

The articles in this VOICE out loud present the essential role of NGOs in the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable and crisis affected people. They help demonstrate the impact the EU can have on this important work.

Médecins du Monde and EU-Cord – two very different European families of NGOs – together underline the professionalism of humanitarian NGOs and the support they receive from European citizens for their work and values. Trócaire from Ireland talks about the principles in the Somalia context as key to maintain affected populations’ access to humanitarian assistance in certain areas while INTERSOS from Italy explains the importance of the predictability and flexibility of the EU aid budget for helping people in complex crises like Yemen with protection, health & nutrition, water and sanitation. Save the Children Netherlands together with the EU office address the issue of accountability and transparency in the sector and People in Need from the Czech Republic writes about voluntarism and vulnerable populations’ survival in war-torn Ukraine. Caritas Austria explains how its global network and relationships with national Caritas, like Caritas Jordan, can be strengthened to empower the local level in humanitarian response. Welthungerhilfe from Germany describes how European NGOs work together and with the international UN response system in the face of massive sudden onset disasters like in Mozambique.

In the ‘views on the EU’ we interviewed Mr. Jean-Louis De Brouwer, Director for Neighbourhood and Middle East in the Directorate-General for European Commission Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) and hear his impressions, after six years there, on the role and state of EU humanitarian aid and the importance of working with NGOs.






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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## FROM THE VOICE PRESIDENT

It is in sudden-onset natural disasters that the work of VOICE members is most visible to the European public.

In the last few weeks, dramatic images of the devastation caused by Cyclone Idai across huge regions of south-eastern Africa were relayed around the world. The human and material losses were vast. The international community mobilised. NGOs with presence or partners on the ground were among the first to respond, quickly supported by others. Sufficient funding and access are basic prerequisites for any effective response. The window for the response to Idai was small as agencies successfully sought to prevent some of the other emergencies that threatened: diseases like cholera spread quickly, malaria is endemic and the flooding happened when the main crop was close to harvest and ahead of the winter crop planting season. But significant recovery funding is needed to ensure that the very clear early warning of hunger is addressed.

In reflecting on the impact of Idai, we need to look at what disaster preparedness and risk reduction measures worked and saved lives or prevented disaster losses across the region. By understanding this we can help ensure development interventions are better risk informed in the future.

We know we will see situations like in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe again as the impact of climate change grows. We already see it in the recurring cases of drought, floods and the accompanying food insecurity in many places across the world.

In parallel with this, conflict has driven the bulk of accelerating growth in humanitarian need in the last decade, and has been instrumental in causing displacement and hunger. Conflict's role in propelling more than 65 million people into displacement is well known, but World Food Programme (WFP)'s Executive Director David Beasley recently noted that *"ten out of the thirteen largest hunger crises in the world are conflict driven, and 60% of the people in the world who are food insecure live in conflict zones.... Hunger fuels longstanding grievances and disputes over land, livestock and other assets."*

The articles in this VOICE out loud illustrate the diversity of needs that humanitarian NGOs respond to all over the world – and the diversity of the NGOs themselves. They show that NGOs' roots are in ordinary people's extraordinary voluntary actions to support crisis affected people. They show the importance of the EU as an actor shaping the humanitarian system. They reflect on the very different crises in Ukraine, Yemen, Jordan, and Mozambique, and the different sets of priorities and impacts on the people living through them. But they also show some common issues, including the reality that safe access to humanitarian assistance at times of crisis is vital. Predictable, timely, flexible and sufficient funding makes for a better response. Risk informed aid means disaster losses can be prevented. Finally, they show that in seeking to build and maintain trust with affected populations, our assistance has to respect the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.

Aid workers around the world risk their lives to ensure crisis affected populations have access to humanitarian assistance and protection. Recently, the protection of humanitarian and medical personnel has been raised for discussion at UN Security Council (UNSC) level. Front-line responders, local, national, and international organisations face constant threats—including actions by some UN Member States - and have expectations from the international community, including for the full respect for international humanitarian law. But recent UN SC discussions have highlighted the need for more attention to be given to the consequences of counter-terrorism measures on civil society and humanitarian space. We also need: accountability for attacks on aid workers and medical missions; less militarisation of humanitarian aid and conflation of peacekeeping and humanitarian actions; and more support and finances for local organisations that face the highest risks.

The commitments of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit seem to be disappearing and its call for political solutions to be found for crises is at risk of being forgotten. More positively, the 'Grand Bargain' on humanitarian effectiveness and efficiency is starting to get going. We now look to the next European Parliament and the new Commissioners to provide political leadership in supporting humanitarian assistance and striving to ensure respect for international humanitarian law everywhere; for ensuring that future funding to support crisis affected populations is secured; and for broadening the space for civil society in Europe and around the world.

I have worked for humanitarian organisations for nearly 30 years. In that time, members of the VOICE network have shown themselves to be dependable sources of support to crisis affected populations, despite the increasingly challenging contexts in which these crises are occurring. As a network, we must convey the importance of the humanitarian endeavour to new EU decision makers. I believe that everyone can play their part in supporting people in crisis – this is what EU citizens consistently say they want the EU to do – and what our long collective experience of responding to crises has shown us that we need to do.

**Dominic Crowley**  
VOICE President

## HUMANITARIAN NGOS: CONNECTING VALUES TO SOLIDARITY

THE ISSUE – EUROPEAN NGOS IN EMERGENCIES: VALUES AND ACTION

*‘NGOs continue to receive high degree of support from European citizens as they connect values with practical expressions of solidarity with those who are often beyond our European borders.’*

★ On 23 October 1984, the BBC’s lunchtime news report led with Michael Beurk’s piece about famine in Ethiopia<sup>1</sup>. It opened with these words:

“Dawn, and as the sun breaks through the piercing chill of night on the plains outside Korem, it lights up a biblical famine, now, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This place, say workers here, is the closest thing to hell on earth.”

The footage was transmitted by more than 400 television stations worldwide and many who viewed the footage were moved to respond which they did, by giving financial support to the humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which they knew and trusted.

Many of those same organisations are responding to the humanitarian crisis left by Cyclone Idai as it leaves people destitute and once again European citizens will respond to appeals for money to support the delivery of life-saving assistance as they have done for people in the likes of Syria, Yemen, Nigeria and South Sudan to name but a few.

Humanitarian NGOs have changed a great deal over the past 30 years and this article will go on to talk about professionalism, expertise and cost-effectiveness. But it is worth remembering that through all this change, NGOs continue to receive high degree of support from European citizens as they connect values with practical expressions of solidarity with those who are often beyond our European borders.

This special status held by NGOs and the embodiment of European values they represent,

as some major European NGOs are also delivering assistance to vulnerable populations within member states themselves, make them credible interlocutors for EU citizens as well as for local populations throughout their countries of intervention on humanitarian and social questions.

Over the past 30 years, we have all been on a journey.

- NGOs are increasingly accountable to affected populations and beneficiaries, as well as individual and institutional donors. We have become more professional taking steps on our own initiative to improve our ways of working which one can see in the Core Humanitarian Standard<sup>2</sup> (quality and accountability), the Sphere Handbook<sup>3</sup> (rights-based global good practice to support humanitarian staff) and the Red Cross Code of Conduct<sup>4</sup> (principles of conduct) to name a few.
- Shifting from a ‘white saviour complex’ to enabling communities and working alongside community institutions which are often the first places people will go when they are in difficulties such as churches and mosques. This is most recognisable in the localisation agenda which commits at least 25% of direct humanitarian funding to local and national responders.
- Being increasingly involved in advocacy work as we can be in a position to speak out on behalf of a population whose voice may not get heard.
- Working in partnership for fundraising and project collaboration, for example, the START Network and the Dutch Relief Alliance.

