

In this edition of the VOICE out loud we have asked our members to share their experiences from working in the Lake Chad Basin.

Their stories show how crises can become protracted and complex, with the effects of climate change layering with underdevelopment and conflicts, all feeding off each other, and contributing to hunger and the need for assistance and protection.

The Lake Chad basin is a perfect example of the relevance of the Agenda for Humanity commitments, linking development and humanitarian assistance, focusing on protection and inclusion, resilience and DRR, and underscores the need for continued funding and attention to forgotten crises.

This edition of the VOICE out loud starts with Acción contra el Hambre writing about the issue of access to conflict affected areas for humanitarian workers and continues with ACTED exploring new approaches to linking emergency and development in long-term crises.

Concern Worldwide explains why it's important in protracted crises to increase the support to Disaster risk reduction programmes and resilience building while COOPI focuses on education in emergency as a tool to protect lives. Danish Refugee Council analyses the case of Niger and the difficulties that humanitarians face to ensure a sustainable impact.

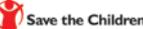
In the View on the EU, we were happy to interview Mr. René van Nes, from the European External Action Service, who explains the EU Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises and how it aims to strengthen the cooperation of all actors involved in a crisis.



VOICE

VOICE stands for 'Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies'. VOICE is a network of 84 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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EDITORIAL

Nicolas Borsinger, VOICE President page 5

THE ISSUE

HAVE WE FORGOTTEN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN?

Hunger and conflict at Lake Chad Basin
Mamadou Diop, Acción Contra el Hambre page 6

Breaking the cycle of vulnerability in the Lake Chad Basin
Alexander Carnwath, Concern Worldwide..... page 7

The humanitarian-development nexus and the New Way of Working:
How to put these concepts into practice
Niger office, ACTED page 8

Education in emergency protects lives
Isabella Samà, COOPI – Cooperazione Internazionale..... page 10

Niger: the challenge to ensure sustainable impact
through humanitarian actions
Corita Tassi, Danish Refugee Council page 12

VIEWS ON THE EU

Interview with Mr. René van Nes, Deputy Head Of Division
of PRISM at European External Action Service page 13

VOICE AT WORK

..... page 15



FROM THE VOICE PRESIDENT

The VOICE President's mandate is coming to an end. We gave Nicolas Borsinger carte blanche to share some reflections on what he sees as the most burning humanitarian issue of the moment.

Wrapping up six years as VOICE president is this "VOICE Out Loud" editorial's order of the day. So much to say, so limited space, how does one transform a marathon into a 100 meters' sprint? Sticking to a single subject it will have to be.

My tenure started with the flames of the Syrian conflict already spreading and finishes with them still raging. Many generations of humanitarians can say the same thing of the successive (quasi uninterrupted) conflicts in Afghanistan. But it is the magnitude of devastation, displacement and cynicism which is so breath taking about Syria. On the latter, so often have we been so many to believe that new heights could not be attained and always have we been proven wrong. Ghouta developments these last weeks both in the field and the Security Council yet again prove the point and establish once more a new record of cynicism.

The pursuit of humanitarian goals is a small dimension of world affairs, its importance precisely deriving from the need to limit devastation due to the collapse of normal public services. But, ever increasing cynicism can only be defeated from different positions with other tools.

The combination of individual commitment, creative use of new technologies and economic models has proven its ability to put pressure on political systems and decision-making. More intensely than ever since several decades, a collective outcry is required for a dysfunctional Security Council to stop being the norm of conflict management and broader geopolitics. Boycotts of sporting events, crowdfunding initiatives, innovative partnerships between celebrities and organisations like NGOs, have in the past half century proven their formidable power.

Given that we have collectively failed (political leaders first, but also diplomats, private sector decision makers, humanitarians, human rights actors etc.) to call the Security Council to account, hope can only come from unexpected quarters. As in many collective disasters throughout history, will a handful of courageous outsiders show the course? 2018 is again a year when a sporting contest, the football World Cup, is the paramount event of world affairs. On the world stage, nothing is more so obviously political than being a Security Council Permanent Member (SCPM). Their determination to host any world event such as the World Cup is thus intrinsically political. Which of course will not prevent them from lashing out at any attempt by civil society to resist abuse of SCPM power, through symbolic gestures, as "politicising a sporting event". This charade is so gross that time has come to answer "If so, only after you have so consistently paved the path for so long". SCPM cynicism around bloodbaths having so recently reached new stratospheric altitudes, has not the time come to loudly signal that no Security Council Permanent Member deserves to host any planet level event of such symbolic dimension?

As disgust for the Ghouta still throbs and June 2018 looms, the last hope on the horizon to save our collective dignity is for at least one team of twenty-year olds to shame us into action by refusing to happily masquerade on SCPM football pitches. They would be certain to at least make world headlines ("never has the dignity of so many been saved by so few in such a peaceful way"?) to an extent that hardly any other score can. Since they need to be made aware and encouraged, it is up to us private citizens and civil society to find ways for them not to face alone the consequences of becoming beacons in a very dark night.

Very open questions in a very tight schedule, but may these lines induce many practical proposals.

Time now to close with expressions of deep gratitude.

None of the achievements during my tenure would have been possible without the commitment on the ground of the VOICE members and in particular the outstanding engagement of my fellow board members over the years. I treasure our exchanges – formal and informal – and will fondly remember them. I wish the network every success as I pass the baton onto a successor. Given the failures, in Syria, in Lake Chad, etc. that drive this network's work, I strongly believe that the human rights, peace building and humanitarian sectors of civil society must convince themselves that addressing Security Council dysfunctional paralysis needs now to figure high on their agendas and that they need to gather actively around this issue and be perceived as doing so.

