more civil society and affected community representatives, including women, to sit at the table. After all, we all committed in 2007 to the Principles of Partnership which aimed to put NGOs, Red Cross and UN agencies on an equal footing^v, and also in the Transformative Agenda, there is a commitment to work in partnership and strengthen individual and inter-agency capacity to respond more effectively to humanitarian crises.

We genuinely hope that the WHS will promote a shared understanding of the importance of gender-sensitive humanitarian operations to save lives, while finding a way to be much more inclusive of local actors and affected communities without paralyzing the system, and without losing basic principles that make humanitarian aid efficient. We look to the EU to play a leading role in ensuring that the action plan from the Summit reflects these key issues and the fact that sex matters in humanitarian response.

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i. Feinstein research on sex and age disaggregated data commissioned by OCHA and CARE
 ii. Development Initiatives. Funding gender in emergencies: What are the trends. Sept 2014
 iii. CARE International, Donor spending in emergencies 2013
 iv. 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.
 v. Christine Knudsen, UNICEF. Partnership in principle, partnership in practice. Humanitarian Exchange Magazine. April 2011.

CREATE SPACE FOR LOCAL ACTORS

THE ISSUE – TOWARDS THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT: AN INCLUSIVE PROCESS ?

The World Humanitarian Summit is seen as a unique opportunity to improve the collective approach to humanitarian aid. Through the various channels of consultations, humanitarian actors are offered a space to highlight what they consider is crucial to better address the needs of affected populations.

Through this article Oxfam Novib provides evidence of the need for the international community to re-think the way it works with local actors; an essential message to get through the thematic consultation on "Reducing risks and managing vulnerabilities".

'Local actors – government and civil society – work with vulnerable communities before, during and after crises.'

★ In order to reduce vulnerability and manage risks in a sustainable way, local actors need to take a leading role. However this requires international humanitarian actors to better recognise their role, to create equitable relations with each other and to leave them the space to take the lead.

★ NOT DESIGNED TO RECOGNIZE LOCAL CAPACITY

The international humanitarian community is not designed to systematically recognise the role of local actors and to adapt its response strategy to the knowledge, resources and assets already on the ground. The response to typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines is an example where we saw a large surge of incoming international organisations despite the relatively well prepared national and local capacity.

Various factors can explain this. The current humanitarian system puts "Projects" at the centre and does not have built-in incentives to invest in development of local capacity to manage disasters now and in the future. This promotes "Partnerships" only through short-term contractual engagements – local partners implement a project. "Capacity development" is often reduced to a set of trainings related to specific projects with little impact on the organisation's future capacity. The UN Cluster system – potentially connecting global to local – has not succeeded in being inclusive and forging equitable relations. The management of clusters is not easily adaptable to the variety of contexts and actually expects local actors to adapt to the international system (language, location of meetings, parallel structure to existing ones, etc.). This problem is now acknowledged and we see attempts to better engage with local actors - for example with the

creation of "baby-clusters" during the Haiti response, or regional coordination mechanisms in eastern DRC. These pilots, however, remain localised or organisation-specific and have so far not led to a structural revision of the Cluster approach to be more flexible to local response contexts and to promote recognition of local actors on the ground.

★ WHY IS THERE AN URGENT NEED TO ENCOURAGE A LEADING ROLE FOR LOCAL ACTORS ?

Local actors – government and civil society – work with vulnerable communities before, during and after crises. They have a deep understanding of the local context and have ongoing relations with communities and often accountability structures in place. Governments have primary responsibility for alleviating citizens' suffering – this sovereign duty should be supported. Local civil society organisations with the potential to be involved in disaster management and reducing vulnerability include not only local humanitarian NGOs but also think tanks, associations, research centres, human rights organisations, women organisations, etc. And not to be forgotten: first responders are always local!