1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/collegeofjournalism/entries/e088509f-af0b-3e1f-8bdb-3d2b024f9eb5>

2. <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard>

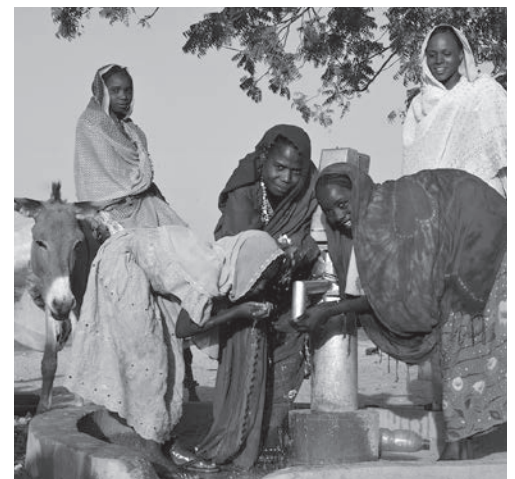
3. <https://www.spherestandards.org/handbook-2018/>

4. <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/publications/icrc-002-1067.pdf>

5. <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm?Survey=getSurveyDetail&search/humanitarian/surveyKy/2121>



Prescription, Nigeria, MDM



WASH interventions in Chad, Torleif Svensson, IAS (EU Cord member)

**BUT WHAT IS A HUMANITARIAN NGO?**

[following is taken from the 2012 VOICE resolution].

A humanitarian Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) is a non-profit entity independent from the government that is organised at local, national or international level.

A humanitarian NGO seeks to save lives, alleviate suffering and preserve human dignity in the face of disasters caused by natural hazards and conflicts. Humanitarian NGOs provide lifesaving goods and services such as food assistance, shelter and medical care, as well as protection to crisis affected communities. At the same time, they aim to increase the capacity of populations to cope with future disasters.

- Increasingly, however, we are being drawn into a debate on cost efficiency: how much output does the donor get for a unit (€) of input? This is a reductionist perspective and risks limiting NGOs in terms of quality, innovation and humanitarian mandate. Businesses recognise that there might be a trade-off between efficiency and quality; short term efficiency gains can end-up threatening the quality of humanitarian response and do not necessarily translate into value for the recipients in the longer term.

NGOs bring a wealth of specialised expertise which is also needed by our institutional donor partners to deliver on their humanitarian objectives.

★ **EU SUPPORT FOR HUMANITARIAN AID**

At the level of the European Union, the key donor for the sector is the Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Operations (DG ECHO).

The Eurobarometer polls the attitudes of European citizens towards humanitarian aid in the 28 EU Member States. In response to their 2017 report on humanitarian action based on data collected in 2016, we can surmise that

if NGOs are trusted by the public to provide humanitarian aid, then financial support to humanitarian action is seen as an important value and act of the EU.

It is worth remembering that<sup>5</sup>:

- 88% of respondents think it is important the EU funds humanitarian aid activities. At least three-quarters of respondents in each country think this is important.
- In spite of the current pressure on Europe's public finances, 84% support the continued funding of humanitarian aid. At least seven in ten respondents in each country support continuing funding for humanitarian aid.
- For 70%, the fact that the EU is one of the world's largest humanitarian donors gives them a positive image of the EU.
- 66% (with a minimum of 54% of respondents per country) says humanitarian aid is more efficient provided by the EU as a whole and coordinated by the European Commission.

The EU, when including its Member States, may be the leading donor of humanitarian aid worldwide but the amount spent through the Commission is less than 1% of the EU's annual budget (equivalent to €2 per EU citizen).

Humanitarian NGOs and the European citizens that consistently support us are therefore looking for a committed EU Commission and Parliament that can, in very practical ways, support the interplay between NGOs, citizens and the EU's commitment to effective humanitarian responses by supporting more predictable and timely funding of humanitarian aid and maintaining humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. This requires a systematic effort from Member States and Members of the European Parliament if our contribution to the humanitarian sector is to meet our ambition and effectively contribute to address the needs of vulnerable populations.

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## THE CHALLENGES OF REACHING SOMALIA'S MOST VULNERABLE – GOING BEYOND STANDARD COMPLIANCE

THE ISSUE – EUROPEAN NGOS IN EMERGENCIES: VALUES AND ACTION

*'In Trócaire's experience, the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality at their core are not just statements of value, but essential tools to gain and maintain affected populations' access to assistance in places like Gedo.'*



A camp for displaced people in Somalia, Trócaire

★ Somalia has been wracked by conflict for over twenty years. A new government in 2012 brought some hope but severe drought and ongoing instability have continued to take a devastating toll on the population. At present 6.7 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Somalia. In 2018 Trócaire was the main INGO actor providing humanitarian and development support in the Gedo region of the country that it has been in since 1992.

The influence of regional powers over the past 18 months on the internal political dynamics of Somalia has slowed and often halted progress towards state building and security in particular. Whilst clearly a step towards more regular governance, the emergence and reach of the Jubbaland State Government creates new challenges for aid workers. Previously, Trócaire worked solely with and through locally led District Health Boards (DHBs) and Community Education Committees (CECs) to provide essential humanitarian services to the community. This method of working provided safe access to areas that other organisations were unable to reach and established Trócaire as an independent and reliable actor among the community. The more pronounced role of the Jubbaland State Government has had a direct impact on the organisation ability to conduct outreach activities in areas where non-state militia groups still control.

In 2018, the Jubbaland State Government's Ministry of Health (MOH) attempted to dissolve the DHBs, insisting they needed to control the running of institutions. This caused significant grievance among DHBs and community elders, and threatened Trócaire's perceived neutrality in Gedo. These developments in Jubbaland have proved a new challenge for the NGO, having to reconcile pressure from different parties, trying to respect state institutions while ensuring neutrality and continuity of humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable.

Adding to the complexity, navigating local clan dynamics in order to access the most marginalised riverine communities poses additional significant challenges. Typically, majority clans in Gedo control resources and access. They are the gatekeepers. Trócaire has to be clear on its systems and process challenges that can be easily manipulated, particularly in relation to recruitment and procurement. Very robust 'do no harm' principles and processes around procurement are required. As a humanitarian organisation Trócaire has signed up to the Red Cross Code of Conduct and continues with its ambition to seek external verification of its policies and practices against the Core Humanitarian Standard. In Trócaire's experience, the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality at their core are not just statements of value, but essential tools to gain and maintain affected populations' access to assistance in places like Gedo.

Addressing compliance goes beyond the standard norms, with compliance in terms of targeting, and

compliance in terms of community engagement also paramount. Exclusion of communities' access to aid deliveries and health services is a significant concern. In the drive towards empowering local civil society, the danger is that by working through clan structures there is a risk of being co-opted into one particular group. Powerful elites within camp structures and even within Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps can be the gatekeepers to assistance and access to services. There is a real danger that minorities and the most marginalised are excluded. We have to be extremely careful in choosing who to collaborate with.

