HUMANITARIAN HPN

exchange

IN THIS ISSUE

EDITORIAL

The special focus of this issue of *Humanitarian Exchange* is aid in protracted crises. How should we respond to people's needs in long-term emergencies, such as those caused by the conflicts in Sudan or Afghanistan? Is a classic humanitarian response appropriate in conflicts that continue for decades? Is a more developmental approach suitable in politically-charged conflict situations? These questions are challenging aid workers, organisations and institutions across the globe.

The message our contributors convey is simple: in protracted crises, there is no neat dividing-line between the humanitarian and the developmental. François Grunewald observes that the ways agencies respond to protracted emergencies and the tools they use may not be appropriate, while the administrative structures within funding bodies are ill-equipped to deal with situations that are not crises, but for which rehabilitation and development aid is not available. In his article on Afghanistan, Nicholas Leader points out a political dimension to the debate: labelling aid 'humanitarian' salves Western consciences, while refusing 'development' assistance to countries whose rulers are deemed undesirable serves foreign-policy goals. Kate Longley describes how, in southern Sudan, developmental approaches can be used to improve the humanitarian response to food insecurity. The Capacity-Building Working Group for southern Sudan argues that agencies should accept political conditions, and work within them to build local capacity. The questions of principle posed by such an approach cannot be easily dismissed, and there are agencies which find them insurmountable.

The debate about humanitarian action in long-term crises is difficult in terms of both principle and practice. But the existence of so many protracted conflicts around the world, and the suffering and devastation they cause, demand that we take up the challenge to make our response more effective.

Other contributions examine other issues that continue to challenge humanitarian actors. The security of aid workers is addressed: Randolph Martin dissects the UN's Memorandum of Understanding on security, and Austen Davis discusses the dilemma of how to respond in Chechnya following the abduction of MSF worker Kenny Gluck. Ted A. van Baarda takes us through the legal maze surrounding definitions of deportation and evacuation, and Robin Schofield and Paul Currion discuss why field-based information systems are failing aid workers, and what needs to be done to make them work. We also take a look at global aid flows, Spanish humanitarian aid, Sweden's 'mainstreaming' approach to conflict management, the Brahimi report and what it means for humanitarians, and the UK government's new policy paper on globalisation. Lastly, we have a personal view from Rae McGrath on why the campaign to ban landmines has not resulted in a realistic response in mine-affected countries.

If you would like to contribute an article to the next *Humanitarian Exchange* on these or other issues you are grappling with, please let us know – we look forward to hearing from you.

Responding to long-term crises

François Grunewald *on why the distinctions between humanitarian aid and development assistance need to be rethought in situations of protracted crisis*

Across the globe, seemingly interminable crises abound. Some, like the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, are ever-present on our television screens and in our newspapers. Yet others, such as those in Colombia, Sudan or Afghanistan, seem to have been largely forgotten, meriting only brief mentions in the media. These entrenched situations are competing, both for media coverage and for aid funds, with more sensational events, such as military flare-ups, hurricanes and earthquakes. In a world where economic resources are in ever-shorter supply, we need to take another look at the practices of the actors involved. In the face of protracted emergencies, which fade into oblivion or leave the public indifferent, are the tools humanitarian actors use and the practices they employ still the most appropriate ones? Are the mechanisms we use to handle information and fund our actions still the most suitable ones?

These questions were debated at a symposium entitled 'Long-term Crises, Forgotten Crises: Humanitarian Issues and the Challenges for Europe', held in Paris on 15 and 16 December 2000. The symposium was organised by the Plate-forme française des ONG pour l'Union Européenne, the Groupe URD and Médecins du Monde, with financial support from the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Participants included Charles Josselin, the French Minister for Overseas Aid, Constanza Adinolfi, the director of ECHO, and over 230 delegates from five UN agencies, the European Commission, NGOs from seven European Union (EU) countries, ICRC representatives, European researchers, African students and representatives of EU member-states, Colombia, Chechnya and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The symposium traced the problems, challenges and issues facing humanitarian agencies working in long-term crises. Today's crises are often deliberately perpetuated for the sake of commercial gain from trafficking, speculation and the exploitation of raw materials. Why do some crises last such a long time, and how might they be influenced? When a crisis becomes entrenched and the classic emergency-aid practices are no longer workable, what can be done to protect and help civilians caught up in apparently

endless disasters? Although needs remain critical, the administrative machinery in funding organisations simply seizes up because the crisis is not an emergency, but nor is it a situation calling for rehabilitation or development assistance. Which office should we apply to? What budget heading does it come under?

Rethinking 'the continuum'

Ending these interminable conflicts requires not only political will, but also powers that governments often do not have. Although at the symposium Josselin rightly stressed 'the danger of confusing governmental powerlessness with indifference', he also pointed out that a government's ability to intervene can be limited by, among other things, struggles for influence between different countries, and the role played by members of the UN Security Council. Who wants to risk getting caught up in the quagmires of the Congo, the forests of Guinea or the Afghan mountains for the sake of distant and apparently intractable conflicts? Meanwhile, however, whole sections of humanity are sinking into oblivion, worried over only by a handful of humanitarians.

Humanitarian aid itself also requires a rethink. In our practices we get the time factor mixed up with questions of content: the classic approach to emergency aid – that we must act quickly – has no meaning in the context of crises which have lasted for years. For example, supplying food aid in on-going crises has a range of negative effects: it creates dependency, it paralyses agricultural systems, it increases the security risks faced by targeted populations, and it creates a war economy based on capturing these supplies. What can be done to help local capabilities survive during crises? What can be done to improve understanding of individual and collective survival strategies? What can be done to strengthen the resilience of populations, the sort of ingenuity which enables them to absorb blow after blow and hold out against the terrible effects that such long-term crises have on the social fabric?

The timing of the symposium was particularly opportune as the European Commission was preparing its second communication on the link between emergency aid, rehabilitation and

development. During the symposium, ECHO director Adinolfi emphasised that one of the challenges in the context of current reforms lay in identifying and putting in place mechanisms to ensure a smooth transition from emergency aid to rehabilitation, reconstruction and development aid. But in the context of long-term crises, the challenge is not so much to be able to move on to development, as to be able to support policies that will assist populations in pursuing their survival strategies and strengthening their resilience. Such policies sound like development, but in a crisis they are in fact humanitarian. The confusion between 'content' and 'context' is akin to that between 'time' and 'content'. To clear up this confusion, strong partnerships between the European Commission and civil society will not only be useful, but also necessary.

Linking emergency and development thinking
The symposium identified several sectoral issues as being particularly complex and resonant in the context of long-term crises. The protection of civilian populations, often an uncomfortable subject, was one of the main ones. Here, the legal framework applicable to long-term or entrenched crises needs clarification. This is a major project that the ICRC is working on. Recent experiences have also shown how difficult it is to guarantee food security in protracted emergencies without creating a dependency on humanitarian aid. The difficulties faced in ensuring the shift from free aid during the acute emergency phase to more viable mechanisms once the crisis has become protracted were highlighted. In this area, we need to identify and analyse the 'success stories', and draw out the methodological lessons to be learned. Lastly, in a turbulent world where the old division between civilians and the military is often blurred, we must think about how to set up effective and ethical partnerships with actors within civil society at a local level.

Ultimately, high-quality analysis is key. We need to improve our ability to develop thinking and put in place appropriate and innovative policies which marry the know-how of the 'developers' with that of the 'emergency aiders'. Initiatives could include setting up systems for exchanging local seeds for food aid; controlling the flow of food in order to stabilise prices and limit decapitalisation and the gradual selling-off of production apparatus; establishing mechanisms for recovering costs; setting up micro-finance systems; and providing aid to local craftspeople to fund production. Lastly, there is a need for imagination and creativity, for listening to populations in distress and for rigour and adherence to clear principles anchored firmly in strong legal frameworks.

The symposium ended with testimonies from two important witnesses, Serdjan Dzarévic, the president of the Helsinki Committee in Bosnia, and Chechen Minister of Health Dr Oumar Khambiev. Alongside the complex geopolitical, technical, methodological, economic and legal debates, their real–life suffering and personal experiences remind us that the 'humanitarian' is primarily to do with what it means to be 'human'.

François Grunewald is chair of the Groupe URD and a member of the Haut Conseil de la Coopération Internationale.

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François Grunewald, 'From Prevention to Rehabilitation. Before During and After: The ICRC in Retrospect', *International Review of the Red Cross*, no. 36, May–June 1995

Sue Lautze, *Coping with Crisis, Coping with Aid: Capacity-Building, Coping Mechanisms and Dependency, Linking Relief with Aid* (Medford, MA: International Famine Center, Tufts University, 1996)

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HPN Team News

In January, Frances Stevenson joined the HPN as its new Coordinator. Previously, she spent six years with Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), managing country programmes in Rwanda, the DRC, Sri Lanka and Indonesia, and working on advocacy in the UK. Before joining MSF, Frances managed NGO humanitarian programmes in Bosnia, and worked on development programmes and research in South Asia.

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Donor governments and capacity-building in Afghanistan

Donor policy on Afghanistan is confused and contradictory, and aid interventions remain trapped in the relief/development impasse. Here, **Nicholas Leader** *argues that the time has come for a fresh approach*

By common consent, the needs in Afghanistan cannot be adequately met by short–term, localised, project–specific and relief–focused interventions. The length of the conflict has ensured a progressive degradation of the human and physical infrastructure; the longer the situation continues, the more difficult and expensive reconstruction becomes, and the harder it is to meet even short–term goals. The widespread destruction of infrastructure, communities and governance is such that needs can only properly be addressed by working on a systemic and long-term basis. In other words, it is necessary to 'scale up' aid interventions – from short-term to long-term, from local project to national policy, and from community to state.[1]

This requires a legitimate and competent authority which can determine and coordinate national policy, and command and resource a structure through which such policy can be implemented. In Afghanistan, such an authority simply does not exist. The *Taliban*, which controls much of the country, is neither legitimate nor competent. Internationally, its perceived Islamic extremism, involvement in the drugs trade and policies towards women have made it a pariah. Domestically, its lack of interest in welfare, particular interpretation of Islamic law and repressive policies mean that its legitimacy is uncertain at best. Its investment in state welfare and development structures is minimal. If the goal is to scale up, should the international community, in particular the aid community, engage with such an authority? How can agencies assist Afghans in ways other than relief, but without sustaining discrimination? Is 'capacity-building' of state structures an appropriate strategy?

The policy impasse

At the level of 'high policy', the response to this problem is the Strategic Framework. The Framework provides the UN and NGOs with a degree of international legitimacy (through General Assembly resolutions), and it specifies a set of overarching principles and an architecture for developing and implementing policy. In practice, however, the question of how to engage with the authorities in Afghanistan in order to scale up is marked by confusion and indecision.[2] Donors have been unable to produce a coherent and coordinated policy, except to communicate to agencies a general feeling that links with the *Taliban* are somehow unacceptable. Agencies have resorted to a series of *ad hoc* and short-term solutions, depending on their particular needs and mandates. 'Principled common programming' has not translated into common engagement strategies. For both donors and agencies, this confusion is most apparent in the vexed question of incentives, an issue that has assumed an importance far beyond its due because it is where donor cash is handed over to the *Taliban*–controlled state structures.

In order to explain this policy impasse, it is necessary to place it in a broader historical and political context. The situation in Afghanistan is one example of a much wider question of how the international community engages in states where governance has collapsed, or has lost legitimacy.[3] This issue has arisen due to the linked phenomena of 'failed states' and the reduced respect for absolute sovereignty that has allowed a series of unprecedented interventions in the affairs of such states by the international community in order to promote peace and security. Respect for sovereignty may not be the guiding principle of international relations it once was but, at least where the state has failed, there is as yet no agreed principle to replace it. The Strategic Framework is thus one of a number of experiments intended to cope with a situation in which governance, and so sovereignty, has been questioned. Crucially, however, it differs from arrangements in, for example, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and East Timor, in that the international community has not authorised coercive measures against the recalcitrant authority.

The relief/development distinction

Aid interventions have not kept pace with these experiments in sovereignty and international relations. Generally, they have only two modes of operation: relief or development. Neither answers

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[1] Joanna Macrae, *Aiding Peace … and War: UNHCR, Returnee Reintegration and the Relief–Development Debate*, New Issues in Refugee Research, Working Paper 14 (Geneva: UNHCR, 1999).

[2] Nicholas Leader, *Negotiating the 'Governance-Gap': The UN and Capacity-Building in Afghanistan*, Report for the UN Afghanistan Taskforce on Capacity-Building, 2000.

[3] Macrae, *Aiding Peace.*

the question of how to scale up in a failed state.[4] The curious tenacity of the relief/development distinction in the Afghan context is not the result of its utility; as a conceptualisation of vulnerability, it is widely seen as unhelpful. Rather, the persistence of the distinction is explained by the political function it serves for donor governments. Because the concept of 'relief' still plays well to Western publics, the distinction allows donors to assert to themselves and their people that they are doing something in Afghanistan ('we are meeting humanitarian need'), while simultaneously sending a political signal of disapproval to the *Taliban* ('we will not authorise development aid until you change your ways, or, better, disappear'). This is consistent with other measures, such as sanctions imposed by the Security Council. The distinction also allows donors to believe that by giving humanitarian assistance, as opposed to development aid, they are somehow helping Afghans without supporting the *Taliban*. For donors, then, the distinction between relief and development is functional, even though it does not do what it is supposed to do, which is to conceptualise vulnerability.

As well as emphasising relief, this politically-motivated distinction rules out anything that might be conceived of as 'capacity-building' with the authorities. This becomes unacceptable because capacity-building is seen as supporting the *Taliban*, and conferring legitimacy on it. The irony is that the assistance activities which probably most support the *Taliban* – food distribution and refugee return – are both classified as relief, and so are less controversial.

[4] Macrae, *Aiding Peace.*

But paying the salaries of ministry of health staff or equipping municipalities to collect rubbish, which do assist with scaling up without such negative political effects, are seen as 'capacity-building', and so are somehow suspect. Given that there is no evidence that the *Taliban* is stepping in with its own funds where the assistance community is not working, it is hard to argue that paying for health workers' salaries is indirectly supporting the war effort.

Donors, in short, cannot have it both ways. It is contradictory to authorise a non-coercive instrument such as the Strategic Framework, which necessarily depends on negotiation with the *de facto* authorities, while also insisting that engagement, and so scaling up, is limited to an absolute minimum. Donor governments cannot legitimately tell their publics that they are doing all they can to help Afghans, while simultaneously insisting that agencies do not negotiate over scaling up with the people running most of Afghanistan. Rather, it should be acknowledged that it is possible to scale up in a principled way in Afghanistan: the work of many agencies in public health is one example. That this admission may be politically inconvenient for some donor governments does not make it untrue. Indeed, the concept and history of humanitarianism is testimony to the fact that it is possible to negotiate for principled ends with unprincipled people.

Ways forward

How, then, should this process of scaling up proceed? One option is to follow through the logic of the experiment in sovereignty represented by the Strategic Framework; the framework is in place, now

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Peter Marsden and Jerrold E. Marsden, *The Taliban: War, Religion and the New Order in Afghanistan* (London: Zed Books, 1998)

Larry P. Goodson, *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2001)

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Afghanistan Today <http://frankenstein.worldweb.net/afghan>

Afghanistan Online <www.afghan-web.com>

a strategy is needed. The Strategic Framework can be interpreted as giving aid actors an internationally legitimated role in the governance of Afghanistan. Following on from what might be seen as the 'shared sovereignty' implicit in this experiment, aid actors could legitimately define a limited number of specific and measurable nationwide targets for the whole aid system – a kind of interim 'national poverty-reduction plan' that all aid actors would work to.

As far as possible, this should be done with the cooperation and involvement of the *de facto* authorities. It should also be discussed with civil structures where this is possible; the international legitimacy of the Strategic Framework needs to be matched by national legitimacy with Afghans. These national targets would then become the focus of all planning and engagement with the authorities until a peace deal is reached. Paying incentives and providing the authorities with training and equipment would thus be legitimate, *to the extent that such transfers contribute to the meeting of the national*

targets. Progress towards the targets would be monitored by the Strategic Monitoring Unit. To ensure that negotiation with the authorities is principled, this plan needs to be backed up by a thorough analysis of the political impact of assistance, based on an understanding of the political economy of the conflict in Afghanistan, and how aid is incorporated into it. Lastly, there needs to be a commonly-agreed 'bottom line' for each sector, such as equal access for women and men to health facilities, without which no work would be done with the state structures in that particular sector.

An approach that is centred on national targets and backed up by political analysis and 'bottom lines' might allow scaling up through state structures where this is possible, but reduce the likelihood of strengthening oppressive or discriminatory practices.

Independent consultant **Nicholas Leader** has recently completed a UNDP/UNCHS consultancy for the UN Afghanistan Taskforce on Capacity-Building, funded by the UNDP.

Beyond seeds and tools: opportunities and challenges for alternative interventions in protracted emergencies

Seeds and tools projects are often seen as a cheap and effective way of addressing food needs in protracted emergencies. But, argues **Kate Longley***, other approaches may be both easier, and more effective*

Distributing seeds and tools is generally regarded as a way of supporting longer-term food security, and is widely undertaken by agencies operating in post-disaster and ongoing emergency situations. In many protracted emergencies, seeds tend to be procured locally, often from the same communities in which they are subsequently distributed. But this begs the question whether relief and development agencies need to supply seeds at all. Are seeds the most appropriate form of support to farmers in protracted emergencies?

For many operational agencies, implementing conventional seeds and tools projects remains difficult: targeting beneficiaries, finding enough 'certified' or good-quality seeds, securing adequate storage and transport facilities, and the high costs of these projects all pose problems, as do issues relating to dependency. At the macro level, seeds have also become a lucrative and contested commodity in the relief economy.

This article argues that – in some cases – alternative forms of food-security interventions may offer better support for rural livelihoods in emergency and post-disaster situations. However, the lack of adequate techniques for assessing seed needs, together with a paucity of monitoring and evaluation studies that go beyond the logistics of seed delivery, have done little to assist agencies in realising these alternatives.

Assessing needs
Relief agencies need to develop a more detailed understanding of how farmers manage seeds, and how they obtain them in emergency situations. Existing guidelines contain very little in the way of advice on how to undertake needs assessments in emergencies. As a result, many seeds and tools interventions are based on an *assumed* rather than an *actual* need. It is generally presumed that, if a harvest is good, the need for seed distribution is low; if a harvest is poor, the need increases. Thus, seed availability is determined by food availability. Whilst this is certainly true at the macro level, it fails to take account of how small-scale farmers retain and acquire seeds.

After a harvest, the amount of seed a farmer retains is usually determined by the size of the plot to be

planted the following season, rather than as a proportion of the overall amount harvested. In the event of a poor harvest, a farmer will usually try to retain the seed needed for the following season, even if this means less food from the overall harvest. In extreme situations, the whole of the harvest can be saved as seed, rather than eaten as food. Farmers in southern Sudan, for example, will do all they can to maintain seed stocks, even if this means eating only wild foods and vegetable leaves. The quantities of seed required by a farming household for planting are relatively small; the amount of seed sown to produce a year's supply of a staple cereal crop would feed a household for less than a week.

The second misunderstanding is to do with how farmers make up seed shortfalls. Contrary to assumptions, seed systems are remarkably resilient, even in the face of disaster or war. In times of crisis, seeds can be acquired through friends, relatives or petty traders, as a free gift, by exchange, by cash purchase or in the form of a loan to be repaid after harvest. Farmers are generally far better than any relief agency at locating the most appropriate sources of seeds. Only in exceptional cases is seed simply not available: when widespread crop failure combines with weakened coping mechanisms and a lack of markets or mobility, or when population displacement makes farming impossible over several seasons. Yet once cultivation is resumed, even following exceptional circumstances such as these, local seed and cropping systems recover and/or adapt remarkably quickly.

© Kate Longley

Farmers near Baidoa, southern Somalia

Whilst seed is often available, access can be another matter. In times of crisis, it is frequently the case that only better-off farmers have access, and sometimes act as a village 'seed bank' in assisting others. The inability of some farmers to retain or acquire seed from one year to the next relates more to poverty than it does to poor harvests, or lack of knowledge or technical expertise. Without the means to obtain seeds through purchase or exchange, poor farmers may be forced to borrow from traders, or beg from relatives and neighbours. In the short term, seed distribution may be necessary, but in the longer term other forms of aid – particularly those that address more general issues of poverty – may be more appropriate than repeated distribution from one season to the next. In short, agencies need to move from free seed handouts to inputs which promote the rehabilitation and enhancement of local seed supplies.

Beyond 'seeds and tools': alternative approaches

A number of agencies working in emergency or post-disaster situations are implementing projects to support the production, access and exchange of seeds at local level, without necessarily providing seeds themselves. These alternatives fall into three broad categories: poverty-focused approaches that widen access to agricultural inputs; advice and training on agricultural technologies; and institutional arrangements for access to/supply of agricultural inputs and technologies.

Poverty-focused approaches

Where seed is locally available, some farmers may need help in obtaining it. Displaced farmers may not have well-developed social networks in the place where they have settled, and returnees may have lost the financial assets with which to procure seeds. In these situations, relief supplies, including seeds, can be exchanged for food, or even for locally-supplied seeds. Providing cash or vouchers could be another way of supplying farmers with the means to access locally-available seeds. Catholic Relief Services has implemented voucher schemes in Kenya and northern Uganda, and the Red Cross and Christian Aid have distributed cash to farmers in Honduras and Orissa. Where seed vouchers are supplied, seed fairs at planting time give local farmers an opportunity to exchange these vouchers for seeds from local traders. Although conventionally regarded as a way of allowing farmers in stable settings to acquire a wider range of planting material, Catholic Relief Services has had considerable success with seed fairs in protracted emergency situations in Kenya and northern Uganda.

Advice and training on agricultural technologies

Alternative agricultural technologies may be required when farmers are faced with unfamiliar situations: displaced farmers cultivating on soils that differ from their home environment, for instance. In other cases, farmers who remain in their homes may have to manage with fewer labourers due to population displacement or the death of family members. Technologies to address particular problems may be required, for example measures to control pests or crop diseases.

Farmers may appreciate the opportunity to try out new seeds for crop varieties that mature more quickly, are more disease resistant or better able to

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tolerate weeds, water–logging or poor soils. Providing new varieties is, however, very different from supplying emergency seeds. Rather than giving farmers enough seed for food production, new varieties should initially be grown on demonstration plots, and better–off farmers should be offered small quantities that they can test for themselves. If new seed types are appropriate to farmers' needs, they will quickly become incorporated into local seed systems.

