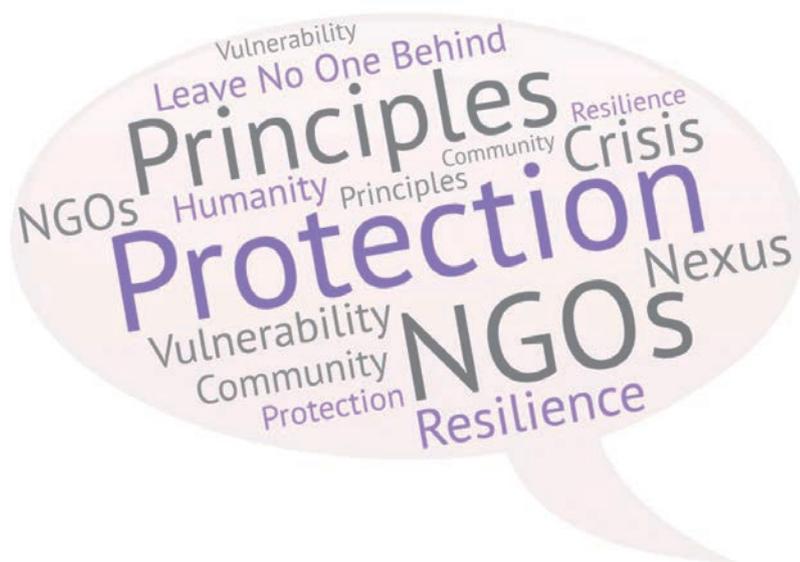


In this edition of the VOICE out loud, NGOs reflect on different aspects of protection in their operations. Our members have illustrated this through their work in different crises.

While NGOs do not bear the primary responsibility for protection, by virtue of their presence in communities they can contribute to it. Through the protracted nature of violent conflict, like in Syria and its repercussions in neighbouring countries, Solidarités and Humanity and Inclusion look at protection in an urban context and for specific vulnerable groups like women with disabilities. Malteser examines what it can mean in the context of the suffering of the recently displaced Rohingya from Myanmar, and Oxfam for communities in less visible crises like the Democratic Republic of Congo. Church of Sweden and GVC tell us how their programming has changed to include this in the simmering highly politicised context of humanitarian response to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Against a backdrop of insufficient funding, the severity, proximity and length of many of these conflicts and crises has driven some changes in how humanitarians work. Many of our members reflect on how this work brings humanitarians closer to development work or human rights and on how to ensure respect for principled humanitarian aid in this context.

We also hear from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) which has protection as a core the mandate. Mr. Walter Fülleemann, who represents the ICRC in Brussels, reflects on how protection work is changing and what in the EU and international context can support or hinder this. As usual, in the VOICE at work feature, readers get an update on the latest news from the network.



VOICE

VOICE stands for 'Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies'. VOICE is a network of 86 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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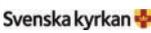
	
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FROM THE VOICE PRESIDENT

As the articles in this edition of the VOICE out loud show, the contexts and nature of humanitarian action are continuing to change. With UNHCR estimating that 68.5 million people have been forcibly displaced, and OCHA that at least 135.7 million people would in be need of assistance in 2018, the level of humanitarian need is at a dangerously high level. These figures are overwhelming even without the realisation that, year after year, on average, only half of the funding appeals are met – meaning that many of those in greatest need receive no assistance. While some can take matters into their own hands and move in response to the challenges that they face - including violence, insecurity, underdevelopment, hunger, desertification and floods - others are left behind. Their needs change, and may increase in scale and complexity, but the aim of humanitarian action remains the same - to respond to the needs of people in crisis, to save lives, restore human dignity and build resilience where possible. This requires continuous flexibility and a willingness to adapt our approaches to best suit these changing contexts and needs.

Part of that adaptation includes increasing our understanding of the protection needs of vulnerable and crisis affected people and communities, and integrating protection considerations into the design and delivery of our assistance. While humanitarian NGOs are not the primary duty bearers for protection, our proximity to vulnerable people and communities, and our understanding of their needs mean that we can play a crucial role in meeting these needs.

This may require us to deepen our understanding of rental, land and home ownership issues in urban areas, facilitate access to proper legal assistance, use cash to respond to multiple needs, have a broader understanding of health to encompass mental health, and support people's most urgent protection needs. These are not new requirements, but they are becoming more central to our work. They present all of us – donors and NGOs - with the common challenge of ensuring that our responses are truly needs-based and tailored to contexts, building on our comparative advantage and strengths, and combining that with the skills, knowledge and mandate of other actors (development, local, national, public, private, human rights, peacebuilding, etc.) where required.

In addition to the changes in the numbers of people in need, the nature of their needs, and in how we respond to these, there are changes in our operational space. Funding scarcity, the necessary demands for better accountability (upwards and downwards), the sexual exploitation and abuse scandals that have rocked the sector, and calls for new ways of working provide us with both opportunities and challenges. We are also faced with an operating environment in which International Humanitarian Law is being routinely violated and access and security challenges often prevent the effective delivery of assistance, reminding us of the necessity of a principled approach. The coherence agenda, exemplified in the triple nexus (humanitarian-development and peace), the Grand Bargain and the UN's new way of working, requires that we engage in a careful balancing act to ensure that we do not lose our specificity and comparative advantages in an effort to simplify, streamline or integrate our approaches, tools, and analysis with those of other actors.

At the EU level, changes in the political environment are calling into question traditional European Union values of peace, unity, solidarity and non-discrimination. They are also challenging some of the long-held values that support NGOs' independence and work. Next year, Brexit and European elections may change the face of the EU. In that potentially changed context, a new multi-annual financial framework will need to be agreed by Member States, and NGOs will be signing a new Framework Partnership Agreement with the European Commission's directorate general for civil protection and humanitarian assistance (DG ECHO). It is my belief that now more than ever, we must maintain trust and build a solid partnership with our donors.

Collective action and engagement through networks like VOICE will help us to weather these changes, but we need to be flexible and adaptable in our responses, predictable and steadfast in our solidarity with crisis-affected populations, and know that the European Union will be there with us. As a network, we remain optimistic that the new budgetary and contractual framework will provide enough funding and flexibility to allow for timely, predictable and sufficient European humanitarian responses to support those people who are in greatest need.

Dominic Crowley
VOICE President

PROTECTION: GOVERNANCE IN EXTREMIS?

THE ISSUE – ADDRESSING PROTECTION NEEDS IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

‘The future requires us to be increasingly people-driven, with international support based on multi-year flexible funding instruments, and better, but principled, cross-sector working within the aid system.’

★ The breakout of armed conflict is perhaps one of the ultimate failures of governance. The ‘social contract’ between a population and those who govern them is intrinsically linked to protection from violence and abuse. When a state is unable or unwilling to fulfil this requirement or is itself the perpetrator or enabler of such abuses, we often speak of it as a ‘protection crisis’. Protection work, especially in conflict situations, is fundamentally about holding duty-bearers to account and influencing, lobbying, supporting, negotiating so that they fulfil their responsibilities, very much like ‘good governance’ work in more developmental settings. In many ways, Protection programmes in humanitarian setting have parallels to good governance programmes, only in far more extreme situations.

People living in conflict situations do not only face direct violence, but also the long-term degradation of civilian infrastructure combined with lack of investment and development. Although exact figures are hard to come by, it is generally acknowledged that more civilians die from the broader impacts of conflict – the lack of those structures that sustain life such as medical services, water treatment plants,

functioning markets and food production - than do through direct lethal force. People living in protracted conflicts need food, water and shelter for immediate survival as well as livelihoods, education, and ultimately sustainable peace. For those living in such situations, sometimes for generations, the artificial silos and labels of the international aid and development system – ‘development’, ‘humanitarian’, ‘refugees’, ‘IDPs’ - are meaningless. Short-term humanitarian assistance cannot meet all these needs and aspirations: as one young woman in a war zone once told me *“don’t keep me alive just so I can live in fear and pain.”*

★ COMBINING COMMUNITY BASED ACTIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

Oxfam’s protection framework combines community-based actions with international advocacy and campaigning. At field level this often involves training and support to community groups or committees so they can raise awareness of rights, but also work to ensure rights are fulfilled very practically in their community. Such groups may work with local authorities and security actors, but also informal and customary structures, to represent their community and bring about practical changes, for example, the removal of barriers or checkpoints, better control on the behaviour of armed actors towards the civilian population, and for national police to fulfil their duties properly.

