



Prevention: A Priority for Development and Humanitarian Aid

**Voice Strategic Seminar
Brussels,
17-18 May 2000**

Summary Report

DAY ONE

The presentations in the morning focused on the different policies of the various international institutions.

- ◆ A scientific approach was covered by an Italian seismologist (Rome University professor who also works with NGOs and with the National Italian Civil Defense) and a climate expert from the Max-Planck Institut in Germany, who both gave extremely interesting presentations and "food for thought" for the following discussions.

- ◆ The following overview of the different policies of the various international institutions included:

from the EU: ECHO (Constanza Adinolfi, new director), DIPECHO, DG RelEx, DG Development and DG Environment

from other institutions: UNDP, ISDR ("International Strategy for Disaster Reduction", that has taken over from the former International Decade for Disaster Reduction), the World Bank and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

Many conclusions arose from these presentations but two basic conclusions can be mentioned here, as they were self-evident:

- a. the lack of coordination and information exchange within the EU on disaster preparedness and prevention and the building up of overlapping and competing structures within the Commission without an overall coherency
- b. the existence of a lot of interesting approaches and policies within international organisations (UNDP, IFRC, ISDR, UNDP, World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, World Food Programme) and the need for a better interaction between NGOs and organisations specialised in this field and international (donor) organisations.

The working groups in the afternoon dealt with hurricanes/floodings, technological disasters and droughts.

DAY TWO

On the second day, World Food Programme (WFP) and the ISDR made a presentation that was followed by a summarised report on the main conclusions of the different working groups. The conclusions of the working groups focused in part on the types of disasters mentioned, but also (and in one group even mainly) on proposals to be made to the EU in order to take more account of disaster prevention and preparedness within its development policy framework.

These findings and all the discussions that took place during the seminar fed into a very good debate in the final discussion panel that had the title "The search for an integrated approach towards prevention". There was a lot of participation from both the seminar participants and the panel itself,

and many interesting inputs from field experiences from individual NGOs and specialised centers for disaster reduction such as CEPREDENAC (Centro de coordinacion para la Prevencion de los Desastres Naturales en America Central).

CENTRAL AMERICA

The afternoon was dedicated to a round table on Central America & the Caribbean. After several interesting presentations from all sides (NGOs, DG Development, DG Relex, PRRAC-"Programme for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Central America"-, ECHO and CEPREDENAC), a very "heated" debate started, as several participants expressed their frustration on the delay of the implementation of the PRRAC for Central America (in addition to the criticisms already expressed in previous meetings concerning the contents of this programme and its very small space for NGO projects). However, other participants also tried to have a more positive approach and underlined the advances made in terms of the last decades.

It was nevertheless stated that more emphasis on prevention has to be made also within this programme, as the region concerned is regularly hit by disasters.

VOICE proposed that the mixed (EC-NGOs) working group that was created following the VOICE Post-Mitch seminar of March 99, should meet again regularly in order to be able to better monitor the implementation of the PRRAC and in general the activities financed by the EU in that region.

CONCLUSIONS

The seminar ended with the proposal to elaborate a policy paper on the basis of this seminar. VOICE was charged with the follow-up work, that would principally consist in

- the creation of a working group
- circulate a first draft policy paper to all participants and work out a consensuated final version
- lobby (with this working group) for an integrated and coherent EU policy on prevention
- Build up and maintain a network of experts and persons working in this field
- Identify needs of NGOs in this field and propose ways of satisfying them