Pro-poor institutional arrangements

If the security situation is stable, some of the interventions suggested above are best implemented through existing institutions or through the creation of new institutional arrangements. For example, small packets of novel varieties or other agricultural inputs can be sold through existing market outlets and petty traders. However, attempts to establish more formalised seed multiplication and marketing systems are unlikely to succeed unless they are based on well–established seed markets, where there is an effective and continuous demand for seed of specific crops. Support to farmers' cooperatives or producer organisations may allow farmers to market their produce more effectively, although where possible it is important to work with local traders who already have marketing experience, rather trying to replace them. Where appropriate, capacity–building interventions such as these can provide a more sustainable form of support to rural livelihoods.

Opportunities and challenges

In extreme situations, seeds may be simply unavailable, and relief supplies may be necessary. But this is the exception, rather than the rule. Where agencies are buying seeds locally, seeds are clearly available, and a more appropriate form of assistance would be to help farmers to gain access to them.

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Food Security in Burundi Following Distribution of Seeds and Tools during Season 99A and 99B, impact assessment report by Danae Meacock-Bashir, Christian Aid, 1999

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For agencies to know when there is a need, and when alternative strategies might be more appropriate, assessment methods need to be improved. There is potential to build on existing networks of field-based systems, particularly where the methods used focus not only on issues of availability, but also on access, for example the Household Economy Approach developed by Save the Children. Monitoring systems must also be designed as an integral part of any intervention.

In designing projects which address the need for improved agricultural technologies, implementing agencies should seek the technical advice of agricultural researchers. In most areas, there is a long history of agricultural research that can be useful in guiding the work of technical experts. Staff of national agricultural research systems and extension workers provide a body of experience and expertise, often informed by detailed local knowledge. Inputs from appropriate experts from international agricultural research centres may also be useful, particularly where national institutions have broken down.

The biggest challenge, particularly in situations of chronic political instability, concerns mechanisms for delivering emergency aid. Whilst current systems render the provision of emergency seed inputs relatively straightforward, the alternative interventions suggested here generally require longer time-frames than many existing budgeting arrangements allow.

Identifying legitimate local institutions with which to work poses a further challenge.

At bottom, what is needed is a more detailed understanding of agricultural rehabilitation and developmental relief. These concepts remain poorly understood, and there is little to guide novel approaches to aid programming outside of current categories of relief or development. Whilst repeated relief seed distributions can potentially disrupt local seed-supply systems, implementing more developmental interventions must be approached with extreme caution. More effective assessment, together with appropriate monitoring and evaluation, are the first step. The budget lines and delivery mechanisms required to implement new approaches must also be established. These issues form the focus of new research being undertaken by the Overseas Development Institute, in collaboration with partner agencies. Providing effective support for rural livelihoods in protracted emergencies is certainly no easy task.

Capacity-building in southern Sudan

The **Capacity-Building Working Group for southern Sudan** *outlines a new initiative to improve humanitarian assistance in south Sudan*

For over 30 years, the people of southern Sudan have suffered the effects of political crisis, conflict and disaster. In 1989, an international humanitarian intervention was designed under UNICEF–Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS). Since then, efforts have been made to improve the capacities of Sudanese to cope with disaster- and conflict-related vulnerabilities. In early 2000, a review of capacity-building in southern Sudan was commissioned by a working group comprising Sudanese indigenous NGOs, international NGOs and UNICEF–OLS. This Capacity-Building Assessment (CBA) explored stakeholders' views on the meaning and applicability of capacity-building in southern Sudan. It concludes that there need to be improvements in the way aid agencies intervene, and suggests ways in which policy and practice can be changed to achieve this.

An important part of the CBA was a three-day workshop held in Nairobi between 30 October and 1 November 2000. The findings and recommendations of the CBA were discussed and refined by representatives from five key stakeholders: Sudanese NGOs; the 'humanitarian wings' of southern Sudan's rebel movements, such as the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association (SRRA), the Relief Association for Southern Sudan (RASS) and Fashoda Relief and Rehabilitation Association (FRRA); some international NGOs, including Oxfam GB, Concern, Care, and Tearfund; the UN; and the governments of Canada, Finland and the US. This article outlines the principal areas of discussion at the workshop, the main areas of consensus and the action points agreed by the participants.

The need for change
The CBA revealed widespread dissatisfaction with the performance of humanitarian assistance in southern Sudan. It also revealed that the current

intervention is reducing the actual and potential impact of international and Sudanese efforts to support people in addressing their problems. The CBA highlighted a number of key weaknesses in the humanitarian response in southern Sudan:

- dissatisfaction with the status quo;
- lack of clarity *vis-à-vis* the purpose of humanitarian assistance;
- conflicting strategies among agencies;
- a poorly-balanced mix of interventions;
- inadequate competencies in intervening agencies;
- inadequate mechanisms for organisational and institutional advocacy and learning;
- inappropriate aid instruments and funding mechanisms;
- the preponderance of vested interests and a lack of trust between international humanitarian agencies and Sudanese organisations and communities;
- inadequate understanding of the political and socio-economic context; and
- a lack of clarity and honesty in defining relationships between the actors in southern Sudan.

If these weaknesses are to be overcome, changes are necessary at both institutional and operational levels, including:

- developing a strategic response to the needs of Sudanese communities;
- setting clear objectives for humanitarian assistance, based on more thorough analysis of needs and the context within which assistance is provided;
- forming strategic links between the key actors, and effective mechanisms for coordination;
- improving mechanisms for monitoring humanitarian aid, and for influencing the overall composition of the aid programme in southern Sudan;
- developing and promoting best practice for effective delivery of humanitarian services;
- establishing improved mechanisms for advocacy and learning;
- improving aid instruments through the widening of donors' understanding of capacity-building;
- establishing improved mechanisms of dialogue and joint problem-solving among all key stakeholders;
- developing accurate, timely and relevant analysis of the political and socio-economic context; and
- ensuring that relationships among the key stakeholders are clearly defined.

What is capacity-building?
Capacity–building aims to enable individuals, groups, organisations and systems to respond better to the constraints and circumstances affecting them. It is political: it is about people, and self-reliance. At the same time, capacity-building can and should be used

as a means to improve the delivery of effective humanitarian assistance through developing local capacities. Given the political context of southern Sudan's crisis, there remains a need for additional mechanisms to safeguard humanitarian principles. Thus, capacity-building may not always be the only means of engagement in southern Sudan, and specific humanitarian concerns will co-exist with and complement capacity-building approaches.

Capacity-building and the process of change
Both the CBA and the consultative workshop revealed that the majority of stakeholders see capacity-building as an essential and effective means of engagement with Sudanese NGOs and humanitarian wings. They also highlighted that further work is necessary to make capacity-building an integral component of the humanitarian response, and that to fulfil its capacity-building potential, the process of change must consider other complementary means by which the overall humanitarian response in southern Sudan can be improved. These include vulnerability assessment, food economy approaches and frameworks for understanding rural livelihoods. The issues have been discussed before, but little progress has been made. This failure stems from the absence of appropriate implementation structures, a lack of commitment, a perceived lack of political support from humanitarian wings of the rebel movements, and operational disruptions caused by the SRRA's memorandum of understanding of March 2000.

Establishing frameworks
In order to guide policy change and improve practice, we need a framework to make the

capacity-building process structured and systematic. The process also needs to be gradual, giving actors sufficient time to adapt to change. The CBA proposed two frameworks: institutional and operational.

As a first step, the institutional framework will aim to develop a shared vision and a common mission statement and strategic objectives among the stakeholders. The intention is to guide the aid response at all levels. Second, it will analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the current humanitarian response, and agree on priorities for change. Third, it will address these weaknesses and establish mechanisms for implementing and realising the strategic objectives.

The operational framework is a practical tool that southern Sudanese and international organisations can use to improve the design of humanitarian interventions. The operational framework aims to generate practical recommendations relevant to all stakeholders, allowing the effective application of capacity-building approaches. It sets out a series of steps to guide intervention strategies, and principles to define, for example, working relationships and objectives.

These objectives and frameworks are not meant to compete with other organisational goals in southern Sudan. They are seen as a way to bring stakeholders to a common understanding, to enable evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the humanitarian response; and to institute a process for change. The consultative workshop recommended practical piloting of the framework.

The debate on political engagement

Attempts to engage armed groups in southern Sudan are regarded by some to contradict the humanitarian principle of neutrality, and as an inexcusable involvement in politics. However, the CBA believed that this view disregards the need to address the problems of the wider population. It may not be prudent for humanitarian agencies to be involved in policy development and other issues related to local governance. But any significant attempts at capacity-building may only be effectively pursued by engaging the humanitarian wings of the rebel groups, as well as other Sudanese actors, such as the civil society and religious groups, community-based organisations and emerging structures of civil authority.

Conclusion

While other initiatives remain useful, capacity-building offers more opportunities for Sudanese individuals, communities, organisations and institutions to participate in the identification and management of disaster- and conflict-related vulnerabilities. The Capacity-Building Working Group (CBWG) was asked to continue the CBA over the following six months, developing terms of reference and membership policy. The level of interest needs to be assessed, and the management of the process must be agreed upon.

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AID IN PROTRACTED CRISES

Abstract

'Developmental Relief': Policy and Institutional Changes

by Margaret Buchanan-Smith, Coordinator, Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG)

HPG Report 11 (forthcoming)

Humanitarian aid has conventionally been designed for short-term, life-saving interventions, with a clearly-defined exit strategy. Yet a common feature of many of today's conflict-related emergencies is their protracted nature, requiring humanitarian aid year-on-year. And, in a number of these situations, there is no state or legitimate authority, posing a further challenge to the conventional aid architecture. Where there is no formal state, development aid is usually unavailable due to economic and political conditionality. Thus, the focus shifts to humanitarian aid to fill the 'grey zone', which requires new forms of partnership and more innovative ways of using existing aid instruments.

The ODI, in collaboration with Ian Christoplos of Uppsala University, has carried out research into how three donor agencies – the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the European Commission (EC) – have adapted their policies and institutional arrangements to respond to these challenges, exploring how, if at all, the traditionally compartmentalised boxes of relief and development have been adapted and linked.

All three agencies have taken significant steps in the last five to six years. DFID has changed its institutional arrangements, so that most emergency programmes are now run from the geographical departments which are principally charged with development programmes, with only a few now run by the Conflict and Humanitarian Aid Department. SIDA has introduced the new and exploratory concept of Developmental Humanitarian Assistance. And the EC has issued a Communication (currently being updated) on 'Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development', as well as other initiatives to adapt and modify some of its aid instruments.

Generally, the objectives of humanitarian aid have been broadened to incorporate aspects of short-term rehabilitation and the rebuilding of livelihoods. But only in the EC has rehabilitation aid been developed as a new and distinct instrument, designed specifically to fill the gap when short-term humanitarian aid is withdrawn. However, the full potential of rehabilitation aid does not appear to have been realised. Bureaucratic obstacles and lack of conceptual clarity about its role have limited its effectiveness.

Another strategy developed in response to protracted conflict-related emergencies is the linking of humanitarian aid to conflict reduction. But this too has its drawbacks as political objectives can become confused with, and sometimes contradict, humanitarian ones. A more positive aspect of this growing concern with conflict reduction is the effort to strengthen political analysis to underpin and inform decisions concerning humanitarian programming.

Most of the manoeuvring to date has taken place *within* the existing aid architecture. The linear relief-to-development model, although discredited conceptually, still implicitly underpins many programming procedures and decisions. The assumptions of short-term interventions and a rapid and early improvement in the situation still tend to dominate. Perhaps as a result, pragmatism often prevails in programming and implementation decisions, where there is a vacuum of new and innovative policy. This can work, up to a point, if it enables experimentation. But this, in turn, must be fed into and inform policy-making processes, requiring the monitoring and capturing of best practice.

The misery of Chechnya – and the failure of humanitarianism?

The kidnap of Médecins sans Frontières worker Kenny Gluck in Chechnya in January–February highlighted once again the risks humanitarian workers face in conflict zones. But more than this, argues **Austen Davis**, *Chechnya confronts us with the near-total failure of humanitarian action*

In today's civil and ethnic wars, the simple and fundamental concept of humanitarian action and human solidarity has been compromised by the lack of political respect for humanitarian action; the lack of military discipline and control leading to the abuse of aid; the diversion of aid for military ends; and the political manipulation of humanitarian action by outside powers. Many of these factors are present in Chechnya. The Chechen people have faced one of the most complete and devastating attacks in recent history. Their towns and villages have been flattened. They have been forced to flee to neighbouring Ingushetia, or have become displaced within Chechnya itself. Chechen civil society and social and institutional organisations have collapsed.

The trajectory of conflict

The failure of humanitarian action in Chechnya is rooted in the conditions of the conflict there, which has been marked by cruelty, suffering and indignity. For Russia, the mistake was to wage war against the entire country and its people, breeding contempt and deepening opposition to Russian authority. In the face of overwhelming Russian military superiority, the Chechens have resorted to guerrilla warfare, fragmenting lines of control and political and social organisation. The conflict has also attracted other fighters, whether Islamist, anti-Russian or anti-Western, diversifying the motives and goals of the insurrection and further fracturing political control and command structures. Finally, both sides have become increasingly dependent on criminal networks and local commanders whose only loyalty is to personal profit and power. In this climate, the Russians cannot win – but neither can the Chechens.

Meanwhile, Chechnya's cities have been flattened; Russia has even suggested moving the capital from devastated Grozny as there is no hope of rebuilding it. The people are traumatised, and stories of fear and persecution beggar belief. All Chechens are targets – harassed at check-points, taken into custody and bartered for cash or prisoner swaps. There is no work, no space to educate and bring up children,

no hope and no dignity. There is little real support for the Russians, but ordinary people also fear some of 'their' fighters as criminals or extremists. There is a belief in a free and fair Chechnya, but while many support the Chechen nationalist cause, the political legitimacy of some rebel leaders is challenged by the ability of others to access foreign funds and weaponry. In this war, it is the strong, not necessarily the legitimate, who win.

The crisis of humanitarianism in Chechnya

In such a fractured, multipolar conflict, coherent and respectful behaviour towards humanitarian actors is virtually impossible. We can provide relief items; at worst, food and medicines could be parachuted in. In the meantime, Chechen doctors and nurses, many of whom have gone unpaid for five years, continue to treat the wounded and sick from all sides – and regularly face persecution for doing so.

The Russian authorities do not understand NGOs. They understand the logic of the UN – but are only now starting to understand that NGOs do much of the implementation of UN programmes. On the other side, rebel leaders openly admit that they do not have full control over all anti-Russian forces. Some of this resistance is anti-Western or simply criminal, or at best does not profess to value the secular and liberal concept of humanitarian assistance. Finally, the much-vaunted 'international community' – if such a thing exists – is more worried about antagonising Russia than upholding international norms of humanitarian action, or international humanitarian law. Chechnya is, in effect, a forgotten conflict; concerns about Russian nuclear weapons, business opportunities, Central Asian energy or militant Islam simply outweigh humanitarian principles. When Western NGOs speak out about what they have seen in Chechnya, they are fobbed off with platitudes and political gimmickry.

Partly in response to the kidnap of MSF volunteer Kenny Gluck, the UN has been persuaded to travel

into Chechnya only as part of Russian armed convoys. This means that the Russian military command in Chechnya determines when and where aid providers move, and to whom they deliver their assistance. Almost all UN agencies and NGOs simply agree to the new conditions, arguing that the delivery of material assistance is the least we can strive for. But, in the words of Kenny himself, 'we are trying to do a little bit more'. We cannot give out humane and compassionate assistance under the guns of one of the parties to the war. We cannot give out assistance simply to those we are allowed to see in the areas where the Russians do not fear to tread. We must give assistance to those who need it most, wherever they live and under whichever warlord's authority. And we must support the efforts of Chechnya's doctors, nurses and civic leaders, who struggle to care and to heal – and talk to these people as human beings. We must be able to touch, as a means to heal as well as to express compassion. We must be able to travel freely, so as to know what is going on – not just see what we are allowed to see.

Kenny's kidnapping, like the murders of six ICRC workers in 1996, presents an organisational dilemma. The Chechen people and MSF's national staff and medical colleagues do not understand why foreign agencies leave so quickly after a kidnap event. After all, we espouse universalist values that say that all human beings are valuable – and aren't many thousands suffering and dying in Chechnya? Why should the life or abduction of one or two workers hinder such an important and life-saving action? But such a kidnapping wounds the organisation, and makes it reluctant to take risks. An organisation and its managers may have little power to resolve kidnap cases, but they feel acutely responsible. At the same time, such a kidnapping makes clear the lack of respect for the targeted organisation's humanitarian presence. Although Kenny's abduction has been resolved, this does not mean that we have the same freedom to offer assistance as we did before it happened. There are basic conditions for successful humanitarian action; free access directly to people in need and free passage of our workers is essential.

Reasserting humanitarianism

Humanitarian action is inspired by the revulsion felt by ordinary citizens in the face of needless suffering, particularly when this suffering is the direct and wilful fault of other human beings, as in war. The abandonment of norms of respect is a major attack on our common humanity. The laws of war dictate that neutral, independent and impartial actors should be given freedom of passage to help human beings suffering and dying as a consequence of crisis and war. This demands responsible action by those groups active in the war. It is clear that a humanitarian agenda may at times be at odds with a military strategy, and the presence of humanitarian groups can be a constraint on the conduct of war; it may even contribute to conflict. Allowing humanitarian actors freedom of movement and action therefore requires considerable political maturity and understanding of its importance – and considerable political and military discipline and control.

This is not a manifesto for one side or the other in the conflict; in Chechnya, *all* sides are making humanitarian action impossible. Some might say that the nature of the conflict makes this inevitable – but this does not undermine the importance of continuing to demand the space in which to undertake humanitarian action. We must reassert the rights and meaning of humanitarian action: the right to travel freely, assess needs, deliver assistance and monitor the effects of our assistance without harassment. The degree to which we are able to offer such assistance is surely a mark of concern and accountability in the conduct of war. If there is no accountability, then more and more wars will be fought like Chechnya's. This is surely unacceptable. MSF's expatriates are safe, but MSF is failing by not being present in Chechnya, and working with local medical staff at a time when this is most needed.

Austen Davis is General Director of MSF-Holland.

Resources

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The Forum on Early Warning and Early Response <www.fewer.org/caucasus>

The Humanitarianism and War Project, <www.brown.edu/Departments/Watson_Institute/ H_W/Chechnya.shtml>

The Institute for War and Peace Reporting <www.iwpr.net>

Seeing through the fog: distinguishing between evacuation and deportation

Ted A. van Baarda *untangles the legal confusion surrounding 'evacuation' and 'deportation'*

Guerrilla wars frequently involve the involuntary transfer of the local population, either by guerrilla forces themselves, or as a counter–insurgency tactic. Examples include the Algerian war of independence of the 1950s, the Vietnam war and, more recently, the conflicts in Burundi, the former Yugoslavia and Sierra Leone. International humanitarian law, the laws of war and, to a lesser extent, human–rights law all prohibit forced population transfers as a means of warfare. But the pertinent legal norms are far from perfect due to the blurred distinction between 'deportation' and 'evacuation'. There is no source of international law clearly distinguishing between the two, notwithstanding the fact that deportation is a crime, whereas evacuation is a legitimate form of humanitarian action.

This leads to two, related problems. First, a deporting authority can be tempted to disguise the criminal aspects of its policy by presenting a deportation as an evacuation. Once such a policy is implemented, it is difficult to disprove its legality, given the vague and even contradictory legal standards involved. Second, a humanitarian organisation or peacekeeping force can be confronted with forced population transfers, as in ethnic cleansing, for example. If the humanitarian organisation or peacekeeping force assists the population in travelling to safety, it may be accused of complicity in deportation. As outgoing High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata puts it: 'In the context of a conflict which has as its very objective the displacement of people we find ourselves confronted with a major dilemma. To what extent do we persuade people to remain where they are, when that could well jeopardise their lives and liberties? On the other hand, if we help them to move, do we not become an accomplice to "ethnic cleansing"?'.[1]

The origins of the confusion concerning evacuation and deportation lie in several international documents. The first two paragraphs of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) read as follows:

> Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, *regardless of their motive*.

[1] Sadako Ogata, quoted in Larry Minear *et al.*, *Humanitarian Action in the Former Yugoslavia: The UN's Role 1991–1993*, Occasional Paper 18, Humanitarianism and War Project.

> Nevertheless, the Occupying Power may undertake total or partial evacuation of a given area if the security of the population or *imperative military reasons* so demand. Such evacuations may not involve the displacement of protected persons outside the bounds of the occupied territory except when for material reasons it is impossible to avoid such displacement. Persons thus evacuated shall be transferred back to their homes as soon as hostilities in the area in question have ceased [emphasis added].

At first glance, the conclusion to be drawn from Article 49 is straightforward: in order to be legal, a population transfer *either* has to be carried out with the voluntary cooperation of the evacuees; *or*, if it is carried out without such cooperation, there must be compelling reasons of safety, or imperative military reasons. The first of these criteria is not a problem. Evacuation is a major instrument of humanitarian protection. Central to the practice of humanitarian action is the well-being of the victims of conflict, and there appears to be no doubt that evacuation is, provided certain standards are met, a legitimate course of action.

The second criterion – the military imperative or 'military necessity'– is more problematic. 'Military necessity' refers to the necessity of the warring parties to acquire victory. Given this, Article 49, on this point at least, codifies a circular reasoning: a forced transfer of the population is prohibited regardless of its motive, unless that motive is the necessity of subduing the enemy. While paragraph 1 attempts to unequivocally prohibit involuntary population transfers for reasons related to the conflict, paragraph 2 allows such transfers for imperative military reasons.

The confusion is not limited to this provision alone. Article 17 of the second Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions (1977), which prohibits the forced movement of civilians, reads:

> The displacement of the civilian population shall not be ordered for reasons related to the conflict unless the security of the civilians involved or imperative military reasons so demand …

This provision is even more confused than the previous one – and for more than one reason. While the first half of the sentence is derived from paragraph 1 of Article 49, the second half is derived from paragraph 2, thus implicitly collapsing the fundamental distinction between evacuation and deportation. In addition, Article 17 avoids using the

words 'evacuation' and 'deportation' – terms which could have alerted the reader to the fact that two different concepts are used in the same sentence.

Although deportation was prohibited by the Charter of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, international tribunals including Nuremberg have used the words 'evacuation' and 'deportation' interchangeably, as if they are synonymous. One of the most recent instances of this is in the indictments against Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in July 1995. The indictment reads: 'These *deportations* were not conducted as evacuations for safety, military necessity or for any other lawful purpose'. The following November, in the indictment against the same suspects concerning their actions against the population of Srebrenica, the Prosecutor wrote of 'the *evacuation* process of Bosnian Muslim refugees'. The indictment against Radislav Krstic of October 1998 uses the concepts of evacuation and deportation interchangeably.

