

**COOPERATION IN THE FIELD GUIDELINES:
A Framework for Enhanced and Visible Cooperation
2008 - 2012**

1. Summary

In the changing NGO environment of international cooperation SOLIDAR, as a network of operational members, needs to explore and develop ways to strengthen cooperation by using its existing potential whilst at the same time preserving the specific characteristics (traditions, politics, profile) and diversity of its members.

The current NGO environment is being affected by three major factors:

1. The implementation of the Paris Declaration by the DAC Member agencies
2. Emerging new state donors (China, Russia, etc.)
3. Sharper competition between NGO families for a fairly consistent level of funds.

The purpose of the Cooperation in the Field (CiF) Strategy Guidelines is to formulate a shared understanding and to strengthen mechanisms for **enhanced and visible cooperation** between SOLIDAR members in humanitarian aid and development cooperation. It covers our base of common values, our political engagement, the range of possible cooperation mechanisms, ways of approaching cooperation in emergency and development contexts, communication mechanisms, the use of the SOLIDAR brand and the division of labour between the SOLIDAR office in Brussels and the respective member organisations.

2. Context and challenges

As an international alliance of social and economic justice non-governmental organisations SOLIDAR has historically focused on creating space for discussion and information sharing between like minded organisations and providing project management, information and lobbying services at the European level. In more recent years, whilst maintaining its interest in social issues in Europe, it has developed through its member organizations, a wide range of humanitarian activities in the developing world with a particular focus on emergency relief and post conflict reconstruction. It has also linked the operational experiences in the field with the political dimension and debate in Europe.

In recent years a number of critical changes in the operating environment for SOLIDAR members have taken place and pressures on the INGO community have increased. One key element is the continuing implementation of the "Paris Declaration" of the DAC with member agencies shifting their engagement towards direct implementation in the south. Furthermore, through budget support instruments governments are enabled to implement local policies (mainly in education and health) directly without NGOs from the north. In most of the developing countries the Paris Declaration is also linked to the PRSP Process. Depending on the political situation civil society is included or excluded from the development of PRSPs.

Another element is the emergence of new state donors. China, Russia, Singapore, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela amongst others are investing considerable volumes in development cooperation. The interventions of these new players are not subject to the inadequate, but established, channels of consultation and transparency that more traditional donors are engaged in. Aid from these agencies does not usually include discussions with civil society and presents a challenge to good governance

At the same time there is concentration and structural change within the international NGO market. Powerful NGO families (OXFAM, CARITAS, CARE, Handicap Int., World Vision, MsF, etc.) and charity foundations (Bill Gates, Clinton, etc.) have strong private and state donor market access. As the private donor market is not expanding the expulsion of other (smaller) market players is a realistic threat which needs to be faced.

In addition, many governments are challenging the effectiveness of delivering aid through CSOs, choosing private and or military corporations as the facilitators of aid distribution, particularly in post-conflict and disaster reconstruction.

In summary, the challenges facing SOLIDAR members working in the field of humanitarian aid and development cooperation include:

- Increasing public focus on accountability and scrutiny of the use of funds:
- Pressure for INGOs to be more effective and efficient in their operations:
- Changes in the funding context with more competition for funds, a preference by donors in favour of larger organisations, and a trend to providing funds directly to countries of the south rather than through western NGOs:
- And as a result pressure to change the shape and structure of the INGO community through mergers and linkages.

SOLIDAR Members need to actively confront these challenges, to search for ways to adapt to this new context and to collectively strengthen our fund raising and programme implementation mechanisms. The cooperation in the field guidelines are intended to provide a framework to do this, taking into account our differences whilst at the same time building on our common values and operational capacities through enhanced and visible cooperation.

It is imperative for a successful implementation of the cooperation in the field guidelines that they are endorsed and institutionally introduced at the political and operational level of SOLIDAR member organisations.

3 Common values and areas of work

SOLIDAR is based on common values rooted in the social democratic and trade union movement: solidarity, social justice, and equality are the political and moral pillars of SOLIDAR's members.

The cooperation in the field of SOLIDAR members is generally linked with a political dimension. This political dimension is based on the principal political values of SOLIDAR which are rooted in the trade union and social democratic tradition. Close cooperation with trade unions at operational level as well as on joint policy dialogue is an added value of the network and ensures a better leverage effect.

