



**Contribution to the EU/Africa Joint Strategy
from the International Federation of Red Cross, Red Crescent Societies and the
Red Cross Societies of the European Union**

The International Federation of Red Cross, Red Crescent Societies and the EU Red Cross Societies have been working for years to improve the living conditions for Africans. We therefore welcome the discussions to set up an EU/Africa Joint Strategy which recognises the mutual impact of a number of issues as well as the need to promote ownership of the future strategy as key element for its success.

As an International humanitarian Organisation, we will focus our contribution under the heading: Key development issues.

With our unique network covering 185 countries and the involvement of millions of volunteers at community level, we link local action to national objectives to international goals. Through our Global Agenda, we are committed to mobilise our network and intensify our work around four broad goals: 1) Reduce the number of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters, 2) Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies; 3) Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross, Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability; 4) Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.

As a guiding principle, we consider that the future EU/Africa joint Strategy should formally put the **achievement of the Millennium Development Goals** at the centre of its priorities and draw up the final document accordingly. Eradication of poverty is the main vehicle to eliminate the major cause of vulnerability for individuals and communities and, as such, should be the overarching objective of the Development side of the Strategy.

Based on our long standing experience in the field, in order to have a significant impact on poverty alleviation, we consider that the joint strategy should address the following interrelated areas:

- (1) HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other poverty related diseases,**
- (2) Water and Sanitation,**
- (3) Food security,**
- (4) Disaster Risk Reduction**
- (5) Contributing to peace building through the promotion of the Red Cross Fundamental Principles and International Humanitarian Law**
- (6) Global migration – population movement**
- (7) Partnership development between the relevant stakeholders and capacity building of civil society**

Health: HIV/AIDS, malaria and other communicable diseases

Millions of Africans die each year from preventable or curable diseases. Vaccination coverage is low in many countries and large segments of the population do not have access to basic health services. The major burden of malaria occurs in sub-Saharan Africa, the region that also has the highest prevalence of HIV. Co-infection and the interaction between malaria and HIV increase the risk of death demonstrating that both diseases have major public health implications that needs to be addressed.

Malaria exacerbates poverty and sustains underdevelopment. Each year, approximately 300 to 500 million malaria infections lead to over one million deaths, of which more than 75% occur in African children under five years of age and in pregnant women. In addition, malaria is an enormous economic burden to society, with treatment costs as high as 33% of household incomes in some countries and considerable waste of productivity and education due to missed days of work and school. The rapid spread of resistance to anti-malarial drugs, coupled with widespread poverty, weak health infrastructures, and, in some countries, civil unrest, means that mortality from malaria in Africa continues to rise. The vast majority of these deaths are preventable and many of infants could be reached through routine immunisation services or campaigns where Long lasting Insecticidal Nets (LLNs) are distributed free of charge and their correct use explained to the communities.

Africa has by far the highest AIDS prevalence rate in the world today. Governments and civil society have a crucial role to play in the prevention and reduction of the pandemic through fighting stigma and discrimination, information campaigns reaching the whole country, enabling and supporting access to antiretroviral treatment, home-based care and support and providing psycho-social support to orphans and children.

- *In order to achieve measurable results and to reach the Abuja target for intermittent preventive treatment of malaria in pregnant African women and the Millennium Development Goals, political commitment and more resources must be allocated for active implementation of preventive measures and health education to those at risk. Moreover, African and EU decision-makers should provide support to work on HIV/AIDS focusing on communities' mobilisation, awareness-raising and education, prevention, care and effects mitigation.*

Water and sanitation

The combined effects of the poverty diseases HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria together with water and sanitation-related diseases cause more deaths and destroy more livelihoods than natural disasters and conflicts together. Clean water is crucial for improved health and nutrition, which in turn, reduces susceptibility to, and the severity of, HIV/AIDS and other major diseases. Without it effectiveness of treatment programmes is seriously diminished. Improved water management also reduces transmission risks of mosquito-borne illness like malaria and dengue fever. Moreover, women and girls often bear the task of water collection and long distances of water supplies prevent them to attend schools and to be engaged in active employment

- *Considering the crucial impact of water and sanitation on health, gender equality and education, we ask that that the objective of sustainable sanitation, hygiene and water service to all is fully integrated in the development segment of the EU/Africa joint strategy and that support is provided for culturally appropriate sanitary facilities. Plans related to water and*

sanitation activities should be based on community participation and the use of appropriate and sustainable technology.

Food security

The World Food Summit in 1996 adopted the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action. The plan of action committed Governments “to reduce the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015.”

Despite this plan of action, under nutrition has increased in several sub-Saharan countries and the lack of improvement in Africa is a worrying indictment of the International communities’ failure to address food security as a political priority and through innovative programmes. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), currently there are 852 million food insecure people in the world, the highest percentage of these being in Africa.

Food shortages - whether as a result of drought, conflict, poverty, HIV/AIDS, mismanagement of water resources or, as is often the case, a combination of these factors – are one of the most pressing problems for the African continent. In turn, poor and insufficient nutrition can reduce people’s resistance to disease, force them to migrate and encourage environmental degradation.

