



RRN newsletter

Improving humanitarian policy and practice in complex political emergencies

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ISSN: 1353 8713

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Editorial

This is the last Newsletter under the RRN name. Donor support permitting, the Network will now implement changes in line with feedback provided by many of you during the RRN Review to make the **Humanitarian Practice Network** – or **HPN** – of even greater benefit.

The **HPN** will of course continue to publish, and we already have many excellent contributions lined up for the coming year. The Network will also have an improved website. This will become one of the key reference sites for the humanitarian sector, and work to improve the site will begin in earnest in May. These changes will certainly keep us busy for the next few months. In return, we have decided to give you a Newsletter that, we hope, will also keep you busy for a while!

This Newsletter is extremely rich and has contributions grouped around a number of themes. These include the politics of humanitarian action, war economies, the structural reforms and policy challenges for the European Commission (EC), natural disasters, and the question of operational partnerships.

Last year we devoted attention to the Kosovo crisis in Newsletter 15, and also put a longer report called 'Peace-making Through Protectorate: Operational and Political Challenges' about Kosovo on our website. The wars of dissolution of the erstwhile Yugoslav Federation are by no means finished. The ultimate status of Kosovo remains undecided, and international pressure on Milosevic's regime continues. The political stakes are high and, as the article about

international aid and energy policy towards Serbia shows, aid becomes highly politicised under such conditions.

Our second major theme is about war economies, with particular examples from Angola and Sierra Leone. As some of the book reviews also highlight, this raises the question of who fuels conflict, and the answer is by no means that a major role is played by aid. The control over valuable natural resources such as oil and diamonds in these two countries is a major objective in the strategies of warring parties and in the dynamics of conflict. These resources need to be extracted and sold on the global market, which is where transnational corporations come in as well as hired 'private armies'. The sums of money involved vastly exceed aid allocations. Trade sanctions, on which we have produced resource materials on our website and in Network Paper 31, stimulate smuggling and often a greater role for organised crime. This is visible in Serbia. But we can assume that the 'protectorate economy' in Kosovo is not totally 'legal' either.

Although wars obviously alter the nature and structure of the 'official' economy, the biggest challenge may come from the non-state actors as these are the most difficult to engage with and restrain. They also fall outside the scope of international humanitarian law. We are currently working on a Network Paper called 'The Political Economy of War: what relief agencies need to know'. Note also the annotated bibliography on war economies which is available at <www.odi.org.uk/hpg/warecons.html>.

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All of this becomes a major challenge for aid agencies and for aid donors, and for the conflict management policies of foreign governments. For the EC the recent reforms have again raised the question of the link between humanitarian and development aid. The discussion is focusing on the 'exit strategy' for ECHO. However it could more profitably focus on the 'entry strategy' for the development instruments, as documented in a review of the EC experiences in three African countries. However, if we start paying more attention to war economies then we cannot avoid the question of trade and international trade. Although the member states are reluctant to give up their autonomy in this area, the push continues for a common foreign and security policy in the European Union. Will aid, and particularly humanitarian aid, be subsumed under this, as one more policy instrument, or will its political neutrality and impartiality be safeguarded? There is much talk about 'coherence', ie, the alignment and use of different foreign policy instruments towards the same objective. Will 'coherence' lead to the politicisation of humanitarian aid?

Canada seems to have found an alternative in its 'human security' policy. Canada has a reputation as a donor without a strong political agenda. It has been prominent in many initiatives for conflict resolution, peacekeeping, the ban on landmines, and more humane sanctions etc. Yet coherence remains difficult to achieve also within the Canadian body politic. Recently there have been debates in the Canadian press about some Canadian actions that appear to contradict at least the spirit of a human security policy. The Canadian aid budget has also been falling rapidly, and a serious debate is now going on about whether its armed forces should integrate more with the military structures of the US, which would compromise its

image in peacekeeping operations. Not least there has been the recent revelation that a reputed aid agency knowingly accepted staff, chosen by Canadian government authorities, for what can only be called 'intelligence' operations in Serbia.

Although in a very different context this same question of coherence, and that of war economies, has posed itself with regard to the relationships of aid agencies and non-state actors involved in conflict in south Sudan. The Sudanese People's Liberation Movement has asked NGOs to sign a Memorandum of Understanding, or leave. About 25 per cent have left. Some of the arguments for and against signing are presented here.

We are also glad to present various contributions on natural disasters, with a particular emphasis on the role of information management and on accountability. In future we hope to be able to publish more of the lessons of the international response to Hurricane Mitch in late 1998 in Central America. The evaluations we have seen so far indicate that many of these should feed into the post-disaster strategies and programmes in Mozambique. Whether such learning ability already exists in the international humanitarian system is less certain.

Perhaps still more than in Africa and the Caucasus, disaster responses in Latin America and in Asia must work with the many well-established local governmental, non-governmental and community organisations. 'Partnership' is the catchword of the day, but crisis situations highlight the inherent tensions that tend to exist between partners of unequal power, and with different primary constituencies. It is a theme that is touched upon here, and on which we would welcome more contributions.

But for the time being welcome to the **Humanitarian Practice Network**, our new name from April 2000!

RRN Good Practice Review 8 Operational Security Management in Violent Environments Koenraad Van Brabant

This is the outcome of a training-oriented research and research-oriented training project, in collaboration with a wide range of individuals from the main types of humanitarian organisations (UN, Red Cross movement, NGOs, think-tanks). Its primary target audience are field-level aid agency managers responsible for security of staff and assets, for whom the GPR should serve as a practical reference tool. It offers a systematic step-by-step approach to security management starting from context analysis and threat and risk assessment, over security strategy choice to security planning. It reviews major types of threats (battlefield survival, vehicle safety, site security, sexual assault, abduction and kidnapping, etc), measures to try and prevent them, and guidelines on how to survive and manage an incident if it occurs. It also stresses the importance of incident analysis and better exchange of security information between agencies. Finally, a number of crosscutting themes are explored that are relevant to risk control such as personal and team competency, clarity towards national staff, good communications, briefing and training, etc. The annexes provide additional information, for example, on legal protection of aid workers, private security companies, the UN security management system and insurance cover. The arguments in the GPR are illustrated with case material drawn from all over the world.

Full members of the RRN will automatically receive a copy of Good Practice Review 8 (ISBN 0 85003 4574) which is available to non-members at a cost of £14.95 for individual copies (£10.00 for students) or £10.00 when over 10 copies are ordered.

Natural Resources and Corporate Responsibility: The Case of Angola's War

Simon Taylor, Director, Global Witness, London, UK

For Angola, the end of the cold war brought an end to the vast external political and military support for the country's warring parties. This in turn forced the struggle for power between the ruling MPLA government, under President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, and the forces of UNITA, under Jonas Savimbi, to rely, as never before, on the natural resources under their control.

A full analysis of the failures of the peace processes from the Bicesse accords in 1991 (which led to elections in 1992) to the Lusaka peace process and the return to war in December 1998 is outside of this discussion. However, it should be noted that natural resources have played a key role in the capacity of the two sides to be able to return to war. Despite this, throughout the 1990s the international community has consistently failed to take effective action to remove the sources of finance for war.

The Role of Diamonds in UNITA's Struggle

Investigations by Global Witness indicate that, at a conservative estimate, UNITA generated at least US\$3.7bn between 1992 and the introduction of diamond-related sanctions against UNITA in July 1998. Given the return to war between 1992 and 1994, another peace process collapse in 1997 and 1998, as well as the key role of diamonds in funding UNITA's war effort, it is very difficult to understand why it took the international community so long to recognise these facts. Even after the introduction of sanctions in July 1998 it was clear that the UN Sanctions Committee was almost totally ineffective until Canadian Ambassador Robert Fowler took over as committee chair in January 1999. All of this directly leads to the undermining of sanctions as an effective tool in conflict mitigation, and the credibility of the UN itself.

This kind of failure to act has been witnessed before, for example in the early 1990s in Cambodia where a clear mandate for action was provided through Resolution 792 prohibiting the export of timber from Cambodia. The UN, with its biggest peacekeeping mission in history, did nothing, thus allowing vast quantities of logs to be exported from Khmer Rouge-held territory to Thailand. This generated vast revenues for the Khmer Rouge. It took investigations and exposure by Global Witness in May 1995 before Thailand finally closed its border to Khmer Rouge timber exports, cutting off their US\$10–20m monthly income. This failure to act, when the possibilities were there, allowed the civil war in Cambodia to continue for several more years than would otherwise have been possible.

However, it is not just the international community that has failed the people of Angola. Perhaps the most significant role has been played by big business – business

which the average person holds in high respect, and which is normally associated as the purveyor of the ultimate gift of love. In other words, business involved in the international diamond trade.

De Beers

A brief analysis of, for example, the company reports of De Beers throughout the period in question shows that the company bought up a significant proportion of the so-called 'unofficial' production from Angola – at a time when the vast bulk of unofficial production was coming from areas controlled by UNITA. This all changed, according to the company, with the introduction of sanctions in July 1998. However, it must be asked – given the implications of this trade – why it took the introduction of sanctions to effect this change. It should also be noted that, throughout most of 1999, when challenged, the company refused to clarify how this policy was being implemented.

One Year On

One year into the work of the new Sanctions Committee, and after significant pressure on the international diamond trade through a potential major consumer campaign targeting conflict-sourced diamonds, things look very different. The trade now appears finally to be opening itself up to some level of scrutiny, and removing the arcane secrecy which has surrounded its activity and which has allowed diamonds to fund some of the worst examples of human rights abuses from Angola to Sierra Leone, and from Liberia to the DRC. It is hoped that the recent momentum in this direction will be maintained, otherwise the shadow of a full-blown consumer campaign remains a reality.

The Role of Oil in the Angolan Government's War

The issue of how the oil industry has contributed to the disaster in Angola is more difficult to appreciate. Nevertheless, this industry provided between US\$1–3bn in annual income to the Angolan state throughout the 1990s. During this same time period that oil production has increased, Angola has slipped in the UN's Human Development Index (HDI), which ranks countries according to various social indicators, from position 73 to 160 out of a total of 174 countries assessed.

It is clear that the government's need to fight an ugly and persistent war against UNITA has played a major role in this situation. But it is also true that widespread looting of the 90+ per cent of state income which comes from oil production is also to blame. This process is conducted with some degree of subtlety and is very difficult to analyse. However, investigations reveal a decline of the functioning

of the state from one which at least gave the appearance of being interested in the well-being of its people during the 1980s, to the current situation where virtually every state process has a price, and where everything from food imports, to clothing, and weaponry for war is subject to at least a 40–50 per cent ‘commission’.

The total lack of transparency surrounding oil income to the state together with control of vast areas of expenditure by the presidency (ie, outside the state budget) and severe

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press censorship, all contribute to blocking change. In addition, the government insists on hiding behind the continuing war as an excuse for all the problems encountered by the population. In other words, as long as the war continues it will be impossible for Angolans to question the actions of

their government, whether these actions relate to the press-ganging of under-age boys into the army to fight, or to the lack of food, education, and medical resources.

Privatisation of the War Effort

An even more ugly aspect to the activities of the presidency since the resumption of war against UNITA in December 1998 is the fact that much of the war effort has been privatised. By this it is not suggested that the presidency decided to wage war in order to make money but rather that there was, by 1998, an inevitability of a return to war, and that key players in the presidency as well as those connected to these key individuals decided that, since the war was going to re-start, they might as well make money out of it. Today there is a major conflict of interest where those who should be pursuing all avenues to bring peace to the country are actively engaged in a process whereby the greater the war expenditure, the more money they will make. This process is further complicated by the involvement of organised crime in the supply of weaponry, and the removal of vast amounts of state revenue into overseas accounts.

This is the mess that the oil companies find themselves operating in. In some cases, certain companies have been, and are actively involved in, this process of state robbery. In others, rather like pigs at the trough – and where the stakes are simply too high not to be involved (Angola is likely to become the largest African oil producer in the next few years) – they have found themselves operating in a country where they account collectively for 90+ per cent of state income; income which is being plundered. Whether they like it or not they are, by default, part of the problem.

What Can Be Done?

It is clear that things will only change for the better with a real peace process. Oil production, and hence state

income, is likely to reach a peak in the next few years. This period of peak state income will have a finite life, and it is essential that this revenue be deployed for the benefit of all Angolans rather than a few individuals and for war. It is therefore essential that the Angolan government:

- make all efforts to end the war as soon as possible;
- immediately open up its oil accounts to domestic inspection. This would mean that the average Angolan would be able to determine what the state is generating from its main resource which, after all, is the property of all Angolans under the constitution.

Given the current attitude of the Angolan government to calls for transparency, this situation seems unlikely at present. This is further worsened by the government’s insistence that it must effectively fight UNITA to the end. But after three decades of war it is hard to see an end to the fighting, especially given the propensity of UNITA to continue using guerrilla tactics (and for years to come), which require the maintenance of a vast state security investment on behalf of the government.

Corporate Accountability

This returns the spotlight to corporate accountability. It is time for a radical rethink of the way in which international business conducts its affairs. Just as for the international diamond trade, where it is clear that action should have been taken to remove ‘conflict sourced’ diamonds from the market place, the international oil industry urgently needs to rethink its activities in countries like Angola.

If companies operate in countries such as Angola where it is clear that there is little or no accountability or transparency of government, then there should be an additional duty of companies to operate within what Global Witness terms ‘full transparency’. This means that companies should publish fully (ie, in a format which can be understood) both domestically and internationally, everything that they pay to a government. If the oil companies in Angola were to do this then there would automatically be an accurate figure for the 90 per cent of state income. This would allow Angolans to hold their government to account for expenditure decisions for the first time. If companies fail to make this move, then they must accept their full complicity in the wholesale robbery of Angola, and the impoverishment of the majority of its people.

Global Witness is a London-based NGO which focuses on the links between environment and human rights. This generally translates into the role of natural resources in countries in conflict, or those emerging from conflict. Global Witness has no political affiliation. For more information email the author on: <Staylor@globalwitness.demon.co.uk> or write to: Global Witness, PO Box 6042, London, N19 5WP. Tel: +44 (0)20 7272 6731 Website: <www.oneworld.org/globalwitness/>

Diamonds: A Guerilla's Best Friend¹

Ian Smillie, independent consultant and writer based in Canada

The Primary Cause of War

Diamonds – small pieces of carbon with no great intrinsic value – have been the cause of widespread death, destruction and misery for almost a decade in Sierra Leone. Through the 1990s, Sierra Leone's rebel war became a tragedy of major humanitarian, political and historic proportions, but the story goes back almost to the discovery of diamonds in the 1930s. By the 1960s and 1970s, a weak post-independence democracy had been subverted by despotism and state-sponsored corruption. Economic decline and military rule followed.

The rebellion that began in 1991 was characterised by banditry and horrific brutality, wreaked primarily on civilians. Between 1991 and 1999 the war claimed over 75,000 lives, caused half-a-million Sierra Leoneans to become refugees, and displaced half of the country's 4.5 million people. There is a view that Sierra Leone's war is a crisis of modernity, caused by the failed patrimonial systems of successive post-colonial governments. Sierra Leonean writers have rejected this analysis. While there is widespread public disenchantment with the failing state, with corruption and with a lack of opportunity, similar problems elsewhere have not led to years of brutality against civilians by forces devoid of ideology, political support and ethnic identity. Only the economic opportunity presented by a breakdown in law and order could sustain violence at the levels that have plagued Sierra Leone since 1991.

Unlike South Africa or Botswana, Sierra Leone's diamonds are mainly alluvial, which means they are spread over vast areas and are relatively close to the surface. This makes it possible to 'mine' diamonds with little more than a shovel, a sieve and a good eye. And this accounts for the focus by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) on the rich diamond fields of Kono District. It also accounts for the sustained military backing of the RUF by Liberian President, Charles Taylor, not to mention the huge upsurge in diamonds being exported from Liberia, and the concomitant decline in legitimate exports from Sierra Leone.

The Central Characters

To understand the complexities involved, a brief cast of characters will help: De Beers, the Antwerp market, Liberia and junior mining firms. Until the 1980s, De Beers was a major player in Sierra Leone. Since then, however, the relationship has been indirect. De Beers says that it does not purchase Sierra Leonean diamonds. Through its companies and buying offices elsewhere in West Africa, however, and in its attempts to mop up supplies everywhere in the world – essential to maintaining the world price of diamonds – it is likely that the company is, in one way or another, purchasing diamonds that have been smuggled out of Sierra Leone.

Antwerp is the world centre for rough diamonds. More than half of De Beers registered buyers (sightholders) reside in Antwerp. Antwerp is also the principal 'outside market' serving as a funnel for more than half of all the diamonds produced in the world. A major problem with the Belgian environment – as it pertains to Sierra Leone or any other diamond producing country – is the lack of interest and information on the true source of the diamonds entering the country. A comparison of West African diamond export figures with Belgian imports is revealing. For example:

Only the economic opportunity presented by a breakdown in law and order could sustain violence at the levels that have plagued Sierra Leone since 1991.

- while the Government of Sierra Leone recorded exports of only 8,500 carats in 1998, the Diamond High Council (HRD), which records imports and exports on behalf of the Belgian industry and the Belgian government, records imports from Sierra Leone of 770,000 carats;
- annual Liberian diamond mining capacity is between 100,000 and 150,000 carats, but the HRD records Liberian imports into Belgium of over 31 million carats between 1994 and 1998 – an average of over six million carats a year.

In fact Liberia has become a major entrepot for diamonds smuggled from many other countries in the region and further afield. It has also become a magnet for criminal elements with ties to the Colombian drug cartels, international gun runners and money launderers.

Sierra Leone too attracted its share of international criminals during the 1970s and 1980s. When a democratically elected government finally took office in 1996, it had its back to the wall, both economically and militarily, and what was left of the formal diamond industry was in the hands of a few international 'junior' mining firms. Principals in these companies (mostly traded on Canadian stock exchanges) became involved during the mid-1990s in the provision of mercenaries, guns and other military equipment in what some have termed a kind of protection racket – 'guns for concessions'.

In June 1999, faced with the possibility of losing the war to the RUF and all but abandoned by the international community, the government of Sierra Leone signed a peace agreement giving RUF leader, Foday Sankoh, and others a general amnesty as well as several cabinet positions. (The irony of international outrage at the inclusion of the right-wing Freedom Party in the Austrian government cannot be lost upon Sierra Leoneans, who saw Jesse Jackson, Bill Clinton and others urging them to make a

deal with murderers.) Waking up to its responsibility after the fact, the UN Security Council finally agreed to a UN peacekeeping mission for Sierra Leone at the end of 1999. Since then, the peace agreement has held, but in the most tenuous fashion, and with continued RUF attacks on civilians, government facilities and even UN peacekeepers. The RUF continues to maintain its hold on the principal diamond areas.

Recommendations of the Report

The Partnership Africa Canada (PAC) study began with the thesis that there will never be a sustainable peace in Sierra Leone until the domestic diamond industry is brought under the rule of law, and until there are major reforms in the international diamond industry. The report made several recommendations. The first involves the creation of an independent international diamond standards commission to establish and monitor codes of conduct on governmental and corporate responsibility in the worldwide diamond industry.

In Sierra Leone, the establishment of justice, the rule of law and human security are paramount, along with major investments in long term development. These must be accompanied by full transparency and rigorous probity in the management of the diamond industry. This, of course, is easier said than done. In addition to the services of UN peacekeepers, the government will need considerable international support to make this happen. In order to attract diamond miners and traders to Freetown rather than to Liberia and elsewhere, it is recommended that De Beers return to Sierra Leone, establishing a purchasing office in Freetown.

Much greater transparency, probity and an end to conflicts of interest in the Belgian diamond industry are essential to ending African smuggling. Because of the documented connections between diamonds and organised crime in Antwerp, it is recommended that a high-level governmental commission of enquiry into the overall Belgian diamond industry is established.

It is recommended that the UN Security Council place a complete and immediate embargo on all diamond exports from Liberia. The open trade in millions of carats of stolen

diamonds between Liberia and Antwerp is unconscionable, and given the horror and death that has been perpetrated on Sierra Leoneans since 1991 it has to be considered a crime against humanity. Consideration should be given to similar embargoes on other countries where exports far exceed known resources, including Guinea and Ivory Coast. At a minimum, internationally mandated geological surveys should be done in order to determine the legitimate resource base of these countries.

In the long run, the identification of rough diamonds by source is critical to the curtailment of smuggling. Work is currently being done at various levels on new technologies and on new forms of certification. Investments in making these both workable and mandatory will be key to ending the problems of 'conflict diamonds'.

Impact on the Industry

The diamond industry has taken note of the work done by Global Witness (see accompanying article on Angola) and PAC. Despite industry denials, there are signs of positive movement and a recognition that change is essential. Neither GW nor PAC have talked of possible boycotts, but Nicky Oppenheimer, chairman of De Beers, has. The industry knows that it is vulnerable to consumer concern. But the industry itself can do much to clean up the problems. If, as industry insiders say, the bad apples represent only 10 per cent of what is essentially a clean enterprise, then the effort may not be that great. But however few the bad apples, their destructive impact on millions of innocent lives is enormous. The impact on the industry of inaction will also be enormous.

¹ This article is based on a major study of the relationship between Sierra Leone's brutal civil war and the international diamond industry. The study, *The Heart of the Matter: Sierra Leone Diamonds and Human Security*, was written by Ian Smillie, Lansana Gberie and Ralph Hazleton, and was published by the NGO, Partnership Africa Canada (PAC), in January 2000.

A summary of the PAC Report can be found at <www.web.net/pac> The full report can be ordered for US\$20 from PAC, 323 Chapel St, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1N 7Z2.

Don't forget!
From April 2000 the RRN will
become the
Humanitarian Practice Network
(HPN)

The Political Economy of War: What Relief Agencies Need to Know A forthcoming HPN paper by Philippe le Billon

War generates both 'winners' and 'losers' and the vulnerability of losers needs to be understood as a result of powerlessness. These two simple arguments are put forward by a 'political economy of war' studying the production and distribution of power, wealth, and destitution during armed conflicts. A political economy approach also stresses that the perpetuation of war can become an end in itself, providing and justifying the use of violent means to create or sustain economic profits and political power. For the winners, a war does not need to be won to be profitable. For the losers, a war is the never-ending accumulation of abuse, fear, and frustration. Complex political and economic processes and motivations are at work behind the distribution of the profits and burdens of war. Global unregulated trade, state failure, identity politics and war profiteering all play a part in the neglect, exclusion or exploitation of losers.

This paper argues that a political economy approach to war has far reaching implications for relief work. First, a comprehensive protection of victims implies the safeguard of political and economic rights from violence and coercion. By understanding the political economy of war, relief agencies can better assess the forms of economic violence threatening livelihoods during wars – whether in the form of physical abuse, looting, destruction of productive infrastructures, exclusion from jobs or economic collapse. Second, analysing the context and implications of relief work is crucial to minimise its negative impact given, the manipulation of humanitarian presence and resources by belligerents and foreign states, and thus to guarantee accountability for local populations, donors and the public. Finally, a political economy understanding of the course of a conflict can help to identify political and economic interests impeding a transition to peace and avoid the reconstruction of a pre-war economy that may have had much to do with the origin of the conflict.

The challenge of providing better power distribution and economic protection during war needs to be addressed by a broad range of initiatives. Relief can only play a limited role adapted to the individual mandate and capacities of each agency. Yet there is room for manoeuvre, especially in terms of adapting the design of relief programmes to local strategies, distributing wealth and destitution, decreasing the degree of relief manipulation by armed groups, as well as informing and motivating collective rights-based political action.