To navigate this difficult context, Trócaire prioritises a number of elements. Careful targeting processes which are clear to the community are essential. These must be supported by strong feedback and complaints systems and robust protection mechanisms. Our organisation's focus and attention is on severely marginalised groups whose vulnerabilities may be exacerbated by the dynamics of clan distributions, particularly vulnerable Bantu Somalis, women and girls coming to access services. To counteract this risk, our aid workers focus on the inclusion of marginalised groups in outreach, discussions with local communities and authorities – ensuring the marginalised are represented and given voice. It is the responsibility of humanitarian actors to ensure that systems are robust, that strong protection mechanisms are put in place and that clear targeting criteria are agreed. Strong community level engagement is required to ensure that no one is left behind.

Trócaire is acutely aware that its beneficiaries are not one homogenous group but in fact comprise quite diverse groups. There can be many communities within the broader community. We take a local approach to hiring of staff from their own locality and not bringing staff from other areas in order to counteract clan dynamics and increase sensitivities to local people. This helps minimise risk associated with accessing services by bring services closer to the affected populations.

Trócaire has managed to gain significant access to the most vulnerable riverine communities in the past year and has been able to respond to their essential humanitarian needs, setting up two new medical centres that serve 2511 households. This has had a very positive impact on access to health services for these most marginalised Bantu communities. It has also helped change the perceptions of some sections of those minority clans who previously complained that services focussed exclusively on areas occupied by the more powerful clans of Gedo.

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## YEMEN: A CASE FOR PREDICTABLE RESOURCES FOR PREDICTABLY STRONG HUMANITARIAN ACTION

THE ISSUE – EUROPEAN NGOS IN EMERGENCIES: VALUES AND ACTION

The past decade has seen a steep rise in humanitarian challenges, resulting from new or ongoing large-scale protracted conflicts, including Iraq, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen, together with Afghanistan, Cameroon, Central African Republic, DR Congo and Nigeria. The staggering scale and breadth of humanitarian issues include an estimated 68 million forcibly displaced persons exposed to protection issues, lack of access to health, food and/or clean water, or facing other humanitarian challenges.

*‘...the humanitarian community needs to continue to work with donors towards stronger planning of humanitarian priorities with predictable funding resources.’*



Mobile clinics in Aden Governorat, Yemen, INTERSOS

Although the overall funding coverage of humanitarian needs have broadly remained at similar levels over the past years, the current humanitarian trends are unlikely to decrease, causing concerns as to how we will collectively be able to respond to communities that will require assistance.

Partly in recognition of these challenges, the international community has been debating how to effectively align humanitarian and development assistance to address the growing aid needs. While the humanitarian-development nexus debate is yet to start bringing concrete results, the humanitarian needs in countless contexts continue to be addressed by national and international humanitarian organisations with the funding support from donors, including the European Union.

Having a sound programme in place, designed based on identified target groups’ needs, to deliver timely assistance to targeted populations – is essential for measuring humanitarian effectiveness. Whether we want to ensure minimal disruption to education for children affected by conflict in Yemen, or provide good access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) to internally displaced populations in DRC, or treat malnutrition in South Sudan – all these interventions are planned and executed with the support of donor funding, in agreement and coordination with target communities, national and local authorities, and other stakeholders. Key enabling factors for successful, well-planned and relevant humanitarian interventions strongly rely on comprehensive funding plans, with commitments and pledges agreed through a dialogue with donors.

Predictable multi-year funding is an important commitment made by the donors at World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, as one of the preconditions to achieve better planned, more effective and efficient programming. A number of today’s Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) outline their multi-year requirements. However, the commitment to multi-year funding is yet to be translated into reality, as the majority of donors continue to work within traditional funding timeframes of up to 12 months.

At the same time, the present operational realities are becoming extremely complex. Take for example Yemen. INTERSOS continues to work both in North and South Yemen, providing life-saving assistance through protection, health and nutrition, and WASH in nine governorates. Yet, to deliver its humanitarian mission in Yemen, INTERSOS must put a lot of time, energy and resources to tackle restrictive operational impediments, while managing funding grants that are often shorter than twelve months. These include daily management of safety and security, negotiating access to different parts of the country, dealing with complex bureaucratic procedures, lengthy negotiations of programme

sub-agreements that may take up to three months, travel permits for in-country movements, as well as the negative impact short contracts have on staff.

Complex humanitarian contexts such as Yemen are not suited for a short-term funding approach, as the existing impediments are already a challenge to deliver urgent and timely assistance. In reality the implementation of shorter assistance within complex and challenging backgrounds could be delayed, sometimes resulting in even shorter project timeframes than originally intended, ultimately at the expense of populations in need. A more predictable approach to planning of activities and resources is essential to avoid this and to increase the effectiveness and relevance of humanitarian assistance to crises affected populations, against the ever-growing obstacles, including the increased fiduciary, legal and other compliance demands from the donors.

Therefore, more than ever before, while protracted crises last on average for 8 years, the humanitarian community needs to continue to work with donors towards stronger planning of humanitarian priorities with predictable funding resources. Predictable and flexible funding in protracted crises would not only provide better humanitarian responses, but would also allow for greater flexibility in terms of responding to sudden spikes and changes in operational priorities, thus enabling a more relevant response, and saving funds by allowing procurements in a timely manner, with more optimal price and quality conditions.

Currently, the EU plans and agrees an annual humanitarian budget, complemented by slightly longer programming cycles. Additionally, reflecting the EU’s commitment to people in crises, EU regularly provides a top up to their annual budgets, enabling responses to evolving humanitarian priorities. However, while these additional injections make a positive difference in humanitarian assistance, they are rarely responding to truly new or unpredictable needs. Using that experience, the EU should recognise its own generosity and agree larger humanitarian budgets at the beginning of each year, thus increase the efficiency, timeliness and predictability of humanitarian responses.

Finally, planning with predictable funding would create a more thoughtful and thorough consultation dialogue with communities targeted for assistance, ensuring that their needs are truly taken into consideration, giving a sense of continuity. A comprehensive approach that combines life-saving humanitarian action with recovery investments with the support of multi-year funding would help prevent further deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Yemen.

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## LOCALISATION ON TRIAL

How localisation is changing partnerships and realities of local and international actors: A dialogue and reality check on localisation between Caritas Jordan and Caritas Austria.

THE ISSUE – EUROPEAN NGOS IN EMERGENCIES: VALUES AND ACTION

*‘Localisation therefore impacts how all actors as part of the local spectrum are engaging with each other and also engaging towards the global donor environment.’*



Jordan, Caritas Austria

★ During the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016 the call for localisation emerged as a core priority for change within the humanitarian system; which was a logical outcome given the extensive preceding regional consultations. With the Grand Bargain (GB), committing to more direct and better funding modalities for local and national responders, localisation also found its way into one of the key agreements of the summit, endorsed until today by 59 governments, UN agencies and international NGOs<sup>1</sup>.