To make matters worse, Article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention defines as a 'grave breach' of the Convention the 'unlawful deportation or transfer' of the population. Using the adjective 'unlawful' as a basis, it has been argued that the prohibition on deportation effectively differentiates between lawful and unlawful deportations – outlawing the kind seen during the Holocaust, but permitting and even authorising deportations carried out by the occupying military authorities in the course of maintaining public order. This argument has been made specifically in defence of the practice of the military authorities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

A solution?

As far as humanitarian organisations are concerned, the dilemma described by Ogata remains emotive and largely unresolved. However, the case of Banja Luka in 1993–94 offers an interesting way out. Before the Yugoslav civil war, Banja Luka was Bosnia-Herzegovina's second city, with a majority non-Serb population. When the war broke out, the non-Serb population was, by means of low-intensity violence and in the context of ethnic cleansing, compelled to leave the city, or remain at their peril. Faced with the question of whether to help non-Serbs to leave the city, UNHCR and ICRC were at first reluctant to offer transport for fear of being accused of complicity. However, as the violence intensified, both organisations moderated their policies and drafted the following criteria:

'For evacuation outside of Bosnia:
- persons whose lives were in danger;
- civilian prisoners;
- the wounded;
- family reunification cases;
- persons who had fled the fighting and were in enemy territory.

'For evacuation within Bosnia:
- civilian prisoners;
- persons subjected to forced labour;
- family reunification cases;
- civilians who have fled the fighting.'

A fundamental criterion is informed consent. This criterion – first defined by a military tribunal in the aftermath of the Second World War – is well-known in the context of medical ethics and suggests that the evacuating humanitarian organisation discusses the advantages, disadvantages and risks of the proposed evacuation with representatives of the would-be evacuees. By respecting this principle, the right to self-determination of the individuals concerned is, however limited, restored, thus helping them to maintain at least a minimum of dignity. The final decision on whether or not to be transferred thus rests with the individual concerned – not with the warlord pursuing a policy of ethnic cleansing. To sum up, there is a loophole in the law, and one which is a cause of concern for war victims, aid agencies and peacekeepers. A limited number of criteria and benchmarks have been drafted in order to grant humanitarian organisations a measure of moral and legal certainty which, although useful, need further elaboration.

Ted A. van Baarda is director of the Humanitarian Law Consultancy, The Hague, and a lecturer on humanitarian law and military ethics. He can be reached at <humlaw@wxs.nl>. A longer version of this article will be published in the Dutch law journal *Militair Rechtelijk Tijdschrift*; an English translation is being prepared.

Resources

The International Committee of the Red Cross website provides a full listing of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and 1977 Protocols, including the article outlines, full-text versions and commentaries; see <www.icrc.org/eng/party_gc>

The International Journal of Refugee Law, The Journal of Refugee Studies and *Refugee Studies Quarterly*, all published by OUP <www3.oup. co.uk>

Forced Migration Review, University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre <www.fmreview.org>

The University of Michigan Law School Refugee Caselaw Site <www.refugeecaselaw.org>

The UNHCR *Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status* <www.unhcr.ch/refworld/legal/handbook/handeng/hbtoc.htm>

The EC Dublin Convention on asylum policy within the European Union <europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l33048.htm>

PRACTICE NOTES

HUMANITARIAN exchange

Information systems in humanitarian emergencies

Few dispute that the Internet has encouraged an explosive growth in both the quantity and range of information available to aid practitioners. So why, asks **Robin Schofield**, *do aid workers say that field-based systems are failing them? And what should be done to make them more effective?*

Information systems catering to the international humanitarian-assistance community have matured considerably since pioneering events such as the October 1997 UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs symposium on the Role of Information in Humanitarian Coordination, and even earlier attempts at harnessing new technologies such as the UN Administrative Committee on Coordination's Refugee Nutrition Information System in September 1993. Reuters' AlertNet, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)'s ReliefWeb and IRINNews, the International Crisis Group's CrisisWeb and a host of other sites, including the HPN's own, all provide a rich source of news reports, analysis and comment. Aid-related sites account for an estimated $20m in donor and private funds; users number in the tens of millions.

Field efforts

Yet aid workers argue that this explosion of centralised information sources at the global level has failed to bring similar benefits to agency operations in the field. Jane Barry, an independent NGO consultant, has seen the UN and other bodies set up many such country-level information projects, but witnessed fewer sustainable successes. She and other aid workers say that operational agencies regularly use e-mail to file reports to and from headquarters. But aid workers in Bosnia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Horn of Africa and Somalia have found more sophisticated information projects designed to share and organise information centrally of comparatively little use.

Why? 'It's a vicious cycle,' says Mike Gaouette, Save the Children UK's emergencies officer. 'The agencies see little value, so they do not contribute and so the project can never really take off.' Other aid workers complain that projects are too technology-focused. 'The whole aim is setting up the system, not populating the data and making it work,' one comments. 'Technology is touted as the complete solution.' ReliefWeb's manager in Geneva, Craig Duncan, identifies an additional problem: 'Too often field-based systems have been dependent on an individual's drive and creativity. After a year or two at most, they leave and are either not replaced, or the new person has different skill sets. It took years to develop ReliefWeb's partnership with information providers. Organisational commitment is only now yielding the kind of continuity that information projects need.'

Many professionals identify OCHA's Kosovo Humanitarian Community Information Centre (HCIC) as one of the best field-based information projects to date (for more on the HCIC, see the following article). According to former project manager Paul Currion, agencies reported that they found the system practical, reliable and transparent. Multiple-access channels to data resources – including a drop-in centre, printed fact sheets, e-mail, interactive CD-ROMs and a website – all proved popular for HCIC users, both in Kosovo and at headquarters. Significantly, there are also no plans to discontinue the effort – a factor which Pat Banks, IRIN's global coordinator, identifies as a major constraint on similar efforts in Rwanda. Senior UN officials say they now plan to build on the HCIC's success. 'Over the next five years, these kinds of information centres will become a familiar feature in most operations,' one manager commented. 'We are planning regional resource centres for southern and west Africa, the Balkans and possibly also Iraq.'

According to the UN, these regional information centres will use existing office infrastructure, but add specific technical expertise drawn from donor bodies and the private sector. Ericsson is reportedly signing a deal to support project communications with equipment and consulting. Further agreements with satellite firms are also reportedly in the pipeline. But experienced aid workers say that considerable changes in the wider aid community are also required if these information centres are to succeed and effectively institutionalise better information flows.

Information systems in aid

Academic models describe five main components to successful information systems:

- information input;
- information processing;
- information output;
- feedback; and
- management mechanisms.

However, field-based information centres as currently designed only control processing, output and management functions. While field-based

information projects identify their mission as improving the delivery of humanitarian aid to beneficiaries by providing improved information services to operational agencies, the relationships between donor organisations, implementing agencies and beneficiaries are inevitably more

> *Initiatives around information systems will not realise their full potential until operational agencies find good reason to value the results.*

complex. Indeed, many aid workers assert that operational agencies have already implemented all the information systems they really value: they know donor funding criteria; they analyse the donor's priorities and look for a good fit with organisational strengths; and they report back to the donor on how its money was spent. According to Jane Barry, agencies working in emergencies simply do not see information as a priority: 'It is very embedded in the culture. Some agencies have worked for decades in Sierra Leone and still do not have a copy of the government census. Until donors insist on better grounding to projects this will not change, even with better information availability as a result of improved central systems.'

The need for change

Initiatives around information systems will not realise their full potential until operational agencies find good reason to value the results. 'The best information system in the world will achieve little if the organisational model is wrong,' one analyst comments. 'Information is still often seen as threatening as it challenges the status quo. If agencies cannot see an advantage, and they know donors will accept the data, then why go to that effort? You can work more quickly, but it is not good programming in the long run.' Indeed, there is concern that improved use of information systems could further erode the operational independence of agencies by enabling donors to exert ever-greater day-to-day control over their activities.

Centralised, field-based information centres can do much to help aid practitioners involved in international humanitarian relief efforts – but they cannot be seen in isolation. Operational agencies have to both use the centres effectively, and see themselves as components in a mutually-dependent system of relationships that will fail if their contributions are ineffective. For inputs to improve, operational agencies need to integrate information collection, management and analysis into their core programming functions, rather than seeing these activities as optional extras. Immediate improvements could include:

- Information systems only thrive where they support a practical need – do not collect information for its own sake. Instead, design infor-

mation products that will improve programmes, and then design the information-processing and collection activities required to generate these results.

- Successful information systems require substantial time, effort and organisational commitment to develop – allocate sufficient resources and staff to achieve realistic goals. Do not try to squeeze a useful system out of the remains of an administration budget.

- Information systems cannot succeed in isolation from programme departments.

- Technology can be more of a hindrance than a help if staff cannot easily operate systems – realistically assess the 'common technological denominator' in your organisation and base your procedures at this level. Money spent on expensive software and server computers might be better spent on training staff to use the packaged software and basic desktops they already have.

- However urgent the immediate humanitarian need, develop at least basic systems to research any response programme before it is designed. Both programmes and supporting information systems can increase in scope and complexity to respond to changing needs.

Robin Schofield has worked on NGO, EU and UN information projects in the Balkans, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and the African Great Lakes. He is a consultant at Accenture, formerly known as Andersen Consulting. Since 7 August 2000, Accenture has not been associated with Andersen Worldwide or Arthur Andersen.

Robin can be contacted at <robin.schofield@ accenture.com>.

Web resources

For background information on the symposium on the Role of Information in Humanitarian Coordination of 1997, see ReliefWeb, <www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf>

The UN Refugee Nutrition Information System <acc.unsystem.org/scn/Publications/html/rnis.html>

IRINNews <www.reliefweb.int/IRIN>

AlertNet <www.alertnet.org>

CrisisWeb <www.crisisweb.org>

For more information sources relevant to the humanitarian sector, go to the Link Library at the HPN's website, <www.odihpn.org.uk>

Learning from Kosovo: the Humanitarian Community Information Centre (HCIC), Year One

Paul Currion *outlines the key lessons learned from the HCIC's first year*

Following the mass return of Albanian refugees to Kosovo in June 1999, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees was assigned responsibility for the Office of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs of the UN Interim Administration in Kosovo. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) was also part of this Office, and in this role began to provide information services to support the humanitarian effort.

One such service was the Humanitarian Community Information Centre (HCIC) which, operating out of a container, opened its doors in July 1999. By mid-August, the HCIC was formally opened in the UNHCR building in Pristina. Its work included developing a contact list and sectoral matrix, and organising daily briefings for the humanitarian community. As well as office space, UNHCR agreed to provide administrative support for the Centre. Support was also provided by the US Agency for International Development, the UK's Department for International Development, Catholic Relief Services, the International Rescue Committee and the World Food Programme.

This article outlines the key lessons learned by the HCIC in its first year, developing a potential model for OCHA or other organisations in future emergencies.

Information is not free

Acquiring accurate information requires time and effort. Investment is a basic precondition for useful results – although it does not guarantee them. But nor does it necessarily mean additional financial resources; frequently it simply means allocating staff time at an early stage. Organisations should give more attention to planning for information needs as an integral part of humanitarian strategic and programme planning. Donor agencies are more likely to fund projects where it is clear that the information is accurate and timely.

Early baseline data provides a yardstick for later assessments and updates. As an example, the HCIC was instrumental in organising the July 1999 Rapid Village Assessment (RVA), a comprehensive information-gathering exercise that assessed humanitarian needs down to village level in areas such as housing damage, water and sanitation and health. Based on a standard survey form, UNHCR,

the intergovernmental International Management Group, NGOs and KFOR troops gathered this data, which was then processed by the HCIC. Reports based on this data were made freely available to the humanitarian community to provide baseline data for their work, and to facilitate the identification of priority areas, and the database itself was later distributed on CD-ROMs.

Sometimes costs are unavoidable. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are among the most exciting applications of new technology – but they require a large capital investment to start up and maintain. In terms of staffing and equipment, a large proportion of the resources of the HCIC were invested in its GIS. However, the results justified the expense, with the HCIC producing a series of thematic maps showing key sectoral information on housing damage, and the location and status of schools and clinics. In the absence of generally-available and adequate route maps for Kosovo, the HCIC also produced and distributed over 5,000 copies of the Kosovo Atlas. As well as detailed ground maps of Kosovo, the atlas contained thematic maps that provided information on topics such as the division of KFOR responsibilities and the distribution of minorities.

GIS has wider applications for humanitarian coordination. The classic example of this is in de-mining, where a GIS can be used to maintain records of mined and cleared areas. For example, KFOR supplies a 'layer' of data showing areas where mines or unexploded ordnance exist; UNICEF then provides a second layer showing school locations. Combining the two sets of data and creating buffer zones around the schools indicates initial areas for de-mining. When a third layer of data is added, this time representing footpaths used by children on their way to school, the resulting intersection of areas establishes priority sites for de-mining. Maps of these sites are then distributed to de-mining agencies.

High-technology solutions are not the only answer

GIS is a high-tech, high-cost information resource – with the potential for correspondingly high-value results. But in most situations, resources on the scale of those available in Kosovo will not be so readily to hand. Information management to support humanitarian work need not be entirely dependent on technology. According to Burim Hoxha, the

HCIC website designer, 'technology is nothing – it's the people who are working with it that are important'.

One of the most valuable parts of the HCIC was its reception area, a public space where day-to-day enquiries could be dealt with. The highly-motivated staff at the front desk met basic requests for information, directed more technical questions to appropriate staff within the centre or in other organisations, and distributed HCIC products. The basic resource required for this service was simply friendly and engaged local staff with appropriate language skills. The reception area also had a notice-board for regular announcements, and 'mailboxes' for agencies. These were highly valued in the absence of working telephone or postal systems, and at a time when Internet access was limited. They acted as a central point for distributing materials and making contact with colleagues, even for agencies with advanced communications. As a result, they were used by UN agencies, NGOs, governmental organisations and other interested groups. Activities like these demonstrate the value of a 'back-to-basics' approach, even where resources are plentiful.

Information is a process
Both low- and high-tech approaches to information management are useless unless the right attitudes underpin them. Kosovo was information-rich but communication-poor, and the HCIC made many direct and indirect efforts to generate what might best be described as an 'open information culture'. In key fora such as the Information Group, set up by the Strategic Planning Office in UNMIK, the HCIC lobbied for the creation of a Chief of Information Coordination and the assignment of Information Focal Points within each UNMIK department. Indirect attempts were made through the development of products that demonstrated the utility of sharing information, such as the Kosovo Atlas and Encyclopaedia.

Information management is a multi-sectoral require-ment that should underpin all activities, and should extend through the transition from relief-oriented to development-oriented activities. It also requires a long-term commitment (since investment in the present will only yield benefits over time), and an understanding that this commitment must be renewed repeatedly in response to changes in the wider situation.

Many organisations resist sharing information, particularly when security issues are involved or funding is at stake. The best way to overcome these obstacles is to create a space in which organisations can be certain that they are sharing their information on equal terms, and in good faith.

Information needs an honest broker
Information is not neutral; in humanitarian emer-gencies, it can be a tool with which to gain donor funds, win media attention or accrue political influence. The question of who has access to different types of information – the location of minorities, refugee numbers, donor allocations and food-security assessments, for example – can become a real issue. Ideally, in a complex emergency clear levels of information would be established, accessible to different parties at different levels, and agreed focal points set up to channel that information.

The HCIC dealt solely in public information that was available to all. While individual staff members within the centre frequently had access to restricted information, this was not processed or distributed through the HCIC. The role of honest broker enabled the HCIC to request information on the understanding that it would be used not to further a particular agenda, but to help all actors in their work.

Perhaps the HCIC's single greatest asset was its perceived neutrality. This did not just refer to its physical space, but extended to almost every area of HCIC activity. As an example, the Centre fielded a two-person Field Liaison Unit (FLU), tasked with providing a means of communication between Pristina and organisations based outside the city. The FLU travelled to regional and municipal inter-agency meetings on a weekly basis, gathering and disseminating information. One NGO representative commented that the FLU was seen as an 'intermediary not beholden to any agency' – no mean feat given the often tense relations between the actors in Kosovo.

Show, don't tell
To back up the principles outlined above, you need to demonstrate the practical benefits of sharing information. In practice, the quickest way to do this is to generate high-visibility products with obvious and immediate utility. The Kosovo Atlas was one such, the HCIC Kosovo Encyclopaedia CD-ROM another.

The Kosovo Encyclopaedia collated all available information relating to relief and reconstruction work for the period June 1999–June 2000. An enormous information-gathering exercise, the final product eventually totalled more than 600MB of information. The Encyclopaedia, which opened automatically and ran in a Web Browser format, was designed to be user-friendly, even for those with minimal computer experience. Over 1,300 were distributed through the HCIC reception desk and the FLU.

Resources such as this can be developed for any geographical location or thematic sector. The Encyclopaedia demonstrated the benefits of sharing information – with the result that many organisations began to approach the Centre, asking how their documents could be included in the next edition. A specific request by the UNMIK

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Department of Reconstruction led to the creation of a specialised Desktop Reference CD-ROM, an easy-to-use resource containing all reconstruction-related documents.

Conclusion

The HCIC has been cited by the Brahimi report on UN peace operations as an example of the practical application of information technology in supporting humanitarian coordination. Similar information centres can become a valuable part of a humanitarian response, even when they are relatively modest in size and resources. Instead of looking at the resources that went into building the HCIC, we should instead look at the principles that came to characterise its work.

Accessibility. With no security checks and no IDs required for entrance, the HCIC was possibly the only international office in Pristina freely accessible to all. HCIC services were available to anyone who needed them – including local people, who could come in off the street to ask for advice on where they might receive shelter assistance or food aid.

Service. People using the HCIC were not seen as 'beneficiaries', but as customers. The HCIC attempted to facilitate the work of these customers, providing support, advice and technical assistance.

Neutrality. The HCIC tried at all times to be neutral in its dealings, and to address all customers on equal terms.

Flexibility. As well as taking forward its own initiatives, the HCIC attempted to respond to need wherever possible, and to support the initiatives of others.

A 'Toolbox', currently in production, is intended to record and disseminate the lessons of the first year of the HCIC; it will be available on the HCIC website and on CD-ROM.

The HCIC was the result of a fortuitous combination of inter-agency cooperation, solid resourcing, imagination and luck that will be hard to replicate. However, the lessons that it learnt in its first year can and should be made available to everybody actively engaged in humanitarian work. But the most important lesson learned by the HCIC is relatively simple: that effective coordination of humanitarian work is greatly aided by effective information management, both within and between organisations.

Paul Currion was Information Officer for the International NGO Council of Kosovo between November 1999 and April 2000, seconded from ICVA; and Manager of the HCIC between April and September 2000, seconded from Save the Children US. He is currently developing the HCIC Toolbox as part of a collaborative consultancy between Save the Children US and OCHA. For more information about this article or the HCIC Toolbox, contact Paul at <paulcurrion@hotmail. com>, or visit the HCIC website at <www. reliefweb.int/hcic>.

Knowledge is power? Obstacles to disaster preparedness on the coastal *chars* of Bangladesh

The people of Bangladesh's *chars* are acutely vulnerable to disasters yet, says **Philippa Howell**, they are the least visible and most marginalised within the national warning and shelter system

Bangladesh's off-shore *chars* (flat silt islands just a metre above sea level) are home to tens of thousands of people, many of whom have migrated there after losing houses and assets to river erosion elsewhere in the country. Life is extremely vulnerable to recurring disaster in the form of cyclones, storms and tidal surges.

This physical vulnerability is compounded by social and economic systems that leave most inhabitants landless and debt-ridden. Hence, in these circumstances of particular vulnerability, disaster preparedness requires not only adequate physical protection, but also steps to tackle these structural inequalities in order to reduce vulnerability and increase coping capacities.

Early-warning systems and patchy preparedness

After the severe cyclone in 1970, substantial sums were spent in Bangladesh on building cyclone shelters and setting up national warning systems. The Red Crescent Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) plays an important role with its network of radio bases and trained volunteers. Yet shelters are still scarce on the *chars*; on Char Jahiruddin, for example, there are only two useable shelters (capacity 4,000–5,000) for a population of 20,000 people. Poor facilities represent a heath hazard in overcrowded conditions. There is no safe path to shelters during a tidal surge, and reaching them means wading or swimming through snake-infested waters. Very few houses are strong enough

to survive cyclone winds or escape a tidal surge: most people survive major cyclones by climbing trees, although many islands have little tree cover.

Factors of vulnerability

Vulnerability is rooted in social and economic conditions, as well as physical hazards. On the *chars*, the poor rely almost exclusively on sharecropping, or fishing under the '*dadon*' system, whereby the catch, usually bought at half its market price or less, is controlled by the person who gives loans for the equipment. This economic dependence (often described as a 'patron–client' relationship) combined with physical risks makes it hard to build up household assets, further reducing resilience to recurring disasters. Moreover, it is precisely these powerful 'patrons' to whom poor people turn for assistance after a disaster, thus increasing dependency and indebtedness. Local governance and judicial systems are also dominated by the powerful.

The poorest are least likely to hear radio warnings, and most likely to live outside protective embankments and furthest from safe paths. Since the pressure on livelihoods is acute, it is tempting to ignore warnings and go fishing, or postpone time-consuming preparations for disaster. Warnings may be disregarded due to their previous inaccuracy. Above all, those with few possessions are least likely to risk losing them in order to save their lives.

Cultural factors also play a part. Attitudes to preparedness are often influenced by religious leaders, some of whom advocate prayer as the only appropriate measure. Women are especially at risk, since they do not frequent public places such as markets where radio warnings may be heard. Their long saris make swimming and tree-climbing difficult, and shame due to loss of clothing is often feared as much as death.

Training for disaster preparedness

Against this background, in 1999 ActionAid-Bangladesh designed a one-year pilot programme (funded by ECHO) to work on 'intensive community disaster prepared-ness' on four coastal *chars*. Lack of information and awareness was believed to be as much an impediment to disaster-preparedness as lack of technical know-how. The programme offered simple practical knowledge, such as the meaning of warning signals, first aid, and ways of safeguarding valuables; and suggested keeping buoyant objects such as dried coconuts in the house. The scientific explanation of how cyclones form was a revelation, since these were previously considered as being punishment from Allah. Based on this experience and the findings of a mid-term review, a replicable training package – Active Disaster

Some people depend only on Allah and some people don't want to leave their house. They think it is irreligious or against the will of Allah for men and women to stay in cyclone shelters together.

Biwi Shafia Begum, Dhal *char*

© Philippa Howell

Women's disaster preparation training session, Dhal char

Awareness and Preparedness Training (ADAPT) – was developed for use on other *chars*.

While awareness and knowledge can better enable poor people to prepare for and survive disasters, they cannot address socially-constructed vulnerability such as exists in Bangladesh. Focus groups to discuss preparedness strategies may be the first step in empowering poor people, but socially-constructed vulnerabilities can only be fully overcome through long-term strategies such as land reform, accountable local governance and transparent legal systems.

