13

RRN
newsletter

Improving aid policy and practice in complex political emergencies

Codes of Conduct: Who Needs Them?

by Nick Leader, Research Fellow, Overseas Development Institute London, UK

Introduction

Codes of conduct have become quite a phenomenon in the humanitarian system in the past few years. This edition of the newsletter carries pieces on the Code of Conduct of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA), the Code of Conduct for Humanitarian Agencies in Sierra Leone, the Principles of Engagement for Humanitarian Assistance in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and the NGO Field Cooperation Protocol. Other codes in recent years include the Red Cross/NGO Code of Conduct (perhaps the 'mother of all codes' in the humanitarian system), the People in Aid Code in the UK, the Sphere Project Minimum Standards, the Joint Policy of Operation in Liberia (JPO), and the Ground Rules Agreement in south Sudan.

Superficially these codes share a common idea: they are public statements of principles or standards of performance to which a number of agencies voluntarily sign up and against which each agency states it is willing to be judged. The Humanitarian Charter of the Sphere Project expresses this philosophy thus: 'The Humanitarian Charter expresses agencies' commitment to these principles and to achieving the minimum standards'. Or, as the Ground Rules declares in its preamble, it 'seeks to define the minimum acceptable standards of conduct for the activities of OLS agencies and SRRA'.[1]

Origins

There are many origins to the current emergence of codes. The following three, however, are perhaps the most important:

1. The huge proliferation of humanitarian agencies working in conflict since the late 1980s. The original Red Cross/NGO Code of Conduct arose specifically from the concern of the established agencies in Sudan in the late 1980s – notably IFRC and Oxfam – that much of the work being done there was of low quality and that some kind of mechanism was needed to raise standards. The response to the

odi

Rwanda crisis and the subsequent Joint Evaluation reinforced understanding of the problem of over-proliferation of agencies and low standards.

2. Growing awareness of the problems of working in the midst of internal war and the growing feeling by many, both within and without the humanitarian system, that aid could be 'fuelling conflict'. Again the Goma camps were seminal in this respect.

3. The 'vacuum of regulation' which confronted the hugely increased numbers of NGOs working in the midst of conflict and often in areas where the state had collapsed. There was no regulatory or protective environment either for the agencies or, more importantly, the civilian population. Indeed the flagrant abuse of the rules of war by parties to a conflict was the greatest part of the problem.

In this context accountability became a watchword, both among critics of humanitarianism and its supporters.

Accountability and NGOs

Accountability is by no means a straightforward concept. To complicate matters, the 'accountability trail' for NGOs is bewildering. Agencies are accountable to the people they are intending to serve. They are also accountable to their donors. They are also accountable to their own organisation's charter or mandate and legislation governing charitable organisations, both in their home country and the country of operation. This is complicated further in that they are also, in a sense, accountable to international humanitarian law. This is a grey but important area. Agencies are not signatories to the Geneva Conventions but there are parts of the conventions that cover humanitarian assistance, notably that it should be impartial and neutral. Authorities are indeed entitled to bar the passage of aid if they think it is not neutral. It could be argued that agencies are thus accountable to both principles of humanitarian action, such as neutrality, and to the governing authorities of an area to ensure the aid they provide is neutral and impartial.

Thus what agencies are accountable to is not an easy concept to define and there are potentially significant 'conflicts of accountability' for an agency

Accountability is by no means a straightforward concept. To complicate matters, the 'accountability trail' for NGOs is bewildering.

between the various 'objects of accountability'. This is a source of ongoing confusion. One of the favourite mechanisms for enhancing accountability has been codes, and this confusion has affected them too.

Typologies of Codes

Since the original Red Cross/NGO Code of Conduct, codes have mushroomed. It is useful to contrast them across various axes. One contrast is country specific codes, such as the Ground Rules, the JPO, and the Sierra Leone code, versus universal codes such as Sphere or the Red Cross/NGO code. The country specific codes are generally concerned with dealing with the specific problems of a particular operation; for example, the Sierra Leone code deals with the problem of armed convoys. Often they go through a process of inter-agency development during which only a few agencies (interestingly often the same ones) take the lead. They usually assume that agencies need to confront ethical problems and dilemmas with a united front as a way of avoiding manipulation. All draw heavily on the Red Cross/ NGO code and all, like the Red Cross/NGO code, have little in terms of detailed protocols or guidelines as to, for example, what neutrality means in a specific context.

A second distinction is between general statements of principle and more detailed statements of performance standards. The best examples of detailed statements is the Sphere Project and the People in Aid code, both of which commit agencies to detailed standards of performance in a number of technical areas. Conversely, the Red Cross/NGO code is more a statement of general principle. And while the country specific codes may be quite detailed about a particular problem – for instance, armed escorts in Sierra Leone – they say little about anything else. An exception is the Ground Rules which commits Operation Lifeline Sudan and the relief wings of the factions to a detailed list of mutual responsibilities. How, or indeed if, general principles such as neutrality can be converted into practice in a specific context is an important problem. The Sphere Project, for instance, despite its technical detail, says very little about neutrality.

Another very important distinction could be described as 'internal' versus 'external'. A number of the country specific codes have an explicit objective to influence the behaviour not only of

humanitarian agencies but also the warring parties. The Ground Rules were signed by the SPLA and were intended to promote the SPLA's respect for international humanitarian and human rights law. The Sierra Leone code workshop had as one of its two objectives 'To ensure that the parties to the conflict recognise and observe the impartiality and the inviolability of humanitarian principles.' The DRC code likewise is addressed to the warring parties and has been signed by them. This is probably the most difficult area for codes and here they move away from self-regulation into the area of conditionality: both the JPO and the Ground Rules have elements of conditionality in them, though fall short of 'full' humanitarian conditionality. Research by ODI shows that this is the least effective area for codes. In short, humanitarian codes cannot fill the vacuum of regulation or impose regulation on warring parties; that can only be done by the great powers, if at all. (An upcoming RRN Network Paper will document this research in more detail.)

Although codes are voluntary, there is often an element of compulsion to opt-in.

Codes in Practice

Development and Opt-in: The development of, and opt-in to, codes are closely related. For country specific codes development is often hurried, pushed by a few agencies, and lacking in detail. The current code for the DRC has been pushed by some donors, notably ECHO, and one large agency, MSF, has refused to opt-in. On the other hand the Sphere Project learned from the experience of the Red Cross/ NGO code and its project team went through a process of widespread and lengthy consultation with many agencies. Opt-in to Sphere is consequently widespread, though not so much with southern agencies. (For a more detailed analysis of Sphere, see Newsletter 12.) The Ground Rules too took six months to negotiate between OLS and the SPLA and as a consequence addressed many concerns of both organisations.

Development does not stop with the production of a code and many codes continue to develop after they are signed. The JPO, for instance, went through several versions after first being signed in 1996 (see RRN Network Paper 22). And the Sphere Project too will continue to develop after field testing.

Although codes are voluntary, there is often an element of compulsion to opt-in. As illustrated by the ACFOA piece, agency motivation in signing up

can be partly defensive in that agencies are concerned with their reputation. Donors too are increasingly using signatory of a code as a criterion for disbursing money – for example, the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) in the UK with the Red Cross/NGO code, and ECHO with the DRC code. This raises important questions about the independence of humanitarian agencies and the extent to which codes used in this way could have a negative impact. Indeed under such circumstances they might reduce innovation and experimentation and make agencies refuse to work if they fear they cannot uphold standards for good reasons beyond their control.

Implementation: One problem with agencies signing up to codes is that there is too little thought as to what changes will have to be made in agency procedures as a result. This is particularly the case with shorter, vague and more general codes. More detail makes agencies think harder about what it means to sign up. A recent study of British agencies reported that the Red Cross/NGO code, a short and general code, is a statement which has 'not been internalised by organisations and remains unused as a means of guiding and auditing their work.' Agencies need to examine carefully what it means for them

Donors...increasingly use signatory of a code as a criterion for disbursing money.

to sign up to a code, and develop a strategy for its implementation; implementation also needs to be properly linked with other initiatives concerned with increasing professionalisation, such as training.

So far it appears that evaluations have hardly made reference to codes of conduct. There is room for development here.

Compliance: Probably the weakest area of codes is what happens when a signatory breaks them. If the essential nature of a code is that it is a public statement of principles or performance objectives against which an agency commits itself to be judged, then the consequences of breaking the code are important. One of the problems is that all of the compliance mechanisms are, as the ACFOA piece puts it, 'complaints driven'. Signing up to a code is voluntary and the nature of the business means that agencies are loathe to report one another for transgression. This is reflected by the fact that

compliance mechanisms are usually under-developed, and if they do exist are under-used. The Red Cross/NGO code, for example, has only had a handful of complaints in its five year history and as yet has no formal complaint or compliance mechanism. The idea of an Ombudsman has been floated by British agencies as one way of addressing this problem. Again, formal external evaluations could have a role here.

Conclusion

As argued above, perhaps the most important motivation behind codes is that agencies are struggling with a 'vacuum of regulation', not just for themselves but for the way in which war is fought.

However, although codes have considerable promise in some areas they are problematic in others. Any 'real' code needs wide participation in its development and opt-in and so depends on a constituency with shared values and objectives. With a shared set of values, vagueness in a code can be acceptable; without it vagueness is a weakness and leads to confusion. Codes also require individual agencies to develop strategies for implementation, mechanisms for reporting on the strategy, independent evaluation of the success of implementation, an independent compliance mechanism, and the threat of publicity if codes are broken. Given these pre-requisites codes will probably be most successful in improving technical performance.

Codes are, unfortunately though not surprisingly, probably least successful in terms of imposing regulation on warring parties. This is simply not something agencies can do. What they can do, however, is establish their own ethical position and it is in terms of developing common ethical

> *Probably the weakest area of codes is what happens when a signatory breaks them.*

or principled positions in specific circumstances that success is most mixed. One the one hand it would seem that often the 'conflicts of accountability' are too great across the range of agencies involved in humanitarian work for them to share common positions. However, developing a common approach to the principles of humanitarian action in a specific context is very important if agencies are to reduce the likelihood that they will be manipulated by anti-humanitarian forces. To achieve this will require considerably more work in terms of thinking through how to put principles, as opposed to standards, into practice. And codes are only part of the answer.

Notes
[1.] Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association, the humanitarian wing of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement.

Inter-Agency Codes of Conduct

- NGO/Red Cross Code of Conduct (1994)
- The Ground Rules (South Sudan, 1995)
- The Principles and Protocols of Humanitarian Operation (Liberia, 1995)
- Somali Aid Coordination Body Code of Conduct for International rehabilitation and development assistance to Somalia (1995)
- The Joint Policy of Operation (Liberia, 1996)
- The NGO Field Cooperation Protocol (1996)
- The People in Aid Code of Best Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel (UK, 1997)
- The Sphere Project: The Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response (1998)
- The Code of Conduct for Humanitarian Agencies in Sierra Leone (1998)
- The Principles of Engagement for Humanitarian Assistance in the DRC (1999)

If anyone knows of any other such codes please contact
Nick Leader at the ODI on: <n.leader@odi.org.uk>

The Media and Complex Humanitarian Emergencies

by Gordon Adam, Radio Partnership, International Centre for Humanitarian Reporting Geneva, Switzerland

There is little doubt that the media can have a profound impact on complex emergencies. The best known example is the notorious use of hate radio in Rwanda and Bosnia to encourage ethnic cleansing. Less well-known is the potential for the media to do the opposite – that is, to support the efforts of humanitarian aid agencies in complex emergencies even to the extent of helping with peace-building efforts. International agencies are increasingly interested in the notion that, if handled appropriately, the mass media could deliver 'smart aid' – information which can be translated into the kind of knowledge that makes a positive impact on complex emergencies – similar to the impact of information on health education worldwide.

Background

Today, more people are liable to experience conflict than at any time in the past. Many of these people are excluded from the global revolution in communications: half the world's population has never made a phone call[1] and the growth of FM radio stations is concentrated in population centres while people in more remote areas have to make do with increasingly badly funded state broadcasters.

These people are often those most likely to suffer from poverty, and they are frequently in areas of complex emergency. Despite the fact that aid organisations and donors target such populations with their poverty focus programmes, generally they are the most difficult to reach due to poor infrastructure and/or security concerns. However, they do possess a vital piece of equipment which could be their lifeline – a radio.

Radios are cheap and portable. They don't require mains electricity so they tend to survive in conflict zones when other mass media fails. BBC audience research shows that in Somalia, Rwanda and Liberia, for instance, listenership to the BBC World Service is high; also that conflict generates listeners, as shown by the Gulf War.[2] The most recent statistic comes from a large UN survey in Afghanistan which showed that no fewer than 50 per cent of the population regularly listens to the BBC Pashto and Persian language services.[3]

Theoretical Framework

Evidence is mounting that well-targeted media interventions can make a positive contribution to the livelihoods of listeners living in complex emergency areas. Robert Manoff from New York University's Center for War, Peace and News Media sees a potential peace-building role for news broadcasters in conflict areas in the following terms. Journalism can, he says, among other things:

- counter misconceptions and rumours;
- build consensus;
- facilitate communication between conflicting parties;
- analyse the conflict and educate on the process of resolution;
- propose options and solutions to the conflict.[4]

This model emphasises the media's role in enabling communication as opposed to simply providing information. Information does not necessarily lead to improved knowledge and can be partial, irrelevant or just plain wrong. But in sensitive hands the media can be used to promote genuine communication which can help facilitate social change.

The implication of this model is that the strictly impartial journalistic approach of reporting facts gives way to producing programmes with a very definite editorial objective – whether it is to reduce land mines casualties or promote peace-building solutions to conflict. Measuring the impact of this so-called 'desired outcomes' broadcasting is problematic, but experience shows that a successful outcome is likely to be determined by certain communications design criteria. The Communications Initiative[5] has attempted to define these criteria in terms of promoting public discussion, building working partnerships, supporting local ownership of media interventions, systematic evaluation and long-term sustainability.

The BBC Afghan Education Drama New Home New Life

One example of how the media has been used successfully in this way is the BBC Afghan radio soap *New Home New Life*, started in 1993. The story is of the survival of two communities during a time of war. There is evidence that people have learnt significant information from the programme, and a 1997 survey found that listeners of *New Home New Life* and other BBC programmes on mines awareness were only half as likely to be involved in mine explosions than non-listeners. The survey sample was large – a total of 60,000 people were interviewed – which increases confidence in the validity of the findings.[6]

A number of factors led to this impact. First, BBC Afghanistan is widely listened to and trusted; there are few other credible information sources. Second, the programme is entertaining and contains useful and relevant information. Third, listeners' views are routinely canvassed. Fourth, Afghans have a strong oral/aural culture to which radio broadcasting is well suited.

The Afghan audience has assumed ownership of *New Home New Life* and of the educational material it conveys. Information ownership is a key criteria identified by the Communications Initiative for effective programming. Afghanistan is a case of a complex emergency where the creative use of mass media has delivered results where conventional aid efforts have failed: fewer people are being injured by mines, not as a result of training courses but through listening to a radio soap opera.

Bosnia: Media Reform in an Ethnically Divided Society

In Bosnia the media has been a key player in post-war reconstruction, though in a different way. The international community is the effective authority in Bosnia, under powers accorded to the Office of the High Representative (OHR). The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), charged with holding free elections in Bosnia, decided to sponsor the formation of an independent radio network (FERN), while the OHR established an independent TV service called the Open Broadcasting Network (OBN). Both of these were intended to appeal to the three, until recently warring, communities: Muslims, Croats and Serbs. The aid organisations – the UN, the EU and the bi-lateral funders – also funded a number of local radio and TV stations.

The overall objective of these initiatives was to establish an editorially diverse, pluralistic media. But the initial lack of emphasis on programming and journalistic skills meant that programming from these smaller local stations was generally poor and no challenge to the big state broadcasters whose programming continued to be partisan and at times (in the case of Republica Serpska TV SRT) hate-mongering. NATO troops eventually forced the broadcast of the OBN news programme for one hour each evening through SRT transmitters.[7]

What are the lessons to be learned from this experience? First, it was a serious omission not to spell out the responsibilities and powers of the international community vis-a-vis local media in the Dayton Peace Accords, particularly when it was well known that the media had played such a negative role in the war. This was not clarified until two years later at a NATO summit in May 1997.[8] Second, it is invariably a mistake to give money to broadcasters in complex emergencies and then walk away. Follow-up advice, training and brainstorming on programme ideas is required.

Third is the preoccupation of the international community with news programming. Objective reporting will take many years to achieve in Bosnia. An alternative approach – to use drama and other entertainment programming to convey pro-social messages – has not been part of the media strategy despite the popularity of a home-grown TV soap in the Bosnian Muslim enclave of Gorazde which became essential viewing before it stopped after a year in 1997.

Fourth, errors could have been avoided had the information strategists begun by asking what people wanted to listen to and watch. Yet it took two years for the first social research of this kind to be commissioned – spearheaded by USAID and the World Bank. The results of this research indicate a preference for entertainment – something people lack in the difficult task of rebuilding their lives after the war.[9]

Conclusions

Information is power, and communications is the process of providing this power of knowledge to people so they can make informed decisions about improving their lives. If the media is to be used to this end in complex emergencies it is clear that:

- careful planning and a deep understanding of the target population are essential;
- partnerships of trust must be built between the media and aid organisations on the ground;
- realistic objectives should be set when it comes to desired outcomes programming: 'do the do-ables', unlike in Bosnia where the international community wanted to put across ideas such the safe return of refugees and the extradition of war criminals which were simply not supported by most of the population.