### ★ LOCALISATION FOR “THE LOCAL”

“The focus on localisation is coming at the right moment for us” Omar Abawi, Head of Programmes of Caritas Jordan is convinced. As an organisation which has been responding to local emergencies since its foundation more than 50 years ago, Caritas Jordan is a prime example to support the case of localisation. “Through the Syria crisis Caritas Jordan has grown in size and it is equally important for us to develop our institutional capacity, having better access to resources and sustain programming especially now that the funding situation is changing.” Clearly as a local actor Caritas Jordan is at the forefront of emergency response in Jordan and finally, according to Omar Abawi, “the international community is tackling its reasoning behind why they have to be present in a country in case of emergency instead of working with and through local actors”. Of course they are implementing projects and providing resources for affected populations, however the sustainability of this approach is questionable and also limited in acknowledging local capacities and realities.

### ★ LOCALISATION TRICKLEDOWN EFFECT

Who is considered as a local? There are different levels reaching from regions (i.e. strengthen regional entities and organisations), to actors on a national level as well as sub-national level (i.e. communities, municipalities). Localisation therefore impacts how all actors as part of the local spectrum are engaging with each other and also engaging towards the global donor environment. On the one hand looking into the current global funding/ donor environment, we see that the system still favours international organisations as opposed to empowering local actors. This is often triggered by a single-provider approach, where higher amounts of grants are given to one contractual partner. Localisation of funding is an example for Caritas Jordan, to

change the dynamics of traditional streams of funding towards more direct and diverse funding for local actors.

On the other hand localisation also affects how national actors further engage with local resources and capacities. “Working with local partners and resources reflects on the quality of our work”, Omar Abawi is certain. Caritas Jordan is trying to mobilise regional and local organisations within their context and abilities. These organisations are facing the same challenges as Caritas Jordan, just on a different scale and level. For Caritas Jordan the contextualisation of capacity and knowledge is a key in creating ownership and facilitating its institutionalisation. Only then Caritas Jordan is also in a position to meaningfully support local counterparts – i.e. Community Based Organisations, parish networks, school networks, etc. – , which “definitely is a responsibility we want to seize as a strong and well connected national actor in Jordan”, according to Omar Abawi. To do so more effectively is however based on how the localisation agenda enables their level of agency and sphere of influence.

### ★ FAKE IT UNTIL YOU MAKE IT

“There is definitely already change visible in terms of attitude”, according to Omar Abawi, “UN agencies and other (I)NGOs are trying to localise their resources and implementing partners through changing their approach and requirements”. Nevertheless, at this point this remains superficial, with localisation being reduced to a mere precondition for funding. Walking the talk is a next step. For Omar Abawi using organisations as mere implementing partners is more a business than a partnership. “We saw this happening in the past, as soon as funding is gone also international organisations, which used to partner with us for years, leave.”

The WHS has pathed the way for a new way of working. The joint commitment serves as a basis to redefine the relationships and partnerships in humanitarian response. There are various applications and implications, which highly depend on the actors involved. Localised humanitarian assistance for Caritas Jordan therefore “is going to be the result of a gradual process of negotiation which will take its time”, as it requires adaptations from both ends. Shifting the power and moving towards relationships among equals, with local actors as active part of the information flow and decision making process is going to take time and different approaches. Localisation not only affects local

1. Executive Independent Grand Bargain Report - June 2018.

THE ISSUE – EUROPEAN NGOS IN EMERGENCIES: VALUES AND ACTION

**CARITAS INTERNATIONALIS COMMITMENT TO LOCALISATION**

In 2018 Caritas confederation undertook a survey on localisation throughout its members, receiving feedback from 80 countries in 6 continents. Caritas is built on principles of subsidiarity, solidarity, autonomy and strong partnership for a principled and effective humanitarian assistance. As a confederation we subscribe to the following commitments:

- We recognise the role of national and local partners as first responders;
- We commit to include capacity investment of the responding agency in all emergency responses;
- We support national responders in accessing direct funding from international donors and advocate for making this possible;
- We acknowledge the importance of full cost recovery for project operations and contribution to indirect costs in humanitarian response;
- We support and promote the expertise and influence of national members in humanitarian coordination mechanisms.

*‘Caritas Jordan is also in a position to meaningfully support local counterparts – i.e. Community Based Organisations, parish networks, school networks, etc. – , which definitely is a responsibility we want to seize as a strong and well connected national actor in Jordan’*

actors and how they will have to develop on an organisational and capacity level, but is equally going to have to translate into a redefinition of strategies and roles of international organisations and donors.

★ **CARITAS’ HEAD START**

Caritas Internationalis is a confederation of 165 national independent organisations, working in more than 200 countries and territories all over the world. As a confederation, partnership based approaches are deeply rooted in Caritas’ identity, hence localised assistance already was a lived reality within the Caritas network before the WHS. Asked how an international entity like Caritas Austria, can better support Caritas Jordan, Omar Abawi refers to two levels of attention: programmatic capacity as well as organisational development.

“Caritas Austria has been supporting us enormously in strengthening our capacity on a programmatic level, specifically in the education sector. Caritas Austria decided to develop interventions with us as equals, fully engaging us in all the decision making processes, accompanying us with having staff present in country and linked to our structure throughout the past years towards accessing longer-term and better funding modalities”, Abawi points out. That is a core starting point of localisation and also led to Caritas Jordan widening its network and being able to access direct funding sources not channelled through Caritas Austria. “Further capacity building was always an integral part of all funding received by Caritas Austria”, as well as the clear commitment to support Caritas

Jordan to participate and shape and not replace them in national coordination mechanisms.

The organisational development and institutional capacity relating to structures, policies and procedures is equally as important as programmatic capacity. Caritas Austria together with other Caritas organisations has accompanied and supported these various processes within Caritas Jordan in the past years. “As Caritas Jordan we know that we still need to improve in a lot of areas”, and Omar Abawi is convinced that “the analysis of organisational capacity needs can not only take into consideration the internal set-up but always needs to be responsive to the context and changing political, social, economic, technological, legal and environmental frameworks in order to grow as a local actor and get more independent.” Further localisation can only be successful if actors are open to engage in genuine and long-term partnerships, with mutual accountability and an openness to discuss problems, challenges and transfer knowledge as well as lessons learned.

★ **BEWARE OF BUZZWORDS AND HOMEWORK TO DO**

Within the WHS local voices and actors have claimed their space and hence the localisation agenda is part of an empowerment process. Localisation therefore should not be framed as a passive process for a *receiving end* alias the *local actor*. Rather discussions should focus on how international actors can more actively support local voices to demand compliance among donors and partners to global localisation commitments and claim their pivotal role within the humanitarian space.

Increased accountability among all actors as well as a reflection on the role of international organisations within the localisation agenda are critical next steps. Within Caritas Austria, this process of reflection has already started towards improving and renewing Caritas Austria’s commitment to partnerships and the added value that we can provide for partners. Together with partners, we still need to identify how to capitalise on Caritas’ head start to actively contribute to shaping the localisation debate. For localisation not to become another humanitarian buzzword, it is essential to remind ourselves why it is a necessity to shift the power dynamics within the humanitarian sector and go beyond discussions of pros and cons of cost-effectiveness.

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## ACCOUNTABILITY: AT THE HEART OF NGO HUMANITARIAN ACTION

THE ISSUE – EUROPEAN NGOS IN EMERGENCIES: VALUES AND ACTION

*‘NGOs remain the main deliverers of humanitarian aid to crisis affected populations and have been advocating for strengthening accountability to beneficiaries.’*

★ Accountability is not new to NGOs. But it has become a trending topic in the humanitarian sector over the past few years. Lately, the Grand Bargain (GB)<sup>1</sup>, an international agreement to improve the efficiency of humanitarian aid delivery commits both donors and humanitarian implementing agencies to be more transparent and accountable both to donors, upward accountability, and to beneficiaries, downward accountability or the so-called *participation revolution*.

