



RRN newsletter

All RRN materials are published in French and English.

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Over recent years the pages of the RRN has conveyed information and analysis on the emerging need for humanitarian assistance to be delivered to rigorous ethical as well as minimum technical standards. The need for ethical relief has become more apparent and more public with every major humanitarian crisis, reaching a peak in Goma in late 1994. It was the events in eastern Zaire, which turned the spotlight as perhaps never before on relief workers who, rather than being applauded for their humanitarian work, were accused of making things worse, of feeding the guilty, of not saving the innocent.

For relief workers, the dilemmas of working in conflict situations are not new. The humanitarian community has been working on a range of initiatives designed to articulate the values and principles underpinning humanitarian action. As the ICRC article 'How can NGO's help promote international humanitarian law?' on page 3 highlights, much remains to be done in terms of increasing the understanding and application of humanitarian principles and law in situations of conflict. In part, this will rely upon the ICRC making more accessible its century of experience of operating within an ethical framework, the spirit of which was codified in the Geneva Conventions. The authors caution however, that as interest grows in the definition and application of humanitarian principles, it is important to ensure that the tenets of the Geneva Conventions are not diluted amidst a proliferation of do-it-yourself codes.

As agencies are urged to sign up to the latest codes and to improve their staff training on international legal standards, so political actors seem less and less willing to subscribe to and protect those same principles. James Fennell writes vividly about the renunciation of principle to realpolitik in the context of the Great Lakes crisis. During the Cold War, humanitarian principles were sacrificed in the name of the superpower struggle. After a brief era of optimism that some more compassionate logic would drive international relations, the voices of those who argue the necessity of maintaining the humanitarian imperative and ensuring that wars are fought according to minimum standards of ethical conduct are sounding ever more lonely.

Increasingly now, it is the same donor countries who are pressing for NGOs to sign up to codes of ethical and technical conduct and for 'smart relief', who also subscribe to a foreign policy characterised by disengagement. While relief workers may be killed in the course of the delivery of humanitarian assistance, the UN and its member states appear to shudder at the idea of their soldiers being killed in order to enforce international law. As Fennell concludes, in such a world, it is difficult to remain optimistic that the concept of global values which reflect people's innate compassion can be upheld to counter cruelty.

Membership & Publications
see centre pages for details on how to obtain our publications and become a member of the RRN



What's new?

Since the beginning of this year, the RRN has worked closely with an advisory group, with meetings held every six months to discuss progress. The group currently consists of representatives of our donors: Sean Greenaway of ECHO, Anders Ladekarl of the Danish Refugee Council, for DANIDA, Philomena Murnaghan, of the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Rob Holden of DFID, UK. In addition, the group includes representatives from the wider aid community: Susan Purdin, Coordinator of the SPHERE Project, Chris Cushing of the UN Staff Training College in Turin, Roy Williams on behalf of InterAction and Angela Raven Roberts of UNICEF NY. In the new year we will also be welcoming Lucie Blok from MSF to the group.

The aim is to provide advice, feedback and suggestions for the development of the RRN over the coming years. In particular, it advises on the general concept and content of the RRN and its publications, and on appropriate marketing and dissemination strategy. The range of experience represented on the group and the contact with initiatives and developments in different fora is particularly valuable.

Membership Details

*Have you recently changed post?
Working on a new project?
Moved from headquarters to the
field? Or from the field to
headquarters?
Keep us informed of your
situation so that we may
continue to tailor our work to
meet your needs.*

**NOT A MEMBER OF THE RRN?
see centre pages for details...**

Regional Initiative

In July, *Philip Winter* became the second part-time RRN Representative, joining the RRN team as part time Regional Representative for the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa region. Based in Nairobi, Philip has extensive experience of strategic planning, programme development and project management for humanitarian assistance operations. He has held a range of posts within the UN and with NGOs in complex emergencies, most recently in Eastern Zaire. He can be contacted through IRIN Nairobi philip@dha.unon.org, or via the RRN in London.

RELIEF AND REHABILITATION NETWORK

website

<http://www.oneworld.org/odi/rrn/>

The Relief and Rehabilitation Network website aims to offer professionals involved in the provision of humanitarian assistance worldwide access to RRN material and links to other organisations working in the same field.

An online RRN Newsletter: featuring articles and news on current developments in the field of humanitarian assistance, key policy issues, a regional focus section, and details of recent and forthcoming conferences, training courses and publications.

An up-to-date list of RRN publications and abstracts.

The Red Pages: offering a directory of comprehensive links to non-governmental, UN and donor organisations, news, background information and research resources relating to humanitarian assistance in both complex emergencies and natural disasters.

A list of current members from over 150 donor, government, UN, Red Cross, NGO, and research organisations in the field of humanitarian assistance in more than 60 countries worldwide.

Information on how to join the RRN or order RRN publications online.

Articles



How can NGOs help promote international humanitarian law?

by Carlo von Flüe and Jean-Philippe Lavoyer, ICRC¹.

Since 1990 a rapidly growing number of field agencies have been working in situations of armed conflict. Though they appear to be engaged in similar activities when viewed from outside, each of these agencies has its own set of working methods and ethical standards. There is no real coordination between them, a reality that it has now become impossible to ignore.

Humanitarian law is based on the premise that though mankind is capable of great cruelty, compassion is also fundamental to our nature. The law was created to ensure a degree of humanity in the midst of war. Specifically, it protects certain categories of individuals – civilians (and their property) and combatants no longer taking part in the fighting (prisoners, the sick and wounded) – and restricts the means and methods of warfare used. As a result, war no longer occurs in a legal vacuum in which everything is permissible.

Multilateral humanitarian treaties began to be adopted in the nineteenth century but their underlying principles are much older and found in various cultures. Today, the main humanitarian treaties are the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their two Additional Protocols of 1977. With 188 participating States, the Geneva Conventions are truly universal. At present, 148 and 140 States respectively are party to Additional Protocols I and II, which develop the provisions of the 1949 Conventions and adapt them to modern warfare. The four Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol apply to conflict between States. Additional Protocol II and Article 3, common to all four Geneva Conventions, are applicable to internal conflicts. Thus, while international humanitarian law is intended first and foremost for governments, it is also applicable to non-governmental armed groups. It sets out who is entitled to protection, lays down the rights and obligations of the belligerents and provides a framework in which humanitarian activities can be carried out.

...though mankind is capable of great cruelty, compassion is also fundamental to our nature.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has a specific mandate from the States to monitor the implementation of humanitarian law. The ICRC deals directly with governments and armed opposition groups to obtain greater compliance and appeals to the international community only as a last resort in the face of massive violations.

The ICRC also has the task of paving the way for the development of humanitarian law, to ensure international rules keep pace with changes in warfare itself. The organisation is uniquely placed for such a mission.

The ICRC – the traditional ‘guardian’ of international humanitarian law – is specifically entitled by the law to visit prisoners of war and to monitor the circumstances of civilians protected by the Fourth Geneva Convention. The community of States has also conferred on it the right to offer its humanitarian services to those party to an armed conflict, including internal conflicts.

Why the ICRC? Certainly, the ICRC has no monopoly on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law. The States party to the Geneva Conventions have a

key responsibility in ensuring that they are respected by other States. There may also be a great deal that NGOs can do in this regard. Thus far, however, the only debate on such a role has been in the form of a workshop organised by the ICRC in 1996 for a limited number of NGOs. Some NGOs then felt they had

inadequate knowledge of humanitarian law nor a sufficient mandate to take action in this regard. Therefore they often looked to the ICRC for guidance (though some did attempt to act on their own despite their limited knowledge of the law). The NGOs were generally better versed in human rights issues. It was also pointed out that governments hostile to human rights law might also find grounds for rejecting humanitarian law if the two were seen to be linked. One of the unresolved questions was whether human rights organisations should promote ratification of humanitarian law treaties. There was a consensus, however, that NGOs definitely had a role to play in assessing situations in the field and advocating compliance with legal standards.

Humanitarian law provides a framework in which NGOs too can work in connection with armed conflicts. Let us look here at internal armed conflicts. Article 3 common

to the four Geneva Conventions provides a legal basis on which impartial humanitarian organisations may offer their services to warring parties.² Protocol II additional to the Geneva Conventions states that if the civilian population has been deprived of objects essential to its survival, relief action of an exclusively humanitarian and impartial nature may be undertaken (Article 18). Governments are expected to give their approval for such impartial humanitarian relief work. It is important for NGOs to be aware that those provisions exist and to pay due attention to the principles set out in them, i.e. the obligatory humanitarian and impartial nature of the activity.

One important question is whether NGOs should approach the authorities – whether governmental or *de facto* authorities – to improve protection for war victims. The answer varies according to the situation and the accessibility of those holding power. A good knowledge of the law and the rights and obligations it sets out, would certainly help humanitarian workers to be more effective in this area.

What should NGOs do when they witness violations of humanitarian law? Should they publicly denounce the violations? Or should they look for ways to change the conduct of those who committed them? Are these two approaches incompatible? If a large number of NGOs are present in the field, should they co-ordinate and standardise their approach?

Experience shows that it is very difficult to undertake effective field work on behalf of the victims while at the same time denouncing violations. One activity tends to rule out the other. This does not mean, of course, that both approaches cannot be taken in a complementary manner by different organisations, i.e. denunciation by an organisation not working in the field and fieldwork by an organisation that scrupulously avoids public denunciation. As an organisation massively engaged in fieldwork, the ICRC takes a pragmatic approach and keeps its representations to violators confidential. Only when discretion proves ineffective does it publicly denounce severe violations of humanitarian law.

There are grey areas in which it is not immediately clear which body of law – humanitarian law or human rights law – is applicable, or in which certain rules need to be interpreted. Sometimes there is scope for several different interpretations. If every NGO interprets the law in its own way and then approaches the warring parties on that basis, the result may be severe confusion. The parties

to the conflict will exploit any disagreement and confusion and then play one organisation off against another. This will not only be detrimental to the victims themselves but may put humanitarian workers at risk.

It is therefore extremely important for all those – NGOs included – who promote compliance with international humanitarian law to ensure a concerted approach. How can this be achieved? With its long experience and its mandate to promote and safeguard humanitarian law, the ICRC can act as a focal point. It can both do more to make clear its own role and working procedures and facilitate dialogue between humanitarian agencies with an operational interest in the subject. This wide array of organisations must somehow agree about how a situation should be defined in terms of the law and about which rules apply. Discussions should

be held about how best to approach the various authorities and the appropriateness of publicly denouncing violations. The ICRC could also provide training in the field of humanitarian law for NGO staff. In any case it could play a consultative role. An extension of any such activity by the ICRC is limited however by the availability of existing resources. More training in humanitarian law for instance, would require additional funds and additional staff, something for which the organisation does not have the necessary resources at present.

Risks are greater if different organisation base their work on different principles and employ different criteria to assess that work. International humanitarian law lays down basic principles for humanitarian action, in particular neutrality and impartiality. Attempts have already been made to set universal standards for conduct in the field of emergency relief (see, for example, the *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-governmental Organisations in Disaster Relief, RRN Network Paper 7, 1994*).

An increased dialogue within the humanitarian community – on a legal as well as an operational level – should lead to more coherent action and would thus help to meet the needs of the victims. A more professional humanitarian response would contribute to improve the security of humanitarian personnel in the field, which in turn would make access to those in need easier. ♦

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1. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the ICRC.
 2. Paragraph 2 : “An impartial body such as the ICRC may offer its services to the Parties to the conflict.”

Hope Suspended: Morality, Politics and War in Central Africa

by James Fennell, formerly Head of the Emergencies Department at CARE, now the Director of Mercurial, a consultancy specialising in complex political emergencies

"...if we publicly say that we were wrong and that moral values exist, and henceforth we shall do what we must to establish and illustrate them, don't you think that would be the start of hope?" Albert Camus, 1946.

After the Second World War, universal moral values were seen to be a necessary basis for regulating the conduct of international relations, and were codified in the body of international law. Humanitarian aid policies of most bilateral and multilateral donors were based on upholding these instruments; in particular the provisions of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) (the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Protocols of 1977) and Refugee Law (the Refugee Convention of 1951 and Protocols of 1967).

The evidence of the Great Lakes tragedy seems to suggest that in recent years there has been a fundamental shift away from 'establishing and illustrating' universal moral values towards reaching pragmatic, though often morally suspect, 'durable solutions'. Over the past three years almost all interested parties have consistently shied away from upholding international law in the face of strategic and economic realities. This article argues that the demise of universal moral values as a basis for aid policy is diminishing our humanity, and has opened the door to barbarity.

Failure to enforce IHL during the Genocide in Rwanda

During the Rwandan Genocide, from April-July 1994, nearly a million people were systematically murdered. It is not the intention of this paper to discuss this crime against humanity in detail, suffice it to say that genocide was the most heinous of crimes committed in the region, and that the prosecution and punishment of the perpetrators remains an outstanding and urgent priority for international action.

The first indication that adherence to IHL would become a consistent victim of the Great Lakes crisis was the UN Security Council's withdrawal of most of the UNAMIR peace-keepers at the height of the violence. It was only the military invasion by the Tutsi-dominated, Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF), which finally brought the killing to an end; in the eyes of many observers, the stark contrast between the efficiency of this 'African solution' and the paralysis of the United Nations, vested unilateral military intervention with considerable credibility.

Responding to the RPF's early signs of adherence to the provisions of the Arusha Accords and respect for IHL - including promises of moves towards a broad-based transitional Government and an end to racist politics - and signs that the quality of humanitarian access was certainly greater on their side, western governments acknowledged the scale of the massacres inside Rwanda and considerable political and military support was directed towards the Tutsi-dominated government.

International law is abandoned in the Refugee Camps 1994-6

As the RPF advanced through Rwanda, a mass exodus of mostly Hutu civilians was orchestrated into Zaire, Tanzania and, to a lesser extent Burundi. It was immediately clear to aid agencies operating in the camps that observance of IHL and the Refugee Conventions was not on the agenda of either the political organisations controlling the refugees or the Zairean and Burundian authorities (the Tanzanian Government was more responsible). As a result, the quality of 'humanitarian space' was very poor - Hutu-supremacist political organisations held sway in the camp; their militia joined

forces with the remnant military organisations of the former Rwandan army (ex-FAR) to enforce this oligarchy; the Zairean authorities colluded with them for political and economic advantage and the

Tanzanian police were too weak to wrest back control. Only in Burundi, where the Tutsi-dominated army controlled the countryside, were these authorities challenged through the forced repatriation of most refugees in 1995 and 1996.

Attempts by UN agencies and NGOs operating in the camps to avoid accommodation with the political aims of these organisations were met with threats and actual violence. These acts were in direct contravention of the Refugee Convention of 1951 and the Protocols of 1967; with proper investigation, and due judicial process, the intimidators could have faced expulsion back to Rwanda

It was immediately clear to aid agencies ... that observance of International Humanitarian Law ... was not on the agenda of either the political organisations controlling the refugees or the host authorities.

under article 33 of the Refugee Convention. The impotence of UNHCR in the face of such brazen abuses of refugee status brought an angry response from international NGOs, culminating in the withdrawal of several from the camps in Zaire (including CARE International and MSF-F and subsequently MSF-I), in September 1994. In the case of MSF, the withdrawal was permanent.

... agencies were faced with a stark choice: either provide assistance to refugees under terms set by the camp authorities or get out.

With hindsight, it seems clear that the host country, the UN and OAU member states failed to act in defence of either the spirit or letter of Refugee Law. The problem, gradually recognised by NGO and UN agency staff alike, came to be characterised as a lack of ‘political will’, by either the host country (Mobutist Zaire, in particular) or the UN (particularly the permanent members on the Security Council). Once the international community’s resolve to enforce IHL was revealed as a sham, Hutu-supremacist camp authorities were able to narrow effective ‘humanitarian space’ to a degree where agencies were faced with a stark choice: either provide assistance to refugees under terms set by the camp authorities or get out. Most agencies chose the former, while continuing to call for ‘political action’. But to have any chance of providing assistance meant accepting considerable diversion of relief goods by camp authorities, diversions which subsequently provided the secure resource base for financing cross-border incursions, buttressing Mobutu’s Hutu-dominated political power base in Kivu, and re-equipping forces for a planned re-invasion of Rwanda.

Once it was clear that the international community was prepared to side-step requirements of international law, criticism of Mobutu’s flagrant support for the hardline camp authorities was muted. This accommodation with Mobutu culminated in the UNHCR financing and training of a Zairean army ‘contingent’ to provide security for aid operations in the camps, a contingent which went on to fight alongside ex-FAR and Hutu militia’s against ADFL forces in November 1996.

