

FOCUS:
Humanitarian Aid
and water

From the VOICE Secretariat

Water is a very basic resource and elementary for human survival. Due to the impact of climate change and conflicts over resources, issues surrounding water are becoming more complex, and humanitarian assistance is facing increasing challenges. Both natural and man-made disasters have a damaging impact on access to water, for personal uses such as hygiene and consumption, for agriculture, irrigation, for public health, and for countless other reasons. Water shortages can themselves trigger conflict and population movements, exacerbating the above mentioned issues. These effects are invariably more intense for the increasing number of people in vulnerable situations, and as such are of significance to actors in the humanitarian sector.

Many VOICE members are active in programmes and projects related to water in Africa, Asia and Latin America. While prioritising the vital question of safe and reliable access to water, their perspectives and responses are varied, as can be evidenced from volume 7 of VOICE OUT LOUD. Further more, humanitarian assistance is also linking water with peace-building and conflict transformation, as well as effective water management leading to community empowerment and improved disaster preparedness. VOICE members are also advocating and campaigning for much needed political action to the humanitarian reality of the millions of people who suffer from insufficient access to a basic resource - water - in the twenty first century.

VOICE OUT LOUD is intended to contribute to the understanding of the professional reality of humanitarian NGOs. It is addressed to the European decision makers and other stakeholders of the humanitarian community, while giving an insight into relevant humanitarian issues, relying upon the experience and input of VOICE members.

VOICE

VOICE stands for Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies. It is a network representing some 90 European non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in humanitarian aid worldwide. Seeking to involve its members in information, training, advocacy and lobbying, VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor with the European Union on emergency aid, relief, rehabilitation and disaster preparedness. As a European network, it represents and promotes the values and specificities of humanitarian NGOs, in collaboration with other humanitarian actors. Based in Brussels, VOICE has been active since 1993 and is an independent organisation under Belgian law since 2001.

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TAKING STOCK: INDEPENDENCE AND COHERENCE AMONG EUROPEAN HUMANITARIAN NGOS

EDITORIAL

 The *raison d'être* of a network such as VOICE is obvious, yet problematic: Obvious, given the importance that European humanitarian NGOs speak with one single voice towards their governments, in order to exercise real political leverage; problematic, because each NGO wishes to preserve its individuality. Throughout my Presidency, I have felt this conflict of interests very strongly- a conflict between a desire to be stronger, and a hesitation to dedicate the resources necessary to translate this desire into action.

However, there is no doubt that the vast majority of VOICE members support the fundamental humanitarian ideals of the Humanitarian Principles and International Humanitarian Law. This has been confirmed by the NGO surveys which contributed to the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.

The source of humanitarian NGOs added value is their independence and their commitment to partnership with civil society. Today for various reasons, these two concepts are under threat. Over the last years I have strived to defend NGOs' independence, often jeopardized by governmental policies, and sometimes even by NGOs' lack of coherence and/or pragmatism. VOICE engagement in the Global Humanitarian Platform hoped to play a part in defending NGO independence. Today, the initial enthusiasm has been shadowed by discussions around the UN reform process, which could give the impression that the UN is attempting to increase its influence over NGOs. Therefore the struggle for NGO independence must be maintained.

The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid represents a significant step for the European Union. It stresses the importance of the humanitarian principles in order to gain access to victims of armed conflict, recognizes the need for diversity of civilian actors in humanitarian aid, and defines the roles of the military and civil protection according to international Guidelines.

The specificity of VOICE is that it is a network resolutely focused on the EU. Over the last years we have started to build stronger links between humanitarian actors at national level and Brussels, to transmit relevant EU policies to national realities. The next step will be widening and strengthening the dialogue to include NGOs of Southern Europe and New Member States. To keep up the momentum on humanitarian aid created by last year's discussions around the Consensus, and to follow the implementation of its spirit and intentions will be the main challenges for the network for the years to come.

If we want to succeed in our efforts, VOICE has to maintain its specificity, continuing to focus on humanitarian policy issues, despite the increasing complexity of the EU Common and Foreign Security Policy. There are other networks which have their expertise in development, conflict prevention and peace building. Given the capacity constraints most networks face, overlap should be avoided, since it weakens positions and could easily undermine our credibility. However, alliances will gain in importance and especially the issues surrounding transition (Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development - LRRD) must be resolved through practical cooperation between different networks.

The new Strategic Plan 2008 - 2010 for the VOICE network can be summarized in four key words: Independence; Influence; Quality; Durability. The first two concepts I have already commented on. The professionalism of humanitarian NGOs must continue to develop; it is essential to their credibility towards donor governments. The need for more accountability towards crises-affected populations also has to be taken into account. The added value of NGOs needs to be argued more strongly, since many actors whose mission is non-humanitarian are getting involved in humanitarian interventions. Well-defined complementarity where appropriate, rather than mere competition should be sought by the entire humanitarian community. The humanitarian NGO networks have their role to play in these efforts.

EDITORIAL

From an organizational point of view the network has grown with the rapidly changing environment and now has a clear focus on policy influencing and lobbying. We have also witnessed the active involvement of more and more members in the activities of the VOICE network. In order to respond to the increasing demands both from members and from other relevant stakeholders, a strengthening of the VOICE secretariat should be considered. Increasing the resources of the secretariat will depend largely on the willingness and creativity of VOICE members, but it is, in my opinion an essential element in order for the network to continue the solid work I have witnessed over the last three years. Its expertise in and relevance to EU humanitarian policy matters is mostly appreciated and recognized in the relevant EU institutions, and among other actors in the wider humanitarian community. In recent years, VOICE has gained increasing credibility and it is worth pursuing this route for the benefit of humanitarian NGOs. This will also indirectly contribute to the provision of relief to the affected populations of armed conflicts and natural disasters.

Paul Grossrieder
President of VOICE

The VOICE SCHA, on behalf of VOICE members and staff, would like to thank the outgoing President Paul Grossrieder for his dedication to the work of VOICE. Through his commitment to the humanitarian principles and his contribution to consolidation of the network, Mr. Grossrieder has been integral to VOICE and its achievements over the last three years.

