

# Presidency

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# Digest

2016 | 3



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



## Development & Democracy



Sustainable World With  
No One Left Behind



### INTERVIEW

**“It is essential that everyone takes responsibility for the inclusion of women in peace and security,” says Alaa Murabit**

Following the 2011 Libyan Revolution you founded the Voice of Libyan Women (VLW). What drove you to establishing this organization? How did you come to the decision to take action and advocate for women’s rights?

*Despite being raised in a very socially conscious family – my parents heavily prioritized education and my ten siblings and I frequently debated –*

*there was never really any conversation about women’s rights. Growing up I never felt a difference between the way I was treated in comparison with my brothers. My parents were extremely influential, from a young age, in ensuring that I had a strong understanding of women’s rights and roles in Islam, more through their example than anything else. I moved to Zawia, Libya when I graduated from high school at*

*15. Zawia is quite well known for being a conservative city, heavily governed by tradition. It was there where I first began to feel passionate about human rights in general, and more specifically our ability to voice our opinions on campus. However, because of the political and social climate I knew that my ability to create change was extremely limited, so even then my main focus was my medical education – change*

on campus was done in an effort to make our experiences as students more comfortable.

I was 21 years old when the Libyan Revolution broke out. My family was heavily involved in Zawia and following liberation I felt like it was the first time the desire for greater human and women's rights on a social level was met with a political window of opportunity. Starting the Voice of Libyan Women (VLW) has been an education. The success of the organization, despite being attributed to me, is truly not my own. I am surrounded by the hardest working, dedicated people I have ever known. My own family who have ensured that I am able to do work I feel passionate about and members of the VLW team who for the most part volunteer their time and efforts.



*Alaa Murabit, the Voice of Libyan Women*

**Your organization focuses on social, political and economic empowerment of women. What has been the general society's response and support for these goals in the context of last years' ongoing democratization and the current security challenges in Libya?**

When we first started VLW it initially focused on the political and economic empowerment of women as a means to social development. In the early weeks following liberation, the women's movement continued to focus heavily on humanitarian work. Despite the interest, heated discussions, and initiatives, we felt that we could create more sustainable impact if we addressed the existing

social construct which led to the limitation and negation of women's rights and roles. For myself and my team at The Voice of Libyan Women we have long held the belief that women's rights and Islam are not mutually exclusive, rather that the key to sustainable, indigenous change is through addressing the decades of tradition and religious misinformation which have provided a social construct and made women's empowerment without religious re-education an impossibility.

In the past two years we have focused on social education, dialogue and communication as a means to gender equality. This has been controversial within Libyan civil society, as we were immediately attacked for working with the different institutions which hold great influence - this included the Libyan ministries, Dar al Ifta Libya and private media and academic institutions. Our reasoning however was quite simple - there is no point in having conversations when everyone at the table already agrees. It is easy to discuss gender equality with those who are like minded. It is necessary to discuss gender equality with those who are not. Rather than brand men and boys as the 'problem,' as they are frequently labelled and perceived, it is time we introduced them as integral partners in the solution. Rather than exclude local community and cultural leaders we need to work with them, communicate with them and provide them with greater access to education and a greater understanding of what gender equality practically means. Working with existing community structures, we have a greater ability to reach the whole population and enhance the lives of all citizens through sustainable and inclusive processes. It is our responsibility to seek out those who seemingly oppose gender equality, so that through education and dialogue we may come together and truly address what can be done to ensure safer and more prosperous societies for all citizens.

For us, it has been this inclusive continued dialogue which has led to significant change, our Noor Campaign, built entirely on social education through religious scripture, is the largest campaign even conducted in Libya, reaching over 33 Libyan cities through city teams and a community of over 600 volunteers. It has since been replicated

throughout the region and proven that only when women's rights groups in Libya are willing to engage in dialogue with all groups and parties will true change occur.