The lessons for donors and NGOs

By itself, knowledge is not enough to break the cycle of vulnerability. Disaster preparedness must be linked to recovery potential as well as survival if it is to make a lasting difference. This is vital if any credible development progress is to be achieved, and highlights the need for anti-poverty programmes to take account of the impact of disasters.

The *chars* are considered 'lawless' due to their remote location and shifting population, and few international NGOs work there. It is easy for the government to ignore them, despite population increases of 5–6 per cent a year, and more advocacy by NGOs could raise their profile and make the environment less conducive to corruption and exploitation. Programmes working directly to promote the capacities of vulnerable people must also seek opportunities to influence social and economic change in their favour. Advocacy is always difficult where power is in the hands of very few people, and is reinforced by the social and cultural system. For this very reason, however, community groups need a lot of support to withstand the threats of those with a vested interest in the existing system.

Support for income generation can complement advocacy work. The households most resilient to disaster are those with a range of earning options: in the long term, this is the only means of escape

from exploitation. In the shorter term, cash–for–work could be used to build raised earth platforms for houses and livestock.

In such extreme conditions as those on the *chars*, it is infrastructure such as strong houses, roads and embankments which will save lives. NGOs and donors, whose interest in supporting infrastructure–based projects is waning, must be prepared to address these crucial deficiencies, whether through direct support or through advocacy. A major thrust of many preparedness programmes is to urge people to seek shelter in time – yet often such shelters are non-existent or inadequate. Cheaper options such as raised and strengthened houses/smaller shelters which can accommodate small groups of households (with separate spaces for men and women) should be investigated, since these would be more accessible and better protect assets. There have been attempts to build smaller community–managed shelters which double as clinics or schools, but there is little research into alternatives to protect livestock and possessions.

Equally, some form of insurance for the poor is essential. This could be linked to the many micro–finance institutions in the sub–continent, to government relief schemes or be based at local level on communal savings and storage. Assurance that lost assets will be replaced, at least partially, could encourage poor people to leave their homes and save themselves. It would also promote recovery and reduce indebtedness to patrons.

The predictable nature of the disasters that afflict the *chars* urges us to revisit the efficiency of current early–warning systems for marginalised populations.

Life on the *chars*

Population density 434/sq km

Literacy rate 12%

Average daily income 30–50 *taka* (40–70 UK pence)

Interest rate 100–200%

Land distribution Less than 10% of families own 80% of arable land; over 90% own no land

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There is potential in incorporating indigenous indicators – ants climbing trees carrying their eggs, for example – into local systems for increased relevance and credibility.

Finally, the case of the *chars* illustrates the complexities of disaster preparedness and resilience. It challenges us to develop a more holistic analysis which explores the social and economic factors affecting people's capacities to cope with disaster. This would enable preparedness and relief to be directed towards household recovery, as well as survival.

Philippa Howell was Advisor to ActionAid-Bangladesh's disaster-preparedness programme in January–August 2000.

For more information on ADAPT, contact Roger Yates at ActionAid's UK emergencies unit: <ryates@ actionaid.org.uk>; or Feisal Hussein at ActionAid-Bangladesh <feisalh @aab.agni.com>.

Resources

In the Eye of the Storm, an ActionAid CD-Rom for development education

Philippa Howell, *Fighting Poverty: The Humanitarian Connection* (London: ActionAid Emergencies Unit, 2000)

Philippa Howell, *Indigenous Early Warning Indicators of Cyclones: Examples from the Coastal Chars of Bangladesh* (Dhaka: ActionAid-Bangladesh, 2000)

Philippa Howell and Gaziul Hassan Mahmood, *Intensive Community Disaster Preparedness Programme: Participatory Mid-term Review* (Dhaka: ActionAid-Bangladesh, 2000)

M. Shameem Siddiqi, *Geopolitical, Ecological and Socio-economic Features and Disaster Preparedness and Management on the Offshore Chars of Bhola District* (Dhaka: Action-Aid Bangladesh, 1996)

John Twigg, *Sustainable Livelihoods and Vulnerability to Disasters* (London: Benfield Grieg Hazard Research Centre for the Disaster Mitigation Institute, Ahmedabad, 2000)

John Twigg, *The Human Factor in Early Warning: Risk Perception and Appropriate Communications* (London: Benfield Grieg Hazard Research Centre, 1998)

Hanna Schmuck, '"An Act of Allah": Religious Explanations for Floods in Bangladesh as Survival Strategy', paper prepared for a conference of the European Sociological Association, 1998

Land-management tools and natural disasters in Central America

Vulnerability to natural disasters in Central America is not only a 'physical' problem. As **Suzanne Lerch** *explains, issues surrounding land-use, ownership and planning also need to be addressed if this vulnerability is to be reduced*

In Central America, the subject of land ownership and use is surrounded by imprecision, an imprecision reflected in the available cartography and data. Two examples illustrate the importance of land usage and the part economic and social factors can play in exacerbating vulnerability to natural catastrophes in the region. These are crucial issues, not only during the period of reconstruction, but also in terms of analysing the causes of damage.

In the Salvadorean town of Tacuba, north of the capital San Salvador, the majority of peasants live on tiny parcels of steeply-sloping land; land suitable for agriculture and housing is taken by the large estates dedicated to coffee production. There is no social-welfare cover. In the event of extreme bad weather, crops are lost, and peasants have neither stocks of food nor a minimum assured income. In this region, preventive measures against vulnerability to natural catastrophes should include a redistribution of land and an improvement in the status of agricultural workers.

The second example concerns the Casitas volcano in western Nicaragua. When Hurricane Mitch struck in October 1998, part of the volcano collapsed, burying 2,000 people in a torrent of mud. This volcano, most of which belongs to a large landowner and a member of the ruling party, was crowned with television antennae, and construction work had begun on a holiday village on the summit. Many of the inhabitants believe (perhaps wrongly) that there is a link between this construction work and the catastrophe. While the official report into the disaster, conducted by the Instituto Nicaraguense de Estudios Territorales in January 1999, considers only physical factors, land ownership is an essential question for the council and people of Posoltega. Unless the reasons for the catastrophe are clearly established, and responsibility attributed, local confidence in national and international experts will not be restored, and the risk of further landslides will not be reduced.

The problem

One of the key tools in land management is cartography. However, existing cartography in Central America principally consists of topographical maps to the scale of 1:50,000 or 1:25,000, many of which are more than 20 years old. Vegetation, towns and infrastructure have all since changed, as have hydrography and topography. Rare larger-scale town plans show only general information covering road networks and hydrography, with no indication of developed estates, topography and the parcelling of land.

Land registration (where it is undertaken) is perceived and conceived as a means – admittedly a very useful means – of increasing tax revenues at municipal level, not as a way of making decisions on national and regional development. In rural areas, data concerning land ownership is available to the public only in statistical form, not as widely-distributed maps. This is the result partly of a lack of technical resources, but also of an absence of political will: land has always been the cause of most of Central America's conflicts and population movements.

Initiatives

Central America's extreme vulnerability to natural catastrophes has prompted international voluntary initiatives in the field of cartography. A programme by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SCD), for example, is producing maps of the dangers facing Nicaraguan towns, while a UN project coordinated by the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the UN Office for Project Service (UNOPS) aims to create a website to give cheap and direct access to satellite images to local players involved in reconstruction after a catastrophe or conflict. But these projects are of a very technical nature, and will be ineffective unless they are accompanied by an integrated approach to national and regional planning in all of its phases and aspects, permitting the players – politicians, technicians, locals and dignitaries – to take responsibility for preventing natural and ecological disasters.

Proposals

Four main lines of work, to be carried out in parallel, can be identified.

1. Promoting 'citizens' participation' on a municipal or micro-regional scale

'Citizens' participation' seeks to open up debates on planning issues, such as the municipal budget, the politics of health and education, housing and

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public transport. It is not the same as 'community participation', which centres on immediate needs and addresses inhabitants of an affected area as beneficiaries. Rather, it aims to create a framework and culture for debate, trying to change the traditional relationship between voluntary organisations, local authorities and inhabitants.

2. Integrating the idea of 'territory' into this process
The concept of 'territory' stands above all else for the common good. It is a powerful idea; public awareness of the 'culture of territory', raised by producing and distributing the implements for regional planning like accurate maps, increases the power of people to put forward their own proposals and conduct negotiations through traditional authorities like town councils, or through new authorities they create themselves. In San Francisco Menendez in El Salvador, for example, a dam built by the government immediately after Hurricane Mitch now deprives a whole estuary of fresh water, putting the work of many farmers at risk and provoking an ecological disaster in an area of mangroves designated a site of national interest. Inhabitants and town councillors, armed with a good map, could perhaps have succeeded in negotiating the position of this dam with the engineers in charge of building it.

3. Encouraging 'decentralised cooperation'
'Decentralised cooperation' – between towns and regions in the North and their counterparts in Central America – offers some interesting advantages. These include increased political autonomy; the involvement of elected officials, technicians and citizens of the North in initiatives in Central America, who are required to give an account of their work and reflections to their own community; and a greater sense of equality between the partners. Examples of such cooperation abound, particularly in France, Spain, Italy and Holland. Often, this form of cooperation has focused on local support for infrastructure construction, but it is increasingly taking up the complex and less glamorous theme of regional and national development.

In Central America, examples of collaboration along these lines are increasing: between La Dalia (Nicaragua) and Seville in Spain, between Leon (Nicaragua) and Florence in Italy, and between the Nicaraguan town of Granada and Lyon in France, for example. French towns grouped under the Fédération mondiale des cités unies have for many years been twinning with towns in Nicaragua and El Salvador, and envisage municipal training operations in 2001. A partnership between Central American towns and the district and university of Geneva is in the pipeline on the theme of regional information, in collaboration with the UN. Schools of architecture in Catalonia have formed a network with universities in Central America, and hold two training seminars a year on the theme of town planning, one in Central America, the other in Spain.

4. Stepping up exchanges and networking
The space for debate on regional and national planning in all its dimensions (cultural, historical and technical) is rarely available in Central America. This limits the extent to which professionals, elected members and the inhabitants themselves can develop critical skills. This isolation means that, to a degree, ideas – Spanish, French, Swiss – are imposed from outside the region. To remedy this, a North–South network on national and regional development in Central America should be established to further exchanges of information and experiences, and to encourage methodological reflection.

Suzanne Lerch is a Geneva-based town-planning architect. She can be reached by e-mail at <slerch @worldcom.ch>.

The New HPN Website: A Central Resource for the Humanitarian Practitioner
<www.odihpn.org>

The HPN's new website offers enhanced access, increased links with other relevant sites, and thematic searchability. With the exception of our Good Practice Reviews, the full texts of all HPN publications – including for the first time French-language editions – are also available.

Now entirely database-driven, the site offers a wealth of material from the HPN's archive of reports and articles, book reviews, and training and conference information, together with key texts and guidelines for humanitarian action. Information can be accessed both by region and by theme. An extensive, searchable link library directs users to key sites in the sector. HPN members and institutions can submit their own recommended aid links and new humanitarian events to the site. Feedback pages enable readers to comment on reports, add their own views and engage in debate. We aim to make the HPN one of the central gateways for humanitarian practitioners, and a key site for debate.

PRACTICE NOTES

From human-rights monitor to health-project coordinator

Koenraad Van Brabant, outgoing HPN Coordinator, interviews **Christina ter Braak**, *MSF-Holland, Uzbekistan*

Christina ter Braak

Koenraad Van Brabant Christina, how does a young woman from Holland end up working in Uzbekistan?

Christina ter Braak My first six-month stay in Uzbekistan was in 1996, teaching Dutch and English at Tashkent University. After my Bachelor's degree, I did a Master's in development studies. For my thesis – on unemployment in Uzbekistan – I spent another three months there doing research; every single person I spoke to had an opinion on the subject. Subsequently, I applied for a job in the Tashkent office of Human Rights Watch (HRW), and was invited for recruitment tests in New York. But the reply was slow in coming, and I returned to Uzbekistan to work for a Dutch tour company. Some time later, HRW offered me the job, and I worked with them for six months in 1999–2000.

KVB Working with HRW in the field meant you inquired into politically-sensitive matters. Did HRW give you any practical training?

CTB Not really; I had little idea of the structure of the organisation, and never saw anything like a handbook. I was the assistant to the director of the Tashkent office, who was very competent. Practical back-up would also be readily available from New York, but I had no pre-departure training as such.

KVB Was the government open to HRW's presence?

CTB HRW was registered with the ministries of foreign affairs and justice. Every time HRW produced a report, a copy was given to government officials. Every year, we would also request a meeting with high-ranking officials. Of course, they read or reread our reports before each meeting. High-profile cases related, for example, to the treatment of local human-rights activists in Uzbekistan would occasionally be discussed.

KVB How, in practical terms, did you go about monitoring the human-rights situation in Uzbekistan?

CTB I wondered about this at the outset, knowing that the government is fairly authoritarian and people are afraid to talk. But you would be surprised how many people came to the office. Families of people who had been arrested were referred to us by local human-rights activists. People also took note of us as we sat in on trials, and would ask who we were and what we were doing, and would contact us at a later date. Those who are harassed or arrested often tend to know each other. Family members of those arrested and local human-rights workers are important contacts, although you need to make a judgement about what you are being told. HRW's reporting is as objective as possible. Sources are checked extremely thoroughly.

KVB Religious activism is one of the major threats as perceived by the government. What position would you take if you came across an Islamic activist whose human rights were being violated, but who was in fact striving to establish an Islamic state without much respect for human rights or democracy?

CTB Clearly, I cannot and do not talk here on behalf of HRW or MSF, only from my own perspective. But this is certainly an issue, especially since religious movements have been repressed. I would make a distinction between organisations, movements or parties that are prepared to use violence to achieve their goals, and those that aren't. I would say that someone who expresses his opinion in a peaceful way, and does not forcibly try to make others accept that opinion, cannot be persecuted. I think that there are many people in Uzbekistan who are curious about what is in the Koran, and who want to be good Muslims. They want to know how to pray, how to dress properly, and you can't refuse them that. Religious activists have that missionary zeal and they want to convert, but not all of them will put a gun to your head to achieve that goal.

KVB What was it like, as a Western woman from a liberal country, to meet devout Muslims, who have different views on the roles of men and women? Was it difficult for them to meet with you, or was it a normal type of interaction?

CTB It was in fact fairly normal. Don't forget that under Soviet rule men and women interacted in a free and open way. Several people I met admitted to having become religious only in the last few years, but are certainly used to seeing all kinds of people and relationships. For me it is not difficult to communicate; I see through their rhetoric and try to talk in a way that they can understand, I try to

indicate that I know a little about their culture and religion. But as soon as it is suggested that I could convert, I explain my background and worldview. In the end, it is a question of being respectful, but also making yourself respected.

KVB Uzbekistan is better off than Tajikistan, but social services have nonetheless declined. Does the government have active economic and social policies?

CBT The government is active in the area of economic policy, especially in trying to attract foreign investment to prestige products. But this generates few employment opportunities, and the population is growing fast. The legal framework is not very enabling for the creation of small private enterprises and regional trade. The financial system also inhibits economic development, and tax rates discourage entrepreneurs. Who you know is much more a guarantee of success than what you know. As far as social policy is concerned, the structures exist on paper. There is a pension system, support for young mothers and large families, and unemployment benefit, but a lot has only limited depth and substance. Take health reform, for example. There are big pilot projects; the World Bank is there, the European Commission's Tacis technical-support programme is there, the Ministry of Health itself is putting money in, and it all looks very impressive – but so far ordinary people have seen few tangible results, and are losing their trust in a system which runs on (unofficial) paid medical care, and which lacks affordable medication.

KVB What made you move from HRW to MSF-Holland?

CBT There were several reasons, but for me an important one was to get more organisational opportunities for my own professional development. MSF-Holland gave me a lot of background information, they gave me an extensive preparatory briefing, they had everything on paper, provided mission manuals, and I knew more what I was going to do when I left to take up my current post in the Ferghana Valley.

KVB Was it important to you, having worked with HRW, that MSF's mandate also included a 'witnessing' role?

CBT Yes, it was good to see this recognised within MSF. The priorities are different, but the organisation recognises the importance of wider contextual knowledge.

KVB Why a project in the Ferghana Valley? I thought it was one of the richer parts of Uzbekistan.

CBT MSF-Holland already had a large project in western Uzbekistan, which was part of its wider Aral Sea Area Programme. But it was felt that health needs in the east could not be ignored. The general impression is that the Ferghana is agriculturally rich, but many people are subsistence farmers. Last year drought destroyed many crops, and the area is prone to landslides from the surrounding mountains. Because of the valley's shape, there are areas where the groundwater is very high and all the irrigation water collects, bringing with it all the pesticides from the cotton fields, and nothing grows there. These problems, combined with collapsing social–welfare structures, made the population prone to basic but widespread health problems. MSF is trying to tackle these problems through its health-promotion activities. In all, Ferghana is not as rich a region as people tend to think.

KVB The Ferghana Valley cuts across Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. It is often said that, if there is a regional conflict in Central Asia, it will be around the Ferghana Valley. Is that correct?

CBT Of course, the borders between these countries have very weird shapes, and border issues are an important factor in political relations between them. There have been armed incursions, and the potential for conflict is there, but I would say primarily because of structural or internal conditions. There is a large population, not enough soil for everyone to grow food, and not enough work. The infrastructure is crumbling, and many non-native Uzbeks, who used to staff the service sectors, have left. I would point to natural disasters, disputes over natural resources and social tensions as major risks. Of course, economic and social deterioration constitutes a tinderbox that could be lit by an external fire. But for the time being the state exercises strong and widespread control. This keeps the situation calm, but in the long run stability has to come through social and economic development.

KVB Usually, NGO work takes place at the micro-level. How do you deal with the 'macro-dimensions' of the context you work in? Do you engage at national policy level?

CBT We are not trying to directly influence health-reform policies at national level, but we do work closely with our national counterparts at local level, and hope to give them some tools that they can use in their future policy implementation. In the Ferghana Valley, we have an extensive programme of health education, which is playing a growing role in the health–reform process by shifting the emphasis from over-staffed curative services towards a more rational and widely-spread primary health care system.

KVB Even if public health contributes to a better cost–benefit ratio, at some point you still need to look at overall health economics and the overall financing of health care. Are other organisations working in this area?

CBT Yes, health reforms are supported by a loan from the World Bank for communications and equipment investment. Tacis is assisting in the restructuring of the Ministry of Health, and its local and regional branches, include computerising data-reporting systems. USAID is supporting research on implementation and medical retraining in some pilot projects, one of which is in Ferghana, where the whole health structure is being redesigned, and where medical staff are being retrained as family or general practitioners. A modern health system should be up and running by 2005.

KVB What is the most stimulating aspect of working in Central Asia, and what is the most difficult?

CBT The most difficult thing is the bureaucracy and lack of initiative, even among highly-educated people; the most stimulating aspect of being here is that the people are often very warm and hospitable. Everything here has two layers, and it takes time to discover the one underneath. Government officials can be very friendly with you, although they have no intention of giving you what you need. On the other hand, people can offer you a table full of food, and what you don't see is that they may have to eat dry bread for two weeks after that because they have given you more than they can spare. It takes time to find out what's really happening, and it takes time to get anything done. But once you feel that you have reached that level of understanding and acceptance, you feel very comfortable and useful.

Developmental approaches in a post-conflict society

Koenraad Van Brabant in conversation with **Hakim N. Feerasta**, *Resident Representative, the Aga Khan Development Network, Tajikistan*

Koenraad Van Brabant The Aga Khan is recognised as the spiritual head (*imam*) of the Ismaeli community, and the majority of Ismaelis in Tajikistan live in the eastern region of Gorno-Badakshan. Are you working specifically with the Ismaelis?

Hakim N. Feerasta Well, there are an estimated 25m Ismaelis all over the world. Tajikistan is one of the countries where Ismaelis live. But the Aga Khan Development Network is a secular organisation; it does not work only for the Ismaeli community. We operate within an ethical framework that is inclusive, not exclusive. We do of course look at where we will go and work, because of the tradition of voluntarism within the Ismaeli community. Where we go we try to mobilise the community's resources to manage and implement programmes. That is a condition of participation. But once we have chosen an area, all our programmes are open to all who live there. There are currently an estimated 210,000 people in Gorno-Badakshan, but among those there are non-Ismaeli Muslims and non-Muslims. Now there were many Badakshanis and Ismaelis outside Badakshan who came to us and said 'look, we are also in need'. My response was: 'we are not working for Badakshanis or for Ismaelis, we are working in Badakshan'. We are not religious-based, and are not working solely for the benefit of the Ismaeli community.

KVB I heard there is a structural food deficit in Gorno-Badakshan. What are other major problem areas?

HNF Tajikistan was the poorest of the Soviet republics, and Gorno-Badakshan was Tajikistan's poorest region. In Soviet times, Tajikistan was economically dependent on resources from Moscow, and Gorno-Badakshan in turn was heavily dependent on subsidies from the capital, Dushanbe. Everything came from outside. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, that support disappeared. Then came the civil war. One of the first requirements was to help people survive, so we started a major humanitarian-assistance programme. First, we sent in an assessment mission, at the invitation of the government. We then started a dialogue with the government and with the people about the fact that we could provide humanitarian assistance, but that such an approach was not sustainable. And, more importantly, we stated our belief that there was capacity to become self-sustaining. So we started an agricultural-reform programme. This concentrated on three things: private management of land, improved inputs and technical advice. After considerable discussion, the *hokamath* (mayors) agreed to privatise most of the land, and we provided inputs and advice. From less than 15 per cent self-sufficiency, last year Gorno-Badakshan as a whole reached 90 per cent self-sufficiency in staple food production. I say as a whole because, given the mountainous terrain, some areas will suffer chronic food deficits. We need to look at how we can help those localities that are not 'self-sufficient' to generate the income to

become 'food secure'. We also started a micro-credit programme to address the problem of employment and income.

Our policy is to support any economic activity that creates employment and income. But because people did not have a tradition of working in a market economy, they were not familiar with business planning, management and all that. So before they get credit, they get training. One of the first loans we gave was for a private dental clinic. The government health-care system had collapsed, people needed dental care, and the dentist asked for a credit. We gave a small start-up loan, and he returned it within a few months. He then took out another loan to expand his business. Other loans have set up a public bathhouse, restaurants, a theatre, wood-working shops and all kinds of things. We also got involved in the education sector, and have been experimenting with teacher training, curriculum development and school management. This is all done in close dialogue with the community.

Our policy is to support any economic activity that creates employment and income.

KVB Different communities may decide different policies. But at the same time you need a common policy framework. Does this cause tensions?