The problems of delivering bulk aid to a country at war, with poor communications and a widely dispersed population, are enormous. What is needed is a greater emphasis on smart aid – the effective dissemination of information to allow people to help themselves. The role of the communicator is to create the optimal conditions for consumers of information to become knowledgeable and to put their newly found knowledge into action. Major donors are slowly recognising the importance of supporting communications initiatives in the field of development, conflict and humanitarian aid. The potential is enormous, but funding remains the major constraint. If this approach can work in Afghanistan, however, it is surely worth giving smart aid a higher priority in complex emergencies elsewhere.

Notes

1. Telecommunications Briefing Paper (1997) Panos, London.
2. International Broadcasting and Audience Research Reports (various) BBC World Service, Bush House, London.
3. CIET International 'Afghanistan: The 1997 National Mine Awareness Evaluation', report to the United Nations Office Coordinating Humanitarian Assistance, Islamabad.
4. Manoff, R (1997) Presentation to the 'Conference on the Media and Peacebuilding' organised by the Voice of America
5. Feek, W, Communications Initiative, WWW: <http://comminit.com>
6. CIET International 'Afghanistan: The 1997 National Mine Awareness Evaluation, pp44–45.
7. Maclay, D (Nov 1997) article in *Prospect*, pp30–33.
8. Macley, D, p33.
9. USAID Final Report (1998) 'Audience Share and Reaction to OBN Programming', Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Contact details for ICHR can be found at the end of the conference report *Strengthening Lifeline Media in Regions of Conflict* later in this newsletter. Gordon Adam is the coauthor of the book *Health on Air: A Guide to Creative Radio for Development* (1998) (London: Health Unlimited). A fuller version of this article will appear in *Brassey's Defence Yearbook, 1999*.

RRN Network Paper 28   ISBN: 0-85003-411-6

North Korea: The Politics of Food Aid

by Jon Bennett

The uniquely difficult political climate for international assistance to North Korea has sometimes distracted from the fact that people in the country are suffering for lack of basic essentials, not least food. The government has reluctantly admitted to the crisis, entering into an uneasy pact with humanitarian agencies for the first time in modern history.

Evidence suggests that humanitarian assistance over the past three years – notably the WFP's largest emergency programme in its history – has been of positive benefit to those most vulnerable. Nevertheless, North Korea presents an acute dilemma for humanitarians determined to uphold minimum standards of accountability. The government has consistently failed to provide adequate information about, and access to, the populations of concern. The clash of cultural norms and the deep distrust of foreign intervention does not facilitate the requirements for transparency and donor accountability.

Humanitarians face a familiar paradox: how to import huge quantities of food and other commodities to stabilise a volatile region while ensuring internationally acceptable levels of accountability. In advocating minimum humanitarian principles, what kind of leverage do aid agencies have in countries where such principles are either misunderstood or simply not high priority?

For some, the remarkable accommodation of foreign aid agencies in the past three years should not be threatened by seemingly intractable debates over transparency – the preoccupation of the givers rather than the receivers. For others, it is time to impose stricter measures of accountability, lest our hitherto lenient position with the North Korean authorities becomes an institutional standard in the country. One thing is certain: by 1999 – 1 million tonnes of food aid later – the acute phase of the North Korean emergency was already over. Are we, once again, worrying about standards in retrospect, locking the stable after the horse has bolted?

Advocacy around Disability in the Midst of War: The Lebanon

by Lina Abou-Habib, Oxfam, Lebanon

In August 1998, physically handicapped from Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and former Yugoslavia, as well as handicapped Palestinians, took to the streets of Beirut to protest the then Cabinet's refusal to discuss a proposal for a disability bill. The message of those involved in the march was simple: eight years after the end of the civil war the disabled wanted to enjoy their full rights and responsibilities as stipulated by the constitution. Many felt there had been very few gains for disabled people despite the enormous amount of money invested in the country's reconstruction plan.

The Fight for Representation and Integration

Before and during the war disabled people were considered to be intellectually inferior and 'immature' and hence had to be specially catered for – generally within the confines of highly patriarchal and often confessional (religious) rehabilitation and service institutions. Crudely speaking, disability was a lucrative business and state support limited as investment in social services had never been prioritised. While the link between poverty and the prevalence of disability cannot be explored here it should be noted that disability resulting from both inadequate preventive health measures and treatments is more likely to affect the poor: most disabled in the Lebanon were, and are, poor. In addition, many disabled had little access to education and were consequently ill-equipped for any form of employment which might have allowed some measure of economic independence.

Prior to and during the war disabled people were therefore at the mercy of the so-called rehabilitation industry, which had no clear human development objectives. In the absence of any form of representation and organisation (disabled people were seen as beneficiaries only) this 'rehabilitative' business was accountable to no one. As a result, the social and economic well-being of people with disabilities, as well as their political representation, was perceived as unimportant. For the disabled it was a vicious circle of poverty, marginalisation, exploitation and hopelessness.

No longer prepared to accept their subordinate status a small group of disabled women and men founded the Lebanese Physically Handicapped Union (LPHU) in mid-1981. The purpose of this union was not the provision of services but mobilisation of the disabled; the union encouraged the disabled to speak out and challenge their marginalisation.

Soon after the creation of the LPHU, Israel invaded Lebanon. The human and material losses caused by this aggression overshadowed all other concerns, including the struggle of the disabled. Yet for the core LPHU it was clear that disability as a social, economic and political issue had never been a priority. Disability could not be dissociated from the overall social and political context and gradually the disabled began to challenge and oppose not only the war but also its root causes – notably the unequal distribution of wealth and power and the religious/confessional divisions which permeated Lebanese social and political systems, and which exacerbated and prolonged the conflict.

The LPHU During the War Years

The war led to the massive internal displacement of some 300,000 people. During this time the LPHU sought to identify internally displaced persons who were disabled and integrate them within its activities. To date, the LPHU continues to prioritise the needs of the displaced from south Lebanon who are still regularly forced out of their villages as a result of Israeli aggression. Furthermore, the LPHU played an important role in supporting the population of south Lebanon as it actively participated in emergency relief initiatives. This demonstrated the organisation's wider commitment to vulnerable and neglected communities.

Despite the abundance of relief and aid money during the war the LPHU was not recognised by local or donor agencies. Many agencies failed to identify mobilisation, organisation, lobbying and advocacy around disability as a key strategy for action. In addition, many of the well-established local NGOs which enjoyed eloquent and mostly middle-class leadership were unsure of how to deal with a group which was grassroots-based as well as confrontational.

The Disability Movement in Post-war Lebanon

The end of the war did not improve the situation of the disabled, who continued to be concerned about the absence of a social agenda within the much publicised reconstruction plan. This was further aggravated by an unstable economy and the absence of disabled persons from political participation and representation in post-war Lebanon. LPHU advocacy thus went beyond looking at the specific conditions of disabled persons to call for a general overhaul of the political system.

For example, LPHU members took an active role in initiatives to curb gross environmental abuses all over the country. They also monitored and took part in grassroots mobilisation during the parliamentary and municipal elections in 1992, 1996 and 1998. The elections provided an opportunity to finally put disability on the political agenda. Notwithstanding the election of three disabled men as local municipal council members in June 1998, disability is still not perceived as a priority for social action.

The history of the LPHU shows an evolving maturity, reflected by closer involvement in 'national' issues and concrete efforts to integrate into and mark the local political and development scene. Close networking and collaboration with selected organisations is seen as important in creating a clear strategy towards the new government, which claims to be committed to administrative reform, and its relevant institutions. Sylvana Lakkis, president of the LPHU, states 'We shall give them the benefit of doubt and seek their help and collaboration. However, we are ready to take to the streets again if they decide to ignore us.'

Foreign Support and Solidarity

The LPHU has received support from some international organisations. For Oxfam GB, for example, the validity of supporting such a movement was self-evident and indeed attractive – particularly at a time when concerns for immediate survival were paramount. The fact that a grassroots group was able to mobilise hundreds of disabled persons around the issue of rights was noticeable and worthy of support. More importantly, in a situation of violence, dissent and factionalism, such an initiative came as a breath of fresh air.

It was not crystal clear, on the other hand, how such an organisation could best be supported and empowered to achieve any impact in such desperate conditions. Questions abounded: what impact was desirable? Who becomes the natural interlocutor of an advocacy and lobby movement when the state system is almost non-existent? Skill development was needed as much as funding: interpersonal skills, skills in organisational development, in communication and in advocacy.

It is clear that early international support to the disability movement was instrumental in its evolution. This external support allowed the development of much-needed internal structures and communications systems. It facilitated contact with international bodies and fora which, over time, came to profile the LPHU as a leading grassroots movement. The support of an external organisation meant that the grassroots group could access international initiatives. The fact that, for example, members of the LPHU were able to attend the UN Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995) was instrumental to the organisation's development of a gender agenda. Oxfam's network of relations and contacts in the region and internationally also led to links with new associations in Yemen which were interested in strategies for grassroots mobilisation and advocacy.

Later, in 1998, disabled people's associations from the former Yugoslavia were put in touch with the LPHU to explore ways in which disability could be used as a uniting concern in order to transcend confessional and communal divides in that region. A mixed group of Albanian and Serb disabled spent two weeks with the LPHU during which time they participated in the association's Disabled Rights Campaign. The experience clarified ways in which the marginalisation of the disabled (in the case of women and other vulnerable groups) cuts across confessional and other divides and should thus lead to common action and struggle.

It is important to point out that it took the direct intervention of an organisation – in this case Oxfam GB – to highlight the patriarchal nature and function of the LPHU which, for some time, had jeopardised the active representation and participation of disabled women in decision-making. Women with disabilities are very rarely at the forefront of the movements of the disabled. Gender mainstreaming in the disability movement – and agenda – is proceeding at a very slow pace; sometimes the only way for disabled women to be heard is to create their own organisation.

More information on the LPHU can be obtained from the following email address: <lphu@inco.com.lb> or from Oxfam on <oxfamleb@dm.net.lb>

OCHA One Year On:
Is Humanitarian Coordination any Better?

by Sarah Longford, Policy Section, World Food Programme, Rome, Italy
Based on an interview with Ross Mountain, Assistant Emergency Relief Coordinator
and Director, OCHA-Geneva

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) was created within the UN Secretariat as a part of Kofi Annan's reform programme in January 1998. It replaced the widely-criticised and short-lived Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) which had in turn replaced an ailing coordinating disaster relief office (UNDRO).

Under the new leadership of Sergio Vieira de Mello, OCHA is again trying to find the right profile. Focus has been reduced to three main themes: coordination of humanitarian response, policy development, and advocacy. Essentially, OCHA's mandate is 'to mobilise and coordinate the collective efforts of the international community, in particular those of the UN system, to meet in a coherent and timely manner the needs of those exposed to human suffering and material destruction in disasters and emergencies.'[1] A tough call, considering the institutional boundaries of the UN agencies, politics within the Secretariat, the whims and interests of donors, and the proliferation of organisations now involved in the aid business.

So what has changed in humanitarian coordination apart from the name of the coordinating body? Is OCHA making a difference? To be fair, these questions are a little premature given the relative youth of OCHA. However, a look at some of the main elements of humanitarian reform will give an idea of the current direction and challenges.

Structural Reorganisation

A clear change was the transfer of responsibility for mine action, demobilisation programmes and disaster mitigation to the Department of Peace-Keeping Operations and UNDP, allowing OCHA to shed most of its so-called operational responsibilities. Still in process is a handover of its relief storage facility in Pisa to the WFP.

Less clear has been the rearrangement of functions and division of labour between OCHA's offices in New York and Geneva: the 'political and humanitarian capitals'. The New York office now consists of a revamped but sadly under-staffed policy, advocacy and information division, the IASC/ECHA[2] Secretariat, and an emergency liaison branch. The latter, given its proximity to the heartbeat of the UN's political, military and security decision-making authorities, is key in feeding the leadership with the latest cross-cutting policy issues for the Secretary General and the Security Council. On the other side of the Atlantic the Geneva office, led by Ross Mountain as Assistant Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, has been re-established as the principal focal point for emergency response, field coordination support and day-to-day contacts with 'the field'. Its Complex Emergency Response Branch is responsible for strategic field-based planning and consolidated appeals, while the Disaster Response Branch (essentially the UNDRO of old) is responsible for natural, environmental and technological disaster response.

An IASC liaison unit is attached to Ross Mountain's office and, as an anomaly, the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction Secretariat, in its last year, still reports directly to the office in New York.

A question not addressed in the reform process was the potential benefit of merging the natural disaster and complex emergency response branches. This could have built up institutional memory – especially for countries which are both prone to recurring natural disasters and suffer protracted conflict – and brought more coherence to the abundance of preparedness and response mechanisms that co-exist but don't necessarily interrelate. For example, OCHA's Emergency Telecommunications Project, the UN Disaster and Assessment Coordination team, the Military and Civil Defence Unit, and the Emergency Stockpile Register, while all worthy projects in their own right, still need to be rationalised in the context of overall standby and response capacities.

The creation of OCHA has also required a painful staffing regularisation exercise to bring it in line with standard UN rules and procedures. Despite some new agency secondments, Ross Mountain admits that 'OCHA is not a new creation and not based on new recruitment, but on existing personnel.' He also highlights the continuing unstable funding base: 'Of the 137 core posts at OCHA, 60 per cent still need extra-budgetary financing, something we highlighted at the ECOSOC special session. But despite support in principle from

donors and developing countries, more long-term financial support has not been translated into reality.'

Field Coordination and Response

OCHA now has field coordination offices or integrated information networks in 23 countries, with a Moscow office reopened recently. The offices, mostly inherited from DHA, have met with varying degrees of success, and the quality has often been dependent on funding levels and the ability to recruit field staff as and when needed. Of fundamental importance, Mountain stresses, is that 'OCHA's humanitarian coordination units report to the UN resident coordinators and humanitarian coordinators (RCs/HCs) and don't act as a headquarters outpost with a separate function. This was perhaps not understood in the past.' But field coordination depends not only on the provision of adequate, timely and experienced support by OCHA to RCs/HCs. It also depends very much on the standard of leadership and preparedness of the coordinators themselves.

A UNDP–OCHA consultation with RCs/HCs took place in December to discuss how to improve field coordination. The coordinators made a number of basic recommendations for follow-up by UNDP and OCHA, including ways to strengthen in-country coordination, relate to headquarters, improve strategy and programming, and the relationship between humanitarian principles and political action. The central role of NGOs was acknowledged given that they 'are not only indispensable partners but are also important channels of resources'. Additionally, recognition was given to the current inadequate standards of security coverage for humanitarian staff and the need for more funds to be made available for supporting field security.

One of the main coordination tools for complex emergencies at the field level is the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP). In the past these have been criticised for being 'shopping lists' of aid projects with no prioritisation. Together with IASC members, OCHA invested much effort in 1998 to strengthen each stage of appeal preparation and has made significant steps forward. In line with UN reform, the CAP is now supposed to be 'the principal mechanism for collective programming and resource mobilisation for the UN system' and it seems generally accepted 'to have a set of agreed principles as basic guidelines for any humanitarian operation'. Each document will also include a common humanitarian action plan, or CHAP. This is an articulation of goals and objectives of the humanitarian community for the period covered. Another interesting development is that there is recognition that security components need to be included systematically into the appeal documents. The culmination of these efforts was the first ever launch of 13 UN consolidated inter-agency appeals, together, in December.

Advocacy and Policy Priorities

Although sometimes lacking focus and impact in its policy work in the past, OCHA has begun, based on more extensive consultation with the IASC, to identify specific humanitarian issues of common concern and use its voice at the highest levels as well as in conjunction with political, peace-keeping, human rights and development actors. At the top of OCHA's policy and advocacy agenda is the need to build greater respect for humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law – a theme addressed by de Mello at the Security Council recently. The relationship between human rights and humanitarian action as

well as the humanitarian impact of sanctions regimes are two other major areas for continued work in 1999, as well as the need to facilitate a coordinated strategy to address internally displaced persons issues. Little progress was made by DHA on this latter issue.

With regard to the issue of 'from crisis to recovery', and how to stimulate interest from development actors at early stages of a relief effort, Mountain recognises that 'this is a real problem and a tortuously long process'. As an example of a recent initiative to try and address this problem in countries affected by Hurricane Mitch, OCHA worked closely with UNDP to launch a transitional appeal drawing attention at an early stage to mid- and long-term needs.

Clearly OCHA differs from DHA in the way it takes on a more prominent advocacy role and proactive approach to coordination. But the main problem that faced DHA will continue to test OCHA – that is, the buy-in from others. Many aid agencies are totally unaware of OCHA and its potential role. Many that are aware still question the expertise and authority of non-operational 'coordination staff' and the additional layers. In sum, OCHA's true potential in contributing to humanitarian coordination can only be achieved with the active, rather than just verbal, support of donors and all operational agencies. As Mountain says 'the proof will be in the pudding'.

Notes
[1] Excerpt from OCHA's mission statement.
[2] Inter-Agency Standing Committee/ Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs.