**The spread of ISIS has particularly worrying consequences for women and their rights. How can women become agents of change and fight religious misinformation to help build peaceful and equal society?**

The situation in Libya is extremely fluid. It is without a doubt that during and immediately following the revolution women commanded much more space and drove the political and social agendas. However, in the years since the growing insecurity and rising extremism has led to the stigmatization of women's human rights defenders. This has led to kidnappings, threats and assassinations of leading activists. The ongoing civil war has acted to enable those who do wish harm, as it creates a larger security vacuum. Thus, unfortunately, any gains that were made in the past three years tend to be unsustainable due to the current situation in Libya. This is further amplified by the fact that to the majority of the Libyan population, women's rights are not seen as a priority because they feel there are more severe issues plaguing the country. This comes at a time where many Libyans feel that the existing governing, security and media structures and institutions have led to a deterioration of the state.

I think what needs to be kept in mind is that gender equality is not a local or regional demand; it is needed, now more than ever. Women are vital to conflict resolution and sustainable peace building. Despite their relative lack of formal political authority, their community credibility and networks make them crucial to sustainable peace, dialogue and cohesion. It is through women that we will strengthen the building blocks of society from the top down and the bottom up. And yet, the roles of women and the benefit they bring are understated. Rather than being encouraged and seen as partners in leading the country into a future of peace, prosperity and economic sustainability, they are still being marginalized due to a lack of political will, and a lack of communication and social awareness.

To me it is illogical and self-destructive to isolate women from the current secu-

ity and political situation in Libya, their involvement in all levels is paramount to the success of any initiatives and peace processes. The problem and the solution, both for women's movement as well as the greater Libyan political agenda are ultimately the same: active dialogue and cooperation. First and foremost, we must seek out active dialogue and communication and strive for greater cooperation – in particular with those who we challenge stability most.

**The refugee crisis showed that women are particularly vulnerable in situations of displacement. Also, by mistreating Muslim women, some European countries demonstrated that western world does not have the women rights issues figured out entirely at all. What is important for us to understand about Muslim women's identities and how can we take positive action to ensure their rights are respected in our societies?**

*What is happening in Europe is evidence of both the rising extremism as well as the dominant patriarchal mentality which dominates globally. Human rights are not a buffet; we cannot pick and choose who it applies to. It is essential that everyone takes responsibility for the inclusion of women in peace and security. On the multilateral*

*level there needs to be clear commitments made; within the UN itself, there should be stronger gender architecture. Member states should create national action plans in coordination with local civil society and allocate the necessary resources for implementation. There should be greater funding and support for civil society which promotes women, peace and security, as well as a greater focus on the voices of activists on the ground. The emerging voices and rhetoric – of contained borders and selective human rights – are ideas which betray Europe's claim as a human rights pioneer, and its history – are so painful. The Europe which has long claimed leadership in the human rights realm is one which knew, without a doubt, that human rights, sustainability and prosperity go hand in hand. You cannot have one without the other. We must understand the histories and colonial legacies that have shaped our present security landscape. We must also acknowledge how we are complicit in these histories, learn from our mistakes, and rectify them by revolutionizing existing international bodies of cooperation.*

*Social sustainability means recognizing that human worth cannot be measured. It cannot be prioritized by national interest, taken by tanks, or secured by walls. Our only option is to address*

*the world's complexity with creativity, with grassroots coalitions, and with an investment in people. Sustainable societies elevate, amplify and work with women and youth – not only when crisis hits, but more importantly in building of institutions and future policies and strategies. The inclusion of women in peace processes has proven to increase their likelihood of success from a dismal 10% in five years to 35% higher in 15 years. Yet despite this, women remain absent from peace tables, with peace processes unable to take into consideration women's unique perspectives and unable to gain traction and credibility within local communities.*

*Today there are over 2.8 million children – refugees – who do not have access to quality education. This will impact future generations – it will amplify levels of poverty for their children and grandchildren to come, it will increase maternal mortality rates, rates of sexual violence and child marriage. I prioritize gender equality and quality education because they are essential. An investment into the education and employment will prompt the eradication of poverty, increase the literacy of families, and greater environmental awareness. In order to effectively meet the challenges we are facing today, we must not allow ourselves to become isolated, hostile or militarize humanitarian issues.*