In countries where education, training and professional development has been limited by protracted conflict, and nepotism and corruption determine who sits in positions of authority, the starting point can be alarmingly low. A senior police officer in a village in South Kivu explained that training sessions on Congolese law by the Community Protection Committee had helped him understand that *“I cannot just arrest anyone, I have to believe they have committed a crime.”*

These types of programmes, that build on community-self-protection, always need to be combined with actions to hold formal duty bearers to account – to firmly place responsibility for protection with the primary duty-bearers. Protection Committees themselves carry out the majority of what is often ‘invisible’ advocacy and influencing with the actors of the state who influence their everyday lives: the local police, the civil administration, a military unit deployed to protect the village, and in some cases, non-state armed actors.

It is remarkable how many people in crisis situations do not perceive those in positions of

THE CENTRALITY OF PROTECTION

In December 2013, the [Centrality of Protection Statement](#) was endorsed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Principals. This statement aims at putting protection at the heart of humanitarian assistance, as a **purpose and intended outcome of humanitarian action**. The Statement was complemented in 2016 by the [IASC Protection Policy](#).

The Centrality of Protection policy is not aimed only at agencies that are protection specialists; quite the contrary this policy makes **protection a core and shared responsibility of all humanitarian actors**, including NGOs, and beyond them, to achieve, collectively and in complementarity, better protection outcomes to reduce risks for people in humanitarian crises. It requires a careful context and risk analysis to identify vulnerabilities, a needs assessment including protection needs, and a right based approach to these and to programming.

The Centrality of Protection Policy gives a key role to the Humanitarian Coordinators, the Humanitarian Country teams and to Cluster Coordinators to develop and implement a **comprehensive protection strategy to address risks and prevent and stop the recurrence of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law**. This strategy relies on complementary roles and responsibilities among humanitarian actors to contribute to protection outcomes, and taking into account the role and contribution of other actors such as peacebuilding, human rights and development ones towards durable solutions.

More and more, the implementation of the **centrality of protection entails the involvement of affected people**, to identify themselves their most urgent protection needs.

In May 2016, in parallel with the World Humanitarian Summit, the European Commission (ECHO) adopted a [Humanitarian Protection Policy](#).

During operations against non-state armed actors, a local military unit carried out abuses against civilians including arbitrary killings, arrests, rape and forced labour. When the company was rotated out, the Community Protection Committees invited the newly arrived soldiers and officers to a play which demonstrated the behaviour they hoped for from the military. The officer in charge publicly committed himself to these principles, promised the army's protection for civilians, and agreed to regular meetings with the Committee to monitor the situation.

Eastern DRC 2010-12

authority as having responsibilities to protect them, and some have only ever known them as sources of abuse and violence in their lives. The realisation that they have responsibilities towards the population can be a revelation. Holding them 'to account' is something community committees do with careful pragmatism – after all these are individuals who live in their community, but also people who hold power over them.

Ultimately, however, it is impressive to see how a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens, can bring about changes in their community, and how similar this model is to what my development colleagues would call 'good governance' programming, albeit often carried out in the most extreme of circumstances: to prevent violent attacks on villages or sexual violence against women and girls, to negotiate for the return of community members who have been abducted to carry supplies to front lines, or for the release of children, arrested in place of a parent, from prison cells. Over time such groups have been shown to expand their remit to tackle issues such as girls' education or women's inheritance rights, issues not normally high on the agenda in a humanitarian response, thus creating a bridge towards developmental goals.

Networks of national and international NGOs complement these localised gains at national or international level to sustain positive changes and tackle the roots of the problem, for example, lobbying donors regarding widespread corruption whereby their funding for security sector reform is siphoned off at the most senior levels of government. This is where the partnership between international agencies and national and local networks and structures can be utilised strategically to leverage change. Oxfam has been able to bring survivors of violence and national activists to global fora including addressing the UN General Assembly, as well as using analysis from protection committees to lobby for changes in specific peacekeeping mandates.

★ FROM SHORT-TERM FUNDING TO MULTI-YEAR FUNDING PROGRAMMES

Tellingly, whilst work to establish community protection groups or committees may start under short-term humanitarian funding, with a focus on immediate protection priorities, the most successful programmes have developed under multi-year funding instruments for human rights and governance, including the EU Aid for Uprooted People and European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights which has allowed longer-term investment and support than humanitarian funding cycles allow.

The communities supported through such multi-year protection programmes develop an awareness of the responsibilities of duty-bearers, and especially the state officials and structures in their community, as well as skills in public speaking, organisation, advocacy and networking. The involvement of people who may have been excluded and marginalised previously – women, older and disabled people, ethnic minorities, displaced people and refugees, is a critical element, and there is a specific focus on nurturing women's participation in community structures, their public role and leadership. A diverse group of activists, with credibility in their community, a mandate to represent its interests, and skills to hold authorities to account, is a very powerful force, and those skills and awareness do not go away when emergency funding ends.

Historically, Oxfam's protection programmes have evolved over time. In Colombia as the political context of the conflict changed, the protection work evolved into a territorial rights programme including supporting cases at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights; in Central Mindanao, the Philippines, it focussed on women's participation in peace processes including ceasefire monitoring.

Improving the links between humanitarian and development has long been a priority within the aid sector, and also within multi-mandate organisations like Oxfam where 'good governance' work sits in our development teams, and 'protection' firmly in the humanitarian. However, the tensions between the two continues to be a subject of debate, including in the current discussion around the 'triple nexus', with specific concerns around how such linking can be both effective but also avoid risks of the politicisation and securitisation of aid, uphold humanitarian principles and respect humanitarian space.

The future requires us to be increasingly people-driven, with international support based on multi-year flexible funding instruments, and better, but principled, cross-sector working within the aid system. Community-based protection work, when combined with local, national and international advocacy, can help fill the gaps and influence those in power to fulfil their roles and responsibilities now, and in the future. As one man in Masisi, eastern DRC, observed "*For you this is an emergency. For us, this is daily life.*"

Rachel Hastie
Protection Team Leader
OXFAM UK
www.oxfam.org/



THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE FOR ROHINGYA REFUGEES IN BANGLADESH

The need for adapting a cross-border approach in refugee protection

THE ISSUE – ADDRESSING PROTECTION NEEDS IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Prior to the events of August 2017, Rakhine State was home to about one million Rohingya. Not officially recognized as citizens or one of Myanmar's 135 ethnic groups, the Rohingya have, over the last decades, been subject to persecution and marginalization through restrictive policies on employment, education and freedom of movement. This long history of discrimination culminated in the violence in August 2017 and led to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis.

In the last year, more than 725,000 Rohingya people have fled to Bangladesh from Myanmar's Rakhine State following an outbreak of violence and persecution in August 2017. It was the fastest growing refugee crisis worldwide, affecting the world's largest stateless population.

With almost 920,000 refugees now hosted in the Cox's Bazar district of Bangladesh, the refugee camp there has become the largest in the world. The refugees arrived deeply traumatized. An overwhelming majority of the camp population experienced or witnessed extreme violence, sexual abuse as well as loss and separation from family members.