This report will be published by the HPN in July 2000.

Philippe le Billon has also compiled and partially annotated an accompanying bibliography which can be found at <www.odi.org.uk/hpg/warecons.html>

Resources

On Angola:

- Global Witness website: <www.oneworld.org/globalwitness> (Angola and Cambodia reports).
- Action for Southern Africa <atsa@geoz.poptel.org.uk>.
- The 'Angola Peace Monitor' <www.anc.org.za/angola>.
- IRIN Southern Africa: <subs@irin.org.za>.
- Gamba, V. and Cornwell, R. (2000) 'Arms, Elites, and Resources in the Angolan Civil War', in M. Berdal and D. Malone (eds) *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*. Lynne Rienner, Boulder and London.
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- Reno, W. (1999) Shadow States and the Political Economy of War in *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, M. Berdal and D. Malone (eds) Lynne Rienner, Boulder and London.

On Sierra Leone:

- *The Heart of the Matter* is available in English and French from the Partnership Africa Canada (PACNET) at <www.web.net/pac>.
- Regular information on Sierra Leone: <www.Sierra-Leone.org>.
- IRIN West Africa: <irin-wa-updates@ocha.unon.org>.
- Parliamentary inquiry into the Sandlines affair in Sierra Leone: <www.parliament.uk> look for Select Committee on Foreign Affairs or <www.publications.parliament...9899/cmselect/cmcaff/116/11603.htm>.
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Stop Propagating Disaster Myths

Claude de Ville de Goyet, Chief, Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief Coordination Programme, PAHO, Washington, DC, USA

The international response to the tragic earthquake in Turkey highlights the need to reassess the myths and realities surrounding disasters, and to find ways to stop these destructive tales. The myth that dead bodies cause a major risk of disease, as reiterated in all large natural disasters from the earthquake in Managua, Nicaragua (1972) to Hurricane Mitch and now the Turkish earthquake, is just that, a myth. The bodies of victims from earthquakes or other natural disasters do not present a public health risk of cholera, typhoid fever or other plagues mentioned by misinformed medical doctors. In fact, the few occasional carriers of the communicable diseases who were unfortunate victims of the disaster are a far lesser threat to the public than they were while alive. Often overlooked is the unintended social consequence of the precipitous and unceremonious disposal of corpses. It is just one more severe blow to the affected population, depriving them of their human right to honour the dead with a proper identification and burial. The legal and financial consequences of the lack of a death certificate will add to the suffering of the survivors for years to come. Moreover, focussing on the summary disposal, superficial 'disinfection' with lime, mass burial, or cremation of corpses requires important human and material resources that should instead be allocated to those who survived and remain in critical condition.

PAHO's experience in the aftermath of the earthquake in Mexico city showed that health authorities and the media can work together to inform the public, make possible the identification of the deceased and the return of their bodies to the families in a climate free of unfounded fears of epidemics.

The myth that the affected population is helplessly waiting for the Western world to save it is also false, especially

in countries with a large but unevenly distributed medical population. In fact, only a handful of survivors owe their lives to foreign teams. Most survivors owe their lives to neighbours and local authorities. When foreign medical teams arrive, most of the physically accessible injured have already received some medical attention. Western medical teams are not necessarily most appropriate to the local conditions.

Many will have found that press coverage of the Turkey earthquake created a sense of *déjà vu*: international rescue teams rushing in were made to look as though they were saving victims neglected by incompetent or corrupt local authorities. We have seen the same cliché after major earthquakes and hurricanes in the Americas.

Disaster-stricken countries appreciate external assistance when directed to real problems. Unfortunately, too much of the assistance is directed to non-issues or myths. For example, a common myth is that any kind of international assistance is needed and needed now, while experience shows that a hasty response that is not based on familiarity with local conditions and meant to complement national efforts only contributes to the chaos. It is often better to wait until genuine needs have been assessed. Many also believe that disasters bring out the worst in human behaviour, but the truth is that while isolated cases of antisocial behaviour exist the majority of people respond spontaneously and generously.

The myth that the affected population is too shocked and helpless to take responsibility for its own survival is superseded by the reality that, on the contrary, many find new strength during an emergency – as is evidenced by the thousands of volunteers who spontaneously united to sift through the rubble in search of victims after the 1985 Mexico City earthquake or the one in Turkey. Such cross-cultural

dedication to the common good of so many volunteers and institutions, without red tape or petty institutional turf fights, might keep alive our faith in humankind and society.

The myth that things return to normal within a few weeks is especially pernicious. The truth is that the effects of a disaster last a long time. Disaster-affected countries deplete many of their financial and material resources in the immediate post-impact phase. The bulk of the need for external assistance is in the restoration of normal primary healthcare services, water systems, housing and income-producing work. Social and mental health problems will appear when the acute crisis has subsided and the victims feel (and often are) abandoned to their own means. Successful relief programmes gear their operations to the fact that international interest wanes as needs and shortages become more pressing.

Natural disasters such as the tragic Turkey earthquake do not result in imported diseases that are not already present in the affected area, and they do not provoke secondary disasters through outbreaks of communicable diseases. Proper resumption of public health services, such as immunisation and sanitation measures, control and disposal of waste, and special attention to water quality and food safety, will ensure the safety of the population and of relief workers.

It is essential that the press and the donor community be aware of what is good practice and malpractice in public health emergency management. Past sudden-impact natural disasters in the Americas and elsewhere have shown the need for international contributions in cash and not in kind. This ensures that allocation of resources is field-driven by evidence of what is needed on site. The population in Turkey does not need used clothing, household or prescription medicines, blood and blood derivatives, medical or

paramedical personnel of teams, field hospitals and modular medical units. They want, as do any victims of disaster, to rebuild safer houses, put their children in school and get back to their lives. Unilateral contributions of unrequested goods are inappropriate, burdensome, and divert resources from what is needed most.

There are lessons to be learned. While it is true that the Turkish authorities were unprepared, who is ever ready for a disaster of this magnitude? The World Health Organisation should have done more to strengthen local capacity, but with what resources? The US and other countries spent

millions of dollars to dispatch search and rescue teams (who arrived after the most critical first hours or days) to a country where thousands of local medical doctors volunteered their services. A small part of this money could have been more effectively applied in preparedness and prevention activities.

We need to educate donors just as we need to educate potential victims of disasters. A little preparedness can go a long way toward alleviating the 'secondary' disasters often visited on countries. Increased funding for the US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance for disaster preparedness

and prevention in the 'third world', and more funding from other bilateral or international agencies, could help matters.

If donors would commit now to strengthen the local capacity to respond to future disasters in Turkey, in the disaster-prone countries of the Americas, and other places, and learn what is important and what is futile in helping countries, the world would be better off.

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Central America 15 Months On: Reconstruction But No Transformation

Sally O'Neill, Regional Director, Trocaire, Honduras, Central America

Hurricane Mitch, the worst natural disaster to hit Central America in a century, opened up significant possibilities to tackle the social, economic and ecological vulnerabilities laid bare by the storm. Fifteen months later the international donor community gathered in Tegucigalpa – the Honduran capital – under the auspices of the InterAmerican Development Bank, to review reconstruction efforts in the region, and to follow up on the commitments made at the May 1999 Stockholm summit.

The post-Mitch period brought some benefits to Central America. For most of the last decade the region had slipped from the international agenda and aid flows had been diminishing. Mitch has reversed that trend. There is now greater visibility for the region's problems, especially for Honduras which, before the hurricane, was the country with the weakest international profile and links.

The inflow of reconstruction funds has helped stabilise the macroeconomic situation of both Nicaragua and Honduras. While both countries have seen their economies go into recessionary decline due to the destruction of crops and economic infrastructure, this has not been to the dire extremes predicted a year ago. International awareness and lobby by citizens groups in the North has led to major efforts to resolve the debt crisis faced by both countries. This resulted in Honduras being declared eligible for HIPC (heavily indebted poor countries) benefits in December



1999. Without the hurricane, access to HIPC would not have likely occurred before 2005.

Weakened Regional Integration

The benefits obtained, however, fall far short of the major needs created by Mitch. One of the casualties has been regional integration. Competition for reconstruction funds has put an end to regional cooperation. The key event of the post-Mitch calendar was the Consultative Group donor

meeting in Stockholm. The host government Sweden and the member states of the European Union (EU) had hoped that Mitch would breathe life into the badly needed regional integration process. In fact the opposite proved to be the case, as each government focused its energies on getting the largest possible slice of the reconstruction pie.

Not only did the Central American governments find it impossible to negotiate joint priorities for the key social and economic reconstruction projects, all of them did their best to resist the growing pressure from international donors to include and involve organisations from civil society in the preparation and implementation of national reconstruction plans. Mitch has revealed the growing hostility between Central American governments and their national NGOs, but the hurricane has proved to be the much-needed catalyst to revitalise civil society in the region. While governmental coordination has been virtually nil, the NGO sector has restructured regional groups and these have greatly benefited from newly created networks in Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua. In Honduras, the country in the region with the weakest NGO capacity, the changes have been dramatic with the creation of Interforos, a coalition bringing together almost 500 grassroots organisations and NGOs.

However, it was not only the Central American governments that reacted in a competitive manner. So did many donors, especially the US which sought to use its \$US1bn package to claw back some of the aid space which had been ceded in the last decade to Japan and Europe. This competitive attitude of the donors has allowed the Central American governments to use the shopping list approach rather than face up to the need to restructure their economies and undertake the political and legal reforms needed to reduce vulnerability and tackle widespread poverty which Mitch uncovered.

Donor Delays Slow Down Reconstruction Progress

One of the few areas on which both governments and civil society are agreed relates to the slow process by donors of converting pledges into actual funds for reconstruction. The Salvadorean foreign minister has complained that less than 7 per cent of the funds promised at Stockholm have actually materialised. The delays have proved to be an embarrassment for governments who rushed home from Sweden talking of the imminent arrival of billions of aid dollars. For the donors several factors have caused the delay. A major one is the weak institutional capacity of Central American governments to deliver coherent proposals to flesh out the project profiles mentioned in Stockholm. Another sensitive issue is corruption and the need to establish new ground rules on what constitutes transparency in the handling of funds. In this regard the governments of the two most affected

countries – Nicaragua and Honduras – do not have a good record. Transparency International, the Berlin-based watchdog organisation charting corruption around the world, has placed both countries on its ‘emergency’ list reserved for the worst violators.

The competitive attitude of the donors has allowed the Central American governments to use the shopping list approach rather than face up to the need to restructure their economies.

Civil society has welcomed donor concerns about corruption and has expressed the view that a multitude of actors should be employed to handle Mitch funds, thus ensuring that difficulties with absorption capacity can be overcome. However, many donors, while emphasising the need for civil

society to be involved, have failed to follow their own advice by ensuring that their funds are also channelled through local governments and decentralised structures, including NGOs.

Poor Coordination Among International NGOs

A constant criticism of international NGOs has been their lack of coordination with local structures, especially during the emergency phase. Mitch attracted many European NGOs to Central America, supposedly expert in emergency aid. However, many of them had little previous experience in the region. More accustomed to implementing their own operational programmes in Africa, they ignored local expertise and structures and there was a significant waste of resources and duplication of effort. Described as ‘ambulance chasers’ by the Nicaraguan Emergency Relief and Reconstruction Coalition, many of these NGOs appeared to have little motivation except to access funds from the EU. The Nicaraguan coalition complained that these NGOs set back and damaged years of hard work by local organisations to develop sustainable approaches to the delivery of aid.

Most local NGOs in Central America, aware of the acute shortage of funds for the region, were anxious to deliver emergency aid in a manner that would enable a rapid return to self-reliance during the rehabilitation phase. After the acute emergency phase was over local NGOs sought to change from a procedure of free donations to food-for-work schemes, but were often hampered in these efforts by the presence of international NGOs with paternalistic approaches and poor knowledge of communities, as well as a lack of accountability procedures.

With the outbreak of hostilities in Kosovo many of the opportunistic NGOs fled. However, by the end of 1999 a number of NGOs had made the decision to remain and commit themselves to medium-term programmes of rehabilitation. This is especially true of Honduras where the number of resident European NGOs increased from 7 in 1997 to 31 following Mitch.

Civil Society Regroups

The absence of formal structures for coordinating international NGO activity was a major failure during

Mitch. This was in stark contrast to the behaviour of local NGOs. In El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua national coordination structures were established to focus the national agendas beyond building bridges and roads. While El Salvador and Nicaragua have a long tradition of NGO coordination forged during decades of civil war, the most interesting new development came from Honduras, a country where civil society has traditionally been weak and divided. The creation of Interforos has broken the history of lethargy and division and out of the disaster has emerged a civil society that is more articulate and assertive in its dealing with government and the donor community, as well as being a key actor in the community reconstruction processes.

On the ground the results of reconstruction led by community effort are impressive. Where local groups have obtained access to resources they have been able to mobilise and the physical improvements in water schemes, sanitation, housing and agricultural rehabilitation have been dramatic. A remarkable feature of the reconstruction process has been the participation of women right across Central America. Mitch has offered them new opportunities for empowerment and change. At the same time economic difficulties caused by the hurricane have led to more stress which in turn has increased domestic violence against women and children. This is most obvious in the large shelters where thousands of families are still housed despite government promises that these were temporary measures and families would not remain there more than six months. In both Honduras and Nicaragua, the governments have failed to find the political will to tackle the issue of land for reconstruction of houses in urban areas and for distribution to small farmers who have lost their productive assets. As always, local landowners have sought to exploit the situation and there has been serious land speculation in areas adjacent to hurricane-damaged zones.

Local Government Loses Out despite Focus on Decentralisation

The other losers in the reconstruction process have been municipal governments and local councils. For most of the 1990s, de-centralisation was the hallmark of the return to democracy and a cornerstone of the process for good governance. But most municipalities are underfunded, overworked and lack basic human and material resources to carry out their tasks. In Nicaragua, most of the hurricane damage occurred in the northern part of the country that is largely controlled at local level by opposition Sandinista-led councils. The government has withheld aid from these groups. In Honduras the reconstruction process has been criticised for its excessive centralisation, controlled directly by the president. This centralisation has meant that the areas most affected have failed to draw up appropriate maps of existing high risk areas, nor strategies for local reconstruction. But there are some signs of hope. In Tocoa, in northern Honduras, the affected communities have set up 452 local development committees and signed agreements with local government and Honduran and

international NGOs to determine priorities for reconstruction. In Nicaragua, with the support of UNDP, over a dozen NGOs worked in four municipalities coordinating assistance to 123 communities. What is new and unique about these interventions is that the NGOs are leading the process and municipalities are extremely willing to accept the added technical advantages that NGOs have in terms of capacity, as well as their detailed knowledge of community needs and leadership qualities.

A Lost Opportunity for Transformation

Despite these efforts, 15 months after Mitch it seems fair to conclude that the opportunity that the hurricane offered to transform Central America into a more just, efficiently governed region, with greater civil society participation, has been lost. Official efforts have concentrated on repairing physical infrastructure which had originally been put in place to service the needs of the export sectors of the economy in the hope of retaining the presence of the transnational corporations that dominate agricultural exports and the free trade zones. Faced with doubts about transparency, corruption and weak local capacity, the international donor community has been slow to disburse the funds pledged at Stockholm. Thousands of victims have been left to fend for themselves and most social reconstruction is the responsibility of local and international NGOs, most of whom are working independently of each other when not stepping on each others toes. Areas with a poor previous history of NGO presence have simply failed to access reconstruction aid.

Although Central America has been repeatedly hit by earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tidal waves, hurricanes and droughts, no country in the region has an adequate disaster preparedness or disaster prevention strategy. Nor has Mitch forced them to remedy this lack, as was obvious in late 1999 when heavy rains swept away roads and bridges including new ones installed after Mitch. If any lessons have been learnt from Mitch there are no mechanisms for ensuring that this information will be shared. Thousands have shown their lack of faith in a new future by marching with their feet, mostly northwards as illegal immigrants. Central American governments are quite willing to allow international cooperation to foot the bill for reconstruction, hoping that the contributions will be large enough to compensate for social injustice and their inefficiency.

The signs of hope come from communities who refuse to remain as victims, renewed vigour and coordination among civil society, hundreds of micro-projects that are bringing new skills and resources to desperate communities, women who are leading the process of reconstruction, and some donors who are serious about decentralisation, transparency and combating poverty.

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WFP Response to Hurricane Mitch: A New Approach

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Though each has a distinctive character, the Central American countries also have several common traits. They are, periodically, exposed to a range of natural hazards such as hurricanes, tropical storms, floods, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Moreover, these hazards may, as in the case of Mitch, simultaneously affect more than one country. The countries concerned also share socioeconomic and ecological features, notably pervasive structural poverty and environmentally sensitive steep lands. These factors made it appropriate for WFP to adopt a regionally focused emergency operation that was distinctively different from the ordinary single, country-based programmes and interventions normally generated by other UN organisations.

Within this regional approach WFP ensured it was possible to incorporate modifications to meet the needs of each country. This flexibility at the country level was required to finetune planning and implementation of relief activities in the light of country-specific realities, including vital partnership arrangements with national governments, local institutions and other international aid providers. Moreover, the ongoing decentralisation of the administrative structure of Rome-based WFP has led to the establishment of a regional office in Managua (Nicaragua). The presence of this regional office within the disaster area allowed for rapid, well-informed decision-making by a regional director and his team.

Benefits of the Regional Approach

Several benefits have become apparent:

- Economies of scale were realised through regional purchases of food and equipment.
- A regional bank account allowed for rapid purchases and transfers of funds needed.
- Regionally-based specialists within the area made frequent visits to provide backstopping to the individual country offices.
- Issues of common interest and experiences on good practice were exchanged increasing the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the regional EMOP among the four countries.

The same regional approach is recommended when a WFP response is required to meet future urgent food needs of people affected by disasters which transcend the national borders.

New Policy Directions

WFP has recently committed itself to new policy directions with the aim of promoting the best possible use of food aid in support of development efforts to bring about sustainable food security among the hungry poor. Food aid should hence be limited to supporting interventions which will create lasting physical and human assets, benefiting poor, food-insecure households. Mitigating the effects of natural disaster in areas vulnerable to recurring crises of this kind is among the principal programming priorities adopted within this 'enabling development' policy. The potential role of food aid should be explored in supporting environmentally sound initiatives by communities in highland and protected areas. An example within the Central American region is the Lempa river basin which spans three countries in the region (El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala). To adequately address the environmental vulnerability of this river basin a more integrated approach is required, both within and between countries. Being a major provider of relief aid, WFP could use its leverage to encourage and support regional environmental initiatives where issues span more than one country. In addition, WFP should consider strategic involvement in policy discussions at national and regional level on land-use planning in order to influence the development of policies which would contribute to reducing Central America's vulnerability to natural disasters.

Such strategic alliances are sought with UN sister agencies and other development partners, in particular NGOs. Within UN inter-agency disaster prevention groups, measures are being reviewed to better respond to unpredictable hazards. Vulnerability Assessment Mapping (VAM) units are being established by WFP in conjunction with other UN agencies (FAO, WHO) and national institutions. Information generated by these units contributes to the effective programming of activities geared towards reducing environmental vulnerability, and establishing contingency planning in anticipation of disasters.

Finally, WFP could encourage other international agencies to also consider adopting a regional approach when programming a response to emergencies which simultaneously affect more than one country. The benefits derived from such an approach could thus be maximised.

For further reference see Evaluation Report: Summary Evaluation of Emergency Operation – Central America 6079.00 ('Emergency food assistance to households affected by Hurricane Mitch'). This document can be obtained through the Executive Board Documents on the WFP website: <www.wfp.org>

Turkey's Response to Crisis

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In August 1999 northwestern Turkey, the country's most densely populated and industrialised region, was hit by two massive earthquakes. The first, on 17 August 1999, measured 7.8 on the Richter scale and lasted 45 seconds. Izmit, the most industrialised city in western Turkey with a population of one million, was at the epicenter. A local petroleum refinery was also affected by the disaster and the fire continued for six days further endangering the local population and causing heavy pollution in the Marmara Sea. The official death toll stands at over 17,000, with some 44,000 people injured; nearly 300,000 homes were either damaged or collapsed, and more than 40,000 business premises were similarly affected.

On the day of the catastrophe the Turkish government declared a state of emergency and appealed for international assistance. On 23 September 1999 it established a Regional Disaster Management Coordination Office (RDMCO). The army took over the security in the region and established logistics centres in the provinces, monitoring, in conjunction with the Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS), supplies stored in the warehouses and the distribution of humanitarian aid. In addition, 87 countries provided emergency humanitarian assistance, the total amounting to US\$61m as of 27 September 1999.

The disaster was followed by more than 1,300 aftershocks, culminating in a second quake at on 12 November 1999. This quake measured 7.2 on the Richter scale and shook Duzce and Kaynasli counties in the northwestern province of Bolu. The jolt was felt in both Istanbul and Ankara. As of 6 February 2000, there was a confirmed death total of 894 with 4,948 injured.

Two more strong aftershocks, measuring 4.7 and 4.2 respectively, occurred on Thursday 20 January in the Bolu area and on Wednesday 9 February in Golcuk Izmit province. Despite widespread panic there were no reports of casualties or any major damage. Some who had returned to their partially damaged houses after the November

earthquake decided to move back into the tent cities, fearing future shocks. Recently this earthquake zone has been hit by snow storms, with the temperature dropping to -16 Celsius and the snow depth reaching 24cm in Bolu city centre.

Shelter Provision: The Official Response

As of 13 January 2000, UNICEF figures show that a total of 77 tent cities with 27,510 winterised tents were inhabited by 108,684 victims (the initial number of tent cities in the devastated area stood at 109, with 132,750 inhabitants). These figures indicate that 24,066 people have moved, either to prefabricated houses or to government-funded/state-guest houses. The tent cities have been provided, in the main, by the TRCS. Some are also funded by international NGOs, the IFRC, and other National Societies.

As of late January, the Turkish government proposed the following three alternatives to address the challenges of providing shelter to the homeless population of 176,000:

- provision of prefabricated houses for all affected families that wish to be sheltered in pre-fab cities;
- allocation of a reconstruction subsidy of US\$ 1,500 for families whose residences were lightly damaged in the earthquake;
- allocation of a monthly rental subsidy of US\$ 200 for each family moving to newly rented accommodation.

The government has announced that it plans to provide approximately 47,000 prefabricated houses to accommodate up to 151,000 people. As of 18 January, a total of 72,336 people were living in 18,084 pre-fab houses in 97 prefabricated cities (a total of 32,141 houses have been completed, with 14,057 prefabs still available for habitation). Despite tremendous efforts to finalise the prefabricated cities in a short period of time and encourage families to leave the tent camps, still over 108,000 people

continued overleaf

Scaling-up after Hurricane Mitch: A lesson-learning study for the Disasters Emergency Committee Sarah Lister (on contract to HPG/ODI)

After Hurricane Mitch devastated Central America in October and November 1999, the Disasters Emergency Committee Central America Appeal raised more than £11m which was distributed to 11 member agencies. This study assesses how those agencies scaled-up after Mitch and how they supported sister agencies and local partner organisations in their scaling-up. The report discusses issues and constraints that the agencies faced in common, and provides detailed analysis of agency responses according to a typology of agencies based on organisational structure and approach to project implementation. Specific lessons and broader themes are identified and recommendations and suggestions provided.

For a copy of the report email the DEC on <info@dec.org.uk>

remain in the tents, as mentioned above. Many victims refuse to move into the prefabricated houses in order not to forfeit the food and financial aid given only to those living in tent camps.