## INTERVIEW

# “We need to allow innovators to pivot and change as they develop their ideas,” thinks Ken Banks

Ken Banks, the Founder of [kiwanja.net](http://kiwanja.net) and the creator of messaging platform FrontlineSMS, is devoted to the application of mobile technology for positive social and environmental change in the developing world. He has worked at the intersection of technology, anthropology, conservation and development for the past twenty-five years and, during that time, has lived and worked all over the whole African continent. Banks is also a published author with his first edited book, “The Rise of the Reluctant Innovator”, self-published in the late 2013 with a follow-up, published by Kogan Page and released in March 2016. The book was translated into the Slovak language by the Pontis Foundation in 2016.

The World Watch magazine described you as a “probably the world's leading voice in promoting

mobile phones as an appropriate technology”. What motivated you to focus on mobile phone technolo-

gies and innovations for development?

*From a relatively early age I took an interest in world issues, and continued to be troubled about all the imbalance and injustices I saw as I grew up. There was a little I felt I could really do about it though, particularly given that I ended up working in the technology and banking sectors – not skills that were particularly useful in international development at the time. But I started volunteering for work projects across Africa, and started gaining as much experience I could, so I could learn about what life was like for people*

living in poverty, or under oppressive regimes. It wasn't until mobile phones started to appear across the developing world, about five years later, that everything fell into place for me. Using my passion for change, the experience I had gained working across Africa in the previous ten years and my technology skills, I began focusing on how mobiles could benefit the social sector across the developing world. It wasn't clear at the start whether or not they could be useful... but the rest is a history, as they say.

**You are the creator of the mobile messaging application FrontlineSMS. It is a free open source software which can operate without the internet connection and is widely used nowadays by organisations to distribute and collect information. What are the origins of the FrontlineSMS and what do you plan for the future?**

*The FrontlineSMS app was originally released at the end of 2005 based on a hunch that there was a need within the grassroots non-profit community for a simple, easy-to-use replicable text messaging tool which didn't require the internet or expensive infrastructure or equipment to use. The idea came during a fieldwork in South Africa, where I was looking for something that South Africa National Parks could use to re-engage the local communities within the conservation effort through their mobile phones. I couldn't find anything.*

*Several months later the idea of a mobile-based messaging hub came to my mind, and I decided it might be worth trying to write something. Over a five week period I sat at a kitchen table in Finland developing a prototype of the platform. Clearly the hunch has paid off. The FrontlineSMS is today in the hands of tens of thousands of non-profit organisations in over 170 countries, and the increasing numbers are beginning to do some quite incredible things with it.*

**This year the Pontis Foundation have translated and published your book the Rise of the Reluctant Innovator. It is a book that makes you feel like you understand the people with the stories that resonate. What inspired you to write this book?**



*Ken Banks, [kiwanja.net](http://kiwanja.net)*

*Despite the tens of billions spent each year on international cooperation, some of the most promising and exciting social innovations and businesses have come about by chance. Many of the people behind them didn't consciously set out to solve anything, but they did. In my work over the past decade or so, I've met many of these people, and I was fascinated by the organic nature of their approach.*

*I published this book to fill the much-felt gap in the social innovation/social entrepreneurship market, one which is currently dominated by books which – often at no fault of their own – give the impression that a meaningful change is only possible if you're an MBA, or a geek, or have money or influence, or a carefully laid out five-year master plan, or all the five. This is not the case, and I felt it was important that young people read these stories by way of getting some balance to the more 'formal' innovation approach.*

**What are the most innovative solutions you came across while collecting ideas and inspirations for this book? How did you choose the stories featured?**

*Selecting stories was quite easy, to be honest, given the fact that I knew most of the people featured. Once I'd decided on the focus of the book, the only tricky thing to do was to convince people that it was worth spending days on and writing their chapters for me. As the book took shape I was incredibly fortunate to secure a Foreword from Archbishop Desmond Tutu – someone who, I think, symbolizes hope and a desire to make the world a better place.*