Rwanda: international law off the Agenda

By early 1995, all the warring parties had shown a willingness to abandon respect for IHL if required to make a choice between humanitarian values and political priorities: a shift in policy focus became apparent within the new Rwandan government as elimination of the threat of a Hutu-supremacist invasion became the priority, clearly demonstrated when thousands of displaced Hutu

civilians were killed by the RPA during operations to empty a camp at Kibeho in southwest Rwanda.

By early 1996, although political attempts to end the growing power of Hutu militia in Zaire were once again on the Security Council’s agenda after an escalation of cross-border incidents, and the clear inability of aid agencies to prevent diversions of aid to the camp authorities, the interpretation of ‘political action’ by humanitarian agencies and Security Council members was vastly different. The latter’s principal concern was to achieve a ‘durable solution’ in the region rather than to enforce observance of IHL, with member countries’ national strategic interests influencing the shape of such a ‘durable solution’.

International Law Defeated: the Civil War in Congo-Zaire 1996-7

By 1996, Kagame had learned two critical lessons about international humanitarianism: the time when humanitarian agencies were able to garner sufficient international political support to enforce humanitarian principles was rapidly drawing to a close and that in these circumstances (such as eastern Zaire) there was evidence of an unseemly readiness to accommodate with the aims of the ruling political authority in a trade-off for limited access. So far, these traits had gone against Kagame. The time had come to turn them to Rwanda’s advantage.

By early 1995, all the warring parties had shown a willingness to abandon respect for IHL if required to make a choice between humanitarian values and political priorities.

In November 1996, after the ADFL captured Kivu, Kabila and his supporters, including Britain and the USA denounced French (and ECHO) calls for military intervention to uphold IHL as politically motivated; the protection of IHL through international military intervention was said to be detrimental to the rapid achievement of a ‘lasting solution’ to the Great Lakes crisis. Thus the Canadian led Multi-National Force did not stand a chance of being deployed inside Zaire. Of course, implicit in this argument was the by now apparent logic that defending humanitarian values was of secondary concern to achieving pragmatic political objectives.

Throughout 1995-6, media coverage had focused on aid agency accommodation with the Hutu camp authorities; ‘Feeding killers’ came to be a commonplace description of UNHCR and NGO operations in the camps. After the civil war broke out, this press campaign reached frenzied proportions in the UK and US. It appeared that the choice

facing UK and US policy-makers seemed to be either a massive military intervention to enforce IHL or political and military assistance for the ADFL - an 'African solution' which, it was hoped, would emulate the RPF in Rwanda and succeed where 2½ years of half-hearted international intervention had failed. And if a few people died along the way, so be it.

Unfortunately they did, by the thousand. The 600,000 people repatriated during November-December from Tanzania and Goma came to be viewed as the only legitimate refugees; those who remained could then be written off as 'genocidaire' and somehow 'morally' beyond the protection of IHL.

Between November 1996 and September 1997, perhaps as many as 100,000 of these so-called 'genocidaire' were killed by forces loyal to the ADFL and its allies. When humanitarian assistance was finally allowed to reach the remnants of this population, it was only sanctioned on the condition that a rapid repatriation would take place. When repatriation seemed in jeopardy, Kabila and Kagame put the pressure the back on by closing down what little humanitarian access they had allowed.

It is better to be wrong by killing no-one rather than be right with mass graves', A. Camus.

It is well known to those who worked in Kisangani that the health crisis among refugees was a direct consequence of the denial of 'humanitarian space' required to prevent humanitarian disasters. Without an incentive to observe IHL, it was possible for ADFL to use tactics against the Interahamwe and ex-FAR leadership which rested on weakening the remnant refugee populations *en masse* (combatants and civilians alike) through the encouragement of sickness and malnutrition. As has been pointed out with reference to other recent African wars, the denial of 'humanitarian space' appears to be a cornerstone of military strategy. It is significant that humanitarian access could only be secured by aid agencies once the desired humanitarian crisis was well advanced, and the civilian support base for the Interahamwe and ex-FAR physically broken.

The ADFL's key international supporters encouraged this highly effective - if inhuman - military strategy: many undoubtedly colluded in its implementation. Western media outlets continue to voice support for this African solution, despite the evidence of its enormous human cost.

Humanitarian assistance for those most at risk was subordinated to the requirement for repatriation. This must represent a new low for humanitarian principles.

Its apparent success in resolving the conflict has reinforced the new consensus around the redundancy of IHL.

Meanwhile, humanitarian agencies continued the now established pattern of ditching humanitarian principles in the face of unsympathetic political authorities. As a direct result, humanitarian assistance for those at most risk was subordinated to the requirement for repatriation. This must represent a new low for humanitarian principles.

Conclusion

The most depressing aspect of the Great Lakes tragedy has been this apparent willingness of all parties to the conflict, including UN and NGO humanitarian relief agencies and donors, to abandon IHL in the face of political imperatives. Humanitarian space was only provided when access to populations and the provision of assistance was in synergy with political or geopolitical aims. The absolute values of IHL would now seem to be largely replaced by relative 'conflict management' objectives designed to achieve a strategically or economically favourable peace. Thus achieving a suitable 'peace' is the new touchstone for international intervention in African wars. What, so far, does not seem to have been given much thought, is the precedent this sets for the conduct of politics in Africa. If pragmatic support for unilateral military solutions has replaced multilateral action grounded in IHL, then what hope is there for ending the so-called 'culture of impunity'? And what can the future hold for ordinary citizens ruled by political authorities that believe political ends justify barbaric means? As Camus once wrote 'It is better to be wrong by killing no-one rather than be right with mass graves'. ♦

Further Reading

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How Female Heads of Household Cope with Conflict: an exploratory study in Sri Lanka and Cambodia

by *Dieneke van der Wijk, currently with Save the Children Fund (UK) in Sri Lanka.*

Origin and purpose of the research

Research was carried out in 1996-1997 among female-headed households in four mostly agricultural villages, two in the north-east of Sri Lanka and two in the north-west of Cambodia. The purpose was to understand how conflict has changed the lives of these women and what impact it has had on their sense of identity.

The setting

The Sri Lankan and Cambodian conflicts have in common the ‘brain drain’ of skilled people, multiple displacement resulting in a loss of assets, weak or absent government service infrastructure, ongoing insecurity, restrictions on movements and a great number of female-headed households. In Cambodia the Khmer Rouge’s deliberate policy to destroy family bonds has led to mistrust among people, a self-centered survival strategy, and a ‘culture of silence’ about individual experiences. Women in Cambodia are also at risk from landmines, and threatened by domestic violence, divorce or abandonment. In Sri Lanka the conflict has led to distrust and prejudices among ethnic communities.

The methodology

The research sought to understand women’s coping strategies through their own eyes. Participatory Rural Appraisal tools, drawings, role plays and discussions were used to stimulate spontaneous group exchanges. The women themselves added singing and dancing. Trust in and an equal relationship with the facilitator was crucial to move from contextual events to more personal and sensitive topics such as women’s feelings about their ex- or late husbands, and their personal sense of identity. Drawings and role play were used to create a relaxed atmosphere and as an informal opportunity for women to recognise similar experiences and feelings amongst each other. One such drawing is

“Now I have a standby-bag in which I keep all my important documents, it hangs near the door, so if I have to run away again I can take it.”

“I am working like a mad cow now.”
“After work we are tired as a dead snake.”

the ‘Perfect woman versus the widow of the village’, which enabled the women to reflect on the work, the thoughts and the feelings of these different models. In role plays they demonstrated their experiences, such as humiliation at security checkpoints, memories of their husbands being taken away from home at night and killed, or how their husbands had beaten them. Women also showed their different feelings using body maps, in which they located where and how they felt anger, fear, sadness and happiness. The direction and speed of the group sessions were very much led by the women and their reactions were constantly reflected upon.

The impact of conflict on women and their strategies for coping

Safety and Security

The instability of conflict leads to increased harassment from armed men. Women are very cautious about their interactions with men in general. They keep a distance and avoid entering their houses as this might stigmatise them as prostitutes. In periods of heightened insecurity they prefer to pass checkpoints in groups. The Cambodian women were more relaxed than their Sri Lankan counterparts, they did not speak about their political views and the distress caused by the armed forces. In

addition, the women do not feel secure at home, as their temporary houses are flimsy and they have no man to protect them. Their main concern is to protect their children.

Loss of services and resources

Women are generally angry and frustrated with the government’s failure to provide adequate health and education services. The poor service infrastructure makes them vulnerable, forcing them to travel further and longer and increasing their worries about their children’s future. They are more prepared to go and complain when a government servant visits the village, as they are made to feel inferior when they go to the local government offices to do so.

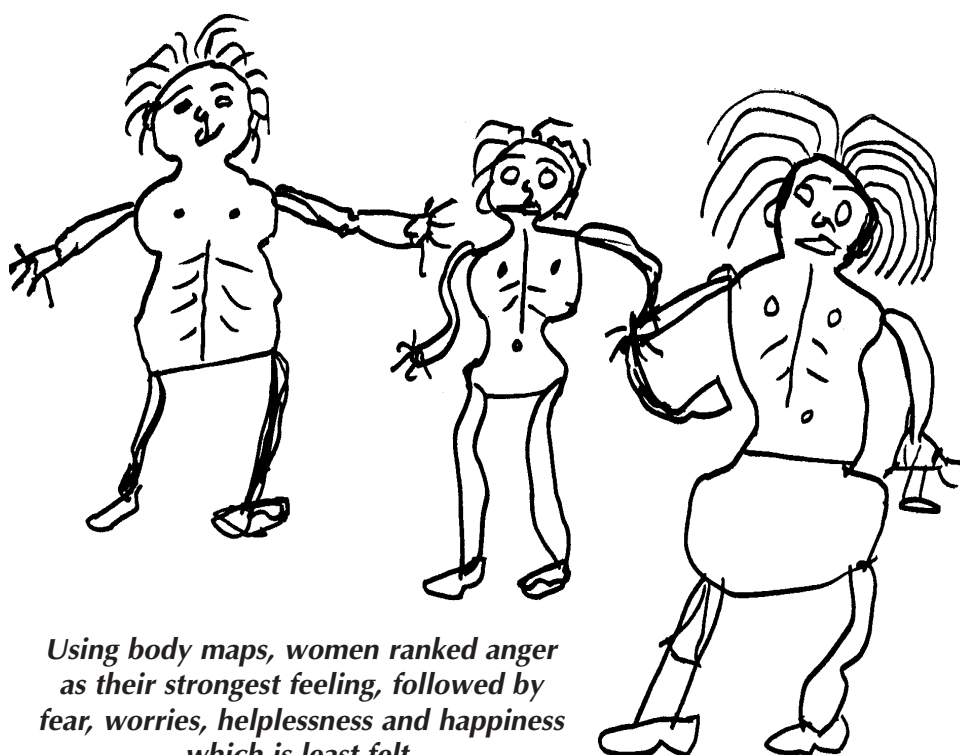
Displacement left many of the women with little more than some kitchen utensils and a mat to sleep on; female-headed households tend to borrow utensils from each other. Of more concern is the loss of bigger resources which may force them into dependency of a moneylender. The loss of identity cards, birth and land certificates, and the difficulty in obtaining death allowances and entitlements, decreases their safety and deprives them and their children of their rights to return to previous settlements and enrolment in school.

Economic position

The women struggle financially. They lack the money to hire labourers and equipment needed to cultivate. The absence of a husband has also changed their role in the family and blurred the socially accepted gender division of labour that was the basis of community respect. The women adapt by using different strategies. Where possible they try to 'make do' in their day-to-day work. This allows them to look after the children. It is relatively safe as the women remain in their home environment and so are not stigmatised. But women are also forced to take over their husband's previous tasks. Now they inevitably need help of the children and the money lender. While engaged in these tasks, the women perform in male dominated spheres and often experience gender-based humiliation.

Migration abroad is not considered as an option by Cambodian women. But women in north-east Sri Lanka are discovering that temporary work in the Middle-East provides opportunities to increase future prospects for their children. Personal risks are not considered. Finally,

Women are also forced to take over their husband's previous tasks and while engaged in these tasks, the women perform in male dominated spheres and often experience gender-based humiliation.



Using body maps, women ranked anger as their strongest feeling, followed by fear, worries, helplessness and happiness which is least felt.

Children become the main supporters in the family's economic and emotional survival, which often forces them to drop out of school.

sometimes women may engage in new and socially unacceptable jobs like selling illicit liquor (Sri Lanka) and smuggling goods (Cambodia). As a result of these changes and their degraded status in society, the community stigmatises the women and they are labelled as being 'after men'.

Food

Lack of food creates tensions with the children and it can remind them of the husband/ father for various reasons: husbands used to bring home food at difficult times, they used to discipline the children when they proved unmanageable, and eating was the time when husband and wife sat together and talked. The women now tend not to eat food the lost family members liked.

Changes in family structure

Although the women feel unable to deal with the changed status and perception in the community, they are proud that they raise their children on their own. Children become the main supporters in the family's economic and emotional survival, which often forces them to drop out

of school. As children grow older they may become restricted in their movements and tasks; the girls for traditional reasons like 'coming of age', and boys for fear of arrest or forced recruitment. The wider kin group, as the family's main support and protection system, has become less effective because of the lower status held by female heads of households, the reduction also of kin because of the conflict and, especially in Cambodia, the breakdown of trust relationships. As a result an alternative social network of female heads of households tends to develop, in which women feel a strong bond, find recognition and can share resources.

Death and domestic violence

None of the women were able to hold a funeral for the dead members. This made acceptance of the death more difficult, especially for disappeared spouses whose fate is unknown. Most women ended their search for answers about the dead or disappeared after five years, due to a lack of money, the humiliation and verbal sexual harassment from security officers, and a disbelief that their husbands were still living.

“I opened my heart and showed my wound inside, after doing all the exercises I feel that the heavy thing in my heart has gone.”

The women in Cambodia reported an increase in domestic violence, and divorce or abandonment. This is a consequence of conflict-induced community problems, such as a higher ratio of women to men, the lack of education and moral upbringing of men during the Pol Pot era, alcohol and the availability of weapons. The women tend to be passive receivers of the beatings.

Mental coping strategies

The women’s personal experiences are reflected in feelings which are mostly felt at night and disturb their sleep. Women ranked anger as their strongest feeling, followed by fear, worries, helplessness and happiness, which is least felt.

Using body maps, women showed the beating of their hearts, fainting, shaking of arms and legs, inability to walk and urinate or defecate. The women seek support, especially from their children, from relatives and neighbours who give practical advice, and in religion that provides a space to reflect and pray for help. The meetings also provided a space to talk and relax.

Programme implications

A key conclusion from the research is that agency interventions should provide both economic and emotional support. Care should be taken with an individualistic Western model of counselling (see Summerfield, 1996).

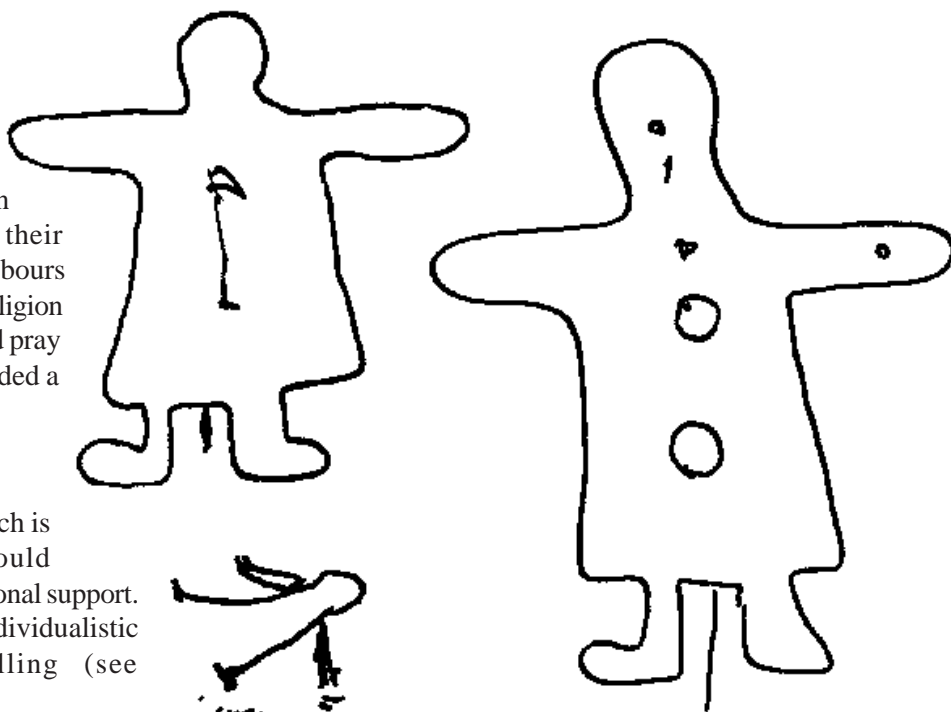
The participatory meetings were received with great enthusiasm. In the evaluations the women said they enjoyed the meetings for two reasons: they were able to share their experiences and found a space to relax.