There are also other drivers making this agenda urgent. We see more disasters than the current international humanitarian system can handle and this will probably continue in the near future. Discussions preparing the WHS will have to acknowledge this. So, what can international actors do to empower local actors to lead? International actors face challenges related to funding and insecurity – both limiting access of international actors to the affected populations. Highly internationalized responses (e.g. Tsunami, Haiti, Haiyan) face challenges to hand-

There is an increase in initiatives and literature on this topic which brings new perspectives and energy to it.¹ Initiatives often remain localised or agency specific and have yet to be translated into a common approach to empower local disaster management capacity sustainably.

A quote from 'Missed Opportunities': *"The vision expressed by many of those interviewed was for a humanitarian sector which is a more democratic, balanced and accountable endeavour, where capacities are fully considered as well as needs, and where emphasis is less on assistance and more on cooperation"* (p.26).

‘Highly internationalized responses (e.g. Tsunami, Haiti, Haiyan) face challenges to hand back to capable local actors to lead and manage, having missed the opportunity to systematically find, develop and invest in local capacity to lead.’

back to capable local actors to lead and manage, having missed the opportunity during the response to systematically find, develop and invest in local capacity to lead.

★ INTENTIONAL EFFORTS

Local NGOs in Myanmar accumulated experience in responding to disasters (Tsunami in 2004, cyclone Nargis in 2008). The initial eight weeks following the cyclone Nargis in Myanmar were entirely managed by local actors who did unexpectedly well. When access improved for the international community – much needed to meet the immense needs – a new situation was created with large INGOs, UN agencies and the related machinery coming in. The risk that local NGOs would be marginalised and instrumentalised was high and in the absence of efforts to address the risk, this finally happened.

Unless there is an intentional effort to develop equitable relations with existing local capacity and structures and to engage them in any new structures being set-up; this may happen again.

An intentional effort to support NGOs to stay on the ball implies supporting local NGOs to coordinate among themselves by facilitating the creation of specific and adapted mechanisms enabling elaboration of joint assessments and joint strategies. In Myanmar, permanent coordinating bodies such as the Joint Strategy Team (JST) for the Kachin and Northern Shan States humanitarian response provide direct support to local NGO response programmes while Oxfam has kept a critical eye on them, challenging the quality of their projects and actions. Investing in both strengthening the organisations as well as giving them the space to use their capacity is a prerequisite for them to take a leading role.

★ COLLECTIVE CAPACITY

In Somalia, as in many fragile states and insecure environment that are difficult to access, most international aid is delivered via local civil society partners. At the same time international actors have a massive presence and current practices do not create conditions for a more indigenous humanitarian fabric to take on responsibility for preparedness and response.

Oxfam is piloting a participatory methodology² geared to design milestones towards a leader-

ship role for local actors to manage low to medium scale crises with minimal international support. This starts with the creation of a profile of current collective capacity thanks to the analysis of the so-called “Humanitarian Country Capacity”. This analysis combines a snapshot of the current organizational capacity of local actors (government and civil society organisations) with an understanding of the environment they work in (society, state, politics, infrastructures).

An important next step is for stakeholders to reflect collectively on the country profile and together define milestones towards increased local capacity. Such a process creates space for local actors to develop a common agenda, to find opportunities for collaboration and possible areas of synergy or specialization. It also helps Oxfam to define what support can be most strategic to increase their strengths as well as create room for local actors to gradually assume their responsibilities.

★ LOCAL CAPACITY AT THE CENTRE

A way forward would put local capacity at the centre, and international systems would be tailored to support it. We need to find a way to better recognise the role of local actors and to create equitable relations with each other and to leave them the space to lead.

Shifting the center of disaster management from the international level to the national and local level will not only save time and money, it will put responsibility, decision making, and power in the hands of the actors that are closest to the people affected most by a disaster, conflict, or other major crisis. This transformational agenda requires a re-think of the role international actors can play to support their peers locally.

The World Humanitarian Summit is a great opportunity to explore ways forward in this direction. This is not only about debating what local actors need to know but also about what international actors need to change when they are looking at reducing vulnerability and managing disaster risks.

