

## **Consolidated input from VOICE members in response to the consultation on a new Joint Communication on Resilience**

**28/02/2017**

In 2012 – 2013 VOICE engaged in the consultation organised by the European Commission when it developed its Resilience Communication as well as in the drafting of its Action Plan. Last year VOICE also contributed to the EU process leading to the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy, bringing forward a perspective from humanitarian NGOs.

Today, the Global Strategy remains a political vision and the upcoming new Communication on Resilience, which will be developed under the leadership of the EEAS, is perceived as an essential step in its implementation.

NGOs from the humanitarian and development sectors welcomed the civil society consultation that was organised on February 17th around the upcoming Communication on Resilience.

This contribution is based on meetings held with members and key points raised by them, on VOICE positioning and contributions to the EU policies on resilience and the Global Strategy, as well on the outcomes of the three workshops held during the civil society consultation.

### **1. Key messages**

The EU has a number of normative bases for its work on resilience, including the Lisbon Treaty provisions on the objectives of development and humanitarian assistance, the EU's commitment to human rights and the respective regulations to implement those, such as the Humanitarian Aid regulation.

The EU's humanitarian aid is guided by the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. This has been reflected in a number of policy commitments, including the EU's WHS Commitments, the respective Council conclusions, and the 2013 Joint Communication on a Comprehensive Approach to conflicts and crises.

#### **→ The new Communication on Resilience should reiterate in particular that:**

- the EU's humanitarian aid will not be used as a crisis management tool and state that a resilience objective may not override the humanitarian imperative and the need to respect humanitarian principles.
- the needs-basis of humanitarian assistance and corresponding funding allocations will be respected, rather than re-oriented towards the areas of immediate concern for the EU's own interests, such as security or tackling migration.
- the EU will maintain its current commitment to resilience, through ensuring full implementation of its Action Plan 2013-2020.
- the Resilience agenda of the EU will be mainly driven by development actors given its intrinsic links with the Agenda 2030 and the need for longer-term programming. To support this, the EU will promote a people centred, context-based and flexible approach to resilience.

The importance of building resilience is internationally recognised by the Post-2015 Global Frameworks, especially the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR), Agenda2030, the Paris Agreement and the Agenda for Humanity commitments taken during the WHS.

In follow-up of the World Humanitarian Summit: the concept of resilience helps towards having humanitarian, development and peacebuilding complementing each other better and ensuring better assistance for crisis-affected people.

This Communication offers an opportunity to build on those international commitments and agreements:

→ **The EU should push for more coherence and complementarity in the definition and collection of indicators to implement those frameworks.**

The EU has undertaken a number of its own policy initiatives to implement those commitments, such as the Implementation Plan for the SFDRR, the 2016 Lives in Dignity Communication, the upcoming Consensus on Development, and an increase in attention to education in emergencies.

→ **This Communication should take stock of these EU initiatives, and as appropriate, they should be reflected in this Communication.**

## **2. Need to build on and maintain implementation of 2012 Resilience Communication and incorporate lessons learnt**

In 2012, the European Commission adopted a Communication on Resilience which was complemented by an Action Plan for the period 2013-2020. These two documents were developed following a wide consultation with key stakeholders and were positively assessed by both the humanitarian and development communities.

Since then, the EU has made significant progress in the implementation of the Action Plan. Examples include both the AGIR and SHARE programmes, the systematic consideration of resilience in humanitarian programming thanks to ECHO's resilience marker and, more recently, the attempt to develop joint humanitarian aid and development frameworks in countries like Niger or Haiti.

→ Therefore, as recently re-affirmed in the EC Action Plan following the adoption of the Sendai Framework for DRR, **the EU must maintain its current commitment to resilience, through ensuring full implementation of its Action Plan 2013-2020.**

→ To build on the existing communication and current initiatives and capture lessons to be learnt, **the findings from the mid-term review of the EC Resilience Action plan should inform this new Communication. The upcoming report from the European Court of Auditors on the EU Bekou Trust Fund, given that this is the first external evaluation of an EU Trust Fund, may also provide critical recommendations for an instrument largely used for implementing resilience policy.** If the urgency to adopt this Communication means that the institutions cannot wait for the formal review of these activities and instruments, initial informal findings should be incorporated.