The meetings built up mutual recognition, trust, strength and solidarity among the women, which was noted when a follow up evaluation was done three months later.

Women heads of households are strong survivors that take responsibility and make decisions for their families within the boundaries of their understanding, capabilities and situational context. It is important that programmes are built on people’s strengths to help them regain control over their lives which will improve their confidence and self-esteem on a personal and collective level.

However, developing the strengths of one particular group in a community might cause tension with other actors in the community, because different dynamics exist between individuals based on gender, age and spatial considerations. Sufficient contextual understanding of relationships is therefore needed.◆

The participatory meetings built up mutual recognition, trust, strength and solidarity among the women, which was noted when a follow up evaluation was done three months later.



Using body maps, women showed the beating of their hearts, fainting, shaking of arms and legs and an inability to walk.

Further Reading

Summerfield, D. (1996) *The Impact of War and Atrocities on Civilian Populations. Basic principles for NGO interventions and a critique of psychosocial trauma projects*. London, ODI, Relief and Rehabilitation Network Paper no. 14.

van der Wijk, D. (1997) *Using Participatory Group Activities to Understand Psycho-Social Strategies for Coping with Conflict*. PLA Notes, June 1997, London, International Institute for Environment and Development.

The full report : 'The Human Side of Conflict. Coping strategies of women heads of households in four villages in Sri Lanka and Cambodia', D. van der Wijk, can be obtained from the Gender and Learning Team at Oxfam, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford, United Kingdom, OX2 7DZ. Tel. +44 (0)1865 311 311

FEEDBACK

Your experiences/lessons learned in humanitarian assistance programmes may be of relevance and interest to a wider audience.

While it is not possible to publish all material received from members, if you are interested in contributing a Newsletter article or Network Paper on a particular issue, or offering to act as a peer reviewer for GPRs, please contact the RRN team.

We are also interested in receiving information and contact details of conferences/training programmes/publications which the RRN might usefully publicise in the Newsletter.

Comments, constructive criticism and Letters to the Editor should be addressed to the RRN Coordinator.

Abstracts

RRN Network Paper 23

ISBN: 0-85003-367-5

'The Coordination of Humanitarian Action' by *Koenraad Van Brabant*

This case study concerns humanitarian field coordination efforts during Eelam War 3 in Sri Lanka, between 1994 and 1996. The war and the coordination efforts continue.

Most documented experiences of coordination of humanitarian action relate to situations in which government was weakened, collapsed or not in control of significant parts of its territory. Sri Lanka provides a case of a government that has asserted its sovereignty and that simultaneously pursues political, military and humanitarian objectives. The government's continued responsibility for the protection of and provision for its citizens is briefly examined in the light of its role in the conflict. An overview of the challenges for humanitarian action and capacity to respond leads to a discussion of the restriction of 'humanitarian space' by the army. Throughout the period in question humanitarian agencies not only needed to coordinate for programme effectiveness, but also to advocate for humanitarian space and access. After a review of the coordination mechanisms in place at the outbreak of war, the different initiatives to strengthen it during the war are examined. Special attention is being paid to the review of the NGO Consortium on Relief and Rehabilitation and the Interagency Emergency Group. For organisational, but also for political reasons, both functioned simultaneously and in parallel.

The absence of professional knowledge about coordination, and the occasional shortage of technical and methodological expertise added to the usual resistance to coordination, making it a difficult exercise. Contextual constraints, such as the outbreak of the war coinciding with an effort to rethink coordination, and the complex and sensitive politics around humanitarian assistance also played their role. The most important obstacle to effective coordination remained however the absence of an effective institutional link for the coordination between humanitarian efforts of the government and those of specialised agencies.

RRN Good Practice Review 5: 'Counting and Identification of Beneficiary Populations in Emergency Operations: registration and its alternatives' by John Telford
(ISBN: 0-85003-253-0)

The aim of this fifth review in the RRN series is to stimulate discussion as to what constitutes 'good practice' in the quantification, identification and registration of beneficiaries in humanitarian assistance operations. The emphasis is on providing practical information concisely and accessibly, however, the Review does not seek to offer a guide to registration. Indeed, it concludes that total population registration is but one option for establishing numbers and constituent groups within a beneficiary population and discusses registration and alternatives in relation to internally displaced persons (IDPs), as well as refugees and victims of 'natural-disasters'.

RRN Good Practice Review 6: 'Temporary Human Settlement Planning for Displaced Populations in Emergencies' (1998) by Andrew Chalinder (ISBN: 0-85003-372-1)

This sixth GPR in the RRN series set itself the task of broadening thinking on temporary human settlement planning in emergencies. It asks "what is good, or at least better, practice in planning 'for' not planning 'of' temporary settlements for displaced populations". The author draws a distinction between the more technical aspects of site allocation and preparation and decisions which take into account political, environmental and economic sustainability issues when planning settlements. The Review contends that the long term implications for emergency assistance programmes of the choice of area or region in which a displaced population is encouraged to settle are frequently overlooked in the scramble to find a site. More attention needs to be directed at a managerial level within both development and humanitarian sectors towards finding economically and environmentally sustainable solutions. A key notion which drove the thinking behind the Review was the feeling that the outcome of planning must have at its core a notion of community and sustainability for the different groups affected by displacement, including both the displaced and the host populations. The idea of assisting a target 'area' rather than a target 'group' is explored as one of a number of possible options to be considered as part of a responsible planning process. A range of agencies and individuals with direct field experience in emergency responses were consulted during the drafting of the paper and it is hoped that the Review does justice to their input and emphasis on the practical application of the recommendations.

How do YOU use the RRN?

Medico International, a German development NGO supporting mental health projects for victims of violence and torture particularly valued Derek Summerfield's Network Paper 14, 'The Impact of War and Atrocity on Civilian Populations: Basic Principles for NGO Interventions and a Critique of Psychosocial Trauma Projects'. Their agreement with his trauma critique led to permission being sought to translate and reproduce parts of the paper in one of their publications.

A member of the RRN's Advisory Group, Susan Purdin, Project Manager for the SPHERE Project ordered several copies of Network Papers no. 7, 'Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGO's', no. 16, 'The Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda: Study III Main Findings & Recommendations', and no. 20, 'People in Aid Code of Best Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel', to be used as part of a presentation on accountability in humanitarian assistance at the School of Public Health at the University of California.

In expectation of a possible drought...according to the El Niño predictions, Jean François Detry (MSF/CIS/Mozambique) reproduced an abstract of Good Practice Review 4, 'Seed Provision During and After Emergencies' in the Boletim da Segurança Alimentar no. 48.'

We'd like to hear from you about the ways in which you use our material... any experiences to pass on would be most welcome... drop a line to the Editor.

As part of pre-production research for a documentary film, a northern California-based producer/director who lived and worked in Liberia years ago sought discussion with Philippa Atkinson, the RRN's Regional Representative in West Africa, author of Network Paper 22 on the war economy in Liberia.

...documentaries...lectures...

...news articles...training...conference material...

News

Rearranging the deck chairs? Reforming the UN's responses to humanitarian crises.

Joanna Macrae, Research Fellow, Humanitarian Policy Programme, ODI, London.

It is easy to suffer from acronym overload when trying to review recent attempts to reform the UN's responses to complex emergencies. From the ECOSOC, to the IASC, to ECHA to the GA, to CCPOQ and the ACC¹, discussion of reform has been in the air for nearly two years; this process seems to be nearing its end, what are we to make of the maze which is UN humanitarian reform?

At issue is who should coordinate humanitarian interventions. In the context of weak states and in environments where state authorities are widely seen to be illegitimate, the question of who should allocate scarce resources and according to what principles has become a central preoccupation of the humanitarian system, particularly within the UN. The lack of coherence of UN agency responses has been a constant theme of a series of evaluations and media reports, extending from Iraq to Somalia to Rwanda. The coherence problem is confronted at numerous levels, extending from the level of inter-agency coordination and division of labour at field and headquarters levels, to the even more complex problem of how to ensure that the political bodies of the Security Council and the Departments of Political Affairs (DPA) and Peace-keeping (DPKO) support rather than undermine humanitarian objectives.

The weaknesses of DHA, in particular its lack of independent resources, its ambivalent relations with UNDP and the perceived weakness of its leadership are widely seen to be symptomatic of the inherent structural flaws of its original mandate. Since its inception, DHA has relied upon consensus rather than clout in order to effect decision-making, a strategy which

has proved weak in a climate of inter-agency competition and overlapping mandates. Furthermore, despite the location of DHA within the UN Secretariat, the level of coherence between humanitarian, political and military responses appears not to have improved.

The arrival of a new UN Secretary-General in January 1997, the conditional improvement in relations between the USA and the organisation, and its continued financial crisis have combined to make reform the buzzword of 1997. The organisation's response to complex emergencies has not been left untouched. A bewildering array of committees, papers and working groups has been instigated over the past year to try to find the magic formula which would improve the coordination of the UN's response to complex emergencies.

DHA has relied upon consensus rather than clout in its decision-making

In its 1995 session the ECOSOC (the Economic and Social Council) adopted a resolution requesting a review of the capacity of the UN system in humanitarian assistance, ostensibly to review the progress which had been made since the establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in late 1991.

Following the resolution, a flurry of discussions took place in various fora, including the IASC, which prepared a report for submission to ECOSOC at its session earlier this year. The findings of this report were overtaken by events, in particular the review of UN structures

A bewildering array of committees, papers and working groups has been instigated over the past year to try to find the magic formula which would improve the coordination of the UN's response to complex emergencies.

conducted by Maurice Strong on behalf of Kofi Annan, the new UN Secretary-General. On the humanitarian side, the cornerstone of Strong's report was the proposal that DHA's functions should be incorporated into UNHCR, the largest of the UN specialised humanitarian agencies. While seemingly attractive in providing the UN emergency coordination role with the political leverage associated with such significant resources, this proposal was criticised by many as it meant losing the independence

necessary to ensure impartial coordination of the humanitarian system. While other elements of Strong's report are reflected in the UNSG's own submission to the General Assembly in July this year, his central recommendation regarding an expanded role did not survive the summer. Rather, in terms of humanitarian

policy, the UNSG's report makes four substantive changes to the existing arrangements:

- ***DHA disappears***

The Department of Humanitarian Affairs is to disappear. In its place, there will be an Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator (OERC) led by Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, which will remain in the Secretariat. The real significance of this move is that OERC will shed most of its operational responsibilities. For example, responsibility for the reduction and mitigation of natural disasters will be handed over to UNDP and responsibility for demining will go to the Department of Peace-Keeping Operations (DPKO). Relieving OERC of these operational responsibilities is seen to enable the ERC to focus more on its advocacy and coordination roles, and the more limited operational responsibilities which it retains such as responding to natural disasters.

- ***Unified framework for field level coordination***

Following from the discussions of the ACC and CCPOQ, agreement was reached between the UN agencies to accept a unified framework for field level coordination. While this existed in theory, personified in the figure of the UN Resident Coordinator system managed by UNDP, in practice this system was often seen to lack 'buy in' from agencies. In addition, in some countries a parallel system had emerged where a Humanitarian Coordinator and a Resident Coordinator would literally or figuratively sit side-by-side. Now the distinction has been abolished. The Resident Coordinator will now represent the entire UN system, although where there is also a humanitarian coordination function, the Coordinator would report to both UNDP and to OERC.

- ***Increasing coherence between political, humanitarian and development domains***

The establishment of Executive Committees as internal coordination bodies, including the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) and the Executive Committee on Peace and Security potentially provides a way of increasing the cooperation between the political and aid domains. The Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator will be represented on both, and chair the former. At the field level, increased political coherence of UN operations may be achieved in future by the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, having at least moral authority over all United Nations entities, including the specialised relief and development agencies.

- ***Department of Political Affairs to take responsibility for post-conflict peace-building***

DPA as chair of the Executive Committee on Peace and

Security has been designated the focal point for UN and will work closely with the World Bank and other development partners in those countries where a peace agreement has been signed and which are designated 'post-conflict'.

There was significant disagreement between the operational agencies and DHA.

Each of these reforms has attracted controversy and generated as many questions as answers, but it is probably DHA's future (or lack of it) which is of

most interest to our readers. ECHA established a working group to thrash out the implications of the DHA-ERC reforms. In addition to representatives from DHA itself, this included UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF and UNDP. Needless to say, there was significant disagreement between the operational agencies and DHA. The former supported the creation of a 'lean and mean' Office of the Emergency Coordinator, with a staff of 61 who would focus on coordination, advocacy and information. In contrast, DHA proposes a larger structure, which maintains a capacity for operational support in crisis countries. The extent to which the OERC has a field presence is a crucial issue; without it, the Office is unlikely to be seen as a credible and authoritative body. Clearly, however, it cannot be business as usual – if the OERC is to have a field presence, the conditions under which this is organised will need considerable review.

Which of these two competing visions will win out is far from clear. In the midst of the detail of the various reports, laden with specification of staff numbers and grades, it is often hard for outsiders to understand the objective of the reforms and the analysis which is driving it. For example, while ERC lacks resources and authority over other operational agencies, can it ever exert any more than moral authority over the UN humanitarian system? Perhaps even more fundamentally, there remain considerable overlaps in operational responsibility in areas such as food aid and food security, while significant gaps remain in areas such as responsibility for internally displaced people. None of these points are addressed within the current UN reform agenda.

The UN faces growing problems securing adequate resources for its emergency operations and pledges against appeals remain at an all-time low. At the same time, globally, humanitarianism as a concept seems to be under siege from critics on the right and left. In this context, it is disappointing to see that this opportunity for reshaping the UN's response to complex emergencies has yielded such a timid response. Rather than moulding a new conceptual and operational framework for future global intervention in political crisis, one is left with the sense that the deckchairs are simply being rearranged on the eminently sinkable UN humanitarian enterprise. ♦

Notes: ¹UK

A Parliamentary Review of Belgian Aid

Principal Findings

In July 1997 the 'Special Parliamentary Commission for the Follow Up of the Problems of the (Belgian) Directorate for Development Cooperation' (ABOS/AGCD), created in late 1995, published its report¹. The audit examined several 'dossiers', and exposed serious structural weaknesses in the Belgian development cooperation. The reports findings are summarised below:

- The goals of Belgium's development cooperation are insufficiently clear (p. 19-20) and there is no coherent and strategic long-term vision. This leaves Belgium's aid open to the interests and priorities of successive Secretaries of State for Aid and to the influence of lobbies. Aggravated by the absence of a geographical and sectoral concentration, the result is a highly fragmented portfolio of aid. There is also a lack of coordination and dialogue between the different actors in Belgium (ABOS/AGCD accounts for 63% of total ODA, with the Ministries of Finance and the External Trade department allocating most of the remainder), and a paternalistic relationship with recipient country governments. A lack of transparency leaves the Belgian aid programme with a poor public image.

Communications between Brussels and the field are poor.

- Over the years the development agenda has grown substantially, both in quantity of projects and programmes and in themes. Yet contrary to the DAC recommendations the staffing of the aid administration has not only been increased but effectively reduced (p. 20-25). At 5%, the low overheads of the aid administration represent understaffing rather than efficiency. Moreover, there is a high turnover of staff, poor job security, with staff on short term contracts and arbitrary personnel policies, and insufficient personnel with serious field experience. There is no proper IT system, the legal department is understaffed and the Monitoring and Evaluation unit is down to two people (p. 22). The aid administration has field delegations, but communications and relationships between Brussels and the field are poor, and there has not been an effective devolution of authority to the field. It is not uncommon for Brussels to override the advice of the field delegation (p. 48).

The aid department is not in a position to be accountable or to develop organisational learning.

- The procedures and decision-making processes (p. 25-26) are complex, unclear and hierarchical. As a result dossiers spent a long time in an administrative carousel that is not necessarily effective because there is no clear notion of 'development relevance'.

- The aid administration operates with an accountancy mentality, paying exclusive attention to financial and administrative controls, ignoring the appraisal and evaluation of the substance of a project or programme. The aid department is therefore not in a position to be accountable or to develop organisational learning (p. 26-27). Even in terms of financial-administrative audits, the process is weak as verification visits to the field are seldom undertaken.

The review thus advocates fundamental reform (p. 192-208) with recommendations, among others, for a long term policy, the development of a strategic framework with geographical, sectoral and thematic priorities, more and better human resources, and a strengthening of an independent monitoring and evaluation function. In the medium term the different aid instruments should be concentrated in a new Department of International Cooperation (p. 199).

