

Humanitarian Exchange

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About HPN

The Humanitarian Practice Network at the Overseas Development Institute is an independent forum where field workers, managers and policymakers in the humanitarian sector share information, analysis and experience. *The views and opinions expressed in HPN's publications do not necessarily state or reflect those of the Humanitarian Policy Group or the Overseas Development Institute.*

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This issue of *Humanitarian Exchange* focuses on the crisis in Darfur, Sudan. Since conflict began in early 2003, an estimated 180,000–400,000 people have died as a result of violence. The crisis has been labelled 'genocide' by the United States, the first time that this has happened since Rwanda in 1994. Yet legal and political recognition of the extent of the suffering has not translated into a robust and effective response. UN Security Council discussions and resolutions, diplomatic activity and the threat of sanctions have yielded some significant improvements in humanitarian access. Peacekeepers from the African Union (AU) have also been deployed. But these efforts have failed to halt the violence, or protect millions of people from the forcible displacement, rape and indiscriminate killing which have characterised the conflict. Meanwhile, attempts by the humanitarian community to fill the 'protection gap' through field presence and global advocacy have had only limited effect.

In this context, humanitarian agencies have been able to do little more than provide a palliative, albeit an important one. Contributors to this issue highlight some of the key obstacles agencies have faced, from insecurity and difficult logistics to government obstruction and bureaucratic delay. Agencies have also found it difficult to shift their programming from a developmental to a humanitarian mode, and to achieve sufficient scale. But this issue also reflects on some real achievements, both by the affected communities themselves and by relief workers.



Despite the huge upheavals facing them, people and communities are surviving. Rich social networks exist and are being created, and these are playing a critical role in enabling people to protect their assets and obtain life-saving services. However, as so often, the voice of the people affected by violence is being lost. Their capacity to influence the shape of humanitarian action remains very limited.

This makes Jan Egeland's contribution, on accountability, particularly timely. Egeland, the UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, writes on this issue at a global level. In relation to Sudan, other articles raise this question with regard to the warring parties, NGOs and third-party governments. An account of the British parliamentary International Development Committee's work on Darfur describes its role in ensuring an accountable international humanitarian system.

Alongside these provocative and informative pieces on Darfur, this issue offers a typically rich array of more general articles. These range from an analysis of the financial effects of the Indian Ocean tsunami to current issues in humanitarian security, psychosocial planning and agricultural rehabilitation. As ever, your feedback and views on all the pieces contained here, as well as ideas for further issues, would be welcomed.



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Darfur and the dynamics of crisis management

François Grünewald, Groupe URD

Darfur has always been a region apart in Sudan. The region is part of a contact zone between Saharan nomadic people, Sahelian agro-pastoral groups and more sedentary farming communities. The belt from Darfur to the Eritrean border comprises a mosaic of ethnic groups organised into tribes and clans with highly intricate and heterogeneous inter-community relationships. These relationships have now been brutally ruptured by the conflict there. Nearly two million people have been affected, hundreds of thousands are internally displaced or have become refugees, villages have been razed, women raped and men massacred. This article explores the complex roots of the war, the nature of the international political and humanitarian response to it, and its possible future evolution.

Background to the conflict

Disputes over land and grazing rights have been a regular feature of Darfur for centuries. Historically, these disputes were settled through traditional conflict-solving mechanisms such as the 'blood price', and inter-communal tensions were not allowed to undermine stability. Since the mid-1990s, however, communal relations in Darfur have progressively deteriorated. Darfur was effectively sidelined by the central government in Khartoum, which broke it down into three states, Southern, Northern and Western Darfur, and appointed non-Fur administrators to govern the region.

Guerrilla groups opposed to the Khartoum regime began to form in 2000. The Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), with its political wing the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM), follows the organisational pattern of insurgent groups in the south of the country, and is marked by internal wrangling and the formation of splinter groups. The second rebel group, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), is well-established in the Jebel Moon heights; it is reportedly run by Hassan Turabi, the head of a radical Islamist movement, the National Islamic Front, and a former prime minister.

disputes over land and grazing rights have been a feature of Darfur for centuries

The SLA/M and JEM launched their insurgencies against the government early in 2003. The government responded with a large offensive based on aerial bombardment. Following a strategy first used in the conflict

in the south, the regime also gave tacit encouragement to tribal militia, known as the *Janjaweed*. The *Janjaweed* has staged raids on villages and displaced populations throughout Darfur. A peace deal agreed in April 2004 has not held, and peace initiatives by Libya, Uganda and other African countries, as well as efforts by the UN, have all failed. The two main rebel groups, though increasingly divided internally, have remained resolute in their demands for more autonomy for Darfur, and for greater access to development resources. They believe that the climate is favourable, and that they may gain international recognition.

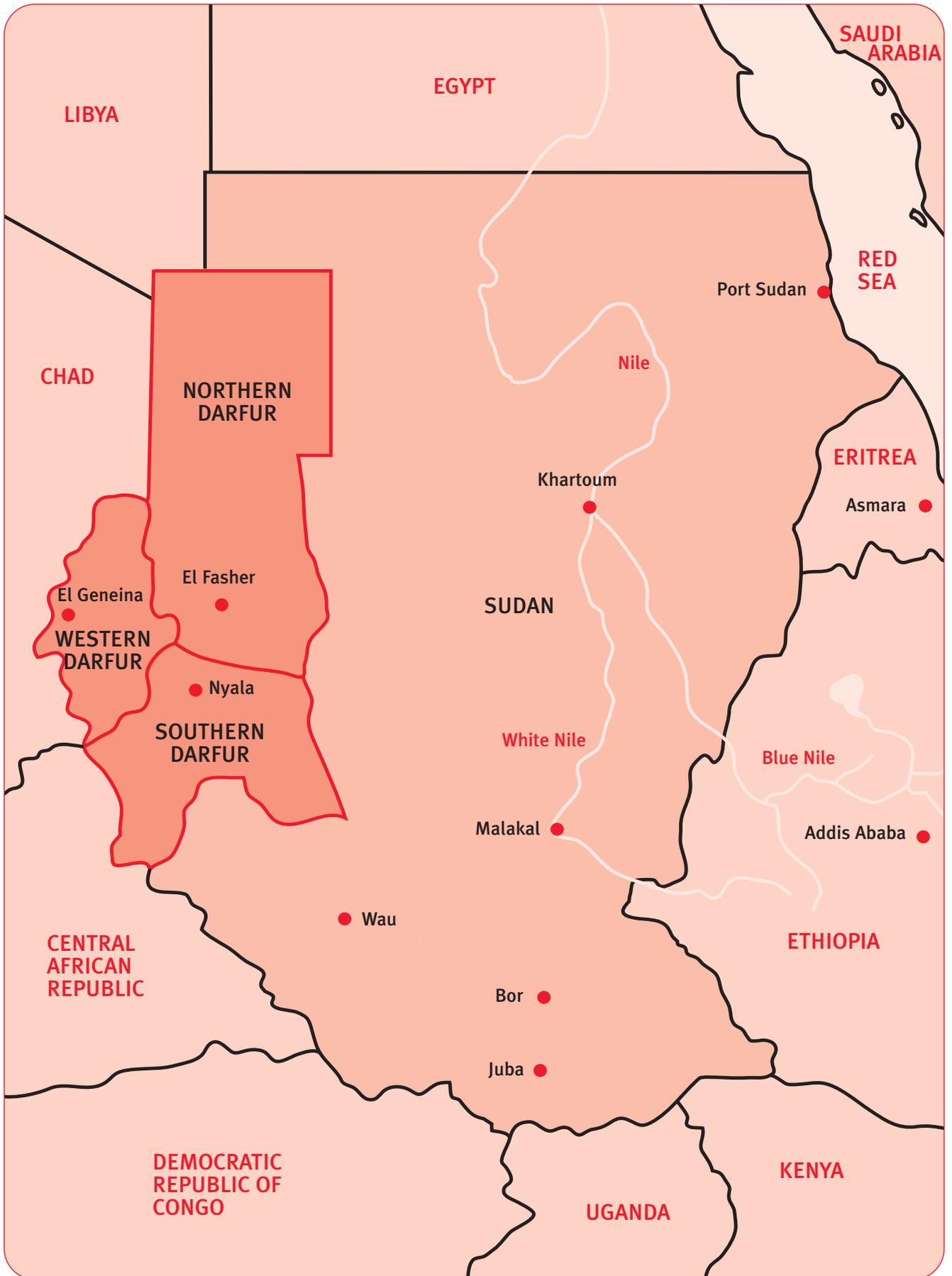
Although the situation appeared to stabilise in late 2004, a further dramatic escalation in the conflict in spring 2005 prompted the UN and some NGOs to withdraw their staff, and the UN has called on aid agencies to reassess their strategies. Meanwhile, a second front, on the other side of the country towards Kaballa and Port Sudan, threatens to become entangled in the Darfur conflict.

The international response

The international community was slow to respond to the unfolding conflict in Darfur. Highly sensitive negotiations towards a resolution of the conflict in Southern Sudan were under way, and international actors did not want to jeopardise them by raising concerns about Darfur. The escalation of fighting in Darfur also coincided with crises elsewhere, notably in Iraq; Darfur's obscure conflict, played out in the depths of the desert, looked like 'yet another African civil war'.

When the crisis first began, in the spring of 2003, only a handful of agencies, including UNICEF and some NGOs, were present in Darfur, and only a limited response was possible. Resources were meagre, and the scale of the developing crisis had yet to become clear. Efforts to develop an appropriate response were also hampered by the Khartoum regime's refusal to ease administrative procedures for visas and travel permits, by logistical constraints and by insecurity. The town of El Geneina, the capital of Western Darfur and the furthestmost point inland in Africa, had only a dirt airstrip, and roads were regularly inaccessible during the rainy season.

The crisis finally came to international prominence in spring 2004, when the UN Resident Coordinator in Sudan, Mukesh Kapila, launched an appeal for assistance. Kapila drew a parallel between the events in Darfur and the 1994 Rwanda genocide. This served as a highly effective trigger, and vast quantities of humanitarian assistance began to flood in.



THE CRISIS IN DARFUR

Senior managers from the main UN agencies, ministers from different countries, even the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, all flocked to Darfur's bedside. Eventually, after months of international pressure, the Sudanese government accelerated the system for visas and travel permits to Darfur. Funds were disbursed, NGOs began to set up offices and projects got under way. Within months, energetic, if poorly coordinated, interventions had seen thousands of latrines dug, complex and costly water-distribution systems installed, a health system put in place and thousands of tonnes of food aid delivered by means of spectacular air drops. Contrary to all expectations, there was no cholera epidemic, but water-borne diseases (especially hepatitis E and diarrhoea), malaria and acute respiratory infections, remain silent killers. Malnutrition rates dropped significantly, and in many areas nutrition problems are now mainly linked to disease rather than food availability.

the international community was slow to respond to the unfolding conflict in Darfur

Issues facing the international response

A major issue is the protection of the civilian population (see Victoria Wheeler's article on page 11). This is obviously inextricably linked to the nature of the crisis. The international community remains poorly organised and lacks a coherent and solid strategy. African Union (AU) troops have made courageous, but as yet ineffective, attempts to protect the Darfur population and aid workers, and to ensure that the ceasefire agreement between the Sudanese government and the rebel groups is respected. Despite the AU's decision in late April 2005 to double its deployment to nearly 8,000 soldiers, the inadequate number of troops and their lack of equipment, complex rules of engagement and the fear of becoming caught up in inter-tribal conflict all hamper the AU's peacekeeping efforts.

Security is another crucial issue. Extending relief along the thousands of kilometres of poor desert tracks makes aid agencies very vulnerable, and several parties have tried to use insecurity as a means to get their views taken into account. The UN security organ UNSECOORD has to manage the security of UN agencies in a 'risk adverse' manner, which ends up limiting access to the population. In many areas, only NGOs can reach people, and this is not without risk. Very strict security mechanisms are in place, and UN organisations must comply with compulsory Minimum Operational Security Standards (MOSS). While avoiding humanitarian casualties is clearly an important concern, these security provisions also constitute a paramount constraint on humanitarian work. They limit external contacts, and bring the management of aid workers under the full control of former members of the military, who might have a different understanding of humanitarian needs and the humanitarian agenda – widening the gap between NGOs and the overprotective UN.

A final issue concerns the process of identifying needs and planning responses. Many of the agency staff deployed to Darfur had little field experience, and projects were frequently designed at head office or country office level. Planning was based mainly on the application of the Sphere standards: the initial 90-day plan was prepared against Sphere in terms of needs assessments and community participation. To meet quantitative targets, private companies were subcontracted to dig latrines and drill boreholes. Quantity is not, however, the same as quality, and the use of sub-contractors has led to many (undisclosed) issues of quality. It is notable that agency visibility has been high on the agenda; in some camps, all the latrines and wells carry a flag with the name of the providing agency and of the donor.

Scenarios for the future

What does the future hold for Darfur, and for the aid agencies working there? The first hypothesis is that a status quo is reached, whereby the situation stops deteriorating, but hopes of finding a quick solution remain slim. If this happens, aid agencies should move towards a care and maintenance strategy, taking precautions to minimise the extent to which people become dependent on outside assistance, trying to stop aid exacerbating the rural-to-urban drift, and ensuring that host communities also benefit from humanitarian assistance.

Alternatively, the situation may continue to deteriorate, and increasingly hazardous security conditions may continue to prevent aid agencies from reaching people in need. Unfortunately, the events of the past few months seem to indicate that this remains the most likely outcome, whatever the result of semantic debates about the applicability of the terms 'genocide' and 'ethnic cleansing'. There is also a risk that the fighting may spill over into neighbouring Chad. The Chadian regime has ethnic and military links with the Darfur rebels; Chad's current president, Idriss Deby, launched the coup that secured him the presidency from Darfur, and many of the ethnic groups involved in the Darfur conflict are present on both sides of the border. Meanwhile, the presence of tens of thousands of refugees in eastern Chad is beginning to weigh heavily on the region's environmental, water and financial resources. Should the Darfur conflict become internationalised, this raises the question whether Chapter VII of the UN Charter will have to be applied.

There are important lessons to be learnt from the Darfur experience in relation to the international community's capacity to anticipate crises in the making. In other humanitarian crises, the dangers of linking political and humanitarian agendas have been all too evident as political objectives have often prevailed over humanitarian principles. The need for political vision and the difficulties involved in achieving enough perspective in this type of situation remain essential, not only for the 'negotiators', but also for those modifying the demographic balance by the simple act of multiplying wells. These issues are by no means new, but rather classic dilemmas that crop up again and again for NGOs, the UN and institutional donors

alike. Is aid creating damaging 'push and pull' factors? Are we modifying situations drastically and for a long period by creating high levels of services for camps? Given previous cases (from the Thai–Cambodian border in the 1980s to the Zaire/Rwanda situations in the mid-1990s), there is a real sense of *déjà vu*.

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The UN Security Council's response to Darfur: a humanitarian perspective

Oliver Ulich, OCHA

The UN Security Council first considered the crisis in Darfur more than a year ago, on 2 April 2004. From the very outset, briefings to the Council characterised the events unfolding in Darfur as a crisis of protection, with large-scale atrocities and other human rights violations being at the root of the humanitarian emergency. The Council's involvement has helped open up and maintain humanitarian access, and its referral of the situation in Darfur to the International Criminal Court (ICC) has been hailed as a historic step. But the Council's response, combined with the gradual deployment of an African Union (AU) mission to Darfur, has not stopped the atrocities, nor has it provided adequate protection against other human rights violations. This article provides an overview of the Security Council's response to date, and offers a preliminary assessment.

Overview of the Security Council's response

Pressure on the Security Council to discuss the situation in Darfur grew steadily during the first three months of 2004, as ever-more detailed information became available on the atrocities there. Senior UN officials became increasingly vocal, and NGOs' advocacy efforts intensified. Some commentators also started referring to the events in Darfur as genocide. Throughout this period, the upcoming tenth anniversary of the Rwanda genocide on 7 April loomed large in the minds of many, including Council members.

The Security Council finally agreed to discuss Darfur on 2 April, although it did so under 'other matters', without

formally adding Sudan to its agenda. Jan Egeland, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, described to the Council how a combination of atrocities against civilians, the forced depopulation of entire areas, and severe access restrictions imposed by the Sudanese government were resulting in a massive humanitarian crisis. A week later, on 8 April, the Sudanese government and the two main rebel movements in Darfur, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), signed a humanitarian ceasefire agreement in N'Djamena, Chad.

Over the next four months, the Council discussed Darfur every few weeks and received a large number of briefings from senior humanitarian and human rights officials, as well as NGOs. Several of these briefings followed missions to Darfur; the picture presented in each of them was as devastating as it was consistent. On 25 May, the Security Council adopted its first presidential statement, which noted that 'hundreds of thousands of people' were at risk of dying. The statement also condemned 'indiscriminate attacks on civilians, sexual violence, forced displacement and acts of violence, especially those with an ethnic dimension'.

International attention reached a peak in late June and early July, when both the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Colin Powell, the US Secretary of State, visited Khartoum and Darfur. The Secretary-General's trip resulted in a number of important commitments from the Sudanese government, including an undertaking to

disarm the *Janjaweed*, and a moratorium on all access restrictions.

Around the same time, the US circulated a draft resolution on Darfur.¹ After several weeks of negotiations, on 30 July, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1556, calling on the Sudanese government to abide by its commitment to disarm the *Janjaweed*, and bring to justice those responsible for atrocities. The Council also requested that the Secretary-General report in 30 days, and monthly thereafter, on progress in meeting these demands, and declared its intention to consider further actions, ‘including measures as provided for in Article 41 of the Charter’. This threat of sanctions, without using the term itself, was the most controversial provision of the resolution and a primary reason for the abstention of two Council members, Pakistan and China, a permanent member. Another key provision was the imposition of an arms embargo on ‘all non-governmental entities and individuals, including the *Janjaweed*’, operating in Darfur. This excluded the Sudanese government itself.

international attention reached a peak in summer 2004

Following the Secretary-General’s first report, which stated that attacks against civilians were continuing and the vast majority of armed militias had not been disarmed, the Council adopted Resolution 1564 on 18 September. The most important new provision was a request to the Secretary-General to establish an international commission of inquiry on Darfur.² Similar to Resolution 1556, this second resolution contained a threat of ‘measures under Article 41 of the Charter’, but this time with an explicit reference to ‘actions to affect Sudan’s petroleum sector and the Government of Sudan or individual members of the Government’. Four Council members abstained, including two permanent members, China and Russia. Many NGOs were deeply disappointed by the absence of the more forceful measures that they

¹ Domestic pressure in the US had continued to increase, with the US House of Representatives passing a resolution on 23 July declaring that the atrocities constituted genocide, and urging the US administration to consider ‘multilateral or even unilateral intervention to prevent genocide should the United Nations Security Council fail to act’.

² The question of whether genocide was occurring in Darfur had become deeply controversial, with the African Union and the League of Arab States rejecting any such classification. US Secretary of State Colin Powell concluded on 9 September that ‘genocide has occurred and may still be occurring’.



Reuters/Anthony Njuguna/courtesy www.alterna.org

Smoke rises from a house in Tine on the Chad/Sudan border after a bomb attack by a Sudanese government aircraft, January 2004

had demanded in light of the Sudanese government’s failure to meet core Council demands, including an immediate oil embargo and targeted sanctions against government officials.

The Security Council, however, started moving in the opposite direction in October and early November 2004, refocusing its attention on the resolution of the North–South conflict. At a historic meeting of the Council in Nairobi, a unanimous resolution was adopted on 19 November endorsing a commitment by the warring parties to reach a final settlement by the end of the year. To attract all 15 Security Council votes, the resolution’s language on Darfur was significantly weaker than in the two previous resolutions.

Following the signature of the comprehensive peace agreement between the Sudanese government and the Southern rebel group the SPLM on 9 January 2005, attention again started shifting to Darfur. The report of the commission of inquiry reached the Security Council on 31 January. It described atrocities in Darfur in devastating detail, and strongly recommended a referral to the ICC.³

After two months of difficult negotiations, the Council accepted this recommendation, and on 31 March referred the situation to the ICC prosecutor. Three days earlier, it had also adopted targeted sanctions, including a travel ban and an asset freeze, against individuals accused of violating human rights and humanitarian law, and extended the arms embargo on Darfur to all parties to the ceasefire agreement, thus including the Sudanese government.

³ On the issue of genocide, the Commission concluded that the Sudanese government has not pursued a policy of genocide, although ‘in some instances individuals, including Government officials, may commit acts with genocidal intent’. The report also added that ‘the crimes against humanity and war crimes that have been committed in Darfur may be no less serious and heinous than genocide’.

A preliminary assessment

A full analysis of the Council's response, including political and other factors, is well beyond the scope of this article. This preliminary assessment of the impact of Council therefore looks at three key areas: access, protection and impunity.

Access

Lifting the Sudanese government's restrictions on access to Darfur was the most important humanitarian objective in the spring of 2004. Here, the Council's involvement, starting in early April, combined with bilateral interventions and advocacy by senior UN officials, undoubtedly increased the pressure on the government. These efforts bore fruit on 21 May, when the government announced a number of measures to facilitate access, including the issuing of visas within 48 hours and the waiving of permit requirements for travel to Darfur. A steady but ultimately dramatic increase in humanitarian capacity on the ground followed. By March 2005, some 10,000 national and international relief workers were in Darfur. The ability of UN officials to bring access issues to the Council's attention, including through the monthly reports of the Secretary-General on Darfur, has also served as an important source of leverage in negotiations in Khartoum and Darfur, where UN officials are engaged in almost daily exchanges with Sudanese officials on access and related issues.

by March 2005, some 10,000 national and international relief workers were in Darfur

Protection of civilians and the role of the African Union

The Security Council's efforts to enhance the protection of civilians included a number of elements: appeals to the parties to the conflict to respect the ceasefire and end all violence; demands to disarm the *Janjaweed*, combined with the threat of sanctions; the imposition of the arms embargo at the end of July 2004; support for the AU mission in Darfur; and – in late March 2005 – the imposition of targeted sanctions.

The impact of these measures has, however, been limited. The overall level of violence against civilians remained high throughout 2004, with some variations. Taking the total number of internally displaced people (IDPs) as a barometer, neither of the Council's resolutions in July and September stopped the relentless increase, from one million in June to 1.6 million in October, and more than 1.8 million by December. The same seems to be true for the flow of arms into Darfur, despite the imposition of the arms embargo in late July 2004, for which no specific monitoring or enforcement mechanisms were established. Other measures and demands have also seen little if any compliance: since September 2004, there has been no evidence of disarmament, and the Council's demand that the Sudanese government cease military flights over

Darfur, first stated in Resolution 1556, has been repeatedly violated.

There were also several periods of escalating violence that did not elicit any particular Council response; indeed, an upsurge in violence in late November 2004 may have been directly linked to the 19 November Security Council meeting, which apparently motivated both sides to adopt a more aggressive posture on the ground. Government and militia forces also undertook large-scale operations in early December and mid-January, displacing tens of thousands of people.

Whenever the need for protection by international forces on the ground has been discussed, Security Council members have turned to the AU. In late May 2004, the AU had been asked by the parties to monitor the 8 April ceasefire agreement, initially with 60 observers and some 300 protection elements. In late July, the AU's Peace and Security Council requested a comprehensive plan on how best to enhance the mission which, almost three months later, on 20 October, resulted in a decision to expand the mission to 3,320 personnel. By late April 2005, six months on, about 2,400 of them had been deployed, and the Peace and Security Council decided to expand the mission further, to 7,730 by September 2005. There has been a general consensus that the AU mission, AMIS, has been remarkably effective wherever it has actually been deployed, while its actual size on the ground, level of mobility and pace of deployment have been regarded as insufficient. By relying exclusively on the AU to establish an international security presence in Darfur, the Security Council has effectively limited the response in this area to what has been within the AU's capacity, a constraint well known to Council members.

Apart from repeated calls for support to the AU and welcoming its 'leadership role' and plans for expansion, the UN Security Council's posture towards the AU's role in Darfur has been one of respectful distance. It has not given the AU mission a direct mandate, nor has it asked for regular briefings, as it could do under Article 54 of the UN Charter. Both the demand for 'African solutions for African problems' and the general desire to strengthen the AU have no doubt played an important role in influencing the Council's stance. Even some of the most vocal NGOs have been reluctant to argue against a lead role for the AU, despite frustrations about its lack of capacity and the slow pace of deployment. At the same time, the Secretary-General has repeatedly reminded the Security Council of its ultimate responsibility for international peace and security under the UN Charter.