Actual experience of cooperation should be disseminated and set into the political context in Europe.

The linking of the political debate in Europe and the results and experiences gained in the respective programmes allows SOLIDAR and its members to contribute to the political debate on relevant issues like workers rights or respect of human right.

SOLIDAR members active in international affairs mainly focus on four modes of action in a variety of fields of work:

Modes of action:*

- Humanitarian Aid
- Development Cooperation

- Political and policy programmes
- Advocacy, good governance

** These are not discrete areas, it is important to see the inter-linkages between them.*

Fields of Work:**

- The provision of food shelter and basic security
- Rehabilitation, reconstruction
- Peace and democracy promotion
- Decent work
- Migration (South/North, East/West, South/South)
- Promoting equality including gender equality
- Institutional and capacity building including support to trade unions.
- HIV/AIDS
- Supporting income generating programs and livelihood programs. Integrated development programs.

** These are non-prioritised examples.*

Some of these fields of work e.g. gender equality, women's empowerment and institution building are cross-cutting as well as being substantive in their own right.

Values and standards of the SOLIDAR engagement

SOLIDAR members are guided by international standards in their development cooperation and humanitarian aid work. As a common base for SOLIDAR the principles of the Int. Code of Conduct for NGOs, the ICRC Chartia and the SPHERE standards serve as internationally recognised frameworks. SOLIDAR has used key elements of these frameworks in its "guiding principles for humanitarian aid and development cooperation". These guiding principles are the basis of any kind of joint activities SOLIDAR members are undertaking.

4. Types of Cooperation

SOLIDAR members are already involved in various forms of cooperation. The following table reflects a range of possible areas for enhanced and visible cooperation and sets out the benefits which might flow in each area from increased cooperation. Clearly in any area more than one type of cooperation can be envisaged. All of these categories currently exist and so form a realistic basis for increasing cooperation.

SOLIDAR members always have the possibility to opt-in in to an existing co-operation agreement. The opting-out procedures will be laid down in the particular co-operation agreement between the respective members.

EXCHANGE

Information and experience <u>exchange</u> to pool organizational knowledge.	Enhances the capacities and effectiveness of individual Member Organisations and SOLIDAR as a whole.
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NETWORKING

<u>Influencing</u> power/finance structures	More visibility of SOLIDAR and Members together than as individual organisations: Increased access to government, official coordinating bodies and the UN system.
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Platform building in country operational Context.	Stronger presence in the INGO scene and improved position towards other stakeholders.
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CO- FINANCING

Ongoing operations of a SOLIDAR member are <u>co-financed</u> by another SOLIDAR member.	Simple way to use funds if a SOLIDAR member is not operational in a particular arena but has funds they wish to use there. Allows for project co-financing requirements to be met.
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ASSOCIATION

<u>Related</u> but not managed projects under the umbrella of enhanced and visible cooperation	Projects which at the moment are independent but supportive of general aims and which have the potential to be more fully integrated.
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PARTNERSHIP