Since August 2017, a large number of humanitarian actors have responded to the humanitarian and protection needs of the Rohingya. However, this assistance is far from sufficient. According to the Humanitarian Response Plan¹, only 37% of the funds needed are available. Meanwhile, the living conditions in the camp remain poor. The Rohingya are living in tightly cramped spaces and are exposed to diseases, cyclones and monsoons. Many are at risk of gender based violence, human trafficking and exploitation. With no access to jobs or an income, they are staring at an uncertain future. The Rohingya are extremely vulnerable, especially the women and children among them.

PROTECTION IN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Specific stand-alone projects in the area of protection are therefore very important, but so is mainstreaming protection into all humanitarian programs. Humanitarian actors are trying to comply with these requirements. They incorporate key elements of protection into their programs as requested by the Global Protection Cluster:

- **Prioritize safety & dignity, and avoid causing harm:** Prevent and minimize any unintended negative effects which can increase people's vulnerability.
- **Meaningful access:** Arrange for people's access to assistance and services without any barriers and discrimination.
- **Accountability:** Set-up appropriate mechanisms through which affected populations can measure the adequacy of interventions, and address concerns and complaints.
- **Participation and Empowerment:** Support self-protection capacities and assist people to claim their rights.

However, several humanitarian actors follow only a "project-based approach"² that insufficiently acknowledges the protection needs of the Rohingya as intrinsically tied to the "interrelated development, human rights and security crisis" in Rakhine State in Myanmar.

It is high time we as humanitarian actors critically

reassessed the approaches that have characterized humanitarian actions in Rakhine State to date: funding and implementing projects to reduce suffering without advocating for freedom and respect for human rights, setting a high value on a good and close cooperation with state authorities without clear conditionality. NGOs and donors will need to ask themselves if their approach of neutrality unintentionally supports repressive systems, thereby passively contributing to (internal) displacement or involuntary return.

THE NEED FOR A COMPREHENSIVE CROSS-BORDER APPROACH IN REFUGEE PROTECTION

Together, humanitarian actors and international donors need to review their approach in such refugee contexts. All refugees have a place of origin. Taking protection of refugees seriously would require a comprehensive and cross-border approach which considers root causes of persecution and displacement in the country of origin as well as protection needs on both sides of the border. Besides adherence to international humanitarian standards by providing relief to refugees and affected population, all humanitarian actors should strengthen their efforts to:

- **Listen to the voices of the people to get to know what they really need.** Very often it is assumed that water, sanitation, health etc. are the most urgent needs. However, the perception of the people in such a context may differ greatly. New tools are needed that give communities a voice as the most important actors.³
- **Advocate for the rights of the people affected and share information about human rights issues on both sides of the border.**
- **Strengthen peace building efforts in the country of origin by encouraging** inter-communal dialogue and peaceful coexistence and by using conflict sensitive approaches.
- **Apply conditionality to project implementation and funding support** in order to influence governments and governmental stakeholders. For instance, implement and fund projects only if formal and informal barriers to accessing life-saving services are removed, and align with government priorities only if they are not discriminatory and do not undermine people's fundamental rights.

In the Rohingya context, it is evident that any approach and project which intends to improve the humanitarian situation of refugees in Bangladesh without taking into account the root causes of their persecution in Myanmar will not help refugees to return to their homes in peace.

Cordula Wasser
 Head of Asia Department
 Malteser International
www.malteser-international.org

1. See Humanitarian Response Plan for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis, March – December 2018, Midterm Review; https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2018_jrp_mid_term_review_v28.pdf

2. See Towards a Peaceful, Fair and Prosperous Future for the People of Rakhine. FINAL REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMISSION ON RAKHINE STATE, August 2017.

3. An example is the People First Impact Method (PFIM); <http://p-fim.org/toolkit-overview/>

COMMUNITY BASED PROTECTION AND THE ISSUE OF COMPLEMENTARITY BETWEEN DIFFERENT ACTORS

THE ISSUE – ADDRESSING PROTECTION NEEDS IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

LOCAL TO GLOBAL PROTECTION (L2GP)

L2GP documents and promotes local perspectives on protection, survival and recovery in major humanitarian crises. Based on research in Burma/ Myanmar, the occupied Palestinian territories, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria and Zimbabwe, L2GP explores what people living in areas affected by natural disasters and complex emergencies do to survive and protect themselves.

★ Locally led protection activities are often – if not always – crucial elements for crisis-affected people's and communities' immediate survival, in which women play a particularly important role. This is what the experience of Local 2 Global Protection, Church of Sweden's international work, DanChurch Aid, Christian Aid, and a number of local and national partners – including the EJ-YMCA (East Jerusalem YMCA) in Palestine and ECOWEB (Ecosystems Work for Essential Benefits) in the Philippines – has shown. They tested how to support locally led crisis responses through mobilising communities to identify their own strengths, capacities, risks, vulnerabilities and coping mechanisms utilizing, among other things, small community cash grants. The work was monitored by other members of the community, as well as the involved aid organisation(s). This way of working has the capacity to reach communities where access is restricted and appears to have the potential to boost community resilience and wellbeing, contribute to preparedness, bridge the gap between humanitarian and development action, and set the frame for peace.¹

★ WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF LOCALLY LED PROTECTION?

Findings from piloting of community-led crisis responses in the Philippines illustrate that in several instances local communities are not only the *first* responders but also the *only* responders, even weeks and months after the initial disaster. Lessons from this way of working in the Philippines included that through supporting locally led protection and survival efforts, very remote areas, often deemed inaccessible by outside organisations and even by local government due to poor infrastructure, long distances and insecurity, could be reached through supporting locally led protection groups to carry out their local crisis responses.² In a protracted crisis, like in Palestine, EJ-YMCA has witnessed how the international community has directed funding to projects that did not always meet the needs, realities or priorities of their constituencies. Locally led protection activities were found to address local priorities more directly, foster community resilience, boost wellbeing and constituted a useful tool for communities to hold local authorities accountable to deliver essential services through locally led advocacy campaigns.³

★ COMPLEMENTARITY BETWEEN DIFFERENT HUMANITARIAN ACTORS

Shifting power towards communities challenges humanitarian actors to let go of their traditional roles. Regina "Nanette" Antequisa, explains how: "...the communities and people affected by the

*disasters - should be considered to have the capacity to help themselves, plan their own action, manage the response and design the program.... Too often though, a disempowering process and relationship between INGOs and L/NNGOs (Local/National Non-Governmental Organization), which often is replicated between L/NNGOs and the very survivors and communities, means that such opportunities for initiating real change are missed."*⁴

Each actor has a role to play. However, supporting locally led protection efforts require all actors involved to let go of their traditional roles and examine/re-think their core added value.

★ BALANCING MANDATES: SUPPORTING LOCALLY LED PROTECTION EFFORTS BUT NOT CONSUMING THE MANDATE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

A L2GP learning brief on Palestine shows that protection groups needed to clarify their role in relation to local authorities. Locally led protection groups should claim their rights towards the local government, but not aspire to take over their role. A community member from Abu Al Ghuzlan in Palestine said: "*Ideally, the relationship between the village council and the protection groups should be complementary. However, sometimes the village council perceives the protection group as a competitor.*"

Women, are often the most important protection actors in their communities. In practice this fact leads to an increased sense of self-esteem among women in the locally led protection groups and has also helped pave the way for women to have more prominent roles in their communities. A woman from Abu Alurqan in Palestine, who participates in a local protection group, explains how: "*We became stronger and now we feel like we have a voice. Now women from other communities are approaching us to ask for our expertise and guidance on how to voice their priorities in their communities.*"

Given the presented findings and the benefits generated from locally led protection activities, more organisations should join forces in exploring approaches which enable genuine local ownership, increased wellbeing, and bridge the gap between humanitarian and development projects where community cash grants appear to be positive enablers of such activities.