Impunity

With the request for a commission of inquiry on 18 September, the Council set in motion a process that resulted in the ICC referral in Resolution 1593 on 31 March 2005. In retrospect, this may well be viewed as the most significant step taken by the Council in response to the Darfur crisis. Of all the Council's resolutions on Darfur, this is also the only one that has been rejected by the Sudanese government, at least so far. It is too early to tell what

precise impact the referral, together with the targeted sanctions, will have on the situation on the ground, and at what stage of the process. But there was a significant increase in tensions in Khartoum and Darfur following the resolution, and there is great concern that action by the ICC prosecutor (or the sanctions committee) could contribute to a deterioration in the security situation for humanitarian staff. There have also been specific threats by militias to retaliate against IDPs in case of ICC action.

Competing objectives

There is a problematic interrelationship in the case of Darfur between the different objectives of access, protection and ending impunity. The security risks associated with international prosecutions and targeted sanctions in an ongoing conflict may well result in decreased access, as they already have in some cases in reaction to specific threats. Increased access also seems to have reduced the political pressure for action on protection: during the summer of 2004, when international attention on Darfur was at its peak, the opening up of access and the massive build-up of humanitarian

capacity that followed meant that humanitarian conditions gradually improved, at least in those areas accessible to the media. This ‘humanitarian plaster’ significantly reduced the pressure emanating from the domestic media and constituencies that ultimately drive the international response. The relatively successful delivery of relief, in other words, has become a mixed blessing, both for those advocating for more effective protection, and for those exposed to the continuing violence. No doubt the large international humanitarian presence has had some positive impact on the level of protection, but it remains concentrated in too few locations, and can never be a substitute for an effective security presence that is mandated and equipped to protect civilians. Such a presence may finally become a reality when the expanded AU mission is deployed by September 2005, 18 months after the Security Council first discussed Darfur.

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Protecting Darfur? Parliamentary accountability in the UK

Alan Hudson, International Development Committee, UK

If there is any useful lesson that can be drawn from the events of April 1994, it is surely one about just how personal genocide is: for those who are killed, of course, but also for those who kill, and for those, however far away, who just do nothing. Our governments are no better than we are. The United Nations is no better than its governments. Lt.-Gen. Romeo Dallaire, UN force commander during the Rwandan genocide.¹

The British parliament is a world away from the sprawling displacement camps in Darfur. But it would be a mistake to dismiss it as irrelevant to the situation there. The UK – as a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, as a leading country in the ‘global war on terror’, and as a nation with a long history in Sudan – is a key player as regards Darfur. The actions and inactions of the British government shape the landscape for humanitarian action there, as well as the prospects for progress towards a political resolution. Parliament is an important forum in which humanitarian agencies, NGOs, voters and citizens can hold the British government to account. Select Committees, along with parliamentary debates and questions to Ministers, are an important mechanism of parliamentary accountability.

The role of the International Development Committee (IDC)

The International Development Committee (IDC) was set up in 1997, at the same time as the Department for International Development (DFID) was established as a separate department of government. It consists of 11 Members of Parliament (MPs), drawn from Britain’s three main political parties. Formally, the IDC monitors and scrutinises the policies, practice, expenditure and administration of DFID. In practice, it keeps a close eye on UK development policy and practice across government: when issues and policies dealt with by other departments impact on development (for example on migration, trade and investment, arms exports or agricultural subsidies); and when the UK is working with international partners in the fight against global poverty (for example with the EU, the World Bank and the UN, and at the World Trade Organisation). International development issues do not respect bureaucratic or national borders. Neither, if the aim is effective scrutiny to enhance accountability and to encourage coherent development policy and practice, should parliamentary scrutiny.

The IDC, like all Select Committees, works by conducting inquiries on topics of its own choosing, and then producing reports, which include recommendations to the government. The government does not have to take up these recommendations, but it does have to respond in

¹ Romeo Dallaire, ‘Lessons from Rwanda’, *International Herald Tribune*, 11 April 2005.

detail within a two-month deadline. Once it has decided to begin an inquiry, the IDC invites the submission of written evidence, and arranges oral evidence sessions with invited expert witnesses. The invitation to submit written evidence is open to all, with particular efforts made to engage with organisations based in developing countries, as well as with diaspora organisations in the UK. Overseas visits can be made in connection with particular inquiries. The evidence collected provides the basis for the reports that follow, and is published alongside the reports themselves. With its reports based firmly on the evidence collected, the IDC has worked by consensus. In the event of disagreement, reports can be voted on and dissenting opinions published.

In the 2001–2005 parliament, the IDC covered thematic issues (on trade, migration, policy coherence, European aid, arms exports, financing for development, climate change and DFID's agriculture policy); humanitarian issues in specific places (Afghanistan, Iraq and Southern Africa); and UK policy relating to particular places (India, Kenya, the Occupied Palestinian Territories). Short inquiries were also held on the international financial institutions, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and intellectual property rights and development. The IDC has had a constructive relationship with DFID, with both entities seemingly regarding the existence and effective operation of the other as beneficial in their shared goal of fighting global poverty.

The IDC's inquiry on Darfur

In July 2004, the IDC decided to conduct an inquiry on Darfur, responding no doubt to media coverage and to concerns expressed to MPs by their constituents. The overall aims of the IDC's inquiry were to examine the effectiveness of the international community's response to the crisis in Darfur, to promote a more effective response and to ensure that, once the immediate crisis was over, the international community would remain engaged. Written submissions were received from 20 organisations, including governments, UN agencies, development and humanitarian NGOs, human rights organisations and research institutes. Evidence sessions were held with NGOs and human rights organisations, and with Hilary Benn, the Secretary of State for International Development.

In January 2005, the IDC made a week-long visit to Sudan. It spent time in the south (Rumbek and Leer), to provide some context; time in Khartoum, to meet representatives of NGOs, UN agencies, the British embassy and the Sudanese government; and three days in Darfur. Based in Nyala, the IDC visited six camps for internally displaced people (IDPs), as well as El Fasher and Zaleingei. The MPs spoke to IDPs, and held meetings with UN agencies, the African Union (AU), NGOs, human rights organisations and government officials. It was a brief but very intensive visit, which enabled the IDC to learn a great deal. On its return, the IDC held further evidence sessions with Jan Egeland (the UN's Emergency Relief Coordinator) and Mukesh Kapila (the UN's Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator

for Sudan until April 2004). Another session was also held with Hilary Benn.

The IDC's report was published on 30 March 2005. The report found that the Sudanese government and its allied militias had committed, encouraged and condoned widespread and systematic war crimes and crimes against humanity against the people of Darfur. The report was also heavily critical of the international community for its failure to protect the people of Darfur. Emphasising that the blame for the crisis and for hindering effective humanitarian relief in Darfur rests primarily with the Sudanese government, the report described a catalogue of failings by the international community – by governments including the UK, by the humanitarian system and by the UN Security Council.

the IDC's report found that the Sudanese government and its allied militias had committed, encouraged and condoned widespread and systematic war crimes and crimes against humanity against the people of Darfur

The report's conclusions regarding the humanitarian response were also critical. Early warnings about the emerging crisis were ignored; humanitarian agencies were slow to respond; responsibilities for helping displaced people and managing camps were unclear; and the UN suffered from an avoidable lack of leadership in Sudan at a critical time. On the political side, the IDC's report described the priority given to the North–South peace process in Sudan by the international community in 2003 and the first half of 2004 as 'misguided', saying that it had had predictable and deadly consequences for Darfur. A 'whole of Sudan' approach to peace-building was possible, preferable and would have provided a more secure basis for building a sustainable country-wide peace.

The report recommended more concerted pressure on all sides in the conflict to enable a more effective humanitarian response, to protect civilians, to enhance security and to encourage progress towards a political solution. It also called for a stronger mandate and more troops for the AU mission in Darfur, a clear strategy and generous international support. The AU, the report concludes, must not become an excuse for inaction by others. The IDC also recommended that the Darfur situation be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC), and that there should be targeted sanctions and an extension of the UN arms embargo to cover the Sudanese government.

Impact, accountability and the policy process

The IDC's report received a great deal of national and international media coverage. This is not an indicator of

policy impact, but it can have an indirect impact by heightening awareness and leading to public demands for action. Since publishing its report, the IDC has received feedback from the World Health Organisation, which was stung by criticism of its widely-cited, limited and misleading mortality data, and from UNHCR, which was keen to emphasise the role it has played in Darfur and to explain the constraints under which it was working.² The British government's response was due in June 2005, and a parliamentary debate on Darfur may be arranged to discuss the IDC's report and the government's reply.

A major theme of the IDC's report was that shared responsibilities to protect, and for development, will be poorly met unless those responsible – governments, humanitarian agencies and international organisations, including the UN – are accountable for their actions and inactions. If the international humanitarian system had been more accountable, and had learnt more from past responses, then it would surely have responded more effectively to the crisis in Darfur. If the Sudanese government had been more accountable for its actions, to its citizens or, failing that, to the international community, then the crisis in Darfur would not have escalated as it has. And if the international community, in particular the UN Security Council, was more clearly accountable to those governments and people who take seriously their responsibilities to protect, and to the people of Darfur, then it would surely have acted more decisively.

if the international humanitarian system had been more accountable, then it would surely have responded more effectively to the crisis in Darfur

Following a string of toothless resolutions, the UN Security Council took some action in the last week of March 2005. First, it approved the deployment of 10,000 troops to support the peace in the south of Sudan; this mission might in time play a role in Darfur. Second, a process was put in place which will lead to sanctions on individuals in the Sudanese government (asset freezes and travel bans), a no-fly zone was established for Darfur, and the UN arms embargo was extended to include the Sudanese government. Third, a French/UK proposal to refer Darfur to the ICC was approved after the US – which is hostile to the ICC – decided not to block it.

On 1 April, the British newspaper *The Guardian* contrasted these signs of action by the international

² The head of UNHCR in Sudan wrote to the Chairman of the IDC on 5 April 2005. This letter will be published alongside the UK government's response to the IDC report. At the time of writing, the World Health Organisation had not made a formal response.

community with comments made about Darfur by the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and by the IDC, characterising these as 'business as usual for the international community ... hand-wringing and outrage in various measures, and what seems like a combination of impotence and inquietude'.³ The international community is failing Darfur, but to characterise the work of the IDC in such terms is either careless, or betrays a serious lack of understanding both of the role and remit of British parliamentary committees, and of the ways in which policies are formulated, at national and international levels. More importantly, such criticism risks undermining parliamentary accountability, and as a result enabling governments to evade their responsibilities to act on behalf of those they represent. A lack of accountability has contributed to the world's failure on Darfur; to undermine accountability further would not be helpful.

Policies and actions (or inactions) do not come out of the blue. They emerge out of the complexity of relationships within and between organisations with different interests and priorities, through discussions about evidence and options. In the sphere of politics especially, such discussions are mediated by mechanisms of accountability. Enhancing accountability and governance – at sub-national, national, regional and global levels – is central to the fight against global poverty, including the response to crises such as Darfur. The IDC and the British parliament more widely can play an important role in holding the UK government and its partners to account for their policy and practice. The IDC cannot directly intervene in Darfur. Neither can it determine British government policy. What it can do is produce hard-hitting reports, based on evidence provided by practitioners and others, which seek to hold the UK government and others to account in order to ensure that they better fulfil their, and our, responsibilities to protect.

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The IDC's report *Darfur, Sudan: The responsibility to protect* is available at: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmintdev/67/67i.pdf. The British government's response to the IDC's report is available at <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/sudan-command.pdf>. See also the speech given by Hilary Benn, the UK's Secretary of State for International Development, at the Overseas Development Institute on 15 December 2004, available at: www.odi.org.uk/speeches/Benn15Dec/meeting_report.html.

³ 'Saving Darfur', *The Guardian*, 1 April 2005, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/leaders/story/0,3604,1449828,00.html>.

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See <http://www.parliament.uk/indcom> for access to reports, evidence and background information on the IDC.

For more on the 'responsibility to protect', see *The Responsibility To Protect*, Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, December 2001, see <http://www.iciss.ca/pdf/Commission-Report.pdf>; and *A More Secure World: Our shared responsibility*, Report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, United Nations, 2004), especially p. 65, para 200, available at <http://www.un.org/secure-world>.

For the most authoritative account of what has taken place in Darfur, see *Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur (ICID) to the United Nations Secretary-General*, Geneva, 25 January 2005, pp. 3–4, available at http://www.un.org/News/dh/sudan/com_inq_darfur.pdf.

Politics and practice: the limits of humanitarian protection in Darfur

Victoria Wheeler, HPG

The protection of civilians has occupied a central position in the policy and operational responses of many actors in Darfur. There have been protracted and numerous debates at the highest political levels, including at the UN Security Council (see the article by Oliver Ulich, page 5), and humanitarian actors have been unusually ambitious in their efforts to enhance civilian protection. Protection officers have been deployed, both by mandated and non-mandated agencies, UN and NGO, and cooperation with human rights agencies and monitors, while not always harmonious, has been notably better than in past crises. Such cooperation has produced positive, though limited, results. To achieve more lasting protection, warring parties must be brought to adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL), and relief strategies must be designed to mitigate civilian risks from violence, civilians must be able to access secure sanctuary and asylum and, ideally, warring parties must be engaged in effective peace negotiations to stop the violence.

This article draws on ongoing work by the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) on protection approaches. It reviews three elements of the international response to the Darfur crises in terms of their impact on civilian protection. These elements are: the internationally mediated peace talks; the African Union (AU) mission in Sudan; and the Protection Working Groups (PWGs) that have been formed to overcome the policy and operational fragmentation brought about by continuing insecurity and bureaucratic obstructions to access.

Protection and peace talks

While IHL requires that civilians be protected even in the midst of conflict, ultimately a genuine peace will give Darfurians the greatest protection from violence.

With international support, and under international pressure, the government of Sudan and Darfur's rebel leaders have engaged in several peace processes – the N'Djamena, Addis Ababa and Abuja processes – and have signed ceasefire agreements, and security and humanitarian protocols. The government has made commitments to disarm and neutralise the *Janjaweed* militia, lift restrictions on humanitarian access, and support the safe voluntary return of internally displaced people (IDPs). As part of the peace processes, the Sudanese government also agreed to the African Union (AU) fielding a mission to monitor adherence to the N'Djamena and Addis agreements. These agreements have, however, been more honoured in their breach, signalling a lack of genuine commitment to them by all parties, and the absence of effective international support or enforcement.

**to achieve more lasting protection,
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international humanitarian law**

The peace negotiations have combined both humanitarian and political issues, and have presented challenges for the humanitarian community in both practice and principle. On the one hand, it has been argued that humanitarian access and an end to violence against civilians have been at the forefront of many of the internationally supported peace negotiations. Some humanitarian workers report that they have benefited from being able to refer to humanitarian

protocols in negotiations with rebel groups (though not with *Janjaweed* leaders, who have not been effectively involved in the peace talks). It has also been suggested that discussion of humanitarian issues has played a ‘vanguard role’, getting warring parties to the table, and providing a fallback position should talks on political issues falter – as happened at critical times in both the N’Djamena and Abuja processes. On the other hand, the ICRC and others are concerned that combining humanitarian issues and peace negotiations allows warring parties to view their humanitarian obligations as subject to political agreement, rather than as a non-negotiable requirement of IHL. This is an important debate, and worthy of further exploration.



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A Rwandan soldier, part of the African Union force in Darfur, surveys the remains of Saher, a burnt-out village outside El Fasher, August 2004

Protection and the African Union mission

One possible instrument available to the international community to respond to a protection crisis like Darfur is a military-led intervention to defend civilians from attack. Many have looked to the African Union’s mission in Sudan, AMIS, to play such a role, although considerations of an enhanced protective force were stymied for too long by regional politics within the AU, and divisions in the UN Security Council. In October 2004, the mission’s mandate was expanded from monitoring and reporting on the N’Djamena and Addis agreements to include the protection of civilians ‘under imminent threat and in the immediate vicinity within its resources and capability’.

AMIS has had some success in deterring attacks against civilians. Sexual and gender-based violence has reportedly decreased in areas it patrols, and the mission has taken risks to negotiate with rebels and the *Janjaweed* to halt attacks. However, its mandate and capacity are critically weak. As of April 2005, AMIS numbered just over 1,900 personnel. It is monitoring a ceasefire that exists in name only, across a vast area, and it has no mandate to disarm militias. It has been unable to provide more than a ‘bubble’ of protection outside some towns and camps, and it has been reportedly slow in translating its new mandate into active rules of engagement. Nonetheless, given indications of even limited success in reducing violence against civilians, there is a case to be made for a much larger, multilaterally sanctioned, military-led force to protect civilians in Darfur, preferably under the auspices of the AU. In late April 2005, the AU Peace and Security Council decided to expand the force size again to a total of 6,127 by September 2005. NATO, including the UK, Canada and other countries, has also indicated that it is ready to provide equipment (including helicopters), and logistical and financial support. It remains to be seen, however, how far such an increase in

size will support AMIS’ protection mandate, however restrictive this is. It also remains to be seen whether the 10,000-strong peacekeeping force to be deployed to support the North–South peace process can assist efforts in Darfur.

AMIS has had some success in deterring attacks against civilians

Protection Working Groups: roles and limits

The humanitarian imperative, and indeed the logic of humanitarian law, demand that civilian protection is assured at all times in conflict – it is not subject to the outcome of political processes to secure peace or deploy third-party protection forces. Given the inadequate international response on both these fronts, and the abrogation of their protection responsibilities by the Sudanese government and other armed groups, humanitarian agencies have been attempting to address protection concerns. Three humanitarian bodies with clear protection mandates are present in Darfur: the ICRC (IHL); UNHCR (international refugee law) and UNICEF (the Convention on the Rights of the Child). These agencies have, however, been unable to persuade the warring parties to comply with their obligations under international law.

Security within and near camps remains an issue. Agencies have sought to deliver their assistance in ways that mitigate violence (for example by delivering fuel to camps so that women need not forage for wood in areas where they are likely to be raped), although they have

been criticised for responding too slowly in this area. The UN Country Team has adopted 'protection by presence' as part of its humanitarian protection strategy in Darfur. Among other things, this aims to provide a continuous presence in IDP camps, in the belief that this will deter would-be aggressors.

There is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that 'protection by presence' works, but it is by no means a sure science, and can increase civilian risks in other areas; it may simply displace violence elsewhere, or it may encourage post-visit harassment if a constant presence cannot be maintained. Moreover, most agencies are still unable to field workers outside major towns in Darfur, due to ongoing insecurity and staffing pressures. Adding to the restrictions, staffing pressures also affect the UN's security assessment apparatus, UNDSS, effectively making many regions 'no-go' areas for many agencies. Put crudely, protection by presence is most difficult to implement where it is most needed.

Beyond mitigating risk locally, operational agencies may choose, security permitting, to engage with other actors (human rights advocates, peacekeepers and international government representatives) to highlight protection concerns and encourage action to address them. There are, however, risks in being seen to be publicly monitoring and reporting on abuses; access may be jeopardised, and agency resources may be diverted away from assistance. Many humanitarians are thus cautious about doing this, individually or publicly, particularly in Darfur, where the Sudanese government's position is that protection is outside the remit of humanitarian agencies.

In recognition of the need to develop collaborative approaches to garner the widest possible range of skills, mandates and capacities, share risk analysis and achieve 'strength in numbers' in the absence of broader support, UN agencies and humanitarian NGOs formed protection working groups (PWGs) at Khartoum and state levels in 2004.

Views of the effectiveness of the protection working groups are mixed. As a coordination and information-sharing mechanism, the PWGs have provided useful fora for NGOs and UN agencies working in the field. They have reportedly developed a sense of cohesion around protection issues, to counter the Sudanese government's opposition to their involvement in protection issues, and have provided the space to share joint analysis of humanitarian needs (including protection needs) which UN officials have then been able to pursue through political channels. Joint analysis and group advocacy have produced some tangible results. The government has, for example, removed some of the obstacles in the way of medical care for victims of sexual and gender-based violence, and agencies have changed relief distribution mechanisms in some areas to avoid post-distribution raids. The PWGs have also supported the Humanitarian Coordinator's pressure on this front over the course of 2004. Similarly, PWGs have also fed solid analysis into reports to the UN Secretary-General and the Security Council, as well as

Protection Working Groups

Participation in PWGs has typically comprised humanitarian NGOs and UN agencies (human rights, humanitarian and multi-mandated), as well as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The ICRC has occasionally participated, but only as an observer. Donor involvement in the PWG meetings has been limited, and has been actively discouraged by state-level PWGs, both for fear of being perceived as biased towards international government interests, and from a desire to retain control over sensitive information regarding civilian risk.

At the state level

PWGs meet at least weekly to identify areas of mutual protection concern and the potential for complementary action. A number of practical programming approaches have emerged:

- joint inter-agency assessments to ensure protection concerns are included in programming responses;
- involving protection specialists in major agency assessments;
- common analysis of trends in civilian threats to design risk-minimisation approaches;
- case-by-case follow-up on incidents of abuse or restrictions on access;
- undertaking surveys of IDPs, such as the North Darfur Survey on Factors Influencing IDP Return;
- briefing visiting delegations (UN, regional and bilateral) on the protection issues facing civilians in Darfur, and the operational challenges for field agencies; and
- relaying civilian risk analysis to AMIS officials.

At the Khartoum level

The Khartoum PWG aims to promote communication between agencies operating in different states, and provide policy support for officials in Khartoum (including where necessary referring issues to the UN Humanitarian Coordinator or Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) to follow up with the Sudanese government). It is now split into two groups – a smaller Khartoum Protection Steering Group (KPSG) to drive operational protection policy, and a broader PWG to share information and encourage problem-solving. The KPSG has mediated between NGOs, senior UN officials and the Sudanese government's Humanitarian Affairs Commission, and has focused on developing a 'protection matrix', designed to capture who does what where, what the obstacles are and who should take the lead in implementing protection activities.

other international missions, helping to keep protection issues on the international political agenda, where it is much needed.

Cohesion has not always been assured, however, and there have been complaints over inadequate consultation by the Khartoum-level PWG in the development of the 'protection by presence' strategy. While agencies have reportedly found the 'protection matrix' valuable, it has not enabled the sequencing of activities, and has often

ended up being a list of current activities (sometimes running to 40 pages long), rather than a basis for prioritising activities and roles.

joint analysis and group advocacy have produced tangible results

Moreover, while the general consensus appears to be that the field-level PWGs have functioned most effectively, being best in touch with local risk patterns as they emerge, developing agreement around priority actions has at times proved difficult. For instance, some members prioritise reactive measures, such as the investigation of individual cases of abuse or obstructed humanitarian access, while others argue in favour of identifying and responding to patterns of impending risk. Neither approach should preclude the other, and disputes have at times hindered much-needed concerted action. In addition, staffing is a constant issue: despite an increase in mid-level (UN and NGO) staff acting as protection officers, crucial gaps remain; there is a lack of experience in handling sensitive negotiations and in high-level decision-making. At times, knowledge of basic aspects of IHL is missing.

Conclusion

Protecting people, particularly from their own authorities, is an enormous political challenge – existing systems of collective security still do not facilitate automatic responses, even to crimes against humanity. Even if they did, little is known about the effectiveness of different kinds of international interventions (rather more is known about the immediately negative effects of sanctions, for instance, than is known about their positive effects in reducing violence against civilians, and evidence to suggest that humanitarian presence reduces violence is anecdotal and contested). The insti-

tution of protection working groups amongst the UN and humanitarian communities may have served to focus attention on civilian protection at field level, and may help to overcome divides between the humanitarian and political/security communities, making coherent responses possible – but evidently more is needed to stop the ongoing and widespread violence against civilians in Darfur.