HOW CAN AN INTEGRATED AND MULTI-FORM APPROACH MAKE THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WASH¹ SECTOR? THE EXAMPLE OF ACTION CONTRE LA FAIM (ACF)

THE ISSUE - HUMANITARIAN AID AND WATER

'(...) the demand for water is increasing due to population growth, urbanisation (rural exodus), climate change and industrialisation.'

 Access to water and sanitation is one of the major challenges for the 21st century. According to the WHO, across the world, 1.5 billion people do not have access to safe water and 2.6 billion people do not have access to basic sanitation facilities. Despite the global efforts linked to the achievement of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) N°7 (Ensuring environmental sustainability), those figures are going to increase. As a consequence, every day around 15,000 people, the majority of whom are children, die from water and sanitation related preventable diseases. Two thirds of these deaths being due to diarrhoea, a disease which represents 28% of mortality in developing countries (WHO 2003) as well as one third of under five child mortality. Acute malnutrition, killing one person every four seconds, is strongly linked to water and sanitation related diseases, especially when the vicious circle between infections and hunger is accelerated by HIV. The risk of mortality is 80% higher when children are malnourished or immunodeficient (WHO, 2002), and the relative part played by the factor 'weight lower than average' in diarrhoeal diagnostics is 61%.

WATER, SANITATION AND ENVIRONMENT

This disastrous access to water and sanitation is due partly to a lack of infrastructure, but also to poor management, creating discrepancies in the service and poor management of waste, which can lead to contamination and degradation of the environment. Water shortages lead to tensions between individuals, communities or countries, which can evolve into conflicts or fuel them. At the same time, the demand for water is increasing due to population growth, urbanisation (rural exodus), climate change and industrialisation.

WATER, SANITATION, HYGIENE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Urbanisation has also created extremely poor sanitary conditions, and the peri-urban context becomes a key problem in term of public health and risks related to water related epidemics. Water, sanitation and hygiene need therefore to be considered in a broad public health sense, to include general sanitary conditions, hygiene practices -mainly responsible for water contamination (faecal contamination)- and pathogen development control (e.g. malaria).

WATER, SANITATION AND LIVELIHOODS

However, water is not only important for public health, but also for general livelihoods: crop production (70 to 80% of all water used is for crop production), livestock production, industry, commerce and daily life depend on access to water. Water-supply and sanitary environment therefore affect health, hunger, poverty and community development.

Lack of access to water has a strong impact on the household economy, as the cost of water is an important part of many families' budgets (particularly in urban and peri-urban areas). In Haiti, after the floods of December 2003 that destroyed the water-supply network of Port de Paix, and the lack of capacity of the government, that had just fallen, to carry out its rehabilitation, the price of water multiplied by five and reached an important part of the daily family budget. The economic impact of lack of access to water can be also directly linked to the water-related chores that consume time and energy (mainly for women and children), instead of productive or educational activities. The problem is particularly acute in the remote areas of arid and semi-arid land (ASAL) regions where Action Contre la Faim often observes several hours dedicated daily to water collection during the dry season, or in urban areas where queuing can consume a lot of time and energy.

Lack of water access may severely impact the community economy too. Firstly water-related diseases indeed affect economic development too: sick people represent a loss of working capacity, and the cost in terms of drugs and treatment (even traditional) has an impact on the family and society budget. Secondly, the economical dependence on water is particularly true for many rural communities who rely on agriculture and livestock production. In ASAL regions, where livelihoods are chronically affected by droughts that cause disruption of the economic system, the construction of appropriate water systems and the training of communities in water-resource management can significantly decrease the vulnerability of rural populations to water shortages.

APPROACHES TO WASH PROBLEMS

Most of the humanitarian crises of the late 20th and early 21st centuries have had a political component resulting from a failure

1. Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), acronym of the sector adopted by main stakeholders.

'The mechanisms of response are various and the strategy of any intervention includes several different kinds of response.'

within the political system, just as they may have stemmed from a lack of concern by key actors, or by a blatant disregard for human rights. This complexity and overlap of factors means that WASH problems should be solved through a large variety of approaches, linking technical interventions to the use of advocacy and lobbying.

The first principle is comprehensive management of water resources and demand: integrated management of the resource, linking it systematically with the social as well as the environmental approach is essential for a sustainable project.

Secondly, a proper prioritisation of fund allocation both from governments and the international community is necessary: water, sanitation and hygiene programmes are, paradoxically, 'not so' expensive projects (in average 22 Euros per beneficiary of ACF WASH projects in 2007) compared to the economic advantages they may generate. The achievement of MDG 7 is estimated to cost between US\$ 9 billion (Evans, 2001) and US\$ 15 billion (SEI, 2005), but the payback would be an injection of an extra US\$ 65 billion to US\$ 84 billion per year into the economy of developing countries (money saved by averted deaths, lower health care costs and productivity gains).

Finally, a rights based approach to the sector is the best way to make access to water and sanitation a concrete and opposable human right, that can be developed at three levels: internationally to define rules to protect water resources and people and to avoid international conflicts; nationally to apply defined rules and to define water-access policies; and locally to develop initiatives to ensure communities' water access. Access to such basic resources should not be a commodity depending on the goodwill of local authorities or international stakeholders.

Examples of activities carried out include the collection of information (identification underlying political and economical causes), awareness campaigns, victim-protection programmes, institutional lobbying, and defence of human rights, including the human right to water.



ACF AND WASH

Conflicts, natural disasters, discrimination and marginalisation, break down of social structures and extreme poverty exacerbate WASH problems and may lead to humanitarian crises. The first objective of humanitarian assistance programmes, and as such Action contre la Faim's approach, is to protect and improve the

lives of the people in these critical situations. In principle, the first interventions of WASH programs focus on coverage of the most basic and immediate needs, while at the same time seeking to reinforce and stabilise the foundations for development in the community, in a way that will reduce or eliminate the risks linked to these vulnerable situations.

In addition, WASH programmes also contribute to establish peace and equity: community mobilisation through water supply and sanitation projects can be a means of creating social cohesion and removing tension. The mechanisms of response are various and the strategy of any intervention includes several different kinds of response. Nevertheless, these responses of ACF in the WASH sector can be classified from emergency response (Darfur, Chad), post-crisis interventions (isolated regions of central Afghanistan), to development contexts where the part of the population targeted is the one excluded from the development mechanisms (water access in the peri-urban areas of Ulan Bator in Mongolia). Specific responses like capacity building of institutions, or disaster preparedness complete the variety of approaches and make intervention more sustainable.