Sofie Grundin
Humanitarian Policy Adviser
Church of Sweden/Local 2 Global Protection
www.svenskakyrkan.se/internationaltarbete
www.local2global.info

1. L2GP is publishing a series of learning briefs that captures recent learning from locally led efforts in Palestine, Philippines, Myanmar, Kenya and Sudan. (www.local2global.info)
2. L2GP, Regina "Nanette" Antequisa and Justin Corbett "Learning from survivor and community-led crisis responses in the Philippines", 2018
3. See the full study: L2GP, Sofie Grundin and Luna Saadeh "Learning from community-led resilience responses in the occupied Palestinian territories"
4. L2GP, Regina "Nanette" Antequisa and Justin Corbett "Learning from survivor and community-led crisis responses in the Philippines", 2018

PROTECTION IN URBAN CONTEXT, WHICH CHALLENGES FOR THE RESPONSE TO THE SYRIAN CRISIS IN LEBANON?

THE ISSUE – ADDRESSING PROTECTION NEEDS IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

'As refugees lacking legal status don't always want to be found, have limited access to livelihood and basic services, and are spread-out over hundreds of thousands of locations in the urban fabric, humanitarian aid requires more systematic integration of protection and faces several challenges.'

1. UNHCR, UNICEF & WFP, *Vulnerability Assessment for Syrian Refugees in Lebanon (VASyr)*, 2018
2. "The Urban Amplifier: Adapting to Urban Specificities", European Commission & <http://alternatives-humanitaires.org/en/2017/11/20/new-challenges-in-the-context-of-violent-urban-settings/>
3. Social capital being understood as the networks of relationships refugees have brought with them or built since they arrived in Lebanon, on which they can count to support them in times of hardships.
4. "The Urban Amplifier: Adapting to Urban Specificities", European Commission & "Running out of Time: survival of Syrian Refugee Children in Lebanon", FXB Center, Harvard School of Public Health, 2014
5. VASyr, 2018
6. VaSYR, 2018
7. Standard Minimum Expenditure Basket
8. "In Focus: Cash-Based Assistance under the LCRP", Inter-Agency Coordination, Lebanon, May 2018
9. ECHO, HIP 2018
10. WASH: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
11. Lebanon's Ark Survey, August 2018
12. VASyr, 2018
13. "Personal perspectives of protracted displacement", Karen Boswall & Ruba Al Akash, 2014; "The collapse of social networks among Syrian refugees in urban Jordan", Matthew R. Stevens, 2016; & "Running out of Time: survival of Syrian Refugee Children in Lebanon", FXB Center, Harvard School of Public Health, 2014
14. "The Neighbourhood" in Arabic
15. El-Qobbeh Neighbourhood Profile, UNH-UNICEF, August 2018

★ Since the beginning of the Syrian Crisis in 2011, Lebanon, a country of 4.5 million people, has welcomed an estimated 1.5 million refugees. This initial hospitality was soon tempered by restrictions imposed on refugees. For historical, political and economic considerations the Government of Lebanon (GoL) especially refused to create structured refugee camps and limited refugees' access to employment to three sectors (agriculture, construction, and environment).

In a country where 88% of the host population is urban, lack of formal camps and job search pushed 81%¹ of refugees (often coming themselves from cities) to settle in urban areas, while only 19% joined informal settlements (tented camps), usually on agricultural lands. This article intends to explain how the specificities of urban contexts, combined with the crisis' strong protection component generated new challenges for humanitarian actors, and which approaches were developed to face these challenges.

★ IMPACT OF URBAN CONTEXTS' SPECIFICITIES:

If many refugees settled in the same neighborhoods, often vulnerable and offering cheap housing, this crisis is still mainly characterized by their dispersion all over the country's dense urban fabric, looking for housing and employment opportunities.

In such contexts, refugees are closely intertwined with host communities, impacting their jobs and housing markets, and weighing on limited resources and infrastructures (water, wastewater, schools...). As they manage these resources, local authorities and private actors have also become important stakeholders in the crisis.

The multiplicity of actors (public/private), the socio-economic, cultural and religious diversity of the populations, and the interconnected weaknesses of services and infrastructures have made this urban crisis especially complex...²

★ IMPORTANCE OF THE CRISIS' PROTECTION COMPONENT:

According to several studies, close cohabitation of host and refugee communities, complex actors' interconnections in an urban context, and cities' negative impact on refugees' social capital³ contribute to protection risks.⁴

In Lebanon, refugees' lack of legal status also reinforces these risks. 73% of the nearly 1 million refugees registered by UNHCR currently do not

have legal residency, as they couldn't fulfill their obligations to renew it (lack of funds, missing legal documents...)⁵. In addition, an estimated 500,000 refugees entered Lebanon without meeting GoL's criteria for legal entry.

This lack of legal status limits male refugees' movements and access to employment, therefore increasing many protection risks (child labor, illegal/dangerous work at low/no wages...).

★ WHICH CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES?

As refugees lacking legal status don't always want to be found, have limited access to livelihood and basic services, and are spread-out over hundreds of thousands of locations in the urban fabric, humanitarian aid requires more systematic integration of protection and faces several challenges.

Refugees' identification is, first, complex in this context. Large-scale outreach efforts were developed early on, but refugees' lack of housing stability meant they had to be constantly repeated. To improve identification, most NGOs have thus reinforced networks of focal points, hotlines, and collective referral capacities, in close collaboration with protection actors.

Secondly, linked to identification, targeting of the most vulnerable and at-risk refugees is also challenging. Especially since 75% of refugees live below the poverty line and humanitarian funds can't support blanket interventions⁶. Food and/or Multipurpose Cash Allowances only partially address this issue covering only 70% of the SMEB⁷, even for the most vulnerable households⁸. To better target the most at-risk refugees, wide coverage multipurpose cash assistance (about 350,000 individuals in Lebanon) can be completed by integrated protection approaches, such as SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL's integrated shelter-protection program⁹. Here, shelter/WASH¹⁰ interventions are adapted to specific protection issues, based on protection partners' (Himaya, DRC...) analysis (improved access for people with disabilities, reinforced security/sanitary conditions for children at-risk, tenure negotiations with landlords for female headed households at risk of exploitation...).

Localized increase in social tensions, involving communities as well as municipalities, constitute a third major challenge. They are especially fueled by the competition for jobs and resources between vulnerable Lebanese without access to humanitarian aid and refugees¹¹. Economic difficulties and weak infrastructures increase these tensions which, added to some political

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EL HAY: NEIGHBORHOOD FOR ALL

As SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL discovered in its shelter programs in Tripoli, stand-alone approaches can generate protection issues in urban contexts, because of complex interconnections between spaces, infrastructures and stakeholders. Indeed, as vulnerable Lebanese could only represent 15% of the beneficiaries, social tensions rose between communities in the poorest neighborhoods.

To mitigate related threats, SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL tested *El Hay*¹⁴, a new area-based approach, in the neighborhood of El-Qobbeh. Through UN-Habitat’s profiling of El-Qobbeh¹⁵, we identified areas combining high population density, run-down housing, lack of access, networks, services, and security, and severely vulnerable populations, including 20% of Syrian refugees.

El Hay’s teams then proceeded to:

- A building-by-building identification of households facing severe socio-economic vulnerability and unsanitary/unsafe shelters, increasing their vulnerability to protection threats
- The identification of community focal points, who could support community mobilization

Emergency shelter interventions impacted 200 severely vulnerable Lebanese and refugees households, while upgrades in 30 buildings’ common areas improved beneficiaries’ safety (staircases, electricity...).

In parallel, community mobilization addressed sources of tensions within/between communities: restructuration of solid waste collection points, installation of 75 solar streetlights for better security, and rehabilitation of 8 public spaces/access points (stairs, pathways...) to reinforce connections between communities.

Beneficiaries and communities chose both the interventions and the designs that were implemented.