**M-Pesa, the famous Kenyan pioneer in mobile banking services is**

**almost ten years old and enabled many other innovations, such as off-grid solar energy companies M-Kopa. Do you see a room for a similar big scale innovation that can spread from Africa to the rest of the world?**

*In my opinion, the pattern has already been set in financial services, and we're going to see many innovations in this sector begin in places like Africa and slowly move their way here. I think the next wave will be in mobile health. Our healthcare systems are creaking under the strain and many of the solutions we need are not a million miles from the ones they need across the developing world, including remote diagnosis and health monitoring. Again, I think much of this will be pioneered across Africa and over the next few years it will slowly come our way.*

**Your initiative Means of Exchange aims to rebuild local communities through technology. What tools have you used to achieve this change? What impact has this had so far?**

*It's only when things go wrong that we question the systems which regulate, control and dominate our lives. We live in a time of great economic uncertainty. Millions of people around the world have lost jobs, homes, businesses, independence and purpose. Millions more face growing uncertainty and insecurity. Many hard working people have been hard hit. In the greater scheme of things they're simply collateral damage in the rebalancing of a larger, broken world economic system. I started Means of Exchange shortly after I stepped back from my FrontlineSMS project to focus on how we might use technology to reconnect communities both socially and economically. Our main initiative to date was a 'cash mob' during the London Olympics in 2012 where we used social media to mobilise shoppers, who committed to visit a bookshop not far from the Olympic Village and spend £10. The idea was to make it fun, and for people to feel part of something, but also to raise awareness around the plight of small businesses. Since holding that first successful cash mob in London, similar events continue to take place across the UK on a weekly basis.*

As an international community, what actions do you think we can take to advocate for more research and investment in technologies that would globally benefit poor communities?

*To be honest, I don't think the problem is a lack of money, or even technologies. What we lack the most is people's attention, and a lack of empathy. We also lack a will to invest in local innovators, and to empower and capacity build among the grassroots. As I highlighted in my book, the approach that the sector prefers – a controlled, three year-style project cycle – just doesn't work most of the time, yet we persist with it. We need to allow innovators that we fund to pivot and change as they develop their ideas, and we need to allow local innovation hubs to thrive, and not dominate things by flying in solutions the whole time from outside. One of my latest side projects is attempting to encourage fresh thinking around much of this – see [hackingdevelopment.org](http://hackingdevelopment.org) for more.*

## The Rise of the Reluctant Innovator

Classes in social innovation, social entrepreneurship and design thinking have become increasingly popular in recent years. On the one hand, this might be seen as a good thing. After all, the world needs as many smart, engaged citizens as it can get, particularly when you consider the multitude of challenges we face as a planet. But does a career in social change really begin in the classroom or out in the real world? To what degree is social change planned and to what degree is it accidental? And which approach tends to lead to the most meaningful, lasting or impactful solutions? This book may help you find some of the answers. (More information available at: <http://www.reluctantinnovation.com/>)



Early this year, the Pontis Foundation translated the book into the Slovak language and published it online and in print. The online version is available at: [http://www.nadaciapontis.sk/data/files/Zrod\\_zdrahaveho\\_inovatora\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.nadaciapontis.sk/data/files/Zrod_zdrahaveho_inovatora_WEB.pdf) The printed copies will be available at the MFA Discussion Table at the conference.

## INTERVIEW

# “Intermediation between communities and government in the development journey of a society is of the utmost importance,” maintains Crystal West

Crystal West has more than 20 years of experience from successful developmental interventions. Her skills and specialization are related to Community Organizing and Community Development, Human Settlements Planning, Organisational Development and Capacity Building. West serves as the Head of Advocacy of the Habitat for Humanity South Africa. Crystal had previously led and implemented two innovative subsidized human settlements projects from commencement of land tenure engagements to completion of top structures, while employed at the Development Action Group at the same time. At Niall Mellon Township Trust (Ireland) and Mellon Housing Initiative (MHI) she acted as the Director of Social Development.