For more information about OCHA email <comments@reliefweb.int> or contact <info@dha.unicc.org> For information on global humanitarian activities, refer to ReliefWeb at <www.reliefweb.int>

News

Some Codes of Conduct Reviewed

Code of Conduct of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid

The Code of Conduct of the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) was a positive development which came in the otherwise negative wake of media allegations against a prominent Australian NGO in 1995. The Australian government, anxious to rectify problems of accountability, decided to increase regulation of the NGO aid sector but was persuaded by ACFOA to allow the industry to self-regulate its behaviour and standards. The Code of Conduct came into effect in 1997 and has made some impressive achievements over the past two years, particularly in raising the awareness of standards and behaviour to which all aid organisations should adhere.

The Code of Conduct and the monitoring of NGO compliance is overseen by a committee which consists of six elected NGO representatives, one independent chairperson, and a nominee of the Australian Consumers' Association. One of the committee's main areas of focus in 1998 was to ensure that the annual reports of NGOs met the six minimum requirements necessary to fulfil the stipulations of the code, and that agencies were individually informed of areas in which they were not in compliance. NGOs have been given until 30 June 1999 to rectify problem areas, and training workshops have been organised to assist agencies in meeting the reporting requirements.

Meeting the standardised annual reporting requirements of the code is also a new criterion for accreditation with the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). Formerly agencies were only required to be signatories of the code, but now agencies must also submit an approved annual report and be cleared of any serious complaint which may have been made to the Code of Conduct Committee. To date one formal and two informal complaints have been referred to the committee, of which one minor breach of the code was identified.

Steady progress has thus been made by ACFOA and the Code of Conduct Committee in informing NGOs of their obligations under the code and in offering the tools to agencies to facilitate compliance. But while the regulations stipulated in the code serve a vital function in the Australian aid community, there are several areas of concern yet to be addressed by the industry.

The first limitation of the code is its primary focus on the rights of donors. In fact 'Code of Conduct' is somewhat of a misnomer since the code only addresses this aspect of an organisation's activities; no mention is made of the rights of beneficiaries to receive appropriate and ethical aid. Six very general operational principles are mentioned in the preamble to the code, but these are vague aims rather than enforceable regulations. The Sphere Project which sets minimum standards in the technical provision of aid complements the current code in operational guidelines, as does the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief. But these international initiatives have a limited application in the Australian aid community, and do not obviate the need for the Australian code to address ethical issues in the provision of humanitarian and development aid.

The ACFOA code is also limited in its ability to sanction NGOs which breach aspects of the code. It is ironic that although the existence of the code confers public trust to the NGO sector, to publicise the wrongdoings of an NGO may compromise that trust in the entire aid industry. One would hope that public confidence would be boosted by transparent and public self-regulation, but such an outcome is far from certain. The caution with which members of the aid community treat any discussion of the need for guidelines is illustrated by the 'running sheet' for the launch of the Sphere Project in Australia on 29 January 1999. It stipulates that 'global cooperation' should be emphasised to ensure that the media does not focus on 'the need for minimum standards'. That the industry is 'in need' of set standards, the running sheet asserts, is far from the case.[1]

The third constraint of the code in regulating the behaviour of Australian NGOs is that compliance is complaints-driven. For example, the NGO response to the tsunami in Papua New Guinea in late 1998 raises many questions about adherence to fundraising stipulations in the code, yet in the absence of a formal complaint no inquiry has been undertaken by ACFOA or the Code of Conduct Committee. This is particularly surprising since ACFOA was the reference point for the tsunami appeal, the response to which was so lucrative that ACFOA was compelled to issue a statement saying that enough funding had been pledged. Many NGOs did react to the tsunami, but most withdrew once the emergency needs to the limited affected population were met. It is difficult to believe that all the funds donated in response to the tsunami were used to this effect. Did the agencies involved specify in the fine print of their appeal that any excess funds would be spent on longer term projects elsewhere? After all, a high-profile emergency to which the public responds warrants a public explanation as to how unused funds are spent.

Thus despite the commendable progress made towards enhancing compliance to the principles set forth in the ACFOA Code of Conduct, more attention is required to the broader aspects of NGO integrity and accountability. Analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the code is a positive base from which to start the debate in the Australian aid community. ◆

Notes

1. CARE Australia Communication Section, *Running Sheet for the Launch of the Sphere Project*, 21 January 1999.

Full copies of the ACFOA code are available from ACFOA. Write to: The Chair, ACFOA Code of Conduct Committee, Private Bag 3, Deakin, ACT 2600, Australia. Fax: (+61) 2 6285 1720.

Principles of Engagement for Emergency Humanitarian Assistance in the DRC

Late last year the worsening humanitarian situation in the DRC together with increased security risks to humanitarian agencies made it necessary to seek consensus on a common approach to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, based on the application of agreed principles. This set of principles – the Principles of Engagement for Emergency Humanitarian Assistance in the Democratic Republic of Congo – aims at increasing the efficiency and pertinence of aid and maximising the humanitarian space for the relief community. They are based on the ICRC's Code of Conduct and were first set out at a meeting in Nairobi on 23 November 1998.

The principles are addressed to the international humanitarian community as well as to the political and military authorities in the DRC. General overarching principles are defined as impartiality; neutrality; independence (aid based solely on need); human rights; participation with local partners; coordination between agencies; transparency of humanitarian actors; and accountability. In addition, some general protocols are mentioned with regard to accessibility, security and types of intervention, and monitoring and evaluation. The principles also set out some practical means for improving coordination mechanisms and monitoring compliance to the principles.

On 28 January this year a follow-up meeting was organised jointly by ECHO and OCHA. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss ways of establishing a coherent humanitarian program in the DRC following the ICRC's Code of Conduct Principles of Engagement framework. In particular, the meeting aimed at designing practical mechanisms to ensure coordination and promotion of compliance.

Coordination

Coordination mechanisms need to be established to support humanitarian operations throughout the DRC. Such coordination mechanisms should be light in structure, and facilitative rather than directive. It was thought that one way of addressing coordination needs would be through the establishment of regular coordination platforms in each of the centres of humanitarian action. The coordination platforms in

the different areas would be established according to the varying features of that specific area.

In practice, these platforms will be managed by a focal point assigned by the local humanitarian partners in the region. This focal point will facilitate the flow of information (on security conditions, humanitarian priorities, operational coordination, joint assessments, etc) within the region and to other centres. The focal point will foster collective responses to problems encountered in the course of humanitarian operations and stimulate the elaboration of a comprehensive plan of action.

In areas where there is an effective UN presence the UN may be the appropriate partner to assume the responsibilities of managing such platforms. In areas where there has been no UN presence humanitarian partners operating in the area will be encouraged to designate such a person/organisation.

Humanitarian officials with regional or sub-regional mandates will be encouraged to continue their efforts in supporting humanitarian partners in setting up the necessary coordination platforms and, when required, facilitate the flow of information, the contact/negotiations with authorities, and the designing of a global action plan.

Adherence to the Principles of Engagement

Recognition was given to the importance of reaffirming the basic humanitarian principles governing humanitarian operations throughout the DRC. It was made clear that the document that emerged from the process in Nairobi was not an attempt to elaborate new principles for humanitarian action but merely to reiterate principles already spelt out in the ICRC's Code of Conduct.

Mechanisms to encourage adherence to these principles were defined in terms of finding resolutions to problems rather than identifying sanctions or penalties for non-respect. Additional levels of recourse open to grieved parties were identified as including:

- coordination platforms in each region (solidarity between all humanitarian partners);
- regional representatives approach senior authorities at central level (possibly undertaken in parallel to attempted resolution at local level);
- ambassadors, special envoys (EU, UN), and headquarters.

Next Steps

Two key 'next steps' were defined as the following:

1. Humanitarian partners in the field will be encouraged to work together to set up the coordination platforms and will begin to produce regular reports (by the end of February 1999). Humanitarian officials with regional or sub-regional mandates will be encouraged to support this process.
2. A similar meeting will be convened in May 1999 to review the effectiveness of humanitarian operations in the DRC and evaluate the pertinence of coordination mechanisms. ◆

For more information contact Frances Smith, acting head of unit for ECHO1 and advisor on operational coordination, email: <Frances.smith@echo.cec.be>

The Sierra Leone Code of Conduct

The origins of the current Code of Conduct for Sierra Leone date back to 1996 when agencies developed standards for child protection activities. This prompted dialogue on the need for a broader code for humanitarian agencies which was formalised at a workshop held in Conakry during the Junta period, and adopted by over 40 agencies.

Notwithstanding current events, the need for a revised code came about following the restoration of the democratic government in February 1998. In particular, the Conakry code had incorporated a 'no-guns policy', the interpretation of which had caused some controversy. In addition, a number of agencies had not taken part in the Conakry process and no local NGOs had been present. The revised code would, it was hoped, broaden the level of participation among a wider range of agencies and revitalise the process of disseminating the code to other concerned parties – notably ECOMOG and the government.

Process and Output

A three-day workshop, with an additional dissemination day for the government and ECOMOG officials, was convened to revise the code. Over 30 representatives from Sierra Leonean NGOs, as well as international NGOs, the ICRC, UN and donor agencies attended. The stated

objectives of the workshop were to review and update the Code of Conduct with the dual aim of:

i. reinforcing a self-regulatory and coordinated approach for the delivery of humanitarian assistance;
ii. ensuring the parties to the conflict recognise and observe the impartiality and inviolability of humanitarian principles.

Key questions concerned the phrasing of the section on the use of armed escorts, and whether or not to refer to relations between the NGO community and the government. A consensus was reached that armed escorts should only be used as a last resort, and criteria that would need to be met before an armed escort was used were agreed. With regard to NGO/government relations it was decided that the code would only refer to principles of humanitarian operations, and that the issue of relations between the two would be left to a separate workshop organised and planned by the government at a later date.

A revised code was eventually agreed. This is a signed document and a committee – consisting of representatives from international NGOs, national NGOs, the UN, donors, with the ICRS as observers – has been given responsibility for promoting the code and dealing with disputes arising over its interpretation and implementation.

Validity of the Code

While the workshop was able to draw on experience from Sudan, Liberia and Afghanistan in terms of their Codes of Conduct, the question arose as to whether the Sierra Leone code was merely climbing on a humanitarian principles bandwagon or whether the process was actually useful. It was generally agreed that the process was beneficial for the following reasons:

• The process of holding the workshop was itself beneficial as it brought together most of the humanitarian community and ensured a broad understanding and agreement on core humanitarian principles.
• The involvement of Sierra Leonean NGOs was particularly important as they had not participated in the development of the Conakry code and their participation will ensure a broader commitment to the revised code.

• The workshop provided a forum for discussion of key problems facing the humanitarian community – notably the problem of restricted access and the question of when, and in what circumstances, the use of armed escorts would be justified.
• The agreement that the code will be a signed document and that a committee will be formed to oversee dissemination and implementation is a key strengthening of the existing code.

If the code is to have any real impact on humanitarian operations the dissemination process will clearly be crucial. This is now being planned by the Code of Conduct Committee. Several key points should be noted:

• Not all humanitarian agencies were present at the workshop. Identifying those agencies not represented and seeking their commitment, particularly among Sierra Leone NGOs, will be a key first step.
• Dissemination needs to begin in individual agencies. Each agency will need to ensure that all staff understand what the code means for their work in practical terms.
• Ensuring that other key parties in Sierra Leone, notably ECOMOG, the CDF and the government, understand and support the code will be crucial.
• The committee will be able to draw and build on existing dissemination experience: Concern Universal was involved in disseminating the Conakry code and the ICRC has been conducting its own dissemination campaign, based on humanitarian principles.

Although the current situation in Sierra Leone makes the revision of the code appear a somewhat redundant exercise, it is clear that when access becomes possible again the issues raised by the code are likely to be more important than ever. In particular, if the rebels remain in control of large parts of the country the question of how to gain access to these areas while maintaining neutrality, and with the agreement of the democratically elected government, will become even more critical. ◆

News

Evaluation of the NGO Field Cooperation Protocol

In September 1996, a number of InterAction member agencies active in emergency response signed the NGO Field Cooperation Protocol. The protocol, a key element of InterAction's ongoing efforts to enhance disaster response by NGOs, committed signatories to try to reach consensus on 37 frequently contentious or disruptive issues. By signing the protocol, members pledged to consult with other NGOs and partners on issues they were likely to face in situations of crisis. Among the 37 subject areas identified for consultation were:

- establishment of a forum for NGO internal consultation and interface with other disaster response participants;
- relations with local authorities;
- local employment practices;
- media relations;
- security arrangements;
- relations with indigenous NGOs;
- NGO–military relations;
- NGO–UN relations;
- information sharing on project selection;
- adoption of socioeconomic program approaches.

In April 1998, InterAction contracted a consultant to evaluate the protocol. Specifically, the consultant was asked to 'determine the extent to which the NGO Field Cooperation Protocol is being implemented by signatory agencies' and to 'determine the lessons learned by signatory agency headquarters personnel in their efforts to ensure that field staff undertake efforts at consensus-building'. A report with recommendations in the following categories was prepared:

- recommendations for modifications of the protocol to enhance its usefulness to field personnel;
- recommendations for internal agency measures which would increase the extent of the protocol's use by signatory agencies;
- recommendations for field procedures and structures to facilitate achievement of consensus among signatory and other agency personnel.

In order to carry out this mandate more than 35 individuals with expertise in NGO cooperation during emergencies were interviewed. These 35 represented signatory NGO managers and staff, staff of indigenous NGOs, bilateral donors, and UN agencies. The interviews were conducted in the US and in Liberia. Liberia was selected because a number of InterAction members and other international NGOs were working there, because NGOs had encountered serious coordination challenges during the conflict in Liberia, and because a substantial coordination system among NGOs had evolved in Monrovia. Among the findings were:

- The NGO Field Cooperation Protocol has not, in general, been systematically promoted by the headquarters of signatory NGOs.
- Field personnel interviewed for the assessment are not aware of the protocol.
- NGO coordination efforts, properly structured, can move beyond collaboration on administrative and logistics issues to cover major programme and advocacy issues.
- Highly structured NGO coordination mechanisms, like those established in Liberia, can enhance cooperation both among NGOs and with partners.
- Reaching consensus on the protocol's list of issues potentially requires significant trade-offs for field-based NGO managers, for example between security issues and local NGO participation.
- Serious partnerships with indigenous NGOs, especially during disaster response, require focused efforts.
- The protocol, as currently written, ignores the important role of donor agencies.
- Field-based NGO managers must have more guidance from headquarters on how far they can go in supporting cooperation.
- Field-based NGO managers want to know how to fund coordination mechanisms.

These findings, elaborated in some detail in the evaluation document, generate six recommendations for action by InterAction and/or member agencies. The six recommendations and 'next steps' suggested in the evaluation are:

1. The headquarters of signatory agencies must do more to promote the NGO Field Cooperation Protocol.
2. The protocol should emphasise more strongly the importance of establishing structured coordination mechanisms.
3. InterAction and signatory agencies should examine techniques to jumpstart NGO colloboration in emergencies.

4. InterAction and signatory agencies should supplement the protocol with a succinct summary of best practices in field-based cooperation.
5. The protocol document itself should be revised to include (1) advocacy and (2) relations with donors among its topics.
6. InterAction should engage OFDA and other donor agencies in discussions on what those agencies can do to enhance implementation of the protocol, including, possibly, funding and inclusion in grant guidelines.

InterAction was disappointed but not surprised by the finding that field workers were unfamiliar with the protocol. While the motive and spirit which prompted its development are evident in the enhanced NGO cooperation which has taken place in recent years in Liberia, Sierre Leone, Kosovo, North Korea and other disaster sites, it is evident from anecdotal reports that more needs to be done to put the protocol into practice.

The evaluator briefed InterAction's Disaster Response Committee at its semiannual plenary meeting on 3 December 1998. His presentation was followed by a discussion on measures to be taken to try to improve the protocol, along the lines of the recommendations, and to make the protocol better known within agencies and among field staff.

InterAction remains committed to implementation of the protocol. Currently its Disaster Response Committee is reviewing how to encourage this process among the membership. Specific measures will be discussed by the committee at its next plenary meeting on 26 April 1999. ◆

For a copy of the NGO Field Cooperation Protocol contact Jim Bishop at InterAction on email: <jbishop@interaction.org> For details of the evaluation contact James Kunder, the independent consultant who carried out the evaluation. Email: <jmkunder@hotmail.com> Fax: (+1) 703 931 8945.

The Future of EU Humanitarian Aid

This year, a new and more powerful European Parliament will be elected, a new Commission will be appointed, and new European institutions will begin to operate. All of these precede the expiry of ECHO's mandate at the end of 1999.

In light of these changes, VOICE – Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies – has facilitated a process of reflection and discussion concerning the future of EU humanitarian aid. Broad-based discussions took place at VOICE's Annual General Assembly on 8 December 1998, and a working document is currently being circulated for further comment; it is expected to be finalised by the end of March 1999. The purpose of the discussion was not to evaluate ECHO's performance, but to think freely and constructively about a vision for future EU humanitarian aid. Three areas of focus emerged during the process.

First, the inevitable question of partnership between EU institutions – notably ECHO – and NGOs. Notwithstanding recent progress, ECHO continues to feel it is perceived as 'merely a bank', whereas the NGOs feel they are perceived as 'merely

implementing agencies'. For the NGOs, partnership requires a mutual engagement beyond the contractual relationship. Flexibility in funding remains another issue, especially in the initial weeks of an emergency. NGO representatives felt value in exploring how the mechanism of an initial 'block grant', offering speed and flexibility for a rapid response, can still be combined with adequate accountability. Finally, instead of focussing on visibility through flags, logos and stickers, the EU would do better to concentrate on a communications strategy that creates a profile for itself as a credible and professional provider of humanitarian assistance.