Although they do not always include a protection entry point, area-based approaches can address protection challenges linked to urban complexity by integrating:

- All pertinent sectors impacting protection risks and beneficiaries’ vulnerabilities
- Different timeframes, to cover relief, resilience and development
- All pertinent stakeholders: public authorities, communities, civil society
- Different scales of intervention, connecting buildings/households to city/neighborhood planning.



parties’ positions, incite municipalities to instate restrictions of movements, curfews and evictions against refugees. To mitigate tensions and restrictions, humanitarian agencies, such as SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL, CARE International or ACTED have worked positively on area-based multi-sectoral approaches, including win-win activities benefiting all communities (see text box).

Finally, relations with private actors are the fourth identified challenge, as they can become sources of protection threats. In Lebanon, refugees’ basic needs mostly depend on the private sector (housing, water, sanitation...). Rent especially weighs on their budget (\$220/month on average for residential buildings). Landlords have strong leverage on their tenants as 90% of households only have verbal housing agreements. And as most refugees lack stable resources and are in debt (+10% average debt per capita in 2018 up to \$250)¹², risks of eviction, abuse and exploitation are high, especially since 80% of refugees are women and children, and 19% of households are female headed. In urban contexts, they are even more vulnerable. Living apart from their extended families/communities, and unable to visit them to maintain social relations for lack of money and legal status, they tend to lose their social capital, which often is their last available resource to cope with hardships¹³. Above mentioned integrated approaches combining WASH/shelter and legal support address such risks by increasing Lebanese real estate’s value, while improving refugees’ living conditions, negotiating freezes/reductions of their rent, and safeguarding of their tenure.

Urban contexts are complex and in constant evolution, and many solutions to these challenges still need to be tested or fine-tuned. But as urban crises become more common, Lebanon’s promising results may soon benefit other countries’ approaches to protection in urban contexts.

Caroline Bouvard,
Country Director Lebanon,
Solidarités International
www.solidarites.org/en/

ENHANCING THE PROTECTION OF THE MOST VULNERABLE IN THE SYRIAN CONFLICT

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‘Maintaining and increasing humanitarian access and continuity of services in all its current forms, across the territory, is not only essential to ensure protection of the dignity and human rights of those affected, it is also crucial for the future of Syria as a whole.’

★ “[...] Those who did not leave Syria have been displaced inside Syria thousands of times. There is no safe place, no prospect of tomorrow. We lived in a state of suspense, waiting in fear that someone would die in a bombing, a mine incident, or from sickness. Or they might die because we had no doctors and no hospitals to go to; several women died in childbirth, and several infants died because there were no hospitals nearby to take them to. Forced migration is humiliating. Need is humiliating; living in a community that is not your own is also humiliating. [...] War destroyed the best years of my life: it took my son, my brothers, and my existence. It made me ill from fear and stress.”¹

These are the words of Amira, 44. From 2012 to 2015, she witnessed bombing and shelling of her rural town in Syria before she could flee to Turkey in 2016. One of her sons was killed during a bombing. She now lives with her younger son in Lebanon, and suffers from depression. Her testimony unfortunately echoes those of too many Syrian civilians.

After 8 years of conflict, Syria is still an acute humanitarian situation and **responding to the protection needs remains an absolute priority**. All over Syria, 13.1 million Syrians are still in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. Among them, persons with disabilities or chronic diseases, as well as the elderly face the greatest barriers to access protection and humanitarian assistance such as shelter, water, health and education.

As a result of the indiscriminate violence, marked by intensive use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and socio-economic deprivation, the number of Syrians with injuries and disabilities has rocketed, and it is bound to increase as 7.3 million persons are living in communities under the constant threat of explosive hazards. An estimated 2.9 million persons inside Syria are living with a disability. A survey carried out in Jordan and Lebanon shows that, among the 5.6 million Syrian refugees, 1 in 5 has a disability and half of the households have at least one member with disabilities.²

★ SPECIFIC VULNERABILITIES AND NEEDS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Persons with disabilities, especially girls and women with disabilities, are confronted to **aggravated risks of poverty and vulnerability**, including exploitation and criminality during displacement, sexual and gender-based violence

and increased loss of livelihoods³. Inside Syria, due to the destruction of health care facilities and the targeting of humanitarian workers, they have been deprived of access to **basic healthcare**, let alone the long-term physical rehabilitation or mental health services they might need. In neighbouring countries, Syrian refugees with disabilities often find that the **specialised services** they need, such as the provision of assistive devices or reproductive and sexual health services, are not available or too expensive.⁴ Without these, there are many more barriers to their safe participation and contribution to the life of the family and community.

★ A CALL TO ACTION

The scale of the needs is considerable and organisations have repeatedly rung the alarm bell. Several rounds of peace negotiations and donor conferences took place, yet the international community has failed to address these challenges.

Last April, the European Union and the United Nations hosted a conference ‘Supporting the future of Syria and the region’. Countries’ representatives meeting in Brussels sent a strong message for the protection of civilians trapped in the conflict and reaffirmed that returns of Syrians to and within the country is not possible as long as the conditions for a safe, dignified and voluntary return are not met.

These commitments need to be translated into action. **Financial commitments** of donors must increase to meet the growing immediate and long term needs. **Access and safety** concerns must be addressed: it means ensuring the protection of humanitarian workers and scaling up humanitarian mine action, including risk education, mine clearance, victim assistance (including physical rehabilitation, healthcare and psycho-social support). Finally, the most fragile and marginalised people, **including persons with disabilities**, must be systematically taken into account in the humanitarian response.

Maintaining and increasing humanitarian access and continuity of services in all its current forms, across the territory, is not only essential to ensure protection of the dignity and human rights of those affected, it is also crucial for the future of Syria as a whole.

Aurélie Beaujolais
Information & Publications Advocacy Manager
Humanity & Inclusion
www.hi.org

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INTEGRATED PROTECTION TO ENSURE COMPLEMENTARITY OF SECTOR SPECIFIC HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

THE ISSUE – ADDRESSING PROTECTION NEEDS IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

‘The CPA system of analysis works as an encompassing process of participation and empowerment of communities and individuals.’

 GVC has been working on humanitarian and development programs for over 30 years. Communities and individuals have always been placed at the centre of its interventions through locally driven projects and strategies. Increasing work in protracted and complex crises has nonetheless led the organization to revisit its standard approaches to ensure more consistency between short-term life-saving interventions and long-term actions to reduce chronic vulnerability and poverty. This internal process led to the development of an Integrated Protection Approach within GVC operations in the occupied Palestinian Territories (oPt), purposely enabling more effective and lasting strategies to reduce aid dependence, by placing self-reliance of the affected population at its core.

A COMMUNITY APPROACH TO DESIGN INTEGRATED PROGRAM

The Community Protection Approach (CPA) is a community¹ engagement and empowerment instrument to design Integrated Protection Programs (IPP) and provides operational tools to facilitate complementarity of diverse foreign aid and national instruments to find sustainable solutions for the needs of a given population. The CPA system of analysis works as an encompassing process of participation and empowerment of communities and individuals. It runs in complementarity to projects and programs cycles in each given context. An initial model has been designed as part of GVC operations in the occupied Palestinian territory, thanks to the support of DG ECHO and different EU Member States cooperation. The model, applied since 2015, is providing positive results and it has been fine-tuned thanks to the support of other NGO partners in oPt.

The CPA is designed to ensure right-based analysis and humanitarian standards for people in need, while setting the basis for a transitional strategy to provide a more integrated approach able to respond holistically, comprehensively and impartially to protection-sensitive needs in the areas of intervention. The CPA is specifically designed to provide a series of outputs that can be used by the other different actors of the international community and local institutions to inform strategies and programmes:

- 1) the CPA provides for a **Protection Vulnerability Index (PVI)**, which uses a set of multi-sectoral indicators, to measure the severity of protection vulnerability in 14 different sectors in 188 communities in the West Bank. The data is collected on a yearly basis and provides trends on the situation of communities, year after year, capturing the effects of external factors, as well as of the different support programmes provided to communities.
- 2) In parallel, the CPA supports the targeted communities by developing a **locally owned Operational Plan** based on ICRC Protection Egg framework², which is revised and updated by the communities, local institutional actors and INGOs on yearly basis. The Plans are multi-sectoral and include short to long term activities. Plans are used by GVC and Partners in oPt to inform the design and prioritization of their sector specific programs as well as by Humanitarian and Development coordination structures (i.e. Clusters) to facilitate complementarity and coordination.