In Duzce, Sakarya, Kocaeli and Golcuk, sites for the construction of permanent housing have already been identified. Tenders for construction companies to present projects have been opened, and work is expected to begin in April. Within the framework of the World Bank's 'master plan' – a plan that not everyone agrees with – an initial allocation of US\$5m has been allocated for the construction of 23,000 houses and 30,000 business premises. Other measures, such as interest-free loans to assist the homeless who wish to buy or construct houses themselves, have been made available. According to the most recent official figures from the Ministry of Public Works and Housing, the total rebuilding and renewal cost of the earthquake is estimated as being US\$1.5bn. ECHO has granted a fund of 30m Euros for the supply of shelter and other social services. However, to date only 7m Euros have been disbursed and many of the NGOs do not work with ECHO funds due to the accompanying abundance of bureaucratic formalities and reporting.

Criticism of the Official Response

Most international NGOs and humanitarian organisations believe that providing prefabricated housing between the preliminary phase of supplying winter tents and the final phase of constructing permanent housing is a waste of time and resources; the US\$360m – the approximate cost of building the prefab houses – could be better used towards constructing permanent homes. It is also a

significant burden on the environment in terms of excessive land use and pollution of the soil.

Cooperation on the Ground

The most significant feature of the recent disaster has been the assistance of international relief organisations in terms of helping to build local civil societies and NGOs, such as the SAR teams which will be prepared for any future disasters. These are voluntary groups that have been established in the affected areas for search and rescue purposes; in many instances they have been trained and supported by the international organisations. In addition, training of locals in construction has taken place; there has also been training for local NGOs on the Sphere project.

The Challenge Ahead

Turkey's confidence in terms of its competence and ability to respond quickly has been seriously shaken. In the wake of this series of earthquakes there has been strong media criticism and adverse public reaction – despite the fact that the scale and the magnitude of the quakes would have challenged the preparedness and resources of any country and national organisation. As a result of the disaster, the TRCS is now gearing itself up for the implementation of an integrated disaster preparedness programme which incorporates training activities, search and rescue techniques, telecommunications, and the replenishment of stock used since the earthquake last year.

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Disaster Management in the Digital Age: the Case of Latin America

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There is no doubt that a digital divide exists between developed and developing countries. In Europe, North America and other parts of the 'developed' world, the Internet has become a routine part of life. In developed countries in particular, people are barraged by so much information from so many sources that they suffer from information overload.

The other side of the digital divide looks quite different. Imagine, for instance, the ministry of health of a Latin American country. Often there is a low computer-to-employee ratio, and even access to a

personal computer does not guarantee access to the World Wide Web or email as many computers are not connected to the Internet. In addition, phonelines are difficult to obtain, expensive to use and bandwidth is low. Talking to developing countries about information overload is like talking about the risk of obesity in famine. Developing countries are hungry for information. The Internet can help to meet this need, and from a disaster management perspective the surface has only been in terms of how technology can be used to improve communication and access to information.

Despite this inequality in the use of, and access to, such technology, the information and technology revolution of the past decade is slowly spreading around the world. Latin America has made significant strides. In Mexico, for example, the number of phone lines per 100 people grew 60 per cent between 1992 and 2000; in Brazil, the number grew by 39 per cent. Today, Spanish speakers account for the highest percentage of the world's online population among non-English languages. In particular, the disaster community in Latin America has taken some important steps to harness the power of the Internet and use it to improve disaster management.

Harnessing the Power of the Internet for Disaster Management

Disaster management encompasses an entire continuum, from impact through response to preparedness and mitigation. Latin American countries are beginning to use the Internet throughout the entire cycle. The Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), an early supporter of these initiatives, has witnessed firsthand the changes that have come about – both in disaster situations and in normal times – thanks to new technology.

Information Exchange during Disasters

Hurricane Mitch (October 1998) was the first Internet-intensive disaster in the Americas. It took an enormous toll on Central America. In Honduras alone the water distribution system in 23 of the country's 30 hospitals was partially or totally destroyed. Sixty-eight of the 123 health centres that were seriously damaged were unable to function when more than 100,000 persons needed urgent medical care. Routine epidemiological reporting, which traditionally covers about 70 per cent of the population, fell to a mere 30 per cent after the hurricane because of a breakdown in communications, the isolation of communities, and a shortage of epidemiologists.

Information was one of the most important commodities in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Mitch. It affected the direction of the response efforts, the allocation of resources, and the nature of donations. In spite of breakdowns in some normal channels of communication, the Internet became a major provider of information. Breaking news appeared just as quickly on the Internet as it did in many major newspapers. Indeed, national authorities in the affected countries as well as international organisations and NGOs often found information on the Internet before they could complete their own assessments. But how accurate was this information? This question must

be taken seriously because it was not uncommon for unsubstantiated reports of disease outbreaks or requests for all kinds of inappropriate donations on webpages to spring up overnight, as some of the same tenacious myths that surround disasters leapt from the printed page of newspapers into cyberspace (see accompanying article *Stop Propagating Disaster Myths*). Consumers of information had to carefully scrutinise and evaluate the source of the information.

What consumers learned was that, whether in electronic or print form, accurate and reliable information is best obtained from those who have been working in a country *prior* to a disaster – the ministry of health of the affected country, for instance, or NGOs and international agencies.

Information was one of the most important commodities in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Mitch. It affected the direction of the response efforts, the allocation of resources, and the nature of donations.

Unfortunately in the past these were rarely the same groups who had the means, the experience and the infrastructure to be first-to-market with breaking news. But the Internet is changing all that. It is levelling the playing field by allowing agencies to use the Internet's speed and global reach to compete with the major media outlets and so insert their information into the public debate and circulate information about genuine needs.

In the case of Mitch the web was used to post daily epidemiological reports and public health guidelines on topics ranging from household water quality to the prevention of outbreaks of measles. Technical guidelines were developed on a wide variety of the health consequences of disasters (www.paho.org/english/ped/pedhome.htm). Through this experience the donor community and the public were observed to become discriminating consumers of information. Whereas even five years ago the media could guarantee that whatever they broadcast in the

immediate aftermath of a disaster would go virtually unchallenged for several days, governmental and non-governmental agencies are now catching up in an effort to provide solid information about genuine needs more quickly.

PAHO used e-mail distribution lists as a concerted post-disaster information strategy. Unlike the web, where users must take the initiative to seek out information, e-mail is proactive and can transmit customised information to specific individuals or groups. E-mail was used to send daily reports to donors about genuine health needs, prompting a quick and generous response. Electronic distribution lists were used to target media outlets providing them, for example, with information on best donation practices or honest and factual analysis of surveillance data. In fact one of the most powerful features of the Internet is its ability to make possible a horizontal exchange of information between and among producers and consumers. In bureaucracies,

this means it is possible to bypass the customary centralised points of information collection and distribution – for example, the office of civil defence – and unclog traditional bottlenecks. While this may not be a popular notion with those in positions of authority who seek to control or put spin on post-disaster information, it is certainly good for democracy.

The Internet's Place in Disaster Preparedness

Hurricane Mitch is just one example of how the Internet can be used in disaster situations. But access to information is just as valuable a commodity in non-disaster situations as it is in the aftermath of a disaster. The advent of electronic publishing and full-text databases over the Internet opens the possibility of much closer interaction in all aspects of communication and information exchange. This will have a major impact in transforming information into knowledge – a prerequisite for the successful development of disaster reduction strategies and therefore good governance.

Latin American disaster managers began using the Internet as a communication tool in the mid-1990s to bridge the geographical divide that exists in the region and to share good practice and learn lessons before the 'next' disaster. The term community is often used in Internet circles to refer to people who share similar interests, concerns or challenges. This was the idea behind the creation of the first primarily Spanish-speaking listserv, which was used not only for general discussion of disaster issues but also for peer review of technical documents, and to circulate success stories and solutions to problems common throughout the region. These first listservs and discussion groups allowed disaster managers to 'talk' to each other when face-to-face communication was not possible.

Despite the fact that in non-disaster situations people generally have more time to pursue an indepth discussion, only a fraction of disaster managers, NGOs, health experts and others working to reduce Latin America's vulnerability to disasters actually make use of this tool. Perhaps more would become involved if discussions centered on specific topics of concern – transparency in the humanitarian supply management process or an

educational campaign on what makes a good donor, for instance. The organisation of such a targeted discussion would make an excellent pilot project and could include the participation of NGOs, universities, civil society and the health sector.

The Regional Disaster Information Centre

In Latin America, the Regional Disaster Information Centre (CRID) in Costa Rica has been a major catalyst in this transformation in the use of the Internet. The CRID is a multiagency center (www.disaster.info.desastres.net/crid) that exists to get information into the hands of users. It offers online access to a database of 12,000 published and unpublished articles, books, after-action reports and other reference documents, the majority written by Latin Americans and Caribbeans about their region. Disaster managers, students, researchers or anyone else can peruse the database from anywhere in the world. Unfortunately, the full text of most of the material is not available – a wasted opportunity that could easily be corrected if funding was made available to convert the material to digital format; currently, users must request hard copies of documents which are sent at no cost to them but at

a significant cost to CRID in terms of handling and shipping.

Conclusion

Slowly, barriers surrounding access to and control of information are breaking down, and the Internet is helping to bring about this change. It used to be that power was gained by holding on to or controlling information. This is no longer the case. Thanks to the proliferation of online as well as traditional sources information now abounds, and consumers in Latin America can turn to a wide variety of sources. Power now rests in the hands of those who produce and disseminate information, and of those who recognise that democratising access to information will lead to good governance and transparency in all areas, particularly in disaster management. We cannot afford to ignore the irreversible impact of the Internet on how we produce and disseminate information. Nor can we afford not to make it a pivotal part of our disaster preparedness, mitigation and information strategies.

For more information on PAHO see the end of the previous article, *Stop Propagating Disaster Myths*, on page 8.

Does Voice Matter? Using Information to Make Relief Accountable in Gujarat

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The Power of Information

Information is power. Information in the hands of the powerless – in this case the victims of natural disasters – enables them to regain some power over their lives in the wake of a disaster. Questions such as who produces this information, how it is stored and managed, how it flows, and who uses it for what purpose are crucial.

The concept of 'information is power' is not new. For example, Mahatma Gandhi promoted *Navajivan* and *Young India* publications to play an empowering role during the freedom movement in India; similarly, *Crosslines*, an independent newsletter published by Crosslines Communications Ltd in association with the International Centre for Humanitarian Reporting (ICHR), exists to promote standards in disaster-related news reporting worldwide; finally ALERTNET of Reuters aims

to empower the victims of natural disasters and emergencies by providing timely and useful information to humanitarian aid agencies and individuals working with vulnerable communities worldwide. All three examples turned information into a powerful voice.

Following is a brief account of the use of information to make relief to the victims of the June 1998 cyclone in the coastal Gujarat, India, more accountable.

The Question of 'Truth'

The cyclone which hit Gujarat in 1998 killed between 3,000 (government estimates) and 10,000 (NGO estimates) people and caused an estimated loss of Rs.3000 crores (a 'crore' is 10,000,000 rupees). This does not

include costs associated with loss of livelihoods. In the aftermath of the disaster, NGOs in Gujarat became impatient with the type and accuracy of available news as this was mainly partisan, covered only partial facts, and focussed on the dramatic side of the cyclone: who died, how many died, and who should be blamed. It was not interested in the loss of livelihoods, effective local mitigation efforts, or undramatic recovery and rescue efforts. PCCRR members (the People's Coalition for Cyclone Relief and Rehabilitation; see below) on the other hand, believed that the media should assist in providing early warning of upcoming emergencies, information on accurate locations, estimated losses, as well as giving a voice to the suffering. Members also believed that the media should influence public policy in favour of adequate and effective relief, guide rehabilitation efforts, and ensure that specific events are not lost in public memory.

In addition, the Disaster Mitigation Institute (DMI; a community-based action planning and public policy influencing agency) was dissatisfied with the quality and top-down, charity-oriented approach of relief. Some international NGOs did not share information. As a result they ended up competing for relief resources, and there was little cooperation and coordination.

It was in response to this difficult situation that the Oxfam (India) Trust was asked to share its experience of running a media centre after the Latur earthquake in Maharashtra state, western India on 30 September 1993. It explained how the victims had a right to speak out about relief provided by the government and by voluntary agencies. Additionally, CHARKHA, a development news service which features positive development stories and provides training in writing and editing field stories for field workers, provided an example of how an indigenous organisation could provide the poor and marginalised with a voice in the decision-making process.

Combating Bias

In this context DMI decided to launch a newsletter for PCRR (at the time the Institute was part of PCCRR) an informal coordinating and advocacy group set up in the aftermath of the cyclone that consisted of 40 individuals and organisations who were responding to the disaster. PCCRR set up working groups to tackle various issues related to the disaster, one of which focused on the media. The newsletter was published by DMI under the auspices of this group.

The newsletter was called 'Vavazodu', meaning 'cyclone' in Gujarati language. DMI's past activities of publishing local experience and narratives of disaster victims in the form of books, booklets and information sheets meant it was well-placed to coordinate this initiative. An additional impetus was created by media analysis which considered published photos in the two leading English newspapers over a 10 day period in June 1998. The analysis showed that media focus was on the loss of government property and corporate installations rather than on the loss of

property of the poor. Only five out of 76 photos showed 'victims'. In addition, all the photos were of urban locations despite the fact that authorities reported that 2,938 villages were affected by the cyclone.

'Vavazodu' was published fortnightly. Funded by the Oxfam (India) Trust, it was a broadsheet of four pages. PCCRR members, local disaster-victims, the DMI team, and editorial staff provided the news and feature stories. The readership included disaster-victims, NGOs, CBO active in relief, and government organisations. Circulation was around 1000 and subscription was free. A total of 12 issues were published over six months after the cyclone.

Objectives of the Newsletter

The main objective of the newsletter was to share local news and information that was either not covered or bypassed by mainstream government and corporate media publications in an effort to make relief more accountable. It gave victims a voice by publishing firsthand accounts of conditions, aspirations, and struggles of the survivors of the cyclone, and fed information from, by, and about those directly affected into the public domain. It therefore became a powerful tool in promoting accountability in the light of bias in the mainstream media, accountability of the government to the people and NGOs, the NGOs to each other, and of the NGOs to the people. Though the effort was small its implications were everlasting.

The newsletter also reported the activities and outcomes of the various PCCRR working groups, announced meeting dates and agendas, and reported minutes. In this way it was able to enhance coordination between PCCRR members. It became a powerful and useful tool for the PCCRR, enabling it to link its other activities of providing relief to the victims of cyclone through its 40 members in the whole of Gujarat. By organising it turned information into voice.

Lessons Learned

An activist journalist and a local CBO leader were asked to review the performance of the newsletter. This review was planning oriented and covered the 12 issues as products, as well as the process of their publication. The team interviewed PCCRR-member NGOs and victims who received or contributed to the newsletter.

Based on the review, the newsletter was broadened to cover any disaster and relaunched with the title 'Afat Nivaran', meaning disaster risk reduction. Since its re-launch it has covered a local drought, the cyclone in Orissa, quality standards in relief, issues concerning the psychosocial impact of relief, and the use of the Sphere standards. The readership has expanded to 1200 and a Hindi language version for other states of India will be produced for the first time in March 2000.

Through the process of publishing these newsletters DMI has found that, while the field of development journalism

is slowly becoming recognised, there is a need to build capacity in local media to develop disaster journalism; currently disaster and emergency journalism is restricted to the international media. In addition, when time and effort is invested in articulating 'voice' it has been found that victims do speak up. Without articulating this voice and presenting it honestly, impact is limited. It is time that the voice of survivors is recognised as an effective way of making relief accountable.

It was also apparent that NGOs have competing claims in terms of representation of the voice of survivors. In addition they often keep silent, or communicate only part of a full story. Thus the voice gets managed and mediated. While such mediation is mostly unavoidable, it can be counterbalanced with another version of voice. This means that, for instance, the publisher and editorial team of a 'grassroots' newsletter must access many versions of survivor voice.

Finally, it became clear that information can bring about accountability when survivors have access, as well as the opportunity, to use it. Also, the source that brings out or legitimises survivor information or voice matters. Credibility of the source is important for authenticity of information.

Conclusion

Does voice matter? Yes, but to provide access to and space for voice is not enough. Voice and participation do not change the lives of victims. Voice needs to be translated into the access of opportunities; such access is mediated by institutions. Voice must therefore be incorporated into local, regional and national decision-making bodies and interpreted by sympathetic institutions. Voice that is not heard for a long time gets lost or comes out as a shout.

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East Timor: Humanitarianism Displaced?

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The people of East Timor take a long view on history. Outsiders observing recent events in the eastern part of the island despair at the shattering destruction wrought in just two weeks in September 1999 by retreating militia and Indonesian soldiers. But for the East Timorese, the unleashing of bitter revenge and recrimination following the population's decision, in a UN-backed referendum, to sever ties with Jakarta, marked the end of 400 years of colonial history and the beginning of a new era. It was an appropriate end to four centuries of Portuguese rule, and 23 years of opposition to the Indonesian military occupation marked by economic exploitation, forced relocation and famine.

Sadly, however, the image of a new dawn is too simplistic. The people of East Timor will be confronted with the contortions of its history for decades to come and the island remains divided both geographically and politically. The pro-Indonesian militias, responsible for much of the violence in East Timor, remain in West Timor in control of camps detaining some 140,000 people. With large economic interests in East Timor and powerful backers, the officially disbanded militias remain a potent, destabilising force on the island.

A New Colonialism?

Six months after the referendum for self-determination the possibility of nationhood for the people of East Timor remains remote. Its political elite talk about the 'new colonialism' of the UN, its humanitarian agencies, the INGOs, and the governments of Australia, Portugal, America and Japan competing to rebuild the country and secure influence in a dangerously unstable region. The UN Transitional Administration will remain in charge of East Timor for two or three more years. The Campaign for National Resistance in East Timor (CNRT) may yet provide the foundation for a first government, but demilitarisation and democratisation will not be easy.

The international response to East Timor remains in the emergency phase. UN Security Council Resolution 1264 of 15 September 1999 tasked the mainly Australian International Force in East Timor (INTERFET) with aiding the return of the UN to Dili, restoring peace and security, and facilitating humanitarian assistance. The UN presence is now firmly established. However, the remaining tasks continue to preoccupy the multinational force which replaced INTERFET in late February/early March.

Relations between the CNRT leadership and INTERFET/UNTAET (the UN Transnational Authority for East Timor) have been smooth compared to the Timorese leaderships' relations with the 80 or so NGOs and other humanitarian agencies active in East Timor. Widespread friction surfaces time and again over the obvious disparities in conditions enjoyed by international humanitarian staff when contrasted with the conditions endured by the majority of East Timorese. Specifically, high salaries, accommodation in hotels, large 4-wheel drives, recruiting of Indonesian labour, and the perceived competition for the poor as clients provide issues of conflict. More generally, there is a deep frustration with the inability to reach the farthest reaches of the small country despite the huge amounts of food, medical and other supplies stockpiled in Dili, the capital, and in Darwin, Australia.

Humanitarian Actions Sidelined

The conditions which resulted in a situation in which the CNRT leadership, and popular opinion, were prepared to trust the multinational military force, may be explained by

developments in the first weeks of the humanitarian operation. These developments served to privilege the status of the military role and the political response to the crisis, while marginalising the humanitarian.

The first six months of the East Timor operation was driven unequivocally by the military and the politicians. When General Cosgrove, the Australian Commander of INTERFET, was asked about the arrangements for cooperation between the military and the humanitarian agencies in his first meeting with the UN's Humanitarian Coordinator, Ross Mountain (20 September 1999, he replied that 'it was necessary for the humanitarian side to realise that military resources could only be *diverted* to humanitarian tasks as and when the core tasks [the restoration of security and the reinstatement of the UN] allowed.'

Naturally this statement of policy concerned Mountain. First, the UN diplomats who drafted Resolution 1264 did not intend that the three tasks were in anyway sequential: this was Cosgrove's interpretation. Second, in their meeting Mountain set out his vision of an integrated and unified approach to military/humanitarian operations in which:

- i. military assets would be used to support the humanitarian operation, and not be diverted for that purpose;
- ii. all activities would be coordinated, particularly in relation to air movements to ensure that humanitarian delivery would not be impeded unnecessarily;
- iii. the military and the humanitarian agencies would share information for the purposes of planning; and
- iv. would actively work together on reconnaissance.

Cosgrove's vision was somewhat different. From this point on, it was clear that UN OCHA humanitarian agencies on one side, and INTERFET on the other would have to reach a compromise, though over time their positions have edged closer.

A Security Driven Agenda

Cosgrove's security-driven rather than humanitarian-driven interpretation of INTERFET's role in East Timor can be explained. The situation in the territory, three weeks after the referendum, was complex, sensitive and dangerous. On deployment, INTERFET could not assume authority in Dili because the Jakarta government, backed by a large contingent of troops (the TNI, the national army of Indonesia) and

Agencies were enraged when seats on the first military flights into Dili were reserved for the media, and aid workers were left on the tarmac.

police, remained in legal control as East Timor was still a part of Indonesia. An arguably understaffed INTERFET was required to consult with the TNI command before undertaking any action. The withdrawal of the TNI from the territory required careful negotiations and hampered the delivery of aid. The security situation remained dangerous. Thousands of pro-Jakarta militia, most likely recruited and trained in West Timor, were active in Dili and beyond, and there was the unknown danger of unexploded ordnance. The assembled force (from a number of nations) needed time to establish joint operating procedures and put in place command and control structures. Moreover, the Australian government, concerned about its rapidly deteriorating relations with Jakarta, and with considerable political capital invested in INTERFET, was determined on a gradualist approach to working with, rather than against, the Indonesian government.

While understandable in geo-political and security terms, the approach adopted by the Australian government and INTERFET had negative humanitarian consequences.

The forced removal of people from East Timor to West Timor and elsewhere in Indonesia continued after INTERFET's deployment. In sight of INTERFET troops, the TNI were clearly orchestrating deportations and looting. Unable to

move beyond Dili, the destruction of towns and villages, particularly in the east of the territory, continued without action being taken by INTERFET. NGOs and other aid workers believed that even after the withdrawal of the TNI, INTERFET was slow to secure the roads, port and airports to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid. Agencies were enraged when seats on the first military flights into Dili were reserved for the media, and aid workers were left on the tarmac. Once in the country, agency staff were critical of the military's reluctance to escort humanitarian workers to 'uncleared' areas where need was reportedly greatest.

Within the humanitarian community it was widely argued that the 'conservative', security-driven approach adopted by INTERFET had unnecessarily prolonged the suffering of the people of East Timor by delaying the delivery of assistance and leaving the displaced to fend for themselves in the mountains under deteriorating conditions. It was further argued that for political reasons the protection and return of refugees was given low priority. The investigation of suspected atrocity sites and interviews with witnesses to potential crimes were neglected; the first forensic teams only arrived 10 weeks after the crimes were thought to have been committed.

Throughout September and October in Darwin, OCHA assumed its coordination role and promoted the exchange of information between humanitarian agencies and initiated regular meetings to plan future operations, assess needs and arrange logistics. At first INTERFET remained apart from this coordination effort, but as pressure grew for a more integrated response, INTERFET started attending meetings – first to brief, and second to listen. Active exchanges between the military and humanitarian agencies only came later.