Action contre la Faim principles of intervention are based on developing a measurable impact; essentially verifiable either through the reduction of water related diseases morbidity figures, either through improvement of proxy-indicators like household water quantity and quality. This impact is due to the achievement of an appropriate project, including both a technical, cultural and economical feasibility and a sustainable approach oriented to strategically disengagement that can be done through an identified and partner with proper or reinforced capacity. The projects aim to be integrated (several sectors like nutrition and food security, linked to the WASH approach in a defined area, will enhance the global impact), and coherent with strategies and policies of other stakeholders, especially the institutional ones when receivable. Also, the projects, with an effective and efficient approach, aim at a valuable coverage (this is specifically tricky for sanitation where up-scaling activities is often at stake). Finally, Action contre la Faim projects consider systematically transversal issues (gender and HIV pandemics for example) and promote accountability through the regular exercise of external evaluations of their impact.

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WATER SCARCITY IN BOMA, PIBOR COUNTY, SOUTHERN SUDAN

THE ISSUE - HUMANITARIAN AID AND WATER

'The results of this water scarcity are immediate and the impact on related health indicators undeniable.'

 The January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) formally marked the end of a two-decade long civil war between the Khartoum government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). Despite the end of the war and the concurrent power-sharing agreement between the governments of the north and the south, many areas of Sudan are marked by extreme poverty and lack of basic resources. Many communities in Southern Sudan continue to experience problems related to basic needs such as safe drinking water. The results of this water scarcity are immediate and the impact on related health indicators undeniable. Merlin through its health programmes in Boma, Pibor County is aiming at responding to these humanitarian needs in the region.

Pibor County is one of the largest counties in Southern Sudan with an estimated population of 1,659,129, yet it has less than 90 functional bore holes, making an average of 7,323 persons per water point. The dry spell that falls between December and April each year brings water shortages and insecurity. The community in Boma has eight community hand pumps of which two are currently functional.² They depend largely on surface water from the seasonal river streams and shallow wells dug out in dry river beds, the quality, taste and appearance of which deteriorate over time. The communities inhabiting the area are largely pastoral groups who rely on livestock for their existence. The lack of adequate water supply not only for themselves, but crucially also for their livestock, increases the stress borne on their lives and their vulnerability to increased morbidity. Merlin has been running health programmes in Boma, Pibor County, since 2004 managing the 80-bed inpatient hospital in Boma as well as conducting mobile clinic outreach to outlying remote rural areas in the vicinity.

Average family size in this region of Sudan is approximately 6-7 members. A survey conducted by ACF-USA in 2006 estimated average household water usage to be 44 litres per family per day. Mothers and children tasked with fetching water for the family in Boma, carry home an average of only 10-20 litres per day. Necessarily, this challenging situation of extreme water scarcity means that families must prioritise their water usage. It is perhaps no surprise that personal hygiene comes last in this long list in a situation in which families may even have to skip some meals due to lack of adequate water.

Pibor County is prone to epidemics with cases of cholera an example that Merlin has witnessed in

recent months. Lack of adequate water supply has led to an increase in hygiene related diseases such as diarrhoeal diseases, eye infections and skin diseases.

Community members do not boil or treat water before drinking it, increasing the risk of contracting water borne diseases. Most of the water containers used by the community are dirty and leak, leading to additional contamination of the water. The communities share water points with their livestock thereby creating a pool of sludge that consists of animal dung and muddy water that creates an environment for cross-contamination.

Well installed and maintained water points are essential to such communities but a difficulty for a settlement which exists in such a water scarce region.

The Merlin run hospital is the only secondary referral and surgical centre in the region with an average of fifteen major surgical operations performed every month. The hospital currently serves communities residing in Pibor and neighbouring counties including refugees and returnees from Ethiopia. Water shortages not only increase the demand on hospital services due to the related increased disease prevalence and morbidity, but Merlin has seen it also hinder hospital operations and affect service provision in the hospital.

Boma hospital requires 50 litres of water per person per day for the in-patient wards. The operating theatres need nearer to 100 litres and the kitchen needs 10 litres to provide sustenance for those patients requiring in-patient care. The scarcity of water also hinders and challenges the health education and immunisation activities, as well as the provision of continuous long term medical treatment run by Merlin's outreach health workers. The pastoral population movements have become increasingly unpredictable as movements are made in search of water and pasture for livestock.

In such a precarious environment³ where a total of approximately 12,000 are currently residing, it is clear that agencies such as Merlin attempting to provide services to vulnerable communities must treat water provision and improved sanitation as a priority issues in their programmes.

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1. Ministry of local government (GoSS), Pibor County, Annual Plan document (2008).
2. In Nawayipuru, a jie tribal village in Boma, an average of 4,000-5,000 people assemble for water from a single water point.
3. The Pibor Inter-agency assessment (conducted in January - February 2007) recommends a thorough geophysical survey to be carried out in parts of Pibor County such as Nawayipuru (Boma) Labarab, Nyat and Kassingor.



ACCESS TO WATER: A CASE TO FRENCH EU PRESIDENCY

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*'(...) unsafe water
is the leading cause
of death in the world
(...)'*

 At SOLIDARITES, experience has shown us that access to drinking water and sanitation is a priority activity within humanitarian action, both in emergency situations and during reconstruction. We have also discovered that unsafe water is the leading cause of death in the world, despite the fact that such statistics are difficult to draw up precisely. Indeed, Michel Camdessus¹ and a panel of international experts delivered a report to the United Nations Secretary General² indicating that unsafe water claims 8 million victims every year, in other words 22,000 every day or 15 every minutes.