### **3. A people centred approach**

Building on the above messages around the need to promote EU values, to maintain humanitarian and human rights principles, and to be consistent with the EU commitments in the post 2015 frameworks:

→ **It is essential that this new Communication on Resilience maintains a strong focus on community based resilience.**

The WHS consultations have reconfirmed the relevance of looking at the resilience of people and communities. The Global Strategy also usefully identifies resilience as relevant to the changing global context. This can help ensure development gains are not lost when there are shocks to the community and households, and build bridges between short and often repeating cycles of humanitarian assistance on the one hand, and longer term development investment in communities' futures on the other.

In line with Europe's experience, civil society is the basis on which community resilience can take root and grow. When civil society has the space to act and flourish, it helps secure people's access to assistance and protection, build solidarity and resilience and create conditions for sustainable development.

→ **The EU should encourage all partner states to provide a minimum level of national resilience or DRR budgets to be spent for community-led DRR/resilience projects.**

Community based resilience naturally contributes to societal resilience (notably thanks to capacity building action to local actors) and thus state resilience.

→ **Capacity building for local actors should be reinforced.**

A focus on most vulnerable / most at risk:

The determination of whose resilience needs to be improved should be guided by a people and community centred-approach. The EU is currently concerned by the resilience of migrants and refugees, but this should not be the limit of its approach to resilience.

→ **The Lives in Dignity Communication provides useful guidance on how protracted displacement can be addressed with EU policies and tools.**

Those who are most vulnerable and at risk are also agents of change in resilience and have a key role to play in resilience building within their communities.

→ **The upcoming resilience communication provides a unique opportunity for the EU to reaffirm the commitment in the Sendai Framework (19§, (d) and (g)) "to integrate a gender, age, disability and cultural perspective in all policies and practices" and on the collection and dissemination of disaggregated data.**

### **4. The limits of a widened resilience concept**

The definition of resilience as currently outlined in the 2012 Communication is considered useful and captures the transformative aspect of resilience which is so important to reflect the WHS Agenda for Humanity and SDGs.

Based on this definition, there is value in broadening the use of the concept of resilience, including to reflect the commitments and initiatives mentioned above (peacebuilding, protracted displacement, education, DRR, WHS/SDG and inequity issues). Effective resilience programming could include cash based assistance, food security, livelihoods, protection, peace-building and governance programming to address both immediate and long-term root causes of vulnerability.

However, VOICE members are concerned about a complete shift of the concept, or a large broadening to accommodate every sector's or actor's use of it, as reflected in the EU Global Strategy on foreign and security policy.

State resilience and community resilience are not the same. Prioritising the former puts an emphasis on security and stability that can limit legitimate grass-roots movements for development and change, opening the door to civil society repression. From a human security angle, broadening the understanding of security to include community resilience for development, and creating the space for non-governmental organisations to contribute to inclusive development or principled humanitarian response, is the best approach.

**→The current definition of resilience should be maintained and the focus should be on community (and societal) resilience.**

*“Resilience is the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, to adapt, and to quickly recover from stresses and shocks.”<sup>1</sup>*

**→State resilience should focus on inclusive governance: governance strategies that support citizens to actively engage with power holders ultimately lead to investments, services and supportive policies that correspond with their needs and contribute to building their resilience.**

While the EU Global Strategy has a focus on the EU's Neighbourhood region reaching as far as Central Asia and Central Africa, adopting a resilience lens to programming is of global value and should not be restricted to particular geographical areas.

**→ This Communication should not limit the geographical scope of EU resilience actions, and sustainable stability (as referred to in the Global Strategy, e.g. ability to reform) is a more useful term than just security or stability.**

While humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors can have a role in building resilience including in conflict areas, the EU should be cautious in seeking to establish 'resilience' as an objective in conflict situations: it should not inadvertently imply that civilians and communities should become resilient to violations of their rights and protection needs. Also, despite the efforts in building resilience and the positive effects this may have on mitigating impacts of shocks and crises, disasters will still occur and humanitarian aid will still be needed. Resilience should contribute to the endeavour of reducing the need for humanitarian aid, but humanitarian assistance cannot be seen as the direct consequence of failed resilience programming.

