

Informal Humanitarian Aid Committee, Marseilles, on 13 & 14 November 2008
Presidency conclusions

- Partnership with local actors is recognised by donors as bringing added value in humanitarian operations. Local actors indeed have several assets (knowledge of the field, local presence) and often are the first actors in a position to respond to an emergency. In the same vein, the donor has above all to seek to draw on the pre-existing competences and experience of the local actors and not reinvent or impose solutions coming from the outside ("we know what we need" underlined the person from Action Aid for example).
- Certain actors thus deplore the imposition by certain U.N. agencies of pre-established frameworks, or even of sudden reductions in financing during the year without taking into account the constraints of local actors, which then calls into question the credibility of the UN with the local actors.
- Acknowledging this then refers us back to the issue of the coordination of activities in the field, in particular within the framework of the humanitarian reform of the United Nations, which results, overall, in too low a capacity of the local actors to take part in it (requiring resources that are both human and "cultural", which they seldom have). The role of international NGOs appears in this respect crucial in particular in terms of technical assistance to increase the capacities of the local actors, in particular in countries where civil society is sometimes embryonic and where only this partnership can enable real leverage effects.
- On a more global level, the "Global Humanitarian Platform" encouraged by OCHA, can be a way of identifying complementarities between various actors according to the contexts and the added value of each one. For the United Nations, one must concentrate on two aspects: the dialogue with the government and the setting up of a working framework for all humanitarian actors.
- The involvement of local actors is crucial for the success of disaster risk preparedness programmes, but may be less so in the case of complex emergencies where very often they have the same constraints as the local international actors, in particular in terms of safety (example of Chad).
- The European Commission presented some methods drawn from its experience through its DIPECHO programme to make this partnership in the field of disaster preparedness function: financing small-scale projects but with high demonstrative value, supporting the projects that increase the local capacities through training/awareness-raising activities in order to develop advocacy capacity with respect to the local authorities, including the local government representatives in advisory mechanisms.
- However, disaster risk reduction and disaster risk preparedness activities do not overlap entirely: the former intervene on the longer cycle of development co-operation and fall within the responsibility of development donors; the latter fall on the humanitarians and are necessarily limited (size of the projects, geographical areas covered) in view of the amounts available to finance them. It is therefore vital that development actors (donors and recipients) incorporate this

dimension into development strategies and do not rely only on the humanitarians to deal with this issue.

- Lastly, recourse to local partners can facilitate the link between relief and development. The testimony of SECADEV thus illustrated the ability of this type of partner to drive both types of action in crisis contexts or the exit from crisis where the concomitance of both actions is often essential: as the partner of the UNHCR, it provides assistance to the refugees and to the internally displaced persons of Chad; as a Chadian NGO, it endeavours to support the host populations and returnees.

- Some obstacles remain: the existence of issues of the strengthening of the partnership with the local actors being fashionable, reduced visibility of the actions of preparation/prevention of the risks of disasters that was not very beneficial for donors more focused on the action, the suspicion of national authorities with respect to the local actors which in certain contexts constitutes an important barrier to the partnership. One of the options suggested by the Mozambican example consists of the setting up of local disaster management bringing together civil society and the local authorities in order to ensure the link with the national level.

- The European Consensus and its Action Plan provide the suitable frameworks to make it possible for the EU to improve its practices in order to make the partnership with the local actors more effective and more respectful of recipients.