WHAT ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE IS THERE IN FRANCE TODAY TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE TO MIGRANTS?

INTRODUCTION

This study is part of an operational research project – “Learning and innovating to improve crisis response” – which aims to support collective learning within the humanitarian sector in the face of major changes in crisis contexts. With funding from the French Development Agency, Monegasque Cooperation for Development and the Fondation de France, the study aims to shed light on how different aid organisations in France are currently able to provide basic assistance and protection to migrants in keeping with their mandates and their values (humanitarian, social or activist).

In order to establish the limits of humanitarian space in response to the fundamental needs of those arriving in France, the study focuses on two central questions:

- What are the limits and nature of humanitarian space in relation to current national policies?
- What innovative solutions and practices exist that can help aid responses to evolve in an environment that is more restrictive, but also a source of new initiatives?

As such, the study aims to:

- Identify areas of tension in relation to humanitarian principles, particularly those of human dignity, independence, and impartiality (IFRC/ICRC Code of Conduct, Core Humanitarian Standard...);
- Analyse the current landscape and the dynamics between the different actors involved in the response;
- Think about the different approaches that could be adopted by actors and suggest possible areas of action for the future.

**Methodology**

The period of investigation is from autumn 2016 to the end of 2017. However, older information – for example, from summer 2015 – was included in the analysis when it had an effect on the current context and organisations’ operational strategies. Geographically, the study deals with three sectors where tension is particularly high: Hauts-de France (Lille, Calais, and Grande-Synthe), Paris and the surrounding areas, and the region near the border with Italy (between Cannes and the Roya valley).

The methodology of the study involved different phases: information collection, triangulation and analysis. These can be summarized as follows:

- **Literature review and collection of secondary data.** During this phase, 11 scoping interviews were conducted remotely with key interlocutors;

- **Collection of primary data** based on interviews with key informers, field visits and direct observations (47 interviews with 32 organisations or individuals);

- **Triangulation and analysis of the information collected.** Given the variety of situations and different points of view, the analysis required a significant amount of triangulation of the different sources of information (literature or from the field and key interlocutors).

The main limit of this study was that it concerned current events that were constantly evolving, which made it more difficult to establish the distance necessary for the analysis.

**1. THE POSITION OF THE PUBLIC AUTHORITIES AND ITS HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES**

Since the beginning of the 2000s, France’s policies in terms of asylum and migration are based on a fear of attracting greater numbers of migrants, and a clear distinction between political refugees and economic migrants. This approach partly explains the congestion of public mechanisms in terms of reception, and has led to levels of protection that are inferior to usual protection standards. Though such deficiencies are perhaps the result of a lack of anticipation and preparation, they also show that there is a desire not to take in more migrants; no long-term solutions are being provided for a long-term issue.

**1.1 THE POSITION OF THE PUBLIC AUTHORITIES TO ASYLUM AND PROVIDING MIGRANTS WITH ASSISTANCE**

**1.1.1 A brief overview of current migratory flows**

Rather than an unprecedented « refugee crisis » in Europe, it is more accurate to talk of a global crisis of forced displacement which has primarily affected the regions close to the crisis zones, and then has lead, to a lesser extent, to subsequent movements towards Europe. In 2016, the 28 countries of the European Union recorded 1.2 million requests for asylum, but the situation in different countries is very different, as Germany alone recorded 62% of these requests. France, for its part, recorded 85,000 and 100,000 respectively in 2016 and 2017.
What is more, migration of this kind was not unknown in the 20th century. France took in almost half a million Spaniards in January and February 1939, and around 1.5 million repatriates from Algeria (512,000 in the summer of 1962 alone). Though, of course, in the latter case, this concerned French nationals, such an influx of repatriates nevertheless shows that the French authorities do have the capacity to manage this kind of situation. Lastly, in 1979-80, the government of Valéry Giscard d’Estaing took in 120,000 Vietnamese and Cambodian “boat people”, without examining their individual situation (refugee status was granted on a prima facie basis).

