



Taking Stock of Valletta Civil Society reflections on the Valletta Action Plan

At the Valletta Summit in November 2015, African and European Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) came together to set out key priorities to be included in the Summit's outcomes. In advance of the one year stock-take that will take place in Malta in February 2017, CSOs have again been invited to give their thoughts on the process to date and priorities for the future.

A survey was circulated to a wide variety of CSOs in order to gain a better understanding of their experience of the first year of implementation of the Joint Valletta Action Plan (JVAP). The information derived from this survey will help inform the structure and content of a one-day consultation prior to the Senior Officials Meeting on 8-9 February. This document, prepared in advance of the meeting, aims to give an overview of the main issues raised. A more detailed analysis will be shared more widely following the consultation.

Key recommendations

The following are broad recommendations derived from the survey results.

- In its second year, the Valletta Action Plan must put more emphasis on the first three of its priority domains, those which prioritise the well-being of migrants, potential migrants, and their communities.
- In particular, protection must be the first priority, and efforts to reduce irregular migration must not interfere with the right to seek and enjoy asylum.
- Poverty and lack of livelihoods are not the only drivers of migration; more political effort must be invested in addressing conflict, persecution and poor governance, including corruption.
- Particular efforts must be made to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable, including unaccompanied minors and women. Insufficient attention has been paid to these groups.

To achieve these results, it is vital that the implementation process engages civil society, including local communities and migrants themselves. The SOM should:

- Prioritise a two-way communication strategy to ensure that CSOs, communities and migrants are informed of actions and opportunities offered by the Valletta Action Plan, and can provide feedback and raise concerns.
- Establish mechanisms that involve civil society – including those often left out, such as women and youth, at all stages of the process, from planning, through implementation, to delivery.
- Invest in monitoring and evaluation processes that are accessible to and inclusive of local communities and migrants. Capacity-building is vital to help prevent misuse of funds or lack of transparency in delivery.



Background

In advance of the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) of the Valletta Action Plan in February 2017, a survey of civil society organisations (CSOs) was conducted by the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) Europe and Caritas Senegal, coordinator of the Migration and Development Civil Society (MADE) network in Africa. The survey focused on the Valletta Action Plan and related initiatives or processes, such as the Rabat and Khartoum Processes, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, and bilateral agreements and compacts on migration.

The meetings in February are about taking stock of progress. Civil Society Organisations responding to the survey gave their thoughts on both the content of the Valletta Action Plan – how appropriate the priorities are, and the extent to which they have made progress – as well as the process by which it is being carried out.

This summary also serves to provide a baseline and provoke discussion among CSOs in advance of the event *Taking Stock of Valletta*, a consultation of African and European civil society, to be held on 30 January.

This is a provisional analysis of the survey response based on the feedback of roughly 50 respondents. It is hoped that providing this initial data in advance of the SOM will allow Officials to take these concerns into account in advance of the event.

Key Findings

One of the main conclusions that can be drawn from the survey results is that many actors are struggling to understand the Valetta Action Plan and how it is implemented. Its priorities resonate with civil society, but the sheer number of complexity of political processes and funding arrangements makes it very difficult to engage or to measure progress.

Another conclusion is that it is essential that civil society organisations are engaging not once every year or so when there is a stock-taking exercise, but on a regular and ongoing basis. For that reason, many of the recommendations that emerge from the survey focus not on content, but on process. A very wide range of organisations focusing a huge diversity of issues responded to the survey, and they have legitimate and important concerns that need to be taken into consideration. These can only be properly addressed if mechanisms are put in place that allow for people in countries of origin, transit and destination – including migrants and diasporas – to provide feedback on what is needed, what is working and what is not.

Who responded to the survey?

Of 53 responses to the survey, 25 organisations are based in Africa, eight are international organisations working in multiple countries, a number represent diaspora groups, and others are from universities, faith groups and policy and rights organisations. Some organisations implement livelihoods or assistance programmes, while others are focused on policy,



governance, climate change and human rights. Some organisations focused on particular groups, such as victims of trafficking, refugees, children, youth and women. Some organisations – particularly larger organisations with global reach – provided a consolidated response that reflected their experience in multiple countries.