CASE STUDY:

A CLUSTER APPROACH TO LRRD IN AREA C

TURBO – TUBAS RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

In the Jordan Valley area of the Governorate of Tubas, 19 rural Palestinian communities within Area C are widely affected by demolitions and the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements. The Tubas Rural development and Business Opportunities (TURBO) is a LRRD (Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development) initiative funded by the Italian Agency for International Cooperation to support communities on the basis of the Community Protection Approach targeting the 19 communities.

TURBO is executed in coordination with the Governorate of Tubas and the Palestinian Authority's Area C Coordination Office and aligns with the institutional Plan of Tubas Governorate. The Community Protection Approach implemented by different partners in the framework of DG ECHO, UNDP and the Italian Agency for Cooperation developmental and humanitarian projects serves as the continuous community engagement and monitoring platform. This helps GVC in piloting a number of concrete LRRD sub-activities within the initiative:

- Institutionalizing an Early Warning System for IHL and IHRL violations through the creation of a Protection Department in the Governorate of Tubas;
- Scaling up governance schemes for humanitarian assets (solar panels) received through various programs/NGOs in the Governorate;
- Building productive infrastructure to serve groups of communities and foster their connectivity;
- Launching an innovative cooperatives' model to provide services to community members.

In its design the initiative is flexible and complementary with the humanitarian activities of DG ECHO and other EU Member States in the 19 targeted communities.

‘The Operational Plans and the multi-sector joint analysis has thus turned into an instrument facilitating the flexible use of existing funding mechanisms, aligning them to the sector priorities identified by Palestinian planning for each geographic area.’

3) Finally, the CPA foresees the development of **Community Profiles that capture the multi-sector analysis of vulnerability and risks over the years.**

All these instruments are developed with and provided to the West Bank communities to engage with duty-bearers and advocate for the inclusion of their needs in local planning.

★ COMPLEMENTARY USE OF SECTOR SPECIFIC HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS IN THE OPT

The application of the Israeli permit and planning regime in Area C increases humanitarian needs but prevents stakeholders from delivering effective assistance, making straightforward developmental programming hardly suitable. In this context, the integrated protection approach of GVC tries to provide instruments to operationalize the concept of transitional development.

Through the CPA, developmental assistance is provided in complementarity with humanitarian aid to create systematic links between short and long-term actions, both included in the Operational Plans developed with the communities. Thanks to a thorough participatory process of analysis and a multi-stakeholders' approach, a context-specific plan of actions is devoted to each sector of intervention. Each time it identifies the best placed activities and implementing actor in accordance to the community's specific needs and risks.

Multi-sector monitoring and planning in this framework can help a single organization to concretely operationalize the use of humanitarian and development actions using different funding.

The combined analysis and yearly update of the same data which is available to communities, partners and donors, supported the increasing understanding of the situation of communities. This additionally helped the search for “out-of-the-box” and innovative approaches, in a context where few solutions are left to address the coercive environment created by the long-standing occupation.

For instance, GVC developed a Response and Transitional Development Plan (RTDP) at governorate level in the framework of a UNDP Community Resilience Development Program building on the integrated protection and developmental approaches to secure livelihoods. The RTDP provided for a wider spectrum of short term to long-term responsive, remedial,

environment building, securing livelihoods and developmental actions. The RTDP has been guiding the complementarity of actions by different NGOs, INGOs and institutional actors under the framework of the UNDP program, and informed the design of GVC's 3 year LRRD program – TURBO.

In parallel, GVC in partnership with UNICEF, developed a program to subsidize water trucking that alleviates water scarcity for Palestinians in Area C of the West Bank, while enhancing the sustainability of water service delivery, equitability of tariffs, and predictability of demand. Starting from the CPA continuous monitoring and analysis, the program used a *contiguuum* model where the humanitarian provision of trucked water was accompanied by both rehabilitation and developmental actions through the construction of water infrastructure and the creation of a multilevel water trucking governance system that defines the roles and responsibilities of all the national, regional, and local water provision stakeholders.

GVC considers that the only possible way of delivering meaningful and long-term development assistance will come when a stop will be put to the Israel's building permits regime and other norms and practices that assert Israel's control over the oPt. In the meantime, GVC, through the CPA and in strong coordination with partners and actors, has been seeking new opportunities for complementarity and coordination to ensure better protection and response to vulnerable Palestinian communities.

This effort resulted in the operationalization of complementary humanitarian and developmental actions. Complementarity is reinforced through the integration of the Operational Plans into the local/regional planning made by the Palestinian local governments. The Operational Plans and the multi-sector joint analysis has thus turned into an instrument facilitating the flexible use of existing funding mechanisms, aligning them to the sector priorities identified by Palestinian planning for each geographic area. In this way, we are moving towards a real nexus approach that can reinforce local ownership and structures where appropriate.

Francesco Michele
Humanitarian and Protection Policy Expert
GVC
www.gvc-italia.org/

1. Community represents a group of people that may be exposed to similar physical, psychological, and/or social impacts from multiple coercive factors and/or share the same resources, often, but not exclusively, related by place.

2. ICRC, 2001

A VIEW ON THE EU:

Interview: ICRC Head of Delegation to the EU, NATO and the Kingdom of Belgium in Brussels, Walter Füllemann

A VIEW ON THE EU

The role of the ICRC Brussels delegation is to be a bridge between the ICRC and the EU, NATO and Belgium. It deals with issues related to Humanitarian Law, Humanitarian action, policy and funding issues and works to ensure the relationship and the mutual trust needed for their political and financial support. 40 % of ICRC's funds come from the EU and the Member States, making them very important ICRC donors.

1. What is your assessment of the EU's contribution to the ICRC's protection mandate?

ECHO embodies the humanitarian conscience of the European Union and represents the humanitarian principles within the Commission and the Union at large. The relationship between us is fruitful and solid, and we see ECHO as a strategic Partner we can count on in helping us promote and consolidate political acceptance of humanitarian action. In terms of protection we assisted the EU develop protection guidelines and specific guidelines on International Humanitarian Law, as well as contributing to elaborate the EU Consensus on humanitarian aid, the first document setting out the EU's and the Member States' approach to humanitarian aid.

2. Are there threats and opportunities in the current political environment?

We continually hear two key issues from the European institutions: one is security, linked to terrorism and counter terrorism, and the other is migration. We see a risk that everything that the Union does would be subsumed by these two issues and that humanitarian action will get absorbed. Hence, we must make sure that the humanitarian space is preserved. This is why ECHO's and our engagement with the Council and the EP is very important; to make sure that humanitarian action doesn't become an instrument for political goals by containing migration or being used as part of the counter terrorism strategy.

3. ICRC has the mandate to protect and assist the victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence. What are today's main protection challenges?

Here we see two main challenges. Firstly, the protection of civilians and respect or non-respect of humanitarian law. Today we clearly witness an erosion of the respect of humanitarian law. Secondly, the protection in armed conflict. We need to look at what is happening in these conflicts. The dynamics of conflict have changed over the years triggering needs and vulnerabilities that perhaps didn't exist thirty or forty years ago. Looking at the actual belligerents, military actors or the armed groups, they are more and more polarised, multiplying and fragmenting. Knowing which actor does what, where and how much influence they have on the protection situation of a population is already a challenge.