ACCESS TO DRINKING WATER AFTER CYCLONE SIDR

When the cyclone Sidr devastated southern Bangladesh on the 15th of November 2007, thousands of people were killed, 615,000 homes were flattened, 300,000 hectares of farmland were ruined and 350,000 head of livestock were lost. The resulting humanitarian crisis affected over 3 million people. In addition, and as the SOLIDARITES emergency team discovered, the water points where villagers draw water are generally open to the sky; therefore 95% of these water points were polluted and contaminated by falling vegetation. Their sand filtration systems were also dilapidated and out of order. In certain villages, cases of diarrhoea increased until they represented 85% of daily admissions to health centres. As we know, over 1.5 million children die of diarrhoea in the world every year. There is therefore real urgency to provide affected populations with drinking water.

SOLIDARITES' action was set up quickly: a small-scale water purification plant, distribution of filters to families (slow biological filters), hygiene awareness activities to enable populations to protect themselves from waterborne diseases, and above all decontamination of village water pools. This is our response to the drinking water emergency affecting the populations of Pirojpur and Barguna districts, Bangladesh.

PROVISION OF DRINKING WATER IN DRC

SOLIDARITES has been working in the Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C.) since the summer of 2000. Our action commenced in the Kayna area of North Kivu, then extended north to Ituri and south to Katanga. Our team comprises 60 expatriate volunteers and 530 Congolese staff who carry out emergency and reconstruction projects. In 2001, we launched our first programmes to provide access to drinking water by fitting out water springs equipped with storage tanks. At the time, there were 100,000 displaced people along the Beni - Erengeti route to whom water was supplied using trucks, then by tapping water springs and setting up water conveyance networks and pumps in refugee camps.

The town of Beni continues to attract displaced populations fleeing combat zones. At the beginning of 2004, this town had a population of 170,000 people but just one water distribution network which only serviced the town centre and was running at half speed due to lack of maintenance. Women and children therefore had to walk to water springs which were several hours away, to the detriment of other activities such as vegetable growing and school. In addition, numerous rapes were reported. Waterborne diseases were the second cause of death after malaria. This situation and the vital need for drinking water spawned an ambitious project which brought together the local council, the REGIDESO (national company for decentralised water management) and SOLIDARITES. One must bear in mind that in 2003, due to internal conflict, eastern D.R.C. had been cut off from the West of the country and the capital city Kinshasa for many years.

We therefore commenced the construction of a new gravity-fed water conveyance and distribution network, comprising 5 water catchments at rivers in the hills and a 10 km waterway supplying a water purification plant capable of treating 100m³ of water per hour using a biological back-filtration system. A huge open-air building site invaded Beni since 50 km of waterways had to be dug. The population volunteered and participated enthusiastically, and around 10,000 town residents were involved in the project. Local radios played a tremendous role by reporting on

1. Michel Camdessus. *L'eau (Water)*. Editions Robert Laffont. Paris 2004.

2. This report was requested by Kofi Annan whilst he was UN Secretary General.

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'(...) a campaign to inform the general public but also to lobby political leaders to take the decisions required (...)'

the progress of the project day after day. After two years of work, the network was inaugurated and included 84 high-capacity (10 m³) street fountains, each of which was equipped with 10 taps and staffed by a water manager. Water costs around one dollar per m³, which represents one family's monthly water consumption. The project was funded by EuropeAid and cost around 2.5 million euros. It was carried out in partnership with Aquatrium who designed the water purification plant, Aquassistance who provided support for our hydraulics engineers, the Beni council and the REGIDESO. The water purification station is an innovation and above all has very low running costs. It was inaugurated in October 2005, and we were very pleased that the Minister of Energy and members of the REGIDESO management from Kinshasa were able to attend, enabling ties to be strengthened between Beni and the capital city against a backdrop of political reconciliation following the end of the conflict.



FROM HUMANITARIAN ACTION TO INTERNATIONAL LOBBYING

Faced with the dramatic mortality figures and based upon our humanitarian action, SOLIDARITES decided 5 years ago to launch a campaign to inform the general public but also to lobby political leaders to take the decisions required by this situation. This year, on the occasion of World Water Day on March 20th, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bernard Kouchner, received a delegation from SOLIDARITES, who handed him a petition which has already been signed by 51,464 people, together with "Report on unsafe water, the leading cause of death in the world"³. We have suggested that he could propose significant measures during the French presidency of the European Union as from July 1st 2008.

In fact, international aid for water is quite insufficient, since it accounts for less than 5% of Official Development Aid (ODA), whilst unsafe water is the leading cause of death in the world. We believe that this issue should constitute a Goal in its own right among the Millenium Development Goals, and not just a secondary objective. Moreover, if ODA budgets are insufficient, why not also set up additional funds as is already the case for AIDS?

We have also put forward a suggestion to Bernard Kouchner that international governance be reconsidered, in particular through the United Nations, since over 22 agencies are currently involved in water issues to a greater or lesser extent. Why not create an International Water Agency to unite the various initiatives?

We also proposed that an Annual Water Report be published, detailing the current situation and priorities, the follow-up of defined objectives, the implementation of decisions, and the results obtained. All parties could contribute to this report and, based upon this reliable information, a better response to the needs of the 1.2 billion people without access to drinking water, and to the 2.6 billion people who do not have access to sanitation, could be provided. This is especially true in countries affected by humanitarian crises due to war or natural disasters.

The French presidency of the European Union during the second half of 2008 is especially important since the next World Water Day in 2009 will coincide with the 5th World Water Summit, which will take place for one week in Istanbul. In 2006, humanitarian emergency situations were omitted by the Mexico Summit and the presence of the European Union was too discreet. We must not let this opportunity pass us by.

It is for this reason that we modestly and amicably invite all parties concerned, NGOs, the ICRC, the European Parliament, the European Commission, DG ECHO, the member states and in particular France, to seize the opportunity of the French EU presidency during the run up to the Istanbul summit in one year's time. In Istanbul, SOLIDARITES will submit its petition⁴, which continues to grow, together with an updated water report, to the President of the European Commission and the United Nations Secretary General, so that water may remain the source of life for all.