1.1.2 Public policies based on the categorisation of migrants and influenced by fear of attracting more migrants

Tension between the categorisation of migrants and the reality of migratory movements

In France, many analysts agree that the distinction between migrants who are eligible for asylum (and therefore potentially political refugees) and economic migrants is not relevant given the mixed nature of migratory flows (economic factors are often linked to violence and Human Rights violations). What is more, certain groups of migrants are running away from political, religious or sexual discrimination which may be carried out by non-State or civil society actors, rather than just by States.

As such, the asylum seekers knocking on Europe’s doors do not correspond to the refugee status as envisaged by the Geneva Convention (1951) which concerns only persecution of a political nature. Established in the context of the Cold War, it appears dated today because it does not allow the majority of requests for international protection to be taken into account.

Fear of attracting more migrants has shaped policy in France

Since the beginning of the 2000s, the fear of attracting more migrants, which is often mentioned in relation to the Calais “jungles”, has become an established feature of political discourse. This fear explains the refusal of the public authorities to improve the living conditions in camps so that they do not become established in the long term, based on the assumption that the conditions in which migrants are hosted can influence where they go. This tension between political and the humanitarian considerations is regularly criticized by humanitarian actors, because vulnerability and protection are not sufficiently taken into account.

In the case of Calais, for example, the notion that more migrants will be attracted appears to be flawed as it does not take on board the main reasons for the migrants’ presence, which is their steadfast desire to get to the UK (for family or economic reasons), and the agreements between France and the UK which create a blockage by reinforcing border security. Methods are applied to prevent the migrants from grouping together and re-establishing informal camps. But this struggle to prevent settlements leads to a recurring cycle of expulsions, wandering, and then rebuilding of makeshift camps. Migrants become less visible, but this tends to make it more complex to provide them with assistance and protection.

1.1.3 The complexity and saturation of the mechanisms in place for receiving migrants

The blockage of the system is essentially due to the fact that the public mechanisms are undersized and saturated, whereas they should provide accommodation and support to the most vulnerable people, including migrants. Despite the government’s announcement that it would create 7,500 places by 2019, the measures in place for the reception of migrants are inferior to needs. Services other than accommodation are crucial: social and legal support (for example, to make a request for asylum), medical and psychological care, and interpreting services.

What is more, the different demands that are made of civil society have a “boomerang” effect which makes the saturation of national mechanisms worse as aid actors orient people towards public services, thereby refusing to make up for the shortcomings of the authorities. Thus, the
health centres known as PASS (Permanences d’Accès aux Soins de Santé - twenty-four hour healthcare clinics), which are already totally overloaded, are unable to cope with the referrals by mobile medical and social teams.

1.1.4 A lack of political pragmatism or a decision not to take in migrants?

Some believe that the insufficiency of national mechanisms is the result of a lack of vision and anticipation of migratory flows

It is difficult to map the different categories of migrants that are present in the country, as well as migrants’ trajectories and the routes that they take through Europe. This lack of visibility with regard to data does not allow either institutional or civil society actors to plan and prepare appropriate responses.

Also, there are often disagreements between civil society actors and prefectures about figures, which does not allow for pragmatic discussions and does not allow actors to receive and orient people. According to civil society actors, prefectures tend to minimize the number of people living in informal camps or in the street due to pressure from the government.

Rather than a lack of pragmatism, the French State appears to be conducting a policy of non-reception with the aim of dissuading migrants

In line with the policy of “firmness and humanity” that was introduced by Bernard Cazeneuve during the previous term of government, the current governmental plan calls for “an active policy to combat illegal immigration” and appears to be prepared to receive certain migrants (political refugees, attractive profiles) on the condition that other categories of migrants are sent back (economic migrants). As such, it is perfectly in keeping with European migratory policies since the 1990s, the main preoccupation being to manage its external borders. Though there have been very clear instructions given to the prefectures by the government, field actors have observed major variability in terms of public actors’ desire and initiatives in terms of access to mechanisms (the time it takes to make a request for asylum, deliver or renew a certificate, the availability of emergency accommodation, or social and legal support, etc.).