This news section does not report on the direct bilateral aid dossiers examined, the indirect ones via multilaterals, but will concentrate on indirect aid channelled through NGOs.

NGOs and the Belgian Development Cooperation

The relationships and cooperation between the aid department and the NGOs could be improved from both sides (p. 213-216). The NGO right of initiative is recognised i.e. they cannot be seen as pure contractors. But the NGO scene is very diverse, and the high number of NGO projects and programmes creates a heavy burden for the aid department. Typically, its staff concentrates

on new, not on ongoing projects (p. 117). There is a need for improved communications, an ongoing dialogue especially around expanded programme funding (p. 119), and more transparency from both sides. The NGOs, for their part, need improve coordination amongst themselves. Structural problems concern the ABOS/AGCD regulations, which are

complex, sometimes inconsistent or open to different interpretation, and always changing. The staff changes in the ABOS/AGCD aggravate the absence of policy and continuity. The regulations need to be simplified and clarified and both the aid department and the NGOs need

to strictly respect them, which is not now always the case. NGOs also need to develop their project documentation which was found to be often so rudimentary that no detailed analysis let alone evaluation was possible (p. 47). NGOs were often found to be slow in submitting their financial reports, but when they did, the aid department in turn proved slow in checking it and following up where needed (p. 152). The regulatory and legal framework with regard to partnerships of Belgian intermediary NGOs and local counterparts, and with regard to innovative ways of financing NGO development projects, need to be developed, and it needs to be made clear what legislation applies where. Finally, the ABOS/AGCD cannot continue to exercise only an administrative and financial control. It needs to pay attention to the substance and impact of projects and programmes (p. 35-37). NGOs themselves however need to develop their internal audit and evaluation capacity (p. 120-121).

The Parliamentary Commission examined a sample of 3 NGO dossiers. Only MSF Belgium was deliberately chosen upon request of the Secretary of State for Aid, Mr. Moreels, former MSF President (1986-1994).

The audit of the dossier of COOIBO (p. 101-122) highlighted NGO practices in the face of general cash flow problems. Delayed accounting of expenses and/or delayed disbursement of agreed funding creates cash flow problems for an NGO with limited general fundraising capacity and limited reserves. The cash flow vulnerabilities of NGOs that work with substantial official funds need to be studied more systematically as a matter of policy (p. 122).

The audit of MSF-Belgium, first by the High Commission of Supervision (Hoog Committee van Toezicht) and subsequently also by the Court of Auditors, included all emergency operations funded by ABOS/AGCD since 1991. This amounted to 248,305,000 Bfr (approx. \$6.95m). The debate essentially turned around 'Transfer'. MSF created Transfer in 1989 as its procurement agency. It is housed in the same building as MSF. Upon recommendation of the Arthur Andersen firm, Transfer was given the legal status of a 'cooperative association'. The first argument focused on a conflict of interest. As a cooperative association, Transfer is a commercial organisation. Belgian legislation forbids an NGO to have any structural links with commercial organisations, hence MSF Belgium, which owns over 99% of Transfer's

shares, would no longer legally qualify as an NGO. MSF denied that the intention or reality behind Transfer was that of a commercial organisation and that the small profits made were reinvested. The Court of Auditors however upheld the commercial nature of Transfer. The second argument concerned the shared cost structure of MSF and Transfer.

The mainly Belgian procurement leads to very high transportation costs.

The Court of Supervision alleged that Transfer absorbed MSF costs, thereby artificially reducing its profit margin and its tax liability. The recommendations of the Parliamentary Commission demand a clear, contractual and accounting separation of the common costs between MSF and Transfer. The third argument concerned good practice in procurement. Non-legally binding guidelines from ABOS/AGCD articulated in 1988-9 stated that procurement had to be informed by offers from at least three EU suppliers. MSF and other NGOs were unable to provide sufficient documentation to that effect. MSF argued that the market for emergency goods is subject to cartel formation, and that at a time of crisis prices tend to rise rapidly. Therefore it felt the need to rely on Transfer's professionally constituted 'stocks-on-standby'. The Court of Auditors granted that three different offers may not always be possible (eg. for patented medicines), and that delivery time is as much a consideration in emergencies as price/quality. Yet it held that the guideline to consider three suppliers then had to be followed at the time of constituting the stock. In that regard it was remarked how few emergency stocks were procured in the country affected by an emergency or its region. The mainly Belgian procurement leads to very high transportation costs: for the Kurdish emergency operation in 1991, for example, 60% of the expense incurred was for transport (p. 155-156).

Project documentation was found to be often so rudimentary that no detailed analysis, let alone evaluation, was possible.

The fourth argument concerned accountability. Whereas government funds were given to MSF, they effectively went to Transfer. The auditors could thus not always find adequate documentation with MSF, which might effectively exist with Transfer. As a result, MSF either has to incorporate Transfer within its normal structure, which would have significant overall organisational costs, or effect a clearer dissociation and open it up to other NGOs.

From a legal point of view, the situation is problematic in that the 1988-9 guidelines were not legally binding. The specific legal regulation of emergency aid did not take place in Belgium until 1995. Until then, the aid department and NGOs were effectively operating in a legal vacuum. A framework law needs to be developed,

indicating the criteria for geographical choice, sectoral priority and thematic emphasis, to provide Belgian aid with a legal basis. As a consequence, the audit and resulting controversies are unlikely to lead to legal actions. On the contrary, the result will be more regulation. It remains to be seen whether this will also be simpler and better regulation.◆

Notes: 1. Chambre des Représentants de Belgique: Suivi des problèmes de l'Administration Générale de la Coopération au Développement. Rapport fait au nom de la Commission Spéciale. 1123/1-96/97, Brussels, (July 1997).

The Ombudsman Project: pilot project to investigate the concept of an Ombudsman for humanitarian assistance

Ombudsman is an old Swedish word that has been used for centuries to describe a person who represents or protects the interests of another. The term is now more frequently used in the public and private sectors to refer to a special office or officer to whom citizens can go with their grievances about maladministration or malpractice. The idea of adopting the ombudsman concept within the humanitarian system has gained credence in recent years, most notably following the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda. With the growth in numbers, power and influence of NGOs, commentators on the international humanitarian system have increasingly stressed the need for some mechanism, such as an ombudsman or inspector, to hold agencies to account for their activities in the field, above all for the beneficiaries of aid. The idea has gathered new momentum since the 1997 World Disasters Forum hosted by the British Red Cross Society in London, where the UK NGO community agreed to support a pilot project, coordinated by the British Red Cross, to examine the concept of an ombudsman-style system for humanitarian assistance.

In principle, a Humanitarian Assistance Ombudsman would act as an independent, impartial body to regulate NGO activities in humanitarian emergencies which may include failure to comply with any relevant legal obligations or codes of practice, and also investigate real grievances identified by beneficiaries. A Working Group has been established to study the feasibility of such a system and aims to design an appropriate model that could

function in humanitarian emergencies. Both international and local NGOs will be involved in the initiative and invited to contribute by providing 'Accountability Case Studies' that focus on the views of stakeholders in recipient countries. The project will address how such a scheme could work in the environment of humanitarian emergencies; who would be the complainants; who would act as the Ombudsman and with what jurisdiction; how the monitoring and grievances would be handled; and what remedies are recommended or sanctions, if any, imposed on those who malpractice.

The project will be developed under the direction of an inter-agency Steering Group and discussed more widely with a Reference Group, comprising UK NGOs, donors and academics involved in the humanitarian system, and also through the Active Learning Network on Accountability & Performance in Humanitarian Assistance (ALNAP). A full report of the findings will be presented at the next World Disasters Forum in 1998.◆

For further details please contact John Mitchell, Project Co-ordinator, British Red Cross, 9 Grosvenor Crescent, London, United Kingdom, SW1X 7EJ. Tel: 0171 201 5433, Fax: 0171 235 0397. E-mail: jmitchel@redcross.org.uk

The International Committee to Protect Aid Workers

The 1990's have seen a marked rise in security incidents involving aid and development workers. While insecurity has always been a threat to aid workers, the recent trend indicates that aid agencies are being specifically targeted by combatants, bandits and political forces seeking further instability within countries and regions already wracked by war, disease and disaster.

The ICPAW is a group of aid workers dedicated to collecting, documenting and analysing data on threats and attacks made against their colleagues, with the intent of defining problems and advocating changes to make aid assistance safer. The Committee believes that exposing the prevalence of incidents and by encouraging discussion within the community of donors, organisations and governments, realistic solutions can be found to improve the security of aid workers around the world. The ICPAW is an impartial organisation, free from other programming constraints, whose sole concern is with the safety of humanitarian assistance and development workers.

The ICPAW is currently engaged in a research project to define and analyse the basic problems of security in assistance work. A questionnaire has been designed to develop a bank of statistical information on aid and development-related security incidents and track trends in innovative solutions for these problems and is seeking contacts with international, non-governmental and development organisations for distribution of the questionnaire and additional programme planning. The ICPAW is also seeking potential donors to support research, dissemination of data and future projects, including training, conferences and support of a website.◆

For additional information on ICPAW or to obtain a copy of the questionnaire (specify computer application), please contact Jim White at: ICPAW@pcisys.com or at 3630 E. La Salle Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80909 USA.

‘More than just a bank’: The revision of ECHO’s Framework Partnership Agreement with humanitarian agencies.

In May this year, ECHO embarked upon a process of consultation with Humanitarian Aid Organisations (HAOs), setting out proposals for the revision of the Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA). Organising themselves within VOICE and more widely as a Dialogue Group, the HAOs prepared a response to ECHO’s initial proposals and released a position document on 7th July 1997.

The response of the HAOs can be divided into two parts: the first is political, dealing with the values and principles of partnership and serving as a reference document (an essential prerequisite for the revision of the General Conditions, the Operating Contract, the annexes and the standard forms). The second is technical, focusing on the administrative, financial and operational aspects associated with implementation of the contracts.

The consultation process between the HAOs and ECHO was provisionally concluded at the beginning of October. However, before a final record of the meetings can be presented, ECHO will need to consult more widely both within the European Union and with the Member States. The comments below provide some preliminary conclusions from an NGO perspective on the process and results to date.

I. Political Amendments

Partnership, as the key to effective political discussion, should be addressed in two ways: regular consultation between partners; and a clarification of the role of ECHO in the partnership.

i. Dialogue

ECHO has not adopted the full concept of dialogue as envisioned by the HAOs, but has committed itself to ‘consulting’ at regular intervals. This distinction seems to reflect ECHO’s fear that partner organisations might interfere in its decision-making process. By asking for regular dialogue, however, HAOs are seeking to avoid the limitations of the role of sub-contractor and to introduce a genuine dialogue which will facilitate decision-making at appropriate levels.

It is encouraging that, while working together on the revision of the FPA, NGOs and ECHO have succeeded in reaching agreement on almost all issues of importance. NGOs were able to persuade ECHO of the added value and quality of their contribution, to which ECHO has responded with a willingness to explore informal partnerships and to strengthen NGO representation to the Commission.

It is recognised that the new FPA provides for an increased level of consultation than its predecessor and that a ‘dialogue’ cannot be imposed upon ECHO. However, in the absence of greater transparency in ECHO’s partnership intentions over the way in which the humanitarian organisations are to be consulted, there is concern that more may yet need to be done to meet the expectations of both sides.

ii. The role of ECHO

ECHO has consistently reiterated its wish not to be considered simply as a bank. It would be advantageous to all for ECHO to develop as a more rounded instrument of administrative and financial management. It is therefore with this as a backdrop and with the aim of strengthening ECHO’s role as a competent humanitarian agency that HAOs are seeking to integrate the following proposals into the new FPA.

- working meetings between ECHO and the humanitarian organisations should focus on operational strategies, with direct access to information on ECHO’s workplans;
- an information, education and general awareness raising strategy should be implemented. This should include a dedicated effort to increase understanding

of humanitarian problems in Europe and in countries experiencing situations of instability and crisis;

- the consensus on humanitarian principles and values should be brought to the forefront. These core values, together with the understanding and application of International Humanitarian Law, enable humanitarian organisations to speak on behalf of those affected by crisis, while also providing ECHO with a political and moral ‘springboard’ in the defence of populations affected by conflict.

Despite ECHO’s insistence that it be seen as ‘more than just a bank’, the limited information available regarding the role that it does want to play to some extent explains the continued lack of commitment by HAOs to partnership issues.

II. Technical Amendments

Technically speaking, the revision of the FPA has achieved the following:

1. A clarification of mutual obligations on the part of all partners, including ECHO, in the implementation of a contract. The details relate mostly to clarity about deadlines for responses to correspondence and applications and payments.
2. An agreement that ECHO will recognise local partners, thus enabling a humanitarian organisation to entrust the implementation of an operation financed by ECHO, either in part, or entirely to a local partner. Full responsibility will continue to be shouldered by the lead implementing partner.
3. A number of significant changes relate to the integration of evaluation and preliminary study and assessment costs into project budgets.
4. Improvements in the financial sphere include a significantly lower risk of exchange losses with a cross-subsidisation of up to 15% between budget lines now possible; the possible granting of an advance of up to 80% of the budget in substantiated cases or on presentation of an expenditure schedule; the possible

inclusion of a contingency reserve of more than 5%, with no maximum ceiling; the use of flat rates for the remuneration/reimbursement of expatriate and local staff; the reimbursement of administrative costs up to 7%, based on a table to be established by joint agreement; the option of obtaining co-financing for large-scale operations with the only obligation being that of informing ECHO of the identity of the other backers and the size of their respective contributions; the extension and greater flexibility in the list of eligible expenses.

5. Discussions are ongoing on the question of management of HAOs purchasing offices with no agreement between ECHO and the partners yet reached.
6. ECHO has withdrawn its intention of accompanying every programme with a visibility plan and, in the framework of a humanitarian project, will make finance available for consciousness-raising and education activities in Europe and developing countries. ECHO is keen to increase awareness of the humanitarian problem and to ensure that populations affected by crisis are seen as worthy of respect, rather than as objects of pity.

III. Conclusions

The current version of the FPA is the culmination of a long and intense process of consultation between ECHO and the humanitarian organisations. It reflects a patient, measured search for agreement which has resulted in significant progress towards giving the FPA the flexibility needed for the effective implementation of humanitarian assistance projects. Care has been taken to ensure that this flexibility is accompanied by rigorous management and a high degree of accountability.

A more transparent commitment to methods of consultation, coupled with constructive dialogue and complementary action between partners, will enable ECHO to more fully exploit the unique opportunity which the revision process has afforded and progress towards its stated goal of becoming ‘more than just a bank’.◆

SPHERE Project

A progress report

The SPHERE Project (an initiative of the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) and Interaction) was launched in July earlier this year. A fuller report on the background to the project and objectives was carried in RRN Newsletter 6 (Walker, 1996). Here we offer a brief progress report and contact details of the five sector managers and Project Coordinator, Susan Purdin. To recap, the project involves European and US NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, donor governments, and UN agencies in developing a set of standards in five core areas of humanitarian assistance as set out in the box (see right). The standards are intended to improve the quality of assistance provided in emergencies, and the accountability of agencies to their beneficiaries, their membership and their donors. A unique aspect of the project is its commitment to derive these standards from a 'charter of humanitarian rights - drawn from existing international law - relevant to all with a legitimate claim to assistance in disaster situations'.

The sector managers met together in Washington during the last week of October 1997, since when the nutrition section has held a working group meeting in London, the water and site teams met together in Geneva and health and food security people have connected with peer groups in several different fora.

Other recent project activities have included the first draft of the humanitarian charter, based on international humanitarian law and human rights conventions, which was reviewed at the project management committee. The charter reaffirms the commitment of NGOs working in humanitarian relief to deliver goods and services in support of life with dignity. It is hoped that a draft of the Charter will be posted on the website by the end of November. ♦

SPHERE Project: Sectors and Managers

All five sector managers are working at building networks and formulating agreed interagency standards in their areas of expertise.

Project Coordinator - Susan Purdin

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Water supply and sanitation - John Adams, seconded to the SPHERE project from Oxfam.

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Food security - Harlan Hale, seconded by CARE-US based in Atlanta

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Nutrition - Lola Nathanail, SCF-UK

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Clothing, shelter and site management - Philip Wijmans, LWF field director in Cambodia

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Contributors to this section:

A Review of Belgian Aid: Koenraad Van Brabant, RRN - Policy and Development

Ombudsman: David Peppiatt, British Red Cross Society

ICPAW: Jim White, ICPAW

'More Than Just a Bank': Xavier Ortegat, VOICE Coordinator, based on information provided from the Dialogue Group (representing FPA signatories)

SPHERE Project: Laura Gibbons, RRN Coordinator based on information from Susan Purdin, SPHERE Project Manager.