The second area of focus concerned the issue of whether ECHO should continue in its current form. This is a question NGOs feel is within the remit of the Commission. However, NGO representatives articulated a number of principles and quality norms that EU humanitarian aid should meet. One is that the EU should develop its own humanitarian policy. There was also a general feeling that retaining one commissioner for humanitarian aid was desirable; so too greater coordination between the various EU institutions involved with conflict issues and between the different commissioners. EU humanitarian aid should become more transparent and accountable (see later book review); to that effect greater scrutiny by the European Parliament was recommended in addition to the inclusion of NGOs with observer status in EU aid committees.

It was felt that the quality of EU civil servants dealing with humanitarian aid needs improvement and their rapid turnover, notably in ECHO, has to stop. The EU should also specify more clearly the relative authority and responsibilities of its field officers and headquarter staff. Access to technical advisors for EU desk officers was recommended, as was a mechanism whereby EU and NGO staff could gain working experience in each other's environments through exchange placements.

Finally, the most challenging discussions centred around the boundaries of humanitarian aid and the definition and interpretation of the mandate of an 'ECHO 2', if such would continue from the year 2000. Questions concerning the relationship of humanitarian aid to disaster preparedness, development, human rights and conflict management policies were raised.

ECHO's director announced that disaster prevention would receive more attention in ECHO as of 2000. At least two questions require further reflection. First, a structural approach to natural disaster prevention implies reducing vulnerability. This is something that has been taken up by developmentalists in other aid organisations. Second, disaster preparedness requires investment in local capacities. What partnerships can and will the EU develop with local organisations in this regard, and how? The relationship between relief, rehabilitation and development remains problematic. What do people understand by these concepts and paradigms? Is there 'developmental space' in any real sense in ongoing conflicts? Given that ECHO was set up in the early 1990s precisely to enhance the swiftness of the emergency response, would a new merging of relief and development actions not be a step backward? There are both advantages and risks to linking relief and development which need further thought.

With regard to human rights, those present at the VOICE meeting recognised that violations of human rights fuel conflict, and that humanitarian action is underpinned by rights. The question is not, however, whether human rights are an aspect of an 'ECHO 2' mandate, but how this would be interpreted in practice. The emerging consensus was that ECHO should not get involved in funding 'classical' human rights organisations whose main strategy is one of public testimony and denunciation, nor get involved in denouncing human rights violations. Also, the decision to suspend humanitarian assistance should not be made dependent on human rights criteria – in which case there might remain few places where humanitarian assistance can be provided. ECHO, on the other hand, should consider rights inasmuch as these are protected by refugee law and international humanitarian law. The emphasis should be on safeguarding humanitarian space and on investing more in practical protection activities. ECHO can also invest in human rights awareness raising and human rights education work.

Finally, it was recognised that the European Commission is a political institution. It is therefore inevitable that its humanitarian aid is considered from a political angle. In the absence of an articulated Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), humanitarian aid has tended to become a prominent tool of EU foreign policy. Is this desirable? Although in recent years several aid administrations have turned to humanitarian aid as a potential tool for conflict management, there are growing doubts about its ability to do so. The record of conditionalities imposed on development aid is also very poor, and there is little reason to believe that it would be any better for humanitarian aid. Further, it seems premature and dangerous to accept that humanitarian aid will be subsumed under the CFSP, while the latter remains largely unarticulated. It is by no means clear that the EU will adopt foreign policies that are ethical and principled rather than driven by economic and political self-interest. Note also that the Red Cross/NGO Code of Conduct states that humanitarian agencies will strive not to be a tool of the foreign policies of their donors. This is not to question the need for conflict management. Rather the point is that such responsibility should lie elsewhere in the Commission and not with the executives and commissioner in charge of EU humanitarian aid. ◆

For more information contact VOICE. Fax: (+32) 2732 1934. Email: <voice@clong.be>

ECHO Tackles Humanitarian Aid and Human Rights

Given the realities of complex emergencies the separation of human rights and humanitarian action has become an obstacle to responding more adequately to this type of crisis: the issue is no longer whether there should be a human rights-based approach to relief, but rather how to give effect to it. Without such an approach the response is likely to be disconnected from the causes of the emergency and ill-adapted to contributing to its resolution on a durable basis.[1]

To better understand the link between humanitarian aid and human rights and what consequences this has for humanitarian operations, ECHO is looking at how its humanitarian assistance can contribute to the protection of human rights. The realities on the ground pose some difficult questions as to how human rights could be integrated into humanitarian aid in practice, and there are inevitably dilemmas and trade-offs to be confronted. Some questions that immediately come to mind include:

- Is there any sign that humanitarian assistance unintentionally allows or possibly encourages human rights abuses? If so, under what conditions?
- How have human rights considerations influenced the delivery of aid in practice? Do they clash with an emergency needs definition?
- Do 'relief ethics', as defined by international agencies and donors, help or hinder in ensuring respect for human rights? Again, under what conditions?
- How could human rights organisations cooperate more closely with those in charge of the actual delivery of humanitarian aid?
- What dangers are there for aid workers to transmit information about human rights or humanitarian law violations? How might this compromise aid delivery over the longer-term? Which criteria are relevant for assessing the associated risk?
- How do rules-based approaches (ground rules, codes of conduct, rules of engagement and strategic frameworks) handle human rights issues? Are these mechanisms useful as information exchanges on the human rights situation and are they capable of discussing/ addressing abuses with warring factions?

ECHO is taking the first step to better understand the inter-relationship between human rights and humanitarian aid. It is aware that this has to be part of a permanent, on-going process of learning from experience. ECHO's learning will initially build on the work already done by many of its partner NGOs and other inter-governmental institutions. The result over time should be a transformative integration of human rights concerns throughout ECHO's work which will increase its overall effectiveness and help it to identify the real dilemmas. ◆

Notes

[1.] Karen Kenny, 'The Human Rights Framework for Humanitarian Aid: Why we need strategies to develop it', paper submitted to ECHO meeting with partner*s*, 9 December 1998.

For more information contact Camilla Brückner in ECHO's Strategy and Policy Planning Unit. Email: <Camilla.BRUCKNER@ECHO.cec.be>

Towards an International Action Network on Small Arms

An estimated 500 million small arms are in circulation globally. Carried by children as young as six, such weapons fuel wars, increase crime and banditry, undermine development programmes and frustrate attempts to build peace.

Fortunately, the international community is beginning to develop ideas on how to tackle the problems associated with the proliferation and misuse of small arms. For example, the Organisation of American States has agreed a convention against illicit firearms trafficking; the West African states and members of the ECOWAS regional forum have agreed a three year moratorium on the production, export and import of small arms; EU countries have agreed a joint action on small arms and, together with SADC countries, have developed an action programme on light arms and illicit trafficking in Southern Africa.

However, as Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy commented, 'civil society activism is the major factor in ensuring that governments actually take up the responsibilities that they have

acknowledged are theirs'. Indeed, the NGO community is taking steps to ensure that those measures advocated by governments are viewed in an objective light: in October 1998, 180 representatives from 100 NGOs from around the world met in Brussels to develop the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) which aims to challenge the limits of international action.

At the meeting (co-hosted by Amnesty International, BASIC, GRIP, International Alert, Oxfam, Pax Christi and Saferworld) participants agreed a comprehensive set of policy objectives to stem the supply of, and reduce the demand for, small arms including: establishing codes of conduct on arms exports; tackling illicit arms trafficking; re-integrating ex-combatants; capacity-building; tackling impunity; poverty reduction; and reversing 'cultures of violence'.

As Loretta Bondi of Human Rights Watch points out 'we cannot expect one overarching instrument to tackle the problems associated with small arms along the lines of the ban on landmines. Various

policies, instruments and capacities have to be developed simultaneously - precisely what IANSA seeks to do'. An IANSA 'Founding Document' setting out the objectives and structure of the Network will be published in April.

Olara Otunnu, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict said at the meeting 'Small arms are causing misery and destruction all over the world. Creative methods are needed to link up national and international action. The development of IANSA is a vital step towards tackling the greatest humanitarian challenge of the next century.'

IANSA will be formally launched in the Hague on 11 May during the Hague Appeal for Peace week. Please refer to the later section on upcoming conferences for details of the IANSA Plenary and workshops at this meeting. ◆

For details contact Steve Shropshire at Saferworld: Tel: (+44) 171 580 8886. Fax: (+44) 171 631 1444. Email: <SteveShropshire@sworld.gn.apc.org>

Regional Focus

Sierra Leone

The seven-year war in Sierra Leone again reached the capital Freetown in early January after months of intense fighting upcountry between the rebel coalition of the former junta AFRC/RUF (Armed Forces Ruling Council and the Revolutionary United Front), and the CDF (civil defence forces) backed by the Nigerian-led ECOMOG.

Following the reinstatement by ECOMOG of the democratically elected Kabbah government in February 1998, the rebel coalition retreated, strengthened by their period in control of state power. Their use of terror against civilian populations has led to continued displacement, with over 600,000 Sierra Leonean refugees in Liberia and Guinea, and at least 150,000 internally displaced. The January offensive left another 150,000 homeless in Freetown.

The ability of the rebel groups to re-enter Freetown has exposed the failings of the Kabbah government's military strategy, which is backed by ECOMOG and the international community. This reflects the difficulties faced by a relatively conventional force in defeating a well-organised and funded guerrilla group. It also demonstrates the continuing effectiveness of the rebels' strategy, including their strengthened external alliances as a result of the rebel/army union, and increased utilisation of Sierra Leone's diamond resources to fund arms purchases and mercenaries. The abuse of civilian populations and their use as human shields in battles against ECOMOG has also proved highly successful. On the other side, CDF forces have also committed atrocities, while ECOMOG bombing campaigns have been heavily criticised for the extent of their 'collateral' damage.

GUINEA

SIERRA LEONE

Kabala

Kambia

Makeni

Lungi
Lunsar
Pepel
Kallahun

FREETOWN

Shenge · Bo · Kenema

Momaligi
Bonthe

North Atlantic Ocean

LIBERIA

In spite of the key roles played by regional and international alliances and interests, this is still fundamentally a civil war and its resolution must be sought locally. A major area of contention relates to the issue of peace versus justice, and the merits of the military strategy as opposed to the pursuit of negotiations with the rebels. There has always been massive public resentment of the violent and highly predatory methods used by the AFRC/RUF, and strong support for the democratic government. But many have also regarded Kabbah's confrontational strategy as a serious mistake. While the political project of the rebels appears incoherent – particularly in the light of their appalling human rights abuses – their continuing military struggle and the more general militarisation of the political process is still understood by some to reflect deep-rooted injustices in the patrimonial political system. This is still apparent, especially in the way that individual cabinet members known for putting their personal ambitions ahead of the interests of the country remain influential.

Many commentators from within and without the country have emphasised the need to address these trends as part of any attempt to seek a peaceful means of resolution. They also stress the importance of acknowledging the complexity of the conflict and multiplicity of internal and external interests involved. External interests need to be addressed beyond the level of rhetoric, particularly the network that reportedly involves Burkina Faso, Liberia and Ukraine in mineral and arms trade with rebel forces. Similarly, the economic interests of the backers of the government, including ECOMOG, must be recognised as contributing to the conflict.

The difficult humanitarian situation is expected to deteriorate further if military activity continues. Some humanitarian activity has been possible upcountry, but relief work in Freetown has been limited by security conditions. Huge physical damage has been done to private and public property and infrastructure, and the medical needs of all victims continue to increase. Some relief agencies have, however, restarted their operations in Freetown.

In the main, relief activity is restricted due to ECOMOG's prohibition of high frequency radio equipment; some agencies have had their equipment impounded by force due to alleged interference with military operations. Agencies have also been hampered by differing perceptions of the neutrality of humanitarian work, despite earlier efforts to disseminate humanitarian principles to the government, ECOMOG and the CDFs, and the development in November 1998 of a new joint Code of Conduct (see earlier article).

NGOs in Sierra Leone have demonstrated some ability to develop and implement innovative relief and rehabilitation programmes sensitive to the inherently unstable situation. A dynamic local NGO sector and local staff of international NGOs have contributed to this process, effectively utilising local knowledge and enabling many operations to continue without the presence of expatriate personnel. Flexibility in food aid implementation is another achievement, as seen in a CARE programme that uses a variety of indicators of vulnerability at village level for targeting purposes. Other programmes have not been so successful. For example, the £2m demobilisation programme funded by DfID and the $18m six-month UNOMSIL budget for UN military personnel to 'observe the war' were seen as particularly inappropriate. There is, as ever, a major shortage of information and analysis about the nature and impact of the conflict, without which it is difficult to develop either effective relief and rehabilitation programmes or policy on political level interventions. ◆

Liberia

The alleged support by Liberia for the rebel forces in Sierra Leone's war epitomises the current problems facing the country in its attempts to rebuild a functioning and credible state following the civil war. While Liberian officials have continually denied any such role, strong evidence shows that, at the very least, Liberian border areas have been used by the AFRC/RUF for re-supplying. Many observers are convinced that links exist at the highest levels and that Liberia is playing an important role in the network controlling the exchange of diamonds for arms, ammunition and mercenaries.

Charles Taylor's close personal connections with Burkina Faso and Libya have contributed further to the general image of Liberia as a 'rogue state', heavily involved in the regional and global black economy and controlled by an elite far more interested in self-enrichment than good governance. Pirate companies have continued their close involvement in the illegal exploitation of Liberia's resources, particularly in the mineral and logging sector. Here companies operate as in the war with little regard for reforestation and other environmental controls. The recent establishment of a mining subsidiary of Greater Churches Limited, a US operation banned in some US states for extortion, is not encouraging. The dynamic of the political economy appears little changed from the war economy, and patterns of economic exploitation may even have intensified with the domination of former warlord Taylor over the Liberian government since his landslide victory in July 1997.

The perception of Liberia as a rogue state is reflected in the restriction by donors of aid budgets for rehabilitation and development programmes. Strict conditionalities relating to governance and accountability agreed by major donors have been maintained, and to date very limited bilateral funding has been made available. US assistance still consists mainly of food aid donated through emergency channels, with some support for good governance and press freedom programmes funded through the non-governmental sector. The EC has further restricted its highly conditional disbursements following the replacement of the reputable planning minister, Amelia Ward, with someone well-known before the war for diverting public funds. International financial institutions have not yet reached restructuring agreements which would allow renewed disbursements, and only UN agencies seem to be offering unconditional support to government departments, despite earlier cases of embezzlement. Investors are also constrained by a lack of assurance from the government regarding issues of accountability, as well as by ongoing insecurity.

The lack of a so-called democracy dividend for Taylor as a result of these realities, while criticised internally, is seen by many in the donor community as the necessary and morally justified use of leverage to discourage such negative trends. The dilemma, however, remains between the potential for change through positive engagement as opposed to the negative effects of disengagement, of retarding the on-going peace process through a lack of resources, and of abandoning Liberians to the international crooks. While a peace dividend is observable in the

country, the slow speed of economic rehabilitation, to some extent due to the lack of international funds for reconstruction, appears to be hindering processes of reconciliation. The economic costs to Liberia of the seven-year conflict have been estimated as approaching US$4bn, and while the impetus for rebuilding must come from within external support is also necessary to help replace lost capital and rebuild destroyed institutions.

More thought should be given by donors to mechanisms that can promote positive development, in conjunction with the existing negative incentives of limiting funding. There is public awareness both of the need for external investment and of the high levels of corruption within the government, but little connection is made between the slow rate of rehabilitation and the corrupt dynamic of the political economy. Limited support has been given by donors in an attempt to strengthen local mechanisms of accountability: US funding for the rehabilitation of the law school at Liberia's university is one positive example, but far greater efforts could be made in this area of civic education.

An increased knowledge among Liberians of patterns of corruption could help empower them to demand greater accountability from their democratically elected government. Since the election, little use has been made of local press campaigns to expose and shame politicians involved in illegal activity – something attempted during the Abuja II disarmament process and recently employed effectively in Sierra Leone against corrupt politicians there by Freetown newspaper *For di People*. While the difficulties of channelling funding, given the current conditions, should not be under-estimated, and the need for conditionality remains, greater attempts should be made by donors to seek out positive and accountable rehabilitation initiatives.◆

Regional Focus

RRN Network Papers

RRN Network Papers are contributions on specific experiences or issues prepared either by RRN members or contributing specialists.

RRN Good Practice Reviews

RRN Good Practice Reviews are commissioned 'state of the art' reviews on different sectors or activities within the relief and rehabilitation field. Prepared by recognised specialists, and subject to peer review, they are produced in a format that is readily accessible to field-based personnel.

ORDER publications RRN

PLEASE ENTER THE NUMBER OF COPIES YOU WISH TO ORDER:

Network Papers (£5 each excluding postage – £3.50 to members or for orders of 10 or more)

☐ NP 1 ☐ NP 6   ☐ NP 11 ☐ NP 16 ☐ NP 21 ☐ NP 26
☐ NP 2 ☐ NP 7   ☐ NP 12 ☐ NP 17 ☐ NP 22 ☐ NP 27
☐ NP 3 ☐ NP 8   ☐ NP 13 ☐ NP 18 ☐ NP 23 ☐ NP 28
☐ NP 4 ☐ NP 9   ☐ NP 14 ☐ NP 19 ☐ NP 24 ☐ NP 29
☐ NP 5 ☐ NP 10 ☐ NP 15 ☐ NP 20 ☐ NP 25

Good Practice Reviews (£10 each excluding postage; £7.50 to members or for orders of 10 or more)

☐ GPR 1 ☐ GPR 2 ☐ GPR 3 ☐ GPR 4 ☐ GPR 5 ☐ GPR 6 ☐ GPR 7

Postage and packing: 20% of order value for UK and EU;
25% for all overseas orders; 35% for Far East and Australasia.