HNF The Soviet health-care system was curative and hospital-based. Health care was also provided for free. There was much unnecessary use of hospitals and a whole list of drugs that our experts thought were not required. So they sat down with health-department staff, looked at disease patterns and rationalised the drugs list. They also chose cheaper generic drugs rather than brand names. Then they provided training on the correct use of these drugs. Within that framework, we brought in the idea of a revolving fund, and our principles of community decisions, community management and cost-recovery. They then have to decide how they will spend their income. The communities established their own financing system, which differs from one place to another, but the principles of action are the same.

KVB You referred earlier to agricultural reform and land privatisation. This is typically something for national policy, yet many of the discussions seem to be taking place at local level. How does the central government look upon the fact that, in Gorno-Badakshan, privatisation is taking place, supported by an international organisation?

HNF We started agricultural reform around 1994. For the first two years it was a struggle. But then the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund came in, and started talking about reform and privatisation. Then the President himself visited Gorno-Badakshan. And if I remember rightly, it was in 1996 during a discussion in parliament about land reform, that he said: 'go and see what is happening in Gorno-Badakshan'. Early last year, a high-level government delegation went to Gorno-Badakshan to see how things had evolved there. So it has served as a model. But people have to realise it is not a magic solution. A lot of effort and thinking have gone into the programme. It is an organic evolution, it has to be internalised, it cannot simply be done by issuing a decree.

KVB How do you prepare your staff?

HNF First, when we recruit we look at personality and inclination. Then we send recruits to northern Pakistan to see the approach being followed there. We also brought very experienced people from Pakistan here. So it is through exposure, through training, through mentoring. But most of the staff are local. We have a Mountain Societies Development Programme, which is an NGO we created over here, to implement the agricultural-reform programme. It has a large staff, but there are only three or four expatriates.

In 1996, the government asked us to consider working in the Karategin Valley, which is an opposition stronghold. The government noticed that since we had started our programme, there had been no major incidents of violence in Gorno-Badakshan. This is because the people there realise that if there is conflict and violence, they will lose this programme. We told them clearly that peace and stability were preconditions for us to work there. And they realise what the programme brings in. So we went and talked to the people, the government and the opposition in the Karategin Valley, and explained our conditions for working there. We took some people from the valley to spend a week in Gorno-Badakshan, to learn about privatisation and community participation. It is always these two things: training and exposure.

KVB If tensions arise in an area where you are working, would your staff get involved in trying to mediate and defuse the situation?

HNF Where we feel that our intervention would be useful, of course we would offer that. Violence affects everybody, and one of the purposes of our programme is to underwrite peace and to ensure that there is no violence.

KVB We earlier discussed the fact that there are areas that will remain deficit food producers and therefore will have to obtain food from surplus areas. That presupposes a functioning market and

trade. Aid agencies typically focus on providing inputs, including credit and training, which is more under their control than is the market. How do you ensure that the market works to the benefit of your programmes and the people you help?

HNF Indeed, we provide inputs. But we are also facilitators. Our initial inputs to farmers were provided on a barter basis, because there was simply no money in Gorno–Badakshan. We provided in kind, and they returned it in kind, with a percentage. Then, as money began to come in, we switched to cash credit. We are finding that when there is demand and money, the market comes in. Farmers start buying from the market rather than from us. What we have to do is give information, for example the price of potatoes in various places, how many hectares of land have been planted and so on, so that farmers can start doing some planning. Second, infrastructure like marketplaces and roads has to be established, and so we get involved in infrastructure development. In northern Pakistan, for example, they produce excellent apricots, strawberries and cherries, which are very perishable. So we experimented with sorting and packaging,

and with marketing. We took people from there to Rawalpindi and Lahore and elsewhere where the markets are, and introduced them to the wholesalers. Now they do business without any involvement by us.

KVB You mentioned that voluntarism was part of the ethos of the organisation. Given the state of the economy and the very low purchasing power in Tajikistan, how can people here afford to do volunteer work?

HNF Over here it is indeed a different scenario. We involve volunteer staff in India, in Pakistan, and in east Africa. Often, we had to create health and education services. Here, there are these services and the staff. What we need to do is reform, retrain and 'right–size'. We have not had that critical need for volunteers, yet we still have a few. Even under difficult circumstances, people still contribute on a voluntary basis.

The Aga Khan Development Network's website is at <www.akdn.org>.

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Nancy Lubin, Keith Martin and Barnett Rubin, *Calming the Ferghana Valley: Development and Dialogue in the Heart of Central Asia* (New York: Century Foundation Press, 1999)

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General news sources include:

Central Asia Monitor, Box 6880, Fair Haven, Vermont, 05743, US

RFE/RL Newsline <www.rferl.org/newsline>

EurasiaNet <www.eurasianet.org>

Asia-Plus <www.internews.ras.ru/ASIA-PLUS>

HUMANITARIAN exchange

Global humanitarian assistance: trends and prospects

How – and why – has humanitarian aid changed in the past decade? **Nicola Reindorp** *looks at a recent report from Development Initiatives which offers some answers*
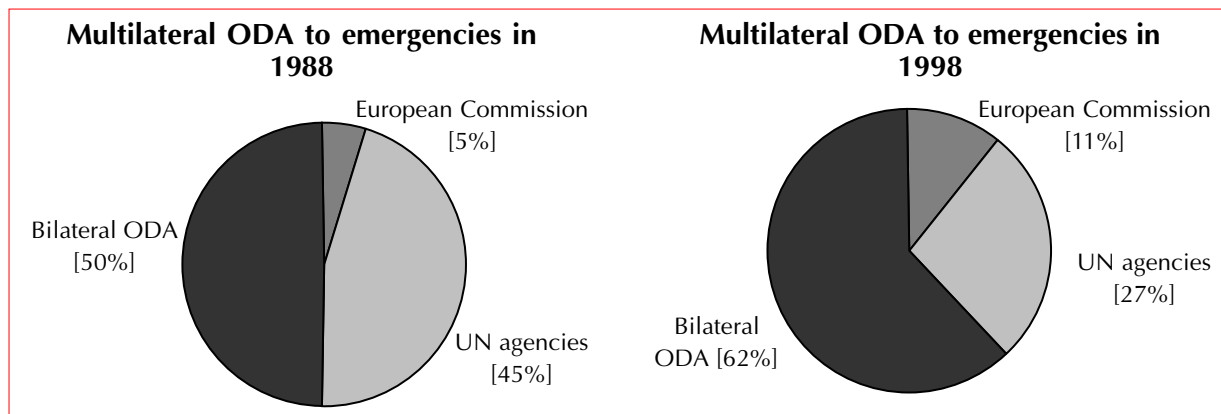
During the 1990s, average per-capita income in OECD countries increased from $21,000 to $28,000 per year. Of that, just over $5 a year was given to humanitarian assistance. As a share of GNP, OECD countries' humanitarian assistance fell by a third – from 0.03 per cent to 0.02 per cent. In 1988, around 45 per cent of humanitarian assistance was given in multilateral contributions to the UN; bilateral donors controlled half of all humanitarian assistance, and the European Union (EU) five per cent. A decade later, bilateral donors controlled 62 per cent, the EU 11 per cent and the UN 27 per cent. In the same year, one-fifth of all humanitarian assistance was spent on supporting refugees and asylum-seekers in donor countries. Around 10m people were being supported in countries with an average per-capita income of less than $8 per day.

These are just some of the startling figures in *Global Humanitarian Assistance 2000*, a report by Development Initiatives' Judith Randel and Tony German for the UN's Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). The report's aim is to assist understanding of the trends in financing and delivery of global humanitarian assistance. With chapters on flows and channels of relief, the politics of humanitarian assistance and its management, the report combines statistical data with qualitative assessments of the sector. It is also a useful reference guide, offering an overview of how a selection of major donors, among them ECHO and USAID, are governed and organised.

Qualitative and quantitative indicators

In terms of volume, the report shows how levels of humanitarian assistance have fluctuated over the last decade: in 1991, aid totalled $4.6bn; three years later, it peaked at $5.7bn and, by 1998, stood at $4.5bn. Within this overall picture, the report also notes a trend towards the bilateralisation of assistance, such that bilateral donors now control more than 60 per cent of global humanitarian assistance, while over the 1990s the UN's share fell from 45 per cent to 27 per cent. Although the volume of aid controlled by the UN increased in real terms by 32 per cent, the European Commission's quintupled, while the budgets of bilateral donors more than tripled, from under $1bn at the start of the decade to $3bn by its close. Earmarking too has increased, up by a third over the last three years.

In contrast to the squeeze on income being felt by UN agencies, NGOs were a favoured aid channel throughout the decade. By the late 1990s, most OECD countries were disbursing at least a quarter of their emergency assistance through NGOs. Some donors showed a marked increase in the volume of assistance taking this route: in the mid-1990s, 45 per cent of ECHO's budget was spent through NGOs; by 1998, this stood at over 62 per cent. Even staunchly multilateralist Sweden saw the percentage of its aid through NGOs grow, from 11 per cent in 1997 to 28 per cent in 1998. But there are exceptions: British spending through NGOs for emergency work declined by some 60 per cent, from £59m (around $92m) in 1995–96 to £24m (about $40m) in 1998–

Multilateral ODA to emergencies in 1988

European Commission [5%]

Bilateral ODA [50%]

UN agencies [45%]

Multilateral ODA to emergencies in 1998

European Commission [11%]

UN agencies [27%]

Bilateral ODA [62%]

Source: OECD DAC Statistics

99. In the US, the picture is complicated by the distinction between NGOs, which are categorised as international not-for-profit entities, and Private Voluntary Organisations (PVOs), which are loosely defined as American organisations. On average, 75 per cent of US aid allocations went to NGOs and PVOs in the 1990s, but in 1996–97 NGOs received only 13 per cent of the spend, PVOs 58 per cent.

Looking at the policy and politics behind this, Randel and German note the push from donors for more integrated approaches, and the greater demands being made on humanitarians and humanitarian budgets. The authors also express concern about the exclusion of many vulnerable countries from long-term development assistance as a consequence of the results-driven policies exemplified in a focus on DAC targets and a trend towards favouring 'good-policy' countries. The report presents evidence of increased targeting and *dirigisme* among official donors. This manifests itself in the growing demand for logical framework analyses, results-based management and other targeting measures. It is also present in donors' greater proximity to, and oversight of, humanitarian operations.

The report also tracks changes in contractual regimes and shifting strategic relationships between donors and recipients. Examples cited include the UK's partnerships with major multilateral institutions such as UNHCR, the WFP and the ICRC, ECHO's Framework Partnership Agreement and discussions around an 'umbrella agreement' between the UN and ECHO. As a counterpoint to their analysis of increased donor *dirigisme* and scrutiny, German and Randel suggest that, where these relationships are characterised by more transparent fund-management systems based on forward planning, such strategic relationships moderate bilateral control over funding.

Measuring humanitarian need

At the heart of this report lies a deeper question to do with measuring humanitarian needs. If one of the uses of the data presented by Randel and German is to assess the extent to which the needs of people suffering on account of violent conflict or disaster are met, the report can do little but present available estimations about displacement and those affected by calamity. Establishing what constitutes humanitarian need, and measuring it, are crucial tasks if we are to assess the effectiveness of global humanitarian action.

That said, this remains an indispensable data reference, and a compelling analysis that attempts to make sense of the trends in humanitarian policy and practice. As the report itself acknowledges, gaps remain, not least the extent of assistance provided by affected communities and countries themselves. Nonetheless, achieving such clarity and thoroughness from opaque, dispersed and partial data is no mean feat. The report's introduction states that this is the first of the IASC's intended series of targeted studies on humanitarian aid flows. The future of this series will be one to watch. There is more to know if the world is to understand to what extent the rights to assistance and protection of people affected by disaster and conflict are being met.

Nicola Reindorp is a Research Fellow in the Humanitarian Policy Group of the ODI.

A critical view of Spanish humanitarian aid

*Spanish humanitarian aid is relatively new, relatively modest and relatively limited in its aims. Here, **Karlos Pérez de Armiño** and **Francisco Rey** cast a critical eye over recent developments, and plot future trends*

Although still a relatively recent phenomenon, and still relatively small in volume, Spanish humanitarian aid has gained an unprecedented degree of media impact and political weight. In the wake of Hurricane Mitch in 1998, donations to NGOs reached over $180m as Spaniards responded to their close historical and cultural ties with Central America. This, combined with the response to the Kosovo crisis of 1999, has led the government to

pay much closer attention to humanitarian assistance, and to strengthen its aid programmes. At the same time, however, aid has become a much more visible instrument of Spanish foreign policy, and its politicisation has increased. During the Kosovo crisis, for instance, the government used humanitarian rhetoric to support its involvement, and the dividing-line between the military and humanitarian aspects of the crisis was blurred.

HUMANITARIAN exchange

Official Spanish humanitarian assistance, 1991–1998 (US$m)

Year	US$m
1991	8.8
1992	6
1993	17
1994	14
1995	44
1996	26
1997	22
1998	31

Source: Development Assistance Committee
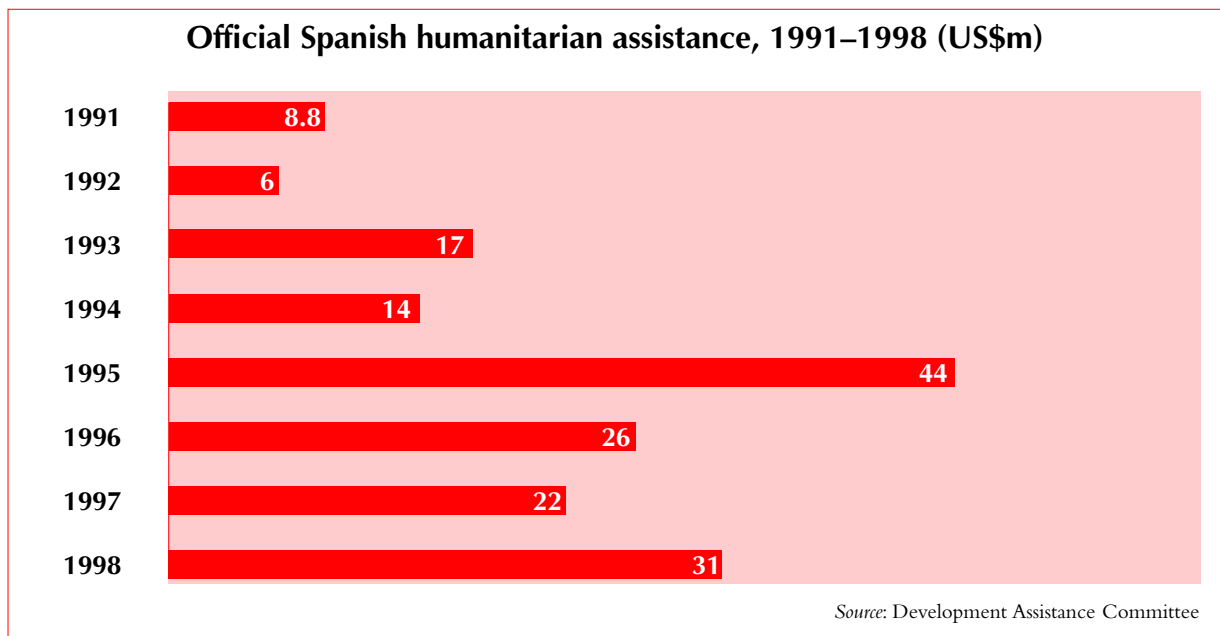
The beginnings of Spanish official humanitarian aid

Official government development aid (ODA), including humanitarian assistance, began in the 1980s. Since 1988, coordination has been in the hands of the Spanish International Cooperation Agency (AECI) within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (some aid instruments like soft credits are under the control of the Ministry of Economics). The Law of International Development Cooperation, passed in July 1998, established a solid basis for development assistance in general, including humanitarian aid. Plans are afoot to designate priority areas, and reform of the overseas aid structure, include the criteria for, and strategies around, humanitarian aid is under way.

Compared with other forms of aid, government funding for humanitarian assistance has been relatively small, and it has not figured greatly in government discussions about the overall design of development cooperation. The level of funding for humanitarian aid is among the smallest of the Development Aid Committee (DAC) members of the OECD. On average, the proportion of total overseas aid going on humanitarian assistance stands at two per cent, compared with a DAC average of seven per cent.

Spanish development assistance has traditionally consisted of credits tied to commercial interests, implying that aid without any type of financial return, like humanitarian assistance, was not a priority. More-over, many of the crises and complex emergencies of the 1980s and 1990s took place in areas deemed of marginal importance to Spanish foreign-policy interests. Only in the case of the Yugoslav crises did Spain demonstrate some capacity for a humanitarian response, combined with an increasing presence in UN military forces. Nevertheless, contributions to multilateral agencies like UNHCR or the WFP are limited; in 1999, Spain's voluntary contribution to UNHCR was $3.15m, making it the sixteenth-largest donor, and to the WFP $1.68m, the nineteenth-largest contribution. In comparison, the US, the largest contributor to the WFP and UNHCR, gave $452m and $254m respectively.

There are also institutional weaknesses. The Humanitarian Aid Unit has little influence within the AECI, and few experienced and well-trained personnel. Its management procedures are slow and inflexible, and it does not have its own logistics capacities. Instead, it relies on those of the military, or of NGOs. Coordination between the AECI and other ministries, as well as between the AECI and NGOs, is insufficient.

Governmental humanitarian aid does not have a coherent strategy, clear objectives or criteria or well-defined policies. In the absence of stable, long-term programmes, assistance tends to be reactive, and highly susceptible to pressure from the media, and from politicians. The focus is on short-term crisis response: sending emergency goods and medical assistance, and rescuing victims. Tasks like conflict prevention and mediation, peace-building and strengthening local capacities in target countries, or efforts to link emergency assistance with long-term development or rehabilitation, do not figure. The experiences in this field of other donor countries like the UK and Sweden have not been incorporated into Spanish aid. The role of humanitarian aid *vis-à-vis* other aid instruments is not clear. Spain plays only a limited role in international fora like the DAC or the European Union. (Paradoxically, the Spanish government has approved a study of the costs of Spanish military participation in peace operations to assess whether they were accounted for as part of ODA; this is expressly prohibited by the DAC.)

Other actors: NGOs and sub-state bodies

The level of humanitarian aid given by Spanish NGOs increased markedly during the 1990s.

According to the coordinating body Coordinadora de ONG para el desarrollo, in 1995 funding for NGOs stood at $180m, of which $28m was humanitarian aid. By 1998, this figure had more than doubled, to $400m, with $58.5m in humanitarian assistance. New organisations appeared, international NGOs established themselves in Spain, and NGOs that had focused on development began to work towards humanitarian aims. These developments were due in part to new funding opportunities, as well as increased donations and support from the EU through ECHO. In 1998, Spanish NGOs received more than $30m from ECHO, the fourth-highest national total after France, Italy and the UK. Public donations in the wake of Hurricane Mitch were 2.5 times higher than the funds assigned to the crisis by the AECI.

One particular feature of Spanish cooperation is its decentralised character, through the country's autonomous communities, provinces and local governments. Between 1995 and 1998, these entities accounted for 40 per cent of all Spanish humanitarian aid, outstripping the central government's contribution. Decentralised assistance has advantages in that there are no payback donations or credits, funds are channelled through NGOs rather than the central bureaucracy and fewer commercial or foreign-policy strings are attached. This aid tends to go to areas or groups not targeted by central assistance, like refugees in Algeria, the Kurds or Iraq. On the downside, this form of aid lacks a strategic vision, and there are coordination problems due to the differing priorities of each region, and for historical and political reasons.

Despite growing numbers and increased funding, Spanish NGOs remain relatively weak compared with those of other European countries. Many rely on government funding and crisis-specific private donations. Generally, levels of training tend to be lower than in other European countries, and knowledge of debates and initiatives in the humanitarian field – the Do No Harm debate or Sphere, for example – is not widespread. Thus, some NGOs have a relatively limited concept of humanitarian action, focusing on supportive, reactive and short-term responses. In some development NGOs, as well as the Coordinadora de ONG para el desarrollo, humanitarian assistance is viewed critically.

The military

Spanish forces have taken part in UN peacekeeping operations since the 1980s, and the Spanish military has become an important participant in emergency response. In 1998, in the country's first large-scale emergency operation, 1,000 soldiers, 14 aircraft and three ships were mobilised in response to Hurricane Mitch. In 1999, Spanish troops were involved in building refugee camps and delivering relief goods to Kosovo, and in 2000 Spanish forces transported aid and set up a hospital in flood-hit Mozambique.

This growing military involvement is in part the result of external factors, among them NATO's new security doctrine and the expansion of the Western European Union's responsibilities to include military-humanitarian missions. But there are also domestic political influences: the AECI's lack of logistics capacity, the political willingness to increase Spain's international military presence and the need to improve the military's post-Franco image at home. Given the abolition of conscription, the military needs to show itself as an attractive professional option.

The militarisation of humanitarian assistance has met with the objections of several Spanish NGOs, and wide sections of the Spanish public; NGOs refused the government's request to attend a parade marking Armed Forces Day in Barcelona in May 2000, for example. Moreover, military participation in humanitarian operations is inefficient and very expensive: a refugee camp built by Spanish troops at Hammallaj in Albania, for instance, cost over $16,000 for each of the 2,250 refugees housed, and remained open for only two months.

Conclusion

Governmental humanitarian aid is relatively small, and is becoming increasingly politicised. Spanish humanitarian NGOs have increased their capacity thanks to financing from ECHO, from sub-state institutions and from the Spanish public. But in both cases, there is a lack of technical ability and conceptual thinking, making it difficult to frame strategies and criteria for humanitarian assistance. In this area, education would help, and university courses on development and humanitarian action, together with growing participation in international fora, are raising standards and awareness. After years of isolation, Spain today has an institutional, political and administrative framework capable of supporting a more committed aid policy. There is a strong consensus in favour of increasing Spanish aid and, for the first time, Spain has the opportunity to be an important player in the development and humanitarian fields. Nevertheless, there is a risk of confusion between humanitarian purposes and political and security ones. There is thus a clear need to clarify the role of Spanish aid in an increasingly complex world.

Karlos Pérez de Armiño is International Relations Associate Professor at the University of the Basque Country, and Research Fellow at the Institute of Development and International Cooperation Studies in Bilbao.

Francisco Rey is a Researcher at the Peace Research Centre (CIP) in Madrid and Fellow of the Institute on Conflicts and Humanitarian Action (ICAH). He works for the Spanish Red Cross.

For more on Spanish humanitarian aid, see the website of the Spanish International Cooperation Agency at <www.aeci.es>.