Inappropriate Action

The need to do something in the face of the unfolding human tragedy and in the absence of ground access led

to demands for the airdropping of food parcels to the hundreds of thousands of people thought to be hiding in the hills and forests. Conditions for airdrops were sub-optimal, visibility was poor, the ground was wooded, steep and rocky, intelligence about the whereabouts of refugees was incomplete, and it was not known if militia were present in targeted areas. The ICRC, with an aircraft in Darwin, rejected airdrops, but the Australian military, AusAID (the Australian government's overseas aid department) and WFP agreed to fund and organise a series of drops over a 12-day period beginning 16 September. A specially equipped aircraft was brought in from South Africa and permitted the use of so called 'snow drop' technology. (Snow dropping is a new technology for airdropping relief supplies designed to reduce the likelihood of losses on contact with the ground and to lead to more accurate delivery.)

News cameras, on board to film the drops, recorded a series of operations abandoned because of failed

equipment. Three days into the airdrops it became clear that the strategy was failing. WFP admitted that packages of rice hastily double wrapped in plastic had exploded on impact – possibly sabotaged by an Indonesian observer. At a press conference it was asked why rice was thought appropriate when refugees were daily on the move, had no time to cook and would not wish to draw attention to themselves by lighting fires. Elsewhere, most notably in Remexio, drops had completely missed their targets. Other reports said that the US supplied 350,000 special daily ration packs containing 200 grammes of high protein biscuits which had swelled in the stomachs of refugees forcing them out of hiding to seek water and medical attention. The final blow was front page news coverage of a six-year old boy struck by a food parcel. His injuries were so bad that it necessitated the amputation of a leg below the knee. Airdrops were ill judged and poorly timed, but had broad public appeal as any action appeared better than none.

The Current Situation

NGOs and humanitarian agencies in East Timor are now struggling to make up ground lost in the opening weeks of the East Timor operation, and to gain the trust and confidence of the people and the political leadership. Instructing aid workers in basic Tetum, gradually re-establishing local institutions and associations, and including the CNRT and the churches in operational planning and implementation is beginning to have an effect.

The response to the East Timor crisis, in line with the move to regional responsibility, was to a large extent forged in the context of Australian national interests. Concerns about regional security and stability were paramount and the humanitarian response was subject to these concerns. In such circumstances it is hard to see how a truly integrative political/military/humanitarian response to a crisis on this scale can be achieved. Inevitably it is the humanitarians who will be wrong-footed.

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RRN Network Paper 32 Humanitarian Mine Action: An Overview of the First Decade by Chris Horwood

There are two important messages concerning mine action that emerge from this paper. The first is that, after only a few years of mobilisation, campaigning and project initiation, there are now in place the forces and legislation to successfully address the threat of landmines in the coming years, rather than decades or centuries. The second is that mine action cannot be successful as an isolated, specialised sub-sector of the aid world, but must be seen as a legitimate component of emergency, rehabilitation and development assistance.

This paper is specifically written for the aid community outside of the mine action sector who may have had very little exposure to the details of mine action and its dramatic growth as a sector in the last 10 years. The paper is also designed to present certain definitions, premises and issues that have emerged within the mine action sector in recent years. It is hoped that it may also serve as a resource document as it disassembles and identifies the issues and main players in global mine action.

Apart from frequent articles which catalogue the horrors of landmines there has been an almost complete lack of documentation concerning the politics, operations and structures within the mine action sector available to those outside of what has become seen, to some, as a closed specialisation. This paper assumes readers are generally aware of the personal, social and economic devastation caused by landmines and other abandoned, but lethal, weapons. Still, the paper outlines the scope and nature of the landmine crisis and, by implication, promotes the importance of an integrated approach to mine action.

The momentum and achievements of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines have been unprecedented; so too the changes within the sector at the operational and institutional/structural level. Nevertheless, the start of a new century and a decade after the initiation of humanitarian mine action programmes seems a suitable point at which to review progress to date and open the issues facing the mine action sector to the wider aid community.

Full members of the RRN will automatically receive a copy of Network Paper 32 (ISBN 0 85003 483 3) which is available to non-members at a cost of £5.00 for individual copies (£3.50 for students) or £3.50 when over 10 copies are ordered.

News

Reform of the European Commission's External Cooperation

RRN Staff

Financial scandal in 1999 forced the executive leadership of the European Commission (EC) to step down. The new executive has initiated a programme of structural reforms, the outlines of which are now becoming clear. Particularly relevant for the RRN readership are the changes affecting the external relations of the EC. In essence these changes consist of a restructuring and reallocation of responsibilities between the Directorate-Generals (DG), with each having:

- its own commissioner;
- a stronger geographical dimension in the management structure;
- the designation of geographical desks as the core instrument for coordination;
- a stronger emphasis on the common foreign and security policy (CFSP).

The reforms are not yet complete, and further changes may take place in the future.

DG External Relations (Commissioner: Chris Patten): The external relations portfolio includes responsibility for the majority of countries, except ACP states and applicants for membership to the European Union (EU). This also includes analyses and policy planning, priorities and programming, information for the delegations, human rights and democratisation, and the common foreign and security policy. The External Relations Commissioner will coordinate the external relations activities of the EC, and be the interlocutor for the newly appointed 'High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy', Javier Solana (former NATO Secretary-General) at the level of the Council of Europe, not the Commission. Alberto Navarro, former director of ECHO, has become 'chef du cabinet' of Javier Solana. Patten is also responsible for the Common Service for External Relations which is responsible for the technical, legal and financial aspects of implementing the EC's aid and cooperation programmes.

Enlargement Service (Commissioner: Günter Verheugen): This now combines the previous Task Force for Accession Negotiations and responsibility for the

relations with applicant countries, notably Cyprus, Malta and Turkey and central and east European countries.

DG for Trade (Commissioner: Marcel Lamy): The creation of a trade portfolio gives stronger focus and higher profile to this thematic issue. The DG will be responsible for bilateral trade issues and for the formulation of trade policy, and will closely relate to the geographical desks in other external relations DGs.

DG for Development (Commissioner: Paul Nielson): This portfolio combines responsibility for development and humanitarian aid. Its geographical focus for development will be the ACP countries and the major development cooperation framework of the Lomé Convention. Its responsibilities also include some budget lines which are of benefit to all developing countries, such as NGO co-financing and non-emergency food aid. It will also have responsibility for relations with international organisations and for the integration of sectoral policies.

Coherence Policy

The geographical dimension of the new management structure is clear in the allocation of responsibilities between the DG for External Relations, Development, and Enlargement. As a consequence, the geographical desks become the primary locus for strategy development and internal coordination of EC policies. Trade and development, as thematic issues, will have to link with the appropriate geographical desks.

ECHO

For the time being ECHO continues as a separate entity though it has lost its separate commissioner and now comes under Paul Nielson who is also responsible for Development. Reportedly, there remains discussion about whether to retain a separate structure for humanitarian aid or integrate it (again) with the geographical desks. It is not inconceivable that, for some time, this will lead to administrative confusion and delays. Nielson is keen on a stricter interpretation of ECHO's mandate, and has already ordered ECHO's exit from Bosnia, Cambodia and Cuba. The question remains: is there an effective 'entry' strategy for the other aid instruments, with a timely 'handover'?

For more information see <www.europa.eu.int/comm> This carries a profile of the new commissioners and their DGs, plus the White Paper 'Reforming the Commission', March 2000.

EU Coherence in Trade, Conflict Management and Common Foreign and Security Policy

Henri-Bernard Solignac Lecomte, Kathleen van Hove, Jean Bossuyt, ECDPM, Maastricht, Holland

Since the conclusion of the Maastricht Treaty, coherence of EU action has become a fundamental principle which is expected to guide all European policies that affect developing countries. Coherence has become a priority for development-minded actors such as NGOs, who are scrutinising EU policies to make sure that development priorities are not compromised. The main political battlefield has been the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), where inconsistencies with development aims have been widely documented and exposed.

Other policy areas, by contrast, have attracted much less attention. A case in point is the coherence in EU policy between trade, conflict management, and the common foreign and security policy. In recent years, a growing number of poor developing countries and populations have become trapped in conflicts with major detrimental effects on development. The EU has sought to respond to these complex political emergencies with traditional means, (eg, humanitarian aid) and with new policies and instruments (eg, conflict prevention, political dialogue, etc). Yet recent experiences suggest that the EU's involvement in conflict management raises thorny issues of coherence that deserve to be charted, documented and debated.

Conflict Management

When looking at trade from the perspective of conflict management, it is striking to see how multi-dimensional the impact of trade can be. First, trade, economic liberalisation and related adjustment policies are generally assumed to be the driving forces behind development and key instruments to foster the integration of the ACP countries in the global economy. Yet what about the relationship between economic liberalisation and political stability? Are EU trade policies towards ACP countries consistent with the need to eradicate poverty or to prevent increased marginalisation and exclusion of people in ACP societies – factors that contribute heavily to conflict? Second, EU efforts to promote regional integration are seen as a potentially very important tool to prevent conflict (with the EU's own economic integration process serving as an example). Third, trade can help trigger conflicts, for instance when the benefits from trade in natural resources on the international markets (eg, oil in the Niger Delta) are siphoned off by central governments and foreign firms to the exclusion of local communities (see earlier articles on Angola and Sierra Leone). Fourth, the lucrative North-South trade in arms is a well known factor that fuels conflict in many countries and a major case of

inconsistent policy at EU level. Fifth, the (illegal) trade in natural resources (eg, diamonds in Angola and the DRC) generates new resources for fighting parties to buy weapons and maintain their armies. Moreover, since conflict allows for such rents to be captured by war-waging factions, it provides an incentive to maintain the conflict situation. Sixth, trade can be used to stop conflicts through the much debated instrument of trade sanctions.

Finally, one should not forget that conflict curbs 'normal' trade flows and leads to a drastic drop in official tax revenues on trade. This, in turn, may render any return to a situation of peace and reconstruction even more troublesome. Somalia, for instance, has suffered from the lack of international representation and recognised national institutions required to meet the increasing number of trade regulations. While livestock trade was gaining strength, the Saudi government once more instituted a ban on Somali livestock in February 1998 due to reports of Rift Valley fever in East Africa. It is estimated that this may have led to a cut of livestock earnings by half in 1998 (Visman, E (1998) 'Cooperation with Politically Fragile States: Lessons from EU Support to Somalia' ECDPM Working Paper No. 66, December).

What Chance a Coherent Policy?

Until now, these questions of coherence in EU policy between trade, conflict management and foreign and security policy towards ACP countries have not been addressed in a comprehensive and systematic way. If anything, trade and conflict management policies, strategies and instruments have tended to evolve along parallel tracks, resulting in fragmentation and limited cross-fertilisation. This partly explains why the current Lomé Convention – the EU's major cooperation agreement with 71 ACP countries involving aid and trade support – does not provide a very solid ground to deal with coherence issues between trade and conflict management. The policy and institutional framework to discuss these questions in a strategic and operational way is simply missing. By contrast, the EU cooperation agreement with the Mediterranean countries is much more couched and practised in the perspective of security and political stability, reflecting the stronger domestic policy agenda of the EU towards this region.

Can major changes be expected with the successor agreement to Lomé IV? After more than two years of debate and negotiations, both the ACP and the EU stand to renew and extend their partnership. A new cooperation framework has been agreed upon, which will most probably be signed in May 2000 in Fiji and receive the name of the host location (ie, the Convention of Suva). In many ways, the new agreement marks a break with the past. Important innovations have been introduced, aimed at adapting ACP-EU cooperation to the challenges of the new millennium.

At first sight the picture also looks more promising for future EU policies towards conflict countries. The new agreement, for instance, considers 'political dialogue' as a cornerstone of future ACP-EU cooperation. Conflict prevention management and resolution, as well as arms trade, are

explicitly mentioned as keys of political dialogue (draft article 8). A basic policy framework in favour of peace, conflict prevention and resolution is integrated in the new Convention (draft article 11), again with a clear reference to the need to better control the spread and illegal trade in (small) arms. Furthermore, conflict prevention is seen as a major objective of regional cooperation efforts (draft article 29.3)

On the whole the new Convention will represent a unique package of cooperation tools between the EU and ACP states, including political dialogue, trade cooperation and financial support. In theory, this package should, more than any other agreement, allow for a coherent use of these tools to reinforce one another, and in particular to:

- i. use trade development as a means to prevent conflicts;
- ii. regulate trade in arms;
- iii. mitigate potential tensions arising from ACP–EU trade in natural resources;
- iv. provide guidelines on whether and how to trade with ACP countries at war or in conflicts;
- v. ensure proper trade policies and support measures in post-conflict situations.

On second analysis, however, it remains to be seen how both parties will be able to put these principles into practice. There is no shortage of obstacles on the road to effective implementation, including the scarcity of reliable information and data on the complex relations between trade and conflict; the lack of adequate human and institutional capacities at different levels to properly integrate the trade and conflict dimension; the reduced political clout of ACP countries in the overall configuration of the EU's external relations, sometimes verging on the brink of indifference; the resistance likely to be offered by a wide variety of 'vested interests' who have much to gain from a continuation of situations of instability in parts of Africa; and the limited number and fragmentation of European civil society actors working on issues of coherence in EU policies between trade and conflict management, making it difficult to mobilise the necessary 'critical mass' to influence policy, etc.

Against this background a number of 'priority actions' emerge:

1. Start building a development coalition of a wide variety of actors and institutions which have a stake in a more comprehensive and coherent EU policy towards conflict countries (eg, multilateral and bilateral donor agencies, research institutions, NGOs, development-minded business organisations, local actors, etc).
2. Improve the information and statistical basis upon which to base future EU policies, as well as investigate in research linkages between trade, conflict management and foreign and security policies, both at the general conceptual level and on a country basis.
3. Promote an effective use of the new provisions for political dialogue contained in the new cooperation agreement between the EU and the ACP countries. On paper, political dialogue could provide the much needed

(decentralised) framework to discuss the root causes of conflict; to identify the different actors and responsibilities involved; and to work out a comprehensive strategy for conflict management, which fully integrates the trade dimensions. In practice, there is not much experience with using this tool. Furthermore, the internal crisis and reform processes now underway at the level of the Commission may hamper effective progress.

4. Undertake advocacy at national level. Most of the inconsistencies in EU policies towards developing countries are rooted in the narrow domestic interests of member states.

The EU Presidencies and Development Council provide a clear momentum for pushing the coherence debate forward, especially towards conflict countries. All this can only reinforce the need for bold, concerted and targeted action from the international civil society and research world.

ECDPM stands for the European Centre for Development Policy Management. It is a Maastricht-based foundation specialising in ACP–EU cooperation. Tel: (31) 43 350 2903 Fax: (31) 43 350 2902 Email: <info@ecdpm.org> Website: <www.oneworld.org/ecdpm>

Recent Developments in European Humanitarian Assistance

'EU Cooperation with Politically Fragile Countries with case studies from Angola, Liberia and Somalia'. (ECDPM Discussion Papers no. 2 (1998, Liberia) and no. 11 (1999, Angola), and Working Paper no. 66 (1998, Somalia).

RRN Staff

The European Commission (EC) aims to promote peace and structural stability, good governance and human rights, as well as sustainable development through its external relations, while also providing humanitarian assistance in times of crisis. The main framework for aid allocation by the EC has been the Lomé Agreement with ACP countries (the 'last' Lomé Agreement ran out on 29 February 2000). Current thinking for the new post-Lomé convention is that aid provision will be linked to performance criteria (yet to be determined) by the recipient, with a tendency towards greater aid selectivity in favour of 'good performers'. However this practise will be thrown into turmoil when it comes to 'politically fragile' countries and collapsed states, and so further punish impoverished and conflict-afflicted populations for consequent 'poor performance' as an aid recipient.

Creative alternatives are needed to the suspension of development aid and for the continued use of European Development Fund finance. These three case studies document three very different country experiences. In

Angola, the relationship between the EC and the government has been difficult. The EC felt that the government was not sufficiently transparent about the management of its national resources and sometimes failed to meet its contractual obligations. The government, on the other hand, found EC aid administration procedures inflexible, complex, and not adapted to the volatility of the Angolan situation. All in all the political dialogue between the EC, through its delegation, and the government, was weak. The study also highlights the negative effects of prolonged relief aid on local producers, as well as the risks of launching premature rehabilitation and development efforts.

The Liberian study reveals an almost totally different EC: the mode of operation during the civil war was highly flexible and reflected changing realities on the ground. This was made possible by the Liberian government's agreement to decentralise EC decision-making, which facilitated much closer interaction with local level authorities. Another contributing factor was the calibre of the EC delegation. This closely managed the design and implementation, mostly by commercial contractors, of EC programmes, and maintained close communications with a competent geographical desk in Brussels; no attempt was made to fit into multilateral coordination efforts where these were considered to be inappropriate or misguided. Even in the midst of crisis strategic rehabilitation-type activities were launched to support local coping efforts, and as a conscious risk-reduction strategy (rather than waiting for minimum conditions to be fulfilled the aid programme tried to support the creation of these conditions). Contrary to the situation in Angola, the EC delegation maintained a close political dialogue with all warring parties, a factor that may explain why its assets, unlike those of the other aid actors, were not looted in April 1996.

EC programming was also fairly decentralised in Somalia. It was also responsive to variations in different zones of the country. Rehabilitation and development-type aid was allocated to stabilised zones whereas crisis-insecure areas only benefited from humanitarian assistance. As in Liberia, the EC was closely involved in political dialogue, especially during the period of its Special Envoy to Somalia (1993–1997). Contrary to Liberia, however, it has also invested in multi-agency coordination through a leading role in the Somalia Aid Coordinating Body – albeit more at the level of policy coordination than that of operational coordination. Although there is no central government, resources of the European Development Fund continue to be allocated to Somalia – not in the least in recognition of the importance of Somali trade in supporting recovery. These experiences are extremely important in the light of the pursuit of policy coherence in the EC and the negotiations of a post-Lomé Convention, where the question of performance-based partnerships with politically fragile countries and collapsed states, and the question of partnerships with non-state actors, needs to be addressed in more detail.

The EC has also remained stuck on the theory of 'linking relief-rehabilitation-development'. The new Commissioner for Development is keen on a clearer 'exit strategy' for

ECHO. But the problem has rather been the lack of an 'entry strategy' for the other aid instruments. It is hoped that lessons from experiences such as these, and stronger country strategies emanating from effectively coordinating geographical desks, will make the disjunctions between the activities of ECHO and of the developmental desks a thing of the past.

For more information on ECDPM see previous article on page 22

Assessment and Future of Community Humanitarian Activities Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament

(Summary of 'Assessment and Future of Community Humanitarian Activities'/'Evaluation et Avenir des Activités Humanitaires de la Communauté' (1999) Brussels: European Commission)

RRN Staff

The EU's humanitarian assistance, mainly disbursed by the European Commission through ECHO, has been the subject of extensive evaluation. Independent consultants reviewed the work of ECHO between 1996 and 1998, while the EU's humanitarian assistance was also included in an evaluation of the Community's overall development assistance between 1991 and 1996.

Since its creation in 1992, ECHO has disbursed some 4bn Euro, of which some 1.8bn between 1996 and 1998. The allocations for this later period went to NGOs (56 per cent), the UN (25 per cent), other partners, especially the Red Cross movement (11 per cent) and direct to action by ECHO itself or disbursements to specialised agencies of member states (8 per cent). Geographically, 37 per cent went to ACP countries, 37.4 per cent to Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States (the Kosovo crisis being the largest single operation), and 25 per cent to the rest of Latin America, Asia, the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Recently the Commission reflected on the findings and recommendations of the evaluations, particularly that of ECHO (named above). The key points are:

- **The 'grey zone' between relief and development:** It is recognised that the Commission lacks flexible and rapid alternative instruments to pick up where ECHO leaves off. The Commission does not consider it feasible to have a new structure to deal with 'transitional' situations, while the evaluators do not favour a continuation of the strict 'emergency' interpretation of ECHO's mandate. Another option the consultants considered was a twin-track approach within ECHO itself, but the Commission only vaguely states that it will ensure that 'all services involved in development cooperation accord a priority to closing the transition gap

with humanitarian assistance'. Its view reveals inherent contradictions in its decision-making logic: ostensibly the argument is made that a more coherent overall strategy will provide the solution, but between the lines it is the lack of sustainability and the need for an exit strategy for ECHO at the earliest moment that appear as big concerns.

- **The mandate, mission and strategic thinking:** The Commission does not agree that ECHO's mandate should be spelled out more clearly. It believes that the current one offers a required flexibility and allows for change. It does, however, see value in the articulation of a clear mission statement, with objectives and clearly defined priorities for ECHO. The 'Global Plans' for a region, introduced by ECHO, are seen as a positive development, but there is no critical reflection on the fact that its six to 12 month time-span can hardly be considered as offering any 'planning horizon'.
- **General management, project-cycle management, performance indicators and results:** ECHO's internal organisation and management is identified as the 'single most frequently criticised' element. For example, between 1996 and 1998 the number of staff to manage 10m Euros increased from 1.3 to 2. Certainly problems with the level and quality of staffing have been pointed out before, but many of the problems result from rules and procedures that are Commission-wide and cannot be resolved at the level of ECHO. The Commission recognises that the administrative culture is not well adapted for rapid response to emergencies. Both evaluations stress the enormous and unnecessary efforts to control inputs to the neglect of results, of collecting lessons learned, of developing institutional memory and of avoiding repetition of past mistakes. Although ECHO is praised by the evaluators for its achievements in evaluation and audit, they note a fairly systematic absence of any use of performance indicators other than disbursement indicators. The Commission has agreed to introduce an adapted form of project-cycle management in response to these criticisms, to invest in staff training, and to promote a learning culture.
- **Partner relationship, stakeholders, and relationship to the field:** Although the reviewed Partnership Framework Agreement is seen as an improvement, there remains high dissatisfaction among partners with the relationship as it is conceptualised and practised. The evaluators recommend a review of the philosophy and practicalities of the agreement, and greater openness through a programme rather than a project-based approach.

The Commission has agreed to such review, in the first instance for the UN and the Red Cross, and to greater clarity about choice of partners and funding decisions. However, it points out that poor performance, lack of attention to results, and poor learning also need to be addressed by ECHO's partners whose performance will be more closely scrutinised. Over time a new administrative culture should enhance ECHO's performance and accountability. The Commission intends to measure stakeholder satisfaction and put the results in

the public domain. The primary stakeholders, however, are not the only partners; they are also those affected by humanitarian crises, as well as European citizens.

A related point of criticism is ECHO's centralised decision-making, notwithstanding the fact that it puts staff in the field – though admittedly of rather unequal quality. The Commission points at general recruitment constraints and the difficulty in devolving significant decision-making responsibilities to non-statutory staff. It also holds that decision-making is often more field-driven than may initially seem.

- **Coordination with member states and international influence:** The consultants advocate for greater coordination between ECHO and the EU member states, noting that this is a two-way process. Joint assessment and policy coordination are two among other possible measures.

ECHO is also noted to have little effective presence in the 'humanitarian capitals' such as Washington, London, Rome, Geneva and New York. How the Commission will pursue a stronger presence remains unclear: one perspective on the current absence is that it punches below its weight; another that it fails to monitor and identify best practices of other major humanitarian donors and actors. While the Commission quotes the consultants as stating that 'ECHO is currently financing the delivery of humanitarian assistance at least as well as any other organisation, and probably better and in a more cost-effective manner than any other comparable international organisation', it is unclear whether this praise extends beyond 'financing' or on what basis the evaluators would come to such a conclusion if other donors were not included in the scope of study.