TOTAL VALUE OF ORDER £ _____

DELIVERY ADDRESS

Title (Dr/Mr/Ms etc) .... Forename .... Surname ....

Delivery address ....

....

.... Postcode .... Country ....

Tel .... Fax .... Email ....
please include country codes

- -

publication orders
HOW TO PAY

☐ I enclose **cash/postal order**
☐ I enclose a **cheque** made payable to the *Overseas Development Institute*
☐ I enclose **credit card details** (Mastercard/Visa/Access)

Please debit my mastercard / visa / access card no. ....

Expiry date of card .... Signature ....

Credit card billing address ....

....

☐ I request an **invoice** to be sent to me

Invoice address ....

.... Purchase order ref ....

FORM registration **RRN**

PLEASE COMPLETE **BOTH** *PAGES*

Title (Dr/Mr/Ms etc.) .... Forenames .... Surname ....

Present post ....

Organisation ....

In which country are you *physically* located? ....

Nationality ....

Please note that we request details of nationality and location only to monitor our circulation.

Approximate no. of people working in your organisation (country office): ....

Mailing Address ....

....

....

Postcode .... Country ....

telephone ....
please include country code

fax ....
please include country code

e-mail ....

website ....

Annual subscription to the RRN entitles members to three Newsletters, four to six Network Papers and one to two Good Practice Reviews per year. Back issues are available to members at a reduced rate.

☐ I would like to **become a full member at a cost of £25.00 per year***
   *please see over for details on how to pay

☐ I would like to be considered for **full membership free of charge** and enclose evidence of the following:
   • an active involvement in humanitarian assistance operations
   • ongoing activities in countries/regions experiencing complex political emergencies
   A limited number of free memberships are available annually with a maximum of 3 per office per country.

☐ I would like to receive **a free annual subscription to the Newsletter** only

☐ I have access to the World Wide Web and would like to **receive RRN publications via e-mail** free of charge.

Visit our web-site and register on-line at:
www.oneworld.org/odi/rrn/index.html

In which language would you prefer to receive RRN publications? ☐ French ☐ English

Please indicate the type of organisation for which you work *(please tick only one)*

☐ 'Northern' NGO - Operational
☐ 'Northern' NGO - Funding agency
☐ 'Southern' NGO
☐ National agency/Government department
☐ Bilateral donor organisation
☐ UN Agency (eg. OCHA, WFP, UNHCR)
☐ Red Cross Movement
☐ Independent Consultancy
☐ University/research institution
☐ Library/documentation centre/publisher

please answer further questions overleaf....

I have completed the registration form (and enclose the appropriate remittance*)

Signed ···

Date ....

For our own evaluation purposes, please complete the following sections:

Current sector of work

- ☐ Medicine/health
- ☐ Water/sanitation
- ☐ Anthropology/sociology
- ☐ Logistics/transport/food aid

- ☐ Nutrition
- ☐ Economics
- ☐ Agriculture
- ☐ Human rights

- ☐ Civil engineering/architecture
- ☐ Natural/environmental sciences
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Other - please specify

....

Current country/region of work

- ☐ Western Europe
- ☐ Eastern/Central Europe
- ☐ CIS
- ☐ Central Africa
- ☐ East Africa
- ☐ West Africa

- ☐ Southern Africa
- ☐ North Africa
- ☐ Middle East
- ☐ North America
- ☐ Central & South America

- ☐ Far East
- ☐ South East Asia
- ☐ Central Asia
- ☐ Australia & Pacific
- ☐ Other - please specify

....

Please name up to 6 countries of which you have particular experience/knowledge:

....

How did you hear about the **RRN**?

- ☐ At a conference
- ☐ RRN Newsletter

- ☐ Via a colleague
- ☐ RRN personnel

- ☐ Personal invitation
- ☐ Other - please specify

....

Note that the details given on this form are stored electronically on the RRN database.
*If you **do not** wish your name and organisation to appear on the RRN World Wide Web site, please tick box* ☐

— —

annual subscription fees
HOW TO PAY

☐ I enclose £25.00/£55.00* **cash/postal order**

☐ I enclose a **cheque** for £25.00/55.00* made payable to the *Overseas Development Institute*

☐ I enclose **credit card details** (Mastercard/Visa/Access)
Please debit my mastercard / visa / access card no:

....

Expiry date of card .... Signature ....

Credit card billing address ....

....

....

☐ Please send me an **invoice** for £25.00/£55.00*

Invoice address ....

.... Purchase order ref ....

Disasters

Full members of the RRN are entitled to a 15% reduction on the annual subscription to Disasters. Joint annual subscription costs £55.00.

I would like to subscribe to both the RRN and Disasters at a total cost of £55.00.* ☐

www.blackwellpublishers.co.uk

Nicaragua

Long before Hurricane Mitch ravaged Nicaragua, the country's economic and social panorama was bleak. Economist Alejandro Martinez Cuenca had begun to warn of the toll exacted by the Asian economic crisis and pointed to the significant drop in price of key Nicaraguan exports by the time the hurricane struck. He stressed the potentially devastating long-term effects of this crisis given Nicaragua's increasing global economic interdependence. Though most government officials maintained that Nicaragua would not be affected by the crisis, sociologist Oscar Rene Vargas predicted the 'Africanisation' of Nicaragua: ever higher levels of poverty, increasing malnutrition among children, rising illiteracy rates and the like.

In the best of times much of Nicaragua is difficult to reach. Within five days in October, Hurricane Mitch dropped four feet of rain. The resulting floods surpassed anything that Nicaragua's civil defence had ever prepared for, and many areas were virtually cut off.

On the last morning of October, Felicitas Zeledon, mayor of Posoltega – a small village in northwest Nicaragua – announced that several small villages in her municipality were buried under a wall of mud. She was accused of being 'alarmist' by the government and of having exaggerated the situation.

The reality of Mitch's impact on the country is truly staggering. Damages have been estimated at US$1.5bn, including US$600m in losses to the country's road and bridge infrastructure. Much of Nicaragua's basic grain crop has been wiped out (the next planting season is not until May), many poor people's homes have been destroyed or severely damaged, and thousands of domestic animals lost.

Needless to say the areas hardest hit were those least able to absorb the damage. A governmental 'map of poverty' issued by the Social Emergency Investment Fund before the hurricane could be mistaken for a map of the areas hardest hit by Mitch. Not surprisingly the poorest areas are also those most devastated in environmental terms, and indeed Mitch's passage revealed the enormity of the ecological damage already existing Nicaragua.

Complaints concerning the politicisation of aid distribution began in the immediate aftermath of the hurricane. In a clear violation of municipal autonomy the government excluded elected Sandinista mayors as well as a number of liberal mayors who have questioned government policies, from receiving aid. As serious is the continuing marginalisation of civil society. President Aleman, already in a conflictual relationship with the many NGOs which have borne the brunt of attending to the population's needs (state funds have been slashed by structural adjustment programmes) has been openly hostile to including them in any relief work.

Aside from its mismanagement of the situation, of equal concern is the government's inability to direct relief or reconstruction efforts in a coherent way. Sociologist Orlando Nunez accuses the government of being little more than an 'overseer' for the international financial institutions and says the disaster has served to highlight how Aleman has completely sidestepped his responsibility of providing even a minimal level of social services to the Nicaraguan population.

Though Nicaragua has been the beneficiary of significant debt forgiveness over the last two months, the Civil Society Lobbying Group (GPC) worries that the Aleman government will only further burden the country with debt as part of the reconstruction process. The GPC is calling for debt forgiveness to be linked both to a coherent strategy of acquiring any new debts associated with reconstruction, as well as to a national plan of sustainable development.

Meanwhile the Non-Governmental Emergency Relief and Reconstruction Coalition has set up a monitoring process which includes financial auditing of funds and resources received by NGOs, as well as an innovative process of social auditing that will

involve those people most affected by the hurricane. This will allow the coalition to assess governmental, non-governmental and church response to the disaster.

Reconstruction work continues apace, with most major roads and bridges repaired. Yet refugees from the hurricane still live in squalid conditions and complain that food is not reaching their shelters. Orlando Nunez warns of a wave of rural–urban migration (or emigration out to Costa Rica or the US) which may result in the virtual depopulation of much of Nicaragua's rural sector. To compound this, agricultural experts report that the hurricane has transformed large tracts of land into areas which are no longer suitable for agriculture. Nicaragua is facing 'apocalyptic poverty' in the rural sector, says Nunez, who adds that the government and the large landowners have been looking to recover vast extensions of land. This could set the stage for an accelerated process of land concentration which would relegate the already poor peasantry to a state of even more crushing poverty. ◆

Haiti

A political crisis, simmering for the best part of two years, finally boiled over in January and Haiti is once again headline news.

The continuing power struggle between supporters and opponents of former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide caused the cancellation of partial parliamentary elections in 1997 and 1998, and has left the government without a prime minister since June 1997. In an attempt to break through the stalemate current president Rene Preval declared, in early January 1999, that according to a 1995 electoral law the terms of most remaining members of parliament and other elected local officials had expired. In a televised address Preval said that in the absence of a functioning parliament he himself would appoint a prime minister and would rule by decree pending fresh elections. His action prompted critics, in Haiti and the US, to charge that he had staged a coup and was preparing the way for a return to dictatorship.

News of Preval's action and the outcry it provoked has raised doubts about the country's prospects for stability and economic development. Both the UN Security Council and the EU presidency issued declarations deploring the conflict between the executive and legislature and offering to assist with preparations for immediate parliamentary elections.

This political crisis reflects the deepening divisions between former allies from the Lavalas coalition, which won a landslide victory in the 1995 general election. The coalition began to splinter in late 1996 when former president Aristide formed a new populist party, Fanmi Lavalas, in an attempt to distance himself from the government dominated by erstwhile allies, the social democratic Organisation of People in Struggle (OPL). A major source of contention was the government's commitment to a structural adjustment programme.

A quick solution to the collapsing state of Haitian democracy seems unlikely. On the one hand the three years of OPL-dominated government have failed to improve the standard of living of the average Haitian, despite the provision of millions of dollars in international aid. The 1998 UNDP Human Development Report, which ranks countries on the basis of a human development index, put Haiti 159th out of 174 countries – a drop of 32 places since 1992. The report estimated that only 60 per cent of Haitians have access to healthcare, and 70 per cent of the workforce is unemployed. Further gloomy social indicators were provided by the World Bank's 1998 Poverty Assessment Report. This states that only a quarter of the population has access to safe drinking water, more than half of adults are illiterate, and 80 per cent of the two-thirds of the population living in rural areas exist in conditions of abject poverty.

On the other hand Aristide's Fanmi Lavalas offers little in the way of alternative policies, and it is hard to see how any government could function

without aid from the Bretton Woods institutions and the US which, together with the EU and other bilateral donors, effectively bankroll the country. Although most observers believe that Fanmi Lavalas would win a majority of seats in elections for a new parliament, widespread disenchantment with electoral politics suggest it would be achieved on the basis of a very low level of voter participation.

This political crisis leaves Haiti poorly placed to address a whole host of social and economic problems. Already deeply depressed, the domestic economy is still reeling from the after-effects of last September's Hurricane Georges, which destroyed almost all the rice harvest in the country's main rice-growing region and left over 200,000 homeless. On the human rights front the judiciary is still plagued by corrupt magistrates, and a rookie police force, still chaperoned by UN trainers and monitors, is struggling to cope with an increase in violent urban crime and in the trafficking of cocaine from Colombia through Haiti to the US.

Future prospects for stable government are far from certain. In addition, as the social and economic plight of the poor majority continues to worsen the strategies of both multi- and bi-lateral donors for interventions in support of medium- to long-term development, carried out in conjunction with national and local government institutions, may prove unrealisable. In this case, Haitian society, rather than making the anticipated progress away from a situation marked by the recent phases of humanitarian relief and rehabilitation, will require a continued and even extended role for local grassroots organisations and national and international NGOs. ◆

A new book, *Libète! A Haiti Anthology*, edited by Charles Arthur and Michael Dash and covering many aspects of Haitian politics, economics, history and culture, will be published by the Latin America Bureau (UK) and Marcus Weiner (US) in April. Email: <haitisupport@gn.apc.org>

Participatory Review in Chronic Instability: The Experience of the Ikafe Refugee Settlement Programme, Uganda

by Koos Neefjes

This paper presents the participatory review of the Ikafe refugee settlement project in northwest Uganda. Established to shelter south Sudanese, the Ikafe project allocated land to the refugees to help them become self-sufficient in food supply, achieve self-management and representation, and reach some measure of integration with the host population. Those involved in the project included the Ugandan authorities, multilateral aid agencies and international NGOs.

Leaders of the host population, refugees, and Oxfam, Action Africa in Need and the Jesuit Refugee Service, all participated in the review. Attempts were undertaken to reach a deeper understanding of the conflicting interests, and to formulate ways forward. The review set out to use methodologies previously employed in comparatively stable situations, but was interrupted by violence. Inspite of this it continued to engage with all stakeholders, adapted to the changing context, and effectively developed ideas for participatory review in situations of instability by 'doing'. Unfortunately the conclusions were overtaken by further violence and evacuation of staff from the project site. Most refugees also moved away and the bigger settlement of the project is now closed. However, the methodology of the review carries many positive lessons in terms of encouraging cooperation, increased transparency of intervening agencies and, above all, improving the plight of refugees and poor host populations.

Angola

The peace process agreed by the Angolan government and UNITA with the signing of the Lusaka Protocols in 1994, and which had appeared increasingly fragile over the last two years, finally broke down in December 1998.

It had been clear that far from demobilising, as required by the protocols, UNITA had been using the time to actively re-arm. In early December the government attacked the UNITA strongholds of Bailundo and Andulo in the central highlands in an attempt to extend state administration 'by force of arms'. UNITA responded with weaponry of a sophistication that surprised the Angolan armed forces. In a virtual repeat of the events of 1993 following UNITA's rejection of the election results, their troops surrounded and shelled the government-controlled provincial capitals of Huambo, Kuito and Malange. After an initial hiatus in field leadership the Angolan armed forces appeared to gain the upper hand with a strong defence of these cities. At the end of January in a possible move towards the oil installations in Soyo, UNITA troops took the town of M'banza Congo 500km north of Luanda; they held it for two weeks before it was retaken by government forces. This resulted in an estimated 200,000 refugees fleeing across the border into the DRC.

Twenty-two UN staff are still missing following the shooting down of two Hercules transport planes over UNITA-held territory in late December and early January. Both planes were transporting peace monitors from MONUA, the UN observer mission. UNITA, suspected of targeting the mission, has officially admitted no responsibility. President Jose dos Santos has made it clear he thinks MONUA can no longer play a useful role given the present situation. The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan warned that the situation 'has the potential to develop into a full-scale humanitarian catastrophe'. Though he recommended the withdrawal of the peace monitors due to the 'steadily worsening security situation', he has consistently stressed the need to continue humanitarian assistance. As it stands, MONUA is scheduled to cease operations when its mandate expires on 26 February.

The number of internally displaced is now estimated at 1.5 million. There is concern that many more have crossed the border into the DRC and Zambia. Relief flights into the provinces were temporarily suspended at the end of December but have now resumed. UN agencies are in the process of revising the amounts requested in the 1999 Consolidated Appeal in light of recent events. While rains have been good much farmland is inaccessible and WFP's representative in Angola has said that the next few months look 'very grim'; 80–90 per cent of humanitarian assistance is deliverable only by air.

After decades of instability, Angola's population is extremely vulnerable to shocks. The insecurity and psychological stress induced by the return to war and the possibility of renewed siege situations is tangible. Mine laying recommenced some time ago. De-mining has now ceased and organisations are concentrating on mine awareness, training and institution-building.

The economic effects of the situation are felt throughout the country. Regular and arbitrary price rises are again adding to the extreme poverty and insecurity of people's lives. The present denial of access to much agricultural land will aggravate this situation. Support to Angola's civil society continues with NGOs and churches resuming ongoing work where they can, and adapting to give emergency support where appropriate. A meeting of senior church and civic leaders took place in Luanda on 21 December 1998 to discuss plans for an Angolan peace-building project.

The development of the fledgling official opposition, including the UNITA delegates who had been incorporated into the Government of National Unity in April 1997, has received a huge setback. The UNITA leader, Jonas Savimbi, is increasingly seen as individually responsible for much of UNITA's unconstructive behaviour. A fuel and arms embargo, a travel and flight ban (and closure of overseas offices) and most recently sanctions on diamond exports, have been imposed on UNITA. However, it is estimated that the organisation has earned $US3.7bn from diamonds since 1992, and

enforcement of sanctions is severely restricted by porous borders and the lack of global political will and commercial desire to improve compliance.

The situation has been further complicated by the involvement of both sides in the DRC conflict: the Angolan government has sent troops to support President Kabila and UNITA sides with those who oppose him. Most recently the Angolan government has officially accused the Zambian government of supporting UNITA, a charge that Zambia has denied.