Expressing here my deepest gratitude for the trust and support received from so many over these six years, may my warmest wishes of success to all be fulfilled.

Nicolas Borsinger
VOICE President

HUNGER AND CONFLICT IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN

THE ISSUE – HAVE WE FORGOTTEN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN?



Nigeria- Guy Calaf, Action Against Hunger

‘We, humanitarians, need to access remote and rural areas for our needs assessments, not relying only on security information from military forces and allowing for principled humanitarian action.’

Despite the harvest of 2017 and the scaled-up deployment of the humanitarian response that halved the number of people at crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity (from 7.1 to 3.2 million people in Nigeria¹), the Lake Chad crisis remains a textbook example of how conflict and hunger are closely linked. Today, 10.7 million people are in need across the region and 5.8 million people are severely food insecure². Beyond the massive numbers of children, women and men displaced by the conflict, markets have been disrupted, so have new crops, fisheries and cattle gathering, while basic services in the area are more fragile than ever.

The violence triggered in 2009 by Boko Haram is still far from an end. Combined with the fatigue of donors and the international community who were keen to prioritise emergency responses, it is posing a major challenge for humanitarian actors in terms of direct access to victims and provision of adequate assistance, with risks of this turning into (yet another) forgotten African crisis.

Action Against Hunger teams, present in Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon, cite three key ways of tackling the links between hunger and conflict in the region:

1. Access to areas affected by the conflict and respect of the humanitarian mandate.

In Nigeria, 930 000 individuals remain without any assistance. While in Niger access has not been compromised except for short periods following occasional attacks, in Cameroon, humanitarian activity was prevented due to the military activities against Boko Haram, even if these measures were lifted in January 2018 following the advocacy efforts of the humanitarian community. In Chad, our main concern is related to the delays in delivery of humanitarian visas, extended for increasingly short periods (up to three months, as opposed to the typical duration in the past of one year).

It is crucial that dialogue between humanitarian and military actors is improved. We, humanitarians, need to access remote and rural areas for our needs assessments, not relying only on security information from military forces and allowing for principled humanitarian action. Particularly in Borno state, it is also key to work with local authorities in order to increase the acceptance of INGOs. Acceptance of the population remains at the core of our security policies.

2. Effective multisector Early Warning Systems.

The current ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States)/Sahelian Regional EWS provides a framework for consensual analysis

of acute food insecurity and nutrition situations (*Cadre Harmonisé* - PREGEC³ cycle). It is based on analysis of the Food Security and Nutrition outcome indicators and their relevant contributing factors. It helps to identify populations in need of food assistance or livelihoods support, and to produce clear recommendations for decision makers. The CH analysis and results have a high impact on the lean season response (design, fundraising, resource mobilisation, type, size, coverage, etc.) in Sahel and West Africa. Taking this into account and results on, it is essential for all stakeholders to continue to strengthen and ensure the quality, neutrality, transparency and inclusiveness of the analysis process. This helps ensure (i) the findings better reflect the field situation in terms of an appropriate estimation of the needs; and (ii) a broad consensus amongst stakeholders on the assessment of the situation of food and nutrition insecurity (context, causes, magnitude/severity, responses, etc.) is strengthened at all levels. Maintaining investment in independent integrated multisector surveillance systems, and investing more in learning about communities working with a range of technologies and platforms (e.g. GIS/ODK, SMS surveys, Sigsahel.info) is also crucial for effective early warning.

3. Effectiveness of the whole response system needs flexibility, partnership, coordination, independence, improvement of risk-specific contingency planning at all levels and a link to development.

Even if basic needs remain largely uncovered, funding is not the only obstacle. In 2017, about 62% of the humanitarian appeal (912 million dollars) was covered (reaching up to 71% in Nigeria) but, without approaching structural problems, it will be very difficult for the humanitarian crisis to be solved. Hunger caused by violence perpetrated by Boko Haram risks becoming a source of new conflicts. The regional project RESILAC “Lake Chad Inclusive Economic and Social Recovery”, funded by, among others, the European Union, combines both a humanitarian and a development approach. This four-year project aims to contribute to strengthening the economic and social resilience of the territories concerned in a complementary manner. Continuing to build on the emergency-development-peace nexus will be crucial

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1. *Cadre Harmonisé (CH) figures (March 2017 vs March 2018).*

2. *2018 Humanitarian Requirement Overview, Lake Chad Basin Emergency, OCHA February 2018.*

3. *Regional system for the prevention and management of food crises.*

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF VULNERABILITY IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN

THE ISSUE – HAVE WE FORGOTTEN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN?

Implementing DRR in conflict-affected regions is a longstanding blind spot for global donors'

Why the EU's response to the current crisis must tackle long term problems as well as emergency needs

 The catalyst for the current Lake Chad Basin food crisis is the conflict in north-eastern Nigeria, which has spilled across borders into Cameroon, Niger and Chad. But the roots of the crisis go much deeper.

For decades, large parts of the Lake Chad Basin, as well as the broader Sahel region, have existed in a state of vulnerability. The combined impacts of climate change, inequality, weak and unaccountable governance have created a situation of entrenched poverty and underlying fragility for millions.

This has been exacerbated by the legacy of four consecutive food and nutrition crises in 2005, 2008, 2010 and 2012, each of which has eroded the assets of people at community and household level and made it more difficult for them to cope.