**One of the Habitat's four global advocacy priorities is to promote informal settlements upgrading. What are the root causes of informal settlements in South Africa (SA)?**

*Countries around the world are urbanising rapidly as more people migrate*

*from rural areas to the cities and natural population growth continues to occur. Today, more than half the world's population resides in urban areas, and by 2050, 70% of the global population is projected to reside in urban areas. More than 90 percent of*

*this urban growth is taking place in the developing world (specifically Asia and Africa). The number of informal settlements in South Africa have increased significantly since 1994 from 300 to over 2 700 settlements. The need for housing assistance has grown exponentially since 1994, and continues to increase due to a variety of factors such as the rate of natural population growth and the tempo of urbanisation (and the accompanying inability of municipal planning to keep track with the demand), and diminished access to housing finance for household that do not qualify for government subsidy assistance.*

**The Habitat for Humanity has launched the campaign called Solid Ground. Could you please tell us more about the campaign and its**

## aims? What has been achieved so far?

*Solid Ground's vision is a world where everyone has access to land for shelter. Its mission is to change land policy and systems to ensure that more people around the globe have a decent home. The campaign's theory of change is to activate and coordinate mobilization of existing and new allies to motivate policy makers to enact and implement policy that will advance access to land for shelter. While the campaign is focused entirely on access to land, it revolves around four sub-themes: secure tenure, gender and property rights, slum upgrading and disaster response and resilience. The Habitat SA is enrolled as a Champion country in the global campaign, and is specifically focusing on informal settlement upgrading and advancing access to tenure security. We have identified three areas where change is needed: guidelines for the implementation of the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP), increased capacity of intermediary organisations in civil society, and mandatory investment in community participation in all upgrading projects. In achievement of this, the Habitat SA is documenting the best practice in participatory upgrading projects, building sector capacity through custom designed training programmes, and lobbying for the utilisation of intermediary organisations for social facilitation services.*

## What approaches does the Habitat for Humanity South Africa adopt to upgrade informal settlements?

*Habitat SA is not involved in the physical and technical component of settlement upgrading, but works "behind the scenes" with communities to build their capacity as leaders, to enable them to drive these processes. This involves specifically a support by helping to set up community governance structures, identification of various assets which can be leveraged in their development journey, the development of a Community Action Plan with identified priorities and the development of maintenance and sustainability plans for community facilities/interventions. Due to the Habitat SA's strong relationship with the corporate sector and positive brand awareness, we are also able to connect community priorities to corporate funding streams. The Habitat SA*



*Crystal West,  
Habitat for Humanity South Africa*

*works alongside partner organisations such as the Community Organisations Resource Centre (CORC) and the Informal Settlements Network (ISN) (who are a part of the South African Slum Dwellers International Alliance). The organisations and social movements specifically provide technical and mobilisation support to informal settlement communities. The Habitat SA therefore offers a service which, when combined with the services and support of other organisations, provides a holistic package of socio-technical services to enable and drive participatory settlement upgrading. We have applied the People-Public-Private Partnership (P4) model which applies to all our projects and interventions. We not only follow this approach ourselves, but encourage others to do so through our advocacy and lobbying efforts.*

*Further, the Habitat SA has prioritised mandatory funded social facilitation in all human settlement interventions as one of our advocacy focus areas, and through this; aims to ensure that the social processes of community mobilisation, community action planning and capacity building are funded by state resources (and not solely through intermediary organisations who primarily utilise donor funding). The Habitat SA furthermore actively engages in policy making activities, and has been involved in the formulation of the White Paper for Human Settlements in South Africa (the first of its kind subsequent to the shift away from the narrow vision on housing provision in 2004). Alongside our sector partners, we have been actively lobbying for (1) increased emphasis to be placed on participation in all human*

*settlements projects, (2) the state to prioritise and action in-situ settlement upgrading in line with the UISP intent, and (3) multi-stakeholder, people-led partnership in the implementation of interventions in human settlements.*

## In order to find solutions and remove the barriers for development, an open and critical discussion between slum dwellers and the local government is vital. How can this debate be facilitated? What are your best practices?