<u>Linked and coordinated</u> but discrete projects run by different member organisations	Greater efficiency and impact due to project complementarity
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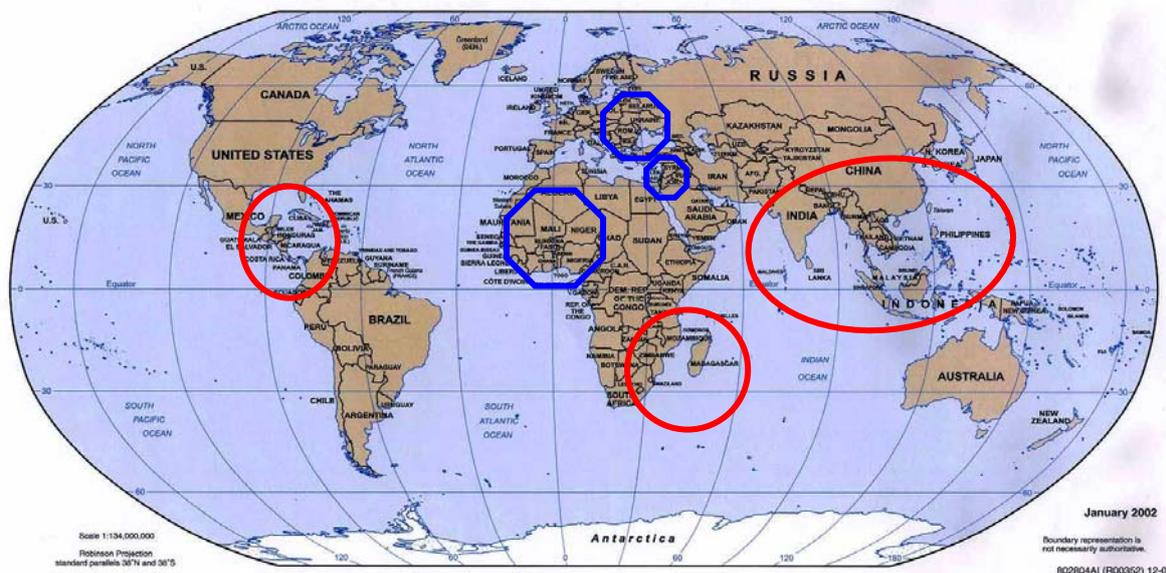
INTEGRATION

Operating <u>joint integrated</u> activities but also potentially working together in some or all of the other modes above (consortium).	Greater economy, efficiency and impact: eg for security, communications. Higher visibility. Stronger programme impact due to synergy.
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Minimum standards for these forms of cooperation will be added in Annex 2

5. Focal Areas of Cooperation

Focal areas are geographical spaces where there is already a high density of SOLIDAR members present.



red= Humanitarian aid and development cooperation focal areas
 blue = Development cooperation focal areas

Humanitarian Aid

In terms of preparedness for an emergency we can see a certain pattern of “emergency event”:

- Central America: Hurricanes, earthquakes
- Sub Sahel Belt: Drought
- Southern Africa: Drought and flooding
- South East Asia: Earthquakes, flooding

Human made emergencies, such as those arising from conflict are not listed but clearly are an important part of our picture. Because emergencies by definition need an urgent response we set out a particular organisational model (See annex 3). In addition to the geographical focus areas of humanitarian aid, Western and Central Africa and Eastern Europe and the Middle East are also considered as operational areas of SOLIDAR members.

In the light of the general debate on development policies the SOLIDAR network has to lay emphasis on preparedness in its approach. Examples of this approach might be the influence of climate change in disaster prone areas as well as migration.

Development Cooperation

The SOLIDAR approach to humanitarian aid is guided by the continuum approach. Whenever possible this approach (Emergency Relief, Rehabilitation, Development) needs to be integrated into the operation.

As with humanitarian aid various forms of cooperation in development are possible. Whilst in humanitarian aid reaction time is crucial, in development cooperation, planning procedures can be undertaken based on the well elaborated programmatic approach, covering some or all of the types of cooperation outlined in section 4.

6. Communication

Communication is a crucial element of the CiF strategy. Due to the fact that SOLIDAR works as a network and SOLIDAR itself is not operational, fluid, transparent and timely communication is a key element of the strategy.

There are different layers of information.

1. General: Ongoing basic information on Countries / Contact Person and Sectors
2. In the field: Mutual knowledge between SOLIDAR Member Organisations in one country; but also general information on SOLIDAR provided to the field staff from HQ.
3. At HQ- Desk level: Contact list of the Desk officers working in the same country/area
4. At HQ Management level: Mutual knowledge of the intervention strategies and back donor structures.

Items 1-3 can be fed into a web based CMS solution powered and maintained by SOLIDAR Office Brussels. Item 4 can be delivered through regular exchange within ICC meetings.

7. Branding

Any type of cooperation in the field can have SOLIDAR branding. This can take different forms:

1. SOLIDAR brand as label in communication activities:
 - a. In publications (electronic and print)
 - b. In fund raising activities
 - c. On projects e.g. housing
2. SOLIDAR brand as joint label in the field
 - a. As consortium
 - b. As network label

Each SOLIDAR member is free to use the SOLIDAR brand. In the case of implementation as a local partnership or consortium the use of SOLIDAR as a joint brand will need to be agreed at the HQ level of those SOLIDAR members involved and in consultation with the SOLIDAR office in Brussels. In these cases common corporate design rules will need to be part of the cooperation agreement.