Preparing for peace and development: the proposed Strategic Recovery Facility

Shepard Forman *and* **Stewart Patrick** *make the case for a new mechanism to harness and coordinate donor support to countries recovering from conflict*

During the 1990s, the international donor community pledged more than a hundred billion dollars' worth of aid to some three-dozen countries recovering from conflict. These financial and material resources were intended to persuade warring parties to resolve conflicts peacefully, and to lay the foundations for a sustainable transition to economic growth and participatory government. There have been notable achievements – in Mozambique, Namibia, El Salvador and Guatemala, for example – but these are the exception, rather than the rule. Somalia, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Bosnia, Kosovo and East Timor starkly demonstrate the costs and weaknesses of current arrangements. Often, aid promised has not been committed, aid committed has not been delivered, and aid delivered has arrived too late and been tailored to donor interests, rather than local needs. Moreover, the planning and implementation of reconstruction aid have frequently suffered from inadequate preparation, poor coordination and inconsistent conditionality. A new mechanism must be put in place to ensure a timely and effective response to the needs of societies recovering from conflict.

The dimensions of the challenge

Donors are still struggling to adjust humanitarian and development capacities to meet the transitional needs of societies emerging from war. Resources have been restricted by budgetary retrenchment and growing disillusionment about foreign aid in donor countries, while much of the aid pledged by the international community arrives only after considerable delays. In the case of Cambodia, for example, of the $880m pledged at the June 1992 Conference on Rehabilitation and Reconstruction, only $200m had been disbursed by September 1993, and only $460m by the end of 1995.

Conventional explanations for unfulfilled pledges or delayed aid delivery have tended to be one-sided, disproportionately reflecting either donor or recipient perspectives. In fact, both sides share responsibility for shortcomings in the design, delivery and implementation of aid. On the 'demand' side, states recovering from conflict often lack the capacity to absorb the considerable sums involved, and do not possess the administrative structures required to design and implement comprehensive recovery plans. Insufficient human resources, immature political institutions, under-developed legal frameworks, limited transparency and persistent (or resurgent) internal disputes undermine good governance and encourage corruption. Recipients often fail to meet conditions established by the World Bank, the IMF, UN agencies or OECD donors.

On the 'supply' side, the generous pledges announced at multilateral conferences may in reality consist of little more than previously-committed funds repackaged for political purposes. Rather than responding to objective recovery needs, donor governments at times design aid packages to reflect their own political interests, or those of their national service providers. Even when funds are mobilised, poor coordination among donors – and with recipient governments and NGOs – may result in duplicated or contradictory efforts, poorly-allocated resources and inappropriate projects. Delays may be exacerbated by lengthy bureaucratic formalities, protracted legislative reviews and cumbersome procurement procedures. In some instances, multilateral peace-building initiatives have collided with structural-adjustment programmes instigated by international financial institutions.

External support for conflict recovery remains a voluntary and essentially ad hoc *enterprise.*

Although donors have taken tentative steps to formulate common principles and best practices, external support for conflict recovery remains a voluntary and essentially *ad hoc* enterprise. Bilateral donors, UN agencies and international financial institutions are selective in their involvement in particular countries, reinvent structures of coordination from case to case and often disagree on divisions of labour and burden-sharing. Bilateral donors tend to discriminate between crisis countries, with their level of engagement reflecting a combination of humanitarian, economic, diplomatic, strategic and domestic political interests.

Bilateral and multilateral donors face a number of challenges if they are to improve the coordination and impact of recovery assistance. They need to establish a shared conceptual framework and integrated approach to the early stages of conflict

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recovery, including a joint needs assessment. They need to involve key local actors in programme planning and implementation, and ensure a rapid release of adequate funding for programmes that will seed a lasting peace. Finally, the donor community must introduce greater accountability and transparency into aid delivery and implementation. A standardised system for reporting and monitoring pledges, commitments and disbursements, as well as sharper analytical tools to assess the *impact* of aid, would strengthen confidence in international assistance.

The Strategic Recovery Facility

Societies emerging from conflict face a serious gap in essential programme support as emergency relief begins to taper off, and longer-term reconstruction aid remains in the planning stage. This is a crucial period in which the bases for sustainable peace and development need to be established. To do this requires a coherent, shared strategy which involves local and international actors, includes rapid evaluation of local conditions and summons the resources to initiate immediate peace-building activities. But assessment missions tend to focus on enumerating infrastructure and population needs, ignoring the core political and social conditions that provoke crises and determine the possibility of recovery and sustainability.

To address this problem and ensure that the international community is *prepared* to facilitate a timely and effective response, the Center on International Cooperation at New York University has recommended the creation of a Strategic Recovery Facility (SRF). The proposed facility would bring key local and international actors together to jump-start the recovery process, and ensure that resources are available to fund essential elements of peace-building in the critical first 12 to 18 months of conflict recovery, until longer-term development assistance and private direct investment come on line. It would have immediate access to the expertise needed to undertake rapid assessments and design programmes, and to the resources needed to implement them.

Structure

The SRF is not intended to be a new international agency. Rather, it is conceived as a facilitating mechanism, its membership comprised of core organisations of the UN system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, regional organisations, contributing bilateral agencies and key operating NGOs. These members would constitute the operating arm of the facility, whose primary mission would be to ensure a timely and effective field-based response. The idea is to bring together key funding and operating agencies around a common agenda and programme of action that will enhance the individual response capacities of each participating agency.

A Board of Directors selected from among senior officials of member organisations would govern the SRF. It could include individuals drawn from the private sector. Ideally, it would be co-chaired by the president of the World Bank and the secretary-general of the UN, to signal their commitment to effective collaboration in the field, and at headquarters. A small staff would manage the SRF, maintaining a 'watching brief' on conflicts and convening member organisations to organise a response when circumstances seemed right. It would also conduct joint training sessions for affiliates' operations staffs, and maintain rosters of experts in various fields known to be essential in post-conflict recovery.

Under the Board's guidance, the SRF would establish a shared conceptual framework and integrated approach to the early stages of conflict recovery, weigh risks and opportunities and prepare contingency plans for a range of responses to ongoing conflicts. SRF staff would identify 'trigger events', such as the return of refugees, that justify the beginning of recovery assistance, and would act as the convening authority to initiate action, upon the advice of the Facility's members. Such action would include organising joint needs assessments, working with other agencies to identify local partners and ensuring their full participation in all stages of the recovery process. On a case-by-case basis, the SRF would identify actions that require immediate support, focusing in particular on those that reinforce local capacity to sustain longer-term peace and development. Additional goals include facilitating the establishment of working public–private partnerships, strengthening mechanisms for collaboration and ensuring a common approach to evaluation, learning and training. Finally, the SRF would help to establish country-level funding mechanisms for on-going and longer-term activities, with a view to gradually phasing out as the country team and local capacity take over.

Financing

The SRF is designed to provide early investment in activities necessary to secure peace, and promote development. The investment required to achieve a sufficient level of preparedness for early intervention is small compared to the costs in opportunities lost – as well as prolonged

Sustainable peace and development requires a coherent, shared strategy which involves local and international actors, includes rapid evaluation of local conditions and summons the resources to initiate immediate peace-building activities.

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expenditures – that the international community will continue to bear in the absence of timely action. In order to operate effectively, the SRF will require modest core expenses, contingency funds for two to three field assessments per year, and a larger 'bridging' fund for essential activities that fall between the cracks of current relief and development programmes. Core funds would be required to cover staff costs, situation monitoring, needs assessment and planning meetings. These costs could be met by cash or in-kind contributions from members, as well as through grants from public and private donors. Contingency funds would be used to enable the participation of non-affiliate experts in needs assessments, and to facilitate the participation of local actors in programme planning and implementation. Bridging funds would be available for up to 18 months for immediate, short-term recovery needs that go beyond emergency relief and rehabilitation to address those critical peace-building requirements that currently go unattended during this period.

What next?

Three questions tend recur with regard to the SRF:

- why create another level of bureaucracy?;

- how will better coordination be assured in this instance where in all others it tends to fail?; and

- will donors deposit monies in yet another trust fund?

The answers are to some extent anticipated within the Facility's design structure. First, it is not intended to be another bureaucratic agency, but a small, 'lower-case' facilitating mechanism to ensure an effective field-based response. Second, pooled funding encourages coordination in ways that exhortation and best intentions cannot. Third, the 'bridging funds' for programme implementation will be pledged on a 'stand-by' basis, to be released to the field on receipt of an agreed plan of action.

Aside from these questions, and the concern that some regional and country desk officers have with regard to sharing authority and resources, the SRF proposal has enjoyed a generally positive response within UN agencies, and among key NGOs. It has received a pledge of $5m in matching support from the UK's Department for International Development. This is subject to several conditions, among them that the Facility be kept small, flexible and bureaucratically unburdened; that it takes advantage of the latest technology in pursuit of its goals; and that it enjoys broad support. The proposal is currently under consideration by several other bilateral donors.

It is now time to move to the next stage in planning and implementation. With that in mind, the Center is organising a meeting of multilateral, regional, bilateral and non-governmental agencies to take the necessary next steps to make the SRF operational. At this meeting, we expect to further detail the design and functions of the SRF, and to choose one or two cases for initial action. We believe that the SRF holds considerable promise for resolving the vexed problem of how to respond in a timely fashion in crisis situations in order to build the bases for a durable peace and sustained development.

Shepard Forman is Director of the Center on International Cooperation (CIC), New York University.

Stewart Patrick is a Research Associate at the CIC. For more on the CIC, see <www.nyu.edu/pages/cic>.

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For a comprehensive evaluation of donor support for reconstruction, see Shepard Forman and Stewart Patrick (eds), *Good Intentions: Pledges of Aid for Post-Conflict Recovery* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000)

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The Brahimi report: politicising humanitarianism?

HPN staff *on what the Brahimi report means for humanitarian agencies*

As of January 2001, some 38,000 military and civilian personnel were deployed in 15 UN peacekeeping missions across the globe, from the Western Sahara to East Timor. Between July 2000 and June 2001, the UN will have spent around $3bn on peacekeeping. But to what effect? The world's largest peacekeeping operation – the 13,000-strong mission in Sierra Leone – has conspicuously failed to end the violence there; operations in Rwanda did nothing to prevent genocide, and peacekeepers in the Balkans found themselves powerless to defend so-called 'safe areas' against Serb attack. Even where operations have been deemed a success, in Cambodia for example, the threat of instability, renewed conflict and human-rights abuse is ever-present.

The acknowledged failure of peacekeeping to keep the peace gave rise to the *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations* (the so-called Brahimi report), released in September 2000. The document, prepared by a 10-strong panel chaired by Lakhdar Brahimi, a former Algerian foreign minister and one-time UN envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, bluntly analysed current weaknesses in the way the UN mounts and sustains operations. The UN overreaches, approving ambitious mandates while deploying inadequately-equipped and frequently poorly-trained forces in volatile situations. Its bureaucracy is cumbersome, with little coordination between relevant agencies. Decision-making is too slow, making timely responses to unfolding crises impossible. And – crucially – the political will does not exist to make peacekeeping forces more deployable, robust and effective. If the UN is the sum of its parts, its capacity to keep or create peace must depend on its members' commitment to achieving these objectives, often in places of only marginal strategic relevance to the major powers. Yet commitments made to peacekeeping forces in Congo, for example, have not been met.

In the short term, some conflicts, those around natural resources such as diamonds for instance, may indeed be immune to satisfactory resolution by outside military intervention. This is not to argue that conflicts in awkward or out of the way places can be ignored. But it does suggest that the traditional concept of peacekeeping – essentially keeping warring parties apart, as on the Golan Heights or in Cyprus – needs rethinking given the more fluid and fragmented conflicts to which peacekeepers are being sent.

There is no excuse for deploying missions with weak and confused mandates, inadequate numbers of troops and muddled thinking about aims and objectives. The Brahimi report was welcomed at the UN's Millennium Summit late last year as a timely analysis of the problems, and a useful prescription for change. Yet operations in both Sierra Leone and the Congo, for example, breach many of the principles it advanced. The long-term aim of the UN operation in Sierra Leone is unclear, and the capacity of the UN to make a sensible contribution to what is a hugely unstable situation in the Congo is questionable at best. Member states are incapable of producing the sometimes very large contingents that a proper operation requires, while the quality of cease-fires, truces, military disengagements and peace arrangements is often too poor to support peacekeeping.

Brahimi and humanitarianism

What does Brahimi mean for humanitarians? Better, perhaps, to ask what humanitarians meant for Brahimi. Although the Brahimi panel included a former head of USAID and a former president of the ICRC, there is little mention of specifically humanitarian issues beyond references to legal instruments. Yet peacekeeping does not take place in a vacuum: where there are peacekeepers, there will also be aid agencies; what peacekeepers do and how they do it can impinge on the activities of

UN peacekeeping operations (January 2001)

Serving military personnel	37,719
Contributing countries	89
International civilian personnel	3,638
Local civilian personnel	8,939
Fatalities since 1948	1,672
Estimated cost (July 2000–June 2001)	$2.6bn–$3bn
Outstanding contributions	$2.2bn (est.)

Source: United Nations, <www.un.org/peace/bnote010101.pdf>

these agencies, many of whom might have been working in a country long before the first UN troops arrive, and might remain there long after they pull out.

This raises a number of questions to do with the relationship between military forces and civil organisations in situations of conflict. Increasingly, governments and armed forces are using the word 'humanitarian' to define military action – see the US and British air strikes against targets in Iraq in February 2001, for example, or NATO's bombing of Serbia in 1999. Pressure too is growing for a closer relationship between armed forces and NGOs. The British army, for instance, is increasingly keen on being involved in areas of work traditionally the preserve of civilian agencies. The lines that traditionally divided military and political action from humanitarian action are becoming blurred.

> *There is no excuse for deploying missions with weak and confused mandates, inadequate numbers of troops and muddled thinking about aims and objectives.*

How should agencies respond to questions of civil–military coordination in the field? There are agencies which accept – even call for – military involvement, and others that categorically do not. In practical terms, agencies may need, or may be compelled to accept, military help in protecting refugees or themselves, or relocating camps. The military clearly has expertise that could be useful in disarmament and demobilisation programmes. This is particularly the case for a country like Britain, whose government has defined DDR as an important aspect of its peace-building agenda, and is commissioning extensive research on the subject.

The key question is to do with how Brahimi defines impartiality. For peace operations, it means 'adherence to the principles of the [UN] Charter: where one party to a peace agreement clearly and incontrovertibly is violating its terms, continued equal treatment of all parties … can in the best case result in ineffectiveness and in the worst may amount to complicity with evil'. Peacekeeping is, by definition, a *political* action. Peacekeepers are deployed on the basis of UN resolutions agreed by governments, and can be mandated to take explicitly political action against parties to a conflict – arresting war criminals in the Balkans, for instance. If their presence aims to enforce peace accords, recalcitrants can be coerced into behaving, and amenable parties rewarded for being agreeable.

For humanitarians, impartiality means something quite different: the delivery of assistance on the basis of need alone. In the context of a peacekeeping operation, where do agencies look for the 'humanitarian space' deemed essential if they are to carry out their work? There is a risk that too

close a relationship between the peacekeeping mission and the humanitarian operation implicates humanitarians in political action to which elements of the local population are opposed, thereby putting them at risk of retaliation. The nature of modern conflict can suggest a closer relationship between agencies and the military. Again, this is a sensitive issue of principle. In theory, at least, there are areas where some common ground could be found. But to do this successfully would mean the explicit recognition of the very different agendas of aid agencies and peacekeepers and their governments. By declining to take humanitarian concerns more fully and explicitly into account, Brahimi insulates peacekeeping from the wider context in which it operates, of which humanitarian agencies are an important part. Peacekeeping and humanitarian agendas necessarily differ, and it is important that these differences are kept clear.

The *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations* is available at <www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/docs/full_report.htm>. Details of all current and past peacekeeping operations can be found at <www.un.org/peace>.

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Managing and preventing conflict: the view from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

There are no 'magic bullets' when it comes to conflict prevention and management, argues **David Wiking***, but Sida's mainstreaming approach could offer a fruitful way forward*

It is important not to exaggerate the impact of humanitarian assistance and development cooperation on the fundamental conditions and attitudes related to conflict; see, for example, the cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iraq and Kosovo. But aid can sometimes play a significant and constructive role. Specifically, it can be used to promote dialogue and reconciliation; enhance security and protection, for example by disseminating concepts of international humanitarian law and human rights, through security-sector reform, or by monitoring the behaviour of armed groups; and it can help governments or, particularly in post-conflict situations, civil societies to address the root causes of conflict, for example by assisting a government to improve its capacity to deliver services, or by promoting democratisation and economic growth.

Sida's approach

Partly as a follow-up to its action programme for peace, democracy and human rights, in mid-1998 Sida submitted a strategy for conflict prevention and management to the Swedish government. In situations of open armed conflict, or when conflict is imminent, Sida seeks to encourage dialogue and to enhance security. Moreover, it also attempts to *mainstream* these processes, applying a 'conflict-prevention lens' to its programmes and strategies.

Encouraging dialogue and promoting security

In 1999 and 2000, Sida's support for initiatives aimed at encouraging dialogue and enhancing security exceeded SEK300m (about $30m) divided amongst more than 250 projects, most of which are implemented by NGOs.

In terms of promoting dialogue, Sida pays special attention to projects which seek to influence the culture of violence, and to research, education, seminars and mediation at local level. Promoting security includes structural interventions to give individuals and groups a greater degree of protection. These interventions are implemented through a 'preventive presence' – civil peace monitoring and observer functions; demilitarisation, disarmament and demobilisation; controls on weapons and armed groups; reform of the security sector; and reforming and reinforcing those social functions and institutions that promote security. Examples include support for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration in Rwanda, and 'track 2' initiatives in East Timor and Sri Lanka.

Sida also supports projects designed to increase knowledge and understanding of the causes of conflicts. This includes influencing public opinion; encouraging research and applied research; and educational projects. Sida also supports several conflict-transformation/peacebuilding NGOs – International Alert, Conciliation Resources, Saferworld, the American Friends Service Committee and the Life and Peace Institute – with core funding. We are seeking to make this relationship more of a partnership in which we are able to learn from each other, rather than the kind of relationship usual between a donor and an implementing organisation. Engaging in such a partnership is time-consuming, and Sida is therefore not considering increasing the number of organisations it supports in this way.

Promoting structural stability

Preventing conflict means addressing the structural factors that underpin it. As in situations of ongoing conflict, the impact of development cooperation should not be exaggerated. Nonetheless, it can have a role insofar as it seeks to address the 'root causes' of conflict.

In Sida's work, conflict prevention primarily comes into, or at least should come into, country analyses and strategies; in some cases, it is explicitly stated as a direct or indirect objective. Areas for cooperation are then deliberately chosen because of the expected conflict-prevention impact. However, it can sometimes be difficult to openly discuss the need for conflict prevention with partner countries.

Having worked with conflict management and conflict prevention for some years, Sida is now gathering lessons learned relevant to promoting dialogue and security. These include:

- Promoting peace is a dynamic process, and requires long-term commitment.
- It calls for flexibility, but within a broader strategic

plan in which subsidiary goals, analyses and tools need to be constantly revised.

- Ensuring gender equality is important if peace-building initiatives are to be sustainable (there is much that needs to be done in this area).
- Finally, work in this sector needs to be based on proper analysis and knowledge; conflict prevention in general, and conflict management in particular, can often be a time-consuming activity.

Like many other actors in this field, Sida can, of course, improve the way it works with project support. In order to allow more time for dialogue and follow-up, we need to consider how we structure our work, and what kind of guidance we can provide to our partners in order to promote a common understanding, or a common point of reference. One way would be to develop and issue guidelines together with organisations applying to Sida for funds in this field.

Mainstreaming conflict prevention

At Sida, mainstreaming means applying a 'conflict-prevention lens'; that is, looking at how projects and programmes influence, and are influenced by, conflicts. From a project perspective, the challenge is to assess how activities affect, and are affected by, conflict, and then avoiding feeding into conflict, and strengthening local capacities for peace. This approach is sometimes called Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA). For example, assistance in electrifying rural areas in a country or region at risk of or embroiled in conflict could be positive as it creates increased income and job opportunities, thereby reducing frustration and grievance. At the same time, there may be a risk that, if only one group benefits, tensions with other groups may rise.

Sida's guidelines for applying for funds for humanitarian assistance highlight the need for an awareness of the consequences – both intended and unintended – of humanitarian assistance. That does not mean compromising on humanitarian principles and the humanitarian imperative. The objective is rather to get partner organisations to search for alternatives or *options* when there are clear risks that a proposed project will worsen a humanitarian crisis, rather than

mitigate it. In particular, the Local Capacities for Peace Project (LCPP) offers a realistic framework for starting to think about the impact of aid on conflict, and Sida frequently recommends its use.

Sida has also tried to work with conflict analysis at the macro level. In cooperation with the universities of Gothenburg and Uppsala, three conflict analyses have been produced, covering Angola, the West Bank/Gaza and West Africa. As part of this cooperation, a form of 'help-desk' has been set up, which is intended to make the kind of knowledge held by researchers available to Sida's programme officers. The idea is to bridge the gap between theoretical and practical approaches to conflict prevention. Although exciting, it has proved more difficult than expected.

The story so far – and challenges ahead

Structural conflict-prevention and mainstreaming the 'conflict-prevention lens' are difficult and time-consuming. There is a lot still to learn; the field is still relatively new, and far from all development workers have accepted this approach. There is thus room for improvement. The challenge is not only finding new methodologies and means of analysing conflicts, but also changing the attitudes of actors involved in development issues. As attitudes change, improved coordination and cooperation, not least between donors, will hopefully follow.

David Wiking is Adviser, Conflict Management, in Sida's Division for Humanitarian Assistance <www.sida.se>.

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When donors plan for contingencies: an opportunity for early response to emerging crises

Since 1999, recurrent drought has devastated Ethiopia's agricultural and pastoral communities, while conflict with neighbouring Eritrea has left an estimated 350,000 Ethiopians displaced. In this context USAID's contingency planning, argues **Laura Hammond***, has been instrumental in allowing for a quick response, averting still-greater crisis*

When disaster strikes in Africa, with its media images of starving children or the war-wounded, the first question usually asked is why the humanitarian community did not see it coming. In truth, crises do not usually happen suddenly, and do not take aid agencies by surprise. Early-warning systems in place throughout Africa warn of climatic conditions that portend drought or flood, and field reports by government, NGO and UN agencies usually provide ample warning, allowing for assistance in time to prevent the situation from spiralling out of control. The biggest problem is that there is often a gap between early-warning and response mechanisms such that the warnings are never acted upon. Contingency planning can bridge this gap by preparing decision-makers well in advance of the actual emergency.

Contingency planning: famine in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has become synonymous with food shortages. Devastating famines in 1973–74 and 1984–85 received massive public attention. There were smaller-scale but still serious shortages in 1991 and 1994. Over the past four years, the main pastoral and the minor agricultural rains have failed. In 1999 and 2000, as people's coping strategies became exhausted, herds were devastated and food stocks depleted.