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The hardest call: why Save the Children withdrew from Darfur

Toby Porter, Emergencies Director, Save the Children UK

On 21 December 2004, Save the Children UK announced that it was suspending all of its operations in Darfur. Nine days earlier, two Save staff members, clearly identifiable as humanitarian workers, had been taken from their vehicle and shot dead as they made their way back to Nyala from the clinic they were supporting in South Darfur. This was the second fatal incident the agency had suffered in Darfur in two months. On 10 October, two other staff members had been killed when their vehicle struck an anti-tank mine in North Darfur, despite their having sought and received

numerous assurances from numerous government and rebel commanders in the region that the routes they were proposing to use were safe and clear of mines. In the space of 60 days, Save the Children had lost four staff members in Darfur – more than in all the countries of the world over the previous 30 years.

Announcing the withdrawal, Mike Aaronson, Save the Children's director-general, called it the hardest decision he had ever had to take in his time with the agency. At the

time of the withdrawal, Save programmes were serving an estimated 250,000 children and adults in a wide range of sectors, from healthcare to education. The great majority of these were internally displaced. It is the nightmare scenario for all humanitarian agencies and all humanitarian workers – being forced to suspend urgent activities for populations in need and in danger. By way of illustration, a week before his murder on 12 December, Abhakar el Tayeb had spent his day at the health post where he worked treating dozens of people, several of them children, for gunshot wounds.

Why did Save withdraw?

After the October mine incident, Save the Children had given serious thought to leaving Darfur altogether, but after careful consideration and consultation, including with the families of both dead colleagues, the agency had chosen to stay and continue its humanitarian operations. A hugely significant factor in this decision was the findings of a joint UN/Save the Children investigation, which concluded that the mine the vehicle struck had been laid for military use, and not to target humanitarian agencies in general, or Save the Children in particular. This was clearly not the case in the December incident, which involved the murder at point-blank range of two clearly identified humanitarian workers. In these circumstances, the agency felt that it could not in conscience continue to expose staff to the risks of operating in Darfur.

the loss of four colleagues in two months was and remains a crushing blow

For an agency that has over many years successfully balanced a mandate to work with many of the world's most vulnerable children with high standards of staff security, the loss of four colleagues in two months was and remains a crushing blow, and one which has affected staff and volunteers all over the world. With the number of security incidents increasing in most areas, particularly on roads between the camps and major towns, the only way to guarantee that a further incident would not occur in Darfur was to remove all staff from harm's way. As for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) after the killing of five of its staff in Afghanistan in June 2004, a threshold, for Save at least, had been crossed. Other agencies have stayed in Darfur. Before Save the Children closed its offices on 31 January 2005, it was able to hand over many of its projects, and a good deal of its funding, to other humanitarian agencies to continue its work with children and their families.

The lessons of Darfur

There are many lessons to be learned from Darfur, for each individual agency and for the humanitarian community as a whole. Many studies, such as the Darfur Real Time Evaluation being coordinated by OCHA, are asking relevant and important questions, but these focus mainly

on the operational capacity of the UN and other humanitarian agencies. It may also be worthwhile to reflect on what the Darfur experience can tell us about what we usually refer to as humanitarian space – how agencies might have acted differently to create it and expand it, and protect it as it came under threat.

From the early days of the crisis in 2003 until April or May 2004, the few humanitarian agencies then operating in Darfur faced a number of direct and indirect operational constraints, apparently designed to restrict the access of affected populations to humanitarian agencies and assistance. The great majority of these constraints were bureaucratic: restrictions on visas, travel permits and customs clearance, for example. Diplomatic pressure from the international community succeeded in removing the majority of these obstacles. As this author stated in evidence to the UK House of Commons International Development Committee enquiry on Darfur in December 2004, this was the first and only time in my career that I have seen a British Secretary of State take up with host authorities the specific operational concerns of humanitarian agencies. However, while this approach essentially succeeded in achieving its valuable short-term objectives, it was largely government-to-government: negotiations were conducted mostly between the Sudanese authorities and foreign politicians and diplomats, almost all of whom were from Western countries. This effort may therefore have had unintended consequences.

The first question to ask is what impact this may have had on the perceived independence and impartiality of the aid community as a whole. As one very experienced humanitarian commentator put in June 2004, in the longer term the aid community might regret appearing to delegate responsibility for solving operational problems in Sudan to figures such as Jack Straw and Colin Powell, particularly so soon after the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. This apparent dependence seemed inconsistent with equally concerted attempts by the same agencies to distance themselves from British and American policies and politicians in those two other arenas. These are not easy issues for a humanitarian agency to confront, particularly as there is no question that intervention at that level and at that time saved a great many lives. Nonetheless, the point made by this commentator is important, and deserves careful reflection.

The second unintended consequence of the way in which discussions were conducted during this period may have been that insufficient time was devoted to negotiating with the non-state actors involved, essentially the rebel groups the Justice for Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), and the *Janjaweed*. It is not that no effort was made to take up humanitarian concerns with these groups, particularly the two rebel movements; however, this was again done mainly as part of wider political negotiations and, again, mainly through politicians. By way of illustration, both major protocols governing humanitarian access in Darfur were negotiated and signed in 2004 as part of a wider political process. Representatives from the humanitarian community were

involved, but one could not say that the humanitarian protocols were actually negotiated between the rebels and the humanitarian community *per se*. Nor, understandably enough, were the *Janjaweed* formally involved, so no binding commitment has ever been made by its leaders to facilitate the safe passage of humanitarian agencies or workers through territory where it is active. The relevance of this absence of proper agreements with non-state actors in Darfur has long been apparent. The perpetrators of almost all of the many security incidents since April 2004 have been, not the formal Sudanese military, but the rebel movements or the *Janjaweed*.

An OLS for Darfur?

What difference might it have made had the humanitarian community, on its own and independently of any wider political negotiations, made a concerted effort early in 2004 to negotiate and maintain some kind of consensual access agreement with the leaders of all the parties to the conflict in Darfur, irrespective of their political status? No one could say it would have been easy, but if it could be done in Southern Sudan, as it was with the Operation Lifeline Sudan agreement, why could it not have been done in Darfur in 2004? It is doubtful whether the late James Grant, UNICEF's Executive Director and the architect of OLS, found much reason to be optimistic when surveying the suffering and insecurity in Southern Sudan in 1989, nor could he have been confident that he would be able to negotiate a tripartite agreement at all, let alone one whose fundamental principles would remain unchallenged and unchanged until the effective end of the conflict more than 16 years later.

Over the last year it has become clear that, in Jan Egeland, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, the humanitarian community finally has a leader with real standing and charisma, and with years of experience of negotiating with parties to armed conflict. Could he have

emulated Grant and persuaded all the major warring parties in Darfur to sign up to an OLS-style agreement, binding all signatories to facilitate the provision of assistance, irrespective of the status of the ceasefire or wider peace negotiations? Could he still?

The benefits of some kind of Ground Rules agreement as part of such a framework would be immediate and far-reaching. It would clarify mutual expectations, communication channels and *modus operandi* between participating humanitarian agencies and all parties to the conflict in Darfur. It would also act as a vital channel through which to increase the scope and effectiveness of protection activities. As it did in Southern Sudan, such an agreement could also be an effective tool in the hands of those such as OCHA charged with making the coordination and performance of the aid operation as a whole more effective.

The lessons from Darfur should not be restricted to the operational sphere. For the humanitarian community, Darfur should provoke reflection on what more could have been done, and could still be done, to increase humanitarian space, and, with it, security for humanitarian workers. For the UN in particular, it should provoke reflection around what leadership of the humanitarian community means in places like Darfur. It may be that what victims of conflict most need from the UN is not service delivery that has consistently been shown to be both slower and more expensive than what NGOs can provide. What we need are leaders, able to use their skills and unique status to go out and negotiate the space in which humanitarian agencies can operate, with consent, transparency and safety.

Toby Porter is Emergencies Director of Save the Children UK. This article is dedicated to Noureldine Issa El Tayeb, Rafe Bullick, Abhakar el Tayeb and Yacoub Abdel Nabi Ahmed.

Real-time evaluations in Darfur: some suggestions for learning

Maurice Herson, independent consultant

Several real-time evaluations (RTEs) have been carried out in Darfur and Chad since the start of the crisis there. Three were presented at the biennial meeting of the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) in December 2004, and others have also been conducted over the past months.¹ This article looks at some of the issues arising from these evaluations, and suggests areas where some valuable lessons might be sought.

RTEs first appeared under that name at the end of the 1990s. There is no generally accepted methodology for RTEs, but in practice they are carried out rather like standard evaluations. Although they are in some ways dissimilar to *ex-post* evaluations, they share with them an emphasis on accountability and learning. However, they tend to focus less on impact and more on performance, with a view to seeing how this can be improved through immediate feedback to programme managers. RTEs also provide an opportunity to identify not only current (i.e. real-time) issues, but also issues that will possibly be of interest in any later evaluation.

¹ See http://www.alnap.org/meetings/pdfs/deco4meet_rec.pdf.

Although RTEs have become fashionable among several agencies, in Darfur it is likely that agencies turned to them to help them understand what they felt was not a very satisfactory response, and to help them improve it. It is clear that, in coming years, the Darfur experience is likely to be referred to as seminal or paradigmatic. This article therefore draws on the author's own experience of doing RTEs in Darfur and Chad to explore the issues that seem to have emerged, mainly with a view to suggesting areas that might be of particular interest for later reflection or evaluation within the humanitarian community at large.

Timing

There is a widespread belief that the individual and collective response to the humanitarian situation in Darfur was late and/or slow. This is a particularly acute issue for those agencies that had a presence, in some cases for many years, not only in northern Sudan but in Darfur itself.

Several factors explain the relatively slow response. First, the crisis evolved relatively slowly; it did not explode all at once. Second, it was overshadowed by other crises elsewhere, crises that were of equal or greater scale. Iraq dominated international attention in 2003–2004. The international community was arguably also inured to crisis in Sudan. There was – and is – a hope that the North–South peace process will succeed, and it was felt, particularly by the UN, that to distract from that, or to change the dynamics of the pressures on the Sudanese government, would jeopardise that process. In fact, of course, the rebellion in Darfur coincided with progress in the North–South peace process. The failure by international agencies, particularly non-governmental ones, despite the warnings of their local staff in some cases, to recognise the significance of the escalation of the conflict in Darfur, inevitably raises questions as to why they were not more alert.

the rebellion in Darfur coincided with progress in the North–South peace process

Once the scale and potential importance of the Darfur crisis started to become apparent, the Sudanese government slowed the response by imposing a range of restrictions on the movement of goods and people. Meanwhile, the perception of insecurity and the lack of clear channels of communication with the rebels limited agency access to territory they held. The impending rains threatened to slow the response still further, though this does not seem



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An IDP shelter in Tawila, Darfur

to have heightened the urgency to respond. For those agencies that were already in Darfur, the transition from ongoing development programmes to a humanitarian operation seems to have caused problems. The usual tensions, of course, combined with logistical and official impediments, made this a slow process.

Even without bureaucratic blockages and security concerns, Darfur poses significant logistical challenges: it is far from Khartoum, and Chad's border with Sudan is remote from the rest of Chad. It took a long time to assemble sufficient vehicles and communications equipment to enable agencies to feel safe enough to venture into these undeveloped areas. While some vehicles could be hired locally, these were too few and usually not considered reliable enough for safety and security reasons. Finally, it took a very long time to hire local as well as international staff.

It is likely that we will need, not only to explain why we were slow or late, but also to seek ways around such obstacles in the future, as well as institutional methodologies to ensure that slow, obscure or endemic crises do not get overlooked. Agencies may have looked at the blockages internal to themselves, rather than at how they might have navigated external constraints. Agencies with longstanding programmes that did not adapt rapidly enough to a humanitarian mode will benefit from understanding why. It will certainly not be good enough to put the prolonged failure to protect the people of Darfur down to unavoidable circumstances, or factors that could not be circumvented.

Accountability to affected people

We all know that accountability to affected people is difficult, particularly where there is violent conflict. While there have been some excellent interventions in support of the public health and nutritional needs of some people

in Darfur, and there is a widespread culture of consultation among at least some agencies implementing them, this tends to be instrumental, rather than collaborative or supportive.² It also relates only to the field programme; advocacy elements do not engage with people's aspirations beyond their humanitarian needs, and the immediate causes of those needs. External agencies often rely on local organisations as 'partners' to be an access channel to those they seek to assist and protect, or even as a proxy for them. In this case, there are very few local organisations. If agencies have had other recourses, these should be recorded and their efficacy should be looked at. If there is no valuable material to learn from here, then that itself is a challenge that must be explored.

Depth of staff experience

Many of today's most experienced humanitarian workers have done stints in Sudan, including in Darfur, before. This depth of experience was needed *in situ* in Darfur, but few of those people are still front-line programme managers, or have lives that would allow them to spend months so far away from their homes. There was also a general dearth of managers able to deal with the complexity of the operations, organisation and politics of Darfur. What then are the lessons for human resource mobilisation? Or for institutional learning or training? Or for management support?

Local and international

In October 2004, there were, according to OCHA, a reported 800 expatriate staff and 5,000 local staff in Darfur. These numbers are enormous, and have no doubt risen since then, though the relative proportion of international to national is not exceptional. My impression, albeit with a fair degree of confidence, was that very few senior agency staff were Sudanese.

It is not clear what 'local' means in this context: staff from other parts of Sudan, including the South, are only to a limited degree local, and staff from other parts of the North are unlikely to speak the local languages and may be tainted with the suspicion that they are politically aligned. Encouragingly, many staff from many different parts of the world were present, including a large number from neighbouring countries.

Arguably, the staffing situation in Darfur is unlikely to be replicated elsewhere, but it is nonetheless fascinating to see the traditional expatriate-local dichotomy so comprehensively compromised and yet still so strong. This is worth looking at to see what factors can reinforce or break down this bane of emergency response.

Scaling up

The reach for scale among agencies was enormous and determined. However, Darfur's marginalisation – one of the causes of the rebellion – meant that, in practice, there were no large numbers of educated people to recruit, and government agencies had very limited resources. The government blocked recruitment from Khartoum (though only a limited

number of people would want to move to the far reaches of the west of Sudan anyway), and administrative obstacles added to Sudan's already complex and process-heavy labour laws. Once recruited, new local staff need basic training before they can become effectively operational.

The aspect of this problem that will bear future reflection is how to expand a programme and an organisation significantly and at speed, while maintaining the identity of the humanitarian organisations, and of the humanitarian enterprise and its standards, quality and principles. Many agencies tried very hard to bring in large numbers of local staff, but these individuals had little or no experience or knowledge of humanitarian practice. It would be helpful to know what methods for doing this appeared most effective, what the key stumbling-blocks were and whether any tools developed in Darfur could be more widely used.

the reach for scale among agencies was enormous and determined

Coherence, advocacy, protection and field programming

The two dimensions of this 'crisis of protection' are that violence and coercion have caused the humanitarian need, and that people continue to suffer from violence even after they have taken refuge, and are to some extent under humanitarian protection. Agencies' advocacy work has encompassed both of these elements. The field paradigm for the international response had been 'protection by presence', a form of substitution for a government that is failing to protect its people (see Victoria Wheeler's article, page 11).

As is often the case, some field staff were concerned about whether advocacy messages were sufficiently connected to field programmes. They were simultaneously struggling to turn the common protection analysis into programmes that would serve to protect. This was a problem for a large part of 2004, and perhaps beyond. It would be helpful to ensure that lessons about how to fashion programmes that both include relevant advocacy and provide protective assistance do not remain within the 'protection community', but are included in the evaluation of assistance programmes.

Coverage, impartiality and the numbers game

Two years on from what could be conceived of as the beginning of this crisis, access to all those affected is still, I believe, far from complete. As recently as April 2005, a British parliamentary report suggested that twice as many people had died as had been previously thought. This has been challenged, but there are no authoritative figures. The humanitarian community claims to be serving large numbers, yet coverage is patchy and the impartiality of the overall effort must therefore be called into question.

² This typology is taken from work done by Groupe-URD.

As we mark the tenth anniversary of the Red Cross/NGO Code of Conduct, we should perhaps reflect on our ability to live up to the articles within it, specifically in this context Articles 1, 2 and 3 that enjoin upon us impartiality and neutrality.

Anything you do can be seen as political

Sudanese governmental support for the wider humanitarian effort is variable, and this variability often seems hard to understand or explain. Agencies commonly suspect or distrust the government, either in its motives or in its intentions. Equally, the humanitarian community in Darfur is suspect in the eyes of the government and many Sudanese people – of acting as the vanguard of a US invasion, as religious proselytisers or intent on arranging the overthrow of the current government. Loud external criticism does nothing to inspire trust in the purity of our motives, particularly in the context of a political society that does not have a great deal of experience of democratic openness and is not likely to find it easy to shake off its semi-pariah status internationally. Nor does the arrival of large numbers of expatriate staff, some of whom lack personal qualities or professional qualifications to justify their presence. In the uneasy balance between humanitarian and political attitudes to the crisis, the UN is compromised by the resolutions it passes condemning and putting pressure on the Sudanese government.

We all have views about the compatibility or otherwise of political and humanitarian motives and actions. This situation seems to me an important subject for discussion and deliberation. The argument that humanitarian action should not be political does not stand up in Darfur.

Chad: contextual analysis and working with local authorities

Most of the above is about Darfur and Sudan, rather than Chad or Darfurians in Chad. The Chad programmes have always been the poor cousins, and rightly so, but they also have their own particular lessons. Among these are why the contextual analysis from Darfur seemed to be so little known in Chad, at least in the middle of 2004. A first guess is that this was for institutional reasons, but there are certainly lessons for agencies about how we collectively frame and share contextual analysis.

the argument that humanitarian action should not be political does not stand up in Darfur

The other observation is that there was little contact between those programming for the refugees in Chad. Local authorities' compliance was generally being assumed, local leaders' role was all but invisible in practice, although often given lip-service, and local communities' acceptance of the presence of the refugees was acknowledged while the dire consequences of it being eroded were noted.

If these observations are even partially correct, then there is much to be thought about in relation to the humanitarian community's respect for the country in which it is operating; in relation to its self-centredness in seeing itself as overly important; and in its short-sightedness regarding the best ways of ensuring the best outcomes for the refugees, rather than for its own activities.

Evaluation

The Darfur crisis has been extensive geographically, in scope and in time. The response to it has taken a great deal of effort and money, as well as attracting justifiable interest within the humanitarian sector. It will undoubtedly attract a great deal of further evaluation. How this can be coordinated, and energies not duplicated, is something that should be addressed sooner rather than later. The issues that have been mentioned above are certainly not comprehensive, but they might form the basis of a shared set of issues of concern that agencies can address together. This approach, rather than an individual agency focus on its own achievements and failings, would indicate more principled, accountable practice in relation to those affected by this crisis. It might incidentally give added value from real-time evaluations, and therefore constitute an addition to the discussions about whether RTEs can be of any real value to programming agencies.

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Cash relief in a contested area: lessons from Somalia

Degan Ali, Fanta Toure, Tilleke Kiewied
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This paper describes the Emergency Cash Relief Program (ECRP) in the Sool Plateau in Somalia in 2003–2004. The programme, implemented by Horn Relief and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), distributed almost \$700,000 to some 14,000 drought-affected households, making it the largest cash response ever mounted in Somalia. The paper argues that cash relief is a valid option in Somalia. In emergencies in the developed world, governments provide cash grants because doing so is recognised as the most flexible and efficient way of helping affected people. If the preconditions are right, why should people in Africa or Asia be ineligible for similar help? Why is emergency aid so commonly restricted to food and other limiting resources? If we can recognise that the answer lies in fear and paternalism, then we have eliminated the core barrier to the acceptance of cash relief as a viable intervention in Somalia and other parts of the developing world.

Engaging communities in emergency response: the CTC experience in Western Darfur

Saul Guerrero and Simon Mollison, Valid International

Over the past five years, Community-based Therapeutic Care (CTC) has carved a niche for itself as an effective and sustainable way of providing selective feeding services in emergencies. From its first implementation in Ethiopia in 2001, CTC has sought to break away from traditional centre-based, inpatient treatment of severe acute malnutrition. The results so far have been very positive; CTC programmes in Malawi, Ethiopia and South Sudan have consistently shown high coverage, high recovery and low defaulter rates. Much of this success can be attributed to the active role that beneficiary communities have played in the planning, implementation and handing-over of CTC programmes. Sceptics, however, doubt that this level of community involvement and participation is feasible

during a complex emergency. These doubts stem from two fundamental, if not altogether evidence-based, assumptions: first, that communities disintegrate during complex emergencies, especially when population displacement is widespread; and second, that even if communities survive these conditions, community mobilisation is a time-consuming luxury for programmes struggling to address urgent needs. The CTC experience in Darfur shows that these issues are more complex than previously anticipated.

Communities in war and peace

In humanitarian circles, and emergency nutrition in particular, the feasibility of community engagement during conflict and population displacement (as in IDP or refugee camps) has been persistently questioned and contested. The critics' main argument has centred on the belief that, as communities fragment under the 'shock' of conflict and displacement, community participation and/or mobilisation becomes unfeasible. This commonly-held view has meant that community-based interventions – such as Community-based Therapeutic Care (CTC), a domiciliary approach for treating severe acute malnutrition – have met with scepticism from practitioners and donors. This



A CTC outreach worker interviews a local leader during a supplementary feeding (SFP) distribution

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scepticism, however, stems from a narrow definition of what communities are – a definition that in practical terms bears little resemblance to the evidence and information emerging from humanitarian operations.

The notion of community is in reality so broad and multi-faceted that it continues to divide social scientists and their disciplines. In its simplest sense, a community is a group of people that identify themselves with common ideas, beliefs and practices. Although physical places and localities play a role in the definition of a community, they are rarely fundamental to the sense of identity among its members. Community is, in other words, more about internal factors (shared ideas and relationships) than it is about external manifestation (home villages, landmarks,

cultural sites). The manner in which 'communities' react to famine, conflict and displacement attests to this – and the current conflict in Darfur offers one of the clearest case studies in this respect.

Over the centuries, the traditional boundaries of Darfur's tribal groups, such as the Zaghawa, Fur, Massalit, Jebel and Arawga, have shifted and overlapped. The conflict in Darfur between different sections of these groups has led to cross-border migrations, as well as internal displacement and relocation around urban centres. The result has been the creation of socio-culturally heterogeneous IDP camps throughout Western Darfur. The camps in and around the town of El Geneina, for example, host an average of over ten different sub-groups, most of them with their own languages. The result of migrations, displacement and interaction between the groups has been mixed; although ethnic identities and communities (at village and camp level) have survived, new 'communities' have also been created. Violence and displacement have forced the congregation of many previously unrelated – and often antagonistic – groups within the camps. Although there are occasionally tensions, groups and villages have re-formed to make large communities under

common, or parallel, leaderships. The 'shocks' to the social fabric of each group have not led to their disintegration as communities; rather, they have forced each community to reassemble and recreate itself around structures (such as leaders) and practices (language and beliefs) that lie at the centre of their identity. For emergency nutrition programmes such as CTC, the implications are clear and significant. Communities, in a broad sense, can endure social disruption. If appropriately approached, they can potentially be incorporated into community-based responses.

communities can endure social disruption; if appropriately approached, they can potentially be incorporated into community-based responses

Mobilising communities during emergencies: old challenges, new responses

Accepting that communities can recreate themselves in order to outlast famine, conflict and displacement suggests that they could play a more direct role in humanitarian interventions. This leads to the critical – and somewhat awkward – question of why communities generally only play a marginal role in humanitarian interventions.

The first answer may be that we do not know enough about the communities we are trying to help. Engaging and mobilising communities carries potential risks, in that it may validate discriminatory or predatory political structures and politicise aid resources. This implies the need for a clear understanding of the population prior to, during and after the crisis, and a strategy that includes as wide a range of community representatives as possible. Many humanitarian programme staff, however, argue that it is virtually impossible to get an accurate picture of the situation on the ground, even through discussions with the local residents of displaced populations.

Another possible explanation may simply be that developing an effective and transparent relationship or rapport with communities is too time-consuming. Achieving genuine rapport over vast rural areas through conventional methods, such as community meetings, health education sessions, surveys and participatory rural appraisal (PRA) investigations, would be both prohibitively expensive and too slow for emergency programming. For community-based interventions such as CTC, however, establishing an effective relationship and creating a pool of accurate information about the community is central to the success of the programmes, even during complex emergencies. As a result, CTC has developed a strategy for cultural understanding and community mobilisation that is rapid, carefully targeted and specially designed to identify and link key features

of the community – such as local channels of communication and socio-political networks – with nutritional interventions.