- **Visibility:** The evaluators criticise ECHO's visibility as being pursued without clear focus and in ways that do not endear ECHO to many humanitarian actors. They suggest a shift to 'communication', with both a field dimension and one towards European citizens and their representatives.
- **Gender and protection:** These are two areas that are little prioritised or integrated in the Commission's humanitarian assistance.
- **Disaster preparedness:** ECHO's work on disaster preparedness is generally positively evaluated, but the new regional approach under the DIPECHO (Disasters Preparedness at ECHO) programme is considered to be seriously underfunded. By contrast there is very little attention to disaster preparedness elsewhere, in the Commission's research programmes or development assistance.
- **Conflict-prevention, peacebuilding and foreign policy:** The Commission recognises that humanitarian aid needs to maintain a distance from foreign policy, but also suggests that a debate be opened about the totality of instruments to intervene in crisis situations and the role of ECHO in that context.

Oil...and Water: Political and Humanitarian Intervention in the Serbian Energy Sector

Joanna Macrae, Humanitarian Policy Group, ODI, London, UK

'Principles of humanitarian aid have been turned on their head. Never before has politics had so much to say about humanitarian affairs'

Interview, diplomat, Belgrade, February 2000

The combined effects of three wars, economic transition and sanctions have caused massive political and economic upheaval in Serbia over the past decade, leaving an estimated two million people below the poverty line. Focussing on the energy sector, this article analyses how humanitarian responses to the country's multiple crises have been shaped by international politics, and how the boundaries between humanitarian and political action have become increasingly blurred.

Hot and Cold Wars: the problem of energy

Maintaining energy supplies is a necessity in any country, particularly one which is urban and industrialised, and where winters are long and cold. Serbia's energy needs are complex, as are the constraints to meeting them. The state-owned electricity grid provides the primary source of heat and light. Without electricity, other forms of fuel such as oil and gas, as well as water systems, don't work. Economic decline has reduced the ability of the state and of households to buy energy. EU and US sanctions have interrupted the flow of petrol and petroleum products into Serbia, while NATO bombing last year severely damaged the electricity infrastructure. The shortage of energy, particularly of oil and oil-related products, has distorted the market. The burgeoning parallel market in fuel and political manipulation of limited supplies mean that available resources are not used efficiently or equitably.

When is a Crisis a Disaster?: defining humanitarian need

Current EU/US sanctions prohibit petrol and related imports, and rehabilitation assistance into Serbia. They allow for humanitarian

exemptions, however. The key question therefore becomes: is the energy situation in Serbia sufficiently grave to constitute a humanitarian crisis? If so, deliveries of energy and related goods can be categorised as 'humanitarian', therefore qualifying for consideration for EU and US aid funding, and exemption from sanctions. If not, then assistance to the sector would violate the sanctions on two fronts: the provision of non-humanitarian aid, and the provision of energy. Predictably, there has been no simple answer.

In the late summer of 1999 two major studies were carried out on the energy sector, one by a group of governments¹ the other on behalf of the UN.² They concluded that a significant, potentially catastrophic, shortage of energy was likely to occur during the winter. These findings were endorsed by EU heads of mission in Belgrade in a report later that year. What followed from this analysis was that repairs to the electricity sector were an essentially humanitarian task, and it was a humanitarian imperative to reach international agreement on oil and gas imports into Serbia. Unsurprisingly, this reading of the situation was controversial. The Dutch, UK and US governments were among those that remained sceptical of the findings, arguing that although there may be energy need in the country it was not so extensive as to warrant easing the sanctions and the provision of large volumes of aid.

In the event outright disaster was averted by a combination of factors, including:

- an unusually mild winter;
- a large grant from the Chinese government enabling the FRY authorities to buy energy;
- sanctions being more 'leaky' than predicted;

- the resumption of gas supplies from Russia through Hungary;
- international interventions – which played a small but significant role.

In understanding these latter efforts there are two points worth emphasising. First, at the time of their design consensus existed that a crisis was likely. Any assessment of the effectiveness of these interventions should consider not only whether they succeeded in meeting actual need, but whether they could have mitigated the worst case scenario. Second, international actors pursued a twin-track approach to the energy sector: one political, the other humanitarian.

'Humanitarian' Energy: an overview of the response

The scope for humanitarian organisations in the energy sector was narrowed by a number of factors:

- Agencies had to secure funding for their work, which meant convincing donors that what they were doing was indeed 'humanitarian'.
- No donor government wanted to reinforce the existing regime, and it was not obvious how to input to the energy sector (particularly electricity), without working through national authorities.
- The studies had emphasised that primary responsibility for addressing the energy problem had to rest with the government. No single humanitarian agency could commit to the extensive repairs of a nationwide grid, nor to secure sufficient supplies of fuel to reach all households and social institutions. This meant targeting resources.

continued on page 27

- Conventional approaches to targeting are needs oriented. In the case of energy the most important fuel type – electricity – is the most difficult to target, with soldiers and schoolchildren benefiting alike.

Recognising these complexities OCHA embarked on a wide-ranging advocacy campaign that sought to identify the responsibilities and competency of different national and international actors in preventing disaster.

The political and technical factors outlined above, rather than need per se, shaped the humanitarian response. UNHCR, ECHO and UNICEF all focussed on providing oil and coal which, unlike electricity, could be targeted at particular institutions and could be delivered and monitored by international organisations. On the issue of scale, UNHCR and UNICEF used their mandates to delineate the extent of their programmes and to target their intervention at special groups. ECHO also sought to narrow the scope of its responsibility, targeting orphanages and mental hospitals, for example.

A qualitatively different humanitarian approach was taken by the Swiss government. It accepted the argument put forward by OCHA that the electricity sector was a priority, and its repair a humanitarian task. It circumvented the problem of direct engagement with the FRY authorities by seconding staff and delivering spare parts through the UN.

If predictions regarding the failure of the electricity sector and major shortages of gas and oil had been realised the ability of humanitarian actors to intervene quickly and effectively would have been limited. Political factors, together with the organisation of the humanitarian system itself, limited interventions to small-scale, highly targeted interventions which would have been virtually impossible to scale up. In the absence of any shift in sanctions policy, humanitarian room for manoeuvre would have been very limited.

As far as donor governments are concerned it was by luck, rather than

judgement, that humanitarian assistance could be portrayed as a palliative to the effects of the bombing and sanctions. If the weather had been different, and the FRY government had not made new and wealthy friends and invested these gains in the energy sector, then the scenario would have been very different. The limitations of humanitarian aid interventions, anticipated by OCHA, would have been revealed.

‘Political’ Energy

‘Energy for Democracy’ (EfD) was a project run by the EU. It funded deliveries of heating oil, targeting municipalities run by opposition parties. The rationale was that, by providing oil, the political standing of opposition parties would be enhanced and the benefits of alliances with western Europe demonstrated to the population.

Initially ECHO was approached to fund and implement the project. However, ECHO advocated successfully against use of its funds arguing that it ran counter to the regulation governing the use of ECHO funds since it violated principles of impartiality and neutrality. It further argued that participating in EfD might threaten the rest of its programme in Serbia, which would be politically counterproductive for the EU as well as unfortunate for existing beneficiaries. In the end an alternative source of funds was found from within the Commission.

European civil servants sought to maintain a distinction between the political and humanitarian tracks. For example, rather than relying on the existing humanitarian exemption from the sanctions regime a new amendment was drafted exempting EfD oil.³ Unlike humanitarian aid, EfD oil inputs were to be treated as commercial transactions, with tax payable on the shipments.

In practice, the distinction between the EfD as a political project as opposed to a politically conditional humanitarian project was not sustained. The FRY authorities held

up the first deliveries at the border with Macedonia for three weeks in November 1999. The EU reacted to these hold-ups by emphasising the humanitarian cost of these delays. An EC press release stated that ‘The fuel is desperately needed in Nis and Pirot...around a third of the city, including schools, kindergartens and hospitals [are] without heating.’⁴ The impression that EfD was primarily a humanitarian project was reinforced by key European and American politicians. For example, in the UK a Foreign Office minister stated that EfD ‘...is a humanitarian effort, but we are able to deliver it because of the added opportunity of a political bonus’.⁵

Problematic about such statements is that the technical distinction between political and humanitarian action is quickly lost. The political character of EfD is downplayed as its objective of influencing public opinion (domestically and in Serbia), and so supporting the democratic overthrow of the Milosevic regime, becomes hidden behind the humanitarian card. In so doing the value of humanitarian currency is diminished. The impression is given that it is legitimate for the West to selectively provide assistance to those in need on political grounds, although it is not legitimate for the Serb authorities to do so. Arguably, deploying such tactics diminishes the legitimacy not only of international humanitarian action but also that of EfD’s supporters. In undermining the spirit of humanitarianism, with its emphasis on impartiality and neutrality, the distinction between those upholding human rights and those abusing them becomes more difficult to maintain.

In their search for tools to promote political change diplomats have repackaged humanitarian assistance. While the costs to the values of humanitarianism are clear, the political benefits of such tactics are not. The opposition groups that EfD was designed to support have been disappointed by its implementation. EfD has not served to legitimise and empower them, since it was implemented by international firms and not through local political institutions. Its limited coverage has

meant that its impact has been marginal. Its selectivity is seen by some to have compromised its legitimacy and to have been politically counterproductive.

Finally, EfD avoids the big political question surrounding the energy sector. Designed to compensate for the effects of the bombing and sanctions, its tiny scale has meant that it has made a limited impact on the energy market. The parallel economy that has grown up around fuel (and other goods) in Serbia is sustaining a complex set of alliances between the state, criminal groups and paramilitaries; these networks intermittently expand to include parts of the opposition. The criminalisation of key aspects of political life in Serbia, and the violence which invariably attends it, represent a significant threat to the emergence of liberal democracy in that country. It

is a threat that remains unacknowledged, and certainly unaddressed by the relatively simple tactics of EfD.

The story of EfD suggests that humanitarian-type instruments have proven ineffective in securing significant political change. Like oil and water, humanitarian and political action are equally essential to life. They are equally difficult to mix, however. In blurring the boundaries, the values and effectiveness of both are diminished.

Notes

- 1 Called FOCUS, this group included Switzerland, Greece, Russia and Austria. 'FOCUS Assessment Mission 2 to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Heating, 6–15 August: Executive Summary and Final Report' Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Berne.

- 2 OCHA (1999) Electricity and Heating in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: Winter 1999–2000, September 20, OCHA, Belgrade.
- 3 Commission of the European Communities (1999) 'Proposal for a Council Regulation amending Regulation (EC) NO 2111/1999 prohibiting the sale and supply of petroleum and certain petroleum products to certain parts of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia', 3 November 1999, Brussels.
- 4 Commission of the European Community (1999) 'External Relations Commissioner Chris Patten regrets further delays to delivery of 'Energy for Democracy' heating oil', 29 November 1999, Brussels, <www.europa.eu.int/rapid/sta>
- 5 Cited in: International Development Committee (1999) 'Minutes of Evidence taken before International Development Committee, 25 November 1999, Mr P Hain, Ms R Marsden and Mr T Faint', House of Commons, London.

Canada's Human Security Agenda

Jennifer Moher, Peacebuilding and Human Security Division, Department of Foreign Affairs & International Trade, Canadian Government

For over two years now Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade together with foreign minister Lloyd Axworthy have been promoting human security as a central theme of Canadian foreign policy. This approach signals a shift in perspective which takes people, rather than states or territory, as a principal point of reference in international affairs. The agenda seeks to address a range of threats – particularly those which stem from violent conflict – to the safety and security of individuals. It aims to complement rather than replace existing approaches to protecting national security and to promoting international development.

The human security approach is a response to the profound changes that have occurred in the global environment in recent years. Armed conflict has taken on a different shape – predominantly intra-state in nature, and often characterised by religious or ethnic discord. Disturbingly, civilians now constitute up to 80 per cent of the victims of such conflicts, and are increasingly the deliberate target of combatants on all sides. This is also true for those trying to provide protection and assistance, as UN and humanitarian personnel find themselves increasingly under threat.

A second trend relates to intensifying global interdependence, and the emergence of a range of

challenges which are as transnational in their origins as in their effects, and which often have direct and serious implications for people's safety. For all its promise globalisation has also shown a dark underside, illustrated by such phenomena as terrorism, illicit drugs, crime and corruption, and trafficking in women and children. Together, these trends have prompted more comprehensive approaches which acknowledge the negative implications that increasingly porous borders may have – not just for the security of states, but also more directly for people.

Canada's promotion of the human security agenda is a response to these new global realities. In recent years, Canada has played a leading role on several important human security initiatives including the achievement in 1997 of a binding international convention banning anti-personnel landmines, and efforts since the adoption of the Rome Treaty in 1998 to establish an International Criminal Court to hold accountable those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

Canada is also advancing work in other key areas including building capacity for conflict prevention and resolution, the promotion and protection of human rights, tackling international crime, corruption and drug trafficking, halting the proliferation of small arms, and promoting the development of effective and humanitarian sanctions regimes. In addition, Canada is focusing on the disturbing phenomenon of war-affected children and are working with the international community to set priorities and establish concrete mechanisms which will protect the rights and welfare of these children. To this end, Canada will co-sponsor with Ghana a West African conference

on this subject in April 2000, and will host an international conference in Ottawa in September.

Partnerships and multilateral cooperation are at the heart of Canada's work on human security. Most prominent is Canada's work on the UN Security Council to advance the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Launched last February as the theme for Canada's first presidency of the Council, the initiative has since resulted in a resolution formalising Security Council responsibility for the issue, as well as the publication by the Secretary General of a report outlining 40 specific recommendations aimed at enhancing the legal and physical protection of civilians in situations of conflict. Canada, along with other Council members, has also sought to mainstream these concerns in daily Council deliberations – whether on thematic or geographic matters, or in decisions on peacekeeping mandates or sanctions regimes. Canada will profile this theme for the remainder of its Council term, including during its next presidency in April.

Also at the UN, Canada is chair of the Angola Sanctions Committee, which is expected to table the recommendations of its Expert Panel later this spring. The Committee's work draws attention to an issue of increasing interest to Canada under the human security agenda – the economic factors and strategies which underpin conflict, and the policy options and tools available to influence these in support of peace.

Canada is also working in special partnership with a group of like-minded countries as part of the Human Security

Network. This will give added profile and support to the agenda. The Network grew out of Canada's close bilateral partnership with Norway, and now includes over 12 countries. The next meeting of the Network will be hosted by Switzerland in May 2000, and will address, among other issues, the question of how to engage various non-state actors – including NGOs, the private sector, and armed opposition groups – on aspects of the human security agenda.

Human security is a work-in-progress. Canada's efforts in partnership with concerned others have launched, if not resolved, important debates about the nature of the global security environment, about the relationship and balance between state sovereignty and the fundamental right of individuals to their own safety, and about the responsibilities, obligations and capacities of the international community and its key institutions to address emerging threats to the security of people. Canada remains committed both to the further intellectual and practical development of the agenda, as a keystone of its foreign policy.

Implementation of a human security-centred foreign policy is not as easy in practice as in principle. Recently there have been debates in the Canadian press which reflect this difficulty. These debates have considered issues such as the high levels of human rights abuses in Kosovo under the nose of the UN (Canada is putting \$100m into reconstruction in the Balkans, much of it into Kosovo). Also, Canada's use of the 'Claymore mine' in East Timor, which is seen by anti-personnel landmine activists to violate the spirit of the Ottawa Convention.

For more information on these and other debates see the website of The North-South Institute on <www.nsi-ins.ca/ensi/news>

The Humanitarian Practice Network (Formerly the Relief and Rehabilitation Network)

Throughout 1999, the RRN devoted significant effort to monitoring and review of its work. The most important of these efforts was the RRN External Review, an independent review by three consultants based in Europe, North America and East Africa. The review confirmed that the RRN (HPN) is widely valued for its objectivity, analysis and accessibility. There are clear indications that its publications are increasingly used by practitioners, and the Network compares very favourably with other professional information services/publications.

As a result of the Review, and as the RRN is about to end its second project period, RRN staff, colleagues in HPG, and RRN Advisory Group members have been discussing the way forward for the Network. A number of important decisions have been made in accordance with the Review recommendations.

- ◆ **Change of name:** As indicated in the opening Editorial, the Relief and Rehabilitation Network will change its name to the **Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN)** as of 1 April 2000. This is more in line with the actual scope and focus of the Network, which produces information, analysis, debate and practical resources not only on 'relief' and 'rehabilitation', but on wider aspects of conflict management, disaster prevention, humanitarian policy initiatives, protection, etc. The new website address will be <www.odihpn.org.uk>
- ◆ **Interactive work:** The core business of the HPN will remain publishing. However, the RRN Review clearly indicated that people pick up ideas and learn more in interactive events. Therefore the HPN will maintain a small capacity to co-sponsor or organise a few interactive events.
- ◆ **Enhancing access:** While the demand for hard copy remains, it is increasingly important for publications to be immediately accessible in electronic format on the web. Therefore, as of June/July 2000 all publications will be available for free from the HPN website.
- ◆ **Specialist gateway and resource site:** The value of the HPN website will be enhanced by increasing its links with other relevant websites, strengthening the thematic search function, and making it more user-friendly to turn it into one of the central websites for the humanitarian practitioner.

Humanitarianism: Imperatives and Principles in Southern Sudan

1. An Aid Agency Perspective

The events that have unfolded in southern Sudan in recent weeks represent some of the increasingly stark and difficult choices faced by humanitarian agencies.

In January, all NGOs working in southern Sudan under the umbrella of Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) received a letter in which the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, or SPLM, required them to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with its humanitarian arm, the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association (SRRA). The deadline for doing so was the end of February 2000; if agencies didn't sign they would have to leave the SPLM-controlled areas in the south.

This letter followed months of negotiations between the SRRA, NGOs and key donors over the principle and text of an MoU that would govern NGO operations and outline the relationship between NGOs and the SRRA. Most agencies had indicated that they would be prepared to sign some form of agreement as long as the text was appropriate. A list of 19 points requiring change in the August 1999 MoU text was submitted to the SRRA by NGOs in late 1999. The debate was messy and drawn-out. Most telling was a public spat over the MoU between US government and EU officials, while the UN sat silently on the sidelines until close to the end. There was good reason for the SRRA to become impatient.

What polarised the issue further was the announcement in late 1999 of US government authorisation to provide humanitarian assistance directly to Sudanese rebel groups (in the end this decision was not implemented). Several NGOs openly criticised this because of the extremely problematic precedent for donor policy that it set, rather than any criticism of the SPLM per se. This move by the US arguably made the situation worse and increased the likelihood of a subsequent impasse. NGO criticism of direct US assistance infuriated the SPLM.

Shortly thereafter the SRRA sent the now famous letter informing NGOs to sign the August 1999 MoU text without any of the changes they had requested, or leave SPLM-controlled areas. A flurry of diplomatic activity ensued, with NGOs and donors lobbying the SRRA to lift the 1 March ultimatum and reopen negotiations. Finally the donors and UN got it together somewhat. In late February, a joint demarche of UN envoy Tom Vraalson, US envoy Harry Johnson, and an EU representative came to Nairobi to lobby John Garang and the SPLM. The SPLM was unmoved. The NGO forum tried to offer the SRRA a way out of the impasse, but again was rebuffed. At the eleventh hour, even a phonecall from US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, to John Garang failed to change the mind of the SPLM.

To Sign or Not To Sign?

By this time, individual NGOs had begun to decide whether or not they would sign the MoU. About 10 days before the deadline the SRRA informed those NGOs who intended not to sign to move their personnel out the field – it could not guarantee the safety of NGOs who did not sign and who remained in the field after the deadline. Consequently, 11 international NGOs, representing around 75 per cent of OLS NGO activities, evacuated their staff and some of their assets. Sixteen NGOs active in OLS chose to sign the agreement. Some 22 NGOs who do not operate within the OLS umbrella had signed an earlier agreement (the same as this one) with the SRRA, as had eight indigenous NGOs. Concerns about the MoU were shared by all NGOs in the OLS consortium, including those who signed. This was communicated to the SRRA on 23 February 2000 in a joint statement that 'the decision to sign or not sign is made under duress, with grave implications for continuing humanitarian support to the people of south Sudan.'

None of the NGOs had any desire to have to leave southern Sudan, and all continue to express a desire to reopen negotiations and find an acceptable solution with the SRRA. In terms of whether to sign or not, agencies had to weigh compelling arguments on either side of the dilemma.

Key Arguments For

- The humanitarian imperative: people in southern Sudan need humanitarian assistance and NGOs can't abandon their obligations to meet these needs.
- NGOs sign agreements like this with authorities around the world, including with some unsavoury regimes. There is no difference between signing this MoU and other agreements NGOs have signed in other places.
- The human rights community is moving in the direction of trying to hold the more 'legitimate' rebel groups (such as the SPLM) to human rights standards; the flip-side of this coin is that, in order to do this, such groups must be conferred reasonable legitimacy.

Key Arguments Against

- There are some important issues of humanitarian principle that are not met by the MoU text on offer, and if NGOs sign this text these principles could be undermined. Concerns about the text of the MoU included the requirement to work 'in accordance with SRRA objectives' rather than based solely on humanitarian principles; the right of the Sudanese to receive aid in an impartial manner; the ability to target aid according to the greatest need; and clauses that could reduce individual NGOs' ability to guarantee the safety of their staff.
- Regarding the human rights case mentioned above, it is argued that any MoU document should reasonably reflect both sides of the human rights coin (legitimacy and upholding human rights standards). This is essentially what the NGOs had been fighting for as they negotiated for an acceptable MoU.
- It was felt by some agencies that there were strong reasons to believe that field staff would be under untenable levels of coercion and intimidation if the MoU was signed under the prevailing conditions, where the SRRA was attempting to exert increased levels of control over NGOs and their work.
- The SRRA's unwillingness to negotiate and its use of an ultimatum did not represent the norms of the mutually respectful relations that NGOs normally have with authorities around the world. The SRRA used an ultimatum knowing that many organisations are responsible for feeding hundreds of thousands of people each day. The ultimatum thus put humanitarian organisations under extreme duress as they tried to balance the immediate needs of Sudan's hungry against the potentially even more destructive cost of allowing aid to be politicised and manipulated.
- An NGO cave-in would be seen, with some justification, as yet another example of the NGO community's inability to uphold principles over self-protection of their programmes, jobs, and turf. Another example of how we are all more worried about the survival of programmes, rather than considerations of principle.

In the end, each agency had to apply its own organisational values and priorities to making its decision and, given the diversity of organisations represented, it is perhaps unsurprising that agencies fell on both sides of the divide in weighing the arguments.

What Now?

There has been almost unanimous disapproval of the SRRA's handling of this, and the sad outcome is that so many agencies have been forced to leave Sudan.

While everyone continues to hope for a more reasoned and negotiated settlement to this critical situation it is nevertheless encouraging that humanitarian agencies have engaged in debates around principles in their decision-making – regardless of which decision they made. This in itself represents an increased level of analysis in decision-making by the humanitarian community.

2. The SPLA/M Perspective

The above article represents one of a number of contested viewpoints held about the situation in southern Sudan, and it is hard to get at the 'truth' sitting at a desk in London. The following points – drawn mostly from a press release by the SPLM/A on 1 March 2000 – present the SPLM/A perspective on the MoU issue. Signatory agencies reflect some of these views, while having yet others of their own.