So how best to respond to an urgent humanitarian crisis in a region blighted by decades of vulnerability? The emergency needs of affected people are of course the immediate priority. But it is also crucial that the response to the Lake Chad Basin addresses the longer term context of need that threatens to return people to a state of crisis over and over again.

In terms of the current humanitarian response, a key element in integrating longer term perspectives will be to tackle the livelihoods crisis that has arisen from the conflict and displacement. Many people's prospects of recovery depend in large part on their ability to restart their livelihoods, or where this is not possible, to find alternative work which will help them meet their basic needs. Measures such as cash for work programming can help displaced people and host communities build up the assets which can help them withstand this and future crises.

National governments also have an important role to play in supporting livelihoods. As part of the regional discussion on stabilisation, it is crucial that governments recognise and address the impact of security restrictions on people trying to work their way out of the crisis.

These restrictions have had a huge impact on the already fragile communities' economic life: access to fields, markets, and Lake Chad, remains limited and there has been a freeze on inter-regional trade movements.

The stabilisation agenda must also not be used to divert much needed funding away from humanitarian and development activity into addressing security issues. While security and stability are crucial to the region's prospects of moving out of crisis, focusing limited resources

in these areas means abandoning those worst affected by the disaster and building stability on the shakiest of foundations.

As for the longer term approach, the EU is among a number of donors supporting disaster risk reduction and resilience-building¹ as a way of breaking the cycle of repeated emergencies in crisis-prone regions. But in order to achieve this in regions such as the Lake Chad Basin where natural disasters and conflict intersect, there must be greater institutional support for DRR and resilience programming in fragile contexts.

Implementing DRR in conflict-affected regions is a longstanding blind spot for global donors - for every \$100 spent on response in fragile states, only \$1.30 was spent on DRR between 2005 and 2010² - and conflict is also absent from key policy frameworks such as the Sendai Framework on DRR.

Increased discussion around the humanitarian-development nexus, meanwhile, provides an opportunity for a greater recognition of how to build resilience and blend support for short term and long term needs.

Consideration of this issue was central to the EC's recent Sahel Technical Roundtable and previously the EC has welcomed cooperation between humanitarian and development actors, stressing 'the importance of investing in prevention and addressing the underlying root causes of vulnerability, fragility and conflict while simultaneously meeting humanitarian needs and strengthening resilience, thus reducing risks³.'

The New Way of Working also articulates and gives impetus to a collective ambition to frame humanitarian and development activity to reduce risk and vulnerability.

In terms of funding, achieving this will require donors and governments to allocate long term, predictable and flexible funding to maintain links between humanitarian and development efforts, without privileging one at the expense of the other.

More broadly, with 5.8 million people across the Lake Chad Basin projected to face severe food insecurity in the upcoming lean season, it is clear just how urgent it is to make progress on this ambition. Unless we do so, both the current crisis, and long-term vulnerability in the region, will continue to deepen.

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1. Joint Communication on A Strategic Approach to Resilience in the EU's External Action (2017).
2. When conflicts and disasters collide: facts and figures. Peters, B. and Budimir, M. (2016).
3. Council Conclusions on Operationalising the Humanitarian-Development Nexus of 19 May 2017.

THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS AND THE NEW WAY OF WORKING: HOW TO PUT THESE CONCEPTS INTO PRACTICE – THE EXAMPLE OF NIGER

THE ISSUE – HAVE WE FORGOTTEN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN?

Linking emergency to development: Towards new approaches

‘It is necessary to adapt these humanitarian programmes into multi-year plans, linking emergency (usually short-term projects) and development (which are designed over longer timeframes).’

Niger faces many challenges: structural crises, such as chronic food insecurity, are combined with security crises such as the conflict in northern Mali or the crisis in the Lake Chad region, resulting in major population movements and affecting assistance provision. The need for resilience programs, to address the root causes of instability, vulnerability, exclusion and conflict, is one of the main challenges in the country. In order to face this challenge, new common practices and agendas are being developed together by humanitarian and development actors as part of the New Way of Working (NWoW¹) and the humanitarian-development nexus². Beyond fostering collaborations and common solutions between humanitarian and development actors, such initiatives also aim at integrating national and local authorities in the discussion and decision making process.

The objective of such approaches is to adapt the tools of humanitarian and development communities to make them work together in the same direction, ensuring a more sustainable positive impact on the beneficiary populations targeted by the assistance. Indeed, emergency programmes implemented for several years in the context of structural crises, such as in Niger, particularly in the Diffa region, have not been able to put an end to local vulnerability or to resolve recurrent crises. This situation exceeds the capacity of stakeholders to respond: humanitarian aid calls now last for an average of 7 years, and 89% of humanitarian funding goes to crises lasting more than 3 years³. It is necessary to adapt these humanitarian programmes into multi-year plans, linking emergency (usually short-term projects) and development (which are designed over longer timeframes). In addition, the analysis of local situations, needs and vulnerabilities will be enriched by collaboration between development and emergency actors, who use different prisms. With the increase of protracted crises, humanitarian aid must address the root causes in order to elaborate exit strategies, while development programs have to work on initial programs mitigating the consequences of the said crisis. It is necessary to change practices, and strengthen collaborations between all the actors involved in the response, in order to gain efficiency, to allow the affected populations to escape from their dependence

on humanitarian aid, and to access more sustainable development possibilities. However, the implementation of such a nexus comes with several challenges. First, the success of this new approach is based on an effective partnership between actors who have different objectives. The complementarity of programs must be at the heart of this new planning, as well as the definition of clear, limited and realistic common strategic objectives. Second, these new processes, based on new multi-annual approaches, may also slow down the “classic” humanitarian response - life-saving responses should not be forgotten or even weakened by this new agenda; and this approach should not be limited to a transfer of resources from humanitarian to development or vice versa. Third, this approach also has to be holistic in terms of the participation and coordination of stakeholders, and comprehensive in the data provided to elaborate the response.