For aid organisations, this lack of political anticipation or willingness to receive migrants means that there is no durable solution to these long-term migratory phenomena

In terms of reception and asylum, the State only appears to be acting in favour of the migrants under the influence of court decisions when a limit has been reached in terms of urgency or media coverage, or when it feels that it has lost control. This approach has sometimes led to a sort of “street bonus” due to the “competition” between different groups (Romani people, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, marginalised and de-socialised people). By becoming more visible, migrant camps sometimes triggered shelter operations, and therefore raised hopes about gaining access to accommodation, even if this was temporary.

For several authors, there is a lack of political realism at the European level despite the fact that the migration that is currently taking place is probably a long-term phenomenon. Due to restrictive immigration policies, the difficulty of reforming the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and the crisis of solidarity in terms of reinstalling asylum seekers, it has become extremely difficult for migrants and even professionals to understand European asylum mechanisms. As a result, migrants have developed mobility strategies that have led to a large number of “roaming migrants” throughout Europe. This issue of secondary flows contributes to the saturation of national asylum mechanisms and reception capacities.
1.2 THE HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES OF THE STATE’S APPROACH

1.2.1 The State’s approach violates people’s dignity and creates risks in terms of protection

On several occasions, migrants’ living conditions were judged to violate human dignity. On 23 November 2015, a State Council order condemned the French State for the first time concerning a refugee camp, based on the concept of human dignity. This decision could be a precedent setting case for all the slums in France where the living conditions are such that people are treated in an inhuman or degrading way.

The State’s approach also involves risks in terms of the right to asylum and protection, for example, in relation to examining individual situations and collective expulsions. Indeed, anyone who arrives in France asking for asylum has the right to have their individual situation examined. What is more, the collective expulsion of foreigners or migrants is contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights.

In addition, unaccompanied minors are a particularly vulnerable group as they are exposed more to the risks of non-protection (abuse, violence, human trafficking via smuggler or prostitution networks, etc.). Their situation is all the more worrying when they find themselves in a legal and social support vacuum, such as when their age is evaluated to check that they are minors, whereas the law States that they should immediately be provided with assistance. If migration policy criteria and the protection of unaccompanied minors were to be brought together, this could lead to different measures for French minors and foreign minors, for example, and imply much lower levels of protection for the latter.

1.2.2 The strategy of dispersing migrants makes it particularly difficult for them to gain access to assistance

Since the beginning of 2017, there has been greater pressure from the police on both migrants and volunteers. Testimonies gathered by the French ‘Defender of Rights’ and Human Rights Watch speak of blankets, sleeping bags and spare clothes being confiscated, and even sometimes water and food, of people being kicked, punched or struck with batons, and of gas being used on people who are sleeping, including children.

In a situation where migrants are faced with increasing difficulties to gain access to assistance and basic protection, aid organisations have had to spend more time locating people who are hiding, their location changing between night and day. Those providing assistance have also been forced to change their operational methods, for example, by multiplying distribution points, organising roaming distributions in order to reach people, or by being present at night in order to prevent police violence.

2. THE LIMITS OF THE SPACE AVAILABLE TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE: TENSION WITH REGARD TO HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES

Though humanitarian principles and reference frameworks are not necessarily shared by French organisations in the social sector, there is nevertheless common ground regarding the values and ethics that they promote in order to prevent and alleviate human suffering, whether this concerns humanitarian actors (everywhere in the world), or charity, social or citizen-based organisations who take action in their own country. As such, what ethical framework and what space for action can be defined between the authorities and aid actors in order to provide basic assistance and minimal protection to migrants who are currently present in France?
2.1 Hindrances to the Principle of Humanity or “Acting out of Solidarity”

1. Decisions aimed at stopping aid operations
2. Physical blocking/hindrance of goods and services
3. The judicialisation of aid actions (aimed at dissuading those providing assistance from taking part in operations)
4. An environment that discourages “humanitarian acts”

2.2 Impartial or Unconditional Aid Under Major Constraints

The government’s approach based on accommodation and simultaneous administrative processing does not respect the principle of impartial or unconditional aid, to use the terminology of social actors. Indeed, administrative categorisation is being applied to mechanisms that are no longer able to provide unconditional assistance, that is to say, based solely on people’s vulnerability.

