



VOICE (Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies) is a network representing 85 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active in humanitarian aid worldwide, which are based in 20 European countries. VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor with the European Union on emergency aid and disaster risk reduction and it promotes the values of humanitarian NGOs.

20/02 2018

## Individual misconduct in humanitarian response and collective learning VOICE STATEMENT

VOICE, the network representing 84 non-governmental organisations active in the humanitarian aid sector, strongly condemns any form of abuse, exploitation or misconduct such as has been reported in the media over the past days. VOICE firmly condemns this outrageous behaviour and those that have betrayed the values of the organisations they worked for and the trust of their supporters and the communities they seek to assist.

As organisations providing assistance and protection to the most vulnerable people, it goes against everything VOICE members stand for. It is deeply shocking in a sector which is seeking to save lives, reduce suffering and is fighting for human dignity on a daily basis.

The corresponding deep public sentiment is a necessary call for action which VOICE fully adheres to. However severe the misconduct of several staff may be, the temptation to make an organisation collectively responsible must be resisted. Sanctions need to be designed so as to effectively target those actively or passively responsible. Given different calls for financial sanctions, in particular, it should be recalled that diminished resources have a significant impact on crisis affected people in the direst circumstances.

VOICE member organisations have been proactively setting standards for improving the effectiveness of aid and the protection of crisis-affected people. However, these events show the need to be more rigorous in implementing policy, training and practices for safeguarding and accountability (such as reinforcing a zero-tolerance approach, reforming human resources and staff recruitment practices as well as whistleblowing protection etc.).

The VOICE network also wants to show strong support for the many thousands of national and international aid workers and volunteers who seek every day to protect highly vulnerable people affected by disaster and conflict. They deliver critically needed aid with exceptional dedication and seeking to live up to the highest ethical standards.

We all must remember that with enormous humanitarian needs worldwide, cutting life-saving assistance to those in need must not happen under any circumstances. This situation must provide lessons to be learnt for us all, while we continue our collective efforts to deliver impartial and independent humanitarian aid when and where it is most needed.