**→ECHO's core business should remain life-saving humanitarian assistance which, where possible, contributes to resilience and preparedness. EU citizens largely support EU spending for**

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<sup>1</sup> 2012 October, COM(2012) 586 « the EU approach to Resilience : learning from food security crises »

humanitarian aid; giving the EU a clear signal of a broad understanding of the humanitarian imperative.

→The big gains in resilience building can be made in longer-term programming. The leadership of the EU's development actors in driving this agenda should therefore be reinforced through this Communication.

#### **5. A contextualised and flexible approach**

In light of the above, and given the complexity and rapidly changing environments in which we operate, the upcoming Communication on Resilience should acknowledge that a one-size-fits-all response cannot be adopted. Experience shows that it is possible to actively build community resilience even while responding to acute emergency needs, and ensuring that local capacities are not undermined in this response. However, maintaining the country and context specificity can help highlight how, when and where there are limits to the EU or different implementing actors' ability to contribute to resilience (such as access limitations, constraints of conflict, etc.), and thus when an adaptation is required to shift the way the money flows.

→While adopting a resilience lens in all EU programming, the approach needs to remain flexible and adapted to each context and its evolution.

→Promoting a systematic multi-stakeholder risk assessment, including with humanitarian and development actors, together with vulnerability and capacity analyses, are key to ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the context, a 'do no harm approach', and the most adapted programming from the different actors engaging.

#### **6. Towards increased complementarity rather than collective outcomes**

As the EU's resilience approach broadens, different actors with different roles, mandates and expertise will become involved. The EU has improved common risk, vulnerability and capacity analysis through the existing Resilience Action Plan. Strengthening or maintaining the systematic use of these tools gives ground for improved complementarity of actions. From different perspectives, be it humanitarian, development or peacebuilding, a 'collective outcome' or a 'resilience objective' will look very different. Rather than looking for collective outcomes, **the EU should:**

→ Further ensure complementarity, and improve clarity in relation to the division of labour

→ Recognise and value the different roles and mandates of different actors engaging in resilience building, and the principles that should guide their respective actions.

→ Encourage its partners, particularly those engaged in longer-term programming, to adopt a resilience approach in their actions while acknowledging their diverse objectives.

→ Focus on the accountability of all actors for the resilience commitments already undertaken.

This should strengthen further the complementarity of their action, built on common analysis and planning, rather than integration of all instruments and activities towards one 'resilience' objective.

## **7. Role of donors and policy makers in resilience**

### **Complementarity translated in improved EU aid funding architecture**

This complementarity should be reflected in the EU's funding instruments and programmes for humanitarian and development assistance. Reducing gaps between them is important to translate the EU commitment to resilience into practice. This is not a new recommendation, and builds on former and ongoing work on Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD)/transition, resilience, etc. However, NGOs still do not see this reflected in the current EU funding architecture

#### **Funding**

The existing Communication on Resilience could have been strengthened by a longer-term vision. The role of development aid in building resilience, and the funds dedicated from the development envelopes are crucial.

**→ The new Communication should strengthen the approach to resilience by having a multi-year and longer term vision further translated in a longer-term funding cycle.**

In line with LRRD good practices and in order to adapt to the rapidly changing environments in which humanitarian and development actors operate, donors' requirements and grant conditions should offer more flexibility for implementing actors to be able to adapt as quickly and smoothly as possible to circumstances on the ground.

Many NGOs are concerned that the flexibility which is promoted through the Trust Funds is there to respond to donors' political rather than operational concerns. NGOs have found that the Trust Funds are less transparent and consistent in their implementation, and urge the EC to focus rather on the simplification of its financial rules rather than on the multiplication of Trust funds.