Community mobilisation and the CTC: the strategy in Western Darfur

The CTC programme in Western Darfur was jointly implemented by Concern Worldwide and Valid International in the summer of 2004. The programme initially focused on the area in and around El Geneina – at present, the programme covers a number of IDP camps in El Geneina (such as Riyadh, Ardamatta and Abuzar), Krenig and in the Selea/Kulbus corridor. As with most CTC programmes, the concept of community has been vital: the community's involvement in the identification and care of malnourished children is at the core of CTC's attempt to reach all eligible children. Recognising cultural differences and variations between communities is just as important, and community mobilisation strategies have therefore been tailored to the context. In Darfur, key aspects of the community had to be identified and incorporated into the planning, implementation and assessment of programme activities. These include the identification of key community figures, formal and informal channels of communication, community groups and organisations (to facilitate local integration), as well as gathering data on health attitudes and health-seeking behaviour. This process, often referred to as cultural understanding within the CTC, is complex at the best of times; in Western Darfur the challenges were considerable.

In the first three months of the CTC programme, from August to November 2004, CTC community mobilisers gathered sufficient data to enable a rapid social mapping of all the IDP camps in and around El Geneina, the main urban centre in Western Darfur. Mapping out IDP communities in Western Darfur was made possible by the unique operational arrangements of the CTC programme: while medical NGOs were in charge of in-patient treatment for complicated cases, other NGO partners were able to concentrate on the social aspect of the programme without jeopardising its health impact. The socio-cultural data collected facilitated the planning of activities designed to involve the community as widely and as comprehensively as possible in the dissemination of information about CTC, the target population and the services available. Primary health, health education and water and sanitation programmes carried out by other NGOs were also linked with the CTC programme, creating a network of volunteers and referral points (in the communities and at health centres). This two-pronged approach was designed to inform the community about the CTC programmes through local structures, and to actively identify malnourished children through these structures and other aid programmes.

The results of community mobilisation in Western Darfur were positive. In terms of resources, the process was led by a small local team (including an IDP) that was able to move widely throughout the area, and engage freely with key community members. For operational reasons the process of community mobilisation extended for over

three months. In hindsight, the main core activities could have been effectively conducted over a 4–6-week period. The lessons learned in Darfur will help improve the mechanisms and the timeliness of future strategies. By relying on the community and existing volunteer networks, information about the CTC programme was spread widely and rapidly to those in need. By January 2005, only two months after the first round of mobilisation activities was completed, a coverage survey concluded that 75% of severely-malnourished children and 64% of moderately malnourished children in the El Geneina area (including the main IDP camps) had enrolled in the CTC programme.¹ These results were comparable to CTC programmes in more stable settings, and may testify to the role of community mobilisation in increasing programme uptake.²

the results of community mobilisation in Western Darfur were positive

The value of community mobilisation in CTC programmes lies not only in its practical applications (to increase programme coverage) but also in its ability to influence CTC programming at a higher level. The process of community mobilisation helps formulate an impression of the population that needs to be recognised as sufficiently reliable to directly inform CTC strategic planning. In Western Darfur, for example, discussions held with the community revealed that villages surrounding the larger urban centres needed to be more actively included in sensitisation and mobilisation activities. The constant population movement between the camps and the nearby villages and fields strongly suggested that the identification and follow-up of children had to be extended beyond the limits of the IDP camps and the larger settlements in order to remain effective. Such a response, however, has much wider implications – most of the humanitarian assistance in Western Darfur, with the notable exception of ICRC's programmes, has focused on the IDP camps. Community mobilisation, by definition, will always be rooted in the ideas and needs of the community, and the

¹ Coverage was estimated using Centric Quadrant Area Sampling (CQAS), a methodology developed by Valid International (see Mark Myatt, Tashome Feleke, Kate Sadler and Steve Collins, *A Field Trial of a Survey Method for Estimating the Coverage of Selective Feeding Programmes*, WHO Bulletin, 2004, in press).

² The current (2004) Sphere minimum standard for coverage in SFP and therapeutic feeding programmes is >50% for rural populations, >70% for urban populations and >90% for camp populations. Although CTC programme coverage (75%) seems unimpressive when compared to these standards, Darfur was unusual in many respects; first, it must be noted that IDP camps in Western Darfur do not come close to being the planned and administered camps that are envisaged by Sphere. Rather, they are *ad hoc* assemblies of people who have congregated near large villages or towns for safety. Many of the people registered in them do not actually live in them, and their populations are highly unstable. Families come and go all the time. Coverage and effective information dissemination were therefore *less* likely than in a stable rural situation (with a Sphere minimum standard for coverage of 50%).

conclusions drawn from engaging with communities may at times require significant changes in programming. The challenge for implementers will be to effectively respond to the situation presented, bearing in mind the programming objectives as well as the practical implications of such changes.

Conclusions

Lessons learned in Darfur are unlikely to change the CTC's focus on engaging with communities during nutritional emergencies – instead, these lessons will help reformulate and strengthen existing community mobilisation approaches. As aid agencies begin to contemplate the next steps of their work in Darfur, understanding how to react to the complexities of the conflict will become increasingly necessary. For community-based programmes such as the CTC, the challenge will be to stay in tune with changes and shifts in communities. The groundwork laid by initial mobilisation efforts will require regular reappraisal, and plans and practices may occasionally need to be rewritten – all in an effort to continue improving programme coverage and maximising its positive impact.

Meanwhile, we have learned much in Darfur about how community mobilisation can and should be integrated with programming decisions. Among these lessons is the need to see displaced people as active partners in any emergency response. This is likely to remain a daunting and difficult task, but the experience and lessons learned in emergencies such as Darfur will prove vital in developing effective mechanisms to bring this about in the future.

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An assessment of mortality studies in Darfur, 2004–2005

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War epidemiology has emerged as a powerful tool for expanding our understanding of the impact of war on civilians, and for influencing policy aimed at protecting civilians from systematic harm. Mortality statistics generated from rigorous field studies can raise awareness of increased risk among vulnerable populations, and can serve as evidence that military groups and civilian combatants have violated wartime codes of conduct. Recent mortality studies illustrate the widespread (and often controversial) attention that statistical evidence of civilian casualties can generate. A study of mortality in Kosovo, published in 1999, documented a pattern of targeted assault on older men.¹ An ongoing study in the Democratic Republic of Congo suggests that almost four million civilians, the majority of them women and children, have died in war and its aftermath. In Iraq, a study published last year indicated that upwards of 100,000 civilian deaths may have resulted from the invasion.² The results of these careful mortality assessments are not easily ignored, and have sparked serious debate among policy-makers and humanitarian organisations.³

The protracted war in Darfur has led to the death and suffering of many inhabitants of the region, and has prompted a major international relief response. The circumstances and consequences of attacks on civilians and civilian villages by armed militia, with the tactical air and ground support of the Sudanese government, are not in substantial dispute. What remains unclear is the cumulative mortality from this conflict. This lack of clarity regarding the human costs of the war in Darfur does not stem from any absence of effort to try to establish the

facts. In the last 12 months, four different surveys addressing issues of mortality have been undertaken. These have either been released to the public, or published in the peer-reviewed literature. In addition, three desk analyses have been submitted via the web and e-mail to the policy and humanitarian community. The discussion that follows summarises these studies (methodology, results⁴ and limitations), and gives recommendations for how best to approach further attempts at arriving at mortality estimates, and how to think about the mortality dimension of this conflict, in the absence of good overall data from the field.

Field surveys

MSF surveys, West Darfur, April–June 2004⁵

In a report published in the *Lancet* in October 2004, MSF used a two-stage household-based cluster survey in four IDP sites in West Darfur. Together, these sites had an estimated IDP population of 215,400 people. The survey focus was on mortality experienced by respondents during ‘pre-displacement’ (the period of flight) and ‘post-displacement’ (the period in camps or settlements) (see Table 1).

The MSF teams found high crude mortality rates (CMR)⁶ for the period of flight, and persistent high rates (though lower than pre-displacement) from violence in the IDP camps after settlement. CMR for pre-displacement populations surveyed in three of these four IDP areas ranged from 5.9 to 9.5 (for populations sampled in El Geneina, the mortality recall period⁷ – one month – did not include the period of flight). CMR for post-displacement (camp mortality) for all four areas ranged from 1.2 to 5.6. Deaths

Table 1

Location	Sample size (households/persons)	CMR (flight period)	CMR (camp period)
Zalingei	460/2,386	5.9	1.3
Mornei	912/4,754	9.5	1.2
Niertiti	903/5,188	7.3	1.3
El Geneina	900/5,191	–	5.6

1 P. B. Spiegel and P. Salama, ‘War and Mortality in Kosovo, 1998–99: An Epidemiological Testimony’, *The Lancet*, 2000;355:2204–9.

2 L. Roberts, et al., ‘Mortality Before and After the 2003 Invasion of Iraq: Cluster Sample Survey’, *The Lancet*, 2004;364:1857–1864.

3 International Rescue Committee, *Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Results* (updated April July 2004), www.theirc.org/index.cfm, accessed 3 May 2005.

4 All study results complied with epidemiology norms, but it is not in the scope of this paper to include confidence interval discussions and other specialised interpretation of data.

5 E. Depoortere, et al., ‘Violence and Mortality in West Darfur, Sudan (2003–04): Epidemiological Evidence from Four Surveys’, *The Lancet*, 2004;364:1315–20.

6 CMR is for all ages, all causes and > 1/10,000/day is the threshold for an emergency; for children under 5 years of age, the MR threshold is 2/10,000/day.

7 The recall period is the time frame in which respondents were asked to provide numbers of people in their household who had died or gone missing. Deaths occurring prior to the recall period will not be recorded.

from violence were recorded separately from all other causes, and constituted the majority of deaths during the flight period. A finding common to all four areas was a marked loss of males in the 15–49 age group.

Important findings of this study include the mortality differentials between the flight and the settlement period, the high proportion of violence-related deaths during the flight period, and the sex ratio among those who died as well as among the survivors, suggesting that violent deaths of males, as opposed to possible disproportionate death from other causes or out-migration, caused the observed loss in the 15–49 group. The limitations of the study are the sampling frame (portions of West Darfur only) and the absence of a sufficient recall period to establish a full profile of deaths during flight and settlement periods for the large subset in this study from El Geneina.

WHO retrospective mortality survey, August 2004⁸

This study (released in September 2004) aimed to estimate the CMR in the 62 days from 15 June to 15 August 2004, among IDPs present at the time of the survey in August 2004. It used a two-stage cluster sample drawn from lists obtained from WFP and OCHA for ‘accessible’ areas within the three states of Darfur. Deteriorating security in South Darfur meant that the study had to be suspended there. Crude mortality rates were derived from a two-month recall period for IDPs (see Table 2).

Diarrhoea was the main cause of death in all three locations. For all ages, violence or injury accounted for 21% of deaths in North Darfur, 12% in West Darfur and 10% in

Kalma camp. A striking finding in all three areas, as with the previous study, was the relative loss of males between 15 and 49 years of age.

Major limitations of this study are the sampling frame, access to those within the sampling frame, and limited recall period. Another issue is the inclusion of interviewers who were in the employ of the Sudanese government.

MSF surveys, South Darfur, August–September 2004⁹

In a report published in *JAMA* in March 2005, MSF described findings from three surveys conducted in South Darfur in August–September 2004. The surveys were based on two-stage cluster sampling among an estimated 137,000 IDPs in Kass, Kalma and Muhajiria. They reported on crude and under-5 mortality rates and nutritional status.¹⁰ Deaths were recorded for a recall period of 121 days for Kass, and 30 days for Kalma and Muhajiria (this shorter period due to ‘priorities of the operational teams’).

Limitations of this study include the sampling frame and the short recall period. The study reflects the mortality profile associated with IDP settlement, rather than the mortality arising from pre-displacement attacks on villages and the impact of flight.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) emergency nutrition and crude mortality survey, September 2004¹²

This study, conducted in Darfur in September 2004 and released in February 2005, was intended to assess nutri-

Table 2

Location	Sample size (households/persons)	CMR	Malnutrition (GAM)
North Darfur	1,290/9,274	1.5	2.5
West Darfur	1,292/7,995	2.9	3.1
South Darfur (Kalma camp)	558/3,506	3.8	11.7

Table 3

Location	Sample size (households/persons)	CMR	MR <5
Kass	900/5,776	3.2	14.1%
Kalma	893/5,050	2.0	23.6%
Muhajiria	900/5,256	2.3	10.7% ¹¹

8 World Health Organisation, *Retrospective Mortality Survey among the Internally Displaced Population, Greater Darfur, Sudan, August 2004*. WHO, Geneva, 15 September 2004.

9 F. Grandesso, et al., ‘Mortality and Malnutrition among Populations Living in South Darfur, Sudan: Results of 3 Surveys, September 2004’, *JAMA*, 2005;293:1490–1494.

10 Malnutrition in children under five is recorded as a ratio of weight-for-height compared to standard tables; global acute malnutrition (GAM) is –2 or more standard deviations from the standard; severe

acute malnutrition (SAM) is –3 or more standard deviations.

11 The relatively low rate in Muhajiria was attributed to the fact that the respondents had recently moved to this area, and observed nutritional status reflected ‘pre-displacement levels’.

12 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Emergency Nutrition Assessment of Crisis Affected Populations Darfur Region, Sudan, August–September 2004*, US CDC and United Nations World Food Programme, CDC, Atlanta, GA, www.cdc.gov/nceh/ierh, accessed 11 November 2004.

tional status among children between six and 59 months old and their mothers. It also aimed to arrive at an estimate of crude mortality in the same population. It was based on a two-stage cluster sample from a list of 1,655,988 people (IDPs and host populations) in 140 locations across Darfur.

In the 880 households (5,470 individuals) selected for the study, the mean length of time in residence in the area was 7.5 months. Malnutrition rates were found to be high (21.8% GAM, 3.9% SAM) with serious rates of micronutrient deficiency. Findings for crude mortality, however, were less striking: based on a seven-month recall (to February 2004), the overall CMR of 0.72 was close to the estimated baseline (0.5) for the period before the onset of the conflict. The female CMR was 0.4 (very low, even in a stable sub-Saharan population), and the under-5 MR was 1.03. These are surprising findings in a population that has undergone conflict-induced forced migration, and with high levels of malnutrition. Of the 81 deaths reported during the recall period, cause of death was not recorded for 39 (48.2%); 13 deaths were noted as due to violence.

Limitations of this study, from a mortality standpoint, were acknowledged in the CDC report. Issues included the heterogeneity of populations across a vast area, sampling frame, sample size, access to those within the sampling frame, recall period, resident time in the area, and recording of the cause of death.

Desk assessments

*USAID mortality projections May 2004*¹³

In spring 2004, USAID released on its website a graphic projection of death rates in Darfur from disease, violence and malnutrition, based on estimates of baseline malnutrition and mortality, and gaps in food supply from January 2004 to December 2005. This projection resulted in an estimate of 300,000 excess deaths by the end of 2005.

*Mortality estimates from Eric Reeves*¹⁴

In autumn 2004, Eric Reeves, a professor at Smith College in Massachusetts, began a running tally of estimated mortality from the onset of the conflict in February 2003. His October 2004 report, distributed over e-mail, estimated total mortality at 300,000 as of that date. This was based on an extrapolation from an August 2004 survey of Darfuri refugees in Chad, conducted by the Washington-based Coalition for International Justice (CIJ). This found that 61% of those interviewed reported witnessing the killing of a family member. Using a figure of 1.6 million IDPs in Darfur, and adding the 200,000 known refugees in Chad, Reeves applied this rate and determined that approximately 200,000 people had been killed by violent means since the onset of the war. He added to that another

80,000–100,000 dead from disease and malnutrition, basing this on monthly estimates from the UN and NGOs.

Subsequent updates have refined estimates for the numbers of people dying from disease and malnutrition. By March 2005, Reeves was estimating that 380,000 people in Darfur had died from disease and violence-related causes since the onset of the war. He also suggested that the monthly death rate from all causes may rise to 15,000, as food supply and security conditions deteriorate in the absence of cohesive political action to bring the conflict to a close.

*Mortality estimates from the CIJ, April 2005*¹⁵

In April 2005, the CIJ estimated that almost 400,000 people had died in Darfur since the start of the conflict, from violence, disease, starvation or exposure, with the death rate continuing at about 500 per day, or 15,000 per month. These figures, developed by academics from Northwestern University in Chicago and the University of Toronto, were derived from the CIJ's August 2004 study and from WHO estimates from September 2004.

constraints on logistics, security and cost imposed daunting barriers

Constraints of the context and the limits of survey tools

These studies each have their strengths and weaknesses, but the major flaw in all of the field studies, from the standpoint of mortality surveys, is that the sampling frame did not account for the complex pattern of attack and flight that produced the displacement in Darfur, and did not address the fact that many of the displaced survivors were in areas inaccessible to outside observers. Although accessibility has improved, an unknown large number, in the hundreds of thousands or millions, may well be clustered in isolated pockets of misery, not yet reached by humanitarian actors. An important population of refugees – the 200,000 people inside the Chadian border – was not sampled in any of these studies, so their mortality experience, which is probably distinct from that of people in IDP camps within Darfur, has not been examined.

None of these issues was unknown to the teams that conducted these studies. Constraints on logistics, security and cost imposed daunting barriers. Furthermore, the focus of several of these studies was more on nutrition than mortality, and directed towards assessing camp conditions, rather than arriving at cumulative data on mortality from the conflict. Of the four formal field surveys, only the MSF's *Lancet* study in West Darfur

13 US Agency for International Development, *Projected Mortality Rates in Darfur, Sudan 2004–05*, www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/sudan/cmr_darfur.text.html, accessed 3 May 2005.

14 E. Reeves, et al., 'Darfur Mortality Updates, 8 October 2004, 12 December 2004, 14 January 2005, 18 January 2005, 23 February 2005', ereeves@email.smith.edu.

15 Coalition for International Justice, *Press Release: New Analysis Claims Darfur Deaths Near 400,000*, 12 April 2005, CIJ, Washington DC, www.cij.org, accessed 21 April 2005.

explicitly tried to adapt the standard nutritional survey into a retrospective mortality survey that would take into account the temporal and dynamic complexity of the conflict. The results indicate that mortality from conflict-related violence was greatest in the period leading up to and including the events that caused the population to flee. Hence this survey establishes that mortality studies looking only at deaths in camps after the population had arrived might well underestimate the cumulative number of deaths that had occurred.

for a conflict of such complexity and duration, there are no methodological shortcuts

Other methodological constraints are familiar ones in surveys conducted in difficult conditions with little security for personnel or for the population: small and unrepresentative samples, an inability to compensate for entire missing households, and inaccuracies in determining cause of death. Even with the careful application of sampling techniques to settled populations, the cumulative mortality experience of the populations sampled varied greatly. The prevailing cluster sampling techniques developed for nutritional surveys could not sufficiently compensate for this complex prior experience, particularly if recorded deaths were not partitioned according to pre- and post-displacement. No methods were employed to account for the possibility that, in some households, all members were probably killed; a retrospective household-based survey would miss these deaths completely, and result in an underestimate of reported total deaths. (However, the observed excess deaths among males would suggest that the loss of complete households is less the pattern than deliberate targeting of men.) Determination of cause of death was more or less complete in these studies, but even where death from violent causes was the focus of the inquiry, there is an incomplete discussion of the fact that many of the deaths attributed to malnutrition and disease are themselves conflict-related – meaning that these deaths would not have occurred had the war not driven these people from their homes, villages and means of livelihood.

Other common sources of error or bias (such as whether the population trusted the interviewers on the teams, whether languages other than Arabic would have been useful, whether security or access issues distorted the rigorous application of cluster sampling in some studies) can also be found to differing degrees.

Some of these limitations in the field surveys were addressed at a qualitative level in the desk studies.

16 A. De Waal and J. Leaning, *Somalia: No Mercy in Mogadishu. The Human Cost of the Conflict and the Struggle for Relief*, Physicians for Human Rights and Africa Watch. Boston and New York, March 1992.

Efforts were made to build up from small sample sizes to an overall picture of mortality conditions across time, and efforts were made to aggregate deaths from all causes as attributable to the effects of the conflict on a fleeing and then displaced population. The CIJ's attempt to work backwards, from memories of survivors to a semi-quantitative estimate of deaths at the time of attack, is creative and has been used only rarely in previous attempts to assess conflict-induced mortality.¹⁶ Yet the desk studies can provide only notional policy guidance, in the absence of empirically detailed studies from many different sectors throughout Darfur.

Recommendations

For a conflict of such complexity and duration, there is no methodological shortcut to an estimate of cumulative mortality and causes of death. The entire region has to be considered the sampling frame; the last complete census conducted in 1983 has to be adjusted as the basis for this frame; baseline mortality rates have to be rigorously derived from existing information; and meticulous cluster sampling must be applied wherever possible. The survey instrument must be partitioned to account for experience and mortality before displacement, during flight and after settlement. Careful attention to the age and sex ratios of survivors and of those who died will yield important information regarding the nature and pattern of violence and vulnerability. The design of the instrument and the analysis of the data need to attend to the possibility that all excess deaths (from disease, malnutrition or apparently non-war-related trauma such as road accidents or suicide) could arguably be attributable to the conflict.

In the interim, the international community must make use of the existing information on mortality in Darfur, as reviewed in this article. It is clear that mortality in areas of displacement settlement varies considerably, reflecting variations in camp management, accessibility and conditions. This information is also highly suggestive of the fact that much of the excess mortality that has occurred probably took place during the events that prompted the displacement in the first place; ongoing mortality surveys are not addressing this historical burden. Finally, whether the cumulative deaths to date are in the low or mid-hundreds of thousands, all studies starkly describe a population subject to intolerable conditions of fear, assault and deprivation. This information should be sufficient to goad the international community into redoubled efforts to bring some relief and security to the people in this region.

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Supporting the process of settlement: lessons from Darfur

Graham Saunders, Catholic Relief Services

The conflict in Darfur has once again highlighted the challenge of meeting the shelter and settlement needs of large numbers of displaced households in an insecure and rapidly changing environment. Traditional settlement and shelter solutions in Darfur typically enabled these needs to be met, albeit with differing degrees of adequacy. The displacement of over 1.6 million households has disrupted social networks and the self-management of established settlements through which issues of livelihood security, personal safety and essential shelter and sanitation needs were addressed.

Displaced households have sought protection and support through a number of different approaches to temporary settlement, including self-settlement adjacent to existing communities in rural areas, hosting by domiciled households within towns and the temporary use of public land and facilities such as schools. However, the local authorities and relief agencies have focused on establishing large-scale camps on the perimeters of the towns. This is the generic response to mass displacement, designed to simplify service provision and management. It has led to an emphasis on predetermined shelter solutions, rather than support for the process of settlement – the more practically and politically challenging task of providing a variety of flexible responses reflecting the local context and complementing the creative coping strategies of affected households and host communities.

Drawing on experiences in West Darfur in particular, this article explores how the provision of assistance could better meet the settlement needs of internally displaced people (IDPs) by supporting the initiatives of displaced households themselves.

Patterns of self-settlement

In response to attacks by Arab militia on outlying and rural villages, displaced households have sought safety through settling in or adjacent to the larger towns or villages. Temporary settlements have been established on vacant land and within communal facilities such as school compounds. In the major towns, a significant proportion of the IDP population is hosted by domiciled residents (approximately 35% of the total number of IDPs in and around El Geneina, according to September 2004 figures). This has also been a key feature of the local response to meeting the immediate housing needs



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A planned and managed settlement: Al Riyadh camp, El Geneina

of displaced households. A number of displaced households have settled on small, vacant parcels of land in and around the towns, often with the tacit acceptance of immediate neighbours. The proximity to existing household clusters resulting from such settlement has enabled ready access to local resources and facilities, opportunities for small-scale livelihood activities, and possibilities for alternative temporary housing through local networking.