The European Commission's Framework Partnership Agreement for humanitarian aid has a section dedicated to accountability (2.2.4) which indicates that “when signing the FPA, the partner commits to ensure accountability of its actions. Accountability in the context of humanitarian aid encompasses both accountability to European citizens on the good use of public funds and accountability to those in need in the countries facing humanitarian crisis, to ensure that the aid is suitably adapted to the circumstances and is provided in a way that enhances prospects for recovery”<sup>2</sup>.

### ★ UPWARD ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is widely recognised as a concept to give account to citizens or ‘taxpayers money’. NGOs are financed both by private donors and public or major donors (like foundations, governments, institutional donors). They need to be accountable to these different stakeholders and respond to their legitimate demand in that regard.

Every year, chartered auditors provide annual accounts and statements certifying that NGOs' funds have been used well and according to relevant guidelines. They are also subject to regular audits which are demanded or undertaken by institutional donors to verify the good use of public funds. As NGOs diversify their source of revenues and the number of donors they work with, the number of audits keeps on growing.

To translate the GB commitment of ‘greater transparency’, NGOs are now asked to encode financial transactions into the dedicated

International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) platform, used by 43 of 59 Grand Bargain signatories to publish some data on humanitarian activities. The use of this platform allows for better tracing of the funding flow in the humanitarian architecture.

### ★ DOWNWARD ACCOUNTABILITY- THE PARTICIPATION REVOLUTION

NGOs remain the main deliverers of humanitarian aid to crisis affected populations and have been advocating for strengthening accountability to beneficiaries. Saving lives and restoring the dignity of people in need is the essence of humanitarian action. However, populations affected by crisis and in need of humanitarian assistance have a right to express what their needs are and also how best to respond to those needs, providing their feedback on activities undertaken and having safe channels for raising complaints if need be. In humanitarian crises, communities often do not have clear and timely information; this should be a core part of aid. Accountability is therefore also linked to populations' access to information.

Participation is a key focus in our work, through the active involvement of affected populations in decision making processes affecting their daily lives. Communities participate through beneficiaries' surveys, or community discussion groups. The existence of safe and effective complaints and feedback mechanisms in humanitarian action is necessary and goes hand in hand with the duty to protect beneficiaries. A usual tool in complaints and feedback mechanisms is an independent telephone hotline, where members of affected communities may anonymously raise complaints on the action or activities of humanitarian NGOs or other stakeholders. Other tools, such as suggestion boxes, are used to gather complaints and feedback. Participation, information sharing and complaints, and feedback mechanisms are the three key components of downward accountability.

As the emphasis on accountability and inclusion increases, NGOs are constantly exploring new ways of listening to people they serve and engaging with them. Save the Children believes it is crucial to involve communities - including children - in these processes to ensure that they have the opportunity to shape decisions which affect them. Children often have views and recommendations that adults will not have thought of, so it is vital their views are taken into account. Accountability to children is grounded in the article 12 of the UN Convention on

1. <https://www.grandbargain4ngos.org/>

2. Source: 2014 FPA Guidelines, section 2.2.4, Accountability

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the Rights of the Child (CRC) – the child’s right to be heard. To make sure this right is guaranteed, Save the Children has developed specific child-friendly tools and professional expertise. This work is done following the Nine basic requirements for effective and ethical child participation<sup>3</sup>.

Accountability to beneficiaries is complemented by horizontal accountability, which refers to accountability towards partners, peers and related organisations, to strengthen learning and professionalization of the whole sector.

**★ LINKS AND TENSIONS BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

Downward and upward accountability systems work hand in hand and mutually reinforce each other. The duty of accountability to tax payers is only effective if NGOs can ensure that this tax payers’ money is used for the right purpose and in the right manner; really supporting the people we are seeking to help.

There are however tensions: donors too often oppose the need for accountability and simplification of reporting/transparency. The

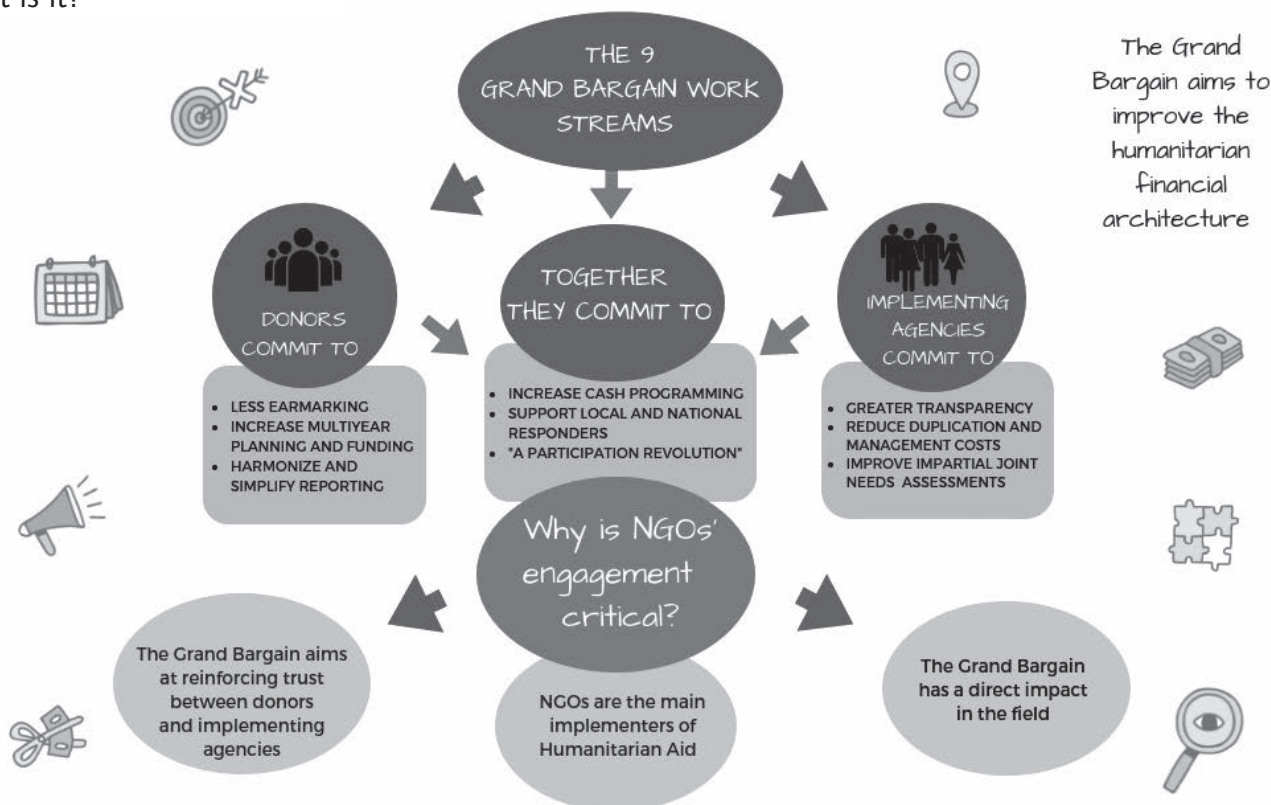
increasing requests for (upward) accountability to donors, and their long lists of rules and reporting demands, can limit the flexibility of humanitarian NGOs at the frontline to adapt actions to changing needs, informed by (downward) accountability mechanisms, in the most rapid and effective manner for the people.