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1. Among others:
- Missed opportunities. The case for strengthening national and local partnership-based humanitarian responses, 2013.
- Funding at the sharp end. Investing in NGO response capacity. Investing in NGO response capacity”, 2013.
- Building the future of Humanitarian aid: Local capacity and partnerships in emergency assistance, 2012.
- Review of engagement of NGOs with the Humanitarian reform Process.
2. With pilots in Somalia and El Salvador.

WHS: AN OPPORTUNITY TO PUT RESPECT FOR HUMANITARIANS BACK AT THE HEART OF HUMANITARIAN AID ?

THE ISSUE – TOWARDS THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT: AN INCLUSIVE PROCESS ?

'2013 set a new record for violence against civilian aid operations, with 251 separate attacks affecting 460 aid workers.'

"...This principled approach is essential to the acceptance and ability of the EU, and humanitarian actors in general, to operate on the ground in often complex political and security contexts. The perception of the EU and its commitment to these fundamental principles in humanitarian action are linked to behavior and engagement on the ground of all EU actors."

paragraph 10 of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, 2008.

★ The Summit has identified three key issues in the theme "**Serving the Needs of People in Conflict**", namely the needs of people affected by conflicts, principles and standards of humanitarian action in armed conflicts and how should humanitarian aid in conflicts look in order to better meet the needs of people. To ACF, for the most vulnerable to access aid, upholding humanitarian principles and protecting humanitarian workers themselves seem particularly important.

★ HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES – HELPING HUMANITARIANS DO THEIR JOB MORE SAFELY

Considering the unprecedented scale of humanitarian crises, the necessity for humanitarians to operate in active conflicts or in volatile post-conflict environments is high. The immense needs of populations trapped in these regions require that despite the degraded global security environment, humanitarian personnel accesses and carries out life-saving activities in dangerous areas. This exposes them to threats whose nature and scale are exceptional.

The 'traditional' roles and responsibilities of parties to armed conflicts are increasingly being blurred. International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is little known if not deliberately ignored by some parties to conflicts, including non-state actors. 2013 set a new record for violence against civilian aid operations, with 251 separate attacks affecting 460 aid workers¹. In addition, third states' political and military agendas tend more and more to affect the action of many humanitarian actors.

Unfortunately, increasingly, armed groups deliberately target humanitarian workers or facilities, in total impunity. Safety and security of aid workers are therefore obvious yet essential preconditions for populations to receive the protection and support they deserve. The protection and respect of the humanitarian principles and of humanitarian personnel are essential for humanitarian action; this is why they should be the international community's top priority.

The observance of humanitarian principles is not a simple question of ethics or values detached from the reality of the population's needs. It is both a matter of professional duty and a practical necessity for humanitarian actors: they allow humanitarian NGOs to negotiate access to populations in need and to gain acceptance.

Little is done to ensure that the principles are understood, protected and upheld. The protection

of aid workers in particular, despite being a matter of life and death, is often overlooked and considered a simple security issue and dealt with at the level of individual organizations. Yet compliance with IHL, and more globally, respect for humanitarian action, is a collective responsibility; shared between parties to the conflict and the international community.

★ WHAT ACF HOPES FOR IN THE WHS ? – THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT

The WHS is a formidable opportunity for the often diverse interests and agendas within the humanitarian community to come together and set the importance of these principles in stone. But it should not remain an inward-looking process that cannot reach out to the multiple actors intervening in a conflict, who could deny their responsibility to protect the principles. The WHS is the chance to hold all actors, such as governments, third parties and donors to account on their responsibility to ensure that humanitarian principles and workers are protected.

The EU, as a donor with political influence and as a humanitarian actor, has an important responsibility to support aid workers. The WHS could be an opportunity for the EU to provide a unique regional contribution and promote its European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. This is a key policy that is based on and promotes the humanitarian principles.

Considering the rise of new donors who do not necessarily root their support in these standards and the current trend of politicisation of aid, the Consensus should not remain an institutional policy but rather be used as a guide to strongly hold Member States to account on implementation of the principles.