In Niger, the implementation of this New Way of Working will first focus on identifying key actors and relevant coordination mechanisms as well as priority areas. After a review of the humanitarian data and a further review of existing development studies and approaches, 3 to 5 common results are to be jointly identified in 2018 and integrated into the relevant national plans, in order to streamline the strategy and the expected outcomes. Then, a tripartite coordination structure involving humanitarian, development and government actors will be set up to ensure the follow-up of these results.



Diffa Region, ACTED

1. *New Way of Working (NWoW)* is led by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

2. *Council Conclusions on Operationalising the Humanitarian-Development Nexus of 19 May 2017.*

3. *“After the World Humanitarian Summit: Better Humanitarian-Development Cooperation for Sustainable Results on the Ground,”* supported by the Center on International Cooperation, June 2016, page 2.

THE ISSUE – HAVE WE FORGOTTEN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN?

In 2018, a new EU TFs (Trust Funds)-funded program, to be implemented in the Diffa region of Niger by a consortium of NGOs led by ACTED, is a pilot approach as per the implementation of the nexus. The chosen strategy is based on a holistic, multi-annual and multi-sectorial approach that will act on the root causes of vulnerability for 42,000 people. A comprehensive set of activities should allow beneficiaries, mainly displaced households or refugees but also vulnerable host communities, to settle permanently with their families in the area and to access better living conditions in the long term. This will be achieved through development of economic, agricultural and livestock activities, building of basic socio-community infrastructures, implementation

of community-based activities to encourage peaceful coexistence and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

If the project developed is based on a resilience approach, it will be implemented in complementarity with the emergency programs currently carried out in the Diffa region. The implementation of activities will take into account the different realities at “Commune⁴” level, in order to be able to shift smoothly from humanitarian activities to resilience ones. In addition, the activities proposed under this project are based on the involvement of local institutional actors and municipal and traditional authorities, in order to ensure the sustainability of the action.

The AGORA initiative implemented by ACTED and its partner IMPACT in Niger aims to support local authorities in aligning regional and municipal development plans with the humanitarian response while creating support structures that accompany local authorities' sustainable local development efforts. AGORA was founded in 2016 in order to provide a predictable capacity to localize aid action in contexts of crisis through settlement-based processes and tools. In Niger, AGORA aims to improve local governance in integrating emergency issues related to IDPs and refugees into Communal and Regional Development Plans, so that they better reflect the evolution of the Nigerian context and thus be more effective and adapted to local realities, while fine-tuning the aid response to beneficiaries through area-based assessments and programming.

Niger Office

ACTED

www.acted.org/en

4. The name of the Nigerian administrative subdivision. A Commune is a grouping of several villages, a specific territorial division, led by a mayor.

EDUCATION IN EMERGENCY PROTECTS LIVES

THE ISSUE – HAVE WE FORGOTTEN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN?

‘It helps them to regain a sense of normality and security in their ordinary life, makes them self-sufficient, and makes them feel cared for and understood. It is the best way to invest in their future in the long-term.’



Niger-Simone Durante, COOPI

★ In the Lake Chad Region, 17 million people are suffering one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world. The region currently contains 2.3 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), 200,000 refugees, and more than 3 million vulnerable out of school children.

★ THE REGIONAL RESPONSE

Since 2014, COOPI has been implementing a humanitarian response in the Lake Chad Basin through coordinated interventions in the four countries that border the lake: Niger, Chad, Nigeria and Cameroon. A regional and multi-sectoral approach has been adopted, facilitating the analysis of the crisis as a whole and the monitoring of its trends in order to rapidly respond to emerging needs.

COOPI covers a huge number of activities ranging from emergency interventions to development projects. The main objective is to immediately meet the needs of the affected populations and, at the same time, create a basis for resilience and for a gradual return to normality. The pillars of COOPI's multiannual intervention are food security, nutrition, protection and education. The intervention has been articulated according to the needs in the field and has given support to more than 300,000 people. This achievement has been possible thanks to the contribution of DG ECHO (Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Operations of the European Commission), AICS (Italian Agency for Development Cooperation), USAID/OFDA (Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance) and UN Agencies.

★ EDUCATION COMES FIRST: WHY?

“My son should go to school. This is the only way he can understand what's really happening as well as to start building himself a better future”.

COOPI staff working in refugee and IDP camps have heard this sentence hundreds of times. Families have the clear perception that Education in Emergencies takes priority among their urgent needs. Therefore, COOPI has introduced Education in Emergencies into their intervention strategy, integrating it in the food security and protection sectors. WASH is also a part of COOPI's education programmes, in terms of the provision of separate toilets, drinkable water, and hygiene awareness campaigns.

Education is a key element in guaranteeing the protection and normal development of kids affected by a crisis. As ECHO has already stated, Education in Emergencies means to “save and rebuild lives”. In fact, schooling protects children from violence and from the risk of being recruited by an armed group. It helps them to regain a sense of normality and security in their ordinary life, makes them self-sufficient, and makes them feel cared for and understood. It is the best way to invest in their future in the long-term.