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Regional focus...

UGANDA

President Museveni of Uganda now faces greater challenges to his control of the country than at any time since he came to power. There are continuing rebel activities in the north, more fighting in the west and increasing insecurity in Kampala (grenades and armed robbery). His government has been explaining that the fighting in the north is about to finish for so long that no-one believes them. Privately, they admit that the UPDF (Ugandan People's Defence Forces) is profiting from the war, corruption has removed much of the donor money given for the north and the merchants there benefit too. It looks like another case of the phenomenon identified by David Keen in the "Benefits of Famine"¹ - enough people do well out of the war that it continues until there is nothing left.

Northerners were in power in Uganda for the whole period until the NRA (National Resistance Army) took over. Their marginalisation now, while the south and west prosper, and the destruction of the northern economy, are a permanent reproach to an otherwise successful government. Museveni's tactic has hitherto been to blame the Sudanese government for supporting the LRA (Lord's Resistance Army) and others - but after ten years, he has failed to consolidate power in the north, to bring it any of the benefits of peace or to persuade his people that he can. There is no evidence that the UPDF has the capacity or commitment to bring the war to a conclusion through military means, nor that the government is committed to achieving peace through talks. The LRA recently stepped up their operations inside northern Uganda in their quest to overthrow the government and replace it with a system based on the Bible's Ten Commandments. Although insecurity and unrest are not yet at a level which could topple the President, the violence, along with corruption, detracts from his real achievements and indeed the regional peace-brokering role he has cut out for himself over the past few years.

From the point of view of donors and relief agencies, there is no central focus from which to plan any rehabilitation. The government is being decentralised, so that agencies deal with the local authorities in Kitgum, Gulu and Aral; the army is unable to deal with the proliferating rebel groups;

there is a Minister for the North, but it is not clear what power he has; the UNDP's DMT seems to have little authority; the donor forum has many more development issues to consider; and traditional leaders do not yet appear to have done what their colleagues did in Teso, perhaps because of their antipathy to the current government.

The government assures its critics that talks are underway with the LRA, despite its commitment to a military solution in the north. A recently published report, drawn up by

Robert Gersony, an expert in civil conflict for the US Embassy and USAID, entitled 'The Anguish of Northern Uganda', marks the

first time a foreign government has endorsed peace talks between the Ugandan government and the

LRA. Gersony also recommends a human rights investigation be started into human rights abuses in order to help pave the way to peace talks and that once such talks

are under way, the international community supports the process with rapid economic assistance to rebuild the

battered north. Meanwhile, relations between the Sudanese government, which accuses Museveni of supporting and arming John Garang's SPLA forces and the Ugandan

Government, which claims the Sudanese are in turn arming and allowing the LRA and other rebel groups to operate out of government held areas of South Sudan, continue to destabilise the region. ♦

COLOMBIA

Colombia is gripped by an emergency characterised by flagrant abuses of human and child rights and international humanitarian law.

The civilian population - particularly in the rural areas - is caught between military, paramilitary, guerrillas and drug traffickers engaged in violent conflict. Growing numbers of displaced people are being forced off their land as a deliberate tactic through threats and selective killings. There are probably now between 900,000 and 1 million displaced people in Colombia of whom approximately half are children. According to a report commissioned by the Defensoria del Pueblo (1996), a state body concerned with the defence of human rights, there are approximately 3,000 children in the various armed groups - between 7 and



10% of the guerrillas and approximately 15% of the paramilitary forces. Of these, approximately 60% have seen killings and 20% participated in massacres.

The failure of the Government to protect the displaced from being forced off their land and the apparent collusion in many areas between the army and paramilitary forces have contributed to a striking lack of confidence in national governmental and state institutions. The armed forces and the various paramilitary groups are seen by many displaced as a law unto themselves and abuses of human rights and International Humanitarian Law by all sides flourish in a climate of impunity. The inadequacy of the Government's response and the absence of a policy with respect to the long-term settlement of the displaced, most of whom are unable to return home because of insecurity, creates pessimism and depression amongst the displaced.

For someone more used to the African context, the response of affected communities, NGOs, churches and even local authorities is interesting. Their strong and consistent call is to "be" rather than to "do"; in other words, for the international community to provide a presence for its own sake not only for the goods and services that it would provide. Such an international presence, it is argued, would provide solidarity with the victims of forced displacement and human rights abuses, enable the monitoring of the situation of the affected populations; strengthen community institutions and processes and encourage the development of civil society and peacemaking. One form of support international agencies can provide is to the 'Communities of Peace', which, caught in the middle of the fighting between guerrilla and paramilitary groups, have turned against displacement as their only option and adopted a position of 'positive neutrality'. The aim is to show that there is an alternative to violence and ultimately undermine the legitimacy of the armed factions. The 'accompaniment' work of the organisation, Peace Brigades International, is interesting in this context, their objective being to provide a presence rather than to carry out specific programme work.

While more understanding is needed on this question of 'presence as protection' with consideration of experiences from other countries - particularly Bosnia, where such experiences have often failed - Colombia presents an example of a complex and neglected human rights emergency which poses important and as yet unanswered questions for the international community. There is a clear need for an improved international response to the problems

of the displaced and other affected populations with the protection of human rights and international humanitarian law with respect to displaced and threatened populations as the first priority.



However, while advocacy and support on behalf of the civilian populations in Colombia should form part of all humanitarian agency programme objectives, considerable care should be taken not to jeopardise the safety of agency staff or counterparts based in the country - media reports travel and can be read by armed groups and the security of these personnel must be a priority.

Given the extraordinary politicisation of Colombian civil society such efforts will demand great creativity between humanitarian and human rights groups and between national and international actors. ♦

SIERRA LEONE

Following weeks of intense fighting between the AFRC (Armed Forces Revolutionary Council) and ECOMOG (ECOWAS Monitoring Group) forces in Sierra Leone, the two parties agreed a deal at the beginning of November, the first since the coup in May which deposed the democratically elected government of Tejan Kabbah. The deal does not appear to be very stable - the timing of the proposed hand-over of power, April 1998, has been questioned by Kabbah, who also objects to the amnesty agreed for the renegade army members. Any role in the new administration for Foday Sankoh, leader of the RUF (Revolutionary United Front) which joined forces with the AFRC in May, is also likely to be unacceptable. Economic sanctions in force since August 30 will remain in place in order to limit supplies to the AFRC, and ECOMOG will presumably continue its bombing and other actions designed to enforce the sanctions. Some observers believe that only through protracted fighting will a sustainable balance of power be established in Sierra Leone.

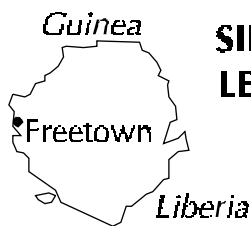
The role of the British government, increasingly active as the crisis has developed, is not entirely clear. Their position has been confused by the fact that the leading role in the restoration of democracy in Sierra Leone has been taken by Nigeria, currently subject to diplomatic sanctions for its own failure to respect democratic and human rights. The British Government has now become more directly involved in one of the first applications of its new integrated and ethical foreign policy, based on the protection and promotion of democracy and justice.

Ministers have recently taken two unprecedented steps, first announcing formally their non-recognition of the AFRC government in Freetown, on the grounds that it is not in full control of the country, and then inviting the deposed President to represent his country at the recent inter-governmental Commonwealth meeting. This follows the approval by the UN Security Council of a British-sponsored motion to back a more limited version of the ECOWAS embargo, on trade in arms, oil and travel by AFRC members. Although the embargo includes an exemption for humanitarian aid, DFID recently announced the cancellation of all British aid, including via multi-lateral channels, on the grounds that relief food in particular could fall into the wrong hands and help support the AFRC regime.

This emphasis on political aims above humanitarianism has been questioned by the humanitarian community. Sanctions, and the military action required to impose them, place a heavy burden on civilians. ECOMOG bombing raids have in the past month killed an estimated 500-1,000 civilians, injuring many more, causing serious damage to property and preventing supplies from the sea from landing. For some months now, the humanitarian community, based in Conakry, Guinea, has expressed its concern over the running down of food stocks and evidence of rising malnutrition rates.

While insecurity in some areas has hampered humanitarian operations, many agencies have continued to work inside Sierra Leone, especially British and French NGOs, and the ICRC. UN agencies have a limited presence, constrained by the high level security alert from sending expatriate staff into the country. Some believe that the forthcoming harvest will be large enough to feed much of the upcountry population, and that if the cease-fire holds, food will be traded into Freetown. Others are still concerned that the harvest will be looted by fighters, or has already been mortgaged by destitute farmers. Even if food aid is not distributed, many agencies believe they can still play an important role in sectors less open to abuse by fighters, and are designing interventions with care to avoid any negative impact. Since the coup the humanitarian community has adopted a code of conduct and operating principles, similar in content to the Code of Conduct adopted in Liberia in July 1995 (see RRN Newsletter 6, November 1996), and has also recently agreed to a minimalistic approach, pooling resources and conducting joint assessments of need.

The difficulties of developing an effective policy response when complex issues of moral judgements and pragmatism are involved are highlighted by the current crisis in Sierra Leone. The local population is suffering because of the



embargo, but sustained economic and military pressure may be only way to wrest power from the soldiers, and thus demonstrate the commitment of the international community to the protection of democratic rights. The possibility of sending a UN peace-keeping or monitoring force, recently mooted, could help, and would lessen the current dilemma regarding the actions of the Nigerians. But UN forces could only be effective if, as in Liberia, they are deployed to oversee the implementation of a viable accord, which, to have a chance to work, would now need to involve not only the government and the RUF, but the AFRC and military, the kamajors, and other local self-defence militias.

While it is encouraging to see the new British government taking a proactive role in the protracted crisis in this distant former colony, there is a danger that humanitarian needs are being sidelined.

Moreover, the current policy of insistence on the reinstatement of Kabbah as President, and the continued failure to include Foday Sankoh, among others, in the negotiations towards a balanced distribution of power, may not contribute to an early resolution. While agencies may welcome government caution over the distribution of bulk food aid, many are concerned to see politics being given precedence over humanitarian needs. These needs must be taken into account as part of any ethical policy formulation, especially if, as many expect, open fighting continues and the civilian population are thus denied access to the means of survival. ♦

LIBERIA

Since the July elections in Liberia, won overwhelmingly by former warlord Charles Taylor, there has been little news about the country's economic or political normalisation. It is difficult to judge whether Taylor is pursuing a real strategy of rapprochement with the international community, abandoning the illegal practices used for so long to fight the war, or whether the patterns of wartime, involving the exploitation of the civilian population in the pursuit of power, continue. Some observers feel that Taylor is being forced to tread carefully in order to placate or reward loyal supporters, within Liberia and internationally, and that his own ambition is to develop the country and thus retain the support of the population. Others view his relationship with Gaddafi, the suspected signing of questionable economic deals, and failure to include representatives of the opposition in the new government as evidence that nothing much has changed since the elections.

The new government has been attempting to consolidate its position of strength, notably through a crack-down on

security. Taylor has adopted a forceful position with regards to the ECOMOG forces still in the country, claiming the rights of the Government of Liberia to take the lead in the restructuring of the armed forces, and opposing Nigerian actions in Sierra Leone. Notorious former police director Joe Tate, removed last year at the insistence of the international community, has been reinstated. His first actions have included threats to the independent press, and the arrest of the editor of one of Monrovia's foremost newspapers, *The Inquirer*. Appeals from the Liberian human rights community led to the editor's early release, but a worrying precedent has been set. Independent press were also recently banned from attending an important Senate committee meeting on Investment and Concessions.

There has been no news since the elections on the controversial mining deal between the Government of Liberia and the small South African company, Amalia Gold, whereby the rights to 40% of all the country's mineral wealth will be handed to Amalia, in exchange for access to western financial markets provided by the South Africans. The role of the new government in the deal is unclear, and some reports suggest that Taylor has not approved it, preferring to negotiate with the IMF for alternative channels of financing for the mining industry. However, the involvement in the deal of the Mines Minister, and former finance minister, both known to be close to Charles Taylor, suggests that it may go ahead.

On the political front, Taylor's recent visit to Libya was criticised by the US, and rumours circulated regarding the withdrawal of US aid. Some funds have since been pledged - \$56m by the US government, but with \$40m of this specifically for food aid, and the rest allocated to small projects as part of the UN rehabilitation and reconstruction plans. The possibility of making aid to Liberia conditional on the guarantee of political freedom and other human rights has certainly been discussed within the US administration. Other donors including Denmark, Germany and Taiwan, have promised funding for reconstruction, and the EU, the biggest potential donor, with up to ECU200m of undisbursed Lomé funds, is pushing ahead with its large scale plans to rehabilitate Liberia's infrastructure.

Donors appear to be adopting a wait and see attitude, only pledging aid that can be withdrawn if the new government fails to fulfill its promises. It is unlikely that a decision on debt relief, requested by the Liberian delegation to the recent UN conference on Liberia in New York, will be seriously considered until Taylor has established a reputation for good governance. Although his government recently moved to set up a National Commission for Human Rights, a



move which may help persuade donors that genuine reforms are being implemented, the independence of the proposed commission has been questioned. Taylor and members of his government, guilty themselves of serious human rights abuses and economic crimes, are unlikely to support any effective mechanisms to really uncover the truth of the abuses that were committed during the war years.

Donor governments have a key role to play in the coming months, both in ensuring efficient planning and distribution of the large amounts of aid that will be necessary for the reconstruction of this devastated country, and in helping to promote, through the conditional use of aid, due process and the protection of human rights. ♦

CHECHNYA

Many humanitarian agencies believed that the end of war and the withdrawal of Russian forces from Chechnya in the fall of 1996 would allow greater freedom for relief operations in the republic. During their 21 month long military operation in Chechnya, the Russian army and Ministry of Interior forces had shown little regard for international humanitarian law or the work and neutrality of aid organisations. In most cases, relief agencies would only be allowed access to areas of conflict days or even weeks after attacks. Many relief organisations therefore left the region, frustrated by the Byzantine Russian bureaucracy and rampant human rights abuses, and by the intolerable security conditions.

Russian and Chechen rebel forces alike perpetrated dozens of deliberate acts of violence and intimidation against aid workers, including assaults, kidnappings and murders. Ransom payments and night-time robberies of residences netted hundreds of thousands of dollars for criminal groupings 'freelancing' outside their military duties or for bandits taking advantage of a lawless state. Russian and Chechen commands systematically accused the other side of having committed the crime or charged that all relief workers were in the employ of foreign secret services. The few criminals who were caught were temporarily detained by authorities and then released unpunished. But as dangerous as Chechnya was during the war, it became even more so after the Russian withdrawal.

On 17 December 1996, six ICRC workers were assassinated as they slept in their hospital compound. American relief consultant Fred Cuny and his three local staff members had previously 'disappeared' while details of the Chechen murders of Finnish aid worker Matti Aho were also released. Now the message was understood. *We do not respect your work. We want aid workers out of Chechnya.* The ICRC murders caused a withdrawal of all

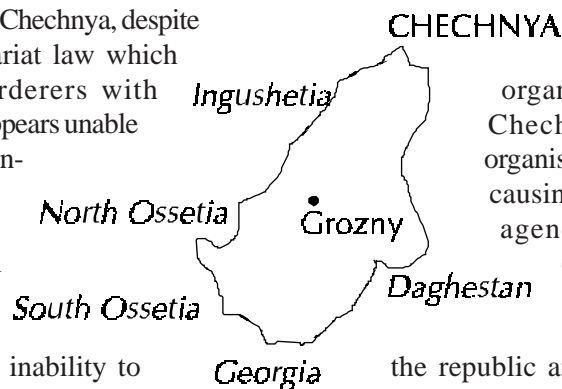
international aid personnel from Chechnya and the neighboring republics and a suspension of most programmes. The event also stopped short an expansion of UN programmes, just as Russian Federal authorities had finally granted permission for them to work inside Chechnya. Promises by both the Russians and Chechens to bring the culprits to justice remained empty. Nor did the security situation improve after the January 1997 elections made former rebel commander Maskhadov president. For some aid groups, the suffering of the Chechen people outweighed the threat to their staff. They renewed their programmes in Chechnya. Most agencies allowed only their local staff members to carry out operations within the republic.

Rule of law has yet to be restored in Chechnya, despite the introduction of Moslem Shariat law which punishes kidnappers and murderers with execution. President Maskhadov appears unable to control his former comrades-in-arms or his own administration. Several charismatic field commanders retain their own armies, while deputies make statements contradictory to those of their President. Maskhadov's inability to consolidate power stems from the very clan-driven, socio-political dynamics. Himself from a smaller, less influential clan, Maskhadov cannot mobilise much political and military power. So he finds himself struggling against his Vice President, Vakha Arsanov, and Deputy Prime Minister, Movladi Udugov. Violence toward foreigners, especially the spate of kidnappings in spring and summer 1997, has been categorically dismissed by the Chechen leaders as Russian provocations, but it appears that forces within the Chechen government itself are implicated.