THE CONTROVERSY OF THE “CRIME OF SOLIDARITY”

Strictly speaking, the “crime of solidarity” does not exist in French law. However, it is an offence to “help a foreigner to enter, stay or circulate in France illegally” as decreed in article L. 622-1 of the Code d’entrée et du séjour des étrangers et du droit d’asile (CESEDA), an offence which appeared for the first time in a decree of 1938, and then again in an order of 1945. Despite the introduction of family immunity and the reinforcement of a form of “humanitarian” immunity (reinforced by the Valls law of 31 December 2012), the way that these exemptions are formulated is sufficiently imprecise or “restrictive” that they sometimes lead to contradictory judicial interpretations.

According to the National Human Rights Commission (CNCDH), the restriction of humanitarian immunity means that it is possible to pursue and sanction “… humanitarian and disinterested actions”, “(...) thus criminalizing acts of solidarity”.

The large number of cases (particularly at the Italian border) illustrates the difficulties that simple citizens, activists or supporters have had to prove that their actions are covered by humanitarian immunity. Because the exemption only applies to the facilitation of residence, a person can incur legal proceedings and sanctions for facilitating a person’s illegal entry and circulation (even if they only give them a lift in their vehicle for a few kilometres). A number of people who were assisting migrants were recently convicted due to their “activism” even though in the first instance it had been decided that the humanitarian exemption applied to their actions. These interpretations restrict humanitarian immunity by using the motive of activism to increase a sentence, despite the fact that the cause that is targeted consists of providing vulnerable people with help and protection in the absence of sufficient and appropriate public action.

For all these reasons, the CNCDH recommends that the government and the legislator repeals articles L. 622-1 and L.622-4, considering, in addition, that the CESEDA’s measures are not in keeping with European law (Directive 2002-90 of 28 November 2002) which stipulates that only facilitating residence for a profit should be sanctioned.

* On 6 July 2018, the Conseil constitutionnel decreed that disinterested assistance for “illegal residence” should not be prosecuted in the name of the “principle of fraternity”. Article L 622-4, partially censored, will have to be reviewed by December.
Rather than defining forms of assistance based on the highest levels of vulnerability (and the reality of people’s needs), administrative criteria short-circuit needs assessments at a very early stage, and influence the type of protection and assistance that is available. Depending on the administrative checks that are carried out, people may or may not be attributed the ability to request asylum (following the normal, accelerated or Dublin procedures) and obtain accommodation and other forms of assistance, or are guided towards establishments with a view to potentially being sent back. Thus, administrative categorisation tends to define people’s needs or level of vulnerability without looking at their particular situation.

This inversion of aid logic has a major negative effect: if people’s administrative situation does not reflect the genuine risks they face for their security, there is a danger that this policy will omit and not fulfil obligations in terms of international protection (people fleeing war, but also other forms of violence that can be assimilated to persecution, isolated children, etc.). This is one of the negative consequences of the distinction between refugees and economic migrants, as well as the imperfections of the asylum process in France today (collective expulsions, non- use of the Dublin III sovereignty clause, non-recognition of minorities, etc.).

### 2.3 The Emergence of Ethical Dilemmas

During this study, ethical dilemmas emerged, particularly during our conversations with social workers from public institutions or associations with public service delegations. Many people involved in providing assistance said that they were effectively torn between the philosophy of their jobs (“finding solutions for people based on the situation they are in”) and the injunctions of the administration and politicians.