The international community believes that education must be a primary element of humanitarian assistance, even if it is underfunded due to not being considered as “immediately life-saving”¹. Education is indeed a child's fundamental human right and in emergency contexts it supports children and their communities giving them the strength they need to face a crisis².

★ EDUCATION AND PROTECTION

Providing Education in Emergencies means offering protection to children³ because 1) school is a safe and protected learning environment⁴; 2) giving children the opportunity to participate in structured educational activities, which for them means returning to normal life; 3) school programmes also empower children with life skills (for example, HIV/AIDS prevention, hygiene awareness, etc.); and finally 4) schooling helps to reintegrate children into society and is the only alternative to exploitation which is far too common during conflict.

Consequently, Education in Emergency programmes are internationally recognised as preventing, reducing, mitigating and responding to the obstacles separating children from education. In order to be effective, these interventions must be inclusive and of high-quality.



Niger-Simone Durante, COOPI

1. Save the Children UK, “Losing out on learning”, 2017.
2. Save the Children Italia, “Programmi di educazione in contesti di emergenza”, 2009.
3. Ib. Save the Children Italia, “Programmi di educazione in contesti di emergenza”, 2009.
4. INEE, “Minimum standards for education: preparedness, response, recovery”, 2010.

NIGER-NIGERIA: A SYSTEM-STRENGTHENING APPROACH EXAMPLE

Recently, a group of 40 Nigerian student refugees in Niger had the chance to sit their state exams in Kono, Nigeria, thanks to an agreement between the two countries' Ministries of Education, facilitated by COOPI in partnership with UNHCR.

This result comes under the framework of the Distance Education Programme, launched in 2014 in the Diffa Region of Niger with the aim of responding to the requests of Nigerian refugee communities to guarantee the continuity of education for students forced to flee from the Northern states of their country.

The curriculum followed by the programme is the same English language curriculum as that used in Nigeria, thanks to the approval of the two countries' Departments of Education.

The Distance Education Programme focuses on secondary-level Nigerian students and is based on self-learning, facilitated by the assistance of teachers and tutors. It reaches 400 students in three centres in Diffa, Maine Soara, and Kabelawa.

Despite the fact that many students have witnessed atrocities and have been forced to flee their homes, they are determined not to let their situation undermine their education and future. Therefore, 40 of them travelled from Diffa in Niger to Kono in Nigeria to undertake their exams for the junior secondary school diploma, certified by the National Examinations Council in Nigeria.

★ EDUCATION AS THE MEANS TO DEVELOPMENT

Education is perceived as an antidote to indoctrination not only by parents but by children as well. Thanks to our projects, girls in particular have the extraordinary opportunity to access schooling for the first time in their lives and to strengthen their self-esteem, building their future and fulfilling their rights.

Sekina Isaka is 12 and comes from Kangaruwa, in Nigeria. After a Boko Haram attack, she escaped with her family and found shelter in the Diffa Region of Niger. In the refugee camp, she started school. *"I love attending school. It's so interesting and I am very happy to learn how to write and read. For me school is very important. I think that the people who attacked my village have never been to school, otherwise they couldn't have done what they actually did (...) When I'll be an adult, I want to teach children how to read and write because school is fundamental to live in peace".*

Education in crisis contexts represents the link between the emergency itself and social and economic development. As UNESCO pointed out, education becomes a support for the whole community because by continuing to deliver education you are granting knowledge and capabilities to future generations who face the task of rebuilding society after the crisis.

★ PLANNING AND INNOVATION

Project activities for implementing Education in Emergencies can be very diverse, varying according to the nature of the crisis and the cultural context. There is no standard project

but a number of key elements. For COOPI, as mentioned in its Child Policy⁵, there is a specific intervention methodology based on: 1) ensuring continuity in the child's schooling path; 2) acting with a multi-sectoral perspective; 3) adopting an innovative approach to schooling (for example, bush schools, teaching through radios, itinerant classes, etc.); 4) working side-by-side with teachers, parents and local communities; 5) taking gender issues and vulnerable groups into due consideration when planning and implementing; 6) cooperating with governments and civil society.

Concerning cooperation with governments, Ministers and local communities, in its work with refugees and IDPs, COOPI aims to strengthen service provision in particular by applying a "system-strengthening approach"⁶. Such an approach focuses on both students and teachers, recognising years of study and teaching and allowing students to sit legitimate examinations. This approach has huge importance, allowing for mutual legitimisation between the host country and the country of origin in terms of programmes attended by IDPs and refugees' children and youths.

In addition, COOPI projects are characterised by four main axes: 1) the training of teachers, especially in psychological and social protection, in order to help children overcome individual trauma; 2) building and rehabilitation of schools, classrooms, toilets and water points; 3) provision of furniture, schools, and recreational kits; 4) payment of teachers' wages and school fees in order to provide continuity for the action into the future.

The sustainability of Education in Emergency programmes is ensured through a School and Parents Committee, who over time, take over the ownership of the programme, and through the creation of school gardens providing food security, communitarian participation, and a case study.

COOPI is aware that offering Education in Emergencies means saving lives. Whenever war destroys communities making them live in fear and violence, COOPI's schools represent a safe learning environment that protects the physical and psychological integrity of children and youths. It is fundamentally important to increase investment in education and it is our duty to give hope to these new generations.

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5. COOPI, "Child Policy", 2011.

6. Save the Children United Kingdom, "Delivering Education For Children in Emergencies", 2008.

NIGER: THE CHALLENGE TO ENSURE SUSTAINABLE IMPACT THROUGH HUMANITARIAN ACTIONS

THE ISSUE – HAVE WE FORGOTTEN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN?