Both Arsanov and Udugov have been accused by recently released (and highly credible) Russian journalists of running a crime and kidnapping cartel. Government sources send out contradictory messages. President Maskhadov attempts to bring back badly needed humanitarian aid through offers of governmental security guards for convoys and the appointment of a former field commander as NGO Security Liaison. At the same time Udugov publicly denounces international and local NGOs as spreading 'Western influence' and has local aid workers detained and questioned about their activities. The obvious tensions within the government give credibility to rumours that a coup may be imminent.

Several organisations, such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), have unsuccessfully attempted to influence the situation. The OSCE advisory group has always seen facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid as a basic component of its mandate.

Head of OSCE Advisory Group for Chechnya, Rudolf Thorning-Petersen would find it difficult to persuade aid organisations to return even if security were better, given the rocky relationships his predecessors had with the agencies working in the region. Many NGOs felt OSCE kept vital security information from them and turned a blind eye toward human rights violations out of fear their office would lose the confidence of either the Russians or Chechens. Despite these obstacles, OSCE is clearly trying to create a role for itself as a coordinator of aid delivery, where none existed before, perhaps to fill the void left by their waning role as negotiators in Chechen-Russian relations.



In Chechnya today, security, not aid work, dominates talks between humanitarian organisations and the Russian and Chechen authorities. Several aid organisations have hired armed guards, causing a philosophical rift between agencies and leaving some more exposed than others to further violence. International aid workers do not live or work within

the republic and have pulled-back further in neighbouring Ingushetia and Daghestan. There are currently 13 aid workers being held for ransom in the North Caucasus, presumably in Chechnya; four French, two British, two Russians, one German, one Slovak, one Yugoslav and two Hungarians. The disappearance of the Cuny group and the ICRC assassinations go unsolved. The murderers of Matti Aho live in their homes in the Shali district, unperturbed by either Chechen or Russian law-enforcement bodies, despite both entities knowing their identities and whereabouts. With no progress by the Chechen government in the return of hostages or the arrest of killers, tens of thousands of Chechens continue to suffer from a lack of potential development and humanitarian assistance. At a time when the Chechen republic is seeking international acceptance of its *de facto* independence, a first step towards normalisation would be the recognition of international humanitarian law and abiding by it. Until that happens, aid workers in and around Chechnya will remain very unsafe.◆

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is currently experiencing serious food shortages as a consequence of chronic infrastructural collapse, compounded by a series of natural disasters over the last three years. Following the floods in 1995 this isolated state issued its first ever international appeal for humanitarian assistance. The resultant flow of aid increased massively

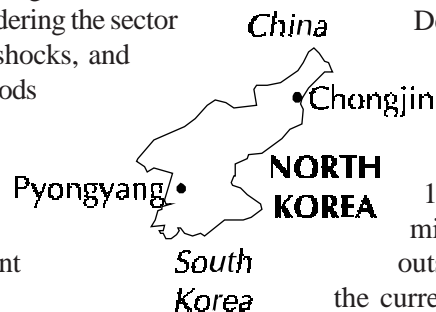
during the past year as the impact of the food shortages became more visible to outsiders, largely through media coverage. The extent of this flow of humanitarian aid to the DPRK over the last two years raises questions about both the politicisation of humanitarian aid, and also the international community's commitment to fundamental operational principles such as effectiveness and accountability.

The DPRK has never been self sufficient in food. Since the state was established in 1948, it has been dependent on food imports attained on preferential terms from China and the Soviet Union. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and economic liberalisation of China, both have limited or ended their subsidies to the DPRK. In addition, they have required payment at world market rates in hard currency for their exports, rather than the previous barter exchange, soft currency options and grant schemes. This has also had a major impact on the industrial and agricultural sectors. From 1990 onwards agricultural production experienced negative growth, largely a consequence of the high dependence on agrochemical imports which the country can no longer afford. This situation has been exacerbated by the increased use of marginal land in an attempt to raise production levels, rendering the sector increasingly vulnerable to climatic shocks, and heightening the impact of the recent floods and drought. This negative growth in the agriculture sector, coupled with serious industrial decline has led to a 30% shrinkage in the economy between 1990 and 1996, and the current food security problem.

The Government's response to the floods in 1995 was to launch an international appeal for assistance. The WFP and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, were among the first to respond. Since this time, there has been a steady increase in humanitarian interest in the country which accelerated rapidly after the Government permitted increased access within the country earlier this year. Agencies rushed to intervene in this latest 'humanitarian disaster' which was readily characterised as a 'famine' which some agencies claimed had led to two million deaths by September. Malnourished children were paraded in front of visiting humanitarian personnel and journalists, and more aid ensued.

So what is the reality of the situation in the DPRK? What is known about the situation beyond the crude food deficit figures? What is the impact of the food deficit on the population within this highly centralised, isolated state where access and information are strictly controlled and highly sensitive? What information is there to corroborate the stories of famine, and what are the real dimensions of the crisis?

In truth little is known. It is impossible to say whether there is a famine in the country. The scale and extent of the crisis are unknown, and indicators of its impact on household food security remain elusive, as does information suggesting which groups within the population are worst affected. No information is available about the large parts of the country which have not been visited by humanitarian personnel, and those which have been visited have been accessed only superficially. Only extremely limited and fragmented information has been gathered regarding the food security situation and its impact, and agencies have been attempting to complete the picture using extrapolations from anecdotal information. Nationally the pattern of impact is not known, and the limited data which is available suggests that even within a given county malnutrition levels may vary considerably. Agencies can only guess at the socio-economic and political factors underlying these variations, and questions regarding entitlement and the state's distribution priorities for relief food remain unanswered. Data to corroborate agencies' claims of widespread famine remain elusive, and the credibility of the humanitarian community is rendered open to question.



Despite the lack of data however, there is an anxiety that the food deficit may be causing an appalling hidden famine along the lines of the famines in the Ukraine in the 1930s, or China between 1958 and 1962, when an estimated 30 million died without the knowledge of the outside world. This concern partly explains the current response to the crisis in the DPRK.

However, there are two important additional factors; the institutional imperative to identify and mobilise resources in response to the next 'big emergency', and the DPRK's status as a country of great strategic and geo-political significance. These factors combine to produce a strong interest, over and above humanitarian considerations, in the implementation of a massive food aid programme in the DPRK. This response serves to benefit many interest groups, meeting the political objectives of major donors, as well as the financial needs of both implementing agencies and the recipient government, but its impact on those in need in the DPRK remains uncertain. This analysis suggests that the DPRK is an example of the continuing politicisation of humanitarian aid, with a blurring of the distinction between the political and humanitarian spheres.

Setting aside this question of politicisation and the confusion of humanitarian and political roles, the fundamental question becomes one of needs, and whether the massive amount of food aid sent to the DPRK is having a positive impact on the vulnerable. To this the humanitarian community can only answer that it does not

know. As needs cannot be established and access is severely limited it is impossible to identify vulnerable groups or assess the impact of the aid delivered on these groups. It has been argued that although needs cannot be determined, the crude food deficit figures offer sufficient justification for the large scale mobilisation of food aid. However, given that food aid is distributed almost exclusively by the government, and only minimal monitoring is permitted, the final distribution of aid within the country is not known, and the effectiveness of this approach in humanitarian terms is open to question. The delivery of large scale material resources meets many objectives, but the international community cannot be sure that it is also meeting the needs of vulnerable children.

The scenario outlined above represents a challenge to the humanitarian community in terms of the principles of needs-based aid delivery, the targeting of resources, effectiveness and accountability, to both beneficiaries and donors. While some agencies are attempting to negotiate a measure of conditionality in terms of minimum standards of access and monitoring, others have elected to follow the humanitarian argument that food aid must be delivered regardless. This approach questions the commitment of the humanitarian sector to the use of a shared set of operational principles and raises concerns for the future prospects of the NGO Red Cross Code of Conduct and other initiatives such as the SPHERE¹ project.

Without large scale external investment and economic restructuring, the situation in the DPRK will continue to decline and the household food security situation will worsen year on year, leading to an ongoing need for international assistance. The only way to ensure effective and accountable use of the aid dollar in the DPRK in the medium term is for humanitarian agencies to develop a coordinated strategy to address the country's humanitarian needs, and a shared negotiating position setting out minimum conditions for intervention, including access. The

humanitarian community needs to engage with the DPRK to develop appropriate and accountable responses which address the range of factors impacting on malnutrition and food security, moving beyond the simple delivery of large quantities of food aid.

Until *amodus operandi* is developed by the humanitarian community in which the needs of the vulnerable are met without abandoning the principles of effectiveness and accountability, the credibility and integrity of the humanitarian sector remains at risk. ♦

Notes¹: SPHERE Project: see page 20 for more information.

Further reading

WFP Food and Nutrition Assessment Report, 1996
 'The Koreans, Contemporary Politics and Society', 1996, Donald Stone Macdonald
 'Kim Jong Il's North Korea', IDE Spot Survey, March 1997
 'The Famine in North Korea: Humanitarian responses in Communist nations', 1997, Sue Lautze
 'North Korea. Peace, War or Implosion', June 1997, Aidan Foster-Carter
 'North Korea in the New World Order', October 1996, ed. Hazel Smith
 SCF Situation Analysis, October 1997

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The opinions expressed in this section are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of their organisations.

The RPN Review

The RPN Review (formerly RPN Newsletter) presents research, practice and news in the field of forced migration. Published three times a year in English, Spanish and Arabic by the Refugee Studies Programme in association with the Global IDP Survey, the RPN Review is a forum for the exchange of information and experience between researchers, practitioners and policy makers.

The 44-page Review includes articles, letters, conference reports, publication details and news items. Recent themes have included: children and youth, the role of the military in humanitarian work, refugee protection, education and training, women and reproductive health, NGOs and host governments, and environmental issues. 1998 issues will include special features on IDPs (January) and refugee camps (May).

For full details of subscription rates or to receive a sample copy, please contact: RPN Review, Refugee Studies Programme, QEH, 21 St. Giles, Oxford OX1 3LA, UK. Tel. + 44 1865 270722; Fax + 44 1865 270721; email rpn@qeh.ox.ac.uk

Letters



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

Letter to James Darcy regarding his recent *RRN Network Paper No. 19, 'Human rights and international legal standards: what relief workers need to know'* (February 1997)

Sir,

I have read with much interest RRN Network Paper 19, Human Rights and International Legal Standards: what relief workers need to know (Feb 1997), by James Darcy and found it to be excellent, convincing and most useful.

Here in ECHO we have also increasingly been becoming aware of the need to view humanitarian assistance in the general context of human rights and of the need to give equal weight to protection and relief aspects; in this respect the paper is very timely and provides a good conceptual framework. In terms of agencies' self-definition of mandate I think this also opens a very useful debate which merits a vigorous follow-up. I would just like to offer a few thoughts:

- It seems to me that the manner and extent to which, the human rights tradition conditions state sovereignty ought surely to be the bottom line as far as humanitarian law is concerned, dealing as it does with such very basic human rights. At present, however, the apparent separateness of the two traditions has led to a situation where many humanitarian players seem to work with a model of state sovereignty which is even more rigid than human rights advocates assume. It is surely vitally important to resolve this paradox: viewing IHL as a special case of human rights law makes this clear.
- Mr Darcy assumes (p.5) a natural law foundation for rights. However, I think it would be more intellectually convincing, and indeed more useful, to base the argument on a positivist view of rights (as set out by Rawls etc): not as part of the innate order of things, but as an achievement of civilisation.
- It is important to recall (p9) that the view of international law as concerning only relations between sovereign states was already fundamentally modified with the adoption of the UN charter, which introduced an element of coercive supranationality to which almost every state in the world has willingly subscribed. This supranationality is also dynamic, since it is self-interpreting: in other words, if the Security Council decides something is a question of international peace and security and therefore requires coercive action, there is no appeal against this decision unless the Council is manifestly abusing the power of interpretation which the Charter confers upon it; and such decisions have the force of law, being binding not only on the offending party but also on third parties. In this context, I do not believe that it is correct to view concern with human rights as 'anomalous' within the state tradition.
- Lastly, I think that sanctions and other non-violent coercive measures have been more effective than the author gives them credit for (p12-13). Sanctions voted by the Security Council are binding on all UN member states, and we have seen them applied with success by third party states at enormous and uncompensated cost to themselves; which is not of course to say that they are perfect!

Sean Greenaway, Strategic Planning and Policy Planning Unit,
ECHO/4, European Commission

"I [receive] your publications which are more and more useful to me, like the latest Network Papers 19 *Human Rights and International Legal Standards: What Relief Workers Need to Know* and 20 *People in Aid Code of Best Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel*, which are more concerned with our activities and how they illustrate the behaviour of other NGOs whether local or international". On Network Paper 18, *Beyond 'Working in Conflict': understanding conflict and building peace*, amongst other points; "it is time now for the UN to review its legislation over countries engaging in civil war by looking at what and who are the causes of that dispute...it is useless to send peacekeeping troops to arbitrate in wars like that of Somalia, Liberia and Former Yugoslavia without knowing the cause of the war".

Mr Kulwa Masubo
LWF Tanzania based in
Ngara and Kigoma regions.

I read with considerable interest the February 1997 edition of the RRN Newsletter. We currently have a large international and national staff team. I think that it would be highly informative and thought-provoking to pass on copies to our staff.

J. Russell Neilson
Senior programme manager
SCF (UK) in Rwanda

My personal comment is that the good practice reviews need to be more simple, easily understood and applicable. Especially if I look at the language ability, and the limited exposure to certain situations, then Cambodians will find (them) a bit too much for them to actively use it.

Visha Padmanabhan
Oxfam Country Representative Cambodia

Training courses

Certificate in Tropical Community

Medicine and Health, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, 12 January-10 April 1998

This is a three month course for Primary Health Care Workers. It is suitable for administrators, nutritionists, health officers, health centre staff, engineers or nurses. Experience of working in developing countries is not essential.

Major themes are:

- Tropical medicine and control of disease;
- Parasite and vector biology and control;
- Community Health in general.

Specialist topics include:

- Environmental health, including water and sanitation;
- Nutritional needs and monitoring;
- Tropical paediatrics;
- Emergency health with refugee and displaced people's health care and programmes;
- Women's health;
- Information skills.

For further information please contact: Anne Gordon, Course Secretary, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, Pembroke Place, Liverpool L3 5QA, UK
Tel: +44 151 708 9393 Fax: +44 151 707 1702.

RedR Training Programme 1998

Refugees, Agencies and Relief Workers: Relief agencies and the international relief system, personal and team effectiveness, site and operations planning and cross-cultural issues. An essential prerequisite for relief workers, especially those with no prior disaster relief experience. *20-25 February. (Ref. 9802)*

An Introduction to Environmental Health in

Emergencies: Introductory module of a four module course. Water, sanitation, health links, environmental diseases, sanitary surveys, hygiene promotion, public health programmes. *February-1 March. (Ref. 9803)*

Communications and Security: Setting up and using field communications equipment. Basic security measures, including mines awareness. *2 day weekend in Mid-March (exact date to be confirmed). (Ref. 9804)*

FEES (per person, per day, all inclusive): £100 for those with institutional support; subsidised rate for individuals, £50; £25 for RedR members and those on a low income.

For further information and an application form, please contact: Caroline Mitchell, RedR, 1 St George St, London SW1P 3AA, UK. Tel: +44 (0)171 233 3116 Fax: +44 (0)171 222 0564.

Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre

The ADPC is holding two courses intended for middle to senior level practising managers, responsible for formulating policies and implementing programmes related to disaster management.

Basic Course on Disaster Management (DMC-23), 2-20 March 1998, Bangkok, Thailand

This course aims to develop the expertise of participants on three tracks of competence. These are:

- Strategic and organisational aspects of management;
- Technical knowledge and skills of a disaster manager;
- Personal skills of a disaster manager.

The course has 5 modules, each aiming to improve clarity of presentation and linkages of the topics for discussion.

- Module 1: Fundamentals of Disaster Management
- Module 2: Hazards - Natural and Man-Made, Prevention, Mitigation and Preparedness
- Module 3: Management Skills Development
- Module 4: Post Disaster Assessment and Response
- Module 5: Participant Presentations, Future Direction

Second Regional Course on Community Based Approaches on Disaster Management, 10-23 May 1998, Bangkok, Thailand

This course is structured to develop the expertise of each participant on the following three tracks of competence:

- Fundamental concepts and principles;
- Technical knowledge and skills;
- Personal skills.