Alain Boinet
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3. This report can be downloaded in French and in English on our website www.solidarites.org

4. Petition at www.votregouttedeau.org

ORGANISING COMMUNITIES TO REDUCE POVERTY AND DISASTER RISK: WATER COUNCILS IN BANGLADESH

THE ISSUE - HUMANITARIAN AID AND WATER

 **Affected communities are usually the first to respond in time of emergencies. Effective community organisation for disaster mitigation can therefore go a long way in ensuring a successful humanitarian response. However, participatory approaches to strengthening community capacity to reduce disaster risk need not be exclusively focused on early warning and disaster preparedness. Indeed, organisation around ensuring basic services and building assets, such as access to water, can play a key role in strengthening community resilience. To scale up successful community response, local organisation-building efforts need to be linked in with government structures and supported in national development policies.**

CREATING SOLUTIONS TO WATER STRESS

In disaster prone countries, such as Bangladesh, water stress looms large - in terms of damage from heavy rainfall, flooding, water logging, tidal surges accompanying tropical storms, and even drought. Climate change appears to be a major factor behind the increased frequency of these seasonal events and the heightened damage to lives and livelihoods which they cause. Current climate models for Bangladesh all estimate a steady increase in temperatures, greater rainfall variability, stronger cyclones and sea storms, enhanced sea-level rise and coastal erosion. Adding to existing pressures of population growth, rapid urbanisation and economic globalisation, more people are pushed to the margins of society and into high levels of vulnerability.

Meanwhile, another form of water stress also dominates the lives of around 25% of Bangladesh's population on a daily basis: lack of access to safe, sustainable water sources. This daily water stress negatively impacts opportunities for social and economic development, as valuable income-generating time is otherwise taken up travelling to seek water, or coping with water-related illnesses caused by consumption from unsafe sources. Ultimately, this reduces communities' abilities to cope with increasing climate-related shocks and hazards.

Those on the margins, such as the millions who live along fragile riverbanks are particularly affected by the dual impact of environmental stress and water poverty. Around 1 million people have been rendered homeless due to river erosion in Bangladesh over the last three decades, as the country's mighty rivers continue to widen at a faster rate than land is accreted. Riverbank erosion displaces more than 100,000 people annually in Bangladesh, resulting in devastating social and poverty impacts along the country's major rivers, where poverty is highly concentrated.

Arsenic contamination of drinking water is also

emerging as a 'real disaster'; it is intensifying malnutrition, poverty and destitution among the already poor, particularly in rural areas. Christian Aid have found that community organisation can be key to creating solutions that both increase coping capacities of poor communities to address the water problem, and tackle everyday issues of poverty, as well as to cope better during disasters.

WATER COUNCILS AS EMPOWERING ORGANISATIONS

In November 2007, one of the worst cyclones to hit Bangladesh in over 16 years struck vulnerable communities living in remote villages of south-west coastal Bangladesh. Several of the villages in the Bagerhat district in this region had been participating in a Christian Aid-funded project implemented by Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS).

Entitled 'Drinking Water Security for the Poor and Women', the initial aim of the project was to help communities achieve their human right to water through participatory community approaches involving women particularly - the main collectors, storers and distributors of water - while also providing simple but sustainable technological solutions to local drinking water scarcity problems.

Through the establishment of local 'Water Councils', consisting of a minimum of 50% female participation and a female leadership, communities were able to begin to organise themselves and choose the most suitable water solutions for their geographical and social contexts. Appropriate and simple technological systems were demonstrated by BCAS engineers, and community consensus was then achieved through discussion in the water councils as to the most sustainable, affordable and viable system for their needs. The opportunity to choose encouraged community ownership. Training and awareness-raising was then provided to the water council members by BCAS' local partner organisations on issues of hygiene and sanitation, gender, rights to water and local government responsibility.

In the villages targeted in the Bagerhat region, membership uptake into the water councils was extremely successful with almost 100% household membership achieved in the village of Kayabunia, for example. In this region, like other coastal districts, drinking water stress is caused by severe and increasing salination of ground and sub-surface water supplies. Water solutions have included installation of standing and portable rainwater harvesting systems at both household and community scales.

Empowerment of the key marginalised population group - women - was observed to be transformational even in villages where the

'Climate change appears to be a major factor behind the increased frequency of these seasonal events and the heightened damage to lives and livelihoods which they cause'

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'(...) it's not only during sudden-onset and large-scale disasters that poor people struggle to cope with natural hazards.'

project had been running for under a year. Gender empowerment and access to water was not the only issue to be addressed either. Individual water councils were beginning to use their new community forum and lobbying skills to tackle access to health and education, community and household disputes, land rights and improvement of transport and communication routes.

EFFECTIVE PROTECTION AND RESPONSE DUE TO COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

When Cyclone Sidr's winds struck the project villages in Bagerhat district at 155 miles per hour, 457 homes belonging to the 684 households participating in the project were flattened. A further 194 homes were damaged; but while houses sustained damage, almost all of the 77 rainwater harvesting systems installed escaped with minimum harm thanks to their sturdy concrete or easily portable designs.

Even more remarkable was the speed at which humanitarian observers noted that the communities in the village of Kayabunia, compared to many other coastal villages, were able to begin to get back to everyday life in the days immediately following the disaster. The observer from ACT International reported, 'People in the surrounding rice and brickfields are back to work; women are washing clothes in the river; the narrow, muddy roads are being paved as we pass by and everywhere there are bicycle taxis carrying wooden poles, tin and other construction-material.'

But it's not only during sudden-onset and large-scale disasters that poor people struggle to cope with natural hazards. The majority of crises are in fact localized and often chronic or recurring, exposing the poor to what has been called 'extensive risk'. While extensive risk does not necessarily make a significant contribution to overall global disaster mortality, it represents a significant and largely unreported source of asset depletion and loss of livelihoods for marginal rural and urban populations. Extensive risk is challenging the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in many countries and will need to be addressed through more effective community action.

SCALING UP LOCAL SUCCESS

The experience of the water council project in the Bagerhat district of Bangladesh provides powerful evidence of the benefits that participatory people's approaches can deliver; both for tackling basic poverty issues and in building coping capacities in disaster prone communities through a long-term development process.

Experience from across the globe is showing that greater participation from civil society, including

representatives of women and high risk groups, will be required at all levels to achieve the outcomes of the Hyogo Framework for Action and to ensure successful humanitarian response. Involving all members of the community, especially women and the poorest households, in decision-making and participation around universal issues such as the right to clean drinking water can prove a powerful tool in building resilience against natural and other sudden-onset shocks and hazards.