It is clear that Angola is entering another phase of protracted conflict. It will be essential that the international community maintains it capacity to assess the developing situation, and assists in meeting increased needs. If this does not happen there is the potential for greater humanitarian crisis than was seen as a result of the fighting in 1993.◆

Georgia

After three years of structural adjustment, inflation in Georgia fell from 19,000 per cent in 1996 to 7 per cent in 1998 and the economy began to grow at around 10 per cent/annum. Such positive macro-indicators belie the harsh realities on the ground. Unemployment and poverty are high and growing (affecting between 40 and 50 per cent of Georgians), the economy remains one-third its 1990 size, and tax revenues are some of the lowest in the world. Public investment is non-existent, and most revenues are disbursed recurrent costs or debt service payments. Following the economic crisis in Russia late last year the Georgian economy suffered a further setback: the Georgian lari – almost completely stable from its introduction in 1995 – fell against the US dollar from 1.35 to 2.15 (at time of writing).

On the political front, ethnic tensions and power politics have compounded Georgia's economic problems resulting in population displacement and civil unrest. Since independence there have been sporadic threats to the stability of the state from anti-Shevardnadze forces whose primary base is in western Georgia. In addition, two unresolved conflicts (in the secessionist zones of Abkhazia and South Ossetia) have left parts of the country beyond the control of central government and in the hands of groups which are unable to support public infrastructure in territory under their control.

Approximately 250,000 ethnic Georgians have been displaced from Abkhazia, which faces severe depopulation, and several thousand have gone from South Ossetia. In addition, thousands of ethnic Ossets have fled areas of Georgia to the Russian Federation; with UNHCR help they have been returning since 1997.

Over the last two years internally displaced persons (IDPs) have also started to return to their former places of residence and UNHCR-supported

rehabilitation is underway in both conflict zones. However, this process has been completely disrupted in Abkhazia due to the outbreak of hostilities and renewed displacement in May 1998.

The Abkhaz conflict appears the most intransigent of the two, and continuing bouts of partisan/militia clashes and mining and hostage taking severely impair the freedom of movement and security of returnees, aid workers, peace-keepers and international military observers. South Ossetia, meanwhile, has re-established grassroots links with the rest of Georgia, and there are numerous contacts between the parties to the conflict under the auspices of a UNDP rehabilitation programme.

An Integrated Approach to Aid

In 1993, the UN issued a Consolidated Appeal for the southern Caucasus. This process ended in mid-1997 when the relevant governments, donors and the aid community reached a consensus that the situation was no longer an emergency, nonetheless acknowledging ongoing pockets of outstanding humanitarian need. In order to address these needs the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA, now OCHA) issued the innovative *Post-Appeal Framework: Linking Humanitarian Needs and Development Strategies* in June 1997. This was followed by Georgia's *Country Strategy Note* which aimed to provide donors with an understanding of the government's long-term development strategy.

It is now broadly accepted that although Georgia is no longer a classic complex emergency it is a complex aid situation. Reinforcing the growing recognition that it is false to speak of, or plan aid according to, an 'aid continuum', the situation in Georgia demands the whole spectrum of aid.

Emergency relief – previously the major focus – is still required among the newly displaced and among some vulnerable population groups and institutions. Increasingly, rehabilitation programmes are being called for to help communities and individuals re-establish themselves. Finally, major development assistance is recognised as a crucial corollary to all of the above in order to enhance Georgia's chances of overcoming systemic economic and political challenges.

Aid agencies are increasingly working toward an integrated approach in recognition of the mutually dependent nature of the aid spectrum in Georgia. In mid-1998, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator established a working group on enhancing capacities for self-sufficiency. The broad range of humanitarian and development actors in the group seek to catalogue and elaborate upon agencies' experience in the relevant programming spheres in order to address outstanding needs and to share findings with the government and donors. ◆

Training Courses

Health Emergencies in Large Populations
21 June–9 July, Geneva, Switzerland

Jointly organised by the ICRC (Health Division), the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Geneva and the World Health Organization (Division of Emergency and Humanitarian Action), this course aims to:
- train experienced health personnel who may be called upon to deal with disaster situations;
- develop a common approach allowing better programme coordination between the various humanitarian agencies involved;
- select methods of assessment appropriate to emergency situations, and stimulate research in this particular field.

For further information contact ICRC: ICRC, HELP '99 – Geneva, 19 ave de la Paix, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland. Tel: (+41) 22 730 22 23. Fax: (+41) 22 733 20 57. Email: <ideslarzes.gva@icrc.org>

Strategic Human Resource Management
3–28th May 1999, Canberra, Australia

This short course has been developed to provide participants with an introduction to the most recent changes in HR Management within development, and to enable participants to prepare constructive proposals for improving HR management practice within their own organisations.

Content will include organisational reform, management and culture, communication skills, motivation of personnel, productivity measurement, performance management, conflict resolution and industrial negotiation.

For further information contact Meera Nair, Professional Short Course Officer at the Australian National University: Tel: (+61) 2 6249 4351. Fax: (+61) 2 6248 8805. Email: <meera.nair@anu.edu.au> Website: <http://ncdsnet.anu.edu.au>

Management in Relief and Emergencies
20–25th June 1999, Surrey, UK

This training course is for project coordinators and managers wishing to cover the following areas:

- people management, including: motivating; delegating; maximising performance; resolving conflict; giving feedback and appraising with both individuals and teams;
- planning in a strategic 'big picture' context;
- project management;
- communication skills, including interviewing and influencing techniques, and taking into account the diverse cultural environments;
- personal stress management;
- workload and time management.

For details contact Ian Neal: MERLIN, 14 David Mews, Porter Street, London, W1M 1HW, UK. Tel: (+44) 171 487 2505. Email: <neal@merlin.org.uk>

The New Peacekeeping Partnership in Action
20 April–1 May, Clementsport, Nova Scotia, Canada

The aim of this course is to provide members of the peacekeeping disciplines with the knowledge required to permit them to function effectively within the New Peacekeeping Partnership (military, policy and civilian).

For details contact Steven G. Loyst: Assistant Registrar, Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, Cornwalllis Park, PO Box 100, Clementsport, Nova Scotia, B0S, 1EO. Tel: (+1) 902 638 6811 ext. 109. Fax: (+1) 902 638 8888. Email: <registra@ppc.cdnpeacekeeping.ns.ca>

First Aid for Overseas Workers
22 April, London, UK

This course covers resuscitation, extremes of temperature, and injuries caused by mines. Sucessful completion of this course leads to the award of the British Red Cross Society (BRCS) Basic First Aid Card of Competence, valid for three years.

For details contact Lucia May, National HQ, BRCS, 9 Grosvenor Crescent, London, SW1X 7EJ. Tel: (+44) 171 235 5454. Fax: (+44) 171 235 0397.

Working With Conflict
26 April–2 July 1999, Birmingham, UK

This intensive 10-week course is designed for those working in relief, development, rights and peace. Modules include:

- making sense of conflict and change: the structure and dynamics of protracted social and political conflict;
- facing violence: strategies for survival and change: moving from violent confrontation to dialogue, coping with crisis;
- towards just outcomes: preventing escalation of conflict, peace-building.

For details contact Responding to Conflict: RTC, 1046 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 6LJ, UK. Tel: (+44) 121 415 5641. Fax: (+44) 121 415 4119. Email: <enquiries@respond.org>

RedR Training Courses
Various locations

RedR provides short, intensive courses for relief personnel.

- Refugees, Agencies and Relief Workers, 30 April–5 May 1999, Birmingham, UK
- Managing People and Projects, 16–19 April, Rutland, UK
- Roads and Crossings, 1–5 May 1999, Yorkshire, UK.

For further information contact Caroline Mitchell: RedR, 1 Gt. George St, London, SW1P 3AA, UK. Tel: (+44) 171 233 3116. Fax: (+44) 171 222 0564. Email: <info@redr.demon.co.uk>

Capacity-Building Through 'Partnerships': Implications for International NGOs
9–13 May 1999, Arusha, Tanzania

Targeted at senior managers and programme officers of international NGOs, the course aims to develop a deeper understanding of an organisational approach to capacity-building and its implications.

For further information contact Natasha Gya: INTRAC, PO Box 563, Oxford, OX2 6RZ, UK. Tel: (+44) 1865 201 851. Fax: (+44) 1865 201 852. Email: <intrac@gn.apc.org> Website: <www.intrac.org>

Conferences

Global Consultation Meeting on Disaster Information Centers

San Jose, Costa Rica, 18–20 November 1998

The chief interest of this three-day workshop was the current and future role of virtual document collections in the prevention of and response to disasters. The workshop set out to answer the following questions:

- How has the Internet changed the way we organise and access information?
- How has the Internet affected the amount and quality of information available?
- Have virtual collections replaced paper ones, improved them, or simply reproduced them in another format?
- Have issues of access and technological ability created a wider divide between the haves and the have-nots?

Some of the recurring themes in the workshop discussions were as follows.

The absence of access to technology: there is a need to recognise the total absence of access to technology among some target audiences and the very limited access available to many others. While it is recognised that the Internet and on-line databases are probably the best place to store information, other methods of distributing this information need to be in place.

The need for training: there is a continuous need for training of both users and managers of virtual collections. The potential of the Internet is lost if users are unable to find the information they require. Exploiting the potential of virtual collections requires thorough and constantly updated knowledge about how various softwares work.

The language of publication: the problem of the language of publication is difficult and ongoing. In theory it can be solved through the immediate translation capabilities of many softwares and Internet browsers, but in practice this is ineffective, insufficient or unavailable.

Incompatible software use among target audiences and coordinating centres: although agreements were made to share resources and workloads among the centres, it was noted that many of the centres use different software and that this is a recurring hindrance in efforts to share and disseminate information. It was agreed that efforts should be made to acquire compatible software on a regional basis.

Duplication of programmes: there is a considerable amount of overlap among centres, both in project efforts and document collections. Duplication of programmes should be identified so that work can be coordinated and time saved, while duplication of documents should be identified so that alternative sources for documents are available when one's usual source is inaccessible.

Standardised indexing language: it was agreed there is a need for a common and standardised indexing language to be used in the virtual collections so that the identification of documents on particular subjects is easy and exhaustive.

Internet issues: the possibilities inherent in the Internet were always at the forefront of discussions. Most participants were enthusiastic supporters of its potential for resource sharing, immediate disaster response and low-cost dissemination of information. But equally obvious was the fact that response to disasters and their overall management requires updated and sound research and knowledge, and that the management of this knowledge is not a technological problem but rather one that requires mediation and organisation by specialised persons and centres.

The workshop closed with the commitment to set up a website of links to all the centres with an Internet presence, to publish an annotated list of all those in attendance, to set up a listserv so that attendants could continue to correspond, and to identify the various lists of indexing terms available on the subject of disasters and commit to using one or a few of them in an effort to encourage consistency in the subject access to virtual collections.

For more information contact: John Paul Menu, Director, Division of Emergency and Humanitarian Response on: <menuj@who.ch> or Ricardo Perez of PAHO, on: <perezric@paho.org>

Workshop on Internal Displacement in Africa

Addis Ababa, Ethiopa,19–20 December 1998

This workshop brought together a rich cross-section of participants from international agencies, regional organisations, NGOs and research institutions. Jointly convened by the Brookings Institute, UNHCR and the OAU, the primary aim of the workshop was to produce a better understanding of the problems confronting internally displaced persons (IDPs) on the ground, as well as the strategies needed at national, regional and international level to help address their plight. More specifically, the workshop:

- promoted the dissemination and application throughout Africa of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, first presented to UNHCR in April 1998;
- explored the role of Africa's regional and sub-regional organisations in addressing the problem of internal displacement;
- formulated concrete conclusions and recommendations in relation to the issue of internal displacement for submission to the OAU ministerial meeting on refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Khartoum in late December 1998.

The workshop noted the scale and severity of the problem of internal displacement in Africa, by far the most seriously affected continent. As stated in Newsletter 12, the Guiding Principles represent the first international standards specific to IDPs and their particular needs. Since their publication last year they have quickly begun to gain authority and international standing and have been adopted and disseminated by OHCHR, UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, OCHA and other humanitarian organisations. Following discussion of the Guiding Principles – which included talks concerning the variety of different uses of the principles – the workshop went on to consider:

- How best to apply the principles (of note is the forthcoming publication of a field handbook which will provide practical guidance on the implementation of the principles, and efforts to provide training for field staff on the basis of these principles).
- The integration of protection and human rights in relief and development operations.
- The protection of internally displaced women and children.
- How to involve displaced and local communities in relief, development and reintegration activities.
- The role of regional and sub-regional organisations in situations of conflict and displacement.

For a full conference report contact the Brookings Institute, 1775 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC, USA. Tel: (+1) 202 797 6000. Fax: (+1) 202 797 6003.

Strengthening Lifeline Media in Regions of Conflict

Cape Town, South Africa, 6–11 December 1998

This workshop brought together for the first time those who are leading the way in using media to help build peace in different parts of the world. Organised by the Radio Partnership of the Geneva-based International Centre for Humanitarian Reporting in conjunction with the South Africa Media Peace Centre (MPC), it was part of a wider project funded by DfID's Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance Department to draw up guidelines of 'best practice' in this challenging field. Participants included media practitioners, those involved in conflict resolution, academics and evaluation specialists from 30 organisations in 15 countries.

A lot of innovative work is being done in video and community radio in South Africa. For example, the ICRC-supported community radio initiative aimed at reducing violence in Cape Town in the run-up to the 1999 elections. An important objective of this project is the empowerment of local communities through 'radio by the community, not for it'. A five-day training workshop for community radio staff emphasised the practical aspects of coping with violence through interactive, entertaining programming using storytelling and stimulating listener involvement.

Drama is being used by another radio initiative in Kwazulu-Natal. There, local people work on scripts tackle taxi wars – a common feature of South African township life. In real life the victims of violence in this particular case are refugees from Malawi. As Robert Manoff of the Centre for War,

Peace and the New Media in New York states, much of the media's effort in peace-building can be focused on 'celebrating otherness' – imbuing tolerance towards those different from ourselves.

The need for evaluation underlay the workshop: how do you come up with indicators that a media intervention promoting peace is in fact succeeding? The broad consensus was that if a number of building blocks are in place the likelihood of succeeding will be optimised. These building bricks include expert knowledge of the target area by project staff, a thorough needs assessment process, the involvement of the target audience in the design of the media intervention, setting 'do-able' objectives in terms of peace-building, broadcasting inter-active programmes, and on-going monitoring.

The workshop also made clear that 'desired outcomes' programming – programming with a definite editorial objective – should not be mounted in isolation. The laudable aims of this kind of programming can often be undermined by the coverage of conflict by news reporters with their tendency to emphasise the negative in an attempt to gain headlines and remain 'objective' from the fray. The question that emerges is whether, in this quest for objectivity, the journalist can or cannot intervene in events or take responsibility for the impact of his/her coverage. Many foreign correspondents are increasingly uncomfortable with their role which can end up distorting the news in an effort to make it palatable and easily comprehensible to a largely uninformed audience. For local journalists, concerns are focused on job security and their personal safety and that of their families. Is there, the workshop asked, a case for the responsibilities of the war reporter to be redefined?

These and other issues will be explored further in two planned publications which will be available from ICHR during the course of 1999. Copies of the conference report are also available. Contact: ICHR/ Radio Partnership, Villa de Grand-Montfleury, Versoix 1290, Geneva, Switzerland. Email: <info.ichr@ties.itu.int> Tel: (+41) 22 750 0950.

Children in Extreme Situations

London, UK, 26–27 November, 1998

This workshop was particularly timely given growing policy concerns regarding the mpact of armed conflict on children. This is due to the increasing involvement of civilians as victims and perpetrators of war. The event raised several issues and debates surrounding the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the UN's role in protecting the children's human rights, and the reality and complexity of children in conflict situations.

The conference began with an overview of the history and implications of the CRC, followed by a critique of the rights-based approach. Discussion centred around the practicality of enforcing the convention and the tensions between civil, political, social and economic rights. Some insisted that a rights-based approach has value but faces implementation difficulties on the ground. Others highlighted questions associated with whether the convention is largely aspirational, and contradictions in international and national law were cited.

The keynote address by Olara Otunnu, UN Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict, emphasised the growing moral vacuum in conflict due to the collapse of value systems. He advocated a more community-based focus to restore these values complimented by international norms, such as the CRC. Otunnu expressed concern about growing complacency and urged the international community to 'reclaim their lost taboos', and no longer 'accept as normal the unacceptable'.

Whether the convention is enforceable or whether its primary use is as an advocacy tool was not the only contentious issue. Participants questioned the assumed innocence of children; others questioned whether justice or therapy is appropriate for children who abuse human rights, and the need for a more diverse reaction to healing children after conflict was emphasised, along with greater consideration for traditional healing methods as practised in Namitxitxi in central-eastern Mozambique. The underlying theme was the issue of giving children a voice and whether agencies and others would be prepared to listen.

For details contact: London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London, WC2A 2AE. Tel. (+44) 171 405 7686. Email: <t.allen@lse.ac.uk>

The Emergency Personnel Seminar 2

11–13 November 1998, Brussels, Belgium

A second inter-agency emergency personnel seminar (EPS) took place in Brussels from 11–13 November 1998. The first was held in Dublin in November 1997 (see Newsletter 9 for a short report and Newsletter 10 for an article summarising a survey of agency views concerning the recruitment of emergency personnel). EPS 2 brought together some 55 participants from a wide number of NGOs, the UN and the Red Cross. The meeting concluded that a follow up seminar, probably towards the end of 1999, would be useful.