For further information contact Hongman Zang, Programme Associate, Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, PO Box 4, Klong Luang, Pathumthani 12120 Thailand Tel: +662 5245362 Fax: +662 5245360 Email: hongmanz@ait.ac.th

ICRC Training Programme

HELP (Health Emergency in Large Populations) for health professionals (doctors, nurses, sanitation engineers, nutritionists) going to work in communities affected by disaster. The course deals with different aspects of medical aid in emergency situations: nutrition, sanitation, epidemiology, etc. (5-6 courses held annually; course duration 3 weeks).

Basic Training Courses are intended for the employees of country offices of the Red Cross. About 20 sessions of in-house training (on human rights, emergencies, etc.) per year and a course manual are provided for 25-30 participants from the national offices.

The ICRC has also played a part in the organisation of a multi-disciplinary MA in Humanitarian Aid at The University of Geneva, commencing in September 1998. ICRC, along with MSF and other international

organisations have contributed to the modular course programme. The course can be studied over 1 year or over a longer period if preferred and is intended both for recent graduates and professionals who already have experience in this area.

For further information contact Roland Desmeules at the Training Unit, ICRC, 19 Avenue de la Paix, CH-1202 Geneva, Switzerland. Tel: +41 22 734 6001 Fax: +41 22 733 2057

Complex Emergencies and Humanitarian Aid Policy Evaluation. March 1998

As part of the Graduate Programme in Development Administration at the National Centre for Development Studies at the Australian National University, this four week course, designed for a post graduate level of study, covers a broad cross section of subjects relevant to today's complex emergencies. Topics include the history and philosophy of humanitarian aid; the changing nature of post-Cold War conflict and the implications of this for aid; international humanitarian law, public health and epidemics; emergency food and nutrition, refugee issues and policy and project monitoring and evaluation.

For more information please contact Meera Nair, National Centre for Development Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, ACT 0200, Australia, Tel. +61 2 6249 4351, Fax. + 61 2 6248 8805 or 6249 5570. Email meera.nair@anu.edu.au

'Responding to Conflict' Courses 1998

Working with Conflict: A practical, experience based course for people working in areas of instability and conflict. Suitable for NGO staff, aid workers, those concerned with rights, relief, reconstruction and development.

Modules are:

- Making Sense of Conflict and Change
- Group Development and Problem-Solving
- Facing Violence: Strategies for Survival and Change
- Towards Just Outcomes
- Practical Projects and Planning

Course duration is 10 weeks, but 2 week modules can be taken individually if required. Some scholarships are available. Places are limited and applications are now being received for 20 April-26 June 1998.

Towards Peacebuilding: Developing new policy and practice in areas of instability and conflict: for staff of international agencies with advisory or direct responsibility for programme policy and implementation. Participants should have a minimum of two years' experience of policy and programme issues in areas of conflict.

This residential workshop provides practical models and methods to assist aid agency staff to analyse social and political conflicts, and to integrate effective conflict-handling strategies into their programmes. The course runs from 1pm on 6 July to 1pm on 10 July.

For more information contact: Linda Batten, Responding to Conflict Programme, 1046 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6LJ, UK. Tel: +44 (0)121 415 5641 Fax: +44 (0)121 415 4119 Email: enquiries@respond.org or visit the RTC website at <http://www.respond.org/>

CD ROM

Hundreds of documents on the Great Lakes Region have been put together on CD Rom by a number of universities. The information includes official national and international reports, technical documents and maps. For further details contact: Réseau Documentaire international sur la région des Grands Lacs africains, c/o IUED, CP136, 1211 Geneva 21, Switzerland. Tel +41 22 906 5905, Fax +41 22 906 5994, Email: charrier@UNI2a.unige.ch

Conferences

Workshop organised by the ICRC on International Humanitarian Law and Protection, Geneva: 18-20 November 1996

International humanitarian organisations are often the first external players in a conflict situation, yet their activities are often seen as relief activities only, often conceived and carried out differently from human rights activities, a term which is now a cliché for fact-finding missions.

For the ICRC, assistance (automatically including a protection component) and protection are two sides of the same coin. The term protection is mainly understood as protection against violations, ultimately meaning the implementation of international humanitarian law. In particular, the Four Geneva Conventions of 1949, and their two Additional Protocols of 1977, which should be adapted in the face of changing realities.

The November 1996 Workshop was attended by representatives of a restricted number of NGOs, coming from different backgrounds, with a wealth of experiences in diverse domains. They gained an opportunity to become better acquainted with each other's operational activities and compare their respective strategies.

The issues of protection and assistance were deliberately separated as it was not intended to analyse the assistance component. Whereas much has already been talked about assistance activities (i.e. the Code of Conduct for International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), sponsored by the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) and the ICRC), it was the first time that the ICRC and a limited number of NGOs met to systematically discuss protection issues.

The workshop analysed legal protection in armed conflicts and reviewed case studies: the growing need to

establish operating principles became evident. An attempt was made towards a common definition, i.e. to understand as protection all activities consisting in collecting information on human rights abuses or breaches of international humanitarian law, and taking measures to give the competent or relevant authorities the means to avoid and stop violations and prevent their reoccurrence. However, it was concluded that it was too early to adopt a common definition.

Both the relevance of the protection issue for relief and human rights agencies and the importance of establishing a common ethical framework in the field of protection to serve an educational purpose was underscored.

The workshop highlighted out the need to look into accountability of humanitarian agencies towards victims as well as towards donors. Co-ordination is a key element. Communication, collaboration and complementarity were deemed to be necessary strategies.

Emphasis was placed on the need to take advantage of the wide range of experience and diversity of approach offered by this meeting, bringing together human rights organisations, relief agencies, the ICRC and NGOs. The participants expressed the wish that this kind of meeting be held on a regular basis. Attention was drawn to the usefulness of having both a comprehensive update of the situation in terms of international humanitarian law and protection, and discussions on specific issues; coordination of manuals, training programmes, establishment of a common ethical framework on protection. Neither should exclude the other. As to future meetings, the next is foreseen for March 1998.

The results of this workshop are now published. Further information can be obtained from: Carlo von Flüe, ICRC, 19, avenue de la Paix, CH-1202, Geneva, Switzerland. Tel: + 41 22 730 2220, Fax: + 41 22 733 2057, Email: io_division.gva@icrc.org

‘**New approaches for the fortification of emergency food aid**’, UNICEF OLS Workshop, Giri Giri UN Compound, 2 September 1997

This workshop was organised jointly with the Refugee Policy Group and the Micronutrient Initiative of Canada, and WFP and UNHCR were given an opportunity to frame the discussion.

The workshop aimed to discover what would be needed to fortify maize and wheat provisions to Africa in order to add a broad range of micronutrients to diets of refugees and crisis victims. It focused on affordability, reliability and sustainability. Factors such as homogeneity of the final product, constraints (equipment, costs, fuel and training), quality control and the question of how to monitor output were considered. The part played by NGOs, donors and commercial firms was also discussed.

For a copy of the report please contact Steve Hansch, Refugee Policy Group, 1424 16th Street NW, Suite 401, Washington DC 20036 USA Tel: +1 202 387 3015 Fax: +1 202 667 5034 Email: sh@intr.net

Emergency Personnel Seminar, Dublin 12-14 November 1997.

A seminar involving representatives of some 30 relief agencies world-wide set as its purpose improving the ability of participating organisations, both individually and as a community, to find, select, prepare, employ and retain personnel for emergency aid operations. The seminar involved participants from some 30 agencies principally from Europe, but with some participants from agencies in USA, Australia, Africa and Asia.

A major piece of research was commissioned in preparation for the seminar, with over 195 relief organisations world-wide contacted. The research elicited a very good response rate with 72 returned completed questionnaires and, in addition to the questionnaire survey, 20 individual in-depth interviews conducted with relief agencies in Europe and the USA.

Accepting considerable statistical and sample limitations, the research findings indicated that a minimum of 17,000 people were employed in emergency operations in 1996, of which 8,000 were expatriates. The findings point to strong support for closer inter-agency collaboration on issues relating to recruitment, training and retaining of emergency relief staff, with the view also expressed that “in the context of the current recruitment environment, closer collaboration could benefit almost all agencies”.

Despite an awareness that “opportunities for collaboration are restricted because of the very different philosophies and organisational values of agencies, there appears potential for stronger collaboration in a number of areas

including training, advocacy work to achieve pre-arranged leave for health staff, securing a more professional status for relief workers, establishing terms and conditions for locally recruited staff and agreement on the skills and experience required for particular competences.”

The majority of respondents did not believe there to be a shortage of emergency relief workers *per se*, but that the problem faced by those recruiting relief staff is the serious shortage of appropriately skilled and qualified personnel in particular competences. There is general consensus that the difficult posts to fill are at management level.

Some of the responses reinforce the view of many in the international aid community that over the past 10 years changes in the context in which humanitarian assistance is given should be reflected in the quality and profile of aid workers needed:

“When you first go in you need those who are experienced, can hit the ground running, the disaster masters. Once those ‘honchos’ have got the systems implemented you need a different calibre of people. There’s a lot of community work in relief. It’s best (to have) people who have a humanitarian background to liaise with the affected population, to have those community participation skills or you will spend a lot of money providing a service that will have no tie in and follow-on to facilitate rehabilitation and development.

“For engineers who have been out doing relief, the work they’ve done counts when they come back to a place.... But it’s not the same for nurses. They can spend time doing relief, but have not progressed when they come back.... It’s career versus ideology.”

For more details contact: R. Lambert, Director, RedR, 1 Gt George St, London SW1P 3AA. Tel: +44 171 2333116 fax +44 171 2220564 Email bobby@redr.demon.co.uk or M. Ryan, APSO, 29 Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin, Ireland Tel: + 353 1 661 4411 Fax 4202 Email: mryan@apso.ie

UNDHA Information Symposium, Geneva, Switzerland 8-9 October 1997.

The UNHDA’s symposium on the Role of Information in Humanitarian Coordination set itself the task of identifying future directions for information systems as support tools for effective humanitarian action. As speakers demonstrated their organisation’s latest investment in information technology it was apparent that the most sophisticated technology was no substitute for poor content. With the increasing flow of information the message from end users was clear – we need credible and accessible channels. End users at all levels need to enter into the spirit of information sharing knowing that data could never substitute for direct contextual exchange. The symposium offered an overview of current systems

and thinking from a broad spectrum of players, however, more focused fora will be required to ensure that humanitarian information systems become genuine assets.

Speakers included Elisabeth Rehn, UN Special Rapporteur for the Situation of Human Rights on Former Yugoslavia as well as representatives of NGO's, Government and Donor Organisations.

For further information, please contact Kate Robertson, Disasters Emergency Committee, Secretariat, 17 Grove Lane, London, SE5 8RD, Tel. 0171 703 5400, Fax 0171 252 4805, E-mail 100676.105@compuserve.com

Humanitarian Imperative in Complex Emergencies, 28 August 1997, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

Organised by Dan Church Aid with a number of participating speakers, working groups looking at the following subjects took place:

1. Role of humanitarian agencies in relief efforts versus the role of government.
2. The imperative of political consciousness for humanitarian agencies.
3. Agency cooperation in complex emergencies.
4. Capacity building and strengthening local capacities in the midst of crisis.
5. Conflict prevention as a dimension of humanitarian efforts in complex emergencies.
6. The role of journalists and communicators in complex emergencies.

To obtain a conference report, please contact Birte Hald, Dan Church Aid Nørregade 13, DK-1165 Copenhagen K, Denmark Tel: +45 33 152800 Fax: +45 33 152818 Email: danchurchaid@dca.dk

Conference on Achieving Lasting Peace in Angola: The Unfinished Agenda, ACTSA (Action for Southern Africa), School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 4 September 1997.

This was a timely conference in London which balanced immediate concerns about a return to war with those of the long-term needs of Angolans for reconstruction, democracy and development. The conference brought together individuals from developmental, church, business and human rights organisations, with differing perspectives. Many attending the conference were Angolan with Dr Chikoti, the Angolan Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, contributing to the discussion.

The report is made up of a series of papers delivered to the conference:

- I: the current context
- II: from the absence of war to a real peace

- III: reconstruction and aid - key priorities
- IV: prospects for long-term economic development
- V: summation

The conference report is priced £3.50 and may be obtained from ACTSA, 28 Penton Street, London, N1 9SA, United Kingdom. Tel: +44 171 833 3133 Fax: +44 171 837 3001 Email: actsa@geo2.poptel.org.uk

Forthcoming conferences 1998

El Niño Emergency Management, Bangkok, Thailand, 26-28 January 1998

Organised by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre in Thailand and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the USA, the key objectives of this conference include:

- sharing scientific information;
- sharing information on regional, national and local efforts at coping with, responding; to and managing the current situation and its effects;
- identifying action plans for regional cooperation;
- learning from other regions' efforts;
- promoting informed media coverage.

For more information contact: AEEM Conference Secretariat, Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, Asian Institute of Technology, PO Box 4, Klong Luan, Pathumthani, 12120 Thailand Tel: +66 2 524 6225 Fax: +66 2 524 5360 Email: lpdadpc@ait.ac.th

Who Wins Wars?, London School of Oriental and African Studies, 14 March 1998

Involving around 300 delegates, this conference, organised by Oxfam, will be looking at the aims of the *Cut Conflict* campaign. The conference will begin with an introductory session and keynote speech and will then break up into seminars. After lunch, there will be a question and answer session.

For more information, contact: Paul Moss, Oxfam UK & Ireland, London and South East Campaigns Office, 4th Floor, 4 Bridge Place, London SW1V 1XY. Tel: +44 (0)171 931 9330 Fax: +44 (0)171 828 8892.

First World Congress on International Cooperation and Defence, Sheffield Business School, UK, 28-30 January 1998.

This will bring together advisors, professionals, government and public affairs officials working in the areas of national security, cooperation, operational and strategic defence, foreign affairs, conflict and peace.

For more details, please contact: Luiz Montanheiro, Policy Research Centre, Sheffield Hallam University, City Campus, Unit 7 Sheffield Science Park, Howard Street, Sheffield, UK, S1 2LX. Tel: +44 (0)114 253 4466, Fax: +44 (0)114 253 4467.

Publications



‘Algeria: Democratic transition or political stalemate?’, P. Rich and S. Joseph; 1997, 34pp
‘The Road to Democracy? Three views on Nigeria’s Transition’, M. Dent, A. Onadipe and P. Lewis; 1997, 66pp. Saferworld, 3rd floor, 34 Alfred Place, London, WC1E 7DP, United Kingdom. Fax +44 (0)171 631 1444 or Email: sworld@gn.apc.org

Algeria and Nigeria are both regionally important countries, with a rapidly growing population. Although important exporters of oil (and gas), both are experiencing an economic decline that causes high unemployment. In both countries, the military took power after annulling election results. Algeria has been suffering a brutal civil war, while Nigeria was on the brink of one. Although there generally has been support for the government in Algeria and criticism of the government of Nigeria, the international community’s engagement with both has been cautious and timid. These two policy oriented studies show the complexities of international approaches for conflict prevention and conflict mediation where no intervention is contemplated. For both, the authors argue that structural stability can only come from political pluralism, a strong civil society, an independent judiciary and sustainable development that brings widespread benefits. The strategies to help a country get there are however uncertain. The Nigerian report presents three viewpoints which, while coinciding in their analysis of the root causes of instability and the desirable future, offer different appreciations of the current ‘transitional’ situation in which General Abacha has promised presidential elections in October 1998. Different international approaches are consequently recommended. For either country a number of alternative scenarios for developing into a pluralist state and open-market economy appear imaginable: the state could collapse, the regime turn overtly authoritarian, or become a stable but predatory and corrupt clique. Algeria is important for the EU’s New Mediterranean Policy but also for the stability of North Africa. Nigeria is important for the broader stability of West Africa. The recent indications of government involvement in the disappearances and massacres in Algeria, and the long standing questionable role of Nigeria in ECOMOG’s ‘peace-keeping’ operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone, warrant more public attention to these tragically unstable countries.

‘Internally Displaced Persons: IOM Policy and Programmes’. International Organization for Migration, 17, rte des Morillons, CP71, CH-1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland. Tel. +41 22 717 9111, Fax. +41 22 798 6150, Email: leg@geneva.iom.ch, Website: www.iom.int

This IOM booklet provides a breakdown of the policy and activities of one what is one of the larger organisations dealing with the challenges posed by migration. An overview of policy and mandate, the first section, will be of particular use to those who are interested in a general look at the activities of the organisation; their principles and functions are clearly outlined. Perhaps of more use to the ‘person on the ground’ will be the ‘operational profiles’ section, informing the reader of the activities and projects that have been undertaken in particular areas between 1994 and 1996. Simple to read and soon available in French and Spanish, the 30 page document is useful as a resource for those requiring examples of concrete relief and rehabilitation activities in areas highly populated by migrants.