Accountability remains our common goal aside from being a donor requirement, it is an essential element for humanitarian NGOs and a requirement to complete our mission successfully. In order for accountability to yield the right benefits for donors, affected populations and the humanitarian community, a continuous dialogue is essential in order to find the right balance between upward and downward accountability. This will remain high on our agendas in the years to come.

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3. [http://www.eacb-for-sick-children.org/images/2015/Nine\\_requirements\\_children-s-participation\\_Lansdown.pdf](http://www.eacb-for-sick-children.org/images/2015/Nine_requirements_children-s-participation_Lansdown.pdf)

**THE GRAND BARGAIN**  
What is it?



NO SILENT WITNESS: MEETING HUMANITARIAN NEEDS  
IN EASTERN UKRAINE FIVE YEARS ON.  
STORIES OF LIFE, LOSS AND VOLUNTEERING FROM PEOPLE  
ALONG THE 'CONTACT LINE'.

THE ISSUE – EUROPEAN NGOS IN EMERGENCIES: VALUES AND ACTION

*'Using selfie-style videos, the five have documented the impact of the conflict on their villages, providing authentic and powerful evidence of life and loss in the middle of a forgotten crisis.'*

★ In Eastern Ukraine, five million civilians bear the brunt of the conflict between the Ukrainian army and Russian-backed separatists. Those worst-affected live in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the East, where a 427-kilometre-long 'contact line', a stretch equivalent to the length of the French-German border, separates fighting forces. Life along the contact line is tough and movement across it is restricted. The villages and cities people used to travel between for work, football matches or family visits are cut off from one another by an active militarised zone, littered with unexploded ordnances.

Czech NGO, People in Need (PIN), has been providing humanitarian assistance along the contact line since August 2014. As one of only a handful of organisations permitted to work on both sides, PIN has brought food, shelter, water, livelihood support and psychosocial aid to conflict-affected civilians, with significant financial support from the European Union (EU).

In the last five years, Eastern Ukraine has emptied of its youth. They have left to pursue studies, find work and raise families away from the fighting. As a result, the elderly makes up 30% of those in need, the highest proportion of any crisis in the world. With limited mobility, no work and families far away, many are incredibly vulnerable. A PIN volunteer, Natalia, helps take care of the elderly in Zalizne, a town near the contact line. "In many cases there is no one to care for them," Natalia explains, "they have no one to talk to, to support them, to do their shopping or bring them medication." Natalia's motivation to volunteer is fuelled by what she has seen. "I'm happy to help those people, as I know personally how it feels to be in the basement, hiding from shelling, having limited access to medical services."

From PIN's headquarters in Prague to field offices all over the world, volunteers like Natalia bring a drive that speaks to PIN's core. As an organisation set up by war correspondents who wanted to do more to support those whose suffering they witnessed, this link between seeing and responding, is fundamental.

While humanitarian needs in Eastern Ukraine remain acute, after five years, the conflict has evolved into a protracted crisis and Ukraine has long since fallen off the radar of international media. With limited foreign coverage from the ground, it is difficult for international audiences to see what is going on and needs are being forgotten.

In an effort to close the distance and amplify the voices of those in Eastern Ukraine, PIN asked five people along the contact line to capture life around them on camera. Using selfie-style videos, the five have documented the impact of the conflict on their villages, providing authentic and powerful evidence of life and loss in the middle of a forgotten crisis. Their videos, which form the YouTube series 'This is Us, This is Ukraine'<sup>1</sup>, demonstrate resilience and humanity, and call for solidarity from people beyond the country's borders.

*"What would you like to say to people living abroad, who don't know much about us and our difficult situation?"* Asks Marina, one of the documentary makers from Bachmutka village, to her neighbour. *"I hope they believe what's happening here, that we are suffering and that they help us a bit,"* replies her elderly neighbour. Around Marina and all along the contact line, everyone has a story to tell. Documenting the lack of drinking water and functional infrastructure in her village, Marina explains how people carry on, little by little, proactively doing what they can for their community, whilst grateful for distributions of free bread, clothes and other aid. Coping mechanisms are worn and savings are spent but people are not too tired to support one another. Marina's message is clear, *"We have to help each other."*

With no end in sight, this protracted crisis on the doorstep of the EU yearns for development efforts to be scaled up. But, with development actors coming in, humanitarian funding is shrinking. What the creators of this YouTube series showcase is the fact that sustained humanitarian aid to Eastern Ukraine is vital. Not only must development investments improve the situation in the medium-term, but humanitarian work must continue to receive the resources it requires to save and preserve lives in the short-term. Looking forward and seeing humanitarian needs endure, it is essential that actors like the EU, who support the reform processes in Ukraine, use their leverage to respond accordingly and ensure that humanitarian needs, on both sides of the contact line, are met.

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Life close to the contact line, Ukraine, PIN

1. [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL\\_O5OQ-eRu98KNsnLgcmEyY6DV1GEVZ\\_J](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL_O5OQ-eRu98KNsnLgcmEyY6DV1GEVZ_J)

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE AFTER CYCLONE IDAI IN MOZAMBIQUE – JOINT EFFORTS WITH EUROPEAN PARTNERS

THE ISSUE – EUROPEAN NGOS IN EMERGENCIES: VALUES AND ACTION



Cyclone Idai, Mozambique,  
Welthungerhilfe

*‘...when division  
of labour works,  
professional partners  
join resources and  
knowledge and go for  
joint activities, we can  
support many more  
people than we could  
as an individual  
organisation.’*

2 May 2019

Right now, activities are being prepared for a joint emergency response after Cyclone Kenneth having the Alliance2015 member Ayuda en Acción based in the affected region.

★ When a disaster happens, emergency operations need to be put in place very quickly, but it is always important to take the time to design an efficient and well-prepared response. On 14 March, Cyclone Idai hit Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe bringing large-scale destruction of infrastructure and land, and most of all, bringing a lot of suffering to the local population. The real dimension of the disaster became only slowly visible in the media. It took some time before TV teams and journalists were able to get access to the affected areas. On the other hand, aid organisations, already right after the first notice of what had happened, were actively preparing their emergency response.

### ★ DAY ONE: THE DECISION

At Welthungerhilfe in Bonn, the regular procedure after a catastrophe is to immediately convene a “Senior Management Briefing”, where all relevant decision makers gather and put the available facts and figures on the table to decide whether an emergency team will be deployed or not.

In addition, since Welthungerhilfe is a member of the European network Alliance2015, it contacts the other member organisations. The questions to be clarified are mainly whether other member organisations are active in the country and has staff on the ground. If so, are the colleagues safe and able to act, is support needed or wanted, what is the kind of support needed, what can be done together? This information can be gathered very fast, and only two days after the Senior Management Briefing for Cyclone Idai made a decision, two members of the Welthungerhilfe emergency response team together with a communication officer flew out to Beira to support the Italian member Cesvi on the ground. The Irish Alliance2015 member Concern Worldwide did the same. The Swiss Alliance2015 member Helvetas, based in Maputo, managed to organise all necessary documents for the teams coming into the country.