On the self-settled temporary sites on the outskirts of the towns, and in the collective sites established in school compounds within the towns, overcrowding has been commonplace, with a lack of sufficient sanitary facilities and inadequate shelter. However, typical household activities have been undertaken elsewhere, and many households do not occupy these dwellings for large periods of the day. Several households secured alternative sleeping arrangements for children and elderly family members. Small-scale market activities, or the grazing of livestock, have taken place elsewhere in the town or on its periphery. Many households reportedly erected shelters solely to make themselves eligible for relief distributions. Where households have been able to self-settle in a given area, related or formerly neighbouring families have managed to provide their own facilities, including the excavation and enclosure of a limited number of latrines and the construction of communal ovens. This has also enabled the neighbourhood community to manage other resources, for example firewood, and the attendant protection issues around the sourcing of this material in open areas.

overcrowding has been commonplace, with a lack of sufficient sanitary facilities and inadequate shelter

Where space or resources within the host family have been limited, priority has been given to the vulnerable members of displaced households to ensure their safety and well-being. Although such hosting has placed additional demands on local services and facilities, the local authorities have been reluctant to allow assistance to be provided to host families, or to support the expansion of services in residential areas hosting displaced households due to concern that this would encourage permanent settlement by the IDPs. Similarly, households who have taken advantage of urban infill plots have typically not been included in distribution lists, and have been encouraged by the local authorities to relocate to 'established' temporary sites.

To address the problems of overcrowding and inadequate facilities, the local authorities and relief agencies have promoted relocation to new or expanded camps. Identifying available land for such decongestion sites has been an issue, with the local authorities favouring larger tracts of undeveloped land on the perimeter of the towns, or sites located at a distance from urban areas. Many displaced households viewed such sites as placing them at risk of further attack. The fact that farmers from neighbouring villages bring their animals in from the villages to the towns at night for safety lends credence to these fears.

A managed approach to the settling of displaced households is clearly required to ensure appropriate population densities, and access to and the provision of facilities. However, the planning process to date has not adequately reflected the preferences of the households themselves, or maximised opportunities to promote self-management by relocating communities. IDPs have been reluctant to move to such isolated sites, despite the 'build it and they will come' exhortations of some officials.

Meeting shelter priorities

Shelter assistance has focused on the construction of household shelters in planned camps, complemented by sanitary and communal facilities. This does not adequately reflect the support the displaced households require to meet their particular shelter needs. These needs vary according to where they are settled, the activities that need to be accommodated and their ability to access material resources and skills.

Smaller-scale clusters of IDPs could be supported where they have self-settled, subject to appropriate short-term land-use agreements in consultation with the neighbouring community, and appropriate replanning to allow for access and service upgrading and the provision of individual

household space. Not all self-settled locations may be viable, due to high land values, land title constraints and planned development. The replanning may also require the relocation of households to reduce population densities. Any such arrangements and replanning could be determined by the respective IDP communities themselves, drawing upon existing self-management structures. This would allow for locally appropriate compromises on space provision (including covered living areas) per individual household subject to usage; the delineation and usage of common external areas; and the siting, design and maintenance of essential facilities, including water points, toilets and washing areas.

A more constructive approach to the hosting of displaced households could reduce the demands on the existing infrastructure, better manage the planning implications of rapid population increase in urban centres, and capitalise to a greater extent on local coping mechanisms. The upgrading of existing services, for example by providing additional water points and toilets or extensions to school classrooms, could meet increasing demand and provide a permanent benefit to the whole community. Support could be provided to develop standardised short-term land use agreements, as well as appropriate planning services and procedures to better manage the absorption of additional households within the existing urban layout. Land use surveys, targeting individual parcels of vacant or underdeveloped land within urban areas, could also inform the short-term urban infill settlement of displaced households, in conjunction with the neighbouring or hosting community. This approach could be encouraged by modest infrastructure upgrading to increase the long-term viability and value of the land parcels in question.

many families have shown great ingenuity in adapting shelter materials they have sourced themselves

Local markets have been functioning and many families have shown great ingenuity in adapting materials they have sourced themselves. An exploration of shelter assistance beyond the provision of direct material distributions could stimulate a broader variety of more innovative housing solutions. The provision of vouchers, redeemable with pre-selected local suppliers and skilled labour, could enable beneficiary households to complement their existing resources with self-selected materials, or indeed specialist labour. Cash payments could also be made available to enable renting, subject to eligibility criteria, appropriate rental terms and an understanding of the existing rental market, to minimise the disruption to existing hosting arrangements. The provision of basic construction guidance, using existing examples of good construction, access to simple tools, and community labour gangs to assist households unable to build, could complement the tailored supply of supplementary material assistance.

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Self-settlement at El Geneina

Promoting the process, not the product

In attempting to meet the many and varied needs of IDPs, greater recognition should be placed on settlement as a process, not simply the delivery of a defined product, such as shelter materials or a package of household items. Grouping IDPs in well-planned camps with materials for individual household shelters is an appropriate response where lack of land, security concerns and the need for the management of centralised resources prompt a preference for such an approach from the households themselves. However, as key sector guidelines emphasise, such camps should not be a default response. Through self-settlement, affected households have typically addressed the overlapping issues of personal

safety, livelihood support, essential shelter and sanitation and social networking, as well as capitalising on available resources and relationships.

A key concern of many displaced households has been to generate income, either from livestock, or through modest market activities. It is acknowledged that disruption to the livelihood activities of affected households has been a key objective of the militia and their supporters in fomenting the violence, and opportunities to support or re-establish such activities should be informed by the local context. However, initiatives of displaced households and the host communities to date are encouraging. Small kitchen gardens have appeared between temporary shelters, and improvised pens have been erected to accommodate animals. Privately-negotiated agreements between IDPs and local families have enabled grazing land on the periphery of the towns to be used on a temporary basis. Support for larger-scale access to, or rental of, land as a relief activity could be actively pursued.

Displaced households and their hosts make compromises between location, personal safety concerns, space provision, access to services and the ability to generate their own resources. The provision of material, organisational and political support for these decisions could result in innovative, locally acceptable solutions. Promoting the process of settlement could include support for local planning procedures, the development of individual household land use agreements and the provision of technical assistance to local authorities and community groups to enable local settlement solutions. Whilst recognising that host communities are not necessarily homogenous, where appropriate they should also be included in the settlement process as potential providers of resources and creative settlement opportunities.

A number of displaced individuals have established links with local traders to prepare or sell wares in camps. Criteria for selecting settlement locations could include ease of access to local markets and suppliers. Market surveys could be undertaken to better understand how relief assistance to IDPs could strengthen local economies, and where investment could best benefit displaced and domiciled households. The presence of a substantial number of new consumers could be viewed as an economic opportunity, and openings for new or expanded microenterprise activities could be identified. The local production of shelter materials and household items could be explored, to benefit displaced households and their host neighbours. Training in new production and construction skills could also be promoted, where there is interest. Opportunities to transfer existing skills between IDPs, where these skills may have been lost as a result of displacement and loss of life, could be encouraged. Microfinance could also be made available, based on recent experiences in providing such services in refugee camps, in West Africa in particular.

Focusing on the process of settlement, rather than on specific shelter outputs, would encourage a more holistic approach to meeting settlement challenges. This in turn would enable the development of more flexible interventions to address the many and varied settlement needs that exist, and better reflect the priorities and preferences of the affected population. Recognition that temporary settlements may remain for some time, given the deteriorating security situation, should also encourage greater consideration of, and support for, more sustainable, locally determined settlement approaches. The experience in Darfur highlights a real need, as well as an opportunity, to put this aspiration into practice.

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Developing ‘connectors’ during humanitarian intervention: is it possible in western Sudan?

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Once again in Sudan, an upsurge in violence has caused a humanitarian crisis. This has led to a massive increase in the numbers of international NGOs and international staff in western Sudan, many with little previous experience of the region. In such circumstances, providing some insights into local cultural practices and how they might assist in meeting immediate and longer-term needs seems to be a sensible idea. This article provides one such insight by highlighting communal labour practices common to many parts of northern and western Sudan, and considering how NGOs might take account of such practices in seeking to deliver assistance. It argues that these practices – known as *naffir* – might provide NGOs with a useful tool for community mobilisation, and may provide opportunities for them to support ‘connectors’ within and between different communities, improving the delivery of assistance to needy populations.

What is *naffir*?

Naffir (نؤير) is a Sudanese Arabic word used to refer to particular types of communal work practices common in western and northern Sudan.¹ *Naffir* has been described as including a group recruited through family networks, in-laws and village neighbours for some particular purpose, which then disbands when that purpose is fulfilled.² Another definition describes *naffir* as ‘to bring someone together from the neighbourhood or community to carry out a certain project, such as building a house or providing help during the harvest season’.³

This illustrates two related ways in which *naffir* can be characterised. The first refers to group tasks that largely benefit one person, such as weeding or harvesting fields. Such activities are typically based on accessing a *naffir* for your own benefit, and as a result taking on a return obligation to participate in *naffir* of those that come to assist you. The second type of *naffir* relates to activities for the benefit of the community as a whole. These can often entail wider community and inter-ethnic involvement. In either case, it is usual for some refreshment (food and something to drink) to be provided for work groups, normally when the work is done. The amount and type of food vary from place to place and depending on the time of year (as different foods are

available at different times), though norms for what is expected are generally well established.

I first came across the concept of *naffir* while working in Khartoum in 1998 for GOAL. During the implementation of a sanitation project, some families proved unable to complete the required pit digging because they did not have sufficient labour available within the household, or sufficient funds to pay other labourers to do it. The project had made provision for a limited number of vulnerable households, but additional families required assistance. In this instance, GOAL’s project manager, working with affected families, was able to muster labour from others living locally or from other families registered on the project, through *naffir*. Community work groups completed the digging and were provided with some tea and a small meal by the household when the work was done.⁴ How these work groups were mobilised tended to vary from case to case, with some seeming to work under the normal process of family ties. In other instances (where the family had no immediate relatives near them), GOAL’s project managers enlisted neighbours directly, asking for additional labour in return for the benefits accruing to these family groups from receipt of latrines from the project (in addition to some refreshment from the host household). In one instance, members of the northern *Shai’giyya* tribe assisted a woman from western Sudan to complete her pit – a small example of inter-ethnic cooperation at the local level.

A second example, closer to the second type of *naffir*, comes from a small GOAL project implemented in Kutum in North Darfur in 2001–02. Six different tribes assisted in an integrated development project, with the concept of *naffir* facilitating the process of joint work among different ethnic groups, in this case to construct a health clinic building. Another more recent example from Darfur was of four tribes being organised by their sheikhs in a village in northern Darfur during the summer of 2004 to each build a wall for a building that would benefit them all.⁵

Why should NGOs consider using *naffir*?

The use of *naffir* structures by NGOs operational in Darfur would support local capacities and institutions, thereby avoiding the more harmful effects associated with dependency that come with other methods of distributing relief assistance. *Naffir* may also provide NGOs with a culturally appropriate device for mobilising populations after they have been displaced. While *naffir* groups are typically based on local connections, the concept itself is familiar throughout western Sudan. As such, it provides a culturally appropriate means for

1 The word *naffir* (نؤير) comes from the Arabic word *nafr* (نؤر) which, in standard Arabic, describes a band, party, group or troop, typically mobilised for war. In standard Arabic a *naffir ‘amm* (نؤير عام) refers to a general call to arms. In Sudanese colloquial Arabic, the word is used differently, referring primarily to the practices described in this article. However, the term has also occasionally been used in a military context in Sudan, most recently referring to militias (*al-naffir al-sha’abi*) that operated in the Nuba mountains region in the early 1990s.

2 Leif O. Manger in Leif O. Manger (ed.) *Communal Labour in the Sudan*, University of Bergen, 1987, p7.

3 ‘Conceptual Analysis of “Volunteer” Around the World’, available at www.isv2001.org/documents/volunteer_glossary.doc.

4 In many parts of Sudan, despite *shar’ia* law banning alcohol, it is common for local people to provide a locally brewed alcoholic drink, normally *marissa*, as refreshment when the work is done.

5 By email correspondence with Dr. Abdullahi El Tom, Professor of Anthropology, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, October 2004.

people that have not previously worked together to begin to recreate the kinds of social ties that help people to endure difficult conditions, even in the context of displacement or refugee camps. Indeed, academic literature on this subject highlights *naffir* as a means for some households to maintain social status and networks of cooperation and support, even when they are under severe economic pressure.⁶ *Naffir* may also provide a means for inter-ethnic cooperation – between different ethnic groups living in displaced camps, between IDPs and local host populations and, perhaps most effectively (if and when circumstances allow), in reconstruction efforts in areas of return.

***Naffir* as a ‘connector’**

In terms of actual NGO activities that might be suited to *naffir*, it may be that *naffir* works best as a connector, particularly between different ethnic groups, when it involves an institution that will clearly benefit all groups – such as the construction of a school or health clinic building. It is worth noting that possibly the most important aspect of *naffir* is not simply the construction of physical infrastructure. Rather, the use of *naffir* by NGOs may assist in rebuilding inter-communal trust and encourage the resumption of life as it used to be, particularly if circumstances change to allow people to return and resettle in their home areas.

As with many communal labour practices throughout Africa, it would be easy to idealise *naffir* as a form of generic collective action readily available for use by humanitarian NGOs in the implementation of project activities; the reality is, as always, somewhat more complex. Traditional communal labour should not be seen as an ideal tool for mobilising cheap or even free labour for any form of rural development project. Research indicates that returns from most communal labour activities are typically insufficient to justify communal work solely on economic grounds.⁷ With the increased penetration of the market economy, communal labour can also become a means for the wealthier to secure labour, benefiting them disproportionately. NGOs should be cautious in how they try to muster people around *naffir* and the nature of the tasks to be carried out; exploitative arrangements similar to those used by large farmers will probably not serve the interests of affected communities. In addition, enlistment by village sheikhs does not automatically mean community participation and support if it is not of a voluntary nature.

In other words, NGOs should be careful, and to some extent pragmatic, in how they treat the *naffir* concept. It is not a generic tool to be used in the same way in all circumstances. Thinking through, by discussion with local communities, ways in which *naffir* should be structured at the local level, particularly if the NGO is directly involved, is crucial. Issues that might arise include whether NGOs should be the ones

to provide food and drink as part of the *naffir* process; or whether and how food for work fits in. Payment of labour through food for work or cash is not the same as *naffir*; if not carefully managed, such activities might see the *de facto* monetisation of communal work relations. This has become increasingly common in many parts of Sudan with the increasing penetration of large mechanised farms and the market economy into rural areas – even where traditional smallholder agriculture is still practiced. This is not to deny the usefulness of such activities – in the current situation in Darfur, many families and communities will no doubt welcome the opportunity of paid labour or food for work – it is merely to highlight that these two things are different. NGOs should be aware of the possible negative effects of large-scale cash-paid or food for work programmes, including distortions to local labour markets and distribution networks. These effects might be avoided through the use of *naffir*. While such interventions may be most appropriate in the initial stages of the humanitarian response, where things need to be done quickly, as the situation stabilises more community-based practices such as *naffir* may be more effective.

Gender also needs to be factored in. *Naffir* is practiced by both men and women, frequently with particular tasks allocated by gender. Where the segregation of tasks by gender is not applied, the work of women or non-adults is discounted, reflecting the supposed lower labour contribution they make. While this article emphasises the relevance of traditional practices, it is also important to be aware of their possibly negative gender effects.

Conclusion

Naffir will not provide a panacea for the problems of conflict in Darfur. It assumes some possibility of stable relationships between different groups that would allow for the establishment of meaningful cooperation. The current levels of violence and displacement, and the continued disruption of people’s lives, all mean that it is incredibly difficult to provide people with the kind of stability required for *naffir* to really work. However, NGO personnel involved in programme design and working on the ground should be aware of this form of communal work practice, and should be sensitive to possible local variations of *naffir*, depending on context. Such awareness may allow humanitarian organisations to recognise additional opportunities for cross-community ‘connector’ activities that can be integrated into existing and planned operations. This should improve the quality and impact of NGO operations and assist in building or supporting existing connections in what has become an increasingly fractured environment. In addition, *naffir* may provide a tool for reducing the risk of long-term community dependency on external aid, allowing communities to restore or protect social ties that have assisted them in surviving previous crises, even in situations where such communities have lost almost everything through war and displacement.

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⁶ Howard White and Jennifer Leavy, *Labour Markets in Rural Africa: What Do Models Need To Explain?*, Institute of Development Studies, available at <http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/pvty/pdf-files/labourmarkets.pdf>.

⁷ Joachim Ziche and Mohammed A.M. Salih, in Leif O. Manger (ed.) *Communal Labour in the Sudan*, University of Bergen, 1987, p. 153.

Rethinking humanitarian security

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The bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad in August 2003, and the attack on the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)'s main office in the city the following October, have jolted humanitarian agencies into rethinking and reorganising their security arrangements. Senior officials in the largest agencies speak of a 'paradigm shift' in the threats facing humanitarian organisations. For years, and in ever-increasing numbers, Western humanitarian organisations have operated in inhospitable regions. They have faced threats and constraints, and have suffered their fair share of casualties, often as a result of the direct targeting of aid workers. Now, it is argued, aid workers everywhere in the world have become a chosen, deliberate and direct target of terrorist groups. In response, aid agencies' security management systems have been subjected to unprecedented levels of scrutiny and review.

Investing in security

Since the end of 2003, more than \$100 million is estimated to have been spent on revamping the security arrangements of the UN and other aid agencies. Most of this money has gone on protecting agencies' premises, both at headquarters and in sensitive areas, against armed intrusion and bomb attacks. The UN has completely revised its security management structures, bringing together its security coordination mechanism (UNSECOORD) with units responsible for staff security at the Department for Peace-Keeping Operations (DPKO) and for the protection of UN premises. A new post, Undersecretary-General for the Department for Security and Safety (DSS), has been created; the

since the end of 2003, more than \$100 million has been spent on revamping the security arrangements of the UN and other aid agencies



US troops seal off ICRC headquarters in Baghdad following the bomb attack in October 2003

©Reuters/Ceeman Aziz/courtesy www.alnetne.org

current incumbent is Sir David Veness, a former senior officer in the British police. The ICRC is also reviewing its security doctrine, and is re-examining the notion that acceptance by all stakeholders of its principles and working methods is a *sine qua non* for its continued presence in a conflict area. The agency is facing up to the fact that neutrality and independence, even if consistently practiced and forcefully proclaimed, do not guarantee acceptance and respect by all armed groups.

A changing political context

Why does humanitarian work seem more difficult and dangerous than in the past? Some argue that part of the reason is that humanitarian actors are no longer neutral. Of course, international agencies have always been perceived by some parties as stooges of neo-colonial or neo-imperialistic designs. During the Cold War, few organisations were truly politically neutral in their choices of beneficiaries, or in their decisions about which regions they wanted to help. More recently, claims to political neutrality have been further weakened as many humanitarian agencies have associated themselves ever-more closely with broader concepts of human security, and have deepened their links to their governmental donors.

The most significant threat to the actual and perceived neutrality of humanitarian organisations has been

agencies' calls for military interventions to stop systematic and large-scale human rights abuses, and to open up humanitarian space. Humanitarian agencies have often blamed the military for claiming a humanitarian mantle for themselves; agencies cringed and cried foul, for example, when military and political actors argued that their interventions in Kurdistan, Somalia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) were being waged as 'just humanitarian wars'. At the same time, however, some agencies are seen to have bowed to political pressure and subordinated their action to military or political considerations.

This trend towards the integration of political, military and humanitarian objectives has come to a head in Afghanistan and Iraq. In these countries, humanitarian emergency programmes, reconstruction and development projects were explicitly integrated into the security strategies of the United States, the European Union and NATO. The military assumed direct responsibility for providing humanitarian aid, or for subcontracting reconstruction and development projects, often because humanitarian agencies could not and would not risk venturing out on their own, or because they refused to act under the protection of intervention forces.

Managing risk

There is now increased recognition that, without a clear separation between military/political purposes and actions on the one hand, and humanitarian deeds on the other, humanitarians will be associated with third-party militaries, and will thus be at increased risk of attack. But how real is the new security threat? It is noteworthy that virtually all reputable international agencies are committed in Sudan and Indonesia, both contexts where one would expect Western agencies to be at increased risk from religious extremists. So far, no security incidents in Sudan can be linked to a global threat. Equally, no agency appears to have been impeded in its work elsewhere as a consequence of its association with the coalitions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

International agencies probably overreacted to the attacks in Baghdad in 2003. But that does not mean that a review of security management was not long overdue. Most agencies admit that they have insufficient knowledge of the contexts in which they operate, that they lack local networks and information sources and that most of their international staff are not familiar with local customs, language and culture. Agencies now recognise that it would be naïve to presume acceptance, and therefore security, just because they are able to satisfy urgent needs and because they abide by internationally accepted codes of conduct.

More often than not, the security incidents suffered by aid agencies are due to foolish mistakes by ill-prepared individuals, and to faulty appraisals of local conditions. These individual errors need to be understood in the context of overall systems and organisational policies. Few agencies have the resources to provide adequate language training, or a sufficient depth of expertise

among their staff to cover all contexts where they operate. Few can afford to resist donor pressure to get engaged in breaking emergencies before they have assessed the risks in depth. Field staff are supposed to take snap decisions daily: whether to send a truck convoy from A to B, go to a meeting with an unknown interlocutor bearing a message from some armed group, send an evaluation mission into an unknown area, reject a demand for help from an aggressive individual or group deemed outside of assistance criteria, or hand over belongings, including cars and radios, to an armed gang at a check-point.

Defining acceptable risk: organisational obligations and liabilities

During their field training, staff were probably told that they should always weigh security risks against the urgency and importance of the mission, and its chances of success. This calculation is the essence of risk management, and it is precisely what most humanitarian organisations are struggling with. Risk management involves establishing an appropriate infrastructure and culture and applying a logical and systematic method of establishing the context, identifying, analysing, evaluating, treating, monitoring and communicating the risks associated with any activity, function or process in a way that will enable organisations to minimise losses and maximise their institutional objectives, and their compliance with their mandate.

Most agencies accept that they do not have a clear idea of what their risk threshold actually is. Most say that the safety and security of their staff is one of their primary institutional objectives, and will admit that there are risks involved in sending people to hazardous places. But almost all also say that no humanitarian act is worth the death of a single aid worker. There is a contradiction here: on the one hand, agencies accept that aid work is a risky business; on the other, their corporate communications and mission statements proclaim mandates, values and goals that stress the good that will come from their commitment. UNHCR is to my knowledge the only humanitarian agency to openly address this contradiction. UNHCR's review of its security policy, published in September 2004, states that:

Given the danger in the environment in which UNHCR must operate if it is to protect and assist refugees, it is inevitable that staff members will be hurt and killed. It has happened in the past and it will happen again.¹

The question of how organisations frame their responsibility with regard to the security of their staff has hard-edged implications. The ways in which organisations manage risk and apportion accountability when things go wrong have implications for corporate responsibility. Who is to blame if there are casualties? What happens if bereaved parents and victims of

¹ Report of the Steering Committee on Security Policy and Policy Implementation (Geneva: UNHCR, 20 September 2004), p. 12.

terrorist attacks lodge claims against an organisation on the grounds that it has failed to take the necessary protective measures, or has failed to properly implement its own security regulations? The UN's insurance policy against malicious acts (MAIP) of January 2003 clearly states that 'claims will only be accepted under this policy if the organisation and/or the Insured Person concerned has demonstrated to UNSECOORD that it has complied with all UNSECOORD security guidelines'.² Considering the complexity of the UN's security rules, that is a tall order.

Conclusions and implications

To sum up, humanitarian agencies face some key challenges in managing the risks confronting their staff. Agencies need to define their risk threshold, provide appropriate security rules and regulations and adequately

² UN/Lloyds Malicious Acts Insurance Policy (MAIP), 27 January 2003, p. 7.

train their field staff so that they can apply them. They need to establish consistent risk management procedures throughout the organisation, and set clear rules for accountability. They need to provide adequate insurance cover for their staff, and protect managers against liability claims. They need to invest the appropriate resources in selecting and training the managers to whom they entrust decisions regarding security. And they need to review their rapport with the military to establish a constructive working relationship. This is a demanding agenda. It is also a necessary one.