‘The absence of a broader multi-year analysis, planning and funding strategy impedes the linkages between humanitarian operations and development of programmes with a long-term vision, and stabilisation initiatives in Niger.’

★ Boko Haram-related violence has sparked an enormous, complex and protracted humanitarian crisis in south-east Niger, where the state of emergency, declared on 10 February 2015, is still enforced. In the Diffa region, Boko Haram’s presence and attacks still heavily impact the protection of the civilian population, constrain humanitarian access and impede progress towards durable solutions.

In 2017, over one hundred armed attacks by Boko Haram¹ were registered in the area where approximately 129,000 IDPs² and 108,470 refugees from Nigeria³ are living. The most serious humanitarian risks are the persistent threat of Boko Haram and related military operations, forced displacement, deteriorated access to basic services and civil documentation, as well as the spread of gender-based violence and human rights violations. Additionally, arrests and detentions are on the rise due to increased suspicions by security forces of civilians collaborating with Boko Haram. Hence, the decline in social cohesion among IDPs, refugees and host communities is leading to the weakening of the self-protection capacities of individuals and families, the erosion of livelihoods opportunities, and the adoption of negative coping strategies.

★ SUSTAINABLE IMPACT THROUGH A MULTI-SECTORAL HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

A good practice to restore the dignity of the most vulnerable and to change the prevailing acute vulnerabilities is to mitigate the root factors fuelling the conflict and displacement, while responding to immediate critical needs. In Niger, the Danish Refugee Council intervenes with a multi-sectorial response to the most urgent needs, including: protection, distribution of food and Non-Food Items, emergency and transition shelters. In the coming year, DRC will focus on meaningful integration of early recovery and resilience strategies to enhance the impact’s sustainability. This multi-sectorial response includes synergy among the different teams of different projects deployed on the areas of intervention in the Diffa region.

When an alert on a displacement movement in the Diffa region is triggered, DRC gathers additional information through the community focal points for protection monitoring as part of UNHCR’s project, while in the meantime a team from ECHO’s Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) is mobilised. The RRM and protection teams ensure a rapid multi-sectorial assessment and the findings establish evidence to decide on further responses regarding non-food items and/or shelter. During the entire rapid response process additional resources for food distributions for the most vulnerable households can be mobilised, if necessary, through a contingency stock ensured by WFP funding.

The multisector approach adopted also tries to comprehend the loss of productive capital and social networks following multiple displacements,

which makes the affected populations more dependent on external assistance.

Indeed, humanitarians struggle to identify effective exit strategies of their short term actions. Qualitative data on the combination of factors that determine the population’s mobility is needed to do this. Aiming to limit this information gap, DRC conducted an analytical study⁴ on the links between displacement and humanitarian aid. The decision to move depends on both push factors (conditions determining to move from an area, i.e. conflict and violence) and pull factors (conditions determining which area to relocate to, i.e. support networks and access to services). In the Diffa region, the study clarified that access to humanitarian assistance is considered a pull factor that influences the choice of the relocation destination. It can also encourage a settlement decision even when the conditions for returning would be present.

In addition to the pulling aspect of the humanitarian assistance, the communities are also affected by the socio-economic consequences of living in areas where instability is still predominant and access to opportunities is extremely limited. Hence, these gaps need to be addressed through appropriate exit strategies complementary to urgent needs responses, as well as longer-term initiatives to ensure the safety and the possibility of personal holistic development for the civilian population.

★ SUSTAINABLE IMPACT THROUGH COLLABORATION BEYOND INSTITUTIONAL BOUNDARIES

In this context, the absence of a broader multi-year analysis, planning and funding strategy impedes the linkages between humanitarian operations and development of programmes with a long-term vision, and stabilisation initiatives in Niger. Whilst the primary goal of responding to urgent humanitarian needs remains crucial, more collaboration across institutional boundaries is needed. The main challenge to this collaboration is the lack of shared understanding on the impact of jointly identifying priority areas, finalising common analysis documents on risks, needs, gaps and vulnerabilities, and establishing Collective Results with specific thematic indicators. The magnitude of the Boko Haram-related crisis in Niger’s Diffa region occurs in a context characterised by structural fragility and systemic violations of human rights. Therefore, it requires a joint strategic and comprehensive response among humanitarian and development actors, donors and state stakeholders, to address both the immediate critical needs of the most vulnerable, ensuring the protection of the population during the stabilisation interventions, and to enhance the support to the government to create a sustainable impact. .

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1. OCHA: *West and Central Africa – Weekly Regional Humanitarian Snapshot* (16-22 January 2018).

2. OCHA: *Lake Chad Basin – Update no. 22 – January-February 2018*.

3. UNHCR: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/ngr> - last update 31 Oct 2017.

4. *This study was conducted in February 2018 and will be externally shared in April 2018.*

A VIEW ON THE EU:

Interview with René van Nes - the EU Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises

A VIEW ON THE EU

René van Nes is deputy head of division of PRISM (Prevention of conflicts, Rule of law/SSR/DDR, Integrated approach, Stabilisation and Mediation) at the European External Action Service.

1. What is the EU Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises (Integrated Approach) and what is it for?

The Integrated Approach was first mentioned in the Global Strategy, the European Union's shared vision and action plan for foreign and security policy. Here it says that the Integrated Approach should ensure that the EU remains engaged in crisis and conflict situations and has to work in all phases along the conflict cycle. It also says we should work at different levels, not only the national level where we are most comfortable, but at subnational and regional level too.