Well equipped with what an emergency team needs when there is no clean water, no electricity, no fresh food and a big threat of cholera and malaria outbreaks, the team landed at Beira airport in Mozambique. The first challenge was that the team had had no time to apply for regular visas beforehand. Therefore, visa on arrival was the only option but in this situation aid organisations are welcome and

administrative procedures were quickly done thanks to the well prepared documents.

### ★ DAY FOUR: ON THE GROUND

The first activities started right at the airport – the only place in town with electricity and internet. The team registered with the UN coordination hub established in a big hall at the airport, and with the responsible local authorities, it got in touch with the relevant people from the individual clusters to immediately take action. After getting familiar with the local conditions at the only partly damaged Cesvi office in Beira, all Alliance2015 members present joined the UN coordination briefings and the relevant cluster meetings to decide which area to go to support the Cyclone affected people. In this case, the Alliance2015 organisations went to the district Nhamatanda, to remote areas, where no other organisation had been yet, to do assessments and feedback the results to the local authorities and the UN coordination. After the assessments, it became clear what exactly were the needs of the local population. Thus, the logistic experts of Welthungerhilfe, Concern Worldwide and Cesvi immediately started to organise the deliveries of the different relief items so that a complete ‘relief package’ could be provided. Within this constellation of different organisations working together in an emergency response, it is really an added value to have that division of labour.

Meanwhile, at our organisation’s head offices in Europe and in the Cesvi Beira office, logistic, financial and marketing experts were backing all procurement and fundraising activities. The communication officers on the ground delivered reports, stories, photographs and movies to document all activities.

The Cyclone Idai emergency response is still ongoing. The breadbasket of the country is destroyed. More than 500,000 small holders have lost their harvest and all their belongings. Aid organisations will have to stay for quite a long period of time. But when division of labour works, professional partners join resources and knowledge and go for joint activities, we can support many more people than we could as an individual organisation.

18 April 2019

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## A VIEW ON THE EU:

Interview: Jean-Louis DE BROUWER -  
Director for Neighbourhood and Middle East in ECHO

### A VIEW ON THE EU

Interview conducted  
by R.Fadda and  
C. Cranfield  
(VOICE secretariat)  
on 29 March 2019.

#### **1. The EU is the world's largest humanitarian aid donor, helping people in need across the globe. The number of crises are increasing faster than the funding available. What are the EU's humanitarian priorities to address the increasing needs in this context?**

All the humanitarian donors are confronted with this question. Accordingly, efficiency and effectiveness are more than ever on the agenda of humanitarian providers. This is the core of the Grand Bargain. I always refer to the report of the High-Level Panel (HLP) of Humanitarian Financing which paved the way for the Grand Bargain because it has a broader scope. It has to do with innovation, coordination, and improving the relations between donors and operators to address the increasing humanitarian needs. All these things are well known by VOICE, NGOs and UN agencies. There is a lot of work to be done but what I think has changed drastically over the last years is that now it is a shared concern and there is joint awareness.

Consequences of a crisis are much more dramatic in humanitarian terms when they unfold in a context that is already fragile. Like the effect of the conflict in the Sahel region populations, a context already extremely fragile because of natural circumstances. Humanitarian aid is focusing on vulnerability and development is focusing on poverty. Vulnerability comes on top of poverty, and it is by having a joint approach to address both that we can limit the consequences of the crisis or at least ensure the sustainability of the humanitarian response. So another priority is the famous 'humanitarian-development nexus', a way to approach crises which often come on top of another crisis.

Another dimension of the HLP on Humanitarian Financing was decreasing needs. I would like to see ECHO as a risk manager. We have the capacity to be there before the risk materialises, with the consequences and implementing a response which, if at all possible, enhances the resilience of the communities concerned. We can do a lot in terms of prevention. We have done in the past with the limited means available in the framework of DIPECHO, Disaster Risk Reduction programme. I would not mind if we invested much more in that. It is easier in regions and areas which are prone to natural disasters and when you look at the huge challenges coming from climate change, a joint-up approach with development, in terms of risk prevention and mitigation is needed.

We should also look at prevention of man-made risks. Political shocks are recurrent in

some areas of the world like the Central African Republic. This involves working with diplomats rather than development actors. Secretary General Guterres is trying to promote this at UN level with the triple nexus (humanitarian, development and peace) and Vice-President Mogherini has been developing this with the EU Global Strategy. I believe we should be part of this agenda.

In terms of identifying other donors, the third HLP recommendation, I think much more could be done with private donors and other geopolitical donors like China and the Arab donors. There is still a lot to do to improve the relation between these type of donors and the UN and about them fully supporting the humanitarian approach and the humanitarian agenda, which, I would say, is not always self-evident.

#### **2. ECHO partners with NGOs, the UN and the Red Cross to deliver humanitarian aid. What is the role NGOs play in the delivery of humanitarian aid? What is their added value?**

The specificity of NGOs is mainly their flexibility, adaptability to circumstances, their professionalism, the expertise they have gained in some of the areas they are in. Some of them, the niche NGOs, have a really indispensable and specific expertise.

UN agencies are also really professional but they have bureaucracy, less flexibility and are anchored to political entities, like ECHO. Not to say that we lose our freedom of expression and that we are less principled but, if you take the example of Syria, it is a member of the United Nations, which has an impact. NGOs are of course also dependent on governments, for their freedom of movement and action, but they keep, I would say, a greater level of independence from States.

#### **3. Traditionally ECHO has chosen to assign a large proportion of its humanitarian funding to NGOs in comparison with many other donors. Could you explain why? What role do you see for ECHO partners in defining and addressing your priorities?**

One of my mentors, when I joined ECHO, told me that ECHO's value is the value of its partners. It is true, if we don't select our partners and projects well, we are going to be seen as an inefficient or non-principled donor.

It is part of the DNA of this house and it is very much alive. Great attention is paid inside ECHO



## A VIEW ON THE EU

to this kind of joint partnership and interaction with the NGO world; not only the institutional lens that VOICE represents, but in all possible areas of intervention even where we mainly support UN agencies.

It is also good your colleagues in NGOs challenge us; reminding us of concerns that we might have lost sight of. Only the partnership and dialogue with NGOs brings that to a public entity like ECHO.

In their dialogue with our colleagues in the field network, ECHO partners are very influential in helping us define and establish our priorities, mostly in the case of protracted crises. I take for example the Syrian crisis. When you have been more than 7 years deeply involved in dramatic crises with dramatic consequences there is some kind of common understanding between ourselves and our partners, including NGOs, of what the needs are and how they should be met. Even when some of our partners could have felt frustrated because in that budgetary year, for that specific project, their proposal had not been selected by ECHO, this was always done with mutual understanding.

#### **4. Have you seen the role International NGOs play change over the years or do you foresee changes ahead?**

My own view is that in future size will matter more. The type of crises that we are confronted with push us in this direction of bigger, multipurpose and professional organisations on one side and on the other side, small, agile, highly professional and specialised organisations dealing with one specific dimension.

To be able to deal efficiently with the crises of the magnitude of the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh, the refugee crisis in Latin America, the Syria crisis, the deterioration of violence in the Sahel or in the Lake Chad region, you have to be very solid. You also have to have solid staff.

On the other side, we will have more and more niche organisations, small ones which are highly specialised in one type of intervention which have developed unique expertise in this area. These niche organisations push and promote innovation in humanitarian aid.