The saturation of national mechanisms also plays its role because, despite the resources deployed, social workers are not in a position to find solutions (even emergency and temporary solutions) for very vulnerable people (who do or do not meet the “right” administrative criteria). Social workers therefore find themselves faced with the major responsibility of deciding “who does and who does not have the right”, and are aware that they are leaving people in precarious situations rather than helping them. For example, it can be extremely difficult to send people (sometimes families) back to the street while at the same time knowing that there are no other solutions for accommodation, and this is regardless of the people’s administrative situation.
3. WHAT ROOM FOR MANOEUVRE IS THERE IN FRANCE TODAY TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE

3.1 DIFFERENT APPROACHES AMONG AID ORGANISATIONS

The position vis-à-vis the public authorities

The most obvious difference concerns the relations that those providing assistance have with the authorities, and this sometimes leads to radically different forms of action. There are three main types of actor in terms of their approach to the public authorities, even though there are different nuances – and sometimes a mixture – of different strategies, whether they are based on providing a service, influencing or acting in direct confrontation with the public authorities:

- organisations who are sub-contracted by the State to deliver services;
- associations that aim to exert influence over the authorities;
- actors who prefer to remain outside all public mechanisms in order to be able to take action and denounce the State’s shortcomings.

Actors of the medico-social sector, who are often State service providers, do not have a great deal of room for manoeuvre to criticise public policies if they do not want to take the risk of losing their contracts. Similarly, one supposes that associations which receive grants from the State or from the European Union find it difficult to denounce the policies implemented by their donors. However, certain associations with State mandates have already opposed the influence of the public authorities.

Finally, certain associations, in order to respect aid principles, try to exert influence by alerting the public authorities while avoiding all forms of public communication, but also all coordination, even informal, with more activist organisations. They refer to this as being a strategy of “change through small steps”.

Citizen-based movements vs. established associations

In the medico-social sector and the humanitarian sector, there are a lot of established associations who maintain regular and continuous relations with the public authorities. The citizen-based movement, for its part, which appeared in 2014-15, has established new forms of activist engagement at the margins of social, humanitarian and political action. Made up of associations and collectives, it is characterized by a high level of financial independence, of political activism and a real ability to have a strong impact on the ground through the intense mobilisation of volunteers (a lot of 18-30 year-olds, but also very active retired people).

Given these contrasts, the established association sector has tended to keep its distance from certain citizen-based actors, criticizing their lack of professionalism and structure, and a lack of detachment which can go as far as implicating migrants in activist causes. It should be noted here that citizen-based associations involved in the migrant question have a hybrid model of organisation. They appear to be situated half-way between a citizen-based collective, from which they have sometimes grown, and an established association, where there is a mixture of professionals and volunteers, and thus combining the advantages of both types of organization.

Three interesting issues for the future emerge from this short analysis of different methods of organisation and action:

- drawing up and respecting a minimum charter concerning the behaviour of those providing assistance (an authority to monitor and regulate them?)
- the need for support in terms of analysis and the supervision of practices (for example, psychological support for volunteers);
- the opportunity to clarify the distribution of roles between associations and citizen-based groups with new methods of action.

3.2 WHAT RED LINES EXIST BETWEEN ASSISTANCE AND POLICY?

3.2.1 The fragile balance between substitution and advocacy

The different advocacy channels used by actors are: influence, denunciation, direct confrontation, and increasingly, litigation. Sometimes there are even different positions within organisations, which can either be more institutional or more prone to engage in denunciation. Though positions have varying degrees of vehemence, advocacy always aims to draw the State's attention to shortcomings in the system so that it takes action to rectify them.

In addition, certain organisations accept that they are stepping in for the State while at the same time exercising influence (known as “institutional advocacy”). The advantages of this position, which could be described as “one foot in, one foot out”, are mutual knowledge and confidence, and potentially the leverage that it provides in relation to State institutions. Negotiations can then take place between associations and the public authorities, even though this does not rule out relations of power, which can paradoxically become relations of dependence vis-à-vis the public authorities, or can even resemble certain forms of manipulation.

At the other end of the spectrum, strategies based on denunciation, or even direct confrontation with the public authorities, also have some advantages. In certain circumstances, these more radical positions managed to bring about positive changes, whether this was within the traditional association sector or within the public authorities.

Scenario A: Civil society initiatives contribute to the inaction of the public authorities

This first case corresponds to situations where public actors are so overwhelmed and/or incapable of dealing with the situation that citizen-based and associative organisations are naturally “forced to act”.

Scenario B: The public authorities ask for help from civil society in the absence of a public mechanism

For example, associations are regularly asked to help during operations to dismantle camps, or medical associations are asked to provide healthcare in centres for migrants which are the responsibility of the State. Pressure has even been put on the association sector to take part in operations that they had initially contested.