Then, there is the challenge of reaching them, engaging with them and having a "protection dialogue". In the ICRC's terms this is confidential and bilateral, documenting violations or holding accountable the person responsible for the violations.

By polarisation, we mean that today we see a world that dehumanises the adversary, and thus anything you bring forward to humanise the other is rejected. This causes real problems when documenting violations, and then engaging belligerents in a dialogue aimed at preventing recurrence of such violations.

There are also increasing challenges in "reciprocity and transnationalism". We see actors respecting the law but only as a transaction, where you say "if you respect it I respect it, if you don't I don't" and that includes giving access to humanitarians, providing access to detainees and helping establishing the fate of people who are unaccounted for.

4. The dynamics of conflict have undergone a rapid transformation over the last few years. What are the consequences for civilians affected by crisis and for humanitarian work?

Today we have numerous long term conflicts or protracted crises, and we witness not only direct protection needs, like people hit by weapons, terrorist attacks, drones, but also an increasing collapse of basic services. Electricity, health structures, health personnel, and medical vehicles are also being deliberately targeted as a means of war. The indirect consequences of war on populations are thus greater and more prolonged. For example, water systems cannot be repaired in two weeks, it takes years to maintain and re-establish these services. The biggest concern for us is that there seem to be no political solutions, hence conflicts continue creating ever deeper rooted problems, and protection concerns will continue. The likelihood of reconciliation disappears.

In Syria, for example, there is the sensitive issue of when the international community will engage in rehabilitation and reconstruction. The people across Syria need it, they don't have access to water because the whole system has broken down. Whether they voted for one side or another it doesn't matter from a humanitarian point of view. The EU declines to fund this unless there is a credible political process, so how do we engage with those whose political concerns outweigh humanitarian considerations? We need to make humanitarian action more sustainable in terms of time and investment to

A VIEW ON THE EU

make sure that there are minimum levels of basic services and livelihoods. Maybe it is a question of semantics, maybe instead of calling it rehabilitation and reconstruction we should call it “humanitarian plus”?

5. There are growing concerns that counterterrorism measures can infringe upon the protection of civilians by inhibiting the provision of assistance and protection. How do you see this?

First of all, terrorism by definition is a serious problem in terms of protection and acts of terror are prohibited by IHL. Counter terrorism can become a concern if it politicizes or instrumentalizes humanitarian aid or introduces “exceptions” to the respect of IHL .

There are implications for broader sanctions and those against terrorist individuals or organisations, and other counter-terrorism measures, but for us it is about the clauses that expect humanitarians to guarantee in writing that none of the work that we do, in terms of protection or assistance, will benefit those who are being sanctioned or will benefit terrorists. When providing assistance across front lines, we often work in areas controlled by people considered terrorists by donors. Of course we don't want to support terrorism but how far do we have control along the line of where food aid or water goes? Also, because of the demonising of the enemy you risk that people don't get any humanitarian aid because they are considered bad or undeserving victims.

6. Today technologies play an important role in humanitarian work and many humanitarian organisations handle sensitive data. What are the risks involved in terms of protection and how can accountability be improved?

Of course, holding private information on individuals we must be very respectful of what we do with this information and use it only for humanitarian purposes. We have names of beneficiaries entitled to cash transfer, or food or water, and data on detainees and patients. People are entitled to know how we process this data. How do you do that in a chaotic conflict environment, where you have very little time? ICRC have been at the forefront, with others, in developing best practices within the humanitarian community and we created the “Handbook on data protection in humanitarian action” together with the Brussels Privacy Hub. We have started to draft the second version,

bearing in mind new developments like Block chain, artificial intelligence, and virtual identities. Our interaction with the population, particularly in the context of war, requires us to make clear that we are not abusing the trust they have placed in us.

7. Does the new trend to try and work in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, fit with ICRC's way of working? What could be its advantages and disadvantages?

The humanitarian-development nexus is not new; before there was LRRD (Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development) and now we call it the nexus, the double nexus. The debate we are having now is about where the humanitarian work links to the security, stability or peace bit. We don't want to design programs for political, military, or purposes other than humanitarian. Humanitarian engagement can contribute in part to stability but in the long run if you deliver humanitarian action for reasons other than humanitarian need, it is going to backfire sooner or later.

8. How does the ICRC see the localisation agenda? What are the risks and challenges of working with local and national actors in situations of conflict?

International actors are not able to deliver a response on their own. Localisation brings the significant added-value of connection, culture, relationships and an understanding of the environment of the place that international actors simply don't have. We are fortunate within the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Movement that we can count on the National Societies, which in many cases can support us. It is not a problem at all in a response to natural disasters but it can be more delicate in protection conversations in conflicts. Information can be delicate and needs to be dealt with discretely and usually bilaterally. If you are an international actor, I think it is easier to maintain that very principled line. If you don't have a clear track record of neutrality, it is going to be very difficult for you to keep the confidence and trust from a population who are going to share their testimony with you, or get access to the people who are responsible for the violations of humanitarian law. This is where localisation and protection could be an issue.



VOICE (Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies) is a network representing 86 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in humanitarian aid worldwide, which are based in 19 European countries. VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor with the European Union on emergency aid and disaster risk reduction and it promotes the values of humanitarian NGOs.

Ensuring people's needs are at the heart of the nexus approach: a humanitarian NGO perspective

VOICE policy resolution 2018

VOICE welcomes the EU decision to pilot the humanitarian-development nexus in six countries. From a humanitarian NGO perspective, adopting a nexus approach is about offering the necessary operational flexibility to address people's humanitarian and development needs in protracted crises in a coordinated manner. Doing this at sub-regional level in six countries is a practical and context-specific approach that allows for learning and development. NGOs welcome the work by the EU's humanitarian and development departments and delegations on developing joint analysis, planning and assessment frameworks and action plans. Based on the experience of NGOs in the field so far, VOICE asks the EU to broaden the process and better include its partners.

In a foreign policy context increasingly driven by security and stabilisation concerns^[1], humanitarian NGOs welcome that the EU has confirmed important safeguards regarding the humanitarian principles referring to the EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid^[2] as this counters the risk of instrumentalisation of the nexus for security purposes. In light of escalating needs, and rapidly evolving and intensifying conflicts, a principled humanitarian response is required. This is also true in the countries where the nexus approach is being piloted.

Successfully implementing the humanitarian-development nexus implies:

- ▶ ensuring people's needs are at the centre of the process, including through involvement of NGOs at field level
- ▶ more multi-year planning and funding in humanitarian activities and the systematic introduction of crisis modifiers in development activities
- ▶ conducting lessons-learned to ensure the further development of the nexus approach and a commitment to it in the long term
- ▶ using the opportunity to enhance a community resilience approach
- ▶ respecting and promoting IHL and humanitarian principles

Background

- ▶ **Ensuring people's needs are at the centre of assessment, analysis and action plans, including through the involvement of NGOs in the process at field level**

The EU institutions and member states will need to overcome cultural and institutional hurdles to achieve the nexus. An inclusive and localised approach to the nexus pilot countries is essential to delivering effective responses and ensuring that no one is left behind in protracted crises. The EU should seek to ensure that international and national NGOs are adequately involved in relevant nexus planning and programming to ensure that gaps are bridged. Given their field experience, NGOs can help provide critical community-based experience, a bottom-up approach and ensure people's needs are put at the centre.

[1] Including in the context of the UN's 'triple nexus' with a peace/security focus, the EU's Global Strategy, the EU integrated approach to conflicts and crises and the new EU focus on state resilience.

[2] Council conclusions on humanitarian development nexus (May 2017), Commission Communication on a strategic approach to resilience (June 2017), Council conclusions on Integrated approach to conflicts and crises (January 2018).