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Some Southern views on relations with the military in humanitarian aid

Nik Bredholt, Caritas

Recent crises have seen a marked increase in the participation of military forces in work usually regarded as the exclusive domain of humanitarian agencies. Since it is impossible today to provide aid in many situations without some kind of relationship with the military, the discussion is less whether there should be a relationship at all, but how to establish what the appropriate relationship should be, and where the boundaries should lie. These boundaries should be established so that those affected by an emergency continue to receive vital assistance in a way that does not undermine the independent and apolitical nature of humanitarian action, and which ensures that guiding values and principles are not compromised in other ways.

The discussion within the humanitarian community on relations with the military has tended to focus on Northern agencies and Northern militaries. There has been less focus on the Southern perspective: the perspective of those who actually experience the presence of these armed forces in their countries. This article looks at some Southern views, and argues that the main guiding principle must be the local context of the emergency. How humanitarian actors relate to military forces will depend on local knowledge, including local perceptions and, to a lesser extent, the kind of military in question, whether they are occupation forces, national forces, non-state armies or UN troops. Clear guidelines cannot be established far from the scene, but have to be contextualised at the local level.

An appropriate relationship: the Caritas discussion

In December 2003, the Caritas Confederation came together in Rome to discuss relations with the military, and to formulate a policy. Caritas is in a privileged position when it comes to achieving a global view, as it includes independent organisations from around the world. Each responds to a local constituency.

The general recommendation from the Caritas seminar was that the shape and nature of relations with the military depend on the individual context, and cannot be predefined. Military involvement in major natural calamities is not only acceptable but vital, as no other institution has the same means in terms of equipment and available personnel. The situation in the case of conflict, however, is different. In some circumstances, contact with the military may be a prerequisite for humanitarian access: to reach areas of northern Sri Lanka, for example, relations had to be established both with the Sri Lankan military and with the rebels. But the presence of the military in a particular environment can also have damaging effects. In particular, Africa has seen a range of examples of the use and misuse of military power, as well as of the impact of UN troop deployments. At the Caritas meeting, a representative from N'Djamena in Chad spoke of the difficulties the local population faced with the presence of UN peace troops. Foreign troops affected, not only the conflict that originally brought them in, but local society as a whole. A degradation of

moral values, prostitution and the increased incidence of HIV/AIDS were all cited as some of the negative features of the UN troops' presence.

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Examples from the Indian Ocean tsunami and the DRC

The involvement of the military in Sri Lanka and Indonesia following the tsunami in the Indian Ocean in December 2004 provides some insight into this problem. Although the disaster hit populations indiscriminately in Sri Lanka and in Indonesia's Aceh province, in both situations the existence of civil conflict meant that, for some, the national army was not a neutral actor supporting the local population, but an enemy. It thus could not act as an effective party to the relief effort. As Sri Lanka is only beginning to recover from its devastating war, especially in the Tamil areas in the north and north-east, tensions around military involvement are high. In addition, negotiations between the two parties, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the government, are at a standstill, and the movement for peace is vulnerable.

Shortly after the disaster, on 8 January 2005, the president of Sri Lanka announced that relief work for the victims of the tsunami would be entrusted to the military commanders in each region. While this move might make logistical sense in areas that recognise the government, the north includes both government-held and LTTE territories. Local people told Caritas that the involvement of military commanders was not welcome in the north, where it could have been seen as a means of occupying their homeland. It appeared to increase Tamil suspicion of the government. Conversely, in Trincomalee on Sri Lanka's east coast, the local Caritas organisation had to stop a rebuilding project proposed by a European partner in an uncleared area as it was felt that the project would be questioned by the army as potentially supporting the LTTE. The substantial amount of money that the project would have required may have led to suspicion that project

funds should also support the resistance, and could ultimately endanger perceptions of Caritas and its freedom of operation.

The Sri Lankan armed forces were not the only military actors in the tsunami relief operation. The American military also took an active part. The US dispatched more than 20 naval ships including an aircraft carrier and 1,300 marines to the tsunami zone. As the LTTE is on a US list of terrorist organisations, the presence of US military personnel in the relief effort was taken as cover for spying and an attempt to collect information for the government of Sri Lanka. Caritas turned down an offer of helicopter assistance from the US military because it was seen as potentially jeopardising the non-partisan position of the Church in Sri Lanka. The status of the Catholic Church, as a well-known entity not related to either the government or the Tamils, has throughout the conflict provided church people with an ability to cross the lines in ways that NGOs in general cannot do. In a situation of widespread suspicion and distrust, a recognised and known identity might prove useful in order to gain access, whereas an NGO label is often less clear.¹

In post-tsunami Aceh in Indonesia, Caritas members have found that it was nearly impossible to work without some kind of relationship with the military. Because of martial law and the absence of a local government with which to coordinate, Caritas was effectively without a natural local partner, as the Indonesian church is relatively small. At the same time, the difficulties in working in close coordi-

¹ Caritas struggles with a definition as a non-governmental organisation, since Caritas is also a church. Among Caritas members in the South, there is an ongoing discussion as to whether Caritas is an NGO at all.



Sri Lankan troops at a checkpoint on a road to Jaffna, July 2004. The Sri Lankan military was tasked with providing relief in the wake of the tsunami

nation with the military may be preferable to implementing through local structures if these structures represent religious fundamentalism. The perception is that aid in such circumstances could be used for other purposes. Thus, the military, though it might be seen as an occupying power, might be the preferred partner, when no other reliable alternative exists.

Caritas turned down an offer of helicopter assistance from the US military

Experiences in Bunia in the DRC are different again. Caritas DRC implements food programmes both in the city and in the bush, in close coordination and contact with local communities. As DRC has no unified national army, but rather a variety of larger or smaller armed groups, there is no national army to relate to, and no local government with effective power.

According to the local Caritas organisation, many people have lost faith in the UN presence, MONUC, and for that reason Caritas cannot be seen to coordinate field visits with MONUC if it wants to travel outside Bunia. Instead, Caritas communicates directly with communities close to the rebels, and these communities themselves make the local security contacts Caritas needs to secure access in rebel-held areas. This is a better guarantee of security than MONUC could provide.

Context above all

Caritas' Southern members do not make the same distinctions between occupation forces, national forces, non-state armies and UN troops that are made in the policy papers developed by Northern NGOs. What really matters is the impact these military forces have on the local environment, and this depends greatly on context and perception – on the NGO in question, and its relation to society.

The case mentioned above of the US helicopter being offered for relief operations in northern Sri Lanka points to the dilemma of military involvement in humanitarian aid. As a means of moving relief items into difficult-to-access areas, a helicopter is extremely useful; however, the signal its use sends to local people must be taken into consideration. In the short term, aid might be delivered, but in the long term the relationship between local society and the humanitarian actor may be endangered. Context is everything, and local Southern organisations will understand the context in a different way to those from the North. Where Northern NGOs typically respond to a Northern constituency, a Southern organisation with a local constituency has to consider local perceptions and the long-term consequences of their actions. These organisations are linked to their local societies, and they cannot withdraw if problems arise.

Although they can shut down operations, they will have to live with those who are in power. Northerners can ultimately leave and decide to terminate any dialogue with a hostile group or government.

As far as UN military deployments are concerned, the potentially adverse impacts that the presence of UN troops might have on the local environment are recognised as a problem at the highest level.² However, the policy papers from the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) do not deal with this. Caritas members from Liberia, Sierra Leone and DRC, where there are large contingents of UN troops, are concerned, and the network will probably have to deal more concretely with the difficulties that arise, and provide guidance for its members on how to denounce wrongdoings, participate in the monitoring of mandates and avoid the use of church buildings and structures without proper indemnity.

Contextualisation is a *sine qua non* in framing relations with the military, and local Southern organisations will perceive this context in a different way to those from the North. Without local trust and confidence, relief work becomes very complicated. Irregular armies are a reality in a number of African countries, not just the DRC. This, combined with a lack of government and distrust towards UN troop contingents, raises the question whether clear guidelines for relations with the military can be established at all.

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² In December 2004, at the UN Security Council Open Debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, Jan Egeland stated that he was deeply disturbed at sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel.

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Is corruption an issue in the tsunami response?

Peter Walker, Feinstein International Famine Center

The Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004 was a massive disaster, prompting an equally massive response. Some US agencies estimate that their tsunami appeals have amassed the equivalent of twice their normal annual global humanitarian budget. But it does not necessarily follow from this that problems of corruption will also be massive. Of the billions of dollars that may flow into the region, how many will be lost to corruption? A fraction of a percent, a worrying percentage? How will this compare with other inefficiencies in the system, such as mistargeting of aid, inappropriate programming and poorly timed programming? Indeed, a focus on the potential for corruption in tsunami relief and rehabilitation work neatly sidesteps issues of impartiality and politically directed rebuilding.

The international watchdog Transparency International defines corruption as 'the misuse of entrusted power for private benefit'.¹ With this definition in mind, this article explores three critical areas as they relate to the tsunami response:

1. The pre-existing 'corruption environment'.
2. The effects of the disaster on opportunities for corruption.
3. The effects of the aid influx on opportunities for corruption.

The 'corruption environment'

Corruption is often a particular problem in disaster-prone and conflict-affected countries. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), for example, puts Haiti at the bottom of the list, at 145. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is 133rd, Iraq 129th. Among the tsunami countries, Indonesia sits with the DRC at 133rd, India is ninetyeth, Sri Lanka sixty-seventh and Thailand sixty-fourth. Clearly, corruption is a pre-existing problem in many of the countries that have received international relief aid.

The economies of disaster-prone regions, particularly those caught up in conflict, greatly increase the potential for corruption. Civil wars, such as those in Sri Lanka and Indonesia's Aceh province, facilitate links between personal power, family, tribal and religious affiliation and the exploitation of natural resources, local populations and external international resources, to fuel personal gain and further war objectives. In environments where the salaries of government officials and of soldiers or militia often go unpaid, personal survival may depend upon graft and exploitation. Your gun becomes your salary, and exploitation becomes the primary mode of governance.²

¹ Transparency International, *TI Source Book 2000*, p. 1, <http://www.transparency.org/sourcebook/index.html>.

The impact of the disaster

The physical effects of the tsunami are likely to have increased opportunities for corruption and exploitation. In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, many of the systems normally used to encourage accountability and reduce corruption break down. Local officials are killed, offices destroyed and records – bank records, land titles, work permits – lost.

If possession is nine-tenths of the law, then those who hold few legal documents have little chance of asserting their property rights. Survivors in Thailand who tried to reclaim their land in Laem Pom, part of an old tin mine site in Ban Nam Khem, the worst-hit seaside village in Phangnga, found that the devastated area had been sealed off by a group of armed men hired by the local Nai Toon ('money baron'), who claimed ownership over the beachfront community where some 50 families lived.³ As this example shows, disasters often exacerbate existing disparities in wealth and power. One aid agency active in the tsunami relief expressed this well:

*As we seek to aid in the post-tsunami reconstruction effort, we must be acutely aware of the power dynamics in [this] complicated social fabric. Without understanding these dynamics, our programs run the risk of reinforcing already highly inequitable social structures.*⁴

Municipal and country authorities, faced with rehabilitating areas where the majority of the infrastructure is destroyed, are likely to err towards planning anew, as if on a slate wiped clean, rather than building on the aspirations of the disaster victims.

The effect of the aid influx

Over the past ten years the humanitarian community, donor governments, UN agencies and NGOs have done a tremendous amount to increase their level of accountability and their ability to track their financial and supply resources. Initiatives like the Sphere Project have sought to set minimum standards for operations, while the Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) and the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership – International have both endeavoured to enhance the aid community's competence in evaluation and monitoring, and

² See, for example, Sarah Collinson, *Power, Livelihoods and Conflict: Case Studies in Political Economy Analysis for Humanitarian Action*, HPG Report 13, February 2003.

³ S. Ekachai, *This Land Is Our Land*, <http://www.achr.net/000ACHRTsunami/Thailand%20TS/Thai%20Extras%20Tsunami%201.htm>.

⁴ Oxfam America, *Program Matrix Tsunami Response*, India, 21 February 2005.

to increase accountability to donors and affected communities.⁵ Within the government donor community, the Good Donorship Initiative seeks to ensure that funds are targeted more on the basis of need and less on the basis of politics or public pressure. All of these, largely self-initiated, activities have greatly increased the accountability of the aid business, and thus reduced opportunities for corruption.

Despite these efforts, all disasters and disaster recovery operations create opportunities for profit, legitimate or otherwise. In situations of famine, grain traders often flourish, as do livestock marketers who are able to buy up herds at knockdown prices. The reconstruction of physical infrastructure presents a prime opportunity for the misuse of power and resources. At one level, this is no different from any other major construction programme in the commercial or public sector. At another level, however, aid systems create their own peculiarities which may enhance corruption. The massive influx of aid resources into the tsunami zone, often from unfamiliar sources and through unfamiliar channels, clearly provides an additional opportunity for corruption.

Implementing aid agencies, particularly those that are new to an area, or are having to rapidly scale up their interventions, have a tendency to create their own systems for delivery, service and accountability, rather than looking to use and enhance existing local systems. In effect, they build a parallel economy, creating a large pool of relatively well-paid but temporary jobs. Through initiatives like People in Aid, aid agencies are starting to reform the way they recruit, train and compensate international staff, but to date no such concerted move has been made to redress issues of inequality in the way local staff are hired, and the distorting effect agencies have on local labour markets. On the other hand, parallel systems may not always be a bad thing. In many conflict environments, parallel systems are set up explicitly to bypass corrupt and exploitative local government, commercial or warlord systems.

The scale of funding that the tsunami has attracted has posed particular problems. Few agencies had Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)'s courage or financial confidence to state clearly that they had raised sufficient funds for their tsunami relief operations, and wanted no more. Given the opportunistic nature of fundraising for relief, most agencies continued to solicit money well beyond the point where their initial appeals were met; one international agency (the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) originally asked for \$59 million in December 2004, revised this upwards to \$155 million in January 2005, and is reported to have raised over \$1.9 billion to date across its global membership. Even where active fundraising ceases, money from the public still continues to flow.

Agencies' accountability systems, procurement systems and payment systems have been developed to handle a predictable level and rate of transactions. In the pressure to spend fast and furiously, the tsunami response is in

danger of overwhelming these systems. There are significant problems associated with scaling up an operation with a \$10 million turnover to one with a turnover of \$100 million in a matter of days. Systems for accountability and the tracking of financial and other resources become overloaded. It is not uncommon for a backlog of accounting to build up, and for auditing to be ignored in the rush to supply. Agencies need to hire large numbers of local staff rapidly, often with little understanding of cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds and affiliations. In many major operations in the past, aid agencies have found themselves spending months if not years trying to unravel the webs of nepotism and minor exploitation they had inadvertently put in place. Other issues apply to the rapid build-up of international staff where, because of a lack of available experienced personnel, relatively inexperienced agency staffers may find themselves administering relatively large and complex operations. Poor targeting, oversupply and inappropriate programmes can present problems and opportunities for exploitation. Opportunities for corruption abound, as agencies seek to purchase goods locally in markets they are unfamiliar with.

Whilst the major international agencies have seen a massive increase in their funding for tsunami relief, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that many non-traditional NGOs have also benefited from the significant expansion in public giving via the Internet in response to the disaster. Ten years ago in Rwanda, some 480 NGOs turned up in Kigali after the genocide, many of them first-timers. The tsunami-affected countries have seen a similar pattern. There are a significant number of relatively new agencies seeking to operate in a largely unfamiliar environment. There is no reason to suggest that these agencies are any less honest or accountable than their more established counterparts, but there is reason to believe that their relative inexperience makes their programming more susceptible to exploitation and corruption.

Conclusions

Aid agencies are seen by the public and by their financiers as holding funds in trust. They are the vital link between those with compassion and those in need. Those with compassion want their money to go to the needy, and are thought willing to give only if they are sure that their wishes are being met. Aid agencies are caught in a bind. They seek to ensure that their reporting emphasises how little they spend on overheads (suggesting that 'every penny' goes to the needy), yet without properly funded systems of financial tracking, checks on authority, internal auditing, training and monitoring, aid may go astray. Many people certainly believe that large chunks of aid money are lost through graft. A recent opinion poll by the Program on International Policy Attitudes at the University of Maryland found that 'Americans show great pessimism about how effectively aid money going to Africa is being spent, with most assuming that large portions are lost to corruption'.⁶ Perceptions about aid in general are little different. Against this background, it is extremely difficult

⁵ Peter Walker, 'Cracking the Code: The Genesis, Use and Future of the Code of Conduct', *Disasters*, forthcoming, 2005.

⁶ See http://www.americans-world.org/digest/regional_issues/africa/africa3.cfm.

for an individual agency to stand up and admit, let alone confront, issues of corruption.

In seeking to understand corruption issues better, agencies should ask themselves three sets of questions.

1. What is the most likely source of significant corruption? Is it the underlying economic systems in the affected countries, the opportunities for profiteering created by the disaster, oversupply or missupply in the aid system, or the internal workings of the aid system itself?
2. If our prime concern is the rebuilding of livelihoods in a sustainable manner within affected communities, how then do issues of corruption and aid misuse measure up against problems of inappropriate, ill-timed and poorly conceived aid projects? Wherein lies the greatest threat to recovery?

3. The concern for accountability, which is part and parcel of the transparency and anti-corruption agenda, has encouraged agencies to work their way down the supply chain, from accountability to donors to accountability to self-set standards to accountability to beneficiary populations. Is there potential in this massive operation to carry out some serious work on this last link in the chain, and move agencies beyond what remains a largely rhetorical aim?

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The tsunami, the internet and funding for forgotten emergencies

Christopher Eldridge, independent

Public responses to appeals for aid funds after the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004 were unprecedented. In Britain, more donations were made more quickly to the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)'s tsunami appeal than to any previous appeal coordinated by the DEC. In two months, £300 million (about \$600 million) was raised – over eight times the amount given to the DEC's Sudan appeal, which had been running for four times as long. Official aid pledges were also large.¹ The responses of the public and of donors raise a number of issues around the financing of relief. This article looks at two: funding for so-called 'forgotten emergencies', and the role of the media and new technology in fundraising and awareness-raising.

Forgotten emergencies and three funding issues: proportionality, timeliness and switching

The problem of forgotten emergencies has been acknowledged for some years. It has been underlined by the disparity between Consolidated Appeal (CAP) pledges for the tsunami and those for other CAP emergencies.² As of 5 April 2005, donor commitments for ten of 17 CAP emergencies then current were each less than 5% of the CAP requirements. For the tsunami, they amounted to 80% of requirements – well over half as much again as those for the other 16 emergencies combined.³

The fact that under 5% of CAP requirements for ten emergencies were met a quarter of the way through the year highlights the issue of timeliness. The timing of expenditure is critical in emergencies for several reasons: first, because by definition the needs are urgent; second, due to seasonal effects (the start of the rains, for example, might cause logistical or health problems); third, because of implementation requirements (in some countries operations are scheduled on a quarterly basis); fourth, where expenditure involves food aid, relief food deliveries which continue after the harvest tend to depress local food prices. So the fact that funding might eventually come close to requirements is not the issue: speed of effective disbursement is of the essence.

The third issue highlighted by the tsunami response concerns the switching of funding between emergencies. None of the \$350 million pledged by the US for tsunami programmes during the month after the disaster was new money; it was simply switched from existing aid budgets.⁴ If some or all of a donor's pledge comprises old money, what will be cut as a result? How quickly will this money be transformed into effective programmes? What financing mechanisms, and/or what conditions attached to the money, might limit the speed, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of the programmes it will finance?

More broadly, the scale of the public response to the tsunami is likely to affect public fundraising for other emer-

¹ By 5 April 2005, donors had pledged \$870 million in Consolidated Appeal contributions for the tsunami.

² Funding for emergencies is also provided outside CAPs, but this disparity is nevertheless indicative of a continuing problem.

³ Reliefweb, UN-OCHA financial tracking system, <http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/index.aspx> (accessed 6 April 2005).

⁴ P. Walker, B. Wisner, J. Leaning and L. Minear, 'Smoke and Mirrors: Deficiencies in Disaster Funding', *British Medical Journal*, vol. 330, 247–250 (2005).

donor commitments for the tsunami amounted to 80% of requirements

gencies, though the nature,⁵ scale and duration of the effects are unclear. In relation to charitable giving in general in Britain, a survey conducted by the UK's Institute of Fundraising a month after the tsunami found no clear consensus among British charities as to whether the tsunami appeal would have negative or positive impacts on their incomes in the long term. A fifth of the 293 charities in the survey reported an increase in income over the previous month, and a fifth reported a decrease. Following previous emergencies, many international NGOs have experienced a longer-term increase in income.

The complementary roles of the mass media and the internet

The disparity between funding for the tsunami and for other current emergencies was paralleled by a disparity in media coverage.⁶ The tsunami attracted more media attention in the two months after it struck than the world's top ten 'forgotten' emergencies enjoyed over a whole year. Among the likely reasons for this were:

- dramatic images of devastation, both rural and urban, in ten different countries;
- the immediate availability of images filmed and photographed by holidaymakers;
- timing: the tsunami struck at Christmas, a time of the year when many people are watching television, and when there are relatively few news stories;
- easy and rapid access by journalists to most affected areas;
- the relative novelty of the disaster (destructive tsunamis are rarer than droughts, floods and conflict);
- the apparent simplicity of the cause of the disaster, and its amenability to graphical, scientific explanation;
- the tsunami struck many areas familiar to Westerners: 14% of those in the UK who made donations gave because they knew the area or had actually visited one of the regions affected;⁷ and
- the death or temporary disappearance of several thousand people from Western countries.

Technology had a major impact on the way in which people pledged their support, offering them a variety of ways to make donations. A survey for the Charities Aid

⁵ The nature of any effect is also important, as aid to support livelihoods damaged in an emergency may be affected differently from aid intended to save lives.

⁶ This is according to a survey by the humanitarian news site Reuters AlertNet, which analysed coverage in 200 English-language newspapers. The ten forgotten emergencies it identified were the DRC, Uganda, conflicts in Sudan, HIV/AIDS, West Africa, Colombia, Chechnya, Haiti, Nepal and infectious diseases.

⁷ NOP study for the Charities Aid Foundation.

Foundation in the UK found that 61% of people who gave online did so for the first time, and 41% of those who used a debit or credit card to give by telephone were also doing so for the first time. Text messaging was used by 1% of donors – all of whom did so for the first time. The availability of information on how to go about donating was also important: of those in the UK who made donations, 65% did so because information on how to give was readily accessible. (The availability of technology alone would not be of much help if there was no information available on how to make use of it.)

The large increase in the number of internet users over recent years provides an opportunity for at least partially overcoming two main constraints which have imposed finite and easily reached limits on the role of the mass media in creating and maintaining public awareness of emergencies (and of relief and development issues generally): space constraints (other news stories compete for limited space) and temporal constraints (after a certain, variable, period, high-interest news stories slip down the schedule and onto inside pages, and the space/airtime devoted to them decreases and eventually disappears). Both constraints mean that a major new emergency, or a newsworthy worsening of an existing emergency, almost inevitably reduces the attention given to other emergencies (and to other development issues more generally).

a major new emergency almost inevitably reduces the attention given to other emergencies

These two constraints suggest that it may be operationally useful to distinguish between creating awareness, and maintaining and extending awareness – providing more, and more nuanced, information on emergencies. The mass media are best-placed for the former, and the internet (with a few quality newspapers, TV channels and journals) for the latter.

The mass media and the internet were used in complementary ways to rapidly raise large sums of money from the public immediately after the tsunami. This complementarity could be extended to increase public awareness of forgotten emergencies and of the wider contexts in which emergencies occur. Websites might be established by organisations involved in emergencies, perhaps by donors involved in the GHD initiative, UN organisations, and NGO coordinating groups such as the DEC in the UK. These could be used to describe, for example:

- forgotten emergencies;
- the increasing number of natural disasters, which tripled from an average of 150 a year in 1980 to over 450 a year today;⁸

⁸ *World Disasters Report* (Geneva: International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies, 2004).

- the two-way links between poverty and emergencies;
- emergencies and development (in countries of low human development, 1,052 people died per natural disaster on average between 1991 and 2000, almost 50 times as many as in countries of high human development (23 deaths per disaster));⁹
- emergencies and vulnerable groups, such as children, older people and disabled people;
- emergencies in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); and
- 'grey' emergencies, such as malaria and diarrhoea, which are not emergencies in the conventional sense, but nonetheless kill large numbers of people, particularly children, and are specific and avoidable.