Equally, the WHS provides a unique platform to make NGOs' voices heard. ACF, as a humanitarian NGO providing aid to populations in areas of conflicts, to better serve the needs of vulnerable people affected by conflict, is committed to assessing all of its interventions against the humanitarian principles. ACF calls for the humanitarian community to strongly advocate for their respect and protection and will strive to make sure that the World Humanitarian Summit does too.

Pauline Chetcuti,
Humanitarian Advocacy Advisor
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1. Aid Worker Security Report 2014.

INTERVIEW WITH MS. FLORIKA FINK-HOOIJER, DIRECTOR, DG ECHO

A VIEW ON THE EU

*Ms. Florika Fink-Hooijer is DG ECHO's (the Commission's Department for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection), Director of 'Strategy, Policy and International Co-operation'.
<http://ec.europa.eu/echo/>*

What would you see as the main challenges for humanitarian assistance today ? What are ECHO and the EU doing to address them ?

Humanitarian needs have reached unprecedented levels while funds are shrinking. Protracted crises become the rule with a shift to urban displacement. More than ever, conflicts are placing civilian and aid worker lives at risk, making better protection an imperative. The international response reveals serious system architecture flaws in responding to multiple parallel complex emergencies of major scale. We also see a lack of efficient early warning or early mobilisation tools, and coordination is not always timely and effective.

These shortcomings are not new and ECHO will continue to support the Transformative Agenda to help strengthen leadership, coordination, accountability, responsibility and partnership in humanitarian action. These are still the key bottlenecks for me even though the "normative" issues have been addressed. Capacity building with partners will shift more to innovation solutions and promotion of models for better accountability to beneficiaries. Protection and more consistent high-quality response in protracted and "forgotten" crises are further key objectives. ECHO remains a strong advocate for the respect of humanitarian principles and International Humanitarian Law (IHL), which are an operational access necessity. In our Ebola response we are currently testing new promising synergies and coordination models with the Civil Protection community as we did with the military in the Central African Republic (CAR).

The EU has a strong policy framework for its humanitarian aid but concerns are repeatedly expressed on the gaps between policy and practice. What are the challenges and opportunities you see in this area ?

Over the last two years I have been systematically investing with my team in narrowing the gap via an operationalization of policies with the introduction of markers (the Gender and Age Marker as well as the novel Resilience Marker), Key Result Indicators or concrete tools that are built into ECHO project cycle management in order to integrate policy and quality considerations into project design and implementation. In 2015, we focus on improving feedback loops and strengthening accountability to beneficiaries. Since this year we also have several new all ECHO (including field) policy WGs in place

such as on the WHS, IHL, Displacement and Migration.

It is more relevant than ever to underpin operational action and funding decisions by evidence and to ensure coherence and complementarity of our approaches. ECHO has been a driver for improvements in needs and risk assessment, analysis and rollout of technical models and tools, such as the Index for Risk Management (INFORM). It is the first global, objective and transparent tool for understanding the risk of humanitarian crises and disasters and enabling risk-informed programming. ECHO will use INFORM as of 2015 and advocate for a global uptake by both donors and our partners.

What are your main priorities for 2015 ? What role do you see for ECHO partners in defining and addressing your priorities ?

The World Humanitarian Summit European consultation in Budapest on 3-4 February 2015 will be a unique one in gathering mainly donors and implementers. I hope it will set the tone for real game-changing steps towards a more efficient architecture and delivery. The voice of donors and of the (European) NGO community has to be heard. This is also an excellent opportunity to share knowledge and best practices. I hope that at this year's ECHO Partners Conference our implementing partners will help us identify common priority issues to be pushed for together, notably regarding the system's architecture.

We will follow-up on the evaluation of the implementation of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. On sector policies, ECHO will work on further bridging the humanitarian and development divide in responding to protracted displacement, on updating our shelter and protection guidelines and further exploring synergies between humanitarian aid and civil protection.