Scenario C: Public mechanisms combined with supposedly humanitarian mechanisms

This form of manipulation is probably the most insidious as it consists of juxtaposing a public mechanism that aims to control migration and so-called humanitarian mechanisms. An example of this type of situation is the controversy around the Centre de premier accueil and the recent “Collomb” official notifications.
3.2.3 **Sometimes difficult dialogue between the assistors and the public authorities**

Successful – but short-term – collaborations between the public authorities and those providing assistance?

Though there have been examples of collaboration – thanks to the political courage of local politicians and other public sector actors – these are only of relative significance due to their short duration.

**Difficult collaboration with the public authorities**

Collaboration with the public authorities is often seen as problematic, for example, when the public authorities do not invite all the actors concerned, or experts on the relevant subject, to meetings, or when consultation is limited to top-down information sessions. According to local actors, this problem with coordination got worse when international humanitarian NGOs arrived. This compartmentalisation between actors contributed to establishing preconceptions between charity organisations, activists and humanitarian technicians.

### 3.3 **Dynamics between aid actors**

#### 3.3.1 Why was the response from humanitarian actors late?

Compared to the spontaneous response from citizen-based movements, established associations (including humanitarian organisations) sometimes took a certain time to position themselves and take action because they felt that it was not their responsibility to assist and stand in for the State (and initially adopted an advocacy strategy).

#### 3.3.2 Coordination and complementarity between actors?

**Dialogue and coordination were initially difficult between established and citizen-based actors**

As mentioned above, there was sometimes no dialogue between different actors of the response, which limits the potential for concerted, or even coordinated, action. Though coordination did take place between actors in certain circumstances, it took some time to establish trust.

**Can a space be created for dialogue between the different actors providing assistance?**

Due to different approaches, there is a real question of legitimacy amongst the different actors in relation to facilitating dialogue and the complementarity of actions. Certain actors refuse to speak to each other, and it is often difficult to bring together operators and activists, or to establish links between the ("traditional") association sector and citizen-based movements. What is more, an overview of all the aid actors involved and the operations carried out was not really available, which made dialogue and opportunities for cooperation more complicated.

Humanitarian associations showed a real willingness to coordinate with the local actors of the response (on aspects of operational coordination, health, shelter construction, communication and advocacy), being generally recognized as having genuine know-how and useful forms of organisation and professionalization (for example, in relation to managing the Calais slum). However, according to local associations, the involvement of humanitarian NGOs also brought an end to existing dynamics as it was based on the camp approach encouraged by the State.

**The advantages of cooperation between actors**

Despite differences of opinion, many interlocutors feel that it is necessary to improve the complementarity of the assistance provided. In the field, operational coordination is often fluid, particularly in order to provide immediate assistance and in relation to specific sectors of expertise.

In addition, at a more strategic level, there is general recognition that it is necessary to carry out concerted actions. Groups cooperate on the basis of shared approaches or topics. What is more, numerous associations release joint press releases on issues such as the infringement of rights and violence against migrants, the saturation of national mechanisms, the non-recognition of minorities, collective expulsions without examining individual situations, etc.
AREAS TO WORK ON

The number and variety of actors involved means that it is necessary to establish greater complementarity. Indeed, a new form of complementarity probably needs to be found due to the emergence of actors whose culture, method of organisation and forms of engagement are unlike those of the traditional NGO sector. Below are five areas to work on to improve the current situation:

Area 1: Establish and/or negotiate an appropriate framework for working

The first issue at stake is to secure a space in which aid actors and the public authorities can work and collaborate in order to limit tensions. The establishment of constructive dialogue should aim to clarify what room for manoeuvre actors have to respond, in keeping with their values and principles, and also in line with France’s international commitments in terms of Human Rights.

Another positive development would be to amend laws which can be interpreted in such a way that they thwart certain initiatives to provide assistance, as proposed by the CNCDH (articles L. 622-1 and L. 622-4 of the CESEDA).