The Ethiopian government has attempted to meet food needs for the coming calendar year by issuing annual appeals for emergency assistance every December/January, with an update based on the performance of the early rains, which is issued in June/July. Typically, there is a gap of between three and four months between the time a donor pledges food and its arrival in Ethiopia. Most of Ethiopia's previous food shortages were caused by the failure of the long agricultural season in the highlands. For these emergencies, the timing of the government's appeal is appropriate, since even farmers who have had a poor harvest have produced enough food to support their households for the first few months of the year. By contrast, people affected by the emergency which began in early 1999 were pastoralists and farmers dependent upon the minor agricultural rains; they required food aid during the first quarter of the year. Waiting for the government's

Loading food for Somali region, Dire Dawa, May 2000

annual appeal before beginning to mobilise pledges would have meant that this aid would not have arrived until May or June, even if there had been no delays in transporting it. Continuous contingency planning and monitoring were thus necessary to ensure that pledges were made early enough to help those in greatest need.

Since late 1998, USAID-Ethiopia has been developing a series of contingency plans for drought response. These plans have served the following purposes:

- to propose strategic guidelines for the US government to make timely donations of both food and non-food assistance;
- to provide a country-wide analysis and possible scenarios of the impact of rains on production in both the agricultural and pastoral sectors;
- to identify the steps to be taken in the event of either improving or worsening conditions; and
- to use in briefing visits by senior officials, as well as field technicians.

Although it is not always possible to predict exactly what will happen six months or more in the future, the process of compiling these plans has helped to increase preparedness for, and awareness of, the nature of the risks confronting Ethiopia. Contingency planning has given the US government early indications of likely food needs, helping to avert a breakdown in the food-supply pipeline. In the final months of 2000, for example, donors were already working to identify resources that could be made available between January and

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March this year – the time they are most needed by those primarily affected by the most recent emergency. Once a pledge is confirmed in writing, it can be used as a promissory note to borrow from Ethiopia's Food Security Reserve (EFSR), which acts as a food bank. When at full capacity, the EFSR has a stock of approximately 400,000 metric tonnes of grain. By borrowing from the Reserve, food can be made available immediately, and when the pledged food arrives, it is used to 'reimburse' the EFSR for the loan withdrawn earlier. If there is a delay in delivering the pledge, the EFSR's stocks drop and its ability to lend food against additional pledges becomes limited. This occurred in late 1999–early 2000. Thus, the Reserve can buy only a few months' time in terms of making food available for early distribution.

In compiling its contingency plans, USAID has consulted agencies involved in early warning, including the USAID–sponsored Famine Early Warning System (FEWS), the Ethiopian government's National Meteorological Services Agency, the Regional Drought Monitoring Centre based in Nairobi, the World Food Programme's Vulnerability Assessment Mapping Unit and other UN agencies. Other donors have also been consulted about their understanding of the situation, as well as their funding intentions. USAID implementing partners are constantly asked about conditions on the ground, and programmes are monitored for their effectiveness and to identify ways of strengthening them. Each plan typically outlines projections of the impact that a positive or negative rainfall season would have on each major beneficiary group. The plan can then be referred to during the period when rains are expected so as to determine specific resource requirements.

A typical framework, taken from the March 2000 Contingency Plan, is shown below.

If rain has not begun by:		Impact of rain failure	Implications for food-aid needs
Current situation	15 March	Land preparation will be delayed in areas depending on **minor agricultural rains**; harvest will thus be late and production reduced	Food needs in areas dependent upon minor rains will be extended through July (assuming August harvest)
		Ploughing for maize and sorghum delayed in areas dependent on **main agricultural rains**	Possible shift to short-cycle, lower-yielding crops
		Pastoral areas continued deterioration: water and pasture increasingly scarce, livestock deaths, human disease	Food needs in southern pastoral areas extended
Worst-case scenario	31 March	Areas dependent on **minor agricultural rains**: total failure of crops	Food need in these areas (1.3m people) extended through June of next year
		Late/reduced land preparation for maize and sorghum harvest (due November/December) in **areas dependent on main agricultural rains**; reduced availability of hungry-season crops (green maize, etc) in August/September	Major potential reduction of 2001 food availability Rising pre-harvest food needs (August/September) in some areas
		Pastoral areas continued deterioration; south-west (Somali Region) rains also due by now	Food needs in south and south-west pastoral areas (1.7m people) extended potentially through October 2000 (assuming rains then)
Assessment & preparedness needed	30 April	Late planting in **areas dependent on main agricultural rains** and potential losses of maize and sorghum (47 per cent of annual grain production)	2001 food availability may be significantly reduced – depending on rain pattern from April onwards
	Scenarios for *April/May*	a) *some rain in April followed by dry May/June (as in 1999)* ➔ *replanting/loss of long-cycle crops* ➔ *reduced main harvest* b) *rain in April–June* ➔ *favourable for planting of long-cycle crops* ➔ *could still produce good main harvest if June–September rains are favourable*	
	End-May	Inter-agency re-assessment of minor agricultural season and projected food needs for rest of 2000	

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In 2000, the early rains failed for the third (and in some places the fourth) time. This resulted in severe food insecurity, and people migrated into the towns in search of waged labour and relief food. A massive emergency operation was launched to provide food, water and medical support to the affected populations. The US government was the largest donor, contributing over 600,000 tonnes of food by the end of 2000.

The contingency plans produced in November 1999 and March, June and August 2000 identified immediate actions to be taken in the areas of food and non-food support. They also provided information on the types of activities that were ongoing, and the implementing partners that could be called on for particular kinds of action.

It would be naïve to say that the US government was ready to respond purely as a result of its contingency plans. Several high-level delegations came to Ethiopia to assess the situation for themselves, and their visits attracted attention from the media. They also sparked immediate responses, as in March 2000 when the USAID Assistant Administrator ordered an airlift of supplementary food items to Gode Zone in Somali Region after seeing first-hand the seriousness of the situation there.

Effective responses still require that those in a position to make a difference actually respond to the warnings and requests for resources that they receive. Countries such as Ethiopia, where every year seems to bring a new disaster, have difficulty capturing the attention of those who decide on the donations. Donors feel that their assistance will not prevent famine from recurring – since most assistance is emergency relief and does not tackle the root causes of food insecurity – and thus that there is little point in committing large amounts of resources to a situation which shows little hope of correcting itself.

Still, the contingency plans have helped to synthesise information into a formula for action that decision-makers can easily digest and use. They were also shared widely with the UN, NGOs, other donors and the Ethiopian government in an attempt to consolidate strategies and identify needs that others besides the US government could address. Finally, the contingency-planning exercises have also been useful in guiding planning for recovery and development.

All recovery and rehabilitation activities proposed in the contingency plans are aimed at reducing vulnerability to future natural disasters by increasing the purchasing power of the most severely affected people, and carrying out works that address environmental and economic challenges to greater food security – the root causes of vulnerability.

Contingency planning: the Eritrea–Ethiopia conflict

The war between Ethiopia and Eritrea which began in 1998 resulted in the internal displacement of an estimated 350,000 Ethiopians from border areas, and nearly twice that number in Eritrea.

In September 2000, USAID carried out a different kind of contingency plan, one which concerned meeting the immediate and medium-term needs of conflict-affected areas and people in Ethiopia. Following the end of the two-year war, the way was opened for those who had been displaced from their homes to be returned. However, the proliferation of landmines and unexploded ordnance in areas close to the border, the destruction of houses and public buildings, the loss of personal property and the lack of economic opportunities as a result of the closed border all represented significant obstacles to return in many areas.

The contingency plan examined the possibilities of providing assistance to overcome these obstacles under four different scenarios:

- most likely situation: tense and fragile peace prevails;
- best-case scenario: quick resolution of the conflict and a return to friendly relations between the two countries;
- protracted stalemate; and
- worst case: resumption of hostilities.

The process of compiling the plan involved all sections of the USAID mission, as sectoral development offices were tasked with identifying resources that could be reprogrammed or redirected to meet the activities outlined under each scenario. This brought those who traditionally had not had an input into emergency programming into closer contact with immediate priorities in the programming areas, and also made relief planning more development-oriented. Since the plan was finalised, steps have been taken to implement recovery and rehabilitation measures in the affected areas.

Contingency plans have helped to highlight needs in remote areas where government capacity is limited, and to mobilise responses that might otherwise not have been forthcoming. Ultimately, contingency plans can only be as successful as those who commission them want them to be, and the work of one donor is seldom enough to avert a major crisis. For every plan that succeeds in mobilising support for emergency and recovery operations, many more end up on shelves, unread. However, if contingency planning is carried out seriously, and its results shared with all stakeholders, it can prove a valuable tool in identifying priorities and resources for collaborative action.

Anthropologist **Laura Hammond** has lived and worked in Ethiopia since 1993. In 2000 and 2001, she was contingency-planning consultant for USAID-Ethiopia.

A more proactive UN role in the security of NGO staff?

The deaths of UNHCR workers in West Timor and Guinea in September 2000 once again focused attention on the precarious security circumstances under which humanitarian relief work is often conducted. But, argues **Randolph Martin**, *efforts by the UN to improve the security of its field operations will do little to help NGOs*

The UN is taking significant steps to improve the security of its field operations. Secretary-General Kofi Annan's report – *Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel* – reviews the scope of the problem faced by the UN in the field, and the shortcomings of a strategy developed 20 years ago in very different circumstances.

The report sets out proposals to improve security, including appointing a Security Coordinator at Assistant-Secretary-General level; establishing a more reliable mechanism for funding Field Security Officers; and increased resources for the UN Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD), to enhance staff training, security assessments, counselling and stress management. These proposals are a step – if not a leap – in the right direction. However, beyond recognising that NGOs face the same challenging operating environment, the report makes no mention of the need to increase coordination and joint security efforts with the NGO community. This is a significant oversight not only for NGOs, but also for the security of UN field operations themselves.

The UN is increasingly dependent on the NGO community. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, as a case in point, relies heavily upon NGO 'implementing partners' – NGOs with a contractual relationship with a UN agency for implementing a specific project under UN funding – to achieve its mandate. In 1999, UNHCR budgeted nearly $300m through its implementing partners. Yet it has done little to clarify how it will work with these partners in ensuring security in the field beyond *ad hoc* arrangements. As a result, security management in each situation is so dramatically different that it is difficult to grasp the overall vision, leaving NGOs not knowing what to expect and plan for until it is too late.

Conversely, when UNHCR does choose to take a coordinating role in security, the results can be impressive. When it calls a security-coordination meeting for NGOs, they come. When it establishes a common communications network or frequency, NGOs participate. When UNHCR offers NGOs technical advice or training, they are generally keen to tap that expertise. These are roles that UNHCR is uniquely positioned to offer. Moreover, in most situations it is far better placed than most NGOs to approach national and regional authorities – or major donors – at the highest levels to advocate for humanitarian access and the security of aid workers.

The Memorandum of Understanding

The UN has attempted to reach a more formal security agreement with NGOs. In 1996, UNSECOORD – the UN office mandated to provide policy and technical support on security matters to the UN family – drafted a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in an effort to establish a framework for a security relationship between UN organisations and their NGO implementing partners. Under the terms of the MoU, the responsibilities of the UN include unspecified 'protection of international staff', the inclusion of 'relevant information' about international staff in the UN's security plan, keeping the NGO informed about security developments and measures being implemented by the UN and, 'to the extent possible', providing travel assistance in an emergency. 'Where possible', the UN also agrees to represent NGOs' security concerns to the host authorities.

In exchange, the MoU requires that signatory implementing partners 'fully follow the instructions of [the UN] regarding security matters', while at the same time assuming 'all risks and liabilities related to the security' of staff and dealing with 'all claims as may be brought against the United Nations arising from the extension under the Memorandum … to its international staff'. Surrendering authority in this way has been a central issue for NGOs – particularly in view of the hazy promises for protection that are given in return. The MoU goes on to require that NGOs 'ensure that the [UN] is at all times informed of the whereabouts and movements … of international staff'. The MoU also requires that the NGOs 'lend, when possible and to the extent feasible, on a reimbursable basis, travel assistance to [UN personnel]'.

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In short, the MoU provides for the exchange of security-related information and the evacuation of international staff in return for the NGO surrendering its authority on security matters to the UN. The MoU has raised as many issues as it attempts to address. What exactly is an 'implementing partner': does the MoU pertain to NGO staff funded by other donors, but working on UN-funded projects? Does the MoU extend to an implementing partner's staff working on complementary programmes not funded by the UN? Is the MoU in effect when NGOs are implementing projects in good faith during the often protracted periods when the UN is processing proposals and agreements and, in a strictly formal sense, there is no agreement between the NGO and the UN? It is not uncommon for these periods of contractual limbo to stretch for months. Do the provisions of the MoU relating to evacuation pertain to national staff which are brought into an area to implement a UN-funded project? What if an NGO disobeys UNHCR's security instructions – is the entire MoU revoked, or are the recalcitrant NGO staff simply omitted from the related portion of the security plan, such as evacuation?

Why is it unreasonable for the UN to expect that NGOs would want to 'fully follow the instruction of the [UN] regarding security matters'? Part of the answer must lie with the culture of independence under which most NGOs operate. However, there are other concerns. First, an NGO's response to a security environment should be primarily related to its global mandate and local mission. An NGO implementing agricultural-extension services, for instance, is likely to have a much lower risk tolerance than an NGO undertaking life-saving medical services. It is unrealistic to expect both of these organisations to respond to security situations in the same way.

Second, the UN's own response to security environments can be compromised by financial concerns unrelated to NGOs. If, for example, UNHCR's Resident Representative is unwilling to prioritise funding from the country budget, no Field Security Officer is appointed; according to Annan's report, only 60 of 80 high-risk posts have assigned security officers. There is no Field Security Officer in Uganda, for example, making UNHCR staff reluctant to visit sites in the insecure north. As a result, UNHCR personnel spent little more than a few days in the Achol Pii refugee camp in 2000. Nevertheless, UNHCR expects NGOs to carry out services in the camp on a daily basis. If NGOs were to follow UNHCR's lead on security, there would simply be no services. Funding is also involved in the determination of the UN's security phases, but not always as one might anticipate: according to a senior UNHCR official in Hargesa, UNHCR in Somaliland remained at phase three of alert long after conditions had improved simply because of

concerns over the impact that eliminating a phase-related security allowance would have on already-low staff morale.

It would clearly be unwise for NGOs to hand over security decisions to the UN, even in the best of circumstances. Yet UNSECOORD has been resolutely unwilling to alter the MoU, even though no NGO has signed it as a global agreement. (The International Organization for Migration, which is not generally considered an NGO and has a very different set of security concerns *vis-à-vis* the UN, is the only organisation that has signed globally.) In 14 cases, including Liberia, Sudan and Tajikistan, NGOs have signed at a country level. This suggests that the MoU is most appropriate in places where NGOs are unlikely to have the capacity to handle the logistics of evacuation, or the diplomatic connections needed to secure humanitarian access and the protection of aid workers. IRC, for example, is one of the signatories to the MoU in Sudan, where it is working with the UN in the government-held garrison towns of the south. Conditions are difficult: evacuation options are limited and communications highly restricted, while the Sudanese government – unofficially at least – views the humanitarian effort as aiding and abetting its enemies.

Moving forward

As a global document outlining the security relationship between the UN and NGOs, the MoU is deeply flawed. It demands that NGOs surrender authority over their own security affairs in exchange for unspecified protection and support for evacuation. At the same time, the MoU does not address the many security-coordination issues that are so important to NGOs.

First, the decision to appoint a Field Security Officer should be made solely on the basis of the security environment, not upon the fiscal concerns and conflicting priorities of the Resident Representative. Accordingly, these positions – costing in the region of $100,000 each – should be financed from a separate, centrally-managed fund. This is, in essence, among the Secretary-General's proposals.

Second, NGO security coordination should be a *formal* responsibility of UN Field Security Officers. Included here would be organising and facilitating routine security-coordination meetings; establishing a shared security-communications network; providing threat assessments; and exchanging pertinent security information. Participation in these activities would not be required, nor would they imply a liability to the UN. Nevertheless, they would be well attended, and valuable to NGOs and the UN alike.

Third, the UN should make a concerted effort to embrace the language and conceptual framework that NGOs have developed. UN organisations and

NGOs are increasingly accepting common 'best practices' in many sectors of programme operations. This is an excellent opportunity for the UN to recognise and embrace the substantial achievements of its NGO partners in the field of security.

Finally, while the UNSECOORD MoU should not be abandoned, it does need reworking to clarify its function within specific contexts. It should be invoked when evacuation options are limited, and where high-level representation and coordination on security is pivotal to ensuring humanitarian access. Portions of its text should be context specific, specifying the sites it covers and the roles that can be expected from the parties working in those sites. In these limited circumstances, such a tight security regimen should be offered to UN implementing partners; it might even be required. In short, for the MoU to be useful, it is imperative that UNSECOORD show some hitherto-undemonstrated flexibility in recrafting it on a more context-specific basis.

Problems shared

The UN should clarify, if not formalise, its unique and central role in enhancing security for *all* humanitarian aid workers. But criticism of the UN should not be taken to imply that there is no more that NGOs can do to address their own security concerns. Indeed, NGOs in general have a long way to go in recognising and addressing the security of their own personnel in the field. The hope that the UN can play a more active role in security coordination largely reflects the failure of NGOs to do so for themselves. Few NGOs have designated security officers at headquarters or in the field; few have adequate security-policy structures; few are adequately addressing security orientation and training; and few are adequately addressing the resource needs associated with enhancing field security. Fresh dialogue is needed between concerned NGOs and UN agencies on how we might better work together to create a more secure environment for our humanitarian missions. Clearly, we all have a long way to go.

Randolph Martin is Senior Director of Operations, International Rescue Committee, New York. A version of this article first appeared in *Forced Migration Review*, <www.fmreview.org/fmr099.htm>.

The International Rescue Committee
122 East 42nd Street, New York 10168-1289, US
Tel: + 1 (212) 551-3000
Fax: + 1 (212) 551-3180
E-mail: irc@theIRC.org
Website: <www.theIRC.org>

Resources

The full text of the Memorandum of Understanding is available from UNSECOORD in New York; fax: +1 (212) 963 4104

Kofi Annan's report, *Safety and Security of United Nations Personnel: Report of the Security-General* can be found on ReliefWeb at <www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/SG_Report_A_55_494.htm>. Other relevant documents on ReliefWeb include: Luis Enrique Eguren, 'Beyond Security Planning: Towards a Model of Security Management', July 2000, <www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/securitymanag.pdf> (see also Eguren, 'The Protection Gap: Policies and Strategies', *Humanitarian Exchange* 17, October 2000)

NGO efforts to address security concerns include:

- The InterAction NGO Field Cooperation Protocol <www.interaction.pair.com/disaster/protocol.html>. See also James Kunder, 'Evaluation of the NGO Field Cooperation Protocol', available on the HPN website at <www.odihpn.org/report.asp?ReportID=1073>

- VOICE's Humanitarian Safety and Protection Network (HSPN) at <www.hspn.org/hspn_home.asp>

- *The People in Aid Code of Best Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel*, Network Paper 20 (London: Relief and Rehabilitation Network, 1997)

See also:

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POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

Sanctions and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: assessing impacts and drawing lessons

A decade of sanctions against Serbia, part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, ended in January 2001. But, as **Richard Garfield** *argues, some of the unintended effects of these measures will be felt for years*

The last sanctions against Serbia, the main republic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), were lifted in January 2001 following elections which ended the government of Slobodan Milosevic. The measures – ranging from a visa ban to trade and arms embargoes – were established first to discourage warfare, then to bring compliance with the Dayton Peace Accords of 1995, and finally to oppose the actions of the Milosevic government in Kosovo. But they also hindered economic recovery, encouraged a burgeoning grey economy and black market and restricted access to essential humanitarian goods, including medicines and some energy supplies. Between 1993 and 1999, more than half of Serbia's population became poor, unemployed or displaced, or were made refugees. Beginning in December 1993, the World Food Programme (WFP) distributed food to 200,000–700,000 people a month, while the Red Cross provided food, shelter materials and clothes to 100,000 local and 200,000 displaced people. In all, humanitarian assistance to Serbia in the 1990s probably totalled between $5bn and $10bn. In per-capita terms, this level of assistance was probably unmatched in any other recent crisis.

The humanitarian impact of sanctions

The UN sanctions committee and other international organisations provided or managed humanitarian assistance. The World Health Organisation (WHO), the WFP and UNICEF did their own assessments of need, but there were no inter-agency assessments of assistance, the level of need or the effectiveness of humanitarian protection until the UN Office of the Co-ordinator for Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) began operations in 1999. Thus, although international conventions require the maintenance of human dignity and prohibit unnecessary suffering, no system was established to determine if, or how, these principles were being observed during the first seven years of sanctions.

Economists estimate that the impact of sanctions on the Serbian economy was less severe than the effects of the secession of four of the FRY's six republics, central-government mismanagement and the destruction inflicted by NATO bombing in 1999. Loopholes and inadequate enforcement of sanctions also mitigated their impact. Nonetheless, they were severe enough to retard economic recovery. The cost of fuel increased three-fold, crippling the energy sector and leading to frequent power cuts and fuel shortages, leaving many homes without heat. The regime politicised energy supplies by making less coal and oil available to communities that voted against the Milosevic government in 1996. In turn, the European Union (EU) supplied 34 opposition communities in its 'energy for democracy' programme. This confusion of political and humanitarian criteria obscured the human rights-related objectives of sanctions.

The exemption problem

In principle, humanitarian goods were exempt from the sanctions imposed on the FRY. In practice, however, such goods were limited in many ways. Financial sanctions interrupted or froze outside sources of support, including remittances from family members abroad, pension payments and funds for private voluntary agencies. Even international humanitarian organisations were affected. In 2000, for example, the ICRC and ECHO arranged to fund the local purchase of 4,000 tons of wheat for the WFP in Belgrade. Funds and approval went from Brussels via Geneva to a bank in Germany, where they were frozen. After a month's delay, the funds were rerouted via a bank in another country, and only reached Belgrade because that bank failed to institute sanction controls.

Restricted cultural and social contacts led to intellectual and scientific isolation. People were barred from international travel, denied scientific information, cut off from research funding, shunned by professional organisations and excluded from the international mail system. Many of the people most capable of responding to the country's humanitarian needs were thus discouraged from acting. The effects of this isolation may take more time to correct than the economic blows of the 1990s.

Adaptations

Faced with sanctions, people adapted. The gradual rise in importance of the private sector in all areas, including education and health, weakened the social fabric, encouraged disrespect for social norms and created inefficiencies and imbalances in the economy. Until the 1990s, the state provided cradle-to-grave social benefits, including a well-developed health-care system with few user fees. By the end of the

1990s, most medicines and medical procedures were purchased privately, leaving some IDPs, refugees and other vulnerable groups at a distinct disadvantage. Survival depended increasingly on political or family connections, charitable help from humanitarian organisations or black-marketeering. Drug use, domestic violence and the proportion of young people reporting psychological or emotional trauma rose.