- *We consider that, in line with MDG1 and the World Food Summit Plan of Action, tackling food security should be referred as one of the key commitment in the EU/Africa joint strategy, favouring a holistic approach taking into consideration the various factors influencing food security. Food security policies should include these three essential dimensions: Availability, access and utilisation*

Disaster Risk Reduction

The frequency and intensity of so-called ‘natural’ disasters is increasing – mainly due to climate change, rapid population growth, unplanned urbanisation and environmental degradation. Taking into consideration the issue of climate change only, there is scientific consensus that the frequency and magnitude of extreme weather events and also other types of risks like sea level rise, loss of biodiversity, etc. will increase in the future. This will add to the risk of disasters likely to affect the poor and vulnerable populations the most and weaken the resilience of people. Climatic hazards, such as drought, combine with poverty and disease and other vulnerabilities can create a compound disaster which can only be solved through an integrated approach.

In addition to bringing death, injury and illness, disasters also undermine fragile development processes at all levels and significantly threaten the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Coping with disasters require a focus on risk reduction. Disaster Risk reduction is a development issue that involves reducing the vulnerability of households and communities in disaster-prone areas and improving their ability to cope with the effects of disasters. There is evidence that well organized preparedness and mitigation measures can prevent or reduce the impact of disasters including the death toll.

- *We believe that ensuring that risk assessment and risk analysis are carried out as a matter of course in humanitarian and development programming is essential to reducing future risk and protecting development gains. Preparedness and mitigation is not only physical protection but it includes the improvement of people’s and communities’ ability to withstand and recover from disaster effects. Therefore, we consider that the EU/Africa Joint Strategy should promote comprehensive disaster risk reduction measures, not focusing only on*

infrastructures but supporting also capacity building of the communities and risks assessment and analysis.

Contributing to peace building through the promotion of the Red Cross Fundamental Principles and International Humanitarian Law

UNDP Human Development Report of 2003 on the MDGs stated that women, rural inhabitants, ethnic minorities and other poor people register less progress than the national average even in the countries that are moving towards the Goals. This concerning observation underlines the necessity to ensure equal access to development programmes and services as a precondition for the achievement of the MDGs.

Based on the principle of impartiality¹, Red Cross/Red Crescent programmes strive to ensure that benefits reach all regardless of any factors that are not humanitarian. Indeed, non-discrimination, as one of the principles of international humanitarian law, is a rule governing the work of the RC/RC Movement. This principle ensures that services are provided for all, especially the most vulnerable, and with respect for human dignity.

- *The Joint Strategy should contain official commitment to ensure equal access to programmes as key element to promote poverty eradication.*

Global Migration – population movement:

Population movement, being North-South or South-South, is a major factor in the African context. We embrace the belief that migration can be an opportunity for enhancing cultural diversity and that hosting and receiving countries can benefit from movement population through the labour market under the condition that migration occurs within a framework where human dignity is respected. We sincerely hope that the joint strategy will cover this topic and will not only focus on a “security driven” approach but will address the humanitarian dimension of this issue.

The issue of brain drain and the vicious circle it creates, being a central problem for Africa, should also be tackled in the strategy. Well-educated people from economically deprived countries are recruited to fill gaps in the labour market of the developed world. This adds to the brain drain of poor countries and damages their social sector and deepens the socio-economic problems in the countries of origin, making it even harder to maintain tolerable living conditions. This situation further encourages migration.

- *Partnership between Africa and the EU is essential to improve migration conditions and should promote a comprehensive approach addressing the issue of discrimination, integration and reintegration and the brain drain phenomenon.*

Partnership development between the relevant stakeholders and capacity building of civil society

By launching a public consultation, EU and African decision-makers have officially recognized that no government or institution has the capacity to provide on its own a response to the complex problems of the African continent. Indeed, we are convinced that successful translation of policies into action needs active involvement of various partners, from international organizations to local

¹ The RC/RC Movement develop its activities according to seven fundamental principles: Humanity, impartiality, voluntary service, unity, universality, neutrality, independence.

communities in the design, implementation and monitoring of the programmes. Moreover, vulnerability is best assessed and addressed in concert with people who experience vulnerability. As the target date of 2015 approaches, the various stakeholders – international organizations, governments, civil society – are focusing more and more their attention on achieving the Millennium Development Goals. By pooling resources and working in partnership, there is great scope for increasing the scale and improving the quality and support provided worldwide.

- *An explicit reference to the need to promote partnership between all relevant stakeholders in the joint EU/Africa Strategy would be in accordance with the eighth goal of the MDGs and allow for a holistic and sustainable approach to development.*

As mentioned above, development policies designed at the national or international level will not have an impact on the local communities and civil society in general without their actual involvement in the identification of needs, the planning and prioritization process, as well as in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Unfortunately, lack of capacity often prevents effective mobilization of the civil society actors, even if there is the willingness to do so.

- *Therefore, promotion of civil society capacity building as prerequisite for effective partnership should be an integral part of the strategy and translated into concrete support.*

Coherence of policies

Considering the impact of various policies such as trade, employment, energy on poverty reduction or rise, we strongly encourage the decision-makers to adopt a coherent and coordinated approach and to take into consideration the different components that can contribute to sustainable development.

This contribution has been prepared by the Red Cross/European Union Office, which represents the National Red Cross Societies of the EU Member States and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to the EU institutions. For any further information and clarification please contact Ms Daniela Adorna, Head of International Development Unit, RC/EU Office, Rue Belliard 65, box 7 1040 Brussels. Tel.: +32 (0)2 235 06 80. E-mail: daniela.adorna@redcross-eu.net

Annexes:

- Algiers Plan of Action
- ARCHI 2010