Another key priority is the post-Hyogo Framework for Action, and we are actively engaged in the negotiation process shaping the post-2015 framework. Also we shall have again a major CP Forum in May 2015.

Last but not least, in 2015 I will have the honour to be chairing the Food Assistance Convention which gives us an important platform to advocate for cash and vouchers, multipurpose cash cards and gender and resilience specific responses in food assistance.

NGOs RESPONDING TO EBOLA – THREE APPROACHES

FIELD FOCUS

International Medical Corps, Médicos del Mundo and Welthungerhilfe, three VOICE members, give us their perspectives on the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD). These three views of the damaging effects of the epidemic, highlight the complexity in responding; the extraordinary work delivered by the affected populations and the whole humanitarian community, but also the important challenges ahead in the coming weeks and months.

‘It is the people of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia; the nurses, grave diggers, ambulance drivers and disinfectant sprayers who are starting to win the fight against Ebola.’

i. The First Responders Campaign is a collaboration between IMC and the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department to raise awareness and understanding around the extraordinary actions of ordinary people during times of crisis.

★ “Looking out over the peninsula from the balcony of my hotel, I see the street children below me rummaging through the dustbins looking for something to eat. I recognise Irene, a 9 year old who has been sleeping in the doorway of a shop across the street and recently lost both her parents to a horrifying death. She is now homeless; abandoned by her aunt and uncle who are scared to let her under their roof because they fear they will catch the same disease that killed her parents.

Sierra Leoneans are some of the warmest, most compassionate people I have met in my 25 years working overseas in international disaster response. But they are scared and feel helpless in the face of a silent killer they don’t understand and are only just beginning to learn how to combat.

Irene’s mother caught what many people call ‘the virus’, working as a nurse in one of the government run hospitals set up to care for Ebola patients. The health workers had little awareness of how Ebola was contracted or protective equipment to shield them. So with the compassion and dedication of any professional nurse, she tended to the sick patients in her care, cleaning up the blood, vomit and diarrhoea with the few tools she had to protect herself.

Ebola is spread by direct contact with an infected person’s body fluids, it cannot be caught simply by being in close proximity to an infected person, nor can it be transmitted through the air despite what some news agencies are reporting. There is no vaccine to prevent it and no drug to cure it.

Irene’s father died three weeks ago, having contracted the virus working in one of the few burial teams created since the outbreak. Burying the deceased is one of the highest risk activities due to the direct contact with an infected person and the body fluids that emanate from the corpse. He received some training, was given some gloves and boots to wear, but it was clearly not enough to protect him. Each day, Irene goes to the government office to claim the pay her father was owed, but with no result.

You rarely hear about the brave people like Irene’s parents who gave their lives in the fight against Ebola in West Africa. International Medical Corps are recruiting doctors and nurses from across Europe to come and work in our Ebola Treatment Units. Their role will be invaluable. Yet a 50 bed ETU requires a team of up to 200 people to operate safely and effectively and local people on the ground make up the vast majority of those First Respondersⁱ. It is the people of Sierra Leone,

Guinea and Liberia; the nurses, grave diggers, ambulance drivers and disinfectant sprayers who are starting to win the fight against Ebola.

We will not face the same crisis in Europe, probably only a few isolated cases. Every credible scientific and medical agency asserts that Ebola will not cause an epidemic in western countries. We are blessed with the knowledge, resources and capability to keep it well under control and defeat it quickly should it reach our shores.

The problem is in West Africa not at home. Donors including DFID, Irish Aid, USAID and the European Commission understand that fact, which is why they are investing now in expanding the number of facilities to treat Ebola patients. By focussing our efforts on defeating the virus here in West Africa, to help children like Irene, we will save innocent lives, alleviate suffering, and protect ourselves in Europe as well.”