- The SPLM/SPLA believes there should be an MoU to regularise operations and promote cooperation between the SRRA and NGOs in the deliverance of humanitarian assistance. However, this good intention has been misunderstood and misinterpreted by some NGOs to mean control of their work by the SRRA.
- In January 1999 the SRRA initiated discussions with the NGOs and other stakeholders such as the major donors. In March 1999 a consensus document was agreed. However, some NGOs requested more time to further study and discuss it with the SRRA. This request was granted until August when an agreement on the present MoU was developed with the approval of all the stakeholders. When asked to sign some NGOs again hesitated and requested yet more time to consult with donors and headquarters. The watershed event was the December 1999 National Liberation Council (NLC) meeting where the MoU was brought forward in addition to a Letter of Understanding (LoU). This had been put together by donors and NGOs as a 'best case scenario' from their perspective, and was seen as 'bad faith negotiating' by the NLC which rejected the LoU for the following reasons:

continued overleaf

- i The LoU was substantially different from the consolidated text of the MoU.
- ii The LoU brought in OLS as a signatory; an idea that was irrelevant because the SPLM/SPLA has a Tripartite Agreement between the OLS and the Government of Sudan (GOS) in addition to several other bilateral agreements including the Ground Rules.

In seeking to put the record straight the SPLM/A stresses:

- The Movement assures the international community that it will stick to its humanitarian mandate and will assist all NGOs to make this commitment a success.
- The MoU was prepared in good faith and in the spirit of transparency and accountability. In relation to this, since 1994 the Movement has been involved in extensive reforms and democratisation which the international community has supported. These reforms will lead to greater efficiency and utilisation of limited resources for the benefit of the people.
- The beneficiaries should be involved in initiating projects, and be given the right to be consulted. They are not passive receivers but partners.
- It is important to streamline programmes and activities in order to avoid malpractice. 'Chaotic situations' with regards to humanitarian deliverance have been occurring in the New Sudan, particularly during the hunger and starvation of 1998. Of course some benefit from such chaos, but the SPLM/A believes that good organisation leads to good governance.
- A good number of NGOs have signed the MoU. The SPLM/A re-assures these NGOs that the Movement will cooperate with them and give them all the protection they need. Of the 43 NGOs working in the New Sudan, 32 signed and only 11 opted not to do so.
- The UN system (OLS, WFP, UNICEF and so on) is not affected because there is a tripartite agreement with them, the GOS and the SPLM/A. The ICRC is also not affected because there is also a separate agreement with them. This group by far represents the vast majority of international organisations working in the New Sudan, which means that the humanitarian situation will not be adversely affected.
- The SPLM/SPLA is not expelling any NGO. The SRRA is only implementing a decision made by the NLC. It is a democratic right of any NGO to reject our laws and leave peacefully.

Signed: Cdr Nhial Deng Nhial, SPLM/SPLA Chairman for External Relations, Information and Humanitarian Affairs.

The SPLM/A press release is distributed in the 'extra' service of the UN IRIN information service. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or the Relief and Rehabilitation Network. For further information or free subscriptions contact IRIN by fax: (+254) 2 622129 or email: <irin@ocha.unon.org>

Sphere Project Field Training

The Sphere Project will be conducting inter-agency workshops in various locations around the world during 2000. These workshops will explore the practical application of the Sphere Handbook in the field.

For more information please contact Sean Lowrie on <lowrie@uk.care.org>

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The HPN (formerly the RRN) website is now at
<www.odihpn.org.uk>

The Kosovo Refugee Crisis: An Independent Evaluation of UNHCR's Emergency Preparedness and Response

Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, Professor of International Refugee Law, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

This is a welcome report; it highlights successes, but also failings and weaknesses. It asks whether Kosovo refugees obtained appropriate protection and assistance, and whether UNHCR met its own standards. It looks at five areas in particular, namely context, including background, preparedness and initial responses; management; assistance and coordination; protection; and relations with the military. This short review touches only a few.

Kosovo was not unique, even though no one disputes that the exodus was unusually large and swift – some 500,000 refugees fled within two weeks, rising to a high probably in the region of 850,000. No one disputes, either, that UNHCR was constrained by circumstance. But that aside, all the errors recognised in its own Great Lakes report (EC/47/SC/CRP.11, 2 January 1997) are repeated: structure that did not ensure effective coordination; poor communication; weak information management; lack of sufficient senior protection staff; protection problems inadequately dealt with and not given sufficient priority; and so on.

UNHCR's weak presence in neighbouring states is noticed early, and its long involvement with IDPs in Kosovo criticised for distracting it from a possible substantial external exodus (95). Its failure, predating the crisis, to develop relationships with Albania and Macedonia is hard to understand. Common sense and local history should have put UNHCR on notice of external movement (81), but the evaluators do not excuse it for doing no better than any one else. Mandated to protect and assist refugees, UNHCR 'might be expected... [to] be more institutionally inclined... to consider the possibility of a massive refugee outflow' (92). It did not, and the report finds a 'near-complacent attitude' on its part.

If lack of information and analysis contributed to this attitude, then UNHCR has only itself to blame. It had long since cut back resources for its Centre for Documentation and Research (CDR), whose rather comprehensive background paper on Kosovo from February 1996 has never been updated.

Against this state of unreadiness, the report finds substantial management weaknesses and a staggering lack of in-country and headquarters support (288). Once again, staff were deployed too late and too slowly, and mid-level

and senior management were missing. Initial staff movements, quick enough in parts, were based on the emergency response team roster, but the report highlights why the 'volunteer' system did not work thereafter, including managers resisting release of personnel and lack of recognition or credit for those going to the field. System-wide demoralisation likely also played a part.

On protection, the report finds that UNHCR 'performed as well as the situation permitted, within the framework of traditional approaches to universal refugee protection' (438, 504). This is usefully ambiguous, but ought to be read as criticism.

Thus, UNHCR tried to promote the principle of mass admission on the Kosovo-Macedonia border, but apparently paid no heed to the context in which the relevant international legal principles have emerged, or to their application in a dynamic sense. Its performance on 'first asylum' strongly implies that staff initially responsible for protection in the region, and possibly also in Headquarters, are unfamiliar with basic principles. If, as the report suggests (482, 511), UNHCR seriously considers that 'first asylum should be considered as an absolute and unconditional legal obligation consistent with the 1951 Refugee Convention', then there is something wrong with its perception of international law. UNHCR's primary responsibility is to provide international protection to refugees and not, as such, 'to promote the right to seek asylum in a Convention signatory State' (459). Its first concern, therefore, is not with 'choice', but with *non-refoulement*, which can as easily be offered in a country of 'first asylum' as in a neighbouring country willing and able to grant refuge. History is full of reluctant hosts, where basic principles of protection could only be maintained contingently; that is, through the negotiated support of other states (451-6).

The report rightly identifies the 'Humanitarian Transfer Programme' (ie, transfer of Kosovar refugees from Macedonia to Albania and Turkey) and the 'Humanitarian Evacuation Programme' (ie, transfer of Kosovar refugees from Macedonia to other European countries and beyond the region) as 'innovations... that generally enhanced protection' (507). That more use was not made of the former again appears due to lack of a clear position of principle on the part of UNHCR (475, 478), and even to obstruction in the field (478). The most practical approach, consistent with the goal of protection, seems to have come from the Director of the Europe Bureau (478, note 48).

What can be drawn from the report? First, there is no evidence of a protection strategy, let alone a plan. Indeed UNHCR, as presently constructed, appears still to offer no place in which a system-wide protection strategy can be devised and implemented.

Second, first asylum is a fine ideal but it does not reflect general international law or the requirements of the 1951 Convention/1967 Protocol. The practice of states – the heart of customary international law – cannot be disregarded when devising a protection strategy or plan.

Third, in relation to emergency response, UNHCR is not capable of infinite and immediate expansion which means contraction and standby arrangements with other, particularly non-governmental, actors play a critical role. However, they ought to be complementary to the development and strengthening of a national (ie, refugee-receiving country) capacity to deal with refugee emergencies; expatriate solutions may be necessary from time to time or for particular purposes, but rarely offer long term 'value added', especially for developing countries or countries in transition.

Fourth, in the matter of early warning and preparedness, whether UNHCR might or might not have predicted the exodus with greater accuracy, it could certainly have made better use of internal and external resources. The report suggests a certain imperviousness to information and analysis – both in protection and operations – which needs urgent correction.

Kosovo may have been special, but it was hardly unique. Overall, UNHCR has not learnt from the mistakes, or the experience of the past, including earlier evaluations. Whether such evaluations actually have any impact in effecting institutional change may be seriously doubted, however, and the impetus for true reform must come now both from within and from without; there may be an opportunity here for the new High Commissioner.

UNHCR's growth over the past decade has been accompanied by an apparently fruitless, indeed damaging, search for appropriate structures. Bureaucratisation now prevails over both protection and operations, and the

organisation no longer meets its responsibilities to the international community.

The report's elucidation of errors suggests a serious failure to identify and transmit, both internally and externally, a clear vision of UNHCR's role, especially in the provision of international protection; it seems to be confused as to its legal standing and as to the international law which it is supposed to apply; it seems unable or unwilling to take note of what is going on in the real world, at ground and field level; it lacks the structural capacity to integrate

information and analysis into protection decision-making and policy and programme formulation; and it seems to have put aside those principles which in turn would enable it to lay down clear goals in relation to donors, states, the military, NGOs (whose voice, inexplicably, is difficult to hear at any point in the evaluation), and, above all, refugees.

These weaknesses themselves allow the inference of yet greater problems – namely, no transparency, little if any sense of accountability, and a tendency to submerge all and any criticism of performance in someone else's absence of political will. Indeed, the report itself disappoints at this juncture; no one is identified save by post or acronym, credit and criticism fall indiscriminately, and one may well emerge with the feeling that, though a lot went wrong, no one ultimately was responsible. If that's another lesson to be learnt, then perhaps we do need to return to the drawing board.

The report can be found at <www.unhcr.ch/evaluate/kosovo/toc.htm>
For more information see ICVA's newsletter: 'Talk Back' vol. 2 (1) 'UNHCR's Kosovo Evaluation' at <www.icva.ch>

Training For Peace in Southern Africa

Cedric Coning, ACCORD, Johannesburg, S. Africa

The increase in violent conflict in the post cold war era has highlighted the need for a comprehensive, multifunctional approach to conflict management. The main characteristics of conflict today are its intra-state nature and the role of civilians as both perpetrators and victims of violent conflict. Interventions aimed at meaningful peace have to include a broad range of diverse activities that are aimed, amongst others, at demobilisation (often including child soldiers), finding a new commonly accepted state system, re-engineering most state functions such as the criminal justice system, and socioeconomic development. The result is that modern peacekeeping missions include a wide range of civilian personnel who are responsible for such diverse activities as humanitarian assistance, human rights monitoring, election monitoring, civilian police monitoring, social justice reform and civil administration.

This shift in emphasis has posed new challenges such as developing and coordinating capacity in order to achieve

and maintain one holistic peace mission approach. Subsequent developments resulted in the 1992 call by the then Secretary General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the establishment of regional and sub-regional peacekeeping training centres. The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded by investigating the feasibility of a project to enhance capacity in Southern Africa in the conflict management and peacekeeping fields. As a result, the Training for Peace Project (TFP) was established in 1995 with the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) [then known as the Institute for Defence Policy] and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) as partners.

The TFP Partnership

ACCORD is primarily responsible for training with some involvement in policy development and research activities. ISS engages in policy research activities and the production of publications documenting local peacekeeping concepts, trends and techniques, and is responsible for the CIVPOL part of the training mandate. NUPI is responsible for providing resource persons and advice on policy and project development, as well as general project coordination.

Objectives of the TFP

- To develop and conduct a series of training programmes with the aim of building a realistic group of stand-by personnel within Southern Africa
- To include in the training programmes participants from the defence and foreign affairs ministries and NGOs of the interested countries in the region so as to contribute to the development of consistency in approach within these three sectors, as well as an appreciation of the differing and complementary roles of each sector.
- To include participants from as many of the 11 SADC countries as possible in each training session, and thereby contribute to the creation of a common language and common culture of peacekeeping
- To conduct seminars and workshops to develop new understanding, knowledge and approaches that will provide the basis for more effective training and education, as well as enhance policy-making and public awareness of the challenges involved.
- To promote policy development in peacekeeping in order to formulate, document, analyse and apply innovative ideas from elsewhere, as well as local concepts and techniques to improve peacekeeping within the region.

The Peacemaking Programme at ACCORD

The Peacekeeping Programme at ACCORD is responsible for implementing ACCORD's mandate under the Training for Peace Project. ACCORD has conducted peacekeeping training workshops under the TFP banner in 11 of the 14 SADC countries from 1996 to 1998. In 1999, ACCORD was asked to design and coordinate all the civilian components for Exercise Blue Crane, a brigade-level SADC peacekeeping exercise held in South Africa. In

the second half of 1999, ACCORD developed a new conflict management course for peacekeepers. This course was subsequently presented at part of the UN Company Commanders Course, the UN Staff Officers Course and the UN Military Observers Course conducted by the SADC Regional Peacekeeping Training Center (RPTC) in Harare. It was also presented as part of the 2nd SADC UN Police Officers Course. ACCORD similarly conducted the Civil Military Liaison Officer's Course at the RPTC in November 1999, the first time a CIMIC course has been presented in Africa.

ACCORD has also organised a number of policy related seminars under the TFP banner aimed at influencing and impacting on policy development in Southern Africa. The Peacekeeping Programme at ACCORD also publishes an occasional paper series aimed at influencing the peacekeeping policy debate in southern Africa. It is aimed at the policy and practitioner level, and while the series is open to a broad range of authors it is specifically targeted at providing young African authors with a publishing outlet.

The Peacekeeping Programme at ACCORD is increasingly focused on the civilian aspects of peacekeeping, on civil-military relations and on conflict management training for peacekeepers. In October this year, ACCORD, as part of the TFP Project, will present the first civilian peacekeeping course.

ACCORD and the TFP are also active in a number of international fora presenting the African perspective on developments in the peacekeeping field. ACCORD is, for example, the current chair of the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres (IAPTC) and will host the 6th Annual IAPTC Conference in June 2000 in South Africa.

To learn more about ACCORD and the Training for Peace in Southern Africa project visit <www.accord.org.za>

Partnerships in Crisis: Collaboration Between International and Local Organisations in Disrupted Societies

Graduate research team, Princeton University, USA

Most international NGOs (INGOs) delivering humanitarian assistance in disrupted societies have yet to design and implement concrete programmes that encourage substantive partnerships with local organisations, despite a broad and sincere effort to make such cooperation a centrepiece of relief and development. Enduring collaboration and capacity building depend on INGOs taking initiative and spending

money on partnerships in politically charged environments, advocacy with donors and host governments, and serious institutional investment in local organisations.

A Princeton University graduate research team visited five countries (Bosnia, Mozambique, Pakistan, Palestine, and Sudan) and interviewed more than 100 local and INGOs in November 1999 to assess the cooperative ventures between the two in politically disrupted environments. The study focused on four central themes – political pressures, capacity building, funding, and coordination – and studied the partnership models that have emerged to translate rhetoric into reality.

The study was interpretive rather than quantitative, and centred around an interview guide. Several findings emerged that might help guide INGOs and donors searching for sustainable and efficient approaches to partnership. Below are some of the more interesting

conclusions that have not been widely covered in the existing empirical and theoretical literature on partnerships.

Recommendations

- INGOs should consider advocacy with donors, home governments, and host authorities an integral part of their mission. They should lobby for more realistic funding practices; often political and donor restrictions limit the timeframe of partnerships or the amount of power allowed local groups. INGOs should push donors to lift or mitigate such limiting regulations.
- Institutional memory and training among international NGO representatives responsible for partnerships and capacity building are inadequate. INGOs should increase the funding allotment for pre-disaster training, devote fieldstaff time to the crucial task of keeping complete records on local NGOs, and maintain consistent relationships over time with the local NGO community that remains in a disaster zone long after international funding and presence dries up.
- Vital contributions of local organisations are not always recognised so that the party contributing the most funds – usually the international partner – holds the balance of power. Institutional assessment should assign value to and attempt to measure the intangibles brought to programming by local organisations including political savvy, local knowledge, and constituent credibility. Such a matrix will shift the balance of power in local-international partnerships and make explicit the resources brought to bear by local NGOs.
- International organisations should experiment with a broader range of partnership models. Some worthwhile approaches include spinning off country offices into national affiliates; building a national network and turning it over to national staff; funding a small number of local NGOs over a long period of time until they become capable of taking over the INGO's

programming; and fostering networks among local NGOs independent of international presence.

- Funding restrictions often prevent local NGOs from developing the exact kinds of capacity donors claim to desire. For example, local partners usually cannot spend international funds on salaries, capital investment, or training, preventing local groups from developing their staff, acquiring physical capital, and paying competitive salaries so their local staff does not flee to work for high-paying INGOs. Brain drain and faltering capacity were cited by local groups as the biggest problems they faced. Training programmes funded by INGOs mostly prioritised reporting and accounting, to the exclusion of other crucial management and programming skills.
- Political tensions in disrupted states usually dominate the local landscape. Given the special nature of political pressure on local NGOs, INGOs should permit local partners to consider approaches to neutrality and solidarity that differ from those of the international partner.
- Finally, until international groups put substantial funding and long term institutional investment into local partners, cooperative programming will tend to follow a contractor pattern.

Funding practices and the local political climate determine the effectiveness of partnerships more than any other factor. Most INGOs that count partnership as a central element of their operational strategy do not dedicate full-time staff to assessing the quality of local NGOs and setting guidelines for partner selection. Furthermore, most have not institutionalised any methodology for choosing and evaluating partners, and do not share such knowledge across country offices.

The report's full text can be found on the internet at www.wvs.princeton.edu/~591bf99/reportPAGE.htm

PARinAC 2000 – and Beyond

RRN Staff

From its inception at the Global Conference in Oslo in June 1994, PARinAC – Partnership in Action – has set the tone and agenda for NGO–UNHCR relations. Its defining characteristic is that it has always been as much about the process of cooperation as about the building up of partnership structures; it is not an end in itself but rather a methodology for NGO–UNHCR relations. As a result of increased NGO–UNHCR cooperation there has been a more coherent and comprehensive approach to working with refugees and IDPs.

In the autumn of 1998, UNHCR and its NGO partners proposed a review of the structures of PARinAC. How has it developed since 1994? How much has effective partnership been incorporated into the work of UNHCR and NGOs? What has made it work well but what could make it work better? and so on. Following are some of the key recommendations.

PARinAC ‘in Practice’

In terms of how PARinAC works ‘in practice’ it is felt that there are still shortcomings when it comes to preparedness and response – as the Kosovo crisis has shown. Lessons learnt from one emergency are not passed on to the next. To rectify this it is recommended that a number of NGO coordinators be trained in a joint effort

by NGOs, UNHCR and OCHA. They should be on stand-by for major emergencies.

Coordination is recognised in the report as one of the most difficult tasks of any field operation. Many models exist – lead agency, NGO fora, consortia etc – but whatever model is chosen some of the same difficulties (such as lack of funding and lack of common goals) still remain. The report therefore recommends that:

- UNHCR and NGOs need to mandate and authorise an entity to have a strong coordinating role for NGO activities in refugee or IDP situations in which they are involved.
- Donors need to be encouraged to see the importance of coordination and release funds accordingly
- Workshops in emergency preparedness need to be organised to develop a more cooperative culture, particularly in relation to including national NGOs from the beginning.

Three other issues that are of note here are local capacity building, regional PARinAC meetings, and questions around the relief/development process. An important aspect of PARinAC has been its awareness of the importance of inclusion and of the potential and responsibility of national and local NGOs. Local capacity building still faces problems so any benefits must be enhanced. The report recommends that creativity and learning from good practice should be applied to this area. In addition, priorities of capacity building should be set by NGOs.

In terms of PARinAC's presence in the field, experience has shown that it is necessary to convene regional PARinAC meetings in order for the NGO–UNHCR partnership to maintain its focus and momentum. The focus of future meetings will be on needs and actions at the local level, as well as the formulation of work plans particular to a region. Regional PARinAC meetings will be held in all seven regions, and each will strengthen public awareness and funding for the refugee cause.

Finally, as all refugee situations need a follow-up of reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation it should be seen as a PARinAC priority to bring some of the other actors and organisation on board as soon as possible. Local PARinAC processes should seek to include other UN agencies on the intergovernmental side and more developmental organisations on the NGO side in order to ensure smooth transition between all when the situation changes from relief to rehabilitation to development.

Other Issues

The report also addresses a number of institutional issues, such as PARinAC and NGO coordination at a global level, and PARinAC's interaction with EXCOM. Administrative issues such as the new interactive PARinAC website, and reporting arrangements for PARinAC's progress are also considered. In addition, there is an important section which looks at IDPs.

For a full report contact the NGO Unit, UNHCR, PO Box 2500, 1211 Geneva 2 Depot, Geneva, Switzerland. Tel: +41 (22) 739 8290 Fax: +41 (22) 739 7302 Email: <hqng00@unhcr.ch>

The Structure of Austrian Humanitarian Aid

Christoph Müleider, Caritas, Austria

The latest DAC peer review of Austria (November 1999) once again highlights Austria's poor position of overseas development aid (ODA). This is characterised on the one hand by the small amount of money involved, and on the other by the lack of an overall aid policy and strategy that links all components to a clear set of development objectives.

Total ODA of Austria in 1998 was 0.22 per cent of GNP (410m Euros), compared to 0.26 per cent in 1997. About one-fifth of Austria's ODA still consists of components not primarily targeted at the development of the receiving country (for example, aid for refugees in Austria, indirect study costs in Austria, public export loans). Austria is ranked 16th among the 21 DAC member countries (in per cent of GNP it is only 19th). Under the new rightwing government it is feared this percentage will decrease by a further 20 per cent.

Responsibility for ODA in Austria is spread between 10 ministries. Expenses for humanitarian aid are administered by the Federal Chancellery (Section 1; also responsible for the national disaster management). Austria has no fixed annual budget for humanitarian aid programmes which means that every project has to be approved by the Council of Ministers. There is no overall strategy that links relief efforts to rehabilitation and development programmes in other ministries or departments, and there is no coordination mechanism between these institutions.

The Department of Development Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for the administration of the bilateral technical aid budget for development projects and programmes in the 'south'. This budget is the main source of public funding for NGOs. In 1998 it accounted for only 17 per cent of total ODA. In 1992 the department defined seven priority countries (Nicaragua, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Uganda, Mozambique and Bhutan) and 11 cooperation countries for Austrian bilateral aid in order to focus the scarce financial resources. In each of the priority countries there is an Austrian regional office for the coordination of public

development cooperation; this has the tendency to strengthen direct relations between the department and southern NGOs through the regional offices as projects in the south are directly financed without the involvement of Austrian NGOs.

All aid programmes for eastern and southeastern Europe and the CIS have been managed by a special Eastern Aid Department in the Federal Chancellery (part of its budget being used for humanitarian aid in this region). The main objective of this portion of ODA is to support the economic and political processes of transformation in the region, concentrating on some priority countries. As of March 2000 the Department for Aid in Eastern and Southeastern Europe will be the responsibility of the Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and no longer in the Federal Chancellery. But there is still no consolidation with the department for development cooperation in the same ministry.

Austria does not have an executing agency for its bilateral projects. NGOs and private companies are the main actors in Austrian bilateral technical aid: the interdependence between the state and NGOs is related to the Austrian model of neo-corporatism which developed in the post-war era and in which all important groups of society are integrated into state decision-making, cooperating in order to achieve consensus and to avoid conflicts. In this context, Austrian NGOs have played an important role in the conception of Austrian bilateral aid. Close formal and

informal relations exist between the responsible departments in the ministries and the NGOs.