*Communities and government both have very limited capacity to engage with one another, and these crucial interactions have not been part of the development process for many years, which has meant that interventions have been largely driven by state priorities with limited (or no) input and guidance from the very communities these decisions impact on. A platform has to be created where communities can interact with government and other relevant stakeholders and partners. Engaging on such platforms and understanding the development context requires a certain level of knowledge, access to information, insight and capability, and the Habitat SA is working alongside other sector partners to capacitate communities to have a voice at the negotiating and planning table. In turn, the Habitat SA also builds the capacity of the state to engage with its residents.*

*Intermediation in the development journey of a community is of utmost importance, and in these instances the Habitat SA (in collaboration with our project partners) manages the interface to ensure mutually beneficial outcomes, without influencing or swaying the outcomes in any particular direction.*

*Best practices to remove the barriers for development through engagement is setting up partnership forums between government, informal settlement communities and support organisations, creating project steering committee meetings where community representatives are able to sit alongside public and private sector stakeholders to guide and inform project interventions and creating horizontal learning opportunities to enable project partners to witness and learn through first-hand experiences how other communities collaborate successfully with the state.*

## INTERVIEW

# “Our sector is increasingly focused on highlighting the interconnectedness of the challenges that we face no matter where we live, and the need for a major transformation in our approach to tackle these challenges,” reckons Seamus Jefferson

Seamus Jeffreson is the Director of CONCORD – the European NGO confederation for Relief and Development representing development NGOs across the continent. He has worked in Brussels (EU development and Neighbourhood issues) and overseas (in South Africa during the transition, in Kosovo after the conflict, in Ethiopia, and in the Middle East with Iraqi and Syrian refugees).

**The aim of the European Year of Development (2015) was to bring the development issues to the attention of the general public of the member states. What was achieved and what were the setbacks?**

*The Year succeeded in linking up different civil society actors (not only development NGOs) in raising awareness about sustainable development. A variety of activities and projects throughout the European Year demonstrated the ways in which ‘development’ is more than aid to poor countries. For example, one initiative that reached wide<sup>1</sup>, and probably new audience, on development issues was a short film on the “€2 T-shirt”. This highlighted the relationship between us as consumers and the conditions and human rights of people making our clothes.*

*The Year contributed to our changing understanding of development cooperation. The perception of our sector moved from the question of ‘rich countries helping poorer ones’ as we are increasingly focused on highlighting the interconnectedness of the challenges that we face no matter where we live (for example climate change, inequality) and the need for a major transformation in our approach to tackle these challenges.*

*There is no doubt that a lot of people were reached. Of course there could*

*always have been more. You can find out more on civil society’s contribution to the European Year and what was achieved on the CONCORD website.*

**In your opinion, did the European Year of Development and spreading awareness of the SDGs contribute to a better communication of the refugee crisis to the general public? If yes, how?**

*The Year definitely contributed to a greater awareness of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Global goals that succeeded the Millennium Goals. It’s also worth highlighting that the Agenda commits all States “to facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well managed migration policies” (SDG 10.7).*

*However, more needs to be done to popularize the SDGs and show how they are relevant to people’s everyday lives and the issues they care about. One way of doing this is to ensure that people are included in the decisions that affect them.*

*My feeling is that people see the connection between development cooperation and tackling the root causes of forced migration. People see that the war in Syria and the growing refugee crisis in the neighbouring countries also have an impact on Europe. And it is the general public who in their tens of thousands have been showing their soli-*

*arity with refugees fleeing a conflict. Last year I witnessed individual volunteers as well as organised NGOs on the ‘frontline’ in railway stations and ports along the Balkan and central European route providing food, information and support to people fleeing a conflict or seeking a better life on our continent. Is it a challenge for us in Europe to cope? Of course it is. Are people fearful for their identity, their job, their safety? Of course they are. But when I see this incredible manifestation of solidarity, activity, and volunteerism – especially from young people – I feel: “wir schaffen das”.*



Seamus Jefferson, CONCORD  
(Archív: © euranet\_plus/flickr.com)

**What impact has the refugee crisis had on public support for the organisations CONCORD represents?**

*Many humanitarian organizations who traditionally worked outside the EU are*

<sup>1</sup> Seven and a half million views on You Tube.