Andy Gleadle

**Director of Programme Performance and Development
International Medical Corps**

★ The international community has taken time to realize that we are facing a major public health humanitarian crisis. In spite of the warnings, and compared with previous Ebola epidemics, the scale of the current outbreak is unprecedented. Its spread in a region with high mobility across borders, in both densely populated areas and remote villages, has taken us so much by surprise that classic outbreak control efforts are no longer sufficient. There is a need for a comprehensive approach that includes caring for patients, isolating infectious cases, safe burials, tracing contacts and health promotion, but no one can assume all these components and for the first time the military are engaging in epidemic control.

For MdM Spain, like the majority of INGOs not used to dealing with EVD, there have been internal debates: how to better address the humanitarian consequences of the outbreak ? What can we take on ? How to tackle the outbreak control and bring down the risk of infection ? How to deal with the exacerbated social tension, fear and mistrust among the population ?

MdM Spain has committed itself to the strengthening of surveillance, case management and contact tracing capacity of the district health management teams, as well as IPC (Infection and Prevention Control) training for health personnel at Peripherals Health Units in Sierra Leone where we’ve been working since 2003. Furthermore we are dealing with social mobilization and health education in order to strengthen cultural and

FIELD FOCUS

‘The epidemic slows down economic growth, jeopardizes local food production, threatens people’s food security and ultimately compromises social stability.’

gender-sensitive outreach. In order to improve public acceptance of national health care services, it is important to establish a link with social structures, community leaders and traditional healers, searching for ways to create a positive atmosphere of collaboration with the public health system. Local organizations have an under-used potential to beat Ebola and we must rethink how to control the outbreak.

Obviously the risk of infection of health workers is a big concern: the hidden danger lies in patients whose status is not known. Protocols are to be strictly followed. For front-line health workers not only Personal Protection Equipment is needed, but the Ministry of Health needs to provide incentives to encourage them to remain in EVD affected areas.

How to minimize rumours, how to channel and deliver the right information taking into account the high illiteracy rate, and how to handle complaints effectively? These are some of our daily challenges. The health system is at the brink of collapse and it is likely to weaken further as the epidemic continues. Induced mortality due to disrupted services is extremely worrying. We cannot underestimate the issue and we can only ask for more long-term efforts.

Luca Beltrame
Humanitarian Unit Coordinator
Médicos del Mundo Spain

 The Ebola outbreak in West Africa is not only a medical nightmare but holds long term consequences for the affected countries. The epidemic slows down economic growth, jeopardizes local food production, threatens people’s food security and ultimately compromises social stability. As investors defer capital spending and foreign enterprises scale down operations, Sierra Leone is increasingly isolated from international markets. Public measures to contain the epidemic impair trade and commerce, so employment opportunities dwindle and whole families lose their source of income.

The outbreak restrains smallholders from farming. As government and most international NGOs direct all resources towards the fight against Ebola, the farmers’ support network has collapsed. Increasing fatalities, strict government regulations and quarantine measures result in agricultural labour shortages. Many markets have been closed and trade flows broken down due to travel restrictions. Trading restrictions, speculation and supply shortages have triggered price increases. Falling yields, income slumps and inflation threaten

the food security of many families. As 7000 schools have closed, many students have lost access to free school meals. Growing unemployment, the decay of social cohesion, the collapse of public service delivery, as well as increasing hunger and growing poverty increase the risk of social disruption.

In Sierra Leone, Welthungerhilfe has been committed to the fight against Ebola from the very beginning. While international support primarily focuses on the treatment of the sick, Welthungerhilfe engages in capacity building of nine district Task Forces of the Ebola Outbreak Committee. By providing adequate support to quarantined households, we facilitate the government efforts to isolate suspected Ebola cases. We have supplied 2000 quarantined families who had been in contact with the Ebola virus. This makes a fundamental contribution to the containment of the disease: without the supply of food, avoiding the movement of EVD contact persons would be impossible.