WHAT WERE THE FINDINGS?

There was significant overlap in the objectives of the Valletta Action Plan and the interests and concerns of civil society.

- Although some of the 16 priorities of the Valletta Action Plan were supported more strongly than others, the majority of respondents considered the priorities to be relevant and well-adapted to the challenges of migration.
- The most strongly supported priorities were projects to enhance employment and revenue-generating opportunities in East, West and North Africa; projects that pool offers for legal migration; projects to improve resilience, safety and self-reliance of refugees; and projects to support the reintegration of returnees into their communities.
- CSOs made strong recommendations for reinforcement of activities under the Valletta Action Plan, particularly with regard to increasing the development benefits of migration, addressing some of the negative drivers of irregular migration, and supporting and protecting migrants both whilst they are on their journeys, upon arrival and on return.

CSOs are still strongly concerned that processes are too focused on political outcomes, and not enough on the well-being of migrants.

- There is not enough emphasis on humanitarian and legal protection. In particular, attention must be paid to the needs of unaccompanied minors, women, and other people vulnerable to exploitation.
- Increased interventions are needed that help make people more aware of and better able to access their rights.
- For both emergency protection and longer-term interventions, CSOs felt that a strong need for better information to be conveyed to communities, migrants and diaspora, with opportunities for them to also be engaged.
- Concern was expressed about the capacity of governments and local actors to implement initiatives in a way that is respectful of human rights and dignity. Delivery of policies or programmes may be negatively impacted by poor governance, corruption or the perception of either of these. Monitoring and evaluation, training and capacity-building for institutions, including government and civil society, is vital.
- More livelihoods support is critical to prevent people having to leave their homes.

CSOs expressed a high level of interest in providing support for delivery of these objectives, but regretted not being more engaged.

- CSOs called for a clear communication strategy to be implemented for the Valletta Action Plan that would allow civil society to understand what is being done and how, and to provide support from higher policy levels down to the local community.



- More strategic sharing of information and two-way communication is also vital to ensure that the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa is well understood. Most CSOs reported receiving information from other civil society actors, rather than from their own governments or from the EU.
- CSOs were also concerned that their ability to make a positive contribution is limited by conditionalities and complex funding requirements that make it extremely difficult for local organisations to access funding through the EU Trust Fund.
- Good monitoring and evaluation is vital to ensure quality programming for migrants and the perception of a transparent and accountable process. CSOs are eager to support systems that ensure such monitoring, and to facilitate the involvement of local communities and migrants themselves.

In general, CSOs did not feel that they were sufficiently consulted on either the development of policy or the implementation of it.

- Of 50 respondents, only 18 (36%) said that they had received verbal or written information or been consulted about the Valletta Action Plan.
- Of 51 respondents, only 16 (31%) said that they had received written or verbal information or had been consulted about the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa.
- Asked whether they felt that the process for accessing funding through the EU Trust Fund was clear or well-communicated to civil society actors, 89% of those responding (39/44) – including some who had successfully applied for funds – answered in the negative.
- Of 46 organisations responding to the question, 32 (70%) said that they had not been consulted with respect to the specific implementation of the Valletta Action Plan, the EU Trust Fund, Compacts or migration partnerships.

Conclusions

Civil Society Organisations recognise the value of the priorities that have been laid out in the Valletta Action Plan, and the potential that many of them have to transform people's lives. They are very keen to continue to provide support, guidance and assistance in implementing the priorities in a way that puts people, their safety and well-being at the heart of the process. They are concerned, however, that there is not enough information available to allow them to contribute in a meaningful way. They also worry that the objectives will not be met without a clear strategy for engagement of CSOs, local communities and migrants themselves. Finally, they are keen to offer their services as part of a coordinated process of monitoring and evaluation, ensuring transparency and accountability in policy, action, funding and delivery.

Finally, a number of organisations expressed concern that attention was almost entirely focused on addressing issues in countries of origin and transit. They pointed to a strong need for host countries, including in Europe, to invest in raising awareness about migrants' rights, and in tackling racism, xenophobia and discrimination.