▶ **More multi-year planning and funding in EU humanitarian activities and the systematic introduction of crisis modifiers in EU development activities**

Implementing the nexus requires ensuring complementarity of development and humanitarian activities. Overall this requires a culture shift from the EU as a donor, towards more flexibility and risk-taking to support LRRD, community resilience, early recovery and reconstruction. NGOs have seen opportunities lost due to a lack of suitable instruments – the next MFF provides an opportunity to address this. Now that the policies are in place, the EU needs to translate the necessary operational flexibility in the right financial instruments and tools: more multi-year planning and funding in EU humanitarian activities, and the systematic introduction of crisis modifiers in EU development activities are first concrete elements the EU can introduce to allow its partners to effectively contribute to nexus implementation.

▶ **Conducting lessons-learned to ensure the further development of the nexus approach and a commitment to it in the long term through the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF - EU multiannual budgetary cycle)**

Defining action plans for each nexus pilot is a welcome step as it will help make them concrete and the EU accountable. Regular reviews should be undertaken to stimulate lessons learned exercises including between the different pilots, especially on the process of implementing the nexus and its impact. Former EU experience of working on LRRD (e.g. drought cycle management in Horn of Africa) can also provide useful elements into the design and monitoring of these action plans. Given the high interest and the momentum around the nexus, new pilots should be rapidly identified especially if the current ones do not make the expected progress. Commitment to the nexus approach and lessons-learned should be integrated into the aid instrument(s) under the next funding cycle and MFF.

▶ **Using the opportunity to enhance a community resilience approach**

People and communities must remain the core stakeholders in building resilience. Paying attention to the most vulnerable/at risk people and groups, building strategies to contribute to more community resilience through greater preparedness, and harnessing the transformative aspect of resilience are essential. This nexus pilot exercise offers a unique opportunity to develop prevention measures, enhance response capacity, support early recovery, build self-reliance and reduce risks at community level; delivering a community resilience approach and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals commitment to leave no one behind and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

▶ **Continuing to respect and promote IHL and the humanitarian principles**

The nexus approach is being applied primarily in fragile contexts where populations' access to humanitarian assistance and aid workers' security are often threatened and where protection needs are high. NGOs thus recall the need for context-specificity of the nexus approach and strongly encourage the EU to stay committed to ensuring an enabling environment for frontline responders to deliver impartial humanitarian aid where it is needed. In line with the EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, the management and delivery of humanitarian aid must remain principled, unconditional and based on assessed needs. Recognising that NGOs need to be able to maintain independence and neutrality, the EU and member states' foreign relations strategies, policies and action plans must fully respect the principled nature of humanitarian aid, and define clear actions to ensure respect for international humanitarian law (IHL). They must continue in their efforts to raise awareness of the need to respect IHL and address their own actions' impact on respect for IHL (e.g. responsibilities in terms of facilitation of hostilities through the sale of arms).

- ★ **Establishing common priorities for humanitarian aid: The new VOICE president Dominic Crowley met Commissioner Stylianides and ECHO Director General Ms Pariat**
These successful meetings gave the opportunity to talk about the importance of the partnership between NGOs and DG ECHO to ensure humanitarian assistance reaches the most vulnerable. The humanitarian situation in Syria, the consequences of Brexit for the delivery of humanitarian aid and the new MultiAnnual Financial Framework (MFF) were among the topics discussed. A follow-up meeting with the Director General of DG ECHO, Ms Pariat, opened the door to further strategic discussions to increase the efficiency and the effectiveness of principled and needs-based humanitarian aid through NGO partners.
- ★ **Fostering NGOs and front-line responder's engagement in the Grand Bargain: VOICE project brings the Grand Bargain to NGOs all around the world!** - The Grand Bargain (GB), is a unique agreement between the largest donors and humanitarian agencies who have committed to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action. The NGO sector is also strongly engaged. The VOICE GB project, financed by the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is making strides providing space for NGOs at field level to engage in the discussions. VOICE launched the [Grand Bargain for NGOs website](#) at the annual GB Stocktaking meeting in New York. The website aims at raising awareness and facilitating access to relevant GB information for NGOs and frontline responders. With its interactive map gathering initiatives from all over the world and information on how and why to engage, it has received a very positive response. More than 47 initiatives and resources have been submitted so far. At field level, two successful workshops were organised. In Somalia, with the support of ICVA and the Somali NGO Consortia, participants shared operational perspectives and experiences linked to the Grand Bargain in the humanitarian financing architecture. In Lebanon, together with Caritas Lebanon, LHIF (Lebanon Humanitarian INGO Forum) and the Lebanese NGO Forum, VOICE had the opportunity to discuss with front-line responders the implementation of the Grand Bargain at field level analysing the ten different work streams. At EU level, a workshop was held in Paris with the support of the French NGO Platform Coordination SUD, providing an open space for participants to discuss the Grand Bargain's potential for simplification of humanitarian aid related processes and administrative procedures.
- ★ **Ensuring that peoples' needs are at the centre of the humanitarian-development nexus: the engagement of the VOICE network and the "from DRR to resilience" working Group** - At the annual General Assembly in May, the network adopted a policy resolution on the nexus, making clear recommendations to the EU on how the humanitarian-development nexus should be implemented. Further discussions on the nexus were held at the VOICE-VENRO roundtable in Berlin where members showed strong engagement. As the current EU political context is being shaped by the topics of migration and security, the inclusion of "peace" in the nexus raises concerns in the humanitarian sector. The VOICE working group is supporting the network's engagement with the EU on its next Multi-Annual Financial Framework, focusing on bridging the financing gap between humanitarian and development aid, asking that the commitment to community resilience is implemented through the new proposed Neighbourhood Development International Cooperation Instrument.
- ★ **An NGO perspective on the implementation of the Trust Funds: VOICE survey** - The VOICE secretariat has recently conducted a second survey among members to identify challenges and best practices regarding the EU trust funds. Since the first survey in 2016, NGOs' access to general information on the EU Trust Funds has improved. However, concerns about the lack of transparency regarding selection criteria remain. Whether the trust funds are bringing more operational flexibility to address needs or rather give more flexibility to the EU to control migration is another issue. Overall the Trust Funds fill a funding gap to bridge emergency and development activities, but their potential is not fulfilled mainly due to complex procedures and delays regarding contracting.
- ★ **VOICE network welcomes two new members** - Red Barna (Save The Children Norway) and La Chaîne de l'Espoir (France) joined the network, bringing the total membership to 86 NGOs from 19 European countries.

HUMANITARIAN ISSUES AT EU LEVEL

VOICE AT WORK

★ Members' publications

- The 2018 Global Hunger Index—published jointly by Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe—tracks the state of hunger worldwide and spotlights those places where action to address hunger is most urgently needed. It shows that the world has made gradual, long-term progress in reducing overall hunger, but this progress has been uneven. Areas of severe hunger and undernutrition stubbornly persist, reflecting human misery for millions.

- The paper "Doing Nexus differently" from CARE International in the MENA region targets a wide range of global stake-holders of the humanitarian and development sectors with the following aims:

Present and strengthen the internal and external evidence of and for a different Nexus approach that works better for our impact groups. Contribute to internal and external dialogue, build collective voice among peer organizations, create linkages with partners (research institutes, specialists in the field) and influence the way the Nexus is, and will be, implemented globally and locally.

- Resilience: Why the divide is artificial, and the opportunities are real in this paper World Vision explains how to overcome the artificial distinction between those involved in humanitarian, development and peace building.



Funded by
European Union
Humanitarian Aid

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Commission through its Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department. The views expressed herein should not be taken, in any way, to reflect the official opinion of the European Commission, which is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

VOICE out loud

Magazine published by VOICE asbl

Editor: Kathrin Schick - Co-Editor: Roberta Fadda

VOICE wishes to thank the contributors of this Issue. Views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the VOICE network.

VOICE asbl (Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies)

71, Rue Royale, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium

Tel: +32 (0)2 - 541.13.60

E-mail: voice@ngovoice.org

Website: www.ngovoice.org

Twitter: @ngoVOICEeu