8. Roles of SOLIDAR Office and the members

Roles within the SOLIDAR network basically follow from the structural set up of SOLIDAR but there are implications within this for staff responsibilities.

Task	SOLIDAR Office	Member agency
Design of approach and local structure		Responsibility of the field offices and HQ's
Operational implementation		Responsibility of the field offices and HQ's
Local communication / lobby		Responsibility of the field offices and HQ's
National communication / Lobby		Responsibility of Communication Departments of HQ's

Task	SOLIDAR Office	Member agency
EU Communication / Lobby	Responsibility of SOLIDAR Office	Supply of information
National fundraising		Responsibility of Fundraising Departments of HQ's
EU and international Fundraising	Support for applications. Lobby and applications in DG's.	Applications for ECHO/Euro Aid , others.
SOLIDAR Operational Database	Oversight and Maintenance of CMS as part of SOLIDAR Website	Supply of information
Strategic overview	ICC meetings coordination	Active participation at ICC meetings
Development of common tools (Cooperation contracts, Corporate design)	Preparations and drafts	Approval at ICC meetings
Required staff	CiF responsible	HQ: Designated SOLIDAR contact for CiF. Desk: Knowledge of CiF strategy as part of the job specification for desk officers. Field: Knowledge CiF strategy as part of the job specification for Head of Missions.
ICC and ICC Subgroups	Support and logistics	Active participation on a regular basis

Whilst further work will be needed on all of these they provide an initial basis for taking things forward. In addition a set of principles for delivering humanitarian assistance and development cooperation is also desirable. (See annex 1)

This guidelines are an integral part of the over all SOLIDAR strategy

The ICC is establishing a working group to formulate minimum standards for the 6 forms of cooperation (see annex 2). The working group will submit these proposals to the ICC in September 2008

ANNEX 1

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR HUMANITARIAN AID AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

1. Objective of Humanitarian aid and Development Cooperation: working together to contribute to the improvement in the quality of the life of people. Our assistance focuses on alleviating suffering, eradicating poverty and enabling communities to become self sufficient.
2. Non-discrimination: providing assistance solely based on identified needs, regardless of location, ethnicity, gender, social status, sexuality, (dis)ability or religion.
3. Impartiality: remaining impartial and not accepting our assistance, supplies, vehicles, facilities or equipment to be used for any military, political or sectarian purposes.
4. Respect of human dignity: demanding respect for international human rights law. Working in response to the expressed wishes of local communities, and respecting the dignity of people, their culture, religion and customs without violating “respect of human dignity”.
5. Transparency and accountability: accountability to other SOLIDAR members and those whom we seek to assist. Ensuring that assistance is transparent. Not tolerating any corruption, theft or misuse of development or humanitarian supplies of equipment
6. Sustainability and preparedness: Tailoring activities to local circumstances and aiming to enhance locally available resources. Strengthening local capacities (civil society, business community, local authorities, etc) to address current needs and to prevent or prepare for future emergencies.
7. Consultation and participation: Seeking to involve communities in the design, planning, management, implementation and evaluation of programmes implemented for their benefit.
8. Coordination: maximum coordination amongst SOLIDAR members and coordinate activities with all relevant stakeholders at every level. This includes also the transparent exchange of information. It is also an imperative that any operation should not interfere to the operation of another member.
9. Security and safety: Protecting and promoting safety, security and freedom of beneficiaries and staff.

ANNEX 2

GENERAL CRITERIA CHECKLIST OF COOPERATION:

Key topics for the minimum standards for the 6 cooperation forms

- Operational
- Financial
- Branding
- Communication
- Decision-making process

Cooperation Forms

- Exchange
- Networking
- Co-financing
- Association
- Partnership
- Intergration

Annex 3

Humanitarian aid rapid response procedure

As a special process in case of an emergency member organisations and SOLIDAR will need to act according to the following procedure in order to maximise the effectiveness of members' humanitarian response through enhanced and visible cooperation.