The origin of this seminar series is the awareness that, although aid agencies compete for scarce human resources they face very similar problems in finding, selecting, preparing and retaining personnel for emergency operations. They can therefore learn from each other and there is scope for greater collaboration than is currently the case.

The seminar first offered feedback from the working groups established after EPS 1 on training, advocacy for the release of health workers from the UK National Health Service, and a register of a pool of emergency workers. These had been neither particularly effective or active. By contrast the People in Aid project in the UK, on which an update was also provided, is active and effective. Then followed the presentation of a survey on foundation training for humanitarian personnel offered by various agencies. The resulting discussion concluded that there is a requirement for 'core awareness, knowledge and skills' separate from agency-specific induction that can be acquired through a 'foundation course', though also in other ways. Other discussion concerned the issue of locally employed staff in emergency situations.

While the seminar did not attempt to resolve the complex issues it did generate ways of moving forward and concluded with a list of specific action points on training and on an emergency personnel pool. Overall, the seminar was very informative. Some participants felt, however, that there was too much diagnosis and repetition of the known and not enough substantive progress. This probably reflects the problematic reality in humanitarian aid agencies: human resource management has not received the same attention and priority of boards and executive managers as has fundraising and operations. Consequently, human resource departments may be understaffed or full of younger and less experienced colleagues who don't have adequate support from senior management. This hampers the development of institutional learning, organisation policies, and collaborative action.

Related reports

- Adams, J (1998) 'Research on Foundation Training for Humanitarian Personnel' and (1999) 'Proceedings of the Second Emergency Personnel Seminar' are available from RedR at <http://www.redr.org> Fax (+44) 171 222 0564.
- Davidson, S & Neal, I (1998) 'Under Cover. Insurance for Aid Workers' can be obtained from People in Aid through <s.davidson@pia.co.uk> or from the RedR website (see article by A Hallam in RRN Newsletter 7, 'War Insurance for Aid Workers').
- Birch, M (1998) 'Training in Health Care in Emergencies. A review', and Jim Henry (1999) 'The Recruitment, Employment and Retention of Locally Employed Staff in Emergency Operations' can be obtained from International Health Exchange at <info@ihe.org.uk> Fax (+44) 171 379 1239.
- Division of Emergency and Humanitarian Action and the International Centre for Migration and Health (1998) 'Occupational Health of Field Personnel in Complex Emergencies: Report of a Pilot Study', Division of Emergency and Humanitarian Action, WHO, 20 Avenue Appia, CH 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland.
- The Humanitarian Training Initiative (HATI) has recruited an information officer who will maintain, develop and promote an area of reliefweb focussed on training courses: <www.reliefweb.int> Send all information about training courses to Craig Duncan: Email: <cd@reliefweb.int>

Conference Reports

Website

We are finding that the number of valuable conferences, seminars and discussions that are taking place is on the increase. In order to share the information with you, in the future we will be featuring conferences and book reviews of particular relevance to RRN readers on the RRN Website: <**www.oneworld.org/odi/rrn/index.html**>

Your Conferences

If you are holding a conference that we can feature in our 'forthcoming conferences' section, or if you are attending a meeting that you may like to write a short note on, please let us know.

Forthcoming Conferences

7th Annual International Conference on Conflict Resolution
6–16 May 1999, St Petersberg, Russia

Focusing on all aspects of conflict resolution and transformation, this joint UK/Russian-sponsored conference will feature presentations exploring conflict resolution within diverse contexts: arts and creativity; ecology; economics and business; education; gender; and global/regional conflict.

For more information contact Steve Olweean: Common Bond Institute, 12170 S Pine Ayr Drive, Climax, Michigan 49034, USA. Tel/Fax: (+1) 616 665 9393. Email: <solweean@aol.com> Website: <www.ahpweb.org/cbi/home.html>

Saving Human Lives in the Midst of Conflict: From Humanitarian Action Towards Humanising Governmental Action
2–3 July 1999, Paris, France

Organised by Médecins du Monde with Amnesty International and OXFAM UK, this conference will bring together politicians and humanitarian actors to examine ways in which political action affects the work of the humanitarian sector. The conference will be based on the premise that political decisions impact considerably upon the vulnerability of individuals in a crisis situation.

Contact Valerie Fernando: Conference Secretariat, 62, rue Marcadet, 75018, Paris, France. Fax: (+33) 1 44 92 13 62. Email: <christine.ihwe@medecinsdumonde.net> Website: <www.warvictims.com>

Launch of the International Action Network on Small Arms
11–15 May 1999, Hague Appeal for Peace, The Hague, Netherlands

During this week, IANSA will be involved in a number of activities. On 12 May there will be an IANSA plenary session and on the 13th and 14th there will be a series of workshops organised by IANSA participants.

For details contact Steve Shropshire: Tel: (+44) 171 580 8886. Fax: (+44) 171 631 1444. Email: <steveshropshire@sworld.gn.apc.org>

International Public Nutrition in Emergencies
17–18 June 1999, Feinstein International Famine Center, Tufts University, Medford, Massachussetts, USA

Malnutrition is one of the most significant public health problems in complex political emergencies, and giving free relief food takes the largest share of the international community's resources for humanitarian response. Yet the most important decisions about nutrition in emergencies are being made by non-nutritionists.

The aim of this workshop is to make international public nutrition an issue for senior policy and decision makers in emergencies.

Contact Sue Lautze: Feinstein International Famine Center, School of Nutrition Science and Policy, Tufts University, Medford, MA 01255, USA. Fax: (+1) 617 627 3428. Email: <slautze@infonet.tufts.edu>

2nd International Interdisciplinary Conference on Women and Health
12–14 July 1999, Edinburgh, Scotland

Organised by the European Association for Research on Women and Health, this conference aims to:

- stimulate communication and collaboration between researchers, clinicians and policy makers;
- bring critical contributions from theory and research into discussions of aetiology, clinical practice and healthcare systems;
- identify priority areas for research.

Contact Pamela Warner: Medical Statistics Unit, University of Edinburgh, Teviot Place, Edinburgh, EH8 9AG, UK. Email: <p.warner@ed.ac.uk> Website: <www.ucs.ed.ac.uk/~pamew/ICWH2.htm>

The Silent Emergency: HIV/AIDS in Conflict and Disasters
2 June 1999, NCVO, London

This seminar will debate issues such as military and migration, sexual violence against women and long term care for those with HIV/AIDS. Target audience is emergency policy makers and practitioners.

Contact: Ingrid Lewis at SCF-UK. Tel: (+44) 171 7035400 or email: <i.lewis@scfuk.org.uk

📖Publications

Mean Times: Humanitarian Action in Complex Political Emergencies – Stark Choices, Cruel Dilemmas
(1999) M Bryans, B Jones, J Gross Stein, University of Toronto, Canada. Vol 1, No 3

This report from the NGOs in Complex Emergencies Project examines the current realities facing humanitarians and populations under threat. The project commenced in late 1995 and brought together a mutli-disciplinary research effort seeking to understand some of the problems created by complex emergencies. Three core recommendations are offered in this report:

•   NGOs should enhance their political analysis and policy development skills;
•   NGOS should consider the privatisation of security for humanitarian purposes;
•   NGOs should take seriously the option of withdrawal or disengagement and develop an understanding of when the humanitarian ethic compels this, rather than presence.

For a hard copy of this report contact: Program on Conflict Management and Negotiation, Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto, 8th Floor – 252 Bloor St. West, Toronto, Canada, M5S 1V6. Tel (+416) 923 6641, ext. 6498. Fax: (+416) 926 4738. Email: <pcmn.alexandroff@utoronto.ca> Website: <www.toronto.ca/cis/conflict.html> Electronic copies in .pdf format are available from CARE Canada's website: <www.care.ca>

The Right to Food in Theory and Practice *(1998) Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Website: <http://www.fao.org/>*

The 1996 World Food Summit contained a pledge to reduce the number of undernourished people to half of its 1996 level by 2015. One of the means for achieving this was to improve the definition and implementation of the rights related to food as set out in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic and Social and Cultural Rights – a role entrusted to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. This collection of papers has been published by FAO to draw together contributions on various aspects of the subject of the right to food to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in December 1998, and contains an introduction by Mary Robinson.

Rights related to food are examined from both the human rights and operational points of view. Among the 10 papers comprising this collection are the following:

•   'The Human Right to Adequate Food and Freedom from Hunger' by Asbjørn Eide, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Food as a Human Right.
•   'NGOs and the Right to Adequate Food' by Michael Windfuhr of the FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN) International
•   'The Right to Food in Emergencies' by WFP.

Commemorative collections published by UN agencies rarely seem to justify themselves; unfortunately this collection is not one of the exceptions. At a time when rights-based approaches to development and poverty reduction are gathering pace higher quality contributions might have been expected. The paper by WFP – the one that would be of particular interest to RRN readers – is disappointingly bland. Hopefully future contributions by WFP on the subject will be stronger.

Human Rights Fifty Years On: A Reappraisal *(1998) Tony Evans, Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press*

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights celebrated its 50th birthday last year. The signing of the declaration represented a remarkable event: in the wake of the Second World War an international consensus achieved laying in legal terms the rights to which every person on the planet was entitled.

The 30 articles of the declaration succinctly cover an array of individual rights which, in addition to familiar provisions regarding prohibition of torture and the protection of freedom of speech, also extend to the spheres of education, employment, marriage and enjoyment of the arts and sharing in the fruits of scientific discovery.

Article 28 states: 'Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realised'. It is this right, or more accurately why it
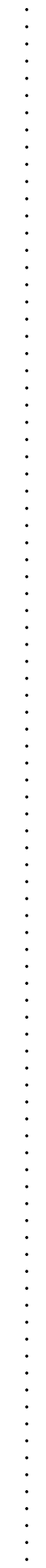
does not exist, which is the subject of Evans' edited volume. It aims to understand not only why the rights promised to the world 50 years ago are very rarely achieved, but also how the discourse of human rights has been incorporated within, and sometimes coopted by, wider international political interests.

With contributors such as Chomsky and Johann Galtung, it is not surprising that the book adopts a structuralist approach and remains sceptical about the way in which the concept of human rights is used (and abused) by powerful actors. But this collection of papers is no mere anti-establishment response to the sometimes uncritical anniversary celebrations. Rather, it includes fascinating and scholarly contributions on issues such as human rights and globalization, women's rights and how individual human rights 'fit' into international law, and international relations. Certainly not a lightweight read, but all the better for not being so!

> ### Professionalism in War Reporting: A Correspondent's View
> *(1998) Tom Gjelten. A Report to the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict (New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York). Email: <pdc@carnegie.org>*

The author of this report sets fellow journalists and the media in general a difficult and complex task: the need to achieve objectivity or 'disinterest' when reporting in situations of war and humanitarian crisis. The problem with a single-authored report on such a subject, however, cannot be overplayed. But despite this inherent difficulty the report makes for interesting reading, not least because it provides an overview of the agendas of the different actors in the Bosnian crisis and how they manipulated information for their own particular ends.

From the 'CNN effect' and Boutros Boutros-Ghali's statement that through the issues, people and places it chooses to highlight – or to ignore – the media today has 'enormous influence over the international agenda [which has] drastically transformed the conduct of international relations' to Richard Goldstone's 'very warm gratitude and appreciation' for media attention to war crimes prosecution in Rwanda and Bosnia, Gjelten communicates well the media problematic. He explains the fragmented nature of post-Cold War conflict and the international policy vacuum which exists today for dealing with these conflicts. He sets this against the question of 'choice' in the sense that modern technology has given the media unparalleled ability to access and report on crisis situations –

often at a faster rate than policy makers can respond. This capacity has led to criticism of journalistic standards and agendas, both from governments and from humanitarian organisations.

Gjelten draws on his experience in Bosnia to examine the need for journalists to respond to these criticisms by improving the accuracy and objectivity of their reporting. He suggests that this could be achieved if journalists set their reports in a political and historical context, had specialised regional/country training to assist them in this aim, and became grounded in international humanitarian law, the rules of war, and the Geneva Conventions. The question is, of course, how to balance accuracy and objectivity against the need to 'hold the attention of readers, listeners [and] viewers'. And while Gjelten ends with the assertion that 'the responsibility for policies and actions rests firmly with government leaders, no matter the power of a headline or the impact of a picture' he doesn't satisfactorily square this with a previously quoted assertion of Kofi Annan: 'Peace-keeping operations depend for their support on widespread public awareness of the conflicts, and we are committed to doing everything we can to facilitate the work of the media'.

> ### Mozambique: UN Peacekeeping in Action, 1992–4 *(1997) Richard Synge, United States Institute of Peace Press, 1550M Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005, USA*

This book successfully balances the fact that the 1992–94 UN peace-keeping mission in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) represented a unique achievement in a specific political context, with the belief that these experiences hold valuable lessons for other peace keeping operations in Africa.

The analysis of ONUMOZ begins with the Peace Accords in Rome and proceeds to cover all the main areas for which the operation had a mandate. Chapters examine the launch of the operation, the political negotiation involved in assembling the two warring parties, the problems of coordinating humanitarian assistance, demobilization, and the establishment of the electoral process and results. In conclusion, Synge provides a useful overview of ONUMOZ by examining its achievements, weaknesses and its legacy, followed by a succinct examination of lessons learnt and their relevance for the rest of Africa. More broadly, however, Synge's account is noteworthy due to its critical view of the peace keeping operation and the extent to which this informs our understanding of conflict resolution in Africa.

While Synge is wholly aware of the shortcomings of the operation in terms of coordination, an overly ambitious mandate, missed opportunities for establishing long-term stability (de-mining, human rights monitoring, disarmement), he does commend the establishment of free elections and demobilization as remarkable achievements. He makes explicit both the internal and external political context and the significant influence these factors brought to bear on the overall success of the operation, emphasizing the support and unanimity of the international community as well as that of the local population and neighboring states.

What makes this account highly readable is the clear manner in which complex and detailed political events are recounted: the book neither lapses into generalities or loses focus. Moreover, particularly interesting insights into these events are provided by the many interviews conducted by the author which make this analysis both lively and thoughtful.

Rebuilding Communities in a Refugee Settlement: A Casebook from Uganda (1998) Linda Payne, Oxford: Oxfam UK

This is an excellent, informative and analytical casebook on Oxfam's Ikafe refugee resettlement project in northeast Uganda. Though the Ikafe settlement has now closed, lessons learned from Oxfam's long experience are currently being applied in Imvepi, a smaller refugee settlement next to Ikafe: 'through learning, we realise how far we have come, but equally how far we have to go', a staff member at Impevi said. See also RRN's Network Paper 29: *Participatory Review in Chronic Instability: The Experience of the Ikafe Refugee Settlement Programme, Uganda* (refer to earlier abstract).

Payne's association with Ikafe appears to have been principally as a social anthropologist. The casebook identifies lessons learned and sets this against Oxfam's evolving vision of what ought to have been. She ranges the refugees' own vision against this in terms of their expectations and needs, among which in Ikafe was education. There is something for everyone here: site feasibility appraisal, registration, representation, consultation, community-based food distribution, social reconstruction, livelihood, local staffing and recruitment, communications, advocacy, social research institutionalisation, training, and more.

All in all, Payne paints a picture of Ikafe as a vast project that went neither very well, as regards Oxfam's objectives, nor very badly in terms of its results. What is incalculably valuable about this casebook, however, is its particularities. It is always at pains to give the actual circumstances and conditions which any attempt to generalize about relief and development management must first take into account. Enviably this provides the reader with enough background and context not only to appreciate the generalisations its author makes, but also to come up with some that are different and to try to extend Payne's analysis to areas which are not addressed in the final summary chapter on recommendations. If only all casebooks measured up to this.

Conflict Prevention and the EU: Mapping the Actors, Instruments and Institutions (1998) A Costy & S Gilbert (London: International Alert). Website: <http://international_alert.org>

This report is the outcome of a study conducted by International Alert for the implementation of FEWER's strategic plan (Forum on Early Warning and Early Response). Its purpose is twofold:

- to provide key policy actors with a tool for understanding current conflict prevention instruments available within the EU, and to clarify how these might be used by the EU and member states to enhance a more coherent policy approach;
- to provide FEWER and other NGOs with strategic approaches for engaging the EU on conflict prevention, at both national and supranational levels.

In this respect the report adds to a growing literature that assesses the possible strategies of NGOs/NGO coalitions on major international institutions. Its publication is particularly timely given the increasingly prominent role of the EU in conflict prevention worldwide.

The report provides a succinct overview of the players and processes at work within the EU, aided by helpful diagrams and key concept boxes. It tracks the EU's recent conceptual shift in its approach to conflict prevention, and notes that the Union now more clearly recognises the often cyclical nature of modern civil war and pays greater attention to the structural economic causes of protracted crises. It highlights the activation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and explains how this increases the likelihood of more proactive engagement in conflict prevention. However, the report notes that there remain substantial capacity problems within the EU – in particular related to

issues of coherence. Policy is also subject to the differing political wills of member states and their relative positions of power within the Union. This means that action is, in the main, still more reactive than proactive.

To overcome these limitations the report concludes with a number of key findings and recommendations for a stronger EU conflict prevention capacity. Mostly these are related to issues of coherence and creating greater linkages – not just between EU institutions but with external organisations. The report concludes with some important strategic suggestions for FEWER and other NGOs on how they might effectively engage the EU on this issue.