It is important that, within the European Institutions and with Member States, we use all of our instruments in an integrated way, finding an even better way for our security instruments to work hand in glove with what our colleagues do on development cooperation, and strengthening and aligning these with political messaging, to make sure that politics, cooperation, and security all work together in a harmonised fashion. Multilateral institutions, in particular the UN, play a very important role, and it is important we work with these very closely.

To turn the concept from theory into reality, the decision was taken to have an institutional structure to drive the Integrated Approach, and this is the role of PRISM (Prevention of conflicts, Rule of law/SSR/DDR, Integrated approach, Stabilisation and Mediation), the new division created in January 2017. We see PRISM as the catalyst for the Integrated Approach.

We have a number of instruments that are suitable for the Integrated Approach. We have an Early Warning System which identifies countries at risk of a violent conflict. As soon as we have identified these countries we actually go to them with integrated missions, typically with colleagues of DG ECHO, DG DEVCO, DG NEAR, or FPI (Foreign Policy Instrument), and we work with the delegation and the Member States, applying the Integrated Approach in practice. It doesn't make sense to do something as grand as helping a country to prevent violent conflict with just one instrument or player. You need to do it collectively.

We do the same with conflict analysis. If different Member States and organisations agree on how you 'read' a conflict (who are the conflict parties, the entry points into finding a solution, the conflict dynamics and so on) then it is much easier to align interventions and programmes. This forms a very strong starting point for the process.

2. What opportunities do you see for humanitarian aid with the Integrated Approach?

We are very mindful that humanitarian aid is different in many ways. We really respect the humanitarian principles and, to the great credit of our colleagues from DG ECHO they always remind us that we should not consider them as a tool in our diplomatic toolbox. We should not politicise humanitarian aid. It is important to stress that.

We see opportunities for humanitarian aid to be part of the Integrated Approach, not as part of our toolkit but through benefiting from the insights of humanitarian actors; often the first people on the ground in a crisis or conflict. They have a very good reading of the situation.

For example, we do a lot of work in the Central African Republic (CAR). It was humanitarians who reminded us that CAR is a forgotten crisis and we should pay more attention to it. As a result of that plea, there was a real uptake in interest, leading to more diplomatic attention and dialogue and a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operation. It is one of our success cases, bringing together all the different tools.

It is very important to have this close link between the humanitarians and the diplomatic, political actors when it comes to advocating for humanitarian access and respect of International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

In Mali and CAR we have two military missions which both provide training on IHL to the national armed forces. This is a really interesting case where military colleagues teach their colleagues about IHL. It is just one example of how the Integrated Approach can bring different strands together to be more effective and impactful. The fact that it is military actors teaching each other transmits the message better than if the trainings were carried out by civilians.

3. What lessons can be learned from DG ECHO in terms of timely response to crises and benefit the EU Integrated Approach?

ECHO is one of the most flexible and pragmatic entities that we have, with an amazing ability to deploy their own people and their implementing partners. We have that ambition to see where we can deploy experts, for mediation support or to carry out conflict analyses. We can learn from ECHO how to deploy rapidly as they excel in speed, flexibility, and adapting to situations.

A VIEW ON THE EU

What is often forgotten is that ECHO has been leading on humanitarian civil-military coordination for years. At events I often show a slide that has coexistence and cooperation at either extreme. One thing we have learned from ECHO is that you do not always need to cooperate. Sometimes it is good to know from the other what they are doing simply to de-conflict your possible actions. The Integrated Approach does not mean that everyone has to work on everything all the time. The Council Conclusions make a clear but strong reference to humanitarian action and even the “in but out” concept is there.

4. Do you have examples of crises/fragile contexts/potential conflicts where PRISM or the European External Action Service (EEAS) pay particular attention to climate change and natural disasters as important factors?

Haiti is a good example of the Integrated Approach.

It is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change and natural disasters and is also one of the least prepared. DG ECHO and DG DEVCO have been working well in Haiti for a few years through the framework of the Resilience Approach. Humanitarian aid is planned to give way to development cooperation for longer term objectives, and they are linked together well. We started looking at it from the political point of view too, looking at the potential links between climate change or the consequences of natural disasters and the emergence of crises and violence. We organised a mission there which included colleagues from PRISM, EEAS, FPI, DG CLIMA and worked on the ground with the cooperation section, political section and the ECHO office. The mission also met Member States, the UN, and Haitian civil society. Natural disasters and the slow onset impacts of climate change will always aggravate an already dire situation. We want to understand better the link between climate change and the probability that a country will end up in violent conflict, and are further studying that relationship. If we can better understand that link it will help us to act earlier.

5. How does the integrated approach relate to the humanitarian-development nexus?

We speak of a humanitarian-development nexus and not a humanitarian-development-peace nexus to be respectful of the humanitarian principles, as peace is by definition a political process. We also have a development-security nexus and a development-peace nexus, but we don't want to make the direct link by mentioning “humanitarian” and “peace” in one breath. There are links but we want to underscore that there is a difference and we want to avoid any possible confusion about that. In practice, there is a lot of very useful cooperation happening.

Conflict sensitivity is a priority. We recommended to delegations that they do conflict sensitivity analysis of programmes in their countries.

6. Will the implementation of the integrated approach have an impact on the perception of humanitarian assistance in the field?