Welthungerhilfe also conducts regular disease impact assessments and provides logistical and administrative support to the Ebola District Task Forces in order to strengthen the authorities’ response capacity. Exchange of best practice examples are facilitated between the different district protagonists. To mitigate the impacts of the Ebola crises in the food security sector, Welthungerhilfe supports revitalization of local agriculture markets by promoting community agriculture enterprises, the harvest period and the establishment of community seed banks.

Containing the crisis requires a sound policy response which goes beyond the mere treatment of the sick:

- While non-essential government restrictions have to be lifted to ease agricultural labour shortages, tailor-made support programs are needed to stimulate smallholder crop production.
- Humanitarian organisations must facilitate the government’s containment measures by minimizing the negative impacts of the restrictions for the population and by promoting acceptance.
- Governments must guarantee the delivery of essential public services and establish a conducive business environment by bolstering trade and stimulating investments in order to maintain and create jobs.

Jochen Moninger Country Director
and **Daniel Scholler, Junior Advisor,**
Welthungerhilfe Sierra Leone

HUMANITARIAN ISSUES AT EU LEVEL

VOICE AT WORK

✧ Humanitarian funding: the importance of predictability and timeliness

Since DG ECHO's announcement in January of its serious funding shortfall (€400 million), the principled and needs basis of humanitarian aid as well as its short funding cycle, requiring the quick disbursement of funding, has been persistently raised with the national governments and the EU institutions. Despite the broader problem of payments within the overall EU budget, the Commission has put forward proposals to solve the current shortfall for humanitarian aid. It falls to the Member States and the European Parliament to agree any additional funding for 2014 and the 2015 budget.

VOICE members at national level have been advocating widely with contacts with their Finance and Foreign Ministries, as well as with the European Parliament, for the need for timely and predictable humanitarian funding. Our focus has been on resolving the situation in the short-term through additional funding in the 2014 EU budget, a balanced 2015 budget and raising awareness on the importance of the Emergency Aid Reserve as a special tool in the event of unexpected big crises. Interlocutors have often been unaware of and impressed by how humanitarian funding is spent. However, looking ahead, a structural solution may need to be found to avoid similar shortfalls. VOICE will continue to follow this issue.

✧ Disaster Risk Reduction in the post-2015 frameworks

2015 will be an important year for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), as the new Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) as well as the post-2015 Development Framework will be adopted. VOICE members have been actively involved in these processes seeking to ensure clear linkages between the two. Many of them have provided comments on the drafts of the post-2015 DRR framework. So far concerns mainly focus on accountability and the need to engage with local partners and build local capacity. The VOICE DRR Working Group will share NGO responses with EU decision makers and Member States before their representatives meet in Sendai next year.

✧ Humanitarian Roundtable in Italy

Under the Italian EU Presidency and hosted in the Foreign Ministry in Rome, VOICE together with Link 2007 organised a roundtable which brought together the VOICE Board and NGOs active in humanitarian aid from Italy with other relevant actors. The Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Mr. Pistelli gave a keynote introduction, sharing his perspective on the key current humanitarian challenges. This event, which was attended by 119 people, contributed to discussions on some of the most pertinent humanitarian topics currently under debate in the EU: the scale of humanitarian challenges for 2014/2015, collaboration between operational actors including where civil protection fits in, and resourcing humanitarian action. This was also a good opportunity to examine links between EU and national realities of humanitarian policy and practice.

✧ News from members

Many VOICE members contributed to the report '[From Crisis to Catastrophe: South Sudan's man-made crisis – and how the world must act now to prevent catastrophe in 2015](#)' warning of famine next year as upsurge in fighting is imminent.

VOICE members have also been alerting the international community about Somalia '[Risk of relapse](#)'.

NRC published a report '[Closing the needs-based funding gap](#)' to understand the funding landscape and how it can be adapted to better assist populations affected by conflicts and natural disasters, including by strengthening the contributions of NGOs.

The [Global Hunger Index 2014](#) was launched by Concern, ACTED and Welthungerhilfe in the European Parliament. This year it focuses on 'hidden hunger' or micronutrient deficiency which affects some 2 billion people worldwide.



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VOICE out loud

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