There are limits to the number of separate emergency appeals which can be launched. Making references to websites endorsed or established by organisations involved in emergencies would help to circumvent these limits, and the two constraints characterising the mass media noted above. It would also allow emergencies to be linked with other campaigns and programmes, such as the Jubilee Debt Campaign, whose website referred to the need to cancel a significant part of the debts owed by countries affected by the tsunami, and freeze repayments on remaining debts; this kind of analysis could be repeated for other emergencies. Other areas to explore could include HIV/AIDS (emergencies tend to facilitate the spread of HIV/AIDS); there is no immediately obvious website relevant to HIV/AIDS and emergencies.

Once endorsed or established, such websites could be used to extend awareness of emergencies and their contexts still further through their use in schools. In Britain, for example, the geography syllabus in secondary schools includes natural disasters and responses to them. Faith-based organisations, other civil society groups, and the private sector

⁹ *World Disasters Report* (Geneva: International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies, 2001).

may also be useful avenues (donations by companies to the tsunami appeals in Britain varied greatly, but in general seemed less generous than those by individuals). It might also be possible to use the internet to raise public awareness at the onset of an emergency: for example, sponsored pop-up news-boxes on Google, Yahoo or MSN.

Conclusion

Various factors contribute to the continuing problem of forgotten emergencies. These include the complexity of many of them, overall low volumes of aid,¹⁰ and the little attention paid by the mass media to poor countries, in which nearly all such emergencies occur. Consequently, several approaches to improving funding programmes for forgotten emergencies are needed. These include emphasis on the GHD initiative, particularly the principles of proportionality and timeliness; transparency concerning switched funding; the funding of UN relief agencies at least in part from assessed contributions, rather than relying on pledges in response to individual emergencies from donor governments;¹¹ and the expanded use of the internet to increase public awareness of forgotten emergencies, to expand awareness of the wider contexts in which emergencies occur, and to help transform impressive public responses to high-profile emergencies into more regular giving.

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¹⁰ Only five of the 22 Development Assistance Committee countries currently meet the 0.7% of GDP target; the average (0.25%) is only just over a third of this. The US figure is 0.16%. However, following the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, levels of development assistance should now be increasing.

¹¹ Walker et al., 'Smoke and Mirrors'.

Food security and markets in Zambia

Miles Murray and Evans Mwangwe, CARE International

Levels of chronic malnutrition in Zambia are now among the worst in the world. But it is drought that galvanises attention and informs responses. Drought response will often be necessary, as will the recovery activities that follow. Addressing people's vulnerability to drought, however, requires a more structural change. One such structural change would be the development of markets for drought-tolerant food crops. In Southern Zambia, this could mean the creation of a market for sorghum. By being able to meet people's needs both for cash and for food, sorghum, like maize, would become a viable choice for farmers. This would provide a powerful

stimulus to crop diversification, and with it drought resistance. CARE International in Zambia has begun investigating how feasible the creation of a market for sorghum is. The initial signs are encouraging, but the work is just beginning.

Food insecurity in Southern Zambia

For most rural households in Zambia, the cultivation of maize provides their primary source of income, as well as food. As a crop, maize is particularly vulnerable to drought, and increasingly erratic and lower rainfall has had a severe impact on maize production in Southern

Zambia. At the same time, economic structural adjustment has resulted in a withdrawal of state support for producers. This has made adjusting to climatic change more difficult, while introducing the additional burden of having to adapt to new market conditions as state marketing boards and cooperatives have been replaced with private traders and the uncertainties of free markets.

Economic changes have also had a direct impact on households' key asset: livestock. Cattle disease has become more widespread, and the cattle population has decreased dramatically, hitting households hard. Finally, HIV and AIDS, though less prevalent in rural areas than it is in urban Zambia, still constitutes a crisis for rural families. Although each family is affected differently, the costs of the disease – in care and medicines, for example – is inescapable.

As a consequence of these environmental and economic shocks, Southern Zambia, historically the source of much of the country's agricultural produce, is becoming characterised by chronic food insecurity. This chronic crisis – the unrelenting erosion, from every quarter, of people's livelihoods – has contributed to a situation where levels of chronic malnutrition in Zambia are now among the worst in the world.

Southern Zambia is becoming characterised by chronic food insecurity

CARE in Southern Zambia

CARE International has been working in Kazungula District in Zambia's Southern Province since the early 1990s. Its involvement began with short-term responses to drought. After repeated relief projects, the Livingstone Food Security Program (LFSP) was started in the mid-1990s to address people's persistent vulnerability to drought. The programme focused on the promotion of crop diversification through a seed loan scheme, and increasing the availability of water for domestic consumption and livestock. The programme also included micro-finance, marketing and livestock disease control, which grew to include dairy marketing.



Millet meal from Ethiopia

©Hunter Nielson

In 2002, just as the LFSP was coming to an end, Southern Zambia was once again affected by a severe drought, and a major drought response programme was put in place. Two and a half million people across the country received relief food, often through food for work. CARE's drought response programme in Kazungula distributed over 4,000 tonnes of government and World Food Programme (WFP) relief food, as well as agricultural inputs for the following seasons. CARE continues to work in Kazungula, piloting a cash-based social safety net for the most destitute families, and distributing food to families who are food insecure due to HIV and AIDS and other chronic illnesses.

Lessons from the droughts in Kazungula

There are many lessons to be learnt from the droughts that have affected Kazungula and the responses, both short and long term. The most fundamental

may be that responses, however effective, are not addressing the real crisis: chronic poverty. There are many causes of this chronic poverty, from the household level to the global level, but addressing vulnerability to drought and loss of livestock may offer the greatest potential for change.

In Southern Zambia, rural households' continued vulnerability to drought is most immediately linked to the cultivation of maize. But maize cultivation is also a very rational choice. Maize represents both a cash crop and a food crop. Maize can feed a household, but it can also be sold to provide the income to meet other basic needs, such as health and education. This versatility gives households the power to cope with the insecurities that surround them. Unfortunately, it also leaves them vulnerable to the less frequent, but more severe, shock of drought. If households were to give greater importance to drought-tolerant food crops, they would be insulated from the major shock of drought, but they would have less income to meet planned and unexpected non-food needs. If they diversified into alternative economic activities, such as the cultivation of high-value cash crops, they would again be replacing one source of vulnerability with another: market, as opposed to climatic, vulnerability could become a key issue for households.

As an agency, CARE faces a similar dilemma. If it supports continued maize cultivation, either directly through seeds and tools or indirectly through cash transfers, it leaves families vulnerable to drought. But if it supports drought-

tolerant food crops, it leaves families less able to meet their non-food needs, and vulnerable to more immediate 'everyday disasters'. We know that the assumption in our log-frames – 'good rains next year' – is as likely to be proved false as it is to come true. But until we address the fundamental problem that drought-tolerant food crops are not a viable choice for farmers, we, like the farmers, have little choice. We continue our seed distributions and food for work, while, like the farmers, watching the sky and praying for rain. General food distribution will help meet immediate needs. Cash or food for work and seed multiplication will help in rebuilding assets, and therefore increase resilience to drought. But the underlying vulnerability to drought will remain.

After the drought of 2001–2002 the rains returned and the agricultural inputs provided as part of the drought recovery contributed to good harvests. Zambia exported maize to the region. But for all the talk of recovery the vulnerabilities remained. This year, once again, the rains have been poor in Southern Zambia. The recovery is evaporating and there is talk of another drought response. Food aid pipelines are being rebuilt, and recovery programmes will no doubt follow. This is not a call for an end to maize. The high yields and ease of processing and storage mean that maize will always have a role to play. Nor is it a call for an end to food relief or drought recovery programmes. They too have their place. It is a call for a real choice – a viable alternative to maize. It is a call for drought mitigation to be given the prominence that response and recovery so often get.

Towards a new approach?

For Southern Zambia, sorghum seems to represent a viable alternative to maize. Sorghum has similar nutritional value to maize, but it requires fewer inputs – both fertilizer and, crucially, water. There is a history of growing sorghum in Southern Province, and there is a market for sorghum in neighbouring Botswana. Like maize, sorghum provides fodder for cattle. Sorghum does have a lower yield than maize, is more prone to attack by birds and more laborious to process. But it is, crucially, more drought-tolerant.

for Southern Zambia, sorghum seems to represent a viable alternative to maize

The demand created by a viable market for sorghum would mean that growing a drought-tolerant food crop would become a real choice for rural households. With a viable market building on, and reinforcing, existing crop diversification activities sorghum would, like maize, be able to feed a household and provide income to meet other basic needs. Unlike maize, it would mean that households would no longer have to choose between

meeting their immediate needs and reducing their long-term vulnerability.

There are a number of examples from the region that show that this may be viable.

- The Botswana government has successfully promoted the increased commercialisation of sorghum to such an extent that it now represents 50% of all traded meal.
- WFP has used sorghum in its school feeding programmes in Tanzania, thereby helping to stimulate the demand for sorghum.
- In Zambia the local NGO Program Against Malnutrition has been advocating for the greater commercialisation of cassava, and the government's food reserve agency has purchased cassava for its Strategic Reserves.

This is not to say that it will be simple. Markets for drought-tolerant food crops would have to be actively developed – just as the Zambian maize market was developed to supply the demands of a newly urbanised labour force. Just as farmers will not grow significant quantities of sorghum until there is a market, so millers and traders will not invest in sorghum until the market is better developed. Issues of grain quality and consistency of supply will have to be addressed. This would be a complex and long-term undertaking. It would have to involve all major stakeholders: the government, the private sector, the wider public, academia, international agencies, donors and NGOs. But it offers a long-term and resilient solution to people's vulnerability to drought. Once established, markets for drought-tolerant food crops would not be limited to a project area, or dependent on donor funding.

During its drought response programme in 2002–2003, CARE tested some initial ideas for developing a market for sorghum. It became clear that urban households (in Livingstone) enjoy sorghum and would be willing to buy it – if the price was right and it was readily available in meal form; and that while rural households have slowly started growing sorghum for food, they would quickly switch to growing more – if there was a market for it. CARE is therefore pursuing this idea further. It will have to develop more than anecdotal or intuitive arguments. With studies and projects it may be possible to convince people of the potential benefits that the development of a market for sorghum could bring. But it will only be with the involvement of all major stakeholders that the scale needed to kick-start a sorghum market will be achieved. But if successful, this could represent a true structural adjustment – a change in the local economy that reduced both poverty and vulnerability.

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CRS seed vouchers and fairs in Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and Gambia: raising the bar in seed-based agriculture recovery

Paula Bramel, International Institute of Tropical Agriculture; and Tom Remington, Catholic Relief Services

Seed vouchers and fairs have gained widespread acceptance as an alternative to direct seed distribution in interventions to support agricultural recovery. Seed vouchers and fairs address the problem of lack of household access to seed following disaster or displacement. In doing so, they challenge the assumption that quality seed of preferred crops and varieties is not available to a community during an emergency. This article summarises the findings of detailed evaluations of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) seed vouchers and fairs in Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and Gambia. CRS seed fairs work by providing vulnerable households with vouchers worth a specific cash value. These are exchanged for seed from eligible seed sellers, who then redeem the vouchers for cash from CRS at the end of the fair. The fairs are organised on a specific day, and in a specific location. The objective of the analysis described here was to (1) evaluate the impact of CRS inter-

ventions in the three countries; (2) evaluate the implementation process used; and (3) compile a list of specific lessons learned.

The findings of the evaluation

In their implementation, the programmes in all three countries utilised the CRS *Seed Vouchers and Fairs Manual* as the basic framework.¹ The three-country programme identified a number of lessons learned from the first year's work, and a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) identified key strategic issues to be addressed in planning and implementation.

The outcomes of the seed voucher and fair programmes are given in Table 1. All three country programmes successfully helped large numbers of beneficiaries to access local seed of diverse crops in areas heavily

Table 1: Overall outcomes of the CRS emergency seed interventions in Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and Gambia

Country	Number of partners	Number of districts	Number of seed fairs	Number of beneficiary households	Number of sellers	Seed quantity (MT)	Number of crop types
Zimbabwe	1	6	19	22,500	1,347	324	31
Ethiopia	9	19	163	56,577	3,242	1,754	15
Gambia	1	6	26	17,058	1,147	306	10

¹ CRS, ICRISAT and ODI, *Seed Vouchers and Fairs: A Manual for Seed-based Agricultural Recovery in Africa* (Nairobi: Catholic Relief Services, 2002).

affected by drought. In all areas, enough local seed was available to meet the needs of these beneficiaries, despite initial assessments which concluded that there was insufficient seed due to a significant loss of crop production.

In all three countries, there was evidence of a short-term positive impact from the interventions on the area planted by participating households and on crop production. In addition, CRS/Zimbabwe was able to demonstrate a positive impact on food security and CRS/Gambia showed a positive impact on household seed security. The evaluation also found that, under normal circumstances, a local seed market operates in all three countries for all crops, with the exception of maize in Zimbabwe. The source of seed sold is local, and there is routine demand and specialised suppliers. The use of the seed voucher and fair approach allowed these seed sellers to operate normally. It also offered opportunities for new sellers to enter the market for the first time.

Strengths

It is clear from the evaluations that the seed voucher and fair approach enhances livelihoods by building assets and strengthening social relations, institutions and organisations. From the evaluation, it emerged that seed vouchers and fairs strengthen a wide range of farm family assets (Table 2). They also significantly strengthened local seed systems, especially the role of local grain markets and traders in this dynamic and resilient system.

The seed fair approach also had an impact on social relations. Relief and development practitioners often struggle to ensure that women play lead roles in the process of

relief and development work, and that they benefit through it. The seed voucher and fair approach builds on and strengthens the important role that women play in seed systems and in local markets. Between a third and a half of the voucher recipients were women: 48% in Zimbabwe, 45% in Gambia and 38% in Ethiopia. Women's participation as seed sellers reflected their role in the market; women accounted for 19% of the sellers in Gambia, 20% in Ethiopia and an astounding 72% in Zimbabwe. The interventions also had a profound impact on CRS itself, its partners and some ministries of agriculture. Shifting from doing what we have always done (direct seed distribution) to a new and radically different approach was met with anxiety and sometimes resistance. However, upon implementation, the immediate feedback from participants (both beneficiaries and sellers) was enthusiastic, especially in comparison to their usual ambivalence over direct seed distributions.

Weaknesses

Unlike a direct seed distribution, which is a rigidly controlled supply process, seed vouchers and fairs are demand-driven and fluid. The evaluation found that it was difficult for CRS and its partners to let go, step out of the process, and play a facilitating role. CRS and its partners had an instinctive distrust of the markets and lacked confidence in the ability of disaster-affected people to play active and incisive roles, and to make wise choices. Because of this, CRS was often quick to control seed prices or restrict farmer choice.

Opportunities

Seed vouchers and fairs shift the focus from problems requiring external assistance to opportunities to link

Table 2: The impact of seed vouchers and fairs on farm family assets

Asset	Impact
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Households obtained seed in time for planting Beneficiaries had a choice of crop, variety, quantity and quality of seed
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial transfer to those receiving vouchers Increased profit for seed sellers due to the seed fair premium Knock-on effect of cash infusion into community
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communities participated in planning and implementation via seed fair committees Open, transparent and public process increased confidence Strengthened relationships between seed sellers and farmers
Human	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced knowledge of different seed systems, their strengths and opportunities for integration Enhanced knowledge of crops, varietal preference and seed quality Seed fair opportunities exploited for information, education and communication in seed, agriculture and other issues such as HIV/AIDS
Natural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased genetic diversity by providing farmers with crop and variety choice²

² It must be noted that seed vouchers and fairs will not increase agrobiodiversity without an explicit emphasis on this (R. Van der Steeg, T. Remington, M. Grum and E. Kemingisha, 'Seed Vouchers & Fairs and Agrobiodiversity in Western Uganda', in L. Sperling, T. Remington, J. Haugen and S. Nagoda (eds), *Addressing Seed Security in Disaster Response: Linking Relief with Development* (Cali, Colombia:

International Center for Tropical Agriculture, 2004)). In Kenya in 2005, 25,000 half-kilo packets of seed of new varieties were exchanged for vouchers at seed fairs (CRS OFDA Quarterly Report *Restoring Seed Security through Seed Vouchers and Fairs in Mbeere, Tharaka and Muranga Districts*).

farmers to markets. Successful seed vouchers and fairs increase confidence in, and knowledge of, seed systems and seed security, creating opportunities to support market seed sellers (especially women) to increase seed supply and quality, to facilitate farmers' access to seed of new varieties from the formal seed sector and to identify and then support the crop value chains that underpin the livelihood security of farm families.

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Threats

There are significant threats to the process of shifting from a top-down interventionist approach to a more nuanced demand-side approach. First, institutions that have invested in the commercial seed system support direct seed distribution. A second threat centres on the assumption that farmers' seed – though produced as grain – is of good quality. Because this seed is not certified, seed regulatory agencies might act to prohibit its sale at seed fairs. A third threat concerns stagnation and deviation. CRS has publicly promoted seed vouchers and fairs as a means of getting off the 'seeds and tools treadmill'. If not watched, there is a risk that seed fairs themselves may become another treadmill (albeit one that puts more cash into disaster-affected communities). Deviation from the principle of an open market and farmer choice can result from attempts to restrict who can sell at the

fairs, or what can be sold (e.g. restricting the sale of maize deemed to be too susceptible to drought, for example). A fourth threat concerns security. Approximately \$5,000 is paid out to seed sellers at the close of a fair. This significant cash transfer places seed fair staff at risk (this risk does not exist in direct seed distributions as these transactions are handled by banks in the capital cities). In conflict areas, there is an added risk in travelling to the seed fair, and congregating at fair sites.

Conclusions

Clearly, the strengths and opportunities of seed vouchers and fairs outweigh their weaknesses, and the threats they potentially face. CRS is committed to overcoming internal weaknesses and confronting external threats – the evaluation described here is one example of this. Seed vouchers and fairs cannot be thought of as a static product, but rather as an iterative process in a transition from disaster response to recovery and the long-term strengthening of agricultural livelihoods.

The seed fair approach has been a dramatic success for CRS in Ethiopia, Gambia and Zimbabwe. Seed vouchers and fairs have 'raised the bar' in seed-based agricultural recovery, and have placed disaster-affected communities on a better road to recovery and resilience. They have also strengthened CRS partnerships, made CRS a more credible agriculture partner with governments and donors, and set out a different development pathway from endemic risk to resilient recovery.

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Agricultural research: what role in disaster and conflict relief?

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Natural disasters and conflicts derail agricultural development. Droughts and floods level crops and kill livestock; wars damage the infrastructure, social networks and human capital needed to get inputs to farms, and outputs to markets. Is research a priority when farmers' needs are obvious and urgent? This article examines how the 15 international agricultural research centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR, www.cgiar.org) are addressing this question.

What is the CGIAR?

The CGIAR's non-profit, apolitical centres are sponsored by the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). They are funded by 46 countries (including 18 from the developing world), 13 international/regional organisations and banks and four philanthropic foundations. The CGIAR took shape as a result of the successes in breeding higher-yielding wheat and rice varieties that helped prevent mass famine in South Asia in the 1970s, often referred to as the 'green revolution'. The agenda expanded during subsequent decades; the CGIAR's mission is now to 'achieve sustainable food security and reduce poverty in developing countries through scientific research and research-related activities in the fields of agriculture, forestry, fisheries, policy, and environment'.

Helping countries rebuild

Emergency relief is not mentioned in the CGIAR's mission statement. Yet its 15 centres have contributed to many post-crisis rebuilding efforts since the mid-1980s. Best known for plant breeding, the centres have often been asked to provide seeds and to help rebuild seed multiplication, testing and delivery systems. But some (both inside and outside the CGIAR) have questioned whether this was research, and whether this aid approach was effective. Under urgent pressure to get results, centres and aid agencies sometimes imported foreign seeds that had not been sufficiently tested in the crisis zone. Massive influxes of seed of just a few varieties could reduce agro-biodiversity on farms, adding further risk; flooding the market with free foreign seeds puts pressure on local seed businesses, impairing recovery rather than accelerating it. Better approaches to seed aid were needed – and that called for research.



An emergency seed distribution in Honduras following Hurricane Mitch

Following the Rwanda genocide and civil war, intensive studies investigated how local seed systems had been affected. The International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), based in Cali, Colombia, convened a partnership of eight centres specialising in different crops and farming systems, in close partnership with a number of NGOs and funded by the donor community. In addition to Rwanda, the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and academic and NGO partners subsequently examined relief seed interventions in parts of Uganda, Sudan, Somalia, Niger and Mali affected by conflict or drought. In Mozambique, ICRISAT worked with local partners to develop tools to enhance seed relief responses following the floods of 2002.

local seed systems are resilient, and can recover

These studies found that massive foreign seed aid may not be necessary if a conflict is as short as that in Rwanda. Local seed systems are resilient, and can recover. Instead of seed giveaways, the researchers recommended that seed vouchers should be issued to farmers. Farmers would choose the best seed suppliers and trade the vouchers for seed at local seed fairs, usually organised by NGOs. Seed sellers could then redeem the vouchers for cash from the relief agency, jump-starting the local seed economy rather than undermining it. Catholic Relief Services has since implemented seed fairs and seed

voucher programmes in a number of different countries, as reported on page 44.

Rebuilding national capacities

National expertise in agricultural research is often devastated by conflict and natural disasters. Centres found that the crop research networks that they had helped create and foster across Africa, Asia and Latin America became valuable safety nets following such emergencies. Rwanda, for example, had contributed knowledge and materials to regional networks prior to its crisis, and when the conflict subsided its neighbours returned the favour through these same networks, helping to train replacements for staff who had fled or been killed. Where such networks were absent, as in the case of newly-independent East Timor, the CGIAR centres helped fill the gap; the Australian Council for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) quickly assembled a consortium including five centres to provide that country with planting material of the best varieties of the island's staple food crops, and trained East Timorese in seed production and distribution.

Gene banks

Gene banks are another vital safety net. CGIAR centres store more than half a million varieties, including wild species related to staple food crops. Centres study these varieties and lines to understand their valuable characteristics, and provide them to plant breeders worldwide as a public service. Preventing loss from extinction or mishandling was the original rationale for this conservation effort, but experience has shown that it is also a vital resource for disaster/conflict recovery.

For example in Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge under the Pol Pot regime (1975–78) extinguished thousands of local rice types, replacing them with imported Chinese varieties that were ill-suited to local conditions – one of several reasons why rice production crashed and people starved during that period. Fortunately, some (though far from all) of the lost varieties had been collected before the regime came to power, and kept safely in the gene bank of the Philippines-based International Rice Research Institute (IRRI). IRRI trained a new Cambodian rice research team and repatriated this germplasm, and jointly with NGOs helped restore rice production across the country. Rice germplasm has also been repatriated in West Africa (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire) by the West Africa Rice Development Association (WARDA). Germplasm of other food crops has been restored in Afghanistan and Iraq by the International Maize and Wheat Center (CIMMYT), the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), ICRISAT and the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI).

CGIAR centres have carried the genetic diversity theme beyond gene banks. Marine biodiversity was used to help the Solomon Islands recover from ethnic conflict and insurgency in 1998. The Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI), led by Australia and New Zealand, sought ways to overcome the poverty and unemployment that were fuelling frustration and violence. The WorldFish Center in Malaysia joined with the government

and NGOs to develop and spread small-scale aquatic enterprises. They adapted technology from French Polynesia and the Cook Islands for cultivating black pearl oysters; they introduced methods for the sustainable harvest and cultivation of giant clams, coral, crustaceans and ornamental fish species for the aquarium trade; and they showed villagers how to sustainably cultivate and market sea cucumbers for human consumption, all following ecologically-responsible guidelines from the Marine Aquarium Council.

Human health and nutrition

The CGIAR has also helped to reduce some health and nutritional vulnerabilities created by these crises. Grasspea (*Lathyrus sativus*) is a legume crop that contains a neuro-toxin that can cause crippling paralysis (lathyrism), mental retardation and other debilitating effects. Normally, Ethiopians consume only small amounts of it, but when drought strikes they have no choice but to eat more of this highly drought-tolerant crop to survive. ICARDA has used a special research technique (somaclonal variation) to develop low-toxin grasspea lines, and Ethiopia's national research team is using them to breed locally-adapted, safe-to-eat varieties.