These still good relationships could be the base for the bottom-up development of a common strategic policy for the whole continuum of relief, rehabilitation and development. An important first step would be the installation of a working-group/round table within the Federal Chancellery, including the most important humanitarian organisations, to develop a proposal for an Austrian humanitarian aid policy. Reportedly, the new head of the responsible department is thinking in that direction. In order to have a durable improvement across the whole sector it will be crucial to unite all activities and planing instruments under one single responsibility and ministry (this could be facilitated by the fact that in the new government the two key ministries for aid programmes – Foreign Affairs and Federal Chancellery – are in the hands of the same party; this was not the case before) and to increase Austrian ODA expenses towards the 0.7 per cent target.

The realisation of these proposals by the new Austrian government would be a good opportunity to prove that the fears of further restrictions of foreign aid in Austria, and of a xenophobic and racist policy, are unfounded.

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This workshop will provide practical models and methods to assist aid agency staff to analyse conflicts and to integrate effective conflict-handling strategies into their programmes. It is aimed at staff of international agencies with advisory or direct management responsibility for relief, development, rights and peace-building programmes. Local workshops are also offered in English, French or Spanish.

Contact: Responding to Conflict (IHE), 1046 Bristol Road, Birmingham B29 6LJ, UK. Tel: +44 (0)121 415 5641 Fax: +44 (0)121 415 4119 Email: <enquiries@respond.org> Website: <www.respond.org>

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Contact: Sharon Kim, Programme Coordinator Tel: +1 (212) 304 5286 Fax: +1 (212) 305 7024 Email: <ssk19@columbia.edu>

MERLIN Training Courses: Relief and Emergencies Various dates, UK 2000

These residential training courses focus on health, management and support aspects of disaster work. 'Introduction to Relief and Emergencies' is aimed at those who lack recent field experience in a field agency; 'Public Health' aims to facilitate the transfer of health workers' professional skills to the relief environment; 'Project Support' will enable participants to understand the role and expectations of a logistician in the relief environment; and 'Management' aims to provide desk managers and field coordinators with more effective disaster management skills.

Contact: Training Dept, MERLIN, 14 David Mews, Porter St, London, W1M 1HW. Tel: +44 (0)20 7487 2505; email: <training@merlin.org.uk>

Food Security: Lessons from the Field 4 – 22 September 2000, Thailand

One of a variety of training courses run by the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, this course is designed for coordinators of food security programmes. Focussing on field experiences and highlighting participatory approaches, participants will discuss current food security issues, policies and trends. The course will provide an opportunity to prepare action plans to be implemented within individual organisations or pursue new interventions towards a more effective food security programme.

Contact: Education and Training Department, IIRR, YC James Yen Center, Silang 4118, Cavite, Philippines. Tel: +63 (46) 414 2417 Fax: +63 (46) 414 2420 Email: <etd-iirr@cav.pworld.net.ph>

Working in Insecure Environments 16 – 20 October 2000, Vénissieux, France

Organised by the French group Bioforce this course will be in French, although English language sessions can also be arranged. Means of reflection, useful tools, telecommunications, rules and procedures for working in insecure environments will be examined, as will ways of managing stress. Bioforce also organise training around international human rights, programme coordination, etc.

Contact: Ludovic Bourbé. Tel: +33 472 89 31 58 Fax: +33 478 70 27 12 email: <info@bioforce.asso.fr> Website: <www.bioforce.asso.fr>

Forthcoming Conferences

Conflict, Sovereignty and Intervention: What Role for International Community? 14 – 16 June 2000, Amherst, MA, USA

This Summer Institute organised by the Five College Program in Peace and World Security Studies (PAWSS) will be exploring the discourse and practice of humanitarian intervention in societies suffering from ethnic conflict. Looking at the nature of contemporary conflict and how humanitarian intervention should be justified and carried out, the limits of sovereignty and the use of military force by governments will be debated.

Contact: Yogesh Chandrani, PAWSS, Hampshire College, Amherst, MA 01002, USA. Tel: +1 (413) 559 5367 Fax: +1 (413) 559 5611 Email <pawss@hamp.hampshire.edu> Website: <http://pawss.hampshire.edu/summer_institute.html>

Management of Complex Humanitarian Emergencies: Focus on Children & Families 19 – 23 June 2000, Cleveland, Ohio, USA

Presented by the Rainbow Centre for International Child Health, this conference will cover such topics as water, shelter and sanitation; mines and unexploded ordnance; emergency obstetrics; international humanitarian law and Geneva conventions; and security issues for relief workers. The programme is aimed at professionals interested in training for the care of children and families during complex humanitarian emergencies.

Contact: Registrar, CME Program, University Hospitals of Cleveland, 11100 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44106-6026. Tel: +1 (216) 844 5050 Fax: +1 (216) 844 8133

Civil Society and Models of Political Participation - Challenges for Development Education 3 – 9 July, Linz, Austria

Hosted by the Austrian Development Education platform this summer school will focus on global citizenship, particularly looking at methods and programmes fostering empowerment and promoting political participation. Five delegates per national NGO platform will be invited to participate with case studies of partnership projects which address the theme.

Contact: Peter Davis, Oxfam DE Team. Tel: +44 (0)1865 313 3162 Email: <pdavis@oxfam.org.uk>

Religion and Conflict: the Use and Abuse of Power 12 – 16 August 2000, Coventry, UK

Held at the Coventry University Centre for the Study of Forgiveness and Reconciliation the aim of this conference is to explore how religion can both inspire people with a vision of a common humanity, and also deepen the divisions that separate individuals, communities and nations. The founding belief is that only by understanding how violence can be driven by religious belief can the positive force of peace and reconciliation be recognised.

Contact: Andrew Rigby, Director, Centre for Study of Forgiveness and Reconciliation, Coventry University, Priory Street, Coventry CV1 5FB. Tel: +44 (0)2476 887 448 Fax: +44 (0)2476 838 679 Email: <A.Rigby@Coventry.ac.uk> Website: <www.coventry-isl.org.uk/forgive>

Coexistence trainers, mediators and facilitators

The Coexistence Initiative is seeking trainers, mediators and facilitators with expertise in the field of coexistence. The Initiative is compiling a database of coexistence trainers, mediators and facilitators which will be an integral part of the Coexistence Experts Directory on their website. This free on-line database is being designed so that organisations can identify appropriate consultants for projects around the world. The Initiative's website will serve as a practical information resource centre on coexistence by acting as a gateway to relevant resources on the Internet, as well as a source of new and valuable information.

If you would like further information or to be part of this exciting new initiative please contact Saqeb Mueen Tel: +44 (0)20 7793 4115 Fax: +44 (0)20 7793 4116 Email: <co_intern@worldforum.org> The Coexistence Initiative, Southbank House, Black Prince Road, London SE1 7SJ, UK

Conference and Training Reports

‘The Power of Humanity’: The 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent

*Sean Deely, Disaster Policy Department, IFRC,
Geneva, Switzerland*

The city that gave birth to the Geneva Conventions 50 years ago successfully hosted the 27th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent from 31 October to 6 November 1999.

The 188 states party to the Geneva Conventions sat down with representatives from the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to produce a plan of action for more effective humanitarian action in the new millennium. The protection of victims of conflict was high on the agenda, with particular concerns expressed for child soldiers, the repression of war crimes, and the control and availability of arms.

Natural disasters were also discussed and the need to ensure more professionalism and accountability in the delivery of aid through initiatives such as the Sphere Project’s Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response.

In an effort to turn discussion into deeds, the Conference produced three main outputs: a plan of action to guide activities during the coming four years, a series of pledges to undertake specific humanitarian initiatives, and a conference declaration.

Plan of Action

The Plan of Action covers three main themes: the protection of victims of armed conflict through respect of IHL, humanitarian action in times of armed conflict and other disasters, and strategic partnership to improve the lives of vulnerable people.

All members of the conference were urged to implement the agreed series of actions set out to meet the identified goals in each of the three themes.

Final goals of theme one:

- Full compliance by all the parties to an armed conflict with their obligations under IHL to protect and assist the civilian population and other victims of the conflict, and to respect protected objects.

- An effective barrier against impunity through the combination of relevant international treaties and national laws concerning the repression of violations of IHL, and the examination of an equitable system of reparations.
- Universal acceptance of IHL and the adoption of all necessary measures by states at the national level to ensure implementation of their obligations under international law.
- Integration, by states, of their obligations under IHL in relevant procedures and training. Promotion of this law among relevant persons and bodies.
- Conformity of weapons with IHL, the establishment of effective controls on the availability of arms and ammunition, and an end to the human tragedy caused by anti-personnel landmines.

Final goals of theme two:

- Effective response in disaster situations through improved national and international preparedness.
- Strengthened mechanisms of cooperation and coordination amongst states, the Movement and other humanitarian actors.
- Provision for the rights and acute needs of the most vulnerable people as the first priority for humanitarian action.
- Understanding of the respective roles of political, military and humanitarian actors, and protection of humanitarian personnel.

Final goals of theme three:

- Improved health for vulnerable people based on strengthened cooperation between states and National Societies.
- New initiatives to meet the needs of vulnerable people and to reduce discrimination and violence in the community.
- Increased National Society capacities and effective partnership with states, and cooperation with relevant humanitarian and development organisations.

Pledging

One of the important innovations of the conference was the pledges initiative. Unlike other humanitarian fora, where pledging implies financial support, the 27th International Conference sought a commitment from each of its members to undertake a new initiative to meet the humanitarian challenge of the new millennium.

While the scope of the pledges was broad, the main trends could be summarised as follows:

- To prohibit the military recruitment and participation in armed conflict of persons under the age of 18.
- To protect and assist women and children, both in legal and practical terms.
- To increase the promotion of IHL and commitment to ratification of the Additional Protocols and/or withdrawal of reservations to the Geneva Conventions.
- To promote and ratify other treaties, such as the Ottawa Treaty on the banning of anti-personnel mines and the Statutes of the International Criminal Court.
- To promote the role and responsibilities of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement as auxiliary to the humanitarian services of government.
- To strengthen national laws to protect the red cross and red crescent emblems.
- To build the capacity of National Societies through the

implementation of the International Federation's *Strategy 2010*.

- To increase involvement and representation of women in decision-making bodies.
- To implement new health and social programmes in response to changing needs.
- To strengthen the role of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in disaster response and preparedness.
- To recruit and train volunteers and motivate young people to ensure their active participation in the design and implementation of programmes.

The Conference Declaration

The Conference ended with a short declaration to inspire members of the Conference to a renewed effort to confront human suffering in the new millennium and reaffirm their commitment to tackle the cause of this suffering.

For more information visit <www.redcross.alertnet.org> This site also allows access to the ICRC and Federation websites.

Public Health in Complex Emergencies Course

Katherine Shields, World Education, Boston, USA

As humanitarian emergencies grow increasingly complex, field managers must coordinate a wider range of interconnected programmes, from planning a culturally appropriate method of food distribution to designing a camp layout that is safe for women. To meet the need for information about state-of-the-art best practice, the Public Health in Complex Emergencies Course trains the staff of humanitarian relief organisations to become more knowledgeable, constructive decision-makers. Aimed at programme managers, the two-week course provides an introduction to key public health topics such as communicable disease control, epidemiology and nutrition.

The course was developed by the Programme on Forced Migration and Health at the Joseph L. Mailman School of Public Health of Columbia University, with support from the US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. Columbia works in partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), a refugee and relief organisation, and World Education, Inc. (WEI), a nonprofit organization specialising in adult education and curriculum development. In keeping with the course's motto, 'by the field, of the field, for the field,' NGOs have been integrally involved in the design and implementation of the course.

Themes

The course addresses several public health topics central to controlling mortality and disease in a complex emergency. Skills learned include how to plan a mass vaccination campaign; conduct a rapid public health needs assessment; evaluate the underlying causes of malnutrition; provide essential reproductive health services to war-affected populations; understand the implications of international humanitarian law and human rights for humanitarian work; manage trauma casualties through medical triage; plan

psychosocial health interventions and apply standard guidelines to evaluate programmes.

Woven through the technical content are discussions of other issues that affect implementation, such as interagency coordination, gender issues and political concerns. The course does not attempt to make participants into technical experts. Rather, it gives them a basic familiarity with the essentials so that they can coordinate effective interventions. Participants practice their new skills through hands-on activities, such as case studies and a simulation in which they play the roles of the key players in an emergency scenario.

The first two courses were offered in the summer of 1999, in New York in the United States and in Kampala, Uganda. While all participants were field-based practitioners with some experience in public health management, the course attracted a wide range of nationalities and specialties. Most were doctors, nurses or public health workers. Approximately two-thirds came from developing countries, ranging from Tanzania to Afghanistan. The majority were staff of international NGOs, but some participants from local ministries of health also provided a valuable perspective.

The courses were characterized by lively, frank discussion of such issues as: establishing communication between NGOs and local health officials; finding practical, low-tech interventions; increasing the professionalism of NGO staff; reconciling donor priorities with on-the-ground realities and resolving conflicts with political factions that interfere with humanitarian services.

Outcomes

Participants particularly valued the practical application of technical skills, and the broad context of politics, gender issues and human rights in which the course situated the technical content areas. As one participant noted, the course 'taught me not to make decisions in isolation.'

Many participants said they planned to apply their new skills right away to concrete projects, such as conducting an epidemiological survey or investigating a nutritional problem.

After attending the course, participants report sharing what they have learned by conducting workshops for their

colleagues. They are using their new knowledge to advocate for change within their organizations, from the development of organisational policies on human rights, to the addition of more reproductive health services to their organisations' programmes.

The Mailman School of Public Health, IRC and WEI promote continued dialogue between the alumni and facilitators of the course. Future plans include an email

listserve or newsletter that allows them to draw on each other for advice in solving problems, and helps them stay abreast of new developments in the field.

For more information contact: Dr. Ronald Waldman, Director, Program on Forced Migration and Health. Email: <rw178@columbia.edu> or Sharon Kim, Program Coordinator. Tel: 212-304-5286 Fax 212-305-7024 Email <ssk19@columbia.edu>

Teaching Conflict Resolution Online: The Experience of the Transforming Civil Conflict Project

Lambrecht Wessels, Network University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, and Laina Reynolds, Distance Learning Projects Coordinator, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, UK

A researcher in Geneva, a UN worker on the road, a Red Cross official in Ethiopia, a US military officer: what could bring this diverse group together to discover new ways of improving the difficult but vital work that they all do in conflict-affected communities? The answer is the new Transforming Civil Conflicts (TCC) course jointly developed by The European Network University (TNU) and the Centre for Conflict Resolution, Bradford University, UK.

The underlying impetus for creating the online course was to equip those professionals – in fields such as development, humanitarian aid, journalism and peacekeeping – who don't have the time or extra resources to attend traditional campus-based courses. The course aims to equip them with a basic set of tools to analyse conflicts, become aware of the problems and prospects for conflict resolution, and understand their role in the resolution process. Besides the theoretical and practical frameworks, the course also functions as a space in which the myriad organisations that work in conflict areas with, against or parallel to each other, can begin to talk with each other and find ways to work more effectively together.

On the basis of this innovative approach to online learning that emphasises active participation and collaborative learning, TNU offered a three-week pilot course in 1999 and has just successfully completed the full module for the first time. The course was taught entirely online, as are all TNU's courses.

Content

The course included an introduction to conflict resolution, conflict analysis and conflict prevention. During the course, participants were familiarised with contemporary theories of conflict and conflict resolution, acquainted with the range of information on conflict available on the

Internet, and introduced to practical issues and debates within the field. They were brought together in an active 'learning community' of people with a professional interest in conflict, which included their classmates, tutors and a range of visiting experts.

The website demo site <www.netuni.nl/demos/tcc> has examples of the exercises that were used in the pilot course. An additional 'do-it-yourself' course in Internet skills was provided for those who were not familiar with the many uses of Internet. It can be taken at any time before the course.

Reactions from Participants

Some 20 people from many different organisations and over 12 countries participated in the pilot course. They included personnel from MSF (Doctors Without Borders), military personnel, the UNDP, several NGOs, journalists and students. Reactions from the participants have been very encouraging, for example:

This course brought together people from different backgrounds and experiences and this gave a very interesting and useful impetus to the discussions online. The site was easy to navigate and the different topics and issues were addressed in a very concise and accessible way.

Juliette Verhoeven: European Platform on Conflict Prevention and Transformation

Prize

In December last year the Transforming Civil Conflict program, though still in its startup phase, won the International Relations and Security Network <www.isn.ethz.ch/> 1999 Empire Grant, <www.isn.ethz.ch/edumod/> for the development of outstanding high quality learning programmes in the field of international relations and security policy <www.isn.ethz.ch/edumod/winners99.htm>

Conclusion

Both the pilot course and the formal course were stimulating experiences for the participants and the coaches. The online environment proved to be conducive to conflict resolution training and facilitated a dynamic and interesting learning process for most participants. There are some interpersonal skills that need to be learned face-to-face, but this course demonstrated that many of the core concepts and ideas of conflict resolution can be explored well in an online programme.

For further information contact Lambrecht Wessels at <tcc@netuni.uva.nl> or see the demo site at <www.netuni.nl/demos/tcc> The course will be offered again from 5–30 June 2000.

Publications

Working with Separated Children (1999). A set of three manuals prepared by Sarah Uppard, Celia Petty & Mary Tamplin for Save the Children-UK

One characteristic of complex emergencies is that it is never 'business as usual'. Issues and problems evolve rapidly and we are systematically confronted with new challenges in implementing programmes to support the most vulnerable groups, including children. What we have learned in exploring new ground, such as community-based psychosocial support in the reintegration of child soldiers in countries like Mozambique, cannot apply *stricto sensu* in today's programmes in countries like Sierra Leone, the DRC, Sri Lanka or Colombia.

The very same applies for family tracing and reunification. While this may seem like an old issue, working with separated children today has little to do with the way we were handling family tracing and reunification some years ago. This is why field officers currently need guidance to define appropriate programme strategies rather than traditional guidelines. This set of three manuals on working with separated children (a field guide, a training manual, training exercises and sample forms) from Save the Children-UK reflects this changing need by bringing together guidance as well as practical tools to conduct training on programming issues.

The manuals go beyond the needs of field staff by taking into consideration the different levels and

actors involved in programme design and support, whether they be social workers in countries ravaged by war and poverty, NGO field workers, social policy makers, governments, UN agencies or donors, and the media. The manuals are not only a training tool, but also an advocacy tool to ensure that appropriate strategic choices and resources are mobilised to support children most in need of protection.

Conditions of violence have changed and new issues have to be addressed, such as family and community mediation to ensure the safe return of children who have been cynically used against their own community. Poverty, social exclusion and the HIV-AIDS pandemic have diminished or overwhelmed the capacity of families and communities to care for and protect their own children. There has also been a need to capture the lessons learned during the Great Lakes emergency operations of 1994 and how it transformed our way of working with separated children. For example, the notion of a centralised database has been radically challenged by the need to develop more active forms of tracing involving new means of communication (radio, loudspeakers in camps, posters, photo display, etc) and agencies such as SCF, ICRC, UNHCR, and UNICEF have demonstrated their capacity to innovate even in the worst situations.

In addition, new issues, challenges and methodologies in programmatic approaches in working with separated children – such as the rights-based approach to children's issues – needed to be captured within a comprehensive

guide addressed to a wide range of actors. This has now been achieved through this manual as well as, for example, the training module developed for the UNHCR Action for the Right of Children training project (ARC).

A key indicator of these changes is reflected in the importance given to interagency coordination as the first issue addressed by the SCF fieldguide when, 10 years ago, this would have been a marginal issue.

In recent years we have seen how agencies involved in working with separated children during emergencies arrived at joint positions on key issues. This has gone alongside the recognition of those in the sector of the need to bring together our limited knowledge, capacities and resources for the sake of children. This fieldguide could as easily be written by and for UNICEF. Consequently, UNICEF will ensure that it is disseminated within the organisation and used as a key reference. This will allow the agency to concentrate on complementary efforts such as preparing a manual on working with under-five year old separated children.

The only regret is that such a practical guide which will be used in major emergencies missed the opportunity to pre-position key forms presented in the booklet as a computer diskette attached to it for immediate use, or for adaptation to local circumstances.

Jean-Claude Legrand, Senior Advisor, Children in Armed Conflict, Child Protection, UNICEF, New York, USA.

Global IDP Database

A new independent website and information management service on internally displaced persons worldwide can be found at <www.idpproject.org>. Global IDP Database was launched on 10 December 1999 and contains a comprehensive coverage of internal displacement in fourteen countries. Regular updates to the database plus coverage of an additional 21 countries are planned for the coming year. Training materials on internally displaced persons and the UN Guiding Principles, plus links to IDP-related sites, are also available.

Fuelling Conflict – on aid and private profit

The genocide in Rwanda was an important turning point for the humanitarian sector, which suddenly found itself strongly criticised for lack of professionalism but above all for ‘feeding the killers’. The literature reviewed here looks at how humanitarian aid can fuel conflict, development aid and private foreign investment.

Do No Harm. How Aid Can Support Peace – or War’ by Mary Anderson (1999) Boulder/ London, Lynn Rienner.

The Local Capacities for Peace Project (LCP) set out to examine how humanitarian/development assistance can be provided in such a way that it helps to support local people to find alternative methods of dealing with the problems that underlie conflict, and not in ways that feed into or exacerbate conflict. Although aid may be delivered in a neutral way its impact may not be neutral, and the actual presence, programmes, attitudes and statements of aid agencies become part of the conflict setting.

Humanitarian assistance can ‘fuel’ conflict in tangible ways (eg, by distorting market forces around production and distribution, causing price inflation, freeing up local resources to be spent on the war rather than on social services) and less tangible ways (eg, by legitimising certain people and actions, or the competitive distrust and rivalry between aid agencies). This study, which is informed by many case studies and field-level workshops, reviews in some detail how aid and conflict come to interact. It also offers a framework to analyse the impact of aid on conflict, and offers programming options to minimise the negative impacts of aid. It encourages local capacities for peace by appealing to those elements that connect rather than divide people (eg, economic transactions, shared underlying values, elements of common history and identity, interpersonal networks and associations across conflict-lines).

The book illustrates five case studies which include the way in which the ICRC tried to increase awareness and understanding of international humanitarian law in Burundi with socially and culturally appropriate references. The subtle analysis of the LCP project has occasionally become

lost in the eager embracing of the ‘do no harm’ soundbite. This soundbite has sometimes been taken to mean that humanitarian aid plays a significant part of war economies and can even prolong wars. In this new version the author clearly distances herself from such abuse. She does not maintain that aid is at the centre of conflict, or that programming to encourage peace capacities at micro-level would necessarily impact on the macro-forces that drive war. It is therefore a logical and moral fallacy to hold that, because aid can do harm, it is better not to give any aid.

Two key areas are identified for future inquiry. First, what is the relationship between insiders and outsiders in conflict situations (eg, who decides about the transformation of a given societal situation?). Second, what is the relationship between the micro and macro level, and short-term and long-term forces of conflict?