Government and donor policies need to place stronger emphasis on actions that strengthen local capacities to reduce hazard-related vulnerabilities. The sustainable scale-up of community-centred humanitarian and development work depends on governments taking a key coordination and facilitation role. It is they who are likely to have the resources and capacity to undertake large-scale multi-disciplinary initiatives, and create the policy and legislative framework within which national risk reduction can be accomplished.

EU PERSPECTIVES

Policy makers and practitioners interested in improving humanitarian response and long-term development efforts need to promote stronger links between existing community organisations, such as water associations, and government-led emergency response initiatives. Bridging the gaps between micro-, meso- and macro-level disaster risk reduction activities, in terms of transfer of information, assigning responsibility, funding and allocating resources will be crucial both for successful poverty reduction and for the future of humanitarian aid. To achieve greater interaction and participation between community members and governing authorities on access to basic services, such as water, we have to ensure that effective response policies both fit local realities and are linked to national poverty reduction priorities.

For European stakeholders this means working towards a clear commitment to substantial additional EU funding to community-based development and risk reduction. This commitment needs to be reflected in the geographic and thematic financial instruments of the European Commission as well as the European Development Fund. Further, taking a leading role in the ongoing climate change negotiations, Europeans can play an important part in advocating for an adequate percentage of UNFCCC/ GEF¹-governed funding to be committed to community-based risk reduction efforts.

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1. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change / Global Environment Facility.

ACCESS TO WATER AS A STRATEGY FOR PEACE BUILDING: THE CASE OF KARAMOJA, UGANDA

THE ISSUE - HUMANITARIAN AID AND WATER

 Improving access to water for communities in a conflict region can also contribute to peace-building. This strategy is especially relevant for pastoralist settings, as can be illustrated by the case of Karamoja, a region in the North-east of Uganda.

Karamoja is a semi-pastoralist region affected by regular and extended droughts, and chronic food insecurity. The region has also been affected for several decades by insecurity and violent conflicts between different ethnic groups. Insecurity is caused by cattle raiding, road ambushes, banditry and a high proliferation of small arms. The Karamojong traditionally migrate in the dry season to other areas to access water and grazing grounds for their cattle, this includes migration to neighbouring regions like the Teso region.

The Karamojong are however faced with increasingly limited access to water and grazing grounds. One reason being that certain areas in Karamoja have been demarcated as game reserves or nature reserves, and do not allow the Karamojong access. More importantly, limited access is caused by insecurity. Actions by Karamojong groups in the neighbouring regions, including cattle raiding, destruction of property and killing and injuring unarmed civilians, have resulted in access to these areas being cut off.¹ It is likely that the access to water- for humans and livestock- will become even more problematic in the future, due to climate change. It is expected that Karamoja will experience severe climate change, like other arid regions in Africa.²

Since the Karamojong are very dependant on cattle, the lack of access to water and grazing grounds has a negative impact on their livelihood. Unfortunately, there are hardly alternative sources of livelihood to which they can resort. There are of course more context-related factors that need to be considered when analysing the causes of conflict in Karamoja. These are, amongst others, the political, social and economic marginalisation of Karamoja and the lack of law and order.

ICCO & Kerk in Actie supports four local organisations in Karamoja. One of these partner organisations is the Karamoja Agro-Pastoralist Development Programme (KADP). KADP has realised the need to work simultaneously at improving the access to water in Karamoja and at conflict transformation. KADP is therefore focusing its work on three themes which are highly related; namely, food security, natural

resource and common property management, and conflict transformation and governance. The theme of natural resource and common property management includes management of water sources by water associations, and soil and water conservation. For example, KADP is supporting water associations to effectively plan, implement and manage water sources. The organisation also supports groups (the so-called Soil and Water Conservation Groups) to be able to transfer soil and water conservation skills to the community.

This way of working is in line with the policy of ICCO & Kerk in Actie for peace building. ICCO & Kerk in Actie has chosen to focus its peace-building policy on the approach of conflict transformation. This approach stresses the need to address root causes of conflicts and underlying structures of injustice and inequality.³ These root causes differ from conflict to conflict, and ICCO & Kerk in Actie has realised the necessity of carrying out a thorough conflict analyses for the (post) conflict countries and regions it is working in. This is an important step in the development of conflict transformation programmes in specific countries and regions, like Karamoja. Such programmes should furthermore aim at changing the attitudes and perceptions of people (for example changing distrust into trust), their behaviours (for example by promotion of dialogue between different ethnic groups), and also the context these people live in.⁴ Concerning the latter: Lack of access to basic services, like water or health, or to sources of livelihood can create potential for violent behaviour and conflicts. A programme on conflict transformation should therefore also try to address injustices in a context that is considered as contributing to conflict, as is illustrated by the case of Karamoja.

Karamoja has been a focus region for ICCO & Kerk in Actie in Uganda for over a decade. ICCO and Kerk in Actie is supporting local organisations (both faith based and secular) in Karamoja, as well as in the neighbouring regions Teso, Lango and Acholi, in order to contribute to conflict transformation in the North and North-east of Uganda. ICCO & Kerk in Actie will continue to work with local partner organisations on an integrated response to the underlying causes of conflict in Karamoja.

Paula Dijk

Department for Democratisation and Peace building

ICCO & Kerk in Actie

www.icco.nl

(...) stresses the need to address root causes of conflicts and underlying structures of injustice and inequality.'

1. "Angering Akuju: Survival and Suffering in Karamoja. A report on livelihoods and human security in the Karamoja Region of Uganda", Feinstein International Center, Elizabeth Stites, Darlington Akabwai, Dyan Mazurana and Priscillar Ateyo, December 2007.
2. "Angering Akuju: Survival and Suffering in Karamoja", Feinstein International Center, December 2007.
3. The policy of ICCO & Kerk in Actie on conflict transformation is based on John Paul Lederach's approach to conflict transformation. Source: "Building Peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies", John Paul Lederach, 1997. Washington: United States Institute of Peace.
4. The distinction between attitude, behaviour and context is an adaptation of Johan Galtung's triangle. Source: "Working with Conflict: Skills and strategies for action.", Simon Fisher et al., 2000. London: Zed Books.