The Reality of Aid 1998/1999: An Independent Review of Poverty Reduction and Development Assistance *(1998) Randel (et al), London: Earthscan.Email:<earthinfo@earthscan.co.uk> Website: <http://www.earthscan.co.uk>*

This is the sixth annual *Reality of Aid* publication produced as a collaborative project of EUROSTEP (European Solidarity Towards Equal Participation of People) and ICVA (International Council of Voluntary Agencies). This year Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) is the lead agency for the project.

As in previous years, the book makes effective use of summary statistics and graphs combined with concise and comprehensive text to provide a summary of overall trends in development cooperation (Part I). Part II considers developments during the past year in relation to the aid programmes of 20 bilateral aid donors (curiously excluding Japan) and of the European Community's aid programme. Part III airs southern perspectives on development cooperation. It has three papers on Latin American perspectives and individual perspectives from Cuba, Kenya, Namibia, Nepal, Philippines, Uganda and Zimbabwe. This year the theme which runs through the publication is basic education.

So what are the principal messages contained in this year's *Reality of Aid*? First and foremost is the assertion that, while OECD/DAC donors talk about the targets for poverty reduction established in the 1996 strategy document *Shaping the 21st Century* (S21C), there was a dramatic fall in world aid – from US$55.4bn in 1996 to US$47.6bn in 1997. This is a 7 per cent decline in real terms in just one 12-month period. Increased aid provision in countries such as New Zealand, Portugal, Ireland and Austria were overwhelmed by significant declines in Germany (-11 per cent); Italy (-45 per cent); and a staggering decline in the US (-36 per cent) as a result of aid to Israel being considered ineligible for inclusion in the DAC's calculation of overseas development assistance. Since the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 total aid flows have fallen by more than one-fifth. As asked in the overview chapter: how can DAC donors expect their commitment to the S21C targets to be taken seriously when so many are singularly failing to provide their share of the resources needed?

Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response *(1998) The Sphere Project*

This represents the output of the first phase of the Sphere Project. It was developed as a result of extensive and sustained cooperation between individuals and agencies and contains benchmarks which will be used by many agencies as they go about their business of meeting the fundamental needs of those affected by disaster. Designed primarily for humanitarian agency staff, this document will be useful for those involved in resource allocation; in the implementation and management of humanitarian assistance programmes; in recruitment, training and staff support; and in monitoring and evaluation.

For copies of the Charter and for details of the Sphere Project, contact: Nan Buzard, Project Manager, PO Box 372, 17 chemin des Crêts, CH-1211, Geneva 19, Switzerland. Tel: (+41) 22 730 4501. Fax: (+41) 22 730 4999. Email: <sphere@ifrc.org> Website: <www.ifrc.org/pubs/sphere>

Red de Rehabilitación y Ayuda de Emergencia – documentos disponibles en Español

Two of RRN's Network Papers are now available in Spanish: *The Code of Best Practice in the Management and Support of Relief Personnel* (Network Paper 20); and *The Impact of War and Atrocity on Civilian Populations: Basic Principles for NGO Interventions and a Critique of Psychosocial Trauma Projects*, by Derek Summerfield (Network Paper 14).

Network Paper 20 is available from: People in Aid, c/o BRCX, 9 Grosvenor Crescent, London, SW1X 7EJ, UK. Tel/Fax: (+44) 171 235 0895. Email: <s.davidson@pia.demon.co.uk> For text-only copies of Network Paper 14, contact the RRN.

Frozen Conflicts:
Research, Conferences and Publications on the Caucasus

Over the past three years the Humanitarianism and War Project at Brown University and the Local Capacities for Peace project of the Collaborative for Development Action, Inc. have conducted interactive research in the Caucasus. This has generated a new publication and a series of seminars and conferences. Questions around linking assistance and political strategies for peace in the Caucasus and in Afghanistan have much in common. The respective regional actors could benefit from sharing insights and approach.

> 'Humanitarian Action in the Caucasus: A guide for practitioners' G Hansen (1998) Providence: Brown University, The Watson Institute for International Relations, Occasional Paper no 32 (website:<http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Watson_Institute/>; a Russian translation is being prepared).

Since the break up of the Soviet Union there have been various violent conflicts in the Caucasus, most of them ethnic. All of them are currently 'frozen' by ceasefires, but nowhere does there seem to be much progress towards a resolution that could also facilitate the return of the many displaced, especially from North Ossetia, Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabagh. This report sets out to provide a comprehensive overview of the context of humanitarian work in the Caucasus, and learning by identifying lessons about what did and did not work. It also identifies policy issues around which firmer and more concerted interaction is required.

The first chapter describes the historical background to the recent conflicts, but also region-wide similarities in the nature of warfare and in the political, social and cultural dynamics and attitudes. The second chapter focuses on the high insecurity warning against a sense of complacency in the south Caucasus, and stresses the importance of contacts, networking and behaviour which can increase acceptance. Chapter three examines the relationship between the political and humanitarian efforts and the links between aid and conflict, and stresses the need for greater collaboration to increase humanitarian space. Attention is drawn to the fact that the Caucasus has shorter term assistance needs but longer term protection needs.

US foreign policy measures to pressure the government of Azerbaijan to ease the economic blockade on Armenia, introduced after successful lobbying by Armenian diaspora organisations, are in this light likely to increase resentment and hostility among the 600,000 Azeris displaced from Nagorno-Karabagh. Chapter four uses the framework of the Local Capacities for Peace project to provide examples of how aid in the Caucasus in practice has inadvertently increased tensions or sent negative messages. Unfortunately, the otherwise impressive analysis stops short of offering practical and concrete suggestions of how to move forward in a positive and constructive way. Still, this report is necessary reading for anyone interested in the Caucasus.

In the fall of 1998, seven seminars on humanitarian action in the Caucasus were held in the region and in Moskow ('Waiting for Peace: Humanitarian Impasse in the Caucasus' by G. Hansen and L. Minear provides a summary report; see Brown University's website or contact Larry Minear on: <Larry_Minear@brown.edu>). Hansen (1998) served as a point of departure for the discussions. Although each seminar dealt with the specifics of certain conflicts in the region, common themes also emerged. For example:

• Lack of progress in the political resolution of the various conflicts has led to routinised humanitarian action losing much of its energy and vision.
• Although there remain many unaddressed needs and almost one million displaced people, donors and operational agencies no longer feel a strong humanitarian imperative.
• The impunity of those who perpetrate crimes against the property and lives of local populations and aid agencies continues, and is a major impediment to normalisation. Insecurity has led to the total suspension of humanitarian action in the northern Caucasus.
• Lack of political progress and a risk of growing insecurity are undermining donor interest in and support for humanitarian action in the southern Caucasus.

The seminars also provided an opportunity to clarify the terms of engagement and the better and weaker arguments for disengagement. The 'Tbilisi Symposium on Conflict and Humanitarian Politics' in Georgia

focussed most explicitly on the relationships and potential synergies between diplomatic, peace-keeping and humanitarian action and actors. It explored the question of whether the synergy, or lack thereof, between these three types of actors resulted in increased or decreased security for the aid agency, access to populations in need and protection for these populations? The interactions and communications between the OSCE mission and the humanitarian community in South Ossetia, for example, was significantly better than that between the UN mission and the humanitarian community in Abkhazia. No convincing arguments can be given, however, for the sometimes high degree of confidentiality and lack of transparancy between the various international actors.

It was recognised that the political agenda would continue to dominate in the Caucasus. This, however, should pay more attention to impunity, security and the plight of the displaced, as well as hold the local authorities to account where they might manipulate displacement for political reasons. The potential contribution of humanitarian aid to a climate conducive to conflict resolution figured high in the discussion. Unequal proportionality in the provision of aid can itself create conflict, yet it was not clear whether the proportional allocation of aid had a constructive impact. Aid itself can become a resource fuelling the conflict, but withholding aid creates isolation and resentment and contributes to a hardening of attitudes that preclude a negotiated settlement. These observations show themselves most acutely in the northern Caucasus, where insecurity has led to the end of needs assessments and the international political will to engage with the conflict. At present there are not even fora to discuss developments in the northern Caucasus or to coordinate future responses to them. A few agencies continue to provide very limited assistance by 'remote control' that is, through local NGOs. This strategy could benefit from closer examination of its preconditions, and of ways of refining the approach.

'Coping with Conflict. A guide to the work of local NGOs in the North Caucasus' (1998) New York: Open Society Institute Fax: (+1) 212 548 4676 Email <refugee@sorosny.org>

After a brief overview of migratory trends and migratory policies in the Caucasus, and a note on the complexities of working in the North Caucasus, this booklet describes the work and gives the contact addresses of a number of local NGOs in Ingushetia, Chechnya and Dagesthan. The general contact reference is the Nonviolence International NGO in Moskow (Email: <ninis@glas.apc.org> Tel/fax: 206-8853)

'Conflict and Forced Displacement in the Caucasus' T Trier and L F Hansen (eds) (1998) is the report of a September 1998 conference organised by the Danish Refugee Council. It reproduces the presentations and summarises the discussions. Whereas the previous initiatives looked at the issues more from the humanitarian angle, this document provides more on the broader political and economic picture. One important conclusion is that the southern Caucasus is in the balance: firm international engagement is needed to prevent it from also destabilising. Email <drc@drc.dk> Fax: (+45) 33 32 84 48.

Disasters: **The Journal of Disaster Studies and Policy Management** *(December 1998) J Macrae and H Young (eds), ODI, London. Vol 22, No 4*

This special issue of the journal brings together papers presented at a conference held in London in February 1998 which led to the commissioning of RRN Network Paper 25, *Humanitarian Action in Protracted Crises: The New Relief 'Agenda' and its Limits* by Dylan Hendrickson. Entitled *The Emperor's New Clothes: Charting the Erosion of Humanitarian Principles*, this issue of *Disasters* considers ways in which the core humanitarian values of compassion and benevolence have been undermined by the international community's failure to respond effectively to crises in Bosnia, Rwanda, Sudan, and Zaire, among others. This cynicism, the papers argue, has been driven by a perception that relief aid serves simply to prolong conflict.

A special price has been negotiated for RRN members who wish to purchase this particular edition. For further information contact: Judy Cornish, Blackwells Publishers Journals, PO Box 805, 108 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1FH, UK. Tel: (+44) 1865 244 083. Fax: (+44) 1865 381 381. Alternatively email: <jnlinfo@blackwellspublishers.co.uk> For those who wish to subscribe in full to both the journal Disasters and the RRN, a discounted rate is available. See centre pages for details.

Letters

The RRN Coordinator
ODI, Portland House
Stag Place
London SW1E 5DP
UNITED KINGDOM

Please send us your comments on RRN publications:
omissions, corrections, additions, views or just encouragement!

'I am a research analyst with the USAID Africa Bureau and I am currently working on a number of requests related to our development assistance in South Sudan. I have come across several RRN documents that I think would be very useful for the practitioners who are implementing the Sudan Transition and Rehabilitation (STAR) program.'

Anne O'Toole, USAID Africa Bureau

We have been using your Good Practice Reviews in several of our courses at Tulane, and find them very useful.

Patrick Metz, Tulane University, USA

Human Rights and International Legal Standards: what relief workers need to know
by James Darcy

19

The Norwegian Refugee Council used Network Paper 19 on 'Human Rights and International Legal Standards: what relief workers need to know' as a resource document in an internal training course.

newsletter **12**

I really enjoyed the Newsletter [12]. It has a broad coverage which for me is good … The Network Papers and Good Practice Reviews have some really useful in-depth nutrition articles as in no. 27 on the Ethiopia targeting issues.

Andy Seal, PhD researcher in Public Health, Nutrition Centre for International Child Health, London

Reproductive Health for Displaced Populations in Emergencies
by Celia Palmer

24

An official of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs found **Network Paper 24** on 'Reproductive Health for Displaced Populations in Emergencies' very helpful in preparing the opening speech for the Cairo +5 UNFPA conference in the Netherlands in early 1999.

The Evaluation of Humanitarian Assistance Programmes in Complex Emergemcies
by Alistair Hallam

7

Maria del Carmen Uceda of the Samaritan Mission in Honduras said that the RRN's GPR7 is 'culturally relevant to the regions we assist in and [will] greatly aid our mission and future trips as we strive to become involved in the rebuilding of Central America.'

The Impact of War and Atrocity on Civilian Populations
by Derek Summerfield

14

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested some copies of **Network Paper 14**: *The Impact of War and Atrocity on Civilian Populations. Basic Principles for NGO Interventions and a Critique of Psycho-social Trauma Projects* as background when preparing terms of reference for an evaluation of the psycho-social trauma projects it funds.

visit the **RRN** website
www.oneworld.org/odi/rrn/index.html

Your Feedback Is Appreciated
(It'll only take 10 minutes!)

As part of our commitment to learning, and as 1999 is the final year of Phase II, the RRN will undergo an external evaluation towards the end of the year. This will assist us in identifying 'next steps' as we approach Phase III, beginning in 2000.

Your continuing feedback is therefore **greatly appreciated**, and will feed into this formal evaluation process. Please take 10 minutes to fill out the enclosed questionnaire. It will assist us in continuing to bring you the news and views you want to read about; news and views that are directly relevant to your work.

Reaching Out
We are also doubling our efforts to get RRN publications circulating more at field level, both within national and international organisations. This year we are expanding our outreach program beyond Central, East and West Africa into Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Afghanistan. In addition, we are stepping up our marketing efforts to find new ways of reaching policy makers, practitioners and analysts.

What *YOU* Can Do
We're sure you've noticed that this is a 'bumper' issue of the newsletter! If you've appreciated this newsletter and the accompanying Network Papers please make sure to:

❖ **Fill in the questionnaire! (This is also on the website: <www.oneworld.org/odi/rrn>)**

❖ **Feedback on this and other RRN publications**

- Let us know what you think about this newsletter and the accompanying Network Papers, as well as other literature you wish to comment on.
- In particular, let us know if you've photocopied any of the articles for field staff, used one of our Network Papers or Good Practice Reviews in policy or programme discussions, in a training course or in any other way.
  We would particularly welcome feedback from field-based staff and from nationally recruited field staff.

❖ **Contribute information on**:

- important conferences or advocacy initiatives from your region;
- ideas or contacts for a country/regional update for the next RRN newsletter;
- details about a programme whose approach you find innovative, or an example of good practice;
- good cartoons or black and white photographs to liven up the newsletter.

❖ **Help with dissemination**

- The questionnaire asks how you could help with dissemination of RRN publications.

Thank you for your continuing support. We look forward to hearing from you.

Please send your completed questionnaire and comments to: RRN Publications, ODI, Portland House, Stag Place, London, SW1E 5DP, UK.

And Finally

The RRN Team

The RRN forms part of the Humanitarian Policy Programme, a wider group within ODI focusing on research into and evaluation of humanitarian policy.

Koenraad Van Brabant, **RRN Coordinator**
February saw Koenraad Van Brabant's appointment to the post of RRN Coordinator. With full responsibility for the Network, Koenraad's excellent analytical skills, combined with his knowledge and experience of the field will prove invaluable.

Rachel Houghton, **RRN Deputy Coordinator**
In January we welcomed Rachel Houghton to the RRN team. Her background in publishing and communications in a number of research NGOs will prove extremely useful in her role as Deputy Coordinator.

Sarah Geileskey, **RRN Administrator**
With responsibility for the production of publications, the upkeep of the website and other support duties, Sarah has a solid background in administration.

With additional support, advice and assistance from Margie Buchanan-Smith, **Humanitarian Policy Group Coordinator.**

After an all-too-brief stay in London, Sarah Longford has now moved to take up a post in the policy department of the World Food Programme in Rome. We are extremely grateful to Sarah for her professional approach and for the major contribution that she made to the RRN during her four months as Acting Coordinator of the Network.

Two-and-a-half years at ODI, a year of which was spent with the RRN, proved enough for Caroline Dobbing. Caroline sadly left us in February to take up the position of Network Administrator at HelpAge International in London. We thank Caroline for all her hard work and wish her well in her new post.

RRN

Background

The Relief and Rehabilitation Network was conceived in 1993 and launched in 1994 as a mechanism for professional information exchange in the expanding field of humanitarian aid. The need for such a mechanism was identified in the course of research undertaken by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) on the changing role of NGOs in relief and rehabilitation operations, and was developed in consultation with other Networks operated within ODI. Since April 1994 the RRN has produced publications in three different formats, in French and English: Good Practice Reviews, Network Papers and Newsletters. The RRN is now in its second three-year phase (1996–1999), supported by four new donors: DANIDA, SIDA (Sweden), the Department of Foreign Affairs (Ireland), and the Department for International Development (UK). Over the three year phase the RRN will seek to expand its reach and relevance amongst humanitarian agency personnel, and to further promote good practice.

Objective

To improve aid policy and practice as it is applied in complex political emergencies.

Purpose

To contribute to individual and institutional learning by encouraging the exchange and dissemination of information relevant to the professional development of those engaged in the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Activities

To commission, publish and disseminate analysis and reflection on issues of good practice in policy and programming in humanitarian operations, primarily in the form of written publications, in both French and English.

Target audience

Individuals and organisations actively engaged in the provision of humanitarian assistance at national and international, field-based and head office level in the 'North' and 'South'.

The Relief and Rehabilitation Network is supported by:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
DANIDA

SIDA

Department of Foreign Affairs,
Ireland

DFID