Resources

The Implications of Do No Harm for Donors and Aid Agency Headquarters, on the LCP website <<http://lcdain.com/lcpp>>

Do No Harm and Local Capacities for Peace. The scope of the project and uses of the soundbite are discussed on the RRN website under ‘conferences’ <www.oneworld.org/odi/rrn/newslet/bookrevs/anderson.html>

From Rhetoric to Reality. The Role of Aid in Local Peacebuilding in Afghanistan, York University, Post-Conflict Reconstruction & Development Unit (1998) workshop report <iaas1@york.ac.uk> and <www.york.ac.uk/dpts/arch/prdu>

NGOs and Peacebuilding in Complex Political Emergencies, seven working papers of a nearly completed research project, including case studies of Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Liberia. University of Manchester, Institute for

Development Policy and Practice <IDPM@MAN.AC.UK> and <www.man.ac.uk/idpm>

Aiding Violence: The Development Enterprise in Rwanda by Peter Uvin (1998) West Hartford, Kumarian Press.

In brief, this is a disturbing analysis of why Rwanda – which was a country hailed as a ‘model of development’ – could so suddenly collapse into genocide in 1994. It also looks at why so many Rwandans participated in the genocide.

The common explanation for the genocide is that a small elite group around Hutu president Habyarimana, (threatened by the peace and democratisation pressure from the Arusha agreements and by the Rwandan Patriotic Front), prepared and incited mass killings of Tutsi and moderate Hutus. This was because the hardships which had resulted from economic stagnation since the mid-1980s made the ordinary people more receptive to such manipulation.

Uvin accepts this crude analysis on the one hand, but also finds it insufficient to explain why so many ordinary people chose to suspend their moral values and actively pursue the slaughter of their neighbours. Uvin’s analysis highlights long-standing, contributing factors which were deep seated racial prejudice and structural violence. By structural violence he means inequality of life chances, clientelism, corruption, arbitrariness, social and economic exclusion, lack of access to information, education, health and other basic services and an authoritarian and condescending state and aid system. Together with secondary factors such as material opportunism, impunity for past violence and massacres, and an absence of external constraints, genocide was made possible.

In Putnam’s terms, Rwanda was a society that showed a very strong

'associational' life and so, in theory, a fairly strong civil society with a lot of 'social capital'. But, the author reminds us, this does not mean that a country is automatically a force for peace and democracy. It has already been well documented that opposition parties, Rwandan NGOs and the Rwandan church were extremely divided and had members that participated in the genocide. In terms of its internal dynamics, the Rwandan genocide now appears to be explained. However, Uvin challenges this picture and questions the responsibility of the international community.

In the early 1990s in Rwanda, political violence and human rights abuses increased. Militia were forming and the Rwandan media began to spout hate propaganda. The international community failed to realise that the rapid imposition of the Arusha peace agreements would precipitate the violence and consequently the peacekeeping mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) turned out to be weak in mandate and size. Reports from human rights organisations in 1993 caused a temporary flurry and a threat of the suspension of aid, but this never materialised. While the Rwandan regime was expanding the army and importing arms, development aid increased to compensate for the effects of a structural adjustment programme. Foreign countries such as France and the US maintained their military assistance.

Never was the failure to protect the democratic changes the international community had helped to set in motion so blatant as when it pulled out at the moment the planned genocide started.

With over 200 public and non-governmental donors, and an income from development assistance that surpassed that of private investment and commercial exports combined, the 'donor community' could have had significant leverage. Apart from the human rights organisations the NGO community continued business-as-usual with its traditional projects. For example, reports and context analysis by World Bank and UNDP continued to ignore the escalating political violence.

Uvin challenges the convenient 'myth of apolitical development' and suggests that the development community shares responsibility in part by its omission. Development aid can be part of 'structural violence' in at least three ways:

- the focus on 'basic needs' detracts from social and political issues and gives the impression that the development solution is a technical one, and not a political one;
- the aid system, through its foreign experts and the local elite it creates, shows the same inequality and superiority as an autocratic state elite further contributing to the humiliation of ordinary people;
- the 'development game' in its real dynamics brings about a collusion between the external actors and the state elite, all the more so if the pressure for 'local ownership' increases.

In Rwanda, as elsewhere, 'development aid is the fuel that allows the government machinery to exist, to expand, to control, to implement'. Ostensibly, the retrospective analysis has been enlightening – that development aid needs to constantly assess its potential 'conflict impact'.

On a positive note there is more aid investment in human rights work, peacebuilding, democratisation and in maintaining a responsible press today than ever before. Whether this is only a superficial layer or a fundamental change still remains to be seen.

Resources

'The Limits and Scope for the Use of Development Assistance Incentives and Disincentives for Influencing Conflict Situations: Case study Rwanda' (1999) A Baaré, D Shearer, P Uvin (Development Assistance Committee) available at <www.oecd.org/dac/html/pubsfoc.htm> under Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation.

Mercenaries. An African Security Dilemma (2000)
Abdel-Fatau Musah and J.Kayode Fayemi (eds) London/ Sterling, Pluto Press.

The essays here provide a detailed and critical examination of 'mercenary' activity in Africa which increased during the 1990s. Its resource material includes a table with a detailed overview of cases, statements and conventions by the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), the 1998 report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the use of mercenaries, and a diagram visualising the Branch Heritage, Executive Outcomes and Sandlines International empire. Documented in some detail are Executive Outcomes, Sandline, Defence Systems Limited, Gurkha Security Guards, Stabilco and IDAS, as well as the 'White Legion' deployed by the Mobutu regime in 1997 against the advancing AFDL (Kabilla's movement) which, for the first time, included Serb mercenaries recruited with the help of the French company Geolink and with support from the French internal intelligence service.

In Africa, the 'hand of trade' and the 'hand of war' have operated closely together since the time of the colonial exploration companies. The concentration of activities by the new 'private military companies' (PMCs) in particular in countries rich in mineral resources but with threatened regimes – notably Angola, Zaire/Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone – is striking. This by itself suggests the claims of PMCs to provide a cheaper and more effective solution than international peacekeepers need to be taken with a grain of salt.

Although the contributors to this book differ on details, the case studies of the three countries show close links. These links are not only through contracts but also through personal networks and shareholding arrangements. These shareholding arrangements exist between mining companies such as Heritage Oil and Gas Group, with its 'subsidiary' Branch Energy/Diamond Works, American Field Corporation and American Diamond Buyers, and its rival J. & S. Franklin, PMCs, suppliers of military

equipment and arms, and various 'support services' companies, which are often spin-offs of PMCs.

The PMCs (who are increasingly being 'paid' in mining concessions) have to defend private interests with accountability to their clients and shareholders. In the short term their actions can prop up a beleaguered regime and change the balance of power sufficiently to bring rebel groups to the negotiating table. However, the record also clearly shows that this has not brought any sustainable benefits. The PMCs are not interested in addressing the root causes of a conflict, and 'regime security' is not the same as 'national security'. Contrary to this their operations actually challenge the primacy of the state and its security forces, and in that sense undermine democracy. They become a source for the pursuit of private interests, and there is a very real prospect that rivalling mining interests will deploy PMCs with opposing sides in a civil war, as is becoming evident in the Zairean/DRC rebellions.

This 'privatisation' of security through PMCs and private security companies (which the World Bank, the UN and also NGOs have been contracting for protection and de-mining work) has replaced the notion of 'security for those who can pay'. Value of contracts for PMCs, whether it be in cash or increasingly in mining concessions, runs into millions of dollars that dwarf the humanitarian aid spent in the same country. This undoubtedly creates a rather different perspective on the war economy and what and who is fuelling it.

The contributors reveal that current legal instruments such as the OAU Convention for the Elimination of Mercenaries are outdated, and that there is little political will to address this development. The diamond centre of Antwerp in Belgium, Tel Aviv, the UK and France figure prominently, as does Canada on stock markets. There are huge and competing economic interests involved, which legislators do not want to 'under-mine' (sic).

Resource

<www.parliament.uk> Select Committee on Foreign Affairs 19989-99, Sierra Leone inquiry report.

Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia (2000) A Rashid, London/New York, IB Tauris.

The author, a Pakistani journalist, has researched issues and interviewed people that aid workers tend to stay away from. The result is a book that is essential reading for anyone interested in Afghanistan and Pakistan and in wider Central Asia, including Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Part 1 provides an overview of the rise of the Taliban movement. Part 2 documents the Taliban's extreme and uninformed interpretation of Islam and of Afghan history, its gender policies, the role of drugs and smuggling in the Afghan economy and how Afghanistan became a breeding place for international, radical, terrorist-minded, Wahhabi-inspired Islam. However, this merely sets the scene for the larger contest or 'New Great Game' for the biggest prize of all: the oil and gas reserves of Central Asia, and pipelines west and south, rather than through Russia, to the European and Asian markets.

Contemporary geo-economics in Afghanistan creates deals and alliances between warlords, extremists, oil companies (eg, Bidas of Argentina and American Unocal), foreign policy makers and other 'conflict entrepreneurs'. The game being played here is for higher stakes and on a much larger economic and geographical scale than human rights activists and humanitarian aid workers can address, or often comprehend.

The book ends with an overview of the objectives and politics of Iran and Saudi Arabia with regard to developments in Afghanistan, and the timebomb that Pakistan has created for itself through its deep but blind involvement in the Afghan war. This 'blind war' includes dealings in narcotics and weapons. Trained extremist Sunnis threaten the very survival of a state where political power has become totally fragmented and which is diplomatically isolated.

The competitive attempts to strike deals in Central Asia and Afghanistan between Bidas and Unocal is well researched and documented. There is insightful documentation about the role of the religious schools, the

transport mafia and the Pakistani Intelligence Service and members of the Saudi Royal Family who support the Taliban. At a deeper level, however, lurk the failed US and CIA policies that for years supported the most radical 'mujahedin' parties, and then abandoned Afghanistan when there was a chance for peace.

Resources

'The Limits and Scope for the Use of Development Assistance Incentives and Disincentives for Influencing Conflict Situations. Case study Afghanistan' (1999) K Van Brabant and T Killick (Development Assistance Committee) available at <www.oecd.org/dac/html/pubsfoc.htm> under Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation.

Sanctioning Saddam. The Politics of Intervention in Iraq (1999) S Graham-Brown London, IB Tauris

The relationship of the international (read Western) community with Iraq cannot be considered from the moment Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990. Essential to the story are the relationships during the 1980s when Iraq was perceived as a large export market for arms and other products, and even more so as a strategic ally against Iran after its Islamic revolution in 1979. This 'friendly' attitude allowed the regime in Baghdad to get away with the bloody Anfal campaign in 1988/89 against its Kurdish minority in the north, in which chemical weapons were used.

Beyond its withdrawal from Kuwait and associated concessions, the Allied coalition has not had much consensus over the political objectives of its sanctions and attempted coercion by force. But it is clear that there has never been any serious interest in addressing the question of governance and the political conflict between communities in Iraq.

A major objective of the Allied coalition is to maintain Iraq as a state – hence the deferential rhetoric about Iraq's 'sovereignty'. Political objectives have shifted from a withdrawal from, recognition of, and compensation to, Kuwait, to the downfall of Saddam's

regime. As he stays in power 'dual containment' of Iraq and Iran is now the objective: Iraq is kept under pressure to prevent it from becoming a threat again, but not so much that the state would be weakened to the point of collapse. The uprisings in northern and southern Iraq in 1991 were a consequence of the international rhetoric and military action. But the Allied coalition wanted a 'coup' not mass uprisings, as this could have led to a break-up of Iraq. This explains why international sanctions were also maintained against the northern governorates so as not to signal an erosion of the integrity of the Iraqi state. The 'no-fly' zones were never intended to be real 'safe havens', and no effective measures were taken to protect the mainly Shia population in southern Iraq from renewed repression. The comparative stronger attention paid to the mainly Kurdish northern governorates has more to do with avoiding a refugee crisis, especially towards NATO-member Turkey, than sympathy for the political plight of the Kurdish minority. (Turkey's strategic interests easily outweigh the question of the rights of the Kurds.)

Soon after its withdrawal from Kuwait, and the uprisings in the north and south, Saddam's regime re-established control over Iraq. Lack of international support and the brutality of repression made this possible. Since then the ruling elite has consolidated its power through a mixture of patronage and privilege, persecution and forced displacement. An internal embargo was established against the north, while the southern marshes are being drained – ostensibly to increase agricultural production but in reality more to destroy a hiding place for the opposition. Through control of the official and parallel economy along with the ration system, and through selective patronage and divide-and-rule tactics, the ruling elite has managed to stay in power. It has appealed to primordial tribal, clan and family loyalties, and manipulated tribal and religious leaders into support or acquiescence. Establishing collective family responsibility for the acts of any individual member has also become a powerful disincentive to visible opposition. Yet the politics of

patronage have not been matched by changes in social policy or by efforts to increase domestic production to mitigate the effects of sanctions. As a result many Iraqis have become impoverished, especially the salaried middle class whose purchasing power has collapsed under hyperinflation. The impacts on health and on education, the rise in crime and probably in domestic violence, and the 'dissavings' of households, are well known. The gap between a small group of 'haves' and many 'have nots' has increased.

The actual sanctions policy and practical interpretation of security council resolutions is made by the Sanctions Committee, made up of the 15 members of the Security Council. Every member has a veto. Until 1995 its deliberations were secret. The fact that it is tasked both with enforcing the trade sanctions and deciding on humanitarian exemptions constitutes a conflict of interest with differing, and politically rather than legally inspired, interpretations of what constitutes 'humanitarian'. The author holds that the oil-for-food programme (OFF), operational since 1996, does not signal a humanitarian concern. Rather, it only serves to reduce the public criticism about the trade sanctions so that the overall sanctions regime can be maintained. Whereas the Iraqi government is accused of delaying for years the implementation of the OFF programme, the revenues of oil sales are not only to be used for humanitarian imports but also for compensation payments and for UN expenses, including those of UNSCOM. The humanitarian requirements should have been de-linked from the other, political issues. Humanitarian aid can also never compensate for the macroeconomic decline caused by comprehensive sanctions.

From the beginning the UN in Iraq was put on the defensive as it continued to operate on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Iraq, which had to be renewed periodically. The movements of UN staff in the centre-south were severely restricted and the Government disputed the right of the UN to identify and target the

vulnerable groups. Most NGOs, who did not want to sign an MoU and did not feel they could make a difference under such sanctions, chose to operate in the north. But by 1997, the party-patronage politics and escalating conflict between the Kurdish parties was overriding NGO capacity to support the recovery in the north. Other undermining factors were the ongoing short-termism, with OFF programmes having to be renewed every six months, and the mistaken import of food into the north that undermined the recovery of local agricultural production.

Many elements of the approach to the Kosovo crisis mirror actions against Iraq in 1991: 'military humanitarianism', bilateral actions that bypass the UN, and concern about preventing and reversing large scale refugee flows in areas of strategic interest. The air strikes against Iraq by US and UK forces in December 1998 led to the expulsion of UNSCOM and the end of on-the-ground verification, just as the NATO bombing of Serbia in February 1999 signalled the end of the Kosovo Verification Mission. In both cases only sanctions, air strikes and the selective allocation of aid remain as major instruments of pressure. There is one more parallel – after a decade of pressure with sanctions and force, Milosevic, just like Saddam, still remains in power. The costs of 'containment' continues to accumulate. Time to review the policy?

Resource

<www.un.org/Depts/oip> Website of Office for Iraqi Programme; <www.un.org/Depts/oip/panelrep.html> A strong critique of the economic sanctions by the Humanitarian Panel, created by the UN Security Council.

<www.cam.ac.uk/societies/casi> website of the Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq.

<www.cam.ac.uk/societies/casi/info/biblio/html> CASI's bibliography on sanctions on Iraq.

<www.unicef.org/reseval/iraqr.htm> preliminary results of the 1999 Iraq child and maternal mortality surveys indicating high excess deaths in the 1990s, which

this report however does not explicitly attribute to sanctions. <<http://fourthfreedom.org/sanctions/garfield.html>> 'Morbidity and Mortality among Iraqi Children from 1990 through 1998', best scientific study available on excess deaths but also problems with survey methodology and interpretation.

How Sanctions Work: Lessons from South Africa (1999) by N. Crawford & A. Klotz (eds) London/Basingstoke, MacMillan/New York, St. Martin's Press.

Those who believe that Iraq offers the longest experience of sanctions are mistaken. Rhodesia/Zimbabwe was subjected to sanctions for 15 years, while South Africa experienced an incremental number of sanctions for almost 50 years until the elections in 1994. Sanctions were imposed for two major reasons: to end 'apartheid' and promote democratic transition, and to stop South Africa's (SA) occupation of Namibia and involvement in the Angolan and Mozambican conflicts. This book explores the role of sanctions in achieving the desired policy changes in South Africa and, through case study material, the larger question of the efficacy of sanctions as a tool of influence.

The book is a novelty in the sanctions literature because it does not primarily rely on the perceptions and analyses of those imposing the sanctions, which inevitably tend to be somewhat speculative and based on assumptions about 'influence' and 'change'. Rather, it goes into depth about the political, economic and social transformations in SA over four decades, drawing on national information resources and on insider perspectives and opinions. Some of the main findings are:

- The arms embargoes and oil sanctions had limited direct impact. SA was able to bust sanctions and also invested in import-substituting industries. However, this created a major indirect cost: the bill of illegal imports and national self-reliance was a significant additional burden

on the economy. Over time the arms embargoes showed some impact in that SA lost access to advanced high technology, especially for its military aircraft. The recommendation for future arms embargoes therefore is to pay particular attention to high tech and machine tool transfers. At the same time the 'defence industry' became a leading economic sector in SA, which is now an arms exporter! An unforeseen consequence of the import substitution strategy has been the accelerated pace of industrialisation. The need for additional skilled manpower created opportunities for black South Africans, and for the development of black labour organisations.

- SA has uranium and, by playing off tendering companies against each other, managed to obtain the technology and training (from France) to produce enriched fuel.
- After 10 years of public pressure and the divestment movement international businesses began to pull out of South Africa. This 'do no harm' pressure on private companies had little economic significance but acquired a greater moral one when, in 1976, Sullivan of General Motors articulated principles intended to be a 'voluntary code of conduct' for companies doing business in SA, and an alternative to sanctions. The stated aim was to try and influence race relationships through their business behaviour in SA. Opponents argued that they did not want 'apartheid' made more comfortable, but abolished. By 1987 Sullivan conceded that his alternative policy was not working, and called for economic sanctions. By then US companies were already pulling out of SA. Inasmuch as they were present in strategic sectors this created a major worry among SA's business class as well as about the sensibility of continuing 'apartheid'.
- Financial sanctions on loans contributed to a debt crisis and put pressure on SA's business class.

Around 1983 the anti-apartheid movement started putting pressure on the IMF, which eventually refused additional loans on the grounds that 'apartheid' represented an economic impediment. The resulting increase in the cost of private foreign finance, together with conjunctural factors such as a fall in the price of gold and of the Rand and a high proportion of short-term debt, led to a liquidity crisis in 1985 and moratorium on debt repayments. The threat to SA's creditors of default eventually led to agreements for the rescheduling of debt, but it certainly created an economic depression. It added pressure to SA's business class, which sought increasing contact with the ANC leadership in Lusaka and urged the government to radically rethink the 'apartheid' policy.

- Diplomatic sanctions are not held to have exercised any direct influence on the decision-making of the SA leadership. But they legitimised and supported the domestic anti-apartheid movement, while denying legitimacy to the 'Bantustan' policy of SA's government.
- The so-called frontline states (FLS) in Southern Africa supported sanctions throughout, but had difficulty enforcing them. Many companies involved in sanctions busting established themselves in the FLS. Their support for sanctions carried a very high cost. Indeed, they were economically dependent on SA, and also vulnerable to surgical strikes in retaliation and larger destabilisation efforts in Angola and Mozambique. Still, an indirect effect of sanctions against SA has been the development of alternative transport and trade routes between the FLS, which has facilitated the recent maturing of a Southern Africa Development Community (SADC).

A number of important conclusions can be derived from this detailed case analysis:

- The economic sanctions were never total: private entrepreneurs busted

sanctions; so too governments such as Iran which continued to sell oil for many years; the European Community was a major importer of SA gold and coal, SA's primary foreign exchange earners.

- Sanctions legitimised the national and international anti-apartheid movements. Yet whereas public mobilisation may be necessary, it is not sufficient. Official governmental sanctions are needed for them to bite.
- South Africa resisted for a long time, due to its particular strengths, which included capable state institutions and a strong natural resource base. The economic structure of a target therefore is an important variable.
- Different sanctions have different timeframes for impact. A sports boycott affects only very slowly, arms embargoes also take time to hurt, whereas financial sanctions may impact much more quickly.

- 'Banker' sanctions are seen as much easier to enforce and more effective than trade sanctions because financial sanctions follow the logic of the market; trade sanctions go against that logic. Indeed, being the only supplier brings high profits to the trader, who therefore has a powerful incentive to stay in the market. Being the only supplier, however, brings high vulnerability to the banker, who therefore has an incentive to stay out.

- The sanctions against SA had limited direct economic impact; nor did they represent a strong direct pressure on its government. Their impact was more gradual and indirect by slowly eroding the economic, political and social powerbase of the regime. It was this social transformation – in which first mostly the black population, but then also white mostly business class came to contest 'apartheid' policy, that eventually brought about change.

The final changes in policy cannot be attributed to individual sanctions in

any direct way. Rather it was the cumulative and dynamic interplay of events and effects, and of international and domestic policies, that eventually led to the fragmentation of the elite and affected state capability. Assessing the vulnerability of a target government to sanctions, therefore, requires an in-depth understanding of the domestic, regional and global political economy.

Resources

<www.smartsanctions.ch> various papers on sanctions, especially financial sanctions.

<www.bicc.de/conference> papers of a working process on travel bans and arms embargoes.

<www.fourthfreedom.org/sanctions>.

<www.oneworld.org/odi/rrn/pubs/others.html> see the sanctions conference report and the annotated bibliography on sanctions.

<www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmintdev.html> *The Future of Sanctions*, Report of the International Development Committee, House of Commons, UK Parliament.

CHANGES TO THE RRN/HPN NEWSLETTER

The HPN will be publishing a new format Newsletter with a change of name. The successor to the current Newsletter will be published twice a year: in March/April and in October/November.

The new HPN Newsletter will be quite different from the old RRN Newsletter as it will drop the country update, training, conferences, and book review sections of the current format. This is in line with suggestions made in the RRN External Review which highlighted, for example, that most people consult ReliefWeb for country update information. The new HPN Newsletter will include the following:

- **Main Feature:** A key theme around which several types of contributions are organised.
- **Practice Notes:** Short articles on topics other than that of the main theme.
- **Policies and Institutions:** Updates and critical reviews of policy debates and initiatives, and institutional developments.
- **People:** More personal accounts and testimony of people dealing with 'crisis'; mostly aid workers.
- **Resource Gateway:** Thematically organised references to publications, organisations, websites, email services etc.
- **Executive summaries** of new HPN publications.

In this way the new HPN Newsletter will avoid duplicating work done by others while incorporating instead interesting and creative new contents and providing greater opportunity for 'voice'/news from the field.

Please contact us if you are interested in contributing

Visit the HPN website at www.odihpn.org.uk

And Finally

The RRN Team

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

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Don't forget that as of 1 April
2000 the

RRN

will be known as the Humanitarian
Practice Network, or HPN

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 has just completed its second three-year phase (1996 – March 2000) during which it was supported by: DANIDA (Denmark), SIDA (Sweden), the Department of Foreign Affairs (Ireland), the Department for International Development (UK), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Netherlands), and OFDA/USAID (USA). This is the last newsletter to be produced under the name of the RRN.

RRN Objective

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

RRN 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.

RRN 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.

RRN 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



OFDA/USAID

Department of Foreign Affairs,
Ireland

DFID Department for
International
Development

Netherlands *Ministerie van*
Buitenlandse Zaken/Ministry of Foreign Affairs