**→ The EU should continue to seek simplification, predictability, flexibility, complementarity and timeliness of its funding instruments.**

In the current political climate, NGOs are concerned about the perceived instrumentalisation of development and humanitarian assistance, particularly in response to the migration crisis, and the security and counter-terrorism agendas, for non-aid purposes.

**→ Keeping to ODA definitions for assistance is therefore crucial.**

**→ Where the EU needs funding to respond to political objectives that go beyond ODA definitions, additional EU funding instruments should be created.**

Donors have a role in bridging the gap between community initiatives and national programmes/policies contributing to resilience. In many cases, both top-down and bottom-up approaches are taking place, but they are not well linked.

**→ The EU and MS as donors with both community-based and governmental partners, are in a good position to help reinforce those links.**

## From risk assessment/ early warning to early action: political buy-in

**Early Warning and Early Action Systems (EWEA).** Over the past decade, investments have been made into communities establishing internal early warning and early action systems to detect and act upon sudden shocks such as flooding. However, climatic phenomena such as El Niño need further understanding but, more importantly, governments need to invest in Early Action. Communities can only build resilience to climatic shocks and stresses if they not only identify their risks but are able to address them before hazards occur. Data collection is important, but what is critical is how this information is used and acted upon in anticipation of a potential crisis. This relates not only to climatic extremes but also in anticipation of violence and potential conflict, infectious diseases and pandemics, as well as economic crisis (SDG 1 – Target 1.5 & SDG 3 Target 3d).

Similarly, the EU has improved its early warning and risk assessment tools (both in relation to disasters and conflict) and working methods. However, corresponding early action should be reinforced. This requires political buy-in.

**→ The new Communication on Resilience should result in the EU and its member states ensuring that in the event of, for example, slow onset crises, the EU is committed to responding to early warning with early action.**

### **8. Role of Civil Society Organisations(CSOs)/NGOs**

As mentioned earlier, civil society organisations play a crucial role in bridging the gap between national and local authorities and people on the ground. Thanks to their presence and actions at community level and their knowledge of actors in communities, they provide skills and expertise that are essential to ensure the needs of the most at risk and most vulnerable are addressed. CSOs have developed strong monitoring and evaluation methods. Learning from humanitarian NGOs is valuable for EU programming and can help build knowledge about communities' vulnerabilities and capacities.

**→ A systematic inclusion of CSOs and NGOs in resilience decision making processes is therefore critical.**

Civil society is diverse, and present from community, to state, to regional and international levels. International NGOs/European NGOs are rooted in European societies. NGOs remain the main implementers of humanitarian action in the field. Crises remain a key feature in this complex and changing world. Safeguarding the space and resources for humanitarian NGOs is crucial and reflects the continued support EU citizens give to CSOs' and NGOs' activities in the current political climate.

**→ Highlighting the role of Civil Society organisations in the Communication, and re-affirming their added value, will demonstrate the EU's commitment to European values.**

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## 9. Additional messages from the civil society consultation:

*In addition to the key messages above from VOICE's membership, the following messages were shared by CSOs with the VOICE secretariat or during the civil society consultation.*

### Values and principles:

- Human rights principles will guide policies, programming and investments in all development and climate action, as mandated by Post-2015 Agreements. This entails a strict safeguarding approach to ensure that any measure taken does not inadvertently undermine human rights, as well as upholding the rights to participation in decision making, especially of those most affected and vulnerable groups, including women, children, indigenous peoples, migrants and the poor.

### A broadened scope:

- Confining 'risk' to peace, security, stability, fragility and crisis does not allow enough room for recognising the incremental changes (e.g. climate, food systems, mobility, ecosystems, inequalities,) that are identified by looking at risks and vulnerabilities and capacities to absorb, change and transform.
- In addition, the discussion paper for the consultation raised the question of the EU's own internal resilience. Agenda 2030 should be read as a global agenda, not just for developing countries. The nexus between internal/external policy needs to be rooted in this agenda. Resilience is a global agenda and thus the EU's internal resilience is not independent from resilience in the rest of the world.