THE CASE OF ARCHE DE ZOË- WHAT IMPACT ON NGOS?

A VIEW ON THE EU

 Over the last months, media both in France and in other countries have repeatedly reported on the case of French NGO Arche de Zoë. Cases like this are easily taken as representative for the wider humanitarian NGO community and might potentially have a damaging effect on the support from the public to the valuable work of professional NGOs, and donor's trust in NGOs. On the other hand they also push NGOs to reflect continuously upon the quality and professionalism of their interventions. Naturally, French NGOs have had to carry the burden of extraordinary scrutiny on their activities over the last months. French NGO Médecins du Monde shares some of their reflections.

The misadventures of the French NGO Arche de Zoë, whose troubles began in the fall of 2007, should serve as an example for future generations that become involved in international emergency relief missions.

The story broke in October 2007 and led to the arrest of 6 of its members, including its President. The staff of the organisation was preparing to remove 103 children, who had been taken into their care at the border between Chad and Darfur, from the African continent, in violation of all international child protection laws, and in a stunningly amateurish fashion.

There are many reasons why this could happen: they are to be found partly in the field in Chad and Darfur, partly in France. However, the big losers are the credibility of NGOs, and perhaps their future ability to operate in Darfur or even in West Africa.

Médecins du Monde, like all French NGOs, feels implicated by this affair: Several months earlier, following the Arche de Zoë's illegal use of the logo of Médecins du Monde on its website, our organisation had alerted the authorities to its questionable methods. We also believe that the case causes terrible damage to the image of humanitarian organizations in Africa and throughout the world. Médecins du Monde thus initiated a debate about NGOs and their methods of intervention, most notably by organizing a forum in December 2007 that involved a good number of players concerned with the matter.

This forum allowed a reflection on the fundamental professional principles necessary for all forms of humanitarian intervention in a country.

First, one needs to have a profound understanding of the country of intervention and its cultures. The operation initiated by Arche de Zoë reflects a form of intervention that is born out of a colonial mentality, combining a feeling of superiority on the part of some Europeans and a certain desire on the part of Western societies "to do good", the end justifying the means.

Second, the role and involvement of the media is important. Their involvement in this affair was discussed at length: their responsibility in the treatment of information and their choice to only cover certain conflicts is not without consequence. It often serves to reinforce only one version of how a conflict and its victims are presented. NGOs are one of many sources of information available to journalists which of course has to be verified. However, NGOs also need the media in order to express their opinions. When doing so, they too make choices regarding the type of information that they wish to disseminate.

One way of avoiding cases such as that of the Arche de Zoë would be the strengthening of coordination bodies, bringing together NGOs, international organizations and fundraisers. As a means of exchanging information about a specific country or region, these bodies make it possible to avoid errors of judgment that a single actor might commit. In addition, they provide an opportunity for different parties to get to know each other better and to coordinate their action.

Médecins du Monde seeks to create more frequent exchanges and to work more collectively with different actors in the field. As such, the sharing of best practices, the organization of debates and the launching of projects with other NGOs in the field are just some of the avenues of work promoted in recent years that our organisation would like to continue to develop.

The Arche de Zoë affair will have had at least two positive effects; it will have led humanitarian organizations to question their own practices and the way in which they account for the legal context of different countries, and it will have brought attention to the dire need for the transmission of reliable information.

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'(...) a reflection on the fundamental professional principles necessary for all forms of humanitarian intervention (...)

HEALTH PROMOTION FOR DISPLACED IN DARFUR, SUDAN

FIELD FOCUS

 **Knowing the best way to keep yourself and your family healthy is important. This is especially the case for the people of Darfur in Sudan, who have been displaced from their homes due to fighting and are living in cramped basic conditions in camps or with relatives. Tearfund is working to provide safe water and sanitation in these areas and give appropriate health messages so that people use the resources effectively. It is key to note that good health and hygiene go hand in hand with access to water and effective water resource management.**

'(...) good health and hygiene go hand in hand with access to water and effective water resource management.'

Health clubs have been set up in order to communicate health messages and provide fun activities for women and children affected by the conflict. The clubs on the border with Chad also include nomadic people who have had very little access to any sort of education and are keen to learn about good hygiene. There are women's clubs for a total of 14,000 women, and children's clubs for 65,000 children across the Darfur region. In order to fit into the women's daily routines and allow access for the few children who attend school, the clubs tend to meet in the early evening twice a week.

Each club is run by a group of local facilitators who are volunteers. The children's clubs also have an 'encourager' in each group of about 50 children. The encourager is a child who guides his or her peers and promotes hygiene through example.

The women's clubs provide an opportunity for social time and discussion about how to ensure they and their families stay healthy. Various methods are used for communicating and discussing health. For example, as it is cultural for one of the local tribes to jump to music, the women enjoy jumping to various songs and rhymes about hygiene.

The children's clubs involve a range of activities related to health, such as use of puppets, stories, songs, cloth charts, drawings, drama, skipping rhymes and games. One participatory activity is the 'rating chart' where children are asked a question such as, 'how often do you wash your hands?' Different choices are shown

by pictures drawn on the ground with a stick. They use a stone to mark their answer. They then compare their answer with the answers of other children. The answers can be recorded and the activity repeated after a time to see how health-related behaviour is changing. Men tend to be more difficult to target with hygiene messages than women and children as they already feel quite well informed about hygiene and are not so keen on the methods used in the women's clubs, such as singing songs. They sometimes receive such messages at community meetings. They also learn through household visits, which is another element of the programme. Some men have volunteered to take part in the programme as facilitators in the children's clubs.

HOUSEHOLD VISITS

Household visitors visit homes in the area to pass on hygiene messages and assist families to put into practice what they are learning at clubs. They provide vulnerable families with additional support such as identifying malnourished children for the nutrition programme. The household visitors are trained to provide families with psychosocial support where it is needed.

The household visitor checks to see that the latrine is clean and well maintained, and that water and soap or ash is available for washing hands. If the inspection is successful, the household visitor puts up a flag outside the latrine to show the neighbours that it is well looked after. At the next visit, if the inspection is unsuccessful, the household visitor takes the flag away. This simple method has proved to be highly successful in motivating people to look after their latrines, although it works better for latrines that are used by one household than for shared latrines. Tearfund is therefore trying to provide more household latrines. This method is also empowering for the household visitors, because the presence of flags shows the fruit of their own work in educating the households.