We should do more about communication, reach out more to the field and more to delegations to explain what it is and what we expect. The Council Conclusions were only adopted in January 2018 and it is super fresh but the communication agenda is the next big thing we want to tackle, and we will start to do this now. The challenge to implement it is making sure that we don't overburden the process through excessive consultation while also including everybody.

Interview conducted by R.Fadda and C.Cranfield (VOICE secretariat) on 17 April 2018.

HUMANITARIAN ISSUES AT EU LEVEL

VOICE AT WORK

- ★ **Implementation of the Grand Bargain (GB): VOICE steps up efforts to enhance NGOs added value in the process** - Two years after the launch of the Grand Bargain, further NGO involvement in the implementation process is crucial. Launched in December 2017, the VOICE Grand Bargain project, funded by the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will contribute to foster NGOs' and frontline responders' engagement through providing space for dialogue and input at field and EU level. The VOICE GB Task Force actively supported the organisation of a successful workshop regarding cash-based assistance, attracting more than 60 participants. NGOs' best practices and experiences with cash transfer programmes provided a strong basis to develop collective messages regarding effectiveness and efficiency, coordination, and the added value of NGOs in large scale cash based operations. Another important activity was the development of a joint paper by the VOICE GB Task force together with the ICVA Humanitarian Financing working group ahead of the GB signatories annual meeting in New York in June. The [NGO recommendations](#) will inform the ODI independent annual report on the implementation of the Grand Bargain ahead of the meeting. Calling for the third year to be a Year of Action, NGOs encourage the co-conveners of the ten workstreams to test the implementation of the commitments through pilots at field level and to ensure the development of useful tools for staff there.
- ★ **VOICE Working Group 'From DRR to Resilience' on track** - The Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Working Group's mandate has been extended to encompass resilience and the humanitarian-development nexus, building on a long time expertise on DRR and using the momentum around new initiatives at international and European level. The first half of this year the focus is on how NGOs best can bring their expertise to the activities in the EU humanitarian-development nexus pilot countries, follow up on NGO engagement in the Sendai Framework and exchange on DRR in conflicts. The group will meet regularly throughout 2018, to contribute humanitarian NGOs' perspective and expertise to EU policy and practice on DRR and stress the importance of communities in the EU's resilience and nexus work.
- ★ **Timely, predictable and flexible financing for humanitarian aid: VOICE members' engagement in the long-term EU budget marathon** - Preparing for a decisive phase in the design of the next long term EU budget (MFF) starting in May, the VOICE network has been actively calling for a distinct humanitarian aid budget line, privileged access to a robust Emergency Aid Reserve and the doubling of the funding for humanitarian assistance. Over the last six months, the Secretariat invested in several activities briefing members on the importance of the MFF for NGOs active in humanitarian assistance and the decision making process ahead. The [VOICE position paper](#) on the Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2021-2027, has been the basis for intense advocacy efforts by VOICE members at national level reaching out to the Ministers of Finance / Budget and Foreign Affairs. To complement these efforts, the VOICE Secretariat also briefed the member states during a meeting of the Council Working Party on Humanitarian and Food Aid in February. To enhance the impact of the collective advocacy even further, VOICE also developed a joint position together with CONCORD, EPLO and the HRDN network. Given the important role the European Parliament plays regarding the MFF, much attention is also being given to regular exchanges with the relevant actors and decision makers there. *Join us on twitter to support EU humanitarian aid funding @ngovoiceeu*
- ★ **EU Financial Regulation: successful outcome of the network's collective action to pave the way for simpler rules in EU humanitarian assistance** - The EU financial regulation is the basis for all rules and requirements applying to all recipients of EU funding including ECHO NGO partners. It defines the scope in which the next Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) between ECHO and its NGO partners will be defined. The network's collective advocacy efforts and cooperation with Civil Society Europe on the negotiation of the Regulation have led to some key achievements: exceptions for humanitarian aid, cross reliance on other donors' assessment and audits, and recognition of the need for the EC to harmonize its reporting requirements with other donors. These successes are important since they provide potential for simplification of the next FPA (from 2020) ahead of the upcoming consultation with DG ECHO, which will be one of the main priorities of the network and the FPA Watch Group in 2018.

HUMANITARIAN ISSUES AT EU LEVEL

VOICE AT WORK

★ Members' publications

- CARE Denmark released a new report entitled "Women and Girls in Emergencies", which shows that while women are extremely vulnerable during emergencies, there is a large knowledge gap of the problem and not enough funds to either prevent it or provide support for victims.
- In a report, "Dangerous ground - Syria's refugees face an uncertain future", the Norwegian Refugee Council, Save the Children, Action Against Hunger, CARE International, the International Rescue Committee and the Danish Refugee Council warn that the prevailing interest in securing the return of Syrian refugees is undermining their safety and dignity in neighbouring countries, creating push factors and increasing the likelihood of forced returns in 2018. It also threatens to limit the options for making a life beyond the region through resettlement or other safe and legal routes.
- Mercy Corps, Save the Children, World Vision, and UNICEF published the 2017 update of their "No Lost Generation" initiative. The initiative, launched in 2013 and co-funded by ECHO, brings together key partners to achieve agreed outcomes essential for the education, protection, wellbeing and future of children and young people affected by these conflicts. These outcomes fall under three pillars: Education, Child Protection and Adolescents & Youth.
- World Vision released "Multiyear Planning and Funding-Implementer perspectives". Through interviews and document reviews of World Vision programmes in Jordan, Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan and Zimbabwe, the study seeks to understand the benefits of Multiyear Planning and Funding, as pledged by GHD donors.



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VOICE out loud

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