#### **5. Why does the EU support humanitarian aid? What is the future for the EU's humanitarian aid?**

Why shouldn't it support it? The humanitarian response grew because we saw the need to

have a more targeted humanitarian aid intervention next to the classical development instrument. A milestone was certainly the adoption of the inter-institutional declaration *the Consensus on Humanitarian Aid* (in 2007). It was the first time ever that the EU adopted its own doctrine in regard to humanitarian aid and it is a fully fled part of the EU agenda in the Lisbon Treaty.

EU support to humanitarian aid is in line with the EU being built on values, on a common vision and understanding of the world and its humanity.

I will leave ECHO after six absolutely fascinating years. Collectively we need to engage in honest way in an update of the business model. For me, the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) was a missed opportunity from that point of view. The UN prepared the Agenda for Humanity before the WHS, it was very good but then I remember Yves Daccord, the DG of the Red Cross, saying '*we went to the WHS with an agenda for humanity and we came out of there with a matrix*'. What the WHS should have provided is a common understanding, an updated consensus. This kind of humanitarian consensus or compact at a worldwide level, like the migrant or refugee compacts.

If we now look at the situation worldwide, more than 80 percent of our budget is going to man-made disasters, protracted crises, Syria. I always quote Mrs Mogherini: '*we are moving towards a world where humanitarian is becoming the new normal*'. I think that we are not seeing the end of the geopolitical crisis in the Middle East, with dire humanitarian consequences. Is the situation improving, getting any better in sub-Saharan Africa? No. Somalia and Ethiopia for instance, are becoming more fragile by the day. It is not urban legend; it is the consequences of climate change. I think we have to engage, looking at financing, relations with state authorities and more. There should be no complacency.

The EU Consensus itself was drafted before the SDGs, before the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty. It is time for us to have an honest conversation about the new realities. That does not mean throwing the old away, or questioning the principled approach or the vulnerability and the needs-based intervention which must guide us as donors and stakeholders. On the contrary, they are the DNA of our intervention. It is simply to make sure that the way we implement these fundamentals are adapted to the new world we are in.

## HUMANITARIAN ISSUES AT EU LEVEL

### VOICE AT WORK

✳️ **Outlining the importance of continued support for humanitarian aid: VOICE Board meets the European Parliament's Development Committee** - To highlight key priorities and exchange on trends and directions in humanitarian aid the VOICE Board together with VOICE member Polish Humanitarian Action met with the DEVE committee of the European Parliament (EP) in Brussels. It was a great occasion for the VOICE President, Dominic Crowley, to recall the importance of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid to tackle the challenges facing humanitarian aid. VOICE Board members gave an NGO perspective on what has been done at EU level to take forward the EU's Agenda for Humanity commitments and how the EP can contribute further to scale up progress on several tracks. Concrete examples from NGO field operations were shared to support VOICE advocacy messages: Multi-sectoral responses in Ukraine, the humanitarian-development nexus and forced displacement, and challenges related to the security situation in the field, violations of International Humanitarian Law and administrative barriers faced by NGOs. The Standing Rapporteur for Humanitarian Aid, Mr. Enrique Guerrero Salom and the Chair of the DEVE committee, Ms. Linda McAvan thanked the network for the regular dialogue and collaboration with MEPs and encouraged VOICE to continue providing input to the next EP's work on humanitarian aid.

✳️ **Budget increased in the next Multi-Annual Financial Framework: more funds for people in need** - Thanks to the strong and consistent engagement of VOICE members all over Europe and other advocacy networks two first achievements have been secured. The European Commission has proposed an overall increase of the budget to €11 billion and to maintain a separate budget line for humanitarian aid. The network has invested strongly in supporting members in their advocacy at EU and at national level. However, it will be the Member States and the European Parliament to be elected in May which will make the final decision on the MFF after it starts working in autumn 2019. Therefore, VOICE members will be continuing their collective efforts for more funding to cover increasing humanitarian needs.

European Parliament and Member State support for predictable, timely and flexible humanitarian aid in the next MFF remains crucial. The Emergency Aid Reserve should be used first and foremost for humanitarian crises outside the EU. VOICE has also provided significant input to the European Parliament and the Council on the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument to emphasise the need for more investment in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), community-based approaches to resilience and complementarity with humanitarian aid in the development programmes and actions of the EU.

✳️ **Towards a predictable and effective Framework Partnership Agreement for NGOs: 2 years' extension** - A huge collective effort invested in ensuring a new partnership arrangement under the next Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) led to a big success, with the Commission announcing an extension of the current arrangements to ensure a better transition. This was much welcomed by ECHO NGO partners and they stand ready for constructive engagement and in-depth consultations. And most of all, it ensures that the EU-funded humanitarian projects continue during a smooth transition to the next FPA. It is indeed a vital tool to assist populations in need, enabling the allocation of funds to partner NGOs in order to implement programmes in crisis affected areas. The FPA is signed between the European Commission's Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) and humanitarian organisations and defines the contractual and financial modalities for a period of several years.

✳️ **Grand Bargain for NGOs! Gathering input from front-line responders in DRC and debating risk in London** - Almost 3 years after its launch at the World Humanitarian Summit, the Grand Bargain remains an important tool for the improvement of effectiveness and efficiency in the humanitarian aid sector.

As the VOICE Grand Bargain project funded by the Belgium MFA continues its journey, a new workshop was held in Kinshasa, DRC, to understand which are the gaps which need to be addressed at field level to implement the Grand Bargain commitments and move forward.

The workshop in DRC was preceded by another workshop in London entitled "Risk Sharing to reach the 'Grand' Bargain?" which addressed issues around risk management and risk sharing in order to unlock the potential of the Grand Bargain. Currently the increasing risk aversion from many donors creates disincentives for collaboration with local and national NGOs (e.g. financial constraints, compliance demands).

**Interested in the Grand Bargain? Please visit the [Grand Bargain for NGOs](#) website to access information about it or to submit your own initiative/ event/ resource!**



## HUMANITARIAN ISSUES AT EU LEVEL

## VOICE AT WORK

## ★ Members' publications

- The Global Report Local-International Partnerships: NGOs & Risk Managing Uncertainty in Local-International Partnerships written by InterAction and Humanitarian Outcomes in collaboration with CARE, Concern Worldwide, Danish Refugee Council, International Medical Corps, International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps, Norwegian Refugee Council, Save the Children, and World Vision examines how risk is perceived and managed in partnerships between international and national NGOs working in humanitarian response. The report identifies the trends, challenges and promising practices in this area, with the aim of strengthening partnerships for improved humanitarian action.
- Reality Makes Our Decisions: Ethical Challenges in Humanitarian Health in Situations of Extreme Violence in this report, the International Rescue Committee explored the ethical challenges humanitarian health organisations face in situations of extreme violence against civilians, particularly when healthcare facilities and personnel become targets in the conflict. Its objective was to provide processes and mechanisms as well as practical tools to guide humanitarian health organisations through complex ethical challenges facing them in these settings.
- Barriers from birth: Undocumented children in Iraq sentenced to a life on the margins in this report, the Norwegian Refugee Council warns that an estimated 45,000 displaced children in camps are missing civil documentation and may face total exclusion from Iraqi society: barred from attending school, denied access to healthcare and deprived of their most basic rights.



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*VOICE out loud*

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