TRAINING THE VOLUNTEERS

Each month the club facilitators, encouragers and household visitors receive training. The content of the training is decided by the volunteers themselves. For example, during the mango

FIELD FOCUS

season they may ask for training about hand-washing and diarrhoea as people are likely to pick up and eat mangoes without washing the fruit or their hands. In winter the volunteers may ask for training about colds.

The volunteers are taught hygiene messages and various methods for communicating those messages. Some of the facilitators cannot read, so pictures are provided to help them to remember the different activities they can share with the community.

SOAP DISTRIBUTION

The United Nations has contracted Tearfund to distribute soap to communities in Darfur. This distribution has been incorporated into the health programme. There are three methods of soap distribution: distribution at the women's and children's clubs, distribution during household visits, and distribution as an incentive to club facilitators, encouragers and household visits.

This soap distribution has reinforced the messages given out at the clubs and has resulted in an increase in hand-washing. However, the disadvantages of distributing free soap is that it is not sustainable once the money runs out, and consequently hygiene may suffer. Also, people may no longer be interested in coming to the clubs, and the facilitators and other people helping with the work might withdraw from it without an incentive.

To address these issues the club facilitators and household visitors are trained in promoting alternatives to soap, such as the use of clean ash or sand. Also, small amounts of money are being provided to groups of facilitators for starting income-generation projects. This provides an alternative incentive to participate in the programme when the soap distribution stops. Some of these facilitators have received money and training to make pasta to sell. It is hoped that in the future they will be able to make and sell soap, but it is currently difficult to obtain the ingredients.

Apart from the challenge of ending free soap distribution, water supplies in Darfur are in danger of being severely depleted: a significant year of low rainfall at this point in time will have a potentially huge effect on groundwater resources. As a result of the conflict Darfur has

unprecedented concentrations of population imposing high localised demands on water resources. This is taking place in a region where rain falls in only four months of the year and the prevailing geology is unfavourable for storage of groundwater. While there are some exceptional areas rich in groundwater, such as the wadis or a few sandstone areas, these are of little benefit for people who are unable to travel to these sources without fear of harassment.

Darfur's rainfall is highly variable but so far a significant dry year has not occurred since the beginning of the current conflict. Research supported by Tearfund report¹ identifies 21 camps that are potentially vulnerable to groundwater depletion in a dry year. If significant depletion occurs, a number of large camps will need relocating, but this will pose security risks as well as huge logistical costs.

Meanwhile, the camp populations must be encouraged to use less water for non-essential use, such as brick-making, and a careful water resource management approach must be applied to safeguard existing reserves. This includes tree planting projects, and use of fuel-efficient stoves.

The list of recommendations made in the Tearfund research report on Darfur's water supply includes the following key statement for decision-makers:

A strategic plan for water resource management should be developed for Darfur. This plan should include scenarios for return, particular return or long term displacement, in the humanitarian and recovery contexts. The uncertainty of the current political situation in Darfur makes this range of contingencies expedient.

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'As a result of the conflict Darfur has unprecedented concentrations of population imposing high localised demands on water resources.'

1. See "Darfur: water supply in a vulnerable environment" November 2007. Summary Report: <http://www.tearfund.org/darfurwatersummary>

The article was adapted from Tearfund's publication Footsteps No. 73.

HUMANITARIAN ISSUES AT EU LEVEL

VOICE AT WORK

- ★ **European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.** Since its official signature by the Presidents of the Council, the Parliament and the Commission, VOICE has been actively following how this policy statement will be translated into concrete actions. VOICE presence, through its members, was strong in January at the European Parliament's public hearing on humanitarian aid, which reflected upon the future of EU Humanitarian Aid following this Consensus. VOICE active participation continued in the DG ECHO Roundtable to discuss the planned EU activities to put into practice the policies outlined in the Consensus. VOICE will continue to engage with EU institutions and Member States to monitor the Action Plan implementation and to ensure the contribution of European humanitarian NGOs.
- ★ **New Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA).** Following the signature of the revised FPA between DG ECHO and its NGO Partners in December 2007, VOICE is reconstituting the FPA Watch Group. The group will continue to represent, through VOICE's facilitation, the views of ECHO NGO partners in the monitoring, review and consultation of all matters relating to the FPA. The work done by the Watch Group and VOICE has become one of the cornerstones of the partnership with ECHO and it is widely recognised.
- ★ **Advocating for disaster risk reduction.** VOICE significantly influenced the disaster risk reduction (DRR) content of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid due to the expertise of the VOICE DRR working group. VOICE calls for DRR mainstreaming, support to community-based measures, and inclusion of DRR as part of wider policy processes, such as climate change, have been recognised. The working group has been consulted as part of the preparations for developing an EU Strategy on DRR. The expertise of the VOICE DRR working group was also sought for DG ECHO's evaluation of DRR mainstreaming in its humanitarian actions. The group has also established solid working relations with the Members of European Parliament (MEPs), who seek to promote DRR mainstreaming into European humanitarian aid and development policies.
- ★ **Civil-military relations in responding to humanitarian emergencies.** VOICE, together with its member organisations Norwegian Refugee Council, CARE and World Vision and in collaboration with the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), organised a very successful NGO seminar on civil-military relations in December 2007 in Brussels. Following the seminar VOICE published a report on the discussions and conclusions. Also, a VOICE working group on EU civil-military relations has been established. The working group envisages engaging in policy influencing in EU institutions and member states, strengthening NGOs' role in civil-military dialogue, and increasing NGOs' capacity on the issue.
- ★ **EU budget review "Reforming the Budget, Changing Europe".** VOICE has contributed recommendations to the EC public consultation on the revision of the EU budget to better support the EU to face future challenges. VOICE emphasised the added value of Humanitarian Aid to European external relations, as an expression of European solidarity; and its relevance, given the increasing frequency and complexity of humanitarian emergencies. Alongside a call for continuity and coherence in European external action, VOICE also highlighted the principles and values of European Humanitarian Aid as set in the recently adopted Consensus.



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VOICE out loud

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