The impact of external sanctions was magnified by the Milosevic government, which imposed its own internal measures to limit access to goods and increase profits for government-related importers. Thus, while essential drugs including insulin and basic antibiotics were in short supply, a smuggler's market meant that 'luxury' products like Viagra were widely available. The government's internal controls on access to, and the price of, goods – including humanitarian goods – were perhaps as important as the international limits imposed by sanctions. These restrictions allowed access to basic entitlements and opportunities to be abused, thus worsening economic and social discrimination. Rather then responding to the needs of vulnerable groups, sanctions thus contributed to vulnerability among women and pensioners, as well as people not well-connected politically, and those earning salaries in the formal sector of the economy.

There is insufficient awareness of the continuing consequences of sanctions, and of the need for the continued facilitation of trade to protect supplies of humanitarian goods.

The bureaucracy of sanctions

The UN sanctions committee authorised the delivery of humanitarian goods, providing a mechanism by which medicines and related products could be imported. The procedure for requesting an exemption was complex, confusing and time-consuming. The committee was quickly overwhelmed with the volume of requests, and lacked the expertise to assess them. Even requests from the ICRC and the WHO sometimes failed to elicit timely responses. Up to half of the funds available for medical imports could not be used because of the lack of timely approvals from the sanctions committee.

The WFP and UNICEF carried out important humanitarian assessments and provided services to needy groups. Other groups with mandates in cultural or economic development were far more limited in their activities. UNDP had only an observer mission in Serbia until 2000, and UNESCO and the World Bank never fielded missions. The WHO could only field a humanitarian-assistance mission as its constitution does not permit full technical offices in countries that are not members of the UN. This prevented assistance for the reform of health systems, which might have improved the appropriateness or efficiency of health programmes.

After sanctions

Even at their worst, problems with the sanctions committee paled in comparison to the unanticipated impact of the lifting of UN sanctions in 1996. It was widely assumed that this would mark a return to 'business as usual'. Instead, the result was often no business at all. Firms had withdrawn their representatives from the FRY during sanctions, and sold goods under the authority and legal protection of the UN. The sanctions committee used FRY funds frozen in international accounts to pay for many medical imports. Without these guarantees and supervision by the sanctions committee, firms in the FRY ran up bad debts and lost the confidence of sellers. With a smaller and unstable market after sanctions, continued instability in relations with the FRY, and on-again, off-again, sanctions among the states in the region, many firms believed it economically or politically too risky to sell their goods there. Ironically, the end of UN sanctions resulted in decreased access to imported medicines. There is insufficient awareness of the continuing consequences of sanctions, and of the need for the continued facilitation of trade to protect supplies of humanitarian goods.

Lessons for the future

While not part of the stated intentions of sanctions, cultural and intellectual isolation was one of their major impacts. There is confusion about sanctions rules and great potential for discrimination against people in a sanctioned country. Sanctioning bodies should make clear that such isolation is not among their goals, and should work to facilitate communications, including mail and Internet, if they are permitted under sanction rules.

Sanctions committees of the UN and other international organisations have a particularly important role to play. Such committees have in the past been set up to judge which goods should be allowed into a sanctioned country. They could instead be given a more activist charge, to assure a 'humanitarian corridor' – assisting the country to acquire approved goods. A sanctions committee should also help to ensure that permitted goods can be purchased, and should encourage such sales during and after the sanctions period. These committees could also monitor humanitarian conditions, and identify and facilitate responses to the needs of vulnerable groups.

The status of UN humanitarian organisations working in countries that are not currently UN members should be reviewed. The current arrangement of 'observer' missions, which are limited in providing scientific information and

technical assistance with potential humanitarian benefit, should be revised. This may require the creation of new norms for observer missions, so as to avoid contributing to intellectual and cultural isolation.

Monitoring the humanitarian impact of sanctions should begin as soon as they are under consideration, and should continue throughout the period of sanctions. It is a sobering thought that in Serbia well-trained professionals, using good data systems, believed that the major impact of sanctions was a rise in infant mortality. Not only was this not true, but infant mortality declined *more* in the FRY than in any other country in the region in the 1990s.

At the same time, a rise in mortality rates among adults went unnoticed. Impartial monitoring by international authorities throughout the period of sanctions can draw attention to substantive problems, help identify vulnerable groups and facilitate a more effective response to the difficulties of those in greatest need, both during sanctions and during the transition period after they end.

The FRY case shows that monitoring should not only focus on humanitarian conditions, but also on the effectiveness of sanctions exemptions.

Monitoring needs to be country-specific. The high level of obesity in Serbia, for example, renders traditional crisis measures of malnutrition insensitive to changes in living conditions. National-level monitoring should, wherever possible, be supplemented by local-level assessments. This could increase the capacity of local communities to raise funds, set priorities, identify groups and individuals at greatest need and engage in local capacity-building to speed recovery. Rather than just one-time snapshots of the situation, assessments should be carried out periodically, and should be multi-sectoral.

Richard Garfield is Clinical Professor at Columbia University, New York.

A detailed report on sanctions and humanitarian data for the FRY, from which this report is drawn, can be found at ReliefWeb, <www.reliefweb.int>.

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Can globalisation really work for the poor?: the UK's new White Paper on development

Three years after its first White Paper on Development, the British government published its second, *Eliminating World Poverty: Making Globalisation Work for the Poor*, in December last year.[1] The paper is nothing if not wide-ranging, covering issues as diverse as new technologies, the arms trade, peacekeeping, corruption and accountability and aid delivery. It commits the British government to a series of targets clustered around the International Development Targets set out in the first White Paper, and subsequently endorsed at the UN's Millennium Summit at the end of last year. Key elements include the Development Assistance Committee (DAC)'s targets of reducing by half the number of people in 'extreme poverty' by 2015; the provision of universal primary education everywhere by the same date; 'demonstrated progress' towards gender equality; significant reductions in maternal and infant mortality; and the implementation of 'national strategies for sustainable development in all countries' by 2005.

The British government's undertakings in the White Paper are as wide-ranging as the document's coverage. In particular, the government pledges to:

- 'work with others' to 'manage' globalisation so as to reduce poverty;
- promote equitable and sustainable economic growth;
- help developing countries build effective governments, reduce corruption, ensure respect for human rights, and reduce conflict;
- promote better health and education for poor people;
- work to strengthen the global financial system, enhance international cooperation on investment, competition and taxation, and encourage 'corporate social responsibility by national and transnational companies';
- support an 'open and rules-based international trading system', and continued reductions in trade barriers;
- tackle environmental degradation;
- make development assistance more effective, and speed up debt relief; and
- 'work with others' to build a 'stronger, more open and accountable international system'.

The UK's development assistance is also set to increase by 45 per cent by 2003–2004, to £3.6bn

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[1] For the UK government, a White Paper is a document setting out information or proposals on a particular issue. It is not a legislative document *per se.*

($5bn). This is equivalent to 0.33 per cent of gross national product, up from 0.26 per cent in 1997. This is still, however, some way short of the 0.7 per cent target set by the UN.

Underlying assumptions

The White Paper is, by its nature, a political document meant as much for domestic consumption as it is a statement of international development priorities. It is informed by two fundamental ideological positions. The first is a neo-liberal faith in the benefits of globalisation, free markets and trade deregulation. The risk is not, the paper tells us, that globalisation will disadvantage the majority in the developing world at the expense of a Western minority, but that the developing world will somehow be excluded from the gifts that globalisation has to bestow. This is, of course, debatable. Aside from a gnomic reference to the 'dark side' of globalisation – namely the proliferation of people-trafficking and child pornography – there is little attempt to answer some of the questions asked of globalisation at Seattle and elsewhere. This position rests on a restrictive definition of globalisation as meaning simply 'interconnectedness', rather than a more sophisticated analysis that takes account of the effects of, for example, fully-liberalised trade and unrestricted capital flows. To be sure, the effects of these changes in the global economy can be felt in the developed world, as jobs and capital relocate to more favourable jurisdictions. The difference, though, is that well-developed economies are generally robust enough to make up the shortfalls, either through growth in other areas or through short-term social provision. These responses are often unavailable to the developing world's poorest people.

The second, linked assumption is that globalisation can be managed to the benefit of the poor. Again, this is a question of definition. If globalisation simply means a more joined-up world, then managing it should indeed be possible by way of greater inter-governmental cooperation in the setting of rules. But if globalisation means a weakening of government authority and a gradual erosion of rules-based systems, then its management becomes distinctly more problematic. Globalisation however defined was not *per se* behind the collapse of the Thai economy in 1997, but the ease with which capital can move between countries contributed to the spread of the crisis. This may have been a failure of management, but it equally might have been the inevitable consequence of the way in which the system works. This question is not simply academic: it is at least arguable that there is a causal link between

the related collapse of the Indonesian economy and the humanitarian crisis in East Timor and continuing internal conflict. There are those further to the political left who would argue that what the developing world really needs is *more* regulation and protection, rather than attempts to open its markets and societies to Western goods, capital and culture.

The White Paper and humanitarianism

The White Paper has little directly to say to humanitarians, partly because of the rigid distinction it makes between 'development' issues and 'humanitarian' issues. The budget figures quoted above do not include humanitarian assistance, and the word 'humanitarian' crops up just five times in the paper's 108 pages, and even then primarily in the context either of violations of international humanitarian law, or to describe the military interventions in Kosovo and East Timor. Humanitarian assistance is mentioned just twice.

That said, a number of issues tackled by the paper have clear humanitarian implications. The main one is conflict. Here, however, the analysis is mechanistic: conflict is bad for development, and must disappear before development can happen. This is not, of course, strictly true in all conflicts at all times, nor does it make any connection between the economics of globalisation and the perpetuation, mitigation or resolution of conflict. The *Taliban*'s involvement in Afghanistan's drugs trade; the exploitation of timber resources in Cambodia or Liberia; or UNITA's diamond profits and the Angolan government's oil earnings are as much part of the 'dark side' of globalisation as prostitution. Civil wars can have economic benefits for the combatants, often mitigating against their resolution. If globalisation has made licit trade easier, then it is perhaps safe to assume that it has done the same for the illicit trades that fuel many of today's most brutal wars. Similarly, the White Paper talks extensively about the role the UN should play in conflict prevention, and backs the proposals set out in the Brahimi report (see the article on Brahimi in this issue). But again, there is no attempt to push this argument further;

declarations of support are not the same as wholehearted financial backing, or pledges to cajole the more unwilling members of the international community to honour their commitments to the organisation.

A recipe for fundamental change?

Two White Papers in the course of one government is an achievement in its own right, and demonstrates a clear commitment to development. The paper's scope is also impressive, as is the range of pledges the UK government has undertaken. But the White Paper is concerned with tweaking the fundamental elements on which the global system is based, rather than putting forward a radical agenda for change. The recognition that developing-country governments need a stronger voice in key multilateral fora is welcome, but this will not guarantee that they get a fairer deal. Welcome too is the White Paper's talk of enhancing the social accountability of transnational companies – just as much the engines of globalisation as the governments of their home countries. But the paper's rejection of regulation in favour of encouragement does not augur significant change. Finally, the absence of any detailed discussion of humanitarian assistance is a fundamental weakness in a document dealing with the effects of globalisation. There is little focus on the micro-dynamics of who wins and who loses as globalisation gathers pace, and how this is to be addressed. That there will be losers seems certain; countries and peoples will become increasingly marginalised as assistance flows to countries deemed 'acceptable' to donors. What happens to them in our increasingly 'globalised' world?

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Eliminating World Poverty: Making Globalisation Work for the Poor is available at <www.globalisation.gov.uk>. The UK's 1997 White Paper, *Eliminating World Poverty* is at <www.dfid.gov.uk/public/who/who_frame.html>

NGO Initiatives in Risk Reduction – now online

Outputs from the British Red Cross project on the work of NGOs in natural disaster mitigation and preparedness are now available online. They comprise:

1. An overview paper that draws together and summarises the research findings.
2. A series of short case studies for project planners, illustrating the range and nature of NGO work in this area, and highlighting key issues arising.
3. A research study of the mitigation/preparedness work of international relief and development NGOs based in the UK, and the factors affecting this.
4. Similar research studies of NGOs in Bangladesh, Nicaragua, the Philippines and Zimbabwe.

Visit the project's web page at <www.redcross.org.uk> – click on 'Our Work', then on 'International Activities', and finally on 'NGO Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness Project' (for the research reports and overview paper) or NGO Initiatives in Risk Reduction (for the short case studies). For more information e-mail <dmp@redcross.org.uk> or the research team leader, John Twigg (j.twigg@ucl.ac.uk).

Landmines: where next?

Rae McGrath *on why the campaign to ban landmines needs to rediscover its radical edge*

Baliet, a remote jungle town of mud huts in the Upper Nile region of southern Sudan, clings to the edge of the Sobat River. Approaching from the west, several hours after leaving the White Nile near the northern end of the Jonglei Canal, the first indication that the settlement exists are the dugout canoes pulled up on the bank. Before the civil war, the town could be reached by road, but that route has been overgrown for years and is believed, with justification, to be mined.

With a small team from the Sudan Campaign to Ban Landmines (SCBL) and Oxfam, I visited Baliet as part of an initiative to evaluate the scale of landmine problems in Sudan. During the days we spent in the town I was struck, not just by the plight of this war-damaged community, but by the minimal impact which the activities of the international landmines campaign and the Ottawa Convention have had on the desperate lives of people in such situations. It is, perhaps, fair to argue that, were it not for the increased international concern, no funding would have been available for our mission, but it would be hard to find any greater impact. The people of Baliet were unaware that the international community had pledged to eradicate landmines and, even had the ban on anti-personnel mines (APM) pre-dated the battles which made their land so dangerous and had the warring parties observed the convention's requirements, it would have changed little.

Baliet itself, surrounded by APM minefields, stands within an anti-tank minefield, a type of landmine prohibited under the terms of the Ottawa treaty. Considerations such as these are academic, regardless of whether the parties to the Sudan conflict stop using landmines; Baliet is already mined. There are surgical and prosthetic facilities capable of treating survivors of landmine incidents in Sudan; but it is unlikely that any victims in Baliet would survive evacuation by river, even in the unlikely event that a suitable craft could be found. Southern Sudan is ravaged by war which, despite the fact that Baliet

Landmine casualties in selected countries

Albania	**136** casualties recorded in June 1999–July 2000
Angola	**1,004** casualties officially recorded in mid-1998–2000
Bosnia-Herzegovina	**94** casualties in 1999
Burma	Estimated **1,500** casualties in 1999
Cambodia	**1,012** casualties recorded in 1999
Chechnya	Hundreds of victims reported in 1999 and 2000
Colombia	**63** victims identified in 1999, 35 in the first half of 2000
Croatia	**51** casualties reported in 1999
Djibouti	**69** casualties recorded between 1999 and early 2000
Eritrea	**504** casualties reported between 1994 and mid-1999
Ethiopia	**100** deaths reported, 1998–1999
India (Jammu & Kashmir)	**835** civilian casualties recorded in 1999
Kosovo	**492** casualties recorded, June 1999–May 2000
Laos	**102** casualties reported in 1999
Lebanon	**50** casualties in 1999, at least **35** by June 2000
Mozambique	**60** casualties recorded in 1999
Namibia	**89** casualties reported December 1999–mid-May 2000
Pakistan	**405** victims were identified in Bajaur area
The Philippines	**33** casualties reported in 2000
Senegal	**59** casualties registered in 1999
Sudan	**51** casualties in Chukudum (1999–May 2000)
Western Sahara	**42** casualties reported in November 1999–March 2000

Source: International Campaign to Ban Landmines, *Landmine Monitor Report 2000*, <www.icbl.org/lm/2000/report>

has seen no combat for some years, ensures that no international effort to clear the mines there will be undertaken in the foreseeable future. This is not as straight-forward as it may seem since a number of communities in areas of southern Sudan controlled by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) are benefiting from internationally-funded mine clearance initiatives. Baliet, in government-held territory, would not be considered for such action by any of the major international donors because they deem the Khartoum regime to be beyond the political and human-rights pale – a fact which the people of Baliet could hardly influence.

De-mining in Angola.

© Sean Sutton/MAG

I chose Baliet as an example, not because it is extraordinary, but because it represents the norm in southern Sudan, and in many other countries. While such communities are not symptomatic of the failure of the landmine campaign and the international response to landmines, they are a clear illustration of how far we are from reaching our goals. This does not mean, as critics have concluded, that we have failed. It is, however, cold comfort to accept that the international campaign has not resulted in a realistic scale of engineering or victim-support response in mine-affected countries.

The reasons are comparatively straightforward: insufficient funds have been committed, and responses are tied to the political agendas of the major donor governments. If the latter reason is perhaps an inevitable consequence of the over-lapping priorities of major donors in conflict areas, it is certainly not a situation that should be accepted. If civil society could influence, motivate and bully governments into embracing a fast-track treaty to ban APM, why stop there?

Donor funding for mine-action programmes, 1993–1999 (US$m)

1993	22.2
1994	37.7
1995	66.7
1996	99
1997	102.6
1998	158.2
1999	210.6

Source: *Landmine Monitor Report 2000*

When politicians and civil servants are challenged to respond to the charge that mine action is critically under-funded, they invariably reply by listing how much their respective governments *have* given, rather than explaining why *sufficient* funds have *not* been made available. This argument could be paraphrased thus: 'we have allocated a lot of money to mine action – surely a lot is enough'. In Kosovo, where there was a political incentive, 'a lot' may indeed be suff-icient. In most other mined countries, where the only incentive is human suffering, 'a lot' has proved to be inadequate. It cannot be reasonably refuted that other sectors of humanitarian and developmental response require equally urgent and necessary funding. That being the case, it is surprising that no government, among the many who have expressed dismay and concern about the impact of landmines, has adopted the available and just option – pledging funds from the military budget specifically to clear land-mines and unexploded ordnance, and to evacuate and treat mine victims.

How unreasonable is this option?

This option would find little support in defence ministries and military hierarchies. Governments could justifiably respond to this opposition by saying that 'a lot' in terms of military spending must be 'enough', in other words, choosing the brave option of placing the positive above the negative – favouring the priorities of life today over the projected costs of conflict tomorrow. This is not as revolutionary a proposal as it may seem. Even a cursory comparison of the costs of military equipment with the budgets currently allotted for humanitarian demining reveals that the military would lose little in real terms, while mine-action programmes would benefit dramatically. Nor would this be an unfair contribution by the many countries whose armed forces have benefited from 'cost-free' training in mine clearance in some of the world's worst-affected countries.

For these arguments even to be considered, political pressure must be brought to bear; civil society must again engage government in order to release the level of funding required to eradicate the landmines already in the ground. The landmines campaign is not doing enough in this regard. This may seem a surprising admission from an active member of the campaign, but I am not alone among campaigners in the belief that we must rediscover our radical

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edge and, once again, put landmines on the political agenda, to make governments' failure to respond cost votes. The hundreds of organisations who make up the international campaign need to become active again on the landmines issue, because without their outspoken commitment, the campaign is toothless, and the ideals to which we publicly aspired during the last decade of the twentieth century will prove to have been little more than rhetoric. The arguments expressed by some organisations that they can only be 'active' on a single issue, and that they have now 'moved on' from the landmines campaign, are not sustainable when almost none of the original objectives of the international campaign have been achieved.

When the landmines campaign accepted the Nobel Peace Prize, its members expressed the sentiment that the eradication of landmines was an opportunity to 'leave the world a better place' for future gen-erations. Eliminating mines is an achievable objective and an engineering possibility, but any neutral audit of our progress would conclude that we are failing, that we are throwing away a rare opportunity to prove ourselves capable of caring for humanity and our environment in a world dominated by the evidence of our capacity for destruction. If that happens, it will not be the sole responsibility of governments, arms manufacturers and combatants; the landmines campaign, and its member organ-isations, will share culpability on the grounds that, while we achieved a lot, we did not achieve enough.

Rae McGrath is a partner in Bridge Initiatives, a post-conflict response consultancy, and Technical Advisor to Landmine Action, the UK campaign against landmines. He can be contacted by e-mail at <raemcgrath@hotmail.com>, or by writing to Bridge Initiatives, Carlisle Enterprise Centre, James Street, Carlisle CA2 5BB, UK.

Resources

The full text of the Ottawa Treaty is available at <www.armscontrol.org>

Chris Horwood, *Humanitarian Mine Action: The First Decade of a New Sector*, Network Paper 32 (London: Humanitarian Practice Network, 2000)

Rae McGrath, *Landmines: Legacy of Conflict* (Oxford: Oxfam, 1994)

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Office of Humanitarian De-mining Programs, *Hidden Killers: The Global Landmine Crisis* (Washington DC: US State Department, 1998)

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Landmine Action <www.landmineaction.org>

Mines Action Canada <www.minesactioncanada.com>

International Campaign to Ban Landmines <www.icbl.org>

German Initiative to Ban Landmines <www.landmine.de>

Handicap International <www.handicap-international.org/presentation/icbl>

ICRC <www.icrc.org/eng/mines>

James Madison University Humanitarian De-mining Centre <www.hdic.jmu.edu>

Mines Advisory Group <www.mag.org.uk>

United Nations Landmine Resource Centre <www.un.org/Depts/Landmine>

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Humanitarian Practice Network
Formerly the Relief and Rehabilitation Network

The **Humanitarian Practice Network** (**HPN**) is the new name for the Relief and Rehabilitation Network (RRN). It was launched in 1994 in response to research that indicated substantial gaps between practitioners and policy makers in the humanitarian field, as well as serious weaknesses in the ability of the sector to learn and become more 'knowledge-based'.

Purpose

To stimulate critical analysis, advance the professional learning and development of those engaged in and around humanitarian action, and improve practice.

Objectives

To provide relevant and useable analysis and guidance for humanitarian practice, as well as summary information on relevant policy and institutional developments in the humanitarian sector.

Activities

- Publishing in three formats: Good Practice Reviews (one per year), Network Papers (four to six per year) and the HPN magazine (two per year). All materials are produced in English and French.

- Operating a resource website: this is one of the key reference sites for humanitarian actors.

- Collaborating with international 'partner' networks: this increases the reach of the HPN, and brings mutual benefit to the participating networks.

- Holding occasional seminars on topical issues: these bring together practitioners, policy makers and analysts.

HPN target audience

Individuals and organisations actively engaged in humanitarian action. Also those involved in the improvement of performance at international, national and local level – in particular mid-level operational managers, staff in policy departments, and trainers.

While a project and Network with its own identity, the HPN exists within the Humanitarian Policy Group at the Overseas Development Institute. This not only ensures extended networking and dissemination opportunities, but also positions the HPN in a wider 'centre of excellence' which enhances the impact of the HPN's work.

Funding