Refugees fleeing conflict or hiding from marauding warriors quickly become malnourished. When their staple crops fail, as is happening in the Democratic Republic of Congo due to the Uganda Variant of the Africa Cassava Mosaic Virus, they are in serious trouble. Research at the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) has developed virus-resistant varieties; through USAID support, IITA is flying resistant plant cuttings into this remote area to stem the epidemic and reduce hunger.

Even in the relative safety of relief camps, refugees face limited food choices. Vitamin A deficiency is widespread in Africa, and especially harms pregnant women and young children. The International Potato Center (CIP) developed sweetpotato varieties with higher vitamin A levels, which could provide 40% of the dietary requirement for this vitamin. An NGO called the James Arwata Foundation is delivering vine cuttings of these varieties to refugee camps in northern Uganda during lulls in the fighting, when farmers have a chance to plant them in fields nearby.

Helping relief agencies become more effective and efficient

Haste can easily become waste in post-crisis situations; rapid assessments to diagnose the most important problems can help set aid on the right track. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) helped newly-independent Mozambique assess its poverty situation, and train national researchers in policy analysis. ICARDA helped Afghanistan to rebuild its agricultural sector by carrying out a large-scale needs assessment in 2002, covering all provinces and interviewing thousands of farmers.

Diagnostics can also help solve problems in aid delivery. USAID's Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance was concerned that its aid to livestock herders in East Africa

following successive droughts was creating handout dependency instead of stimulating recovery. The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and the ASARECA regional agricultural research network studied drought-plagued parts of Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. Instead of handouts, they recommended that USAID support vulnerability-reduction steps such as organising herders to collectively manage herd sizes and deal with traders pre- and post-drought; developing 'fodder banks' to alleviate the feed shortage during droughts; providing better animal health care services so that fewer animals would die when drought-stressed; and developing alternative activities to supplement the incomes of pastoralists.

Preparing for future crises

Many are predicting future agricultural disasters caused by global warming. Climate change may scorch some farming areas, and flood or freeze others. Farmers may have to quickly change crops and farming practices; pests and diseases may migrate to new areas where they have suddenly become well-adapted, wreaking havoc on crops that were never bred to resist them. For example, CIP found evidence of shifts of white-fly pests in Peru following the El Niño warming and increased rainfall of 1997–98.

Research can help combat this threat, although the only permanent solution is to control greenhouse gas emis-

sions. The CGIAR centres are researching farming systems that extract more carbon out of the atmosphere and store it in the soil or in plant biomass. They are also developing mathematical models based on known responses of crops and pests to climate, which can help countries to forecast what they might face in the years ahead, so that they can prepare. Crops are also being bred for resistance to potential pests and more severe drought.

Conclusion

Over the past decade, the CGIAR's post-crisis rebuilding approach has grown beyond technology transfer to emphasise strategic research that helps partners i) diagnose and solve food security problems; ii) rebuild human and institutional capacities for agricultural research; and iii) make relief aid more effective and efficient. Through this more systematic and knowledge-driven approach, the centres' contributions should continue to improve in scope, quality and effectiveness in the years to come.

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Conflict, mental health, care and malnutrition: designing relief programmes with trauma in mind

Cécile Bizouerne and Sandra Bernhardt, Action Contre La Faim

The visible causes of malnutrition in humanitarian crises include a lack of food and potable water, and disease. The psychological and social consequences of crisis also have a direct, though less visible, impact on nutritional status and on the treatment of severe malnutrition. UNICEF's conceptual framework for nutrition identifies three essen-

tial elements for the development, growth and survival of children: access to healthcare, access to food and access to nurturing or care. While the consequences of inadequate care on children's nutritional status have been analysed in development contexts, very little research has been done into typical care practices during crises. Yet the

psychological and social effects of war and conflict – personal trauma, depression, chronic stress, the collapse of family structures – strongly influence families’ capacity to care for and protect their dependent members. This suggests the need for a new approach to nutritional programming in conflict, one which includes a mental health component focusing on psychosocial care and the family–child relationship. This article describes two pilot projects set up by Action Contre La Faim (ACF) which sought to address the mental health and care practices of severely malnourished children and their families as part of therapeutic feeding programmes in Afghanistan and Southern Sudan.

The pilot projects

ACF’s pilot projects ran in Kabul in Afghanistan and Juba in North Sudan during 2002–2004. The aim was to improve the mother–child relationship and increase children’s stimulation in order to strengthen the prevention and treatment of malnutrition; enhance the well-being of the people bringing children to the feeding centre, as well as of the children themselves; and limit the negative impact of malnutrition on children’s development. The idea was to see how new activities could be accommodated within existing nutritional protocols, such as three-hourly therapeutic milk schedules, and what activities were most appropriate within the very structured environment of therapeutic feeding centres.

Each pilot project involved a complete nutrition and medical team, including one or two psychosocial workers. The basic package consisted of:

- New welcome and stay modalities, including better information about malnutrition and treatment, greater involvement of families in the treatment of children, improved decoration in the nutrition centres, more flexibility in patient stays and regular meetings and enhanced communication between staff and patients.
- Active support during milk feeding, sensitisation around children’s needs and child development, explanations regarding the impact of malnutrition on child behaviour (such as apathy and irritability), all designed to reinforce the relationship between caregivers and children.
- Social activities for adults.
- Play sessions for mothers and children, to reinforce the caregiver–child relationship and improve care practices, to stimulate children and to teach mothers how to continue stimulation at home. This component also aimed to give enjoyment in a very medical environment, to provide a framework where caregivers could appreciate their children’s skills and to bolster parents’ confidence in their capacity to take care of their children.
- Individual follow-up through interviews, and the creation of psychosocial files for each admission. In this way, psychosocial workers tried to understand the history of a child’s malnutrition, and develop better prevention strategies. The stress caused by the child’s malnutrition and by long stays in the nutrition centre, compelling parents to leave other children alone at home, was also discussed.

- Parents were also encouraged to participate in informal discussion groups: patients in nutrition centres supported each other by talking about their children’s recovery, and staff tried to encourage discussion about specific family concerns, allowing people to talk about their problems and tell others about the solutions they had found.

This basic package of care practices and mental health activities was then adapted to the cultural context, the causes of malnutrition and the profile of the patients in the two pilot sites, as described below.

Kabul: milk insufficiency and severe malnutrition among children under six months

After more than 20 years of war, Afghan women have found themselves in a very precarious situation, both socially and economically. Socially, many married women are isolated in the homes of their in-laws, where they often have little support, and can become victims of violence. Separation from their husbands may only make them more vulnerable. Economically, their living conditions are also often fragile: living costs may be high, and their job opportunities (mainly daily work) are precarious.

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In 2003, almost 40% of the severely malnourished children who came to ACF’s nutrition centres in Kabul were under six months of age. Mothers of these infants complained of lack of breast milk. Typically, it is rare to see large numbers of severely malnourished children under six months of age because breastfeeding protects them. In Afghanistan, this protection seems not to be effective. A study is on-going to better understand the causes of mothers’ milk insufficiency. Initial evidence indicates that there are many reasons for milk insufficiency: complementary feeding may be introduced at the wrong time, there may be a lack of support in cases of lactation difficulties, breastfeeds may be too short or too few, the position during breastfeeding may be incorrect, or low-birth-weight children may have difficulty suckling. Psychologists have shown that depression and anxiety among breastfeeding women can lead to difficulties in taking proper care and establishing good relationships with their babies.

Better knowledge of care practices and breastfeeding will help us to define and develop better interventions to prevent lactation difficulties, and to treat severe malnutrition among children under six months of age. Measures include using suckling techniques that permit the child to be fed with therapeutic milk, while stimulating the production of breast milk through continued suckling. The aim is to treat the child’s severe malnutri-

tion without impairing the production of the mother's milk, and damaging the mother-child relationship. Building mothers' confidence is key to the success of lactation or re-lactation when breastfeeding has stopped. Psychosocial workers encourage and guide mothers and babies during breastfeeding, adjusting the baby's position and giving counselling.

Psychological support seems to be well suited to the Kabul context. Most women express their feelings and describe their difficulties very easily. To reach in-depth changes and improvements, we tackle the child-caretaker couple but also the family as a whole, especially within a society where responsibility and power are in the hands of the husbands and/or of the mothers-in-law.

Preventative activities were instituted in the Kabul pilot for pregnant and lactating mothers from January 2005. Women are invited to join group discussions and play sessions, where they receive personal advice and support for breastfeeding; referrals to other institutions and organisations are arranged according to need. Babies' growth is monitored to confirm that the lactation is adequate and sufficient for development. It is too early to assess the results. In addition, a community approach, including home visiting, is under discussion, to improve access to women in a country where most are still confined to their homes.

Juba: foraging leads to neglect of maternal care

After 40 years of war, people in Southern Sudan regularly face forced displacement, and families are often split up. Frequently, displaced people make for Juba, the main city of Southern Sudan. Once there, they find that their usual mechanism of survival (subsistence agriculture) is virtually impossible due to limited access to land and impoverished soils. Displaced people therefore have to find new ways to survive; women start leaving camps or protected areas to forage for wood or grass to sell in the market in order to buy food for their families. As they are away from home for most of the day, mothers have to leave their youngest children in the care of older children, who themselves are sometimes under seven years of age. In addition, the displaced situation, hunger and serious problems of alcoholism among both men and women lead to family conflict and violence. Children in these situations often suffer from some form of malnutrition due to basic neglect and a lack of resources.

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The psychological strains produced by such difficult conditions have both immediate and less direct impacts on malnutrition and its treatment. In Juba, face-to-face interviews are unusual and seem less appropriate to tackling individual suffering. People are not often willing

to speak about their past because it 'makes them sad' and leads to difficulties in sleeping. The approach ACF has developed is based principally on informal group discussions in nutrition centres, and joint activities, such as dancing and storytelling, where topics of concern to caregivers are more easily discussed. Mutual support among caregivers is much appreciated, and has a greater effect than advice from ACF staff.

Alcoholism and associated violence is a complicated issue to address. ACF's input is mainly in lobbying with institutions and the ministry of health for the recognition of this major public health problem. The ACF programme includes foetal alcoholic syndrome in health education sessions, to increase awareness and sensitise communities to this risk. Some of the severely malnourished children admitted to nutrition centres are probably victims of alcohol, and we know that one of the consequences of FAS is difficulty in suckling. ACF's food security programme in Juba also includes psychosocial support for families with alcoholism problems.

The impact of integrating a mental health component into therapeutic feeding

Assessing the impact of a psychosocial component within therapeutic feeding is not easy. Nonetheless, evidence from the Kabul and Juba pilots suggests that adopting a more holistic approach to therapeutic feeding leads to better services for patients.

- Feeding centre staff have a better knowledge and understanding of each family situation and the causes of malnutrition for each case. It is easier for them to give specific and adequate advice to families, and they feel more motivated.
- The children are much more active.
- Support is provided to each family according to its specific situation, weaknesses and strengths.
- The self-esteem of caregivers is reinforced; fewer judgments are made by centre staff, parents are enabled to discover the capacities of their own children, and their own capacities to take care of them; and responsibilities during treatment are shared more.
- Default rates during treatment are reduced. In Kabul, defaulting decreased not only because of care practices but also because of an improvement in the whole approach and in the quality of services provided.

Conclusion and recommendations

Following the pilots in Juba and Kabul, the project has been extended to other countries and areas, including Darfur. The outputs of these pilots confirm the need to integrate care practices and mental health activities in all ACF's therapeutic feeding centres, and this is beginning to happen. All nurses are trained in nutrition and care practices before they go on mission, and expatriates (psychologists and ergotherapists) support the field team in the implementation of these new activities in feeding centres.

Besides the direct benefits for ACF's patients and programmes, the move to a more holistic approach and

the addition of these new competencies has benefited the agency more broadly, in terms of:

- Facilitating context analysis, by taking into consideration the social and psychological consequences of crises for affected people and agency staff.
- Enabling a better understanding of the causes of malnutrition through the inclusion of care-practice factors in addition to food security, health and hygiene.
- Allowing the development and improvement of ACF programmes and interventions according to psychosocial and care-practice needs.

The sharing of experience in different contexts and with different organisations is needed to define the best and most efficient approaches (centre-based/community-based, individual/collective, counselling/play). Even after a general framework for integrating these care practices and supportive activities is established, a lot

of work still has to be done. Transferring technical skills in care practices and mental health is a long and complex process, and needs to be adapted to fit the particular cultural context, beliefs and habits. Indicators for assessing needs and impact are not well-defined. There is a real need to develop these kinds of activities in emergency situations. This was one of the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Nutrition's Working Group on Nutrition in Emergencies when it met in New York in March 2004.

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Humanitarian engagement with non-state armed actors: the parameters of negotiated armed access

Network Paper 51

Max P. Glaser

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This paper addresses the question of humanitarian engagement with the non-state armed groups that increasingly populate the zones in which humanitarian action takes place. In particular, it seeks to understand why some combatants react positively and consistently to humanitarian demands to meet access preconditions, while others respond erratically, decline to respond or are hostile. The paper looks less at how to negotiate with such groups, and more at the various types of non-state armed group with which negotiations are likely to be conducted. The ultimate objective is to determine the parameters of responsible humanitarian engagement – i.e., to investigate the scope of successful engagement, one which maintains minimal operational preconditions, such as security for aid workers, and to explore the available modalities of engagement. The paper is accordingly aimed at senior and mid-level managers in operational decision-making positions: people who have to evaluate the potential effectiveness of the intended engagement, rather than field-based staff involved in face-to-face access negotiations.

Humanitarian accountability: putting principles into practice

Jan Egeland, UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

The Indian Ocean tsunami crisis prompted one of the world's largest-ever relief operations. In its aftermath, the humanitarian community has revisited the issue of accountability, this time with greater public interest – and scrutiny – than ever before. Accountability, along with its corollary, transparency, are two words very much in vogue at the moment, both within the humanitarian community and in the United Nations. But what do we mean by these terms, and to what ends are we applying them? And most importantly, how do they contribute to the health, safety and physical wellbeing of the millions of people around the world who turn to humanitarian workers in times of crisis?

For accountability to have real meaning, it must be tied to a specific set of actors, audiences and objectives: one is held accountable to someone for something. Accountability also implies consequences – one is literally called to account. How do these concepts apply to the humanitarian community, where numerous interests and actors – beneficiaries, agency and NGO partners, donors and host governments – converge?

While roles and responsibilities vary, ultimately accountability is about strengthening our capacity to save lives and alleviate suffering in a manner that affirms individual dignity. However we understand the term, accountability must manifest itself in results on the ground that protect and improve the basic quality of life for those at risk from conflict or disasters.

Any discussion of accountability must begin and end with this question: as a result of our actions/policies/decisions, have we improved our ability to provide aid – quickly, competently, equitably, and in a dignified manner – to those who most need it?

Strengthening accountability through improved response

Today, the humanitarian community is being called up to respond to a wide range of often simultaneous crises, from the Indian Ocean tsunami to the crisis in Darfur and the ongoing calamity in the DRC. Overall, the UN system and its humanitarian partners in the Red Cross/Red Crescent and NGO community have responded reasonably well, given the circumstances. More aid gets delivered to more people more quickly than ever before, thanks in part to improved technical and logistical capabilities and more effective coordination on the ground.

Our technical advances, however, have not been matched by similar progress in human consciousness – in fact, if

anything we have further distanced ourselves from the suffering of others. Despite the one-world mantra of globalisation, we still turn a blind eye to the suffering of millions of people who remain outside the media spotlight or beyond the narrow range of political interest. Accountability is thus a twin challenge: improving our ability to respond, and doing so in a manner that upholds the core values we espouse.

to be accountable to our beneficiaries, we must close the gap between what we practice and what we preach

One of these core values, impartiality of assistance, requires us to provide aid to those who need it most, wherever they may live. In some crises, such as the tsunami disaster, we have met this challenge, providing massive relief to two million people across 12 countries in a matter of weeks. In other crises, such as Darfur, we initially responded too slowly with too many gaps in assistance, while in DRC and many other countries outside the limelight, our efforts have been woefully under-funded proportionate to needs.

To be accountable to our beneficiaries, we must close the gap between what we practice and what we preach. We must improve both what we do, and how we do it. To that end, the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, has proposed reform of the humanitarian system, which seeks to strengthen accountability by:

- building a more predictable response capacity; and
- providing for more predictable and more flexible funding.

This reform agenda, described in the Secretary-General's March 2005 report *In Larger Freedom*, will be presented to UN Member States in September. If adopted and implemented faithfully by all parties – donor governments, the UN system and our humanitarian partners – these reforms should improve our ability to respond effectively to future crises.

In addition to these reforms, which are largely quantitative in nature, we also need to focus attention on the qualitative aspects of accountability. As humanitarians

accountable to those we serve, and those who help make such service possible, we need to:

- operate transparently;
- keep our humanity at the centre of humanitarian action; and
- confront our greatest challenge – public indifference – by focusing attention on the millions of people who suffer in ‘forgotten crises’.

As Emergency Relief Coordinator, I am committed to strengthening both the quantitative and qualitative factors that will make us more accountable to our beneficiaries, host governments, humanitarian partners and donors.



Tsunami damage in Meulaboh, Indonesia, January 2005

Objective 1: more predictable response capacity

The need for a more predictable response capacity is clear, as the crisis in Darfur and the tsunami disaster both demonstrated. We can, and we must, do better. To this end, last year I commissioned a *Humanitarian Response Review*, led by some of the most well-regarded members of our community: Costanza Adinolfi, David Bassiouni, Roy Williams and Halvor Fossum Lauritzen. Their review, to be made public in June, will identify gaps in humanitarian assistance and suggest how we should fill them. They will also make recommendations to ensure we have the personnel and equipment needed to respond immediately to future emergencies, and if need be, to major crises occurring simultaneously in different parts of the world.

Some initial observations are in order. First, the humanitarian community does not have a sufficient number of stand-by staff skilled, trained and ready to deploy for a major emergency. We need to create stand-by arrangements for the immediate deployment of skilled personnel (and equipment), with the emphasis here on ‘skilled’. Over the last decade, we have expanded the ranks of aid workers, but failed to balance improved advocacy with the high standards of quality and professionalism in all logistical areas required to meet urgent humanitarian needs. As a result, the skill sets in some key sectors may have declined, with technical capacity in areas such as epidemiology or water and sanitation often secondary to other endeavours.

Today, there is an urgent need for senior technically skilled staff in the field. We need staff who know the basics of operational response and can train others, especially local staff, if need be. We need staff who can conduct comprehensive needs assessments, lead programmes for the protection of civilians, provide water and sanitation services, design morbidity and mortality surveys, implement effective vector control measures and

effectively manage camps, to name just a few critically-needed skills.

To establish greater quality control, there has been talk recently of more systematically accrediting UN agencies or NGOs during a crisis. As Emergency Relief Coordinator, I believe it is incumbent on each agency and NGO to strengthen its technical response capacity, and I have had discussions with heads of agencies on just this point. Accreditation, however, is a matter for local and national governments, not the UN. Our role is to assist if called upon by governments for this purpose.

the humanitarian community does not have enough trained staff ready to deploy for a major emergency

We also need to strengthen coordination in the field so that gaps are filled and duplication and confusion minimised. To that end, the Secretary-General’s report proposes strengthening the Humanitarian Coordinators’ role, as well as better preparing and equipping UN country teams.

Objective 2: more predictable and flexible funding from a greater variety of sources

Effective humanitarian response is predicated on our ability to access sufficient funding quickly, in a manner that is both predictable enough to enable advanced planning and flexible enough to respond to changing needs on the ground. The Secretary-General’s report calls for more predictable and flexible funding based on needs, and thus is fully consistent with the principles articulated in the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative. The UK

government is playing a leadership role in designing a better funding structure for emergency operations.

As the tsunami crisis demonstrated, however, we still have far to go in putting these principles into practice. Donors' unprecedented response to the tsunami in some cases exceeded humanitarian needs on the ground, and NGO/agency capacity to absorb the money. In a move towards greater accountability, donors should consider un-earmarking tsunami funds for use in other crises. Meanwhile, NGOs and agencies should seek permission from donors (individuals as well as institutions) to use tsunami funds for other humanitarian crises.

The tsunami aside, nearly every other humanitarian crisis in the 2005 Consolidated Appeal (CAP), be it in DRC, Côte d'Ivoire or Colombia, faces critical funding shortages. As of early May, funding for all Appeals was 38% (and 24% excluding the tsunami appeal). In DRC, only 22% of the country's huge unmet humanitarian needs are funded; in Somalia barely 8%; and in the Central African Republic only 6%. Donors' slow or non-existent response to these crises is putting millions of lives in jeopardy. To be accountable to both people and humanitarian principles, we must push for more equitable funding based on needs and needs alone.

We also should reflect on the financial tools currently at our disposal and decide if we need to upgrade or revamp them to meet the plethora of humanitarian needs. To that end, I welcome the proposal made by the UK's Secretary of State for International Development, Hilary Benn, to create a new, voluntary \$1 billion emergency response fund.

Transparency

Accountability is about more than getting programmes funded and the trucks rolling. It is about means as well as ends. It is about transparency of intentions and operations, principles and practices.

The UN humanitarian and development agencies have been successfully accounting for multi-million dollar programmes for years. We are accountable to our donors, our partners and the public at large – all of whom have an indisputable right to know where and how their money is being used.

Conscious of public demand for greater accountability, the UN recently welcomed a *pro bono* offer from Price-WaterhouseCoopers to enhance our accounting expertise, as well as the UN's public Financial Tracking Service. As a result, we will be able to track incoming contributions to the

UN pledged through the Tsunami Flash Appeal and provide the public with data on how these funds are used. This new system was launched on 25 May. Few public or private entities have this degree of transparency. But we believe that not only is this extra accountability the right thing to do, it is also the only way to operate.

Keep our humanity front and centre

Humanitarianism is founded on the principle of humanity. How we provide aid often says more to beneficiaries about our motivation and principles than what we provide. In our rush to provide aid quickly and efficiently, we must not neglect the power of presence – the act of human solidarity in the midst of suffering.

Accountability is about these intangible but essential qualities of humanitarianism. Our beneficiaries may well have lost everything in life. Plastic sheeting or a food package may address their physical needs, but suffering far transcends the physical. The first thing people in crisis need to know about humanitarianism is that we will treat them as human beings, with dignity and respect.

Focus on the forgotten

This element of recognition, of remembering those whom the world has forgotten, is an essential component of accountability. To be accountable to the millions of people who suffer far beyond the media spotlight, we must confront our greatest challenge – public indifference. If nothing else, the tsunami crisis showed, in a way few crises ever have, the extraordinary inter-connectedness of our global society. The world's generosity in the tsunami should be a model for how we respond to all crises – this is the message we need to take to the public, the donors and the media. The value of a human life is the same everywhere, in Bunia and in Banda Aceh.

Conclusion

While our individual roles and responsibilities may vary, our ultimate accountability as humanitarians is to the people we serve. And we must serve them as people, in a manner that affirms individual dignity. Ultimately, 'accountability' must manifest itself in results on the ground that protect and improve the basic quality of life for those at risk from conflict or disasters.

Principles into practice: as humanitarians, we are called to this challenge every day, in each and every crisis. As humanitarians, we can promise no more; as humanitarians, we must be accountable for no less.

Humanitarian Practice Network

The **Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN)** is an independent forum where field workers, managers and policymakers in the humanitarian sector share information, analysis and experience.

HPN's aim is to improve the performance of humanitarian action by contributing to individual and institutional learning.

HPN's activities include:

- A series of specialist publications: *Humanitarian Exchange* magazine, Network Papers and Good Practice Reviews.
- A resource website at www.odihpn.org.
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HPN's members and audience comprise individuals and organisations engaged in humanitarian action. They are in 80 countries worldwide, working in northern and southern NGOs, the UN and other multilateral agencies, governments and donors, academic institutions and consultancies. HPN's publications are written by a similarly wide range of contributors.

HPN's institutional location is the Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), an independent think tank on humanitarian and development policy. HPN's publications are researched and written by a wide range of individuals and organisations, and are published by HPN in order to encourage and facilitate knowledge-sharing within the sector. *The views and opinions expressed in HPN's publications do not necessarily state or reflect those of the Humanitarian Policy Group or the Overseas Development Institute.*

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