Area 2: Encourage medico-social work methods to evolve

Medico-social workers will have to adapt their practices to the new migratory reality (which would help to simplify the national apparatus for providing migrants with assistance). They conduct new tasks that can be described as humanitarian (managing camps and queues, logistical responsibilities, public and staff security, and a great deal of inter-cultural mediation).

This is a socio-political projection that will depend on how well the public authorities anticipate migratory phenomena. It will also be necessary to think about how the social actors of tomorrow can be prepared for the arrival of migrants from a wide variety of cultures and crisis contexts. (see Area 4)

Area 3: Find new ways of working together

3.1 Create partnerships between NGOs and citizen-based actors

As NGOs and citizen-based actors sometimes manage to work together to increase the impact of their actions, partnerships of a new kind could be considered, which are mutually beneficial and based on the sharing of experience and knowledge. Also, the NGO sector could take inspiration from the organisational and operational methods of the new actors.

3.2 Improve the distribution of roles between those who take action and those who influence?

It seems difficult to envisage a strict distribution of roles between independent citizens who campaign and assist (close to the field) and organisations who are closer to the public authorities (and therefore more susceptible to be able to influence their policies). And yet, partnerships or more informal collaborations could be established, and nourish the actions of the different parties (for example, between the local and national levels, for assistance or advocacy).

3.3 Stimulate the complementarity and coordination of actions

More complementarity or coordination between actors would bring benefits on two levels: the operational level (mutual support, improved sharing of information and data, projects that combine specific expertise: logistics, medical, legal and Human Rights, etc.), and the strategic level (drafting communication and advocacy messages, influencing public bodies, engaging in litigation actions).

Area 4: Mutually reinforce the responses of different actors

4.1 Encourage the exchange of practices between the humanitarian and the medico-social sectors

Skills exchanges could be established between social and humanitarian workers with a view to the State and service providing bodies taking over. The latter know, for example, how to establish security procedures to avoid fights in camps/or centres, and how to manage tens or hundreds of arrivals per day in a respectful manner (whereas individualised reception cannot last more than three minutes).
4.2 Consolidate analysis and make the voice of migrants heard

More studies and collaborations could be conducted in fields that have not yet been explored a great deal (mental health and psychiatry, combatting human trafficking and exploitation networks...). This would help to guide and orientate actors who wanted to get involved in these fields.

The involvement of migrants is another important subject that aid actors rarely address. Indeed, they should be consulted more during the definition of responses, and their voices could be given support via certain forms of mobilisation.

4.3 Share experience and skills between social actors of all kinds

Exchanges between organisations who assist migrants can be useful, but relevant perspectives can also come from other areas of social action. Thus, the successes of pro-migrant associations have created a precedent that could prove to be useful to improve the living conditions in all slums. The know-how of CNDH Romeurope was useful for actions to stop evictions in the absence of alternative solutions for accommodation.

Area 5: Encourage forms of assistance at the societal level

Given that policies have become more restrictive, citizen mobilisation may be the only way to improve the fate of migrants. Actors must therefore discuss how to mobilise more citizens and renew forms of engagement.

5.1 Recognise and support the role of host populations

In order to reduce the potential for misunderstanding and polarisation within French society, it would be a good idea to take inspiration from lessons learned at the international level in terms of recognising, highlighting and supporting the contribution of citizens and associations in providing migrants with assistance and helping them to integrate (even temporarily).

5.2 Raise awareness among the ambivalent sections of public opinion

A central challenge is to change the viewpoint of a large number of citizens, by highlighting the contributions of migration, and encouraging the acceptance of people from different cultures. In an unfavourable socio-political context, this effort to raise awareness will necessarily require innovation, particularly by taking inspiration from the principles of grassroots education and discussing with all the actors involved (French and European).

5.3 Organise civil vigilance

This is already being done by civil society organisations and could be reinforced at the national level. It essentially consists of systematically collecting detailed testimonies in order to provide evidence, support denunciations and influence policies.

Auteur : Valérie Léon, Researcher. Full version of this report available (in French) at: www.urd.org/Les-solidarites-face-aux-flux