‘Working in Long-term Conflict: Managing the organisational challenge’, Ruth Jolly (ed.) 1997, INTRAC PO. Box 563, Oxford OX2 6RZ, United Kingdom - £12.50 (+p&p)

This publication is the outcome of an INTRAC pilot workshop on the same subject. It is not an academic work nor a training manual. While reflecting the collective insights gained at a particular workshop, it is of broader use as a source book to stimulate and inform the thinking on NGO programming in conflict. The short chapters highlight key points about understanding conflict; international humanitarian law, humanitarian principles and ethical analysis in conflict; understanding organisations and the organisational requirements when working in conflict; and some aspects of programming in conflict. Attractively presented, the source book also has some case studies, recommended reading and a general bibliography. Small, C. 1996 ‘NGO Management in situations of conflict’, INTRAC Occasional Paper series no. 12 is a companion publication.

'War and Crop Diversity'. Ed. by L. Sperling. pp. 40, Overseas Development Institute, Portland House, Stag Place, London, SE1E 3DP, United Kingdom. Agricultural Research and Extension Network Paper no. 75. (no charge). Tel +44 (0)171 393 1600, Fax +44 (0)171 393 1699, Email odi@odi.org.uk.

Productive and stable agricultural livelihoods require on-farm crop diversity. This paper explores the impact of war on crop diversity through 4 case studies: Nicaragua, Cambodia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. It looks at the impact of government policies formulated in a context of conflict on cropping patterns, at the different impact of conflict on formal and informal seed supplies, and at the problem of access to seed for impoverished farmers. The paper further comments on the possible use of genebanks to reintroduce lost varieties, and recommends detailed analysis, as the situation may differ per crop and per locality. More timely monitoring of the impact of war on agriculture is advocated, and some suggestions are made for innovative aid agency programmes. Recommended reading for agencies with agricultural programmes in conflict affected areas.

Entre Urgence et Développement: associer les savoir-faire et rechercher les synergies entre acteurs (From Emergency to Development: sharing knowledge and researching linkages between actors), C. Pirotte and B. Husson, Editions Karthala, 22-24 boulevard Arago, 75013, Paris, France. 140FF.

On 17 October this year, after nearly three years of discussion and preparation, a group of committed individuals from predominantly French but also other European backgrounds launched its book 'Entre Urgence et Développement: Associer les savoir-faire et rechercher les synergies entre acteurs'.

For RRN readers, this book offers a rare opportunity to access material produced by francophone commentators many of whom also have extensive field as well as academic backgrounds. Contributors come from well known humanitarian agencies such as Action Contre la Faim, Médecins Sans Frontières, Médecins du Monde, ACORD, Handicap International and the ICRC, as well as research, NGO umbrella and training organisations such as Solagral, CIEDEL, VOICE, AVICEN and CIEPAC. The range of perspectives on this oft-debated subject offer a valuable contribution on the topic, dotted with humorous illustrations communicating sensitive and sometimes controversial issues.... 'Although always regrettable for the violence it implies, conflict may bring necessary change' (editor's weak translation!) and 'development initiatives do not necessarily have peaceful

outcomes'. The latter illustrates an article by Mark Duffield on the contribution certain forms of development assistance may make to conflict, arguing that development organisations' failure to comprehend the structural nature of political and social breakdown as anything other than temporary aberrations, risks missing valuable opportunities to shore up local capacities to respond and adapt to the situation. The articles compiled are short and readable, offering different although not contradictory perspectives of an issue which bedevils the organisational, political and financial structures set up to provide humanitarian assistance to populations affected by instability and conflict.

As yet only published in French, there are plans to produce an English version in the New Year, possibly in a reduced format via the RRN.

'Catholic Relief Services: The Beginning Years - For the Life of the World'. Eileen Egan, Catholic Relief Services, 1011 First Avenue, New York NY10022, USA. ISBN: 0-945356-00-5

The Beginning Years tells of the setting up of the Catholic Relief Services and looks at both sides of the story; those who received and those who gave relief, from a series of individual personal recollections. The human aspect is particularly prominent, and will be of use to those who are not only interested in the beginnings of a relief agency, but who like a more personalised approach in their reading..

World Disasters Report 1997 *The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Oxford University Press, 1997, £25.99 (US \$29.95) Tel +44 (0)1536 454 534, Fax +44 (0)1536 746 337, Email: orders@oup.co.uk*

This annual report examines key issues ranging from the changing role of NGO's, the military/humanitarian relationship, the issue of data gathering in disasters, right through to the use of information in emergency situations. As usual, the report offers a comprehensive disasters database with 25 years of statistics, tables and sources.

VIDEO

World Vision recently launched a Commodity Management Training Video. Lasting 45 minutes, the video has been designed as a tool for helping to build staff capacity to manage food commodity programmes. The video costs US\$4. For further information, please contact World Vision International, Africa Relief Operations, PO Box 1101, Florida 1710, USA. Tel: +1 2711 672 2043 Fax: +1 2711 674 2661

Conflicts in Africa - an Analysis of Crises and Crisis Prevention Measures. The Responsibility of the International Community.

Report commissioned by 'African regions in crisis', Foundation Roi Baudouin - Médecins sans Frontières, with GRIP 1997, rue van Hoorde, 33, B-1030, Brussels, Belgium. Tel. +322 241 8420 Fax. +322 245 1933 Email: grip.admi@infoboard.be Website: <http://www.ib.be/grip/> ISBN: 2-87291-018-2, pp281, 155FF (895 FB or approx £19.50).

This book explores the increasing confusion evident within the international community as to what course of action to follow as many of the 'certainties' of humanitarian assistance are questioned. The authors hope that the recommendations for action which stem from the analysis will break through much of the rhetoric and enable practical action to be taken. The book offers a number of useful field perspectives, drawing on case study material from Namibia, Angola, Rwanda and Kenya, as well as being illustrated with a number of imaginative diagrams.

This is the English translation of the French book, *Conflits en Afrique - analyse des crises et pistes pour une prévention*, which was more fully reviewed in the RRN Newsletter 8, May 1997.

Report on a 'Study of economic coping strategies among Afghan refugees in Pakistan (Dec. 1996); Return and Reconstruction'.

Report on a 'Study of Coping Strategies of Refugees from and Returnees to Afghanistan (June-July 1996); Living in Exile'.

Report on a 'Study of economic coping strategies among farmers in Farah Province, Afghanistan (July 1997)'. *British Agencies for Afghanistan Group, British Refugee Council, 3 Bondway, London SW8 1SJ, United Kingdom; Fax. + 44 (0)171 582 9929.*

These three complementary studies document the economic coping strategies of Afghan refugees in Iran and in Pakistan, and of Afghans who remained, or returned to the Kandahar and Farah provinces in Afghanistan. The studies provide a picture of the different groups of refugees, who arrived in successive waves, before and after the fall of the Soviet-backed Kabul regime in 1992. They highlight the role of casual labour, the reduced support from the extended family, and the relative

unimportance of remittances. Both Pakistan and Iran for years adopted a generous policy towards Afghan refugees, but the aid received in Pakistan has been substantially reduced and is diminishing in Iran.

In southwest Afghanistan, the Taleban have brought a degree of security and stability. Agricultural aid, especially seeds, fertilizer, irrigation and flood control measures, and road repairs, have had a positive impact on local production. Other parts of Afghanistan remain more unstable though, and refugees are generally not contemplating a return, even with an assistance package, until there is better security. Households headed by women or a disabled person are found to be especially vulnerable, in and outside Afghanistan. Richly documented with personal stories derived from semi-structured interviews, the studies are not only relevant for Afghanistan, but are an example of the strength of well-prepared rapid assessments.

'The Legitimization of Violence'. *Edited by David E. Apter, Professor of Political Science and Sociology, Yale University. Macmillan Press Ltd, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, England, RG21 6XS, United Kingdom. ISBN 0-333-63745-3 Paperback, £16.99*

Violence is usually seen as an irrational way of handling disagreements, or as a means to political ends. This book results from an UNRISD research project and analyses political violence as communication.

The theoretical model for the understanding of political violence as communication, elaborated in Apter's introductory chapter, is derived from discourse analysis, and has strong roots in a French intellectual tradition. In this 'post-modernist' analysis, just as with much modern art, the setting and timing, and the commentary and interpretation of the event, may be more important than the event itself.

Terrorist violence in particular acquires characteristics of ritual, drama and spectacle. In its enactment, terrorist violence ruptures and inverts the existing world order and the commonly held meanings, and attempts, not unlike a creative cosmogenesis, to instaurate a new order by destroying the old one. The primary audiences for the messages and the myths need not always be the opposing state and its ruling political class. The messages are as much directed at the current and prospective members of the movement, who need to be convinced and converted to another worldview with its own symbols, semantics and social identities. Smaller and larger 'revolutionary' movements are not analysed here as political and operational organisations, but as discourse communities.

The case studies include the Shining Path (Peru), the Red Brigades (Italy), Neo-Nazism (Germany), the JVP (Sri Lanka), Shia terrorism in Lebanon, the IRA (Northern

Ireland), ETA (Spain), and generalised violence in Colombia. Their order is not arbitrary. The analysis puts them on different ends of a spectrum according to whether the violence seeks primarily symbolic capital or material gain. In such analysis the violence in Peru and Colombia have little in common. The Shining Path epitomised violence emanating from a mythological project of a Maoist peasant revolution (that needs to kill peasants who do not understand their own true identity and destiny) whereas the violence in Colombia is a 'normal' mechanism of market exchange for material gain.

The documentation on these imagination-catching violent movements is in itself attractive, and the analysis of their violence, as meaning creating communication, contains gems of insight. Unfortunately the contributors have fallen into the trap of becoming themselves a discourse community with Apter as chief cosmocrat. They wrap themselves in an unnecessarily cryptical jargon, that makes for good metaphor and alliteration, but obstructs easy understanding. The different case studies try to apply Apter's model of analysis, and attempt to refer to each other. The result is unfortunately much irritating repetition. Sharper editing would have made the message of the book more transparent, and reduced its length by at least 120 pages.

Understanding not only the victims but also the perpetrators of violence, and in their own terms, is a new and disturbing element in the contextual analysis around humanitarian action. Work has been done in this regard in South Sudan and Sierra Leone, and for the LTTE in Sri Lanka, and one can imagine more studies on the place of terror and violence in the worldviews of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, Renamo in Mozambique or the armed Islamists in Algeria. At the same time the Colombia case study of violence as market mechanism also raises the question of the limits of a cultural-semantic analysis of violence.

'Refugees: Human Rights Have no Borders'. *Amnesty International Publications, 1 Easton Street, London, WC1X 8DJ, United Kingdom. ISBN: 0-86210-265-0 Paperback, £8.99*

The number of refugees leaving their homes and countries is on the increase whilst the issue of asylum is at the forefront of many governments' minds. This book is part of Amnesty International's campaign to bring the subject of human rights violations alongside the asylum-seeking issues and to ensure that those who flee persecution are allowed to reach a place of safety, are given effective protection against forcible return, and are guaranteed minimum standards of humane treatment while they are displaced. The book calls for human rights to be a priority when considering amongst other things, repatriation programmes and development in refugee law and practice.

'War and Ethnicity: Global Connections and Local Violence' *Ed. D. Turton, University of Rochester Press, PO Box 41026, Rochester, NY 14604-4126 USA. ISBN: 1-878822-82-9*

On the understanding that many of today's wars take place within rather than between states and are often justified by participants as the result of differences between 'them' and 'us', the contributors to this book explore the role of 'ethnic' difference. They discuss the causes of internal war, the techniques used by nationalist politicians and intellectuals to turn ethnicity into a political resource, the response of the UN and of non-governmental agencies to 'complex' political emergencies such as those in former Yugoslavia and Somalia and the constitutional strategies that can be used in acknowledging and accommodating ethnic diversity. The papers in the book try to demonstrate that the relationship between ethnicity and war is not a simple matter of cause and effect.

'Genocides et Violences dans l'Afrique des Grands Lacs. Six propositions pour une réforme de la coopération internationale'. *Coopération Internationale pour la Démocratie, 3191 Route de Mende, BP 5056, 34033 Montpellier CEDEX 01, France. 99FF. July 1997. Tel. +33 67046070.*

What is now recognised as a history of genocidal killings in the Great Lakes before and after the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, provokes as many intellectual agonies as practical dilemmas for those who want to help. There is a tendency to ultimately reduce the dynamics of the conflicts in the region to either continuing tribalism or to colonial and neo-colonial manipulation. Depending on which viewpoint one adopts, a call results for either more forceful international political support for genuine democratisation, or for outsiders to leave Africa to the Africans. This somewhat haphazard compilation of documents, summaries, ideas and proposals, of rather variable quality and interest, is mainly critical of the role of the international community in the Great Lakes crisis, and of France in particular. Of the six proposals three are fairly straightforward:

- Western countries should examine their role and responsibility in the Great Lakes crisis;
- human rights should be more central to development cooperation than has been the case up till now; and
- one should intervene preventively before a conflict escalates.

The three others, breaking the cycle of impunity, support for democratisation and a regional framework for cooperation and conflict prevention not unlike that of the European Union, are far more complex and not as much under the control of Western powers or a sort of African

Security Council, as the authors of these proposals seem to believe. The 1994 genocide was planned and the Western powers received indications of such plan. Therefore a critical examination of the development and military cooperation, and of the political responsibilities of the Western powers, is justified. But in the absence of a more subtle and detailed examination of the historical dynamics of violence in the Great Lakes, and of the very real and practical constraints and dilemmas that development workers and humanitarian agencies have to work under, this publication unfortunately remains an elephant of progressive intellectualism on wobbly feet.

‘Understanding European Community Aid; Aid Policies, Management and Distribution Explained’. Aidan Cox and Antonique Koning, ODI, Portland House, Stag Place, London, SW1E 5DP, United Kingdom. ISBN 0-85003-396-9

Understanding European Community Aid describes the role and functions of all the institutions, policies and legal basis of the EC programme, together with a sectoral and geographical analysis of EC aid flows. Taking into account European Community aid as that portion of EU aid that is managed by the European Commission and the European Investment Bank, rather than Member State bilateral aid, the book covers all the EC’s development cooperation programmes.

It provides a framework for comparing - across regions and countries - different categories of aid delivery and different sectors receiving aid. EC aid to each of the main

recipient regions is examined in detail, through both statistical and institutional analysis. Finally, Community aid is placed in a global context, comparing the regional spread and sectoral emphasis of EC aid with those of the major OECD donors.

This book provides a more than useful base of empirical information for anyone interested in the role the European Community in the aid world.

International Peacekeeping Journal

Subscriptions enquiries: Newbury House, 900 Eastern Ave, Newbury Park, Ilford, Essex, IG2 7HH, Tel +44 (0)181 599 8866, Fax +44 (0)181 599 0984. 1997 Annual Subscription: Individuals £35.00 (US \$45.00), Organisations £110.00 (US \$170.00).

Published quarterly, the journal includes papers from a number of different sources which cover a wide range of issues. The last two editions have included the following titles:

- African Peacekeeping: Still Dependent? Roy May and Gerry Cleaver;
- The International War Crimes Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the Dayton Peace Agreement: Peace versus Justice? Oliver Schuett;
- MINUGUA’s Peacebuilding Mandate in Western Guatemala. Christopher Louise;
- France’s Role in Rwanda and External Military Intervention: A Double Discrediting. Mel McNulty;
- Diplomacy, International Law and the Campaign against Landmines, Tim Carstairs.

And Finally...

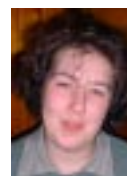
The RRN Team

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

Laura Gibbons, **RRN Coordinator**.

Koenraad Van Brabant, **RRN Policy and Development Officer**.

Sarah Scott, **RRN Administrator**. The RRN has a new Administrator. Sarah joined the team from a background in local government in mid-September, replacing Sophie Peace as full-time Administrator.



Caroline Dobbing, **part-time RRN Administrator**. As our membership increases in number and geographical reach so the role of Administrator has grown. Caroline has offered valuable part-time assistance to the team in recent weeks.

John Borton, **Head of the Humanitarian Policy Programme**.

Joanna Macrae, **Research Fellow**.

Philippa Atkinson, **RRN Regional Representative**, West Africa.

Philip Winter, **RRN Regional Representative**, East Africa. Philip joined the RRN in the summer to work as our second part-time Regional Representative.

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, ECHO, 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

ECHO

Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland

Department for International
Development (NEW LOGO!)