

An urgent call to protect principled humanitarian aid

VOICE POLICY RESOLUTION 2022

The first six months of 2022 have been a period of immense global humanitarian challenges. The conflict in Ukraine and its ever-widening global economic repercussions have exacerbated the already dismal humanitarian situation worldwide – aggravated over the past years by the “3 Cs” (conflict, climate, and COVID-19) and the chronic underfunding of humanitarian crises. In May, the number of people expected to need humanitarian aid this year increased to [303 million](#), 29 million more than in December 2021. [181 million](#) people are expected to reach crisis levels of hunger in 2022 in 41 countries/territories. Most severely, [one person is likely to die every 48 seconds](#) from acute hunger in Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia.

This period has also marked massive public solidarity across Europe. The European Union (EU), its Member States (MS) and its citizens mobilised an incredible level of resources in a very short time to support those affected by the conflict in Ukraine. Extensive media coverage, paired with a geographic proximity to the conflict and its consequences, has inspired action on a massive scale. Humanitarian NGOs welcome the speed and scale of donors’ funding to respond to the Ukrainian crisis. However, they also stress that this should not come at the cost of the **attention and funding needed for other humanitarian crises**. In accordance with humanitarian principles, there should be no distinction between people or humanitarian crises worldwide. This is particularly important in respect of the [Global Humanitarian Overview](#) (GHO) – currently less than 20% funded – and especially of neglected crises such as Syria (in its eleventh year of conflict), Yemen (seventh year), the Horn of Africa, and Afghanistan, all of which, despite experiencing harrowing levels of humanitarian needs, have appeals that are significantly underfunded.

Humanitarian NGOs play a unique role in supporting people in need everywhere, thanks to their long-standing experience and proximity to affected populations. The diversity and complementarity of international and national/local NGOs ensure the provision of a wide variety of life-saving support, enabling a unique access to communities affected by crises and the ability to help people to meet their basic needs. However, these organisations still face multiple challenges to deliver principled humanitarian aid. The conflict in Ukraine has once again highlighted the need to constantly promote and protect International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the fundamental humanitarian principles. This conflict must be a wake-up call. The EU and its MS must revive their commitments to supporting adherence to IHL, act to ensure the delivery of principled humanitarian aid, and support solutions to address the underlying drivers of conflict, hunger, and poverty.

VOICE RECOMMENDATIONS:

VOICE calls on the EU and its Member States (MS) to consistently uphold principled humanitarian aid worldwide through the adoption of the following set of recommendations:

> Principled humanitarian aid

- Ensure that the speed and scale of funding generously provided to Ukraine becomes the new normal and is replicated for all important humanitarian crises, current and future
- Guarantee humanitarian aid funding allocations prioritise life-saving aid and are not reallocated for any political or economic considerations
- Systematically include humanitarian exemptions to all EU and MS sanctions regimes

> Funding share and allocation

- Substantially increase humanitarian aid funding to cover the increasing and record humanitarian needs

> International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

- Promote and uphold IHL, protect civilians and support humanitarian access

Principled humanitarian aid

The Ukrainian conflict has highlighted the risk of different standards being applied to humanitarian crises and, more broadly, of the need to respect the humanitarian principles. The speed and scale of donors' funding for the Ukrainian crisis have been remarkable and should be replicated for all important humanitarian crises, current and future. Everyone in need should receive fair, equitable and consistent humanitarian assistance and protection. Money should not be diverted from one crisis to another due to any political or economic considerations as such actions could result in further suffering and the exacerbation of needs in already dire humanitarian contexts. Humanitarian aid should not be used as a crisis management tool and must be safeguarded from the effects of sanctions regimes and counter-terrorism legislation of EU MS. As such, VOICE members urge the EU and its MS to systematically include humanitarian exemptions in all of their sanctions' regimes. Sanctions and counter-terrorism measures are foreign and security policy tools that can cause legal/financial/reputational/security risks for humanitarian organisations operating in sanctioned environments. Thus, humanitarian organisations acting under the principles and providing life-saving support must be safeguarded from their effects.

Funding share and allocation

The scale of humanitarian needs is catastrophic, and the available resources are insufficient. In 2021, only [54% of needs](#) were covered and the situation is expected to worsen in 2022, with a total of [US\\$46.06 billion](#) needed to assist 202 million out of the 303 million in need around the world. Acute food insecurity across the Horn of Africa requires an immediate, adequate and sustained response. For example, the [IPC](#) has highlighted that areas across Somalia are in risk of famine and, in South Sudan, despite [FEWS NET](#) reporting that one person in six was in 'Crisis' or worse in April, the UN [World Food Programme](#) has suspended food assistance to 1.7 million people because of insufficient funding. VOICE members urge donors to ensure that the necessary response to the conflict in Ukraine does not undermine the funding urgently needed to other crises in acutely vulnerable contexts. In 2021, the EU alone accounted for [11% of global humanitarian funding](#), after the United States of America and Germany, and only two MS featured among the top 10 global humanitarian donors. VOICE members call on the EU and its MS to step up their efforts to cover the increasing and record humanitarian needs. To guarantee that funds are tailored to effectively address people's needs, more investments must be allocated to address humanitarian needs, and particularly key under-funded areas such as gender-based violence (GBV) and other protection concerns. GBV risks significantly increase in conflict contexts, but only [28%](#) of GBV funding requests were met in 2021. Finally, the EU and its MS must invest more on locally led anticipatory actions to limit the impact of climate-related disasters and prevent chronic food insecurity. In 2022, anticipatory financing is particularly important to support those humanitarian contexts dependent on Ukrainian and Russian food products and fertilisers, and therefore highly exposed to dramatic consequences in terms of food insecurity.

International Humanitarian Law

The EU and its MS play a key role in meaningfully curbing the escalation of humanitarian needs in conflict settings. VOICE members strongly encourage policymakers to continue to use all diplomatic efforts to find political solutions to prevent or quickly resolve conflicts, and to ensure that IHL is respected by all parties to conflict. Humanitarian NGOs, which play a key role in supporting conflict-affected people, rely on adherence to IHL to deliver life-saving assistance. Civilians, especially those most at risk, are insufficiently protected in conflicts. In Ukraine, Central African Republic, Yemen, Syria, and too many other contexts, civilians as well as medical, educational, and other civilian infrastructures have often been attacked, and hunger and GBV have been used as weapons of war. Civilians must not be intentional, accidental, or collateral victims of conflicts – they must be better protected. The EU and MS should use all of their political influence to promote and uphold IHL, protect civilians and support humanitarian access to allow disaster affected people to access humanitarian aid.

This is an urgent call to action! It is now the time for the EU and its MS to take specific actions to guarantee that all humanitarian crises worldwide get the attention and funding that they need, and to ensure the safe delivery of principled humanitarian aid.

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