now supporting refugees within the EU's borders – on the Greek islands, in Italy, in the Balkans and central Europe too. They can do this using the expertise gained over many years in humanitarian emergencies (for example providing medical attention, food and basic needs, child support, addressing specific needs of women refugees). NGOs have also been channeling the support provided by their members and supporters, undertaking campaigning and awareness work and fundraising. This is important because it provides a channel for peoples' desire to support and help. One challenge for our organisations is how to make use of the public's wish to do something. People want to donate clothes and food, they want to volunteer their time and skills but translating this resource into help takes time and organization. Perhaps NGOs risk become too much like public or private service providers focusing on delivering government-funded contracts. It is our challenge not only to manage projects but to harness the ingenuity, political power and resources of our supporters. The partnership of local authorities with NGOs, church and other groups and associations in receiving and supporting those coming to Europe this past year is worth underlining. I think this will be an important trend in the future too.

Finally, there is perhaps an impact on the public's interest in and understanding of our role in the neighbouring countries, the fight against poverty and for human rights, and the interconnectedness of our world. A war in Syria has a very direct impact on people in Europe. Climate change in the horn of Africa is gradually leading to movements of people. Insecurity in the Sahel is taking away opportunities and livelihoods for people in their own countries.

We cannot ignore these events and say they have nothing to do with us, that we have to 'deal with our own problems'.

Through an active and outward-oriented external policy including in the humanitarian field as well as through development cooperation, the European governments can show their electorates that they are agents in tackling the situation and not helpless victims of a migration phenomenon. Critically, this means working as true partners of origin and transit countries and not treating them as the source of our 'problem'. I think the public get this if we – and I see this as NGOs' role too – take the time to explain and explore root causes and do not seek only quick answers to the issue in building walls and fences.

**In relation to the refugee crisis, what are CONCORD's immediate priorities and plans for moving forward?**

Let me first say that I think we need to be more precise when we talk about 'refugee crisis'. Lebanon has a refugee crisis – one in four people in that country are refugees. The islands of Lesbos and Lampedusa are experiencing a crisis. But I wouldn't say that Belgium or the UK or Slovakia are experiencing a refugee crisis. The numbers of refugees being resettled from the region, from Italy and Greece – especially highly vulnerable people including young children – is frankly lamentable. As a continent, we need to do better.

CONCORD and our members are part of an effort to understand and tackle the root causes and to avoid the language of fear and xenophobia when discussing how to react to the unprecedented movements of people to our shores.

All aspects of EU policy tend now to be seen through the prism of migration and security so this question will dominate all our work. Our approach is to highlight and seek to tackle the root causes of forced migration. Specifically we will be working on the following:

Ensuring that sufficient resources are made available and that we do not 'rob Peter to pay Paul'. In other words, ensuring that a country or peoples' access to aid is not determined mainly by their role in solving what Europe sees as our migration "problem". We need to find new resources – and given the attention being devoted to the topic, this really should be possible.

Ensuring that the rules governing what we can spend aid on are respected. The aid is for the fight against poverty. We will work to ensure that aid remains focused on this and that more appropriate funds and instruments are used for the EU's other external actions, be they diplomacy, security cooperation or promoting EU trade and business. The principles on development effectiveness agreed in the Paris and Busan accords provide the framework for our efforts. These include: country ownership, untied aid, donor coordination, beneficiaries consulted.

Ensuring that relevant non state actors – organisations representing young people and migrants, faith groups, development NGOs and others – are fully consulted and involved in the discussions of how programmes addressing migration question are conceived and implemented. Finally, ensuring that oversight and accountability mechanisms for how public funds are spent in the migration response are robust and transparent, so that there are checks and balances and we can see the results of these initiatives.

The Presidency Digest is issued under the auspices of the Slovak Presidency in the Council of the European Union, funded by the European Commission and co-financed by SlovakAid.



Published by the Pontis Foundation, Zelinárska 2, 821 08, Bratislava, Slovakia.  
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The Presidency Digest is financed by EuropeAid and co-financed by SlovakAid. The views expressed in the Presidency Digest do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the donors.